

## Chapter 1

### **Continuity and Innovation from a Theoretical Perspective**

In this chapter I introduce the notion of traditional politics and theories that organise a deconstructive analysis of the absence of change and endurance of a traditional order in Brazil. This is certainly not the first such investigation. Hagopian's (1996) Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil recently gave a general account of intellectual work supporting the thesis of a lack of political change in Brazil. It presented evidence that the past, present and future of Brazilian politics can only be understood with reference to clientelism, regionalism and elements of traditional politics inside and outside the state. According to this view, traditional power structures<sup>1</sup> function as 'bridges' that the 'state' and 'society' build. 'Clientelistic mediation' holds the key to the survival of traditional elites in the cracks of an expansive state (Hagopian, 1996:xii).

Continuity of certain mechanisms in Brazilian politics can also be understood in terms of *iterability* and the logic of *hegemony*. Deconstruction and hegemony cross over assuming that structures are contingent, precarious and pragmatic articulations<sup>2</sup> that retain a political character. From these perspectives, the Brazilian State and society are contingent structures articulated through mechanisms of power that show a force of resistance dwelling on their conciliatory character. Looking for mechanisms of power through which Brazilian elites increase the scope of their hegemonic articulations, my claim is that a quasi-monopoly of mass communication in Brazil constitutes a conciliatory mechanism of power that sediments traditional social relations. As a privileged arena of an accommodating discourse, the media produce the grand narrative of legitimisation of the traditional elite.

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional power structures are here conceived as the complex and relatively enduring relationships that define the basic traits of the system and permit its continued reproduction.

<sup>2</sup> Articulation is a practice that establishes relations between elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. Articulations that take place in a context of antagonistic struggles and conflicts are defined as hegemonic articulations (Torfing, 1999: 298)

## Chapter outline

This chapter is divided in four sections. In section one I explain the notion of 'traditional politics' and explore the mechanisms of conciliatory power through which Brazilian politics safeguards patronage. I introduce the notion of traditional politics as a system of political organisation that is authoritarian in the sense that 'political power is narrowly concentrated, access to decision making restricted, channels of political representation hierarchically arranged and political competition strictly regulated' (Hagopian, 1996:16). I also clarify the general problem of continuity of traditional power structure in Brazil, introducing different theoretical accounts of the State. I argue that, excepting the Weberian analyses, interpretations of Brazilian authoritarianism do not account for contradiction and incongruent tendencies pervading the state, since they do not question the grounds that permit them. In the conclusion of this section, I explain why a poststructuralist perspective seems to provide adequate tools for a critique of different interpretations of the state.

In section two, I explain Derrida's categories and their relevance to the analysis of the repetition of traditional domination in terms of his infrastructural logic of iterability.

In section three, I introduce the logic of hegemony from the works of Laclau and Mouffe that constitute the theoretical framework with which I am able to account for political strategies that are constitutive of the Brazilian power structure. Here I develop the proposition that the electronic media are weakening the possibilities of emancipation of civil society in Brazil in that they obstruct the drawing of clear-cut political frontiers and the contingent production of social links.

In section four, I introduce the notion of political communication in poststructuralist terms, explaining how the mass media contribute to the sedimentation and consolidation of a common ground that retains objective differences in Brazilian society, and I also address the question of the building of *logocentrism*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> By logocentrism I mean an illusion of harmony based on the positivity of the social.

## Section 1

### **Traditional Politics and Demobilisation**

#### **Patronage Politics vs. Technocratic Rationality in Brazil**

One of the most puzzling questions for those who analysed the 1964 revolution in Brazil was why the military did not achieve a real hegemony in civil society. It seems that the uneven development of Brazilian civil society organised as a traditional power structure might explain the particularity of this case. The regime of rupture brought about by the military was a result of the incapacity of the élite to solve the proliferation of society's demands, yet, the authoritarian regime did not supplant the conciliatory character of traditional structures that dictate the main pattern of Brazilian politics to this day.

The military state, intending to exclude the Brazilian traditional oligarchies from the political scenario relied on the atomisation and 'passive consensus' of the so-called 'politically inactive' people, the military regime could be considered as a demobilising *regime of rupture* because it lacked any 'active consensus'. This regime promoted a sudden break in the relation state-society, establishing a new authoritarian order in opposition to a more basic and permanent power network constituted by *parentela*, *coronelism* and *clientelism*, characterised by its unbreakable continuity. The military rule also corresponded to the dysfunction of conservation that has been performing a crucial integrative function that binds the Brazilian traditional power structure together.

Despite the fact that both authoritarian and traditional politics exclude protest, there are a number of differences between them. Traditional politics assigns power to regionally based political elites, boosts personal political careers and therefore requires political de-centralisation and weakness of the federal executive. Holding an opposite tendency, the authoritarian politics inaugurated in 1964 discarded regional identities and loyalties and concentrated power in the federal executive de-politicising the policy-making process, moreover, it transferred major policy decisions to a technobureaucracy. Patronage politics in some aspects is the antithesis of

technocratic rationality but none of them questioned the idea of an ultimate foundation on which the structure is built.

Military ambitions for rationalising the state and promoting economic modernisation required the disruption and devaluation of traditional politics since it was incompatible with clientelistic pressures, corruption and other practices held by oligarchic power that put traditional values and personal ambition ahead of national interest. The traditional elite obstructed a shift in political institutions as defined by the authoritarian plan and at the close of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime resources generated by state capitalism continued to sustain personal-state clientelistic networks. As a result, the patrimonial elite was not only strengthened by the authoritarian experience but was also able to negotiate its place in the post transition democracy. Brazilian clientelism proved to be a hegemonic way of organising consent when the military failed in their attempt to rationalise, fortify and modernise the State, rational technobureaucracy was not able to work as the ultimate foundation, or the structuring principle of the Brazilian society.

The accommodation of opposite forces such as past-oriented oligarchic patronage and future-oriented modern politics such as the new union and social movements, the electoral breakthrough of a genuine labour party, urbanisation and industrialisation, have been articulated by certain hegemonic conciliatory discourse that is highly institutionalised in Brazil. These traditional articulations seem to contribute far more than any other discourse to deeply layered structural properties in this society.

### **Repetition and Adaptability of Brazilian Politics**

Despite the force of modern politics, traditional politics continued to be deeply grounded in Brazilian political life during and after the military regime (Hagopian, 1996:14). The endurance of traditional politics and the defeat of the military's attempt to modernise the Brazilian State are understood in Derridean terms as related to underlying infrastructures that can be analysed in terms of iterability. The latter creates the conditions of possibility for the repetition *in* alteration, i.e. repetition of the oligarchic patronage system despite the strengthening of modern and pluralist

politics. According to the logic of iterability, traditional politics absorbs modern politics and survives, guaranteeing no change. In this sense, the survival of traditional elite requires innovation, i.e., the constant sliding of signifieds under the its main signifiers, emptying them.

In addition to an infrastructural approach, Laclau's deconstructionist access to politics explains the absence of change as a lack of *dislocation* or destabilisation of a discourse motivated by the emergence of new events that cannot be integrated within a discourse in question. *Dislocation* of the structure conceived as the condition of possibility of power and contingency, discloses the undecidability of the social requiring new ethical and political decisions. For this reason, *dislocation* is the *possibility* of democracy, on the other hand structural repetition does not require political negotiation, new exclusions or new acts of power. The continued repression of protest and *dislocation* is therefore a condition of possibility of the existence and essence of traditional politics whose properties are recursively implicated on the reproduction of certain practices within Brazilian society.

#### **Theories of the State: the insufficient account of continuity and change.**

A repetition of contradictions and incongruent tendencies such as modernisation of the state and continuity of traditional structures that constitute the specificity of the Brazilian politics, remain unaccountable if one takes into consideration the patrimonialist, structuralist and revisionist perspectives. The latter does not question the idea of an ultimate ground on which the rational or traditional structure is built. On one hand, the established conception of structure does not allow one to think of change only in terms of rupture, accident or unfolding of an internal logic whilst on the other hand, deconstruction involves the recognition of the limitation presupposed by structuralism that impoverishes political analyses. By giving up the conception of an ultimate foundation, deconstruction overcomes the traditional idea of a centred structure expanding the play and negotiation within it. As a result, the political field becomes a field of infinite substitutions and change since the absence of a fixed centre extends the process of signification, which means that different political forces are always freed to search for a new organising centre.

Before explaining how a post-structuralist perspective can contribute to the understanding of the political process and lack of change in Brazil, I introduce the main debate on the authoritarian state in this country that was considered to be a critical moment of political change.

Since the inauguration of the Republic, the Brazilian State has undergone innovations oscillating from corporatist-authoritarian forms in 1930-45 and 1964-84, to more democratic ones from 1945-64. However, there has been a continuous political domination by the traditional elite that is able to fix an ultimate identity for Brazilian society beyond the reach of the play of meaning. By the same token, a rationalising principle proposed by the military regime did not leave enough room for the play of meaning in the Brazilian political structure either. Therefore, the military regime cannot be considered as a signal of political change, but as a continuity of totalising conceptions of the political game.

The problem of whether the Brazilian State did or did not undergo changes during the military regime has been the subject of Marxian, Weberian and revisionist discussion, these discussions do not clarify a specific type of change that always ensure the continuity of traditional mechanisms of domination. The Weberian perspectives (Faoro, 1958; Schwartzman, 1975, 1982; Roett, 1984) give an anthropological, functional account of the institutional elasticity of the Brazilian State arguing that authoritarianism was exacerbated in the periods 1930-1945 and 1964-1984 and is rooted in the patrimonialist character of the State. In this sense the authoritarian state could be considered as a customary political condition. In other words, the patrimonial state had always coerced and excluded the Brazilian civil society from decision making, that is why civil society continued to be excluded and traditional groups persisting in their actions along patrimonial lines, despite the introduction of a specialised administration by the military.

I highlight the fact that the above discussion carries several difficulties so that political scientists find it impossible to reach an agreed definition of 'the state' (Easton, 1953; Hoffman, 1995). There has, however, been consensus about Max Weber's concept of the state (Dahl, 1984; Almond and Powell, 1966; Easton, 1985; Watkins, 1988; Hall & Ikenberry, 1989) but not around a structuralist account of the state. Marxist-structuralist theory supposes that circumstances have a

predetermined end that is unique and unavoidable, implying binary-type oppositions that constitute the dualistic structure of *logocentrism* or supra-historical notions of rationality that deconstruction criticises. Marxist studies of the state have attempted to fix the absolute correlation between state and economy dogmatically asserting mechanical relations of causality. In this way, Marxist considerations provide instrumentalist accounts of the state taken as a simple tool manipulated by the dominant class asserting a mono-causal relation between the state and the societal structure that in the latter case, is determined by the economy. According to this instrumentalist notion of the state, the political loses its specificity since it is emptied out by the reference to the determining effects of objective structures and the efforts of the dominant class to accomplish its aims and interests.

Contrary to structural Marxist accounts, patrimonialist investigations of regime continuity in Brazil do not disregard the specificity of the political as the institutional order of the state that provides the primary terrain for the struggle between hegemonic agents. The patrimonialist current argues that despite the capitalist experience, the Brazilian development has always revealed the persistence of a secular patrimonial structure and its progressive repetition. Capitalism, its machinery and its enterprises were always adopted in Brazil as mere techniques (Faoro, 1957:736) and there are no reasons to believe that the Brazilian State has changed with the 1964 'revolution'. Whereas the structural Marxist analysis conceives the modern Western Capitalist State as the consequence of a specific line of historical development originating from Feudal Europe, the Weberian perspective accounts for another type of historical development that leads to the authoritarian State. On one hand, 'Weberians' assert that the Authoritarian State is a variant of traditional political systems where no difference existed between the political and economic spheres of society - the patrimonialism.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Marxist perspective argues that political instability and centralisation of the state was a result of an imbalance between the dispute for resources and the velocity of economic development.

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<sup>4</sup> Raimundo Faoro first used the notion of 'patrimonialism' applied to an analysis of the Brazilian State in 1957 in 'Os Donos do Poder'. Richard Morse (1964) and Magali Sarfatti (1966) also employed the category applied to

Weberian discussions seem consistent when they consider that instability and authoritarianism are not necessarily the consequence of an excess of demand in a context of scarce industrialisation and limited resources. Authoritarianism is a consequence of reduced social capacity for articulation and representation of interests, in a context of an excessive concentration of power by the State (Schwartzman, 1982:21). From this perspective, increasing attempts to articulate the representation of interests are followed by repression and co-optation that leads to the weakening and dependence of social groups in relation to the political centre.

The model of political representation in the Weberian paradigm describes the State as an impersonation of a determined group, as an institution that represents itself, and also that its governmental bureaucracy is faceless, holds no content and must be conceived as a formalistic exercise of power. The reason for such development of an all-encompassing and multi-functional State is that it is historically prior to the configuration of autonomous interest groups in society, and that patrimonial administration of the State is incompatible with political participation and does not respond to social demands efficiently. The State is not an agency to solve problems but a locus for the search for social and occupational mobility, and political power. The appropriation and the inheritance of the patrimonial State, where public administration is viewed as an end in itself, challenges the institutionalisation of a Liberal Democratic State given the incentive to clientelistic politics.

As Schwartzman (1982:23) stresses, the analysis of the Brazilian State proposed by the patrimonialist school is specifically political and not a logical derivative from the knowledge of certain structural characteristics of that particular society. 'Political patrimonialism' is better explained through its relation with 'political co-optation' - a system of political participation that is hierarchically controlled, the functioning of which depends on the previous exclusion of certain groups from the political arena when political participation becomes a favour and not a right. There is no place for the representation of interest in the patrimonialist state since it does not promote the

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Latin America. For further reading on a Weberian interpretation of the Brazilian political system see Fernando Uricoechea (1978) *O Minotauro Imperial*, and Simon Schwartzman (1982) *As Bases do Autoritarismo Brasileiro*.

generation of active groups of interest and the proliferation of militants in either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

Probably the most crucial aspect of the system of co-optation is that it gives rise to a type of politics that is considered as 'traditional' but this does not mean that it is rural. On the contrary, the 'traditional' politics in the Brazilian context is 'modern', urban and performed by an elite that is skilled enough to control the State apparatus (Schwartzman, 1982:24). According to Faoro, after many centuries of traditional domination, the same cycle repeats itself in Brazil: the state is forced to adapt to the external forces of international economy, adjusting itself with modernisation and progress. This vicious circle forces the state to reconstitute itself under the influence of new factors, always accentuating its stabilising functions (Faoro, 1957:88). The compatibility of modern capitalism with a traditional framework (equivocally identified as pre-capitalism) is, in Faoro's view, one key that assists in understanding the Portuguese-Brazilian historical phenomenon. Contrary to the feudal world, that is essentially closed and fails to resist external impacts, the patrimonial state is open to the external world. Whereas the feudal system breaks under the capitalist impact, the patrimonial system moulds itself in times of crisis, transition and change, the patrimonial state has a flexible character that stabilises external models by concentrating in the state the mechanisms of intermediation (Faoro, 1957:737).

Through historical deduction, Faoro argues that centuries of Portuguese and Brazilian history show that the independence of the State that remains beyond the nation is not an exception related to a certain historical period, as Marxists argue, neither is it a means to attain another step. Even the pressure of liberal and democratic ideologies did not break or dilute the political patronage of the State over the nation because political patronage comprises a system of political forces that stand above society and beyond social classes. The political apparatus that coincides with political patronage governs in the name of an impermeable circle of command that never represents the nation. So, the state is therefore an autonomous sector, a state sector in substance. Its absolute essence is paradoxical since power and popular sovereignty do not emerge from the nation, from the society or from the people, but from the owners of power (Faoro, 1957:747-8).

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While the Weberian thinking concentrates on the *means* through which the Brazilian State guarantees its continuity, Marxist-structuralist studies concentrate on the *ends* of the Brazilian state that underwent significant changes with the military coup. According to the model of 'bureaucratic-authoritarianism', Cardoso, Faletto (1973, 1979) and O'Donnell (1973) contend that the authoritarian state inaugurated in 1964 was a *political solution* to a new structural situation of internationalisation of the market and external dependency and did not admit the continuity of an exhausted import-substitution industrialisation. Thus, the emergence of a 'bureaucratic authoritarian' regime was the result of the limits of the expansion of the domestic market for existing industries, growing inflation, trade imbalance and disproportional wage increases allowed by populist governments.

In the structuralist view, two conceptions of the dependent State explain the non-democratic nature and increasing intervention of the Brazilian State in the national economy as a combination of economic domination and social coercion that creates areas of tension with the national bourgeoisie and also with civil society (Carnoy, 1984:199). The first mode, the 'State capitalist school' (Fitzgerald, 1977, 1979; Evans, 1977; Offe, 1973; Canak, 1983) emphasises the increased role of the Third World State in economic production. This model stresses the existence of a weak bourgeoisie in the context of dependent economy that creates even more propitious conditions for the expansion of the State into production. State capitalist approaches give an account of the role of the State as a particular stage of the accumulation process that undergoes crisis because of the relation of dependent economies to the metropolis (Evans, 1977; Fitzgerald, 1977). The 'State capitalist school' attributes the contradictions of the Dependent State to its involvement in the distribution and production of goods and its submissive interaction with foreign bourgeoisie and metropolitan States.

The second model, called 'bureaucratic-authoritarianism', based on the class struggle perspective by Cardoso and Faletto (1979) and also O'Donnell (1979), argued that 'bureaucratic authoritarianism' guarantees and organises the domination exercised through a class structure. However, class structure is subordinated to the upper fractions of a highly oligopolised and

transnational bourgeoisie (O'Donnell, 1979: 292). This model highlights political exclusion of the previously activated popular sectors by the imposition of 'order' through extreme coercion and depoliticisation of the society. Regarding the relations between State and society, the model of 'bureaucratic authoritarianism' stresses the separation between State and civil society, the State exerting strict control over labour unions, eliminating political access through political parties, mass organisations and interest groups. Access to the State is restricted to individual contacts between persons inside and outside the bureaucracy, populist policies of income distribution through wage increases are cut (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979:65) and the working class consensus with the State is kept through coercive apparatus (Stepan, 1978:76).

Whilst O'Donnell argues that the bureaucratic authoritarianism corresponds to a particular 'stage' of accumulation in independent economies (O'Donnell, 1979:291), Cardoso (1979) and Stepan (1978) disagree. Stepan considers that the bureaucratic authoritarianism is a type of anti-populist corporatism and not a type of state, whilst Cardoso argues that there are no strict structural-economic bases for 'bureaucratic-authoritarianism' that is not a form of state as such but 'a type of political regime' (Cardoso, 1979:40). This is the reason why the dependent capitalist State has assumed several forms expressed by non-military corporatism (Mexico), inclusionary militarism (Peru), exclusionary militarism (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay) and even democracy (Venezuela, or Brazil during the time of Kubitschek, for example). All of these converged as responses to political movements and social clashes affronting the State.

A third 'revisionist' current represented by Lamounier (1984, 1989) conceived forces of change in Brazil as derived from the liberal-representative traditions developed in its society. According this model, the Brazilian State should not be characterised as pre-modern and/or traditional but as a modern parliamentary democracy, otherwise, the legalisation and legitimisation of democracy emerging from electoral process and party formations would not have constituted resistance against the authoritarian state in the 1970s and 1980s. Lamounier (1989:72) notes, however, that Brazil is a perverse polyarchy, 'a society which does not accept monolithic authoritarian domination, but which also does not have the tradition of pluralist and independent

political organisation of the State, which is typical of the real liberal polyarchies' (Lamounier, 1989:72).

The revisionist scholarship stresses the concept of *institutionalisation*. Lamounier (1984,1989) and McDonough (1981) pointed out that during the authoritarian period 1964-1984, the Brazilian regime was a fully institutionalised political form, i.e. the tradition of political pluralism continuously pervaded the Brazilian State during the military regime. There was an adherence to pluralist values within and outside military circles that softened the military rule forcing the abandonment of the authoritarian project in 1974-75. In Lamounier's view, failure in detecting such liberal components in political beliefs of the regime's societal opposition led structuralist analysts to super-estimate the authoritarian state by failing to consider the fact that it could not institutionalise itself given the pressure of electoral process and party formations.

However, like the structuralists, Lamounier failed to predict the persistence of the traditional elite when this assumed the leadership in the re-construction of a democratic regime at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Nevertheless, Lamounier (1989) provided a considerable contribution to the understanding of controversies surrounding the Authoritarian State. He called attention to the relevance of the 'tendential fit between infrastructure and superstructure: more precisely, between a social (and organisational) matrix, on the one hand, and a viable legalisation and legitimation formula, on the other' (Lamounier, 1989:44).

For Lamounier the major difficulties in structuralist conclusions such as those identified by Schmitter (1973)<sup>5</sup> flowed from the exclusion of any concern with the institutional mediations of the political system. This was allied with the assumption that the Brazilian social structure was incapable of fostering resistance to the authoritarian concentration of power. As Lamounier stresses, Juan Linz (1973) was probably one of the only authors who referred to the ambivalence of the military state in Brazil as both liberal and authoritarian (Lamounier, 1989:49). Linz addressed

<sup>5</sup> In 'The "Portugalisation" of Brazil?' Schmitter (1973:184) inferred to an elective affinity between certain structural and behavioural attributes of 'delayed-dependent' development and protracted authoritarian rule in Brazil. In his view, certain characteristics of Brazil's delayed economic and social transformation had 'conspired' to make it highly unlikely that it would replicate either the evolutionary liberal-pluralist or the revolutionary nationalist-collectivist route to political modernity.

the complexities of the Brazilian State arguing that it represented 'an authoritarian *situation* rather than an authoritarian *regime*' (Linz, 1973:235). On this basis, the military government would remain unstable if it continued to be unable to institutionalise a new centralised system. Symbols, slogans and phrases such as the 'salvationist' mission to 'clean up the mess' and restore democracy that accompanied the Brazilian military regime in its formative stages attached to the military a certain image that limited their freedom as they strove for political institutionalisation in the later stages. The intention to restore competitive liberal democracy was conceived by Linz as a drawback for the legitimisation of a permanent authoritarian elitist rule. Only the complete discontinuity with the initial military leadership and ideas of 1964, combined to displace the ruling groups, would provide the support for a self-confident authoritarian regime. By highlighting contradictions inhibiting the establishment of a fully authoritarian state, Linz addressed some of the major questions dealt with in post-structuralist approaches when identifying the contingent and discursive character of the authoritarian state.

As seen in this section, Weberian, Structuralist and revisionist studies do not give particularly illuminating explanations to the contradictions of Brazilian politics. In a post-structuralist view, the state always has a contradictory identity that asserts a monopoly of legitimate force, which it does not (and cannot) have (Hoffman, 1995:5). The state faces a legitimacy problem since it cannot reconcile freedom, dignity and autonomy with its repressive activity and coercive character.

Notwithstanding, Weber's definition of the state assists post-structuralist theorists in inverting the *logocentric* hierarchy proposed by the Marxist approach to the state, since post-structuralism privileges historicity, and also his theory of the state is considered to be logically coherent since it emphasises the centrality of force. This definition permits drawing the distinction between state and government whereby the state can be isolated as the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Government, however, retains pluralistic and consensual features so that the attributes of the state co-exist and are mutually determinant but are nevertheless structured in a hierarchical way in which 'force' provides the conceptual 'glue' and also

constitutes the basic element of a structures definition of the state (Hoffman, 1995:37).

## Section 2

### **A Poststructuralist Approach to the Continuity of Traditional Domination**

#### **Deconstruction and the account of Irreducible Plural Structures**

As shown in the previous sections, the Brazilian State and government follow different logics whose incompatibility is aggravated by a certain **anachronism** in the combination between a bureaucratic rational state and traditional patronage organising government since discourse is split from its content and characterised thus for not being synchronous. Such anachronism between the universality of a modern rational order and a traditional content is reinforced by the remainders of particularity of a traditional order, preventing the liberalisation of the political system since the universality of a modern order is represented through the materiality of particular signifiers that are ineffaceable.

There are several categories in Derrida's deconstruction especially relevant to the development of my argument about continuity and the hegemonic process in Brazil. These concepts comprise the non-unitary and undecidable infrastructures that are conditions of intelligibility of discourse. In this section I explain how these infrastructures account for an irreducible plurality and the possibility of conflicting concepts concentrating on the infrastructure as iterability. The latter is of special interest for my argument.

#### **The Infrastructures: Iterability as the origin of repetition**

*Iterability* refers to an 'original repetition' that is prior to common or ordinary repetition, which requires a unique and singular model to be reproduced. Iterability is not an empirical repetition it just presupposes the necessary relation between the possibility of repetition and alteration. It accounts for the reproduction of something that is already constituted being a repetition that already divides at the origin (Derrida, 1978: 213). Through five different functions

such as repetition, idealisation, alteration, duplication and effacement, iterability overlaps other infrastructures by linking various aspects stressed by 'supplementarity', 'difference' and 'arche-trace'. Iterability composes a new synthesis that can be broken down in the following terms:<sup>6</sup> (1) Iterability is the *origin of repetition* and in this respect it shows points of contact with *supplementarity*<sup>7</sup> that repeats the absent unit. Repeatability as the origin of repetition is based on the structural possibility of absence of the repeated and this is the point where iterability overlaps *supplementarity* since it corresponds to the function of filling in the lack created by the absence of the other. (2) Iterability can be conceived as the *origin of idealisation* and also of identification because it is only the ideal identity that can be repeated independently of the context and events of its occurrence. The repetition of the ideal or invariable part of identity is the repetition of the *eidos* or truth that can be continuously repeated as the *selfsame*, i.e., as a 'minimal remainder' that is recognisable and identifiable 'even in view of its alteration' (Derrida, 1977:190). Without iterability there would be no transmission of an ideal truth, but paradoxically, iterability also originates the limit of truth. Given a difference inscribed in each ideal unit, iterability prevents the achievement of truth when it links together a good repetition of the ideal and unchanging truth to a bad repetition of an un-truth. (3) Iterability can also be conceived as the *origin of alteration* or displacement because iterability alters by repeating and allowing something new to take place (Derrida, 1977:175), it also affects or alters what it accounts for by repeating it. (4) Iterability can be conceived as duplication that is not derivative from presence, i.e., it is not preceded by any unity or origin as all it does is bind repetition to doubling so that the possibility of establishing a last origin is eliminated. Doubling is not incidental and does not multiply the simple but the double, and also for this reason, duplication subsumed to iterability presupposes a non-Platonic simulacrum since it does

<sup>6</sup> For a further reading see R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1986), pp.177-254

<sup>7</sup> *Supplementarity* is an irreducible complexity that performs the task of exclusion. It has no energy of its own. It is a parasitic movement that determines the force of desire (Derrida, 1976:179). Language for example is a *supplement* that restores presence. It stands in for presence because of the primordial self-deficiency of presence. The restitution of presence by language is at the same time symbolic (the thing itself does not appear outside of the symbolic system) and immediate (experience of immediate restitution). Language retains the contradiction that is inherent to the *supplement* since it divides with passage through the world. The symbolic becomes the immediate and presence becomes absence. See J. Derrida *Of Grammatology* (1976) p. 144.

not have an ultimate referent. In sum, *duplication* has the structure of an angle or a fold that is internal to the event and thus leads to a return of the circuit onto itself. (5) Iterability is the possibility of effacement of the *trace* that every concept includes within itself - a *trace* of something it endeavours to oppose. The infrastructure as iterability overlaps the infrastructure 'arche-trace' in which it allows for an originary effacement, providing the conditions of possibility of the differential interplay between the Self and the Other within dyadic conceptual structures.

As seen above, repetition, idealisation, alteration, duplication, effacement are effects of iterability that organise it as a heterogeneous thread or impure universal law that makes impossible any project of idealisation.

#### **Iterability: an infrastructure as an open structure**

Because structure, as used by Derrida, is an infrastructure, he puts into question the privilege of form, internal organisation, essence and closure, giving priority to content, history, openness and a genetic analysis. If, according to a structuralist view, the passage from one structure to another depends on chance, hazard or catastrophe (because the structure is centred), deconstruction puts into question this closed totality that resists all possible change from outside by challenging the structure as an ideal model. Deconstruction is concerned with structure as a *de facto* construction and not as a topographical entity that refers only to the order of forms and sites governed by a unifying principle. Infrastructures account for 'the play going on within it [the structure] metaphorically' (Derrida, 1978:16).

Through infrastructures such as iterability, Derrida tries to achieve the structurality of the structure by thinking about its openness, of what stays open in an otherwise consummated structure, because for Derrida (1978:26) the most fundamental in a structure is that which liberates time and genesis. Explaining progress towards the future, infrastructures encompass the principles that guide the de-centring and centring of structures. Being plural, the infrastructures represent the relation that organises differences, contradictions and inconsistencies between concepts, argumentative and textual arrangements accounting for differences that breach discourse. They are

able to explain contradictions of discourse, but not their causalities, because they hold a pre-logical and a pre-ontological status, apart from a synthetic character and a strategic nature (Gasché, 1986:148-154), representing the common root of all predicative designating opposing terms.

Rather than corresponding to an operation of grounding or explaining causalities, the infrastructures organise Derrida's (1976:281) theory of *original constitution* in terms of the *inscription* that constitutes all origin and designates the possibilities that necessarily affect such root. In this sense, infrastructures describe clusters of determinants according to which particular modes of founding are to be contemplated. However, it is important to note that the system of structural possibilities does not control the origin, since this presupposes the play, which means that an origin can be described with relation to systems of infrastructural possibilities but which cannot be accounted for. In this sense to deconstruct a conservative system, such as the Brazilian one, by inscribing it, or putting it in relation to the transcendental conditions of possibilities presented by an infrastructural iterability displaces the explanations for the repetition of a traditional order that have been ground on reasonable speech.

### **Iterability as an economy of the conditions of possibility**

As conceived by Derrida, infrastructures or arche-syntheses are quasi-synthetic constructs that account for the economy of the conditions of possibility of whatever is constituted, they are 'non-unitary'<sup>8</sup> and point to a 'forever-irreducible plurality'.<sup>9</sup> Derrida's infrastructures are not univocal but transcend 'the project of *definiteness* itself'<sup>10</sup> and in this sense, infrastructures, also called 'undecidables', are pre-suppositions and not founding principles as their nature and the relation they have with what they constitute cannot be understood in terms of essence. Since the infrastructures are not governed by truth-values that follow ideas of totality and unity, they must be viewed as *heterology* (Gasché, 1986:101) from which Derrida thinks of a radical alterity.

<sup>8</sup> See R. Gasché, 'Infrastructures and Systematicity', in J. Sallis (ed.), Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Idem.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Gasché, 'Infrastructures and Systematicity', in J. Sallis (ed.), Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987) p. 10.

By means of infrastructures such as iterability deconstruction attempts to 'account' for the contradictions and differences inherent to concepts and texts, by grounding them in syntheses that emerge from an analysis of the specific organisation of these contradictions. So, the infrastructures are the 'formal rule' (Gasché, 1986:142) that each time differently regulates the play of the contradictions in question. In this way Derrida inscribes philosophy within a general *heterology* by erasing the metaphysical concept of a last instance, for example. His *heterology* is not a search for more essential principles of thought and cognition.

When Derrida knots the manifold through his infrastructures he is strategically focusing, in a non-dialectical manner, on how different principles are connected. In the case of iterability, he is thinking about the reunion of two opposite incommensurable meanings: the possibility of repetition and also alteration. The synthesis between repetition and alteration alluded by iterability stands for an alterity that is beyond principles since it represents the conditions of possibility and impossibility of principles. Iterability demonstrates how the principle of repeatability is breached and being a multifarious infrastructural account, is a movement contrary to the neutralisation of differences or conciliatory solutions. The infrastructure, as iterability, is essentially incomplete, undecidable<sup>11</sup> or negative and cannot therefore be viewed as a system of axioms that govern multiplicity because it places into question the very possibility of closure.

Iterability and other infrastructures are 'the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them (Derrida, 1989:127) and the 'undecidability' of these infrastructures is a result of their syntactic arrangement. The notion of *syntax* in Derrida refers to an 'irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic' (Gasché, 1978:11), as it does not refer to the formal properties of language but tries to undo the oppositional form and content, i.e. between syntax and semantics. In Derrida's (1981:220) terms, what counts is not 'the lexical richness, the semantic infiniteness of the word or concept...what counts is the formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes it'. In this sense, iterability performs a specific organisational function

<sup>11</sup> See J. Derrida, *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry* (1989), p. 53 and also Derrida's, *Dissemination* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 220.

similar to the secondary parts of discourse such as 'and', 'or', 'if', etc, that have no fixed meaning and must be used with predicates.

To conclude, Derrida's infrastructures represent a radical move allowing syntax an independent and contingent framework, *arche-trace*, *difference*, *supplementarity*, *re-mark* and iterability being examples among which iterability and supplementary are of special importance to the analysis conciliation between contradictory concepts in the Brazilian politics and the repetition of the power structure. As a structural requirement of identity, iterability indicates the possibility of repetition, alteration and subversion referring to an identity, which must have sufficient presence and clear limits in order to be repeated, altered or substituted. Because of the alteration and substitution it assists, iterability prevents an identity from having full presence since it exposes the sign to alteration.

### **Iterability, Communication and Minimal Reminders**

From a post-structuralist perspective, communication can be understood in terms of its infrastructural iterability that enables the transmission of a dominant meaning in the absence of an original context. Iterability presupposes *remainders* that replace a standard and traditional concept by another. What remains in *communication* organised by the logic of iterability 'does not amount to the repose of permanence...the structure of the remainder, implying alteration, renders all absolute permanence impossible' (Derrida, 1976:53-4), therefore, iterability negates not only presence but also teleology, goal, task, completion or perfection. Teleological explanations that attempt to account for things by appealing to their contribution to optimal states can no longer provide orientation and organise the movement of *communication* insofar as fulfilment, realisation and actualisation of plenitude identical to itself are impossible. In other words, iterability negates teleology that presupposes intelligent design and 'final cause' explanations since any identity or intention is always,

Divided and deported in advance, by its *iterability*, towards others, removed in advance from itself...this re-move makes its movement possible...this remove is its condition of possibility, it is not

an eventuality...intention is a priori (at once) *différance*: differing and deferring, in its inception.<sup>12</sup>

In the above sense, in a communicative act any *identity* constitutes itself only by virtue of iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence of a determinate *signified*, the intention of actual signification or the intention of present communication. Therefore, iterability gives rise to the *sign* by means of divergence of its parts, like a law of undecidable contamination between *signifier* and *signified*, iterability renders the rigour and purity of the *sign* as something impossible.

In spite of the undecidability and impurity of *communication* under the contingent logic of iterability, the latter limits but also makes possible idealisation as it produces identity in repetition but this identity is *independent* of the multiplicity of factual events. The logic of iterability alters and contaminates the code or whatever it identifies, providing the means for a certain identity to repeat itself by meaning something else. Since iterability inscribes alteration in repetition, it blurs dividing lines between oppositional terms such as presence/absence and subject/object, thus corrupting and limiting them. Conversely, iterability is also the condition of possibility for the meaning of positive values, like progress, order and justice because this infrastructure authorises a break of the sign with every given context, engendering new contexts in an unlimited way.

The logic of iterability explains not only the repetition of dominant interpretations of historical contingency, but also demonstrates the link between sameness and creativity that allows alteration and removal of the sign from its original context, thus the possibility of language to be altered, reinterpreted or re-contextualised is clarified. Whilst it comprises identity and difference, repetition and alteration (and no process of idealisation is possible without it), iterability inverts the conscious structure of communication and Derrida seeks to demonstrate in 'Signature, Event, Context', that the unconscious has a relevant role in the communicative process. The unconscious is the 'parasite' which subverts communication, according to deconstruction, conscious is not prior to the unconscious. For this reason, metaphysical idealistic exigencies such as 'the good before the evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex...'

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<sup>12</sup> *Idem.*, p. 56.

(Derrida, 1988:93), must be dropped. The structure of the 'conscious ego' can never be isolated in its pure identity while its being involves iterability - a logic which 'ruins (even ideally) the very identity it renders possible'.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, communication as iterability subverts the very idea of communication as a mere repeatability of linguistic elements since 'it designates non-semantic movements as well'.<sup>14</sup> Communication leads to semantic *displacement* bringing about the problem of polysemy derived from difference and dissemination derived from repetition, both of which are held tightly together by the infrastructural movement of iterability that imprints ambiguity upon communication.

What is crucial in Derrida's structure of iterability concerning its articulation with Laclau's theory of hegemony is that the structure of *iteration* 'implies both identity and difference'.<sup>15</sup> The iterability splits each element whilst constituting it and is also differential between elements insofar as their remainders never fulfil presence, so that each element is marked by an articulatory break. In brief, as a differential structure, iterability escapes the logic of the binary presence/absence on which the idea of permanence is dependent, being useful to explain contingent logic that opens the way for the primacy of the political articulation. The preponderance of *politics* over the institutional matrix of *the political* is thus explained by this infrastructural logic.

### Section 3

## **Hegemony and Repetition of a Traditional Order:**

### **Definitions of Categories composing theory of Hegemony**

The philosophical perspective of *deconstruction* leads to a second politico-theoretical level where I link Derrida's infrastructures to Laclau's conceptualisation of power and process of identification centred in the category of *hegemony*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (1988), p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context', in *Limited Inc.* (1988), p. 1

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> See Laclau & Mouffe, (1985), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 136-7.

### The Category of Articulation

The concept of hegemony is based on a theoretical field dominated by the category of *articulation*, since the hegemonic link is founded on the unevenness between articulator and articulated, requiring negotiation amongst mutually contradictory discursive surfaces. The practice of articulation must be grasped as the fixation and dislocation of a complex system of differences that retain a discursive character but do not consist of purely linguistic phenomena. However, whilst placed in the field of articulation, the theory of hegemony requires the renouncing of the conception of society as a ground, or founding totality, of social processes. The openness of the social must be taken as the constitutive ground of different social orders that are just partial attempts to domesticate the field of differences.

Articulatory practices of social orders are constituted around a fundamental asymmetry enabling a relation among elements in a way that their identity is transformed as an outcome of such practices. Therefore, social orders cannot be considered as merely cognitive entities. These structured totalities that result from articulation are what Laclau & Mouffe (1985:105) call *discourse*. Any discourse depends on the attempt to fix differences as moments of a stable social order understood as an articulatory structure that faces the imbalance between a growing proliferation of differences or differential positions (*moments*) within society, and the challenge of fixing these differences as moments of a stable totality. This articulatory structure is the starting-point for Laclau's elaboration of the concept of hegemony since this requires the possibility of designating which *elements* (as difference not discursively articulated) will enter into an articulatory relation and also specifying the relational *moments* (differential positions) constituting a structured totality.

A discursive formation in which every element occupies a differential position, is conceived by Laclau & Mouffe as mainly a regularity in dispersion, or an ensemble of differential positions that is not the expression of any underlying principle extrinsic to itself. All a discursive regularity requires is that every element has been reduced to a moment of that articulated totality which is contingent and not sutured. In this respect, the notion of articulation is fundamental in that it warns

to the fact that one cannot distinguish between a discursive and a non-discursive formation. By affirming that 'every object is constituted as an object of discourse' and that social production of meaning is structured 'under the form of discursive totalities' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:107), one should understand that articulated objects could always constitute themselves outside any discursive condition of emergence. Discourse does not depend on the debate on whether objects do or, do not exist outside thought, however, an idealist or mental perspective must be avoided since every discursive formation has a material and performative character, such as stressed by Wittgenstein through what he calls language games.<sup>17</sup> This material character of any discursive formation cannot be unified in the consciousness of an original source, since diverse subject positions are necessarily disseminated in a discursive formation. In this concern, the theorisation on the articulation of discursive formations followed, by a break with the discursive/ extra-discursive dichotomy and the abandonment of the thought/reality opposition, contributes to enlarge the objectivity and also the political field.

### **Antagonism and the Phenomenon of Frontiers**

*Antagonism* 'constitutes the limits of every objectivity' exposed as partial 'objectification' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:125) and must be understood as the 'failure of difference', i.e., it can only exist as the disruption of a system of difference. Antagonism is a metaphor that subverts a system of differences, and in this sense, every society is precariously constituted as the repression of antagonism that exists only as the pervading impossibility of the objectification of A closed system of differences. Antagonism is neither a contradiction nor a real opposition, since these refer to objective relations between real (objects) and conceptual objects taken as full identities.<sup>18</sup> Antagonism is just a relation, through which the limits of objectivity are exposed, being the experience of the limit of the social that only exists as A partial struggle for building society. Antagonism is, therefore, external to society, since it constitutes the limit (to society) that will never

<sup>17</sup> For further reading see L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford, 1983), pp.3-5.

<sup>18</sup> This argument is developed in E. Laclau & C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, Verso, 1985), pp.122-3.

become an intelligible rational totality. As the limit of the social totality, antagonism is experienced like a failure in the sense of an identity crisis and also as a perception of a discursively constructed subversion of its own image, since social antagonism involves the negation of identity.

Antagonisms are neither positive internal moments of society nor the moments of a broader totality but the negation or the limit of a given order. Therefore, if we conceive the social as a dominion in which all positivity is subvertible, one cannot refer the negation of a positive position to an underlying positivity. Given the limits imposed by antagonism, hegemonic forces construct identities as threatening obstacles to the total realisation of selected options and so as an intimidation to the expansion of a discourse. However, hegemonic articulations require the acceptance of an adversarial power struggle, since the intrinsic link between politics and social *antagonism* requires the acceptance of opponents. This means that the negation of identity must not result in the complete destruction or political killing of the repealed identity, as the latter should be able to antagonise the force of negation articulated by hegemonic forces, characterising a situation of social antagonism. As Mouffe (1993:4) notes 'within the context of the political community, the opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated'<sup>19</sup>

### The Constitutive Outside

The *constitutive outside* has the form of a radical alterity. It is the surplus of meaning subverting the rationality and intelligibility of society that is expelled outside it using force and repression (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:137). It must be viewed as a discursive exteriority that connects to moments within the dominant discourse through a relation of equivalence that threatens and disrupts the discursive system of differences. The constitutive outside is at the same time that which blocks the identity of the inside but also remains as a prerequisite for the construction of the identity of the inside because the constitutive limits of a discourse are constituted in relation to the

<sup>19</sup> See C. Mouffe, 'Introduction: for an agonistic pluralism' in C. Mouffe (ed.) *The Return of the Political* (London, Verso, 1993) pp.1-8.

dangerous outside. The constitutive outside derives from the presupposition that the frontier is internal to the social and is not an empirical referent, and that the experience of the limit of all objectivity always assumes the form of *antagonism*.

### **The Logic of Equivalence and Difference**

The condition for society as a full presence is the construction of a closed space where each differential position has been fixed as a specific moment. The expansion of a discourse into a dominant horizon occurs by means of the articulation of unfixed elements into partially fixed moments, observing a *differential logic*. Conversely, the condition for the subversion and prevention of a closed space is that the specificity or particularity of each position should be dissolved in a *relation of equivalence*.

The Laclauian *logic of equivalence* refers to the common differentiation between political positions or contents, and as a result of this process, the specificity of each differential position is dissolved and the contents lose their condition of being differential elements. The process of equivalence is possible, therefore, by a kind of subversion that occurs when there is a total cancellation between signified content differences in a discursive reality, and through this cancellation (of differences), the previous elements acquire the fixed character of moments. This expansion of the logic of equivalence leads to a construction of antagonistic fields in the society by a process of subversion of elements. For the subversion of elements into moments to occur, something identical must underlie all differences about a subject to transform its identity into something possible by a common external reference. This construction of negative identities may be translated into an eventual polarisation.

It is through the logic of equivalence and its expansion that a demarcation of political frontiers becomes visible, whereby as a discursive form, equivalence annuls all positivity of the object and gives a real existence to negativity as such. This does not mean that antagonism manages to dissolve the objectivity of the social completely, but that the coexistence and impossible relation between negativity and positivity is constitutive of the social. This coexistence cannot be considered

as a relation of frontiers but as an internal relation of reciprocal subversion of contents.

During Collor de Mello's 1989 electoral campaign in Brazil, the subversion of the civil servants - the Maharajas, and President Sarney's image seemed to permeate through all aspects of the Brazilian state which itself became identified with corruption. The chain of equivalence created by the subversion of the administrative and personal identities led to the necessity of its substitution by a positive state image based on morality, this was possible because the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole of a signifying chain. Elements are substituted for one another, reducing the number of positions, which can be combined. This model of clear-cut politics of frontiers can be linked to the unstable social relations that offer conditions for a proliferation of points of antagonism, blocking the construction of any centrality.

From the point of view of the *logic of difference*, political spaces are structured on the basis of the non-relationality of differential identities, so that they are of no political importance. The logic of difference implies an open space, where each differential position exists as an independent positivity, and is the condition for the existence of a full presence or at least an illusion of it. The 'one nation' discourse is a typical strategy to maintain fixed differential positions. However, the illusion of fullness this type of discourse brings about is exactly what might be subjected to the process of subversion that occurs as soon as the differential positions lose their fixity. Through this subversion, the content of a specific element might become equivalent to another enabling a common differentiation between elements, turning the latter into moments of a discursive totality, since any discourse is an attempt to 'arrest the flow of differences' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 112).

### **Empty and Floating Signifiers**

The main innovation brought about by Laclau's theory of *hegemony* is that it adds something to the deconstructionist perspective with the introduction of psychoanalytical categories of Lacan, of which the category of *empty signifier* is the main example that operates deconstructively within Marxist categories, helping to advance political analysis. Laclau and Mouffe (1985:8-9) exemplify the working of the *empty signifier* in the theses of Rosa Luxemburg (1906) as

stated in *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*. In her theory of the unruly spontaneity of over-determined political mobilisations, Luxemburg refers to *empty signifiers* like 'the unity of the class' in order to defend the efficacy of mass strikes as a political tool for workers' struggles in Germany. It must be noted, however, that the *unity of the working class*, in Luxemburg's conception, retains the necessary class character of the unified political force. Whereas in Laclau and Mouffe's view it stands as a symbolic unity, suggesting an absent totality and 'diverse attempts at recomposition and rearticulation'<sup>20</sup> of social forces. This empty signifier is constructed in such a way that the meaning of every concrete mobilisation in society appears as a split: apart from their particular demand, each mobilisation represents the revolutionary process as a whole, a symbolic class unity.

According to the logic of hegemony, the absent fullness of the community has to be represented by one of its particular contents with the hegemonic relation being the connection enabling a particular element, or empty signifier, to assume the impossible task of universal representation. In fact, politics is possible because of the constitutive split between singularity and universality, i.e. the *signifier* is not bound by a strict attachment to a *signified*. If there was a total and necessary coincidence between *signifier* and *signified*, politics would not encompass the play of language and the subversion of identities but would be constituted by collision of social forces followed by rupture, so there would be no negotiation of meaning.

The empty signifier, as opposed to a *floating signifier*, is exceptional, in that it represents the whole, the universal, that which cannot be represented by standing in for the impossibility of representation whereas floating signifiers are all other common signifiers. Empty signifiers aggregate a series of a loose collection of signifiers into a discourse that at the same time limit floating and make all other signifiers float because they are the principle of a given structure and the foundation of the possible relation signifier/signified. This means that the emptying of the signifier depends on the hegemonic intervention,<sup>21</sup> i.e., the role performed by the empty signifier is not

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> This specific articulation of signifiers through a hegemonic intervention I call *secondary discourse*.

intrinsic to a priori properties of the signifier. Signifiers have no attributes because, as said before, the value of any signifier emerges only from the relation between them.

Since empty signifiers create a symbolic and hegemonic order by fixing a correlation between signs, floating signifiers would not operate if there were no empty or exceptional signifiers that provided rules to language that lacks a code. However, remainders of the particularity that characterise the floating signifiers contaminate every *empty signifier* carrying traces of the materiality that cannot be erased and that destabilises the symbolic from within. As a consequence, every signifier is inappropriate to the content, which it is supposed to express, as there is an impossibility to represent any content because of the lack at the level of the referent. This impossibility leads to an infinite repetition of empty signifiers whose materiality or remainders of particularity stand in for universality, which means that traces of particularity are ineffaceable.<sup>22</sup>

### The Notion of Hegemony

*Hegemony* defines the terrain in which a political relation is constituted. Through his formal analysis of the logics involved in *hegemony*, Laclau moves from a purely descriptive account of concrete agents involved in hegemonic operations, providing an explanation of the logics of the constitution and dissolution of the social thereby understood as hegemonic operations. As shown before, these hegemonic operations interrelate in a space of an open and incomplete structure marked by undecidability. *Deconstruction* and the theory of *hegemony* meet, where on one hand, deconstruction discovers the role of the decision out of the undecidability of the structure, whilst on the other, hegemony, as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain, requires the contingent character of the connections. Hegemony presupposes the unfinished and open disposition of the social that deconstruction has theoretically enlarged, widening both the field of structural undecidability and the terrain to be filled by decision. Contingency<sup>23</sup> is a necessary

<sup>22</sup> This is the crucial point for my argument about the Brazilian politics that cannot be purged of its particularity or its materiality that enable empty signifiers to operate as the representative of a lost totality.

<sup>23</sup> In the Laclau & Mouffe neo-Gramscian theory of discourse contingent is that being whose essence does not involve its existence. All social identity is experienced as incomplete and contingent since its conditions of possibility are also its conditions of finitude. Contingency should not be taken as accidental (Torfing, 1999:50-2).

condition for the *articulation* of any identity by means of a *hegemonic intervention* (Laclau, 1996:89) and so hegemony only emerges in a field of articulatory practices where meaning has not been totally fixed, i.e., where elements have not been crystallised becoming fixed moments. Otherwise there would be nothing to hegemonize.

As Laclau (1999:11-14) notes, hegemonic relations show four dimensions. Firstly, the hegemonic relation requires uneven distribution of power as constitutive of it since it describes an essentially political act that cannot exclude the interaction between antagonistic wills. In this concern, the claim of a fraction to rule depends on its ability to present a project as the most popular, which could be shared by the whole community. This transformation of a particular project into a universally accepted is inherent to the hegemonic operation. Secondly, particularities must assume a function of universal representation, taking up the representation of something different from themselves because 'there is only hegemony if the dichotomy universality/ particularity is superseded' (Laclau, 1999:12). In other words, the formulation of a universal project requires that it incarnates and subverts some particularity. Notwithstanding, no particularity could be transformed into a political issue without being the locus of universalising effect. Thirdly, the hegemonic logic requires the production of empty signifiers that will keep the incommensurability between universal and particulars and will enable particulars to represent the universal, showing that a relation of 'representation' is necessary to the hegemonic operation. Fourth and lastly, hegemonic relations only expand in the terrain of 'the generalisation of the relations of representation' (Laclau, 1999:14). That is the reason why globalisation and the proliferation of relations of representation lead to an increase in the hegemonic form of politics.

As stated above, the main conditions of a hegemonic articulation are 'the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of frontiers which separate them' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:136). By instability of frontiers, I mean a conjuncture of a generalised crisis of social identities, or *organic crisis*, where there is a general weakening of the relational system defining these identities and an increase of floating signifiers. Hegemonic practices, as the constitution of an organised system of differences, require not only the general field of articulatory practices but also a

field pervaded by antagonisms, the phenomena of equivalence and frontiers effect.

The logic of hegemony goes far beyond Gramsci's theory, which sustains that due to their structural position at the level of the relations of production, the social classes have an ontologically privileged role in the struggle for hegemony. The hegemonic logic is emancipated from the category of 'historical necessity' and it is exactly the critique of this tradition of thought that allows the formulation of a new political conception in which 'historical necessity' presents itself as a limit to the working of the *symbolic*. In other words, the construction of political identities has little to do with strict class boundaries.<sup>24</sup> The Gramscian war of positions, which supposes the objective division of the political space, is unacceptable in terms of the Laclau & Mouffe's theory. The hegemonic logic moves away from two key aspects of Gramsci's theory of *hegemony*: the necessary constitution of hegemonic positions on dimension of fundamental classes and the assumption that every social formation structures itself around a single hegemonic centre. The presupposition of a single political space as the necessary field where political struggles take place is eliminated. Hegemony is not a construction that 'always operates on the basis of expanding the frontier within a dichotomised divided political space' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985:137). Notwithstanding, the articulatory logic of hegemony still retains some features of Gramsci's theory such as the logic of articulation and the political centrality of the frontier effect.

The hegemonic logic that explains the emergence of new forms of political subjectivity cutting across the categories of the social and economic structure requires a necessary undecidability inscribed within any framework which makes the contingent an essential part of the structure. The 'structurality' of the structure cannot find the source of contingent connections within itself but in an external source of a certain set of structural connections that Laclau (1996:90) calls *force*. As said before, the theory of hegemony renounces epistemological claims, based upon the ontologically privileged position, which presents history and society as intelligible totalities.

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<sup>24</sup> An example of this is in the emergence of fascism and populism that dissipate the fallacy of the necessary constitution of certain class articulations.

## The Subject of the Lack

The dialectic between particularity and universality such as the lack within the structure are constitutive of processes of *identification* by a subject defined by his attempts to fill structural gaps. Because radically empty, the subject of the lack has also a social character, it relies on the symbolic order, i.e., culture, law, tradition and so on. He knows himself through an external image defining him through self-alienation, yet, as the coherent images remain external to the subject, his identity is sustained only through constant *repetition*. However, identity construction is contingent and not predetermined, i.e., identity is fluid and it is always open to change led by a desire to fill the lack that constitutes the condition of possibility of identificatory movement.

The Lacanian theory of subjectivity and its approaches to the problem of signification through the categories of the *imaginary*<sup>25</sup> and *symbolic*,<sup>26</sup> is a necessary reference to explain the notion of *subject of the lack* that is not an essential, unitary rational agent but a fragmented and radically empty subject. His main feature is to be a split subject between its subject position and attempts to fill structural gaps through acts of identification. Given his de-centred nature and basic lack, the subject's identity formation is a way of evading the lack through a psychic makeup. The desire to fill the lack is the condition of possibility such identificatory movement that 'sets in motion the contingent process of historicisation-symbolisation'.<sup>27</sup>

The *subject of the lack* belongs to the dimension of the Real<sup>28</sup> understood as non-substantial inherent limit, a point of failure that maintains the gap between reality and symbolisation.

<sup>25</sup> An imaginary identification refers to the Lacanian proposition that the ego comes into existence at the moment when the child first apprehends the image of its body within a reflective surface, and is itself a mental refraction of that image, acquiring a remarkably visual status.

<sup>26</sup> The symbolic identification in Lacan is a function of speech and language whereby the Oedipus complex and the articulation of the incest taboo works toward differentiation of certain cultural members from others by means of linguistic categories. Lacan considers the paternal signifier as the most important in the history of the subject and also for the organisation of the larger symbolic field.

<sup>27</sup> See E.Laclau, 'Identity and Hegemony: the role of universality in the constitution of political logics' (Colchester, University of Essex, mimeo, 1999), p.21.

<sup>28</sup> The order of the Real is one of the three orders according to which all psychoanalytic phenomena can be described. See *The Seminar, Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (London, Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), p. 167 where J. Lacan links the term Real to the concept of impossibility because it is impossible to integrate into the symbolic order. See also E.Laclau the paper 'Identity and hegemony: the role of universality in the constitution of political logics' (Colchester, University of Essex, mimeo) for the debate proposed by J.Butler around the concept of the Real as appropriated by Laclau.

The subject of the lack is inscribed in the dimension of the Real that according to the Lacanian theory is undifferentiated, situated outside language and located beyond the symbolic. In this sense, the subject of the lack has nothing in which to firmly stand, experiencing contingent imaginary and symbolic identification since the traumatic Real is the *impossible*, it is that which cannot be integrated into the symbolic order.

In his Lacanian approach to politics, Laclau reconciles the conception of the Real with the strategic question posed by the hegemonic logic. The Lacanian Real impels the contingent process of symbolisation and history since it shows the ultimate impossibility of total representation pressing for this very reason the way for the historicism and strategic movements required by a hegemonic logic. The failure in achieving the suture attempted by the subject of the lack allows a sequence of indefinite substitutions that are the ground of a radical historicism and in this sense subject-formation is constitutive of politics.

#### Section 4

#### **Political Communication and Media in a Traditional Order:**

**The *logos*<sup>29</sup> of mass communication and the three crucial points in the analysis of concrete discourses: the relations of difference and equivalence, overdetermination and the unifying effect of nodal points**

Taking into account the theoretical framework of Derrida and Laclau, it seems that the process of *representation* involved in the intervention of mass communication might yet promote innovative ideas in Brazilian society, paradoxically, this innovative idea becomes conventional rather than unconventional. This is because the mass media strengthens agreement and builds

<sup>29</sup> *Logos*, a Greek word has primarily signified in the context of philosophical discussion the rational and intelligible principle, which structures and orders. According to Aristotle's theory (*Topics*), rhetoric encompasses three sorts of proofs or ways of persuading- *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. *Ethos* and *pathos* constitute the affective dimension of persuasion. *Logos* is the third kind of proof, which stands for reasoning or rational persuasion, constitutes the dialectical dimension of rhetoric. But in this chapter, *logos* is also taken as the human discourse which is deprived of an objective truth and therefore remains without referent. As Olivier Reboul (1991: 22) notes, the success of human discourse understood as *logos* is dependent on its aptitude to convince by its logical appearance, its argumentative power and by its style. In this sense, 'the only possible science is rhetoric, the science of discourse' this is because the objective of rhetoric is not to find truth but to dominate by language (*parole*), which is not about knowledge but power.

As Derrida (1973:99) notes in *Speech and Phenomena*, there is an initial limitation of *logos* to objectivity, of language to reason. The common matrix of this limitation is truth, objectivity, is being as *presence*, the maintenance of the temporal present whose ideal identity allows infinite repetition.

resistance against change understood as a disruption of a given order. Structures of signification promoted by the media induce closure and contentment through rationalising strategies of hierarchisation and binary opposition that suppress everything that weakens founding values. The media's own *logos* reflect a dominating paternalistic culture for example. Television's source of power and authority is in the naturalisation of those myths and in the repression of the other world views, suppressing the proliferation of different and clashing identities in society. My intent in this section is to introduce a theoretical interpretation of how hegemonic discourses erase the signs of their own production, how they undo foundations, opening the possibility for re-articulations of the traditional power structure.

### **The relations of difference and equivalence in Laclau-Mouffe's Discourse theory: the possibilities of drawing clear-cut political frontiers in Brazil**

Based on Laclau and Mouffe's framework of discourse theory, I develop the proposition that the electronic media are weakening the possibilities of drawing clear-cut *frontiers* in society. My hypothesis is that on one hand the electronic media reinforce the *instituting moment* of society, which, in Laclau's terms, is the political moment. Whilst, on the other hand, television's *logos* conceals the other dimension of the political, namely 'the incompleteness of all acts of political institution'<sup>30</sup> that involves the contingent production of the social link. By these means, television filters contingencies preventing the de-centring or rupturing of society and also expands the creative power of a political oligarchy vis-à-vis the dynamic events in society.

### **The subjective bases of language**

In very schematic terms, there are two mutually exclusive possibilities of reading a text<sup>31</sup> and watching a television programme: on the level of themes - a primary denotative text, and on the level of figuration, a secondary connotative dimension that is the most mediated. *Metaphor* corresponds to Saussurean paradigmatic relation held *in absentia* as it is a synchronic relation

<sup>30</sup> See Laclau, (1995) 'Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony', (mimeo), pp. 2-3 where Laclau mentions the importance of the deconstructive approach as highly relevant to the two dimensions of the political - difference and equivalence, as opposed to the 'social'.

<sup>31</sup> See Paul De Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, (New Haven

concerning the ways in which a signifier in a signifying chain may be substituted for a (signifier) ONE in another chain. *Metaphor* is a trope that compares one thing by describing another and which deals with the selection of linguistic items allowing their substitution. *Metonymy* is a trope in which a term is used to denote an object with which it is closely linked, corresponding to the Saussurean syntagmatic relations held *in praesentia*. The combinatory property of *metonymy* links linguistic items sequentially and simultaneously. The working of the hegemonic logic requires however, the break of the isomorphism postulated by Saussure between the order of the signifier and order of the signified and the awareness of the difference between the two orders in formal terms. This change is decisive for hegemonic analysis that whilst encompassing a psychoanalytic perspective it is not concerned with meaning but with the dissociation of truth from meaning and with the autonomisation of the signifier, breaking thus with the dependence on the signified that characterises a rationalistic conceptions of politics.

In terms of a hegemonic analysis that incorporates a psychoanalytic perspective allowing the exploration of the unconscious detached from the search for an ultimate meaning, *metonymy* is linked to *displacement* and *condensation*,<sup>32</sup> and *metaphor* to identification and symbolism. According to the Lacanian theory, *metaphor* works through condensation, and *metonymy* works through displacement. Since displacement is logically prior to condensation, *metonymy* is the condition of *metaphor* in the same way as desire (of what is not possessed) is the condition of love. The two dimensions of language, paradigm and syntagm that encompass the psychoanalytical concepts of *displacement* and *condensation* and also *metaphor* and *metonymy* can be useful notions to clarify the purely persuasive and authoritarian discourse of the mass media. A 'syntagmatic' political speech would be the one taking on a semblance of factuality, with little space in it for comment and would generally be 'metonymic' in character. In spite of the welding of the functional units of the horizontal discourse, distension and expansion of this sort of discourse enable the infiltration of paradigmatic elements and this incision which is composed by ideological marks,

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and London, Yale University Press, 1979), p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> These different kinds of overdetermination are explained later in this chapter.

reconstitutes the narrative as a meaningful discourse. A non-neutral discourse would be predominantly paradigmatic, insofar as its voice would be committed to an ideological position.

Comparing linguistics and politics, Laclau and Mouffe assert that the logic of simplification of political space is the *logic of equivalence* while the *logic of difference* is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity. The logic of difference, which defines the increase of meaning, 'tends to expand the syntagmatic pole of language, the number of positions that can enter into a relation of combination and hence of continuity with one another'.<sup>33</sup> The logic of equivalence, which accounts for exchanges of dissimilarities and comparisons of similarities, elucidates the determination of values because it 'expands the paradigmatic pole - that is, the elements that can be substituted for one another - thereby reducing the number of positions, which can possibly be combined'.<sup>34</sup> Taking the Brazilian case, skin colour, education, language, housing, clothing and customs are qualities related to differential moments in the society which are made equivalent by the traditional domination which preserves the class structure and divides the country into privileged and under-privileged. The equivalence between, for example, 'black', 'slum inhabitant', 'manual worker' etc. creates a second meaning - under-privileged, which through association with the first, subverts them and the several moments acquire the *floating character* of *elements* that can be articulated differently within different discourses but which contain something identical underlying them all.

Conciliatory mechanisms of power such as the Brazilian television tend to reproduce the same hierarchical structure of meaning through the equivalential *reduction* of its highly aesthetic and motivated metaphorical language that attempt to dominate the field of discursivity. *Metaphors* are able to unify a certain discourse by partially fixing the identity of its moments with reference to a certain symbolic code. This is also true of the expansion of a syntagmatic concatenation through, for example, non-stop messages that correspond to an increase in the opportunity for creative or paradigmatic interventions. The latter rise to *empty signifiers* or *nodal points*, as signifiers emptied of any precise content partially fix meaning within signifying chains, guaranteeing the hegemonic

<sup>33</sup> Laclau & Mouffe, (1985), p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem.*

universalising effects the consolidation of a given narrative irradiated from a particular sector in society.

### **Overdetermination and Communication: the working of displacement and condensation**

The repetitive communicative process forwarded by television is strongly determined by the working of *overdetermination*<sup>35</sup> that gives social identity a symbolic form, since identity is achieved as a fusion of a multiplicity of identities. The over-determined presence of some identities such as the mass media, in others obstruct their closure, leading to increased *displacement* of meaning through which relations of contiguity are constructed. Television promotes not only the transferral of the meaning of one particular discursive moment to another, but also gives rise to *condensation* of meaning through which emerge the fusion of a variety of meanings into *nodal points*. As privileged discursive points, *nodal points* partially fix meaning within signifying chains that allow a unifying effect producing and supporting the hegemony of political identities through the building of clusters of definite meanings by television discourse that empties signifiers from their content. It is because of this emptying that certain signifiers are able to assume the role of unifying a discursive terrain.

It seems that the double operation of *displacement* and *condensation* empowers the mediatory role of television as a conciliatory mechanism of power, since television represses the destabilisation of a given discourse, disarticulating social identities and political action. *Overdetermination* that occur at the symbolic level, induce television discourse to repress the *dislocation* that otherwise would necessarily introduce change in the hegemonic situation. It is through *overdetermination* that the electronic media exclude events and new social demands that cannot be domesticated, symbolised or integrated within the dominant discourse. As I will discuss in chapter 4, the *displacement* and *condensation* of democratic and non-democratic discourse is among the most important outcomes emerging from the prevalence of a motivated language forwarded by the mass media in Brazil.

Figurative meanings involved in metaphorical discourse put forward by the electronic media, blur *institutionalising* or segregated policies stressed in political discourses, giving them the expression of a unified project. On one hand, this blurring process empowers *institutionalising* or conservative claims with a paradoxical *mobilising* capacity because of its *equivalential* nature, in Laclau's terms, whilst on the other hand the operation of *displacement* of meaning represses *mobilisation* by destabilising claims, since it restores their differential features. As I will explain in chapter 5, Brazilian television is able to integrate in its hegemonic discourse important popular mobilisation, such as the Landless Movement in Brazil, doing so by disqualifying members of the Movement considered to be disoriented low-life individuals, apt to invading farms. According to this viewpoint, by absorbing *mobilising* discourses and *institutionalising* them, a dominant discourse produces a stabilisation of the political terrain. This occurs since the *institutionalising* discourse gives rise to a particular sort of a non-subversive discourse of equivalence that does not contribute to the building of a radical imaginary. This is clear in demagogic proposals for political change which do not divide the social camp but only cause adhesion to a superficial unifying ideology of the new, of the moment, of modernity<sup>36</sup> in opposition to disruptive change.

Populist *mobilising* discourses constitute the best example of rhetoric strategy that benefits from television's *equivalential* language, to such an extent that populist claims appeal to the receiver's imaginative or affective referential. According to Laclau the mobilising discourse shows three defining features:

- (1) Relations of equivalence and difference should be ambiguous insofar as the *equivalential* dimension is antagonistic. Moreover, relations of equivalence are related with homogeneous qualities of the crowds and retain prevalence over relations of difference. Conversely, the latter are more related with institutionalisation and discriminating qualities in the society.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of overdetermination comes from Freud [1900] *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

<sup>36</sup> This ideology of modernity describes not only television as a whole but also its verbal aspects that give privilege to presence and details by means of metonymic descriptions of the immediately visible. Metaphorical strategies are also of great interest for the analysis insofar as they disguise the imperative character of television grammar giving rise to a poetic language.

- (2) Populist discourse is hierarchical and this is confirmed by its appeal to the oppressed 'underdogs' in opposition to 'top dogs'.
- (3) The Empty place is the principle of unity through relations of equivalence, meaning that the emptier the place is the more a new leadership will unify the crowds.

To conclude this point, the complementarity between the differential and equivalential discourse is the source not only of mass media autonomy but also the foundation of political autonomy acquired by political leaders in the 1990s. Given the loss of legitimacy of certain liberal institutions added to socio-economic crises, politicians now claim for political stability searching for their legitimacy on ontological grounds. This movement is encouraged by the electronic media and runs in the opposite direction to modernity and differentiation of the social fabric.

### **The freezing of old Antagonisms**

The distortion of the Brazilian political system and the lack of free play and credibility of political parties both derive from the freezing of old antagonisms. By means of argumentative strategies that intensify individualism, presence and the cult of personality, the mass media strongly contribute to the fixation and sedimentation of traditional social identities by the creation of a natural identity. This naturalisation of contingent discursive forms removes society from the political moment of undecidable decision-making to relatively fixed social relations, opposing the constitution of new collective social identities. Media strategies are permanently removing political speeches from their undecidable and open terrain in this way assisting the consolidation of the 'non-ideological' and 'a-political' *one-nation discourses*.<sup>37</sup> This can be grasped as a discourse of counter-insurgency that at once reinforces old differential systems and appears as the discourse of 'the new' by means of a metaphorical reactivation of language. The equivalence process, which infiltrates in the *one-nation* discourse, does not necessarily create new limits in society but displaces

<sup>37</sup> It is important to note, however, that in 1989 Collor's one nation discourse was skilfully disguised as a discourse of rupture that did not refer to any antagonistic positions in the Brazilian society. In the same way, in 1994,

meaning constituting new perspectives of seeing the same by means of an aesthetic discourse. This occurs to the detriment of antagonism and the clear-cut *politics of frontiers* that, on television, has been reduced to a mere exchange of criticism and insults between political currents.

The *one nation* discourse, which has the advantage in the mass media and generally preserves the status quo could be characterised in Auerbach's (1957) terms as a process of *parataxis*<sup>38</sup> marked by,

The absence of precise connections between the parts...the hearer is left free to imagine between the events a relationship that by its very lack of precision, assumes a mysterious, magical character: in this way moreover it can sometimes produce a highly dramatic effect.<sup>39</sup>

*Parataxis* does not appear to impose a particular viewpoint because it enables social demands to be segregated from their chains of equivalence and thus transformed into objective *differences*. This expansion permits the displacement of the frontiers of antagonism to the periphery of the social. In this sort of discourse, the notion of being is central, the person is considered to be 'the support for a series of qualities, the author of a series of acts and judgements, and the object of a series of appraisals'.<sup>40</sup> This is why the secondary discourse of connotation is paramount in political communication, since it lends authority to the enunciator rather than that which is enunciated.

### Connotation and the Logos of Mass Communication

The prevalence of *ethos* and *pathos* characterises the *logos* of mass communication; that is, the means by which television mediates through a 'truthful' discourse based on the prevalence of intrinsic or indirect evidence. One example of this prevalence is in the use of *connotations*<sup>41</sup> that

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Cardoso's one nation discourse was accepted exactly because his own image was that of a left-wing intellectual.  
<sup>38</sup> In Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, (New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> Perelman, Chaim & Tyteca Olbrechts (1958) *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, (London, University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 157.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem.*, p. 295.

<sup>41</sup> As John Stuart Mill notes in his *A System of Logic* ([1843], 1919:25) that the first writer who, in his time, adopted the word *to connote* was James Mill, in his *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*. The latter used the word applying it to every case in which a name, while pointing directly to one thing, includes also a tacit reference to some other thing. In John Stuart Mill's (1919:19) perspective, 'all concrete general names are connotative'. Connotations signify the subjects directly and their attributes indirectly. In this sense a connotative name denotes the subjects and implies, involves or indicates its attributes: '...the names given to objects convey any information, that is, whenever they have properly any meaning, the meaning resides not in what they denote, but in what they connote'. See J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, (London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), p. 21.

he/she gives to reality through the use of places (*topoi*) of argumentation. Throughout this thesis, I use the term *connotation* in Roland Barthes' sense of 'criticism of connotation' (1974:6-10) as he considers that denotation 'is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of connotations' (Barthes, 1974:9). I agree with this viewpoint according to which denotation seems both to establish and to close the reading pertaining to 'language as nature'. However, in my empirical approach to political proclamations in Brazil, I propose the study of the two supposedly different systems – denotation and connotation, since my intent is to find out how television interferes in the game where connotative and denotative systems refer to each other. I aim to show whether an illusion of truth is increased or decreased when television becomes a privileged arena for political persuasion. Looking at political proclamations in different media, it seems that innocence of language and politics can be more challenged by the electronic media than by written party manifestos since, through representation, the electronic media politicises particularities that become the locus of universalising effects. The chain of equivalence that it comes to represent contaminates these particularities universalised by television. As I will show, television seems to favour a more mediated and connotative communication than party manifestos do.

Popular agreement around *broadcast* messages relies on the use of *connotation* whereby meanings come not from a pseudo scientific and logical argumentation but from the subjective or inter-subjective dimension meeting users' feelings by means of a persuasive language. Through redundancy and repetition, *connotation* conventionalises certain systems of signs that become accepted by all members of the community. Conversely, in their written form, political manifestos

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The first serious articulation of this question was by Gottlob Frege in *Function and Concept* (1891), *On Concept and Object* (1892A) and *On Sense and Reference* (1892B). This author shows that functions (arguments) are fundamentally different from objects (the things signified). Frege (1892a: 49) argues that 'an object is something that can never be the whole reference of a predicate, but can be the reference of a subject...language has means of presenting now one, now another, part of the thought as the subject'.

*Connotation* was also a term used by Hjelmslev and Roland Barthes (1974) to describe signs with a secondary meaning. This in opposition to denotation or first order signification used by Ferdinand Saussure to describe the relationship between signifier and signified within the sign, and of the sign with its referent in external reality. According to Barthes (1974:7-8) connotation designate a subjective or inter-subjective dimension of language. Regarding the hierarchy of denoted and connoted, Barthes observes that to deny connotation 'is to abolish the differential value of the texts'. This is because connotation is 'the way into the polysemy of the classic text'. See R. Barthes, *S/Z*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1974), pp. 7-8.

introduce codes that are more closed and logical and therefore correspond to a type of argumentation, which is supposedly *denotative*, pseudo scientific, objective and impersonal. As previously stated, the logical argumentation, centred on the search for scientific truth, is not the main component of television messages, since they do not stress communality and similarities amongst the majority of the people. Television broadens common sense and restricts objective signification impeding the affirmation of adversarial political forces. As I will show in the methodological chapter, *connotation* and *denotation* constitute basic concepts used in my empirical analysis of *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary* rhetorical strategies to investigate the building of hegemonic discursive constructions in party broadcasts and manifestos. I am aware that all sorts of strategies are interrelated and cannot be isolated, as in the case of a qualitative approach. Notwithstanding, I am proposing such classification for the sake of a quantitative analysis that is used as the first step to a qualitative approach and thus requires a very schematic view of political proclamations. Given this preliminary explanation, the relation between the three rhetorical positions is the following: while the *primary* rhetoric produces an illusion of truth that consolidates a system of differences, the *secondary* rhetoric advances an equivalential logic that re-organises discourse around *nodal points* or empty signifiers. The *tertiary* rhetoric is composed of terms that are meant to threaten and disrupt the *primary* discursive system of differences, blocking the identity from the inside. However, as the *constitutive outside* is internal to discourse, it is the prerequisite for the construction of the identity of the inside, the antagonistic role assumed by the *tertiary* discourse becomes superfluous because this role is always forged by a *secondary* discourse that constitutes its limits.

To deal with the prevalence of the connotative aspect of political communication on television, and how secondary discourse follows the logic of iterability and hegemony, I have created two methodologies to account for the empirical dimension of these philosophical questions, which I will explain in the next chapter.