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Challenges to Brazilian Society on the Construction of the Nation

AJS – Hello everybody, we are now starting our International Forum of Ideas, which, in this present day, March 29th 2017, will count with the participation of Professor José Medeiros da Silva, who holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of São Paulo (USP), and is currently a Professor at Zhejiang International Studies University, on the city of Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, and I, Antonio Marcelo Jackson, who also hold a PhD in Political Science at the Research University Institute of Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ) and am a professor at the Federal University of Ouro Preto. Our theme today is: Challenges for the Brazilian Society on the Nations' Construction, on the understanding of nation. Professor José, it is always a great pleasure to talk to you, and even more with your situation being rather peculiar when compared to mine, since you are a Brazilian residing in China for several years now and a university professor. I will now give the word to you, so you can start explaining the challenges are for the Brazilian society for the construction of an idea of nation. Once again, it is a pleasure.

JMS – Professor Antonio it is a pleasure and an honour (to participate in this forum). Before making any consideration, I want to thank you for your efforts on the establishment of these connections, which enable the construction of joint reflections. I want also to thank our technician friends at the Federal University of Ouro

Preto, who are also dedicating a bit of their time and labour to register this meeting.

Brazilian universities have played a very important role on the country's development and on the construction of the very concept of Nation and it still has much work to do. From the academic point of view, the very concept of Nation is very recent at least on the meaning it can have now, that is, an identity which connects various existing groups to a determined social space.

As this is well known, let us not go into too many details, which might be a little boring for our audience, but, in a common sense, the idea of nation, as an element that unites all people, and, while uniting all people, it also produces benefits for all people. In this sense, an idea of nation that is not excluding of others – that is, of other nations – this is the main challenge for Brazil.

I believe Brazil can construct an idea of Nation which is universalizing, and this will be our difference when comparing to other countries. Why? Because we [Brazilians] are prone to being inclusive from the viewpoint of ideas, ethnicity (if this concept is still fitting nowadays)... we have an opening for this, this social fabric that we call Brazil, Brazilians... is like a patchwork made out of many parts [peoples]² coming from all over the world to make something new.

I am really attached to the idea put forth by Professor Darcy Ribeiro³, of a concept [of nation] which is opened, and exactly because it is opened, it is inviting, so we can create the nation that we want.



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So, before we go into the debate about the challenges for the Nation's construction, I would like to highlight this issue of the construction of something which has a bias towards the universal, and not towards the other's exclusion.

AJS – Just to complement your initial talk, José, and also to everyone who is watching or hearing us, [it is necessary] to think that the idea of Nation, the very linguistic expression Nation, presupposes precisely an idea of universality [of a social group], an idea of inclusion and not a principle of exclusion.

You call to our attention, and I would like to highlight it, because it is very relevant, that when we speak of the idea of Nation – and I agree with you – without going into a theoretical debate about it, the idea of Nation is very recent. It would be, one could say, if having to give a concrete answer, from the 19th century onwards... that a serious discussion starts to be made.

In more superficial terms, this discussion comes from the 18th century, as it is shown in the Eric Hobsbawm's book, he who was the first great scholar about this in "Nations and Nationalism", which is a very famous book from this English Historian. He claims that this discussion will seriously appear at the end of the 19th century, and the 20th century will be the great moment, the great challenge for the idea of this debate about the concept of Nation.

Now, to be sure, it matter little the way we define it, the idea of nation will always come from an idea of inclusion, and on this you are absolutely right and I subscribe to your words.

There is no way to think about Nation as something which excludes, as something which separates peoples and groups. This is unconceivable inside the very concept.

JMS - I would add that my vision of inclusion is not only in the sense of internal groups, but it is also in the inclusion of other Nations. The inclusion via connections, because what has to prevail is an idea of humanity. Thus, inside of an idea of humanity, the groups which organized through countries, or other forms. How do these groups will develop certain characteristics, or certain skills, anyway, or make certain syntheses of their evolution process, this process of transiting throughout territories, or throughout the geographic space that we call Earth. How do these groups synthesize certain experiences, and, from their encounters with other human groups, these syntheses can be shared for the common prosperity of mankind as a whole. This would be without impositions, and of course, but starting from revelations, demonstrations, and the other, absorbing this knowledge or not depending on how pertinent that is for their own well-being. This is an ideal that not only I believe, but I also make an effort so as to, in my transiting [through this Earth], I can transmit my own experiences, or experiences of the places I have gone through, lived, from Brazil, the things which I consider positive so that other human groups, in the case they [decide] to incorporate this in their day-to-day life, they can become more universal. Thus, I see that Brazil has the opening for this universality, and this is the biggest heritage, which can pull us up from these instincts, or keep us away, or at least attenuate in us these primitive instincts from groups that the



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fight for their group make them forget the whole, and not only forget, but attempt to decimate the other. This is something very primitive and Brazil can and should overcome this.

AJS – Making some comments on what you just said, it is interesting, firstly, for anyone who is watching us to think about this: Professor José is maybe an idealist or a dreamer when he talks about the issue of mankind. But then I remind this person, if there is anyone who is thinking that about his most recent talk: the interaction among peoples exist naturally. There is an almost infinite list of examples which are the fruit from the most myriad interactions in language, habit, cultures. Translating this into practical examples: in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, that is, in the historical cities of Minas Gerais (a province in Brazil), we can find many examples of art which bear Chinese influence. This came from a time when Macau was a Portuguese colonial city in China and all these contacts made a ripple effect that reached Brazil and influenced first-hand the Minas' Baroque Art. I can also find, for example, on Japanese cuisine the Tempura, the very word comes from “Tempero”, which is the Portuguese word for spices. In other words, when you, José, talks about interactions, multiple influences, they happen normally. What is scary, and that is where I think we should highlight is, if on one hand these interactions happen naturally, when Politics enters the fray, these interactions seem to have never existed or to should not have existed. This is, in my modest understanding, something completely schizophrenic. I mean, don't think that anyone is an island. This phrase is a platitude, but it is also quite true. We are all mutually influenced, we live on the same planet, so there is no way to escape this reality. But I think this first aspect that you call [to attention] is very relevant in order to think the challenges of Brazilian society: remembering that we all influence each other mutually. Our cultures are forged starting from these multiple interactions. Therefore we are not exclusive, we are not unique, much the opposite, we are multiple. This is the great truth.

JMS – I think this multiplicity in Brazil, and you, professor, highlights it with much propriety... this multiplicity in Brazil is even more marked it is the great Brazilian value. The reflexion I am trying to bring here, it is that we must build with this [Brazilian] multiplicity, but also to be opened to an even bigger multiplicity, to the point of that romantic sentimentalism, the one that based the birth of Nations and that is not damaging. That the nation is not an end in itself, but it is still opened to universality, as a historical reality of a process that is still being built. This is what sets [Brazil] apart, it is to have no fear of being universal. In the sense that we perceive ourselves as just one mankind and that we value other groups and other Nations, its peoples and its course on the face of the Earth. Also to add some examples, I would say that many habits... I will give one many cited example: Greece, the cradle of wisdom, still had the institution of slavery as something natural and that thinking was altered. Nowadays, who is the one who accepts the practice of slavery as being normal? This was seen as normal – and a point of pride for some social strata. Another example. Here in China, I was observing, what western influences we have, and I was reading some documents from the 16th and 17th century from the Jesuits who were here and the great debate with the Confucians,



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with the followers of the thoughts of Confucius, a great Chinese sage (from the year 400 B.C.), and one debate of many Jesuits with Confucian thinkers was about the issue of one man having the right over 3 or 4 women [or many more]. There was a whole debate about this. Nowadays, the very Chinese legislation forbids this [polygamy]. This was not an Eastern thinking, this was a thought brought by the Jesuits, that is, by a different social group. This now has generalized into Chinese society and he [the Chinese individual] doesn't even realize that this was acquired.

I see for example, in the universities, when I finish a class on a Friday, and there are no classes on Saturday or Sunday. Well, this is nothing but Western. The Sabbath is Judaic and the Sunday is Christian. With this, a group of works perceives this as good for its resting, that this is a conquest, that it is an elevated value and incorporates this on its day-to-day practice.

Because the workers, the people, they start to see the relevance of free time, of time for their family... of course Sunday here will not be dedicated to go to Mass, or Saturday to go to a Synagogue, but the worker enjoys it to stay with her family, walk in a park, leisure time, resting etc...

So, this a knowledge sharing that the other social group perceive as relevant to itself and adopts it, adapting it to its own reality. Of course, there are many Chinese contributions scattered over the globe. [Talking] about technology we know the contribution of compasses and paper, without mentioning gunpowder, that was not only used in fireworks.

AJS – Pasta, bicycles, umbrellas, this was all invented in China. I don't know what would be of the world without China in this respect.

JMS – So, I think that this ideal, it might be a dream, in the sense of a wanting, but those dream which have pertinence must be cultivated.

AJS – Without a doubt. And now angling towards the central issue of our talk. So we reached the conclusion that, in cultural terms, these interactions will happen naturally, will it be inside societies themselves, among the many groups that compose these societies, or between [external, foreign] societies. It is of little importance if we are speaking about regions which are in opposite sides of the planet.

So, it seems to me that the actual problem is when that thing called political power appears, this is where things get tricky. That being about another country or the country itself. [In this sense], thinking about the theme of today's International Forum of Ideas: thinking about the challenges for the construction of a Brazilian Nation.

Thus, could it be said that the groups who compose the Brazilian Nation, when we talk about political power, that they do not accept these interactions? I mean, can I say that the problem starts there? How can I deal with the groups, from the diverse regions of Brazil, which many times do not accept each other? Or even when it comes to social strata, a group that has more resources, that is, has more money, doesn't accept the



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group that has less resources. Can it be that the problem becomes evident when political power gets into play? This is the question I pose to you. JMS – Professor, you put forward a very profound question, and I had the privilege of hearing from him in some ponderings, when I notice that he also has elaborated on the matter. I rather like dedicating some of my time to think about these issues, and I try to observe the historical formation, the historical process that constructs these political groups and their modes of organization, their filling of the political space, of power structures and, when they hold this space, they are able to normalize society or impose their point of view. Well, we know that the people is a new element in social climbing [and only recently] it has gained space to enter the place where social functioning is normalized and organized. This point is important so that we understand the process of social inclusion... I would not even say social inclusion, but in the sense that new segments from other social sectors will seek space and bring new ideas, oxygenating the sites where power is yielded. [All this] is a very recent process on the history of people and, in Brazil, even more recent. Before you had the nobility, who defined what was right and everybody followed suit. After that, with a bigger opening, where military sectors, coming from the Paraguayan War, etc., etc... will put their boots in there [in the power structure], their cannons... but they will also bring [into power] feelings from the people, making new openings in that space. Now, for instance, we are searching for space inside universities and other institutions... Many times we become captives of these modes of operation, but new things, which alter that mode of operation will never cease to exist. So, this process of maximizing the number of people involved to find a common denominator that is beneficial for the whole of society is very new. This is all very recent. In this sense, I think that the number one challenge for the edification of a humanly dignified Nation is to think territory as a whole, of course, because it is the space where we, legally, have the right to be and stay, and to think, in a first glance, as if this was the first layer, taking [as an example] the image of a painting. In a first layer it would be the territory, which would be the whole [the screen itself]. So, on the foreground there is the people, the human beings.

Human beings, those who are Brazilians and those who are circulating around Brazil temporarily or in some other fashion. After that, we would have all in depth, the wealth, environment, fauna, flora, culture etc., but the first great challenge is an answer on how to make these people who are born in Brazil, raised in Brazil and live in Brazil are not afraid of the future. Are not afraid when it comes to food, shelter and that they have the minimum condition to experience life in some comfort, and thus blossom in a more elevated plan.

This would be a second moment, which is, talking with the society as a whole, debating what the challenges that we will have to confront are. For example, the challenge to prevent this madness for cattle herding and soya bean plantations to exterminate the 'Cerrado' biome, things in this sense. So, you begin to involve [Brazilians] in a concrete action to defend [Brazil]. That is, Brazilians will take hold of Brazil, territorially, in the sense that they perceive how territory is being used, how the resources are being extracted and how the people is being taken care of.

So, in this sense, politics will have to give these answers because politics is the space of bargaining when striving for [social] equilibrium. The problem is that, nowadays,



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politics is being used as a tool for [power] appropriation by the means of force, which is an already constituted power, and from this force there results the strengthening of certain groups. That is, we have people who are incapable of realizing the whole, that cannot visualize the 205 million Brazilians, and they wouldn't need to have this capacity; they could just operate a "software", using our statisticians, our knowledge that is scattered through the universities and know how these people are doing, where they are, what are they biggest hardships, so as to not become a prisoner in this language of the market, of the commodity, that is, a resistance so as we do not become commodities, to not 'reify' ourselves, because they are reifying us... of course that there is a part [in us] that can be 'thing', but we cannot be 100% 'thing', because we would incur on the risk of not existing as a human being.

I believe that the challenge is very complex, but very possible to be realized as long as there are more Brazilians involved, not to immediately propose solutions, but so as them, together, build solutions, just like we are here doing at this International Forum of Ideas as we are starting with the idea of Brazil. What contributions can Brazil give to the world?

AJS – See if I am understanding correctly. You are saying that, firstly, in historical terms, the greater participation of people [in politics] is something very recent and that this participation will generate something we could call fear – or some other name we could call it – in relation to this future that is now uncertain, that it is not anymore that moment in which only one small group would participate and in the name of this fear, this power winds up being disputed and serving only the interests of few groups. Would this be, more or less, what you said? Or am I going wrong here?

JMS – You are not wrong, but I would make it clearer. This first part is right; people's participation is really recent, that is, there existed groups who controlled the countries, and now, inside myriad groups, be it in companies, universities, churches, armed forces, what have you, we have elements that came from the people and, by social climbing, by studying etc... get to enter these groups which were very closed up before. This is a first point.

Secondly, these groups, or this power dynamic, is closed. So, if, for instance, a 'Lula' goes into power [it is even a pun], if anyone gets in, even you, having an origin from the people, it is very possible that this [political] machine, programmed to have its own functioning, does not permit openings for those ideas brought by other social segments, from those segments that were excluded and that start to have a say inside this system. So, usually, if you enter, you get swallowed up in there. However, although these groups get swallowed, there is always something that can be done and this open new cracks in the system. Something like that.

So let us say, Machado de Assis, he is included as a great writer, and he is a great writer, however, his social conditions, he is accepted in this social environment because he managed to squeeze through the pre-requisites of social classes that dominated at the time.



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AJS – So I think I am understanding. Rectifying what I said previously... so there is a machine, which is the political power that was made, it was programmed – using your words – to work in a certain fashion in which only an infinitesimal number of people are able to govern the country. However, historically, a process takes place, where a greater number of people start to enter this milieu, they start to participate in this issues and then the machine reacts. Is that it, then?

JMS – Precisely. But we have to be able to stop this machine, and make it spin in another axis. Because, for instance, I ascend socially to political power, even though I come from a class, a social segment from Cana-Brava [small Brazilian city], at Rio Grande do Norte, where the illiteracy rate is very high, where people do not have jobs, or have a job and earn very little and I was able to do a Bachelor's, a PhD, have a good salary etc... and, from there, I start to exult my own merits. Then I start to put a weight on my whole social basis that it did not manage to get this ascension, that it did not follow on my tracks, like there was space for everybody from that strata to get that, which is false! And so, instead of using my ascension to value my social base, to value its working efforts, its contribution on the building of the country and to show that it can and must perceive this country as a whole, take power of the nation and contribute, regardless of them going to college or not, regardless of them knowing to read or not, but [conscious] of its capacity and potential as a human being. If this happens, then they will include themselves on the process of construction [of the Nation], instead of being a person controlled by me.

AJS – I understand it completely.

JMS – So the challenge is that we break with these chains of command. That is, a complete freedom, but at the same time cooperative; it will not be A, B or C skillsets that will be on the top of a propaganda or a circumstantial need that will impose and determine that one human being is more skilful or more capable than the other to [control] the collective of beings. And then, yes, these humans will perceive themselves as important and they will be able to exit this closed centre of the defence of private interests and construct something that is really theirs. **AJS** – I understand it completely. I find it curious, José, I will not remember the name of the person, because I got it from a piece from the French International Radio (RFI), and I got this piece already ending, this person giving an interview, and the name of the interviewee was not cited again. It was in Portuguese, this interview. I am citing this because of the coincidence with what you just talked about. He is a Brazilian man who does his PhD in Economics in France. And he analysed the eight years of the Lula government, and what was his conclusion? He said that the greatest mistake of the Lula tenures was that, despite having implemented a very strong income distribution policy, he did not break with the country's core economic structures, that is, he augmented the number of people with access to goods and services – via the distribution of income – but did not alter the structure (that was there for the past 500 years), of the Brazilian economic model. This



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(imprecisely) rings very close to what you are talking about, but you are thinking about the political structure, and the lad over there made a thesis about the economic question, but it seems to me that [these ideas] are very closely related. You started talking and I remembered this interview that I heard over a year ago.

JMS – Yes. It is because liberation does not come through what is material. At the moment you stimulate consumption, you are reproducing a system in which Brazilians do not include themselves in the protection, care and edification of the country, because you have this paternalistic idea of the great leader... that I am the leader and you need only to trust me, as opposed as you trailblazing, since you are in the centre of a political power, opening cracks in it, so that more and more people will come into the process of the edification and caring of this space in a responsible and solidary manner, be it on the defence of our cultural goods, historical goods or natural goods etc... of knowledge and knowledge institutions, as universities and so on... At the same time making a production basis that is firstly aimed at the physical well-being, in the sense of feeding and care for the people as a whole, independently of social classes, as a profound human question, and as a second concern, also amplifying the contribution we can give, since we have a great quantity of productive land, to attenuate the impacts of things that are unpleasant for mankind, as the matter of hunger. We now have 700, 800 million people starving. Brazil has a big responsibility. So we must export not only to countries that will give an economic return, we do have conditions, technological, productive etc... to contribute to the attenuation of this situation [hunger] to other peoples. In retribution, we could receive special things developed by these peoples that we know they have. So what would be the social return of agribusiness, tax-paying? Ok! This is important because it could generate public policies. But this need to be very well define according to necessity. Because of that, these generalist discourses, the ones that claim to have a solution for everything, they don't convince me anymore and I do not want to be in the same rhythm with them, for they would want to present me as a leader and guide of a people. Me, much the opposite, I am on my hammock, as the native-Brazilian that I am, in the case of China, I brought my own hammock, but at the same time I want to be active, because I know that the material and immaterial goods that are in my country are also mine – though many will claim that they are not – they are mine and they are others' and I do have this conscience. Although, it is not always that I am allowed to use those goods, to develop them, to add value to them, so they can return to people with this added value. But this is not a problem, this is the limit of a political class... it is their limit, not mine, it is not my mental limit, so, it unrests me, as a citizen, but at the same time I remain calm to transit with these ideas. Because the Brazilian edification is being done... Now I remember a poem from Oswald de Andrade⁴ “Para TELHA, dizem TEIA⁵”, where he plays with language, because the native-Brazilians cannot say the “LH” phoneme, so, we continue to make our “teiados”... that is, the people being people follows on in its great Odyssey to exist and stay. It is from this strength of our people that a solution may arise for an idea of a nation. So those who are big-bellied⁶ and barefoot, those are the ones who can even live in China and work in a university, or they can be there like Professor Antonio [in a Federal University], coming out of the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. Or like Rafael, who leaves from Campinas and goes there [to



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Beijing, to work at Xinhua News Agency], or like Simone, who also organizes this project is now a Professor at the Federal University of the Semi-Arid, or Roger who is a technician there [in Ouro Preto] e so many others... like Danilo [historian and radio broadcaster in Ouro Preto]... millions and millions of Brazilians. The “Marias”, as Milton Nascimento⁷ sings so well. This people is making their rooftops (like in the Oswald de Andrade poem). They are in the hills and favelas, in Minas Gerais, they are scattered all over. So, when these persons are perceived by a ruling elite – when I say elite I do not consider these people important, on the contrary, I consider them less important – but who have an imposed relevance in our current social organization and in plans for the creation of jobs etc... So when they realize that the people has to be seen as a population, be it poor or rich, then we will use the resources of the country for the well-being of this people. Education would serve as fuel, it would make these people find their potential, and they would put their favoured field of knowledge or practice to use, on the caring of their object of choice. If they like history, restoration [of a heritage], go and take care of it, if they like plants, go and take care of it, if they like feeding people, go and do that. That is, a society that, with a minimum of knowledge, the practice of this knowledge would generate a benefit to the whole.

AJS – Without a doubt, and then, going back to your words, we need, then, if not to break it, at least reconfigure this machine, somehow...

JMS – And nowadays there is no need to break it, right? Because with the reconfiguration software...

AJS – It is true, without a doubt... we can reboot the machine without any problems.

JMS – And I believe that we need not to fear. We do not need to follow the rest of the world. For example, I went to Japan recently and had the privilege of going to Hiroshima and fulfilling a boyhood dream and other places like Kyoto, the old capital... Japan has a mode of relationship and caring for the external that is very deep, and I believe that, in Brazil, since we do have many people of Japanese descent, certain practices can make Brazilians in general even better. Now, there are certain things in Japan that I want to be away from. For instance, a society that believes that one must work 12 hours a day, that this somehow edifies the human being... I am radically opposed to that, although I do commend it, and I applaud the ones who want to do that... but I believe that free time, and people working less, in the formal sense, for a company, tightening screws, or doing something for 12 hours, this is, in my view, almost inhumane, and I believe Brazil does not need that. No, we need free time for friendship, to play football, to paint, for samba, for coco (a Brazilian rhythm), to pray, in the case of Catholics or Evangelicals that like to stay in churches to pray or socialize etc... this is a trait of our people... or maybe go to a beach, drink some beer, this characterizes us. And, of course, a sense of been active and social responsibility on



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working as well, but let this not be a enslavement of your own body and a taking up of time of an individual. Imagine that an individual has a very great potential and he is confined to working 30, 40 years in only one sole activity that limits him as a being. So, we need not to be afraid of this debate. Imagine one who decides to go to the Amazon, to learn the foods of a native tribe, to learn one of the 180 languages spoken in Brazil, and go to a group in the Federal University of Ouro Preto, or the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte or there on the “Aziz Ab’Saber Garden of Science”, that is where I have my social activities in Cana-Brava at Rio Grande do Norte, or here in China and share the images of that social group, or making “beiju” [Brazilian delicacy made from Tapioca]... this deserves applause, this is very useful for the edification of what we call Nation. Because the edification of our notion is the caring for this diversity, just how you said it in the beginning.

AJS – That is right, and I think your train of thought is extraordinary and it brings to anyone who is watching an enormous succession of reflexions. First, and I will begin by the ending... nobody is talking about a “pasteurization”, a standardization of the world, where everyone will be the same. No, nobody talked about that. Differences are important, and they are important because they are the ones to interact among themselves and produce new things that will interact with other things and so on, to infinity. Secondly, the conception: when you talk about a “power machine”, constructed over the centuries in Brazil, this machine does not comprehend that the population, the people has grown and its participation grew with it, that is what calls for the necessity of us reconfiguring this machine... for sure. And following your train of thought, and there I return even more to your comments, in the fantastic example you gave, that some people foll themselves, they take their self-example, of a person who left the countryside of Rio Grande do Norte, goes to a federal university, does a Master’s degree and takes a PhD in São Paulo and now is a professor in China. Or I can cite my case: a sub-urban from Rio, from a very humble family, that also goes to a public university, a master’s degree a PhD and now I am a professor in Minas Gerais... and then people look at my example and say: anyone can do it. That is a lie! We know it is not anybody who can do it, and this machine does not allow that. Some people manage to escape the machine’s gears, and some people do not reproduce that image from Chaplin tightening screws in “Modern Times”. Some people escape this, but this is not the rule... the rule was made so you get swallowed by the machine, and you said this very well. You get co-opted and ends up reproducing [this logic]. One comment that I think is key in your reflexion, when I cited that professor who was studying his PhD at Sorbonne and you said: it is proven, there is no point in making a distribution of goods without changing the conception of ideas. That is, it is not good enough for you to raise consumption without the ideas being altered in the same proportion, because then you do not solve the problem, I believe your comment was precise, and that all you said leads to many other ponderations. And it is always an immense pleasure to talk to you, because I will always learn.



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JMS – I want to leave to the records here that I had the pleasure of including Professor Antonio on the list of my professors. In fact, I have reached an age that I choose my professors, and I have professors in the middle of people as well. So, nowadays I observe the people who stayed there in my homeland, and I always go back with much affection, and they stayed there, working with a hoe, in that hard work to live and take care of their children. Of course, I managed to have a vision of the world which is very different from theirs, but today I realized that all my conquests are nothing compared to theirs. It is not as if I envy them, but, had I not left, and stayed working the fields, it would not have been bad for me. What is missing is that we cherish these human beings, not that we give them a value that they do not have, but see the value that they do have, the value they have as a human being, as a worker... with their parties, their beliefs, their hopes, with the gift of hospitality, socialization, which are very Brazilian things that cannot be lost, wherever you go, we have this feeling of being embraced, this feeling of socialization, of identification with the other, apparently so different. These elements must be on the composition of what we call elevated national elements, with which we identify ourselves and we fight to defend them. Not only with the Brazilian National Team and so on, which is also good when it qualifies to the World Cup, as it happened now. None of that excessive nationalism, when, without that, we will not be happy. We will be happy, we have the gift of being happy. Professor Antonio Jackson, as a great scholar on the field of music, is making very beautiful programs about the [history] of Brazilian Samba, and I believe these programs, made by the Federal University of Ouro Preto's Radio, are of the highest quality, and should reach public schools, so that teachers will see that, so that they take it to the classrooms, so that community radios reproduce it. Because, by reproducing these essential elements for the construction of a Brazilian identity, this leaks out and irrigate the hearts and minds of the people.

Think about a man like Noel Rosa⁸, he is a national heritage, like Pixinguinha⁹ is, and they cannot be forgotten. So, our mission, as educators, is to propagate these values. Imagine Nise da Silveira¹⁰, I am now thinking of Rio de Janeiro, or Darcy Ribeiro, or Professor Aziz Ab'Saber¹¹, they gave many profound contributions to Brazil, so, putting this to our youth, so they can perceive them and continue them, bringing their energy, or an even more advanced vision of things. I was also thinking on my doctoral supervisor, Professor Oliveiros Ferreira¹². It is a generation of people with their areas and their limitations, but who already gave great contributions for the edification of this nationality. So, our work is to stimulate this youth to perceive this beauty that was already developed in various fields of knowledge, on the arts, music, science and in other fields, and make this predominate as the elements of day-to-day conversations, the elements of our national interest... as opposed to some buffoonish TV programmes that are around, that we may use 0,2% [of our time], even to rest, that are of a very low cultural level, but that should also not be excluded... see my respect.

But, come on, you dedicate 100% of your life, that has such an amazing and beautiful potential, to these things is a waste! Literally.

AJS – That is right! Look, José, our talk was fantastic. We start our work like this, our International Forum of Ideas and we will have many more. We will still have Simone to



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join the conversation, Rafael and all guests we are going to have during the duration, which I hope is long, of our joint project. It is a multinational project, and that is a fantastic thing. Involving China, Brazil, two different regions in China, two different regions in Brazil... and showing that this world, like Tolstoy said, still is a little village, and we should take very good care of our village.

JMS – Let us take care of our village, and just so as a reminder to our public, Hangzhou, the city I am now, is not such an old city, but already has about 2700 years.

AJS – (Laughs) It is a teenager!

JMS – Marco Polo made a registry of Hangzhou in his travels, there is a statue of him here with the phrase saying that the city is the most beautiful he saw when he was in China. So it is a very special city. So, to all our listeners, or viewers in the internet, that will have access to this chat of ours, they are invited to visit it. And Professor [Antonio] as well. It is a dream of mine to organize [an event] when he can be invited by my university so he can visit us.

AJS – It would be an honour

JMS – Recently, 3 or 4 years ago, [Hangzhou] was listed as a World Historical Heritage, just as Ouro Preto. So this connection between Hangzhou and Ouro Preto (two cities who are Historical Heritages for mankind), and also Beijing, because Rafael is, in some form, connected to us, that also has many Historical Heritages, it is a better space so we can begin from this particular and universalize this particular, making connections among people, sharing experiences. So that many Brazilians are occupied in this great task that is the preservation of this history. Whether we like it or not, it is what we have! It is not about likings, but what actually happened.

AJS – But our history is beautiful, all histories are beautiful. The way we tell it is what counts, let us be honest.

JMS – We cannot finish without citing our very own Carlos Drummond de Andrade¹³, that he speaks about Robinson Crusoe, and he did not know that his story was much more [important] than Robinson Crusoe.

AJS – “I did not know that my life was more beautiful than that of Robinson Crusoe”, this poem “Infância” is wonderful.

JMS – So I think Brazilians have to see the importance of their history, appropriate themselves of their history, of their territory, and determine themselves to build Brazil.



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AJS – Without a doubt. José, it was a great pleasure. And thus we finish our First International Forum of Ideas, with this always great pleasure of our talks, and we will have others for sure. I hope all can watch and talk that listen to it and can read the transcriptions of the Forum have the same pleasure I did with this learning that I always have with you. You are also a professor of mine, there is no doubt about that. Thank you very much, José!

JMS – Thank you professor!