

8. The Formation Without a Form

In 1933, Caio Prado Júnior (1907-1990) published *Evolução Política do Brasil* (Political Evolution of Brazil, henceforth EPB), proposing to its readers a text in an essayist form.²⁷⁹ To him, colonization was the way the Portuguese Crown found to defend its territorial possession in the New World. Through the hereditary possessions (*capitanias hereditárias*), the Crown conceded to the private initiative the colonizing enterprise.²⁸⁰ Caio stipulates in this text that society is a faithful reflex of its material base: the agrarian economy, in Brazil's case.

According to him, the hereditary approach to land distribution followed a format similar to the one adopted by England in North America, "but, if the success there was praiseworthy, nothing, or almost nothing, was attained in Brazil" (EPB, p.15). This regime of land distribution is defined by Caio as "characteristically feudal" (EPB, p.15), but its failure did not leave a single relevant trace in Brazil's historical formation. This happened because, in the colonial Brazil ("Brazil-Colony", as used by Caio), the significant feature was that land propriety, in itself, meant nothing, except if the means of exploiting it and the capital involved were considered:

in this aspect, our *formation* is distinct from that of the medieval Europe emerging out of the barbaric invasions. [There,] the economic and political prevalence of the feudal lords was *directly and exclusively* caused by the land appropriation, which automatically generated bonds of dependence of the primitive occupiers in relation to those

²⁷⁹ In 2012 came out the 22nd edition of EPB. In Caio Prado Júnior's words in the preface to the first edition: "What the reader will read is not a History of Brazil... it is simply an essay. I have sought only to provide the synthesis of the political evolution of Brazil, and not to trace its complete history" (EPB, p.9). The first edition had the following subtitle: "essay of materialist interpretation of the history of Brazil"; the second edition, published in 1947, had a new subtitle: "essay of dialectical interpretation of Brazilian history"; from the third edition onwards, published in 1953, the title became *Political Evolution of Brazil and other Studies* (see Pericás and Wider, 2014, p.195, n.3).

²⁸⁰ The *capitanias hereditárias* were a form of territorial administration through which the Portuguese Crown delegated the colonization and the exploitation of certain areas to private people, due to the scarce public resources. This system formally ran from the sixteenth, in 1534, to the eighteenth century, being extinct by Marquis of Pombal, in 1759, when its hereditary character was abolished.

same lords. Here, it was not like that. The Brazilian politico-economic arrangement was not a product of the overlapping of one class over an already established social structure, this overlapping resulting from the appropriation and monopolization of the soil. It was lacking for us this economic character, fundamental to the European feudalism (EPB, p.18, italics in the original, except for the word "formation").

At the end of this extract, Caio inserts a footnote in which he makes clear the underlying dimension of his interpretation of the Brazilian political evolution, or formation: "This observation is destined mainly to those who, based on certain superficial analogies, prematurely make parallels that have no support in reality. We can talk about a Brazilian feudalism only as a rhetorical device, but not to express a parallel, that is inexistent, between our economy and the medieval European one" (EPB, p.18, n.8).

This interpretation of the colonial Brazil as something distinct from the European feudalism marked a strong presence in many subsequent interpreters of Brazil. This sort of interpretation of Brazilian modernity comes along with the contestation of a historical perspective tracing a progressive development from the pre-modern or the feudal to the modern or capitalist condition. To follow Caio's track, the above passage highlights the necessity of understanding the formation Brazil from its peculiar historical colonization and its (also peculiar) insertion in capitalism. This singularity is interpreted by Caio from the parameter represented by the English colonization and the European political formation.

According to EPB, since the seventeenth century, Brazilian social structure has been defined by the complex emergence of a commercial bourgeoisie. This emergence happened when the Portuguese Crown changed its position in relation to Brazil, adopting a more oppressive form, generating an opposition between Brazilian interests, mainly represented by a national land aristocracy, and Portuguese interests, mostly bourgeois commercial merchants. Consequently, the Crown began to limit the freedom of the private initiative, centralizing to itself the conduct of the economy and of politics in the country. This centralization would enable, especially after the Crown was transferred to Brazil, in 1808, a unique

political emancipation compared to the other American colonies.²⁸¹ Due to this transference and the English influence in this event, 1808 is considered by Caio the year that, in practical terms, Brazilian independence was made effective: "the old colonial administration mechanisms [were] abolished, one after the other, and replaced by other ones, already of a sovereign nation" (EPB, p.43). The American colonies, "around the same epoch, broke the subordination bonds that tied them to the nations of the Old World. But, while in the other American colonies, this separation was violent and consolidated in the battlefields, in Brazil it is the metropolitan government itself... that will paradoxically cast the pillars of Brazilian autonomy" (EPB, p.42).

Caio Prado Jr. makes sense of the periodization that marks the end of the colonial status and the beginning of the national autonomy through a Marxist primacy attributed to the materiality of the economic infrastructure. The political evolution in Brazil, different from the European one, constitutes a modernization *here* that is not equivalent to the process that occurred *there*.

EPB understanding of the "contemporary" deserves some observations. Firstly, it is crucial to see how Caio's construction of Brazil established a direct connection between colonialism and capitalism. Before becoming a sovereign nation, Brazil was not a feudal society, as it is the case in his comparative description of the European evolution; here, the evolution is defined by the increasing "economic penetration of the Portuguese, [reverberating] in the political sphere by the gradual waning of the local autonomy we had in the first century and a half of colonization" (EPB, p.41). This displacement of authority resulted in the emancipation of Brazil. The point to be observed is that this process is inseparable from capitalism, since the transference of the Crown is interpreted as an effect of the British pressure towards the opening of foreign markets to its products. In this sense, the formation of Brazil as a sovereign nation is part, from its birth, of the external conditions of capitalism. Secondly, the formal independence did not represent a complete rupture with old features of Brazil. The old and the new, in the

²⁸¹ After Napoleon decreed the continental blockade of England, in 1806, the latter was prohibited to trade with the other European countries, including Portugal. Portugal, in its turn, allied and sheltered by England, was unable to adhere to the blockade, or even to declare war on England; the country was, then, invaded by French and Spanish troops. Consequently, Dom João VI, Portuguese sovereign, opted to transfer the Crown to Brazil, so that, even being invaded in its European territory, the Portuguese state was not conquered.

formation of Brazil, coexist in this second period. In other words, the periodization Caio stipulates does not mark the separation of the old from the new, but an arrangement between them, a rearticulation of the before and the after. As Bernardo Ferreira (2008) notes, the colonial and the national do not correspond to the moment before sovereignty and the moment after it. Caio's interpretation of Brazil in EPB is marked by two different periodizations: on the one hand, one has the "revolution of independence" that brings political autonomy to the sovereign nation; on the other hand, one has the coexistence of the colonial and the national within this sovereign nation.

The articulation of both periodizations constructs a modern Brazil that is not fully modern; this construction is enabled, among other things, by Caio's assessment of modernity *outside* Brazil. Throughout his text, however implicitly, at least three dimensions of this external parameter of modernity are at play. The first one, already mentioned above, refers to the comparison between the processes of independence in Brazil as opposed to the other American colonies. The second one, even less explored, refers to the tension, witnessed at the moment of this process, between popular forces (composed of oppressed layers of the population); reactionary forces (composed of the "Portuguese party", defending the return of a colonial status); and the forces of the upper class in the colony (composed of the "Brazilian party", defending the consolidation of autonomy).²⁸² The external parameter is also visible when Caio affirms that the brutality of the labor regime imposed on the indigenous people by the Portuguese was one of those processes that we can still see "among the populations not initiated in the western civilization" (EPB, p.24). The final victory of the "Brazilians" is interpreted by Caio as follows: "the re-colonizing reaction, though supported by the metropolitan government and the Portuguese royal courts, will be supplanted because it was not possible anymore to stop the unfolding of the events and to make Brazil *backslide in the course of History*" (EPB, p.46, italics added). The singularity of the Brazilian national

²⁸² The expressions "Portuguese party" and "Brazilian party" refer to currents of opinion, and not official political parties, created in the debate surrounding the question of the relation between Brazil and the Portuguese Crown. The former, mostly formed by allies of the Crown and traders associated to the colonial trade, defended that Brazil should be kept under the Imperial command, while the latter, mostly composed of big land and slave owners, traders and self-employed people, defended a greater autonomy to Brazil. Initially, the "Brazilians" did not wish the political emancipation, but an Empire with two distinct Kingdoms; the unfolding of the controversies, however, led them to defend the independence.

formation is positioned in relation to its inclusion in a universal "History". Caio brings to the front the logic of a philosophy of History that permeates some of Karl Marx's texts, one of his main theoretical inspirations; nevertheless, instead of simply narrating a full insertion in this modern progressive History, the interpreter takes the Brazilian political evolution to be a deviant case in this "western" process, provided that its independence was concretized "more by one class [the Brazilian party] than by the nation as whole" (EPB, p.48). That is the main reason why his Marxism is not a general model to be applied to no matter where or when.²⁸³ By the way, in my view, it is completely beside the point to try to stipulate whether his Marxism enabled him to identify the peculiarity of contemporary Brazil or if it was the latter that led him to a specific variation of Marxism. Things go hand in hand on that matter.

The class prevalence leads to a third dimension through which the external parameter works. The "Brazilian party" has turned D.Pedro I monarchy (the one that replaced D.João VI) into an instrument of the dominant class, therefore he has become a sovereign of a precarious monarchy.²⁸⁴ In Europe, the course of History would transform the autocratic monarchies into modern states; in the deviant Brazil, however, the arrival of independence to its "natural course of evolution" (EPB, p.58), that is, to the modern state, followed a singular modernity: "it is not on [the monarchy] that lies the Brazilian national state, contrary to what has happened in the modern European states brought out from feudalism" (EPB, p.48). The class prevalence, then, is not a general analysis that Caio applies to the history of capitalism, but a specific interpretation to a specific, and singular, modernity. The process of independence unfolded the "first steps on the way to the country's 'modernization'. The old colonial structure, with the suppression of the obstacles to its progress, enters in a stage of complete remodeling" (EPB, p.83). According to Caio, it was inevitable that Brazil would be integrated into the "universal economy" (EPB, p.83). Due to this inevitability, concomitantly to its political evolution, the

²⁸³ Bernardo Ricupero (2009) defends that Caio has "nationalized Marxism", translating it to the specific Brazilian reality. Years before, Fernando Henrique Cardoso had said that Caio Prado Jr. "did something that is possible only in the Third World: a Marxist analysis in which servitude has trumped proletariat from the preeminent place; and in which the masters of the big land properties have not become feudal barons, but 'modern' exporter capitalists" (Cardoso, 2013 [1993], p.285). On Caio's Marxism, see also Octavio Ianni (2004a, pp.96-101).

²⁸⁴ D. Pedro I declared the Independence of Brazil on September 07, 1822. He would abdicate the throne in 1831.

singular modernity in Brazil also went through the integration in a "superior production form: the capitalist form" (EPB, p.88). The conservative and retrogressive past ceded towards the democratic and liberal evolution. The institutions of the Empire were incompatible with progress, what explains their decay.

Caio's interpretation plays with both a linear and progressive conception of history and an alternative periodization which mutually imbricates the old and the new, the colonial and the national. To reinforce this point, it is worth noting that the topic of the predominance of one class over the nation as a whole is linked as well with the inequality within Brazil. During the first and a half century of the colony, the social structure is composed by "two classes": on one side, the oppressing owners of rural lands; on the other side, the oppressed mass of land workers, slaves and semi-slaves (see EPB, p.28). In what regards the political structure, the municipal administration is considered by Caio "the real and almost sole administration in the colony" (EPB, p.29): contrary to what happened in Europe after the feudal regime was over, in Brazil this administration is not organized on a urban basis, but on a rural one. The urban population is excluded from power, which is owned by the owners of land in each region: "[the] colonial Brazil forms a unity only in name", but not in "reality" (EPB, p.31). After this first and a half colonial period, new social and economic forms arrive in the country. A bourgeoisie composed of increasingly wealthy merchants starts challenging the land owners. This is the dispute mentioned above between "the Portuguese" and "the Brazilians". The victory of the latter is associated not only to the formal independence, but also to a political arrangement that excluded the participation of popular classes, in favor of the upper classes that carried their privilege from the colonial moment to the national one (see EPB, p.48). The weakness of the popular classes would be dealt with again in another text, with which I will deal below. For now, suffice to say that this is one of the main aspects that led Caio to state how incomplete and peculiar is the formation of contemporary Brazil.²⁸⁵

In sum, the political and economic formation in Brazil is interpreted through EPB as constituted by the inevitable unfolding of stages in the Historical progress. This process, however, when it comes to the Brazilian condition, shows itself in a

²⁸⁵ According to Marco Aurélio Nogueira (2012), the inferior and intermediary layers were seen by Caio as incapable of acquiring an organic structure and a political consciousness.

very peculiar way. More precisely, Brazil is defined also by what it has not accomplished in relation to the linear history supposedly fulfilled by the modern European states. As it did not undergo a feudalism that predated capitalism and a consolidated monarchy that predated the modern state, Brazilian modernity ended up being a singular arrangement, in tension with the regulative ideals of western History. This reading of history and of the peculiarity of Brazil would be deepened in 1942, when the concept of "formation" was again at the center stage in Caio's interpretation.

Caio Prado Júnior published, in 1942, *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo: Colônia* (Formation of Contemporary Brazil: Colony, henceforth FBC).²⁸⁶ The title already anticipates two crucial aspects: the centrality that the concept of "formation" will occupy and the relevance of interpreting the past, in order to understand the present and the (im)possibilities of the future. In the beginning of the text, Caio reinforces the decisive aspect surrounding the transference of the Portuguese Crown to Brazil, in 1808, and the political emancipation that would be consolidated in the following years.²⁸⁷ More than that, he highlights the bonds between this moment and the his contemporary Brazil: "to those that try to understand Brazil, *including the Brazil of our times*, the moment is decisive" (FBC, p.9, italics added). The beginning of XIX century works as a synthesis of the preceding 300 years of colonization and

constitutes a key, a precious and irreplaceable one, for one to follow and interpret the ulterior historical process and its outcome, that is, the Brazil of today. It contains the past that has made us; it is reached by then the instant in which the constitutive elements of our nationality - energies and fundamental institutions -, organized and accumulated since the beginning of the colonization, bloom and complete themselves. Then, we enter in the proper phase of the contemporary Brazil, erected on that basis" (FBC, p.9).

²⁸⁶ In 2015, the 24th edition of FBC came out.

²⁸⁷ In his words: "[the beginning of the XIX century] delimits a decisive stage in our evolution and begins in all the spheres - social, political and economic - a new phase" (FBC, p.9).

As Bernardo Ricupero (2008b) points out, Caio goes back to the XIX century because it is when, for him, the contemporary history of Brazil begins.²⁸⁸ The contemporary Brazil, according to FBC, is defined by a combination between the colonial past and the subsequent transformations still operating: the historical process is not over yet, that is why the study of the past, particularly of this decisive moment, provides the reader with "indispensable data to interpret and comprehend the environment that surrounds him" (FBC, p.10). The colonial past is still in the present, even if in a modified form: contemporary Brazil is "an organism in an open and active transformation and that has not yet been deposited [*sedimentado*] in defined lines; that has not '*taken form*'" (EPC, p.11, italics added)²⁸⁹. In the first footnote of the text, Caio reinforces the coexistence of the past and the present, through a personal anecdote: "[o]nce, a foreign professor told me that envied the Brazilian historians, who could witness in person the most alive scenes of his past" (FBC, p.12, n.1). This anecdote could be taken as an incidental remark, marginalized to a footnote of an introduction. Nevertheless, it seems to be much more than that. By recalling it, Caio performs two moves at once: it stresses that the formation of contemporary Brazil has not yet reached the stage of a definite form and that, contrary to other countries, Brazil contains the past and the present in its contemporaneity. A privilege to historians, a problem to the country's formation.²⁹⁰

FBC stipulates that "[a]ll peoples, when seen from distance, have in their evolution a certain 'meaning'" (FBC, p.19). The original text shows "*um certo 'sentido'*", that I have translated as "a certain 'meaning'", while the 1967 English

²⁸⁸ Bernardo Ferreira (2008) observes that, in EPB, Caio's periodization dates back to the second half of the XVII century, while, in FBC, it is situated in the end of the XVIII and beginning of the XIX century. This difference is not relevant for me here, since, in both periodizations, Caio remains stressing that the past is still alive in the present. As I am not concerned with historical accuracy as a counterpoint to his interpretation, I will not challenge or endorse any of the periodizations he presents.

²⁸⁹ "Taken form" stands for "*tomou forma*". A literal translation would suggest "taken shape", instead of "taken form". Nevertheless, it is crucial to have in mind here the play between the formation and the form, that is why I have opted for the word "form", and not "shape". Another translation that seems to me adequate is "reached a form", since this conveys the metaphor of an organism in an evolution (formation) process towards reaching the stage of having a form. This problem also brings us to the difference between reaching *a* form and reaching *the* form. To put it differently: at stake here whether there is a single and unique form that all countries should reach or, at least, desire/aspire to.

²⁹⁰ Elsewhere, Caio states that "[o]ur history is still... present [*atualidade*]" (Caio Prado Jr. [1954] *apud* Ianni, 2004a, p.84).

translation added the word "pattern", suggesting it as a synonym to "meaning".²⁹¹ The Portuguese word *sentido* has different definitions; among them, at least two seem to be inscribed in the way Caio uses it in the text: firstly, it can mean direction or orientation of movement; secondly, it means the interpretation ascribed to some proposition, the signification. That said, when Caio says, later, that this meaning is one of "a colony destined to supply to the European trade certain tropical or mineral commodities" (FBC, p.119), I propose to interpret it as both the outside direction or orientation of these products of colonization, in detriment of the inside, and as the signification inscribed in the process of the formation of contemporary Brazil. Bernardo Ferreira summarized what I am claiming here as follows: "the colonial history is presented as a process whose meaning (signification) is strictly tied to the meaning (orientation) of the colonial enterprise" (Ferreira, 2008, p.500).

Brazil is an episode in the history of European colonization; the Portuguese colonization is but a part composing the whole. And the historian, according to Caio, must always have as its final goal this unity or whole, since it is through that way that the individuality that he is looking for can be defined - be it the people, the nation, the society, the country (see FBC, p.19). The colonization of the Americas is divided into two different areas: on the one hand, the temperate zone; on the other hand, the tropical and subtropical ones (see FBC, p.25). This contrast has profound consequences to the historical formation of these two areas, not the least because the natural conditions found in the latter zones came to represent to European countries the possibility of the provision of goods that were lacking in Europe. To that aim, the Portuguese captured indigenous peoples and practiced the slave traffic from Africa to Brazil.

While in the temperate zone, the New World was organized following the European model, "in the tropics, on the contrary, it will emerge an entirely original kind of society" (FBC, p.31); colonization in the tropics has been a wide commercial enterprise, aiming at exploiting the natural resources to the benefit of Europe: "this is the *true* meaning of the tropical colonization, of which Brazil is one of the results; and it will explain the fundamental elements... of the historical formation and evolution of the American tropics" (FBC, p.31, italics in the

²⁹¹"Seen from a distance, the evolution of all peoples has a certain pattern or 'meaning'" (Prado Júnior, 1967, p.7). The English edition received a suggestive title: *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil*.

original). The true meaning points both to the signification of the colonization and to the orientation of the movement inscribed in this process: "[i]f we assess the essence of our *formation*, we will see that, in fact, we were constituted to supply sugar, tobacco, and some other commodities; later, gold and diamonds; then, cotton and, even later, coffee, for the European trade" (FBC, pp.31-32, italics added). Brazilian society and economy are, thus, organized with a foreign objective, oriented towards outside the country, to the detriment of the inside.²⁹²

Covering a huge territory in the Americas, the Portuguese were not capable and interested in populating the country in an equal pattern. Hence, the population was considerably dispersed and concentrated on the coast (except for certain activities that attracted people in a disorganized manner to the interior), configuring an unbalance between this part of the colony and the interior. And even the coastal population was irregularly distributed, also concentrated on specific areas. Overall, the colonization "is not oriented towards the construction of a solid and organic economic basis" (FBC, p.73), which explains its instability and the superior intensity of movement of the population here, when compared to "what is normal in new countries" (FBC, p.73). Brazilian colonial economy was, thus, characterized by its outside orientation and by the concentration of its wealth in the hands of few owners of monoculture lands. The lack of structured internal market, derived from this external orientation, was one of the main obstacles to the consolidation of a properly national economic sector.

The bonds between past, present and future become clear when Caio defines that this meaning of colonization is "determined by more profound elements than simply the deliberate policy of the Kingdom... [and that] will condition the *formation* and all the evolution of Brazilian economy" (FBC, pp.126-7, italics added); or that "Brazil would not leave soon its colonial status in other aspects, even after becoming a sovereign nation" (FBC, p.127). José Roberto do Amaral Lapa (1999) noted that the future, to Caio, was not conceived as the natural unfolding of the present contradictions. Its potentialities, therefore, did not announce an inevitable future to come. The economic evolution of the colony took shape other

²⁹² Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in 1978, pointed out that FBC stressed the "essential contradictions" of a country that was capitalist, but also based on slavery; entrepreneurial, but also closed to the transformations that capitalism had taken to Europe following the Agrarian and the Industrial Revolutions (Cardoso, 2013 [1978]).

than through a progressive evolution compatible with its juridical sovereignty, and the coexistence of these temporalities is what links past, present and future.

Instead of blaming the settlers for this condition, Caio ascribed the fundamental problem at stake to a systemic condition, the agricultural basis of the country. This system fostered and was enhanced by the cyclic movement of the economy. All that would serve to keep the past alive in contemporary Brazil. In a footnote referring to his times, Caio exposes once more his position regarding Brazilian past: "We should note that today's largest rice producers in the country are [the states of] Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo. In the case of São Paulo, [it is] not anymore in the coastal area, but mainly in the uplands... *The contrast with the colonial past in this case is significant. We would be better off if this was the case in everything...*" (FBC, p.168, n.29, italics added). The coexistence of the present and the past in the contemporary Brazil is reaffirmed in many moments throughout the book. The "hard and painful" Brazilian evolution from "a simple tropical colony to a nation" is characterized as being "yet incomplete" (FBC, pp.215-6), raising barriers against Brazil's "industrial development" (see FBC, p.227). In other words, the juridical sovereignty of the nation shares the contemporary Brazil with colonial economic traces.²⁹³

Another peculiarity of the colonization in Brazil was that the indigenous people were incorporated since the first steps of the Portuguese in the New World, as opposed to what happened in North America. Caio stresses that this difference between kinds of colonization had important consequences to the internal dynamics in Brazil, since the settlers and Jesuits diverged in relation to the proper treatment given to the natives: the former incorporated them to labor, while the latter isolated them from it.²⁹⁴ In the black people's case, on the contrary, no problem was identified by Caio; he considers their contribution "certainly much bigger than the indigenous one" (FBC, p.106).²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, later in the text, one reads that

²⁹³ According to Octavio Ianni, Caio Prado Jr. privileges three processes in his interpretation of the formation of Brazilian society: the meaning [*sentido*] of colonization, the weight of the slave regime and the unequal and combined development (see Ianni, 2004a, pp.79-85).

²⁹⁴ The Jesuits came to Brazil with the purpose of diffusing Catholicism among the natives. They had been established here for more than two centuries, before the Portuguese Crown, led by Marquis of Pombal, put forward a strong anti-Jesuit policy. After the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil, the African slave traffic was intensified. There is a huge controversy surrounding not only the dispute between the settlers and the Jesuits, but also the XVIII century Pombaline Reforms. It is not relevant to my purpose here, however, to raise those debates.

²⁹⁵ The gradual disappearance of the indigenous people in their contact with the white people is explained by Caio with the resort to a general argument, ascribed by him to all places and all times;

"modern slavery", unlike "the ancient [Greek and Roman] one" is not linked to any "constructive element, except in the very restricted, purely material, aspect of the implementation of a trade enterprise" (see FBC, pp.270-1). This comparatively unfavorable condition in relation to the ancient slavery is aggravated by the fact that the American natives and the African blacks are considered "peoples of undermost cultural level, in comparison to their masters" (FBC, pp.271-2). If, earlier, Caio had said that the African people's contribution was bigger than the indigenous one, later in the text he would say that their contribution to "Brazilian *formation* is, apart from the driving energy [as a simple brute and unconscious labor machine], almost null" (FBC, p.272).

The indigenous problem and the introduction of African people in Brazil are directly related to another central feature in the formation of contemporary Brazil: miscegenation. Caio stipulates that profligacy was always "Brazil-Colony's norm" and that, despite all the negative accounts it has received, "it had, at least, this positive contribution to the formation of Brazilian nationality" (FBC, p.98). This is a result of the Portuguese capacity to merge with other races and Brazil owes to this capacity its unity and its own specific existence. The history of Portugal's formation is briefly brought by Caio, to show the provenance of the "plasticity of the Portuguese in face of exotic races" (FBC, p.108). This is also the reason why racial differences in Brazil would be less important than the social position occupied by the individual, as opposed to other colonized countries; more precisely, race is much more a function of this social position than of skin color (see FBC, p.109).

In sum, miscegenation is "the sign under which Brazilian nation is formed and that constitutes its most profound and notable feature" (FBC, p.98); or, as he puts later, the profound miscegenation is "the most salient feature in the ethnic formation of Brazil... [the three races] together and limitlessly merging, in an orgy of unrestrained sexism that would turn Brazilian population into one of the most miscellaneous ethnic ensembles that Humanity has ever known" (FBC, p.107). Caio warns that the tolerance inscribed in this proximity between the races must not convey the illusion that prejudice was inexistent. The "barbarians", as Caio defines the slaves of both kinds (natives and African), suffered the consequences of the system and of their inferiority, even if, in the case of Brazil, this relation benefitted

that is: when and where races with very different cultural levels coexist side by side "the inferior and dominated disappear" (FBC, pp.104-5).

from the plasticity of the Portuguese, who established a less severe contact with these inferior races.²⁹⁶

Between the two extremes - the slaves and the masters - a growing number of individuals are situated. This intermediate layer of the population is mainly, but not exclusively, composed of black people and *mulatos* - a miscegenation between blacks and whites. They constitute a "socially undefined element" or a colonial "undercategory [*subcategoria*]" of the population, repelled from social stability because "of the prejudice or of the lack of available positions" (FBC, p.282); it is "an uprooted element of Brazilian population", "more or less marginalized from the social order" (FBC, p.285).

This growing layer of individuals is the product of the cyclic evolution of the economic history of Brazil-Colony. This layer is situated outside the "patriarchal clan [*clã patriarcal*]", that is, the unit that gathers the masters (owners of the large rural lands) and the slaves: "an economic, social, administrative and, in a certain way, religious unit" (FBC, p.286).²⁹⁷ Caio interprets this patriarchalism as another singularity of Brazil's formation, "specific to our organization" (FBC, p.287).²⁹⁸ Patriarchalism, in FBC, emerges from the economic regime. The big land owner becomes an aristocrat, possessing wealth, power and authority (see FBC, p.289). Therefore, colonial life is divided into two sectors: on the one hand, the inorganic one, composed of this intermediate layer of uprooted people; on the other hand, the organic one, defined by slavery and the patriarchal clan. Regarding the organic section, he says that "slavery, in both the functions that it will put into practice in colonial society, that is, the labor factor and the sexual factor, will determine nothing more than elementary and very simple relations" (FBC, p.342). In relation to the other sector, one cannot even talk in terms of a "structure", according to Caio, since it is "unorganized", "unstable" and "incoherent" (see FBC, p.344), raising a barrier not yet surmounted by the constitution of modernity in

²⁹⁶ It should be noted that this less severe contact did not mean a "human and complacent one" (see FBC, p.277); the slaves were, after all, mere things, as they were in ancient world.

²⁹⁷ After using the expression "patriarchal clan", Caio puts into relief that this is "an already consecrated expression" (FBC, p.286). Indeed, it is widely used to define characteristics of the colonization and the contemporary Brazil. Nevertheless, this should not be an indicator that the uses of this expression are homogenous and unequivocal. On the contrary, much of the controversies in the interpretations of Brazil come both from the different definitions given to this expression and from the various positions regarding the possibilities and impossibilities of surpassing it in the so-called "modern Brazil".

²⁹⁸ In a footnote after this statement, Caio says that Iberian-American colonies and the South of the United States also witnesses this kind of organization (see FBC, p.287, n.36).

Brazil, since this sector has been incapable of superseding the structures of the old, organic one. Nevertheless, in this inorganic sector lie the forces that could impel Brazil to finally attain the still inexistent form. Bernardo Ricupero (2008b) grasps this ambivalence of the inorganic sector when he stipulates that what is a problem in the colony has the potential to become a solution to the nation.

Gradually, the colony begins to observe a fierce dispute of social forces, which is the "replication of the traditional rivalry between nobles and bourgeois that fulfills European history" (FBC, p.296). In the case of Brazil, the former are the land owners, while the latter are the merchants. This is the moment in the XVIII century in which "Brazilians" start to dispute against the "Portuguese", that dispute getting increasingly defined in "national terms".²⁹⁹ Instead of correcting this disparity, the Independence proclaimed in 1822 has put in place "a state that, although national in name and in its *formation*, reproduced almost entirely the Portuguese monarchy that it replaced" (FBC, p.345, italics added). The state was an external imposition, and not something that emerged from Brazilian society itself. The independent country gave a new life to the old traces of its colonial past.

In another footnote, Caio compares this situation with what occurred in the English colonies in North America where, "after the separation from the colonizers, it was created not only an original governing system, but an epical one that launched a dividing line in the political evolution of Humanity" (FBC, p.346, n.4). In contrast to the former English colonies, Brazil had reached a situation of widespread disorder. This represented a moment of a possible reaction and in which forces of renovation manifested themselves. After 300 years, the colonial traces were more clearly exposed in their negative side; once adequate and inevitable, those traces were now losing their force, incapable of sustaining the social structure in formation. The unbalance was getting deeper, therefore, to the extent that the disparity between the economic and the social structures were getting bigger and that the number of uprooted people were increasing.³⁰⁰ In sum, there were

²⁹⁹ In this scenario of disputes, Caio says that the Kingdom shows itself to be divided, although slightly favoring the "Portuguese". He also strongly criticizes the civil and the ecclesiastical administrations in Brazil, although he notes that the latter's skills are superior to the former's (see FBC, p.337).

³⁰⁰ Fernando Henrique Cardoso underlines that FBC puts into relief two concomitant directions of exploitation: the outside-inside one, that is, of the colonized by the colonizer; and the internal one, that is, of the lower classes by the higher ones (see Cardoso, 2013 [1978], p.146). Both these directions are linked to external interests, therefore to the unequal insertion of Brazil in capitalism.

"profound contradictions in the colonial system": the social divide between the land owners and the merchants; the huge number of displaced, uprooted people; and the growing revolt of the slaves against slavery (see FBC, pp.366-8).³⁰¹ The colonial system was reaching its demise from within; however, this did not mean that our formation would soon reach a form. Potentialities do not necessarily get converted into actual achievements. In any case, the coexistence of two sectors (organic and inorganic) and two temporalities (the cyclic and the progressive) in contemporary Brazil puts into relief the importance of both the contradiction between the economic and the political spheres, and of miscegenation to the future of Brazilian nationality.

In general terms, it would be possible to say that contemporary Brazil in Caio's interpretations discussed above is identified through a series of five traces marking the uses of "formation": (1) the concern with the "nation" as a potential achievement in an uncertain future when Brazil would reach a form; (2) the incompleteness of the transition from the colonial to the national; (3) the internal divide, and unbalance, between two sectors and two temporalities; (4) the external parameter, leading to a comparison between Brazil and other national evolutions, mainly the one witnessed in the United States; and (5) the singularity of the Brazilian encounter with capitalism and with modernity. Those five traces are intimately connected with Caio's political position, mainly in the fierce controversies in the political-partidary scene that Caio lived in a intense manner and engaged with permanently. Hence, before moving to another interpretation of Brazil, I would like to suggest some connections related to that issue.

The contestation of historical determinism had among its targets the interpretation endorsed by the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Communist Party of Brazil, henceforth PCB).³⁰² Caio's engagement and affiliation with PCB were full

³⁰¹ According to Bernardo Ferreira (2008), there is a modification in the materialist interpretation of Brazil endorsed by Caio from the first to the second text discussed here: while in EPB, the transformations of Brazil-Colony derived from the progress in the economic infra-structure, in FBC this transformation derives from the limits of this infra-structure, as the profound contradictions above would demonstrate.

³⁰² On his relation with PCB, see, for example, Ferreira (2008, pp.490-1); Nogueira (2012, pp.161-3); Ricupero (2008b, pp.132-6; 2009, pp.228-9; 2012, pp.20-2, pp.28-33); Mendes (2013); and Pericás and Wider (2014, pp.201-10). PCB was founded in 1922 as *Partido Comunista do Brasil, Seção Brasileira da Internacional Comunista* (Communist Party of Brazil, Brazilian Section of the Communist International); it changed its name to *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Communist Party) in 1960, trying to be legalized, but has kept its acronym (PCB); in 1962, a dissident group founded the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB) and

of tensions, not least of all because of the disagreement in the interpretation of the historical formation of Brazil, which was linked to PCB's political choices that Caio disapproved. According to him, in an interview given in 1981, he has always been a "secondary element" in the Party, "not in personal terms, but because of my way of interpreting Brazil. I have always been marginalized a lot in the Party, because of [my] opposition to political and economic schemes that I thought were mistaken in what regards Brazil" (Prado Jr. *apud* Pericás and Wider, 2014, p.207).

Despite the fact that Caio and the PCB shared the relevance of conceiving the movement of history in terms of a global process, they parted company in what regards the specificity of Brazilian formation. More precisely, the PCB and most of the interpreters associated to the left ascribed the obstacles to modernization in Brazil to the residues of a feudal past in its national formation: the modern Brazil would be consolidated once it removed this feudalism, following the European model, mainly the Revolutionary France or the English Civil War (Ricupero, 2008b; 2009; 2012). Caio, on the other hand, rejected this comparison, saying that the formation of Brazil exposed a peculiar condition, so that the European model could not be replicated here. In a letter from 1946, written to another supporter of the communist position, Evaldo da Silva Garcia, he said: "[c]an we reasonably affirm that there is already among us a correct Marxist interpretation of our country and our revolution? Anything that, if not close to, at least vaguely reminds us of what Marx did to the XIX century and Lenin did to Europe and, most of all, to Russia in the first twenty years of this century?" (Prado Jr. *apud* Pericás and Wider, 2014, p.200).

Caio was far from a deviant case in this sense. The impact of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the 1917 Russian Revolution, and other external and internal events upon the range of interpretations within socialist militants and/or intellectuals in Brazil has never produced an homogenous group self-identified as "left". Although I am unable to develop this point here, it is important to mention that the following decades intensified some disagreements among these intellectuals and/or militants. For instance, there were divergences concerning the appropriations of Marxism to Brazilian reality and concerning the relations that should be established between PCB (founded in 1922) and the Communist Party of

in the years to come other dissidences would take place (see Netto, 2000, pp.223-7; and Pericás and Wider, 2014, p.201, n.20).

the Soviet Union. Different interpretations of Brazil - for example, regarding the existence of feudal relations in the country and the capacity of the working class to conduct a revolutionary movement - were connected with different political choices - such as whether or not to adopt an armed struggle and whether or not to conceive the national bourgeoisie as a conductor of revolution.

A telling expression of the intense controversy regarding the existence of a feudal past in Brazil comes from the discussion around IV Congress of the Brazilian Communist Party that would take place in 1948, but ended up happening only in 1954.³⁰³ The "Program of the Communist Party of Brazil", approved in 1954, states that PCB "is convinced that the democratic transformations that our people necessitates and aims at can only be achieved with a democratic government of national liberation, a coalition government in which not only the working class, but also the peasants, the intellectuals, the petit bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie take part".³⁰⁴ The inclusion of the "national bourgeoisie" among the social forces that should struggle to implement "democratic transformations" became PCB's hegemonic position at that time. The document affirmed that "in the current economic, social and political conditions in Brazil, it is not possible to realize socialist transformations".³⁰⁵ Luiz Carlos Prestes said that the "proletariat" should "fight and march together with the national bourgeoisie against the North American imperialists and against the regime of big land owners and of big capitalists" (Luiz Carlos Prestes [1955] *apud* Ianni, 2004e, p.247). Socialism kept being the Party's final aim, but, in its interpretation of Brazil, the alliance with the national bourgeoisie was at that moment inevitable, since the country still had "feudal" reminiscences because of the interests held by "big land owners" and "big capitalists" and because of US imperialism.

Caio had a different interpretation of Brazil, as I have interpreted from EPB and FBC.³⁰⁶ In 1947, much of his disagreement was reiterated in a text contesting the theses that would be endorsed by PCB in the IV Congress. Bernardo Ricupero

³⁰³ The opening discourse of the IV Congress was given by Astrogildo Pereira, who identified Luiz Carlos Prestes as "the leader of Brazilian people" (see topic 2 of the document cited above).

³⁰⁴ This quotation is taken from the topic 6, II, 4 of the document approved in the IV Congress. The document is available at: <http://www.marxists.org/portugues/tematica/rev_prob/64/index2.htm>. Last access: July 22, 2015.

³⁰⁵ This quotation is also taken from the topic 6, II, 4 of the document.

³⁰⁶ It is not my point to attribute to Caio a more "correct" or "sophisticated" interpretation of Brazil comparing to the one officially held by PCB. I want, instead, to point out how their disagreements are connected to a certain political orientation endorsed by Caio.

(2009; 2012) mentions one of the reactions this text triggered from one of the members of the PCB, Ivan Pedro Martins, in the same year: "to deny, without proving, the existence of feudal residues in our economy [...] is a clear manifestation of what can be called an ideology foreign to the proletariat and infiltrated in the party" (Ivan Pedro Martins *apud* Ricupero, 2009, p.229). As Claudinei Mendes (2013) recalls, other self-defined "communists" reinforced the persistence of feudal relations in Brazil, even when they characterized their persistence in Brazil as peculiar (see Mendes, 2013, pp.204-7).³⁰⁷

In the already-mentioned 1981 interview, Caio said that

[t]he Party assumed that Brazil was a semi-feudal country, which seems to me an outrage. It is not an academic matter, but a concrete and very important fact in order to draw a political orientation. To the Party, we were living in a semi-feudal country that needed, therefore, a democratic-bourgeois revolution to put an end to this situation. In my view, all that was fantasy, even because of the shocking particularities that existed to demonstrate that fact (Prado Jr *apud* Pericás and Wider, 2014, p.208).

In sum, Caio's targets were not only those ufanist (or jingoist) interpretations of Brazil, but also those that neglected that the first steps of the Portuguese colonization were intrinsically related to capitalism. Although having taken place after the publication of EPB and FBC, his struggle within the Communist Party expresses very well these disagreements and the links between Caio's interpretation of Brazil and his political position.³⁰⁸

To be clear: I have not suggested a causal link between his activity in political parties, on the one hand, and his interpretation of Brazil in EPB and FBC, on the other hand. I am saying that they are inseparable, perhaps mutually constitutive. Going back to FBC, Bernardo Ferreira (2008) is precise in saying that both the colonial economy and the national economy play the roles of analytical

³⁰⁷ Claudinei stresses, however, that these disagreements should not lead to the conclusion that Caio and PCB had opposing and mutually excluding interpretations of Brazil (see Mendes, 2013).

³⁰⁸ This link kept alive throughout his other intellectual and militant manifestations, but it is not my point to develop this further in this text.

and normative terms in Caio's text; or, I would put, they express the relation between his interpretation of Brazil and his political position. In this sense, the controversies surrounding his dispute within the Communist Party of Brazil were inscribed in, and inseparable from, this relation. The contemporary Brazil, in Caio's interpretation, is characterized by an incomplete formation; a formation without the form. Despair and hope are very close from each other.