

14. A Formative Process Between Present and Future

My next move will be to approach some recent attempts that provide problematizations similar to the one I am proposing here.⁶³⁰ The first set of texts I want to deal with were written by José Maurício Domingues.

Since at least the end of 1990s, he has proposed the interpretation of Brazilian modernity from a global perspective, so that "the general categories of modernity help illuminating Brazilian reality, which, in turn, contributes to insert modernity into wider coordinates, incorporating both what is universal in it and what it presents as variable" (Domingues, 1998, p.211). According to him, some of the key features of modernity are the legal-rational state, the capitalist economy, the nuclear family, as well as individualism, rationalization, differentiation of spheres of value and a dispute between liberalism and other ideologies; all these features acquire specific modes of configuration in different spaces and times (see Domingues, 1998, p.211). José Maurício highlights, however, that modernity and tradition are not mutually exclusive, but each complements the other, establishing mutual relations that have been differently arranged according to each "'national' society of the international system" (Domingues, 1998, p.211).

José Maurício rejects what he sees as an "essentialist theorization of modernity", according to which modernity is a totality that has emerged in a specific "spatio-temporal coordinate" and, then, has been unfolding to other parts of the world (see Domingues, 1998, pp.212-3). What he proposes, instead, is to conceive modernity as a "process, during which historically contingent institutions emerge", which means that modernity refers indeed to "*processes of modernization*" (Domingues, 1998, p.213, italics in the original).⁶³¹ At the same time, he argues that, alongside centralized processes of modernization, other, more dispersed,

⁶³⁰ It should be warned in advance that the thinkers I will be dealing with next have contributions that do not concern exclusively to an "interpretation of Brazil"; instead, their texts have in common a contribution to rethink "modernity" itself - or, more precisely, the very plausibility of talking about modernity "itself". As my resort to them is focused on their interpretations of contemporary Brazil, I will raise their interpretations of modernity in general only insofar as they are helpful to the understanding of their depiction of Brazil (or modernity in Brazil). It is also important to reiterate that it is not my ambition to make claims on to their entire "work", but only to the specific texts to be mentioned.

⁶³¹ That said, "modernity can only be understood... in its historical dimension and its variability" (Domingues, 1998, p.213).

movements also take place. These are movements carried forward by "collective subjectivities" that have little or no coordination, but that can also impact upon the general process (and eventually even challenging the modernizing processes themselves) (see Domingues, 1998, pp.213-4).⁶³² So, in his view, it is crucial to interpret modernity as a "historical contingency", which assumes its worldwide influence without endorsing a homogenizing view of modernization; its multiple faces express indeed arrangements with similarities and differences when compared to one another, not to mention the multiple combination of tradition and modernization (see Domingues, 1998, pp.224-5).

Now, when it comes to the interpretation of the process of modernization in Brazil, José Maurício affirms that its hegemonic collective subjectivities have been consistently compromised to aspects of tradition, implying that the process "incorporates selectively and in an authoritarian way the institutions of Western modernity" (Domingues, 1998, p.218). Development takes place indeed through the conciliation between political elites. Here, José Maurício mobilizes a comparative parameter to say that the Brazilian political tradition is different from "Northern European tradition", since in Brazil the ideas of "the individual" and "the social contract" are not established: "to the contrary, it is possible to claim that an integrative state, that presents itself as responsible for the ethics that it imposes in a top-down manner, still today organizes ideologically and practically Brazilian society, even if this normative postulations are not made explicit, rephrased as they would be by the liberal discourse" (Domingues, 1998, p.218). In other words, under a liberal description, Brazilian social arrangement, as opposed to the "Northern European" one, is marked by a strong presence of the state, mainly through persistent agreements between political elites. This process is also characterized by a "conservative modernization" and by the prevalence of a "traditionalist patrimonialism".

In this sense, the combinations of modernity and tradition in the formation of contemporary Brazil are double-faced: on the one hand, traditions are sometimes modernized in a democratic way, enabling the participation of different social

⁶³² In his terms, "[c]ollective subjectivities include ruling groups (so-called 'elites'), but go beyond that: the concept encompasses all sorts of social systems, irrespective of their power or level of centering" (Domingues, 2009b, p.223, n.1). In other words, they can relate to social movements, professional groups, classes, races, genders, the state, international organizations, the family, friendship circles, all with different levels of centering (see Domingues, 2009b, p.213).

groups; on the other hand, the modernization of traditions can assume "an eminently conservative and anti-democratic character, in general even exclusive" (Domingues, 1998, p.219), as those linked to the top-down, elitist development of the country. Yet, as José Maurício reminds, these authoritarian aspects of modernization should not be seen as reminiscences of a pre-modern past, but rather as rationalized forms in coexistence with contemporary forms of authoritarianism, as if two "political cultures" were in dispute: one associated to democratic struggles and the other one, to authoritarian elites (see Domingues, 1998, p.220). To a great extent, argues José Maurício, modernity in Brazil (and, he adds, in Latin America in general) represented first and foremost a material development, which then legitimates the authoritarian tradition. That is to say, the economic performance and the authoritarian political forms enhance each other, strengthening the kind of non-democratic modernization of tradition mentioned above.

In few words, José Maurício states that Brazil is a case of "advanced modernity, but with not very accentuated self-questionings" (Domingues, 1998, p.225). In this same vein, he adds that there has been no "civilization rupture", but a coexistence of a major and a secondary directions. The latter refers to the fact that the conception of the "self" is increasingly closer to the "European and North American, utilitarian, rationalized, atomized counterpart", as opposed to the relational (personalized) sociability characterized, for instance, by the "cordial man" (Domingues, 1998, p.226). Nevertheless, what seems to José Maurício to be the major direction in Brazil is the deepening of a modernization conducted by the ruling groups and political elites, as well as other kinds of collective subjectivities, linked for instance to religious groups, class relations, gender affiliations, racial elements, among others. In his words, "the reinforcement of traditional modernity is a response to the disembedding mechanisms and the uncertainties generated by modernity" (Domingues, 1998, p.227, italics dropped from the original), thereby multiplying the combinations of modernity and tradition.

Of particular importance to my purpose here is his "A Dialética da Modernização Conservadora e a Nova História do Brasil" ("The Dialectics of Conservative Modernization and the New History of Brazil"). There, he reminds that the transition of diverse "social formations" to modernity has been a central problem to social scientists and to the very formation of sociology. In Brazil, he claims,

history seemed crucial to the account for the country's present, since the explanation and the correction of its embezzlements [*descaminhos*] were perceived to stem from a precise identification of its formative processes - and fetishes [*taras*]. Oliveira Vianna and Nestor Duarte, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Gilberto Freyre, Caio Prado Jr. and Raymundo Faoro, among many others, have dedicated their efforts thus to our colonial and post-independence past, aiming at the identification of those elements that would end up molding our passage to modernity (Domingues, 2002, pp.459-60).

In this text, José Maurício brings the notion of "conservative modernization" again, in order to compare the formation of Brazil to other national formations. He defines it schematically as the refusal of "fundamental changes in land propriety", so that "in conservative modernization, the agrarian traditional elites imposed a compromise upon a bourgeoisie that was reluctant and averse towards the democratization processes: modernization took place under the leadership of agrarian owners and taking into account mostly their interests" (Domingues, 2002, pp.460-1). As a result, modernization became characteristically authoritarian, preventing freedom to acquire a wider scope.

Despite being constituted by many and extreme exclusions, Brazilian conservative modernization during the XX century has ultimately undermined "the very grounds of conservatism to the extent that an increasingly modern country emerged, with individuals and collective subjectivities with more freedom and less prone to be manipulated" (Domingues, 2002, p.462). Therefore, José Maurício argues that the process of conservative modernization is over, taken that the personal relations of subordination have yielded to a series of disembedding and urbanization processes and the emergence of new collective subjectivities. This new order did not eradicate the position of the old rulers, but rearranged it through a "passive revolution". In this direction, according to José Maurício, if, on the one hand, the new order did not fully replace the ruling groups of the old order, and no rupture has taken place (see Domingues, 2002, pp.466-7), on the other hand he

claims that "Brazil has entered into modernity in a definitive way" (Domingues, 2002, p.469).

In order to support this last assertion, he says that, despite the fact that land ownership is still very concentrated (which is, to recall, a central trait of what he identifies as the old order), "Brazilian institutions are very similar to those of the central countries in the global system, with which Brazil shares modern civilization" (Domingues, 2002, p.469). So, it is plausible to say that José Maurício's definition of modernity in Brazil is permeated by a comparative perspective with "central countries in the global system" where modern condition has supposedly been completely achieved - where, in other terms, the standard modern civilization has been established. Nevertheless, Brazilian modernity is not a replication of an "European" or "North American" modernity, remaining a specific country; this implies that a homogenizing theory of modernization is incapable of grasping these specificities, and therefore the multiple modern configurations in each national society.

It is interesting to see how José Maurício mobilizes the category of the "West" in his specification of the formative process of Brazil. According to him, "we were born with the West [*Ocidente*] itself, and we have been closely linked to its dynamics in a dependent way, without becoming actually Western [*Ocidentais*], however" (Domingues, 2002, p.470). Hence, although inseparable by birth from the so-called West, Brazil is not quite "Western". Two things deserve attention. Firstly, the reproduction of the periodizing conception in accordance with which Brazil was born only with colonization, already attached to the "West". Secondly, the comparison with the "West", in order to ascribe a different, specific configuration to Brazilian modernity.

In relation to the second aspect above - the comparison with the "West" -, José Maurício highlights the current "unilateral evolution of the Iberian heritage, so important in [our] national formation" (Domingues, 2002, p.473). Although far from the only element in the formation of contemporary Brazil, he notes that it "impregnated the national formation, with different weights according to different regions of the territory" (Domingues, 2002, p.474). As opposed to the individualism associated to "Protestantism", the "Iberian" individualism "perceived subjects as free from societies and their norms", the state being conceived as the agent responsible for providing the normative references to individuals: "[o]rder,

therefore, is not considered to be dependent upon each individual, but upon that comprehensive collective subjectivity - the state" (Domingues, 2002, p.474). All that said, however, he claims that the definitive incorporation of Brazil into modernity means that, on the one hand, together with other reminiscences of the past, "the project and the strategies of incorporation based on the Iberian style, from the above, have been exhausted" (Domingues, 2002, p.475), that is, the masses became increasingly relevant agents in society, detaching themselves from traditional mechanisms of control; on the other hand, the individualism associated to Iberism "is far from being exhausted" (Domingues, 2002, p.475).

The depiction above leads José Maurício Domingues to claim that Brazil is constituted by a "semi-institutional hybrid": the institutional developments linked to the "West" advance at the same time that the modern individualism does not meet the institutional pillars required for its consolidation (see Domingues, 2002, p.475).⁶³³ So, this semi-institutional hybrid has replaced conservative modernization to the extent that Brazil has become definitively modern; this does not imply, notwithstanding the precepts of homogenizing theories of modernization, that a single and central modern path is reproduced by the formative process of the country.

What is intriguing, in my view, in José Maurício's interpretation of Brazil is the combination of a claim such as "Brazil is definitely modern" with a claim that calls the attention to the reminiscence of an "Iberian individualism". This ambiguity comes to the stage again in the very last paragraph of the text, where one reads that "we continue to suffer from problems linked to the *absence of modernization* in certain fields, but also from problems that derive from modernity itself, which has been *definitively implemented among us*" (Domingues, 2002, p.478, italics added). It is plausible to claim, following his texts, that the absence of modernization relates, for instance, to the reminiscences of that "Iberian heritage" mentioned above; but it is also possible to claim that the erosion of traditional mechanisms of control of the people refers to the incorporation of the country into a modern condition. In short, Brazil is inscribed by internal disparities that make it *both non-modern and modern*.

⁶³³ Following Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos (1993), but also proposing different aspects from his interpretation, José Maurício Domingues discusses this point using the concept of "polyarch" proposed by Robert Dahl and used at length by Wanderley.

I must spend some more time with José Maurício's texts, in order to clarify the above. Years later, discussing Walter Mignolo's texts, he opposed himself to the thinkers that defend the claim that Latin American social movements (in particular the indigenous and the black movements) should be conceived as being outside modernity. Instead, José Maurício proposes that they march "in close connection with episodic, contingent *modernizing* moves that build specific paths within modernity" (Domingues, 2009a, p.124, italics in the original). As this is not the place to discuss his interpretation of "Latin America", suffice to say that, in his view, "Brazil" should be interpreted along the same lines. What underlines this position is both the rejection of a dichotomous relation between tradition and modernity, as if the former could pose a resistance against the latter from a position of complete exteriority, and the refusal of a theory of modernization.⁶³⁴

I have already mentioned above that José Maurício also rejects a theory of modernization that dismisses the national specificities. So, when he talks about "modernizing moves", the argument is that movements conducted by collective subjectivities, such as those mentioned above (and many others), should be seen as occupying the following position towards the modernity: "[b]elonging in modernity and at the same time bringing to bear their own heritage, they may have a particularly critical angle in relation to contemporary epistemological and social processes. There are in any case many ways to criticize modernity and assume a modern identity" (Domingues, 2009a, p.125). The escape from this dichotomy between tradition and modernity is expressed in his statement that "we live today in a global modern civilization, which is now highly heterogeneous" (Domingues, 2009a, p.125).⁶³⁵ This means that modernity has brought within itself "other civilization elements", so that instead of eradicated, they have been reconfigured in various ways through modernizing moves that take different directions - top-down, bottom-up, from inside and from outside countries - and comprise multiple dimensions - social, economic, cultural, political (see Domingues, 2009b, pp.213-5).

⁶³⁴ As puts elsewhere, the notion of "modernizing moves" replaces the "teleology of the theory of modernization" (Domingues, 2013 [2010], p.29).

⁶³⁵ In another formulation: "we are placed within modernity as a global civilization, whose expansion predates its own constitution" (Domingues, 2009b, p.212).

I have mentioned above that José Maurício Domingues delimits at least two period-shifts: one linked to colonization, when "Brazil was born", and the other lined to the end of conservative modernization, when "Brazil became definitively modern". He also proposes a more general periodization of modernity since the end of the XVIII century, according to which the first phase was the "liberal" one (in Europe and in the United States, but restricted in Latin America due to the prevalence of landlords); the second was "organized by the state" (as developmentalism and corporatism in Latin America exemplify paradigmatically) and begun in the 1920s; and the third, current phase, begun in the 1990s and is marked by greater social complexity and pluralization, as well as by the predominance of neoliberalism (see Domingues, 2009a, p.126; 2009b, p.212).⁶³⁶ According to José Maurício, the crucial difference between the first two phases and the current one is that the latter has given up the ideal of a homogenization of societies operated by the market and the state, yielding to heterogeneous frames of social life and its major collectivities, such as international organizations, corporations and the most powerful states (see Domingues, 2009a, p.126). This third phase is the one in which a "unification of history" has been accomplished, in the sense that modernity has expanded across the world deepening globalization (see Domingues, 2009a, p.128). After all, one has a totality composed of local specificities; within this global modernity, movements in multiple directions and dimensions are carried forward enabling both contestations and affirmations of prevailing social orders.⁶³⁷

Connecting José Maurício's consideration on this "unification of history" under a "global modern civilization", on the one hand, and his definition of contemporary Brazil, on the other hand, it is plausible to conclude that, according to his interpretation, Brazil has reached a modern condition, but its internal disparities still exhibit non-modernized sites. Rather than two mutually exclusive

⁶³⁶ According to him, modernity was consolidated only in the second half of the XVIII century (therefore being misleading to speak of modernity since the encounter with the "New World") and is defined by an "integrated, though dynamically contradictory, social formation, with closely entwined multidimensional features", which are "institutional capitalism, the bureaucratic rational state, the patriarchal nuclear family and class struggle, plus an imaginary resting on individualism, logocentrism and (real) abstractions, the unlimited domination of nature and 'equal freedom'" (Domingues, 2009b, p.212)

⁶³⁷ That is why, in sum, José Maurício claims that rather than framing the concept of modernity "through discrete unities", as S.N. Eisenstadt does, he proposes to understand it from its "globalizing character" (Domingues, 2009b, p.215; see also pp.220-1).

worlds, José Maurício proposes to interpret them as related to each other; this relation is weaved by the modernizing moves, that is, by a certain dynamics that is inscribed itself in modernity. It is this sense that, in his view, "[t]here are no longer traditions external to modernity, surely not in Latin America"; it has become "the first ever truly global civilization" (Domingues, 2009b, p.214, p.217).

In my view, it is possible to identify in José Maurício Domingues' texts a particular mobilization of comparisons. Instead of a universalizing scale of more and less modern(ized) countries, he proposes to focus on differences within a global modern civilization. The comparisons, then, would consist in identifying singularities and common properties across diverse (modern) social configurations. These differences are produced out of modernizing moves that provide collective subjectivities with the possibility of various combinations of traditions and modernization. Nevertheless, one may ask whether José Maurício is not contradicting himself when he says that "we are all within modernity", at the same time that he points out places where modernization is absent.

In a 2013 text, José Maurício is assertive enough to state that the transitional period towards modern society is "obviously over" in the sense that "populism", defined as the manipulation conducted by political elites in respect to the masses outside the political system, has become useless (see Domingues, 2013a, pp.19-20). This does not mean, to be sure, that modernization has been accompanied by an irreversible progressive direction: not only "democratization" (and its associated progressive social movements), but also the "neoliberal project" are characterized as kinds of competing modernizing moves, comprising therefore a "clash of political projects" within increasingly heterogeneous societies (see Domingues, 2013a, p.20). This increasing social heterogeneity is "a phenomenon that pertains both to the centre and to the peripheries and semiperipheries of global modernity" (Domingues, 2013a, p.25). Hence, in relation to Brazil, José Maurício warns that democratization has also coexisted with the persistence of a considerably "despotic" character of the state, as well as with other "systems of domination" and poverty (see Domingues, 2013a, pp.21-2).

José Maurício has an overall positive evaluation of Latin American recent formative process, stressing the deepening of democratization across the continent, despite many persisting problems. So, if, on the one hand, he warns that global modernity entails modernizing moves in multiple dimensions (race, class, gender,

among others) and multiple directions (progressive, fundamentalist, clientelistic, among others), he defends, on the other hand, that it is within this same global modernity that new arrangements should be pursued. In his words: "[s]hortcomings notwithstanding, it is within the imaginary of modernity, with its universalizing claims to equal freedom, solidarity and responsibility, against domination, inequality and fragmentation (plus a broader view of responsibility beyond neoliberal egoism), that Latin America has been advancing in the last decades" (Domingues, 2013a, p.26) and that an emancipatory potential persists as an alternative to be explored by "peripheral and semiperipheral" societies in what he calls the "third phase of modernity" (see also Domingues, 2011).

José Maurício's reiterated claims that the transition to modernity has been consolidated in Brazil imply that there is no "pre-modern", or "past" reminiscence that has not already been inscribed in modernity through some kind of modernizing move.⁶³⁸ To put it differently, the supposed eradication of mechanisms of control linked to the old order - represented, for instance, by the irreversible death of the "cordial man" - marked in Brazil the end of conservative modernization and the beginning of a definitively modern condition (this one constituted by a global character and also national specificities). At the same time, however, very often José Maurício reminds that some old practices - such as a partially despotic state and some clientelistic patterns of relation between state and society - have persisted. For my purpose here, it is crucial to insist on a interpretative operation that runs through José Maurício Domingues' texts approached above: the denial of a dichotomous coexistence of past and present in thinking about future possibilities and impossibilities in contemporary Brazil. As I have noted above, his interpretation couples the assertion of a unequivocal global modernity with the attention to particular specificities; moreover, it combines the effort of reinterpreting modernity, relying mainly on the notions of "modernizing processes" and "moves", with a critique of a homogenous theory of modernization.

All the above is expressed in the very first pages of the collection of essays *O Brasil entre o Presente e o Futuro: Conjuntura Interna e Inserção Internacional* (Brazil between Present and Future: Internal Conjuncture and International Insertion). From the title, it is possible to see that Brazil is placed between "present"

⁶³⁸ Not only "Brazil", as it is clear from his considerations on "Latin America" and on "India", for instance, and, more generally, on "global modernity" as whole.

and "future", which implies that at least a certain "past" has been superseded; in addition to that, José Maurício reiterates in the title the bond between the inside and the outside in Brazil's condition in global modernity. In the introduction, this spatial relation will be reinforced through the notions of "center", and "semiperiphery" and "periphery" (see Domingues, 2013b, p.8). In short, Brazil is situated along certain spatio-temporal coordinates.

Presenting one of the chapters of the collection, José Maurício states that it endorses

the fundamental thesis that *the resort to history does not serve us anymore to the interpretation of Brazil*. Or rather, it remains valid, as everywhere else in the world. But it is necessary to recognize that Brazil, with its peculiarities, is basically *a modern country*, and that the present and the struggles for its future, more to the right or more to the left, is what matters (Domingues, 2013b, p.9, italics added).

It is true that a reservation is made in the quotation above - "it remains valid" -, but it is hard not to have the eyes turned to the so-called "fundamental thesis" - "the resort to history does not serve us anymore to the interpretation of Brazil". If this is linked to what was discussed above and to what comes next in the same passage, the dots are connected: history, however valid, is not useful anymore since Brazil is "basically modern". That is why José Maurício reiterates, perhaps even emphasizes, what had already been pointed out in one of his texts I approached above: the necessity of a "new and possibly brand new [*novíssima*] history of Brazil" (Domingues, 2013b, p.10).

Few paragraphs later - I remain in the introduction, which frames the problematization of all the collection -, one reads that Brazilian intellectuals have always been protagonists in the interpretation of Brazil, but that "the situation that previously implied a strong concentration in the interpretation of Brazilian past as a key to the present is here displaced to an emphasis in the understanding of the present as a key to comprehend the future" (Domingues, 2013b, p.10). At least implicitly, José Maurício's claim expresses a counterpoint to those texts that resort to history in their articulation of past, present and future in their interpretations of

Brazil - or, in what matters to me here more directly, those interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil.

The notion of a "new and brand new history of Brazil", closely connected to the so-called "third phase of modernity", is approached in more detail in one of the texts of the collection. José Maurício recalls that, when he proposed a "new history of Brazil" (in the 2002 text I approached above), he referred to the end of the conservative modernization (constituted by the alliance between agrarian landowners and industrial bourgeoisie) and the transformation of Brazil into a modern country. The achievement of this condition meant that "the enormous effort by intellectuals to comprehend the country through its history had to be modified", as the modernizing process in progress since the XIX century had been fully accomplished by the 1980s and "Brazil showed itself to be, in its own way, *contemporary to modern social formations* that are widespread in their national contours throughout the planet" (Domingues, 2013c, p.74, italics added). In short, once having definitively entered into modernity, Brazil is placed between the present and the future (rather than between past, present and future), with no "significant differences in relation to the rest of the world" (Domingues, 2013c, p.74).

It is interesting to recall, however, that very often when José Maurício states that Brazil has achieved a fully modern condition, he makes some kind of remark or observation that somehow attenuates or qualifies the statement. That happens again right after the passage cited above, where one reads that "[i]t is obvious that pending problems, such as the secular poverty and misery of most of the population, as well as all our entire trajectory until now, can only be comprehended from a historical perspective" (Domingues, 2013c, p.74). Or, more recently, when, after stating that "it seems clear that modernity is completely developed [in Brazil]", José Maurício seems to qualify the statement few lines below: "modernity, as we know it, already basically [*en lo fundamental*] exists" (Domingues, 2015, p.222, italics added). The overall point he wants to advance, however, is that this historical perspective should not be focused on the already supposedly superseded "past", when Brazilian formative process faced obstacles to the implementation of modernity, but on the future of Brazil within the background of its insertion into

"contemporary global modern civilization" (Domingues, 2013c, p.75; see also Domingues, 2015, pp.222-3). This is the "new history" José Maurício talks about.⁶³⁹

I have mentioned above that his interpretation of Brazil mobilizes a comparative account, according to which Brazilian formative process, as opposed to the "Northern European" one, is marked by "conservative modernization" and "patrimonialism". But José Maurício also challenges the notion that the authoritarian aspects of this modernization can be taken as reminiscences of a pre-modern past; rather, he claims that contemporary Brazil expresses the mutual enhancement of economic performance and authoritarian political forms, strengthening a non-democratic modernization of tradition.

Throughout the XX century, the process of conservative modernization has undermined the grounds of conservative forces linked to tradition and, now that the process is over, the personal relations of subordination have been replaced by a series of disembedding and urbanization processes and by the emergence of new collective subjectivities. The new order did not represent a rupture with the old order, but, at the same time, "Brazil has entered into modernity in a definitive way" (see Domingues, 2002, pp.466-9). José Maurício is opposed to homogenizing theories of modernization, emphasizing instead the multiplicity of modern configurations in each national arrangement. It is a comparative mobilization that supports this assertion, since Brazilian institutions are interpreted as similar to those of the "central countries in the global system, with which Brazil shares modern civilization" (Domingues, 2002, p.469).

Placing Brazil within "modern civilization" does not preclude José Maurício to remark, although often in passing, that the Iberian heritage "impregnated the national formation" (Domingues, 2002, p.474). As it was stressed above, modernization coexists with modern problems, but also with problems linked to the absence of modernization in different parts of the country. I would suggest that José Maurício's dominant position is that Brazil is "definitely modern", although

⁶³⁹ When he mentions the possibility of a "brand new history of Brazil", he is referring to future scenarios in case it takes place "at least a partial victory" of a sector more to the "left" of the current project in progress, but already reaching its limit (politically, socially, ideationally), in Brazil. This would require less compromises with certain "neoliberal" capitalist forces, alongside the strengthening of renewed popular forces (Domingues, 2013b, p.91-2). What is relevant to my purpose here is not exactly the details of this project in progress, but the fact that this "brand new history" represents, in José Maurício's perspective, a deepening of the modern condition in Brazil through the active participation of even more pluralized social movements to the "left" of the political spectrum (therefore, of the "new history" already in march).

dispersed remarks concede that modern problems coexist with problems derives from "Iberian", "non-modern", traits.

Finally, the periodization inscribed in and discussed by José Maurício's texts implies, on the one hand, a critique of modernization theories and, on the other hand, an alternative modernizing narrative, mainly in relation to his insistence that emancipation can only be achieved within modern, universal values. In a sense, then, "modernity" is placed both in the beginning of his interpretation - Brazil is already modern and modernity is in a third, global phase - and in its end - Brazil should be modernized within the values posed by modernity itself. But, in another sense, the "past" (the aspects of a certain "Iberian heritage") remains an obstacle to modernization; in this regard, the starting point is not already-fully modern, but at once modern and non-modern.

To conclude my take on José Maurício Domingues' texts and move to Jessé Souza's, I want to make a series of brief observations. Firstly, his interpretation of Brazil displaces, in temporal terms, its formative process: instead of a resort to history in order to establish an articulation between past, present and future, from which reminiscences of a pre-modern past would be stressed in the present, conditioning the future, José Maurício reiterates that the "pre-modern", or at least the "non-modern", past is already gone, insofar as Brazil has achieved since the 1980s a fully modern condition. Secondly, in this temporal articulation, modernity appears as the multidimensional and multidirectional imaginary within which future accomplishments should be thought through; in other words, the universalizing claims - that is, modern claims by (European) birth and (global) expansion - to equal freedom, solidarity and responsibility, are seen as the sole basis for a potential emancipation of certain collective subjectivities. Thirdly, as a consequence of the previous point, there is no outside-modernity, not only in the sense that modernity is now global, but also in the sense that resistances and struggles should be conducted under modern horizons of possibilities and impossibilities; the desire to be modern now fully satisfied, what remains to be explored is a series of modern improvements. These improvements cannot be understood or aimed at from a homogeneous theory of modernization, obliterating all the specificities of national formations. Neither they can be grasped through a dichotomous interpretation of the relations between tradition and modernity. Hence, the multiple relations between tradition and modernity must be interpreted through the modernizing

moves that make the former now inseparable from the latter. Fourthly, contemporary Brazil is not only temporally placed between present and future, but is also spatially situated across globalized bonds of inside and outside, so that the links between present and future are also conditioned by the position occupied as a central, peripheral or semiperipheral society and state within global modern civilization. Fifthly, notwithstanding the progressive social movements at work, modernity also opens up the possibilities for other directions, such as the one of fundamentalist groups; thereby, a teleological progress is by no means an inevitable course of history. Sixthly, comparative mobilizations in the interpretation of Brazil (or, for that matter, of any other country) must run along universally shared (modern) elements, on the one hand, and specific national configurations, on the other hand. Seventhly, José Maurício's assertions that Brazilian formative process has achieved a definitively modern condition since at least the 1980s are often accompanied by remarks that point out some reminiscences of configurations linked to previous stages of development, such as a partially despotic state (as opposed to a fully democratic relation between state and society) and an Iberian individualism (as opposed to a modern individualism). Finally, eighthly, those reminiscences generally receive a normatively negative evaluation, since the emancipatory potential can only be explored from and within modern, universal values.

In sum, José Maurício Domingues' texts discussed above provide certain critiques of modernization, at the same time that they advance a modernizing perspective. Some of the points raised in my discussion will reappear in Jessé Souza's texts, to which I now turn.