



Signical reflection and refraction in arendt's public space: interference bakhtinian

Ricardo Gião Bortolotti

Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio Mesquita Filho", Av. Dom Antonio, 2100, 19806-900, Assis, São Paulo, Brazil. E-mail: bortho@uol.com.br

ABSTRACT. The goal of this study is to analyze and characterize the importance of the word as action unfolded in the public space. For this, we used the Bakhtinian notions of reflection and refraction, applied to the issue of communication in the common world, very important for Bakhtin and Arendt. In fact, we assume that these concepts can provide elements to think about the act of enunciation of judgment, without affecting its particular characteristic, since they seem to contribute to the breakdown of fossilized ways of thinking.

Keywords: judgment, opinion, politics, sign, communication.

Reflexo e refração sígnica no espaço público de Arendt: interferências bakhtinianas

RESUMO. O objetivo deste texto é analisar e caracterizar a importância da palavra enquanto ação desenrolada no espaço público. Para isso, partimos das noções bakhtinianas de reflexo e refração, aplicadas à questão da comunicação no mundo comum, de suma importância para Bakhtin e Arendt. Com efeito, supomos que essas noções possam fornecer elementos para se pensar no ato de enunciação do juízo, sem ferir a sua característica particular, pois parecem contribuir para o desarranjo de modos fossilizados de pensamento.

Palavras-chave: juízo, opinião, signo, política, comunicação.

Reflexión y refracción sígnica en el espacio público de arendt: interferencias bakhtinianas

RESUMEN. El objetivo de este texto es analizar y caracterizar la importancia de la palabra enquanto acción desarrollada en el espacio público. Para ello, partimos de las nociones bakhtinianas de reflexión y refracción, aplicadas a la cuestión de la comunicación en el mundo común, de suma importancia para Bakhtin y Arendt. En efecto, suponemos que estas nociones puedan proporcionar elementos para pensarse en el acto de enunciacón del juicio, sin reducir su característica particular, pues parecen contribuir para el desarreglo de modos fosilizados de pensamiento.

Palabras clave: juicio, opinión, signo, política, comunicación.

Introduction

The expressed opinion in public space, while of the order of the sign, presents itself the universe of the public network, of the plurality, of the reality of the 'we'. Bakhtin said that it does not only reflect, but also refracts. In reflecting, when pronouncing the word, the individual makes its appearance to others according to the use of signs in rotation in the social context, but its singularity, in our view, is in refraction, which expresses its differential nuance among the social agents.

Our main goal is to present the thinking of two great thinkers in regard to the search for the meaning of the worldly experience. Although Bakhtin has an interest in literature and genres, he also sought to understand the universe of human interaction, according to the activity of dialogue and

the plurality of voices. Arendt, by her part, maintained her interest in political activity and in the plural dialogue involved in the public sphere. She abhorred the social, since for her conception, it is only a mixture of private interests in the public space, predominating the satisfaction of the desire of the masses. We try, therefore, to approximate the notions of reflection and refraction, as Bakhtin defines them, to those of public space and dialogue in Arendt. We try to observe not only what would be the singularity in the 'expression' of the word in the political space, but also into the stories, which, in our view, they involve ways of seeing and describing everyday life, revealing aspects of reality to everybody, as well as characteristics of our own personality. In fact, this act does not consider reflection in the Bakhtinian sense, but we can say that it involves learning, experience and therefore

'new' ways of seeing. This means that 'refraction' participates in the internal modification of our beliefs (Severo, 2007)¹. In general terms, we can advance that we mean by 'reflection' the learning of habitual concepts and situations, according to the identification of the agent with the others; on the other hand, 'refraction' is for something new, in the sense that the agent of enunciation evades the usual, with its own interpretation, although originated from the social network (Tápias-Oliveira, 2004-2005)².

The discussion of these two notions and their application to Arendt's thinking was motivated by the similarity of some aspects of the theories held by both thinkers. The incommensurability of the approximations we intend to accomplish is not predominant, but we know that each theory must be treated in its own niche, because it brings with it the peculiarity of each personality, its life experiences, its influences and expectations created by the practice of the theoretical work. For this reason, approximations are always fearful, since the risk of misrepresenting the author's thinking is very great. However, even facing this risk, we believe that this attempt may awaken new motivations for the more detailed exploration of such complex thinkers that have unique importance for the critique of the constitution of social space.

Bakhtin's thought: general conceptions

Nothing is absolutely dead : every meaning will have its festive return (Bakhtin, 1924, p. 170 apud Faraco, 2009, p. 53).

In fact, every living ideological sign has, like Jano, two faces. Every living critique can become a compliment, every living truth can not let some seem to be the greatest of the lies (Bakhtin 1992, p. 47).

Bakhtin's concerns were broad, from literature to philosophy, to carnival, and to ethics. He worked in these areas from the point of view of the sign, the ideological vehicle for excellence, and that mediates social relations. The dialogical participation of individuals in social space reveals particular aspects of their agents, making us all 'responsive' beings (Severo, 2007). Dialogism is the way in which consciousness is delineated, as well as the way in which we arise in the social space, plural, in its countless voices. In fact, we form the stuff of our daily consciousness, in the exchange of opinions, in

the so-called 'daily ideologies', which renew and construct the great ideological systems that make up the social fabric (Yaguello, 1992).

We will call the totality of mental activity centered on everyday life, as well as the expression that binds it, ideology of everyday life, to distinguish it from the constituted ideological systems, such as art, morality, law, etc. The ideology of daily life is the domain of the inward and outward word disordered and not fixed in a system, which accompanies each of our states of consciousness (Bakhtin 1992, p. 118).

For the author, 'ideology' is a notion that is not reducible to the mechanical aspects; on the contrary, it covers all the cultural spheres, such as art, religion, philosophy, literature, the daily life of a community, etc. Faraco affirms that, for Bakhtin's Circle, the ideology does not mean "[...] masking of the real [...]" (Faraco, 2009, p. 47). In addition, according to the scholar, this notion approaches the term 'axiological', meaning, therefore, that our social participation in any area does not happen neutrally, but involves valuing choices (Faraco, 2009). Thus, although we can verbalize our lived experiences, the possibility of expressing them in their totality is impossible, they always remain open, orienting to the future (Faraco, 2009). In fact, we communicate through signs, which are not neutral, but refer to something outside of itself (Bakhtin, 1992), fruits of the valuation and the choice. It is not a physical or a natural object, unless its representation, that of the objects, is endowed with artistic-symbolic characteristics (Bakhtin, 1992). Because it is an ideological product, it allows some evaluation, that is, it can be considered true or false, ugly or beautiful, right or wrong (Bakhtin, 1992).

Because of that, the enunciation 'reflects' the social experience, with which we form our consciousness and, from it, we communicate with the world. However, expressing our positions does not only mean a work of signic 'denotation', but it encompasses, in addition to the understanding of the other, our way of understanding, and elaborating the experience. In other words, although we participate in the same social environment, we manifest our 'uniqueness' in the uttered word. By this we receive and 'refract' from judgments, based on taste, on choices and preferences, which do not need to be reduced to a self, since this 'I' is nothing but a 'we', coming from the social fabric. The culture takes precedence over the individual, since it is semiotically constituted, that is, based on the infinite dialogue between those who constitute it (Faraco, 2009). In short, for Faraco (2009, p. 49), in the interpretation of Bakhtin's thought, our relations

¹ An illuminating article about the thinking of both thinkers is that of Severo (2007). The author explores the main points of convergence of the thinkers, basing them with passages of their works.

² For a rich discussion of these two Bakhtinian notions in the context of education, see Tápias-Oliveira (2004-2005).

are mediated through signs. Thus, our life goes on "[...] in fact, in a world of languages, signs and meanings".

The words are not 'pure', that is, in their meaning, a huge range of aspects from 'heteroglossic' discourses³ that present themselves as a snowball that, in its unfolding, it increases in volume. The word, when it is enunciated in the public space, does not fail to bring about, in itself, the 'pluralism' proper to the individuals who have communion with, and who had communion with it. In it, we encounter differences in the mode of 'signifier', in individual choices, but without thereby being alien to the community.

It is with this wealth of interpretations, of receptions of the word, in social space, that we understand and construct the world around us. This is the definition of 'refraction'. In the illuminating words of Faraco (2009, p. 50-51):

And 'refracting' means here that with our signs we do not only describe the world, but we construct it - in the dynamics of the history, and because of the always multiple and heterogeneous character of the concrete experiences of human groups - different interpretations (refraction) of this world. [...]. In other words, refraction is the way in which the diversity and contradictions of the historical experiences of human groups are inscribed in the signs. Since these experiences are manifold and heterogeneous, the signs cannot be univocal (monosemic). Pluricity (the multisemic character) is the condition of functioning of signs in human societies.

Thus, participation in the social network is manifested not only according to the understanding of the common use of the concepts, but also in the way in which we interpret the world, based on our own singularity. With this, the dialectical movement that encompasses the enunciation presents understandable signs, that carries the difference of each enunciating agent in itself.

For Bakhtin, the dialogue is intrinsically linked to the living, to the day to day of the human being in society. Faraco takes the manuscript For a re-reading of Dostoevsky's book, in which the author exposes his dialogical conception of living:

Living means to participate in the dialogue: asking questions, giving answers, giving attention, responding. Being in agreement, and so on. From this dialogue, a person participates fully, and

throughout his life: with his eyes, pencils, hands, soul, spirit, with all his body and with all his deeds. He invests his whole being in discourse and this discourse penetrates the dialogical fabric of human life, the universal symposium (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 293 apud Faraco, 2009, p. 76).

In a passage of *Marxism and philosophy of language*, Bakhtin states that "[...] it is not enough to put two *homo sapiens* face-to-face in order to signs to be constituted [...]" (Bakhtin 1992, p. 35). For the author, only the social organization, a certain existing social unit between them, is that it makes the sign something intelligible and communicable, since I understand the discourse of the other, and myself from the socially attributed meanings to the sign. Thus, a person, in communicating, is not alone, but carries in his gestures and actions the whole of social organization, of the life in common.

We are only, therefore, the fruits of this social organization, and our consciousness "[...] it acquires form and existence in the signs created by a group organized in the course of its social relations" (Bakhtin 1992, p. 36). Without such this domain, we would be dealing only with the sensations of the physiological processes, which are inexplicable outside the sign mesh, which provides meaning to each image, word, gesture, and so on.

The Ideological systems are important in the formation of the signs, but day-to-day communication also assumes a unique importance, since it encompasses several beliefs and experiences, reflected and refracted by the signs in rotation in the daily practice of social interaction. Such signs are ideological, but in our view they are flexibly apprehended and interpreted from the desires and expectations of each individual's particular experience⁴. Indeed, signs are ideological vehicles, refracted by users and reproduced in the conditions of daily practice⁵.

For Bakhtin, there is no significant material that does not make part of the speech, the verbalization (Bakhtin, 1992). Hence, in reference to refraction, the author states:

Every 'ideological refraction of being in the process of formation', whatever the nature of its signifying material, 'is accompanied by a verbal ideological refraction', as a necessarily concomitant phenomenon. The word is present in all acts of understanding and in all acts of interpretation (1992, p. 38, emphasis added).

³ In *Discourse on the novel*, Bakhtin presents, according to Faraco (2009, p. 56), "[...] refraction, for example, as the entanglement of dialogic threads woven by socio-ideological consciousness) around each object." And, also with Faraco (2009, p. 57): "What we call language is also and mainly an indefinite set of social voices". It is such a set of voices that defines 'heteroglossia', as the researcher informs us (Faraco, 2009).

⁴ "The word is always charged with content or with an ideological or experiential meaning. This is how we understand the words and only react to those who awaken in us ideological resonances or concerning the life" (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 95).

⁵ On the flexibility of the word, see Bakhtin (1992).

The importance of the word lies in its 'social ubiquity' (Bakhtin, 1992). In fact, the word is distributed throughout social space, be it artistic, political, everyday practice, etc ; and of all, not only embodies its values but also enables constructions of minimal social changes, which have not yet reached a formal character (Bakhtin, 1992). Thus, ubiquity makes the sign the very continuum of the social sphere, making the consciousness of individuals of the most diverse social, economic, religious and cultural conditions. Consequently, the same word can acquire different nuances in diverse social and cultural layers, giving rise to "[...] different modes of discourse, be them interior or exterior [...]" (Bakhtin 1992, p. 42).

An example illustrates how the social environment determines awareness and enunciation. When speaking of the mental activity of 'I' and 'we', the author shows us that the activity of the self tends towards the limit, approaching the 'physiological reaction of the animal', and that the mental activity of 'we' implies the social modeling (Bakhtin, 1992). With this in mind, Bakhtin exposes different degrees of ideological modeling. A hungry and 'isolated' individual tends towards mystical resignation or individualistic protest. On the other hand, in a 'collective' of the hungry, but without 'solid material bond' between them, resignation in solitude seems to predominate. It is fertile ground for philosophy or religion. Finally, the hunger felt by members of a community 'united' by 'objective material bonds' (factory workers, for example) offers the means for "[...] the sharp and ideologically well-formed development of mental activity [...]" (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 115-116).

In sum, the woven considerations point to the human being as a communicative being, as a being of dialogue. In fact, the existence thus defined takes place from the social organization, in which the sign is the essential element for the active participation and the knowledge of the individual. This last one is not reduced to the unity of the self, for, as a result of the social environment, its consciousness is shaped by the 'we', by the various voices that echo on the stage of its experience. Thus, the world is reflected in itself, but it is also refracted, that is, it is the result of interpretations, whose signs are open to new ways of seeing and acting.

Hannah Arendt

Public space and action

[...] we are from the world, and we are not only in it; we are also appearances, by the circumstance that we arrive and leave, we appear and disappear; and

although coming from nowhere, we come well-equipped to deal with it to appear and to take part in the game of the world (Arendt, 1992b, p. 19).

Only in the freedom to talk to one another is born the world that is spoken about, in its objectivity visible from all sides (Arendt, 2012, p. 60).

In Arendt, we also find the same importance attached to the dialogue, to the word, both emitted and thought. The role of the dialogue in active life, as action, does not reject the critical thinking that occurred while thinking. The participation in the public space is not mechanical, as if we were automata beings, but it involves interaction and learning, which means that we think about the world around us, significantly modifying our way of seeing and acting. This means that in dialoguing we also interpret the signs in a refractory process, of transformation and selection of past knowledge and also what we learned in the public scenario.

The 'public space', for the author, differs from the private and the social, since she defines such space by political participation, similar to the manifestation of the Greeks in public square, in the discussions on the destiny of the polis. The 'private space', on the other hand, corresponds to the home, to the place where the tyranny of the owner predominates. Finally, the 'social space'⁶, criticized by Arendt, consists of the mixture of private expectations in the public sphere, increasingly occupied by the desire of the masses.

It is, therefore, in the public space that we carry out the highest political activity: the dialogue which differs from manufacturing and labor activities (Arendt, 2012), which are suited to survival and work. Public space is characterized by struggle, based on discussions about politics, and does not involve guarantees of survival or better living conditions. What is taken in consideration is the fate of the city, not the soul of each one.

The totalitarian ideology, with the intervention of the universality, silenced the voices of the square, putting an end to the pluralism that characterized the dynamism of opinions. Indeed, it put an end to the freedom. With a ready and finished idea, to guide the action of men, automatism becomes the rule. The free play of the creation and communication cannot evolve. Isolated opinion is inconsistent unless it confronts another. According to Roviello, interpreting Arendt's thought, opinion

⁶ "The emergence of the social produces solitude, alienation, consumerism and lack of belonging to this world" (Fry, 2010, p. 83). According to Fry (2010), in *On Revolution*, Arendt (2001) clearly expresses her rejection of the social. In this work, the author evaluates the American and French Revolutions, presenting their preference for the American Revolution. This Revolution kept separate the private and public spheres, while the French was social.

"[...] it requires in principle to be communicated and to receive communication from other opinions. It is a view of the world that only takes consistency when seen in turn from other points of view about the same world" (1987, p. 112).

This point of view, expressed by Roviello, seems to us to approximate Arendt and Bakhtin, since, for the author the sign is responsive, that is, we do not enunciate without a return which would characterize a dialogue. Hence, for Bakhtin, the space of action of men, in the conception of the author, the social space is plural, since it happens when crossing several voices.

It is in the enunciation that we reveal ourselves, requiring, for this, a certain work of the imagination to adapt our thinking to the possibilities of plural discourse, since the criterion must be communicability, without which we would not be understood (Arendt, 2009a). Now, in this case, it would be licit to speak about the reflection of the signs, since the signs must be understood by all; but would also involve refraction from 'choice' based on our uniqueness. Hence, the truth contemplated by the sage would hardly sound comprehensible in the common space, needing to undergo to a drastic 'thaw', leaving the high spheres of scientific synthesis for the dynamic rotation of the common world. Indeed, Arendt, in *Truth and Politics*, affirms about 'opinion' and 'truth': "The shift from rational truth to opinion implies a change from man in the singular to men in the plural [...]" (Arendt, 2009c, p. 292). To transform a sign into something communicable, whether the truth contemplated by the philosopher outside the cave at the time of the return, requires the descent of the plans of contemplation to the citizens, who are not subject to the trained view of the sage. This requirement implies the understanding of this truth for ordinary life, for common sense or worldly experience. And only making it palatable and debatable by all, confronted in the plural space of men, one could speak in understanding (Roviello, 1987; Aguiar, 2001). This does not only reflect the signs, but refracts them, producing them for the communication of the common world. In fact, we would be contributing to the construction of the world. We can say that if we take refraction in a broad sense, of interpretation through the enunciation of opinions, together with the intervention of the imagination, the rational truth conditioned in its unity, would remain innocuous for worldly communication: formal language would not resist pluralism that characterizes everyday reality.

In the common world, all things appear, that is, they make up the domain of the phenomena, of the visible. In this visibility, we also act and opine, but within the criterion of communicability and, therefore, we make choices, which means that we deliberately conceal what we don't want to show. Arendt sums it up well:

Besides the impulse for self-exposure, by which living things accommodate to a world of appearances, the men also 'present themselves' by deeds and words, and thus indicate how they 'want' to appear, which in their opinion, Must be and not be seen (Arendt, 1992b, p. 28, emphasis added).

The fact that men 'choose' directs us to think of models of action or 'examples', which agree with the question of communicability and common sense. Nevertheless, it seems clear to us that in this case there is a possibility of approaching the notion of reflection, and of the 'choice' of our apparition in the society. Refract would be to work dialogically our apparition in the public space, making our differences communicable and comprehensible to all, without the demand of the univocal understanding, proper of totalitarian policies, that is, our opinions, although 'communicable', are at the mercy of the refractory reception of the other. In this lies the richness of pluralism in public space.

In *The crisis in culture* (Arendt, 2009a), we come to the judgment as the manifestation of the individual with their differences, that is, the judgment as revealing of the individual in his singularity.

An important aspect in the application of these two notions is the question of 'learning', that is, the child, for example, is not political, as Arendt says, being in school, preparing to play one role in the public space. It goes through an apprenticeship which is linked to tradition (Fry, 2010)⁷. In the public space, we experience action, and reflect on it. The word spoken carries in itself beliefs and positions, which, if communicable, would face the confrontation between the citizens. But it cannot be a 'mere' reflection, an image in the mirror, 'like' the original. If this were, we would be mechanical beings, repeaters of the action of the nature itself and of fossilized ideologies. In fact, as intelligent beings, we are prone to change, so public space is dynamic. Thus, the dialogue with the other also presents refractions, which can modify the status of our beliefs. In other words, participation in the public space makes constant changes in the judgments that were made.

⁷ "To belong to the world, in the sense of political community, that is, to belong to the common world, it is necessary to go through the educational process, with the intention of integrating it with the new ones, who, without the necessary learning, they are still foreigners [...]" (Carvalho, 2011, p.12). It is from this process that the individual can not only initiate something new but also respond for it.

This kind of thinking can easily be applied to the judgment of the spectator and the storyteller, the one who will rescue the past. Such a recovery must adjust to the present times only if the use of the past enables the freedom of the present life, which only the narrative in reflex would not guarantee. The use of the past in the present can not involve mechanical causality, which would be merely a reflection of the conservative conditions of the past, but must consider changes, different looks from the present to the future. In short: it should enable the understanding and use of the past in refraction.

If, for Arendt, the totalitarianism is the realm of the ideology (Aguiar, 2001), since it promotes the unity of all, stopping the plural dialogue, the public space in which authentic politics must spread, the exchange of opinions is the rule. This happens in the manifestation of the word, which is the fruit of the intertwining of voices, born of plural practice in political space. Nevertheless, the opinion is an expression of thought made concrete and may differ from other opinions. Not to disagree would be the attitude of mechanized behavior, but not of the understanding of meaning⁸, which becomes the object of the refractory activity of thought, to abuse the Bakhtinian term. In other words, ideology, as the foundation of living, generates totalitarian policies, whose principles guide general thinking; but the plural dialogue, by highlighting the uniqueness of the object of totalitarian opinion, opens space for the debate between the different opinions. If active life is thus constituted, then there is no place for totalitarianism, since any single, unequivocal opinion is dissolved by discussion. In other words, the political life requires the possibility of diverging (Aguiar, 2001).

In the Greek *agora*, the fate of the *polis* was the object of opinion. Indeed, the enunciator avoided focusing on the particular interest, although the opinions presented singular aspects of the personality of the individual. Public life was transformed from an increasingly bureaucratic activity (Arendt, 2004), making citizen participation in the affairs of the city meaningless (Aguiar, 2001). On the harmful role of bureaucratic organization, Arendt states:

In any bureaucratic system, the transfer of responsibility is a matter of daily routine, and if we wish to define bureaucracy in terms of political science, that is, as a form of government - the

command of the power as opposed to the men, of a single man, of few or many - the bureaucracy is unfortunately the command of no one, and for that very reason, perhaps the least humane and most ruthless form of government (Arendt 2004, p. 93-94).

Now, the political participation in the public space happens on a paradoxical situation, because it involves the discussion between equals, but without rejection of the differences. Arendt explain:

Human plurality, the basic condition of action and discourse, has the dual aspect of equality and distinction. If they were not equal, men could not understand each other and those who came before them, nor make plans for the future, nor predict the needs of those who will come after them. If they were not distinct, being each human being distinct from any other that is, was or will be, they would not need speech or action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds would suffice for the immediate communication of necessities and similar needs (Arendt, 2012, p. 219-20).

It is interesting that the difference exposed by the speech enables the revelation of our humanity, which does not include ownership or finality (Aguiar, 2001). In fact, the manifestation of speech creates the public space, common to all who participate through the mediation of language (Aguiar, 2001). It is in this plural space that citizens can present themselves with their differences, expressing themselves as they understand and desire the common world. In such a space, the individual issues his particular judgment, based on the 'extended mind', on the action of the imagination, "[...] which is not limited to the law of the causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not simply reproductive than already is known but generative of new forms and figures" (Zerilli, 2005, p. 163), which enables the communication of thought, far from the universality of the transcendental categories. Although refractory, the opinion doesn't escape from the consecrated opinions of the 'we', of the public fabric; but if it were not patterned by differences, we would have mere repetitive automata. Therefore, what we feel and think must be reduced to some form of communication, from common sense, not principles that are ready and established as right⁹.

The action performed in the public space is irreversible (Arendt, 2012 apud Aguilar, 2001), since its consequences cannot be predicted, for example, the deduction of general principles and models. This unpredictability is that entails the discussion of

⁸ In referring to judgment as the result of experience and not of ultimate foundations, Aguilar (2001) presents us with the definition of understanding: "It opposes, therefore, the perspective of philosophy which, starting from reason, submit the action, the experiences in their particularities, the absolute criterion. Arendt, in contrast to philosophy, calls this 'understanding'" (Aguiar, 2001, p. 99, emphasis added).

⁹ Bakhtinian refraction involves interpretation, cognitive aspects not discussed by Arendt, but we can not deny the role of persuasion and also criticism, exercised by thought, pointed as a way to escape the banality of evil.

positions adopted and that can be frustrated in the very act of enunciating them. In short: the dynamism of the dialogue activity prevails, without violating the principle of freedom.

Thought, judgment and narrative

The word house is something like a frozen thought that thinking must defrost, as if to defrost, whenever you wish to discover its original meaning (Arendt, 2004, p. 240).

[...] the world is full of stories, events and occurrences and strange events, which only wait to be told [...] (Arendt, 1987, p. 88).

To speak about the activity of dialogue is to bring to the discussion the question of judgment. We know that Arendt worked this question on *The Life of the Spirit*, a text drawn after her death, since only the title on the sheet attached to the typewriter had been found. There is also the work on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, *Lectures on Kant's* (Arendt, 1992a), in which Arendt reinterprets the Kantian aesthetic judgment, placing it alongside the political judgments. Thus, let us review this question, which is so important for the author, and which leads us to an understanding of the structure of communication in the public space, in the pluralism and the refraction of the senses, for a somewhat libertine application of the Bakhtinian notion to Arendtian thought. Let's see:

Following Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, Arendt differentiates generality from universality. The universal is something valid in every place and time, to it, determinant judgments are appropriate and present imperatives or concepts valid for all, as in morality and knowledge. But the generality emerges from the particular as its own significance. Generality is understood as the tellability and communication of immanent significance to particular experiences (Arendt, 2001, p. 225).

According to Aguiar (Aguiar, 2001), Arendt doesn't have a specific work on who should be the judge, the actor or the spectator. In *The life of the spirit*, the author assumes the position of the spectator, but the actor's is not so clear compared to other works. For this reason, Aguiar in his work seeks to trace the course of this issue, concentrating more on the texts of the 1950s, works in which the action is more evident. Teles (2013), in turn, defends the participation of both situations, that is, the spectator also acts when participating in public life, while transmitting his vision, his position enunciated to all¹⁰. Indeed, for Arendt, "Political

thought is representative. I form an opinion considering a given theme from different points of view, making present in my mind the positions of those who are absent; that is, I represent them" (Arendt, 2009c, p. 299 apud Aguiar, 2001, p.105). For its communicative effectiveness, the opinion must obtain the acceptance of the community, without which there would be no political activity (Aguiar, 2001). What would be the opinion that remained in thought, without revealing itself? The truth of the sage is unconditionally accepted, forged from abstractions and transcendent ends. He is not part of the common world, producing in his imagination his opinion, and then enunciating it for the appreciation of the community; but from the particular to the high peaks of universality, that is, it leaves the common world for the domain of abstractions. Political judgment does not find its place in *a priori* categories of understanding, but in the possible analogies of living together.

Now, as a spectator, the individual is a 'blind poet'¹¹, because he moves away from social reality to find its meaning, lost in the ideological diversity. He is endowed with freedom from the standards established by the society (Aguiar, 2001). In the search for meaning, the one operates transformations in the integration lived between its story and history, whose purpose is reflected in the daily life of institutions and social behavior. And it is precisely in telling his story that he reveals the meaning of everyday life by 'defrosting' conditioning ideas and refractally exposing his point of view to the possibilities of points of view of the public sphere. It reveals what he selected from his worldly experiences, in the confrontation of reflected and refracted thought, as interpreted according to the conditions of communicability, of common sense.

The judgment of individuals in society is not, as we have already had the opportunity to affirm, a reflex of a neutral background, but refracts opinions and diverse tastes. From this perspective, the author, in *The crisis in culture*, specifies:

Whenever individuals judge the things of the world that are common to them, there are implicit in their judgments more than these same things. By his judgment, the person also reveals something of himself, what person this one is, and such revelation, which is involuntary, gains as much in validity as it has freed itself from the merely individual

¹⁰ "To appear in the public world is a co-appearance, since those for whom I appear, also appear to me. Thus, being a spectator is, at the same time, and

inseparably, being an actor" (Teles, 2013, p.87). In relation to the one who narrates a story: "The storyteller is then characterized by the figure of the spectator and the actor, for in narrating he is also acting among others, giving meaning to the events of which he witnessed as a spectator" (Teles, 2013, p.110).

¹¹ On the notion of 'blind poet', check out Arendt (1992a) and Aguiar (2001).

idiosyncrasies. Now it is precisely the domain of action and speech, that is, the political domain in terms of activities, that in which this personal quality is brought to the fore in public, in which the 'whosoever' is manifested more than the qualities. And individual talents she may possess (Arendt, 2009a, p. 278).

It is about public dialogue or narrating a point of view. In spite of the various theories and conceptions, common dialogue is the way to be understood by all, based on what can be imagined for the communication to be received. Singularity manifests itself in the choices of the individual, who, among other possibilities, knows that the one should choose the one that reinforces communication. Now, in this communication is that his personality appears, the difference in the soil of the common. In other words, in judging, the individual takes the other into consideration, since "[...] he requests the agreement of others [...]" (Zerilli, 2005, p.164). In fact, it implies wearing oneself in the other's shoes (Arendt, 2009a).

This plural dialogue situates us in the community, as well as "[...] reveals a new sense of community with others [...]" (Zerilli 2005, p. 165). Communication does not happen in consideration of the rules that direct the judgment and common participation, but in the direction of what pleases or does not, that is, it is not linked to a univocal idea, but it arouses the sensation of something pleasant, which can only be considered through imaginative work, with the help of 'analogies'. Therefore, the importance of narrating, because it puts the narrator as one who presents a common sense to all, and not the 'truth' known by the wise. The meaning, thus revealed, passes through the sieve of plural opinion, constituting the salutary movement of public space.

On this critical account of narrating and judgment, Aguiar states in his interpretation of Arendt's thought:

Narrative thinking is critical because it gives (Arendt's Benjamin-inspired thinking), first and foremost the exchange of experiences, storyteller transforms raw experiences into a solid and unique product: the 'story', and for this it requires attention, Posture of a spectator and demanded the questioning of habits that always lead to the exclusion of reflexive processes (Aguiar, 2001, p. 210).

It seems that, for the author, the imagination, the faculty that enables the storyteller to experience with various positions¹², choosing the one that suits the best, is for refraction in Bakhtin, for if the refraction

corresponds to desires, expectations and class conceptions, the individual reveals in the public space. For Arendt, in our view, the examples made possible by the imaginative experience also consider the individual in the public space, according to its singularity. For the author, the risk to be avoided is that of the single thought, which characterizes universal conceptions, contrary to the spontaneity of the judgment of common sense. In fact, the difference manifested in the perspective chosen by the narrator exposes the very singularity before the space of interaction, contrary to what happens with the egalitarianism preached by the mass ideology that conditions all to the same category (Aguiar, 2001).

Thus thought, diverted from its worldly reference, associated with the truth of the philosopher, distances itself from common sense, climbing the high peaks of metaphysics. However, it can contribute to the work of "[...] disarranging the old values through reflection, operating a critical examination of the condition of existence" (Teles, 2013, p. 75). It is, therefore, in narrating that men recover their past and present, and it is in this activity that the union of the thought and action consists (Teles, 2013). In this activity, we seek to understand our existence, rescuing aspects that have gained fixed contours, but that, with new arrangements, aided by the faculty of imagination, we can integrate opinions, ways of feeling etc., in the mundane reality. With this, we open space for senses not experienced in the present in relation to the past, fruits of ideological conditioning.

Final considerations

After all, what is the central goal of the applying these two notions? What is the fruit of this study? To the scholar of both Bakhtin and Arendt, the notions of reflection and refraction can illuminate the activity of discourse. Although for the Marxist philosopher the social sphere is the foundation of the evolution of the language, for Arendt the importance lies in the political sphere, since the social is reduced to the massed experience, importing more the satisfaction of the desires than the destination of the city. These Bakhtinian notions are part of the critical apparatus of thought. And since the language is common ground of both, which makes the authenticity of the being, experienced in the communication, the expressed opinions are manifestations of the junction of the individual with the environment. Now, can not be

¹² "We have seen that Arendt formulates the faculty of political judgment in terms of the ability to observe the same object from multiple perspectives" (Zerilli, 2005, p. 168).

found the personality at this intersection? Is it not in this intersection that the individual realizes his identity? And what would this identity be, if not the fruit of the 'we', of their common experience? In fact, our path sought to show this dualism, between the self and the us, and which consists of dialogism. This dual game, in fact, presents our beliefs, formed from daily practice, in the face of our fears, joys and expectations, and nothing better to understand than the legacy of the experience of the past. On the other hand, it also encompasses our second 'birth', in revealing ourselves publicly, bringing the novelty imprinted on our modes of expression: singular as made of internal dialogue, but adjusted to the community, adequate to common sense.

Arendt developed her research in politics, trying to understand the advent of the totalitarianism in the history. It has drawn a long way from the ancient Greeks to our days, in order to understand the process of transformation of the ways of thinking of the world of men. With Eichmann's judgment in Jerusalem, it was concluded that the evil was in the lack of thought activity, that is, it was an automaton, which mechanically fulfilled the duties that were imputed to it. Eichmann was the fruit of the ideologies that dominated the understanding of history, processed in low fire since antiquity. Thus, for the author, the conditions that led to the modern world, which determined modes of thinking and power, lay in the cutting of the thread of tradition, opening up an abyss between the past and the future: the advent of totalitarianism. With the end of public space and authentic politics, characterized by silence, the withdrawal of citizens from participation and exchange of opinions, there is an urgent need to rescue the role of the critical thinking. Freedom must be the condition for coexistence among citizens. This work sought to understand, from two thinkers, how the plural space in which freedom flourishes, a state in which history is woven by truly human events.

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