

THE CONSUMPTION OF DEPENDENCY THEORY IN THE UNITED STATES*

Fernando Henrique Cardoso
Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento, São Paulo

If an observer from outer space had landed his UFO at any meeting of Latin Americanists during the last few years, he would have had to agree with the structural anthropologists. He would have said that at these meetings, versions of the same myth are constantly repeated: dependency and development, exploitation and wealth, backwardness and sophisticated technology, unemployment and extreme concentration of income. Somewhat wearily, our creature from space would have commented: "The brains of these beings appear to limit their images and thoughts to binary opposites." Returning to the debate on the meaning of analyses of dependency gives one the sensation of entering a discussion in which imagination is bound by preestablished models. Nevertheless, as though I were one of the "founding fathers" of dependency, I endorse the ceremonial consumption of the theme. How to escape from this uncomfortable position?

A little while ago, in Princeton, I was present at a talk by an English anthropologist, recently knighted by the Queen. With his characteristic irony, Sir Edmund Leach told how he tried to stifle his own amusement at the ceremonial rite to which he had to submit, by comparing his consecration at the Court of St. James to sacrificial ceremonies on the high plains of Burma. His talk was entitled, "Once a Knight is Enough." Nevertheless, the irony, mingled with erudition and with pious respect for the ritualized reenactment of a moment of passage from the condition of "commoner" to that of member of a noble order (which, even if it is not sacred, has something of the distinction that is reserved for the upper ranks of the hierarchy), could not conceal the fact that the ritual and the symbolic renaming to which he was submitted did hold some kind of meaning for him. The scientific consumption of

*The author thanks the Institute of Advanced Study for sponsoring his stay at Princeton, where he had the opportunity to review the literature on dependency. Based on this work, the author offered a lecture to the 1976 LASA meeting at Atlanta. The present paper is a revised version of that lecture.

the rite of passage did not eliminate its force. The game of comparative-formal analysis did not expose the political and social interests that underlay these ritual ceremonies but simply reaffirmed the universal value of them.

By using the title "Consumption of Dependency," and at the same time participating in this critico-commemorative celebration (which is, naturally, a more plebeian ceremony than the English knighting ritual), do I not run the same risk? There is no way to deny it. I hope, nevertheless, to maintain a sufficiently critical (and self-critical) position to avoid merely consenting to the ritual consumption of the theme.

The risk of ceremonial celebration becomes greater as studies of dependency arouse a certain movement of conversion among social scientists. Susanne Bodenheimer, grasping the critical power that these studies contained, gave wider currency to some of these formulations (since she wrote in English, which is the Latin of our times) and presented them as a *new* paradigm.¹ From that point on (although it was not her fault), what had been an endeavor to be *critical* and to maintain the *continuity* of previous historical, economic, sociological, and political studies in Latin America was transformed into an article for consumption in various versions that include references to the original myth but in large measure constitute the expression of a quite distinct intellectual universe from that which gave it birth.

Every myth requires a simple structure and a moment of revelation. The first, drastic simplification carried out by some popularizers of these studies was to treat them as a sort of mental thunderclap that occurred at a given time and place. Now the discussion revolves around the question of in whose head the thunderclap was produced; with that kind of beginning, the celebratory aspect is inevitable. Each interpreter seeks to locate his prophet. However, anyone who is aware of the social nature of thought knows that every new paradigm results from a complex discussion among persons, institutions, and groups, which in the modern world are located in different countries. With time, the discussion is enriched and provokes internal controversies.²

However, after establishing the immediate origins of the "dependency paradigm," popularizers who are not aware of the process of intellectual production attempt to describe its prehistory. Here, two principal currents are generally cited: ECLA, and the Marxian and neo-Marxian North American current (Baran, Sweezy, and Gunder Frank). At times, some spice is added to the debate by saying that the *dependen-tistas* (a term that makes me shudder) are of distinct ideological hues: there are those who are closer to ECLA (and to the "petty-bourgeois nationalism" that is supposed to have been derived from ECLA's

research work), and there are those who adopt a position of more authentic opposition to capitalism and are thus more influenced by the above-mentioned Marxian economists prior to the dependentistas. These assertions are plausible—indeed, perhaps they are typologically correct—but they do not correspond to the intellectual history of these ideas as it really happened.

The analyses of dependency situations in Latin America done in the second half of the sixties did not represent new methodological propositions. What happened was that a current which was already old in Latin American thought managed to make itself heard in the discussions that were taking place in institutions normally closed to it: ECLA, the universities, some government planning agencies, and—last but not least—the North American academic community.

As for the renovating influence of the North American neo-Marxian current, if it was real (principally the contribution of Baran), it was certainly not greater than that of Marx himself, and it did not “reveal” anything not already present in the perspective of critical Latin American thought before 1960. In practically all the principal Latin American intellectual centers, a critique of the critics was also developed which paralleled the development of a current of analysis and interpretation based on Prebisch and Furtado (and, along with or before them, Nurkse, Hans Singer, Myrdal, and Hirschman—to cite just a few of the authors who opposed “orthodox” theories justifying the nonindustrialization of the region in view of the comparative advantages that might be obtained with agricultural production for export). It arose within ECLA itself, at times explicitly, as in the studies by Ahumada and Aníbal Pinto dealing with Chile and the concentration of benefits from technological progress, or in the essays of Medina Echevarria on the social conditions of development and on the “instrumental rationality” of the developmentalist approach. At other times the critique of the critics was implicit in the work of intellectuals who, in the universities or in political movements, emphasized not only the “obstacles” and the “distortions” of capitalist development (often inspired by structural-functionalist analysis), but also the inequality of opportunities and wealth that was inherent in forms of development derived from the expansion of capitalism and the strengthening of imperialism.

Historians Sergio Bagu and Caio Prado, Jr.; sociologists Florestan Fernandes, Pablo González Casanova, and Jorge Graciarena; and economists Armando Córdoba, Antonio García, and Alonso Aguilar are examples of efforts to present alternatives both to orthodox analyses and to what we might call the ECLA-Keynesian analyses. A rereading of the *Revista Brasileira*, published in Brazil in the 1950s—and there were

journals of the same sort published in almost all the cultural centers of the area—shows that criticism of structural-functionalism and Keynesianism occurred in Latin America at the same time as the criticism of “orthodoxy” was being elaborated. In an effort to develop a double-edged critique, a few groups of intellectuals in Santiago in the mid-1960s took up the ECLA problematic and tried to redefine it radically, while seeking to avoid “vulgar Marxism.” To compare what ECLA predicted as the outcome of industrialization with what was in fact happening was easy. It was more difficult to propose an alternative that could not be limited to a methodological-formal critique; one that, starting from the analysis of historical-social processes, would be able to define an alternative problematic and break with both the prevailing “economicism” of analyses of development and the “apoliticism” of sociological analyses. How was that to be accomplished?

A study of the history of ideas in the twentieth century would show that each generation of critical intellectuals seeks to revive Marxism with a new breath of life. The crust of so-called “vulgar Marxism”—“economic determinism,” “mechanistic” analysis, the difficulty of capturing social movement due to conceptions that give a deterministic weight to the structures, etc.—is so recurring that it must have something to do with Marxism itself. From time to time things are shaken up by rereading the classics, by some new interpretation, or by the support that some author outside the tradition of dialectical thought lends to Marxian analysis. In the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, this bridge was made by Sartre and by the publication in French of *History and Class Consciousness* by Lukacs. It took years to emerge from the impasse between dialectics and the notions of “project” and “possible consciousness.”³ For those like myself who had undergone prior training in Dilthey, Weber, and Mannheim, the preoccupation with ideology and its incorporation in analysis came to be constant and was frequently equivocal. In the following generation, Althusser reread Marx in another way and structuralism nearly killed the movement of dialectics. Later (and in a few countries, like Argentina, even as early as the sixties), Gramsci appeared as a liferaft for those who wanted to understand the political processes, ideology, the will in history, etc., and avoid drowning in the abovementioned “deviations” of mechanistic Marxism.

Studies of dependency, then, constitute part of this constantly renewed effort to reestablish a tradition of analysis of economic structures and structures of domination; one that would not suffocate the historical process by removing from it the movement which results from the permanent struggle among groups and classes. Instead of accepting the existence of a determined course in history, there is a return to

conceiving of it as an open-ended process. Thus, if structures delimit the range of oscillation, the actions of humans, as well as their imagination, revive and transfigure these structures and may even replace them with others that are not predetermined. These studies also had a peculiarity within this tradition of criticism: instead of limiting themselves to the theoretical-abstract plane, they sought to utilize the historical-structural, “nonvulgar” method to analyse concrete situations. And instead of limiting their studies to the analysis of circumscribed problems, they sought (returning to the theme of development) to define questions relevant to national politics and to the relations between the central capitalist economies and the dependent and nonindustrialized periphery, following in this respect the tradition of the ECLA perspective. It did not interest them merely to describe abstractly the consequences of the accumulation of capital and of its expansion at the global level; they also posed questions arising from the historically determined point of view of dependent societies: What are the forces that operate in them, and what are their objectives? How and under what conditions is it possible to overcome a given situation of dependency?

Thus, an initial reevaluation of the manner in which the consumption of dependency theories occurs in the U.S. must reconsider the point of view from which the “new paradigm” was established, through the work of a group of intellectuals at ILPES (Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning, at ECLA) and CESO (Center for Socioeconomic Studies, University of Chile). Some intellectuals in these organizations played a certain role in the proposal of a set of themes and in the critique of Keynesianism and of structural-functionalism—a role to be discussed further on—but they did *not* propose any *new* methodology.⁴

Once the methodological contribution of the dependentistas has been limited and the possible influence of North American Marxism on proposing studies of dependency has been redefined, it is necessary to look at the contribution of André Gunder Frank to the themes of dependency. Some of his studies in *Capitalism and Development in Latin America* had great critical impact and were contemporary with the elaboration of what is called here the “theory of dependency.” Earlier works, such as his paper criticizing the thesis about Brazilian agrarian dualism, may have been stimulating, but frequently missed the point as far as proposing new themes is concerned.

The central question in Brazilian discussions concerning the past nature of social relations in rural areas and their specific weight in determining a certain type of sociohistorical formation was not a debate between the partisans of the existence of a feudal structure and those who believed that “since colonial times” the concept of capitalism best

described the existing social relations and forms of production. Nor was it a debate between precapitalism and capitalism *tout court* (although this discussion was more common). These propositions lost their force when confronted with the concern of those who tried to characterize the mode of production that prevailed in the past by taking colonial slaveholding into account. Except for the crudest of the evolutionist Marxists (who really did see “feudalism” as an important characteristic of Brazilian society), the discussion had for a long while centered on slaveholding colonial production and on the specific nature of a social formation which, although created by the expansion of mercantile capitalism, was based on slave-labor relations and reserved the most dynamic part of its output for the international market.⁵ (This outlook is already noticeable in the works of Gilberto Freyre, dating from the 1930s, despite their commemorative quality.) Gunder Frank simplified the debate, disdained the specificity of the situation (a procedure contrary to that of the dependentistas), and failed to attempt any sort of theoretical scheme of a dialectical type that might draw together the general and the particular in a specific whole. With the masterful polemics that are his special skill, he mortally wounded the dualists and blamed the confusion, sometimes correctly and sometimes not, on Marxists and ECLA theorists.

Nevertheless, the paradigm of dependency is consumed in the U.S. as though its contribution to the historical debate had been centered on a critique of Latin American feudalism. That is, some of Gunder Frank’s works are taken to mark the beginning of a “new” perspective in Latin America. Bagu, Caio Prado, Simonsen, Celso Furtado, Florestan Fernandes, Alonso Aguilar, and many others, had already written on the colonial period or on the structure of agricultural production for export, basing their analyses on considerably more complex themes than the simple duality between feudalism and capitalism.

The second distortion produced in the consumption of dependency theories concerns the relationship between the social, economic, and political structures of the dependent countries and the international capitalist system. Dependency analyses in the years 1965–68 were pre-occupied much less with the external conditioning of the Latin American economies, which was taken for granted, than with the development of a type of analysis that could grasp the political alliances, the ideologies, and the movement of structures within the dependent countries. How was this to be done? The “vulgar” current was predominant in analyses that regarded imperialism and external economic conditioning as the substantive and omnipresent explanation of every social or ideological process that occurred. Certain political forces endorsed that formulation for tactical reasons. Clearly the target of the struggle was

evident—North American imperialism; and the allied camp was also clearly defined—everyone, except the agro-exporting latifundists linked to imperialism.

The dependentistas put the question the other way around: social movement cannot be theoretically represented by means of a “mechanical” opposition between the internal and the external, in which the latter cancels out the existence of the former. The approach ought to be historical, and it therefore starts from the emergence of social formations. Underdevelopment then comes to be seen not merely as a process which is a concomitant of the expansion of mercantile capitalism and recurs under industrial capitalism, but as one which is actually generated by them. The approach ought also to emphasize the *specificity* of dependency situations, as against societies in countries of the economic center. In other words, although the social formation underlying situations of dependency is the product of the expansion of capitalism, it is distinguishable from the classical pattern to the extent that “slaveholding colonialism,” or some other form of colonial exploitation, is present as the basis of the articulation between dependent and dominant societies. On the other hand, after the passage from the colonial situation to situations of dependency of national states, it is observed that: (a) the passage implies the creation of states in answer to the interests of local property-owning classes; (b) these, however, have their structural situation defined within the larger framework of the international capitalist system and are thus connected and subordinated to the conquering bourgeoisies of the western world and to those classes which succeed them; in this way alliances are established *within the country*, even though in contradictory form, to unify external interests with those of the local dominant groups; and (c) as a consequence, the local dominated classes suffer a kind of double exploitation.

The “movement” that had to be understood, then, was that deriving from the contradictions between the external and the internal, viewed in this complex fashion and summed up in the expression “structural dependency.” If imperialism was embodied in the penetration of foreign capital (invasions by Americans in the Caribbean, by the English in South America, etc.), it also implied a structural pattern of relations that “internalized” the external and created a state which was formally sovereign and ready to be an answer to the interests of the “nation,” but which was simultaneously and contradictorily the instrument of international economic domination. Certainly, the phases and forms of capitalist expansion (colonial-mercantile, mercantile-financial and industrial-financial capitalism, oligopolist forms of “multinationalized” capitalism, etc.) are constituent parts of dependency situations,

but the latter are explicable only when those forms cease to be taken as an entelechy or as an abstract and general conditioning factor, and reappear concretely in the analysis of their articulation in each local economy at different moments of time. This process was to be explained not as the "abstract" unreeling of forms of accumulation, but as a historicosocial process through which certain classes impose their domination over others, certain factions of classes ally or oppose themselves to others in political struggles. In this struggle, what appears at first as inevitable because of the "logic of capitalism" is revealed without disguise: one side wins or loses, one form or another of dependency is maintained or makes way for another, the general conditions for capitalist development are sustained or reach their limits, and other forms of social organization are foreseen as a historical possibility.

Thus, right from the initial propositions,⁶ dialectical analysis was the point of departure. What was significant was the "movement," the class struggles, the redefinitions of interest, the political alliances that maintained the structures while at the same time opening the possibility of their transformation. The structures were regarded as relations of contradiction, and therefore dynamic.⁷

This aspect of the relations between the internal and the external was quickly accepted and was put forward, with slight variations, in various works.⁸ The most competent North American commentators took note of these propositions and saw in them something new.⁹ New it certainly was, but within the spirit of efforts that, every ten or fifteen years, in different countries, attempt to recall that dialectical analysis should above all be analysis of contradictions, of the reproduction of forms of domination, and, at the same time, of the transformation and expansion of a given economic form or type of society.

In the process of disseminating these studies in the U.S., however, the characterization of dependency acquired local color. There was a preoccupation with the denunciation of forms of "foreign aid"—the intervention of the CIA in foreign policy, the invisible and Machiavellian hand of the multinationals, etc.—a politically legitimate preoccupation that emphasized real aspects of the contemporary historical process. Little by little, however, this ended by reestablishing the priority of the *external* over the internal (which may be well-founded), and it led in the end to the elimination of the dynamic proper to dependent societies as a relevant explanatory factor (which is not acceptable). Once again, in metaphysical fashion, the two terms of the opposition—external and internal—were separated, and the opposition passed from dialectical to structural-mechanical, when it was not conceived of in terms of antecedent causes and inert consequences.

The most general and formal of Gunder Frank's works are taken

as though they were his best, the formal definition of dependency furnished by Theotonio dos Santos is appended, the problematic of "subimperialism" and "marginality" is sometimes inserted, one or another of my works or Sunkel's is footnoted, and the result is a "theory of dependency"—a straw man easy to destroy.

Therefore, instead of demanding an empirico-analytical effort of reconstructing a "concrete whole" with the abovementioned characteristics, dependency came to be consumed as a "theory," implying a corpus of formal and testable propositions. I was always reluctant to use the expression "theory of dependency" because I was afraid of formalizing the approach. Nevertheless, Latin Americans and North Americans began to make the effort to create a "theory." The Latin American authors who moved in that direction were nearly all of Marxist inspiration; although they yielded to the glorious temptation to construct a theory (a temptation that led them to formulate abstract formal definitions and elaborate typologies),¹⁰ they nevertheless held on to the concern for establishing "laws of movement" of "dependent capitalism."¹¹ In my opinion, they did not always succeed in their difficult undertaking, since there was even a difficulty in logic to be overcome: how to establish a legitimacy that, by definition, is contained in a separate and distinct situation? On the other hand, some North American specialists began clamoring for "internal consistency" in the theory of dependency and established a body of hypotheses deduced from the principle of dependency in order to test them empirically. In this type of reformulation of dependency, the concepts must be one-dimensional and precise and must refer to clearly established variables. With their help it ought to be possible to measure the continuum that goes from "dependency" to "independence" and to characterize variable degrees of dependency.¹²

However, this kind of definition of the notion of dependency also modifies the "theoretical field" of its study: instead of making a dialectical analysis of historical processes, conceiving of them as the result of struggles between classes and groups that define their interests and values in the process of the expansion of a mode of production, history is formalized; the specific contribution that these analyses of dependency might make from a methodological point of view (that is, the idea of contradiction) is withdrawn. The ambiguity, the contradictions, and the more or less abrupt "breaks" in reality are reduced to "operational dimensions" which, by definition, are univocal but static. The result is somewhat like a dialogue between two deaf people, in which one group says: give me precise concepts, with clear dimensions, and I will tell you, after testing them, if the relationships among the variables defined within their theoretical framework conform to the hypotheses which you propose. The other group says: I am not interested in defining

univocal concepts; what interests me is pointing out contradictions and formulating relationships in which *the same* thing is transformed into *the other* by means of a process which takes place in time and which brings certain classes or fragments of classes into relation with others through struggle and opposes them to rival blocs—for example, how one and *the same* “national” bourgeoisie is internationalized into *something else*, or how “public servants” are transformed into the “state bourgeoisie” by redefining the allied and enemy camps. In this analytical perspective, processes involve changes in quality and not merely in degree.

The divergence is not merely methodological-formal. It is, rather, at the very heart of studies of dependency. If these studies do in fact have any power of attraction at all, it is not merely because they propose a methodology to substitute for a previously existing paradigm or because they open up a new set of themes. It is principally because they do this from a *radically critical* viewpoint.

Indeed, by admitting that structures have movement and that changes cannot be explained through factors conceived of only as external (which act as conditioning of and interfering in the social process), the dependentistas affirm the existence of domination and struggle. The question, “How does the *transition* from one situation of dependency to another occur?” or “How can situations of dependency be eliminated?” ought to be asked in terms of “Who are the classes and groups which, in the struggle for control or for the reformulation of the existing order (through parties, movements, ideologies, the state, etc.), are making a given structure of domination historically viable or are transforming it?” In these analyses, therefore, there is no presumption of scientific “neutrality.” They are to be considered more “true” because they assume that, by discerning which are the historical agents capable of propelling a process of transformation and by providing those agents with theoretical and methodological tools for their struggles, these analyses thus grasp the meaning of historical movement and help to negate a given order of domination.

They are therefore *explanatory because they are critical*. In any case, there is no intention to put “arbitrary” in place of “objective” knowledge. What is intended is an approach that accepts and starts from the idea that history is movement and that structures are the result of impositions; even though these impositions may become crystallized, they contain tensions among classes and groups which always make them, at least potentially, dynamic.

In the struggle that takes place among the components of a structure there are no “dimensions” of “variables” at stake, but tensions between interests, values, appropriations of nature and society, all of which are unequal and in opposition. Therefore, when speaking of

“dependent capitalist development,” one speaks necessarily and simultaneously of socioeconomic exploitation, unequal distribution of income, the private appropriation of the means of production, and the *subordination* of some economies to others. On the other hand, one also necessarily inquires into the conditions under which this order of affairs is negated.

To sum up, then, studies of dependency continue a live tradition in Latin American thought, reinvigorated in the 1960s by the proposition of themes and problems defined in a theoretical-methodological field not only distinct from what inspired Keynesian and structural-functionalist analyses (the theory of modernization, and of the stages of development that would repeat the history of the industrialized countries), but radically distinct with respect to its inherent critical component. If this kind of study acquired force and penetrated the contemporary intellectual world, it was because it explained more accurately certain changes occurring in Latin America, while certain changes in the countries of the center itself (above all the U.S.), beginning in the 1960s, brought out clearly the inadequacy of the assumptions of structural-functionalism. The protest of American blacks, the war in Vietnam and the movement in opposition to it, the counterculture, the student movement, the feminist movement, etc., all demanded paradigms that were more sensitive to the historical process, to social struggles, and to the transformation of systems of domination. In such a perspective, analyses of dependency correspond better to this search for new models of explanation, not only in order to comprehend what is happening in Latin America, but also what is happening in the U.S.

Up to this point, I have somewhat inelegantly been putting the blame for all the misunderstandings on the consumers of dependency theory, as though the reestablishment of the original myth would resolve all the problems. An ill-disposed critic might quickly respond that I not only content myself with the ritualization of the theme, with more indulgence than Sir Edmund Leach, but I even aspire if not to “true prophethood” at least to being one of the most zealous of apostles.

However, if there have been so many distortions in the consumption, it is because the original production was not clear regarding several of these points, and may even have included, in latent form, much that later appeared as simplification and inconsistency. I shall not repeat here what I have already said in previous works. I want merely to emphasize that, if it is to be judged on the basis of its own assumptions, the point of view of dependency ought to be confronted with at least three types of question:

1. Have dependency studies been able to whet the imagination so that discussion is opened on themes and forms of comprehending reality which are compatible with the contemporary historical process?

2. Does the theoretical representation of the dynamic of this process proposed by dependency studies permit us to comprehend the forms of capitalist expansion on the periphery and realistically to make out the alternatives to it?

3. Do the studies enable us to define the classes and groups that give life to dependent structures through their political struggles? Do they make it possible to go beyond the structural frame of reference in order to clarify the relations between ideologies and social and political movements in specific political conjunctures, so as to assist action to transform reality?

As for the first question, if the initial studies of dependency possessed any novelty, it certainly was not the affirmation that dependency exists, but it was rather the characterization and the search for an explanation of *emerging forms of dependency*. The studies sought to show the meaning of the industrialization of the periphery (and thus the formation of an internal market, since in Latin America this process did not involve the construction of mere export-manufacturing enclaves), under the control of what later came to be called “multinational corporations.” The recognition of the effects of this process—the “new dependency”¹³—was the point of departure for reflection on this theme. Today, this appears to constitute another banality. Nevertheless, in Latin America up to the end of the decade of the 1950s there was a deeply rooted conception that the international economic trusts were not interested in the industrialization of the periphery, since they exported finished goods there; their fundamental interest was the control and exploitation of primary agricultural and mineral products. The theory of imperialism reinforced this point of view, which was moreover consistent, at least in part, with what happened up to that point. The anti-imperialist struggles were at the same time struggles for industrialization. The local states and national bourgeoisie seemed to be the potential historical agents for capitalist economic development, which in turn was looked upon as a “necessary stage” by a considerable part of critical opinion.

The dependentistas showed that a kind of industrialization was occurring under the control of the multinationals, and they drew certain conclusions from it. There was even an attempt to propose a more general model of the process, to characterize a “transnational capitalism” and to estimate its effects, not only on the periphery, but also on the very center of the capitalist economies.¹⁴

The revision proposed on the basis of these perspectives—that of the industrialization of the periphery and the internationalization of internal markets—made it possible to generalize the criticisms of the

theory that the national bourgeoisies could repeat the function they served in the center as the leaders of the capitalist process in underdeveloped countries. It also displayed the insufficiencies of the theory of modernization and the expectation that there would be stages of development identical to and in the same sequence as those in Europe. From that point on, the question of the state came to be reformulated, and the role of the bureaucracy (and what later on I called the "state bourgeoisies") came to be discussed in greater depth.¹⁵ On the other hand, thanks to the characterization of the specific form of capitalist industrial development on the periphery—where what dominated was oligopolistic-corporative production oriented toward consumption by the high-income classes—numerous hypotheses were advanced and some studies were made on the theme of marginality and of the formation and behavior of the working class.¹⁶

On balance, the effect of dependency theories on the sociological imagination seems to me to have been positive. Thanks to these theories (but not exclusively so, since the ECLA group had already pointed in that direction), attention was called to a thematic frame that ceased to see capitalist development on the periphery as a mere "consequence" of accumulation of capital in the center, and began dealing with the historical form that this process acquired in dependent societies.

I have more reservations concerning the explanations proposed in many of these studies to account for the historical process. I shall limit myself to one question that has served to divide the dependentistas; that is, the question of the form of analysis of the movement provoked by the expansion of capitalism on the periphery. Here there are two polar modalities (although I simplify somewhat) to conceive of the process of capitalist development:

1. There are those who believe that "dependent capitalism" is based on the hyper-exploitation of labor, that it is incapable of broadening the internal market, that it generates constant unemployment and marginality, and that it presents a tendency to stagnation and a kind of constant reproduction of underdevelopment (thus Gunder Frank, Marini, and to a certain extent, dos Santos).

2. There are those who think that, at least in some countries of the periphery, the penetration of industrial-financial capital accelerates the production of relative surplus-value; intensifies the productive forces; and, if it generates unemployment in the phases of economic contraction, absorbs labor-power in the expansive cycles, producing, in this aspect, an effect similar to capitalism in the advanced countries, where unemployment and absorption, wealth and misery coexist.

Personally I believe the second is more consistent, although the

“dependent-associated development” model is not generalizable to all the periphery. At times the “theory of dependency” is thought to be impugned, or contradictions are seen in it, when it is pointed out that there can be *development* and *dependence* and that there exist more dynamic forms of dependence than those characterizing enclave or quasi-colonial situations (even allowing greater degrees of maneuver to the national states and to the bourgeoisies locally associated to the state and to the multinationals). The argument most commonly used is that in this case a relationship of “interdependence” comes into being. Nevertheless, when one examines the relationship between the economies of “dependent-associated development” and the central economies, it is not hard to perceive that the international division of labor persists, based on very unequal degrees of wealth, on unequal forms of appropriation of the international surplus, and on the monopolization of the dynamic capitalist sectors by the central countries. All of which leaves no doubt about the distinction between central and dependent economies. The sectors of production of capital goods and the generation of new technologies, which are the most revolutionary sectors at the level of productive forces and are decisive in the scheme of extended reproduction of capital, remain in the central nuclei of the multinational firms. And the external debt is oscillating but continuous in the dependent countries.

Finally, in this very summary balance, I also find very debatable the analyses produced up to now to categorize the “historical agents” of social transformations. Both the “stagnationist” or “underconsumptionist” authors—who believe that the internal market is insufficient to make way for the capitalist-dependent expansion—as well as those favorable to the possibility of capitalist development in certain countries of the periphery, have generated up to now a relatively impoverished political analysis. Either they emphasize the “structural possibility” of revolution and go on to discuss the overcoming of dependency in terms of a historical horizon in which socialism appears as the result of growing crises peculiar to a stagnating capitalism, or they foresee a “new barbarism” and display an inclination for repeating clichés that explain little. Those who do not share either idyllic or catastrophic vision (and I am one of them), are reticent concerning the political alternatives. At any rate, the “catastrophists” make a “mechanico-formal” analysis, and the latter either reveal a good will toward an “autonomous capitalism” (although it is not clear how it can be brought about), or they sketch out their hopes of a socialism whose historical *persona* is not described in their analysis, nor perhaps in reality.

Both the mechanico-formal style of those who believe in the ultimate aims of history, guaranteed by the *necessary* structural incapacity

of dependent capitalism to expand and reproduce itself, and the elliptical style of those who wish to escape this Frankenstein politics, lead the critics of dependency to the conviction that a catastrophic vision of history or permanent indefiniteness must be inherent outcomes of this kind of analysis. To avoid this, they ask that better dimensions be defined, so that degrees of dependency may be measured. With these, they think it is possible to demonstrate that as long as the local states increase their capacity to regulate the economy and counterbalance the multinationals, the area of independence will enlarge.

I do not agree with the idea that to improve the quality of analysis, the theory of dependency should be formalized so that, after testing hypotheses derived from this formalization, one could venture out into the world waving the banner of the percentage of variance explained by each factor within the situation of dependence. Instead of asking for analyses within the mold of empiricist structural-functionalism, it would be better to ask for an improvement in the quality of historical-structural analyses.

In saying this, however, I do not want to endorse the ingenuous expectation that theories about dependency explain *everything* or that, if they do not yet explain everything, it is because the method has been badly applied. It is necessary to have a sense—I will not say of proportion—but of the ridiculous, and to avoid the simplistic reductionism so common among the present-day butterfly collectors who abound in the social sciences and who stroll through history classifying types of dependency, modes of production, and laws of development, with the blissful illusion that their findings can remove from history all its ambiguities, conjectures, and surprises. It is necessary, on the contrary, to have the patience for research disciplined by a dialectic that is neither listless nor complacently constructing abstract and general formulations that seek to be taken for syntheses. Luckily, as much as social scientists strive to enclose the structural possibilities of history in their own constructs, history continually makes us *dupes de nous-mêmes*, and astonishes us with unexpected revelations.

NOTES

1. Susanne J. Bodenheimer, *The Ideology of Developmentalism: The American Paradigm-Surrogate for Latin American Studies* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1971), esp. "Toward a New Conceptual Framework: The Dependency Model," pp. 34–40.
2. Some original formulations of dependency studies try to avoid the simplistic presentation of the subject. The same is true for some commentators. Several books and papers are available in English about "dependency theory." See, for a historical view on Latin American sociology, Joseph A. Kahl, *Modernization, Exploitation, and Depen-*

- gency in *Latin America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1976). For an extensive review of Latin American literature on dependency, Ronald Chilcote and Joel Edelstein, *Latin America: The Struggle With Dependency and Beyond* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), "Introduction," pp. 1–87. For some criticism and an alternative but not incompatible perspective, see Albert Hirschman, "A Generalized Linkage Approach to Development with Special Reference to Staples," mimeographed, 1975. For a critique and a summary assuming another paradigm, Robert Packenham, "Latin American Dependency Theories: Strengths and Weaknesses," mimeographed. For brief, but consistent summaries, Philip O'Brien, "A Critique of Latin American Theories of Dependency," mimeographed, Glasgow Institute of Latin American Studies; and Juan E. Corradi, "Cultural Dependency and the Sociology of Knowledge: The Latin American Case," in *Ideology and Social Change in Latin America*, ed. June Nash and Juan Corradi, forthcoming. For an overview and bibliography, see Frank Bonilla and Robert Girling, *Structures of Dependency* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973).
3. The debate between the "humanistic" and the "ontological" approaches in the interpretation of Marxist dialectics has influenced most of the attempts to use this methodology by Brazilian social scientists. The methodological introduction to my Ph.D. dissertation, "Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional" (São Paulo, DIFEL, 1962), for instance, expresses this mood. On the other hand, the concept of "project," with all its metaphysical implications, was also behind most of the publications of the influential Brazilian Institute for High Studies (ISEB) since the fifties.
 4. The methodology of the book *Dependência e Desenvolvimento* (whose first version was an ILPES document) is quite close to the methodology that I used in previous studies on slavery and capitalism, as well as in research on problems of development and entrepreneurship in Brazil (see, for instance, *Desenvolvimento Econômico e Empresário Industrial no Brasil*; [São Paulo: DIFEL, 1964]). Several other Latin American authors have published since the early fifties attempting to revitalize the dialectical approach.
 5. Brazilian literature on this topic is considerable. The classic studies are the well-known books by Roberto Simonsen, Caio Prado, and Celso Furtado on the colonial economy. From the sociological viewpoint, Florestan Fernandes's analysis of slave society and the "ancien régime" provides insightful interpretations. All those books (as well as Octavio Ianni, *As metamorfoses do escravo* [São Paulo: DIFEL, 1962] and my own book on slave society in Southern Brazil) were already published when Gunder Frank discussed his thesis on "feudalism" and "capitalism."
 6. This is the perspective of interpretations proposed in F. H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependência e Desenvolvimento* (Santiago: ILPES, 1967). The draft version was distributed in Santiago in 1965.
 7. In spite of that, the usual conception of a static analysis of structures leads to misinterpretations of some of my writings. In criticism I have been considered a structuralist in the Levi-Strauss tradition, or even a defender of a non-class-struggle style of analysis. See, for this kind of naive understanding of the methodology that I propose, John Myer, "A Crown of Thorns: Cardoso and the Counter-Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1975).
 8. Theotônio dos Santos, for instance, presents a similar view in the study he wrote after the discussion in Santiago of the essay written by Faletto and myself (*Dependência e Desenvolvimento*). See dos Santos, *El nuevo carácter de la dependencia* (Santiago: Cuadernos de Estudios Socio-Económicos 10, Centro de Estudios Socio-Económicos [CESO], Universidad de Chile, 1968). In other essays that dos Santos published after his first comprehensive writing about "la nueva dependencia," the same pattern of dialectical and nonmechanical connection between external and internal interests is described in a simple and clear way. See especially, "La crisis de la teoría del desarrollo y las relaciones de dependencia en América Latina," in Helio Jaguaribe et al., *La dependencia político-económica de América Latina* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1970), pp. 147–87.
 9. See, apart from Kahl's book which is more comprehensive in historical terms and is

- not limited to the discussion on dependency, Bodenheimer, *The Ideology of Developmentalism* and Chilcote and Edelstein, *Latin America*. See also, Packenham, "Latin American Dependency Theories," pp. 4–5.
10. Even dos Santos proposes a formal (and thus static and nonhistorical) definition of dependency in his well known article "The Structure of Dependency" (*American Economic Review* 60, no. 2 [1970]: 231–36). Vania Bambirra also succumbed to the temptation of helping dos Santos to develop a "theory of dependency" or of dependent capitalism, as the latter suggested in his essay "La crisis de la teoría." The result of that attempt was a new typology of forms of dependency and some formal possibilities of structural changes. See Vania Bambirra, *El capitalismo dependiente latinoamericano* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974). Bambirra misinterprets the analysis of situations of dependency suggested by Faletto and me when she refers to them as if we were proposing "types" of dependency.
 11. The preoccupation with "laws of transformation"—in the Marxist tradition—is quite clear in dos Santos, as well as in Bambirra's book. Rui Mauro Marini, in "Brazilian Sub-imperialism" (*Monthly Review* 9 [February 1972]: 14–24), and *Sub-desarrollo y revolución* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1969), refers also to some kind of historical laws. But Marini's views are more analogical-formal than historical-structural and his presentation of dependent capitalism's characteristics (in terms of overexploitation of the labor force and permanent crisis of capital realization) does not fit with the real historical process.
 12. Examples of this are Packenham's criticism of dependency studies and, correspondingly, his contributions towards evaluating the performance of states and economies in terms of degrees of independence. See, especially, his article "Trends in Brazilian Dependency since 1964," unpublished. Others, in spite of more adequate understanding about the theoretical meaning of dependency studies, have committed methodological fallacies. One example is the quite provocative paper by Cris Chase-Dum, "The Effects of International Economic Dependency on Development and Inequalities: A Cross-National Study," unpublished. The author makes comparisons between *different* situations of dependency as if they form part of the same continuum of dependency-independence. The analysis becomes, thus, formal and ahistorical. Even in Durkheim's approach to comparative analyses, some compatibility among structures being analyzed is required to validate the results. Furthermore, in a *historical-structural* approach, the specificity of concrete situations is a precondition for any analytical formulation. Nevertheless, Chase-Dum does not take into account the basic distinctions between class and political structures in an enclave type of economy, a nationally controlled export economy, and an associated-dependent industrialized one. Mixing data drawn from distinct situations of dependency, he intends to validate or to criticize statements that have been presented as characteristic of specific forms of dependency. I am not arguing against the use of statistics or empirical (historical) data as a means of validation or rejection of theories. I am criticizing the inadequate use of them, in methodological and theoretical terms.
- Some other papers present mistakes similar to the above, with an additional characteristic: they replace the theoretical views of dependentistas by the "common-sense meaning of the term" (dependency and imperialism). The pretext for this is the lack of precision in the literature. By precision these authors mean a positivistic approach. After redefining the "theory of dependency" according to their own conceptions they intend to submit it to "empirical test," confronting hypotheses with data. Which hypotheses, how to categorize data, and who are the authors submitted to proof depends, of course, on the arbitrary choice of these empirical and objective cultivators of science. See, for instance, Raymond Duval and Bruce Russett, "Some Proposals to Guide Research on Contemporary Imperialism," unpublished.
13. See *Dependencia y Desarrollo*, last chapter, "The New Dependency." Dos Santos took these ideas and developed the characterization in *El nuevo carácter de la dependencia*. Nevertheless, several critics and commentators have not realized the implications of what is *new* in the dependency situations of industrialized Third World countries.

Bodenheimer, for instance, kept the perspective of the expansion model of one phase of imperialism as the main feature of "la nueva industrialización": "The international system *today* is characterized by: advanced industrial capitalism . . . the dominant nations need raw materials and, more important, commodities and capital markets" ("Dependency and Imperialism: The Roots of Latin American Underdevelopment," in *Readings in U.S. Imperialism*, ed. K. T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges [Boston: Porter Sargent, 1971]), p. 161. Moreover, Bodenheimer's concept of the "infra-structure of dependency" relates basically to the multinational corporations. Thus, again, the *external* forces are supposed to reshape internal structures without internal mediation: "The infrastructure of dependency may be seen as the functional equivalent of a formal colonial apparatus," sustained by client-classes which play, in "modern" Latin America, the historical role of a "comprador bourgeoisie" (see pp. 161–63). In this approach the functional-formalistic method is alive again, not because of the use of the expression "functional equivalent" by itself, but because Bodenheimer is comparing situations (the "colonial" and the "modern capitalist") constructed without historical content, as Gunder Frank sometimes does when he refers to feudalism and capitalism.

14. In this respect, the most influential essay was Osvaldo Sunkel, "Transnational Capitalism and National Disintegration in Latin America," *Social and Economic Studies* (University of the West Indies) 22, no. 1 (March 1973). Celso Furtado wrote some recent articles on contemporary capitalism, stressing the reorganization of the international market under the control of multinationals and its consequences for international political domination.
15. The importance of state bureaucracy and state enterprises in Latin America was stressed by several dependentistas. See, dos Santos, "La crisis de la teoría del desarrollo," and "Dependencia económica y alternativas de cambio en América Latina" (*Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 32, no. 2 [March-April 1970]: 416–63). My own views on the subject can be found in *Autoritarismo e Democratização* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1975). See, for more recent developments in the discussion of the role of the state, the insightful essay by Guillermo O'Donnell, "Reflexiones sobre las tendencias generales de cambio en el Estado burocrático-autoritario" (Buenos Aires: CEDES, 1975; to appear in *LARR* 13, no. 1 [in press]). Marcos Kaplan published pioneering essays on the nature of the state in dependent societies. See, esp., his "Estado, dependencia externa y desarrollo en América Latina" (*Estudios Internacionales* 2, no. 2 [July-September 1968]: 179–213). Francisco Weffort published a well-known, illuminating essay on "State and Masses" (*Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología* [Buenos Aires, 1966]).
16. This is not the occasion to recall the discussion on "marginality," to which Aníbal Quijano and José Nun have contributed. Recent research and criticism seem to reorient the discussion by assuming other hypotheses with respect to employment, marginality, and industrialization. See Paul Singer as well as Elizabeth Balan and Lucio Kowarick in various issues of CEBRAP's *Cadernos* and *Estudos*. Vilmar Faria in his Ph.D. dissertation "Urban Marginality as a Structural Phenomenon: An Overview of the Literature" (Harvard University, 1976), not only summarizes previous discussions, but proposes new approaches to the subject, taking into consideration empirical evidence and theoretical elaborations on the question of employment and capitalist development, without the "stagnationist" bias.