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Traditional Values & Virtues in Contemporary Social Life

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IN SEARCH OF A TRADITION: COMPONENTS FOR A BRAZILIAN CULTURE

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Abstract:

The Brazilian civilization is relatively new in world history. Built on a mix of cultures - Portuguese, Indigenous, African, among other European and Asian people who were coming to the country - we can say, not without astonishment, that Brazil still suffers from a cultural identity. The tension that involves the formation of identity emerges in times of social crisis or crisis of moral values, as seen in the current context of the country, undermined by constant allegations of corruption at all levels, by increasing violence, and lacking in a row established policy, Brazilian society has appealed to discourses that seek, in the ideologies of the past, an answer to the present problems. At this moment that we realize that a substantial part of that society does not know with accuracy, refer to the past, tradition and that they seek as a foundation for their beliefs. The speeches, at that time, oscillate between the rescue of religious traditions, the resurrection of old theories or policies, and the restatement of foreign nationals coming with immigration. This condition creates a complex plan to debate political and social questions, whose paradigms do not depart from a critical and cultural consciousness formed, but rather the attempt to assert a vision of what is 'traditional' without having an exact idea of their extent and origins or real influence. In this communication, therefore, our purposes are: to try to understand, through the analysis of Stuart Hall and Zygmunt Bauman, the reasons why the Brazilian society has claim for a 'return to tradition', even if they do not know exactly what is sought in return: and a second moment, map, albeit briefly, what are the cultural matrices involved in this debate, with some recent cases in which in which the question of tradition has been placed with a response to legal and social situations.

Introduction

Brazil has won recently a prominent place among the major world economies, forming the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), group of countries whose influence will be decisive in the 21st century. Together, Brazil was also able to host a soccer World Cup and the Olympics. However, these indicators of apparent success has not been accompanied by a balanced social change. Brazil is faced with increasing cases of corruption contained, there is unemployment, deep social inequality, and arise at any time explosions of ethnic's, religious and sexual violences. There is a conflict between the shocking image of a great and rich country with the daily population, which is not affected, positively, for all these economic changes.

In our communication we will not discuss the political and economic issues that shape this crisis, but the way it has been read by the Brazilian society. In search of an



ideological solution that can save the country's development, various groups within society have sought, in the ancient traditions of the past, a possible answer to the moral dilemmas facing Brazil. However, Brazil is a country of very recent history, which was constructed from cultural matrices (today) foreign - mainly African and Portuguese, and then, with immigration, received contributions from Italy, Germany, Eastern Europe and Japan. The native Indigenous culture contributed in this process, albeit much less present than in the case of the civilizations of Spanish America. In addition, the 20th century represented a dramatic change in cultural orientation of Brazil, began to receive from the USA an influence on their consumption patterns and in the field of political and religious ideas. In today's globalized context, Brazilians feel relatively lost in their ideological choices, and try to rebuild their guidance from the teachings which, in his view, can only restore a balance that would have existed in the past.

Initially, therefore, we try understand how Brazilian society are reading this cultural crisis through which passes, and then, try to map some of the main lines of thought that has gained strength with this crisis of moral and social values.

'Liquid Modernity'

The Polish thinker Zigmunt Baumann (2010) pointed out, properly, that the contemporary world is undergoing a phase of "liquid modernity". With the apparent demise of socialism in Eastern Europe, and the supposed victory of capitalist theory, the promise of a new world, more balanced and economically rich, did not materialize. Instead - and in the case of Brazil - the victory of capitalism was a step back in working relationships, a deepening economic crisis and rising inequality. From 1964 to 1984, Brazil was ruled by a military junta that has kept increasing levels of development, but sustained artificially (VENTURA, 2000). This caused a devastating economic crisis in Brazil after the military government, although clear signs that this could happen were already seen before the return of full democracy. The "defeat" of socialism was understood as the end of a historical context in which the concessions made to workers could be abolished after all, was no longer necessary to keep them from the "danger" of the labor system of socialism. This created the opportunity for groups that dominated the country's economy is cast to a scramble for profits and capital



accumulation, putting in crisis the social compromise that had been established between workers and employers over the period of "cold war".

The desolation caused by the abandonment by the disruption of this compromise launched entire societies, such as Brazil, a reflection on the moral and cultural values. After all, if the capitalist world appeared to be a bad option, which would then be the alternatives? Let us, then, to Baumann. We live in a historical context in which human relations are governed by uncertainty, lack of a deeper commitment by a 'liquidity' in relations: impossible to control, and they do break up with incredible rapidity, seeking only immediate benefits and profit possible. This would occur because some societies without cultural paradigms are set to respond to this values crisis. There are no major systems, such as at the time of dualism "socialism x capitalism," to guide us. So what can we put in place these "big absences"?

The reading by Baumann is quite appropriate for the case of Brazil, who has also difficulty with a series of building their cultural identity. Countries like China, India and Russia have ancient traditions that serve to build a solid cultural reference, to claiming it or refuting it. The case of Brazil is quite different: their cultural traditions are relatively recent, and are usually imported from the civilizations that colonized the country, forming a nothing cohesive and inconsistent identity. Stuart Hall's analysis (1997) is appropriate here to guide us in trying to understand the difficulties of building a Brazilian cultural identity - especially now, in the context of modernity.

Until the 19th century, Brazil was a colony of Portugal, and its basic cultural guidance was grounded in Portuguese culture. The Indigenous and African cultural additions were fundamentals in conquer of space and the development of economic activities. However, indigenous participation in Brazil was restricted by numerous ethnic massacres, even so, the culture brought from Africa was submitted to the system of slavery, which was only finished in 1888 - that is, both the cultures, indigenous and African, were conditioned by the cultural Portuguese matrix. The independence of Brazil in 1822, this situation has not changed radically: the African slaves continued to come as long, and indigenous people were getting shorter and shorter. From the early 20th century, attempts to formulate a Brazilian cultural identity, required the integration of the country, created the theory that Brazil would be composed of the "harmony of the three races," ie, that the Brazilian people was composed by the union of three cultural



sources - Portuguese, African and Indigenous - so egalitarian. There would not be in Brazil, for example, racial discrimination, and yes, social discrimination caused by disparity of riches and social origin. Great Brazilian authors like Gilberto Freire (1935, 1954) and Darcy Ribeiro (1995) defended this theory for years, but it proved wrong. Brazil, during the 20th century, continue to speak Portuguese, to be catholic in its majority, and maintain a series of social tensions, ethnic and intellectuals who were not in any way overcome, but rather covert.

The cultural situation of Brazil became even richer and more complex with the arrival of large waves of immigration coming from Europe and Japan, which diversified the cultural landscape of the country. However, a substantial part of the European immigrants who came to southern Brazil was not integrated with this existing cultural landscape, maintaining a certain autonomy in relation to the dynamics of cultural exchanges.

If you look up and see here, so, that the construction of Brazilian culture was made continuous additions and disorganized, as is natural in a process of cultural exchange. However, the existence of these different cultural matrices formed a society largely divided between different groups, whose orientations vary along ethnic, religious, cultural or economic. In times of political and social crisis like that Brazilian society is now, these groups seek in their cultural origins possible ideological orientations to meet in order the demands of modernity. The desire to return to ancient cultural traditions and moral, in which a utopian reign stability, based on clear values and properly applied, has become a constant in political and social discourses that surround the discussion of the Brazilian identity in the contemporary world. There is a moral (or mental) that could re-educate people to follow a path of "order and progress"? Consider, then, a map of the main trends that now operate in Brazilian cultural life.

Proposals for cultural traditions

Cultural Diversity

For methodological reasons, the first of the proposals presented here is the one advocated in general terms, so by the Brazilian government official. Based on guidance



- in some way influenced by a socialist discourse - the Brazilian government assumed that Brazil is formed by a great cultural diversity, with demonstrations and the right to free expression and independent, and whose maturity is still under development. This proposal does not refute the Portuguese cultural traditions, but puts them in the background in order to strengthen indigenous and African cultures. It admits, though, the presence of globalization is a real and permanent effect, which directly influences the process of building and exchange of cultures. Seeing therefore the proposal of the Brazilian government is not concerned directly with the rescue of ancient cultural traditions (with the exception of Indigenous and African), but that the formation of Brazilian identity is a dynamic phenomenon of absorption of other cultures, creating an identity. This discourse has created a series of tensions within society, because many groups believe that these upgrades are responsible, in fact, for the social crisis that the country is going through. The Brazilian government, for example, failed to distribute a handbook on sex education and social inclusion which proposed, among other things, the acceptance of homosexuality as something natural. Similarly, university quotas were created for African-descendants and indigenous peoples who are heavily criticized by various segments of society. Brazilian schools resumed the teaching of religion (which had been suppressed during the military government), in order to promote religious tolerance in diversity, however, the proposal has been openly tampered with, and many fundamentalists have used the lessons of religious education as a stage of preaching in the schools. Finally, communities of immigrants from Europe in a more recent period of history (especially the 2nd World War), dispute the notion that diversity is harmful to society, culture and economy, and occasionally suggesting the isolation or the separatism. Another criticism of this view of cultural diversity is that it did not include immigrants from Latin America. A large number of Bolivians have come to Brazil looking for work because of the severe economic situation in Bolivia, and the Brazilian government did not wave with any policy in this regard.

Therefore, we note that the point at which to target our discussion is that the Brazilian government can not, in principle, to build an inclusive cultural idea, although that is its intent. His attempt to create a modern image, aggregating, tolerant and inclusive is hampered by economic and political crisis, which takes a substantial portion of the population to believe that these factors are interrelated. Thus, it creates a lot of



confusion around the idea of a "moral degeneration": for example, a corrupt government official is associated with the affirmation of gay rights because they are both considered "degenerate" in front of a Christian morality that opposes both things. This frame of mind is extremely simple and perverse, and so has a big impact. The establishment of quotas for university african descent was treated by some of these social groups as a threat, created by the government, which would strengthen racial discrimination - when in fact, discrimination existed, but was masked by the myth of the "harmony of the three races ".

The difficulty that the public policy of cultural diversity is to affirm is further increased by the educational system inefficient that Brazil has, which has been unable to meet the demands of both the market and the formation of citizens capable, and self-conscious. With this, the government makes room for discourses that seek to regain the ancient traditions as a way to resolve the current issues. However, this cultural variety shows that Brazil allows, therefore, a variety of different proposals.

Resumption of Catholicism

Brazil is the largest Catholic nation in the world in numbers terms. Catholicism is traditionally associated with the state, but their political influence and moral plummeted near the end of the 20th century. Several reasons are given for this: an elitism of Catholicism, the constant complaints of sexual crimes in the church, the gap that has arisen in relation to poor communities because of the occasional welfare policies promoted by the Brazilian government. The fact is that Catholicism has suffered, as a discourse, a major weakness in their ability to opine on social issues such as birth control, labor, etc.. The survival of Catholicism in Brazil is due in large part, the resistance of communities living in smaller towns outside the big cities. The apparent defeat of socialism in Eastern Europe in 1989 renewed the spirits of Catholicism to become an ideological and moral option for the Brazilian people, bringing the unit of Brazilian civilization around religion imposed since colonial times by the Portuguese. However, the return did not occur as expected. First, Catholicism began to suffer competition from evangelical churches, who worked in the blanks left by the Catholic Church next to the poorest communities. With a Christian message simplified and more accessible, the evangelical churches showed that the models seemed to



overcome the Roman Catholic liturgical and not very able to reawaken the religious sentiments in the population. The Brazilian Catholic Church devoted itself, so investing in a vulgarization of the doctrine, seeking closer ties with the public. Self-help books, Catholic Mass music and other media have been used more appealing to attract the faithful lost.

The discourse of the Catholic Church in Brazil is closely linked, however, the guidelines of the Vatican. Thus, the forms of popularization of modern Catholicism are only superficial, since the essence of the speech remains conservative and moralizing. However, this device has achieved a relative success in recent years, since, as stated, Brazilian society believes to be living a moral crisis, a crisis of values that can only be overcome, among other responses, the revival of ancient traditions. But what traditions, if Brazil is not ancient? This point is crucial for the recovery of a history of Christianity that culminates in Brazil, the most Catholic country in the world. Several Christian-themed films, made in Brazil, had a huge success, promoting a revival of Catholicism in the society.

The challenge that the Catholic Church will face, however, is: how to reconcile the discourse of renewal of a Christianity that advocates chastity, simple material life, the traditional family consisting of the heterosexual couple, in a world where relationships market demand, increasingly, participation in a circle technological exigent, competitive and multifaceted? The Catholic renewal works well in the inner cities of Brazil, smaller, and whose social relationships are closer, but how to face the dilemma of modernization in large urban centers? If on one hand the conservative discourse, dressed in a modern dress, is attractive in the current context of crisis, as can be sustained before any possible political or economic improvement?

Evangelical Churches

Evangelical churches (name used in Portuguese to describe in general terms, non-Catholic churches, such as gospel, Pentecostal, evangelical, etc..) Have a great grown in the last two decades in Brazil. Directly threatening the dominance of Catholicism, evangelical churches invest in the speech of a reinvented Christianity, based on a unique interpretation of Christian antiquity. The speech of these churches, in general, is simple and accessible to the lay public, and is based on an immediate



salvation in this world and eternal life a reward for success in material life. The services rely on a biblical knowledge, based on ancient wisdom, which would serve as a guide to modernity. Strongly influenced by the churches of the USA, the Brazilian Evangelical churches have been able to greatly expand thanks to its presence in communities neglected by Catholicism, occupying the void "spiritual" and moral. Evangelical churches would also count with the advantage of being decentralized, and expand their networks were much more flexible and dynamic to the Catholic churches. Working with open doors day and night, providing direct assistance to the population and claiming that the material gain is evidence of spiritual success, evangelicals managed a rapid diffusion and surprising in the country.

Their proposals are based on moral interpretations of the Bible themselves, ranging from church to church. However, their lines of action are decidedly conservative, and evangelical ideology is one of the main responsible for the idea that cultural diversity is responsible for the moral and social crisis that Brazilian society is. To quote again a few examples: evangelicals are against the discussion of abortion or euthanasia, have "programs for the recovery of sexual disorders" (gays and lesbians), advocate a radicalization and deepening of religious discourse in education (in Brazil, as well as elsewhere in the world, they are absolutely against the Charles Darwin idea of evolution, believing that it goes against the concept of creation of the world by God) and, if structured in economic organizations that help each other, but which exclude or downplay those who do not belong to his church. In an attempt to deepen the moral imposition of these cultural practices, many evangelicals have participated in the Brazilian political life, applying for office and getting a relative success with the public.

Such as Catholics, evangelicals preach a return to moral consider old, derived from early Christianity. However, for evangelicals, it allows an individual's autonomy, the possibility of achieving social and material that is not provided for in Catholicism. One person well-succeeded is a good Christian. This, however, she must accept a certain group of religious dogmas present in the discourse of these churches, which are strictly monotheistic and intolerant of other religions. For evangelicals, basically, one person is respected and accepted to enter your community, allowing unequal treatment to other social segments. Again, some examples: the evangelical churches in general, tend to be against the government inclusive policies, because they



think they encourage racial-ethnic conflict. On the other hand, they have their own inclusive policies. There is great number of black evangelical preachers in Brazil, and his personal success is attributed to its entry into the church and community, not the policies of the government's social inclusion. So for them, discrimination and racial quotas create conflict, when the ideal would be that they got in their churches. There are even evangelical groups that promote persecution and attacks on african-Brazilian religious cults, destroyed their places of worship and attacking their representatives. There existed, in this view, no a racial discrimination, but rather 'religious and cultural'.

The same goes for gays who are "welcomed" in the church to be "cured", based on fragment of the Bible, in Leviticus, which says that homosexual couples is inappropriate. When some of these evangelicals can reach government offices, it is not unusual to propose public health policies to "cure homosexuality" as if it were some kind of disease.

Many evangelical churches have faced accusations of corruption and abuse of power, which puts in question the gap between their moral discourse and practices that some preachers have done. However, the evangelical churches are a striking example of speech that would be necessary for the 'teaching' - or maybe 'salvation' - a Brazilian identity to appeal to a moralizing Christianity, fundamentalist, based on a restrictive interpretation of the history of Christianity primitive. Evangelicals have increasingly sought to participate in public life in Brazil, through public office and government, believing that this is an appropriate means to promote their views. The unification of the Brazilian identity would be made by a religious means, not an ethnic, racial or cultural. This speech, very attractive to many, yet is loaded with intolerance of cultural differences and clashes directly with the idea of diversity. Along this line, so any identity is created by the annulment of difference, just as there was in the history of Christianity, the 'election of a people chosen by God' to promote the Christian faith.

The search for the "Other Traditions"

But religion is not only that Brazilians seek inspirations to understand their own culture and to reform it. There are "other traditions" political and cultural discourses are occasionally glimpsed as ideological valid for the solution of problems affecting Brazil.



Recently, Gustavo Ioschpe (Brazilian economist and educator) visited China to meet its educational system, which had excellent results in Shanghai (2011). In a lengthy report made to the "Veja" (known Brazilian magazine, with a conservative character), Ioschpe praised the Chinese education system and suggested, emphatically, that he was adopted in Brazil. Interestingly, the conservative groups of Brazilian society like the idea, while the current government understood that the Chinese educational system was extreme disciplinarian, incompatible with the reality of the Brazilian culture, and against the cultural diversity. If we pay attention to the glaring contradiction of this discourse, we perceive a tension that has long been developing in Brazilian intellectual circles: the attraction and inspiration in the Asian models, especially China and Japan

Considered models of public administration, work systems and successful economies, the experiences of Japan and China, although different, have been discussed and admired as alternatives to solve the crises in Brazil, have been given by the adoption of certain cultural practices in the work environment. With a millenary experience, the Chinese and Japanese culture could provide subsidies for the construction of an educational system and more efficient business. However, criticism of these systems coming up again in a supposed 'Brazilian cultural identity' which has notable problems with the ideas of 'order' and 'discipline' and refute, "naturally," elements from cultural traditions strange to the 'European-African-Indigenous' matrix by the Brazilian culture. There is an obvious contradiction in that speech: as a country that offers a cultural diversity admits to some extent, a selection of crops that can be part of your picture?

Similarly, the absence of a sense of "tradition" in Brazil means that the term is used erroneously. It is not uncommon for Brazilian advertisements indicate, for example, that a particular store or company has "three years of tradition," trying to create an image of antiquity as a quality certificate. This type of analysis allows us to understand the reasons why, for example, another model that has been advocated by some segments of Brazilian society is the resumption of Soviet communism, mixed with psychoanalysis, whose representative is the intellectual Slavoj Žižek (2007). This model claims that communism still reappear in the world, based on a model of reformed communism of the former USSR. However, the deviance of the human being could be solved by psychoanalytic therapy, a support missing in the former a 'communist moral'. For many



Brazilians that seems a throwback total: however, for its defenders, socialism and communism have been able to create their "own historical traditions," able to illustrate the points right and wrong of Marxist theories. The important thing, however, is the concept that there is a 'communist morale', secular, rational and non-religious, able to overcome the problems of today and ignore religious tensions.

One has to wonder if indeed the Marxist theory can be framed with a "tradition" in the cultural sense of the word. However, this discourse is considered opposing the resumption of religious traditions in the country, establishing a plan to debate difficult to achieve.

Conclusion

This brief presentation sought to draw a map on the current situation of Brazilian culture need of proposals that may diminish the tribulations with which society faces. Although corruption, violence and abuse can be attributed indiscriminately to market economy and poor educational background, Brazil suffers from a moral framework that serves as inspiration for social reform. The revival of Christian traditions, reinterpreted through the light of modernity, the search for a different cultural identity or even the use of alternative traditions, such as Asian, presents to us a portrait that proves the very diversity of opinion in Brazil. Unanimous in fact, only reconigze a crisis of values, which has called for an urgent solution based on ancient beliefs and theories. Without having a proper set of traditions that are absolutely rooted in the imagination, at a time, says Baumann, the very idea of tradition does not seem to make much sense, though it requires both a 'sense of tradition' for continuity, Brazilian society is seeking in this 'concept of tradition' the foundation of a 'new culture' capable of resolving the dilemmas of modernity - even if this 'new culture' loan take their roots in ancient traditions, whose term of longevity seems to ensure its efficiency.

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