

### CONTINUITIES OF BRAZILIAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Élide Rugai Bastos

Center for the Study of Contemporary Culture (Cedec)

FAPESP Process 2007/52480-5 | Term: Mar 2008 to Feb 2012

Main researchers: Gildo Marçal Bezerra Brandão, Bernardo Ricupero



*Celso Furtado (1920 – 2004), one of the leading Brazilian intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (photo by Fernando Rabelo. Courtesy of the Celso Furtado International Center – CICF)*

The aim of this study is to identify and understand the main intellectual traits of Brazilian conservatism, liberalism and socialism. To this end, we intend to determine whether the concepts of “organic idealism” and “constitutional idealism,” originally elaborated in a different way by Oliveira Vianna, are adequate to describe and appraise the main “forms of thought” and “intellectual families” predominant in Brazil since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In addition, we will identify the countercurrent and anti-aristocratic ideas outlined during the country’s industrialization process, especially those related to “middle-class radicalism” and “communist Marxism,” which served inspired the social and economic reforms prior to the predominance of neo-liberalism. Finally, a hypothesis will be proposed about the response of these currents to Brazil’s political development. Thus, we will analyze both the content of ideologies and worldviews and the “forms of thought” subjacent to them – that is, the intellectual structures and theoretical categories by which reality is perceived, practical experience is elaborated and political action is organized.

As part of the project, we will undertake a critical assessment of the state of the art of research on Brazilian political and social thought. Special attention will be paid to determining whether the specialized investigation currently underway in universities represents a break with what is generally known as “interpretations of Brazil.”

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS TO DATE AND PERSPECTIVES

In its first year, the Continuities in Brazilian Social and Political Thought project made progress in mapping and understanding the authors and problems active in different periods of Brazilian history. The research was organized according to five themes: 1) the establishment of Brazilian political-social thought during the Empire; 2) the genesis of anti-oligarchic thought during the 1930s; 3) the emergence since the 1950s of "development" as a central problem in public debate; 4) the importance of individual contributions to Brazilian nation-state projects; and 5) a comparison with the role of ideas in other countries and contexts. The work as a whole provides a critical reflection on various theories and methodologies to create common references for the interpretation of continuity and change in Brazilian thought.

The study of political-social thought occurs in a frontier zone between different intellectual areas. Thus, it is influenced by a wide range of orientations in the humanities. In Brazil, this field was established at the crossroads of specialties as dissimilar as political anthropology, sociology of art, history of literature, history of science, history of mentalities, sociology of intellectuals, philosophy, political and social theory and the history of ideas. This has been the direction the project has taken, and its work reflects this outlook.

Diversity has contributed to the accumulation of theoretical capital and the crystallization of a specific intellectual camp. Diversity begins by recognizing the existence of a tradition of social and political thought in Brazil and converts the reflection on its classic meanings into a means to confront the society and history that produced them.

## MAIN PUBLICATIONS

Bastos ER. 2008. Raízes do Brasil – Sobrados e mucambos: um diálogo (Raízes do Brasil – Sobrados e mucambos: a dialogue). In: Monteiro PM, Eugênio JK (orgs.). Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: perspectives. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp; Rio de Janeiro: Ed. UERJ, pp. 227-244.

Botelho A. Universal e particular na sociologia brasileira da mudança social (Universal and particular in Brazilian sociology about social change). Sociologias, UFRGS, 2008.

Cepêda VA. 2008. Celso Furtado e a interpretação do subdesenvolvimento (Celso Furtado and the interpretations of underdevelopment). In: Lima MC, David MD (orgs.). The actuality of Celso Furtado. São Paulo: Francis, pp. 43-63.

Fernandes MFL. 2008. A esperança e o desencanto: Silva Jardim e a República (Hope and loss of faith: Silva Jardim and the Republic). São Paulo: Humanitas/FAPESP (ISBN: 978-85-7732-079-0).

Ferreira GN, Ricupero B. 2008. Vinho novo em odres velhos: continuidade e mudança em Os donos do poder (New wine in old wineskin: continuity and change in Os donos do poder). In: Botelho A, Bastos ER, Villas Bôas G (orgs.), op. cit., pp. 65-101 (ISBN: 978-85-7475-151-1)

Ricupero B. Florestan Fernandes and the interpretations of Brazil. Latin American Perspectives (ISSN: 0094-5821).

Villas Bôas GK. 2008. Revendo o lugar da sociologia alemã no Brasil: do uso instrumental à pesquisa da recepção (Revisiting the place of German sociology in Brazil: from instrumental use to reception research). In: Ribeiro AM et al. (orgs.). Modernity as a theoretical challenge: essays on German social thought. Porto Alegre: EdPUCRS, pp. 19-34.

Brandão GM. 2007. Linhagens do pensamento político brasileiro (Continuities in Brazilian political thought). São Paulo: Hucitec. (ISBN: 9788560438365).

Ricupero B. 2007. Sete lições sobre as interpretações do Brasil (Seven lessons on the interpretations of Brazil). São Paulo: Ed. Alameda.

---

Élide Rugai Bastos

Centro de Estudos de Cultura Contemporânea  
Rua Airosa Galvão 64 – Água Branca  
CEP 05002-070 – São Paulo, SP – Brasil

+55 11 3871-2966 and +55 11 3569-9237  
cedec@cedec.org.br  
www.cedec.org.br