

Between Culture and Politics: The Sociology of the 1930s

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Abstract

This article undertakes an investigation of the Brazilian sociological tradition in the 1930s and its relationship with conservative modernization. On the basis of a wide range of concepts that have been employed by modernist sociologists, it is possible to obtain a clear view of the tension that existed between the world of culture and the political sphere. Modernist sociology strikes a distinctive note in putting into effect concepts such as patriarchalism, familism, patrimonialism, personalism, agnatism, clientelism and a myriad of obstacles caused by the privatism that was contained in their thinking. This means it can play a decisive role in constituting the public life of its society in the way that its State is organized and the history of its society is narrated.

Keywords

sociology, modernism, social theory, political theory.

The purpose of this article is to explore modernist sociology in the 1930s and the concept of political sociology in Brazil by assessing the explanations for the relationship between the public and private social sectors. The particular shape of the State in Brazil can be configured on the basis of this kind of sociology. The question of what forms modernist sociology, can be understood as entailing the formation of a political community characterized by modernity. This should involve the combination of several essential factors related to modernism and modernization: the bureaucratization of public power, the formation of a social solidarity that is suited to this kind of authority, the establishment of a modern subjectivity and the fact that the specific modern features of this region were more closely intertwined than in the case of the classic Western tradition. Although related to the heuristic value of the public/private relationship addressed in these essays (which is needed for a discussion of the State-Nation impasse in Brazil), this study seeks to obtain a sociological understanding of the “interpretations of Brazil”, not as descriptions from outside, but as previously constituted social forces that are involved in the modern form of nationalizing social life itself.

On this basis, and going beyond the intellectual context of what has emerged from this diagnostic inquiry, the striking note of modernist sociology lies in its patriarchalism, familism, patrimonialism, personalism, agnatism, clientelism and the myriad of privatist obstacles contained in its thinking. This means it can play a decisive role in constituting the public life of society. The appearance of this question is a recurrent feature in the tradition of Brazilian socio-political thought. If this is taken literally, it can be shown that this line of interpretation was discerned in the 19th Century; however, modernist sociology has given the matter new concepts. When expressed in these terms, the recurring image of a public life that is conceived in this way, can be regarded either as a sign that the interpretations of reality are already dated and have been definitively overcome, or that they are the legacy of interpretations which, to a greater or lesser extent, remain credible.

Rather than postulating a characterization of public life as being based on a historical and analytical plane or even going beyond it, it may be more productive to question its role as an expedient that can be employed to explain the ambiguous shape of Brazilian public space. The recurrence of this theme can be posited by the bibliography and the object of study as existing in a dual dimension. On the one hand, in the plane of ideas, a nuanced examination is required of the way the specific features of the approach can be reconstructed, together with an understanding of public space by the modernist sociologists of the 1930s, or in other words, its emergence, crystallization, reproduction and analytical procedure. On the other hand, the central part of this issue can be explored as a phenomenon in which fundamental dilemmas arising from the shaping of public space in Brazil, are reflected in their private counterpart. This draws attention to some of the historical difficulties raised by the sudden emergence of the modern State in peripheral environments.

Having said this, a reflection on the best way of guiding conduct, perceptions and ways of thinking or acting that arises from the interpretations of modernist sociologists, has removed the particular traits of certain conditioning historical factors (regarding the relationship between the public and private worlds) that are embedded in the history and sociology of their society and their cultural determinations. This at times defines the most striking features of the Brazilian character, as a society amenable to differences and at times reduces what should be public to the following: personalism, asphyxiation before the “hypertrophy” of the private world, the amorality of customs, patrimonialism, familism, a lack of solidarity, a lack of a distinction between the public and the private, clientelism and a weakening of rights or any set of standards with claims to universality.

The 1930s: Intellectuals, the State and Modernization

The 1930s witnessed a political movement which formed the backcloth to previous events in so far as it was against this historical background that the social and political experiment of this decade took place. It was a historical setting that characterized the awareness of a generation and the practices of certain institutions along the way. This initial movement formed the cornerstone for setting in motion the process of modernization and the emphasis on modernism through an awareness of the idiosyncratic features that the “modern” had brought about in this part of the American sub-continent. Hence it is worth noting how the fundamental characteristic of this period and the processes it entailed, had a dual character: innovation and pragmatism.

The State which was afflicted by dissenting voices, such as the Paulista War [or Constitutionalist Revolution] of 1932 and the ill-fated Communist Putsch, by the end of the decade had already embarked on routine activities through technical specialization. These were put into effect by setting up a network of intellectuals who took part in the “bare bones” of the State – its administration or investment in works carried out under its supervision. In a general way, the great debate centred on the Ministry of Labor, with its legal advisors and interpreters of Brazil, such as Oliveira Vianna, Azevedo Amaral and Francisco Campos from the Ministry of Education with Capanema and his “specialist team”; and technical consultants and departmental chambers with Roberto Simonsen and the industrial sector.²

The Ministry of Labor, which was the Center of a constituted corporate body and had a varying degree of importance and range of activities at different times, formed a laboratory, which brought together the sociological experiments on subjects of interest which were decided by law and workers’ legislation. A newly formulated concept of work that was grounded on the world of the factory was attached to this and included legal advisors (WERNECK VIANNA, 1999a). With regard to this concept, the Ministry of Revolution which had made an intervention at that time, while acting on behalf of the Ministry of Education, was concerned about the future.

Modernism flourished in this Ministry of Education which forged a relationship between the future and tradition in a peculiar way. Whereas the Ministry of Labor was driven by the guiding principle of interest, the Ministry of Education covered the principle of merit. These were orchestrated by Capanema, Rodrigo de Mello Franco de Andrade, Mário de Andrade, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Lúcio Costa, Alcides da Rocha Miranda, Luis Saia, Pedro Nava, Gilberto Freyre, among others and were brimming with the nationalization of the modern and its modernism from 1930 onwards (BOMENY, 2001).

The different facets of this period show that although the intellectuals were members of particular professions and formed a social group, they were at the disposal of the corporates. Thus, the intellectuals were increasingly involved in establishing this process which shows the links which can be formed between professional organizations and the creation of the State. (PECAUT, 1990; MICELI, 2001). The kind of modernization that took place in Brazilian society was highly disciplined and socially regulated, although it ended by inhibiting its free expression, It was conducted by the State with an audacity that was accompanied by innovation, industry and the ideology of industrialization. (WERNECK VIANNA, 1999).

Thus, by the end of the 1930s, the growing political schisms which had been gradually shaped by the theoretical activities of the intellectuals who had gravitated to the State and become involved in its practices, as well as through the modernization of society and the economy, brought the political and social movement (with which the decade had begun) to a conclusion.

The changes that took place within the State and its relationship with social groups, allowed the institutionalization of a corporate, vertical and hierarchized structure which provided space for the representation of the interests of the new players who were linked to the emerging industrial order (WERNECK VIANNA, 1999; DINIZ, 1999; LEOPOLDI, 1999). The new system established the asymmetry and consolidated a bipartite corporatism in the sector by creating an area of negotiation between the financial and State elites.

In the case of Brazil, during this modernization, the State was seen by intellectuals as a place for advantageous operations. It is not surprising that the arguments were formed in a situation where the public words (LECLERC, 2004), commonly used by intellectuals were bandied about in the State arena. However, it is necessary to draw a distinction between “project” and “process”.³

In contrast with the beginning of the decade which was still undefined, the final outcome was a conservative modernization. Compared with other cases of modernization, the 1930s in Brazil, when the first signs of this type of modernization were apparent, had its own particular features. There is no doubt that the country had undergone different kinds of modernization in its history since Independence, but the authoritarian route that opened up in 1930 was unusual (WERNECK VIANNA, 1999).

In the first place, there was the refusal to make fundamental changes with regard to the ownership of land. The large landowners kept control over their rural workforce who were not able to break free from the relations of personal subordination or the extraction of surplus value by direct means (WERNECK VIANNA, 1997). In the conservative modernization, the traditional agrarian elite compelled a reluctant middle-class (which was opposed to greater democracy), to make a commitment: modernization had to take place in accordance with the will of a transformative, cautious and authoritarian bloc, both in its attitudes and strategies.

In Brazil, the control of the agricultural frontier was of crucial importance to subordinate the rural masses (VELHO, 1979). On the other hand, space was opened up for industrialization and a certain degree of migration from the countryside to the towns and cities, which was now gathering momentum. Low labor costs could be guaranteed by the limits of the agricultural frontier and the political control that was exerted over the working-class, especially the trade unions, which operated in Brazil by resorting to State corporatism.

However, following this route required sharing the matrix of the first movement of the decade among separate sectors in the State in an anti-oligarchical climate. As a result, the State was established as the main protagonist of modernization from the top, in a civilizing project that was combined with an economic plan, industrialization and urbanization. Hence, it required the presence of industrial interests that were able to push forward a faster and more comprehensive change in the direction of the market economy and a competitive social order. (WERNECK VIANNA, 1997; 1999a; CARVALHO, 1998). This involved leveraging industrialization as a phenomenon that progressed with a certain degree of intensity, and at a constant rate, over a long period of time. Moreover, it took place in the large urban centers rather than the countryside where there was no modernization.

At this time, the country underwent the process of what would become the framework of classes in the social arena, in a sharper form, as well as the formation of the nation-state in the political arena and an industrial and capitalist Brazil in the economic sphere. In the case of modernism, this involved making an attempt to form the modern Brazilian being through discovery and invention. Thus, the building of modernity in Brazil turned into a national project that entailed shaping identities. It had to be constructed now that the modern was combined with the idea of universality and nationalism, and no longer viewed as a replica of the traditional pattern that only certain groups of elites thought was suited to the needs of the country.

What was in play was an attempt to forge close links between the activities of intellectuals and the production of distinct temporalities by the State which were observed and absorbed by the social classes that were constantly being regrouped (THOMPSON, 1987; HOBSBAWN, 1988). A close togetherness and social interaction were witnessed in this period that arose from the tension between expectation and experience, diagnosis and prognosis and interest and merit. These were found in the driving-force of the conceptual matrix of 'class', the substratum of which lay in the division between capital and labor in a corporate dimension and collective identity through modernism. In this way, "the results of collective activity were embedded in spaces of action that were culturally defined. This implies that the effect of social class on collective action is mediated by the cultural fabric." (EDER, 2002: 36). Modernism rationalized the world through its different languages such as literature, the plastic arts, photography and the cinema which were underpinned by their technical, ethical and aesthetic dimensions and thus bestowed a cultural density on the forces of collective identities that were driven to social action in a unified way.

Intellectuals and Brazilian Modernism

However, it should be stressed that the discourses that support building a modern society in Brazil, did not take place on a single plane. It can be argued that, particularly in the 1930s, Brazilian modernity was divided by intellectuals into two planes, both within the pattern laid down by the new social situation. This fact can be illustrated more clearly if the idea of modernism is employed as a paradigm for designing the relationship between culture and modernization in Brazilian society. Modernism arose through the will and constant exercise of plasticity as constructed and expressly conceived in political terms (BARBOSA FILHO, 2005; MORAES, 1978). Hence the outcome of this movement is of crucial importance to modernist sociology.

Following this line of argument, a reflection can be made which benefited the various factors included, whether from a particular national/regional tradition or even from its

conflicts over the formation of modernism in situations outside the axis of the North Atlantic zone. When posited in these terms, this issue raises a number of questions. The first concerns the tenacity of modernist cognitive practices in territories outside the European sphere and the way this overlaps how the ideas are expressed. The second refers to a common feature of these territories where there is a meeting-point between inventiveness in its constructive sense and incompleteness when a comparison is made (as by the modernists) with other modern proceedings. The third point concerns the ways in which modernism on the fringes of society has defined the relationship between intellectuals and writing, literary forms and public life. The fourth question deals with the formation of a modernist sensibility and its characteristics in these regions. The fifth point refers to the need to define a modernist language and its relationship with the main characteristics of the modernization that has taken place.

Moreover, far from opposing the basic axioms of the modernism of these regions, the emergence of modernism in the regions outside the North Atlantic zone, are linked to it and form their own identity by rediscovering their modernism. The hypothesis is that the general sharing of Brazilian modernism (which became "nationalized" in the 1930s and broadened its operational powers), entered into a close dialogue with the modernization that occurred in Brazil. However, if the notion of modernism itself must be variegated with other cases of entries being made to modernity, the same procedure should be adopted with regard to the question of modernization.

In studying the case of Brazil, Werneck Vianna deciphers the enigma of Brazilian history by describing it in terms of a passive revolution which achieved modernization through a commitment to its past (WERNECK VIANNA, 1997). In the binomial "conservation-change", the term 'change' began to have implications which had not in any way been predicted by the players concerned. They raised expectations that the transformative path could be imagined as a better route to the modernization of the country, since the term "conservation" suggested the world of tradition could be constantly updated. This molecular process that was of long duration, defined the kinds of links between the State and society along the path to Brazilian modernization.

Since the artists and intellectuals linked to European modernism had a negative and hostile attitude to traditions, one of the main tasks facing Brazilian modernism was the simultaneous construction of a future and its tradition (GORELIK, 1999). In the case of Brazil, if thought could be given to a distinct and inspired civilizing moral code for national construction (that was grounded in its original geographical conditions) this would allow the assertion of the modern through modernization even when the resulting temporal schism led to the question of tradition. The common fund of modernist intellectual and peripheral experience involved a combination of modernism and nationalism (OLIVEIRA, 1982). Nationalism was pervasive in Brazilian cultural life and readily made use of by the State. (BARBOSA FILHO, 2008). This modernist premise did not remain confined to the realm of art and architecture but penetrated the essay-writing and programmed formulation that surrounded the modernization of the 1930s. The strategy of building the country from the top acquired a greater complexity in this renewal of its metaphysics at a time when culture and politics were bound up with each other. In their awareness of a possible drawing together of national forms of development, the modernists provided an interpretation of Brazil that combined the national question with cosmopolitanism in a record characterized by pragmatism based on the Brazilian experience. In view of this, the intellectual experience of the modernists was tethered to the way Brazilian modernization unfolded in the 1930s.

Whereas the State gave shelter to many of the intellectuals and absorbed them into its bureaucracy, the publishing industry also widened and increased its number of readers and its sales of books (HALLEWELL, 2005). In the area of graphics, the advent of linotype, printing machines and improvements in the quality of the paper produced in the country, ensured the growth experienced by the publishing industry in the period 1910-1940.

The leading publishers invested a lot of money in producing collections of books, either of literature or books that interpreted Brazil (PONTES, 1989: 368), such as Companhia Editora Nacional [National Publishing Company] (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), Editora Globo (Porto Alegre), Editora José Olympio [José Olympio Publishers] (Rio de Janeiro), Editora Francisco Alves [Francisco Alves Publishers] (Rio de Janeiro), Editora Melhoramentos [Progressive Publishers] (São Paulo) and Livraria Martins Editora [Martins Bookstore] (São Paulo), as well as the pioneering Companhia Gráfica Editora Monteiro Lobato, [Monteiro Lobato Graphics Company] which went bankrupt in 1925 (HALLEWELL, 2005).

The collections of this epoch were the outcome of editorial strategies that sought to publish books “on a larger scale and at a lower price, that were targeted at a specialist public which meant dividing the reading public.” (DUTRA, 2006:300). The advantage of having collected editions was that it led to a standardization of books which resulted in savings in time and a reduction in costs, while making it easier for the reader to identify the works at the time of purchase. (AMORIM, 1999: 71-72). One of the most important collections of the national scene in the first half of the 20th Century was the Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira [Brazilian Library of Teaching Material], which was planned by the intellectual e educator Fernando de Azevedo, in an undertaking of the Companhia Editora Nacional, [National Publishing Company] compiled by Octalles Marcondes Ferreira. The collection was planned with the aim of both fostering the acquisition of knowledge and increasing the number of readers among the public. Five sub-series formed a part of this library: Children’s Literature, Teaching books, Updated Pedagogical Material, Scientific Learning, and collections of books/material about Brazil.

In general terms, the most important collections on Brazilian matters that were published in the Vargas era were as follows: collections of books about Brazil formed in 1931 by the Companhia Editora Nacional [National Publishing Company]; Brazilian Documentary Material launched in 1936 by Editora José Olympio; and Biblioteca Histórica Brasileira [the Brazilian History Library], produced from 1940 onwards by the Livraria Martins Editora [Martins Bookstore]. The objective of all of these was to “disclose, map out, study and analyze the reality of Brazil.” (PONTES, 1989:359).

In general terms, it can be assumed that the collections of books were a means by which the world could be organized. Thus, the choice of works and authors, the organization and publications, formed a means of producing a social meaning. The act of collecting withdrew the object from a particular context and endowed it with a new meaning within the collection. On the other hand, it allowed individual projects to be turned into collective projects. It also put into effect a new way of classifying books based on a selection of those that had to be published, those that provided an opening for new authors and the republication of old books.

Temporal Awareness and Modernist Sociology

Modernism in general and Brazilian modernist sociology in particular created a historical consciousness. It undertook its historiography from the perspective of public history and provided an opportunity to spread historical knowledge by means of archives, historical

memory centers, the cinema, museums, television, the radio, publications, newspapers and magazines. To a certain extent, the State appropriated these perspectives and reflected the sense of the time as described by modernist sociology, as if it was its own project.

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The new decade had been accompanied by 'acceleration' as the characteristic sign of temporal awareness. From the beginning of the 20th Century, there was an accelerated pace in the social world that was mainly evident in the large cities; this involved wide avenues, cars, passers-by, places for socializing, and a greater interaction with the news and latest fashions from abroad (FREYRE, 2001). As early as the 1920s there were signs of the sparkle and fleetingness of an unstable world, which highlighted this accelerated pace of life, particularly through the frenetic pace and waywardness of the post-war world (LAHUERTA, 1997). However, the new decade (in reaction to the outcome of the previous frantic era) had its own subjectivity with regard to time. Nobody expressed this so sensitively as Azevedo Amaral. As the leading protagonist of the era, Azevedo Amaral drew a sharp contrast between temporality which he called *evolutionist*, and temporality which was *revolutionary* (AMARAL, 1938). This contemporary period was characterized by disruption and fickleness; it was a time that was fractured and intermittent and moved at a pace that altered the collective psychological spirit of the people of that time. It was a world that was receptive to new technology and means of communication.

This accelerated pace had to be tamed and given a sense of direction. Francisco Campos was also aware of the disordered and destructive features that were brought about by time itself when men ceased to run about freely.

The demon of time when under the eschatological tension of the latest and final catastrophe, seems to accelerate the pace of change. It parades before the eyes of mankind without any of the customary pauses. Everything is in play in a way that under normal circumstances would be set in a series of successive stages that were to some extent defined and followed a consistent pattern. As a result there is a questionable aspect to everything: when the rhythm of change is accelerated, every situation seems to be temporary and the spirit has to adopt an attitude of constant readiness to adapt — not to defined situations but simply to change itself. (...) The era of transition is exactly when the past continues to interpret the present and when the present has still not found its spiritual form or the spiritual form of the past with which it continues to cloak its image of the world. It appears to be inadequate, out-of-date or awry as a result of inflexibility and having a body with lines that are still undefined and the substance of which has not yet got its bearings (CAMPOS, 1940:8-10).

A few years later this essay-writing was devoted to the issue of national organization and a quest to find out the origins of the formation of Brazil and, in reality, there was a concern about this by everybody in this period of the Brazilian "revolution". It is symptomatic that Paulo Prado and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda devote the last chapter of *Retrato do Brasil e Raízes do Brasil* [A Portrait of Brazil and the roots of Brazil] to dealing with the Brazilian Revolution. At the same time, Nestor Duarte and Afonso Arinos are unable to refrain from addressing the subject in *A Ordem Privada* [The Private Order] and a *Organização Nacional e Conceito de Civilização Brasileira*, [National Organization and Brazilian Civilization] respectively.

The movement in opposition to this kind of essay-writing in the previous period took place in a climate when there was felt to be a need for undertaking and experiencing the revolution. The form this took was to make an attempt to find out about the dynamics of the age as expressed in feelings of innovation and permanence, disruption and continuity, and

evolution and “involution”, which culminated in a type of modernity where the Brazilian model could effectively be compared with other models.

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A feature of this particular modernism, (which emerged from the type of modernization that involved some people as models, a source of inspiration and motivating factors, and others as interpreters and creators) in the last analysis, led to a willingness to discover that there was a constant attachment to a sense of realism in Brazil⁴. At the end of the 19th Century, Brazil was permeated with the voices of Joaquim Nabuco, in *O Abolicionismo* [Abolitionism], and Euclides da Cunha, in *Os Sertões*, [The Backlands] especially when the constitution is thought of as a type of sociological imagination linked to the logic of distinct territories and their social types.

Throughout the sub-continent of Latin America, modernism played a crucial role in the interpretation of its societies, the organization of the State and the founding of a certain kind of American metaphysics. (DEVEZ VALDEZ, 1992; 1997). This can be associated with the rationale that defines the continent: invention and pragmatism, tradition and guile (BARBOSA FILHO, 2000; MAIA, 2008), which are grounded on a sense of realism arising from its sociological imagination. However, one can no longer find intellectuals who, like those of the 19th Century, “gave advice” to the State in its civilizing mission which was based on a metaphysical theory of the peaceful administration of the time (WERNECK VIANNA, 1997).

At the end of the 1930s, Nestor Duarte wrote *A Ordem Privada e a Organização Política Nacional*. [Private Order and National Political Organization]. The title draws attention to two factors. The first is the relationship between order and organization and the private and public worlds which lie at the heart of the sociological essays of that time. The second factor refers to the subtitle, *Contribuições para uma sociologia política brasileira*, [Contributions to a Brazilian political sociology] which in the words of the author, are linked to the “so-called Brazilian studies” that are centred on the reality of the country (HALLEWELL, 2005; MICELI, 2001). These studies are referred to by the author himself throughout the article and this acts as a useful strategy for entering into a public debate about the period. Nestor Duarte lays more emphasis on the ideas raised by Azevedo Amaral, Pedro Calmon, Gilberto Amado, Manuel Bonfim, Oliveira Vianna, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Caio Prado Jr., Afonso Arinos and Gilberto Freyre⁵. This was the final achievement of the essayists that flourished in the 1930s.

What was forcefully argued in this modernist sociological period of the 1920s and 1930s, was the notion of a “private hypertrophy” which regarded a patriarchal kind of family as the essential medium for coordinating the social life that had gradually been formed since the time of Portuguese colonization and could be compared with an atrophied public sphere that was identified as being the State. In all these authors, the colonial features of Brazilian society remained present⁶, and prevented the complete establishment of the institutions and values of a classic Western modernity. From this standpoint of “Brazilian social thinking”, an atavistic patrimonial-patriarchal heritage subtly took on the character of an “independent variable”, which was supposedly able to explain the political/social forms and configurations established here throughout Brazilian history, especially in the rural world. (TAVOLARO, 2005).

An idea that was, to some extent, made explicit in the interpretations of each of these authors, is that in contemporary Brazil, the State, the economy and contemporary society had never been fully distinguished from each other and thus each área had been were driven by its own logic and particular codes. The public domain had been absorbed into the

domain of family life and then subjugated to its logic and objectives, as well as its personal and private codes, which explains why impersonal and rationalized regulations were often relegated to the second plane. In this society, social differentiation, secularization and separation between the public and private spheres, was never attained to the same degree and extent as in “the central modern societies”.

It is worth remembering that the sociological discourse of “classic modernity”, or the so-called “central modern societies” is being carried out when those in the State, the market and civil society occupy spheres that are clearly separated from each other and entirely regulated by their own codes and driven by a particular rationale. The public and private spheres are in turn completely separate and each is governed by its own codes and a particular rationale too, which are only communicated through appropriate channels that are designed to keep the terms and rules of each of their domains unaltered.⁷

Returning to the arguments of Oliveira Vianna about our colonial formation, it can be stated that the main sociological features of colonization were sprang from the geographical conditions of the landed estates. Moreover, public power was split up and its new dynamics deprived the common man of legal protection and rendered him politically helpless. The rural “clan” appeared as a social aggregator and builder of what Vianna called “patriarchal clan solidarity.” (BRANDÃO, 2005).

As well as Oliveira Vianna, Gilberto Freyre, Caio Prado Junior, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Nestor Duarte and Afonso Arinos were sociological essayists who highlighted the features of Brazilian rural life which had its own individual characteristics. These included the following: the isolation of people into separate units, the lack of an internal market between different social sectors, the relative weakness of the urban centers and their people, the lack of roads and communication, the lack of a State as the normative body for enforcing internal public legislation, the “sense of colonization” that was felt in the agro-export economy, the risks, and a routine life with its interests and merits as well as the gradual differentiation between the Metropolis and the Colony (FREYRE, 2002; PRADO JUNIOR, 1994; HOLANDA, 1995; DUARTE, 1939; MELO FRANCO, 1936; VIANNA, 1987).

Each rural center or each “casa grande” [mansion], to stick to the expression of Gilberto Freyre, [author of the famous work *Casa-grande e Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves)] was a social microcosm or small collective organism that was well suited to an isolated and autonomous life. (VIANNA, 1956:155). These phenomena with their cultural and socio-demographic origins, allowed Oliveira Vianna, Sérgio Buarque, Nestor Duarte and Afonso Arinos, to interpret (with the aid of their conceptual tools) the *modus operandi* of certain frameworks of oligarchic domination, which were incompatible with the constitution of a liberal democracy and as a result, were highly effective for the acquisition, organization and exercise of power.

This type of “clan solidarity”, linked to our historic past did not, in our view, seem likely to disappear simply as a result of development and modernization in the political field but would remain a constant cultural factor as an amalgam of the collective national psychology. The civilizing process was defined by the existence of this pattern of implicit dominance that arose from the lack of a spontaneous connection of the interests of social groups with the State apparatus, and meant that it was essential to interact with these social groups through vertical power structures where the head of this rural clan could be found.

Underlying the modernist sociology was the political and social power that were structured in a pyramidal form in so far as each rural head had close links with others. This allowed them to form a structure of joint dominance through the exchange of

reciprocal “favors”, as was found in the analysis of the problems of political pupillage which involved a) gratitude and friendship, b) questions related to a code of cordiality, c) the key features of patriarchalism and d) the weakness of the liberal ideology, among other issues. They concluded that in this type of political activity they did not have to serve a national or public interest which transcended immediate and particular interests. Instead of this, their political activities were simply partisan and exclusive and when carried out were confined to a restricted circle or group comprising a clan, faction, local organization or family. The power brokers were confused with power itself; the representatives of authority with authority; and the government bodies with the government itself.

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The large farmsteads in the country and hence the notion of exclusive agriculture and the simplified operations of the landed estates, became essential components in this model and explain the conditions in which solidarity and interest formed the peculiar situation in Brazil. Given these differences, the analysts of Brazil were aware that this simplification of activities was an obstacle to trade and checked the emergence of a commercial bourgeoisie or an industrial class, both of which were concentrated along the coastline or in the small towns in the interior but lacked any political power. Thus, there were no solid ties between the working-class and the traditional aristocracy – a situation that was underlined by the lack of a middle class of the kind found in Europe. (BOTELHO, 2007; WERNECK VIANNA, 1997; 1999b).

On the basis of the landed estates, the kind of solidarity that was formed (together with the stable conditions of the family groups, which allowed a web of fixed, permanent and traditional social relationships to be established) gave rise to the patriarchal figure of the *paterfamilias*, patrimonialism in the public sphere and the subjugation of private interests to the public interest. This inspired an analysis of the dynamics of the past that the essay writers and society of the time regarded as belonging to them. Hence the concern to have control over the time and its society.

During this period, the past was important as a means of allowing the course of its sociology to be defined. It was this sociology that paved the way for an alternative route to the modern course of events through a range of dichotomies: a) the country and the town or city; b) rural and urban; c) the coastal region and the interior; d) the center and the periphery; e) the public and private; f) interest and merit; g) action and inactivity; h) undertaking and commitment; and i) will and contingency – in a complex combination. The thesis played a role in reviving traditions. The antithesis brought about something new. Brazilian modernism, and to a certain extent Latin America, drew on this contradiction to form the basis of its modernity (GORELIK, 1999) in particular in a way that addressed its territories and the characters involved in its historical activities.

In seeking to explain this difficult combination, Brazilian modernity was known through its contemporaneity and historicity and from the standpoint of a pathological kind of Modernity (VIANNA, 1999b; WEGNER, 2000). The field of inquiry had its sociology and main characters with its own subjectivity and activities in the world. The landed estate was the basis for activities carried out by those responsible for the interests and merits of the peasant farmers, slaves, henchmen, and common men, which occurred in a period when social life was stagnant and change moved at a sluggish pace. The towns and cities which were a place for social interrelationships and the locus of a more rapid pace, new initiatives and the pleasure of modern life involving liberal characters and their social world, often had to succumb to the rural world and was unable to find the right conditions to make any progress.

All the features that comprised this picture began to be analyzed to obtain an understanding of the urban and rural worlds: the land, water, climate, people, civilization, culture, architecture, work, ideas and symbols. The country and the city not only formed the “materiality” but had a symbolic and subjective dimension which also played a part in the building of its spatial forms. The meaning of urban or rural space provided a setting and identity as a background for the individuals and collectives, in a kind of structuring of space involving a semiotic sign (MAIA, 2008).⁸

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What I wish to draw attention to is the fact that each locality has a kind of “semantic cartography”, which can be attributed to a determined space-time, and ways of living, thinking and experiencing the world, as well as certain social types, solidarity and representation of interests and merits in its sociability. These are characterized in Brazil by modernism and its sociological essays, inventiveness and pragmatism.

A Final Word

An attempt has been made here to conduct an interpretative analysis of Brazil which takes particular account of the meaning of collective action in the country and the resulting political culture that stems from the formation of its Nation-State. The explanatory role of the modern (which has been revealed an interpretation of Brazilian social and political thinking), frames the dramatic effect of the evocations of our sociological and political imagination. When we take stock of what is involved in our entry to modernity, the constituent dilemmas can be seen to emerge through a kind of explanatory allegory. There is a procedural movement that is linked to a social ordering and driven by the pragmatic activities of a new person in a new world, who is turning them into opportunities for a new discovery of sociability.

If modernism is regarded as a distinct moral and civilizing code (which is active and designed for a national construction that is embedded in its original geographical situation), it can be affirmed through modernization. It was set against a common background that links modernism to nationalism (BARBOSA FILHO, 2005)⁹. This modernist premise did not remain circumscribed by the field of art and architecture (MORAES, 1978), but encroached on the formulations and framework that surrounded the modernization of the 1930s. The country’s strategy of construction from “above” acquired a new complexity in this renewal of its metaphysics. While being aware of a possible approximation of national types of development, basically they offered an interpretation of Brazil that combines the national and cosmopolitan issue in a record characterized by inventiveness and the pragmatism of the Brazilian experience.

The prognosis that was carried out produced the time that engendered it and the direction in which it was planned. This forming of a stylized configuration by means of temporal and political control, brought about a “realistic” complexity, which sought to locate an inner order from a historical event. Thus, the interpretation of this past acquires social and political significance since it aligns the intellectuals to the State itself.¹⁰

In our hypothesis, what was involved was a kind of essay-writing that, rather than simply discussing politics and social matters, sought to outline the fundamentals and social dynamics of political dominance in Brazil. It is this that can make their tendency to link acquisition, distribution and organization to the social framework, more intelligible. When put in these terms, the kind of social and political action that is at the disposal of each person in this inherent historicity, has a different ripple effect. It is the analytical movement which to a certain extent, logically shapes the precedence of *sociology over politics* (WERNECK VIANNA, 1997).

In summary Em suma, from 1930 onwards, in the social sphere in Brazil, changes in the social classes and class system could be observed both in industry and among the workers. In the political field, the reinvention of the State and the criticism of liberalism in the 1930s, gradually led to the authoritarian-corporate project, while in the economy, there was an expansion of industrialization. It is from this interrelationship between social, political and economic activities that it is necessary to include the creation of significant meanings in the concepts defined by the intellectuals, which were formed in a time when there was a good deal of thought about the class system, the organization of the State, and industrialization. This brought to light the factors involved in understanding the modern path of Brazil and placed the issues of capital and labor as basic and structural elements of (and above) the social perspective.

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To a certain extent, modernism makes speculations by entering into a dialogue with the State with a view to forming social classes. It sets out models for collective action that are embedded in a culture where they can act as an intermediary by overcoming the obstacles to understanding social classes by making collective representations that are either disseminated, or exist at an unconscious level. At the level of mentalities they are employed to make an interpretation that entails analyzing how collective action and the ordering of classes were categorized in the media and public discourses and how this categorization helped in the building of collective activities among the classes themselves. In other words, either modernism through the State or the State through modernism could make possible the structured attributes of the class culture and bring about a combination of interests and horizontal or vertical solidarity in the constitution of the experience and expectations of the social classes in the 1930s. This meant that the State did not open the doors to corporatism as a central or guiding feature for its activities in some sensitive areas such as the economy and law but joined modernism in offering its key concept of "merit" as a structural device for its intervention in the social world. The key to transformism would be found in this singular combination between corporatism and modernism.

These sociological essays and their respective expressions are bound up with our argument at a time when a number of ideas were put forward or to be more clear, they devised a political concept which few people have put into practice and this concept was different from anything that had been formulated in the traditions of the past. The political concept underwent a redefinition where it was given other outlines, supposedly with a view to allowing it to be employed for a determined social system. As a result through this application, its effects were disrupted which meant that it was given a new interpretation, unlike what had prevailed when it was originally established, and certainly unlike the succeeding occasions when it was appropriated at different historical periods. (BOTELHO, 2007; WERNECK VIANNA, 1997 e 1999b; BRANDÃO, 2005 e NOVAIS 2005)

Reflecting on this historical period can be of value in so far as it raises questions about our concepts about the time in which we ourselves live. Sociology and history as parameters of this kind of thinking have proved to be essential in debates that put forward these ideas. Moreover, they create explanatory concepts about the present and as a result, act in an appropriate way by allowing us to form the concepts that we have of the contemporary world. In reality, they do this by also waging a so-called "imaginary war". The difficulties of dealing with such a complex issue as this is that it requires a recognition of the inevitable pitfalls that can arise when attempting to exhaust this question since when analyzing how past societies interpret their past, we are in effect interpreting our own past.

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Notes

1. I am very grateful for the comments and suggests of my peers reviewers and I apologize for my excesses.
2. I have been particularly influenced by the most recent analyses, which drawing studies by Werneck Vianna and Florestan Fernandes, have tried to detect the longstanding features of the Brazilian revolution. I particularly refer to MAIA, 2008 and BARBOSA FILHO, 2000 and 2006. I will return to this matter in the next topic.
3. With regard to the relationship between intellectuals and modernization, the words of Maria Alice Rezende Carvalho (2006) are examples of its dual dimension: the political that depended on the support of the intellectuals for the reconstruction of the country which was led by Capanema and the structural or sociological which resulted from the social engineering carried out by Alberto Torres, Oliveira Vianna and Azevedo Amaral, in which the intellectuals formed a part, regardless of their will or adherence.
4. This complex of realism is echoed in almost all the authors of this period.
5. Since Nestor Duarte published his work at the end of the 1930s, it would be of value to conduct an in-depth analysis of these authors to find out their possible similarities and difference in a more systematic way and obtain an understanding of the dynamics of publishing such as in the collections of "Braziliana" and Brazilian documents.
6. This varies in intensity from author to author.
7. In the opinion of Oliveira Vianna, for example, in the Anglo-Saxon world the following could be found: the local need to satisfy common interests, the dynamics of will and initiative, the preponderance of urban life, the gathering sense of national solidarity, the intellectualization of the State, the principle of immanence and the impersonality of power.
8. Following the suggestions of João Marcelo Maia (2008), the expression *land* conceived as *geographical space* includes two aspects

that complement each other. The classification of the physical environment that can produce specific social types (in this case the environment as a setting where the process of civilization unfolds) and the physical environment as a matrix for the production of images and forming of comparisons with the social world that are able to endow the peripheral experiences with meaning.

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9. According to Barbosa Filho (2005), when assimilating nationalism, our modernism is adjusted to keep expressive baroque and romantic features by weakening the anti-subjectivist sense of Western modernism. It is the permanent aspect of this subjectivism that characterizes Brazilian modernism.

10. This does not imply that they adopt a position in which the country must be governed exclusively by intellectuals or ifrom stricter principles like those of the positivists. It is rather that the intellectuals obtain a particular importance in the structure of the State and the problems that have to be confronted and find ways (through policymaking) to overcome them. In reality, these authors seek to strike a balance between the insulation of the traditional elite with “social reality”.

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