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# THE EDENIC MOTIF IN THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL IMAGINARY\*

José Murilo de Carvalho

*Brazil is a landscape*  
(Nelson Rodrigues)

*My nativist sentiment [...] has always been hurt  
by this adoration of nature [...] I  
neither made nor asked anyone to make the  
sky, the mountains, the woods and the rivers.  
They were already there when I found them.*  
(Machado de Assis)

The edenic motif has inhabited the national imagination since the beginnings of the European presence. The image of the country as nature became definitively crystallized at the end of the 19th century in Afonso Celso's *ufanismo*. This essay has two aims. The first is to document, through data from public opinion research, the surprising vitality of the edenic motif in present-day Brazil. The second is to suggest that a possible explanation for this phenomenon might rest in what could be called the satanic motif — the

negative image of the people — which also has long haunted us.

## The edenic motif

The presence of the edenic motif is well documented (Holanda, 1959; Cândido, 1981; Ventura, 1991). The paradisiacal view of the land began with the first Europeans who set foot here. It is already present in the letter sent to the Portuguese king in 1500 by Pero Vaz de Caminha, the clerk who accompanied Cabral's fleet. Shortly thereafter, in 1503, Amerigo Vespucci, in a letter known as *Mundus Novus*, addressed to Francesco de Medici, asserted that if there were an earthly paradise, it would not be far from the lands he saw. Among the 16th century chroniclers, Gandavo outdoes Caminha's enthusiasm in his 1576 *História da Província de Santa Cruz*: "without contradiction, this province is the best for human life among all others in America, for it is generally well-aired and most fertile, and in large manner delightful and pleasant to the human eye" (Gandavo, 1980, p. 81). The province, as he goes on to describe it, is covered with tall and dense forests and irrigated by many streams, the land is ever green, the climate of eternal spring: "never

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does one suffer cold nor excessive heat" (*idem*, p. 82). It is not difficult to trace like-minded assertions among other 16th century chroniclers.

In the following century, the author of the *Diálogos das Grandezas do Brasil* (*Dialogues of Brazil's Great Things*) continues in this elegiacal vein: "the land is fit to all agricultures of the world because of its high fertility, excellent climate, friendly skies, the disposition of its temperament, salubrious airs, and thousands of other features that belong to it." (*Diálogos*, 1977, p. 32). Near the end of the 17th century, the jesuit Simão de Vasconcelos, in his *Crônica da Companhia de Jesus do Estado do Brasil*, published in 1663, based on other travelers' accounts and on his own impressions, asserts that Brazil was an "amazement of nature". He does not hesitate to add that "we could draw comparisons or likeness between some of its parts and that earthly paradise in which our Lord, the Almighty, as in a garden, placed our father Adam". There is no doubt, adds the jesuit, that the land is superior to the pagan Elysian Fields.<sup>1</sup>

The fullest expression of this edenic view can be found in Rocha Pita's *História da América Portuguesa* (*History of Portuguese America*), published in 1730. This book, the first known history of Brazil written by a Brazilian — friar Vicente de Salvador's 1627 history was only published in 1882 — is openly apologetic; Sílvio Romero considered it a patriotic anthem. Rocha Pita himself admits that he was writing to enhance patriotic glories. Antonio Rodrigues da Costa — a censor of the Royal Academy of Portuguese History — highlights this feature of Rocha Pita's work while commenting that the latter seems rather "an elegy or panegyric than a history". Be that as it may, Rocha Pita denied that he had foresworn truth for the sake of love of the country. To his readers he declares, in the prologue, that "if you understand that I composed this book in applause and reverence for the climate in which I was born, you can believe that the information I give are certain and faithful because the praise is not divorced from the truth."<sup>2</sup>

The author justified his patriotism as a reaction to the ignorance of the Portuguese metropolis regarding the colony. One of the book's censors, bishop Joseph Barbosa, admitted the ignorance of

things Brazilian and called Pita a "new Columbus" for having "discovered another new world within the same discovered world". Pita restates Gandavo, who had admitted to have made an apology for the country in order to attract immigrants.

A model of the view of Brazil as nature, Rocha Pita deserves a more extensive citation that will also serve to convey the flavor of his style:

In no other region is the sky more serene, nor daybreak more beautiful; in no other hemisphere does the sun possess such golden rays, nor its nocturnal reflections so brilliant; the stars are most benign and ever gay; the horizon, whether the sun rises or falls, is ever bright; the waters, whether gathered at their source in the fields or in the villages through aqueducts, are most pure; in summary, Brazil is the discovered Earthly Paradise, where the largest rivers are born and run; where the healthiest climate dominates; where benign stars bear influence and the softest breezes blow rendering it fertile and peopled by countless inhabitants. (Rocha Pita, 1730, pp. 3-4)

Rocha Pita's scholastic education did not allow him to ignore the condemnatory views of the "torrid zone" as an uninhabitable place held by Aristotle and later recast by Pliny, Cicero and by such Church Fathers as Saint Augustine and Bede. He had no difficulty, however, in discarding these views by simply pointing out that their proponents had had no direct experience of such places — in short, that they had no idea of what they were talking about (which did little to prevent the continuing influence of Aristotle's views over European perspectives on the tropics).<sup>3</sup> Aristotle aside, Rocha Pita's text became the classic formulation for our edenic *ufanismo*, to be repeated with little variations in Gonçalves Dias' romantic "Song of the Exile", in the lyrics of the Brazilian national anthem, and in Afonso Celso's *Porque Me Ufano*.

Before Gonçalves Dias and the romantics, however, the quality of the land was heatedly debated at the time of the country's independence from Portugal, especially between 1820 and 1822. This brief period witnessed what the priest Luis Gonçalves dos Santos very adequately called a

"literary war" between Brazilians and the Portuguese. The major weapons deployed in this war were political pamphlets.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning, the point of contention was whether the Portuguese monarch, Dom João VI, should remain in Brazil or return to Portugal. After the king's return to Lisbon, the discussion gravitated round the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining union between the two kingdoms.

For my purposes, the most important pamphlet was that written by Dos Santos himself, entitled "Just Retribution Given to the Brother from Lisbon". The clergyman responds to another pamphlet entitled "First Letter from the Brother from Lisbon", a vitriolic attack on Brazil. The "brother from Lisbon", Manuel Fernandes Tomás, had attacked Brazil's climate and people in order to disqualify the country as an adequate seat for the monarchy. Repeating Aristotle, Tomás had said that Brazil — for its location in the torrid zone — had a scorching and unhealthy climate. Africans alone, and for a short time only, could endure the "piercing rays of a blazing zone". Moreover, the country's population was reduced to "a few hordes of little Negroes fished off the coasts of Africa". The country is "savage, uncouth and a land of monkeys, blacks and snakes". Dos Santos and other pamphleteers were taken by nativist indignation before the insults of the brother from Lisbon. He scoured the literature — both Brazilian and foreign — for arguments to refute the position of the "uncivil and furious charlatan" from Lisbon. Dos Santos mentions *Corografia do Brasil* (surely referring to *Corografia Brasileira* by Manuel Aires do Casal, published in 1817), *Estudos do Bem Comum* (referring to the work of José da Silva Lisboa, the viscount of Cairu), the memoirs of Caetano Brandão, of the baron of Langsdorff, of the English naturalist Clarke and the paintings of Maximilian de Neuwied. Without giving names, he adds other colonial chroniclers in an exercise that allows us to infer that the construction of the edenic tradition was fully underway.

Based on these authorities, Dos Santos praises the excellence of a climate of "complete spring-time", the natural beauty, the fertility of the soil and the wealth of mineral resources. From Cairu he draws another topos familiar to the edenic tradi-

tion: the absence of natural disasters, droughts, earthquakes, typhoons and epidemics. He concludes that though Brazil may not be the earthly paradise that the jesuit missionary had thought it to be (in a probable reference to Simão de Vasconcelos), it greatly resembles such a place and indeed is the pagan paradise, "the Elysian fields of this New World called America" (p. 27). One need only increase its population for it to become "the greatest empire, the most flourishing and powerful on earth" (pp. 27-28). On the eve of independence, the natural grandeur of the country and its abundance of riches had already been formulated as the foundation for the creation of a future vast empire and great power. The strongest argument advanced by the advocates of maintaining the United Kingdom of Portugal and Brazil rested precisely on the possibility of creating a large and powerful empire.<sup>5</sup>

These pamphlets are important because they demonstrate the continuity of the edenic motif. Their impact was, however, limited to the moment; they were not incorporated into the edenic tradition. The most influential texts from the period of independence in shaping the view of nature were written by a foreigner, Ferdinand Denis. In two works, one published in 1824, the other in 1826, Denis suggested that the originality of Brazilian literature should rest on the description of tropical nature and of (exotic) indigenous customs.<sup>6</sup> Brazilian romanticism, following on the footsteps of Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães, was certainly influenced by Denis' recommendations, but it had far more ancient roots on which to feed. It was certainly very successful in disseminating the edenic motif. Even today, who does not know at least a few verses of Gonçalves Dias' "Song of the Exile" by heart? The poem's most famous strophe

*Our skies have more stars  
Our prairies have more flowers  
Our forests have more life  
Our life more love*

was later transplanted onto the lyrics of the national anthem by Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada. It is Rocha Pita revisited nearly two centuries later.

Count Afonso Celso's work is thus but another link in the uninterrupted chain of the edenic tradition. The very expression, "*ufania nacional*", thought to be of his coinage, already figured in the pamphlets of the independence period. The count's fame as the "creator" of *ufanismo* can be justified solely on the grounds that it was he who formulated a systematic presentation of the country's natural beauty and wealth as a basis for national pride. In his book, published in 1900 as part of the celebrations of the fourth centenary of Cabral's voyage, he describes in detail the major components of the edenic motif, to wit, Brazil's territorial sweep, its natural beauty, riches and climate and the absence of natural disasters. Afonso Celso was familiar with the edenic literature, be it indirectly by way of João Francisco Lisboa's *Jornal de Timon*, the first complete edition of which appeared in 1864-65. Through Lisboa's work, he cites Vespucci's reference to the earthly paradise and mentions several colonial chroniclers — especially Simão de Vasconcelos —; he also cites the passage from Rocha Pita that I have quoted above and refers to such foreign travelers as Humboldt and Lamberg. Unfailingly, he reproduces the famous stanza in Gonçalves Dias' "Song of the Exile". Thus the edenic tradition was kept alive from the beginning to the end of the Empire (1822-1889), at least among the educated Brazilians. There are no indications of its currency among the populace; it probably did not exist there. At the time, the only available instrument for spreading national imagery was primary education. It happens that, according to José Verissimo (1906), exaggerated as his assertion may be, primary education during the Empire was utterly devoid of national sentiment. It is unlikely, therefore, that it could have been an effective instrument of transmission of any sort of patriotism not to mention that it reached only a very small portion of the population.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of Afonso Celso's book may well rest in its capacity to popularize Rocha Pita's work. It had several editions in quick succession. Although no information is available on the point, it is likely that the book was included in primary and secondary school curricula. This inclusion would

have been consistent with the efforts made after the proclamation of the Republic (1889) to promote civic education of children by means of textbooks. Some of the principal writers of the period, such as Silvio Romero, Olavo Bilac, Coelho Neto, Manoel Bomfim, and Afrânio Peixoto, were engaged in this undertaking. Curiously, Silvio Romero and Manoel Bomfim conveyed an image of Brazil and its people that was considerably more positive in their works for the younger readership than it was in their writings directed toward adults. Some of these writers joined Afonso Celso in the creation of national defense leagues during the 1910s.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that this civic literature penetrated primary schools and thus became responsible for the diffusion of the edenic motif in the Brazilian popular imaginary. What is certain is that it *was* disseminated and became deep-rooted. So deep, in fact, that to this day it still survives with considerable vigor.

### The survival of Eden

Evidence of this survival can be found in two recent public opinion surveys. One survey is nationwide and was conducted by a private public opinion research organization; the other, carried out by academic institutions, covers only the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. Both encompass a broad set of themes. I shall take up only those questions related to the topic at hand.<sup>9</sup>

A good way to open the discussion is to ask whether the respondents are proud of being Brazilian. The answers are in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Pride for being Brazilian**

|                                  | (%)       |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Feels for being Brazilian</i> |           |
| Very proud                       | 59.6      |
| Somewhat proud                   | 27.4      |
| Not proud                        | 6.8       |
| Shame                            | 4.4       |
| DK/NA                            | 1.8       |
| Total                            | 100.0     |
|                                  | (N=1,578) |

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

When the question is phrased this way, the proportion of *ufanistas* is very large indeed. The Vox Populi/*Veja* survey yields similar results, although it doesn't distinguish between "very proud" and "somewhat proud". According to that survey, 84% of the respondents feel that to be Brazilian is a reason for pride and only 5% feel that it is reason for shame, figures which are nearly identical to the results of the Rio survey (*Veja*, 1.10.1996, p. 49). The data indicate a degree of pride that ranks among the world's highest. According to the *World Value Survey* for 1990, only the United States and Ireland registered percentages for "very proud" that exceeded considerably the Brazilian figures. Similar to the Brazilian rates were those obtained for Canada, Mexico, South Africa. Several notches below were those for Netherlands, Germany and Japan (Inglehart, 1997, p. 304). But there is reason for suspicion that a question phrased in such broad terms may induce ritualistic responses. To avoid this danger, the answers were broken down by a few variables in order to explore possible differences that might lie behind such apparently monolithic patriotism. Table 2 controls the responses by educational level.

**Table 2**  
**Pride for being Brazilian by education**

|                                  | (%)                         |   |                                 |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Pride for being Brazilian</i> | Up to 4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 5 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grades | High school complete/incomplete | College complete/incomplete |
| Very proud                       | 69.8                        | 58.2                                      | 52.5                            | 52.5                        |
| Somewhat proud                   | 20.0                        | 28.5                                      | 31.9                            | 33.5                        |
| Not proud                        | 4.7                         | 6.5                                       | 9.0                             | 8.9                         |
| Shame                            | 4.2                         | 5.2                                       | 4.8                             | 1.3                         |
| DK/NA                            | 1.3                         | 1.6                                       | 1.8                             | 3.8                         |
| Total                            | 100.0                       | 100.0                                     | 100.0                           | 100.0                       |
|                                  | (N=451)                     | (N=572)                                   | (N=398)                         | (N=158)                     |

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

Table 2 yields somewhat surprising information. In general, the number of years of schooling

does not significantly affect whether or not one is proud of the country. But if we take into account only the response "very proud", a significant difference (17.3%) appears between the least educated and the most educated, where the former are more patriotic than the latter. This is not surprising, for it is reasonable to suppose that the critical capacity is more developed among the better educated: the more one knows about the problems of the country, the less one likes it. What is surprising is that the major cutting point occurs after the 4th grade. Among those who completed 5th to 8th grade the very proud fall from 69.8% to 58.2%; the second and less dramatic cutting point occurs among those who completed some high school; among them the very proud fall to 52.5%. Some college education makes no difference whatsoever, if compared to high school education, in the feeling of being very proud of the country. Brazilian governments in their failure to meet the obligation to provide a complete primary education seem to have guessed the effect that this might have in sharpening the citizen's critical faculties.

One might also ask the extent to which age affects national pride. The pattern here is largely similar to that in Table 2. The difference of opinions by age groups is discernible only in the "very proud" category. The older generation (over 40) is more patriotic than the younger. These results are intriguing. The political event that had the greatest impact over the last 60 years was the military coup of 1964 — and the 20 years of military rule that followed. It is precisely those who were born before the coup and who, therefore, suffered the effects of repression most intensely who display the greatest pride in their country. How can this be explained? The reasonable thing to expect is for this generation to be disenchanted. One possible explanation could be that the nationalist spirit of the 1950s was so ingrained that it was able to survive the test of the military period. One would also expect that the post-coup generations — bombarded by intense official propaganda and subjected to the school diet of moral and civic instruction — would exhibit a greater measure of *ufanismo*. The fact that this is not true may suggest that there is no political socialization more effective

than the one obtained through activism of the sort experienced during the nationalist struggles.

Variables such as gender, religion, information (measured by newspapers reading), political participation (in strikes, demonstrations, and other kinds of protest), social mobility, or associational life, have little effect on the rates of pride. It is noteworthy, however, that followers of Afro-Brazilian religions such as *Umbanda* and *Candomblé* tend to declare themselves “very proud” more frequently than followers of other religions. Associational life also matters among the “very proud”. Those who belong to labor unions, professional associations and beneficent organizations are more proud (77%) than those who do not (59%). The opposite happens among those with higher levels of political participation. Among those who participate highly, 45% declared themselves “very proud”, as opposed to the 60% who were less politically active.

Addressing directly the edenic theme, both surveys asked respondents to point out three reasons for pride in Brazil. The idea was to extract more detailed answers and also to force respondents to devote some thought to the matter in order to avoid ritualized responses to the preceding question. The responses are in Table 3.

Under the category “nature” I have included all responses that referred to natural beauty, including the beauty of women (the body is nature). Here are some examples of these responses: nature, marvelous nature, scenery, marvelous land, holy land, Amazonia, forests, mountains, wetlands, waterfalls, seashore, greenery, the sun, the pure air, fauna, flora, geographical appearance, natural beauty, the beauty of the beaches, Northeastern beaches, loveliest country in the world, blessed country, the most beautiful country, fertility of the soil, plant everything and it will grow, rich land, richest country on earth, natural resources, mineral resources, continental country, territorial extension, grandeur of the country, grandeur, the marvelous city (Rio de Janeiro), tropical climate, good climate, no earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, volcanoes, the beauty of the people, pretty women. In short, this heading includes all the responses that match the list elaborated by Afonso Celso.

“Character of the people” encompasses personality traits of the Brazilian that are considered positive, as well as exemplary individuals. For example: a compassionate people, hard-working, united, dedicated, cordial, artistic, hospitable, good, cheerful, peaceful, determined, orderly, competitive, simple, welcoming, friendly, loving, affection-

**Table 3**  
**Reasons to be proud of being Brazilian\***

|                                | Reasons   |              |           |              |              | (%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----|
|                                | VP/Veja 1 | Cpdoc/ISER 1 | VP/Veja 2 | Cpdoc/ISER 2 | Cpdoc/ISER 3 |     |
| Nature                         | 25        | 26.0         | 25        | 19.8         | 34.8         |     |
| Character of the people        | 20        | 11.3         | 21        | 8.8          | 15.5         |     |
| Characteristics of the country | 10        | 13.8         | 9         | 9.3          | 16.3         |     |
| Sport/music/Carnival           | 11        | 6.8          | 7         | 5.2          | 9.1          |     |
| Other                          | 3         | 15.7         | 4         | 10.7         | 18.8         |     |
| None                           | 8         | 2.5          | 7         | 3.1          | 5.4          |     |
| DK/NA                          | 23        | 23.7         | 27        | 43.1         | —            |     |
| Total                          | 100.0     | 100.0        | 100.0     | 100.0        | 100.0        |     |
|                                | N=1,976   | N=1,579      | N=1,962   | N=4,734      | N=2,696      |     |

\* Respondents were asked to list three reasons for pride. In VP/Veja 1 and Cpdoc/ISER 1 only the first response was computed. In VP/Veja 2 and Cpdoc/ISER 2 the three answers were averaged. Because there was a large increase in the percentage of don't know/no answer in Cpdoc/ISER 2, this option was eliminated in Cpdoc/ISER 3. The smaller increase in don't know/no answer in VP/Veja 2 is due to the fact that they were computed only once; i.e., the second reason was only asked of those who had given a first answer, and the third reason of those who had given a second. For the VP/Veja survey, some of the responses presented in the published table were collapsed.

Sources: VP/Veja and Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

ate, loyal, capable, honest, humanitarian, human, religious, intelligent, free, festive, happy; the family, the 92-year-old mother, Getúlio Vargas, Betinho, Ayrton Senna, Juscelino Kubitschek, Xuxa, and so on. "Characteristics of the country" include positive attributes unrelated to nature that can be credited to human achievement: the absence of racial discrimination, terrorism, conflicts, death penalty; a hospitable country; peace; freedom of expression, of religion; democracy, progress, development; the campaign against hunger, the *Viva Rio* campaign; the monetary reform of *Plano Real*, and so on. "Sport and music" are self-explanatory; they include the arts, artists and Carnival.

There were, of course, answers that could not fit the foregoing categories. They did not constitute a group sufficiently homogeneous, coherent and significant to justify the creation of a special category. For the sake of illustration only, I will cite a few: to have been born here, to be Brazilian, to like the country, to be healthy, to be a woman, foreigners adore Brazil, to travel, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, (the statue of) Christ the Redeemer, the flag, religion, beer on the weekends, leisure, to be happy, and so on.

The first revelation of the table is that, despite the fact that 87% of the respondents stated their pride in being Brazilian, around 23% in both surveys were unable to indicate, in the first option, a single reason for their pride. Adding up the three reasons for pride, the percentage for those who were unable to answer rises to 43% (Cpdoc/ISER 2). It should be reminded that the surveys were conducted at a time when the national mood if not exactly one of euphoria was hardly one of depression. According to the VP/*Veja* survey, 45% of the respondents thought that the country was improving, while only 31% thought that it was declining (*Veja*, 1.10.1996, p. 51). It becomes clear that the patriotic responses to the first question were ritualistic indeed (Table 1).<sup>10</sup>

Having said as much, the great surprise emerges: at the end of the twentieth century, 264 years after Rocha Pita and 96 after the publication of Afonso Celso's work, the edenic motif still predominates among those respondents of both surveys who were able to mention some reason for their pride in the country. The edenic motif re-

mains on the top of the list regardless of the procedures adopted for the tabulation of responses. In the Cpdoc/ISER survey, it consistently accounts for double the next most mentioned reason, characteristics of the country. Even more impressive is the fact that, among the latter, not once do we see mentioned in either survey Brazil's political institutions, the three constitutional powers, the representative system and so on. These institutions are usually mentioned in countries that have a democratic tradition.<sup>11</sup> The only significant difference between the two surveys is the smaller emphasis placed on the positive characteristics of the people and the greater emphasis placed on the positive characteristics of the country among respondents of metropolitan Rio de Janeiro.

The surprise is also concern. For how can it be that after 174 years of independence Brazilians are still incapable of finding reasons for patriotic pride grounded in national achievement rather than in those things over which they have no control. Machado de Assis, whom I have cited in an epigraph to this essay, had already reminded us that we did not create the skies and heavens above, nor for that matter the mountains, forests or rivers. Much less were we to take credit for protecting the country from earthquakes, volcanoes or hurricanes. Machado de Assis complained about visiting foreigners who only noticed the "*pays féerique*". Once, after guiding such a visitor around Rio, at the end of the day the tourist had only this to say: "My, what nature do you have!" This attitude, Machado complained, belittled man and his accomplishments and ignored all notion human action.<sup>12</sup> One can imagine the measure of his disappointment upon witnessing that to this day, perhaps even more so than in his own time, such attitudes are rampant among Brazilians themselves. His indignation at this sort of contempt for the country resurfaced 80 years later in the distinguished playwright Nelson Rodrigues, who put it in his customary bluntness: "Brazil is not a country, it is not a nation, it is not a people: it is a landscape." (Rodrigues, 1997, p. 14). Perhaps the best representation of Brazil as landscape yet is one Di Cavalcanti's "Reclining Nude" from the 1930s, in which the painter depicts a nude mulatta whose



bodily curves blend into the natural backdrop. Woman and nature are thus fused.

Before seeking plausible explanations for Brazil's perpetually edenic self-image, we might ask ourselves whether there are specific factors affecting the answers. On this point I shall limit my remarks to the data provided by the Cpdoc/ISER survey. Color or "race" do not yield significant differences. As far as religion is concerned, there is a slight tendency among the followers of *Umbanda*, *Candomblé* and kardecist spiritism to be more edenic than the rest. This may be due to the greater importance attached to nature in Afro-Brazilian religious practices. It would be normal for this added importance given the natural world to be transposed to civic sensibilities. Age does yield differences. The older generation, above 55, is the one that least refers to edenic explanations (21% on the first response, 15% on the combination of all three). The younger generation (between 16 and 25) shows the greatest adherence to the edenic belief (33% and 25%, respectively). This is cause enough for concern, for it seems that edenism is not only alive but shows symptoms of added strength. The younger generation is also the one that sees the fewest positive characteristics in the country and the one that attaches the greatest value to sport, music and Carnival. This generation, which grew up during Brazil's re-democratization process (1980's), does not appear to have experienced the political transition as a national accomplishment in which they could take pride. Strangely enough, not even the 1992 successful campaign for the impeachment of President Collor — so recent and so marked by the strong participation of youths — is mentioned as a source of pride.

Finally, the answers were controlled by level of education, a factor that could be seen theoretically as the most important in determining the reasons for national pride. The results are in Table 4.

This table contains two opposing curves: one predictable, the other not. The predictable one is the negative correlation between education and the ability to state reasons for pride. Among the least educated (up to 4th grade) there is twice the likelihood of being unable to mention any reason for pride. Those who take the greatest pride in

being Brazilian are precisely those who have the greatest difficulty in justifying it. The surprising curve is the systematic increase of the edenic motif in proportion to the increase in education. Edenists are twice as many among those with a secondary or college education. If, as we have seen, the more educated tended to be the least *ufanista* they tend, on the contrary, to be considerably more edenistic. And this includes the college-educated, the most edenistic of all. The more educated one is, the greater the concentration of one's reasons for pride on natural factors. This tendency is confirmed by the fact that those who are best informed (those who read more newspapers) are also more edenistic than the least informed. How can this be explained? Could it be attributed to the content of education? Could the edenic motif be so thoroughly engrained in the textbooks? Or could it be the consequence of the military regime's moral and civic education and its patriotic propaganda?

**Table 4**  
**Reasons to be proud of being Brazilian**  
**by education**

| Reasons                        | (%)                         |   |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                | Up to 4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 5 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grades | High school completed/ Not completed | College completed/ Not completed |
| Nature                         | 13.2                        | 20.0                                      | 24.0                                 | 26.8                             |
| Character of the people        | 6.5                         | 7.2                                       | 9.5                                  | 19.2                             |
| Characteristics of the country | 9.2                         | 8.1                                       | 10.8                                 | 10.4                             |
| Sport /music                   | 3.2                         | 6.4                                       | 6.1                                  | 4.4                              |
| Other                          | 13.1                        | 9.1                                       | 10.4                                 | 10.4                             |
| DK/NA                          | 50.7                        | 46.5                                      | 36.4                                 | 26.5                             |
| Total                          | 100.0                       | 100.0                                     | 100.0                                | 100.0                            |
|                                | (N=1,355)                   | (N=1,715)                                 | (N=1,190)                            | (N=473)                          |

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997). The three responses were added together.

In regard to propaganda in its strict sense, the answer is no. A recent study by Carlos Fico (1997) shows that the official public-relations agencies

created by the military governments during the 1970s did indeed emphasize an optimistic view of the country. The reasons for this optimism were not, however, edenic. The central themes in this propaganda had to do with the idea of building and transformation, as it can readily gathered from the slogans of 1972 ("You are building Brazil"), or 1976 ("Brazil is made by us"). Military propaganda emphasized unity, love, solidarity and fraternity; it extolled the Brazilian man, national heroes, historical achievements, not nature. It was, of course, a mystification, an attempt at winning support for the military rule and at de-politicizing the populace. But the important point here is that the propaganda of the military regime was *not* edenic. In this respect, it followed the example established by a previous dictatorship, that of the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945), and by the children's literature of the beginning of the Republic; both sought to call the reader's attention to individuals and deeds.<sup>13</sup> Colonel Otávio Costa, who headed a PR bureau for Brazil's military regime in the 1970s, quite explicitly stated in an interview with Carlos Fico that he had to "fight like a lion" against the tendency to extol Brazil's natural beauty best represented at the time by Amaral Neto, a reporter for Globo TV (Fico, 1997, p. 137). Recent edenism cannot, therefore, be credited to military propaganda. The latter did include a political derivation of edenism, that is, the idea of Brazil as a great power, which, as we have seen, was already present at the time of independence under the formula of Brazil as a "powerful empire".

Education, however, is another story altogether. A survey conducted in the State of Maranhão during the 1970s (during the presidency of General Geisel) shows that TVE, the government's official television channel, which was responsible for over-the-air instruction in moral and civics for grades 4 through 8, did indeed transmit a paradisiacal view of the country (Bomeny, 1981, ch. 3). Paradise, in this instance, was not restricted to nature; it also encompassed the qualities of the people (good, peaceful, hospitable) and of the government (good, patriotic, competent). However, it did include nature, since TVE used Amaral Neto's programs that Colonel Costa found so detestable. And it was

effective propaganda. Student compositions showed that they had "bought" the whole package: nature, people and government. One student said that he would introduce Brazil to a foreigner by pointing out that it was "a sort of infinite paradise, because it was peaceful, pretty, etc. I am proud of my country." (Bomeny, 1981, p. 77).

Another hypothesis not wholly farfetched to account for the greater edenism among the young is that it may be connected to the practice of singing the national anthem that became fashionable during the 1984 campaign for restoring direct presidential elections. Pop singer Fafá de Belém moved multitudes with her particular rendition of the anthem that thenceforth came to be sung at virtually every conceivable occasion, whereas before it was heard only at official ceremonies, civic rituals and in the out-of-tune chorus of the national football team. Youths sang the anthem profusely during the campaign to impeach president Fernando Collor.

In fact, the national anthem is even more edenic than *Porque Me Ufano*. Consider, for example, its first stanza:

*The placid margins of the Ipiranga river  
Heard the resounding cry of a heroic people,  
And the sun of liberty in brilliant rays  
Shined at that moment in the sky of the fatherland.*

In the first place, the resounding cry of a heroic people is pure invention (it was D. Pedro who shouted). But the worse is that the "listener" of the cry were the banks of the Ipiranga, the listener was nature not people. D. Pedro shouted to the riverbanks (which surely did not echo back). Moreover, the reference to liberty — a human achievement — is made through a natural metaphor: liberty is the sun, whose rays shine in the sky. Further along, the sky appears yet again, this time smiling and limpid, along with the beautiful, fearless, colossal natural giant. The giant is colossal by nature. The grandeur of the future is assured by natural gigantism. There is more: the country is said to lie in a splendid natural cradle, illuminated by the sun of the new world. Immediately after comes the passage from the "Song of the Exile". Finally, the Southern Cross, which incidentally appears

twice in the lyrics, is presented as a symbol of eternal love. It would not be surprising if the repeated singing of the national anthem contributed to the absorption, be it in an unconscious manner, of edenism. This explanation, however plausible, is certainly not entirely satisfactory. And so the question remains open.

### The satanic motif

*In a radiant land lives a sad people.*  
(Paulo Prado, *Retrato do Brasil*)

Beyond the likely topical reasons for the persistence of the edenic motif, such as those related to education, religion and the national anthem, it is possible to suggest more lasting reasons of a historical and cultural nature. One could ask, for instance, whether the predominance and persistence of the edenic might not be connected with the lack of other reasons for national pride. One such absence is the lack of popular participation in the most important political transformations that the country went through. Another obvious drawback, because it is also a component of the Brazilian imaginary, lies in the belief in the inadequacy of the human element that inhabits the country. We could call this particular inadequacy — in opposition to the edenic motif, and with some exaggeration — the satanic motif.

There is a rich literature on the conquest and colonization of the Americas that deals with the nature of the American man in general and the Brazilian in particular. Antonello Gerbi (1996) has studied this discussion from Buffon up to the end of the nineteenth century. Afonso Arinos de Melo Franco (1937) surveyed the European imaginary and its representations of Brazilian Indians from the time of Vespucci until the French Revolution. Just as the quality of the land and the climate were subject to debate, so too were the qualities of man, native and non-native, with evaluations that ranged from the positive to the negative. The latter category referred not only to natives, called by the jesuit Manuel da Nóbrega the “saddest and vilest gentiles in the whole world”, but also to the European conquerors. In *Diálogos das Grandezas do Brasil*,

after Brandonio describes the wonders of the land, he is questioned by Alviano, who asks him how then to explain the fact that everything is so expensive. Brandonio answers that the fault lies in the negligence and lack of industry of its inhabitants (*Diálogos*, 1977, p. 33). We know of the frequent complaints made by jesuits and grantees of crown lands against the practice of transporting criminals and prostitutes to Brazil. Slavery was also blamed for the corruption of both masters and slaves. Some observers, such as the jesuit Jorge Benci, attributed depravity to the Negro race itself.

To keep matters brief, let us move to the period of independence. We saw how some pamphleteers viewed Brazilians as a horde of little negroes fished off the coast of Africa. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Brazilian inferiority gained scientific trappings thanks to racist theories accepted — in greater or lesser degree — by important intellectuals such as Silvio Romero, Euclydes da Cunha and Nina Rodrigues. The mentality at the turn-of-the century — the time when Afonso Celso’s book was published — is aptly encapsulated by a character in Araripe Junior’s 1906 book, significantly entitled *Diálogos das Novas Grandezas do Brasil*: “Brazil is a lost country! Silvio Romero is right when he says that everything here is grand, except for the men, who are useless.” (Araripe Junior, 1909, p. 103). At the end of the First Republic, Paulo Prado produced one of the most pessimistic views of the Brazilian. The opening sentence of his *Retrato do Brasil* is well known: “In a radiant land lives a sad people”, marked by covetousness and lust (Prado, 1931).<sup>14</sup> Prado’s assessment echoes that of the Irish poet Thomas Moore, who visited the Americas in the early 19th century. Rejecting the negative view of American nature, Moore insists, however, in the pessimism about the population: to nature’s grandeur there corresponded a savage, weak, repugnant and idiotic population (Gerbi, 1996, pp. 254-257).

The VP/*Veja* and Cpdoc/ISER surveys included questions that allow for the evaluation of the self-image of Brazilians today. In the VP/*Veja* survey, the majority of respondents negatively evaluated Portuguese colonization. Moreover, Africans and Asians are seen as having had a negative rather

than positive influence. We have noted how, in the Cpdoc/ISER survey, the character of the people figures in a discreet third place as a reason for national pride. Other questions in this survey sought to clarify the content of national self-evaluation. Respondents were asked to choose, from a list of adjectives, those that in their view best defined Brazilians and the inhabitants of metropolitan Rio de Janeiro (*Cariocas*). The results are in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Image of Brazilians and *cariocas***

| <i>Image</i>   | <i>Brazilians</i> | <i>Cariocas</i> |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                | (%)               |                 |
| Long-suffering | 74.1              | 54.9            |
| Hardworking    | 69.4              | 49.7            |
| Cheerful       | 63.3              | 70.4            |
| Conformist     | 61.4              | 51.3            |
| Determined     | 48.4              | 38.5            |
| Caring         | 46.1              | 44.0            |
| Revolted       | 42.3              | 34.0            |
| Pacific        | 40.4              | 33.8            |
| Honest         | 36.2              | 30.5            |
| Crafty         | 30.8              | 45.1            |
| Violent        | 28.5              | 36.7            |
| Lazy           | 24.0              | 34.9            |
| Selfish        | 21.6              | 23.1            |
| Dishonest      | 17.2              | 19.8            |
|                | (N=1,578)         | (N=1,578)       |

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

Taking those attributes that were checked by at least 50% of the respondents, we see that the adjectives that best describe Brazilians are, in order: long-suffering, hardworking, cheerful, conformist. The same characteristics define *Cariocas*, but in a different order: cheerful, long-suffering, conformist, hardworking. The stereotypical view that other Brazilians have of the *Cariocas* is thus confirmed: in relation to other Brazilians, they are merrier and less hardworking, craftier and less given to suffering. However, as a sign of the times and outside the stereotypical formula, *Cariocas* see themselves as less pacific and more violent. A comparison of these results to those obtained in the VP/*Veja* survey

reveals that the differences are minor. According to the latter, the four most frequently cited characteristics of Brazilians are, in order: hardworking, amusing, complacent and caring. Suffering follows immediately after caring (*Veja*, 1.10.1996, p. 53).<sup>15</sup>

Generally speaking, the Brazilian self-image is not very negative in regard to psychological traits, to the extent that such attributes as dishonesty, selfishness, laziness and violence rank at the bottom of the scale. The self-image for *Cariocas* is somewhat worse, although not alarmingly so. But what draws attention in the set of most-voted attributes is the notion of passivity: work, suffering, and conformism. What is yet more troubling is that these are all tempered by cheerfulness. One might well ask whether it is not contradictory to select both suffering and cheerfulness. In my view this is not necessarily so. Suffering can indicate the sense of being a victim of government, of circumstances, of fate. Cheerfulness would be the way in which one faces hardship. The Brazilian would be a sufferer who is resigned and cheerful. A perfect précis of this self-perception is to be found in the name of a Carnival group from Recife: "*Nóis sofre mas nóis goza*" ("We's hurtin' but we's fun"). From a moral and psychological standpoint, this is not terribly compromising, unless one chooses to interpret it as an indication of masochism. But from a political and civic standpoint, it is the perfect personification of the non-citizen, the subject who suffers, with cheerful resignation, the will of the sovereign. The people see themselves as victims, as a passive entity rather than an agent of history. In my view, the satanic image has a great deal to do with this lack of civic sensibility.

Authors who have worked with the concept of political culture (Almond and Verba, 1965; Inglehart, 1990 and 1997; Kalberg, 1993) agree on the existence of a psycho-cultural attribute that is central to the operation of democratic systems of government: trust in one's fellow citizens. The close connection between mutual trust and democracy is easily understood. At least within the Anglo-Saxon perspective on citizenship, cooperation and the capacity for organization and collective action are of fundamental importance. It is obvious that without mutual trust there is no

possibility of organized action. The question on trust was included in both surveys. The results for the Rio survey are in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Trustworthiness of Brazilians**

| <i>Trustworthiness</i> | (%)   |
|------------------------|-------|
| Very trustworthy       | 6.5   |
| Trustworthy            | 30.2  |
| Less than trustworthy  | 46.3  |
| Untrustworthy          | 13.8  |
| DK/NA                  | 3.2   |
| Total                  | 100.0 |
| (N=1,578)              |       |

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

The findings are dismaying. No fewer than 60% of the respondents believe that their fellow countrymen are less than trustworthy or untrustworthy altogether. Only 36.7% find them worthy of trust. This is the sole point where the two surveys markedly diverge. According to VP/*Veja*, 63% of the respondents find that Brazilians are highly trustworthy and 34% view them as less than or not at all trustworthy, proportions exactly opposite to those for the Rio survey. The results are promising for Brazil but worrisome for Rio de Janeiro. The answers for Rio may reflect the impact of urban violence on the inhabitants of the metropolitan area, which would lead them to lose trust in their fellow citizens.

But it should be noted that even the nationwide data on trust fall far below the levels that can be found for most European democracies. In the *World Values Survey* for 1990, Brazil ranks at the very bottom of the 43 countries surveyed on the index of interpersonal trust (Inglehart, 1997, pp. 359 and 306). Surveys conducted between 1976 and 1986 in Europe reveal high levels of stability in the degree of trust within each country. Moreover, with the exception of Greece and Italy, the degree of trust falls in the 85-95% range, considerably higher than the figures we have for Brazil as a whole and overwhelmingly so when we consider the data for Rio de Janeiro. Tellingly, trustworthiness is at its

lowest — at roughly 50% — in Sicily and southern Italy (Inglehart, 1990, pp. 34-35). This immediately brings to mind Banfield's ideas on the amorality and familism of the culture of these regions and Putnam's more recent analysis of their low civic capabilities (Banfield, 1958; Putnam, 1996). An earlier study by Almond and Verba (1965, pp. 212-214) had also shown higher levels of trustworthiness for the United States and Britain, lower for Germany and Mexico, and very low for Italy. A strong correlation between interpersonal trust and longevity of democratic systems of government was also established by Inglehart (1997, p. 174).

The results of the Rio survey are especially troubling when controlled by age group. To simplify matters, I will consider only the two extremes: youths between the ages of 16 and 24 and those above 55 years of age. Among the latter, 46% think Brazilians are trustworthy and 47% that they are not. Among the former, 74% do not trust their fellow citizens, as opposed to 25% who do. Trust in one's fellow man is dramatically diminished among the young, which does not bode well for the future of democracy. Religious affiliation is another variable affecting mutual trust. In this regard the extremes consist of Afro-Brazilian and spiritist religions on the one hand, among whom the levels of trust hover round 50%, and those without a professed religion, among whom only 27% express trust. Evangelical Christians, at 31%, rank next to the latter.

There are additional variables that discretely affect trustworthiness. As one might expect, those who belong to professional and beneficent organizations tend to display greater trust in their fellows: joining requires trusting. Color and gender do not affect levels of trust. Whether one is informed or not does: 45% of respondents who read newspapers are trusting, while among those who do not the percentage drops to 35. Those with some college education also tend to place more trust in others (53%) than those who did not advance beyond the 4th grade (40.5%).

The similarities between the Brazilian and the southern Italian cases regarding the lack of a civic mind are further suggested by the data displayed in Table 7, which show the levels of trustworthiness in different kinds of leaders.

**Table 7**  
**Trust in leaders\***

| <i>Type of leader</i>                | (%)                          |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                      | Cpdoc/ISER<br>Average rating | VP/ <i>Veja</i><br>Average rating |
| Leaders within own religious group   | 8.1                          | 6.4                               |
| Relatives                            | 7.9                          | 6.8                               |
| Friends                              | 6.6                          | 5.7                               |
| Neighbors                            | 6.0                          | 4.7                               |
| Bosses/employers                     | 5.4                          | 4.4                               |
| President of Brazil                  | 5.1                          | 4.7                               |
| Union and other organization leaders | 4.2                          | 4.0                               |
| Mayor                                | 4.1                          | 3.9                               |
| Congressman for whom they voted      | 4.0                          | 3.1                               |

\* Both surveys asked respondents to rate their leaders on a scale of 1-10 on the basis of the amount of trust they inspired. The table displays the averages for these grades.

Sources: VP/*Veja* and Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

There are impressive similarities between the nationwide data and the findings for the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area. The rankings are virtually identical and the ratings very similar. The meaning of the data is unequivocal: Brazilians in general and *cariocas* in particular place the most trust in their religious leaders and in their relatives. Employers are more trusted than union leaders. Political leaders, with the exception of the president, are unworthy of trust. And the trophy for mistrust goes to the congressman for whom the respondent voted.<sup>16</sup> To borrow Roberto Da Matta's expression, Brazilians keep their trust at home, in the realm of primary relationships. Outside the household, in the public space, only religious leaders are deserving of trust. At the end of the twentieth century, the majority of Brazilians remain adverse to the world of political and civil associations. In Rio this pattern is even more accentuated, surely in response to the levels of violence that discourage people from leaving home. If the characteristics of the Brazilian as described in Table 5 portray him as a subject, rather than a citizen, the responses displayed in Table 7 reveal a propensity for the parochial, to draw from the terminology used by Almond and

Verba, that is, for a type of culture dissociated from the political or even the civil, inclined rather toward the domestic world. Other findings in the Cpdoc/ISER survey corroborate this characterization. I refer especially to the extremely low levels of associational practices among the population of the Rio metropolitan area. Only 2% of the region's inhabitants are affiliated with political parties, 5.5% to neighborhood organizations, and 1.7% to PTAs.

It seems reasonable to conclude that this self-image contributes to the existence and persistence of the edenic motif. Those who do not see themselves as a civil or civic being cannot see themselves as agents — individual or collective — of social and political change in which they might take pride, and so must seek elsewhere the rationale to build a national identity.

We can shed more light on the question by investigating the reasons Brazilians provide for feeling ashamed of their country. Both surveys asked respondents to indicate three reasons to feel ashamed of Brazil. Their answers are in Table 8.

**Table 8**  
**Reasons for feeling ashamed of being Brazilian\***  
(%)

| Reasons                     | VP/<br><i>Veja</i> 1 | Cpdoc/<br>ISER1 | VP/<br><i>Veja</i> 2 | Cpdoc/<br>ISER 2 | Cpdoc/<br>ISER |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Misery/unemployment/poverty | 29.0                 | 20.1            | 25.0                 | 17.4             | 24.9           |
| Health/education            | 3.0                  | 3.9             | 6.0                  | 5.7              | 8.0            |
| Politicians                 | 18.0                 | 21.2            | 14.0                 | 11.6             | 16.6           |
| Corruption                  | 17.0                 | 6.0             | 15.0                 | 5.0              | 7.2            |
| Violence                    | 9.0                  | 19.6            | 11.0                 | 14.0             | 19.9           |
| Other                       | 5.0                  | 10.5            | 7.0                  | 11.1             | 16.0           |
| None                        | 8.0                  | 4.6             | 5.0                  | 5.2              | 7.4            |
| DK/NA                       | 11.0                 | 14.1            | 17.0                 | 30.0             | —              |
| Total                       | 100.0                | 100.0           | 100.0                | 100.0            | 100.0          |

(N=1,962)(N=1,579)(N=1,962)(N=4,731)(N=3,320)

\* VP/*Veja* 1 and Cpdoc/ISER 1 tabulate only the respondent's first response. VP/*Veja* 2 and Cpdoc/ISER 2 are the average of the three responses. Cpdoc/ISER 3 refers to the three responses and discards "don't know/no answer". In the VP/*Veja* survey, the response "abandonment of children" was included in the first response (*Veja*, 1.10.1996, p. 54).

Sources: VP/*Veja* and Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

Responses to this question were quite diversified. But closer examination revealed that they in fact pointed to a few problems that respondents deemed shameful to the country. I don't believe that I have distorted the responses by classifying them in the groups that appear in this table, which does not evidently exclude the use of other categories or of a different classification. The first heading includes such answers as: low wages, minimum wage, hunger, shantytowns, abandoned children, indifference to the poor, income distribution, financial condition, the economy, social injustice, inequality, social difference, lack of opportunity, etc. In short, it includes everything that touches on the social question. Health and education could have been included here. They were treated separately only because of their importance. They encompass all the responses referring to deficiencies in the school system, the hospital system, public health and sanitation. Under the heading "politicians" I have included responses such as these: government, bad government, administration, management, shamelessness of the authorities, political frauds, the ruling class, Congress, politics, the political class, wheeling and dealing, politicians who steal, corrupt politicians, dishonest politicians, the president, the mayor, Collor, thieves from up above, indifference of the authorities, etc. Under the heading of "corruption" the following responses, among others, were included: theft, thievery, theft in the welfare system, impunity, tax evasion, shamelessness, lack of honesty, scams, roguery, frauds, etc. The heading "corruption" could well be added to the item "politicians", for both are frequently mentioned in the same breath. Criticism of politicians almost always refer to the idea of corruption: corrupt, crooked and dishonest are all adjectives that in the popular view stick firmly to the noun politician. "Violence" comprises everything related to safety, justice and the police: aggressions, killing, robbery, massacres, bloodbaths, kidnapping, criminality, injustice, impunity, lack of safety, precarious justice, laws that are not enforced, the judicial power, public safety, police corruption, and so on. Under "other" a wide variety of responses were classified, ranging from *funk* parties to ugly women, and encompassing foreign debt, drugs, lack of

respect for one's fellow man, dirtiness, the "Brazilian" way of circumventing problems, queues in banks, racism, corporatism, shameless people, homosexuality, naked women, prostitution, etc.

The reasons for national shame may thus be grouped under three main headings: the social questions, including health and education; politics and corruption; public safety. The social question in both surveys accounts for nearly 30% of the responses. Politicians and corruption occupy the first place among reasons for shame when only the first response is taken into consideration. When the three responses are computed, it comes in second place. Safety comes in third place. The three reasons together account for nearly 70% of the answers in both surveys.<sup>17</sup> Rio de Janeiro stands out in the national scene for two characteristics: smaller emphasis on corruption and greater emphasis on public safety.

If the educational level is taken into account, its potential for increasing criticism stands out. The data on education are available only in the Cpdoc/ISER survey and are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9**  
**Reasons to be ashamed of being Brazilian**  
**by level of education\***

| Reasons                     | (%)                         |   |                                  |                                      |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                             | Up to 4 <sup>th</sup> grade | 5 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grades | College completed/ Not completed | High school completed/ Not completed |
| Misery/unemployment/poverty | 12.9                        | 19.1                                      | 19.6                             | 18.2                                 |
| Health/education            | 3.9                         | 5.5                                       | 6.3                              | 9.3                                  |
| Politicians                 | 8.3                         | 10.2                                      | 14.4                             | 19.3                                 |
| Corruption                  | 2.5                         | 4.3                                       | 7.1                              | 10.2                                 |
| Violence                    | 12.0                        | 15.2                                      | 16.0                             | 10.0                                 |
| Other                       | 7.4                         | 10.3                                      | 14.1                             | 16.7                                 |
| None                        | 10.1                        | 5.0                                       | 2.1                              | 0.6                                  |
| DK/NA                       | 42.9                        | 30.4                                      | 20.4                             | 15.7                                 |
| Total                       | 100.0                       | 100.0                                     | 100.0                            | 100.0                                |
|                             | (N=1,354)                   | (N=1,714)                                 | (N=1,191)                        | (N=472)                              |

\* In this table the three answers were added together, which increased the number of don't know/no answers.

Source: Cpdoc-FGV/ISER (1997).

The big difference between Tables 8 and 9 is the fact that education greatly enhances the critical sense of the population. The more educated a person is, the greater her ability to list reasons for shame. But the critical sense of those with more education is directed toward a different target than the one of the less educated. It is sharper in relation to politicians and corruption, to education and health. The best educated are three times more likely to cite politicians and corruption as a reason for national shame, ranking this item at the very top of the list; in regard to education and health, they are twice more likely to do so. Their sensitivity to poverty and violence is lower. These are items that prove more troubling to those in the middle of the occupational strata.

If social or political factors are absent from the reasons for national pride, in the reasons for national shame their presence is overwhelming. When it comes to diagnosing the country's problems, the population is profoundly clairvoyant. The negative image of Brazilians is rarely mentioned among the reasons for national shame, except among the most education. The bad things are institutions, political leaders and their policies. The drama embedded in the responses is that the solution for social and security problems they point out depend on the operation of institutions and the action of politicians. But the politicians themselves (and by extension, the representative system) are seen as one of the major causes for shame.

These findings shed new light on the short-circuit that leads to edenism. If one's fellow citizens are untrustworthy, their political representatives are even less so. The people do not see themselves as responsible for what happens in the country not only because they do not participate but also because they do not see themselves as accomplices of the actions of their representatives, even when they have elected them. They see themselves as neither direct nor indirect agents of politics. They do not fit either in the old direct form of democracy or in the new indirect one. And so all that he is left with is the natural beauty of the country, which they are destroying constantly. The day when natural beauties will

vanish, the final refuge for pride will perhaps be the *samba* and football. We hurt in politics, but we have fun in Carnival and in the victories of the national football team.

In a cruel judgment, Hegel asserted that America — and South America in particular — was condemned to be a prisoner of nature and never to rise to the condition of history. If the survival of our edenism as a substitute for participation does not fully corroborate the philosopher's verdict, it is no less troubling as a fact in its own right. Nelson Rodrigues' remark that "Brazil is a landscape" captures this sense of disquietude and dismay. The fact that the same Nelson Rodrigues identified the presence of a Brazilian nation in the national football team is but a poor consolation.

## NOTES

- 1 As quoted in João Francisco Lisboa (1865, vol. II, p.191).
- 2 Rocha Pita expresses the matter compellingly when he states that to describe the open map before him he needs the artistry of a painter, the "liveliness of colors", the "boldness of the brushstroke". Furthermore, in defense of his style he reminds us that his paintbrush still only humbly can depict its images, for he has been working partly with secondhand information (see Prologue).
- 3 Aristotle's opinion must have had certain currency in Europe. Friar Vicente do Salvador, whose work Rocha Pita in all likelihood had not read, since it was not published until the 19th century, argues against Aristotle. Friar Vicente states that the heat in Brazil is attenuated by the humidity of the land, by the prevailing wind from the sea, and by the fact that the days are of equal length the year round. In the temperate zone, the summer days are longer, which leads to more extensive exposure to the sun, and which in turn results in greater intensity of heat. At any rate, friar Vicente claims — as would Pita at a later date — that experience shows that in Brazil one can live worry-free and untroubled by disease, except for a few pocks (Salvador, 1982, pp. 61-62).
- 4 In 1973 the Federal Council for Culture published a selection of these pamphlets, along with an introduction by Raimundo Faoro. Nevertheless, hundreds of pamphlets were not included in this publication, and Faoro's introduction — although up to his usual standard of excellence — is too brief and does not do justice to the richness of the material.



- 5 One of Brazil's features during the period of independence that set it apart from the rest of the Ibero-American countries was the retention of the idea of empire. In Mexico, imperial rule also arose but was short-lived. Among us since independence began to be contemplated, and even before that, the conviction existed, among Brazilians and Portuguese alike, that in Brazil an empire would be built rather than a kingdom, such as that of Portugal. The extent of the territory undoubtedly accounts for this expectation. For further treatment of this topic, see Lyra (1994).
  - 6 *The two books were Scènes de la Nature sous les Tropiques* (1824) and *Résumé de l'Histoire Littéraire du Brésil* (1826). On this topic, see Roberto Ventura (1991, pp. 29-32).
  - 7 Verissimo's overstatement is proven by the publication, during the Empire, of textbooks on Brazilian history written for schoolchildren. The first such work may well have been *Resumo da História do Brasil*, by H.L. de Niemeyer Bellegarde, which the government adopted for use in schools, and whose second edition is dated 1834. In its first edition, this book consisted, in part, a translation of Ferdinand Denis' *Résumé*. Joaquim Manuel de Macedo also wrote textbooks for primary schools as well as for the Rio's elite secondary schools, the Colégio Pedro II. That aside, however, it is likely that these works had little impact outside the capital and outside the few who attended school.
  - 8 On nationalism and *ufanismo* at the turn of the century, see Lúcia Lippi Oliveira (1990, especially pp. 95-109). The tragic figure of the disillusioned *ufanista* is personified in Lima Barreto's fictional character, Policarpo Quaresma. For a discussion of children's literature during the early years of the Republic and its possible impact on the formation of the national image, see Carvalho (1995).
  - 9 The nationwide survey was conducted by Vox Populi on commission for the weekly newsmagazine *Veja*; its results were published on October 1, 1996. The survey of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area was jointly conducted by the Center for Research and Documentation for Contemporary History of Brazil (Cpdoc), of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), and the Institute for Religious Studies (ISER). *Veja*, through Ricardo Grinbaum, and Vox Populi, through its director Marcos Coimbra, agreed to include questions in their survey that would enable comparisons with the Rio survey. I would like to express my gratitude to both individuals. The VP/*Veja* survey was conducted on October 28-31, 1995. 1,962 people were interviewed in a random nationwide sample. The margin of error for the sample was 3% and the confidence interval 95%. The Cpdoc/ISER survey, entitled *Lei, Justiça e Cidadania*, was designed under the coordination of José Murilo de Carvalho, Leandro Piquet Carneiro, for ISER, Mario Grynyszpan and Dulce Pandolfi, for Cpdoc. The survey was carried out between September 1995 and July 1996. It was based on a random sample of the population of 8 municipalities in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area.
- The sample was selected in two stages. In the first stage, 6,837 households were selected in a random drawing and 16,763 people registered. Among the latter, 1,578 were interviewed. The estimated margin of error is 3.9% and the confidence interval 95%. The survey was financed by Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos (Finep) and the Ford Foundation (for Cpdoc) and by Fundação Banco do Brasil (for ISER). The main results can be found in the publication *Lei, Justiça e Cidadania* (Cpdoc-FGV/ISER, 1997).
- 10 To be proud of one's country or not depends, of course, on the conjuncture. A nationwide survey conducted by DataFolha in September 1991, when allegations of kickbacks and bribery were racking the administration of President Collor, revealed that 40% of the population either had no pride in Brazil or were incapable of mentioning any reason whatsoever to feel pride in their country. Tellingly, among those who did state a reason, most (8%) mentioned nature. Among those with some college education, this percentage rose to 20%. See *Folha de São Paulo*, 9.22.1991.
  - 11 Data for the United States and England from 1959, although superannuated, are useful for showing the contrast with Brazil. In both countries, physical attributes are seldom mentioned as reasons for pride (5% and 10%, respectively) in contrast to political institutions (86% and 46%, respectively). The natural setting is cited more frequently in Germany (17%); but even there, by 1978 it had lost ground to political institutions (14% and 31%, respectively). See Almond and Verba (1980, p. 230).
  - 12 *A Semana*, 8.20.1893. I am grateful to Paulo Luiz M.C. Esteves for having drawn my attention to Machado's text.
  - 13 For an analysis of the innovative content of government propaganda under the *Estado Novo* see Ângela de Castro Gomes (1996).
  - 14 The subtitle of Prado's book is suggestive indeed: *Ensaio sobre a Tristeza Brasileira* (Essay on Brazilian Sadness). Prado cites Capistrano de Abreu, who had proposed the adoption of the *jaburu* — an outsized and "melancholy" bird — as a national symbol.
  - 15 A nationwide survey conducted in January 1998 by Propeg, an advertising agency, yields similar results. The principal characteristics of Brazilians, according to the 1,700 respondents, were: hardworking, cheerful, complacent, and optimistic. *Cariocas*, on the other hand, are perceived by other Brazilians as cunning, cheerful, lazy and likable. *Jornal do Brasil*, 3.29.1998, p. 8.
  - 16 Mistrust and even contempt for politicians appear in virtually all surveys addressing the subject. Ibope surveys carried out between 1988 and 1990, for example, systematically rank politicians last among several social categories and institutions. In six surveys conducted during this period, the portion of respondents who say they trust politicians gravitates round 15%, in contrast, say, to the 80% who say they trust the Catholic Church. See Lamounier and Marques (1992, p. 146).

17 The Propeg survey mentioned above yields similar results. Leading the reasons for shame are social problems, followed by corruption among politicians and security concerns. See *Jornal do Brasil*, 3.29.1998. In this survey, politicians figure as the social category that least contributes to the country.

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