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Number 182

FOR AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE BRAZILIAN TRADITION
or
A virtude está no meio

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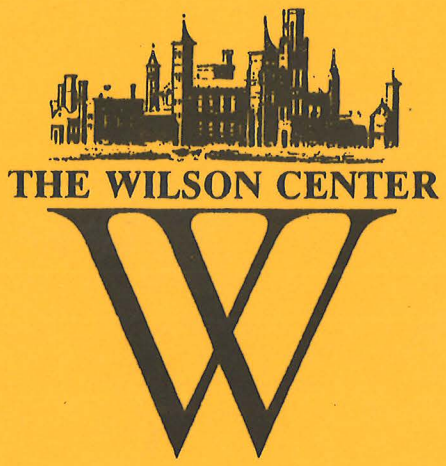
LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM



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Latin American Program
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

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Pouco por força podemos
isso que é, por saber veio,
todo o mal jaz nos extremos,
o bem toto jaz no meio

Sá de Miranda

To Dick Morse

Latin America is full of Lévy-Bruhls. Previously, it had its Gobineaus. Today, many deal in an impossible racial grammar (for example, that of Agassiz, Nina Rodrigues, and Sílvio Romero) only to demonstrate, from their doctrinal political view, that the continent is a true logical disaster. Or, more precisely, a socio-logical one!

The problem is that the observer rarely questions his own starting point. He assumes it to be logical and precise to the extent that he is part of a system capable of defining itself with a word (capitalism, modernity, progress), two or three well-known concepts (usually made up by the observer himself, drawing on his own weights and measures), and only one sort of logic--the excluded middle (the tertium non datur of the ancient philosophers)--that won't allow adding apples and oranges. But none of this works for the so-called "Latin American reality."[1]

To define this region politically (and sociologically), one must use at least five conceptual notions and two sets of logic, because south of the Rio Grande and below the equator we run on samba, pisco, caudillismo, carnival, and a kind of historical belly laugh echoing through a "living museum" (Anderson, 1964).[2] Or, as Howard Wiarda has said, Latin America is an extraordinary place, where "virtually all the systems of society that have ever governed men's affairs continue to coexist." In listing its characteristics, he creates an image that makes Jorge Amado's magical Bahia, Guimaraes Rosa's fantastic sertão, Mario de Andrade's hallucinated Sao Paulo, Jorge Luis Borges's cities of the absurd, and Gabriel García Márquez's renowned Macondo look like the most well-behaved places on earth. Wiarda attributes this to the absence of any genuine social revolution, which has permitted the continuing coexistence of Thomism, divine-right monarchy, feudalism, autocracy, republicanism, liberalism, and

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[1] For an analysis of the effect of this perspective on Latin American studies see Morse (1964) and Wiarda (1974).

[2] And, as Oliveira Vianna (1974:90) said, anticipating modern scholars: "Brazil is a kind of museum of retrospective sociology or social history."

all the rest (1974:214).[3]

Brazilian specialists are not far behind and today can easily declare that in Brazil and Latin America we have a "class society" oddly coupled with clientelism, syndicalism, corporatism, and strong-arm bossism--all of it filtered through bureaucratic enclaves. This leads us to conclude that we are not simply a living museum but a surgical room for conceptual and symbolic operations where everything is "out of place" but enjoys a theoretical free voucher. In other words, what one discovers in Brazilian or Latin American "reality" is isomorphic to those fashionable studies that trace every twist and turn of every theoretical current of the political and social sciences. Just as Latin America was considered in the late nineteenth century a living museum of races mixed in strange and troubling ways, so today it horrifies observers as a political, juridical, and social kaleidoscope--especially (and this is always camouflaged in the analysis) because one speaks here of <u>another</u> "American" reality, one without social "linearity," where time seems to have passed without generating "history." What in fact this traditional vision hooks on to is a mysterious "blend" of institutional forms that apparently has no grammar.[4] Thus we jump from exaggeration to exaggeration, finding everything imaginable in Brazil, and, fascinated by theoretically and ideologically impossible permutations, we end up more interested in listing theoretically implausible amalgams than in exploring their deeper logic. In short, we sidestep fundamental issues.

One issue arises with the concept of tradition, the abusive

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[3] The similarity to Oliveira Vianna (1974:91-92) is noteworthy: "Every kind of social structure . . ., all economic phases..., all of the cycles of social economy--from 'hunting and gathering' to a 'plow economy' to the 'industrial' and 'metropolitan economy' . . .; we find all of these types, phases, and cycles within Brazil, subsisting and coexisting out in its obscure <u>sertões</u> or blossoming on the plains or the coast: it's like the showcase of an ethnographic museum."

[4] Such an attitude reveals a predominantly "linear" vision and practice of history that assimilates all histories to those of Western Europe and the United States. All of them would reveal a process of "accumulation" by which certain institutions would substitute others seen as older, archaic, or "weaker." On this model no transformation would occur according to a logic for combining or mixing, allowing mixture to be understood in a positive fashion. And finally, this perspective does not allow for a distinction that I consider crucial: that between "nation" and "society." Ambiguous social forms can be adopted by a "nation," but excluded by "society." This important problem has been overlooked by a wide variety of scholars.

use of which has blocked any understanding of Latin American societies. When one speaks of tradition, care should be taken to avoid turning it into a mystery. To do this is to fall into a relativism that social anthropology has consistently avoided. Man and his societies are certainly diverse, but once differences are discovered, one must show how one difference can be turned into another; that is, one must go back over the road, retracing it inversely. Otherwise, all that is left is a catalogue of mutually inaccessible human experiences. Traditions reveal not only differences but similarities as well. Richard Morse was one of the first in the field of Latin American studies to show that traditions should be studied as "choices" or "options"--that is, as alternatives, made up of relatively integrated and dynamic groups of decisions about what to be, to do, to think; in a word, about what to value.[5] But there is only one road to get there: the contrast among various levels of different traditions.

If the concept of tradition is not seen as dynamic, it merely serves to legitimate domination, freezing differences and screening out an understanding of reality. So if there is, in fact, an "Ibero-American tradition," one must take a different route than do most scholars to reach it. We cannot allow ourselves to be content with the identification of the components of our tradition. The mere classification of butterflies--as Sir Edmund Leach said in 1959--is one thing, but it reveals little about the nature of these creatures. To break out of the routine of Latin American studies, it is necessary to give more weight to the less eloquent words of traditional descriptions. That is, we should be less taken with the fact that we might have Thomism, autocracy, and republicanism in Latin America and more concerned with words such as "mixture," "confusion," "combination," and others that designate what should really be understood: interstices and simultaneity, or, simply, relations (see DaMatta, 1979, 1985, 1986a, b).

Most authors who focus on the "Latin American" tradition address its constituent characteristics rather than relational ties among them and their underlying logic. Without recognizing such ties I do not think that an understanding of what constitutes tradition is possible. Every tradition implies a choice, a compromise (Morse, 1982), and, obviously, a legitimacy (or explicit recognition of its elements, logic, and message). In this sense every tradition is a fact of conscience (or a "moral fact," in Durkheim's term) and a selection. It is a fact

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[5] It is not by chance that Morse characterizes his book <u>El Espejo de Próspero</u> as a study of the "dialectics of the New World" and throughout explicitly contrasts the Anglo-American universe with its "variant" and alternative in the Americas, the "Ibero-Catholic" universe.

of conscience because every tradition tells us what should be remembered (and almost always with what intensity and when) and what should be forgotten. It is a selection because a tradition implies distinctions within a sphere of infinite social possibilities and historical experiences. For example, a process of selection is involved in the Brazilian concept of race relations. The "fable of the three races" was a Brazilian cultural invention that had little to do with an "empirical" history of our racial differentiations (DaMatta, 1981:58ff). But in order to situate this fundamental point of "Brazilian national ideology," it is necessary to contrast the way in which relations are conceived in Brazil and the United States.

In both countries, blacks, whites, and Indians played important roles in territorial conquest, colonization, and creation of a national conscience; but in the United States social identity was not constructed upon a fable of the three races that shows blacks, whites, and Indians to be symbolically complementary. In fact, America was founded on the ideology of the white element. Thus, in order to be an American one must be encompassed by the values and institutions of the "Anglo" world, which retains hegemony and operates in terms of a bipolar logic founded on exclusion.[6] In Brazil, the experience of slavery and of the diverse Indian tribes that occupied the territory colonized by the Portuguese generated a radically different mode of perception. This view is based on the notion of an "encounter" among the three races that occupy differentiated but equivalent positions on an ideological triangle. It divides the Brazilian totality into three complementary and indispensable units, allowing for complex interaction among them. In Brazil, therefore, "Indians," "whites," and "blacks" relate via a logic of inclusion that is articulated on planes of complementary opposition. In this fashion, Brazil can be read as being "white," "black," or "Indian," depending on the aspects of Brazilian culture and society one might wish to accentuate (or negate). Brazilians can say that on the plane of happiness and rhythm, Brazil is "black"; it is "Indian" with respect to tenacity and synchronization with nature; and all of these elements are articulated by a language and social institutions of the "white" element (the Portuguese) that, within this ideological conception, acts as the catalyst that combines them into a coherent and harmonious mixture. It should not be forgotten that the <u>mestiço</u> (as a valued cultural being) is a fundamental aspect of Brazilian national ideology in contrast to

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[6] I use the expression "Anglo" as a synthesis of certain crucial aspects of the North American experience, such as individualism, egalitarianism, capitalism (and the resulting commodification of social life), and the institutionalization of universalist criteria as central points in the rules of social life. See Parsons (1958).

the United States where mixture and ambiguity are still highly negative elements. These ideologies come to the fore once again in the notion that the United States was produced historically; that is, it was founded on a gradual and linear implementation of Puritan values in a territory that was expanding. In Brazil, on the other hand, one speaks of discovery, a chance discovery in fact, which allows for the articulation--on a richly symbolic plane--of the idea of luck, encounter, miracle, mixture, hierarchy, and complementary relationships among different elements.[7]

In short, the same empirical elements that permeate the entire history of the Americas are combined and experienced in different ways in each society in the process of constituting their respective social identities. The United States' identity emphasizes the Puritan tradition, founded on a logic of exclusion that considers undesirable anyone who is not a member of the parish; one is a "member of the community" or one is outside of it, and all members are equal in accordance with the constitutional laws that govern it. In Brazil, although these elements are recognized and, in fact, adopted as part of its legal and "constitutional" framework, the values of complementarity, inclusion, and hierarchy are emphasized. Racial ideology follows the same logic as other social institutions, in which an ideological pact hides or disguises differences, thereby making the ideology complementary. But in the United States, the difference is undisguisable and produces a real dilemma, as Gunnar Myrdal taught us (1944 [1962]). In other words, in the society with an egalitarian credo, race relations reintroduce hierarchy by way of a natural ("racial") code. But in a society whose daily life is founded on inequality, the experience of different ethnicities does not spill out of the personal and quotidian sphere and thus allows for the creation of a fable that treats the three races as complementary and, at this level,

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[7] I cannot refrain from pointing out that the first chapter in Brazilian history books always addresses the question of "discovery," and that there is a classic debate among Luso-Brazilian historians about whether the "discovery" was accidental or intentional. The thesis of intentionality would undermine much of the mythology that presents the Portuguese colonizer as innocent. It was Lívia Neves de Holanda Barbosa of the anthropology department of Federal Fluminense University who called my attention to the question of the discovery of Brazil as opposed to the founding of the United States and how this was consistent with the contrast between societies articulated in terms of individualism and those based on individualism combined with holism. For the question of holism and individualism see Dumont (1970a, 1970b, 1986) and Tcherkézoff (1987). For studies of Brazil as a system divided between individualism and holism, equality and hierarchy, see DaMatta (1979, 1985, 1986a, b).

equivalent. The result is the "equal but different" principle that Otávio Velho (1985) suggests might be the touchstone of individualistic socio-logic. Relational logic would be founded on the opposite principle and would go something like this: "together and differentiated in a complementary fashion." In one case, mediations are obviously impossible: one is black or white or Indian. In the other, mediations are not only possible but fundamental.

As Louis Dumont says, contrast among traditions allows us to perceive their values, or their encompassing elements. To state that the Ibero-Latin tradition is a scandalous combination of feudalism, Thomism, capitalism, liberalism, hierarchy, favors, corporatism, class domination, bureaucratic insulation, dualistic reason, and whatever else one wants to throw into the feijoada[8] is of little use--unless the respective weight and significance of each element within the tradition are analyzed.

To say that in Brazil the deep-seated combination of slavery (and of "favor" as a system) with liberal ideas is a social and political scandal, a symptom of "impropriety," and obviously inconsistent morphologically, as Roberto Schwarz did, brilliantly and precisely, is to give up too soon. Everyone knows that in Brazil (as throughout Latin America) everything is "out of place." But where wouldn't it be?[9] And what logic presides over this apparently prelogical untidiness? This is precisely the question that nobody asks! And for this reason the Brazilian tradition and the institutional framework that it legitimates

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[8] A stew of black beans and every conceivable cut of pork.

[9] The question is hardly rhetorical. If we take a sharp, unbiased look at the United States we will see pockets of hierarchy, patronage, and "favors" in university fraternities, in clubs and voluntary associations, and in rituals such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans (DaMatta, 1979, chap. 3). One needs only to examine university life, where personal ties open doors and provide scholarships or where antipathies generate sour reviews and limit hopes for tenure. Here we have Thomism, bureaucratic insulation, and all the rest; but in this case, as in France and England (to stay within this admired trilogy), the ideas are rigorously in place. It appears so precisely because the empirical variety of social reality (which is by nature variegated) is orchestrated and encompassed by a single credo or system of values--that of liberal individualistic egalitarianism, which is effectively hegemonic. The distinct impression of order and coherence produced by these societies, then, is closely tied to a heavy ideological framework that makes other forms illegitimate. The problem therefore is not that of discovering that things are "out of place" but that of understanding how articulations are undertaken by the society itself.

becomes such a tremendous mystery. Nonetheless, the puzzle begins to make sense when one reflects about the place of favor, of patronage, and of personal relations in the Brazilian social system, contrasting their importance with their role in liberalism. One then discovers what was tacitly known, that the personal relations and impersonal rules on which liberalism is based exist side by side in mutually exclusive, although complementary, social spheres.

In Brazil, liberalism is a matter for government and the world of economics--metaphorically, the universe of the street--while the ideology and values of favor and patronage in general function in the universe represented by the metaphor of the home. Not only does each set of values carry a different weight, but they move in very different spheres. Thus may arise the following type of circular logic: Precisely because I am a liberal in Congress (i.e., as recognized in national public life), I have the "right" to be a slaveholder or a paternalist at home! To use the very example of Machado de Assis, it is precisely because Machado is "a combative journalist and an enthusiast of the proletarian intelligence, of the classes," that he may also be (within the system that separates the street and the home) the "author of chronicles and commemorative pieces on the occasion of the marriage of imperial princesses, . . . a knight and eventually an Official of the Order of the Rose" (Schwarz, 1977:21). His behavior in the street seemed to confer the right to be the opposite at home. Would this be a personal inconsistency or a deeply rooted manifestation of a system that does not operate in linear terms and is not, in fact, governed by a single set of rules?

In my opinion, the analysts have contented themselves too easily with identifying the duality, taking it as something simply incoherent and "out of place." But why can it not be a self-referential duality, founded in "hierarchical opposition"? In this case, it would be important to examine how the behavior of certain people changes in accordance with where they are. This could reveal a logic to this cynicism or apparent confusion that might be more than a mere symptom of the tragicomedy that history seems to have reserved for Brazil.

When we investigate Brazilian reality, we are rarely able to do so from within the framework of Brazilian social logic; nor are we able to break out of the logical straightjackets we accepted along with the grand intellectual designs of the West. From them we learned that ideological contradictions lead to conflict and profound social transformations. In the United States, however, the presence of two contradictory ideas presupposes a homogeneous setting wherein conflictive coexistence is its own "natural" resolution. But in Brazil and in the rest of Latin America contradiction merely engenders inflamed speeches

in public and lively anecdote sessions at home.[10]

In a discontinuous medium, contradictory ideas can be hierarchically arranged on different planes, such that for some things I am a liberal and for others I am paternalist or patronal. The system allows me to use my right hand or my left hand to do different things and to give different meanings to the experiences of life. Certain anthropologists have shown that the right hand dominates for official purposes, while for others, such as washing oneself or having sexual relations, the left hand is key.[11] It is precisely for this reason that carnival, a rite of inversion that was used as a form of social protest and transformation in certain European countries (cf. Davis, 1975), has a secure place in Brazilian society alongside the solemn civil rites of the state and the relatively neutral celebrations of the Catholic church.

The study of our reality from this perspective has revealed not open conflict (which brings about transformative action) but growing radicalism as well as "word-proof" enthusiasm and political creativity (the "pactism" of Schmitter, 1971) that defy coherence in their cumulative adoption of all forms. The system is effectively cannibalistic (as Oswald de Andrade splendidly discovered[12]) and has an incredible capacity to perform as did Dona Flor's second husband, Dr. Teodoro Madureira, whose motto

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[10] One astute observer of Brazilian life, Ernest Hambloch (1981), who was consul of England in Brazil, used to say that "Brazilians are wordproof" because there was absolutely no consistency between what they said and what they did. He authored other observations, such as: "Politics in Brazil has nothing to do with political phrases"; and "Personal questions are a part of political life in all countries. But since the establishment of the Republic, they have become the quintessence of what is called Brazilian politics. There are no political plans, and even the question 'What plan should we adopt in order to convince the country to put us in power?' is not suggested. The question is but one: 'With what political elements should we conciliate in order to stay in power, or alternatively, to get there?'"

[11] See Needham (1973) and Beidelman (1961). In this case, however, I take Dumont's (1986) perspective, from which he criticizes the static nature of these studies and their ability to see hierarchical encompassments in the dualism of hands and consequently their inability to register the importance of the "left" in certain contexts that are defined by a logic of inversion. See also Tcherkézoff's broad critical study on the subject.

[12] The Brazilian modernist writer who issued an "Anthropophagic Manifesto" in 1928.

was "A place for everything and everything in its place."[13] Here is a social principle capable of conciliating everything as long as the context from which one speaks of or asks for something is mentioned. So it is not at all scandalous for us to hear (or to say): "I am only a liberal in Congress . . . after all, nobody is made of steel!" Or, as one of my friends says: "Brazilian men are feminists only with other people's wives!" Almost all of Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos's Kantianas Brasileiras fit within this model of contradictory visions. It is too bad, however, that their author discusses them only in terms of a supposed dual reason"--or to be more faithful to him, as a "dual ethic of national political reason"--when he could have done so in an "Amadian" fashion as a complementary, hierarchical opposition that has the tragic capacity to compensate the injustice of the system.[14] What is startling in the Brazilian case is not the existence of contradictions and cynicism, but the enormous tolerance of the system. To understand this tolerance would create the capacity to break through the duality and its web of compensations.

We must then investigate the dialectic of the Brazilian tradition more closely, paying more attention to anecdotes we recount at home with our friends and servants (criados) as well as to other cultural phenomena, which would move us to the complex grammar of encompassment and passages between "this world" and the "other world."[15] The Marquis of Paraná de Nunes

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[13] The reference is to Jorge Amado's novel, Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands.

[14] My reference to Dona Flor is not intended as a literary judgment. I use it simply as a revealing example (for reasons I have developed elsewhere [1985] and repeat here) of "Brazilian ideology."

[15] The enormous disenchantment with the so-called redemocratization process after the fall of the military regime has made some intellectuals pick up on the intolerant, authoritarian, cynical, and group-oriented side of the Brazilian system. As far as I am concerned, these characteristics are not the consequences of a static or immutable tradition, nor of "preceding institutional structures and behavioral dispositions," to use the unimaginative and sophisticated phrase of the otherwise perceptive Philippe Schmitter (1971:182). I think rather that they arise from a dilemma in the social forces that govern Brazilian society and the Brazilian nation. At the risk of repeating myself I refer to the modern forces of equality (which are involved in and put pressure on the constitutional side of Brazil) as well as to the traditional forces of hierarchy that operate on the personal and familiar side. The street and the home continue to be incompatible in Brazil, as they do in

Machado's favorite phrase, according to Oliveira Vianna, is known to every Brazilian: "I am capable of any sort of courageous act except saying no to my friends!" Revealing sociological intuition that is not always characteristic of his work, Oliveira Vianna (1923) explains that our "civic disposition" and our most intimate tendencies relative to our "conduct in power" are revealed in this phrase. We will not advance toward significant understanding of Brazilian and Latin American reality if we do not discover the deep relations between the impersonal commands of law (conceived as a function of "individuals") and "friends" (a universe governed by the implicit and personalized rules of parentela[16]). Thus, the marquis' statement is but a variation on the old theme, "everything for my friends; for my enemies, the law." Such expressions of loyalty are the web that still envelops personal relations in Brazil, setting the stage for such little rituals as "Do you know to whom you are talking?" and jeitinho, which are Brazilian methods of corrupting, skewing, and--this is the point usually overlooked--relating the harsh impersonal hand of the law to the gradations and hierarchically differentiated positions that everyone occupies in a web of socially determined relations.[17]

What I am saying, then, is that personal relations tend to encompass the law when the context is not serious or solemn, as it is in a public forum. In public the acclaimed Marquis of Paraná would never have said things that made the relations created in the sphere of the home sound so definitive. But at home, amidst their friends, such persons could "let off steam," expressing an occult social truth by way of a boutade, which is a

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many other Latin American societies.

[16] An extended family structure on which social influence is based.

[17] The Brazilian jeitinho is situated in harmony with the "favor." There are two aspects to the jeito: (1) the humanization by which the unequal (those who have power in a particular situation and those who do not) are equated by means of an irresistible appeal to the fact that we are all human and, in principle, ought all to have pity on one another; and (2) to get the "other" to trade places with the person who needs the jeito, thereby making him see things from the other's view. For studies of the jeito see DaMatta (1979) and Barbosa (1986). Roberto Campos and, following his lead, Philippe Schmitter speak of the jeito, but they do so from a moralistic point of view informed by the practicality they assume to be ever present in social life. From this perspective the jeito is nothing more than a flaw and an epiphenomenal result of dysfunctional laws and antimodern Catholicism, not a profound expression of social values. For a critique of "practicality," see Sahlins (1979).

Brazilian way of getting around a problem, turning a sociological dilemma into an anecdote. And this is a profoundly original and sociologically relevant way to divide the world and relate two fundamental elements of life in modern societies: the universe of personal relations on the one hand and, on the other, the impersonal rules that, constitutionally speaking, ought to determine our behavior in a hegemonic fashion.

It was in the context of personal intimacy that the great Joachim Nabuco, with his proverbial honesty, wrote in his memoirs that he missed the slaves (1949:231). Is this a manifestation of some sort of national perversion, or might it simply be the perfect recognition of a modality of "social navigation," a way of living Brazilian reality in which the economic and institutional world, the universe of the street, heads in one direction while the dominion of the home takes off in another?

What Nabuco said, to make it quite clear, is that he helped to combat the institution of slavery but that he missed the affective, personal relations that he had with certain slaves. We can condemn him as having a dualist, cynical, and irrational conscience, where everything is misplaced, in which case we are obliged to see the dilemma as a contradiction. Or we could observe that Nabuco is simply expressing what is a daily operation in the Latin American social universe: dividing the street and the home into two separate spheres so that he can relate one to the other in a deeper manner, by way of a personal comprehension that always allows him to <u>return</u>, <u>conciliate</u>, <u>reconsider</u>, and above all, <u>start again</u>.[18]

Such observations point toward a question that is critical to the study of societies in general and to national societies in particular. To say that a slave society cannot adopt liberal

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[18] Certain students of Brazilian society have called attention to the "hybridism" and the notable survival capacity values without--to my mind--hooking into their deeper logic. Schmitter (1971), for example, in the course of an extremely keen and important argument with respect to what I am discussing, speaks of a system (sic!; p. 376), mentioning the logical difficulties of a research attempting to describe it. In his words: "I needed a model stressing certain unique, relatively stable, and interrelated characteristics of an intermediary system that was neither pluralist nor mobilizational, yet has some features of both" (377). He then goes on to make a series of formal observations, contending that Brazil is a weakly integrated society. Yet he reveals exactly the opposite. In fact, we are speaking of a highly functional system that, operating on the basis of three codes, is capable of confronting all of its problems without, however, opting for any hegemonic or definitive solution.

ideas is to forget that ideologies marry without asking sociologists for permission. This gives salt to life; otherwise, the sense of social change and dynamism disappears. In the real world of societies it is the hope for change that creates alliances between the "most backward" and "most advanced." In fact, this relationship is in and of itself an innovation, although elites might see it as a disease or symptom. The problem is that this is an original innovation brought about by us. In Europe it was the coupling of asceticism and work in the religious sphere that allowed for the liberation of the enormous energy that appeared with the advent of capitalism. According to Stanley Tambiah (1973), Weber's thesis--often cited but seldom read--revolves around the notion of an inverted, surprising, and "indirect relationship" between an ethic based on asceticism, control, modesty in food and behavior, continence, and radical equality and capitalist accumulation. The discipline that liberates the individual from the collectivity to put him in God's service generates a religion of "this" world and makes it possible to unify "this" world and the "other"--the state and civil society; or, to use Brazilian sociological categories, the church, the home, the street, and the government.

As long as this context goes unperceived, nothing will change, and we will witness increasing contradictions on the strictly formal, institutional plane. Thus we will continue to interpret Latin America as merely a battlefield for the forces of right and left, liberalism and statism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism (and imperialism), capitalism and communism. But the critical fact is that, alongside these formal and institutional battles, which are no doubt important and are, in any event, branded on our political factions and interest groups, another, more profound and clandestine battle is taking place.

What battle is this? It occurs between the formal or "constitutional" level of the system and the group of unwritten personal codes of conduct that are considered "natural" by members of the system. The question is to know whether these formal rules--which were born with the bourgeois state, these "national and constitutional laws" that are conscious, written down, and designed for the "individual" as a responsible political and juridical subject and that are at the base of the so-called "nation state"--encompass the rules that effectively order society. My thesis is that there is a deep relationship between these two dimensions of the social life of countries like Brazil, where a system of personal relations and a national order founded on this code perpetuated itself and later came into profound conflict with a liberal set of ideas invented in Europe and the United States on the basis of radically different historical experiences. This is especially true in the Brazilian case, which had an atypical, even original colonial history, marked by the presence of the royal family in Rio de Janeiro from

1808 to 1831![19]

At this point a cultural or symbolic analysis can be of help. I used it in studying carnival as a national ritual. The question was not to analyze carnival in and of itself but to show how the Brazilian social world and its consequent identity are constituted and celebrated by way of carnival along with two other cycles of celebrations: civic rites that legitimate transmission, recuperation, and even loss of power--such as graduation ceremonies, political rallies, and inauguration rituals (DaMatta 1983a, 1986b),[20] and the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church, which serve as the paradigm and reference point for ties between this and the other world. The social system, in other words, has institutionalized three modes of self-celebration that appear to be rigorously incompatible and even contradictory, as many foreigners have noted. In 1986 Brian Gumble, of NBC's "Today Show," after seeing the whole formidable and paradoxical parade of Rio's samba schools, asked me: "Why this celebration, with so much luxury and waste, when there are so many poor people here?" Clearly for Mr. Gumble the celebrations were out of place. How could a poor country ritualize a luxurious, sensual, and complete utopia that is, aside from all else, so joyful? This could never happen following the deepest Western logic: If a society is poor, it can celebrate only its own misery. This would be not only functional but also linear and coherent. Yet in spite of the bourgeois logic that confines our imagination, there is a profound link between everyday suffering and the subversive drama that carnival presents.

We may understand the problem if we avoid a linear answer. We might say that there is a luxurious carnival precisely because there is social misery and little political space for the exercise of citizenship. Relations are then not linear or transitive but circular or dialectical. Only when there is hierarchy, attended by social and economic misery, is a ritual of disorder like carnival celebrated, whose symbolism allows people

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[19] Brazilian studies seem to have a case of sociological amnesia with respect to this fact for which, as far as I know, there exists no good symbolic, political, or ideological evaluation.

[20] No one has studied the symbols associated with the peaceful transmission of power in Brazil and Latin America, such as the "presidential sash" which is "penetrated" by the president-elect, the man who encompasses the entire system (see DaMatta, 1986a, b). Nor has anyone studied the symbols associated with violent takeovers in which "putting the tanks on the street" and/or "closing the Congress" literally signify the use of the armed forces in favor of the political interests of a certain group.

to inquire into the possibilities of changing social places, even if briefly. Joãozinho Trinta, the immensely creative stylist of the Beija-Flor Samba School of Nilópolis, Rio de Janeiro, said it better than anyone else: "Intellectuals are the ones who like misery; the poor prefer luxury." This phrase describes not only the spontaneity and authenticity of carnivalization (the ritual of trading social places) but also the more profound perception that things do not always "go together." On the contrary, they may follow complementary and apparently contradictory paths. In truth, Joãozinho Trinta is also saying that during carnival the social world is not encompassed by the values of linear and practical reason that ties ideas in Calvinist fashion to words and behavior. A carnival cannot be confused with a jeremiad--"a ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public and private identity," as Bercovitch tells us.[21] In carnival, existence is momentarily encompassed by the poor disguised as wealthy, representing themselves as nobles. In this fashion rich and poor, dominators and oppressed, express a difficult and profound relationship.

To complicate matters further, a few months after carnival a military parade engulfs this same reality in the values of nationalism--the "beloved country"--in all their symbolic and emblematic richness. Here we have another idea of order, where the system navigates under the hand of its "constituted authorities," geometrically grouped and packaged by the national anthem in commemoration of "Dia de Pátria,"[22] creating a community around the concept of "nation." But when we celebrate our nationality within the realm of modern symbols of citizenship and informed by the idea of the nation state, we enact a drama that is the exact opposite of carnival. Here we dramatize hierarchy and not carnivalesque equality. In the military parade, and even in progressive political rallies, we emphasize hierarchy, presenting an esthetic space based on carefully

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[21] Bercovitch (1978:11) then speaks as follows of the American jeremiad: "The question in these latter-day jeremiads, as in their seventeenth-century precursors, was never `Who are we?' but, almost in deliberate evasion of that question, the old prophetic refrain: 'When is our errand to be fulfilled? How long, O Lord, how long?' All the answers, again as in the Puritan jeremiads, invariably joined lament and celebration in reaffirming America's mission." Again, the contrast with Brazil is flagrant. Among us the big question is "Who are we?": a question that leads not to voyage but to a metaphysics of "races" and political and social doctrines.

[22] "Fatherland Day," although overly Teutonic, is the closest translation of "Dia de Pátria." It commemorates Brazil's independence (7 September) from Portugal.

demarcated positions, with each character in its proper place.[23]

This type of civic ritual, however, is not inclusive or dominant as it is in the American case where civic culture--or a true "civil religion," to borrow Robert Bellah's (1975) use of Rousseau's expression--permeates not only the values of daily life but also the logic of large-scale social dramatizations like Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Veterans Day (splendidly analyzed by Lloyd Warner [1959] as a rite that celebrates war and empire).[24] But if Americans have days of celebration, we have weeks. After Fatherland week we find ourselves involved in "Holy week," where we can celebrate the social unity encompassed by the values of the "other world" as propounded by the Roman Catholic Church in its rites and ideology. Here, we know, exists a clear division of social positions but also an undifferentiated "carnival" of pleas and supplications from all social levels and statuses, unified under the mantle of a saint or the Virgin.

I have emphasized the circularity and the various complementary and hierarchized modes of national celebration instead of claiming that this ritual behavior shows contradiction, historical or sociological indecision, or cultural irrationality. Is it possible that Brazil is caught among one perspective that is truly Catholic, another that is authentically civic and modern, and still another that is fully popular and carnivalesque? Or does society behave exactly like Dona Flor--Jorge Amado's character and also a metaphor for Brazil (DaMatta 1985)--who chose all three and accepted each at similar

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[23] All Brazilian political rallies follow a standardized pattern that combines elements of processions, carnival, and military parades. The quasireligious and charismatic nature of certain themes and personalities is characteristic of processions. The climate of political change, the possibility of changing regimes, the times, and the people by trading places is carnivalesque. And military parades lend a hierarchical element to political rallies, visible in the emphais on the speakers' platform and consequently on the division between candidates and politicians on the one hand and the people on the other. There is also a rigid hierarchy in the order of speeches. It is important to "get the last laugh," and whomever speaks last dominates the entire event. There are frequent incidents--as in the charismatic free elections campaign of 1984--caused by people attempting to climb up onto the platform and be near those who organize and address the event. But pictures of these rallies demonstrate their kinship with military parades, with the "superiors" affirming their position metonymically.

[24] Parodying Almond and Verba (1963), one could say that America does not have a "civic culture" but a "culture" encompassed by civic values, which seems to be a very different matter.

and complementary levels of seriousness? This interpretive possibility is the key to a sociological understanding of Brazil and, by extension, Latin America and our so-called "Ibero-Latin tradition."

This sketch of Brazilian rituals reflects on the larger social sphere of elements that compose our tradition. But from the perspective I suggest everything changes. We are not dealing merely with contradiction, cynicism, or out-of-place ideas but with a social logic that interrelates the system, exploiting the ambiguities of its intermediate ranges. This said, we must think of Brazilian society as a process of mediation between poles and not, as has been the practice, construe our reality as having but a "dualistic rationale." We have been using an individualized epistemology to study a reality that functions relationally.

We may speak of Brazil as a system of opposition between blacks and whites with Indians mediating between the two; or between people and the government with the church mediating. Mediatorial figures are neglected in Brazilian sociology (excepting the classic works of Gilberto Freyre and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda). This has led analysts to see our social logic as contradictory when it is also triadic, complementary, and hierarchical. From a formal academic position the mulatto can be reduced to a black or a white, and this has been presented as an "advance" over other explanations.[25] From society's view, however, the "mulatto" is not simply the empirical result of a physical and sexual relation between "races" but also the crystallization of the possibility for encompassing opposition. Using comparative historical analysis, Carl Degler (1971) understood the mulatto within the Brazilian racial system as an "escape hatch"--a valve that liberates social tensions and allows for compensations. I similarly interpret the Brazilian system as <u>substantively</u> <u>functional</u> and exhibiting original sequences of <u>social</u> <u>compensation</u>.

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[25] I particularly have in mind "Marxist" interpretations that reduce racial prejudice to a mere reflex of the economic structure that is interpreted as "class structure." Crasser forms of this model forget two crucial points. The first is that "class structure" in the case of Brazil and Latin America should be discussed in terms of patronage and favors; the second is that the "Brazilian racial system," with all of its mythology and fablizing, creates its own etiquette, its own symbolism, and manifests itself in a style that should be investigated. It certainly does not exist in a sociological vacuum, but this does not mean that it should be seen as a reflex of a "class structure," which ultimately is also symbolic (and conventional). Once invented and implemented in a credo, a system of ideas comes to make up part of the picture and is confused with social reality.

There are profound epistemological consequences when a society is half way between liberal individualism and hierarchical holism. In such systems we may observe the institutionalization of the intermediary: of the mulatto, the cafuso[26] and the mameluc[27] in the racial classifications;[28] of the despachante[29] in the bureaucratic system; of the cousin, lover, and boy/girlfriend in the amorous system; of saints and purgatory in the religious system; of prayers, popular music, serenades, empty discourse, and staring olhar in the mediation that permeates daily life; of the jeitinho, the "Do you know to whom you're talking?" and well-placed connections (pistolão) in confronting impersonal laws; of feijoada, peixada,[30] and cozido, food that is squarely between solid and liquid in the culinary system; of sacanagem[31] as a mode of sexual manifestation[32]--all these as fundamental modes of sociability. Here the intermediate and ambiguous cannot be reduced to a purely negative position, nor can its existence be denied. In Brazil's case, there is an obvious relation between liberalism and socialism, some sort of sociological "Dona Flor" that has yet to be discovered. It might well be found in the web of personal relations between liberals and socialists in spite of their divergent ideological options, half carnivalesque and half skeptical, given to privilege and personalism (and bureaucracy for its enemies), which goes to the beach and above all is not made of steel. Brazilian liberalism reveals the same inconsistencies: it favors market forces only when profits are assured, is absolutely negligent with respect to the rights of the consumer, and uses the governmental apparatus as an ally in the search for profits but denies its role as a representative of the consuming public. From a strictly Aristotelian and rational point of view we are Kantians who divide the world into pure and practical reason--and are left without reason. That is, we see everything as hopelessly out of

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[26] A mixture of black and Indian.

[27] A mixture of white and Indian.

[28] In this context it is worth remembering what Antonil (the Jesuit Giovanni Antonio Andreoni, who wrote a treatise on Brazil's society and economy) wrote in 1711: "Brazil is Hell for Negroes, Purgatory for Whites, and Paradise for Mulattoes."

[29] A paralegal professional who sees paperwork through a bureaucracy.

[30] A form of fish stew.

[31] A Brazilian form of erotica, infused with pornographic elements.

[32] As far as I know, I am the only author to have analyzed sacanagem as a sociological category.

place. At the same time, in examining the relationship between these outlooks, we find hidden ties of friendship and interest that are certainly more powerful than futile ideologies.

From this angle the mystery of Dona Flor is certainly relevant, for it points toward the positive role of relations and their institutionalization. Of course, one might perform a "rational" or "dualist" reading of Jorge Amado's narrative, which would emphasize the dilemma of a woman forced to choose between two men and two ways of marital life, representing the classic poles of the bourgeois world. Vadinho would represent the traditional side, Teodoro the modern. From this point of view the resolution of the narrative, which allows her to choose both, would be interpreted as conservative. But if we read it in a relational mode, as I propose, then everything changes. Dona Flor can be seen as a character who refuses the Puritan (and bourgeois) contest that leads to a hegemony of logics and desires. She can thus emerge as the incarnation not of conflict (which would force her to choose individualistically between one or the other) but of the relation itself. As in our examples of the mulatto, jeitinho, "Do you know to whom you are talking?" and reason of friendship and family, Dona Flor says that the relation among different formal systems is possible, revealing mysteries unknown to Western sociology. The myth, thus, presented without masks, without the theoretical fetichism that characterizes the way we think about ourselves, allows for the possibility of encompassment by the relation and not by the forces in conflict. And would this not be the deepest logic of our social reality?

If this is indeed the case, we will have to change many logical signals. Instead of viewing the ambiguous, the transitory, the intermediary, and that which coexists or is mixed as necessarily negative characteristics, we will need to invert our analytical assumptions so as to become more aware of their positive elements. Dona Flor, like so-called fantastic realism, points to something paradoxical within the social logic of the West. She proposes to remain with both of her options, choosing not to choose. This opens the possibility of a still more absurd démarche in terms of the sociology that we have studied and, God willing, learned: she tempts us with the possibility of legitimizing ambiguity. Dona Flor recuperates everything that the history of the West since Luther (and long before him) has rejected with force, energy, and brutality. She wants to keep both of her husbands. She wants Vadinho and the street spirit, the disorder that emanates from him, the uncertainty born of his gestures yet the certainty of his complete fidelity to his friends and the universe of informalities and ambiguities characteristic of personal relations. Yet Vadinho is not enough, as Dona Flor discovers. This love of the uncertain and informal must be complemented by formal marriage to a character for whom everything is norms, rules, regularity, and impersonal institutions. Life emerges as if from a telephone book, clear,

correct, and explicit. But it should not be forgotten that if Teodoro is visible like our constitutions and laws, which should apply to all, Vadinho is quite invisible for those who do not know him or do not want to see him. Thus the only person capable of dealing with him is Dona Flor. Or ourselves, if we are inclined to accept Jorge Amado's lesson and restore to sociology its former subject: social relations, which are the salt of life and also the pivot for a real sociology of Brazil.

We must be alert not only to the conflict seen as dividing two political parties, social categories, or interest groups but to the hidden motive of the relation between them. Such a motive certainly has to do with the historical fact that elites in Brazil are small and highly concentrated. But it expresses something deeper. The personal relations that exist amongst entities in conflict present a field of sociological motives largely unrelated to the rational and ideological objectives being discussed in the political and constitutional arenas. Such arenas--the universe of the "street"--permit the emergence of a third party or actor that can, if not encompass the other two, at least postpone conflicts and their resolution or make ideological disputes secondary. This is particularly so when such actors are confronted with the ties of loyalty that effectively and affectively bind the characters that make up the Brazilian elite.

Finally, and as I said in the beginning, I want to believe that in the case of Latin America the characteristics that make up our tradition are less important than the relations among them. In order to use this notion in such a way as to understand the system as a whole, however, we need to comprehend these relations themselves as actors and encompassers of situations. Otherwise we will continue to practice a sociology of interests and individuals when in fact we live in societies where these coexist with friends, relatives, <u>compadres</u>, and <u>jeitinhos</u>.

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