

Bakhtin and the BMV group: incongruências of an orthodox linguistics

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Resumo

Para os autores russos, um signo tem que ser fiel à realidade mas o que é, de fato, "ser fiel", o que é "realidade"? Eles também sugerem que o pensamento só se estrutura por signos - como Peirce, que inclusive nega a realidade dos sonhos - caindo na aberração de dizer que o ato de sentir fome é expressão ideológica e os gritos de um recém-nascido já são manifestações apreciativas desse novo ser. Os autores inspiraram o estruturalismo, dizendo que um semiodiscurso estrutura os homens, que, como tais, nada podem. Apesar dessa instância, a palavra permanece neutra, afirmação estranha às suas raízes hegelianas e marxistas; o paradigma deles, ao contrário, só pode ser heideggeriano, segundo o qual, não há diferença entre o ser natural e o ser ideológico, só existindo o ser "marcado": olhando uma determinada coisa, eu a «situ», eu a enquadro em seu contexto. Situar é atribuir sentido e isto é mais estoico do que, de fato, marxista.

Palavras-chave: linguística, ideologia, signos, Saussure, formalistas, estoicos

Abstract

For these Russian authors, a sign has to be faithful to reality. But what is, in fact, "to be faithful", what is "reality"? They also suggest that thinking structures itself only by means of signs - as Peirce, who denies the reality of dreams, as well - falling, in the aberration to say that the act of being hungry is an ideological expression and the cries of a newborn are already appreciative manifestations of this new human being. The authors that inspired structuralism say that a "semiodiscourse" structures men and there is nothing they can do. In spite of this instance, the word remains neutral, which appears to be an odd affirmation due to their Hegelian and Marxist roots; their paradigm, in contrast, can be Heideggerian, according to which, it does not have any difference between the natural being and the ideological being, only existing "the marked" being: looking at one determined thing, I "place" it, I fit it in its context. To place something is to attribute sense and that is more Stoic than, in fact, Marxist.

Key Words: linguistic, ideology, signs, Saussure, Formalism, Stoicism

1. BAKHTIN, VOLOCHÍNOV AND MEDVEDEV, BMV GROUP AND NAIVE POSIÇÕES

At the same time when in Vienna the Logical Positivist Circle was already operating intensively and when, in Germany, the Frankfurt group was being constituted based on Max Horkheimer, the BMV group was being created in Russia. It aimed at the critical study of western linguistics, at criticizing Freud and Russian formalists. Among the three participants of this group, only Mikhail Bakhtin survived Stalinism.

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His two comrades died: Volochínov, who is possibly the co-author of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, published in 1929, died in 1934, and Medvedev disappeared in a Russia concentration camp in 1938.

The disappearance of two participants of this group raises various assumptions and suspicions about the joint work. Why Bakhtin had never had serious problems with Stalinism and kept teaching, publishing his books and researching on Dostoievski and Rabelais? Would Volochínov and Medvedev be mere secondary characters, who let Bakhtin use their names so he could publish his ideas without being persecuted? Or the opposite, they really did write those books? Wouldn't it be a concern of the Soviet Union itself to erase a dark chapter of its history, the times when dangerous scholars were sent to extermination camps? Why was Bakhtin seen as "master" if the other two had his age?

In the beginning of the work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Roman Jakobson asserts that all of these books were written by Bakhtin. Marina Yaguello, who wrote the presentation of the book, reinforces the thesis that the other two ex-collaborators only lent their names and that "there is no doubt regarding the authorship of the works". But Tzvetan Todorov, author of *Mikhail Bakhtin, o princípio dialógico*, expressed a different opinion, in 1981. Todorov says that among those books, the authorship of three articles signed by Volochínov must be restored to Bakhtin, but *Sobre o freudismo*, 1927, which was preceded of extensive study (*Do lado do social. Ensaio sobre o freudismo*, published in 1925), whose authorship was attributed to Volochínov. Also, no one tries to attribute to Bakhtin the authorship of Medvedev's *O método formal*, which was preceded by the article "As atuais tarefas da ciência histórico-literária". In Todorov's opinion, these three works, *O freudismo*, *O método formal* and *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem* are, in terms of writing as well as due to its strong controversial orientation, very different from the style of Bakhtin's work on Dostoievski, written in 1929, and of the following works. This means, he says, that it is impossible to erase these names.

Therefore, we will continue to discuss in this essay *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem*: we will quote it as a work written by Bakhtin and Volochínov. It is important to point out that the book shows a clear change in style from chapter 4 to the end. The previous chapters, 1 to 3, are positive, austere, and dogmatic; in chapter 4 and after, when the linguistics issue itself appears; the style becomes more modest, the language is blander, precise, and meticulous. One could deduce that Volochínov inspired the beginning of the book, while Bakhtin took care of the rest, but the hypothesis that notes were exchanged in this work is not excluded.

In the beginning of the book, in the argumentation that presumably belongs to Volochínov, it is possible to identify features from a rhetoric that is common in texts from the 20th Century historical and dialectical materialism, which aimed at impose itself through style and not through reason. The first pages of *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem* seek "truly objective" demonstrations, unquestionable logics, affirmations whose validity are irrefutable. There is a strong scholar's tone, a professor's attitude of someone who is speaking *ex cathedra* and is trying to validate what he says as being true, just and correct. For example, the intention of the authors is to build a "truly objective psychology" (p.48), and the "objective apprehension of inner experience" (idem). Marxism, at that time, did not see frontiers for its enlightened aspirations. For them, the inner sign – a questionable concept from the logical point of view – is something that can be accessed by the fact that it can be exteriorized, in other words, since it is real, it is rational and, therefore, there are unfathomable spaces for the method.

This is justified by the fact that the main aspect of the logic that guides the first chapters of this work is the ideology issue, in Marxism, as an object of study that has to be seen through an objective and scientific point of view, according to the proposed method. In order to do so, the authors use dual logics, according to which objects have a double dimension: they can be things in their pure state and, eventually, also be ideological signs.

Bakhtin and Volochínov say that objects and projects, in short, any human creation, is a project as well as “something else” and this something, besides being itself, reflects and refracts an external reality and is the mirror of something that is foreign to the object, something that was added to it: “everything that is ideological has a *meaning* and cross-refers to something located outside itself” (p. 31). Well, this last sentence does not present anything new if we consider that men normally give meaning to things, which only exist in society when they have a sense; the issue here is something else; it is to suppose a previous existence, *free* from meanings.

In the first part of the work, the authors will insist on the separation of “natural” facts or objects, which are not part of the field ideology and are studied by biologists, botanists, physicists. They would be *discrete* objects that later acquire the status of sign through ideological assignment. For example, the sickle would be a mere working tool of the peasant, but when associated to the hammer, it becomes an ideological sign and acquires another dimension, it is fetishized. It is the dialectic materialist scholar’s duty to solve the puzzle, to show this duality and to demonstrate that the other dimension is fake, has unreliable aims and is the product of prevaricating intentions.

The thinking model is idealistic, marked by the logics of alienation that Marx appropriates from Hegel. Dualism already existed in Hegel himself, who, when raising the issue whether our thoughts correspond or not to the thing itself, brings back the discussion on Alienation of the Spirit, which, in order to take place must exteriorize itself, be objective in a work and, at the same time, to become strange to itself. Volochínov e Bakhtin see objects the same way as Marx: the sickle, the hammer, the wine, the bread. They are fulfilled when exteriorized, objectified and becoming foreign to themselves. So, the project of these scholars is to give their original form back to them or, in Hegelian terms, to reveal the ending aspect of things by knowing their essence and existence.

The Hegelian model was reinterpreted by Feuerbach in his study about Christianity. In the opinion of this philosopher, man projects in God qualities that actually belong to him and, for this reason man becomes strange to himself. Marx will say that this is not enough and that criticism toward religion is sectorial and that one must dig deeper and look for the reason why man resort to “the opium of the people”. In wage-earning jobs, the economical feature of alienation is revealed: by selling its workforce, the worker becomes strange to himself.

Therefore, to return to the original form means to seek the original form, therefore, it is to look for the thing in its pre-signifying and pre-ideological situations, similar to Peirce’s *fanerons*, such as the cry of the animal, a mere reaction of the body to pain (p. 45). But this is not what happens to the sickle, the wine, the bread. They are all “marked” objects. There is no sickle in its pure state, the hammer, the wine. All of these objects, when created, carry in their body the marks of their history. Heidegger criticized Husserl, because he used to say that Husserl, when seeing a table would walk around it in order to obtain multiple visual aspects that, together, combine to form the idea of “table”: “This is a table”. He gathered everything his memory could keep from the notion of table and, when seeing it, concluded that it was a table. He identified the table by means of a technical look, just like the carpenter or the mathematician, who recognizes the table due to its round features its angles, etc. In the same way, he will see future tables, by following the path of *protention*, extending what he knows from other tables to the ones he will meet in the future.

Martin Heidegger has a different opinion. He doesn’t only see one table; he sees *the table*, initially as a user of the piece. In this table, he says, I write, I leave my papers; in front of it I sit as someone determined to do something. Considering the distance from the light, from the objects, from the door, I see if I am comfortable before it. But, sitting at the table, I see the window, people outside, nature, the blue sky, in short, the whole of which nature is part. All of this acquires meaning to me. This object, the table, is not only something that exists, it is also something that I have available, that suits me. But still, the table

represents time to me: when I bought it, the first times I used it, these scratches that were made when I scraped metal objects on it, so many things...

The problem is that Bakhtin and Volochínov think dually and Husserl, as a lonely man, thinks cartesianly. On the other hand, Heidegger used to say that in general we are not aware of the world or of ourselves. So, it is important that we pay more attention on some objects: this table, this pen, this computer, this chair, this painting, this watch. None of these things by themselves constitute a world of meaning. They are only things. We are the ones who put them together in a whole that has meaning. To observe this whole is, to Heidegger, a prudent concern and not an uninterested contemplation. And we all have concerns, including the ones who are unconcerned. Being-here is never worry-free, we always get to know the world around us and we always consider this world.

The “I” does not exist, unlike Descartes wanted, “by itself”, as something with permanent evidence. When a shoemaker works, he concentrates on the needle, on the shoe, but not on himself. This only happens when he gets hurt, when there is an accident; then, the “I alone” gains meaning, but other than that, his own person is not considered. But Bakhtin and Volochínov think that one physical body is enough, does not mean anything and coincides with its nature (p. 31). Well, even for the anatomist, the body is not something pure, but always a body with a history, it can be a history of addictions, of accidents suffered during life, a sedentary life, the life of a ballerina, or whatever else. For a botanist, a plant is never only a datum, it is always synthesis of the environment from where it lived, from composts it received, from pollution it suffered, from interferences of the environment.

So, an “ideological product” that is different from the product itself does not exist, everything is ideological (if we want to maintain their vocabulary), which means, everything is “marked”. The sickle is a marked object; the hammer is a marked object; the sickle and the hammer together make up another marked object. The fact of cross-referring to something located outside itself takes place with every object, and not only with the “ideological” ones. The question is, if I see all things as carriers of some other dimension: “ideological” (therefore: fake, delusive), I suppose, at the same time, that it is possible to exclude this component that was added to it and be lead to pure things themselves, “in itself”. This is a positivist and scientificist illusion: to think that we can erase what humans have added in things in order to reach their pureness. They necessarily fall into Descartes’ and Husserl’s naiveté.

2. THE THEORY OF SIGNS: “EVERYTHING IS A SING”

For Bakhtin and Volochínov, the sign is part of a reality as well as reflection and refraction of another reality (p.32). It can distort it and be faithful to it. It is part of reality as the phenomenon of the exterior world, they say, as, possibly, other immaterial reality, such as feelings, humors, atmospheres, “scenes”, and so on. The other characteristics, distorting or being unfaithful to reality, evokes once more the ideological dimension.

The authors did not specify what exactly is this “being faithful” to a reality and this causes at least two difficulties. First, the concept of reality, which, it seems that, the authors consider (a) existent and (b) unique to all people. Second, what does exactly “fidelity” mean in this relation with reality?

The discussion about what reality, about what is real or what is not, is very old, we all know that. Plato used to say that the future seems real to us in relation to what is stable, what is eternal. Reality, to him, is the structure of things, the immutable group of laws that rule the world. But the Platonian thought conceives the real by opposing it to the apparent, the illusory, the fictitious, and Nietzsche dismantled this mistake in “History of an Error”, saying that the truth is a mystification and that, with the disappearance of truth, the appearance also disappears, therefore, the real or the apparent do not exist. What really exists is our relationship with the world, which is private, specific and always relative.

We know this from the discussion brought back by Heinz von Foerster and with Humberto Maturana, from *Círculo Cibernético* (Cybernetic Circle). Von Foerster says that there is no external reality and that our brain is what institutes it; on the other hand, Maturana says that, for biologists, reality does not exist and that the researcher that says so is the one who believes to have a privileged access to the world and, therefore, superior than the common man. In his opinion, there are as many realities as observers and we literally create the world we live in, by living it. The discussion, at that point, reminded of Luhmann who, different from them, was sure of the existence of a mean besides men; however, in this world, according to him, it is not an object, but only a horizon and therefore, inapprehensible.

If there is no such thing as one reality, but several realities, it is difficult to conceive the idea of ideology, since it links itself to one single object. So, Bakhtin's and Volochínov's argumentations are invalidated. Therefore, if according to them the sign is part of a reality as well as reflection and refraction of another reality, being able to distort it or be faithful to it. Now, it's a good moment for a small correction on his concept, proposing that signs are part of a good that is common to all, which is culture, but each one reacts its own way before them, seeing what one wants to see. So, they do not reflect "another" reality, but several ones and do not distort anything. In fact, they are faithful to the subjective view, which belongs privately to each person.

Later, Bakhtin and Volochínov say that the word is a "neutral sign" (p. 36) that could suggest a reference to the circulation of the significant in the linguistic chain. The same way as they had referred to the cry of the animal as pure reaction to pain (Peirce's "primeirism"), here they talk about the signal as something that does not belong to the domain of the ideological sign. It becomes sign, possibly, in the following phases. By doing so, they intend to question (Freudian) psychoanalysis, which looks into exterior signals to find ways of interpreting of psychism. And, indirectly, they also criticize Husserl and his theory that expression is the origin of sign constitution, by using this type of logics in the frames of an "idealistic subjectivism". Let's look at this separately.

Bakhtin and Volochínov constitute a model of study of signs that is very similar to the Peircean's. They say that "ideological themes" become, in the individual conscience, indexes of value (for them, "Themes" is the same thing as reality). We have here what Peirce calls "more developed sign", which is created in the spirit of the observer. No longer being "a pure reaction of the organism" (a mere «qualissign» (primerism)) to be a «sinsign» (secundism), which is a path to the *terceirismo* of interpretation. Up to now, there is nothing new. In an equally Peircean line of thought, they say that psychism structures itself in signs and that outside this semiotic universe there is no mental activity. We fall into the same aporia of Peirce: the dream does not exist, since it has its own record and this is why it is, according to Peirce, "irrelevant". (For that, consult my *Escavador de silêncios, "Os equívocos de Peirce"*).

The same way, this excluding view of psychism eliminates all extra-cognitive experiences from the cognitive field. Bakhtin and Volochínov follow, in this sense, an old argumentation of Berkeley: conscience cannot conceive what is not part of it or think what is radically opposed to it and remains external. Therefore, in Berkeley's opinion, it is absurd to admit the existence of a reality whose matter we cannot form an opinion about. How it is possible to affirm something that cannot be conceived? Well, but it is not justified – Deleuze and Guattari say in *One Thousand Plateaus* – why the semiology of a non-linguistic system must resort to the mediation of language? Why linguistics has to be the interpreter of *all* other systems, including non-linguistic ones? This "commodious" presumption of linguistics only justifies itself under the optics of domain and control: all knowledge must be subordinated to linguistics. But things are not exactly like that. In natural codifications, nothing is written (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, quoted on ch. 31 of my work mentioned above) and there are no means to recognize anything as a sign.

The fallacy of linguists, which we clearly saw defended in Richard Rorty (idem) and also in Humberto Maturana, is that we need to use language even to express something that is not part of the domain of signs. Two levels are mixed up here: one says that we need to use the language tool, which is correct, and the other says that talking about things is enough to understand them completely, which is incorrect. Not only it is impossible to understand something completely, but it is also very far from achieving this. It is the domain that is not reached by language, and about which it is not enough talking. The “abstract machine” of linguistics, Deleuze and Guattari say, intend to encompass all strata (*Mille Plateaux*, p. 85). But there is the ineffable, the irrepresentability of the Holocaust about which Lyotard talked in *Heidegger and the Jews*; Nietzsche’s pre-linguistics; Bergson’s non-perceived matter, as well as Merleau-Ponty’s invisible; Lorenzer’s non-linguistic unconscious; all of Michel Serres’ examples about the five senses; and many others.

I don’t use language to “feel” the facts, there is the domain of things that can’t be said, and if I don’t say anything (Wittgenstein), it doesn’t mean that things no longer exist: they survive in their linguistic silence. I notice them without words; they exist and provoke their effects. The concept of “happening” itself is an event that can’t be described by the linguistic field, but at the same time, is central in communication studies. The obsession for explaining everything in words is only justified by the force of a positivist tradition, still strongly present in our environment and that comes from analytical philosophy, according to which everything that is real can be described, and once it is not describable it’s not real. Language occupies the space of materiality in empiricism. These are variations of the theme ‘positivism’ in human sciences.

But Bakhtin and Volochínov go further beyond. According to them, the act of being hungry is already contaminated and it is an “ideological expression” (p. 114), Just like the cries of a newborn baby, which would be a “judgmental orientation” towards the mother. According to the authors, this new human being, who has just entered the world, is already capable of making judgments. But there is more: breathing, circulation, body movement, all physiologic reactions have the same semiotic destiny: they become expressive (idem, p. 52). A visible overlap of physical body and psychic signs and social signs of communication takes place here. Authors defend that ideological signs use previous signs, in conscience, but nothing justifies saying that these, as signs, such as the baby’s cry, blood flow already have the ideological material. It is understood that “using previous signs” (p. 57) means that they use individual psychic material, which is partially social (since it emerges in a certain society, in a certain historical moment), partially instinctive, “animal”. But even this “social” is social due to mandatory contextual insertion (nothing exists if it is not social) and not due to judgment orientation.

This is partially recognized by the authors, but for the wrong reason. They say that it must be established a difference between the “natural isolated” individual, not associated to the real world, “as studied and known by the biologist” (p. 58) and the other individual, as a semiotic ideological superstructure. But the first one does not exist, there is no “pure body”, one that is outside its environment (this would be “robinsoning”, as Marx used to say, it would be an illusion), even for the biologist, as we previously saw. The body is a mix of social and instinctive-organic, but social is not mandatorily ideological, which means in the sense that they use here, as having a “meaning”, referring to something outside itself.

3. AGAINST FREUD, SAUSSURE AND THE FORMALISTS

Bakhtin and Volochínov affirm in their joint work that the thought is subordinated, at the same time, to two systems: ideology, on whose laws it depends, and psychism, which also has its own laws. So, when a patient submits himself to a medical treatment, he makes an “evaluation”, which takes place by means of its individual judgment. And also in that same moment, he considers the enunciative context and seizes, at the same time, a “community of evaluation” in the social mean to which, according to Volochinov, the discourse is destined. However, the authors make this duplicity disappear when describing the process

through which ideology forms us and constitutes us: there is almost no space for individual psychism, everything is submitted to the “ideological magma”. Volochínov, for example, believes that during a therapy session, the unconscious mind of the patient is not against his individual conscience, but against the doctor, against the “other”. The subject is never considered alone: verbal ability does not belong to him, but to the group. In the environment there is a multiplicity of factors that produce this ideological magma, which causes “waves of interior and exterior language” to take place in each one. Therefore, he says, it is not about listening to the unconscious, but listening to the interior discourse that the ideology of a society elaborated in each individual speaker.

In Germany, leftist Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1930’s evoked the presence of social and political aspects in the formation of psychism, but it never purged the intervention of the agents in this process. We will see that the reflections of Bakhtin’s and Volochínov’s positions will reappear, especially in structuralism, for example, in *Anti-Oedipus* and in *A Thousand Plateaus*, by Deleuze and Guattari. At this point, affirmations that the patient’s discourse is not only related to his family drama, but also with the whole society (Reich) reappear. What also reappears is the affirmation that his verbal capacity does not belong to him, the management is always collective and the discourse is a mere “detached fragment of mass”. As we know, this is one of the pillars of structuralism, which had already been criticized in the past, especially by Lévinas, who demands that the responsibility of discourses be also taken individually.

Actually, if we refute the Cartesian assertion that the “I” exists alone and has permanent evidence, which means, voluntarism, there is no reason why accept its universe or that totality imposes itself alone, ignoring interventions made by men. Since Marx, we know that history is made by men, but unconsciously, under given circumstances and realities, but even so, it is “made by men”. The issue is to know up to what extent this intervention takes place; it is evident that we can’t see men as mere molecules, as suggested by Lyotard in *Postmodernism*, but we can look at the process as two independent moments: one of men acting individually and aiming at changing history and another of results, which are necessarily social, multiple, uncertain, impersonal. Results of all kinds of factors that take place at the same time and promote change. Men act individually here and there, he moves, he looks into, he tries, he struggles; and most times he doesn’t achieve anything, but eventually, he contributes to trigger bigger processes, upon which he no longer has control. This can be a possible mediation between these two positions.

Bakhtin and Volochínov put Ferdinand de Saussure in the category of “abstract objectivism”, a method that, according to them, is only interesting due to the internal logics of the sign system. In abstract objectivism, which probably derived from Leibniz’ universal grammar, free-will would not exist under such immutable laws.

As we know, Saussure says that words don’t have any value by themselves and acquire value in games with other words within a language. But Bakhtin and Volochínov say that the contexts of linguistic constitution are not only data, they meet in a situation of conflict and struggle and it is passing from one context to another that changes in the value stress of a word are relevant. This is where polissemia comes from: the interactive game of society and the contradictions it generates.

This can be seen between the speaker and the listener, a space in which the concrete linguistic production takes place. Speaker and listener both perform their own role by judging the situation at the time when any given content is expressed by the living word; this word is not neutral, it comes along with a judgmental stress. In the same sense that Bateson talks about, concerning various plans of verbal language, Russian authors say that when the speaker stresses this or that part of a sentence, when he adjusts intonations, shapes his intentions and colors them with various values, the listener also decodes this level, which is more decisive than the substance of the word itself. The “how” is more important than the “what”.

In a bigger social plan, ideology acquires its form and enunciation undergoes a judgment orientation, as they say. Therefore, besides the sound of a word, its material meaning and purely verbal inter-relations (all of this still according to Saussure's model), it is necessary to add intonation to what is said, the production of sense and of judgment. Therefore, a within the act of enunciating, there is the act of taking a stand.

In the opinion of these Russian scholars, the linguistic game does not take place in the significance level, but also in something they call "theme", which is its insertion in society. Together, theme and significance constitute sense. This can be more clearly seen in the indirect speech. Indirect speech is a speech within another speech: I reproduce what John told me. But it is also to comment on it, an enunciation about an enunciation, they say. So, it is an active component of the narrator. The speech of the other is put within my speech and, when transferring it to my interlocutor, I also transfer my impressions about it. Thus, in acts of speech, stable Grammar forms are not really what matters, but their modification that comes from individual enunciations.

But Bakhtin and Volchínov have a different focus, an internal one, which are the formalists. They anticipate the movement that later would expand throughout Europe, the linguistics that tries to comprehend all other fields of human sciences. The imperialism of philosophies of languages is fought against by these Russians theoreticians when they say that logics, aesthetics and poetics cannot be dissolved in the linguistic field.

However, it is Medvedev who criticizes on this matter, in his *The Formal Method*. According to him, there is a sphere called "semiodiscourse universe", which surrounds man and has meaning, sense, "internal value" and is composed by art, scientific works, religious symbols, myths, material objects. But they only become effectively "ideological realities" when they are put in words, acts, clothing and habits. It is through this process that these objects and these actions become practical part of reality around men. Objectives and acts are "intersected" by "ideologemes", by ideological products, says Medvedev. Man constitutes his social conscience when facing them and the choice has to be made: should I or should I not internalize them? At this exact moment, his conscience will no longer be individual; it will also be (social) conscience. Therefore, the decision marks the passage (the same way as Heinz von Foerster's constructivism, decisions define what is and what isn't information or communication).

As we have seen, in Medvedev's semiodiscourse universe lays the affirmation according to which: everything that is ideological is a sign, therefore, in the submission of this great magma, which is the field of ideologies, to the context of signs (supposedly, the universe of signs is more comprehensive). Ideology builds itself from signs that belong to language. Sign and ideology belong to another order that is not the same order of "natural things"; they are "cultural constructions". But, despite the fact that each domain formulates its specific signs and symbols "the word remains neutral". This is a singular and intriguing assertion. It does not seem that they are restricting, as did Lacan and his chain of significant (in Lacan, there is no politics – or "ideology" – or this conception of neutrality: significant really work and they are the ones, and not the meaning, that constitute the web of social relations and, therefore, have bonding force); what this assertion suggests is that they are thinking as the stoics and seeing words as "bodies", just like the other bodies of reality, which do not exist "alone", but only in relation with a bodiless element. In this case, the enunciative evaluation would be the bodiless element.

Let's remind ourselves of stoic semiology: For the stoics, the thought is a body, as well as the sounds (the word). The body can be represented by a word, which adds to it a bodiless feature without altering it. This way, any intrinsic relation between the word and the thing is suppressed, since words and things are bodies with an additional and bodiless dimension: the word's sense is the bodiless dimension and the bodiless dimension of the thing is its attributes. The thing remains unaltered and words add to it

something that is accidental, they add a happening. Judgments and judgmental associations are also expressible, in short, the discourse involves the relation between things (hence: Medvedev's evaluation).

Considering the communication process, formalists say that it takes place when A passes on a communication X to B. But Medvedev thinks differently and, following Bakhtin and Volochínov, says that the relation between A and B is not limited to that and it changes during the process. And he also says that the X message does not exist without social interaction and that it takes place only when generated in the process, when it is built among them. So, it is the act that, in fact, carries out communication. In the (stoic) moment of the happening, words gain vital energy, becoming ("ideological") realities and becoming alive. But this cannot be explained by the Heggelian model, which seems to be followed by them (through Marx and readers of Marx). But according to Heidegger's model, which, as we previously saw, says that there is no different between the natural being and the ideological being, only existing the "marked" being: when I look over something, I "place" it, I frame it in its historical, physical and cultural context. For the stoics, this act of placing takes place to provide sense, it is the presence of the bodiless and an endowment I give things the exact moment I look at them. Such "phenomenological" appreciation is strange to Marxism, which operates according to structural categories of existence of the thing as "metaphysical" product of ("pure") objects.

REFERENCES

Item 1.

Bakhtin, Volochínov e Medvedev. History of the Group: beginning of the 30's: Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volochinov word together (BMV Group). Volochinov dies in 1934, Medvedev in a KZ in 1938. (Peytard, 1995, p. 11)

Works whose authorship is controversially Bakhtin's. Years 20's: *O freudismo*, 1927; *O método formal*, 1928; *Marxismo e a filosofia da linguagem*, 1929, and *Problemas da obra de Dostoiévski*, 1929. Works officially by Bakhtin, period 1963-79: *Poética de Dostoiévski*, 1963; *A obra de François Rabelais*, 1965; *Questões de literatura e de estética*, 1975. Posthumous work: *Estética da criação verbal*, 1979. (Peytard, 1995, p. 11)

Defend Bakhtin as the sole author: Roman Jakobson, Marina Yaguello and Viacheslav V. Ivanov, who is a Russian semiotician, says that Volochínov and Medvedev "only did some small interpolations; they also modified some parts of these articles and books" (Peytard, 1995, p. 19). *Bakhtin e as máscaras*. They says that Bakhtin did not give out his name because he didn't want to follow his editor's impositions and "the other set of reasons were more personal and linked to Bakhtin's character and his taste for masks and duplication and, also, as it seems, due to his profound scientific modesty". (Peytard, 1995, p. 19)

Bakhtin: suspect? "Bakhtin will never have problems with the regime, he will continue teaching and publishing his books, in particular about Dostoiévski, then, about Rabelais, while Volochinov will disappear in the camps, undoubtedly, soon after the publication of his second book. [...] in the 1970's, a rumor is spread, according to which neither Volochinov nor Medvedev (another member of the group) actually wrote the books they have signed: they would have lent their names to their "master" to allow him to publish safely..." (Calvet, 1993, p. 11).

Obscure facts of the group. "It starts with a non-resemblance that makes Bakhtin a 'master' whose "pupils" were the same age and enables the Soviet Union to erase the possibility that the important, and now re-published, books were written by people that were killed in the camps. It is affirmed that Volochinov, who according to this scenario never wrote anything, died from this absence of works, while Bakhtin, who worked in the shadows, despite Marrism's imposition, was later able to come back to the scene". (Calvet, 1993, p. 12)

About Tzvetan Todorov and his considerations about the relevancy of Volochínov and of Medvedev and the need to remember them, consult Paytard, 1995, pp.19-21.

About the intentions of dialectic materialism. The objective illusions: “One of the most urgent and essential tasks of Marxism is to constitute a truly objective psychology”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 48). (...) “The first and main existing problem according to this view, is the objective apprehension of ‘inner-experience’” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 48).

If it is real, then it is rational. “In its pure form, the inner signs, which is the mental activity, is accessible only to introspection” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 61). “(...) the object of introspection is the inner sign that can also, due to its nature, be exterior signs. Inner discourse can, equally, be exteriorized. (...) Mental activity is not visible or can either be directly noticed, but, it is understandable”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 61)

About Heidegger and the objects, read: Inwood, s/d, Cap. 5.

Item 2

Signs: truth and falsity. “A sign does not exist only as part of a reality; it also reflects and refracts one another. It can distort this reality, be faithful to it or understand it from a specific point of view, etc.” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 32). Sign: fragment of reality “Each ideological sign is not only a reflex, a shadow of reality; it is also a material fragment of this reality”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 33). Sign: phenomenon of the exterior world, “A sign is a phenomenon of the exterior world”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 33). “Originally, the word must have developed itself during the individual’s socialization process and was, later, integrated to the individual organism to become inner speech”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 64)

Word: neutral sign. But the word is not only the purest sign; it is also a neutral sign. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 36). I: neutral = pure significant (which displaces itself).

Sign and signal. The signal is not within the scope of ideology (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 93). Signal reading: against psychoanalysis. “Only an unfortunate group of circumstances and practices of mechanic thought would be able to make certain researchers to see these “signals” as the key to the understanding of human language and psychism”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 94)

The expression: against Husserl (“idealist subjectivism”). “(...) idealism, which originated all theories of expression, also contributed to the creation of theories that reject expression completely, considering it to be the deformation of the pureness of inner thought. Anyway, all forces that create and organize expressions are inner forces. The exterior is only passive material of what is inside. Basically, expression is built inside; its exteriorization is its translation. The result is that the understanding, the comment and the explanation of the ideological fact must move towards the inside, that is, must move in the opposite direction of the expression: continuing, the explanation must penetrate until its internal roots.” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 112)

Traces of Peirce in Bakhtin and Volochínov. “The ideological theme [= reality] always has an index of social value”(...) [In individual conscience] “in a certain way, they become individual indexes of value.” (...) “The index of value is *interindividual*. The cry of the animal, as a pure reaction of an individual organism to pain, has no index of value. It is a purely natural phenomenon”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 45). The evolution of the sign: “Therefore, themes and forms of ideological creation grow together and actually constitute two sides of the same thing”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p.

46). *Everything is sign; all inner activity is expressible*: “What kind of reality belongs to subjective psychism? *Reality, as it is understood by inner psychism is the reality of the sign*. Without a semiotic material, one cannot talk about psychism”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 49). “(...) mental activity is externalized with the help of the sign (...) even though for the individual himself it only exists in the form of signs. Apart from this semiotic material, interior activity itself does not exist. In this sense, *all mental activity is expressible*, that is, it constitutes a potential expression”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 51).

Being hungry is an ideological expression. “(...) although confused, the simple fact of becoming aware of any given sensation, as hunger for example, may not need an exterior expression, but does not need an ideological one...” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 114). *The cries of a newborn baby*: “(...) without a judgmental social orientation there is no mental activity. Even the cries of a newborn are directed to the mother”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 114).

Semiotic material psychism. “All gesture or process of the organism: breathing, blood flow, body movements, movable joints, inner discourse, mimic, reaction to exterior stimuli (light, for example), in short, *everything that takes place in the organism may become material for the expression of psychic activity, since everything may acquire semiotic value, everything can be expressed*”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 52). *About nervous twitches, reflex gestures* see Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 52. And also: “(...) even for the physiologist, even for the biologist, it is important to take into account the expressive semiotic function (and, therefore, the social function) of correspondent physiological processes. Without this, it is impossible to understand its biological role in the functioning of the body. On this matter, the biologist cannot ignore the point of view of the sociologist” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 53).

The ideological uses inner signs. “(...) all ideological phenomenon, during the process in which it is created is related to psychism, as a mandatory step. Repeating: any kind of exterior ideological sign uses inner signs, in conscience. It comes from this ocean of inner signs and goes on living, because the life of the exterior sign is constituted of a process that is always renewed with understanding, emotion, assimilation, that is, by a repeated integration to the interior context”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 57). *Two-way*: “(...) all exterior semiotic expression, such as enunciation, can have two directions: one towards the subject or, from the subjects, towards ideology”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 60). *In the origin, the external*: “Little by little, thought is shaped, based on the ideological system, since it came from ideological signs previously assimilated”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 58)

Bakhtin/Volochínov's robinsoning. “In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is important to always establish a strict distinction between the concept of a naturally isolated individual, who is not linked to the social world, as known and studied by the biologist, and the concept of individuality, which is already a semiotic ideological superstructure” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 58). Double place, relativization: “(...) my thought, since its origins, belongs to the ideological system and is subordinate to its laws. But, at the same time, it also belongs to another system that is unique and has its own laws: the system of my psychism”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 59)

Item 3

The thought is ideological and "psychic". “(...) my thought, since its origins, belongs to the ideological system and is subordinate to its laws. But, at the same time, it also belongs to another system that is unique and has its own laws: the system of my psychism”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 59)

Enunciation is never individual; Deleuze and Guattari used this theory. “Individual enunciation (‘parole’), contrarily to the abstract objectivism theory, is not an individual fact that, due to its individuality, is not part of the sociologic analysis”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 121). “(...) Any enunciation, as meaningful and complete it may be, is only a fraction of an uninterrupted communication flow (concerning, daily life, literature, knowledge, politics, etc.)” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 123).

Deleuze talks about “fragment” (which is the same thing). Also see: “Any verbal ability of our behavior (of “interior” or “exterior language”) cannot be, no matter the case, attributed to one individual, because it doesn’t belong to him, but to his group, his social environment”. *Le freudisme*, p. 182 (Peytard, 1995, p. 30).

Against Freud. Initially, poor criticism: “Psychoanalysis is made of the same flesh and blood as the decadent bourgeois ideology”, Volochínov, *Le freudisme*, French translation, p. 212 (quoted by Peytard, 1995, p. 26). Also read: “Psychic mechanisms easily show us their social origins, an ‘unconscious’ built not against the individual conscience of the ill person, but, above all, against the doctor, against the one who listens, in one word: against the Other”. *O freudismo*, idem, p. 175. (Peytard, 1995, p. 28). Also read: “Every speaker, when building its sentence, is sensitive to the discursive environment. He feels that speaking does not take place without an *evaluation* of the situation in which he expresses (himself), without the evaluation of an enunciative context, which means, the enunciations that are already there. But the *evaluation* doesn’t appear only by means of the judgment/feeling of the individual speaker, there is also (simultaneously apprehended) a community of evaluation that is supposed to exist in the social environment at which the discourse is aimed”. *Freudism*, p. 195 (Peytard, 1995, p. 29). *Volochinov’s mistakes regarding Freud*: understands the clinical dialogue as a dialogue with the other, but not as a conversation (Peytard, 1995, p. 29).

Against Saussure: general linguistics is an algebraic system. In the opinion of the authors, “abstract objectivism” is only interested in the internal logics of the system of signs themselves; the system understood as “algebraic”. (cf. Peytard, 1995, p. 34). Leibniz’ mathematical sign as universal grammar: see Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 84. *There is a system that coerces*: “Among this *formal system of abstract relations*, how the language specialist introduces and structures it, and the *system of rules* that the speaker’s subjective conscience feels as something that coerces, there will be quite a difference”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 34). About the “laws that are immutable and completely deprived of free-will of individual speakers”, read Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 88. *Against Saussure: “The value changes according to the change in context*. Contexts are not simply juxtaposed [...], they are constantly in interaction, in a constant and restless fight. The change in the value accent that takes place from one context to another is completely ignored by linguistics” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf. p. 116, in: Peytard, 1995, p. 35). *Against Saussure: the evaluation*. “Volochinov, thinking about the direction of both the speaker and the listener, in this division of semantics, in which each one performs its role by judging the situation in which they are, says that at the moment when an objective content is expressed (said or written) by the living word, it is always together with a certain *judgmental stress*. In a first level (oral), the speaker distributes stresses on this or that segment of the enunciation, he also modulates his intonations and, from this fact, gives form (modalise) to it, that is, adds values while the one who listens interprets this melody that produces more sense than the substance of words” (Peytard, 1995, p. 37-8). *Against Saussure: linguistics reduces*: “It unilaterally indicates something (*elle monosémise*), ignoring the interenunciative game of society and contradictions generated by it, which make the word, the verbal sign, to have an essential polissemic status”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 37). *Against Saussure: language as membrane*. “Volochinov opposes the practice of the speaker-listener to the inventive representation the linguist sets on the language system. We are always in this intersection between the *interior* and the *exterior*. The subject’s language-capital builds itself within and for the everyday experience of exchange. In other words, all signs are contextualized and interiorized as such”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 35). *Against Saussure: meaning and “theme”*. “Theme and meaning. The first one is typical from the enunciative act, which is socially situated. The second belongs to the domain of components of the enunciation”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 37). “We will call its theme the sense of the complete enunciation [...], considering not only linguistic forms [...]. But equally, the non-verbal elements of the situation”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf. p. 142). “The *theme* is the system of complex and dynamic signs. *Meaning* is a technical device of fulfillment of the theme”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929vf. p. 143).

About the evaluation: “Yet more widely, in the environment of ‘general communication’, where ideology acquires its form, all enunciation experiences a ‘judgmental orientation’. In other words, within the exchange and circulation of enunciations an enunciating evaluation takes place”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 38). *Indirect speech:* “The *narrated discourse* is the discourse inside the discourse, the enunciation inside the enunciation, but at the same time, it is the discourse ABOUT the discourse, and enunciation ABOUT the enunciation”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf. p. 161). *About the decision of the receiver:* “More clearly: to narrate an external discourse is to extract a segment of the discourse from the environment, and the act of extraction demands, judgment, evaluation – as it is in the case of the act of insertion”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 39). “It is within the frame of interior speech where the apprehension of the enunciation of the other takes place, as well as its understanding and evaluation, which means, the active orientation of the speaker”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929vf. p. 165). *Against Saussure: what matters are modifications, and not stable aspects.* “From the language evolution point of view, the important aspect of all acts of speech is the stylistic fulfillment and the modification of abstract forms of language and not stable, effective and common grammar forms”. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, p. 76)

Against formalism: the word, five elements. 1. sound; 2. material meaning; 3. verbal inter-relations; 4. word intonation; 5. the sentiment of penetrating in the sense as well as the judgment, in other words, the sentiment of a movement, of taking a position, which referred to the man as a whole... The fifth and last element reflects the other four. (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf. p. 75. In: Peytard, 1995, p. 43. *Against formalism (Russian formalists): linguistic imperialism.* “If we dissolve logics, aesthetics and poetics in linguistics, we will destroy uniqueness in both logical and aesthetic fields. The same thing takes place in the linguistic field.” (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf. p. 57) *Against formalism: embedded objects and meanings.* “There is a semiodiscursive universe that materially contains ‘all the products of an ideological creation: works of art, scientific papers, religious symbols and rituals, material objects, part of the functional reality man is surrounded by [...], objects that have special origins that have meaning, sense, internal value. But these senses and these values are inserted in material objects and in actions [...] that become ideological realities only fulfilled in words, acts, clothes, habits [...], in short, in any defined semiotic material. Through this material they become a functional part of reality that surrounds man” (Medvedev, *O método formal*, vf, p. 7. In: Peytard, 1995, p. 45. *Against formalism: ideologeme* (ideological products in which an object and its value intersect). “*The decision.* How ideology is something a person can build? The individual see ‘ideologeme’, outside himself, but his activity will be of accepting or rejecting them and through this action, he acquires awareness”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 45). “Individual awareness can only become awareness if it is fulfilled in the form of ideological acceptance”. (Medvedev, *O método formal*, vf, p. 14). (Peytard, 1995, p. 45). *Against formalism: There is no “communication” alone.* “In fact, the relation between A and B [in the opinion of the formalists: A passes a communication X to B] is constantly mutating and generating (*changeante et générante*) and it changes itself during a communication process. And there is no message X without interaction. It is generated in the interactive process between A and B”. (Medvedev, *O método formal*, p. 152). “What must be pointed out is that the ‘message’ does not exist alone, as an object, datum/ something finished”. (Peytard, 1995, p. 49). “Message X is not passed on from one to another, but built between them (A and B) as a sort of ideological bridge, it is built within their interaction process. And this process produces at once the thematic unit of the world and the form of its fulfillment”. (Medvedev, *O método formal*, p. 152).

The word as something “neutral.” Against linguistics, Medvedev defends that the word, an ideological phenomenon, is “neutral”: “Each field has its own ideological material and formulates its own signs and symbols accordingly [...], the word, on the other hand, is neutral compared to all specific ideological functions. It can fill all kinds of ideological functions: aesthetic, scientific, oral, religious” (Bakhtin e Volochínov, *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem*, v.f., p. 32, in: Peytard, 1995, p. 32).

Sign and ideology. For Bakhtin and Volochínov, (1) everything that is ideological is a sign (2) technical material is not signs (complete). “Everything that is ideological is a sign. There is no ideology

without signs [...]. An ideological product belongs to a (natural or social) reality as any other physical body [...] but, in addition, it reflects and refracts another reality that is external to it. Everything that is ideological has a reference that sends to anything that is located 'outside'. In other words, everything that is ideological is a sign [...] just like natural phenomena, technical material and consumption products; there is a private universe, the *universe of signs* [...]. Ideology is found where the signs are found. Everything that is ideological has a semiotic meaning". (Bakhtin/Volochínov, 1929, vf, p. 25-27, cf. Peytard, 1995, p. 31-32.

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