

7.Capitalist (De)Formation: Minimal Decolonization, Maximum Modernization

Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995) published *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil* (The Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil, henceforth RBB), subtitled "essay of sociological interpretation", in 1975.²⁴⁹ The "explanatory note" that opens the text states that, when Florestan began to write it, in 1966, it was conceived as "an intellectual response to the political situation that had been created after the [military] regime was established on March 31, 1964" (RBB, p.25). The writing would be suspended for years, until 1973, when he wrote the final (third) part, finally finishing the three-part text: the origins of Bourgeois Revolution (first part); the *formation* of the competitive social order (second part, named as a "fragment"); and Bourgeois Revolution and dependent capitalism (third part). The end result is considered by Florestan a "free essay, that I would not be able to write were I not a sociologist, but that puts in the foreground the frustrations and hopes of a militant socialist" (RBB, p.26).

To begin with, Florestan's central question, needless to say, is whether there is a Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil or not (see RBB, p.37). To that question, Florestan responds in the following way:

"[t]here is a tendency, considerably strong and generalized, to negate it, as if the opposite [that is, the affirmation of its existence in Brazil] implied thinking Brazilian history in terms of repetitive schemes of other peoples' history, particularly from modern Europe. The question would be misplaced, indeed, if one pretended that the history of Brazil had to be the deformed and anachronistic repetition of those peoples' history. But this is not the case. The point, instead, is the determination of the way the absorption of a structural and dynamic pattern of economic, social and cultural organization has occurred" (RBB, p.37)

The notion of "Bourgeois Revolution", therefore, is not linked to an attempt to explain contemporary Brazil from the European sequence of past and present (and future). There is a specific historical evolution that Florestan is targeting: "[w]e did not have all of Europe's past, but we have reproduced its recent past in a peculiar

²⁴⁹ In 2005, the 5th edition of RBB came out.

form, since this past was part of the very process of implementation and development of the Western modern civilization in Brazil" (RBB, p.37).²⁵⁰

The formation of contemporary Brazil is intrinsic to the incorporation of the "Western modern civilization" and to its integration in capitalist economy. The absorption of capitalism in Brazil has taken place since colonization. Brazilian national society, as he puts in a text from 1967, has its modern historical origin through the "expansion of *Western world* and the role the Portuguese had in it" (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.9, italics in the original); hence, as stated in another text from the same year, "[w]e have *not yet* completed the absorption, neutralization and overcoming of the complex negative inheritance received from our colonial past" (Fernandes, 1975b [1967], p.155, italics added).²⁵¹ Capitalism was "deformed" (see RBB, pp.40-1) here, being "negative and regressive before being stimulating and positive" (RBB, p.40). In other words, the "*formation* of capitalism in Brazil" (RBB, p.44, italics added) is inseparable from its deformation, linked to colonialism. This scenario would change with the end of the colonial status brought by independence. Nevertheless, the national status did not represent a complete rupture; it retained components of the colonial world with a "renewed vitality" (RBB, p.47).²⁵²

Independence has inaugurated Brazilian "national society" (see RBB, p.49) and "has presupposed, side by side, a purely revolutionary element and another one, particularly conservative" (RBB, p.51): the former wanted to suppress the colonial social order, while the latter wanted to preserve and strengthen this outdated order. That coexistence of antagonist elements enabled, at the same time, the suppression of the juridical-political status *and* the maintenance of the moral, social and material substance from the colonial moment. Independence has become the only way through which the "lordship estates" [*estamentos senhoriais*] perceived the

²⁵⁰ Earlier in the text, Florestan had stated that "[i]ndeed, we did not have a 'feudalism', as we did not have the 'town' [*burgo*] characteristic of the medieval world" (RBB, p.34).

²⁵¹ In 1965, Florestan said that "[o]ur feeble 'bourgeois revolution' constitutes, for the time being, the sole dynamic and irreversible process that opens some historical alternatives" and that "[w]hile we do not make a definitive rupture with the invisible chains of the past, we will not achieve the minimum of autonomy, which is necessary so that we govern our 'national destiny' in the form [*nos moldes*] of the modern civilization" (Fernandes, 1975a [1965], p.170, p.171).

²⁵² Or, as Florestan puts in another text: "the so-called *traditionalist element* remains alive, operative and with high vitality" (Fernandes, 1975a [1966], p.106, italics in the original). Later in this text he adds that traditionalism has "dismal consequences", such as the "*deformation* of the forms of power inherent to the competitive social order" (Fernandes, 1975a [1966], p.108, italics added). Finally, in a text from 1967, he argues that the "historical path" turned Brazil into a "'modern nation', but of a '*colonial*' and '*dependent*' kind" (Fernandes, 1975b [1967], p.154, italics in the original).

possibility of eradicating the obstacles against their autonomy and full accomplishment (see RBB, p.78). Furthermore, this condition has transferred patrimonialism, previously circumscribed to the domestic and local realms, to the “estamental community”, comprising an “estamental rule” within the national condition (see RBB, p.78). These lordship estates became “the owners of power” (see RBB, p.81) in the independent state. As Haroldo Ceravolo Sereza (2014) states, this patrimonialist rule was neither feudal nor capitalist in the sense assumed to be European (see Sereza, 2014, p.234). In few words, Brazil “has been liberated from the legal condition of Colony, but has remained subject to a situation of extreme and irreducible economic heteronomy” (RBB, p.84); or, as Florestan stated in 1967, “the colonial bonds have only changed their character and suffered a transference: from juridical-political, they have been secularized and became purely economic” (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.10).²⁵³

The impact of liberalism was crucial to the evolution of Brazilian formation and its insertion in capitalism, since, “despite all the limitations and *deformations* that hung over its socio-cultural re-elaboration in Brazilian environment”, it provided the substance of “the modernizing processes deriving, first, from the end of the colonial status and, then, from the slow and heterogeneous, but also progressive, disaggregation of the colonial order itself” (RBB, p.55, italics added). Liberalism was able to cope with slavery and with patrimonial rule, without overcoming them at a first moment; the old models of patrimonial power relations and the new forms of power created by the legal order formed a “structural duality”

²⁵³ Although the expression “owners of power” can suggest an agreement between RBB and Raymundo Faoro’s *Os Donos do Poder* (The Owners of Power, DP), Luiz Werneck Vianna (1999) notes that, while the former is focused on the social character of patrimonialism, the latter is devoted to interpret the patrimonial state (see Vianna, 1999, pp.175-184): “[w]ith this sociological perspective [Florestan’s], that aims at analytically combining micro and macro fundamentals of the *formation* of the state, a new light is shed on the dimension of interest, which is not anymore seen as a place of innovation and resistance against patrimonialism [as DP, for example, would see], but as a place in which *status quo* is conserved” (Vianna, 1999, p.184, italics added). This is not to say they do not have similarities; the point is rather to avoid conflating them. It is not my point here to discuss the contrast between RBB and DP, however. I just want to point out for now that they figure as extremely telling cases in the interpretations of Brazil: firstly, they both make a central use of the concept of “formation”; secondly, they also center their interpretations on the concept of “patrimonialism” and its relation with liberalism, capitalism and state in Brazil; thirdly, the both identify this relation in comparison with “fully modern” cases in Europe and in North America; fourthly, despite these similarities, Florestan identifies himself as a “militant socialist”, while Raymundo is more generally interpreted as a “liberal” (although this should not be taken straightforwardly as an anti-socialist position); and, fifthly, despite these differences, both texts would later become appropriated in the foundation of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers’ Party). As my aim in this text is not to compare the interpretations of Brazil, these points will be developed in other opportunities.

(see RBB, p.56), in which liberalism, although being a historical reality just to the minority of “lordship estates” [*estamentos senhoriais*], represented the “alive cultural force of the Brazilian national revolution” (RBB, p.57).²⁵⁴ In other words, liberalism was not integrated as simply a reproduction of the “old” order; it challenged this order, being also incapable, however, of establishing a completely “new” one.

These modernizing processes exerted pressures derived from “the *formation and consolidation of a national social order*” (RBB, p.86, italics added). This modernization meant the participation of Brazil in the “contemporary Western civilization” (p.88), therefore the internal pressure towards modernization was of a very specific kind, inseparable from the ambition to be integrated into this civilization pattern.²⁵⁵ This has led to a state intervention that operated in the benefit of the “lordship economic interests” and in detriment to any other interest. In this sense, “the national State absorbed political-economic functions that are typical of the dependent nations”, but also worked as “an instrument of the estamental rule in the economic sphere” (RBB, p.92). This characteristic marks a difference from the historical evolution of certain European regions: there, the capital accumulation of the estament was “converted into a process of limited historical duration (that is, *into a stage of the economic development*)”; here, the process “has crystallized, gaining a recurrent social character and the meaning of a *permanent economic condition*, and persisting even after the disaggregation of the patrimonial social order and the universalization of the free labor regime” (RBB, p.99, italics in the original).²⁵⁶ If, according to Florestan, in certain parts of Europe capitalism has

²⁵⁴ Florestan completes by saying that Brazil, “[a] country that has barely emerged from the colonial status and that has not been able to overcome the social order inherited from the colonial system, engendered not only a quite *modern* national State, but, most of all, a State virtually apt to the subsequent *modernization* of its economic, social and cultural functions” (RBB, p.57, italics in the original). In a 1966 text, he states that the incorporation of the “Western civilization pattern” - or, in my terms, the encounter with a specific European modernity - has generated a general feeling of “profound insatisfactions, bitter perplexities and radical hopes, as if the moment had come to a definite choice between the *past* and the *future*” (Fernandes, 1975a [1966], p.101, italics in the original).

²⁵⁵ In a text from 1966, Florestan says that, although not being “completely particular”, the case of Brazil expresses, “in a typical way”, the reconstructive transplanatation - but not “reproduction”, “imitation” or “copy” - of this pattern (see Florestan, (1975a [1966], pp.96-7).

²⁵⁶ Gabriel Cohn (1999) clarifies Florestan’s uses of “class” and “estament”, saying that, in European central societies, Florestan identifies the replacement of the estaments (defined by criteria of inclusion and exclusion as a principal of social organization) by classes (defined by the principle of social organization that allows the unlimited access to opportunities, especially economic, while in Brazil there was a structural incorporation of the estamental organization into the bourgeois class (see Cohn, 1999, especially pp.397-9).

developed in a linear way, in Brazil, “there are two lines of capitalist development”: one originally linked to colonization and commercial capitalism, the other one originally associated with political autonomy and its corresponding historical tendencies, that is, the creation of a national state, economy and society through the incorporation of the “modern Western civilization” (see RBB, pp.104-5). It is plausible to say that these two lines express different encounters with Europe: one through Portuguese colonization, the other one through the insertion in capitalism and its incorporation as an “internal reality” (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.12).

This incorporation is not the plain reproduction of an European model in Brazilian reality, as the models of economic organization found in “central economies” would not be reproducible in Brazil, a “peripheral and dependent economy”; what happened, then, was an internally unequal assimilation, more intense in the urban centers and what came to be the “new” sector. This does not mean that at least in these centers the assimilation was complete, since even there it had to cope with the “functional and structural peculiarities of the existing market situation” (RBB, p.110). Hence, the economic models transplanted to Brazil have faced local conditions that produced a specific form of capitalism; and it took place a specific bourgeois revolution, in face of the “colonial, peripheral and dependent economy” in Brazil (see RBB, p.112). This peculiar revolution has produced an internal disparity between the urban and rural economy, the former becoming the “new sector”, the epicenter of a “new pattern of economic development” (RBB, p.124; see also pp.200 and the following). As I mentioned, however, even this new pattern was not able to reproduce the formation witnessed in central economies, since:

All over where it took place, the “Bourgeois Revolution” was always moved forward by historical protagonists that performed strategic roles to the *formation* and development of modern capitalism. As a rule, these characters belong to certain symmetric social categories and tend to fulfill homologous functions in the *rupture with the past and in the creation of new economic structures* (RBB, pp.127-8, italics added).

Hence, to Florestan, the bourgeois revolution, “where it took place”, implied a rupture with the past and the creation of something new; in this sense, the process of formation of modern capitalism has a clear before-and-after progression, while,

in Brazil, the before impregnates the after, the colonial remains within the national.²⁵⁷

The absorption of capitalism, to Florestan, leads to a typical social order, a competitive one. The dependent (former colonial) economies expose a different historical evolution than the one in central economies, to the extent that capitalism is introduced in the former before the "*formation* and development of the competitive social order" (see RBB, p.179, italics added). And, more than that, while in "advanced capitalist societies" competition was linked in constructive ways to "private propriety, free initiative and income and power redistribution", in dependent economies competition was "redefined, both economically and socially and politically, as a factor of an estamental income and power distribution - therefore highly unequal" (RBB, p.187). To put it differently, Florestan says that the formation of the competitive social order in Brazil was "deformed" by the existing colonial order (see RBB, p.192, p.199). This configured a situation in which competition was incorporated into "more or less archaic" contexts, provoking social dynamics that, instead of eradicating these archaic elements, contribute to "keep or preserve 'the past in the present'" raising obstacles to the formation of a class society (see RBB, p.199).²⁵⁸

The encounter between the colonial and the competitive order in Brazil - that is, between the colonial Brazil and the capitalist modernity - enabled a "temporary accommodation of opposing and exclusive economic forms", creating a "hybrid 'national' economy" (RBB, p.209), in which the "archaic" and the "modern" coexisted and influenced each other. This peripheral and dependent capitalist economy generated "a *minimal decolonization* with a *maximum modernization*" (RBB, p.209). In this process, instead of a clear periodization

²⁵⁷ In a text from 1967, Florestan said that modernization in Brazil in the XIX century "is equivalent to *Europeanization* and has *Europeanizing* effects" (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.13), but that this is not the repetition of the central European historical model of capitalist formation.

²⁵⁸ The formation of a class society is salient in Florestan's interpretation, since one of the crucial aspects of underdevelopment is exactly the comparison between classes in independent and in dependent capitalist states. In terms of future possibilities, Florestan says in 1967 that "[t]here is nothing prohibiting the disappearance [of the association of capitalism with underdevelopment]. And, if that takes place (or when it does), it is clearly predictable that the class regime will work as a structural and dynamic support to some form of self-sufficient and autonomous capitalism" (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.90). Although I will not discuss the point in detail, it is worth at least mentioning that influential texts written in the 1960s by interpreters associated to the "left" focused on the obstacles "populism" raised to the formation of a class society and to the emergence of class antagonisms, as opposed to what they identified in the formation of capitalism and liberalism in "modern countries" (see, for instance, Ianni, 1978 [1967]; and Weffort, 2003 [1978]).

marking a before (colonial situation) and an after (capitalist development), Brazil expresses a "rotation of the colonial growth towards the neocolonial one and, subsequently (and all that very quickly), towards the capitalist pattern of dependent economic growth and underdevelopment" (RBB, p.213).²⁵⁹ In other words, it was not the absence of modernization that has kept the "past" and the "archaic" alive, but, in fact, the maximum modernization articulated with the "colonial past".²⁶⁰

This blurred periodization is also perceived by Florestan in relation to the transition from the slavery to the free labor regime. As his interpretation of this transition paves the way for a subsequent move towards contemporary Brazil, it is worth quoting at length:

[f]ree labor is not born here under the mark of a market that divides and opposes, but at the same time valorizes and classifies. It emerges as an expression of the conventions and regularities prevalent in the suffocating Brazilian social order based on slavery and lordship rule. Instead of fomenting competition and conflict, it is born doomed to be structurally and dynamically articulated with the frame of *mandonismo*, paternalism and conformism, imposed by the existing society, as if free labor was an unfolding and an extension of slave labor. The rupture that would take place in the last quarter of the XIX century was 'mechanic' and 'static' before being societal, historical and political; [it took place] as a pure result of the existing incompatibilities between slave labor and free labor, colonial market and capitalist market, colonial production and capitalist production (RBB, p.228).

This mechanic and static rupture ultimately means an incomplete rupture or, in Florestan's own words (that I have stressed above), the preservation of "the past in the present". In 1967, in a text published in the French journal *Les Temps Moderns* (The Modern Times), the very first lines are the following: "*Brazil lives, simultaneously, in diverse 'socio-historical ages'*". Present, past and future are intertwined and confounded in such a way that it is possible to go from one historical stage to another through the most simple means: the dislocation in space" (Fernandes, 1977 [1967], p.111, italics added).²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Florestan adds that this process is similar to what had happened in some European countries, such as Spain and Portugal, and is also common to all the Latin American ones (see RBB, p.2013).

²⁶⁰ As Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda (2010) points out, the second part of RBB, a fragment, is dedicated to "understand the *formation* of the competitive social order in countries of colonial *formation*" (Arruda, 2010, p.22, italics added).

²⁶¹ One should not lose from sight, however, that this coexistence of historical eras is not simply an affirmation of the coexistence of "many Brazils" within Brazil. Florestan himself emphasizes that

This brings me to his move towards contemporary Brazil. Before quoting him once again, let me recall that this contemporaneity, as I am proposing throughout this text, is expressed when the interpreters of Brazil approached here to identify a certain past, in order to stress its reminiscence in the present, also conditioning future possibilities and impossibilities. To put it differently, I am exposing specific moments in the texts in which the use of the concept of formation is also an identification of contemporary Brazil.

After characterizing this rupture (an incomplete one, as I have mentioned) between slave labor and free labor regime, Florestan says that the lordship rule [*dominação senhorial*] was transformed into an oligarchic rule; this transformation, notwithstanding, kept the previous pattern of economic, social and political blockade of "the *formation* of classes and of the mechanisms of class solidarity, imposing the *conservative control* and the autocratic power of the elites of the dominant classes as the *historical thread*" (RBB, p.231).²⁶² This conservative control as a historical thread is constitutive of contemporary Brazil, according to Florestan; the competitive social order is curbed of its potential to foster structural transformation: "free labor was submitted, throughout the *formation* and the expansion of the competitive social order, to a process of a secular corruption..., which has removed, and *still* removes, from [it] the structural and dynamic basis of its elaboration as a constructive social factor (capable of feeding and giving meaning to the *bottom-up transformations* of the competitive social order)" (RBB, p.232).²⁶³

when he says, in a text also from 1967, that the "dislocation in time going through space" in Brazil is an "obvious reality", but it requires taking into account the ways these "heterogeneous and anachronistic forms of production" are articulated with each other, and not simply coexisting (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.52). The text published in *Les Temps Moderns* is focused on the racial relations in Brazil - or the "Brazilian racial dilemma" -; despite deeply related to his concerns in RBB (suffice to say that the interpretation of the connection between aspects such as competitive social order, modernization, the role of blacks, migrants and coffee farmers in bourgeois revolution in Brazil is also central to RBB, especially in the first two parts), I will not expand the discussion on Florestan's conception of race relations, since this would require a much longer text. Let me suggest, however, that if the purpose of this text was the detailed interpretation of Florestan's uses of "formation" in his entire work, it would be crucial to explore the way these uses are expressed in at least three interrelated dimensions: the formation of capitalism in Brazil (which is the one I am focusing here through the interpretation of RBB), the formation of sociology and of the sociologist in an underdeveloped world (see note 265 below) and the formation of the Brazilian racial dilemma (topic explored at length by Florestan since the late 1940s - see note 572 below).

²⁶² I have added italics to "formation" and "historical thread". Gabriel Cohn (1999) stresses that "autocracy" is not the same as "authoritarianism" or as "dictatorship" in RBB; autocracy is related to the "exclusivist and privatist concentration of power" (Cohn, 1999, p.404), and not to the authoritarian exercise of power.

²⁶³ I have added italics to "formation" and "still".

If one takes all the expressions emphasized in the last paragraph - "formation", "conservative control", "historical thread", "still" and "bottom-up transformation" -, one gets the clear sense of how Florestan's interpretation of the past is intimately connected to his interpretation of the present condition and of the future possibilities and impossibilities. And, if I can propose one more step here, it is also plausible to see how this interpretation of contemporary Brazil expresses a political position. This last aspect can be seen not only in his considerations regarding the blocked bottom-up transformations, but also in the way he closes the second part of his text - a text, it is worth recalling, written as an intellectual response of a militant socialist facing the implications of the military coup. There, he is still talking about labor, but goes much beyond: "[t]he human element or dimension of labor, as well as 'social peace', are rhetorical devices of an explicit bourgeois mystification, and when they need to go beyond [this mystification], traditionalist *mandonismo* and paternalism cede their place to police repression and to politico-military deterrence" (RBB, p.233).²⁶⁴ It is plausible to follow Gabriel Cohn (1999) in that, to Florestan, bourgeoisie in Brazil, being the dominant class, is profoundly averse to deep transformations and to class conflicts: "under pressure, it recedes to social and economic accommodation and to political despotism" (Cohn, 1999, p.411), which does not mean that it will always succeed in maintaining its dominant position, therefore in precluding major transformations.

I would also like to note how this intellectual response is directed to all the political-partidary spectrum, since, as José de Souza Martins (2005) mentions, the so-called "left" was also under discussion (see Martins, 2005, pp.15-9). In this sense, one can recall Florestan's claim that the bourgeois revolution in periphery is misleadingly interpreted when it is defined as a failure of bourgeoisie, "as many authors do (probably following implications of [Antonio] Gramsci's interpretation of the Bourgeois Revolution in Italy)" (RBB, p.343). Or, even more evidently, one can take into account how his effort to emphasize that no universal model of capitalist development can be applied to all historical realities, dependent or

²⁶⁴ Around the same moment, in the 1960s, Florestan says, in another text, that "[a]s paradoxical as it may seem, the 'forces of order' and of 'defense of social peace' are identified, in fact, to the indefinite survival of economic, social and political inequalities that are incompatible with 'mature capitalism'" (Florestan, 1975, p.198) (I was not able to precise the year this text was written).

independent, is intrinsically related to a critique of interpretations of Brazil endorsing a universalized Marxist model.²⁶⁵

Summarizing, before moving forward, I want to point out some general traces in Florestan's uses of the concept of "formation". Firstly, it is plausible to say that the organizing principle of his historical interpretation is constituted fundamentally by the concept of "nation", working both as the entry point of his sociological essay and the end (not necessarily attainable) point of the historical evolution he is interpreting. Secondly, the formation of the social competitive order and the incorporation of modern capitalism and of "Western modern civilization" in Brazil is not constituted by a series of clearly-defined stages of capitalist development, but by the coexistence of the past in the present, conditioning the limits of the possible in the future. Thirdly, this formation exposes the production of internal disparities, mainly between the urban and the rural sectors, the "new" and the "old" one. This internal inequality is inseparable from the wider capitalist development, that is to say, from the external dimension. This dimension works in two different, but connected ways. On the one hand, there is a comparison between

²⁶⁵ Although it is not my purpose here to discuss Florestan's conception of "sociology" or his deeply influential role in the consolidation of social sciences in Brazilian universities, particularly at the University of São Paulo, I want at least to suggest another dimension of his use of the concept of "formation" that is linked to that. Florestan's texts, as I am exposing here in relation to RBB, are mainly devoted to interpret the (de)formation of capitalism in Brazil; to that aim, he defended (for instance, in 1967) that it is crucial to foster a certain "scientific *formation* of sociologists" (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.17, italics added): "[t]he so-called *underdeveloped world* not only presents an enormous variety of different socio-historical situations, that contrast with [some European countries and the United States], but it would also hardly be possible to explore in a fruitful way those [conceptual, methodological and theoretical resources from Sociology], in order to study these situations sociologically, without judiciously adjusting them, be it to the work conditions of the subject-researcher, be it to the socio-historical and socio-cultural conditions of manifestations of the objects of study" (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], pp.17-8, italics in the original). All that with a strong commitment to science. As an anecdote, Fernando Henrique Cardoso recalls that Florestan used to wear a white coat in the Faculty to show "two things: one, that science is a labor and the other one, that sociology is science" (Cardoso, 2013 [1986-7], p.176). What I want to indicate here is how the (de)formation of capitalism in Brazil is connected to a certain kind of (de)formation - or adjustment - of the intellectual resources explored to interpret an underdeveloped reality. It is an *adjustment* - not a negligence or a denial - of "external" resources. All that aiming at producing a relevant knowledge, which means to Florestan in this text, that sociology should contribute to a "more comprehensive process of explaining and overcoming underdevelopment" (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.20). Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda (2009) highlights that this bond between science and politics is not the reduction of thought to the condition of an instrumental political concern (see Arruda, 2009, p.313). The fierce debate surrounding the relation between sociology and politics (which came to be also a debate on the role of intellectuals in governmental policies towards development) is beyond my scope here. Anyway, if I may say so, it is as if Florestan defended that a certain scientific (de)formation of the sociology produced in the center was necessary, in order to contribute to the improvement of the (de)formation of capitalism in the periphery. For other interpretations of Florestan's conception of science and his influence upon academic knowledge, see Ianni (2004 [1986], ch.13); Cardoso (2013 [2000]); and Arruda (2009).

the central (independent) economies and the peripheral (dependent) economies; on the other hand, there is the interpretation of how both kinds of economies are interconnected through capitalism, which means that the reproduction of the historical formation of central economies in peripheral economies is impossible, since their histories are already interconnected in deeply asymmetrical and non-linear ways. Finally, the formation of contemporary Brazil exposes the singularity of a historical process of the encounter between a colonial country, with its Portuguese legacy, and modern capitalism.

That said, I will now proceed to the third and final part of Florestan's interpretation of contemporary Brazil - the one he claims to have written already in the 1970s.²⁶⁶

Florestan begins this part defining bourgeoisie in Brazil. Unsurprisingly, in a comparative way. "Our" peculiarity concerns the relation it established with the state: "[u]nlike other bourgeoisies, that have forged their own institutions of specifically social power and have used the state only to more complicated and specific arrangements, our bourgeoisie converges to the state and promotes its own unification in the political sphere, before converting socio-economic domination in what [Max] Weber understood as 'indirect political power'" (RBB, p.240). As a consequence, "our" bourgeoisie has not performed the role of the "paladin of civilization" or of the "instrument of modernity", at least not in the sense of a social class (see RBB, p.240). The point Florestan wants to make here is that the innovation brought by bourgeoisie in other states was "diluted" in the case of Brazil; this occurred not simply as an effect of the resistance posed by the oligarchic hegemony, but also because the bourgeoisie itself has opted for an adjustment with what was already in place, "preferring the gradual change and the composition,

²⁶⁶ It is not my purpose here to discuss the differences and similarities between the first two parts and the third part. According to Fernando Henrique Cardoso (2013 [1999-2000]), the former is more Weberian, in that it is centralized on the human agents, taken as ideal-types, of the bourgeois revolution in Brazil, while the latter has a Marxist tone, focusing on the phases of capital accumulation (see Cardoso 2013 [1999-2000], p.189). Maria do Nascimento Arruda (2009) notes, however, that Florestan's contact with Marx had already begun in the 1940s: in 1946, he wrote an introduction to the Portuguese-language edition of Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*; in 1958, he did not directly participate, but intensely interacted with, the "Seminar Marx" (also called "Group of the Capital"), organized by his assistants and other young professors at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo (among the participants were Fernando Henrique Cardoso, José Arthur Giannotti, Fernando Antonio Novais). Karl Marx's texts were also taught by Florestan and Antonio Candido in their classes at USP on sociology and literary critique respectively.

instead of an impetuous, uncompromising and overpowering modernization" (RBB, p.241). In other words, the bourgeois rule in Brazil preserved elements from the past, being associated with "autocratic procedures" and being "almost null to the *formation* and diffusion of alternative democratic procedures" (RBB, p.243).

This fusion between the "old" and the "new" has turned bourgeoisie into a "naturally ultraconservative and reactionary social force" (RBB, p.250); all that taking into account that, to Florestan, dependent capitalism is, by definition, a "difficult capitalism", incapable of experiencing a "national and democratic revolution" (RBB, p.251).²⁶⁷ Underlying these adjectives ascribed to capitalism (dependent, difficult, savage) one finds a crucial assumption endorsed by Florestan: there is no such a thing as a "universal model" to explain the formation of capitalism in different countries (see, for example, RBB, p.252).

And one can go even further than that. It is not only the case that capitalism in dependent economies is different - difficult - and follows a specific historical evolution. It is also the case that it becomes undemocratic, autocratic. The statement of singularity is attached to another one - that I would be tempted to understand as a political judgment -, as if Florestan was saying that *unfortunately* "we" cannot be like "them" ("them" in this case corresponds more precisely to France). It seems inevitable to read this way affirmations such as: "[a] nation that seemed to prepare itself and to move forward to a Bourgeois Revolution in *a great style* - that is, *according to the French model* of national and democratic revolution - suddenly reaches... a new historical stage" (RBB, p.253).²⁶⁸ José de Souza Martins (2005) notes that the way Florestan specifies Brazilian condition in relation to the French one is another instance in which his text is opposing a Marxist interpretation endorsing inexorable stages towards a bourgeois revolution following the French historical formation.²⁶⁹ Or, as Haroldo Ceravolo Sereza observes, to Florestan the bourgeois revolution in Brazil is unable to fulfill the promise of democratization

²⁶⁷ The expression "difficult capitalism" is in italics in the original. Later in the text, Florestan says that this capitalism is "savage and difficult, whose feasibility is often decided through political means and on the political ground" (RBB, p.341; see also p.353).

²⁶⁸ Or, as he adds below in the same paragraph: "the ideal of capitalist development and industrialization... was the one provided by the already-mentioned French model, that seemed extremely appropriate to the perspectives linked to internal market and industrial production under 'our' competitive capitalism" (RBB, p.253).

²⁶⁹ It is not relevant here whether the French historical formation did, in fact, follow the stages ascribed to it; what matters is how this was taken as an external parameter to judge Brazilian formation, leading to different interpretations, therefore different political positions, as Florestan's text exposes.

(see Sereza, 2014, p.236). Fernando Henrique Cardoso notes that, to him, "our bourgeois revolution was not only internally *incomplete* (due to its *permanent* coexistence with the previous historical moments), but also *deformed*: we have not repeated the history of the *true* capitalism, 'theirs'" (Cardoso, 2013 [1999-2000], p.190, italics in the original).

From the two previous paragraphs, it is plausible to say that the bourgeois revolution in Brazil does not follow a universal model *and* that it follows an undemocratic path. There is a third peculiarity to be added here. According to Florestan, the trajectory of this autocratic revolution was "peculiar", but was neither the first nor the last one to have had this characteristic: "it seems that capitalist development points to this path as the normal one nowadays, which means that the present of Brazil contains the future of other countries that belong to the periphery of world capitalism and that are not able to proceed directly to socialism" (RBB, p.259). As Bernardo Ricupero (2008b) observes, "our bourgeois revolution" is, at once, peculiar to the country and typical of what takes place in the peripheral situation" (Ricupero, 2008b, p.191). Singular, autocratic and, in a certain sense, a historical lesson to the future of other countries: the complexity of the intertwinement between past, present and future defies a clear periodization logic.

"True capitalism" turned to be unfeasible in Brazil due to political transformations. Bourgeoisie was submitted to a "triple pressure" in Brazil: one having an outside-inside direction, associated with world capitalism; and the other two being internal. One of these internal pressures came from the proletariat and the popular masses, while the other one came from the state direct interference in economy (see RBB, p.254). It reacted to these pressures establishing connections with financial capitalism, repressing the working and popular masses and transforming the state into an instrument of its power. In other words, if, previously, lordship rule, prevailing even after the juridical-political Independence in 1822, had been able to keep its power without having to deal with internal and external pressures; now bourgeoisie rule had to establish itself through a heterogeneous composition, at once national and international (see RBB, p.256). The increasing internal complexity, accompanied by changing configurations of internal inequality, evolved side by side with external re-articulations. To the bourgeoisie, the friend/enemy relation was played out inside Brazil, the popular masses being their "main enemy" (RBB, p.256); to these masses, in turn, the friend/enemy

relation had this internal and also an external dimension, linked to world capitalism. Overall, the bourgeoisie central concern was, first and foremost, the problem of order, and not the problem of democracy (see RBB, pp.386-7).²⁷⁰

Florestan affirms that "dependence and underdevelopment" are not only external impositions, but also internally articulated (see RBB, p.262). To him, the Brazilian bourgeoisie was unable to conduct an "industrial revolution" because, "ultimately, it was beyond its reach the neutralization of the unequal paths of capitalist development: periphery, as a whole, *was backward* in relation to central economies, that engulfed it within their own transformation" (RBB, pp.304-5, italics in the original).²⁷¹ This backwardness must not suggest that history can be repeated, thereby eradicating this underdeveloped condition as if this was simply a stage to be surpassed. The way-out of this dependent condition requires the "rupture of the external domination (colonial, neocolonial or imperialist)" (RBB, p.339), since central economies and peripheral economies are two different "historical realities" (see RBB, p.340).²⁷²

RBB emphasizes the double articulation (internal and external) of peripheral economies. This does not mean that conflict, accommodation and competition among classes are features exclusive to these economies. The difference, however, is that "[dependence and underdevelopment] introduce new elements in the *formation* and manifestation of these processes that adjust themselves, then, to the nature of dependent and underdeveloped capitalism, which tends to introduce higher economic imbalances on the basis of the classes antagonisms and more rigid political controls over their effects" (RBB, p.323, italics added). At the end of the

²⁷⁰ One should have in mind that, from 1946 to 1964, Brazil had a democratic regime (I am not making any claim about the specificities of this democracy, though) and that development seemed a feasible goal to intellectuals and politicians alike. As Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda (2010) highlights, this period witnessed not only the strengthening of the academic institutions, but also the "process of constitution of democratic institutions and the creation of organisms dedicated to the funding of the Brazilian state developmental policy" (Arruda, 2010, p.12).

²⁷¹ To Florestan, as the existing alternatives were disregarded by the bourgeoisie, it ended up losing its "historical opportunity" (RBB, p.304).

²⁷² In 1967, Florestan mobilized a comparison between United States and Brazil, to claim that the former was able to "neutralize and definitely overcome the colonial structures, in favor of the emerging social competitive order", while in the latter this has not taken place, resulting in the "formation of a national economy doubly polarized" (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.22. italics added) - this double polarization referring to the coexistence of a "new" and an "old" sector. Later in the same text, he mentions the US again, as well as Japan, as examples of countries that were capable of attaining the condition of "modern economic powers", in this case with the difference that, in the Japanese case, the initial conditions favorable to this transition to autonomous capitalism were not even met, as opposed to the US case (see Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.46, n.27).

second part of the text, as I have mentioned, Florestan had already noted how the autocratic bourgeois rule in Brazil is linked to these political controls (police repression and politico-military deterrence). Now, in this third part, written after 1973, therefore in the end of the so-called "Brazilian economic miracle" (1968-1973), during which the levels of economic growth were considerably high, as well as the income concentration and the increase of poverty, Florestan says that the capitalist pattern in place is deepening the economic, social and political inequalities (see RBB, p.324).

All that leads RBB to an explicit answer to the starting question - that is, whether there is a Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil or not -: "the Bourgeois Revolution in the periphery is, par excellence, an essentially political phenomenon, of creation, consolidation and preservation of power structures that are predominantly political, submitted to the control of the bourgeoisie or controllable by it in any circumstance" (RBB, p.343). One of the crucial implications of this position is that one must be careful in order to avoid the qualification of this revolution as "frustrated", as if the peripheral bourgeoisies had failed in their projects. According to Florestan, both the national bourgeoisies in the periphery and the national bourgeoisies in central capitalist states want the same thing: "to keep the order, to save and enhance capitalism, to prevent the deterioration of the bourgeois rule and of the bourgeois control over the national State" (RBB, p.343).²⁷³ The target of the bourgeoisie has been to preserve the compatibility of the national revolution with the dependent and underdeveloped capitalism, or of "development" and the "revolution within order" (see RBB, p.350).

According to RBB, this "revolution within order" is linked to a separation of the nation from the civil society, reinforcing an internal disparity. Within this separation, "civil society" corresponds to the "enlightened" part of the population, composing the social competitive order, while "nation" becomes "an abstract being (or a useful *legal fiction*)" (RBB, p.352, italics in the original), mobilized by this civil society only to the extent that it does not threaten its rule. Instead of the nation, it is the bourgeois rule that "imposes itself as the starting and the arriving point of any relevant social change" (RBB, p.352). The double articulation mentioned above and the specific bourgeois revolution in peripheral economies preclude Brazilian

²⁷³ All this phrase is in italics in the original.

society from becoming a nation, as Florestan would like it to happen.²⁷⁴ Contemporary Brazil is constituted, in other words, by this double articulation, through which the capitalist transformation takes place under the permanent bond between "the internal unequal development and the external imperialist domination" (RBB, p.370) and a conciliation between the "Brazilian tradition" of a "restricted democracy" (that is, democracy among those that occupy the privileged position within civil society) and the "modernizing orientation" linked to a "strong government" (see RBB, p.403).²⁷⁵

The capitalist modern state in the periphery exposes the coexistence of different temporalities, defying any linear interpretation of its historical formation. As I have already said, this does not mean that the supposed peripheral realities are disconnected from the central ones. It means that their peculiarities cannot be interpreted from a universalized model. As stated in RBB, the modern capitalist state in the periphery is "complex and heterogeneous, [containing] *several historical layers*, as if it reflected the extreme points, the starting and the arriving point, of the transformations through which the capitalist state in the hegemonic and central societies has passed" (RBB, p.405). In 1967, Florestan had already said that underdevelopment economies such as Brazil exposed "the articulation of *heterogeneous and anachronistic* forms of production with each other", or the organic combination of "economic structures in *different stages of development*" (Fernandes, 1975c [1967], p.52, italics added). In the terms I am proposing here, the articulated coexistence of these several historical layers or stages of development constitute *contemporary Brazil* following Florestan's interpretation.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ In 1966, Florestan had stated that Brazil lacked a "national integration", without which its survival and organization as a "autonomous *national society*" would be hampered (Fernandes, 1975a [1966], p.118, italics in the original). In this same year, in another text, he argued that this "divorce" between civil society and nation exposes the failure in universalizing rights and duties in Brazil and in developing the country on "nationally autonomous bases" (Fernandes, 1975b [1966], p.146)

²⁷⁵ "Restricted democracy" and "strong government" are in italics in the original.

²⁷⁶ Let me insist once more that the qualification of this coexistence as "articulated" is crucial, since it underlies the claim that the "archaic", "old" and the "modern", "new" are not internal stages under an inevitable course of history that will witness the supersession of the former by the latter, repeating the stages supposedly passed through by central economies. The articulation, in other words, means an organic relation between these sectors, and not a linear arrow pointing towards inevitable and complete autonomy and independence. It also means the center-periphery external articulation in world capitalism. For a more careful interpretation of the uses of "articulation" and "polarization" in RBB, see Ricupero (2011) and mainly Cohn (1999). To put it briefly, polarization refers to the way liberalism points towards two directions: the colonial emancipation and the construction of a national state, that is, towards what has been accomplished and what needs to be done; articulation, as I said, refers to the internal articulation of the "archaic" with the "modern" sector, and the external articulation of the "agrarian exportation" with the "central capitalist economies" (Cohn, 1999).

According to Carlos Guilherme Mota (2003), it is possible to identify seven "theses" or "hypotheses" about "contemporary Brazil" in Florestan's late texts, including RBB. First, the Brazilian bourgeois has become counter-revolutionary since 1960s. Second, the oligarchic estament was absorbed into the class society in formation in the XX century, and not superseded by the latter. Third, the old dominant estaments have been integrated in the competitive social order and in the class society being formed and expanded. Fourth, national unity was forged by the bourgeoisie, once it has occupied the dominant position. Fifth, this condition of the bourgeoisie is not *fait accompli*, since its class solidarity is not nationally integrated. Sixth, the limits of the bourgeois revolution in Brazil precluded the formation a homogeneous Brazilian culture. And, seventh, the negligence and the neutralization of creative capacities and revolutionary impacts are associated with the ultraconservatism of the bourgeoisie in Brazil (see Mota, 2003, pp.405-9).

The "old" *and* the "new", "tradition" *and* "modernization", the "past" *within* the "present", the "inside" *and* the "outside". These incompletely traced demarcations seem to be conditioned, in Florestan's interpretation, upon another demarcation, this one very clearly defined, between dependent and independent, peripheral and central economies. Some considerations will make my point clear. First, as I have been discussing, the formation of contemporary Brazil in RBB exposes a historical evolution that combines continuities and discontinuities. The reconfigurations resulting from the encounters between, on the hand, Brazil (and its Portuguese legacy) and, on the other hand, modern capitalism and "Western modern civilization" must be taken into account also in relation to long-term continuities linked to the conservative control defined as the historical thread of this evolution. That is why the past remains, if only altered, in the present; and the old and the new form a hybrid economy. Second, these internally blurred demarcations (past/present, old/new, and also colonial/modern) are inseparable from the dependent and peripheral condition of Brazilian economy, therefore following a model completely different from the ones observed in independent and central economies. But this difference - and this is the third consideration I want to pose - should not be interpreted as a result of disconnected evolutions, since the reproduction of these asymmetrical (dependence) relations have been intrinsically associated with the inside/outside dynamics of capitalism. Finally, fourth consideration, if the inside and the outside are inseparably tied in the sociological

interpretation proposed by RBB to deal with external inequality, the same works in relation to internal inequality, which is also produced through the inside/outside dynamics.

The considerations above summarize five constitutive traces of the uses of "formation" in RBB: (1) the concern with the possibilities and impossibilities of the formation of an integrated nation, capable of supporting Brazil in overcoming dependence and underdevelopment; (2) the incompleteness of the transition from the "old" and "colonial" to the "new" and "national", and, more than that, the formation of an articulation between both sectors (old and new, archaic and modern) through the (de)formation of capitalism in Brazil; (3) the production of an internal inequality accompanying this articulation, as well as the inseparable articulation between the inside and the outside (hence, the double articulation characteristic of underdevelopment and dependence relations); (4) the comparative dimension, leading to the definition of the bourgeois revolution in Brazil as incompatible with the model followed by central economies and even by some former dependent economies, mainly the United States; finally, (5) the singularity of capitalism and modernity in Brazil, exposing the coexistence of past, present and future, and also expressing a potential condition to be realized in other economies following the way towards underdevelopment.

To go back to where I have begun, let me recall that RBB is a response given by a socialist militant. José de Souza Martins (2005) stresses the link between Florestan's option for an essayist form and the incorporation in the text of his intuitions as a militant. Known by his methodological rigor and by his previous resistance in relation to "essays of interpretation of Brazil", this option exposes the willingness to propose "an open reflection on an insufficiently documented reality" (Martins, 2005, p.15).²⁷⁷ When he wrote the third part of RBB, Florestan had

²⁷⁷ Maria Armanda do Nascimento Arruda (2010) also stresses that RBB represents a kind of retreat in relation to Florestan's resistance against the "essayist form"; to him, this form of writing, very common among the interpretations of Brazil in the previous decades (suffice to mention Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Gilberto Freyre and Caio Prado, who have all defined some of their main texts as "essays"), was antithetical to scientific sociology and represented an "estamental form of intellectual life" (Arruda, 2010, p.24; see also Ricupero, 2011, especially pp.112-3). The definition of RBB as an "essay" should not lead, however, to the conclusion that Florestan has abandoned his scientific principles - here as elsewhere, there is no complete rupture. Florestan would become one of the founders of the Workers' Party in 1980, would be elected twice as a federal deputy and would take part in 1988 Constituent Assembly, but he had already been involved in a political party in 1930s and 1940s, being an active member of the *Partido Social Revolucionário* (Revolutionary Socialist Party, PSR) (see Ricupero, 2011, p.121, n.3). But RBB should not be taken retroactively

already been compulsorily retired from university as a consequence of the 1964 military coup.²⁷⁸ It seems plausible, as Bernardo Ricupero (2008b) suggests, to interpret this resort to an "essay" of "sociological interpretation" as another dimension of his intellectual response. The titles of each of the three parts composing the text - the origins of the bourgeois revolution; the formation of the social competitive order (fragment); and bourgeois revolution and dependent capitalism - and the expressed feelings of the militant socialist give the sense of what is going on in RBB: a sociological interpretation (in an essayist form) of the historical unfolding (origins and formation) of the bourgeois revolution, its possibilities (hopes) and obstacles (frustrations), in Brazil (a dependent and underdeveloped capitalist country). In other words, this intellectual response is expressed in the content of the text, *as well as* in its form. Analogously, the "Western civilization pattern", when it comes to Brazil, exposes a different content, *as well as* a different process of formation in comparison to the one it takes in "central economies". Ultimately, reading RBB one encounters a form - a textual and capitalist form - that is *not completely* formed, that is marked by a fragment that links and articulates parts and sectors, ultimately achieving a *free* essay... about a *dependent* country.

as a manifestation of Florestan's coherent inclination towards political-partidary engagement - here as elsewhere, there is no inevitability in the historical-biographical trajectory.

²⁷⁸ The compulsory retirement happened in 1968, almost 25 years after Florestan has been admitted as a professor at USP (1945).