**ETHICS AND POLITICAL PRACTICE: RETHINKING THE USES OF THE CONCEPT OF
HEGEMONY AND EVENT IN THE 2002 BRAZILIAN GENERAL ELECTION**

**LA ÉTICA Y LA PRÁCTICA POLÍTICA: REPENSANDO LOS USOS DEL CONCEPTO
DE HEGEMONIA Y EVENTO EN LAS ELECCIONES BRASILEÑAS DE 2002**

**A ÉTICA E A PRÁTICA POLÍTICA: REPENSANDO OS USOS DO CONCEITO DE
HEGEMONIA E ACONTECIMENTO NAS ELEIÇÕES DE 2002**

**L'ÉTHIQUE ET LA PRATIQUE POLITIQUE : LES USAGES DU CONCEPT
D'HÉGÉMONIE ET D'ÉVÉNEMENT LORS DES ÉLECTIONS BRÉSILIENNES DE 2002**

伦理题和政治实践在2002年巴西总统大选的框架内对霸权概念使用的再思考

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ABSTRACT

In this work I investigate the idea of ethics in terms of the theory and practice of the discourse of the so-called left, to have assumed significance within the framework of Latin American social movements, with a particular emphasis on Brazil. A theoretical basis is provided by our investigation into how the categories of hegemony, proposed by Ernesto Laclau, and event, developed by Alain Badiou, extrapolate their theoretical limits when considered in terms of political practice. Based on the real-life example of the election to the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, an icon and leading figure in the Workers' Party (PT), I intend to analyze how the exercise of power blends with a certain concept of ethics to construct political discourse, and which strategies are employed in these hegemonic fields in the search for legitimacy. The material for the analysis in question is mainly provided by the documentary film by João Moreira Salles (*Intermissions*), along with some other supplementary sources.

Key words: Political Theory, Cinema, Elections, Lula, Populism.

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo pretendo problematizar la idea de la ética en relación con la teoría y práctica de los discursos de la llamada izquierda que asumen importancia dentro de los movimientos sociales latinoamericanos, con énfasis en el caso brasileño. Como fondo teórico investigamos cómo las categorías de *hegemonía*, propuesta por Ernesto Laclau y de *evento*, desarrollada por Alain Badiou extrapolan sus límites teóricos cuando son pensadas desde la práctica política. Partiendo de un caso real, la elección a la presidencia de Luis Inácio Lula da Silva como icono y figura destacada del partido de los trabajadores (PT), pretendo analizar de qué manera el ejercicio del poder se mezcla con una determinada concepción de ética para construir un discurso político y qué estrategias se utilizan en estos campos hegemónicos para encontrar legitimidad. El material para el análisis en cuestión constituye principalmente la película documental de João Moreira Salles (*Entreatos*), y algunos materiales suplementarios.

Palabras clave: Teoría Política, Cinema, Elecciones, Lula, Populismo.

RESUMO

Neste trabalho pretendo problematizar a ideia de ética em relação com a teoria e a prática dos discursos da chamada esquerda que assumem importância nos movimentos sociais latino-americanos, com ênfase no caso brasileiro. Como fundo teórico, investigamos como as categorias de *hegemonia*, proposta por Ernesto Laclau e de *evento*, desenvolvida por Alain Badiou extrapolam seus limites teóricos quando são pensadas a partir da prática política. A partir de um caso real, a eleição para a presidência de Luis Inácio Lula da Silva como ícone e figura destacada do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), pretendo analisar de que maneira o exercício do poder se mistura com uma determinada concepção de ética para construir um discurso político e quais estratégias se utilizam nestes campos hegemônicos para encontrar legitimidade. O material para a análise em questão constitui principalmente o documentário de João Moreira Salles (*Entreatos*), e alguns materiais suplementares.

Palavras-chave: Teoria Política, Cinema, Eleições, Lula, Populismo.

RÉSUMÉ

Il s'agit dans cet article de problématiser l'idée d'éthique en relation avec la théorie et la pratique des discours de la gauche au sein des mouvements sociaux latino-américains, et ici plus particulièrement brésiliens. En toile de fond théorique, nous analyserons comment les notions d'hégémonie (proposée par Ernesto Laclau) et d'événement (développée par Alain Badiou) extrapolent leurs limites théoriques lorsqu'elles sont pensées sur la base de la pratique politique. À partir d'un cas concret, l'élection à la présidence de Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, icône et figure incontournable du Parti des travailleurs (PT), nous analyserons de quelle manière l'exercice du pouvoir incorpore une conception donnée de l'éthique pour construire un discours politique et quelles sont les stratégies utilisées dans ces champs hégémoniques pour conquérir sa légitimité. Le matériel analysé est principalement constitué du film documentaire *Entreatos* de João Moreira Salles et de quelques autres documents.

Mots-clés: Théorie politique, Cinéma, Élections, Lula, Populisme.

摘要

本论文探讨政治实践中伦理议题在拉美社会运动中所起的作用——

以巴西为例。在政治学理论的基础上探讨Ernesto Laclau的主导意识 (*hegemonia*), 和Alain Badiou的具体事件(*evento*), 及其在政治实践上的局限性。本论文以巴西工人党的领袖 工人党 (PT) 的标志性人物鲁拉Luis Inácio Lula da Silva 在2002年总统大选中的选举话语和具体行为进行研究, 试图分析政治实践中, 伦理议题和权力议题的结合而产生的政治话语。为了争夺合法性, PT融合了主导意识, 策划了新的选举策略。主要资料来源于巴西的纪录片制作人João Moreira Salles 的作品“来龙去脉” (*Entreatos*) 和其他的补充材料。

关键词: 政治学理论 电影 大选 鲁拉 民众主义。

In this work I intend to problematize the idea of ethics in terms of the theory and practice of the discourse of the so-called left, to have assumed significance within the framework of Latin American social movements, with a particular emphasis on Brazil. A theoretical basis is provided by our investigation into how the categories of *hegemony*, proposed by Ernesto Laclau, and *event*, developed by Alain Badiou, extrapolate their theoretical limits when considered in terms of political practice. Based on the real-life example of the election to the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, an icon and leading figure in the Workers' Party (PT), I intend to analyze how the exercise of power blends with a certain concept of ethics to construct political discourse, and which strategies are

employed in these hegemonic fields in the search for legitimacy. The material for the analysis in question is mainly provided by the documentary film by João Moreira Salles (*Intermissions*), along with some other supplementary sources².

According to Ernesto Laclau, hegemony is defined by the “*process by which a particularity comes to represent a universality by that which is ultimately immeasurable*”.³

Laclau effectively intends to update some key Marxist concepts, placing them in a dialogue with contemporary political practice. His original goal is to fulfill the need to construct a left-wing politics which affirms national and working-class identities and overcomes the strictly classist approach to have marked the discourse of the more orthodox Marxist camp as of the 1960s. Based on some of the principles of traditional Marxist discourse, his objective is to develop and relativize the notions of historical totality and economic determinism as dated references – taking into account the limits of the category of class in the analyses of power relations. For Laclau, the idea that a set of social facts has a unified, organic and intelligible structure should be questioned, and the idea of an ‘ultimate determination’ of economics is meaningless in contemporary society, marked by multiplicity and the fragmentation of identities, interests and conflicts. Concepts and principles which are able to explain the real without reducing or generalizing should be theorized and developed in a pragmatic fashion. These principles and basic categories are not however incompatible with Marxist ideology, as long as they form a political agenda oriented toward socioeconomic changes which focus on the needs of historically disadvantaged groups.

This panorama does not however feature a single objective within the historical process (the class struggle), and the ideological struggle which Laclau considers is rather marked by a plurality of interests, strategies and efforts to assume a preeminent position, that is to say, a battle between opposing *hegemonic fields*. It is *articulation* – according to Laclau – which permits the differentiation and identification of these distinct elements composing the hegemonic fields through this fragmented universality. It is articulation which facilitates strategic negotiation and victory in the disputes at stake. Political articulation establishes the principles for the relations between hegemonic fields from a

² His campaign (such as the “Letter to the Brazilian people” signed by the then-candidate in June 2002), interviews with Lula after his election and during his exercise of the roles of president in and outside Brazil.

³ Laclau, Ernesto (2008). “An Ethics of Militant Engagement”. In *Debates y combates: por un nuevo horizonte de la política [Debates and Combats: Toward a New Political Horizon]*, Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 79-80.

practical point of view, and that which influences these fields in order to modify them. The result is what Laclau refers to as *discourse*, to be converted into what he defines as “structured totality”, or the product of the discourse obtained by the articulation between distinct hegemonic forces (or fields).

It must be stressed that the use of the category of “structured totality” is no accident. For Laclau, affirming the existence of a universal and structured nucleus serves as a material basis, background and ideological orientation. Without this totalizing and structured unity of the discourse, its entire theoretical foundations would be fragmented. As a means of distinguishing himself from the historicist and determinist materialism of orthodox Marxism, Laclau rejects the idea of historical totality and recognizes the fragmentation of identities within contemporary politics. However, in defining strategies for discourse to triumph over hegemony and affirming the existence of a re-totalization in a particular order – as a horizon – Laclau revisits the subject of the constitution of historical blocks and the possibility of reconstructing collective identities.

Laclau’s efforts to update categories and do away with the exclusivity of traditional Marxism’s determinations is pragmatic in itself, as he attempts to increase the number of factors and elements which interfere with the hegemonic struggle (which to some extent overrides the idea of the class struggle as a factor unique to the socialist revolution). In his appropriation of socialism as a regime, Laclau widens the concept of the term. Along with the elimination of production media’s private property, the struggle for a shift from the regime to a society based in the collective also implies other forms of “liberation” which form part of different hegemonic fields. What he refers to as the “totality of emancipatory ideas” is not necessarily linked and is not restricted to the class struggle. In this case, it refers to the multiplicity of the causes to which the democratic and socialist militancy is dedicated and forms the hegemonic forces under dispute. Laclau does consider the fight for rights among minorities as relevant and important within the historical process and the many struggles to which contemporary progressive (left-wing) politics are dedicated, reaffirming that they are a part of the contemporary socialist struggle.

In defining *democracy* as an ambiguous and unstable term due to a multiplicity of hegemonic discourses which are constructed *articulately*, Laclau does not confine his theory to an utopic historicist transcendence with ideals of perfection. For him, the idea of Marxism as an “ultimate end” and a definitive resolution to historical and social problems is unrealistic. In assuming that ambiguity and instability form, part of the democratic process, Laclau denies the frequent idealization in the socialist camp which converts Marxism into a

dogmatic value. In Laclau's eyes, that which is moral and ethical is sustained by multiplicity and it does not determine that the class struggle is necessarily bound to other demands, which does in fact provide us with a space to consider the countless political possibilities and articulations in the democratic camp as a whole. In assuming the multiplicity of identities forming an individual, what Laclau does is to expose the great difficulty of unifying a progressive discourse, valuing the importance of dialogue and negotiation under the principle of *articulation* which it itself defines.

In the real-life example of the Workers' Party (PT) election in Brazil, much of what Laclau developed as a theory may be identified in the practical sphere. As we may observe, the idea of hegemonic blocks under dispute connected by unstable strategic articulations configured what was the Workers' Party's greatest political pact since 2002. The idea of the dialogue suggests a negotiation in which the weight of political decisions was and is determined by the power of each of the parties involved in the dispute. If what political articulation offers is a breakthrough from an ideological impasse (the two sides concede to a proposal reflecting shared interests), an incongruence inherent to the practice itself still remains. Laclau firmly believes in change by parties in the negotiation process itself, and proposes the creation of a shared practice, in which each side responds to its interests. In this case, the idea that there might be a balance of interests in the negotiation is extremely problematic, as it does not consider the asymmetry in the hegemonic dispute, or, in other words, the fact that the disputing sides are not equal. As the goal of the hegemonic struggle is victory, the movement of the hegemonic struggle is necessarily unbalanced. The idea of negotiation thus masks the conflict at the heart of Marxism's philosophical core. According to this theory, the entire political process is based on (class) conflict, on the struggle of interests in which breaking with the stronger side, capital, requires systematic and definitive violence: the seizure of proletarian power. Although Laclau does not do away with the notion of conflict – reaffirming it in speaking of hegemonic fields in constant dispute – his concept of negotiation as a political end leaves a significant gap: how to join forces and win the dispute without being absorbed by the preeminent hegemonic forces. What are the limits (ethical, for example) of a party in a negotiation and concession in which the struggle is necessarily asymmetric? What is the goal of the struggle if articulation requires a consensus from all parties?

For the PT, victory represented a negotiation between various sectors of society, with the aim of breaking free from working-class bases and gathering support by adding a section of the productive sector (previously in visible economic decadence), while

maintaining a discourse directed towards the working classes. If we recall the so-called “Letter to the Brazilian People”, signed by Lula in 2002, the candidate mentions his fundamental goal in the changes proposed by the party: to grow, to include, and to pacify, to inspire change which might result in economic development and social justice. To inspire change which might avoid an economic, social and moral collapse. The same may be perceived in the documentary film: in *Intermissions*, Lula also leaves no doubt as to the party’s specific goals: relations between the state and society must be changed *while* governing.

The main argument driving the PT’s governmental platform consisted of a social and economic restructuring capable of reorganizing the country’s productive forces and an increase in the Brazilian internal consumption market (which had been on the PT’s agenda since 2002). Achieving this would mean combining economic development and income redistribution as a central pillar of the administration. If the PT’s proposals were interpreted by an enthusiastic left as strategies for obtaining the radical changes necessary for society and the economy – consistent with the history of the social movement – for the conservative right, the PT’s coming into power represented a threat to their class position according to the principles of neoliberal rhetoric. Once underway, the result of the government’s practical actions did not in fact correspond to either of these two expectations. The growth of the economy combined with the systematic expansion of the middle class (incorporating working-class sectors within the category) did not respond to either the radical changes demanded by the left or the drastic prognoses regarding Brazil’s political and economic instability. This double “disappointment” which symbolized the party’s positioning facilitates a consideration of the idea of articulation proposed by Laclau from a practical point of view. Combining negotiation and reforms within the axis of a consensus means defining priorities and creating a political game capable of legitimizing and converting the interests of one party into the interests of another.

On the other hand, Laclau effectively offers an escape in affirming the multiplicity of profiles which configure the political subject, its interests and its affiliation with a political project. This multiplicity is found in a set of elements which profile the definition of a party, not just in its economic-ideological orientation. To be committed to the labour movement does not necessarily mean sharing all of the ideas of democratic socialism. Nor does it mean rejecting the struggle for more just and dignified social rights and conditions. And the possibility of the existence of internal ambiguities and contradictions is precisely what, in

Laclau's eyes, defines the democratic character of a group, political subject or party (as in the example of Lula and the Workers' Party).

Although still referring to political practice, Alain Badiou considers the category of ethics in contemporary theoretical and political discourses from a different theoretical standpoint. Beginning with a revision of the notions of ethics by theorists such as Kant and Lévinas, Badiou reconsiders the different levels of transcendence in morals which are hidden within ideas of tolerance, otherness and humanism. He radically contests the so-called "ethics of difference", which synthesizes the argument for the use of tolerance as a principle. In criticizing Lévinas, for example, Badiou affirms that the principle of the devotion to the Other is necessarily assured by a mimetic conception of the duplication of the one, which is significantly problematic. The distance which separates one from the other in terms of otherness is what allows one to recognize and enjoy oneself in the other. According to Badiou, for this to make sense the ethics (which he criticizes) require that the Other must be sustained by a principle of otherness which Lévinas refers to as "altogether other" - a principle which transcends the finitude of the experience. The Other constitutes a fixed and determined image which always corresponds to its similarity and difference in relation to itself. Finally, the domination of ethics by an idea of otherness results in a religious axiom. According to the French theorist, philosophy ends up being cancelled by theology. All of the effort to convert ethics into a principle for thought and action is in itself essentially religious. This Other, therefore, comes to be lauded as an entity able to share codes of particular values which are accepted socially and politically as universal: women's rights, environmentalism as a form of praxis, etc. These are naturalized rights, which become common references and define when the Other is or is not "friendly" or when they are converted into a potential "enemy". Finally, as a basis for sustaining the idea of human rights as a categorical principle, respect is invoked for differences which ultimately refer to a common point: obedience to a universal identity – which is the very object that Badiou opposes.

From thereon, Badiou begins to construct the categories which he uses to propose ethics based on the complete cancellation of his moral and theological principles. In opposition to the metaphysical bases, Badiou advocates experience as fundamental to ethical consistency. Categorically denying the existence of God, in order to reject any idea of origin and uniqueness, he expands the concept of ethics mediated by multiple differences, both indefinite and infinite. According to this principle, there are as many

differences between me and myself as between a Swedish farmer and someone who lives in a poor neighborhood in a Chinese city, for example.

The concept of interest is crucial, and should be understood as perseverance (of and in the Being), and not as one's personal or material interest specifically in relation to an object or knowledge. For Badiou, ethics should be manifested as a "disinterested interest", as a form of curiosity which actively motivates perseverance. The "disinterested interest" appears here in a radical sense, in so far as the objective is to link forces with *fidelity*, which constitutes the *truth process*, as well as defines it. These categories are fundamental and are directly linked to the idea of *event*, which provides the theoretical base of the ethics it proposes.

The idea of *event* is defined by Badiou as an extraordinary moment capable of extrapolating its particular circumstances to alter a given situation. The event forms part of a markedly potential moment, initiated by means of an effective change, a process which Badiou refers to as *fidelity*. Truth is the result of this fidelity process occurring within an event, its effect within a situation. Badiou considers the event as a component of rupture, and the *truth* to materialize in the situation is imminent and does not materialize there. There are no prevailing truths, everything is given and determined by the action of the event, by this specific movement. The rupture serves as an activation in which another meaning is added to a known meaning, which Badiou refers to as a *truth process*. When we consider a situation from the perspective of the event, it is because there was a rupture, and the fidelity of the event was consolidated within the situation. In sum, the event should transform the situation from its bases.

The existence of the event is therefore related to the situation through a certain void of meaning. According to Badiou's definition, the event's relationship with a situation is supplementary, without it necessarily being fixed to its rules or categorical determinations. What connects the event to its defining characteristic is the very void inherent to a situation prior to the change that might occur. Badiou summarizes: "*the fundamental ontological characteristic of an event is to inscribe, to name, the situated void of that for which it is an event*"⁴. To name is key, as it indicates the consequent feature or result of the event related to the situation.

⁴ Badiou, Alain (2001). *Ethics: an essay on the understanding of evil*. Translated by Peter Hallward, London; New York: Verso, p. 69.

Badiou uses such premises in order to redefine an ethics exempt from any metaphysical reference. From his point of view, conceiving ethics means cancelling any and every moral and theological principle in order to construct ontology of distinct characteristics. The experience appears as the basis of ethical consistency, without the existence of God and without a single (historical) genealogical principle. Event and situation serve as spheres of actuation which define the possibility of the occurrence of truth. Within them, it is possible to observe and qualify the existence and the imminence of the truth processes which characterize ethics. Considering that the human subject has no positive or negative value per se, the emergence of good and evil depends on this very real (and rare) presence of the truth processes in a situation.

The subject sustains the fidelity which bears the truth process. The subject cannot therefore precede this process without forming part of the immanent construction. In other words, the subject does not exist in the situation prior to an event. The truth process rather inspires the creation of the subject. The subject of the political revolution is not the militant individual, but rather the singular production which takes different names (sometimes party, but not always). The truth processes (plural) thus result in the opposite sense to the Kantian sense of morality, as ethics do not exist without the direct reference. As Lacan affirms, for Badiou ethics must refer to politics, love, science and art. There is therefore no single subject of truth, but rather multiple subjects, and they must refer to one of these four categories underlined by the thinker.

In responding to some of the key concepts defined by Badiou in *Ethics*, it becomes increasingly clear that for Laclau, it is the very idea of the void and the relation between event and situation which are problematic. The idea of a predefined meaningless event as a trigger for an effective and definitive change in a situation, without the existence during this process of a correspondence or a “filling” of meaning is what Laclau systematically refutes over the course of his theoretical argument. According to Laclau: “*the truth process in which its subjects participate, consists, in one of its most basic of elements, of the reconstitution of a situation around a new nucleus* (77)”⁵. The consequence – he affirms – is that it is no longer possible to visualize or understand the consequences of the event: “*it will have to reveal its capacities for articulation, going beyond itself*”⁶, which forces a

⁵ The term *habitus* here refers to the concept of habitus developed by Pierre Bourdieu, which classifies the set of cultural practices that constitute the profile of the individual in his social group.

⁶ At a given point in the film, Lula said the role of social statistical institutes and even stated that he wished to receive at home a census representative to be noted that had it a socioeconomic profile of middle class.

separation between the void and the site of the event. As a final result, it becomes necessary to fill the void in a particular way, requiring a theoretical description, which is lacking from the French thinker's approach. All of the forms by which Badiou understands the filling of this void are, according to Laclau, through evil, which results in a fundamental distinction: although necessary and inevitable, the final meaning of the truth process tends to produce something negative for Badiou. For Laclau on the other hand, something may be constructed, by means of an equivalence (and a transcendence) of particular details, as the name of the void which occupies the situation in a definitive fashion, without it necessarily meaning something positive or negative.

How might we consider the Workers' Party victory in Brazil in 2002 using these terms?

In defining the specific focus of his documentary, director and writer of *Intermissions* João Moreira Salles stated his goal to produce a documentary featuring the decisive moments in the 2002 Brazilian general election campaign with an emphasis on the figure of the then-candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Painting a portrait of Lula, however, does not just mean defining his role as a candidate and his discourse, but also problematizing the relationship between the social and individual profile of the man and his backdrop: the rise of the labor movement in Brazil since the 1970s. The film also adds complexity in incorporating scenes between those behind the scenes in the campaign and showing the party's strategy in its attempt to win the election.

In a single narrative, the film is able to combine the biography of an important political figure and his insertion into a contemporary political process. When Moreira Salles begins the documentary by stating his interest in showing Lula behind the scenes, his intentions are in no way innocent. On the one hand, Salles shows us the identity of a political subject which is much more complete than the one mediating his party's discourse and offers us the possibility of considering a potential political change by means of effective negotiation strategies. On the other hand, the film offers the viewer the confirmation of a particular rhetoric: the government platform is equivalent to the candidate's intimate discourse. The story of Lula as subject is in some way linked to his party's governmental plan, conferring legitimacy to his arguments. From an analytical point of view, the director seeks to reconfigure the historic profile of a section of the working

class which nowadays is part of the Brazilian middle class, with all of the inherent political implications and contradictions. In presenting the context of the PT's historic affirmation, the documentary refocuses its main goal: to highlight a seizure of power which is reformist rather than radical and successful due to its very pragmatism.

In personalizing the figure of Lula, what the film wishes to highlight is essentially how his middle-class identity blends with a working-class profile. For example, the recurrence of scenes in which Lula affirms his middle-class identity is systematically explored over the course of the film. The insistence in always wearing a sharp suit, the importance placed on wearing ties which are appropriate for the occasion and the images of his "luxury bourgeois" apartment are no more frequent than all of the scenes in which Lula himself refers to his working-class past, tastes and *habitus*⁷. The candidate's suggestion to put pop music on in the car; the simplicity of the barber's shop he goes to and his past in a factory recalled without a hint of nostalgia⁸ add a depth to the profile of the politician beyond the symbolism of the elite which tends to associate itself with the exercise of power.

In terms of rhetoric, Lula affirms that what sets his party apart is the very process by which it was created. It was after all constituted by a working class fresh from the factories, too unhappy with its proletarian function to take on political roles (Lula even mentions the PT's successes at the polls since it was founded). The intention is to affirm that, unlike traditional left-wing parties formed by petit-bourgeois intellectuals inserted into the factories, the PT is different: it was the workers who gradually came to occupy positions of power on a regional level until they won the presidential election. However, this statement and argument expressed by Lula is directly linked to the party's basic strategy: to gather political support beyond its bases. Although it was built pragmatically, all of these efforts are sustained by the absorption of the PT into the centre of power. The documentary highlights the high degree of negotiation and reinforces Lula's political articulation in the recurring images of his advisors and staff who instruct, advise and provide most of the argumentative apparatus which sustains Lula as a candidate. Finally, Lula is presented as the "best prepared" and the most competent in achieving administrative changes, but the

⁷ The term *habitus* here refers to the concept of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu, in which he classifies the set of cultural practices constituting the profile of the individual in their social group.

⁸ At one moment in the film, Lula comments on the role of social statistics institutes and even claims that he wanted a census taker to come to his home to confirm that he represented the socioeconomic profile of the middle class.

support base providing this preparation is found in the comprehensive network of political articulation which interconnects Lula's working-class personality and participation with a section of the Brazilian intellectual left, which also forms part of the party. In this case, the PT, which emerged from the working class, confirms its legitimacy via the presence of an entire bourgeois intellectual apparatus which confers (pragmatic) efficacy to the discourse and adds power to this hegemonic field.

It may be affirmed that Lula's ascent to the presidency bears the symbolism of Badiou's *event*. If we accept the idea suggested in the film that the PT found an opportunity to gain power at that moment provided by some of its characteristics (its origin and capacity to launch itself as a bridge to a government platform which although realist, might however bring about change), the use of the term *event*, in Badiou's sense, is fitting. The image of Lula as the main symbol of the movement is born from the materialization of this project which is supposedly united with the principle of a truth process. If we recall Lula's categorical statement in the film that, "*I am the only national figure in Brazil nowadays, as I have a whole movement behind me*". We might consider this subject – fruit of a labor movement – as capable of representing and naming the gaps in a situation, according to Badiou's principles.

However, the idea of simultaneity and reform at the heart of Lula's discourse inserts a temporal relationship which denies the possibility of considering this event from Badiou's perspective, as it is the very idea of simultaneity which Badiou does not share. In its conceptual formulation, the relation between event and situation is of rupture and substitution, whereas in Lula's discourse, we are talking about changes which are organically constructed, from within the political process. It is *this* proposal for change which permits negotiation (and articulation) and brings about a consensus. In the end, according to the film, to come into power and govern democratically requires dialogue, a conciliation of interests, negotiation and gathering support to put actions and structural changes into place.

If we place this example in dialogue with Badiou's statements, some important questions remain. In some ways, "disinterested" political discourse whose interests should be channeled into a collective end, a transcendent idea, is incompatible with the idea of articulation and negotiation. If Laclau considers dialogue as a means of consolidating discourse and changing Marxist ideology in the practical and effective sphere, Badiou tends to isolate the idea of the event within a transcendence. For Badiou, even though the experience serves as a basis for ethical consistency and this experience

is defined by a multiplicity of differences, no room is left for conflict. The main contradiction in the ontology suggested by Badiou is that he recognizes the transcendence which forms part of the discourse of differences, and opposes obedience to a single universal identity, but without space for dialogue, without an event able to fill the gaps in a situation, everything refers to a recurring void. We might ask how differences between subjects may be overcome in order to locate a collective discourse which might effectively change a situation. If the event emerges from the gap left by a situation, and is subtracted from it, then there is no way of changing a situation actively, without a constant wait for a certain moment in which the truth process replaces the present reality and converts it into something new, without an affirmed identity. But throughout this process, there is no control or power of decision. According to Badiou himself, the ethics of truth serve as a principle of perseverance and resilience, facilitating the prevention of evil as a possible effect of the truth processes. Resilience is understood here as resistance, as the tenacity needed to avoid evil. But it is in the very ethics of truth where Badiou omits the possibility of creating good, or the substantially positive⁹.

The documentary's presentation of Lula's candidacy and the history of a social movement reveal the natural and incongruent contradictions within political theory according to Laclau and Badiou. From the sphere of political practice, the idea of negotiation negates the historic meaning of the changes considered by one party, and does not consider what would be the resistance or the basic principle of the ideological orientation of a party to have emerged from a social labor movement. What kind of a commitment to the worker is established in Lula's governmental platform which is not related to economic growth and expansion? What kind of dependence does this social compromise have on the interests of capital, which are, in turn, absolutely anti-ethical to the principles of socialism? Assuming that the party represents the reformist ideal, on the other hand, what kind of negotiation is possible within a social structure historically formed by inequality?

⁹ For Badiou, the concept of evil depends on three elements: the void in a situation, the uncertainty of fidelity and the power of the truth to mark and force knowledge. In terms of the void, evil is what brings about the plenitude of a situation, its force and not its evil, incoherence or failure. In this case, evil would be known as *simulacrum* or terror. Betrayal is a failure in continuity on the part of fidelity, the inability of an event to confer upon a situation an effective change, the interruption of a truth process. Finally, evil is a disaster when the identity of truth refers to an idea of total power, when the essence of a truth is affirmed. These three movements characterise evil within the truth process itself and do not form an opposition, as proposed by the principles of theological moral which affirms the truth in confrontation with its polar opposite to evil. See *Ethics (op.cit.)*

The innocence of Badiou's thought does not however take into account the real needs of political practice. In terms of the PT, if the event had meaning here – through originating in a gap left by a situation – it would necessarily correspond to solid content, to a political movement guided to fill this gap symbolized by the absence of the working classes in the exercise of executive power.

Both Badiou and Laclau take the plurality and fragmentation of identities into consideration and the impossibility of unifying them in a collective total – a mark of current left-wing progressive political thought. Whether considering ethics as capable of redirecting the subjects' practical actions (Laclau) or in rethinking the role of the militant and their responsibility to an ontological principle (Badiou), both are based on the complicated network of discourse which brings Marxism up to date.

A final question might be: what are the ethical limits of political practice? The so-called "seizure of power" by one party of proletarian bases highlights the complexity of the question. Whether it is the contradictions and ambiguities or the capacity to generate multiple dialogues, it is the very visibility of the politics and their transparency beyond the real which reaffirms the importance of Marxist theory, both historically and philosophically.

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