

Part IV

José Maurício Domingues, Jessé Souza and Sergio Tavolaro have advanced insightful propositions towards an alternative perspective on the interpretations of Brazil. José Maurício has insisted on the need for a global perspective that avoids essentialist interpretations and privileges the heterogeneities inscribed in the processes of modernization. Jessé highlights the need to reinterpret the dilemma of modernization (in Brazil and elsewhere) as a selective process and also stresses the links between the interpretations of Brazil and the self-interpretations of Brazilians. Sergio, in turn, has built his alternative framework from José Maurício's and Jessé's texts, among many others, and has reinforced not only the necessity to problematize the so-called hegemonic discourse of modernity, but mainly how a reinterpretation of the dilemma of modernity in Brazil can contribute in a crucial way to this problematization.

It would be plausible to say that their texts, taken together, carry a double relation in respect to the interpretations of Brazil they implicitly or explicitly consider. On the one hand, they group those interpretations together, in order to identify their limitations and explicitly propose an alternative framework to the dilemma of Brazilian formative process ("dilemma" being a central concept to all of them, even if only stated explicitly as such by Jessé and Sergio). This way, José Maurício's "new history of Brazil", Jessé's "sociology of inauthenticity", and Sergio's "thesis of Brazilian singularity" all refer to the limitations identified in previous interpretations of Brazil and to the alternative frame they delineate. On the other hand, in my interpretation of their texts, I have pointed out that they express an aporetic performance, both endorsing a modernizing perspective and advancing a critique of modernization. This performance is implicitly or explicitly shared with the interpretations of Brazil they draw on.

Let me situate very briefly their interpretations in relation to the five traces of "formation" previously identified. In José Maurício Domingues' texts, (a) he emphasizes the need for a global perspective on modernity, while, on the other hand, he claims that the processes of modernization vary across each *national* society. In relation to (b) the *incompleteness* of the transition from the colonial to the modern period, he states that Brazil is definitely modern, but has some traits of

Iberian individualism still in place. This reminiscence impacts on the (c) an certain *internal disparity*, since the impregnated Iberian heritage is said to have different weights in contemporary Brazil according to different regions of the country. Moreover, (d) *comparatively*, Brazilian formative process, as opposed to the formation of Northern European countries, has witnessed a "conservative modernization" and a "patrimonialism" that, however superseded, still impregnates national society. Finally, as I have said, (e) *specificities* of Brazilian formative process are identified as national configurations of the global modernity.

In Jessé Souza's texts, the challenge posed to the "sociology of inauthenticity" aims at (a) interpreting the formation of Brazilian *nation* by unveiling its contemporary deep social grammar and the modernization process that has lead to its establishment; the precise understanding of this formative process is seen as the condition under which a "conscious and reflexive formulation of an autonomous and national modernizing process" can be conceived. The XIX century modernization, deepened since 1930s, has consolidated the exclusive legitimacy of the modern values, but (b) Brazil remains non-modern in other aspects, for instance in the *coexistence* of the modern legitimate code of values with other codes, and in the coexistence of a primary habitus with a precarious habitus constituted by a kind of subjectivity, the *ralé* (rabble), whose structural dimension is inherited from colonial period. The precarious habitus is linked (c) to the production of an *internal inequality* among citizens and undercitizens that crisscrosses Brazilian regions. Related to that, (d) the characteristics of Brazilian modernization and its corresponding reproduction of internal inequality make it part of the "new periphery", *as opposed to* "old peripheries" and "central modern countries". Finally, (e) the *specificities* of the "new periphery" and, within this group, of Brazil are raised in terms, for instance, of the mass phenomenon of the structural *ralé*.

Finally, Sergio Tavolaro's texts seem the most challenging regarding the five traces of formation. In relation to the first, (a) the centrality of the nation is directly challenged as the pre-conceived unit of analysis. The global perspective and the notion of connected histories move in this direction, mainly in his recent texts, although ultimately the goal is to reach an understanding of the multifaceted aspects comprising the varying patters of modernity in each *national* situation. Related to that, Brazil is interpreted as a variation upon modernity, which implies in a certain sense a problematization Sergio poses to the accounts on (b) the

incompleteness of the transition from the colonial to the modern period and (c) to the interpretations of *internal inequality* that reproduce a temporal frame relating backward and advanced stages of development across different regions of the country. From that, (d) the *comparative mobilization* aims at avoiding the hierarchy between advanced, central modernities and backward, peripheral ones, in favor of taking them "on equal foot" in relation to the pillars of modernity. Finally, (e) the problematization of the thesis of Brazilian singularity leads to the consideration of the *specificities* of Brazilian formative process from the angle of the global perspective and the connected histories.

Next, I will further develop the notion of aporetic performance, by tackling those five traces of "formation" from a different angle. It should be noted that, in a very important sense, my own effort here iterates a certain move I have indentified in José Maurício's, Jessé's and Sergio's texts. That is: it groups previous interpretations together - in this case, through the notion of "aporetic performance" -, in order to propose an interpretation of Brazil - in this case, of the "formation of contemporary Brazil".

(Well, the "contribution" of my perspective could be quickly inscribed as a certain effort towards the "improvement" of previous interpretations. Otherwise, why would I be tempted to reproduce the move of "grouping" previous texts in order to "propose" a "different" interpretation, if I did not consider this "different" interpretation also, in a certain sense and for a specific purpose, a "better" one? But, if that was the case, wouldn't I be reproducing a logic of progress that I problematize in the first place? Or, at least, wouldn't I be moving towards something "new" as a way to supersede the "old"? Isn't this a "modern" move? Would it be possible at some point to identify very clearly the limitations of my own perspective and then seek to overcome them? But, then, I guess the vocabulary of "*overcoming limitations*" and "*my own perspective*" is already problematic enough...)

17. Conclusion; Or, Aporetic Performances, Contemporary (De)Formations (in Brazil)

In order to avoid expectations that would not be met, let me begin by saying that, although this is the last chapter of the text, it would be more adequate to understand this *end* as another *beginning*. Not exactly a round journey, as I claim to have arrived at a site that is somehow different from the one I begun with. Certainly not a final destination, as I do not claim to have come to any kind of (definitive) conclusion. My point is rather to propose some reflections upon my previous discussion on the traces of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil.

Having in sight that my overall aim in this text has been to interpret the *aporetic performance* of those interpretations of Brazil, it seems timely to recapture some general lines of the perspective I proposed in Part I, chapter 3.

In my first move towards that aim, I proposed that some *regularities in dispersion* can be identified in the interpretations of Brazil. They are "regular" since they share some aspects - the traces of "formation" -, irrespective of whether these are deliberately shared by the writers or not. They are "dispersed" since they carry differences or specificities in relation to one another, in particular in the links between the texts and the political positions exposed. Moreover, the regularities in dispersion are constitutive of a historical a priori and its positivities, linked to the uses of "formation" and the articulations of past, present and future, as well as inside and outside.

My next move aimed at delineating the *traces in interpretation*. I proposed, first of all, that the linguistic traces register social and political conditions in such a way that the interpretation cannot assign any deterministic relation between what is linguistically registered and what is historically real. In this sense, the interpreter is situated in-between what the text meant in its time and space, and what it may mean when and where it is interpreted. Hence, I proposed to interpret the traces of "formation" as an operation of identifications and differentiations, implying that "Brazil" is inseparable from its historicity, always traced in different linguistic registers of the interpretations of Brazil, rather than an ontological reality to be assessed, described, represented by an instrumental conception of language.

It remained to be discussed the way I conceive the "contemporary" and the exposition of a "political position". The next move proposed to read the interpretations of Brazil as *contemporary*, which means that they are neither ineluctably tied to their time and space nor atemporally relevant or even prescient. They are interpreted, instead, through the way they problematize the encounter of times and spaces with one another, opening up alternatives to think the identifications and differentiations in contemporary Brazil. To put it differently, the internalization of the condition of forces - in more general terms, the relation between "text" and "context" - is not a process attached to its own time and space, although it is not unrelated to that either, but a process of tracing that enables encounters of times and spaces, exposing through them different *political positions*. In sum, from the general lines of my perspective, the interpretations of Brazil approached here enable different encounters of past, present and future, inside and outside, through their traces of formation. These encounters expose, at once, modernizing perspectives and critiques of modernization. In short, an *aporetic performance*.

The general lines of my perspective have proposed a certain articulation of the central concepts I have been mobilizing in the problematization of the five traces of formation identified in the interpretations of Brazil previously approached. My next move will be dedicated to explore the notion of "aporetic performance" and how it is related to those traces - to recall: (a) the centrality of the "nation", (b) the incompleteness of modernity in Brazil, (c) the internal inequality, (d) the external parameter, and (e) the specificity of Brazilian formative process.

The conceptual chain of "formation", "modernity" and "nation" has permeated all the interpretations of Brazil discussed in this text. This chain is intrinsically linked to spatio-temporal articulations of past, present and future, as well as inside and outside. In that sense, I have been insisting that those five traces of "formation" express these articulations in different ways exposing an aporetic performance in relation to modernization and modernity.

Before moving on, however, one observation must be made as clearly as possible. I have few doubts that many, perhaps most, of the interpreters of Brazil dealt with so far have held some variation of what could be considered a "modernizing" perspective and political position. In this sense, to say that their texts are also critiques of modernization, it must be explicit that I mean that in two

different ways. Firstly, they express how "modernity", however each defines it, has not been "completely established" in Brazil, due to different conditionings, ranging from a certain way "Brazil" got colonized to a certain way "Brazil" has been inserted in capitalism. In both cases - which sometimes come together in the interpretations of Brazil -, the (de)formation of contemporary Brazil is inseparable from the "external" dynamics. Hence, the (de)formation of contemporary Brazil becomes a site to certain problematizations of the production of inequality in "modernity".

But there is a second way - to be explored next - in which I take those texts to be potential critiques of modernization. In my view, they can be interpreted as sites of problematization of central concepts of what is usually defined as "modernity", such as "nation" and "history". Following that track, the traces of formation become *entry points* to my proposition of an alternative interpretation to the relation between "nation" and "history". Along that same track, the "interpretations of Brazil" become, thus, sites of a wider problematization.

(I was - and still am in a way - tempted to conceive my "entry points" as "points of attack", as Carl Schmitt once proposed, saying that "[t]he term 'point of attack' carries with it the potential aggressiveness that is immanent in each value attribution. Terms like 'standpoint' or 'viewpoint' divert one's attention and give the impression of an apparently limitless relativism, relationism and perspectivism, and concomitantly, of as great a tolerance, joint to a fundamental neutrality" (Schmitt, 1996 [1979], p.22). Speaking of "temptation", Friedrich Nietzsche had said years earlier that "[a] new species of philosopher is coming up: I venture to baptize them with a name that is not free of danger. As I unriddle them, insofar as they allow themselves to be unriddled - for it belongs to their nature to *want* to remain riddles at some point - these philosophers of the future may have a right - it might also be a wrong - to be called *attempters*. This name itself is in the end a mere attempt and, if you will, a temptation" (Nietzsche, 1992 [1886], p.242, italics in the original). Speaking of being (un)riddled, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak once said that "the secret keeps us, not the other way around" (Spivak, 1999, p.245, n.73). Speaking of the "self", Caetano Veloso once said: "All my lyrics are autobiographical, including those that are not" (Veloso, 2003, p.9). I have kept "entry points" after all...)

Let me move on iterating the collage posited previously: "[t]he refutation of an interpretation of Brazil is only possible with another interpretation of Brazil" (Lessa, 2009, p.75); "the unique character of this structure of iterability... lies in the fact that, comprising identity *and* difference, repetition *and* alteration, etc, it renders the *project* of idealization possible without lending '*itself*' to any pure, simple, and idealizable conceptualization." (Derrida, 1988 [1977], p.71, italics in the original); and, "'Brazil' does not exist, but it is the same 'Brazil' that does not yield to the attempts of translating it in substantial volumes of cultural and literary history" (Rocha, 2003b, p.17).

Octavio Ianni's formulation summarizes what the reader may have already concluded by now: "[t]he history of Brazilian thought is permeated by the fascination with the *national question*... The national question is always present, as challenge, obsession, impasse or incident" (Ianni, 2004 [1992], p.24, italics added). Most recently, as I have discussed above, Sergio Tavolaro insisted on the need to problematize the "methodological nationalism" according to which "the nation" is the exclusive unit of analysis (see Tavolaro, 2014, p.656).⁶⁹⁰ Although it is plausible to say that "the national question" - the centrality of the nation - is not an exclusively "Brazilian" concern, this is certainly the case in the interpretations of Brazil discussed here, concerned as they are with the possibilities and impossibilities of "national literature", "national state", "national society", "national people", "national history", "national economy".

Referring to the "essays on the interpretation of Brazil" published from the 1920s to the 1940s, André Botelho warns that it would be a mistake to say that they form a unity based on the criterion of "national identity", even if it is indeed the case that they express "a common methodological movement" of going "back to the colonial past in order to confer intelligibility to the dilemmas of the present" (Botelho, 2010, p.54). His point is that the "national identity" gains different senses in those texts, so that to ascribe them any homogeneity could lead to the obliteration of their differences. I agree with André, not only in relation to those "essays", but also to the "interpretations of Brazil" more generally; my text here tried to emphasize that, by dealing more closely and separately with the texts. Nonetheless,

⁶⁹⁰ For other discussions of "methodological nationalism", not referring to "interpretations of Brazil" though, see Siba N. Grovogui (2006, pp.100-2) and Sankaran Krishna (2009, pp.160-6).

as he himself notes, they do have some "regularities" (see Botelho, 2010, p.64), and the "national question" is indeed one of them.

The centrality of the nation expresses a double operation: it is both the starting point of the historical reconstruction of Brazilian formation and the desired end point of the formative process. It is projected retrospectively and prospectively, working as a key concept to the proposed coherence of the interpretation. It becomes the condition of possibility for the link reconstructed between the colonial period, in which in a strictly historical point of view the very idea of a "nation" has been absent from its immediate vocabulary, and the incompletely-national period, in which the formal political independence is said to be out of joint with other dependency relations, such as in the cultural, economic, social domains. In other words, the nation is both the object of knowledge and the condition of possibility for this knowledge to be produced.

I have been insisting that there is no "nation" outside, before or after, its (con)textual articulations - within and beyond the so-called "intellectual" environment. Following that, "Brazilian nation" could be interpreted in line with Jacques Derrida's notion of "singular plural" in a logic of "dissemination": "numerical multiplicity [for instance, the multiplicity of the interpretations of Brazil]... serves as a pathbreaker for 'the' seed, which therefore produces (itself) and advances only in the plural. It is singular plural, which no single origin will ever have preceded. Germination, dissemination... A trace, a graft whose traces have been lost" (Derrida, 1981 [1972], p.304).⁶⁹¹ Hence, instead of an absolute origin and an absolute destination - or, nation as a destiny -, there are ceaseless retrospective and prospective projections whose starting and end points defy any attempt towards the fixation of "the nation". In short, instead of *destination*, *dissemination*.

One could ask oneself whether "dissemination" does not reproduce the fascination with the national question or the methodological nationalism. On the one hand, it remains the concern with what is at stake in talking about "the nation". For those familiar with "Brazil", a short journey across the country or even a short walk around a mid-size or big city would suffice to raise doubts whether *anything* such as a Brazilian "nation" really *exists*, except for the fact that the vast majority

⁶⁹¹ I have used the English translation, but comparing it to the French edition (see Derrida, 1972).

of its inhabitants speak some variation of the Portuguese-language.⁶⁹² Notwithstanding this "empirical" observation, references to a "Brazilian nation" ("people", "society") are almost inescapable (on media, music, daily talks, intellectual works, public debates...), in such a way that any "empirical" claim to the contrary would ultimately neglect a crucial aspect of the (self-)interpretations of Brazil(ians). On the other hand, the previous discussion on the concept of "formation" in those interpretations has brought the necessity to think "the nation" in terms of past, present and future, and inside and outside. Mobilizing Jacques Derrida once more, "[a]ll the oppositions based on the distinction between the original and the derived, the simple and the repeated, the first and the second, etc. [I would add, between the inside and the outside, the before and the after, the center and the periphery], lose their pertinence from the moment everything 'begins' by following a vestige. That is, a certain repetition or text" (Derrida, 1981 [1972], p.330). Hence, dissemination puts in play dyads in a "conflicting and hierarchized field" that cannot be reduced to a single unity or to a primordial singularity, and that does not lead to a dialectically-achieved third-term (see Derrida, 1972, p.31). If I had to use the current terminology, however problematic it may be, I would say that "the national question" is at once an "international question". In short, instead of a *national* question, a national *and* international one.

(But, again, all that does not seem to be exclusive to "Brazil". In any case, sticking to it as my immediate focus here, I will remain along those lines.)

The fascination with the national question, iterating Octavio Ianni's affirmation, combines with challenge, obsession, impasse, incident. The contemporary formation of Brazilian nation is variously interpreted in relation to the challenges posed to the establishment of a fully-modern country; to the obsession towards the achievement of this modern condition, one in which the "nation" would not be dependent upon any "external" (or "international") tie; to the impasse before modernization process in Brazil; and to the incidental structure of a peripheral situation and/or of an incidentally-Portuguese colonization. Luiz Guilherme Piva is only one among the many voices reinforcing the identification

⁶⁹² "The vast majority" works as a precaution not to neglect, for instance, some indigenous people or even foreigners that do not speak any variation of "Portuguese".

of "modernization as one of the obsessions of Brazilian thought" (see Piva, 2000, ch.2); accordingly, Robert Wegner says that the theme of "tradition and modernity" is almost "a constant in Brazilian social thought" (see Wegner, 2000, p.17). The "national form" to be achieved (or at least desired) has gained different predicates, depending on the interpretation of Brazil in sight: industrial capitalism (as opposed to state capitalism), autonomy, independence. On the one hand, all those predicates point towards the overcoming of colonial ties and/or structural obstacles that preclude the formation of the modern form; on the other hand, those interpretations raise (deliberately or not) different problematizations (sometimes contradictory in relation to one another) of homogenizing accounts of modernity that obliterate national specificities. In this sense, the centrality of the nation has expressed both a modernizing perspective and a critique of modernization.

Following the lines being proposed here, that fascination does not lead to the very familiar claims identifying a polysemic conception of "Brazil". The way I mobilize Jacques Derrida's notion of "singular plural" is helpful in providing an alternative account to that. He resists the notion of "polysemy", privileging "dissemination", since the former relates to multiple senses (a semantic plurality) taken as "enriching, temporary detours of some passion, some signifying martyrdom that testifies to a truth past or a truth to come, to a meaning whose presence is announced by enigma" (Derrida, 1981 [1972], p.350). Dissemination, in turn, has no absolute reference external to the play of identifications and differentiations (con)textually exposed. Bringing that to my immediate concerns, "Brazilian nation", as a "singular plural", does not lend itself to claims regarding its "original purity", "authenticity", "destiny". Interpretations of Brazil become, then, instantiations of struggles constituting "Brazil itself" and the very subjectivities struggling towards this constitution (be them associated to race, class, gender, region, or other subjectivities).

That said, the centrality of the nation is far from a "merely" "intellectual" fascination circumscribed to "sociology", "political science" or any other field of knowledge. It speaks to the conception of "human association" generally held within and beyond "intellectual" fields. Jens Bartelson has called the attention to the "successful *nationalization* of the concept of community itself, a process through which the nation became the paradigmatic form of human association in theory and in practice alike" (Bartelson, 2009, p.4, italics in the original). This

nationalization is inseparable from the attachment of the "nation" to the "state" in the prevalent imaginary - the latter conceived, as Quentin Skinner has pointed, as a "fictional or moral person distinct from both rulers and ruled" (Skinner, 2009, p.362; see also Skinner, 2010, p.45).⁶⁹³ The centrality of the nation, then, is closely tied to the centrality of the state.

Jens Bartelson argues that a "statism" is inscribed in the "scientific political discourse", that is, the concept of the state occupies the central place, being "individuated by a series of differences" (see Bartelson, 2001, pp.11-2). One difference marks the separation of the state from domestic society and from the governmental apparatus (from the ruled and the rulers, as mentioned above); the other, marks the distinction between the political order represented by the state and the pattern of relations between states: "at the heart of this distinction between inside and outside [and between state, rulers and ruled, VCL] we find the concept of sovereignty" (Bartelson, 2001, p.12). Instead of a juridical-political attribute of the state, sovereignty becomes, in this perspective, a practice of discrimination. Analogously to the retrospective and prospective projection linked to the nation, a double status also marks the notion of the state: it is "inscribed within discourse as a potential object of knowledge whose true nature and function that discourse has as its objective to reveal" and it is also "inscribed as a condition of political knowledge, in so far as this concept is integral to the definition of the domain of politics and to the possibility of attaining knowledge of that domain" (Bartelson, 2001, p.34). In this sense, the status of the state is "both empirical [that is, the object of knowledge] and transcendental [that is, the condition of political knowledge]" (Bartelson, 2001, p.34).⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹³ Jens Bartelson's provides a "conceptual history of world community", in order to challenge the "tragic outcome" of that nationalization (see Bartelson, 2009, p.4). Quentin Skinner, in turn, proposes a "genealogy of the modern state", emphasizing the current prevalence of the "fictional theory of the state", as opposed to other, "absolutist" and "popular theories", which he seems as "nowadays of exclusively historical interest" (see Skinner, 2009, p.361; 2010, p.45). My effort here is rather different: I do not propose a "conceptual history" or a "genealogy" of the kind and I do not seek any move against what Jens Bartelson calls the "tragic outcome" of nationalization or in favor of what Quentin Skinner calls "fictional theory of the state". I resort to few of their texts in order to raise some implications of the centrality of the nation as one of the "traces of formation" in the interpretations of Brazil.

⁶⁹⁴ Michel Foucault had used a similar line of reasoning to discuss the concept of "man" in *Les Mots et les Choses* (The Words and the Things, translated as The Order of Things): "[m]an, in the analytic of finitude, is a strange empirico-transcendental doublet since he is a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible"; and, he adds, "the threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called *man*" (Foucault, 1970

To this link between "nation" and "state", it is possible to add "society". As Jens Bartelson puts, the "modern" sense of the concept of "society" fulfills "three functions" that need to be questioned (see Bartelson, 2015, pp.3-4). First, it presupposes the distinction between "society" and "nature", "man" and "world", ascribing "history" and "culture" only to the social and human domain. As an implication, everything considered not to be human, therefore "spiritual" and "material", is ruled out of "social" investigation. Second, the concept of "society" is often "thought to refer to a pre-political and self-contained order, existing prior to and independently of any structure of political authority". And, third, the connotations of "homogeneity and boundedness" linked in general to "society" leads to the projection of heterogeneity only to realm "outside" a certain homogenous society.

These aspects of the concept of "society" can also be seen in many attempts to transpose it to wider realms, such as "regional", "international", "world" or "global society". I will address that from a different angle below. For now, I just want to emphasize that it is not my claim that we need to overcome the political vocabulary linked to "society", "nation" and "state". As I said right from the beginning of this text in relation to the concept of "formation", I am not proposing, much less diagnosing, a move beyond a certain state of affairs. Rather, my point has been to explore the potentialities of reinterpretation inscribed in the uses of "formation" and the traces identified in the interpretations of Brazil.

One should recall that, in Sergio Tavolaro's texts, a similar logic of demarcation emerges from the centrality of the nation (the "methodological nationalism") in the "hegemonic sociological discourse of modernity" and in the "thesis of Brazilian singularity" endorsed by the interpretations of Brazil. Moreover, as I have noted, the national question often conditions other concepts or fields of knowledge, such as literature, culture, economy, history, people. Well, from that it seems plausible to say that the "nation" occupies in the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil the position of an empirico-transcendental doublet.

[1966], p.347, italics in the original). Much could be said about Michel's notion of the "threshold [when? where?] of our [whose?] modernity", but I am not going into that, since it would require a careful discussion of his texts, which is not my purpose here.

Let me make clear the move at stake here. On the one hand, I am proposing that the "nation" occupies a position in the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil that is analogous to that of the "state" and "society" in Jens Bartelson's account of "political" and "social knowledge" and that of "man" in Michel Foucault's account on "human sciences" more broadly. At the same time, following my discussion here, the centrality of the nation is not circumscribed to "sociology" or even, more widely, to "human sciences". In this sense, the "interpretations of Brazil" become a privileged site of problematization of disciplinary distinctions, of the distinction between "academic" and "non-academic" domains, and of the distinction between the empirical reality of the nation and the nation as a regulative ideal.

It is worth recapturing now the notion of "dissemination". Homi K. Bhabha has proposed to think of "nation" not in terms of "nationalism" or as if it were an "empirical sociological category" or even a "holistic cultural entity", but in terms of a certain "temporality" linked to "complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation' and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives" (Bhabha, 1994, p.140). The temporality of the representation of the nation "moves between cultural *formations* and social *processes* without a centred causal logic" (Bhabha, 1994, p.141, italics added). There is a split, according to Homi K. Bhabha, between "the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (Bhabha, 1994, p.145). That is to say, the "nation", attached as it is to the concept of "people", relies on a presupposed historical reference linked to the past and in a future-oriented conception of subjects (re)producing their own history, their own nation. In my view, the distinction between the pedagogical and the performative is better understood as dimensions of the performative. As I have been claiming, formations are always-already spatio-temporal processes; or, the *form* of the nation is inseparable from the *traces of its formation*.

One step further with Homi K. Bhabha will move this discussion towards the other traces of formation I have identified. In his words, the nation is articulated "in the tension between signifying the people as an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of the narrative, its enunciatory 'present' marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign"

(Bhabha, 1994, p.147). Relying on Carlos Drummond de Andrade's poem "*Hino Nacional* [National Anthem]", João Cezar de Castro Rocha says that, "instead of a sign fulfilled by a meaning that reinforces itself, the nation would rather be an empty signifier to which a semantic baggage is ascribed according to the necessities generated by the contingency of historical circumstances" (Rocha, 2003b, pp.20-1). This implies that a double move of identification and differentiation is at play: on the one hand, a "nation" is identified with itself and differentiated from other nations (the internal-external discrimination); on the other hand, the nation is differentiated from itself. In relation to the second move, linked to the internal disparity I have mentioned as one of the traces of formation, "[w]e are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population" (Bhabha, 1994, p.148). This split can be related to class, race, gender, ethnic and indigenous minorities, region or other discrimination/categorization within the national discrimination/categorization. Hence, if the first move requires the presupposition of a certain national homogeneity and the mutual recognition of sovereignty, the second move is conditioned upon the presupposition that the internal heterogeneity is a manifestation of differences-within-similarity. In other words, the performativity of the nation is constantly iterating the play of a *past* and a *future* hetero/homogeneity, exposing the encounter of times and spaces with one another that I have discussed, more generally, in terms of the *contemporary* and, here more specifically, in terms of *dissemination*.

The relation between inside and outside, and between national homogeneity and heterogeneity, can acquire multiple frames. Not rarely, for instance, it is framed through the identifications of internal and/or external threats to national security; or in terms of internal and/or external obstacles to national modernization; or in terms of the multiple forms in which security and development can be connected with each other. The detailed discussion of those and many other instantiations of those frames would side-track this text from its immediate concerns. What is crucial to have in mind, however, is that the centrality of the nation interpreted in terms of performativity and dissemination challenges any essentialist conception of how those frames must be established, as well as any essentialist conception of the "nation itself". In this regard, different contestations based on class, race, gender, political orientation, among other subjectivities, are conceived as practices that produce those very subjectivities, and therefore the relations between inside and

outside, homogeneity and heterogeneity, that iterate (produce) the nation. In sum, the double move of identifications and differentiations marking the "nation" refers to the *dissemination* intrinsic to the empirico-transcendental doublet *performed* in the interpretations of the formation of *contemporary* Brazil. In this vein, the very notion of the "centrality" of the nation is seen as the "performativity" of the nation; or, *the centrality of the nation as a performativity*.

I have been insisting that the formation of contemporary Brazil must be interpreted through the iterated practices of discrimination constitutive of the inside ("the nation") and the outside ("the international"), and also that the "inside" is crossed by a certain internal disparity dealt with in multiple frames. In this vein, my discussion has been touching upon the relation between past, present and future inscribed in the interpretations of Brazil. I will gradually move to that now.

Referring to Caio Prado's, Gilberto Freyre's and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's texts, Elide Rugai Bastos once said:

the recuperation of the past operates as an explanatory element of the present, of its traits and its impasses. But, in each, the version of the past is different because, among many other reasons, it is diverse the perspective on the place of the tradition in the explanation of the country. Thus, the mobilization of history, besides being the foundation of the explanation of the characteristics of Brazilian society, since it is associated with sociology, performs a political function and defines the way through which they use this mobilization not only as way to unveil reality, but as propositions to change it (Bastos, 2008, pp.227-8).

On a related way, Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda points out that the "inclination towards the reconstruction of the past and the propensity to the essay [as a form of writing] are unavoidable derivations of an intellectual exercise that cannot evade itself from facing the dilemmas of a history that manifests a neat sensation of incompleteness" (Arruda, 2004, p.109).

Elide's and Maria Arminda's remarks resonate in varied ways in a broader set of the interpretations of Brazil. This is clearly the case of those texts that Sergio Tavolaro grouped under the "sociology of the patriarchal-patrimonial heritage".

Yet, it is possible to extend the claim that the "mobilization of history" also "performs a political function" to those texts Sergio grouped under the notion of "sociology of dependence". José Henrique Bortoluci's consideration on some interpretations of Brazil inspired by Karl Marx (among which, he includes Caio Prado, Florestan Fernandes, and Antonio Candido) can be mobilized in that sense: "[m]ore than an inspiring interpretation of the history of the Portuguese colonization in the Americas, this Marxist and anti-Eurocentric lineage establishes a way of seeing the faces of the supposed peripheral 'backwardness' as a *moment of modernity*, and not as *its other*" (Bortoluci, 2013, p.172, italics in the original). I will leave untouched by now the discussion on whether this "lineage" is indeed "anti-Eurocentric"; in any case, José Henrique does have a point when he calls the attention to how it problematizes modernity. In his words, "[t]he critique of peripheral modernity or capitalism as a moment of the critique of global modernity or capitalism depends... upon a consideration of the *forms* of intertwinements between the various determinations of this global totality" (Bortoluci, 2013, p.172, italics added). In a related way, Gildo Marçal Brandão highlights that "the object with which we deal is not 'singular', but 'universal'; it can have theoretical significance in itself, both in the sense that it can be the local manifestation of a world process and in that it can be the point - the weakest nexus? - in which this process can be recognized and criticized as such" (Brandão, 2008, pp.408-9). Thus, the notion of "global totality" challenges the methodological nationalism discussed above and "gives the critique of peripheral modernity the opportunity to constitute a critique of global modernity" (Bortoluci, 2013, p.180).

That said, whether as a "moment of modernity" or as a "sensation of incompleteness", the interpretations of Brazil express the intimate connection between history and politics. It is crucial to address that.

Before proceeding, however, I will, first of all, recall two things connecting the previous with the subsequent discussion. After that, I will make two remarks that intend to avoid certain implications of the problematization proposed here.

First to be recalled. The interpretative move laid out above is also expressed in a certain way in Roberto Schwarz's *Ideias Fora do Lugar* (Ideas Out of Place) - as I pointed out in the beginning of this text - when he warns that "our national

oddities" have a "world scope", in that they raise the question of the modernizing process accompanying capitalism: the formation of Brazil is "a sore point through which world history passes and is revealed" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.29). Octavio Ianni touches upon that when he says that "the history of Brazil" can be understood both as a reference to a "significant social experiment", and as a way to "clarify some dilemmas that traverse the history of the metamorphoses of the New World, in the counterpoint with colonialism, imperialism and globalism; among those dilemmas, nationalism is problematically situated" (Ianni, 2004c, p.154).

Nevertheless, the second point to be recalled is that, instead of an effort towards the identification of a moment in history in which supposedly "modern" conceptions of "(Brazilian) society", "state", "nation" and "formation" emerged, I concentrated the previous discussions of this text on the identification of how those concepts were mobilized by the interpretations of contemporary Brazil. In other words, instead of making periodizing claims myself, stipulating a pre-modern/modern divide in time, and instead of demarcating myself an inside and an outside in space, I opted for problematizing the periodizing claims advanced by those texts, as well as the demarcations of inside/outside associated to those claims. To that aim, I have been emphasizing the notion of "contemporaneity" as an encounter of different times and spaces in the production of "Brazil" and as a possibility of thinking the relation between *place* and *political position* in the *aporetic performances* exposed in the interpretations of Brazil. Now, having discussed that in relation to the centrality of the nation, I will address the link between history and politics pointed out above.

As an entry point to that problematization, the reader may have in mind not only the discussions on "modernization" and "development" permeating the interpretations of Brazil, but also how the notions of "Iberianism" and "Americanism" are constitutively related to the nexus between history and politics, and the corresponding perspectives endorsed by part of the "elites" regarding the "modern form" "we" should aspire to in Brazil. On that, one aspect requires an important consideration. As I am dealing here more directly with interpretations of "Brazil" - that is, a previous formally-colonized country - the discussion could at this moment lead to a direction that I am deliberately avoiding, even if I will not

spend enough time distancing myself explicitly from it. Thus, very briefly, I want to make two remarks.

(The remarks below will be made from brief engagements with thinkers that are not directly dealing with "Brazil". The reason I do that is because engaging with other "interpretations of Brazil" at this moment will lead me to a much longer discussion than what is feasible in this text. Hence, I will only point out here that much of my resistance below has in mind not exactly the thinkers I am resorting to, but lively and frequently-espoused positions by "interpreters of Brazil" within and beyond the "intellectual" environment, something particularly intense at the moment I write this text.)

First remark. It is not uncommon to hear that "third world" countries often have the "leaders their peoples deserve"; it is also frequent for one to face the claim that corruption in politics and/or in society (or even in the "people") is the main obstacle to development and modernization. A certain moralized and moralizing stance to deal with political and social issues is not rare within and beyond so-called "intellectual" debates.

Albert Memmi once wrote that "[m]ore than precautionary compassion is needed if we are to help decolonized peoples; we must also acknowledge and *speak the truth to them*, because we feel they are worthy of hearing it" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], pp.xiii-iv, italics added). He highlights that the "change of masters" after decolonization has not effected the changes once expected: "the new ruling classes are often greedier than the old" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.4). His text is focused on how "third-world" governments (or ruling elites) are responsible for the nexus between corruption, poverty, and violence, and on how the "decolonized" should not search for "diversions, excuses, and myths" that enhance their "dolorism", that is, "a natural tendency to exaggerate one's pains and attribute them to another" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.19). Even if he does not reject the importance of the "colonial past" to the history of "young nations", he considers "global colonialism" or "neocolonialism" to be facile routes to explain economic stagnation in decolonized countries; moreover, he claims that the fact that "the strong dominate the weak... applies to all nations, whether or not they have been colonized" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.22) and that a crucial thing to be recognized is that

"tyranny blocks all progress" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.54) and "democracy remains foreign to the political practices of the third world" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.59).

Having "denounced" and "demystified" - his words, not mine (see Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.146) - "third-world rulers" and the "third-world condition", "secularism" is considered by Albert Memmi the "primary condition of true universalism", which is equivalent to the universalization of "Western civilization" (see Memmi, 2006 [2004], pp.142-3). This requires from "intellectuals", according to him, a different attitude, abandoning their "irresponsibility, if not blindness or cowardice" towards the "reality" of the "third-world" (Memmi, 2006 [2004], p.148). Moreover, they should reject "outdated theories" in favor of, needless to say, "updated" ones. One should know how this argument goes...

It would be too obvious to reject the grand generalizations Albert Memmi puts forward ("third world" being perhaps just the most astonishing). Equally problematic seem to be the "truths" he speaks to the "decolonized". The focus on how tyranny and the absence of law in "young nations" strenghten poverty, corruption, and violence is not only a condemnation, but is also a route that pretty much neglects any "external" element in the "internal" condition and that ultimately depicts a considerably dark image of "third world societies". In other words, his text assumes a moralized variation of methodological nationalism that centers on the perverse local elites in order to account for the "backwardness" of the "young nations", while all the other aspects "within" and "beyond" those nations are downgraded or simply ignored - with the exception to the moments in which he points to the "dolorism" of the "decolonized". Global capitalism and politics are reduced either to "third-world" excuses to the "true" problems facing "decolonized peoples", or to a potential solution provided that the universalization of "Western civilization" actually takes place.

(Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*, said that "[s]laves lose everything in their chains, even the desire to escape from them"; for him, "[t]he first slaves were made by force; their cowardice kept them in bondage" (Rousseau, 2002 [1762],p.157). After the end of formal slavery and formal colonialism, it seems that some stances very often voiced have made a certain "Rousseauian twist", as if, now, his phrase became as follows: slavery was instituted by force; once it has finished, former slaves' lack of private iniciative, individual effort, merit has been

keeping them in bondage or has made them rely on a providential state, as an excuse to their own failures in succeeding by themselves as self-made men [*sic*]. Cowardice and dolorism fit pretty well in this way of coupling a "humanitarian" stance with the maintainance of privileges in a specific kind of state-capital frame...)

Second remark. Nationalism remains a fundamental concept to the interpretation of the formation of former colonies. The supposed late establishment of the formally independent nation triggers many controversies around its imperfection, its lack of authenticity, its incompleteness. In this vein, it is not uncommon the claim according to which the local elites, in their nationalist project, have either failed to modernize their countries or reproduced exclusionary practices of "European" nationalism.

Partha Chaterjee provides a fruitful discussion on nationalism without reproducing the deeply problematic stance one sees in Albert Memmi's text. I will not go into the details of his reading of Asian and African anticolonial nationalist movements, but I want to highlight his claim that they cannot be seen as mere reproductions of "modular" forms of nationalism one sees in "the modern West". Actually, he says, "[t]he most powerful and creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity, but rather on a *difference* [with those forms]" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.5). In short, to be "modern" is not necessarily to be "like the West". He, then, draws a distinction between "modern community" and "modern state", saying that "our postcolonial misery" has roots in "our surrender to the old forms of the modern state", and not in "our inability to think out new forms of the modern community" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.11). One can see, then, that Partha Chaterjee questions the automatic identification of state, nation and people (see also Chaterjee, 1993, p.155). Hence, his goal in the text is to track the "mutually conditioned historicities" both in the "hegemonic project of nationalist modernity" and in the "numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project", in order to "claim for us, the once-colonized, our freedom of imagination" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.13).

According to Partha Chaterjee, the "modern regime of power" is constituted by a "rule of colonial difference", marked most obviously by the "racial" criterion. The "colonial power" is "a modern regime of power destined never to fulfill its normalizing mission because the premise of its power was the preservation of the

alienness of the ruling group" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.18). The "rule of colonial difference" conceives an "other" that is "inferior, radically different, and hence incorrigibly interior" and it can be also employed in instances other than those of strictly colonial and political history - including *both* relations among nations *and* "within populations that the modern institutions of power presume to have normalized into a body of citizens endowed with equal and nonarbitrary rights" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.33). Allow me to insist: colonial difference can be mobilized in situations *within populations*. The racial criterion can also divide citizens among themselves.

The nationalist movement in India, in his interpretation, had the goal of marking a difference from "the West": a "new national subjectivity" was not rooted in "a conception of universal humanity, but rather on particularity and difference" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.75), that is, on a "national community" different from other communities, or on a "postcolonial modernity" struggling against "modernity". Or, as he puts later, "the nationalist paradigm... was not a dismissal of modernity but an attempt to make modernity consistent with the nationalist project" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.121). To that aim, the history of nationalism must be told in such a way that other actors and other chronologies are considered, in such a way that anticolonial nationalism does not get reduced to the reproduction of nationalist forms produced in European or American countries (see Chaterjee, 1993, pp.155-7). In that sense, the subaltern cannot be understood only as a structural condition of deprivation, but also through the historical process of interaction "between the dominant and the subordinate" (see Chaterjee, 1993, p.197).

At least four kinds of stances are problematized in his text: one, the assertion that it is possible to have a "universal truth of the pure theory"; second, that any form of the modern state (in India) is an "unwelcome intrusion of the West"; third, that "the sovereignty of the individual will" must be proclaimed in face of state interference in "individual freedom of choice and contractual arrangements"; and, fourth, that there is only "one political community" regulating society as a whole (see Chaterjee, 1993, pp.224-39). Underlining all those stances, Partha Chaterjee identified the territorially globalized and conceptually universalized "capital". The fragments of the nation to which he calls the attention allow the site to rethink "nationalism" in "postcolonial politics" away from the kind of moralized and moralizing methodological nationalism advanced by Albert Memmi.

The intricacies of the relations between state and capital and between state, nation, and community are raised by Partha Chaterjee in such a way that the complexities of politics can be addressed. Nevertheless, the opposition he draws between the "grand narrative of capital" and the "narrative of community", as well as the way he conceives the modern state to be "embedded within the universal narrative of capital", lead him to such a statement: "[t]he modern state... cannot recognize within its jurisdiction any form of community except the single, determinate, demographically enumerable form of the nation. It must therefore subjugate, if necessary by the use of state violence, all such aspirations of community identity" (Chaterjee, 1993, p.228).

Although I do not want to deny the highly contestability in the use of state violence and, what is more, although I do think that the globalized reach of capital puts serious risks of marginalization and of the production of inequality, I have some uneasiness in face of interpretations such as Partha Chaterjee's, due to the potential implications of a certain demonization of the state and a certain romanticization of community. Again, I do not deny that it is crucial to be attentive to the historical inclusions and exclusions throughout the formation of the modern state and the way it encounters former colonies. My main resistance comes in relation to the previously attributed negativity to the state.

(Again, the reader may now have the sense of why I had to avoid dealing with the issues touched upon in both remarks above through a specific and detailed discussion of the "interpretations of Brazil". So, why those remarks after all? One reason for that is that they help me situate the discussion ahead in relation to the routes I will not take and the implications I would like to avoid. Another reason, more timely, is that they at least allow me to situate myself indirectly in relation to some stances frequently voiced in the current debate on "Brazilian society and politics". Having avoided succumbing to the temptation of dealing with them explicitly, I was not able to avoid at least alluding to them...)

Remarks made, let me iterate the following: either as a "moment of modernity" or as a "sensation of incompleteness", the interpretations of Brazil expose intimate connections between history and politics. I am now able address that.

As an entry point to that discussion, I propose to deal with the link between "modernity" and the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous". Some of Reinhart Koselleck's texts can be helpful to being with.⁶⁹⁵ He distinguishes three modes of "temporal experience": "the irreversibility of events, before and after"; "the repeatability of events"; and "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous". This last mode contains "a diversity of temporal strata which are of varying duration, according to the agents or circumstances in question, which are to be measured against each other"; the "varying extensions of time" refer "to the prognostic structure of historical time, for each prognosis anticipates events which are certainly rooted in the present and in this respect are already existent, although they have not actually occurred" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.95). The combination of those modes of temporal experience allows one the conceptual deduction of "progress, decadence, acceleration, or delay, the 'not yet' and the 'no longer', the 'earlier' or 'later than', the 'too early' and the 'too late'" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.95). Moreover, these modes are not exclusive to a certain historical period, so that they can be experienced in principle at any time, in any space.

The access to "diverse strata of meaning descending from chronologically separate periods" implies that one goes beyond an either/or approach in relation to synchrony and diachrony, privileging "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous... that can be contained within a concept" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.90). In this sense, the historical depth of a concept does not correspond to a chronological succession of its meanings, but to the intimate relation between synchrony and diachrony inscribed in its uses. As he puts elsewhere, "[a]ny synchrony is *eo ipso* at the same time diachronic" (Koselleck, 2002, p.30). That is why concepts are linked not only to the singularity of their past usages, but also to a "structural potential, dealing with the contemporaneous of the noncontemporary,

⁶⁹⁵ Reinhart Koselleck's first major text has deals with the "bourgeois philosophy of history" and how history has been transformed into a process whose future became unknown, so that "[p]lanning history [has come] to be just as important as mastering nature" (Koselleck, 1988 [1959], p.11). For the sake of my discussion here, however, I am not interested in the historical emergence of "the bourgeois world" or of "modernity", but in the way Reinhart Koselleck mobilizes the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous". Hence, it is not relevant here whether his historical interpretation is only valid for a certain national domain, but not necessarily for others (as John Pocock (1996, pp.47-58) has claimed); or how his interest in long-term historical change contrasts with an interest in sudden conceptual shifts (as Quentin Skinner (2002, ch.10) points out). My point is rather that his mobilization of the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" is helpful in problematizing the traces of formation identified in the interpretations of Brazil.

which cannot be reduced to the pure temporal succession of history" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.112).

This structural potential, differently phrased, is related to "concepts" and "historical reality". Continuing with Reinhart Koselleck on that, one reads: "[o]nly concepts with a claim to durability, repeated applicability, and empirical realizability - concepts with a structural content - open the way today for a formerly 'real' history to appear possible and to be represented as such" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.112). It is the structural content of a concept that allows the production of historical knowledge, since it puts into play the relation of synchrony and diachrony, between the same and the different, between repetition and difference.⁶⁹⁶ In this vein, with the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous", "the most different but coexisting cultural levels were brought into view spatially and, by way of synchronic comparison, were diachronically classified"; as a consequence, "*the most differentiated levels of development, decelerations and accelerations of temporal courses in various countries, social strata, classes, areas were at the same time necessarily reduced to a common denominator*" (Koselleck, 2002, p.166, italics added).

The notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" opens up the possibility of a temporal experience that is restricted neither to a supposedly clear-cut distinction between before and after, nor to the assumption of a radical singularity of events. As Helge Jordheim notes, Reinhart Koselleck's theory of periodization exposes overlapping temporal structures, synchronicities and nonsynchronicities that ultimately defy periodization (see Jordheim, 2012, p.157). What interests me now is the way all that is linked to what Reinhart Koselleck calls "asymmetric counterconcepts". At stake, it is a differentiation between "we" and "you" that conditions the possibility of action: "[a] political and social agency is first constituted through concepts by means of which it circumscribes itself and hence excluded others, and therefore, by means of which it defines itself" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.155). The structure of the asymmetric counterconcepts emerges when concepts deny the practice of mutual recognition. The examples worked out by him are the following: Hellene-Barbarian, Christian-Heathen and

⁶⁹⁶ Reinhart Koselleck also discusses the relation between past, present and future through the relations of two "metahistorical", "anthropological categories": "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" (see, for instance, Koselleck, 2002, ch.6).

"the conceptual field of humanity between human and nonhuman, superhuman and subhuman" (see Koselleck, 2004 [1979], ch.10). But these are not isolated examples, since "the structure of the first pair... continuously reappears"; "particular features of the second pair... were contained in the first"; and the conceptual field of humanity contains elements of both of the previous ones, "without, however, being reducible to them" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.160). In this sense, a single pair of concepts contains "antithetical linguistic figures" and "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous".

Now, one remark must be done; one inflexion, proposed; and one orientation, announced. First of all, the remark. If I continued following Reinhart Koselleck, I would need to discuss how this notion of "contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" is double-faced in his texts: on the one hand, it is a methodological instrument to the production of historical knowledge along the lines mentioned above; on the other hand, it appears as a product itself of a certain historical period, "modernity": "[t]he contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous, initially a result of overseas expansion, became a basic framework for the progressive construction of a world history increasingly unified since the eighteenth century" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.246). Here, it is in a sense the very notion of "modernity" as a historical period that I want to problematize.

Thereby, the inflexion. Reinhart Koselleck claims that what those three structures above (Hellene-Barbarian, Christian-Heathen and Humanity) share, besides the inequality of the antithesis they establish, is that they all "claim to cover the whole of humanity", that is, they put forward "claims to universality" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], pp.156-7). The inflexion I propose is to approach "modernity" as a conceptual field marked by a structure of asymmetric counterconcepts comprising "non-modernity", "pre-modernity", "postmodernity", "late modernity", and also some usages of "traditional", "colonial" or "neocolonial condition", among other possibilities. In short, I will mobilize "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" in order to problematize "modernity".⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁷ In this sense, my inflexion moves with and against Reinhart Koselleck: *with*, since it further explores his discussion on "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" and "asymmetric counterconcepts"; *against*, since I propose that he neglects how these notions can also be related to the very conception of "modernity" as a historical period, that is, they can be mobilized towards the problematization of the periodization inscribed in his texts. To be sure, Reinhart Koselleck does not

Regarding the orientation, two iterations will suffice. First, the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" exposes the coexistence under a single denominator of different levels of development, in various countries, social strata, classes, areas. Different levels of development among and within countries. Second, one can recall the "disorienting feeling" that contemporary Brazil is "neither traditional nor fully-modern", as Sergio Tavolaro poses; or, that it is "modern and non-modern", as Jessé Souza's texts often imply; or, that it is "no longer traditional and not yet modern". In short, "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" is helpful as a first move towards the problematization of what is stake in the incompleteness of modernity, in the internal disparity, and in the mobilization of external parameters as traces of formation in the interpretations of Brazil. That said, let me proceed with the inflexion proposed.

Before going back to the notion of "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous", some words must be said on what is deeply connected to that, that is, the distinction between "past", "present" and "future". A productive way to proceed with this discussion seems to be to expose the play of history (conceived as the knowledge of the past) and politics. According to Constantin Fasolt, the current conception of history is committed to a specific view of human nature that conceives human beings as "free and independent agents with the ability to shape their fate, the obligation to act on that ability, and responsibility for the consequences" (Fasolt, 2004, p.xvi; see also Fasolt, 2005). At the same time, "history can never absolve human beings from the responsibilities of freedom. On the contrary, history does nothing more effectively than to assert the liberty that is a necessary precondition for responsibility - and politics" (Fasolt, 2004, p.xvii).

The limits of history are exposed as soon as one reflects upon the implications of the distinction between past and present. "The past" is generally conceived as immutable and absent, as opposed to the mutability and the presence

neglect the work of periodization in texts; on the contrary, he claims that "history loses itself in boundlessly questioning everything" if it does not have a "theory of periodization" (Koselleck, 2002, p.4). In this vein, he claims that the "destruction of natural chronology" has made "new" questions emerge, among which the ones related to "the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous" (Koselleck, 2002, p.8), which has become, since then, one of the criteria defining "modernity". Following that, "the concept of modernity (*Neuzeit*) can be characterized by the fact that it is not only intended to be a formal concept following upon earlier periodizing determinations. It contains the criteria that are hypothetically also applicable to the earlier histories of previous ages" (Koselleck, 2002, p.168). These considerations reinforce that the inflexion I propose moves with and against his texts - being particularly indebted to Kathleen Davis (2008, especially pp.87-95) and Helge Jordheim (2012).

of "the present". On this distinction, rely both the condition of possible historical knowledge - concerned with "the past" - and the condition of politics, that is, the possibility of not simply repeating what was done "in the past", and therefore "seek a future better than the present, and definitely better than the past. Freedom and progress depend on the distinction between past and present" (Fasolt, 2004, p.7). A step further and the "state" comes into scene, since it represents "freedom in space" (within the limits of the territorial dimension of sovereignty) and "freedom in time" (related to progress and freedom towards the future). Thus, sovereignty and citizenship are linked "not only to borders in space, but also borders in time" (Fasolt, 2004, p.7). In that sense, history and politics stand in a relation of mutual reinforcement.

As Constantin Fasolt argues, the distinction between past and present, therefore also the connection between history and politics, "does not exist apart from our activity" (Fasolt, 2004, p.12).⁶⁹⁸ Hence, the immutability and absence of the past, as well as the mutability and presence of the present, are not based on metaphysical, natural or unquestionable distinctions; rather, they are produced as such. In this sense, it comes to the fore the act of periodization. In his words, the separation between "modernity" and "Middle Ages" is nothing but a "projection of historically minded people on a unsuspecting past. Of course it is arbitrary. But it is necessary, too" (Fasolt, 2004, p.227). Its necessity comes because "[i]t is essential to the integrity of the modern world. Its nature is political, not historical" (Fasolt, 2004, p.227). In another text, Constantin Fasolt claims that a "break in time... is made whenever we change our agreement in a shared form of life by drawing an imaginary line between the present and the past in order to avoid confronting disagreements we have with ourselves *about* our agreement in a shared form of life" (Fasolt, 2013, p.186, italics in the original). According to him, "modernity", as a break in time, is "an enduring symbol of the victory historians won for metaphysics when they convinced the world that Europe had really managed to make a break in time" (Fasolt, 2013, p.195). In short, periodization is a political act.

⁶⁹⁸ As he puts elsewhere, history is a "rule-governed activity" that serves as a "religious ritual" that reinforces the conception that "all human beings, past, present, and future, are free to act and are responsible for their actions, but at the same time determined by the circumstances of their time and place" (Fasolt, 2006, p.25).

In Kathleen Davis' definition, periodization is "not simply the drawing of an arbitrary line through time, but a complex process of conceptualizing categories, which are posited as homogenous and retroactively validated by the designation of a period divide" (Davis, 2008, p.3). Periodization carries an "exclusionary force" to the extent that this line-drawing imposes homogeneities in face of differences that sometimes evade that clear-cut divide. The break between "medieval" and "modern" period works in two different, but interrelated, ways: on the one hand, it is conceived as a category of time that, once European, is now global; on the other hand, "Middle Ages" is a "mobile category, applicable at any time to any society that has not 'yet' achieved modernity or, worse, has become retrograde" (Davis, 2008, p.5). As Barry Hindess suggests, distance in time and distance in space are closely associated (see Hindess, 2007, p.325).

There seems to be a double move of inclusion and exclusion at play. On the one hand, there is the exclusion of certain subjectivities from the spatio-temporal position that includes other subjectivities. On the other hand, there is a scaling of subjectivities according to a single historical time, relying on a certain stagist perspective. Take, for instance, divisions such as Christians and Heathens; Civilized and Barbarians; Civilized and Terrorists; Developed and Developing; Advanced and Backward; Pre-modern and Modern. Even if one could assume that, historically speaking, the progressist conception of time is more recent than an eschatological one (perhaps even one possible derivation of the latter), it seems plausible to argue that the potential encounter of times and spaces available to the current vocabulary makes it possible to frame those divisions today according to different spatio-temporalities.⁶⁹⁹

Let me be clear on that. I am not claiming that some concept emerging at a specific time and space (think of "Modern", "Development" or "Progress" for that matter) should be projected retrospectively and anachronistically to all "times" and

⁶⁹⁹ In the history of the so-called "modern thought", this has been generally understood through the distinction between those subjectivities "inside History" and those "outside History". I am unable to tackle that, however, but it seems crucial to have in mind that the identification of those "outside History" is far from only historical interest. Issues such as "terrorism"; migration routes at the Mediterranean Sea; use of force in poor communities and against specific people in places like Brazil; among others are important sites of reflection on that distinction. In these and many other cases, I am not sure whether the line separating the "not yet" from the "not yet forever" (or "never"), to take something raised in Amitav Ghosh and Dipesh Chakrabarty correspondence exchange; or the line separating the "make live" from the "let die" have not been crossed or even considerably blurred. See Ghosh and Chakrabarty (2002).

"spaces". Nor am I claiming that history is ultimately a progressist or decadentist teleological development through which vocabularies replace one another; or, to the contrary, that the coming-into-scene of vocabularies occurs in completely unrelated ways. For my purpose here, my point is rather simpler: once vocabularies come into scene, they become available for potential *mobilizations* in different ways, including retrospectively and prospectively. So, I agree with Ian Hacking when he puts that, "if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence" (Hacking, 2002, p.108), and with Nicholas Onuf when he states that "old ontologies never die" (Onuf, 2013 [2012], p.203; see also Onuf, 1998, ch.8). These "new" possibilities for action and "new" ontologies include interpretations of the "past" through vocabularies that were not necessarily available "back then".⁷⁰⁰ The act of periodization very often instantiates this possibility.

When all that comes to the interpretations of Brazil, periodization needs to be tackled in relation to the coexistence of the past with the present and the future throughout the formation of contemporary Brazil. This is what is very often at stake in the identification of internal inequality and of the incompleteness of modernity in Brazil, as well as in the mobilizations of the external parameters ("central" or "modern" countries, for instance).

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, two "ontological assumptions" are inscribed in the "secular conceptions of the political and the social": "[t]he first is that the human exists in a frame of a single and secular historical time that envelops other kinds of time" and the second, posits that "the human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end 'social facts', that the social somehow exists prior to them" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.16). These assumptions are intrinsically connected to the "first in Europe, then elsewhere" structure of "historicism". In his words, "[h]istoricism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but

⁷⁰⁰ I would not say that here I differ completely from Ian Hacking's "dynamic nominalism" - which argues that "numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the ways to name them" (Hacking, 2002, p.113) -, but that I am exploring it in different ways. For instance, I am trying to grasp what is at stake in the periodization act linked to "modernization", according to which "pre-modern" and "modern" "periods" as inserted in a progressist narrative that was supposedly not available to the "pre-moderns" (which, by the way, could not even conceive "themselves" as such). In face of that, I think it is not enough to say that all that is simply a matter of "historical imprecision" that must be "corrected" through a "scientific" or other kind of "method". In short, my aim is to understand the implications of "modernization" as a periodizing act in the interpretations of Brazil. Indeed, Ian Hacking's concept of "styles of reasoning" has many points of contact with what I am proposing here (see Hacking, 2002, chs.11 and 12).

rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.7, italics in the original). Here is his conception of "historicism":

It tells us that in order to understand the nature of anything in this world we must see it as an historically developing entity, that is, first, as an individual and unique whole— as some kind of unity at least in potentia — and, second, as something that develops over time. Historicism typically can allow for complexities and zigzags in this development; it seeks to find the general in the particular, and it does not entail any necessary assumptions of teleology. But the idea of development and the assumption that a certain amount of time elapses in the very process of development are critical to this understanding (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.23).

Phrased differently, historicism is a "transition narrative", often expressed in terms of "development", "modernization" and "capitalism"; and in terms of "absences", "failures", "incompleteness" (see Chakrabarty, 2000, pp.30-4). This narrative operates homogenizing differences under the same historical movement, in such a way that what is not "completely" or "fully-modern" ("capitalist", "developed") is conceived as "lacking modernity" or "not-yet modern" ("lacking capitalism" or "not-yet capitalist"; "underdeveloped" or "developing"). This transitional narrative of historicism captures not only relation between nation(-state)s, but also the internal relations of a nation(-state), which means that different social groups are also apprehended through the practices of scaling them through different levels or stages of modernity or development, for instance.

Problematizing the nexus between development and modernization after the Second World War, Arturo Escobar claimed that "the creation of the Third World and the dream of development" came to cross diverse areas of life, from politics to economics and culture; and it involves relations of power, production of knowledge considered to be scientific, and ethical implications (see Escobar, 1995, ch.1). Indeed, he observes, "discourse of development" and "orientalism" have a

fundamental point of contact. One of the definitions Edward Said gives to "orientalism" takes it as a "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said, 2003 [1978], p.3). Moreover, it depends on a "flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relations with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 2003 [1978], p.7). Similarly, the "discourse of development" marks a way of dealing with alterity that is inscribed by a relational inequality.⁷⁰¹

If one recalls for a moment the previous discussion on the interpretations of Brazil, it some becomes crucial to have something in sight. What those interpretations expose is how a certain "discourse of development" and a certain "Orientalism" do not necessarily correspond to specific geographical places in the world, such as "the West" or "Europe". Those kinds of relational inequality are also very often internal to "non-Western" countries, including how "non-Westerners" interpret themselves. In a related way, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says that "[s]cholars of the non-Western world often come up against the problem that words (signs) and therefore concepts that do not have a field of play there are applied to signify absences" (Spivak, 1999, p.89). Similarly, José Maurício Domingues claims that "[w]hen we [Brazilians] turn our eyes to the outside, we turn them to the United States, to England, to France or to Germany, and usually attest what is lacking: the classical bourgeois revolution, the effective rule of law, the rational individualism, and other phenomena of the kind" (Domingues, 2015, p.215).

This comparative mobilization can be understood, following João Cezar de Castro Rocha, as a certain "archaeology of absence" in the interpretations of Brazil, leading to a "melancholic description of what the country has not been - modern, democratic etc -, of what it has ceased to be - egalitarian, enlightened etc -, of what it is not yet - first-world country, world power etc" (Rocha, 2003b, p.23; see also Rocha, 1998, p.79; Rocha, 2005, pp.6-7).⁷⁰² Even when this archaeology of absence

⁷⁰¹ Later, Edward Said conceded that his discussion of "orientalism" leaves aside the resistances against to the "West" carried in many parts of the world, to which he then turns, for instance, in *Culture and Imperialism* (see Said, 1993, Introduction).

⁷⁰² João says that the "archaeology of absence" is seen in one "school" of the "intellectual essays and scholarly books written on the historical *formation* of Brazilian society"; another school, which he exemplifies with Gilberto Freyre, is characterized by how it "values Brazilian *formation* as the emergence of a unique way of negotiating differences and controlling the agonistic element of its social system" (Rocha, 2005, p.6, p.7, italics added). The opposite of the "archaeology of absence" is, to João, the "national tautology", which consists in affirming that the grandiosity of a work derives

is not fully reproduced, it is not uncommon to see the move that turn the particularities and singularities identified into signs of a certain kind of inferiority. Moreover, although I am particularly indebted to João Cezar's constant insistence on the need to problematize this "archaeology of absence", what is absent - if I may say so - in his interpretation is what I have been insisting here regarding how the interpretations of Brazil potentially expose a global process.

In sum, this "archaeology of absence", coupled as it often is with "modernization", puts in motion a transitional narrative. As I have discussed throughout this text, this narrative relates to the incompleteness of the transition from the colonial to the modern period, the identification of internal inequality and the mobilization of external parameters. Nevertheless, as I have also insisted, this transitional narrative leading to archaeologies of absences can be problematized from within the interpretations of Brazil if read as "contemporary" texts.

As Barry Hindess notes, the "modern tendency" relegates "some of our contemporaries to a time earlier than our own" and tends to "treat belonging to the past as a bad thing, that is, as a kind of cultural and moral failure" (Hindess, 2007, p.333). Hence, differences within and between nation(-state)s are homogenized through a modernizing scaling. When I insist on the aporetic performance of the interpretations of Brazil, it is because this "modern tendency" is exposed side-by-side with the potential sites of its own problematization. There is no possible clear-cut separation between "colonizers" and "colonized", "modernizers" and "modernized". Modernization, as a homogenizing perspective, is at play both among and within nations, advanced by certain groups globally articulated and nationally representative. Exploring that, "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994, p.39). The intimate enemies are also the intimate friends.⁷⁰³

Going back to Dipesh Chakrabarty, it is possible to explore "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" not only as an expression of a modernizing narrative, but also in terms of its potential resistance towards that. To him "subaltern pasts", linked to "minorities histories", expose potential sites of

from its genuinely national origin and that the genuinely national origin is only expressed when a work is grandiose (see Rocha, 1998, p.79). Both the "archaeology of absence" and the "national tautology" are problematic, since "the work of the critic is restricted to the confirmation of principles established a priori" (Rocha, 1998, p.79).

⁷⁰³ I am obviously alluding to - and freely appropriating - Ashis Nandy's (1983) words.

questioning the modernizing ("historicizing", as he puts) narrative. In his words, then, "[a]n appreciation of this problem has led to a series of attempts to craft histories differently, to allow for a certain measure of equality between historians' histories and other constructions of the past"; by doing that, one "*perform[s]* the limits of history" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.106, italics in the original). Recalling the previous discussion, it is possible to say that the problematization of the distinction between "past", "present" and "future" expose the links between politics and history performed by iterated acts of periodization. In this sense, "minority histories" can raise problems to the homogenization of difference under a modernizing perspective.

From this angle, "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" becomes double-faced: on the one hand, it is inscribed by a modernizing perspective; on the other hand, it raises the heterogeneity of time, that is, the multiple pasts that are not necessarily reducible to the modernizing perspective. When it comes to the interpretations of Brazil, it is plausible to say that the internal inequality, the incompleteness of modernity and the external parameters expose exactly this double face. So, analogously to what the "subaltern pasts" enable according to Dipesh Chakrabarty, the interpretations of Brazil, I suggest, "must implicitly assume a plurality of times existing together, a disjuncture of the present with itself" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.109). To remain with his terms, this "disjuncture" does not mark a mutual exclusion between "subaltern pasts" and "historicization": "[i]t is because we already have experiences of that which makes the present noncontemporaneous with itself that we can actually historicize" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.112).

To bring that to my terms, the "disjuncture" marking the traces of formation inscribed in the interpretations of Brazil exposes at once the inclusions and exclusions produced through modernization. As André Botelho stresses, the "before" and the "after" inscribed in a stipulated historical sequence are linked to "norms of conduct" and "political projects" whose meanings arise "both from what is negated and from what one seeks to affirm about continuities and ruptures"; those in dispute about this history, then, try to "validate their political and intellectual objectives, commitments and instruments" (Botelho, 2008b, p.18). Phrased differently, modernization is interpreted not as the inevitable historical development irrespective of current differences or heterogeneities, but as a certain

essentially contestable framing of those irreducible differences and heterogeneities. Once those heterogeneities, or forces, are not tied, in any necessary way, to a modernizing perspective, an alternative interpretation is opened up, one in which "the margin as such is the impossible boundary marking off the wholly other, and the encounter with the wholly other, as it may be figured, has an unpredictable relationship to our ethical [therefore also political, VCL] rules" (Spivak, 1999, p.173).

To call into question a linear history attributed to "modernity" - and, relatedly, to call into question the neutrality of any stance on periodization - does not mean the rejection that things "change", that "new" things can "emerge". Actually, the contrary case could be made, since "modernization", read as an inevitable pace of history, would "itself" erase difference, as I have been insisting. Jacques Derrida, problematizing the "concern to periodize", says that the "singularity of the event" can be even more "irreducible and confusing" once "we give up linear history", that is, if one gives up "the idea of a decisive and founding event" and the corresponding "alternative of synchronic and diachronic" (Derrida, 2009, p.333).⁷⁰⁴ The singularity of the event is linked to the heterogeneities of history. To rethink that, for sure, requires rethinking the passage of time and the delimitation of space; and, conversely, the delimitation of time and the passage across space. That is to say, instead of a vocabulary marked by "lack", "incompleteness", "not yet", it is possible explore the forces constitutive of what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "the ontological 'now'" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.113); or, as I propose, "contemporaneity".

It is worth, then, recalling that contemporaneity is conceived here as an encounter of past, present and future, inside and outside, linguistically traced and iterated in the interpretations of Brazil dealt with previously and exposing different political positions. I have claimed above that, taken as contemporary texts themselves, those interpretations internalize - as performative acts - conditions of forces of contemporary Brazil, questioning a linear and progressist historical development and a dichotomous perspective of inside and outside. As Nicholas Onuf reminds, telling a story about "modernity" involves mobilizing metaphors such as "boundary", "break", "junction", "limit", "rupture", "stage", "transition"

⁷⁰⁴ This discussion is found in Jacques Derrida's March 20, 2002 seminar session.

(Onuf, forthcoming); and to speak about history does not mean that "history - that *thing* called history - is going anywhere in particular" (Onuf, forthcoming, italics in the original). The perspective on "contemporaneity" proposed here does not reject "modernity". It rejects, instead, the inevitability of "modernization" and the exclusivity of "the state" and/or "the nation" as the necessary spatio-temporal coordinates and narratives of politics. It seizes and lives for the *place* of the performativity of singular and collective subjectivities.

All that implies that I am not endorsing any stance according to which the world is currently moving "beyond borders", into a wholly "globalized era". The notion of politics here goes in a very different direction. Jacques Derrida once said that "in politics, the choice is not between sovereignty and nonsovereignty, but among several forms of partings, partitions, divisions, conditions that come along to broach a sovereignty that is always supposed to be indivisible and unconditional"; "it is always in name of one [form of sovereignty] that one attacks another [form of sovereignty]" (Derrida, 2009 [2002], p.76). Let me propose one should read this way the already-quoted phrase: "[t]he refutation of an interpretation of Brazil is only possible with another interpretation of Brazil" (Lessa, 2009, p.75). Hence, in this line of thought, "politics as performativity" (see Bhabha, 1994, p.15) and "politics of boundaries" (see Walker, 2016) come hand in hand in what I have discussed here as the *political positions* exposed in the interpretations of Brazil.

To recall, I have two major things in mind when I refer to "political positions". One relates to the immediate struggles in which the interpreters of Brazil were engaged, for instance those corresponding to political parties and to institutional disputes within the university environment. The other dimension of "political position" relates to the aporetic performance of the texts, that expose a "boundary situation" (Maia, 2010, p.10) and "a temporal hub [*condensador*] of expectations, possibilities and experiences [*vivências*]" (Lima, 2003, p.25, n.6), delineating a "discursive place that thinks the modern in a global and de-centered way" (Maia, 2009, p.163). In short, the interpretations of Brazil become a *place* from which modernization is both endorsed and criticized.

With that, I iterate in a certain sense a discussion that was previously conducted. Through the problematization of the "centrality of the nation", I have advanced the notion of "the centrality of the nation as a performativity", by insisting that the formative process of contemporary Brazil must be interpreted through the

iterated practices that constitute the inside ("the nation"), not conceived as a homogenous entity, and the outside ("the international"), not conceived as a homogenous entity. Now, the notion of "contemporaneity" has lead me to the point that "past, present, and future" are also politically performed. The reader may be asking himself how does all that affect the "the specificities of Brazilian formative process", one of the traces of formation I have identified. I will now move to that.

The formation of contemporary Brazil, according to the interpretations discussed in this text, is identified through a series of specific traits that either make Brazil join others as part of a certain group of countries - "semi-peripheral", "peripheral", "developing" - or even turn it into a radical singularity among the "nations", since, besides being part of a group, it has also been, like no other "Latin American" country, colonized in a very specific way by the Portuguese. The "specificities of the formation of contemporary Brazil" are closely related to "the centrality of the nation", "the external parameters", "the incompleteness of modernity" and "the internal inequality". As my effort in this text suggests, the problematization of these traces of formation implies a problematization of "modernity itself" - or, of the very possibility of talking about modernity "itself".

André Botelho claims that the "interpretations of Brazil" express how "our modernizing and nation-building process, *as well as any other and all the similar processes...*, always involve some singular combination of 'traditional' and 'modern' elements" (Botelho, 2005, p.18, italics added); in this sense, every society would have its own "historical sequence". As he puts later in the text, "[a]s well as the modernizing processes, the nation-state-building does not follow a single and systemic pattern defined *a priori*; their possibilities are multiple and historical" (Botelho, 2005, p.52). André adds, moreover, that "social change" is not a process that takes place exclusively within national societies, since it "always involves the international diffusion of institutions and ideas, which puts the idea of a 'particular culture' in permanent tension" (Botelho, 2005, p.53). This implies that the interpretation of "Brazilian singularity" would resonate in the very understanding of the formative process modernity, now seen as a general pattern of singular combinations of "traditional" and "modern" traits.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to stress that this consideration cannot lead to the position according to which there is ultimately a multiplicity of unconnected modernities and/or that there is an irradiating center of change from which

institutions and ideas migrate to other parts of the world. To avoid that, I want to explore here how the "specificities of Brazilian formative process", as one of the traces of formation in the interpretations of Brazil, can be interpreted also as an aporetic performance. More precisely, if it is the case that the notion of "specificities" can lead to assertions pointing to "singular" or to "multiple modernities" which would end up reproducing the dichotomy between inside and outside and/or reproducing the modernizing scaling of "national societies" or even the "diffusionist" view of formative processes, its problematization can also be a site to challenge those notions.⁷⁰⁵

Walter Mignolo's notion of "colonial difference" seems helpful on that. To him, "[y]esterday the colonial difference was out there, away from the center. Today it is all over, in the peripheries of the center and in the centers of the periphery" (Mignolo, 2012 [2000], p.xxv). I am not sure if "yesterday" colonial difference marked indeed a clear-cut separation between "center" and "periphery", but it would be a completely different task to discuss that. What is relevant here is to explore the "today" depicted by him.⁷⁰⁶ Colonial difference, in his definition, is "the space where coloniality of power is enacted", where "*local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored" (Mignolo, 2012 [2000], p.xxv, italics in the original); or, as he puts elsewhere, it is "a connector that... refers to the changing faces of colonial differences throughout the history of modern/colonial world-system and brings to the foreground the planetary dimension of human history silenced by discourses centering on modernity, postmodernity, and Western civilization" (Mignolo, 2002, pp.61-2).⁷⁰⁷ This encounter takes place in a space that is at once physical and imaginary. On the one hand, "Western cosmology is the historically unavoidable reference point" to that space; on the other hand, "multiple confrontations of two kinds of local histories

⁷⁰⁵ Giddens (1990) and Eisenstadt (2000), from a sociological perspective, Keene (2004), from a political legal perspective, and Morton (2007), from a political economy perspective, are just few examples of challenges to those notions.

⁷⁰⁶ As it is beyond the scope of this text to discuss my disagreements in relation to other aspects of Walter Mignolo's texts that I will not raise, I will only refer the reader to what seems to me a very precise engagement with his texts, advanced by José Maurício Domingues (see Domingues, 2009a).

⁷⁰⁷ The notion of "contemporary modern/colonial world", as I mobilize here, does not hold any anti-modern position according to which particularities (should) trump universalities, "non-moderns" (should) trump "modernity" - this would be, indeed, my main resistance in relation, for instance, to some implications of Walter Mignolo's texts. In relation to that, José Maurício Domingues warns against the "simple inversion of the polarities of modernization theory" (Domingues, 2009a, p.129).

displayed in different spaces and times across the planet" happen there (Mignolo, 2012 [2000], p.xxv). Aníbal Quijano had already claimed that the "coloniality of power" comprises a "global pattern of world power", or a "global world-system", since the different parts of this system are not only simultaneously operating, but are also articulated with each other through the system itself (see Quijano, 2000, p.206). Hence, colonial difference is a set of *loci* of enunciation that defy dichotomous and historically linear interpretations, since it exposes a "modern/colonial world-system".

The "modern/colonial world" is conceived "in terms of internal and external borders rather than centers, semiperipheries, and peripheries" (Mignolo, 2012 [2000], p.33). It exposes encounters that cannot be understood through the logic according to which "Europe"/"center" encounters, or is encountered by, "others"/"periphery". Rather, *contemporaneity* is the encounter of different times and spaces; of universals and particulars. Following my proposition here, the encounter of multiple contemporary forces - of "heterogeneities", if I may recall Dipesh Chakrabarty, or "local histories", as Walter Mignolo puts - is understood away from a simple dichotomy between "Self" and "Other" (or, what is also common, "Europe" and "its Others"), but as the site of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak called "the heterogeneous Other", that is, of what is ungraspable by any generalized account of "Self" attempting to assimilate what "the Other" may or must mean (see Spivak, 1988, p.288, pp.293-4). As she would put later (I suggest replacing "imperialism" by "modernization" in the following quotation, in order to keep the track I have been proposing in this text), "[n]o perspective *critical* of imperialism [modernization] can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism [modernization] has always already historically refracted what might have been an incommensurable and discontinuous other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperialist [modernizer] self" (Spivak, 1999, p.130, italics in the original).⁷⁰⁸

Contemporaneity, therefore, cannot be understood as a collection of multiple and disconnected singularities. Dipesh Chakrabarty will help me clarifying

⁷⁰⁸ I should warn that, while I interpret "the heterogeneous Other", "local histories" and "heterogeneities" as structurally analogous in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's, Walter Mignolo's and Dipesh Chakrabarty's interpretations, I am far from suggesting that their overall interpretations are entirely compatible with, or even that they complement, each other. To reiterate, it is a matter of mobilizing them for my own purposes here.

that; his discussion of "singularities" can be mobilized to my account on the "specificities" of Brazilian formative process as one of the traces of formation. According to him, "[n]ormally, the condition for conversation between historians and social scientists working on disparate sites is a structure of generality within which specificities and differences are contained" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.82). Following that passage, he relies on Paul Veyne's distinction between "singularity" and "specificity", resisting the latter for similar reasons that lead Sergio Tavolaro to resist the former in "the thesis of Brazilian *singularity*". For me here, words matter less than concepts and, if I opt for "specificity", instead of "singularity", it is because I have built my perspective with Sergio's consideration in sight. That said, let me proceed to the passage below:

Paul Veyne's distinction between "specificity" and "singularity" is relevant here. As [Paul] Veyne puts it: "History is interested in individualized events... but it is not interested in their individuality; it seeks to understand them - that is, to find among them a kind of generality or, more precisely, of specificity. It is the same with natural history; its curiosity is inexhaustible, all the species matter to it and none is superfluous, but it does not propose the enjoyment of their singularity in the manner of the bestiary of the Middle Ages, in which one could read descriptions of noble, beautiful, strange or cruel animals."

The very conception of the "specific" as it obtains in the discipline of history, in other words, belongs to the structure of a general that necessarily occludes our view of the singular. Of course, nothing exists out there as a "singular-in-itself." Singularity is a matter of viewing. It comes into being as that which resists our attempt to see something as a particular instance of a general idea or category. Philosophically, it is a limiting concept, since language itself mostly speaks of the general. Facing the singular might be a question of straining against language itself; it could, for example, involve the consideration of the

manner in which the world, after all, remains opaque to the generalities inherent in language. Here, however, I am using a slightly weaker version of the idea. By “singular” I mean that which defies the generalizing impulse of the sociological imagination.⁷⁰⁹

Dipesh Chakrabarty's "weaker version" of "singularity" is linked to his conception of "heterogeneities", that is, to that which cannot be fully grasped by "historicism". Accompanying the terms I have been mobilizing here, the notions of "specificities" (or, in the terms of the quotation above, "singularity"), "heterogeneities" and "local histories" problematize any linear and homogenizing interpretation of "modernity" as the exclusive modernizing path of development between nation-states or by subjectivities within nation-states. In this sense, they defy the generalizing impulse of "sociology", as well as of "political science", "economics", "literature", "international relations", among other "disciplines"; moreover, they also defy generalizing impulses very often advanced beyond the "academic" environment.

But, as Dipesh Chakrabarty himself notes, there is no "singular-in-itself", or "specific-in-itself". The reason he gives raises a very important aspect of what I have been discussing here: the particular always bears some relation with the general, even if it is placed in a position of exteriority. That is to say, even when some particularity is stated as that which is outside any generality, its exclusion is only thinkable through some relation with what is included in the general (universal). To put it differently, it is excluded by being at once included in some higher discrimination of what is generalizable (universalizable) and what is not. In that sense, on the one hand, to frame some "specific instance" as merely a manifestation of a "general idea" is not the only possible way of conceiving it, however "naturalized" it may have become to be seen as; analogously, to frame internal and/or external inequality as a manifestation of general levels or stages of development within the modernizing path of history and politics is not the only possible way of conceiving it. On the other hand, the play of identifications and differentiations are always iterations of some relation between the general and the

⁷⁰⁹ The citation of Paul Veyne is extracted from **Writing History: Essay on Epistemology**, translated by Mina Moore-Rivoluceri (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), p.56.

particular, even when the latter defies the former (that is, when it bears the relation of defying the general).

"Denaturalizing" a certain frame of inequality and a certain relation between the particular and the general means neither erasing inequality nor extracting the "particular" from any "generality". It is not a matter of providing "solutions". Rather, it is a different way of asking the "questions", of assessing how "questions" are posed, how forces are shaped and dispute each other. In a word, it is a matter of "problematization". In one of his many definitions of the term, Michel Foucault poses that "problematization... develops the conditions in which possible answers can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to" (Foucault, 2000 [1984], p.118). The attention is given not only to the different solutions constructed to a problem, but also to how those solutions result from a specific problematization instigated by "social, economic, or political processes" (Foucault, 2000 [1984], p.117). Elsewhere, he says that the study of "(modes of) problematization" - that is, of how "objects, rules of action, modes of relation to oneself" are defined - points to what is "neither an anthropological constant nor a chronological variation", but that, at the same time, carries "questions of general import in their historically unique form" (Foucault, 1997 [1984], p.131); or, as I would prefer, questions of general import in certain *(con)textual* iterations.

"Problematization", I would like to suggest (perhaps departing somehow from Michel Foucault's considerations), is both what emerges from the approach to a certain domain of (con)texts, and what is understood as bearing some kind of reference to that domain. Not surprisingly, the reader may be recalling now the previous discussion on "the cursed external reference" and the interpretations of Brazil.⁷¹⁰ Phrased differently, problematization is an (interpretative) act of *identification*, meaning both the *reference* to "something" and the *production* of "something". The problematization of the interpretations of Brazil dealt with here has tried to identify traces of formation and their relation with political positions marking "contemporary Brazil".

In this sense, the series of questions Michael Shapiro once proposed speaks directly to the point I am raising: "Given the general area in which you are interested

⁷¹⁰ See pages 84-98.

- [for instance, "interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil]... - what is the origin (in terms of the array of shaping forces) of the *doxa*, the currently dominant way of formulating problems?"; "What are the forces at work that allow those formulations to persist?"; "What are the costs and benefits for various constituencies of the mode of problematization that commands thinking and inquiry in the domain of your inquiry?"; "Whose perspectives on problem(s) gain recognition and whose perspectives fail to rise above the threshold of recognition?"; "And, finally, what conceptions, juxtapositions, and soliciting of alternative subjects and thought worlds will disrupt the dominant modes of intelligibility and open up spaces for new political thinking with empowering implications for new forms of subjectivization, for the welcoming of new kinds of (in-process or becoming) subjects into politically relevant space?" (Shapiro, 2013, pp.31-2).

My proposition of the notion of "contemporaneity" aims at an alternative from easy solutions that move from the particular to the general, or the other way around. The modernizing perspective most often frames not only the relation between states, but also the relation between subjectivities within a state. Heterogeneities, and local histories, as I propose here, should not be conceived as differences "within" pre-defined borders of a "nation" or a "state". They are not, therefore, difference within identity. Rather, they expose the performativity of the nation (and/or the state) as well as potential identifications of subjectivities across performed nations (and/or states). To be clear on that: I am not claiming that heterogeneities make boundaries (national or otherwise) obsolete; my point is that they expose the continuous production of boundaries, the "national" ones being only one instantiation of that process. Following Rob Walker: "[t]he boundaries that divide our spaces on the ground also enable our political imagination in time. Conversely, our ability to understand ourselves as modern subjects, acting in the temporal trajectory we have come to treat as the inevitable ground of modern freedoms, also maps our political imagination in space" (Walker, 2010, pp.31-2). Boundaries have been multiplied, not erased.

This is what I have been insisting on through the connection identified between the "the centrality of the nation", "the incompleteness of modernity", "the internal inequality", "the external parameter of comparison", "the specificities of Brazilian formation". The performativity of the nation and the performativity of history have become crucial dimensions of the interpretations of the formation of

contemporary Brazil, since they have helped me to emphasize their aporetic performance.

Space coordinates are always already time coordinates - and the other way around. Mapping "ourselves as modern subjects", as well as mapping "our country" - or some of its subjectivities - as "modern" ones, as opposed to "non-modern" ones, is an interpretative act of identification and differentiation. As Niklas Luhmann puts, "the concept of society proclaims a specific combination of difference and identity, of differentiation and reconstructed unity" (Luhmann, 1997, p.68). His notion of "world society" can go in tandem with the notion of "modern/colonial world-system", both being helpful in problematizing dichotomies such as "center/periphery" and its spatio-temporal implications.⁷¹¹ To recall, Walter Mignolo interprets the "modern/colonial world-system" through "internal and external borders rather than centers, semiperipheries, and peripheries" (Mignolo, 2012 [2000], p.33). Niklas Luhmann, in turn, claims that the predominant relation in contemporary world society is one of "inclusion and exclusion", linked to "functional differentiation": "[f]unction systems presuppose the inclusion of every human being, but, in fact, they exclude persons that do not meet their requirements" (Luhmann, 1997, p.70; see also Luhmann, 2002, p.89).

Niklas Luhmann's conception of "internal differentiation" within "world society" is a productive approach to the notion of "specificity", since it can be mobilized as a way to move further Walter Mignolo's point in relation to the dichotomy center/periphery. In his words, "[w]e can conceive of differentiation as the process of reproducing systems within systems, boundaries within boundaries and, for observing systems, frames within frames, and distinctions within the distinguished" (Luhmann, 1997, p.71; see also Luhmann, 2002, p.110).⁷¹² Internal inequalities, following this argument, are maintained by systemic internal differentiation, which means that, it is by being systemically included that different subjectivities are excluded or marginalized.

⁷¹¹ I am avoiding to tackle here the problematization of the pre-modern/modern, or traditional/modern, periodization inscribed in Walter Mignolo's, Rob Walker's and Niklas Luhmann's texts; the historical dimension of their texts invariably relies, even if in different ways, on a distinction of before and after modernity was consolidated. This does not preclude nonetheless the mobilization of their texts for my concerns.

⁷¹² As he puts elsewhere, "[c]onceived as an operationally closed system, modern society is world society" (Luhmann, 2002, p.107).

From a different perspective, Paulo Arantes has called the attention to a similar point, when he warned against the notion that there is someone "excluded" without being already "included"; or, that a "fracture" is separating those that are supposedly "in" from those that are supposedly "out": no one is in a position of complete exteriority. Appropriating Paulo's words, "the phraseology of fracture (social, urban, or any other)" (Arantes, 2004 [2001], p.51) very easily gives rise to the renovation of modernizing programs that neglect that the production of inequality is already "modern"; or, what is perhaps worse, it can give rise to varied forms of "states of exception" to deal with situations of fractural emergency within and beyond societies or to the plea for "zero tolerance" towards some situation - which not rarely, or rather invariably, becomes "zero tolerance" against certain (colored) subjectivities, turning a social question into a criminal question.⁷¹³

To bring that to my discussion, one would have that the specificities of Brazilian formation - including "national" inequality and its unequal insertion in the "international" realm - cannot be interpreted apart from "world society" (or "modern/colonial world-system") and its internal differentiations between inside and outside, center and periphery, advanced and backward.⁷¹⁴ Hence, there is no position of complete exteriority; inside and outside are constantly differentiated; the specific always bears some relation with the general.

For me here, two are the main interrelated implications of Niklas Luhmann's perspective. Firstly, it advances the point I have been making in terms of the multiple possible relations between the specific and the general (or, if preferred, between the particular and the universal). That is, it helps me problematizing the "specificities of Brazilian formation", providing an interpretation according to which these specificities are not taken as an expression of a "singular" formation, that is, of a formative process alien to the "contemporary world". Secondly, it challenges modernizing perspectives that stipulate a single historical development for different societies, homogenizing differences under a modernizing scale that can

⁷¹³ I will not develop the deep implications of expressions such as "social question" and "criminal question", but both are of fundamental importance regarding the interpretation of "marginalization", "exclusion" and, it comes as no surprise, "modernization". I will address that in another occasion.

⁷¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty stresses that there is no "singular-in-itself"; Niklas Luhmann stresses the "unapproachability of the external world 'in itself'" (Luhmann, 2002, p.129); and, from a different angle, Gildo Marçal Brandão says that "we [Brazil] are not a self-referential 'singularity'", so that "the universal phenomena necessarily realize themselves among us, but in a different order which is neither a random one nor exclusively false" (Brandão, 2008, p.408).

take the shape of distinctions such as "backward/advanced", "developing/developed", "periphery/center", "non-modern/modern". By "internal differentiation", one can interpret the encounter of forces of different times and spaces. "Contemporaneity", as I propose here.

The notion of "contemporaneity" can trigger a problematization of the encounters of forces of different times and places - encounters no doubt very often deeply assymmetrical - that defies the inevitability frequently coupled with the notion of "modernity" and, even more so, with the notion of "modernization". That is to say, in no way my purpose here is to neglect the heterogeneities and the inequalities at play in those encounters I am proposing to be understood from the notion of "contemporaneity" - to the contrary. In my view, this notion enables a more fruitful interpretation of those heterogeneities and inequalities exactly because it does not automatically, or pre-reflexively, reduce them to a logic of modernization.⁷¹⁵

With that said, "the specificities of Brazilian formation" come to express a wider problematization of the lines of demarcation that separates and unites inside and outside, past, present, and future; internal inequality and external inequality. That is why, coming back to what I have stressed above, "heterogeneities", "local histories", "the heterogeneous Other" always carry some kind of relation with "the general", or "the universal". Another way to put that would be to stress that history and politics are not tied by any inevitable or natural bonds (periods), but by disseminated thresholds exposing inside and outside, past, present and future. As Jacques Derrida notes, it is necessary a "greater vigilance as to our irrepressible desire for the threshold, a threshold that *is* a threshold, a single and solid threshold. Perhaps there never is a threshold, any such threshold. Which is perhaps why we remain on it and risk staying on threshold for ever" (Derrida, 2009 [2002], pp.442-3, italics in the original).

I would add, the (non-)existence of the threshold is perhaps why not only one remains on it, but also why one remains projecting thresholds on others through

⁷¹⁵ To be clear on that: I am not opposing, as Walter Mignolo very often does (see Mignolo, 2006, 2007, 2009), a "rhetoric of modernity", or "modernization", to a "logic of coloniality". The notion of "contemporaneity", as I take it here, is not a rejection of "modernity", but a way of reinterpreting it away from a naturalized conception of "modernization". In this sense, the "interpretations of Brazil" addressed before are aporetic performances exactly because they embrace in diverse ways that conception, but also enable different critiques of it, allowing for alternative understandings of heterogeneities and inequalities.

iterated practices demarcating inclusions and exclusions, particulars and universals. The (non-)existence of Brazil, as Carlos Drummond de Andrade puts, can also be thought of as the inevitable risk of being on the threshold for ever, exposing, deliberately or not, certain political positions on what it means to be on the threshold, what it means to live in a boundary situation. Instead of the eradication of politics, this condition is what enables politics in the first place. Actually, it could be even be asked whether the attempts to leave this condition, towards a secure ground with solid foundations are not, ultimately, an attempt at depoliticization, not rarely a deeply violent one, based on some kind of imposition of what it means to be "modern", "Brazil(ian)", a "modern Brazil(ian)".

Previously, I have dealt with many interpretations of Brazil, and proposed to understand them as regularities in dispersion. The "objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices" permeating the texts were interpreted through the five traces of "formation" that can be seen as the nexus of regularities that govern their dispersion, including the different political positions they expose. Approaching multiple interpretations and focusing on their uses of "formation", my aim was not at building a coherent image of how "Brazil" is defined, much less providing a definition myself to what "Brazil" is. In this sense, Carlos Drummond and Michel de Montaigne come hand in hand: no Brazil exists, and "experience makes it manifest, that so many interpretations dissipate truth and break it" and that "[t]here is more ado in interpreting interpretations than in interpreting things" (Montaigne, 2012 [1588], p.1174, p.1176).

From what has been said, the problematization of the specificities of Brazilian formative process also brings to the foreground a certain problematization of "modernity" in general. Opting for "specificities" has a two-fold implication. Firstly, it highlights that "Brazil" is not a unique "case", and therefore any variation of methodological nationalism would be deeply problematic to some "interpretation of Brazil". It derives from that neither the necessity of restricting the approach towards some "smaller" unit of analysis nor expanding it to "Latin America" or "the Globe". The problem relies exactly on the premise that a unit, or level, of analysis can be taken for granted as the point of departure and the point of arrival. Secondly, the notion of "specificities" also implies that formative processes are connected, in a way that patterns of inclusion and exclusion do not correspond to previously

delimited borders demarcating inside from outside, and that lines of distinction do not require a previous difference between past, present and future. The iteration of identifications and differentiations exposes the shifting production of inside/outside, past/present/future.

The notion of "contemporary Brazil", as I mobilize it here, first, defies a historical teleological interpretation stipulating a progressive (or decadent) history from "pre-modernity" to "early modernity", then "modernity" or "Enlightenment", then "late", "post-modernity" (with all the possible variations upon that); second, it brings to the fore the contradictions between modernization and heterogeneities, or local histories, within and beyond the limits of the nation-state, without submitting those heterogeneities to some inevitability ascribed to modernization in the very first place; third, it questions the geographical separation between a "modern" center and a "non-modern" periphery; finally, fourth, it challenges the hegemonic modernizing perspective potentially at play in the conception of a "center in the periphery" and a "periphery in the center".

Despite those two last remarks, regarding "center" and "periphery", the reader may have identified that this text has been insisting on both terms, even if mobilizing them in a different direction, for instance through the notions of a "center in the periphery" and a "periphery in the center". The notion of "center" has been mobilized here in two different, but interconnected ways. Firstly, I have said that the search for a *center* named "Brazil" coexists with the absence of this center; rather than a metaphysical inversion from presence to absence, I have proposed to understand that as a structure of iteration that identifies "Brazil", but always in a different way. Repetition and difference. Secondly, I have claimed that certain texts on the formation of contemporary Brazil expose a site to rethink the relation between "center" and "periphery" away from a dichotomous and/or modernizing perspective. Interpretations of Brazil, therefore interpretations of modernity.

Yet, why should I insist on those terms and not simply propose "new" ones, given my uneasiness towards them? I would propose a twofold stance on that. On the one hand, I have decided to take a position in relation to those terms similar to the one I have taken more carefully in relation to "formation". Instead of either rejecting it or indicating forms to move beyond it, instead of going for or against it, I have explored a way of reinterpreting it through the "traces of formation" and how they speak to "contemporary (de)formations". That is to say, this is a way to insist

on a certain potential of those concepts to the problematization of "modernity" and of "Brazil" - of "modernity to Brazil", so to speak. On the other hand, mobilizing the notions of "center" and "periphery" is also a suitable track to recall that this kind of problematization has been raised in the so-called "periphery" for many decades now, partially with minor or no influence at all at first from certain "central approaches" associated to some variation of "post-structuralism", "post-modernism", "deconstruction", among others. As iterated many times here, not only I have strong resistances to "labels", but I also reject any taken-for-granted assumption regarding some "incompatibility" between "central theories" and "peripheral realities". My point, instead, is to avoid the all-too-common practice of importing and applying "advanced theories" to "Southern/third-world realities". Again, the notions of "center" and "periphery" seemed advantageous in that direction, opening a site to rethink "theorization".

Avoiding the projection of the inevitability of modernization is very different from simply rejecting modernization or modernity. The interpretations of the (de)formation of contemporary Brazil expose the need to rethink *how* "modernization" and "modernity" should be conceived (and therefore, how their relation with "tradition" should be conceived). Following that, my attempt in this text has not been to defend how I think (Brazilian) past looked like, how or what is (Brazilian) present, how or what (Brazilian) future will be or should be. Accordingly, I have not proposed any path along which (Brazilian) modernity should or should not move, nor have I decreed what (Brazilian) modernity is. Rather, through the mobilization of different texts, I have proposed an alternative interpretation of the play of inside and outside, past, present and future, in contemporary Brazil.

With that, I hope to have avoided the reproduction of what Michel Foucault defined once as a "blackmail". He referred to "Enlightenment"; I refer to "modernization" (and also to "formation"). As a hub of cultural, institutional, social, political, historical and economic conditions, "modernization" remains a crucial site of interrogation, "[b]ut that does not mean that one has to be 'for' or 'against' Enlightenment [or, modernization and Brazilian modernization, VCL]" (Foucault, 1997 [1984], p.120). Actually, it means, he continues, the need to refuse simplistic alternatives: "you either accept [modernization, VCL] and remain within the tradition of its rationalism...; or else you criticize [modernization, VCL] and then

try to escape from its principles of rationality" (Foucault, 1997 [1984], p.120). This refusal requires a "limit-attitude", that is, to move beyond an either/or logic, in order to be "at the frontiers", "reflecting upon limits" (Foucault, 1997 [1984], p.124) and upon the "politics of boundaries" (Walker, 2016).

I have begun this text insisting that the "interpretations of Brazil" expose a potential *place* from which "modernity" can be problematized, once they are addressed through the links identified between the "(de)formation of contemporary Brazil" and a "global or world-society process". Ultimately, however, I am providing no answer to the problem articulated. I would rather *interrupt* the text without concluding:

[i]n a world system that reproduces inequalities, how not to dispute a better position, closer to the winners and less truncated? How to escape the impaired position without joining those that impair? The reflection on the impossibility of a competition without losers; or, in other words, on the impossibility of leveling at the top - but which top is that? - impels questioning the order that engenders the problem (Schwarz, 2003).

Once more, what is at stake is not a rejection of "modernity"; rather, the point is that "those asking to enter [that is, to be included] often do not criticize or mind the costs, paid as usual by a new category of the 'excluded' from modernization" (Arantes, 2004 [2001], p.54). Iterating what I have cited in the first pages of this text, a "persistent critique of what we cannot not want" is perhaps the only permanent necessity.