

Presence of Religious Cosmivision in the Discursive Construction of the World / *Presença da cosmivisão religiosa na construção discursiva de mundo*

... when the other consciousness is the encompassing consciousness of God, a *religious* event takes place (prayer, worship, ritual).

*Mikhail Bakhtin*¹

Each field of ideological creativity has its own kind of orientation toward reality and each refracts reality in its own way. Each field commands its own special function within the unity of social life.

*Valentin N. Volóchinov*²

Would the discursive construction of the world, through religion, have a pre-eminent place in the social experience of subjects, in their varied socio-verbal interactions? Or: would religion be the opium of the people, as stated by a widespread vulgate of Karl Marx's thought?³ These always controversial issues are tangential to the debate that *Bakhtiniana* proposes in this issue focusing on the presence of the religious worldview in the discursive construction of the world. For this matter, we invited Pedro Farias Francelino, from *Universidade Federal da Paraíba* [Federal University of Paraíba] (UFPB), to act as *ad hoc* editor.

Bakhtin would remind us of the weight that the speaker and their word have in the

religious thought and discourse (mythological, mystical and magical). The primary subject of this discourse is a being who speaks: a deity, a demon, a soothsayer, a prophet (...). All religious systems (...) possess an enormous, highly specialized methodological apparatus

¹ 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, p. 22.

² VOLOSINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trad. Ladislav Matejka and R. Titunik. Translator's Preface. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 11.

³ This statement is in the Introduction to Marx's work *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, originally published in 1843, in the paragraph: "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." (In:) Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843). Translated by Joseph O'Malley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

(hermeneutics) for transmitting and interpreting various kinds of holy word (2015, p. 351).⁴

In fact, there is no way to be indifferent to the singular and expressive presence of the religious sphere and its implementation in the most varied forms of insertion/action of man in society. That is, insertions/actions intertwined with other discursive spheres, such as politics, science, media, etc. In general, religion is considered as an inseparable dimension of man's reality, as human beings have sought to relate to the divine/transcendental through various forms of worship. And this search translates into diverse semioses, which produce diverse ways of being in the world and, consequently, diverse valuations/refractions of reality.

The large number of submissions received reflects the importance of the topic, of which this number is only the first sample. Therefore, here we present a collection of articles that deal with the place of religious discourse in the experience of subjects in their multifaceted socio-verbal interactions and, consequently, in such perspective of discursively constructing of the world.

The researchers who brought their voices here, each from their own theoretical-methodological perspective, describe, analyze and interpret the various axiologies that, through different discursive materialities, (un/reveal) beliefs, values, customs and behaviors of the "I -for-myself, the other-for-me, and I-for-the-other" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 54).⁵ Given the richness of this issue, we decided to present it in a way that, may eventually, respected the order of occupation of the country by practitioners of different beliefs/religions. Thus, one of the articles informs us that, in Brazil, around 85.7% of the population professes a Christian faith (Falcão, 2024, e63356e). In general, we know that faith dominates and penetrates in all Brazilian spaces, which can be proven in the first article, about a religion created under the influence of the Christian religion, professed by the indigenous people in the border region of Brazil with Guyana and with Venezuela.

Adriana Helena de Oliveira Albano and João Paulino da Silva Neto, both from Universidade Federal de Roraima [Federal University of Roraima] - UFRR, Boa Vista,

⁴ BAKHTIN, M. M. Discourse in the Novel. In: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

⁵ BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy to the Act*. Translation & notes by Vadim Liapunov. Edited by Vadim Liapunov & Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Roraima - Brazil, sign “Myth and Religion in the Triple Border of Roraima, Guyana, and Venezuela: *Areruya* and the In-Between,” weaving a productive discussion about echoes and resonances of cultural elements of the white colonizers and their Christian religion in the constitution of the current *Areruya* religion. Based on the notion of in-between, formulated by the philosopher, professor, critic, and literary historian Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994),⁶ the authors establish a comparative analysis of the discourse of two myths that originated the religion in that indigenous community. To do this, they used two versions of their mythological narratives transcribed at different times (1960 and 2019), revealing that the myths that gave rise to that religion go beyond those that expressed the colonizer’s (“unreliable”) worldview.

On seeking to partially recover through recent voices those ones that had constituted us in the early days of colonization, we present the second article “‘Decolonial Metamorphoses’: The Animist Unconscious and Transmutations as a Cosmivision in African Literatures,” by Silvio Ruiz Paradiso (Universidade Federal do Grande Dourados [Federal University of Grande Dourados] – UFGD, Dourados, MS). In this text, the focus is on the literary production of African writers, such as the Nigerian Amós Tutuola, the Angolan Décio Bettencourt and the Mozambican Mia Couto, and the traditional African religiosity in their works. Paradiso bases his study on the aesthetics of animistic realism to demonstrate the importance of religious studies, especially African traditions, in the postcolonial literary context. The author then problematizes the absence of studies on religiosity, or its relegation to the backstage of the field of post-colonial studies, a fact that began to be overcome in the 80s of the 20th century. That was the moment when those African traditions started enabling the emergence of an aesthetic proposal that articulated these two fields. The author highlights that this approach is observed through the emergence of an animistic conception of the world, “a literary form of the African unusualness which confronts interpretations of the unusual as ‘magic,’ ‘marvelous’ and ‘fantastic.’”

Next, our chronotopic journey returns to the Middle Ages of Saint Thomas Aquinas, with the article “Presence of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Construction of the Medieval Narrative on Money,” by Thiago Martins Prado, from Universidade do Estado da Bahia [State University of Bahia] – UNEB, Salvador Bahia, Brazil. The author

⁶ BHABHA, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.

proposes to analyze aspects of Thomas Aquinas' economic thought in the medieval context, seeking to demonstrate how religious discourse influenced an entire social imaginary regarding commercial practices and the use of wealth as a sinful practice. This perspective reverberates in literary discourse, such as in Dante Alighieri and Geoffrey Chaucer's works. Starting from the theoretical-methodological assumption of interdiscursivity as a condition for the existence of the meaning of all discourse, the author exposes Aquinas' instructions, set out in some articles of the *Summa Theologica*, regarding the uses of money, in comparison with literary texts, such as *The Divine Comedy*⁷ by the poet Dante Alighieri, and *Tales from Canterbury*⁸ by Geoffrey Chaucer. In this sense, the author mobilizes, for the reading of fragments of the *Summa Theologica*, biblical excerpts, commentaries on the Bible of the Catholic tradition and, also, texts by economists, in addition to formulations of theorists of Christian thought, such as Augustine and Boethius, and of the economic, like Molina and Robbins. The author concludes by showing how Aquinas' ideas influenced the economic thought that developed subsequently from the creation of notions such as that of "fair price." He also demonstrates the way in which literary discourse represented the sinfulness arising from human economic activity.

Dante⁹ is present again in the article "Dialogic Notes on the Origins of the Ambivalence of the Concept of Hell in Western Culture: The Sacred-Prosaic Simultaneity," by Anderson Salvaterra Magalhães (Universidade Federal de São Paulo [Federal University of São Paulo] – UNIFESP, Guarulhos, São Paulo - Brazil) and Carlos Eduardo de Araújo de Mattos (Universidade Metodista de São Paulo [Methodist University of São Paulo] – UMESP, São Bernardo, São Paulo - Brazil). To reflect on the concept of hell, the authors recover themes that unfold over time in Christian and apocryphal works, but, above all, in texts that do not necessarily have this Christian bias. The authors promote an instigating and consistent analysis of the concept of hell present in the Western religious (and non-religious) imagination. To this end, Magalhães and Mattos establish a theoretical dialogue between the ideas about language

⁷ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. Translated by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. Princeton: The Princeton University, 2002. Available at: <https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/>. Retrieved on June 07, 2023. – Work composed between 1304 and 1321 and published in 1472.

⁸ CHAUCER, G. *The Canterbury Tales*. Translated into Modern English by Nevill Coghill. London: Penguin, 2003. – Work written between 1387 and 1400 and published in 1478.

⁹ For reference, see footnote 8.

and dialogism formulated in the writings of Bakhtin and the Circle, the notion of collective memory, by Halbwachs, and some notions of cognitive linguistics. As a methodological path, they start from the comparison between canonical and apocryphal biblical texts of the Christian Bible to verify the verbo-ideological conditions in which the construction of the concept of hell takes place. This is tensioned by values originating from the Judeo-Christian worldview, but which, at the same time, reverberates in other spheres of human activity.

The following two articles propose to analyze texts from the Christian Bible: a gospel and an epistle. The first one, “The Gospel of Matthew and the History of Reading in Brazilian Bible Editions,” is the article in which João Leonel (Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie [Mackenzie Presbyterian University] – UPM, São Paulo, Brazil) brings about a relevant discussion about the role of paratexts, especially intertitles, as a resource textual (editorial) for reading biblical texts. The author draws on renowned theoretical references in the field of the history of reading and the history of books, such as Roger Chartier, Lucien Febvre and Gerard Genette, among others, to investigate the history of reading the gospel of Matthew by comparing two biblical versions: the Holy Bible translated by João Ferreira de Almeida in his *Nova Almeida Atualizada* [New Almeida Updated]; and its previous version, *Almeida Revista e Atualizada* [Almeida Revised and Updated]. The article makes an important contribution to linguistic and theological studies by showing the editorial intervention work viewing to facilitating the reading of the biblical text, and aiming to highlight the image of the reader that is constructed through this type of textual-discursive resource. The analysis of discursive materiality deals with the study of editorial strategies focused on two aspects: the reading of the biblical text by the editors themselves, manifested in distinct ways in the paratexts that they created; and, especially, the conception of the reader of the gospel produced in those paratexts.

The second article, “Analysis of the Biblical Epistle Genre in the Light of Contemporary Language Studies,” by Abner Eslava da Silva, William Freitas Rodrigues, William Freitas Rodrigues, Rosane de Mello Santo Nicola and Caroline Kretzmann, all from Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná [Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná], Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, makes an incursion into the epistle as discursive genre aiming to demonstrate how the characteristics of the genre are

presented in ancient texts, especially in the Bible. For this purpose, the authors focus on the biblical epistles sent by the apostle Paul, in the context of the New Testament, to ecclesiastical communities in the city of Corinth, from which the names of the Pauline writings derive: Epistles I and II to the Corinthians. The reflection is based on the dialogue that the authors establish, on the one hand, between the conception of discursive genre proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin and that of textual genre, developed by the Brazilian linguist Luiz Antônio Marcuschi, and, on the other hand, through articulation with other areas of the knowledge, such as Literature, History and Theology. As results of the research, the authors point out some fundamental aspects for understanding the epistle textual genre, with a view in contemporary times.

To round it all up, we come more specifically to the here and now in the following two last articles of this issue. Carolina Cavalcanti Falcão (Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco [Federal Rural University of Pernambuco] – UFRPE, Recife, Pernambuco - Brazil) in her article “On Incompatibility and Estrangement: Christophobia Utterance and the Scales of Meaning in Online Cartoons,” makes an important contribution to the dialogical analysis of online cartoons. Through a precise survey of the socio-dialogical conditions that allowed Christophobia to be expressed, the author highlights the context of permeability between politics and religion in the country. From there, Caroline Falcão analyzes five cartoons produced by André Lafayete, which highlight the references to Christophobia in the speech of the former Brazilian president (2019-2022) at the United Nations (UN). The author reads the statements through the main concepts of Dialogical Discourse Analysis, in dialogue with other theoretical-methodological approaches. This allows the author to highlight the antagonistic and contradictory nature of the former president’s speech about Christophobia, for it reverberates values that are refracted in the cartoons as incompatible with the assumptions of Christianity, as apparently intended to defend. As a result of the research, Falcão concludes that the statements analyzed establish a “Christophobic ‘Other’ in opposition to a persecuted ‘minority us’,” a discursive strategy that demonstrates an enunciative project of religious intolerance as part of a political agenda present in the ideological-religious alignment of the former president of Brazil.

We end this issue with an article whose analysis will link themes from religious discourse to literary discourse. This is the text “Figures of the Resurrection in *O Pai da Menina Morta* [The Dead Girl’s Father], by Tiago Ferro,” written by Camila Concato and Thiago Cavalcante Jerônimo, both from Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie [Mackenzie Presbyterian University] - UPM, São Paulo, São Paulo - Brazil. The authors create an intriguing reflection on one of the pillars of Christianity: the theme of resurrection. For this matter, they take Bakhtin’s ideas about language as the main axis of analysis, particularly the notion of double-voiced discourse. Based on these concepts, they show how the narrative of the debutant (and already award-winning) novelist Tiago Ferro, by establishing a dialogical relationship with Christian discourse, specifically with the episode of the resurrection of Lazarus narrated in the Gospel of John, from the Holy Bible, refracts the Christian religious discourse, promoting the displacement of the meanings intended in the biblical narrative, either subverting or denying the already crystallized meanings.

So, as you can see, the issue addresses notable contemporary Brazilian issues of the religious phenomenon in dialogue with the most distant tradition and current affairs, with some intersections of discourses from different spheres of human activity. Therefore, we invite everyone - readers, authors, and collaborators - to actively respond to these texts, savoring and including in their research this set, which brings together 15 researchers from eight different Brazilian universities (UEBA, UFCD, UFRPE, UFPR, UPM, PUCPR, UNIFESP, UMESP).

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