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## Interview with Fernando Henrique Cardoso\*

By Pedro Luiz Lima\*\*

### \* Fernando Henrique Cardoso

is the author of several books and articles as a sociologist and political scientist (*Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil Meridional*, 1962, *Empresário industrial e desenvolvimento econômico*, 1964, among many); he was a sociology professor at the University of São Paulo until the 1964 military coup; he was a researcher at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; he was one of the founders, in 1969, of the Brazilian Center of Analysis and Planning (*Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento* - CEBRAP). His academic career includes several achievements, among them the presidency of the International Sociological Association (ISA), in the early 1980s. From 1983 to 1992, he was a Senator of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (*Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* - PMDB), and for the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* - PSDB) starting in 1988. He served as Minister of Foreign Relations from 1992 to 1993, when he became Minister of Finance. He was President of the Republic from 1995 to 2002.

### \*\* Pedro Luiz Lima

is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the Institute of Social and Political Studies, at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (IESP- UERJ), and a substitute professor at the Political Science Department, of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

On April 8, 2013, I was received at the *Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso* (IFHC) in São Paulo by the former president for a conversation that would focus on his *oeuvre* as a social scientist, Marxism and his conception of politics – incidentally the subject of my

PhD dissertation in Political Science at IESP/UERJ. As a sociologist and political scientist and author of numerous books and articles that span the last five decades, his work is an important reference in study of the recent history of Brazil and Latin America. Fernando Henrique Cardoso was president of Brazil between 1995 and 2002 and is one of the leaders of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party, the PSDB (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*) – and if this prominent political career is not directly mentioned in the dialogue transcribed below, it is evident that it looms over many of the issues discussed.

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Since the interview unfolded more as a lengthy conversation, the transcription below preserves the markers of spoken language and Fernando Henrique Cardoso's conversational tone. I would like to thank the personnel of the IFHC for kindly receiving me and former president Fernando Henrique for his generosity in granting me this interview.

### **Pedro Luiz Lima**

One of the topics of my dissertation pertains to the issue of nationalism in Brazilian politics, particularly in the 1950s, which coincides with the beginnings of your academic career. I have read your comments about the *O Petróleo é Nosso* [The Oil is Ours] campaign, about your father's involvement, and your connection to the Brazilian Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Brasileiro* – PCB) at the outset of that decade, when you participated in a journal connected to Caio Prado Jr. At that point in time, with the death of Getúlio [Vargas, former president] and all the rest, how did nationalism fit into your worldview, into how you viewed Brazil and into your conception of politics?

### **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

During this whole period, since 1930, with Getúlio and the Estado Novo, in this period [marked by the economic development model] of import substitution, the idea of the National State as something important, and necessary in order to accomplish an economic leap, was predominant. At the time we talked less about democracy and more about growth – democracy was not a question yet. After 1945 [democratic elections after Getúlio's rule] came a new Constitution in 1946, and then Getúlio returned, and so on until 1964 and this was a time when the idea of the formation of the nation was fundamental. In my case due to family influences (not only my father, there were many others – there were at least 10 generals in my family, one Getúlio minister)... At home, people were very pro-Getúlio, my father was too. Brazil's affirmation depended on our growth, and our growth was stunted because of external forces. Our enemy was abroad. Naturally, in the preceding period, during my father's times, it was British imperialism. He loathed British imperialism – so, many in those times flirted with Germany, even [former president] Dutra himself, a lot more as a matter of national affirmation against England than strict adherence to Nazism. The idea of imperialism was very strong – in order to affirm itself the nation had to bear in mind the foreign enemy. This was "rice and beans," your basic fare – and the Communist Party took it to the extreme, since soviet communism used this as a strengthening mechanism. The vision that later became dominant was that there had to be a progressive alliance between workers and industrialists against large landowners [*latifundiários*] and imperialism. This was a common and current vision – and it was mine as well, just not perhaps in such a radical version. At the time I had read Weber, Mannheim, and Descartes a lot more than Marx. It was not because of Marxism that we thought about these things, but Communism.

### **Pedro Luiz Lima**

But the PCB, around that time, in 1952 and 53, had an uneasy relationship with Getúlio...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

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The PCB was against him. It was against Getúlio and afterwards was against Juscelino [Kubitschek]. By then I had changed my mind a bit, because of my multiple connections and sources of information. The academy was against him, the communist left was against him — the left in general was against him. Now, as I said, I had a lot of pro-Getúlio influence in my family, pro-Juscelino too. My father was a congressman, my uncle was the president of the Bank of Brazil. It was hard then... Be it as it may, we were quite suspicious of foreign capital. At this time, Caio Prado was a staunch opponent [of foreign capital]. It was a mercantilistic point of view. And how did my mind start changing? As I started doing research. In the beginning, my work was about black people, the issue was different, how Brazil was integrated into the world through slavery and the international trade. I was then concerned with this system. When we started looking more at Brazil — at least in my case — in the beginning of the 1950s and beginning of 1960s, it was through these ideological lenses. And when I started doing research — about entrepreneurs, specifically — I realized that they did not behave according to this model.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

I read a recent interview you gave at PUC (*Desigualdade e Diversidade*, Revista de Ciências Sociais da PUC-Rio, n.9, 2011) in which you comment that you began the research for “Empresário industrial e desenvolvimento econômico” [Industrial entrepreneurs and economic development] with the hypothesis [espoused by] the *Partidão* and end up...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

I end up saying that it's all wrong, that this whole business does not accord with reality. Because at the time of the studies of slavery, the *Partidão*, the left, had nothing to do with it — it was all pure theory. It was the influence of reading Marx.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

And where can the influence of the work of Caio Prado be felt in these initial researches on slavery? Because some of the conclusions are the similar ...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

It was not so important, really. I had read Caio, obviously. Caio was a beacon among us. He was a very interesting person, in his book *A Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* [The Formation of Contemporary Brazil], in which he realized the meaning of colonization, its connection with the rest of the world. . . And Caio has another book that has not been sufficiently assimilated yet, which is *A Revolução Brasileira* [The Brazilian Revolution], where he changes his point of view.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

He “attacks” the feudalism thesis, correct?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Indeed he does. He changes his point of view. Caio had an enormous advantage: when he went into philosophy he would say foolish things and nobody remembers those texts; but when he analyzed concrete processes, he knew [what he was talking about]. He was trained as geographer, he accompanied Lévi-Strauss in his travels in Brazil, he knew geology and traveled a lot. He was not only a theoretician. Because of his family too, he

was familiar was the issues pertaining to land ownership in Brazil, rent-paying settlers [meeiros], etc., and his analysis strayed from the prevailing Communist Party line. So he influenced me from that angle... Caio was a pillar for us. And it is curious that Florestan was not. Because at the time Florestan was a functionalist; he was discussing the *tupinambá* [native Indians], the social function of war, the functionalist method. . .

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### **Pedro Luiz Lima**

Much has been said about the USP-ISEB<sup>1</sup> rivalry at that point. There is a certain history of the social science, perhaps with a USP-bent, which places scientific rigor on the USP side, and sees the ISEB as politicized, politically-oriented, with close ties to the State, with all the impurities following from this... What to you think of this kind of analysis?

### **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

I find it very unsystematic. We had a vision here, within USP, that ISEB, because of its connection with the State, was compromised... They were too nationalistic, while people at USP at this point had already incorporated a class struggle perspective, people read Marx. So then the criticism [from the side of USP] was that the State obscures class interests. But, truth be told, ISEB was a lot closer than USP to the real social processes at work in Brazil. USP was in its ivory tower and ISEB was discussing topics pertaining to the Brazilian political process. But ISEB was not a monolith. [Hélio] Jaguaribe had very good analyses, Celso [Furtado] too, although he did not belong to the ISEB, strictly speaking, he was close, but not a part of it. The ISEB is Candido [Mendes], [Roland] Corbisier, [Álvaro] Vieira Pinto. Which is to say: ideological. There was ideology at both USP and ISEB. But I think ISEB could see and follow the real processes more closely. Let me tell you a little story: Alain Touraine spent some time here [at USP], and he was very helpful in making me understand things. He had come from Chile, and had been working there with [Enzo] Faletto, and would make analyses of social processes. He would tell us: "Be careful, you have to pay attention to the State, because the question of the nation is very important in this country." And we then wrote many articles that were published in *Les Temps Modernes*, [edited by] Sartre, and Touraine criticized this. He said "You are replicating Europe here in a way, the entrepreneurial class, etc. And things here are quite different". Perhaps I was not as exaggerated as my colleagues, in the ideological realm, because since I have always interacted with many people, I could not attach myself to a single vision. And Touraine had an important role in calling attention to these processes. Florestan only began discussing these subjects after he left Brazil, after 1964, when he discovered [the concept of] dependency... That was a lot later, he was already in Canada. At this point, Florestan's view was a lot more academic; it was, so to speak, positivistic. And we were lost here... And who invented Marxism at USP was my generation: Giannotti, Fernando Novais, myself, Octávio Ianni, Paul Singer... It was an invention that only later became wed to the theology of liberation, becoming a total ideology and took over. At any rate, we were more rigorous; our reading of Marx was that of true marxologists. Giannotti tried to read Marx heuristically, with the influences he had from his stay in France... At this point, the people in the Seminar were no longer truly militant. Paul [Singer] had been a militant, I think, judeo-zionist, and was a socialist. Out of the others, only I had a stint as a left-wing political militant, because of my family, I had greater proximity to that context. The others were not militants; their political activities came after the coup. But the fact they were not militants does not mean they were ideologically influential.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

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Returning to this subject you were referring to, Touraine's warning against this supposed "idealization" you would be culpable of: would this have anything to do with the big influence of Florestan's functionalism in this "pre-Marxist" period, and, therefore, with the great influence of an interpretation of Brazilian history through the prism of "obstacles to transformation"?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

That was very widespread. The person who criticized that was Albert Hirschman in an article on "The Obstacles to Seeing Development." Here and then, in the late 1950s, almost all seminars in Brazil talked about this, the obstacles to change. It seemed that there were insurmountable obstacles; the main axis was imperialism, but not the only one. It was the lag, the "two Brazils," the persistence of the archaic, duality...

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

But do you believe, returning to the subject of nationalism, that Marx and this rigorous reading of Capital also grounded an anti-nationalistic perspective?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, exactly. There was no possibility of compromise, and that's why the ideology was frail. Marx is class, not nationalism, not the State. This influenced us as well. And the distancing away from the ISEB starts there, with the suspicion about these people who talked about the State that for us was nothing more than a mystification. "What is behind the State? It was the bourgeoisie. Allied to whom?" This difference existed. Our analysis always hewed closer to social process and class struggle, to the idea that there is such thing as class antagonism; nationalism glosses over class struggle in order to rally the people against something foreign.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

It is curious then that in a certain sense, as you mentioned, the ISEB was closer to political life than you at ISEB, who were supposedly ensconced in some tower, reading Marx with a magnifying glass, and so on, but your interpretation also later goes in the same direction of a vigorous interpretation of Brazil. The theory of populism itself, which can be found in embryo form in your work on the industrial entrepreneur, would be a point of arrival for that Marxism, with an interpretation of Brazil...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Opposed to populism. [Francisco] Weffort was who crystallized, so to speak, this point of view. And there lies another difference between us, that is political as well. Because what was common in Brazil, the best of Brazil, was populism. Our Brazilian left, accepted, as it still does, Chávez, etc. The left has lost its bearings of the processes of Marxist class, and has succumbed to populism and nationalism.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

At the moment of the critique of the CEPAL [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe*] from within, which your book with Faletto established, there was still [the idea of] the nation as a strong unit of analysis. In "Dependency and Democracy in Latin America" (*Dependência*

*e Desenvolvimento na América Latina*) you denationalized the foundations of economic development, at the same time you singularized political contexts...

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**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

I was pitting myself against the CEPAL's economicism...

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

And I think the classical question about this book would be: once dependency is established as the motor and true basis of economic and political relations, how to think of politics in this quagmire, in this straightjacket of dependency? What room is there for politics?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

If you take a good look at dependency theory, deep down it is not much different than what I was thinking when I was dealing with capitalism and slavery. There is the external relation, but not everything can be explained by it. The internal dynamics must be taken into account. One thing is the plantation slave, another thing is the cattle slave. One thing is large-scale production for export, another thing is production for the internal market. So they must be differentiated. And what did we do in "Dependency and development in Latin America"? The important thing there was not dependency but development. And in dependency, we would say, there are different types and different degrees. And then we set up three basic types: either there is the formation of local capital or not; there is the enclave; or it is already connected to the system of globalization (we did not know yet what it was, but that's what it was). And then we said: it is not the same thing – although there is the prevailing factor of the external that is determinant, it is not always determinant in the same way. And there are shifts that are internal and lead to different degrees of freedom. In a certain way you have to compare that book with those by Guevara and by Débray, you'll see that it is the opposite. And our book was read from the perspective of Guevara's book. . . But they were saying something else. In fact, it is very curious how Guevara was completely mistaken in his analyses. He defended a theory of focus and the situation had nothing to do with the situation of focus. So, politics for us is born here: "be careful, you cannot imagine that economic over-determination will thwart the existence of varieties, variants." This is constructed. But that is still a lot more schematic. In fact it is surprising because it is still being sold. In Spanish there are more than 30 editions, in Brazil there are 10, and I don't know how many more in the United States... Because [the book] was truly a little different. It was born in a seminar we had at the CEPAL. And there was a battle between social scientists and economists. I had already written the book about the industrial entrepreneurs and economic development and had a richer vision of this process, of how links were created.... When I realized that São Paulo industrialists did not want anything else than allying themselves to capitalism, imperialism, I realized it was a different deal. That started a line of analysis that later led to the form of development [I called] dependent-associated. Still *development*. The book was read differently, in the fashion of Gunder Frank and others, which viewed it as a straightjacket, "this is the way, there is only one path, only one possible politics: general rupture: socialism." And at the time, the 1960s, almost everyone in Brazil, including Celso Furtado, Maria Conceição Tavares, [Hélio] Jaguaribe, everyone one thought that, as [Guillermo] O'Donnell theorized, capital imposed an authoritarian regime, that it could not expand without the authoritarian regime. In other cases, they said there would be no expansion, capitalism would be forced back. They completely misread what

was happening. I don't think we were wrong when we said "there will be transformation, it is already happening; the forms of development are dependent, but they are *development* no less – we are not moving toward stagnation." At the time, those were the words used: stagnation and revolution.

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**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Correct that is one of the main arguments of the book, an anti-stagnation theory of dependent development, even under authoritarianism...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

That is Marx backwards...

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Exactly, that is where I was going. That seems to be a reading closer to Capital than the reading the revolutionaries were making at the time...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Exactly, it is Marx backwards. To this day, I think that who did not understand... Well, Marx understood capitalism. If Dilma [Rousseff] had read Marx well, she would not propose a 6% return tax. Because this is "fair profit," we return to the Middle Ages. That cannot be done, capitalism is accumulation. It is horrible – and since it is horrible nobody likes it, and since there is no alternative, there are attempts to curb its momentum, but it is impossible. Not everyone who read Capital in that seminar understood this. Many also became too dogmatic... But who understood the process knows that the dynamic force of capitalism is explosive, it is not something easily stopped.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

I would like to return a little to the passage in "Industrial Entrepreneurs," and "Dependency and Development..." because the ending of "Industrial Entrepreneurs..." is quite enigmatic...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, I made a concession to "Sub-capitalism or socialism..."

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Yes, that is where I was trying to get. Reading this passage, almost 50 years later, made me think "well, Fernando Henrique Cardoso is making a concession to stagnationism"....

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, in the end there is a concession to that ideology.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

"We need the revolution, or else this is not going to turn out well." You are pointing in that direction...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Correct. The book was published in 1964, amidst the crisis of the Jango [former president João Goulart, overthrown by the military coup] government, so it was very hard to be reasonable with what I was seeing.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

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About this context, which I am very interested in, the immediate moments before the coup, a very confusing context... In Brigitte Leoni's book ("Fernando Henrique Cardoso: O Brasil do possível" [Fernando Henrique Cardoso: The Possible Brazil]), there is a story about March 13 [1964], the day of the Central Station Rally [*Comício da Central*], in which you mention that you were on your way from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo and were talking to friends about the possibility of Jango launching the coup... So, a large portion of the left thought the coup would come from Jango's side.

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, but I did not share that idea, that Jango would launch the coup. I was very critical of Jango at the time, because Jango was a populist, he was fragile... But my family was on his side. When I arrived in São Paulo, those who thought the coup would come from that side were José Gregori and Plínio [de Arruda Sampaio]. I'll tell you another story: after I got to São Paulo there was a meeting at the university at night, Weffort and Lourdes Sola were there, everybody – and they wanted to write a manifesto against Jango. And then Luiz Hildebrando, a communist, a colleague of mine for many years, and I went there, because they wanted to make a manifesto against Jango on the eve of the coup! And Weffort was one of the most riled up. It was difficult, and the people at USP were so anti-populist that they thought the coup could come from both sides. This reminds me, fast-forwarding in time, that at the time of Lott's counter-coup, Florestan, when we still lived on the same street, would become furious because my father, for whom he had voted, was on Lott's side. The difficulty in understanding the true political game was too big for university people living in São Paulo. There was a lot of confusion as to what would happen: "from which side is the coup going to come from?"

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Connecting these two moments, the 1950s and 1960s: you commented in passing that in the mid-1950s you had read a lot more Weber, Mannheim and Descartes than Marx, whom you only began reading in 1958 in the Capital reading group, and you said that at the time nationalism originated more from communism than any type of Marxism. It is as if the Marxism that came later expelled communism: before there was communism without Marxism, and then the Marxist analysis of reality replaces the vision of the Communist Party. . .

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, it becomes an ideology...

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Thinking about this strong reception of Marx for the first time in Brazil and in many places, even in France this becomes more fashionable immediately after...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, only later. In Argentina it was simultaneous and we had contacts with a group of Argentinian intellectuals in Cordoba who also read Marx.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

...you even said that the reading in the "Seminar" was not a [politically] engaged reading, it was more academic. Some people refer to "Chair Marxism," not without irony. I would like you to evaluate the general context of this reception of Marx in Brazilian academia and

in the social sciences, and the type of theoretical revolution this represented – not least because the introduction of “Capitalism and Slavery in Meridional Brazil [*Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional*]” is very symptomatic of this, there are quite a few pages in which you write about dialectics, defending dialectics as the best way to apprehend reality.

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**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

At that moment this is what occurred: we had training in empirical research, surveys, etc. and in this case, yes, this was thanks to Florestan; and we had a kind of frustration because we were socialists. And when we read Marx we started seeing “look, there’s movement” ... Mannheim was the first attempt of who knows, trying to understand, the subjects of planning and democracy. . . And there was the Cold War in the middle of all this. Things were divided here: our hearts were on the side against imperialism. The difficulty with our Marxism was: how can we make something out of this that will allow us to analyze concrete processes? Sartre helped with his “*Question de méthode*.” Because Sartre threw in a few clues; he had to do some gymnastics to approximate existentialism to Marxism, he went to Cuba, and was something of an icon for us. But Sartre had nothing to do with the analysis of concrete social processes. So we clinged on to these theoretical instruments, almost as a theoretical inspiration. This led to, at least in a first stage, in a non-dehydrated Marxism: not a communist ideology, nor Talmudic. Even in the book about capitalism and slavery, you can notice than I am analyzing processes and mixing concepts, Weber comes in as well as Marx, and it was Florestan who started this, with his “*Empirical Foundations of Sociological Investigation*” [*Fundamentos Empíricos da Investigação Sociológica*]. He established three gods [Marx, Weber, and Durkheim] – which was something completely unacceptable from the point of view of those who saw dialectics as a unique, totalizing ideology as “the” method. Florestan would never say this; according to him, depending on the nature of the object analyzed, the method must change as well. So this gave us the opportunity to free ourselves from the theoretical dogma – I won’t call it ideological – of Marxism. Even Roberto [Schwarz] – he would like to be more of a Marxist than he really is – in his recent work about Caetano, he shows the nuances of this process – although he is more obsessed than the majority with class struggle (he sees it everywhere). If you also look at another very good book, by Fernando Novais [“Portugal and Brazil in the crisis of the old colonial system, 1777-1808” (*Portugal e Brasil na crise do antigo sistema colonial, 1777-1808*)], it’s the same; a little bit less in the work of Octávio Ianni, who as a little less mechanical in his Marxism. So I don’t completely agree in calling this academic Marxism, because academic Marxism is merely theorizing, and we always were interested in understanding processes.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

With regard to your doctoral dissertation, “Capitalism and Slavery...” you mentioned that Florestan hated the introduction...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, I was sick with smallpox, and he came by. He was furious because I was attacking the functionalist method. I ended up softening my critique in the dissertation. In the end we almost quarreled, but I never quarreled with him, I have always been very devoted to Florestan.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

You wrote with José Serra, “The Misadventures of the Dialectic of Dependency” [*As Desventuras da dialética da dependência*], in 1978, a text in which you critique Ruy Mauro

Marini. A question that intrigues me is: everyone tends to claim and defend their own dialectic. Generally, debates among Marxists usually goes like: "I am dialectical and you are not, I am more dialectical than you are". But wouldn't dialectics, in general, bring in implicitly a problem for politics itself? Because dialectics require finding the ideal in the real, it "suffocates" everything that is idealistic, Hegel "suffocates" Kant... so how to think of a dialectical conception of politics that is not merely a reiteration of the real?

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**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, because in reality every contradiction is contained in the real. So, what is the role of politics then? Once again Hirschman comes in. He wrote an essay about dialectics without synthesis, which would be a more fluctuating, indeterminate dialectics. Because Marxist dialectic is determinate, it leads to a result. Hirschman tries to show that it is better to use dialectics without the idea of finality that is derived from this contradiction, because the many contradictions can lead to nowhere. Drawing a parallel with quantum physics, today there is no longer the possibility of determining the position of a micro particle; you can determine the statistical probability of the behavior of an *array* of particles. Physics evaporated the mechanical notions of cause and effect. This came from before, from the principle of indetermination. Now they are trying to determine something, but it is impossible to determine one thing, there are *arrays* of possibilities. Hirschman's ideas — he does not use the physics analogy, I am the one who is saying this — is: why not think of the world with multiple contradiction which may or may not have a result? This gives you a lot more freedom.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Well, one question that has always intrigued me is the following: in a later moment of your work, in the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s, in some texts you critique a certain spirit of the times that ultimately approached the concept of civil society as a fetish. You were saying something along the following lines: "let us not fetishize this concept, civil society is not panacea, it won't resolve all our issues, because it contains conflict." But at times, also in the context of the dictatorship, we can find in you work praise of the autonomy of civil society. How can we then think of a good balance between the State and civil society? What are your thoughts on this subject?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Indeed, conflict is in civil society, not in classes. Here in Brazil when the idea of civil society was reborn, during the authoritarian years, it appeared in positive light, while the State was negative. But lets take a step back, particularly, to Gramsci: we will see that hegemony is formed in civil society and culminates in the State. And the State must be permeable in order to absorb what is in ebullition in civil society. So, what I was thinking at the time was: "you are fetishizing, be careful".... And what were social movements doing here? They would demand what they wanted to state bureaucrats. This made me think: "you are not doing politics. Politics implies understanding the State as well." If civil society does not connect to politics and you do not go to the State it remains in a lower position. That was my idea.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

There is a book called "The Viable Utopia" [*A Utopia Viável*], from when you were president, that is a collection of lectures in which utopia figures as an important moment of politics. And, in this sense, in a 1991 text from a journal called *O Socialismo do Futuro*, you vehemently critique those who see in liberalism, at that point in time when real socialism

was undergoing its debacle, the salvation to all conflict. However, in a more recent text, *The Accidental President of Brazil*, published in 2006, in several passages you are effusive in conferring capitalism a certain amount of supremacy with regard to the allocation of resources and to the distribution problems and the resolution of conflicts of interests. So I wanted to ask you, and this is a big question: how do you deal with, today, the question of the limits of capitalism and the limits of liberalism? How is it possible to point towards a direction beyond capitalism and where does utopia fit in your conception of politics?

### **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Here is what I think: the limit of capitalism is hard to anticipate, because socialism did not succeed. The end of capitalism is nowhere in the horizon, capitalism only transforms itself. And the main transformation was its global integration. And what I have been trying to show is the following: a unit is formed with the subject, and this subject is not a class; we have to start thinking in terms of certain attributes and utopias that take into consideration the interests of mankind. Environment, human rights, that type of thing. And, in order to legitimize this, you need a legal system. This is Kant. So we have to think about forms of global governance. These forms of global governance are necessary in order to counteract the inherent irrationality of capitalism. I am not proposing the end of capitalism, because I don't see its end. However, what I see is that it is possible to limit its irrationality. It is inherent, because speculation is part of capitalism. People want rational capitalism; that does not exist. It is irrational. It grows, and keeps on growing forever but also creates disasters. It's Schumpeter. And how to counteract this? Politics, and politics require a certain utopia, a certain objective, a certain ideal. So I think that, at most, it is possible to think of forms that regulate this irrationality, that lead to moderation. This is why I am not a liberal. Because I do not believe in self-regulation. I am politically a liberal, but I am not philosophically liberal, nor economically a neoliberal because there must be regulation. Now, who will sustain this regulation? Class? No, it cannot do that any longer. I always repeat this: Gorbachev realized this. It is not class, it is not the State, because the environment does not rely on class or the State. For example, the nuclear terror, North Korea can cause a world catastrophe...And what is at stake economically there? Nothing. So everyone, somehow, has to find forms of regulation. That is how I see it.

### **Pedro Luiz Lima**

The political question there is rather tense... It encompasses an array of possible alternatives. From the moment one acknowledges the irrationality of the capitalist system it is possible to act politically to overthrow it, or to work from within to regulate it. The second course is clearly your alternative...

### **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, it is the democratic option, let's put it that way...

### **Pedro Luiz Lima**

In a lecture published in the beginning of the 1980s in "Democracy for change" [*Democracia para mudar*], you state that, towards the end of the military regime, much thought was given to the question of distribution and once again you talked, as a Marxist, that the contradiction was situated at the level of production. You talked of another kind of development at the time, and defended that distribution alone would not solve the problems. It seems that, at this moment, your world perspective was quite informed by the notion of contradiction, *à la Marx*...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

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Yes, that is probable.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

I would like to know then if there is a moment when you identify a step back and start saying “look, maybe that’s not the way it is, there is an intermediate path and perhaps it is better than thinking of changes in the regime of production, which seems historically intangible”...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

What I think, stated quite simply: where has there been greater balance between production and consumption (distribution)? In the Nordic countries, which are social democrats. It is just that banal, but that is it. In the end, that is why I am a social democrat and why I have supported the third way. It is not because of adhesion to I-don’t-know-what... It is because otherwise you have savage capitalism, simply because in its essence that is how it works. So you need political forces that hold it back. That is where democracy comes in. This is something that only becomes a concern of mine in the 1970s. We were not thinking about democracy before. We started reflecting on democracy because of authoritarianism. But now it is not only because of authoritarianism. It is a necessary condition for the existence of civil society, for it to pressure, so that it can therefore be capable of regulating the system. Yet this will always occur in an unbalanced way in my model, which is Marxist – I am not thinking of an equilibrium model. Liberals think and neoliberal political economy think in terms of equilibrium models. But there will be no equilibrium; historical process lacks equilibrium. It will always be that way. And this does not afflict me. It is something normal; which does not mean we are going to sit down and watch until the lack of equilibrium takes its toll and destroys everything. No, you maneuver a little; in the end, to me, politics is navigation. You must see in which direction you are going, “I am leaving this point and will arrive there, yes. But there are islands in the way, tempests, fair weather...” So I do not have a deterministic view of things. This is why I mentioned physics: gone is determinism, in come arrays of possibilities.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

There is a tragic Weberian component in your conception of politics. And it is curious because Roberto Schwarz, in his classical text about the Marx Seminar, offers a caveat in his conclusion, stating that perhaps the members of the seminar had not read the Frankfurt School, a “more somber Marxism,” so to speak. But when Weber enters this tragic conception of politics, the “somber” enters as well...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Right. But it is not the same “somber” of the Frankfurt School, it is deeper “somber.” It may not work; there is no guarantee it will work. The future is not necessarily promising. In Marx it was; you focused on overcoming. But here there is dialectic without overcoming; you do not make it to paradise, not necessarily. So there is something truly tragic, agonistic. Reminiscent of Isaiah Berlin, the value of judgment. Because there are situations that are agonistic, in which there are two values that are contradictory and that you cherish. “You shall not kill” and “Go to war”... At another level, there is a truly tragic element too. There is no naïve optimism. For me this tragic element, should not lead to inaction. In the end, it is a struggle to avoid tragedy. The tragedy of capitalism,

in the context we've been discussing; its irrationality. It is a struggle to avoid this irrationality. Therefore, it cannot be apologetical to capitalism.

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**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Many people read your work and establish a distinction, perhaps also because of political biases, between a Marxist moment and a Weberian moment, being that that latter would overtake the former in the beginning of the 1970s. How do you assess this distinction?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

It is completely wrong.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Yes, because it seems to me that you were always writing texts that heavily referred to Marx, even in the 1970s, whether in the polemics with Poulantzas and Althusser, or in the text about Marini. Even in "The Sum and the Rest" [*A Soma e o Resto*], published in 2012, Marx is the most frequently cited author in the book, which I found curious.

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, because my training was very heavily influenced by Marx. In this sense, sometimes I talk to Roberto [Schwarz]... He is Marxist through and through, or wants to be; I don't want to be that much of a Marxist, but I am. The foundation of my perspective of the world, of capitalism, is Marxist... Now, I am not politically a Marxist.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Indeed, and that is where I was going. How then does your intellectual, sociological conception of the world relate to your political life, your political intervention?

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Precisely, I do not believe in the inevitability of progress, nor that class struggle will resolve this or that, so my politics are different. I think there is a certain mechanism in Marxism, an optimism, an idealist optimism I do not share. What do I do in politics? I try to broaden the margin of what is possible, all the time, not accommodate to the possible; but it is also important not to stray too far. There is a certain amount of realism, but this is not a mechanical realism, because I have a utopia — there is contradiction between the two things. Always, politics are always like that. You must take good care, because you are making a pact with the devil. Be careful: "you are selling your soul, or not? Or are you just renting it? Are you paying upfront or in installments?"

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Still in recent politics: in the beginning of the 1990s in some moments you spoke of globalization as a new renaissance. At the same time, in your books with Mário Soares ("The World in Portuguese" [*O mundo em português*]) and with Roberto Pompeu de Toledo ("The President According to the Sociologist" [*O presidente segundo o sociólogo*]), you seem to be a critic of globalization

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, what do I criticize in globalization? What do I think is positive in globalization?

I criticize it because it is asymmetrical, etc., etc., But, at any rate, it is also liberating; it allows integration to capitalism, in modernity — more than that, in the contemporary world — of sectors that had been deprived of this possibility before. And when I compared it to the Renaissance, it was in the sense of humanism and not in the sense that it would end poverty (poverty is diminishing with globalization, it is diminishing; but perhaps not inequality, but poverty yes). But I am not thinking of a renaissance in that suddenly everything will be good. No, no. The Renaissance was also terrible, it happens with the Medici, with the Borgia Pope... The same happens here. But it gave man a certain possibility of thinking himself as the center of history. Now I say “we can think of humanity as the center of history, in terms of a broader solidarity.” Since, good or bad, globalization is the end of imperialism. People never see this. Because globalization is the prevalence of the company over the State — and companies do not wage wars, States do. We return to Montesquieu, *le doux commerce*. Who wages war is Korea, not General Motors. War does not fit into the logic of globalization, that’s part of the State’s logic. With imperialism, yes, that was primitive accumulation, the domination of natural resources. That is no longer necessary today. Integration was enormous. So, I find it better in this sense, because it engenders less irrational facts than in the previous situation. Now, from this to people thinking you are uncritically praising globalization is a short step, and when people want to criticize you, they make vulgar readings, and that’s how it stays, there is nothing you can do — but it is not what I am thinking. I’ve never heard anyone pointing this out, that globalization is the end of imperialism...

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

Returning to the interpretation of Brazil: in an inaugural lecture at the Itamaraty [the Brazilian Foreign Relations Ministry] (later published as “Books that Invented Brazil [Livros que inventaram o Brasil]) you mention Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda and Caio Prado Jr. and you mention Sérgio Buarque as the one you feel greater kinship for, with whom who have greater affinity. This sounds curious to me, particularly in light of the direction taken in our conversation, because your reference is capitalism, it’s Marx — and none of these references is central for Sérgio Buarque.

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

Yes, but it is Sérgio Buarque who places his bets on democracy. All of the others bet on the maintenance of paternalism, or the State. It’s from this perspective that I approach Sérgio Buarque. He was the only one who in the 1930s — the decade of Fascism or Communism — , believed in democracy, in the possibility. . . He would say: “Be careful, rules are necessary, laws are necessary, the law is universal, the cordial man is arbitrary, he is against the law. I am not enshrining the cordial man, I am enshrining respect to law.” So this was my perspective, that of institutions.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

He is a liberal, in a sense...

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

He is a liberal.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

While Caio Prado is the Marxist in this triad: one conservative, one liberal, one Marxist.

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

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That is true. But I confess this is the side of Sérgio Buarque I find important; he was unique, in a time of totalitarian-authoritarian obscurity, not to believe in these options. And that was hard, in the 1930s, in Brazil, with Getúlio, and Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin... You see he had a different reading of history.

**Pedro Luiz Lima**

“Capitalism and Slavery...” echoes, to a great extent, the USP spirit of antagonism with Gilberto Freyre and Oliveira Viana. And these are two authors who have been rediscovered as of late; you yourself also make a self-critique with regard to Gilberto Freyre, saying that he can be very interesting.

**Fernando Henrique Cardoso**

I am about to publish, in a book about Brazilian thinkers, a long essay I wrote about Gilberto Freyre, based on a conference at the FLIP [Paraty Literary Festival, in the state of Rio de Janeiro] about him in which I in a certain way return to this, although I maintain my critique. Oliveira Viana was never a love of mine, precisely because of his anti-democratic stance. Oliveira Viana is the State... With regard to my work, there is something else: here we are trying to recreate my trajectory, but thus is complicated, because we never at each and every moment thinking about what we wrote before. So there are certainly contradictions. You venture here and there, feeling your way around. And a good amount of what I wrote was in the heat of disputes. Some things I wrote more as a thinker; but in general that was not the case – I wrote as a fighter.

**Quote this interview**

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**Notes**

1. USP, the University of São Paulo (Universidade de São Paulo); ISEB, Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies (*Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiro*).