

SCHOLARSHIP AND STATESMANSHIP

Fernando Henrique Cardoso

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I first came to know Professor Seymour Martin Lipset in the mid-1960s, when I contributed a chapter to a book that he and the Paraguayan sociologist Aldo Solari were preparing on the topic of elites in Latin America.¹ I was by then a full-time researcher at the University of São Paulo, where I was studying the roles and ideologies of industrial elites in Brazil (as well as Argentina, Chile, and Mexico).

As this was the subject on which I had just written an academic thesis, it was very rewarding for me to be engaged in the broader debate that Professor Lipset was leading on the ethical or “values” orientation of Latin American elites. His views could not have been more straightforward. Building on concepts developed by Talcott Parsons, Lipset argued that economic factors alone could not fully explain the relative backwardness of Latin America. Attention would have to be paid as well to the attachment of local elites to values that inhibited the systematic accumulation of capital.

Latin Americans, it was often said, were anything but enthusiastic supporters of the principles of achievement, universalism, and egalitarianism. These were the basic principles that Talcott Parsons had stressed in some of his very important contributions to sociological theory. They were, moreover, principles from which Latin America had always seemed a little distant, which explains why the prospect of cultural change in the region was of such interest. The most obvious route to change lay through improving and diversifying the content of the educational sys-

THE SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET LECTURE ON DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

On 6 December 2004, Fernando Henrique Cardoso delivered the first annual Seymour Martin Lipset Lecture on Democracy in the World at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. The inaugural lecture, which was also supported by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and the American Federation of Teachers, was followed by a reception and dinner hosted by Canadian Ambassador Michael F. Kergin. This new lecture series is cosponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto, and in future years it will be delivered in both the United States and Canada.

The series honors Seymour Martin Lipset, one of the most influential social scientists and scholars of democracy of the past half-century. A frequent contributor to the *Journal of Democracy* and a founding member of its Editorial Board, Lipset has taught at Columbia, the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard, Stanford, and George Mason University. He is the author of numerous important books, including *Political Man*, *The First New Nation*, *The Politics of Unreason*, and *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. He is the only person ever to have served as president of both the American Political Science Association (1979–80) and the American Sociological Association (1992–93).

Lipset's work has covered a wide range of topics: the social conditions of democracy, including economic development and political culture; the origins of socialism, fascism, revolution, protest, prejudice, and extremism; class conflict, structure, and mobility; social cleavages, party systems, and voter alignments; and public opinion and public confidence in institutions. Lipset has been a pioneer in the study of comparative politics, and no comparison has featured as prominently in his work as that between the two great democracies of North America. Thanks to his insightful analysis of Canada in comparison with the United States, most fully elaborated in *Continental Divide*, he has been dubbed the "Tocqueville of Canada." It is hoped that the joint U.S.-Canadian sponsorship of the Lipset Lecture will serve as a catalyst for further cooperation between Canada and the United States in the promotion of democratic ideas and institutions around the world.

At the lecture, Lipset was presented with the NED's Democracy Service Medal. As he was unable to attend the ceremony because of failing health, the award was accepted on his behalf by his wife Sydnee.

tem, or through transforming the social structure in order to marginalize traditional powerholders, addicted as they were to ascription, particularism, and elitism—the opposites of the Parsonian principles.

Despite the influential idea, most famously associated with Max Weber, that the rise of Protestantism (or more specifically Calvinism) was crucial to the rise of systematic capital accumulation in certain European societies, Lipset held that inculcating a Protestant ethic in Latin Americans would be unnecessary. He pointed to nineteenth-century Meiji Japan as a case where a shift from tradition to modernity had occurred within the context of a single, continuous cultural environment, and he felt that the same sort of process could unfold in Latin America. The Japanese had become efficient and competitive in a modern economic sense without having to abandon the samurai ethic of militancy.

In short, Lipset argued that achievement-oriented values could prosper in Latin America without having to displace basic cultural and religious tenets. This was very important at the time, because it suggested that modernization did not have to mean the complete abandonment of one cultural pattern and the complete embrace of another and radically different one, but instead could proceed in a more measured fashion, producing a blend of tradition and modernity that would lay a sounder foundation for the pursuit of freedom and prosperity across the whole region.

In the essay which I wrote for that 1967 book, I tried to stress that the theories coined to explain the historical evolution of elites in older industrialized countries were insufficient to account for the formation and ideology of industrial communities in “peripheral” countries outside the already-developed world. Favorable conditions for development in Latin America would not be secured simply by updating the thinking of entrepreneurs through the assimilation of values friendlier to the spirit of capitalism. If we were to grasp the situation and prospects of local industrial elites, I was convinced that it would be essential to consider the specific structural and historical patterns that entrepreneurial activity had taken in the region. At least a couple of variables that had been absent in the industrialization of developed countries would need to be taken into account, all of which limited the chances that entrepreneurs could act as “demiurgic” forces for change.

First, basic conditions of production and marketing, including technology and trading methods, were “givens” already laid down by developed economies. Also relevant was the influence of other groups, such as labor unions, that applied pressure on or by means of the state in order to restrict industry’s freedom of action. Finally, the expansion of markets and the crafting of industrial-development policies were not priorities for those in power. Governments were more likely to focus instead on ending domination by large landowners and securing international rules to advance the industrialization process. Such circumstances

made it difficult if not impossible for Latin American industrialists to play a role comparable in dynamism to the roles that North American or European industrialists had played in developing capitalism in their own regions. The prevailing values in the industrial community were certainly evolving away from the mindset of the traditional patron and toward that of the modern professional entrepreneur, but this was occurring in rather irregular and contradictory ways, precisely because of the practical factors and constraints that I have just mentioned. Modern and traditional mentalities existed side-by-side—sometimes in a sort of functional relationship, as if they were somehow meant to reinforce one another.

This is not the occasion to evaluate in detail whether the views that Professor Lipset and I held in the mid-1960s still hold any hermeneutical value. The point is that at the time, our respective approaches to the subject were very similar. Lipset had already gained considerable experience studying Canada, and was always comparing Canada to the United States. He also had enormous experience in analyzing Europe, and he was *starting* to understand Latin America, producing in the process his fresh and remarkable view that industrial modernity and key parts of Latin America's traditional cultural heritage could combine in new ways.

It goes without saying that entrepreneurial practices and values in Latin America have changed dramatically over the decades since Professor Lipset and I worked together on that book. The reasons for the changes are many, and include the new wave of globalization that has swept the world in recent years. The revolution in information technology and the internationalization of production processes have helped to bring about an extraordinary convergence of methods and perceptions among business communities everywhere. Despite the continued relevance of national and regional characteristics, business circles today are definitely sharing a common code of procedures and concepts, much to the benefit of general levels of productivity. Latin America is no exception to that trend.

Of course, the region is not a homogeneous whole. Indicators vary from one country to another, being more positive in nations that can count upon a significant scientific and technological base. Brazil fares well in this regard, as shown, for instance, by the number of doctorates earned in the country every year, a figure that totals around six thousand. This is basically the same number that Italy or Canada produces. Most of these new doctorates, moreover, come in areas that are directly relevant to economic development. One such area is that of the agricultural sciences. The country's most important research center in this field—the Brazilian Enterprise on Agricultural Research—has more than a thousand people with doctorates on its payroll. Brazilian agribusiness, not surprisingly, breaks productivity records year after year, with the

country ranking first or second among commodity producers in many areas (soy, coffee, sugar, maize, and meat, among others).

Knowledge and Values

Whether or not the scenario that Professor Lipset and I sketched in the 1960s is outdated, I am certain that the subject area on which we chose to focus continues to be as important as ever. Studies of ethical and values orientations remain highly relevant not only to the study of economic processes, but also—and perhaps even more importantly—to the study of political agency. Governments no longer seem to derive their legitimacy from upholding the “right” cause or “fighting the good fight,” but from doing a good job of delivering what their constituents want and expect. Today’s motto is not “what to do,” but “how to do it” in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible. Yet this in no way implies that values or ethical considerations do not matter to public agency. Politics has not been and cannot be reduced to a technical matter of optimizing defined interests. Values continue to be of the utmost importance to politics, but they come to bear in a different way.

Political agents are now supposed to engage in deliberative exercises with a multitude of actors in order to define the common good. The general will, rather than being a predetermined variable, as Rousseau and his followers would have it, is now seen as the outcome of extensive and open-ended deliberation. This is why it is so important that the “modern prince” should have a republican turn of mind and a clear view of the ultimate values that political decisions should promote. Otherwise, the prince risks being held hostage by corporatist interests. As never before, virtue is expected to prevail over vice in the conduct of public affairs—in the eyes of diverse peoples all over the world, corruption is becoming less and less tolerable, and good governance more and more a *sine qua non* of national life lived to the full.

Here again, the prince is supposed to be not only morally but also technically more enlightened today than in the past. The work of fitting many conflicting demands into policies that serve the common interest can succeed only if the necessary expertise to evaluate and fine-tune the various inputs is available. To be meaningful, republicanism must also be effectual. There is no cultivating public virtues in the abstract. They presuppose technical competence as applied to actual cases. The good news is that the same trends that hem in the modern prince also open up new areas of initiative and action. Suffice it to mention the extraordinary resources that the new wave of technology has put at the disposal of the public power to better meet social demands. As far as public policies are concerned, the Internet not only serves the demand side by conveying requests, but also assists the supply side, helping governments to deliver everything from distance learning to mail. E-government has brought

the state as a provider of public goods closer to the citizenry at large, enhancing social control of public policies and thereby boosting transparency and democratic accountability.

Here again, people in virtually every quarter expect the upshot to be a more selective and cost-effective use of public funds. It is as if all roads lead to Rome. From whatever perspective we take on the conditions that currently govern political life—the number and variety of social demands, the deliberative nature of decision making, or the impact of new technologies on society and the state—we find ourselves concluding that public agency fares better with rather than without technical knowledge. What balance, then, should be struck between values and facts for a ruler to be successful? I need not stress that there seems to be no clear and definite answer. But allow me to venture some additional remarks.

The first is that the relationship between ethics and objective knowledge is not static. It changes over time for obvious reasons. Knowledge in the social sciences is anything but time-proof. What appears to be the state of the art today might not look that way tomorrow as new data and assumptions filter into the picture. Let us recall, for example, how views of the market and its effects upon the social fabric have shifted over the last several centuries. Montesquieu spoke of *le doux commerce* (“gentle commerce”). The luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment followed him in thinking of trade as a way to civilize people, for regular commercial exchange presupposes habits of conversation, negotiation, and compromise. So, for the leading thinkers of the Enlightenment, commerce comes to light as a powerful tool for building a better world characterized by more peace, prosperity, and civilized refinement. Markets, if allowed to operate free of undue political or other constraints, should help to temper passions and constrain the arbitrary use of authority.

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth and the human and social costs of the Industrial Revolution became more evident, however, a change in mentality began to take place. The market then came to be portrayed as a locus of violence and oppression. The emergence of imperialism made things worse, as not only individuals but entire nations could be said to be under the severe yoke of capital. The state was then praised as the necessary countervailing force to market excesses. The welfare state follows from this critique, resting on the premise that there should be a safety net in place to catch those whose socioeconomic fall is unchecked by the market’s invisible hand. The financial collapse of state-run welfare systems in the 1980s, however, led to the rediscovery of the market’s virtues. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund took the lead in spreading the so-called Washington Consensus, which steered numerous developing countries toward smaller, less ambitious states and freer markets. Thus the cycle has gone through a full turn, from the original idea that commerce and markets would make a better world, through the idea of the market as a problem and the

state as the solution for improving the human condition, and now again back to praise of the market as a crucial force countervailing the state and its tendency toward arbitrariness. There is nothing wrong with this shift of perceptions. Changing realities require a constant updating of theories and concepts, if these are to bear any hermeneutical or practical value. What would be wrong would be to ignore this lesson and to approach contingent notions as truths for all time. Ideas are to be understood in light of the circumstances that they are meant to explain and address. Only then can we intelligently put ideas to work for our chosen causes.

Suppose, for example, that one settles on a social-democratic program as the best option for one's country? Would it be sufficient to assemble, based on theory and the experiences of other nations, a set of rules establishing an appropriate balance between the market and the state? Or should other variables that are specific to local circumstances—national history, particular distributions of power, and social expectations—also figure in the account? How far ought one to go in sacrificing universal principles to national particularities, and vice-versa? Is it unnecessary to be concerned with local specificities, provided that public deliberations are broad and open enough to encompass views from all across society and the nation? For those who hold the latter view, the outcome of a truly representative deliberative process will inevitably bear the national imprint. An appropriate method, in other words, will produce an appropriate result.

Statesmanship and Political Judgment

Yet it goes without saying that even a truly representative process is insufficient to ensure that the expectations of the majority will be met. For a leader to safeguard national interests and achieve national goals, there is an additional requirement. Updated knowledge, republican values, and a good deliberative process, important though they are, may not be enough to produce a successful statesman. The missing quality is what Isaiah Berlin identified as the capacity for good “political judgment.” This entails not only the discernment to avoid the opposite risks of impractical idealism and uninspiring realism, but also the practical wisdom to grasp the character of a particular situation or moment in history and to seize the opportunities or confront the challenges that it presents. It is the capacity to reach into the chaotic flow of experience and sift out what matters, to see what fits with what, what springs from what, and what leads to what. It is a sense for what is qualitative rather than quantitative, a proven capacity for synthesis rather than analysis. Berlin goes so far as to equate that gift with the talent displayed by great novelists such as Proust or Tolstoy, who convey a sense of direct acquaintance with the texture of life.

Those who lack this gift, no matter how clever, learned, imaginative,

and noble they may be, lack the sense of what will make a difference in history and what will not. One may add that while political judgment always matters, it matters even more so at times of transition. It is true that in democracies, all moments are in some way transitional, for democracies are constantly reinventing themselves. Yet no moment is perhaps so critical as that of democratic consolidation, when progressive trends struggle daily with regressive ones, and the outcome is by no means certain. A true statesman will know how to foster the former and inhibit the latter, or at least how to put any such backwardness as cannot be uprooted at the service of progress, for the benefit of institution-building. For it is only institutions, and not individuals, that can reliably sustain democracy over the long haul.

Perhaps the best use that statesmen can make of political acumen in such moments is precisely that of making their nations less reliant on themselves and more dependent on institutions. How George Washington did this for the sake of the young United States of America is the great theme of Lipset's 1998 *Journal of Democracy* essay on the first U.S. president as a democratic founder.²

These are the thoughts that I wanted to share with you today as a tribute to Seymour Martin Lipset, a great patriot, scholar, and friend of democracy who has never been moved solely by what Weber called the "ethics of conviction." Ever mindful of the "ethics of responsibility," Lipset has never let the political implications of his work escape from his sight.

To paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein, let me say that Seymour Martin Lipset's words have also been deeds, and they have benefited such important causes as democracy in Latin America and peace in the Middle East. Lipset has always been alive to history and to the ethical dimension of human life, and on top of that, always concerned with some sense of the qualitative, of how to judge, and to judge well. I felt that quoting Isaiah Berlin in this context was fitting because Berlin and Lipset are such kindred spirits. Lipset understands, as Berlin understood, that even if you intend to bring together the scientist's passionate concern for understanding with the citizen's passionate concern for social affairs and political life, you also need to have a sense that does not necessarily come from formal knowledge, but flows instead from another kind of spirit—a quality of mind, but also of heart. In order to honor Seymour Martin Lipset, I would like to recall this very simple idea. The worldwide honor and recognition that he now enjoys are his just deserts. We are all in his debt.

NOTES

1. Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo Solari, eds., *Elites in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

2. Seymour Martin Lipset, "George Washington and the Founding of Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (October 1998): 24–38.