

Social and racial analysis in the work of Fernando Henrique Cardoso¹

DOI: 10.12957/irei.2023.79858

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Abstract

The present work aims to investigate the way in which social and racial analysis emerge in the thinking of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Contrary to what is generally stated, the hypothesis is defended that the racial issue is central to understanding the author's thoughts. His most relevant proposal, that is, associated development, can only be well understood if related to his previous works. Thus, the present work analyzes several works from Cardoso's youth in dialogue with his most prominent work, investigating how racial themes permeate and condition his reading of Brazilian social formation and, consequently, the possibilities of national development.

Keywords

brazilian political thought; slavery; development.

A análise social e racial na obra de Fernando Henrique Cardoso

Resumo

O presente trabalho se propõe a investigar o modo como a análise social e racial emerge no pensamento de Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Diferentemente do que em geral se aponta, defende-se a hipótese de que a questão racial é central para a compreensão do pensamento do autor. Sua proposta de maior relevância, qual seja, a do desenvolvimento associado, só pode ser bem compreendida se relacionada aos seus trabalhos anteriores. Desse modo, o presente trabalho analisa diversas obras da juventude de Cardoso em diálogo com sua obra de maior destaque, investigando como a temática racial atravessa e condiciona a sua leitura sobre a formação social brasileira e, conseqüentemente, sobre as possibilidades de desenvolvimento nacional.

Palavras-chave

pensamento político brasileiro; escravidão; desenvolvimento.

¹ This paper presents an excerpt from the discussion previously developed in the author's doctoral thesis (Cf. CARVALHO, 2022a).

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Introduction

The life and work of Fernando Henrique Cardoso have been the subject of in-depth study over the last few decades. In the context of his academic career, between the 1960s and 1970s, the author was nicknamed the prince of sociologists and became an important reference in the humanities. Years later, when he entered political life and was finally elected President of the Republic twice, his work was revisited by various researchers concerned with understanding the correlations between his achievements in public life and his academic writings (FIORI, 1995; TRASPADINI, 2014; CARVALHO, 2015; GONÇALVES, 2018). In recent years, Cardoso himself has dedicated his efforts to producing interpretations of his own work and political career (CARDOSO and TOLEDO, 1998; CARDOSO, 2015-2019).

A comprehensive examination of the author's body of work has illuminated several significant facets of his career trajectory. These include his departure from the traditions of ECLAC[♦] and ISEB[♦], the strategic utilization of Marxist frameworks, and an early recognition of the burgeoning globalization landscape. Furthermore, scholarly analyses have underscored how his understanding of Brazil laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira[♦] (PSDB), extending to evaluations of his political endeavors (LAHUERTA, 2001; DULCI, 2010; NATALINO, 2020; CARVALHO, 2022b).

While our article does not aim to delve into all the intricacies surrounding interpretations of Cardoso's works, we propose a specific analysis that sheds light on the structural underpinnings of Brazilian political thought. Specifically, we aim to examine how Cardoso's interpretation of Brazilian social formation influenced his various intellectual constructions. Moreover, we seek to highlight the significant racial dimension that underlies these constructions, emphasizing its undeniable importance.

If the argument presented holds true, this paper can be positioned alongside efforts to elucidate the development of structural racism in Brazilian society (ALMEIDA, 2019). Beyond merely illustrating its existence, our aim is to contribute an additional dimension to this thesis by highlighting how racial biases permeate and, to some extent, shape the intellectual frameworks of authors who were once regarded as attuned to racial concerns.

This paper is structured into five sections. The first section revisits two foundational elements shaping Cardoso's thinking: the critique of the racial democracy thesis and the recognition of the unfeasibility of the national-developmental project. The second section offers a succinct overview of the evolution of these themes, illustrating their initial perceived interconnectedness. In the third part, we analyze how Cardoso's works mirror a nuanced interpretation of Brazilian social formation in the 19th

♦ T.N.: ECLAC - The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

♦ T.N.: ISEB - Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies

♦ T.N.: Brazilian Social Democracy Party

century, subsequently influencing his analysis of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and workers, which are examined in the fourth and fifth sections of this article, respectively.

Dual antagonisms

Fernando Henrique Cardoso's intellectual journey unfolds within the distinct post-World War II era, a period marked by a burgeoning emphasis on scientific inquiry in the humanities. This epoch not only witnessed a growing discourse on development, notably exemplified by the establishment of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) in 1948 but also saw the prominence of racial issues in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Against this backdrop, Brazil emerged as a contrasting image to Nazi Germany, internationally perceived – largely influenced by Gilberto Freyre's work – as a nation ostensibly devoid of racial tensions. To deepen the empirical understanding of racial dynamics within Brazil, the UNESCO initiative was launched (MAIO, 1998). This initiative spurred a series of investigations into racial issues, with Florestan Fernandes spearheading research that delved deeply into Brazil's racial landscape, spanning from the era of slavery to the present day. He particularly studied how Black individuals were included in class society, a concern that would give title to one of his best-known books ♦ (FERNANDES, 2021). Fernandes's inquiry critically interrogated the romanticized portrayal of racial mixing propagated by Gilberto Freyre in his seminal work *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933). This line of research led by Fernandes produced several works, including Fernando Henrique Cardoso's doctoral thesis: *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional* ♣.

Within the same historical context, the project "Economia e Sociedade no Brasil: análise sociológica do subdesenvolvimento" also emerged. Spanning four to five years, the project aimed to generate diverse works exploring themes of modernization and the establishment of a competitive order in Brazil. Within this undertaking, Cardoso assumed responsibility for investigating "A mentalidade do empresário industrial" ⊕. This exploration served as the foundation for his full professorship thesis, *Empresário Industrial e Desenvolvimento Econômico no Brasil* ⊙, which he defended in 1963 (QUEIROZ, 2020, p. 77).

Aligned with the prevailing research interests during his tenure at the University of São Paulo, Cardoso significantly enriched two pivotal research agendas: the racial issue and the development dilemma. In both realms, he engaged with distinct adversaries. Regarding the racial discourse, he challenged the idealized portrayal of social formation, particularly concerning interracial relations between white and Black individuals. On the developmental front, he grappled with organized factions within

♦ T.N.: The referred book is *The Negro in Brazilian Society*.

♣ T.N.: In free translation: Capitalism and Slavery in Southern Brazil.

• T.N.: In free translation: Economy and Society in Brazil: A Sociological Analysis of Underdevelopment

⊕ T.N.: In free translation: The Mindset of the Industrial Entrepreneur

⊙ T.N.: In free translation: Industrial Entrepreneur and Economic Development in Brazil

ECLAC and the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB - Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies) regarding the practical feasibility of executing a national development initiative.

In their collaborative work *Dependency and Development in Latin America* authored with Enzo Faletto, Cardoso posited that Brazil's path to development lay in embracing openness to foreign markets. Departing from the prevailing nationalist model, they advocated for *development associated* to foreign capital as a plausible long-term trajectory for the country. While recognizing *dependency* as an enduring challenge, Cardoso diverged from the Marxist Theory of Dependency (MTD) by contending that a certain level of development could still be achieved *despite dependence*. This interpretation sparked controversy and ultimately led Cardoso to distance himself from proponents of the MTD (WASSERMAN, 2017). Amidst these discussions, the debate surrounding the nature of the Brazilian civil-military regime also loomed large. Unlike his contemporaries, Cardoso perceived this regime as harboring the potential for economic modernization. As he succinctly stated, "were it not for avoiding semantic confusion and the obvious political manipulation it allows, it would be more correct to assert that the '64 coup had revolutionary economic consequences" (CARDOSO, 1993a, p. 52-3).

In the literature, the two issues—race and development—are often treated as separate threads in the author's discourse, seemingly disconnected from each other. However, upon revisiting his early works, the intricate interplay between these themes becomes more apparent.

Slavery, patrimonialism, and brazilian capitalism

In *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional*, Cardoso embarks on a comprehensive exploration that intricately weaves together two pivotal themes. His endeavor is to offer a historical examination of economic development, political structures, power dynamics, and the formation of the State in the southern region of Brazil. Essentially, "the book seeks to dissect the concrete social fabric born from the interaction between masters and slaves within the society of Rio Grande do Sul" (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 27). A noteworthy innovation of this work lies in its direct engagement with Marxist thought, particularly evident in the establishment of its methodological framework, such as advocating for the use of dialectical interpretation in sociology (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 31). This Marxist influence can be traced back to Cardoso's participation in seminal seminars on the study of *Das Kapital*, which introduced a novel sociological approach at USP and profoundly shaped his subsequent scholarly trajectory.

As noted by several scholars³, the intellectual milieu of the 1960s-70s was marked by what can be termed as a "diffuse Marxism" (LAHUERTA, 2001; PÉCAUT and

³ By bringing in this methodological reference, Cardoso was taking on his own trait and distancing himself, to some extent, from the pattern originally established by Florestan Fernandes. Costanzo and Marino (2022, p. 319) point out that the use of Lucaks and Sartre in *Capitalismo e Escravidão...* allowed Cardoso to make use of historical materialism, distancing himself from the functionalism that was strong in Florestan at the time.

GOLDWASSER, 1990), which not only influenced Cardoso but permeated the broader intellectual community of the era. It is important to recognize that while Cardoso's research was informed by Marxist principles, it also incorporated other significant methodological underpinnings, particularly drawing from Weberian sociology (RIBEIRO, 2020). This methodological eclecticism, coupled with a discernible detachment between the application of Marxian dialectics and the advocacy of socialist politics, veers away from characterizing Cardoso as a strict Marxist. Rather, his approach aligns more with what Gabriel Cohn (1987) termed as a "well-tempered eclecticism," akin to that attributed to Florestan Fernandes.

Utilizing this methodological eclecticism, Cardoso's doctoral thesis bridges the discourse on the racial dilemma with the discourse on development and modernization. He delineates how slavery constituted a defining reality in Rio Grande do Sul, and how the region was typified by its rural, land-owning, and slave-based society, mirroring the broader national context. Contrary to prevailing historiographical narratives, Cardoso contends that there was no semblance of rural or racial democracy in the region. Rather, a patrimonial formation predominated, as evidenced by the entrenched system of slavery (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 107-8). This patrimonial and slave-owning structure significantly shaped the region's integration into the capitalist dynamic.

Is it credible to assert that the "pastoral society" thus formed constituted a "democratic order"? It appears evident that it did not. The *lagunistas*[♦] and *preadores*[♦] from São Paulo transplanted to the South the same system of labor organization, land appropriation and distribution, and power structure prevalent throughout the colony: the extensive estates managed by patriarchal families, reliant on slave labor, and supported by auxiliary laborers (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 118).

In a sweeping analysis, Cardoso employed the Weberian ideal model to delineate the diverse structures of slave labor utilization in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. While acknowledging distinctions between urban and rural slavery, as well as variations in rural areas between the *charqueadas*[♦] and the *estâncias*[°] (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 172), he ultimately concluded that "although in different ways, the slave is always a slave, and there is no 'rural democracy'" (Ibid, p. 166-167). In essence, Cardoso posited that the society of Rio Grande do Sul should not be viewed as an outlier in the colonization

In a similar vein, drawing on Sallum Jr (2002), Álvaro Bianchi claimed that Florestan used Marx but integrated the contributions of his sociology with those of Weber, Durkheim, Mannheim, and the Chicago School. In this sense, by affirming Marx's ideas as a starting point, the *Das Kapital* studies group to which Cardoso belonged "clearly challenged Florestan" (BIANCHI, 2010, p. 186).

♦ T.N.: drovers from Laguna, the most advanced settlement on the south coast at the time of Brazil's colonization.

♦ T.N.: cattle-grabbers.

♦ T.N.: Rural property where charque, a salted, sun-dried meat, is produced. Source: <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charqueada#:~:text=Charqueada%20%C3%A9%20a%20%C3%A1rea%20da,para%20o%20processo%20de%20desidrata%C3%A7%C3%A3o.>

° T.N.: In the Southern Cone, an estancia (from the Spanish rioplatense estancia) is a rural establishment used especially for raising cattle, but there may also be sheep or horses. Source: <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Est%C3%A2ncia>

process; rather, it encompassed all the hallmarks of a slave-owning, patriarchal, and patrimonial society, albeit with its own unique characteristics. Among these traits was the relatively diminished political influence of the elite of Rio Grande do Sul on national politics, owing to the region's peripheral status. Moreover, the formation of power in this border region assumed distinct contours, structured around patrimonialism and imbued with peculiar conditions that fostered a system marked by arbitrariness and violence: "it would not be an exaggeration to admit that the patrimonialist system of power was distorted in the direction of a type of sultanistic power" (CARDOSO, 2003, P. 130).

Cardoso underscores the intertwining of individuals' lack of competitiveness and political clout in Rio Grande do Sul with the advent of competition from *charque*[⊕] produced in the Prata region, forming a detrimental feedback loop. He suggests that enhanced production conditions could bolster profits and augment the power and prestige of the landlord class. Conversely, if the land-owning class exercised greater power and influence for other reasons, they could utilize fiscal measures—particularly import taxes on meat—to secure more favorable conditions for the *charque* from Rio Grande do Sul (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 208). However, Cardoso contends that beneath this power imbalance lies a fundamental discord: the incongruity between capitalism and slavery. According to him, "the slave system was inherently bound to fail when pitted against economies structured around free labor" (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 216). The slave-based economy inherently constrained the rationalization of production and economic calculation, ultimately posing a hindrance to the evolution of capitalism.

(...) in the capitalist regime, free labor allows for the selection of a form of incentive to production, such as wages, which, with all their mystifying properties, give the illusion of paid work. In certain circumstances, it can even induce workers to dedicate themselves to their work in order to obtain higher wages and, consequently, greater possibilities of acquiring the indispensable means to satisfy themselves in life outside work. Slave labor, on the other hand, does not allow for any similar form of adjustment by the producer to the conditions of production. It becomes an irremissible condemnation that can only be maintained thanks to direct and continuous coercion (CARDOSO, 2003, P. 217-218).

Following the enactment of the Eusébio de Queiroz Law in 1850, which curtailed the supply of slaves and drove up prices, there was a notable migration of this kind of labor towards the north. Concurrently, the scarcity of labor exacerbated the challenges faced in the South, particularly with the flight of slaves. Over time, the region struggled to maintain competitiveness due to the entrenched structure of property and slavery, which lay at the heart of its difficulties. As discussions surrounding the abolition of slavery gained momentum, attention gradually shifted towards immigrants as a solution to the region's woes. White Europeans came to be viewed as harbingers of progress, while Black people remained firmly associated with backwardness.

[⊕] T.N.: Beef jerky.

The desired labor force was the untainted arm of foreigners, not the arm of freedmen or Black individuals degraded by slavery. Conversely, the latter group came to be viewed, irrespective of the institution of slavery, as synonymous with idleness, lethargy, and societal decay. The outcomes of slavery were misconstrued as its root causes, perceived as catalysts for stagnation and regression (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 254).

The prevailing attitudes towards Black people and immigrants foreshadowed the post-abolition era, characterized by the perpetuation of a backward social structure incompatible with capitalist progress. Merely relinquishing slave ownership did not equip the *charqueadores*^{*} with the prowess to become successful capitalists. A fundamental redefinition of values and behaviors was imperative, a task that proved beyond the capacity of the *charqueadores* (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 262-263).

The critique of the absence of a capitalist mindset, initially directed at the 19th-century Rio Grande do Sul elite, remained a central theme in his research. This investigation subsequently shifted focus to the emerging Brazilian industrial bourgeoisie of the mid-20th century. In *Empresário Industrial e Desenvolvimento Econômico no Brasil*, the author examined this bourgeoisie to assess the potential for national development under its leadership.

Simultaneously investigating the elite, Cardoso also explored, although less systematically, the experiences of slaves and the Brazilian proletariat. His objective was to elucidate the profound impact of slavery on these groups in the 19th century. Transitioning to the 20th century, his focus shifted to understanding the formation of the proletariat and assessing its potential to lead political change. In broad terms, his research revealed structural constraints that hindered both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie from fulfilling modern expectations. Insufficient class consciousness impeded their ability to exercise political influence, whether in fostering a robust capitalist system or facilitating the advent of socialism.

The patrimonial, slave-owning, and underdeveloped origins persist throughout Cardoso's later works, as the author discerns no profound ruptures from the constituents of this societal framework. Even industrialization, in Cardoso's view, fails to precipitate revolutionary change but rather assimilates into existing structures. Consequently, his work elucidates empirically verifiable historical-structural elements as pivotal obstacles in the developmental trajectory. Only during transient periods, such as the era of populism, could a strictly national development agenda be feasibly pursued, although on precarious foundations. However, with shifting circumstances, these pacts became unsustainable, ultimately culminating in the implementation of the civilian-military regime – a topic extensively analyzed in Cardoso's book *Autoritarismo e Democratização*^{*}. Despite its authoritarian nature, Cardoso discerned a modernizing impulse within the military regime, contrary to the assertions of Marxist dependency theorists.

* T.N.: Jerky manufacturer or preparer.

* T.N.: In free translation: Authoritarianism and Democratization.

Through empirical analyses of the national landscape, Cardoso identified the prevalence of marginalized social groups and a patrimonial State, rendering any alternative to *associated development* unviable. This concept advocates for opening the economy to foreign capital to instigate a dynamic of economic modernization, albeit within a framework of dependence. This argument permeates his seminal work: *Dependence and Development in Latin America*, co-authored with Enzo Faletto (CARDOSO and FALETTO, 2011).

This concise overview of Cardoso's work underscores the enduring presence, although with adaptations, of fundamental aspects from his doctoral thesis in his subsequent research. On one hand, his analysis delved into the patrimonial nature of the State and its functioning, while on the other, he articulated his perception of a prevailing archaic dynamic within society. Cardoso's examination of the inclusion of Black individuals in the social fabric, primarily as nominal equals to whites, highlighted "the fragility of the purportedly established new democratic order in the country and the enduring vestiges of the 'old regime' within the class structure that had formed" (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 354). This comprehension persisted in his evaluation of the constraints on democracy throughout Brazilian history.

In this light, Cardoso's theoretical framework can be grasped through two pivotal insights: firstly, his conceptualization of the State as patrimonial, rendering it inept as a rational driver for capitalist development. Consequently, Cardoso advocates for a reduced State intervention in market dynamics, enabling a more liberated operation. While this interpretation of the State holds significance, our focus in this discussion lies more on Cardoso's analysis of society, particularly how the racial dimension serves as a crucial backdrop to his theoretical construct.

Social analysis in the 19th century

Although he does not set out to make a reading of national social formation comparable to those made by others in the Brazilian political thought (FREYRE, 1933; HOLANDA, 1936; VIANA, 2005), a discernible thematic thread emerges throughout Cardoso's work. In *Capitalismo e Escravidão...*, for instance, Cardoso explores the social fabric of Rio Grande do Sul, aiming to unravel its economic dynamics. His scrutiny of the Southern economic elite reveals their inability to contend with their counterparts in the Rio de la Plata region, stemming from their failure to establish a modern capitalist production system. This deficiency was intricately tied to the institution of slavery, which ran counter to the imperatives of modern production (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 218). The prevalence of free labor and a more pronounced division of labor emerged as pivotal factors in accounting for the competitive advantage enjoyed by the neighboring region.

However, this diagnosis was not widely accepted at the time. On the contrary, individuals from Rio Grande do Sul persisted in advocating for State protectionism as a remedy for their lack of competitiveness. The persistence of the institution of slavery

thus serves as a stark indicator of the economic system's irrationality. In Cardoso's analysis, slavery was not only morally indefensible; one of his primary objectives throughout *Capitalismo e Escravidão...* was to illustrate that this irrationality had an impact on the very logic of capitalist economics itself. Through this lens, we begin to discern an initial portrait of the national elite, albeit one situated within specific temporal and spatial contexts. This elite, unable to grasp the nuances of modern capitalist dynamics, remained ensnared in a slave-driven mindset, reliant on State subsidies and protections. Consequently, such an elite was destined for failure and obsolescence within the competitive post-abolition landscape.

Simultaneously, in *Capitalismo e Escravidão...*, Cardoso explores the experiences of the other, more populous group in society: the slaves. This work exhibits a nuanced sensitivity towards the intricacies of slavery, probing into the complexities of racism and its impediments to the integration of Black individuals into the class hierarchy. As previously noted, this aligns with the broader research emerging from Florestan Fernandes and the USP School of Sociology. However, as the book unfolds, a presumption emerges that sheds light not only on the confines of Cardoso's perspective but also on the prevailing discourse surrounding the subject at that time. According to the author, the pervasive influence of slavery was such that it compelled the enslaved individual to internalize their own objectification, viewing themselves as a commodity – a mere labor force – thus internalizing the very constructs of the slave system itself.

The coveted but unattainable notion of freedom was thus reduced to a mere subjective yearning for validation, unattainable in practical terms. It is true that there were escapes, manumissions, and reactions. (...) Any achieved or granted freedoms failed to disrupt the fundamental structure defining the master-slave relationship: it did not shake servile property and the mechanisms for its maintenance. (...) Moreover, the possibility of slaves viewing themselves as autonomous social actors, capable of pursuing their own aspirations, was persistently undermined. This was a consequence of the progress of socialization, the formation of societal expectations around their conduct, and the stringent surveillance under which they were placed (...) slave society employed various mechanisms to mold the personality of the enslaved individual, thwarting the development of attitudes conducive to the realization of liberation ideals (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 179).

Although lengthy, this passage offers profound insights. While Cardoso acknowledges the burgeoning abolitionist movements leading up to May 13, he attributes their feasibility to shifts in economic and political frameworks. He contends that “the effective possibility of slaves developing coordinated actions with their own purposes in mind was very small.” According to him, slaves “were not in a position to define targets that would lead to the destruction of the slave system, and they did not have the cultural means (social or material techniques) capable of enabling them to achieve the purposes they might have defined” (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 179). For all these reasons, slaves were incapable of reacting against the system, and their revolts were

merely acts of individual desperation or, at best, frustrated plans of rebellion, which were soon contained by the strength of the slave institutions (Idem, p. 180).

This perspective remained entrenched in subsequent years. In the second edition of the book, there was no revision of the terms under which this debate was conducted, and the preface reiterated the notion that the abolition of slavery in Brazil would be brought about by the triumph of capitalist-industrial interests from Manchester. It was not until the preface to the fifth edition in 2003 that a brief acknowledgment of this subject was made.

A key tenet of Cardoso's work lies in recognizing the pivotal role of external events in shaping political processes within the periphery of the capitalist system. Rather than viewing these processes in a deterministic light, he endeavors to comprehend how external interventions influence national dynamics, yielding diverse outcomes. This perspective informs his analysis of phenomena such as slavery and industrialization, laying the groundwork for his proposal of associated development.

In 1975, Cardoso revisited the processes of national formation in *Autoritarismo e Democratização*. Within this exploration, he reiterated the previously identified perspective on slavery and the perceived limitations of slaves' resistance to the system.

While slave revolts have been a persistent occurrence, the abolition of slavery is a complex process driven not solely by the contradictions between masters and slaves, but by a multifaceted network of determinants. As previously mentioned, this process involves various social forces, including the English industrial bourgeoisie, now allied with an emerging agrarian bourgeoisie represented by the coffee farmers of São Paulo who relied on immigrant wage labor. Indirectly, support also came from certain segments of the State apparatus, such as the military, and ideological apparatuses like the Empire's intelligentsia. These forces opposed the slave masters, slave traders, and sectors of the imperial State that endorsed and facilitated slavery in the country (CARDOSO, 1975, p. 110).

If the preceding passage hinted at the diminished role attributed to Black individuals in the abolition process, the following elucidates this conception further.

Throughout this transitional period, slaves, Indigenous peoples, free laborers, freedmen, and peasants serve as passive observers in a narrative where they exist merely as instruments upon which the historical forces of transformation act. Their occasional resistance bears little resemblance to the "primitive rebels" of Europe and is instead relegated to the tragic annals of those denied a meaningful place in history. The struggles of quilombos and individual slave revolts, when a slave kills a master and runs away, lack the potential to spark a broader social upheaval capable of challenging the prevailing order. They represent borderline situations where, devoid of historical agency, men almost retreat into a stance of haughtiness and disgust, seeking refuge in grandiosity and an impotent sheer negativity. (CARDOSO, 1975, p. 112).

In summary, *Capitalismo e Escravidão...* bears significant weight in enlightening Cardoso's perspective on slavery, a viewpoint reiterated in subsequent works. He

reiterates what is now seen as a settled issue: “slavery fundamentally hinges upon relations of violence.”

However, the intention behind this statement was particularly targeted within its timeframe: it aimed to definitively dismiss any interpretation suggesting the presence of a racial or rural democracy, even if such a concept was considered a distinct characteristic of the Southern region of Brazil. As stated, the purpose was to counter the idealized perspective proposed by Freyre (CARDOSO, 1993b, p. 25), and Cardoso effectively achieved this goal, building upon the insights provided by Florestan. By identifying a patrimonialist order characterized by arbitrariness and violence, he reported how this structure rendered impossible for black individuals to have a status of humanity recognized in their integration into Rio Grande do Sul’s society (CARDOSO, 2003, p. 161).

In a dialogue with Axel Honneth, Marcos Abraão Ribeiro rightfully points out that Cardoso’s work enhances our comprehension of how Black individuals were integrated into class society, rejecting the perception of Rio Grande do Sul’s slave society as an exception. In addition, it is to Cardoso’s credit that he presents the “process of social non-recognition of Black people”, a process that would be reproduced at all stages of life in Rio Grande do Sul society. “From a young age, white children were taught not to perceive Black slaves as human beings. This played a decisive role in perpetuating such a brutal system” (RIBEIRO, 2011, p. 13).

However, while Cardoso effectively refuted the concept of racial democracy and elucidated the impacts of slavery on Black individuals, he ultimately gave rise to a totalizing interpretation of slavery. Despite acknowledging the dire circumstances that hindered Black people from fighting for their freedom, he, unlike Ribeiro (2011), *denied the acknowledgement* of several social struggles within the Black population, both during and after abolition. In our opinion, this highlights a significant limitation in Cardoso’s ability to understand humankind itself and the rationality inherent in these enslaved subjects. Indeed, this limitation underscores a fundamental aspect of the line of thought developed in the third quarter of the 20th century. On one hand, the intellectual discourse displayed sensitivity towards racial issues and demonstrated a profound understanding of the many impacts of slavery, particularly how these effects persisted during the integration of these marginalized groups in society. However, on the other hand, such effects also tended to pigeonhole those subjects to that very condition, thus overlooking their capacity for resistance throughout the history of slavery and oppression. Indeed, the history of resistance extends far beyond mere “gestures of despair” (on this, see ALMEIDA, 2022; ALONSO, 2015; CARDOSO, 2008; 2015; SIMAS, 2018).

The exploration of slavery in Cardoso’s work may appear separate from other significant themes like “authoritarianism” and “development”. However, we believe that there must be a connection among these concepts. These individuals enslaved by the end of the 21st century, depicted by Cardoso as unable to conceive their own interests and act rationally based on them, continue to grapple with this condition in the post-

abolition era. While slavery itself has vanished, racism persists as the practice that obstructs the complete integration of these individuals into society. Without substantial ruptures in the subsequent decades, it is unsurprising that the analyses of the 1940 and 1950s continues to reveal a lingering social deficit.

In this sense, the objective is to demonstrate how the interpretations of Brazilian society at the end of the 19th century resonate in subsequent analyses of Brazilian society in later decades. We observe a shift from the agrarian bourgeoisie and the perceived irrationality of slaves in the 19th century to an understanding that recognizes the persistence of these characteristics in the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class/peasantry of the 20th century.

From agrarian elite to industrial bourgeoisie

In 1964, merely two years following the completion of *Capitalismo e Escravidão...*, Cardoso presented *Empresário Industrial e Desenvolvimento Econômico no Brasil*, initially crafted as a full professorship thesis. Within this thesis, he aims to empirically investigate the mindset of the Brazilian industrial entrepreneur. Cardoso argues that the primary imperative for the economic elites lies in transcending their role solely within the realm of enterprises to also become a political elite. He highlights their need to perceive the growing mobilization of the working classes and devise a coordinated strategy to counterbalance the pressures exerted by other social strata. Consequently, the author's objective is to ascertain whether the Brazilian bourgeoisie had the necessary attributes to spearhead a project of economic modernization within the nation. This endeavor aligns with the prevailing discussions at ECLAC and ISEB.

Thus, the analysis of the bourgeoisie becomes intricately linked to the endeavor of exploring the avenues for development. In the central countries, the narrative of development intertwines with the establishment of a rational model of economic action championed by the bourgeoisie (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 78). Building upon this premise – and in contrast to Celso Furtado, whom, as per Cardoso (Idem, p. 83) prioritized systemic analyses and did not explore deeply the role of industrial entrepreneurs – we propose to understand Brazil's economic development as

a political-economic-social process [that] entails not only the establishment of an industry of capital assets and the automation of economic growth but also the formation and dynamization of new classes capable of reshaping the traditional power balance and overcoming economic stagnation (which manifest in various forms of underdevelopment), both domestically and internationally (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 84).

In the 19th century, Cardoso's analysis of the so-called 'Southern Brazil' revealed political, economic, and social structures did not foster modern, rational practices. Similarly, in *Empresário Industrial...*, his analysis of the national bourgeoisie situated within urban settings undergoing industrialization does not yield a significant varied

diagnosis. Seeking to understand this bourgeoisie through its internal variations, Cardoso identifies distinct behaviors and establishes criteria based on factors such as location, scale and the historical trajectory of companies and industries to construct a typology. In essence, the conclusion delineates two typical-ideal models: Industry Captains and Businessmen.

The category of Industry Captains encompasses individuals who engage in experimentation and profit from speculation, utilizing rudimentary controls based on production and demand through basic surveys. Despite having a scientific spirit, although slightly rational, these entrepreneurs have succeeded in establishing manufacturing empires, albeit through venturesome means. This business community operates without a long-term vision and exhibits minimal planning capacity, prioritizing experimentation, adventure, and speculation. Their interaction with the State is characterized by the pursuit of occasional benefits. In this context, Cardoso observes that “the patrimonialist-State, as long as it remains susceptible to manipulation, becomes the preferred model of governance for these advocates of ‘private initiative’” (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 134).

However, certain Industry Captains have developed more accurate worldviews. They achieved this by integrating a deep understanding of their industry’s dynamics with implementing measures to make mass production cheaper and better. Moreover, they extend their influence beyond their own companies, supporting ideas and initiatives that advance the industry as a whole. This transformation from an Industry Captain to a Businessman (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 140), signifies a shift towards prioritizing the spirit of competition, efficient work method and technological development. This leadership style demonstrates a heightened awareness of corporate challenges, diverging from the conventional views typically associated with Industry Captains. Businessmen, as outlined by Cardoso (Idem, p 139), exhibit broader and more altruistic concerns, with a more comprehensive focus on the society.

Within the environment of factories, their drive is fueled by the desire to establish a “true industry”, aiming to build capitalism in Brazil, guided by their broader worldview. Consequently, they strive to achieve widespread influence, not only by bribing state agents and seeking favors, but also asserting the industry's ideologies upon the broader societal fabric. Central to this endeavor is the cultivation of their influence within cultural spheres and channels of communication, recognized as pivotal steps in, ultimately, persuading the nation of the advantages of capitalism (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 148).

It is crucial to highlight that these Businessmen represented a minority within the Brazilian business landscape, with the majority of this class being comprised of “Industry Captains”. Being in the minority, they encountered significant difficulties in effectively exerting influence over the country’s politics and economy. Additionally, internal disagreements among them exacerbated these difficulties, especially concerning the importance of defending the national industry. While some advocated for

maintaining control over domestic companies as means of fostering independent economic development, others believed that advancing capitalism on a broader scale, irrespective of capital origin, served the “true interests of the nation” (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 150-151).

The diversity among business owners can also be attributed to their location. While Industry Captains were prominent across the nation, São Paulo stood out as an exception, characterized by a higher concentration of Industrial Businessmen (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 172). Moreover, regional disparities are evident when we compare “beliefs and practices of Industries in the Northeast, often associated to ‘major family ties’, and those in Blumenau of German descent, highlighting significant contrasts in actions and ideals” (Idem, p. 162).

The bourgeoisie could not perceive themselves as sharing the same class conditions, primarily due to entrenched patrimonialist principles inherited from slavery, which were strongly identified in the Northeast (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 162). Furthermore, the majority of Businessmen favored traditional practices, such as seeking favors, bribery, or other means to secure easy gains. Only a minority of them showed genuine interest in technical advancement or participation in significant national projects. Even among those with a more comprehensive vision, few were able to translate their ideas into action, hindered by both structural and political constraints⁴ (Idem, p. 155-156).

To establish hegemony, the bourgeoisie would need to break away from traditional groups, relinquishing the status of imperfect competition and embracing the uncertainty of pursuing future hegemony. This would entail aligning with urban and popular groups, albeit at the risk of industries losing political control. Faced with this scenario, the bourgeoisie opted to align with traditional groups to avoid potential future risks.

In this regard, the behavior of the bourgeoisie is primarily influenced by an underlying ownership structure that predates its formation. This structure neither compels a proactive stance towards modernizing, nor fosters unity among these groups in pursuit of societal political hegemony. Lacking significant nationalist concerns regarding the origin of capital, the desire among entrepreneurs to lead a modernizing industrialization process remains limited, insufficient to meet the nation’s developmental aspirations. Ultimately, Cardoso’s thesis empirically underscores the unsustainable nature of this endeavor.

⁴ This framework has led several authors to perceive Cardoso’s work as diagnosing a sense of passivity within the bourgeoisie (Cf. MANCUSO, 2007). Other authors even attempted to investigate behavioral patterns that diverge from those outlined by Cardoso (BIANCHI, 2010; DINIZ, 1978; DINIZ e BOSCHI, 1978). More recently, Costanzo and Marino (2022) argue that Cardoso did not suggest passivity or irrationality among the bourgeoisie, but rather a tendency towards traditional actions stemming from challenges in asserting their interests. These difficulties arise from the bourgeoisie’s recent formation, its heterogenous nature, marked by conflicting interests and its lack of significant pressure from organized labor. Operating in a scenario of imperfect competition, where prices are determined in relation to imported goods, the bourgeoisie faces no imperative to innovate. Thus, maintaining alliances with traditional sectors becomes a rational strategy to uphold prevailing conditions.

From slaves to workers

Having recognized the limitations facing the industrial bourgeoisie, Cardoso concluded the first edition of *Empresário Industrial...* by pondering the potential of working classes to drive a modernization process. Conversely, he speculated that Brazil might adopt a limited form of capitalism. “Ultimately, the question will be: subcapitalism or socialism?” (CARDOSO, 1972, P. 198).

However, to assess the feasibility of a socialist revolution championed by the popular classes, it is essential to understand Cardoso’s perspective on these social groups. While the author did not empirically analyze this stratum of society as he did with the bourgeoisie, glimpses of his views on the “proletariat” may be identified in some of his publications.

In a paper titled “Condições sociais da industrialização de São Paulo”[♦], published in *Revista Brasiliense*, Cardoso (1960) revisits the issue of how Black people were integrated into class society. He observes that the industrial workforce initially consisted mainly of immigrants, with “former slaves generally not being employed in the new industries”. This was because “the condition of legally free men did not necessarily alter their mindset and habits inherited from slavery, which were incompatible with the concept of free wage labor in the industries” (CARDOSO, 1960, p. 42). However, between the 1940s and the 1960s, former slaves began to be integrated into the industry after enduring prolonged periods of “disorder and misery”. Their role in industrialization was often that of “occasionally available workforce” or seen as “a symbol of degraded labor, representing a cheaper workforce” (Idem, p. 44).

In the subsequent year, Cardoso published “Proletariado no Brasil: situação e comportamento social”[♦], also in *Revista Brasiliense*. This paper, originally part of a dossier organized by Alain Touraine in *Sociologie du Travail*, aims to explore how the unique characteristics of the Brazilian industrial system impact the proletariat. Cardoso highlights that under these circumstances, “there is a lack of conditions for the development of traditionally proletarian forms of action”. Moreover, he notes that “the expectations held by the working classes during the formation of the manufacturing system did not lead to the emergence of behaviors and mindsets that could consistently define the condition of proletariat” (CARDOSO, 1961. p. 101).

These peculiarities can be attributed to a dual constitution.

On one hand, there existed a group of Brazilian workers, primarily from rural backgrounds, who showed little inclination to pursue social advancement and harbored no desire to “transition out of their worker status” (CARDOSO, 1961, p. 104). Lacking the knowledge of how to claim for improvements, “they resorted to appealing to management to address their grievances, although more in the manner of supplication than assertion” (Idem, p. 110-111). This group lacked the tradition of organized labor,

[♦] T.N. In free translation: Social conditions of industrialization in São Paulo

[♦] T.N. In free translation: Proletariat in Brazil: situation and social behavior

rendering them an inexperienced mass regarding citizenship and the struggle for workers' rights. Their protests were predominantly marked by violence and defiance. In this context, violence "served as a manifestation of revolt consciousness, symbolizing an ultimate rejection, the heroic act of absolutely denying the industrial order" (Idem, p. 111). The workers' actions, characterized by acts of theft and destruction of machinery, underscored their "failure to comprehend the mechanisms upholding the industrial capitalist system". Consequently, they were unable to "mount organized resistance to it" (Idem, p. 111). This entire context led to a situation where workers were more akin to a "mass of maneuver" rather than a socially conscious class aware of its interests (Idem, p. 119).

On the other hand, there was a distinct group composed of immigrants. Cardoso observes that "the behavior of these workers, primarily immigrants, was generally characterized by a desire for social ascension" (CARDOSO, 1961, p. 103-104). Among immigrants of European urban origin, especially the Italian and Spanish, many "brought with them the experiences, the feelings and the objectives of European labor movements that were politicized and dissatisfied with the social injustices imposed by industrial capitalism" (Idem, p. 104). These immigrants identified European workers' movements, like anarchists, anarcho-unionists, trade unionists, Carbonari, and other variants, all seeking to "organize the emerging Brazilian working class and instill it with its own characteristics" (Idem, p. 105). Given their structural conditions, immigrants found effective possibilities for their upward social mobility within the country's industrial system. For them, skilled manual labor represented a means to achieve this aspiration. Cardoso notes that crafted workers would be provided the opportunity to "establish their own small business and, perhaps in more ambitious and fortuitous cases, to 'make America' by becoming industrial men themselves" (Idem, p. 104).

Therefore, the same duality expressed in the analysis of the bourgeoisie had already been described by Cardoso, although less systematically, in these papers on the proletariat. Though not comprehensively recognized, these papers helped elucidating the statement briefly featured in *Empresário Industrial...*, which underscores the lack of class awareness among the bourgeoisie: "the industrial bourgeoisie is, for similar reasons, the replica of what happens with the proletariat" (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 166). Similarly, Cardoso asserts in another passage: "as the lack of a 'proletariat tradition' makes it difficult for workers to orient their behavior towards values consistent with their class status, the recent non-industrial background of Brazilian industry owners impedes their awareness as entrepreneurs and their alignment with class-oriented behavior" (Idem, p. 160).

However, the proletariat, as we will see, emerges as the only group at the base of the Brazilian society capable of exhibiting a degree of rationality, albeit predominantly lacking in a tradition of working-class consciousness. In contrast, Cardoso's overview of non-working groups, including urban masses or peasants, highlights their incapacity of a rational and politically oriented collective action.

The concluding question “subcapitalism or socialism?” in *Empresário Industrial...* is certainly not accompanied by a belief in the realistic possibility of a socialist revolution led by the popular forces. In the second edition of the book, launched in 1972, this issue was portrayed more explicitly. Returning to the question of “subcapitalism or socialism?”, Cardoso states that “entrepreneurs exerted their influence in 1964 to make the otherwise tenuous alternative of possible socialist development unviable” (CARDOSO, 1972, p. 15, emphasis added).

Hence, the patrimonialist and slave-owning foundations laid down the unique structural conditions that facilitated Brazilian industrialization. The growing bourgeoisie, lacking a clear political agenda, displayed no objection to aligning with traditional groups or opposing to the influx of foreign capital. Meanwhile, the proletariat, mostly comprised by Brazilians from slavery and/or rural backgrounds, faced predominant fragility, lacking both the capacity for citizenship and engagement in the working-class struggles. In contrast, immigrants, accustomed to industrial structures and capable of rational actions, found greater opportunities to move up the social ladder, thereby diminishing their potential to exert pressure on the system.

Final considerations

In this paper, our aim was to reconstruct important aspects of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s thought and, especially, underscore the importance of the analysis of the Brazilian social structure in his work. While much attention has been given to his analysis of the bourgeoisie by scholars, it is equally crucial to consider his insights into the working class.

Another dimension highlighted as a backdrop for the Cardoso’s social analyses is the racial aspect. While the author contributed to challenging the theses on Brazilian “racial democracy”, it is noteworthy how the weight of slavery serves as the foundation for arguing the perceived incapacity of these groups. This incapacity would be evident in their struggles for own freedom during the 19th century and their ability to organize and lead political transformation as a working class. In São Paulo, the bourgeoisie would exhibit transformative potential, whereas traditional practices would be more comprehensively identified in the Northeast. The transformative capacity of the working class would be concentrated within the white layers of society – particularly European immigrants – rather than among the majority of the national population, notably Black individuals, who are heirs to slavery.

Cardoso’s work is situated in a historical period far removed from the era dominated by eugenicist perspectives, notably the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Furthermore, the author distances himself from interpretations that attempt to mitigate the impact of slavery, a trend that gained traction in the 1930s and the post-war period, especially with the work of Gilberto Freyre. In his writing, Cardoso meticulously addresses racial issues, exposing the violence inherent in the system of slavery and its

transition, often associating progress to European migration. However, in his examination of Brazilian society, Cardoso ultimately perpetuates these same narratives.

The acknowledgment of the inherently violent structure of slavery led to a totalizing understand of its impact. Consequently, despite Cardoso's condemnation of this violence, his approach inadvertently perpetuated deeply ingrained stigmas and misconceptions about the Brazilian population, particularly regarding Black people. Even in the absence of a belief in racial inferiority, Cardoso attributed inferiority – or what he often termed as "weakness" – to the enduring legacies of slavery itself.

Ultimately, Cardoso argues that the inherent weakness found in the society's formation, particularly exacerbated by slavery, along with the derived patrimonialist State structure, undermines the feasibility of any genuinely national development initiatives. The absence of a rational-oriented bourgeoisie, proletariat, and State means that aspirations for development can only be pinned on external factors. It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that, to some extent, the defense of this development paradigm was rooted in deeply racist ideologies. If scholars asserting the inseparability of FHC's theoretical framework from his presidential tenures are correct, then the ramifications of this paradigm are even more profound. This observation hints at an additional layer to our understanding of the deep and complex implications of structural racism in Brazil (ALMEIDA, 2019).

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Received in

October 2023

Approved in

March 2024