

Context as a Space of Creation and Cocreation: A Glimpse at Works of Bakhtin and the Circle / *Contexto como espaço de criação e cocriação: um olhar sobre obras de Bakhtin e o Círculo*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the meaning of context in the works of Bakhtin and the Circle. The research *corpus* consists of works signed by Vološinov, Bakhtin and Medvedev published in Brazil. We set an image related to a space of creation and cocreation where discursive, ideological, cultural or artistic modes of communication exist. Results show four types of contexts: the context of the utterance in the speech communication mode of which borders are locutor and interlocutor; the unique and singular context in semiotic communication mode of which borders are active comprehension and evaluative intonation; the aesthetic context in the artistic communication mode of which borders are author and contemplator in a work of art, author and characters in the novel and lyric hero and his/her other in poetry; and the extraverbal context in the cultural communication mode of which borders are a “I-we” and the event of Being.

KEYWORDS: Bakhtin and the Circle; Modes of communication; Types of contexts; Meaning making

RESUMO

Este artigo objetiva tratar do sentido de contexto em obras de Bakhtin e o Círculo. O corpus de pesquisa são as edições das obras assinadas por Volóchinov, Bakhtin e Medviédév publicadas no Brasil. Partimos de uma imagem recorrente sobre um espaço de criação e cocriação na produção de sentidos, identificado como comunicação discursiva, sógnica, cultural ou artística. Os resultados demonstram quatro tipos de contextos: o contexto do enunciado na comunicação discursiva cujas fronteiras são locutor e interlocutor; o contexto único e singular na comunicação sógnica tendo como fronteiras a compreensão ativa e a entonação avaliativa; o contexto estético presente na comunicação artística cujas fronteiras são a relação entre autor e contemplador de uma obra de arte, autor e personagens no romance e herói lírico e seu outro na poesia; e o contexto extraverbal na comunicação cultural cujas fronteiras são um ‘eu-nós’ e o acontecimento da existência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Bakhtin e o Círculo; Formas de comunicação; Tipos de contexto; Produção de sentidos

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The Possible Problematic of the Meaning of Context

As we go through the works of Bakhtin and the Circle, we realize that the idea of context has a relevant role in the situated process of meaning making and oriented to the other's active response. In Vološinov (1973, p.69),¹ we find some reflections on the functioning of the comprehension of the word by the person to whom the word is addressed. The author says that active comprehension results from the orientation of the word "in a given context and in particular, in a given situation – orientation in the dynamic process of becoming and not 'orientation' in some inert state." What catches our attention in this statement is the syntactic relationship of evaluative equivalence between "context" and "situation." At the same time, this need for syntactic explicitation of two apparently equivalent terms makes room to consider the possibility of a probable distinction in meanings between them.

Vološinov (1973, p.79)² still offers us some more aspects of this same type for reflection on the role of context, when he attests that "the meaning of the word is determined entirely by its context." The author also reaffirms the focus on the situated process of meaning making, establishing a proximity among contexts where words circulate and the various uses, or orientations, that are given to words in these contexts, "there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts of its usage." In another moment, when dealing with the functioning of the utterance in the interlocution process, that is, considering the orientation to an active response, Vološinov (1973, p.73)³ syntactically approximates the context of the utterance to the reality. That is, the utterance concretely means only when the minimum conditions, relating to space, time and person, in the interlocution are observed. In the author's words, the utterance, when it is "divorced from its verbal and actual context," becomes a clause that can be grammatically analyzed, but empty of meaning, since it stands "open not to any possible sort of active response."

This point of view about a possible problematic related to the understanding of context can still be seen when Vološinov (1973, p.80)⁴ states that the work of the linguist

¹ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trad. Ladislav Matejka and R. Titunik. Translator's Preface. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

² For reference, see footnote 1.

³ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴ For reference, see footnote 1.

is far more complicated “by the fact that he creates the fiction of a single and actual object corresponding to a given word. This object, being single and self-identical, is just what ensures the unity of meaning.” From this perspective, the “various contexts of usage for any one particular word are conceived of as all lying on the same plane” with the same meaning: “these contexts are thought of as forming a series of circumscribed, self-contained utterances all pointed in the same direction.” Against this point of view, the author argues that “contexts of usage for one and the same word often contrast with one another,” functioning as replicas “found in a dialogue” and, therefore, distinct whenever they come into contact with each other. The author closes his reflection by saying that “contexts do not stand side by side, as if they were unaware of one other, but in a state of constant tension, or incessant interaction and conflict.”

Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.121),⁵ in the wake of reflections on meaning making in context, argue⁶ that the meaning of an utterance cannot be confused with the meaning of a “dictionary word,” because comprehension must consider the historical and social context in which it – comprehension – is produced. In the authors’ words, the utterance must be understood in its “contemporary context and our own, if they do not coincide” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.122).⁷ This point of view regarding the consideration of contextual non-coincidence directly implies the production of scientific knowledge. For the authors, methodological-scientific perspectives that depart from the assumption that there is one and only context of scientific production, “following subjective instinct,” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.78)⁸ remove the historical and ideological character from the object, and leaves its meaning arising from circulation in the specific social *milieu*. That means that such studies based on intuition about contexts consider the scientific object as an abstract entity, without taking into account the ideological values that give meaning to the object in society where it was originally produced.

Contrary to this, the authors establish that new methodologies must promote a tense dialogue with the scientific thought in force at the moment of production of certain

⁵ BAKHTIN, M./MEDVEDEV, P.N. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship. A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

⁶ In Brazil, nowadays, we understand that the *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* was solely written by P.N. Medvedev, but we will maintain the plural form when relating to this work in respect to the publication of the *Formal Method* in the USA, as shown in footnote 5.

⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁸ For reference, see footnote 5.

knowledge. It is a proposal for production of scientific knowledge resulting from clashes with established methods, opposing to scientific knowledge based on the replication of methods produced in other times and spaces that do not consider the functioning of science and the production of locally situated knowledge. The perspective treated by the authors understands that scientific methodologies resulting from scientific thinking must “reflect the interrelationships of their objects,” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.78)⁹ i.e., they must bring an alternative contemporary point of view about accepted scientific thought.

From this brief survey of some formulations, we realize that there is a possible space for reflection and discussion about the meaning of context in the works of Bakhtin and the Circle. It is evident that the Circle refutes deterministic or mechanistic views about predetermined meanings, being important to the locutor the “new and concrete meaning” (Vološinov, 1973, p.68)¹⁰ that the word acquires at every moment in which it is produced, in each concrete utterance in which the speaker actively participates. For this reason, we must suspect that the sense of context in the Circle’s works should extrapolate the possibility of constituting a static form or an implied meaning in the significant set of works.

Considering these aspects, the objective of this article is to discuss occurrences that may allow a better comprehension of the meaning of context based on the works of Bakhtin and the Circle. For that matter, we focus on works of Bakhtin and the Circle published in Brazil in Portuguese, signed by the three authors: M. M. Bakhtin, V. N. Vološinov and P.N. Medvedev. Since we do not have access to the Russian language to compare the translation with a view to greater security regarding the occurrence of a term in Portuguese, we applied the method of comparison with other translations in English, French and Spanish.¹¹ We considered an occurrence reliable and acceptable when it could be detected in the same syntactic position in two other languages.

⁹ For reference, see footnote 5.

¹⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

¹¹BAJTÍN, M. (MEDVEDEV, P.N.). *El método formal em los estudios literarios*. Translated by Tatiana Bubnova. Prologue by Amalia Rodríguez Monroy. Madrid: Alianza, 1995.

BAJTÍN, M. M. *Hacia una filosofía del acto ético*. De los borradores y otros escritos. Translated from Russian by Tatiana Bubnova. Comments by Iris M. Zavala y Augusto Ponzio. Rubí (Barcelona): Anthropos; Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1997.

BAJTÍN, M. M. *Estética de la creación verbal*. Translated by Tatiana Bubnova. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002.

BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Menneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

In addition to this brief presentation in which we established the parameters for our theoretical-reflective proposal, the final considerations and the references, this article is divided into three other sections. The first section, entitled “Between Two Extremes That Never Touch, There Is a Space of Creation and Cocreation,” moves towards understanding the sense of context as a space of meaning making. The second section, entitled “Forms of Communication and the Place of Production and Circulation of Meanings,” responds to the problem of studying the relationship between communicative manifestations and their contexts. In the third and last section, entitled “The Context of the Utterance, the Unique and Singular Context, the Aesthetic Context and the Extraverbal Context,” we will deal specifically with four contextual forms corresponding to four communicative manifestations.

1 Between Two Extremes That Never Touch, There Is a Space of Creation and Cocreation

Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.3),¹² in their reflections on the relationship between superstructure and economic base, critically dialogue with currents of scientific thought in force at the time they produced their work. These currents tend to consider a direct and mechanical relationship between changes in the economic base and prevailing ideologies. This implies that ideological shifts are directly and vertically reflected in the actions of the economic base and vice versa. This problem, presented by the authors as a kind of theoretical-methodological error, disregards the possibility of the existence of social spaces in which ideologies enter circulation and, therefore, are reworked, re-signified and displaced. The author argues that, at that time, the study of these social spaces of

BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas, 1995.

BAKHTIN, M. M.; MEDVEDEV, P.N. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Translated by Albert J. Werle. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

BAKHTINE, M. *Le marxisme et la philosophie du langage*. Essai d'application de la méthode en linguistique. Translated from Russian and presented by Marina Yaguello. Preface by Roman Jakobson. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1977.

BAKHTINE, M. *Pour une philosophie de l'acte*. Preface by S. Bocharov. Notes by S. Averintsev. Translated from Russian by Ghislaine Capogna Bardet. Paris: Éditions L'Age D'Homme, 2003.

BAKHTINE, M. *Esthétique de la création verbale*. Preface by Tzvetan Todorov. Translated from Russian by Alfreda Aucouturier. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.

¹² For reference, see footnote 5.

production and circulation of meanings was still in an “embryonic stage,” having been very little explored in its particularities, constituting “a certain gap, a shifting and hazy area through which the scholar picks his way at his own risk.”

Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.3)¹³ understand that these spaces, which they call fields of ideological creation, should be studied in their specificities, considering the “distinctive features and qualitative individuality of each of the branches of ideological creation – science, art, ethics, religion, etc.” It happens, however, that the researcher goes through this field, “shutting his eye to all difficulties and ambiguities,” disregarding the fact that “each area has its own language, its own forms and devices for that language, and its own specific laws for the ideological refraction of a common reality.” According to the authors, the scientific thought of that historical moment is based on a static and abstract assumption about the spaces of meaning making, disregarding the fundamental diversity of the existence of these spaces in their function of ideological creation and cocreation.

Vološinov (1973, pp.17-18)¹⁴ makes a similar movement to Bakhtin/Medvedev’s point of view when he criticizes scientific perspectives oriented to the mechanistic comprehension regarding the circulation and meaning making of ideological embodiment of signs established between the superstructure and the base. In other words, there is a problem in the non-observance of the space for meaning making that lies between the varied ideological embodiments that constitute the word, sculpture, drawing, painting, music etc., and the established ideological systems – literature, art, law etc. When these materials are observed in isolation, deprived of their field of circulation, removed from the “unity and integrity of its ideological context,” they lose their value as ideological signs representing a time, a historical position, and become only valid in its formal structure, as raw materials without ideological value. Between the base and the superstructure there is a “long road that crosses a number of qualitatively different domains, each with its own specific set of laws and its own specific characteristics.” Thus, the shifts in meaning occurring both at the base and in ideological systems need to take into account “all the qualitative differences between interacting domains and must trace all the various stages through which a change travels.”

¹³ For reference, see footnote 5.

¹⁴ For reference, see footnote 1.

In this movement of meaning making, the behavioral ideology plays a decisive role, because it allows any material embodiment of signs, whether a word or a work of art, to flow in meanings through the tense dialogic process that it goes through in each sphere of ideological creation. According to Vološinov (1973, p.91),¹⁵ the material embodiment of signs “must enter into close association with the changing behavioral ideology, become permeated with it and draw new sustenance from it,” thus promoting changes both in the established ideological systems and in the base. The author perceives the behavioral ideology as a tense space for circulation, creation, and cocreation of ideological values, as it interacts with both the base and the superstructures.

Vološinov (1973, p.92)¹⁶ perceives two strata of speech circulation in the behavioral ideology: a lower and an upper stratum. The lower stratum refers to those speeches that circulate in everyday life, in the immediate and quick interactions we constantly go through. In this case, “experiences born of a momentary and accidental state of affairs, have, of course, no chance of further social impact of efficacy;” these occasional and quick experiences of the lowest stratum, which occur at the base, will hardly interfere in the constituted ideological systems, generating in them some modification or change given the distance they are from those established ideological systems. On the other hand, the upper strata of behavioral ideology, formed by more complexly organized spheres, for example, the literary sphere, the press, the scientific sphere, are closer to the established ideological systems and, consequently, exert more closely influence of the base on the that ideology. These upper strata “are more vital, more serious and bear a creative character” and, therefore, must be observed in their dialogical movements.

It so happens that the interference of the upper strata of behavioral ideology in established ideological systems is not direct, but gradual and constant. The upper strata interact with the established ideological systems in a dynamic meaning making situation, i.e., the ideological systems also influence the ideological embodiment of signs of the upper strata of behavioral ideology, “the new currents of behavioral ideology, no matter how revolutionary they may be, undergo the influence of the established ideological systems and, to some extent, incorporate forms, ideological practices, and approaches

¹⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

¹⁶ For reference, see footnote 1.

already in stock.” According to Vološinov (1973, p.18),¹⁷ only then can the study of meaning making “result, not in a mere outward conjunction to two adventitious facts belonging to different levels of things, but in the process of the actual dialectical generation of society, a process which emerges from the basis and comes to completion in the superstructures.”

Bakhtin (1993, pp.2-3)¹⁸ brings the same type of image in the treatment of meaning making when he proposes reflections on the relationship between form and content, saying that form is found in life and content in domains of science, of culture, art, history. Form and content belong to two distinct worlds. To one of them, of an ideological character, the content constitutes possibilities. To another, of a concrete character, the content corresponds to life in flow, that is, the world of life is “the only world in which we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives and die.” These two worlds must meet in the unitary and common plane of the event of Being so that the form – life in other words -takes on content; and content – the established ideologies – take on form. The unitary plane of the event of Being allows form and contents to produce meaning as a whole. According to the author, the unitary and common plane of the event of Being is the space for unique and concrete meaning making. It is the place to overcome the “pernicious non-fusion and non-interpenetration of culture and life,” constituting the only way to promote the meeting of these two “worlds that have absolutely no communication with each other and are mutually impervious.”

In summary, we notice that these authors recognize the existence of a field, a sphere, a plane where meanings are produced, values and actions are re-signified. These spaces interact with two extremes, which are mutually interrelated, though not directly or mechanically. Every embodiment of sign that circulates within these spaces, from a word to a work of art, is commented, discussed, evaluated, rejected, accepted, revised, etc. According to Bakhtin (1986, p.92),¹⁹ this happens, because

After all, our thought itself – philosophical, scientific, and artistic – is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others’

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 1.

¹⁸ BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* [1924]. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

¹⁹ BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres [1979]. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.60-102.

thought, and this cannot be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well.

The dynamics of meaning making has in these spaces of ideological creation a complex, dialogically constituted set that does not allow for the direct encounter of the extremes. The two extremes are perceived as the constituted ideological systems and the socioeconomic basis. To the first correspond culture, religion, etc.; and, to the second, corresponds everyday life. Between the sensible world, corresponding to the universe of objects present in a reality, and the ideological systems that guide the social values attributed to the objects of that reality, transforming them into ideological signs, there is an opaque, dialogically constituted space, filled through “distinctive forms of social discourse” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.11).²⁰

2 Forms of Communication and the Place of Production and Circulation of Meanings

Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978)²¹ consider that ideological creation takes place concretely in the space of social communication, constituting “the medium in which the ideological phenomenon first acquires its specific existence, its ideological meaning, its semiotic nature.” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.8) As a result, the valid forms of social communication for a social group “are established for the plurality perceiving the ideological product.” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.11) That means that those valid forms of social communication correspond to the dialogical relationships established between a locutor (speaker, author, writer, poet, etc.) and the target audience, whose response is expected by the locutor.

Therefore, the author points out two constitutive characteristics present in any space of social communication: the “mutual orientation of people” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.13) and the social relationship that promotes inter comprehension. The first characteristic, the mutual orientation of people, considers that “the individual and isolated person does not create ideology,” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.7) hence the importance of social communication in the circulation of meanings within the space of creation and

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 5.

²¹ For reference, see footnote 5.

cocreation. Social communication becomes the live agent in the process of construction and reconstruction of meanings, as it allows constantly evolving signs to become “a practical part of the reality surrounding man” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.7). The second characteristic of social communication is the ability to socially understand a sign, or rather, “the more complex, differentiated, and organized this mutual orientation is, the deeper and more important is the resulting comprehension” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.13).

Vološinov (1973, p.11)²² follows the same direction regarding the relevance of social communication when he reflects on the circulation of “material embodiment of signs,” emphasizing that social communication is constituted among individuals who are “organized socially, that they compose a group (a social unity); only then can the medium of signs take shape between them” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.12). Among the possible forms of social communication, we highlight semiotic communication, through which the specific signs resulting from the “semiotic interaction of a social group” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.13) circulate. Although this form of communication exists for any ideological spheres, as its laws correspond to those of “semiotic communication” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.13) in general, semiotic communication and meaning making occur distinctly for every “ideological sphere,” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.14) that is, every ideological sphere or field “possesses its own ideological material and formulates signs and symbols specific to itself and not applicable in other fields” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.14). According to Vološinov (1973, p.99),²³ “it is precisely in the material of the word that the basic, general-ideological forms of semiotic communication could best be revealed,” since the word is an ideological sign capable of circulating in all ideological spheres, that is, subject to the same laws of semiotic communication.

Bakhtin (1993, p.66)²⁴ brings to fore meaning making that occurs in artistic or aesthetic communication, understood as having a complex nature and organization, once the work of art resulting from this communication process becomes unique, as a consequence of ethical-aesthetic positioning of artist and observer. This results from the fact that the work of art, the result of artistic communication, concentrates both the socio-

²² For reference, see footnote 1.

²³ For reference, see footnote 1.

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 18.

historical values aimed at by the author and the socio-historical values aimed at by the same author for his real or imagined audience with whom he engages in this ethical-aesthetic dialogue. In other words, not only does the author become a “participant of this architectonic,” but he also includes in the work the contemplator himself, imagined or predicted, which implies that the work of art contains within itself the germ of an answer.

In addition to artistic or aesthetic communication, Bakhtin (1986, p.80)²⁵ later mentions cultural communication, which occurs in all spheres of production, circulation and reception of languages. This type of communication implies a specific individual with “an excellent command of speech in some areas of cultural communication,” i.e., the individual of cultural communication is able to adequately interact in various conflicts of meaning with his others, understood here as works of art, scientific projects, socially or formally structured encounters etc. This is an individual who “is able to read a scholarly paper or engage in a scholarly discussion, who speaks very well on social questions.”

It is not true to say, though, that this same individual is able to do well in every and each sphere of communication for this person may be unsuccessful in simple day-to-day exchanges in which “composition is very uncomplicated.” It can happen that this individual “is silent or very awkward in social conversation,” because cultural communication presupposes an individual who is concerned with specific speech production in fields of knowledge and culture. The discourses produced by this individual of cultural communication correspond to those that circulate more closely to the behavioral ideology of an upper level, i.e., in its more structured forms and closer to superstructures. Furthermore, this same individual may have another individual as a direct interlocutor, positioned in another time and space to whom these culturally constituted speeches are directed. Even so, according to Bakhtin (1986, pp.95-96)²⁶

When speaking I always take into account the apperceptive background of the addressee’s perception of my speech: the extent to which he is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies.

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 19.

²⁶ For reference, see footnote 19.

It is undeniable the fact (and we could not fail to mention it) that social communication, semiotic communication, artistic or aesthetic communication, and cultural communication are contained in speech communication, which, according to Bakhtin (1986, p.95),²⁷ occurs between any individuals socially organized in the various spheres or fields of human activity. Speech communication can consist of the production, circulation and reception of simpler statements, which occur in everyday speech manifestations, between a “subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth.” But it also implies the production of more complex statements, arising from a sphere where there is “a differentiated public, like-minded people, opponents and enemies,” In all these cases, we perceive the active responsive role of the other as an “essential (constitutive) marker” of this type of communication.

3 The Context of the Utterance, the Unique and Singular Context, the Aesthetic Context and the Extraverbal Context

Bakhtin (1986, p.68)²⁸ states that the “complex and multifaceted process of active speech communication” establishes the context of the utterance, of which boundaries are, on the one hand, the locutor, who takes the word and addresses it to an interlocutor, and on the other hand, the interlocutors themselves, who actively respond to the demands introduced by the first locutor; that is, “the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.71). The locutor takes the floor, establishing his/her moment of saying, his/her wanting to say and, when perceiving the exhaustion of the locutor’s object of speech, the interlocutor establishes an active response process reverting the speaking role, that is, “the listener becomes the speaker” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.68). This reaction can also be less immediate as more complex utterances often require other interlocution movements, but “sooner or later, what was heard and actively understood, will find its response in subsequent speech or behavior of the listener” (p.69). Thus, according to Bakhtin (1986, p.71),²⁹

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 19.

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 19.

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 19.

Any utterance – from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise – has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and an absolute end: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others.

With the boundaries of an utterance defined as the alternation of participants in an interaction, two main components constitute this type of context: the finalization and the evaluative tones. Finalization, with its three axes of meaning: the referential and semantic exhaustiveness, the locutor's speech will or speech plan and the forms of construction of the whole related to a specific speech genre, offers elements to guide the utterance towards the responsive comprehension of the interlocutor. This means that the locutor addresses his/her utterance to an intended or anticipated interlocutor and, at the same time, makes room for the "possibility of responding to it or, more precisely and broadly, of assuming a responsive attitude toward it." (Bakhtin, 1986, p.76) The evaluative tones produced by the locutor's intonation, on the other hand, promote the necessary colors to the utterance so that the addressed interlocutor can immediately begin his/her process of responsive attitude and subsequent responsiveness. Thus, the context of the utterance in speech communication is not related to the unique possibility of recognizing and transmitting the linguistic form "used, but rather to understanding it in a particular, concrete context, to understanding its meaning in a particular utterance" (Vološinov, 1973, p.68).³⁰

We will deal with the three axes of meaning of finalization: the referential and semantic exhaustiveness, the locutor's speech will or speech plan, and the forms of construction of the whole related to a specific speech genre. These three axes establish a confluence between form and content that indissolubly and concretely make meaning within the space and time in which locutor, and interlocutor meet. It is of relevance to remember that form and content are united not as harmonic elements, but in tension, since meaning is produced in the "contrast between form and content," (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.49)³¹ that is, in the dialogic orientation of the locutor to a form and to a content, considering the intended interlocutor.

³⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

³¹ For reference, see footnote 5.

The first constituent element of the axis of finalization, the referential and semantic exhaustiveness, guides form and content in two directions. On the one hand, the axis allows the dialogue between the locutor and the object of speech, as the locutor does not directly bring the object of speech to the utterance, but brings a situated point of view on it, that is, he actively responds to this object of speech in the utterance, agreeing with it, rejecting it, etc. In the context of the utterance of speech communication, the object is not exhausted by itself, it lives in the chain of speech communion that reinforces it, that challenges it. However, in its orientation towards the utterance in which form and content enter dialogic tension, the content momentarily exhausts itself in a form, opening up space to be contested, responded. Furthermore, the same object of speech must be common knowledge between locutor and interlocutor, that is, it must be socially constituted and circulating in a given time and place. In the words of Vološinov (1976, p.100),³²

The individual and subjective are backgrounded here by the social and objective. Only what all of us speakers know, see, love, recognize – only those points on which we are all united can become the assumed part of an utterance.

The second element of the axis of finalization is the locutor's speech will or speech plan which allows the interlocutor to perceive "the entire utterance, its length and boundaries" (Vološinov, 1976, p.77).³³ Words, expressions, linguistic forms etc. are brought to the utterance by the speaker with the objective of making the interlocutor "embrace, understand, and sense the speaker's *speech plan or speech will*" (Vološinov, 1976, p.77).³⁴ Thus, the interlocutors are given the possibility of an active response as the speaker pronounces his/her first words in the utterance. Since the utterance, which contains the germ of the response, is directed to an interlocutor, this one immediately perceives the speech will in the locutor's first words. The third element, constituting the axis of finalization, is related to the forms of construction of the whole related to a specific speech genre. Speech genres exist and circulate in all spheres of human activity, and they

³² VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Appendix I – Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art (Concerning Sociological Poetics) [1926]. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Freudianism – A Marxist Critique*. Translated by I. R. Titunik. Edited in collaboration with Neal H. Bruss. New York – San Francisco – London: Academic Press, 1976, pp.93-116.

³³ For reference, see footnote 32.

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 32.

may be more or less plastic, that is, allowing or not a greater or lesser degree of interference. The more plastic the genres, the more possibilities for creation and cocreation are open.

According to Vološinov (1976, p.105),³⁵ the evaluative tones given to the utterance, second component of the context of the utterance in speech communication, are aimed at two orientations; “this double social orientation is what determines all aspects of intonation and makes it intelligible.” The first orientation is related to the locutor’s reaction to the utterances in circulation about the object of speech. That is, the locutor’s intonation “scolds or caresses, denigrates or magnifies” the object of speech. Considering that the locutor is also an active respondent of speeches in the spheres where he/she circulates, when constructing his/her utterance, the locutor establishes responsiveness in relation to other locutors, situated in other times and spaces before and after him/her. According to Bakhtin (1986, p.91),³⁶

Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as response to preceding utterances of the given sphere.

The second orientation of the evaluative tones refers to the locutor’s expectation of the target interlocutor’s active response, which implies the locutor’s insertion of possible values from the interlocutor’s purview in the context of production of the utterance itself. In the words of Bakhtin (1981),³⁷ this means that “the speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener’s, apperceptive background,” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.282) i.e., “the word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien context” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.284).

This dialogic relationship between contexts points to the problem of the unique and singular context that occurs in the semiotic communication process, of which boundaries are, on the one hand, the active comprehension, the gateway of the ideological

³⁵ For reference, see footnote 32.

³⁶ For reference, see footnote 19.

³⁷ BAKHTIN, M. M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259-422.

sign into the interlocutor's consciousness, and, on the other, the interlocutor's evaluative intonation, which colors the ideological sign of varied tones aiming at the real or imagined audience to whom the sign will be addressed later. Regarding the active comprehension that takes place in the unique and singular context, we can highlight five main characteristics: ideological and social consciousness, creative assimilation, the possibility of thinking ethically, the clash among signs and the validation of the new sign.

The first characteristic, the ideological and social consciousness, refers, according to Vološinov (1973, p.26)³⁸ to the impossibility of the psyche functioning as something essentially and solely subjective, because “outside the material of signs there is no psyche.” In other words, the circulating and valid ideological signs in the individual's consciousness are not born nor do they circulate within a psychic movement only, that is, they are not restricted to the individual's consciousness. Ideological signs exist in the “*world of signs*,” (Vološinov, 1973, p.10)³⁹ circulating in all fields of ideological creation, reflecting and refracting reality in different ways depending on the field of circulation, as “each field commands its own special function within the unity of social life” (Vološinov, 1973, p.10).⁴⁰

The second characteristic, the creative assimilation of the sign, which according to Bakhtin (1986, p.89)⁴¹ corresponds to the “process of *assimilation* – more or less creative –the other's words.” In the active comprehension of the sign, within the unique and singular context, corresponding to the ideological consciousness of the individual, the ideological signs are perceived as alien signs, words of others that present themselves to the individual in “varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness,’ varying degrees of awareness and detachment.” In the second moment, the individual starts to use these words, ideological signs by nature, in such a way as to let anyone perceive that these ideological signs came from outside, i.e., that they are foreign to said individual, having echoes “of another's individual expression.” In a third moment, the more or less creative assimilation process finally occurs as a whole when “we assimilate, rework and re-accentuate” the words, the ideological signs, in such a way that we no

³⁸ For reference, see footnote 1.

³⁹ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴¹ For reference, see footnote 19.

longer realize that these signs were once somebody else's. Bakhtin (1986, p.88)⁴² states that

Therefore, one can say that any word exists for the speaker in three aspects: as a neutral word of a language, belonging to nobody; as an *other's* word, which belongs to another person and is filled with echoes of the other's utterance; and, finally, as *my* word, for, since I am dealing with it in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan, it is already imbued with my expression.

The third characteristic of the unique and singular context, the possibility of thinking ethically, according to Bakhtin (1993, p.36),⁴³ refers to the contact between culture and life that can only occur through the individual, "from within me as an obligatory participant in it." Thinking ethically allows one to observe life as Janus, i.e., to look "in two opposite directions" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.2). On the one hand, there are valid and circulating ideological systems for a community and, on the other, there is the individual who thinks life over, and, when thinking it, said individual is oriented towards "the objective unity of a domain of culture and at the never-repeatable uniqueness of actually lived and experienced life" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.2). From this perspective, the individual takes a midway position between the world of ideologies (culture, science, etc.) and the lived experience, building meanings for oneself and for the society in which one lives, "every thought of mine, along with its content, is an act or deed that I perform – my own individually answerable act or deed" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.3). Everyone constitutes a "unitary and once-occurrent context of a living consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.36) within which the ideological sign develops through a continuous process that starts from comprehending it, goes through the relationship of this sign with the signs acquired by the individual and ends with active assimilation. The locutor, when confronted with a sign, actively assimilates it, which allows this sign to gain other nuances of meaning, inserting itself into the his/her ideological sign repertoire. The sign lives in a constant "process of renewal as something to be understood, experienced, and assimilated, i.e., its life consists in its being engaged ever anew into the inner context" (Vološinov, 1973, p.33).⁴⁴

⁴² For reference, see footnote 19.

⁴³ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁴⁴ For reference, see footnote 1.

We follow Vološinov (1973) in his discussion on ideological sign⁴⁵ and the inner consciousness⁴⁶ to reflect upon the fourth and fifth characteristics. The fourth characteristic may be understood as a clash among signs internal to the individual's consciousness and the external signs, referring to the moment when signs penetrate the conscience in search of the interlocutor's active response. Active comprehension occurs in the clash of signs entering consciousness with "other already known signs; in other words, understanding is a response to a sign with signs." (Vološinov, 1973, p.11)⁴⁷ The result of this are shifts of meanings in all ideological signs present in consciousness, as neither the sign that has just entered consciousness nor the signs previously circulating in the contextual space of consciousness remain the same. These constant changes are a result of the tension that is created during this clash of meanings, but it is still necessary to validate this new meaning "with an orientation toward an ideological system, and it itself had been engendered by the ideological signs" (Vološinov, 1973, p.33)⁴⁸ valid and shared by a social group.

This is the fifth characteristic of this singular and unique context, i.e., the necessity of validation of the new sign by the current ideological systems. At this point, the ideological sign has been "engulfed in and washed over by inner signs – by the consciousness," (Vološinov, 1973, p.33)⁴⁹ and for this reason it is renewed by the clashes suffered. However, that is not enough as the active comprehension process also means "to perceive the sign in the system of ideology appropriate to it." (Vološinov, 1973, p.35)⁵⁰ That is, where values have already been constituted in "ideological signs that I had previously absorbed." (Vološinov, 1973, p.33)⁵¹ This means that the universe of social values circulating externally is also present and alive in the individual consciousness, which implies that each one's perception of reality is both particular and collective at the same time. It happens that during the sign validation process, the changes in meaning, which occur during the clash with the internal signs, interfere in the one's perception of reality.

⁴⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴⁶ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴⁷ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴⁸ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴⁹ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁵⁰ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁵¹ For reference, see footnote 1.

This takes us to the other extreme of the border of the unique and singular context in the individual's consciousness. According to Vološinov (1973, p.105),⁵² the evaluative intonation, precisely "plays the creative role," generating sooner or later a responsiveness. The new values, constituted by the meanings resulting from the clash that occurred in the individual's consciousness and already validated by the ideological systems present in the same consciousness, need to return to the concrete reality, to the individual's lived world, to the concrete world. The role of evaluation corresponds to the orientation given to the sign by the locutor viewing his/her interlocutor. The locutor prepares the sign to return to the external social reality, focusing on the targeted interlocutors. This means that, considering a real or imagined social audience with whom the locutor will interact, the sign that has gone through the process of internal comprehension is prepared to return to the concrete and real world. For this purpose, the once interlocutor of someone else's sign, colors the new sign with evaluative tones aimed at his/her own interlocutors in order to seek other new active responsiveness.

We can say that the evaluative intonation has a double function, as it aims at the active response of the target audience and focuses on the values constituted in the current ideological systems. As regards the target audience, the evaluative intonation prepares the responsive path of the ideological sign, which is still in the consciousness, aiming at another interlocutor with the objective of establishing a new process of internal comprehension in the consciousness of others. As regards the ideological systems, the evaluative intonation also aims to establish a responsive dialogue with them. This dialogue integrates the ideological systems viewed by the locutor with meaning making, which implies that the nuances of meanings of the evaluative tones placed in the ideological signs aim to establish a point of tension with the ideological values in those systems, provoking a continuously and slowly shifting of those values in the systems viewed.

Social values are reworked in the subject's ideological consciousness in the space of ideological creation and subsequently returned to external circulation. This movement guarantees the maintenance and evolution of the ideological systems by constantly renewing their values. This is the process of creation and cocreation produced within the unique and singular context that works in one's consciousness as a result of the semiotic

⁵² For reference, see footnote 1.

communication in its work to promote the mediation between the sensitive world and the world of ideologies. That is, “only through the answerable participation effected by a unique act or deed can one get out of the realm of endless draft versions and rewrite one’s life once and for all in the form of a fair copy” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.44).⁵³

The third contextual aspect that we will deal with in this article concerns the aesthetic context within artistic communication, organizing the artistic work both externally and internally. This is because the aesthetic context implied in this form of communication points to a complex contextual structure, which bases itself on the author of a work of art and expands to three distinct contextual borders. The first one has the artist/author of a work of art and, on his/her other, the audience/readers, to whom the work of art is intended; that is, the two extremes of this aesthetic context correspond to the author and his intended interlocutor. For the discussion of the second and third borders of the aesthetic context, we need to take into account that in art “every genre represents a special way of construction and finalizing a whole” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.130).⁵⁴ We mean that, as a result of the diverse possible forms of finalizations within a given field of aesthetic communication, our observations and reflections will focus on two aesthetic manifestations only: novel and poetry. We will leave reflections on other manifestations of art for another moment. Regarding the contextual borders of the novel, we can say that they are constituted by the author, on the one extreme, and the characters, on the other. The contextual borders of poetry, in their turn, correspond to the “lyrical hero (the objectified author) in one extreme,” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.66)⁵⁵ and his/her interlocutor, in the other, constituted by the lyrical hero himself.

Let’s start with the author and the intended audience. That is, the first manifestation of the aesthetic context has its borders defined by the dialogical relationship established between the author and his/her interlocutor, his/her real or intended audience. As Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.120) put it, the work of art “is also inseparably enmeshed in the communication event.”⁵⁶ In this respect, the aesthetic context closely resembles the constitutive characteristics of the context of the utterance in speech communication in which the author expects a response from his/her interlocutor through the work of art.

⁵³ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁵⁴ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁵⁵ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁵⁶ For reference, see footnote 5.

The distinction between the aesthetic context and the context of the utterance lies in the treatment of the object of speech of the work of art. The object of speech gives the artistic utterance its status as art because it not only thematizes ideological values, but it concretely materializes those values in the form of the work of art itself constituting its form and content. The thematized object of speech materializes itself as part of the finished whole of the work of art, constituting “the typical totality of the artistic utterance, and a vital totality, a finished and resolved whole” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.129).⁵⁷ The work of art totally exhausts its object of speech, which, in turn, closes in on itself, pointing to the work of art’s own aesthetic construction. Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.130)⁵⁸ argue that the finalization is “a specific feature of art that distinguishes it from all other spheres of ideology,” because in these other fields the object of speech is discursively constituted, therefore, “determined by external factors than factors intrinsic to the object itself” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.129) as in the work of art.

In other words, in the work of art, form, content and object of speech are organically fixed. Therefore, the work of art becomes unique, molded in the material that constitutes it. From this point of view, form, content and object of speech cannot be reworked, remodeled, without dismantling the unity of a specific work of art and so producing a work of art of another aesthetics. The work of art produced in a determined time and space results from the author’s orientation towards the outside, towards “the listener and perceiver, and toward the definite conditions of performance and perception” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.131) in a specific time and space. At the same time, it is also a concrete result of the orientation towards “life from within, one might say, by its thematic content.” (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.131) In the words of Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978, p.135),⁵⁹ “the artist organically places life as he sees it into the plane of the work.”

The second border of the aesthetic context, which concerns the boundaries in the novel, places us in front of two construction designs of a literary work with regard to the relationship between author and character: the monologic design and the polyphonic design. According to Bakhtin (1984),⁶⁰ in the aesthetic context in which the monological design materializes, we find, on one extreme, the author of the novel, whose conception

⁵⁷ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁵⁸ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁵⁹ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁶⁰ BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. 8th printing. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

puts each character, the other extreme, at the service of a single point of view that corresponds to the author's point of view. Each character built under this design "acts, experiences, thinks, and is conscious within the limits of what he is, that is, within the limits of his image defined as reality." (Bakhtin, 1984, p.52) The author's monologic design in relation to the whole work implies a world constituted as the author's world, as "parts of one and *same authorial position*," (Bakhtin, 1984, p.71) whose voice spreads and merges with the voice of the characters. In other words, none of the characters is placed in an equal relationship with the author, that is, they position themselves in a lower position in relation to the author's voice, i.e., as regards the characters, "not a single one ends up on the same plane with the author's word and the author's truth." (Bakhtin, 1984, p.72) The author is the only one possessing excess of seeing in relation to the characters and, for this reason, determines and controls the functioning and circulation of ideas, opinions and points of view. All characters, "with their fields of vision, with their quests and their controversies, are inscribed into the *monolithically monologic whole* of the novel that finalizes them all" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.72).

In the aesthetic context that corresponds to the polyphonic design, the characters engage in dialogic clashes with each other and with the author, because, according to Bakhtin (1993, p.7),⁶¹ Dostoevsky's "major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design, *not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse*." That is, the characters are constituted through a "*plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.6) that circulate their own values and are in an equal relationship with each other and with the author. In the aesthetic context of polyphonic novel "the point of view from which the hero observes the world serves as the dominant in the representation of surrounding reality" (Bakhtin, 1993, p.23).

The third border of the aesthetic context is related to poetry and is constituted by a lyrical hero, on one extreme, who is responsible for the poetic utterance and an interlocutor, on the other extreme, to whom the poetic utterance is directed and fixed in the work of art. The two internal borders of the aesthetic context of poetry correspond to, according to Bakhtin (1993, p.66),⁶² the situation in which "there are two value-contexts,

⁶¹ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁶² For reference, see footnote 18.

two concrete reference-points with which the concrete, valuative moments of Being are correlated.” It so happens that in this type of utterance, the contexts of values, however varied they may be, always turn to the lyrical hero, as it is through the voice of the lyrical hero that the aesthetic border is constituted. Thus, in poetry, the other to whom the hero refers, as “the second context, moreover, without losing its self-sufficiency, is valuatively encompassed (affirmed and founded) by the first” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.66). These two evaluative contexts, however, are not independent, as “both of these contexts are, in turn, encompassed by the unitary and valuatively affirming context of the author-*artist*.” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.66)

The author-artist and the contemplator constitute the two maximum borders within which the aesthetic context, with its other borders, is constituted. All the characters’ movements are implemented “simultaneously in the context of the author’s life,” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.67) who is in a state of interaction with the contemplator, i.e., the author’s expected or imagined interlocutor. According to Vološinov (1976, p.103),⁶³ the valuative intonations establish an “active attitude toward the referent, toward the object of the utterance,” in which the contemplator – “the second participant – is, as it were, called in as *witness and ally*” (Vološinov, 1976, p.103) of the author. The intonations are on the limits between verbal and extraverbal, between the said and the unsaid of the work about a given event. They are emotional-volitional sharings between author and contemplator that can be either explained or implied in the work, as it refers to common knowledge between both of them. Therefore, “every instance of intonation is oriented in two directions: with respect to the listener as ally or witness and with respect to the object of the utterance as the third, living participant” (Vološinov, 1976, p.105).

We come to the last contextual aspect that we will deal with in this article, the extraverbal context present in cultural communication. However, we know that by implying a dialogical relationship with the values of existence, the extraverbal context is present in any types and forms of communication situated and oriented towards an interlocutor. According to Vološinov (1976, p.96), the word, loaded with meanings and present in every verbal interaction, “taken in the broader sense as a phenomenon of cultural communication, ceases to be something self-contained and can no longer be understood independently of the social situation that engenders it.” This means that we

⁶³ For reference, see footnote 32.

can observe the functioning of the extraverbal context in any discursive manifestation in which the word circulates.

The borders that constitute the extraverbal context can be established through the dialogical relationship involving two participants present in the communication and defined, according to Bakhtin (1990, p.92),⁶⁴ as an ‘I’ and the “mediating value-category of the other,” which is not exactly the one to whom the speaker directs his utterance. We will first deal with the ‘I’, of which first clues to help us comprehend it are found in Vološinov (1973),⁶⁵ when the author discusses the first trend of philosophical-linguistic thought in dealing with the problem of the lived experience centered on the ‘I’. For the author, the experience centered solely on the “I,” without a social audience to whom this ‘I’ can address an utterance, “loses its ideological structuredness” (Vološinov, 1973, p.88). Thus,

In the course toward its extreme, the experience relinquishes all its potentialities, all outcroppings of social orientation, and, therefore, also loses its verbal delineation. Single experiences or the whole groups of experiences can approach this extreme, relinquishing, in doing so, their ideological clarity and structuredness and testifying to the inability of the consciousness to strike social roots (Vološinov, 1973, p.88).⁶⁶

For this reason and still according to Vološinov (1973),⁶⁷ this socially oriented ‘I’ is closer to what can be called the ‘we-experience’. In the author’s words, “ideological differentiation, the growth of consciousness, is in direct proportion to the firmness and reliability of the social orientation” (Vološinov, 1973, p.88) of the individual. This ‘I’ from the ‘we-experience’ corresponds to an ‘I’ collectively constituted and oriented, because “the stronger, the more organized, the more differentiated the collective in which an individual orients himself, the more vivid and complex his inner world will be (p.88).” Vološinov (1976, p.100)⁶⁸ reaffirms the idea of this socially oriented ‘I’ when dealing with the role of subjectivity in the constitution “a thought, idea, feeling” of the speaker saying that “the individual and subjective are backgrounded here by the *social and*

⁶⁴ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity (ca. 1920-1923). In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

⁶⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁶ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁷ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁸ For reference, see footnote 32.

objective” (Vološinov, 1976, p.120). We can say with this that the individual’s point of view about his/her world points to and responds to collective values valid for a collectivity.

In other words, the ‘I’ cannot be constituted solely in the inner unity, disconnected from the collectivity where it belongs, as this inner unity can only make meaning for the ‘I’ and for the others if the values, that is, the feelings, thoughts, desires, etc. exist both for the individual and for the participants of that same society. According to Vološinov (1976, p.120),⁶⁹ “only what all of us speakers know, see, love, recognize – only those points on which we are all united can become the assumed part of an utterance.”

We will say, then, that this ‘I’, which is situated on one extreme of the contextual border, is an ‘I-we’, as it is embedded in social values that belong to this ‘I-we’ and to others at the same time. The moment this individual, the ‘I-we’, enters the interaction, orienting his statements to an interlocutor, this ‘I-we’ immediately dialogues with his/her own social values, responding to the demands that these social values impose on him/her. For this reason, we cannot say that the other extreme of the contextual border of this extraverbal context is the interlocutor, i.e., this ‘I-we’ cannot be mistaken for the direct or intended interlocutor of this ‘I-we’ locutor. It so happens that this interlocutor is also a socially constituted ‘I-we’, as he/she also dialogues with the social values valid for the collectivity to which he/she belongs.

Vološinov (1976)⁷⁰ offers us some clues that enable us to make the first approximations towards the other extreme of this border, since this extreme should not be confused with the locutor’s direct or intended interlocutor. First, the author makes it very clear that the interlocutor is not the one to whom the locutor directs the evaluative response. The direct interlocutor is a witness in the process in relation to the utterances produced by a locutor, both of them are ‘I-we’. According to the author, in every dialogic relationship involving a locutor, ‘I-we’, and an interlocutor, also ‘I-we’, there is a third participant whom he calls “the ‘hero’ of this verbal production” (Vološinov, 1976, p.103). This hero allows the speaker to establish a dynamic and vivid relationship with the object of speech of the utterance by means of an intense dialogue with the social values that give meaning to this object of speech, placing it in the time and space of the interaction.

⁶⁹ For reference, see footnote 32.

⁷⁰ For reference, see footnote 32.

Bakhtin (1990)⁷¹ also gives us clues to the understanding of this third participant when treating the other as a mediator of valid social values, besides the author of a work of art and its contemplator. For Bakhtin (1990, p.97),⁷² “the author produces an object of pleasure, and the contemplator passively affords himself this pleasure,” but this mediator axiologically participating in the dialogue is seen as another, one on the outside, who is constituted by ethical values shared by both the author and the contemplator. These values make sense for the author and for the contemplator keeping the object alive, present and vibrant at the moment of interaction.

When dealing with each and everyone’s lives in interaction with the objects in the world and with the meaning of life to oneself, Bakhtin (1990, p.102)⁷³ argues that what comes into play are the values that “are located in *Being*.” This Being can only be understood as an event, as it gives meaning to life as lived experience. According to the author,

My exterior is incapable of becoming *for me* a constituent in a characterization of myself. In the category of *I*, my exterior is incapable of being experienced as a value that encompasses and consummates me. It is only in the category of the *other* that it is thus experienced, and I have to subsume myself under this category of the other in order to be able to see myself as a constituent in the unitary pictorial-plastic external world (Bakhtin, 1990, p.33).⁷⁴

We will call this third participant that borders the ‘I-we’ the “event of being” (Bakhtin, 1990, p.98).⁷⁵ Unlike the dialogue between direct participants, the dialogue with the event of being points to social values located “in the future, in what is desired, in what ought to be, and *not* in the self-sufficient givenness of an object, in its being on hand, *not* in its present, its wholeness, its being-already-realized.”

For this article, we will reflect on two aspects related to meaning making within this space defined as an extraverbal context: the common purview of values and the sympathetic comprehension. The common purview of values deals with social values that are constituted within the set of common social values accessible to the participants at the

⁷¹ For reference, see footnote 64.

⁷² For reference, see footnote 64.

⁷³ For reference, see footnote 64.

⁷⁴ For reference, see footnote 64.

⁷⁵ For reference, see footnote 64.

time of interaction. The second aspect, the sympathetic comprehension, implies “the self-activity of mine in relation to another’s inner world (form outside this world)” (Bakhtin, 1990, p.102).⁷⁶

According to Vološinov (1976, p.119),⁷⁷ the common purview between speaker and interlocutor implies a shared knowledge that corresponds to the “said related to the unsaid (Vološinov, 1976, p.99)” present in the word directed from one to the other. This is due to the composition of the utterance consisting of two parts: “1) the part realized or actualized in words and 2) the assumed part” (Vološinov, 1976, p.100). The verbally performed part refers to the linguistic, repetitive and systematic elements transmitted from a locutor to an interlocutor and they guarantee the unity of the language. According to Vološinov (1973, p.52),⁷⁸

And it is precisely these factors – the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical factors that are identical and therefore normative for all utterances – that insure the unity of a given language and its comprehension by all the members of a given community.

Also according to Vološinov (1976)⁷⁹ the implied part cannot be seen as a subjective psychic act, as an individual point of view about a linguistic event. The implied part must be common knowledge and shared between a locutor, located in his/her time and space, and the viewed or intended interlocutor, also located in a certain time and space. The implication goes beyond the merely linguistic and formal constituents of a language and refers to what is common between locutor and interlocutor, i.e., to common and shared values. In other words, emotions and feelings can only be understood by the other if both participants in the interaction belong to the same context of values of meaning making.

It is precisely in the perception of the unsaid by both the locutor and the interlocutor that we observe the dialogue established with the event of being, the third participant in the interaction. The values that circulate in the common purview where locutor and interlocutor are located are brought to the dialogue and re-signified as a result of the positioning of each of these participants in relation to the event of being. These

⁷⁶ For reference, see footnote 64.

⁷⁷ For reference, see footnote 3.

⁷⁸ Fo reference, see footnote 1.

⁷⁹ For reference, see footnote 32.

values return to the extraverbal context to enter again into other interactions in a continuous movement of evolution of meanings and re-signification.

The intonations of the common purview play a key role in this process, because they involve common social and historical values with an extra layer of meaning. However, this other layer of meaning is not aimed at the direct interlocutor of the interaction, as he/she shares the intonation values used. These intonations turn to the third participant, the event of being, with whom the direct participants engage in veiled or open polemic. According to Vološinov (1976, p.101),⁸⁰ the intonations used during the dialogue with the third participant point to evaluations about the common reality for the direct participants of the dialogue as “assumed value judgements are, therefore, not individual emotions but regular and essential social acts.”

Vološinov (1976, p.102)⁸¹ also states that the intonations produced in the common purview of the extraverbal context place the word “directly into contact with life.” Individual emotions only exist when they accompany “the *basic tone of the social evaluation*,” relying on the “*community of value judgements*,” (Vološinov, 1976, p.100) on the common aspects of the existence of both locutor and his/her real or intended interlocutor. Vološinov (1976, p.100),⁸² argues that

But for us it is another aspect of the behavioral utterance that is of special importance: Whatever kind it be, the behavioral utterance always joins the participants in the situation together as co-participants who know, understand, and evaluate the situation in like manner. The utterance, consequently, depends on their real, material appurtenance to one and the same segment of being and gives this material commonness ideological expression and further ideological development.

We come to the second aspect of the extraverbal purview of values that we will deal with in this article, sympathetic comprehension. According to Bakhtin (1990, p.102),⁸³ in the sympathetic comprehension, means that “the point is a transposition of another’s experience to an entirely *different* axiological plane, into an entirely *new* category of valuation and forming,” i.e., this refers to what is understood about the inner experience of the other. This means that the way we perceive and deal with the feelings

⁸⁰ For reference, see footnote 32.

⁸¹ For reference, see footnote 32.

⁸² For reference, see footnote 32.

⁸³ For reference, see footnote 64.

of others does not occur in the same way as the other one really feels. The perception of the feeling, the feeling of what we believe the other feels, depends on the orientation given towards the values of existence present in the extraverbal context. It is in the establishment of a dialogue between a locutor with the event of being that such feelings, desires, suffering etc. of the direct interlocutor gain meaning and social orientation. They become meaningful through the locutor's own gaze: they are social values for the locutor taken from the existence. This means that the perception of the interior life is directed to the values present in the life perceived as the category of other.

Bakhtin (1986)⁸⁴ points to this same sympathetic comprehension when dealing with the concepts of witness and judge in relation to consciousness in and about the world (in the event of being). Each of us is a witness of the event of being while we are also judges of that event. This implies that, on the one hand, we witness and perceive an event as common ground and, on the other hand, this perception of the common event is axiologically oriented to those values relating to life in society. Locutor and interlocutor, belonging to the event, judge it through access to common social values in circulation at the time of interaction. According to the author,

A stone is still stony and the sun still sunny, but the event of existence as a whole (unfinalized) becomes completely different because a new and major character in this event appears for the first time on the scene of earthly existence – the witness and the judge. And the sun, while remaining physically the same, has changed because it has begun to be cognized by the witness and the judge. It has stopped simply being and has started being in itself and for itself (these categories appear for the first time here) as well as for the other, because it has been reflected in the consciousness of the other (the witness and the judge): this has caused it to change radically, to be enriched and transformed (Bakhtin, 1986, p.137).⁸⁵

Intonation plays a fundamental role in meaning making in sympathetic comprehension, as it points to the fact that evaluative tones related to the utterance extrapolate the words as they are more closely linked to the object of speech. In the sympathetic comprehension, the witness's search for an understanding of the other's

⁸⁴ BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970-1971 [1979]. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.132-158.

⁸⁵ For reference, see footnote 84.

interior implies a judgment of this interior based on social values that are in the common purview. This evaluative judgment implies a constant evaluation process in relation to current values, ensuring the evolution of valid social values present in a society through the dialogic movement that is being formed. When an evaluative tone is carried out, it is possible so safely affirm that another evaluation is being prepared, because there are other witnesses and judges interacting about the same object of speech.

Final Considerations

This article did not intend to exhaust all possible reading possibilities and aspects regarding the idea of context in the works of Bakhtin and the Circle published in Portuguese in Brazil. Despite the complexity presented by the concept, we were able to identify a recurrent image in the works that proved to be quite productive for us to theoretically reflect on this point: the image of the context as a space for meaning making contained within borders that are established at the time of interaction. This was made possible only because both Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978), Vološinov (1973) and Bakhtin (1993) mention this space of meaning making, but each in their own way and aiming their own object of study.

Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978) determine that this is a unique space of creation and cocreation in which the object of speech, ideological in its essence, is placed under discussion and reflection and materializes in the work itself along with the form and content of the constructions. On the other hand, Vološinov (1973) calls this space the place of ideological creation, within which everyday ideologies circulate establishing a tense connection between the socioeconomic base of society and the constituted ideological systems. Bakhtin (1993), in turn, establishes that the link between life and culture is in the unity of cognition of a subject. On assuming life and culture as a unity, one produces meaning to one's own life and also to cultural manifestations.

Following this image, among the possibilities of focusing the attention that the works offer, we reflected on four possible contexts that occur within spaces for meaning making. We also noticed that each of these occurrences of contexts takes place in distinct communicative situations. The first situation presented and discussed was speech communication, whose respective context corresponds to the utterance and its borders are

the alternation of participants in an interaction. The second manifestation, semiotic communication, is characterized as the space in which the ideological sign circulates, which is situated in the consciousness of each one of us and has its borders delimited on the one hand by active understanding and on the other by responsive evaluation.

We also observed the artistic communication in which the aesthetic context is located with its borders defined by the relationship between author and intended audience. With regard to the novel and poetry, we perceived the existence of other borders that are constituted within the aesthetic context. As novel is concerned, borders correspond to the space of meaning that is established between author and character. This space can be of two forms, either monologic in which the characters reflect the author's point of view; or polyphonic, in which the characters gain discursive independence from the author, which implies a very tense dialogic relationship between the author and the characters.

On the poetry side, the borders correspond to the lyrical hero, the author objectified in the work, and another with whom he/she dialogues within the poetry space. Each of these borders corresponds to an evaluative position about the world, however, the other of the lyrical hero does not have total discursive independence. The other of the lyrical hero is inserted in the hero's purview; therefore, the values brought by the second context are worked through the vision of the lyrical hero. In other words, the values that refer to this other are those to which the lyrical hero has access in his own purview.

The fourth and last context dealt with here, the extraverbal context of circulation of values, implies directing utterances towards another participant, a mediator, situated outside the direct relationship of interlocution. In other words, this extra participant is located outside the relationship between locutor and interlocutor. This mediator directly interferes in meaning making, as it is related to the values that circulate in common existence. These values guarantee not only common perceptions among interlocutors about the event in which the interaction takes place, but they guarantee the ever-evolving event of being, the continuity of existence itself, of life in common, because it is through this mediator from outside that the values are perceived and at the same time reworked by the evaluative tones.

Through these reflections, we propose that context should be thought of as an active space of meaning making, as it implies responsiveness from all directions and to all directions, whose borders within which the meanings are updated, are constituted in

the instant of interaction. This means that established borders change, expand, retract, multiply depending on the dialogical relationships perceived in the excess of seeing of an observer.

In other words, these contexts and their borders are only possible to be observed through an observer positioned outside the event. That is, observation takes place in situations in which the observer maintains a distant position of the speech event. The distant observer perceives contexts from his/her own point of view. That means that distinct observers will perceive distinct contexts. The dialogue that must be established between the observer and possible interactional contexts is positioned close to Bakhtin/Medvedev's perspective (1978) when they propose a repositioning of the look at forms of communication beyond a possible and simple direct communication.

For the authors, direct communication implies the understanding that meanings are mechanically given and that the contexts in which these communication processes circulate constitute static and predetermined data. This point of view can be defined as if there were a group of people together in one place directly and without interference receiving without a speech coming from a single and authoritative voice. For the author, this is not possible because

Social man is surrounded by ideological phenomena, by objects-signs of various types and categories: by words in the multifarious forms of their realization (sounds, writing, and the others), by scientific statements, religious symbols and beliefs, works of art, and so on. All these things in their totality comprise the ideological environment, which forms a solid ring around man (Bakhtin/Medvedev, 1978, p.14).⁸⁶

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⁸⁶ For reference, see footnote 5.

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Statement of Authorship and Responsibility for Published Content

We declare that the authors had full access to research *corpus*, and that they also fully participated in the discussion of the results, besides revising and approving the process of the final version of the article.

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