

HEGELIAN DIALECTICS IN MIKHAIL BAKHTIN'S BOOK ON FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

Sheila Vieira de Camargo Grillo*

- **ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to show that the principles of ambivalence and inconclusiveness of the popular culture of laughter, of the action of the people in the Middle Ages, of the historical body and of the human/world relation at the popular-festive banquet, present in the book *Rabelais and His World* (Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) (1965), as well as in the text *The Art of The Word and The Culture of Folk Humor* (Rabelais and Gogol) (1940, 1970), were developed from the perspective of Hegelian dialectics, among other approaches. The methodology of this research, which is bibliographic in nature, consisted of the following steps: searching for statements by Bakhtin himself and by scholars of his work regarding the relevance of dialectics as the origin of the concept of ambivalence and of other categories in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais; reading and identifying principles of phenomenology and of dialectics in texts by Georg Hegel and by his critics; identifying categories in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais developed from Hegelian dialectics; finally, determining the developments and advances of Bakhtin's theory in relation to the German philosopher. The findings have shown that the images of grotesque realism are, on the one hand, affiliated with the Hegelian concept of becoming, but, on the other hand, distance themselves from it due to their obvious, visual, tangible, bodily character.
- **KEYWORDS:** Dialectics; Ambivalence; Georg Hegel; Mikhail Bakhtin.

* Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, São Paulo, SP, Brasil. Livre-docente. sheilagrillo@usp.br. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0480-2660>

Statement of purpose

According to Alexandre Kojève¹ (2014 [1947]), *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Georg Hegel's first and most distinguished work, is a "philosophical anthropology"², which "aims to describe man's integral essence, i.e., all human possibilities (cognitive, affective, active)" (Kojève, 2014 [1947], p. 37).³ The editors of M. M. Bakhtin's works state that *Towards a philosophy of the act* (Bakhtin, 1993b) and *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (In: Bakhtin, 1990) are considered by the theorist himself as his "philosophical anthropology" [философская антропология] (Gogotichvili, 2003, p. 351). *Towards a philosophy of the act* would be the first part of a greater project on the theme "architectonic of the actual world of the performed act" [архитектоника действительного мира поступка] (Bakhtin, 1993b, p. 59). The principles of such philosophical anthropology are not limited to the two mentioned texts by M. Bakhtin, but they pervade his other works. One of Bakhtin's historic predecessors is the German philosopher, based on whom he elaborates his own philosophical project.

In Georg Hegel's work, the dialectical movement is the principle that forms the human spirit, as "the philosophical thought is dialectical because it reflects⁴ [reveals] the real, which is dialectical" (Kojève, 2014 [1947], p. 36).⁵ In Mikhail Bakhtin's texts,

¹ Kojève was born in Russia in 1902 and died in 1968 in Brussels. He emigrated, after the Russian Revolution, to Germany, where he studied philosophy. During the rise of Nazism, he left for France and succeeded Alexandre Koyré, another Russian, as a professor at *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, and became one of the most important introducers of G. Hegel's thinking in France. In his seminars taught in the 1930s, there were great thinkers such as Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Jean Hyppolite, Jean-Paul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, among others. Brazilian philosopher Paulo Arantes (1991, p. 79) sees a certain anachronism in Kojève's reading of Hegel: "There will be no exaggeration if we include Kojève's Seminar in the genealogical tree of French Ideology. In the crossroads, there is Hegel, whose existentialist view will undoubtedly prevail, as it has been seen. But the image of a Hegel who is strangely contemporary will survive in another branch of French theoretical modernism" (in Portuguese: "Não haverá portanto exagero se incluirmos o Seminário de Kojève na árvore genealógica da Ideologia Francesa. Na encruzilhada, Hegel, do qual sem dúvida prevalecerá a versão existencialista, nos termos que se viu. Mas sobreviverá também a imagem de um Hegel estranhamente contemporâneo de uma outra vertente do modernismo teórico francês"). Similarly, the reading of Mikhail Bakhtin's work from the 1960s onwards in France has also been accused of a certain anachronism.

² In Portuguese: "antropologia filosófica".

³ In Portuguese: "quer descrever a essência integral do homem, isto é, todas as possibilidades humanas (cognitivas, afetivas, ativas)".

T.N. The reference in English (Kojève, 1980) does not have this explanation.

⁴ The terms "reflection" and "reflect" are common in Hegelian dialectics, in Bakhtin's theory and in the Bakhtinian Circle. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the word reflection is initially used when light, propagating in straight line, finds a similar surface and is bounced back. "We wish, as it were, to see the matter double, first in its immediacy, and secondly in its ground, where it is no longer immediate" (Hegel, 2015b, p. 93), when it is mediated.

Such is the case when we reflect or (as they say) *rethink* [*nachdenken*] an object, whereas it is not the object that counts, in its immediacy, [...] "things should essentially be viewed as mediated" (Hegel, 2015b, p. 93); we want to know them when they are mediated.

For G. Hegel, reflection refers to how objects from reality are apprehended by human consciousness. Firstly, they present themselves as self-sufficient, immediate, fixed and in identity with themselves (A=A). Secondly, they are reflected, mediated by human knowledge and, therefore, in their difference in relation to themselves.

⁵ In Portuguese: "o pensamento filosófico é dialético porque reflete [revela] o real que é dialético".

T.N. The reference in English (Kojève, 1980) does not have this explanation.

the frequent occurrence of references to dialectics and its relations to dialogue point to its relevance for comprehending the Russian theorist's formulations.

During the translation of *Rabelais and His World* (Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) (1965) and of *The Art of The Word and The Culture of Folk Humor* (Rabelais and Gogol) (1940, 1970), and also during the writing of the text *A polémica sobre a cultura popular na Idade Média: diálogos entre Arón Guriévitch⁶ e Mikhail Bakhtin* (The controversy about popular culture in the Middle Ages: dialogues between Arón Guriévitch and Mikhail Bakhtin) (Grillo, 2024), it has been observed that ambivalence is one of the main traits that constitute and guide grotesque realism. According to Bakhtin, the material and bodily substrate of grotesque images have a profoundly positive character. In *The Duvákin Interviews*,⁷ Bakhtin affirms that the ambivalence stemmed from dialectics and from dialogue:

D: While you, on the other hand, are [a dialectic]?

B: Not really. . . . For me, too, dialectics is not the main thing.

D: But your concept of ambivalence came out of dialectics, didn't it?

B: It was derived from there, but it's not dialectics per se. It's such an old story: dialogue and dialectics, the relationship between the two in terms of theory and history [...]. I hold the view that dialectics is born out of dialogue, and then later, dialectics again gives way to dialogue, but dialogue at a higher level, a much higher level (Bakhtin, 2019).⁸

The Russian medievalist Arón Guriévitch (1981, p. 277, emphasis added) also comprehends that “ambivalence” is related to dialectics and to dialogue:

Bakhtin describes the interaction, the confrontation between official and nonofficial cultures, as *ambivalent*, dual, in which oppositions are dialectically connected, changing places in a reciprocal way, and preserving polarity. In Bakhtin's conception, if I am not mistaken, ambivalence is a little related to another key concept: “*dialogue*”.⁹

⁶ Arón Guriévitch (Moscow, 1924-2006) was an important Soviet medievalist. Due to his Jewish origin and the theoretical divergences with Marxism, he had difficulties to enter Muscovite universities. From the theoretical perspective, he was close to the cultural history of *École des Annales*, especially to Jacques le Goff's work.

⁷ T.N. Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. *The Duvákin Interviews*:1973. Translated by Margarita Marinova. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2019. Available on <https://dokumen.pub/mikhail-bakhtin-the-duvak-in-interviews-1973-9781684480944.html>

⁸ Д: А Вы как раз диалектик?

Б: Нет, не совсем. Я тоже диалектику... для меня не самое главное.

Д: Ведь Ваша амбивалентность, по-моему, вышла из диалектики.

Б: Да, вышла из диалектики, но всё-таки это не диалектика. Это такая старая история: диалог и диалектика, их взаимоотношение, и теоретическое, и историческое. (...) Я придерживаюсь такого взгляда, что диалектика родилась из диалога, а потом - диалектика снова уступает место диалогу, но уже диалогу на высшем уровне, на более высоком уровне.

⁹ Взаимодействие — противоборство культуры официальной и культуры неофициальной Бахтин описывает как *амбивалентность*, двойственность, в которой противоположности диалектически связаны, взаимно меняясь

In line with these declarations, the principle of ambivalence, the basis of Bakhtin's conception of popular culture, comes out of the concepts of dialogue and of dialectics.

Considering the affirmations by Mikhail Bakhtin himself, by Víktor Duvákin and by Arón Guriévitch as a starting point, the **purpose** of this paper is to demonstrate that the principles of ambivalence and inconclusiveness of the popular culture of laughter, of the action of the people upon laughter in the Middle Ages, of the historical body and of the human/world relation at the popular-festive banquet – present in the book *Rabelais and His World* (Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) (1965), as well as in the text *The Art of The Word and The Culture of Folk Humor* (Rabelais and Gogol) (1940, 1970) – were developed from the perspective of Hegelian dialectics, among other approaches.

Georg Hegel's work was not the only reference for dialectics in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory: dialectics by Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Marx also need to be investigated. However, due to the complexity of these theories, this paper is dedicated to Hegelian dialectics, and the others will be studied in further phases of the study.

The methodology of this research, which is bibliographic in nature, consisted of the following steps: searching for statements by Bakhtin himself (transcribed above) and by scholars of his work (V. Duvákin, A. Guriévitch – also transcribed above) regarding the relevance of dialectics as the origin of the concept of ambivalence and of other categories in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais; reading and identifying principles of phenomenology and of dialectics in texts by Georg Hegel and by his critics; identifying categories in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais, developed from Hegelian dialectics; finally, determining the developments and differences of Bakhtin's theory regarding the German philosopher. Such steps do not constitute separate sections of this article, but methodological procedures of investigation, comparison and presentation of findings.

Time, ambivalence and inconclusiveness – embodied and popular – in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais's novel

In *Rabelais and His World* (Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) (1965) and in *The Art of The Word and The Culture of Folk Humor* (Rabelais and Gogol) (1940, 1970)¹⁰, Mikhail Bakhtin postulates that the presence of the grotesque image in Rabelais is defined by two main aspects: relation to time and ambivalence.

местами и сохраняя свою полярность. В концепции Бахтина, если я не ошибаюсь, амбивалентность несколько сродни другому ключевому понятию «*диалог*».

In Portuguese: Bakhtin descreve a interação, o confronto entre as culturas oficial e não oficial, como *ambivalente*, dual, em que as oposições estão dialeticamente ligadas, mudando de lugar de modo recíproco e conservando sua polaridade. Na concepção de Bakhtin, se não me engano, a ambivalência é um pouco aparentada de outro conceito-chave: “*diálogo*”. (Guriévitch, 1981, p. 277, sublinhados meus).

¹⁰ So far there is a translation of the first text from French – BAKHTIN, M. *A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento*. O contexto de François Rabelais. Trad. Y. Frateschi. 4. ed. São Paulo-Brasília: Edunb-Hucitec, 1999

Image [óbráz] is a basic category of artistic creation and the central concept in Russian literary theory; it is one of the most frequent terms in M. Bakhtin's book on F. Rabelais (the word "obraz" and its derivatives appear more than 1,500 times). The artistic image is a form of reproduction, interpretation and assimilation of life through the creation of elements of an artistic whole, which has relatively independent existence and content. The most immediate influence comes from *Lectures on Aesthetics*: Volume II by G. Hegel (1988b), who understands image as an exhaustive metaphor, i.e., when two phenomena or autonomous states are placed in unity, so that a state provides the meaning which is made apprehensible through the image of the other state. This is about the relation between two concrete and firmly determined existences. In "The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Act" (In: Bakhtin, 1990), image is an aesthetic component or a distinctive aesthetic formation, realized with the help of the material (word in poetry, apprehended material in visual arts etc.). The specific possibilities of each material are transformed by the artist/creator into images or signs of artistic content. In *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (Volóchinov, 1973, p. 9), the author proposes that "any physical body may be perceived as an image" (obraz) of something, i.e., an ideological sign, element of daily reality, is transformed into a sign or image when it reflects and refracts meanings that are culturally constructed, shared, ambivalent and in constant change. Throughout the study on F. Rabelais, M. Bakhtin demonstrates how images reflect the cosmovision and the specific forms of the popular culture of laughter, in opposition to the official culture.

Returning to the images of grotesque realism, Bakhtin argues that time is essentially historical; it has direction, it moves toward the future, i.e., the world changes in time, except for the cyclical perception and the possibility of going back in time. Ambivalence is another trait that constitutes and guides the grotesque image, which manifests the two poles of life. Let us see how ambivalence and time are formulated by M. Bakhtin:

The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 24)¹¹

[1965] – and a translation of the second one in the anthology: BAKHTIN, M. **Questões de Literatura e estética (A Teoria do Romance)**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Editora da UNESP, 1993 [1990].

T.N. References in English: BAKHTIN, M. M. **Rabelais and His World**. Translated by Helene Iswolski. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984b. BAKHTIN, M. **The dialogic imagination**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. BAKHTIN, M. **Art and Answerability**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

¹¹ Гротескный образ характеризует явление в состоянии его изменения, незавершенной ещё метаморфозы, в стадии смерти и рождения, роста и становления. Отношение к времени, к становлению – необходимая конститутивная (определяющая) черта гротескного образа. Другая, связанная с этим необходимая черта его – амбивалентность: в нём в той или иной форме даны (или намечены) оба полюса изменения – и старое и новое, и умирающее и рождающееся, и начало и конец метаморфозы.

Historical time and ambivalence constitute two central aspects of the grotesque image in F. Rabelais's novels. The way time is addressed in Rabelais's work and in the Middle Ages varies.¹² M. Bakhtin concludes that the purposes of play and parodied prophecies are to "uncrown gloomy eschatological time, that is, the medieval concept of the world. The parodies renew time on the material bodily level, transforming it into a propitious and merry notion" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 238)¹³. Next, analyzing the third book on Rabelais's novel, M. Bakhtin interprets that the body of the people on carnival square is "historic"¹⁴, it is a "unity in time"¹⁵, conscious of its "relative historic immortality"¹⁶, which points to "becoming and growth" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 255-256). From M. Bakhtin's perspective, time is materialized in the grotesque image of the body in Rabelais:

[...] mankind's historic progress. The human race is not merely renewed with each generation, it rises to a new level of development. [...] the image of the ancestral body is merged with the people's vivid awareness of historic immortality (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 324).¹⁷

The material body principle in grotesque realism [i.e., in the imagery system of popular culture of laughter] is offered in its all-popular festive and utopian aspect. The cosmic, social and bodily elements are given here as an indivisible whole. And this whole is gay and gracious (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 19).¹⁸

In this passage and in others, the grotesque body is not only a biological body, given, static, and repeated in new generations, but it is defined by two aspects: on the one hand, it is a historical, active and creative body, which moves progressively in time; on the other hand, the bodily principle places the historical, creative process of humanity on the material, obvious, visual, tangible level. The human bodily existence and the human knowledge are the essences of the realization of historical time.

¹² This paragraph and the following one were imported from my text: GRILLO, S. V. C. Mikhail Bakhtin: pensador do riso, da crise e da mudança na teoria dos gêneros do discurso *Revista de Estudos da Linguagem*, v. 30, p. 1185-1205, 2022.

¹³ Развенчать мрачное эсхатологическое *время* средневековых представлений о мире, обновить его, в материально-телесном плане, приземлить его, превратить его в *доброе и весёлое время*.

¹⁴ Исторично

¹⁵ Единство во времени

¹⁶ Относительное историческое бессмертие

¹⁷ С темой исторического прогресса человечества. Человеческий род не просто обновляется с каждым новым поколением, но каждый раз он поднимается на новую высшую степень исторического развития (...) тема родового тела сливается у Рабле с темой и с живым ощущением исторического бессмертия народа.

¹⁸ Материально-телесное начало в гротескном реализме (то есть в образной системе народной культуры) дано в своём всенародном, праздничном и утопическом аспекте. Космическое, социальное и телесное даны здесь в неразрывном единстве, как неразделимое живое целое. И это целое - весёлое и благостное.

In chapter 3, “Popular-Festive Forms and Images in Rabelais”, M. Bakhtin develops another image which is relevant to comprehend time in F. Rabelais’s work: the people. In the following passage, people gather in themselves the historic “becoming”, i.e., the union between continuity and renewal:

The body of the people on carnival square is first of all aware of its unity in time; it is conscious of its uninterrupted continuity within time, of its relative historic immortality. Therefore the people do not perceive a static image of their unity (*eine Gestalt*), but instead the uninterrupted continuity of their becoming and growth, of the unfinished metamorphosis of death and renewal (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 255-256).¹⁹

This body or collectiveness of the people feels its unity on carnival square; by means of the people, fear of death and of finitude is overcome, as a generation dies and is renewed upon the emergence of the next one. Death does not have the last word; human beings defeat death only with different human beings, who are renewed, following one another, evolving through time.

Inconclusiveness is another element of the carnival popular cosmovision which negates all that is static, serious, dogmatic, authoritarian, motionless, and finished, in favor of the infinite, unpredictable, unstable, unfinished, nonofficial, noncanonical. Inconclusiveness is still present in grotesque realism through the nonseparation between body and world, and through ambivalent images of the body, in which old age and death generate life. In times of crises, some writers perceive and deal with an unfinished world, which is undergoing transformation and reconstruction. Their works are saturated, on the one hand, by a decomposing past; on the other hand, by an unsaid future, which is not yet formed; polysemy, apparent obscurity, and monstrosity disagree with canons and norms of finished, authoritarian, dogmatic times. M. Bakhtin states that, during the Renaissance, human beings started to be understood as unfinished, open, free, and in constant coming to be. Such concept is also present in both books by M. Bakhtin on Dostoiévski²⁰ and in the theory of the novel.²¹

The interrelation among time, ambivalence, body and people appears on the final pages of chapter 5, “The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources” [Гротескный образ тела у Рабле и его источники]:

¹⁹ Народное тело не карнаваловой площади прежде всего чувствует свое единство во времени, чувствует свою непрерывную длительность в нём, свое относительное историческое бессмертие. Здесь, следовательно, народ ощущает не статический образ своего единства (“*eine Gestalt*”), а единство и непрерывность своего становления и роста. Поэтому все народно-праздничные образы фиксируют именно момент становления и роста, незавершенной метаморфозы, смерти-обновления.

²⁰ BAKHTIN, M. M. **Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics**. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984a.
Problems of Dostoevsky’s work (not translated into English) is the first version of **Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics**.

²¹ BAKHTIN, M. **The dialogic imagination**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981 and BAKHTIN, M. **Art and Answerability**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

The movement in time is guaranteed by the birth of generation after generation, a never-ending succession that fills the gods with fear. Pantagruel, too, intends to get married and to have children, and this is the relative immortality of which Gargantua speaks in his letter to his son. The immortality of the ancestral body of mankind is rhetorically proclaimed. Not the biological body, which merely repeats itself in the new generations, but precisely the historic, progressing body of mankind stands at the center of this system of images.

Thus, in the grotesque concept of the body a new, concrete, and realistic historic awareness was born and took form: not abstract thought about the future but the living sense that each man belongs to the immortal people who create history (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 367. Emphasis added).²²

Here and in other parts of the book, Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes that it is not only a biological body according to G. Hegel (*Sein* or the given being, natural, equal to itself, commented by A. Kojève), but a historical body which, through new generations, is developed in time by means of its transformative and creative action of natural reality.

In grotesque realism of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, laughter is the fundamental principle of dialectical movement. Firstly, M. Bakhtin addresses aspects of laughter prepared in the Middle Ages and completed during the Renaissance, when François Rabelais's work was produced. Like in dialectics, laughter is in constant development; it constitutes consciousness, it is critical and historical. Let us see all of this in the following fragments:

In this new combination medieval laughter was destined to change. Its wide popular character, its radicalism and freedom, soberness and materiality were transferred from an almost elemental condition

to a state of artistic awareness and purposefulness. In other words, medieval laughter became at the Renaissance stage of its development the expression of a new free and critical historical consciousness. It could acquire this character only because the buds and shoots of new

²² Движение во времени гарантируется рождением новых и новых поколений. Его-то - рождения новых человеческих поколений - и испугались боги: Пантагрюэль «собирается жениться и иметь детей». Это и есть то относительное бессмертие, о котором Гаргантюа писал в письме своему сыну Пантагрюэлю. Здесь это бессмертие родового тела человечества провозглашено на риторическом языке. (...) Не биологическое тело, которое только повторяет себя в новых поколениях, но именно тело исторического, прогрессирующего человечества, - находится в центре этой системы образов.

Таким образом, в гротескной концепции тела родилось и оформилось новое, конкретное и реалистическое историческое чувство, - не отвлеченная мысль о будущих временах, а живое ощущение причастности каждого человека бессмертному народу, творящему историю.

potentialities had been prepared in the medieval period (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 73. Emphasis added)²³

This process was completed during the Renaissance. Medieval laughter found its highest expression in Rabelais' novel. It became the form of a new free and critical historical consciousness. And this supreme form of laughter had been prepared in the Middle Ages. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 97. Emphasis added).²⁴

M. Bakhtin saw, in François Rabelais's work, the manifestation of laughter as a new free and historical consciousness. In Hegelian terms, it is a dialectical movement of evolution of human consciousness which, upon negating the established order, advances in time in an active and creative manner. M. Bakhtin demonstrates that laughter was a weapon to criticize (negate) the official feudal and religious order of the Middle Ages. However, as the theorist affirms, such free, critical and ambivalent character of laughter was lost during the Enlightenment:

Thus, generally speaking, the Enlighteners failed to understand and to appreciate Rabelais, at least within the sphere of their theoretical knowledge [...].

This abstract rationalism and antihistoricism, this tendency to generalization and nondialectic thought (the break between negation and affirmation) prevented the Encyclopedists from grasping theoretically the nature of ambivalent festive laughter. The image of the contradictory, perpetually becoming and unfinished being could not be reduced to the dimensions of the Enlighteners' reason (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 118. Emphasis added).²⁵

²³ Средневековый смех в этой новой комбинации и на этой новой ступени своего развития должен был существенно измениться. Его всенародность, радикализм, вольность, трезвость и материалистичность из стадии своего почти стихийного существования перешли в состояние художественной осознанности и целеустремлённости. Другими словами, средневековый смех на ренессансной ступени своего развития стал выражением нового свободного и критического *исторического* сознания эпохи. Он мог им стать только потому, что в нём за тысячелетие его развития в условиях средневековья были уже подготовлены ростки и зачатки этой историчности, потенции к ней. Как же складывались и развивались формы средневековой культуры смеха?

²⁴ В эпоху Ренессанса этот процесс завершился. В романе Рабле средневековый смех нашёл свое выражение. Он стал здесь формой для нового свободного и критического *исторического* сознания. И эта высшая стадия смеха была уже подготовлена в средние века.

²⁵ Итак, просветители, в общем, не поняли и не оценили Рабле - во всяком случае, в плане своего теоретического сознания. [...] Этот абстрактный рационализм, антиисторизм, тенденция к отвлечённой всеобщности, недialeктичность (отрыв отрицания от утверждения) не позволили просветителям понять и *теоретически* осмыслить народно-праздничный амбивалентный смех. Образ противоречиво становящегося и вечно неготового бытия никак нельзя было подвести под мерку просветительского разума.

By pointing out that the Enlightenment principles impeded the comprehension of the nature of medieval and Renaissance laughter, M. Bakhtin underscores, by negation, the dialectical principles of his conception of laughter: historicity, dialectics (simultaneous presence of affirmation and negation) or contradictory constitution, leading to the historical, always unfinished process of human existence.

M. Bakhtin identifies the origin of laughter in Socrates's "critical philosophy" and in the carnival forms of the antique world:

Another form of seriousness was created in the antique world, which was also devoid of narrow dogmatism (in principle) and was capable of being tested in the crucible of laughter. This was critical philosophy. Its founder, Socrates, was directly linked with the carnival forms of antiquity that fertilized the Socratic dialogue and freed it from one-sided rhetorical seriousness (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 121. Emphasis added)²⁶

Even though this paper does not focus on Socratic dialectics, which has its main expression in Plato's dialogues, it is necessary to indicate two elements of the Bakhtinian theory of laughter: firstly, M. Bakhtin, here and in other texts, has in Socratic dialogue one of the founding principles of his concept of dialogue; secondly, the carnival and comic character of the Socratic dialogue (of laughter) is in the origin of medieval laughter, which is devoid of dogmatism, which is not one-sided and which is connected to carnival forms. Bakhtin's theory of dialogue is oriented by the critical, historical principle, devoid of dogmatism, which negates the existing order.

Finally, laughter is, next to seriousness, the second truth about the world. It "[...] was the world's second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away. It was, as it were, the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 84).²⁷

The truth about laughter is connected to universality (oriented towards the wholeness of the world), to freedom and to the nonofficial, popular character. The truth about laughter places the world in historical movement when it questions the real.

The negating act of the given is also present in Bakhtin's analyses of the material bodily lower stratum in Rabelais. In chapter 6, "Images of the Material Bodily Lower Stratum", the mention to the negating character of Rabelais's system of images orients the discussion of the material bodily lower stratum as well as the praise-abuse merger in language, both characterized as "elemental dialectic phenomena":

²⁶ На античной же почве сложилась и другая форма серьёзности, также лишенная догматизма и односторонности (в принципе) и способная пройти через горнило смеха. - форма критической философии. Основоположник её - Сократ - был непосредственно связан с карнавальными формами античности, которые оплодотворили сократической диалог и освободили его от односторонней *риторической* серьёзности.

²⁷ Это - *вторая правда о мире*, которая распространяется на всё, из ведения которой ничто не изъято. Это - как бы *праздничный аспект всего мира* во всех его моментах, как бы второе откровение о мире в игре и смехе.

We have in mind the manifestations of popular artistic imagery which until now have not been understood and studied. These are elemental dialectic phenomena. Up to now, only phenomena expressing the relations of formal logic have been analyzed, or, better, only those that fit the framework of these relations: manifestations in one single plane, in one dimension, and in one tone, representing the static character of the object, not its becoming and ambivalence. The manifestation of the culture of folk humor reflects precisely these dialectics in the form of imagery (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 410, emphasis added)²⁸

It is clear here that Mikhail Bakhtin operates with principles of Hegelian dialectics –negation, movement, becoming – with the form of artistic images that constitute Rabelais’s artistic cosmovision. The dialectical negation of abstract and logic character is transformed into the upside-down image of the carnivalesque:

Negation in popular-festive imagery has never an abstract logical character. It is always something obvious, tangible. That which stands behind negation is by no means nothingness but the “other side” of that which is denied, the carnivalesque upside down (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 410)²⁹.

The movement and the becoming of existence are materialized in Rabelais’s ambivalent language which merges and intertwines praise-abuse: “It was not mere chance that the ecclesiastical form of litany was chosen, for this form of pious, one-sided praise is here debased and drawn into the vast torrent of praise-abuse, reflecting the contradiction of the world of becoming” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 419)³⁰.

Let us see how time and ambivalence, materialized in the images of the body and of the people on the square, oriented by the critical laughter (negating), free from grotesque realism in François Rabelais’s work, have, in Hegelian dialectics, one of its sources. Before that, however, let us address the human/world relation at the festive-popular and banquet imagery in Bakhtin’s theory on Rabelais’s novels.

²⁸ Мы касаемся здесь таких явлений народной художественной образности, которые до сих пор остаются непонятыми и неизученными, - явлений стихийно-диалектических. До сих пор изучались только явления, которые выражают формально-логические отношения, во всяком случае укладываются в рамки этих отношений, явления, так сказать, плоскостные, одномерные и однотонные, рисующие статику предмета и чуждые становлению и амбивалентности. Между тем в явлениях народно-смеховой культуры мы находим именно диалектику в образной форме.

²⁹ Отрицание в народно-праздничных образах никогда не носит абстрактного, логического характера. Оно всегда образно, наглядно, осязаемо. За отрицанием стоит вовсе не ничто, а своего рода обратный предмет, изнанка, изнанка отрицаемого предмета, карнавальные наобороты.

³⁰ И самая церковная форма (пиететная и односторонне-хвалебная) снижается, вовлекается в поток хвалы-брани, отражающий противоречивое становление мира.

The human/world relation at the festive-popular and banquet imagery

In chapter 3, about the festive-popular forms and images in Rabelais's novel, Mikhail Bakhtin, on the one hand, refuses the one-sidedness of Hegelian negation (i.e., refuses the given, ready reality), as he considers it to be abstract. On the other hand, he points out how the festive-popular images represent life in its contradictory ambivalence, negating the old in order to create the new:

There is no pure abstract negation in the popular-festive system of images; it tends to embrace both poles of becoming in their contradiction and unity (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 203, emphasis added).³¹

All the episodes we have discussed in this chapter, as well as the individual scenes of battles, fights, beatings, the uncrowning of people and objects (for instance, the bells) are presented by Rabelais in the popular-festive carnival spirit. Therefore, all the episodes are ambivalent: destruction and uncrowning are related to birth and renewal. The death of the old is linked with regeneration; all the images are connected with the contradictory oneness of the dying and reborn world (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 217, emphasis added).³²

In the previous section, the visual character of Hegelian dialectics (addressed later in this paper) was demonstrated, according to Rabelais's cosmovision. In the aforementioned excerpt, the contradictory oneness is affirmed (negation and affirmation) of this system of images.

Hegelian phenomenology is present at the banquet images discussed by M. Bakhtin; they materialize the phenomenological relation between man and the world, between the I and the object, between self-consciousness and the other.

Eating and drinking are one of the most significant manifestations of the grotesque body. The distinctive character of this body is its open unfinished nature, its interaction with the world. These traits are most fully and concretely revealed in the act of eating; the body transgresses here its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense. The encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing

³¹ В народно-праздничной системе образов нет чистого, абстрактного отрицания. Образы этой системе стремятся захватить оба полюса становления в их противоречивом единстве.

³² Все разобранные нами до сих пор эпизоды и отдельные образы, все сцены битв, драк, побоев, осмеяний, развенчаний как людей (представителей старой власти и старой правды) так и вещей (например, колоколов). Обработаны и стилизованы Рабле в народно-праздничном карнавальном духе. Поэтому все они амбивалентны: уничтожение и развенчание связано с возрождением и обновлением, смерть старого связано с рождением нового; все образы отнесены к противоречивому единству умирающего и рождающегося мира.

mouth, is one of the most ancient, and most important objects of human thought and imagery. Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself. Man's awakening consciousness could not but concentrate on this moment, could not help borrowing from it a number of substantial images determining its interrelation with the world. Man's encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage. (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 281 emphasis added).³³

Mikhail Bakhtin sees, at the banquet imagery of popular culture, the dialectical association of man with the world, in which man triumphs, absorbs and is enriched by incorporating the other. It is relevant to underscore the “unfinished” nature of this relation with the world and the emergence of human consciousness upon the encounter with the world as one of its moments or aspects.

This encounter of man with the world through food is completed in the collective work:

If food is separated from work and conceived as part of a private way of life, then nothing remains of the old images: man's encounter with the world and tasting the world, the open mouth, the relation of food and speech, the gay truth. Nothing is left but a series of artificial, meaningless metaphors. The original system of images symbolized the working people, continuing to conquer life and food through struggle and labor and to absorb only that part of the world that has been conquered and mastered. In such a system the banquet images preserve their initial meaning: their universalism, their essential relation to life, death, struggle, triumph, and regeneration. This is why banquet imagery went on living in the creative life of the people (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 281-282, emphasis added).³⁴

³³ Еда и питье - одно из важнейших проявлений жизни гротескного тела. Особенности этого тела - его открытость, незавершённость, его взаимодействие с миром. Эти особенности в акте еды проявляются с полной наглядностью и конкретностью: тело выходит здесь за его границы, оно глотает, поглощает, терзает мир, вбирает его в себя, обогащается и растёт за его счёт. Происходящая в разинутом. Грызущем, терзающем и жующем рту *встреча человека с миром* является одним из древнейших и важнейших сюжетов человеческой мысли и образа. Здесь человек вкушает мир, ощущает вкус мира, вводит его в свое тело, делает его частью себя самого. Пробуждающееся сознание человека не могло не сосредоточиться на этом моменте, не могло не извлекать из него ряда очень ряда очень существенных образов, определяющих взаимоотношение между человеком и миром. *Эта встреча с миром в акте еды была радостной и ликующей.* Здесь человек *торжествовал над миром*, он поглощал его, а не его поглощали; граница между человеком и миром стиралась здесь в положительном для человека смысле.

³⁴ Если оторвать еду от труда, завершением которого она была, и воспринимать её как частно-бытовое явление, то от образов встречи человека с миром, вкушения мира, разинутого рта, от существенной связи еды со словом в весёлой истинной ничего не остаётся, кроме ряда натянутых и обесмысленных метафор. Но в системе образов *трудящегося народа*, продолжающего завоевывать свою жизнь и еду в трудовой борьбе, продолжающего

Human labor exerts a transforming action in the given natural reality; through work, human beings suppress the initial opposition between themselves and the world, and “humanize” the world, making it part of themselves. In Rabelais’s system of images, work is completed at the banquet imagery, when people become aware of their transforming activity that blurs the boundaries between human beings and the world, and they enjoy the result of such work. Bakhtin has a quite optimistic view of human becoming in popular culture, which also seems to be a point of contact with the progressive, ascending, evolving character of Hegelian dialectics.

Negation and time in Georg Hegel’s dialectics

The comprehension of time, of ambivalence, of inconclusiveness, of the historical body and of the human/world relation at the festive-popular and banquet imagery in François Rabelais’s novel and in M. Bakhtin’s text on it becomes deeper and more understandable when placed in dialogical relations with Georg Hegel’s philosophical system or “system of science”³⁵. Such system is composed by two parts:

- 1) The first one is *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 2018) centered on phenomenological dialectics of human existence that is realized through the consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) / self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) opposition. Such oppositional experience is the human being understood as a negating act in time, i.e., the given being (*Sein*), static, natural, equal with itself ($A=A$) by means of the negating act (*Tun*) of the human being, sublated (vanishing/preserving) dialectically (not-A) towards the revealed being (*Begriff* – concept);
- 2) The second part is *The Science of Logic I, II and III* (Hegel, 2016[1932], 2017[1813], 2017[1816]) which is the ontology³⁶ of “Being as such” (Kojève, 1980, p. 215) with the object “*thinking as such*” (Hegel, 2015a, p. 41) “freed

поглощать только завоеванную, освоенную часть мира, - пиршественные образы продолжают сохранять свое важное значение, свой универсализм, свою существенную связь с жизнью, смертью, борьбой, победой, торжеством, возрождением. Поэтому образы эти и продолжали жить в своём универсальном значении во всех областях народного творчества.

³⁵ Designated as such in HEGEL, G. W. F. **The Science of Logic**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015a.

³⁶ In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel defines ontology as “the doctrine of the abstract characteristics of Being” (2015b, p. 29). The “Being” (from the German *Sein*) is a natural, static, eternal or nontemporal being, i.e., it exists in an eternal identity in itself and it is the object of thinking and the theme of Logic. The Being (*Sein*) is the first element that constitutes the Spirit (*Geist*), which is dialectical or trinitarian. Science reveals the being or the object in interaction with the subject of knowledge, as it “never attains this autonomous real” (Kojève, 1980, p. 177), but “Subject that knows the object, or, what is the same thing, the Object known by the Subject (Kojève, 1980, p. 174). G. Hegel states, in the introduction of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: “However, if we designate the essence, or the in-itself of the object, as the concept, and in contrast understand by object the concept insofar as it is object, or insofar as it is for an other, then the examining consists in our seeing whether the object corresponds to its concept. One clearly sees that both are the same, but what is essential throughout the whole investigation is to hold fast to this, that both of these moments, concept and object, being-for-an-other and being-in-itself, themselves fall within the knowing that we are investigating [...]” (Hegel, 2018, p. 56, emphasis in the original).

from all sensuous concretion” (Hegel, 2015a, p. 37)³⁷ and adapted to or identified with the external world, i.e., “the structure of thought, therefore, is determined by the structure of the Being that it reveals” (Kojève, 1980, p. 170). Thus, logical thought is dialectical, as the Being it reveals is dialectical (implying a constitutive element which is negative or negating).

In the forewords of the first edition (1817) and the second edition (1827) of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (2015b), G. Hegel reaffirms the importance of identity ($A=A$) as a principle of speculative philosophy and defends the intelligence or rational knowledge as an attribute that gives dignity to human beings.

In *The Science of Logic I: The doctrine of Being* (Hegel, 2015a), historical time and negation are traits that form Hegelian dialectics, according to which “becoming” is the unit of movement and contradictory balance (unifies in itself what contradicts itself in itself) with two directions: “The one is *ceasing-to-be*; being passes over into nothing, but nothing is just as much the opposite of itself, the passing-over into being, coming-to-be. This coming-to-be is the other direction; nothing goes over into being [...]” (Hegel, 2015, p. 80-81). This movement between ceasing-to-be/coming-to-be occurs through what Hegel names “sublating”, a contradictory unit, vanishing/preserving. Addressing the finitude of things, G. Hegel concludes that “the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of this transgression in their in-itselfness: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death” (Hegel, 2015a, p. 101). It is the historical movement of mankind, not satisfied with repeating the given, the natural life. Nor does it negate the past altogether, i.e., humanity evolves by preserving and transforming the past.

In the last pages of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (2018), Georg Hegel concludes that “time” and its correlate “evolution” point to an endless movement of transformation, stating that the spirit (*Geist*) – the collective human being or human spirit with actions “propagated through History” (Kojève, 1980, p. 257), integrated in society, acknowledged by other humans – is only manifested in time:

Time thus appears as the destiny and necessity of the spirit that is not yet completed within itself. – It appears as the necessity to enrich the participation self-consciousness has in consciousness and to set into motion the *immediacy of the in-itself* (Hegel, 2018, p. 462, emphasis in the original).

In Hegelian phenomenology, self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) is the human being referring to himself as to an object, and this occurs when reality is reached through activity, i.e., “one can truly create only by negating the given” (Kojève, 1980, p. 223), and after each creating phase, one becomes conscious of what one created, i.e., of what one is, after having become. Such activity makes men recognize themselves as true

³⁷ In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, G. Hegel defines content or object of Logic as “the science of thought and of its laws and characteristic forms” (2015b, p. 12).

and real: “[...] the individual cannot know what *he is* prior to having brought himself to actuality through action” (Hegel, 2018, p. 218).

Kojève identifies such activity in the transforming work of reality – the technique – and in the struggle that creates the social, political and historical world. Human beings are the transforming activity of natural reality into a created human reality. When relating to things that are external, they realize that this world of things is, in fact, a product of their knowledge, i.e., by distancing themselves from the experience of an objective world, they find themselves as beings that act in order to understand the world, and constitute themselves as self-conscious subjects. Kojève (1980, p. 3) states that there is a circularity here, as “‘the knowing subject’ ‘loses’ himself in the object that is known”. Self-consciousness has domain over the opposition between self-certainty and object, but now the object for itself is self-certainty, knowledge.

By introducing G. Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, understood as the science of the experience of consciousness, Alexandre Kojève (1980) comments that the human “I” is distinguished from the animal “I” through desire realized in time:

This I will not, like the animal “I,” be “identity” or equality to itself, but “negating-negativity.” In other words, the very being of this I will be becoming and the universal form of this being will not be space, but time. Therefore, its continuation in existence will signify for this I: “not to be what it is (as static and given being, as natural being, as ‘innate character’) and to be (that is, to become) what it is not.” Thus, this I will be its own product: it will be (in the future) what it has become by negation (in the present) of what it was (in the past), this negation being accomplished with a view to what it will become (Kojève, 1980, p. 5).

The human being is not a static being defined by equality with himself in the natural world, but he is a restlessness realized in time – he is a becoming. Time here has a historical restless character.

Another aspect that differentiates man from animal is the people: a “man who recognizes another man or is recognized by him” (Kojève, 1980, p. 9). According to G. Hegel, the human being as self-consciousness and historical existence is only realized through people organized in a State.

In the life of a people, the concept of the actualization of selfconscious reason has in fact its consummate reality, namely, where in the self-sufficiency of the *other*, each intuitively its complete *unity* with the other (Hegel, 2018, p. 205, emphasis added).

As the actual substance, it is a people, and as actual consciousness, it is the citizens of the nation.
This consciousness has its essence in simple spirit, and its certainty of itself in the actuality of this spirit, in the whole people, and it immediately therein has its truth. But it does not have its truth in something which is not actual; it has it in a spirit which *exists and is validly in force* (Hegel, 2018, p. 257, italics in the original. Emphasis added).

Self-conscious human being (*Selbstbewusstsein*) of Spirit (*Geist*) is only brought to actuality in the life of people through the union with other human beings, in the belonging to all mankind (*Geist*), i.e., in the union between the particularity of each person and the universality of all mankind.

Time and ambivalence materialized in the images of the grotesque body and of the people in M. Bakhtin, on the one hand, resume the concepts of becoming or historical time and of people (*Geist*) in Hegelian phenomenology and, on the other hand, transform such concepts by placing them on a material and bodily level, as G. Hegel locates time in the constitution of human consciousness and not in the body. Kojève (2014 [1947], p. 292) affirms that

[...] in *Phenomenology*, man is addressed, but with an abstraction of the world. Man is abstract, unreal. In other words, the external consciousness is addressed without addressing the object to which such consciousness refers. Therefore, it is not the real consciousness, but the abstract notion of consciousness. That means the ideal possibilities of consciousness are addressed, i.e., the ideal existential social, political types, not the concrete manner through which such types are realized in history [...]³⁸.

After *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel proposes to define “Logic”, which, as already indicated above, is the science whose object is “determinations of thought” or “thinking in general” or “thinking and the rules of thinking” or “*thinking* as such” (2015a, p. 13, 24, 41) “freed from all sensuous concretion” (2015a, p. 37). Such thinking “must adapt itself to its matter” (2015a, p. 24): the external world.

Alexandre Kojève (1980) addresses the passage of “Phenomenology” to “Logic” in the following terms: “Phenomenology” is the opposition or “difference” (*Unterschied*) between subject and object, between concept and reality, between consciousness

³⁸ In Portuguese: “[...] na *Fenomenologia*, fala-se do homem, mas fazendo abstração do mundo. Fala-se do homem abstrato, irreal. Ou seja, fala-se da consciência-exterior sem falar do objeto coisa ao qual essa consciência se refere. Logo, fala-se não da consciência real, mas da noção abstrata de consciência. Quer dizer que se fala das possibilidades ideais da consciência, isto é, dos tipos ideais existenciais, sociais e políticos, e não da maneira concreta como esses tipos se realizam na história [...]”.

T.N. Some courses presented in the Portuguese version are different from the ones in the English version (Kojève, 2018).

(*Bewusstsein*) and self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*), between thought and reality, whereas “Logic” contains the identity or the coincidence with such terms. In the final chapter of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Georg Hegel contrasts “Phenomenology” with “Science”:

However much in the phenomenology of spirit, each moment is both the difference between knowing and truth and the movement in which that difference sublates itself, nonetheless science does not, in contrast, contain this difference and its sublation. Rather, as the moment has the form of the concept, it unites the objective form of truth and that of the knowing self into an immediate unity (Hegel, 2018, p. 465).

In other words, “the dialectic of the subject and Object, which is effected inside of the Subject and is described in Phenomenology, is meaningful only if one supposes the existence [...] of an Object external to and independent of the Subject” (Kojève, 1980, p. 152). Contrary to “Subjective Idealism” (Hegel, 2015b, p. 41), which does not conceive a reality independent from knowledge³⁹, in “Phenomenology” this real distinction between man (*Selbstbewusstsein* understood as negating action of a given being and, therefore, time, *Zeit*) and the nontemporal natural world or the given being (*Sein*), revealed by the concept, is responsible for realism in Hegel’s system.

According to Hegel, in the metaphysical tradition of the antique world, such world and its elements are realities that are thought or elevated to forms of thinking, i.e., they are interiorized. The foundation of this thought world or the way to apprehend it is dialectics: “*transcending* the concrete immediate, in *determining* and *parting* it” (Hegel, 2015a, p. 26), and this occurs through the contradiction – “the elevation of reason above the restrictions of the understanding and the dissolution of them” (Hegel, 2015a, p. 26). The method of logical science is the dialectics that coincides with its object and content. Hegel equates the speculative to the dialectic: “grasping opposites in their unity, or the positive in the negative” (Hegels, 2015a, p. 35); such opposition makes content move progressively.

Whereas Georg Hegel proposes to reflect on human consciousness towards self-consciousness, Mikhail Bakhtin’s work addresses a real type of consciousness that was formed in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, in historically situated social and political conditions: popular consciousness formed by negating or subverting the official medieval feudal and religious order.

³⁹ In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Georg Hegel evaluates that Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), one of the most cited philosophers in his works, is a subjective idealist: “the Kantian Criticism presents that ‘common’ type of idealism known as Subjective Idealism. It asks no questions about the meaning or scope of the categories, but simply considers the abstract form of subjectivity and objectivity, and that even in such a partial way that the former aspect, that of subjectivity, is retained as a final and purely affirmative term of thought” (Hegel, 2015b, p. 41). Georg Hegel considers that his philosophical system is realistic, when he conceives dialectics between subject and object, in which the independence of an external object is presupposed, and that is ratified by Alexandre Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel’s Phenomenology.

The banquet imagery presented above acquires new layers of meaning when compared to the relation between self-consciousness and the other (or self-sufficient object) in Hegelian phenomenology:

Self-consciousness is therefore only certain of itself through the sublating of this other, which, to itself, exhibits itself as self-sufficient life. Self-consciousness is desire. Certain of the nullity of this other, it *posits for itself* this nullity as its truth, it destroys the self-sufficient object, and it as a result gives itself the certainty of itself as *true* certainty, as the sort of certainty which, to itself, has come to be in an *objective manner*. However, in this satisfaction it learns from experience about the self-sufficiency of its object. Desire and the certainty of itself achieved in its satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for the certainty is through the sublating of this other. For this sublating even to be, there must be this other (Hegel, 2018, p. 107, italics in the original, emphasis added).

Self-consciousness is the desire that experiments with the other as a self-sufficient object and assimilates it, making it self-consciousness. Such other is in necessary association with consciousness, i.e., both are in an essential reciprocal relation, defining themselves in such relation. Such act of sublating – transforming and preserving the other or vanishing/preserving – is materialized at the banquet imagery of grotesque realism, as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin. Hunger, eating and devouring are actions that aim at realizing desire by means of incorporating the world. Alexandre Kojève comments on the realization of desire with the example of food:

Now, what is Desire – one need only think of the desire called “hunger” – but the desire to *transform* the contemplated thing by an action, to overcome it in its being that is unrelated to mine and independent of me, to *negate* it in its independence, and to assimilate it to myself, to make it *mine*, to absorb it in and by my *I*? For Self-Consciousness, and hence philosophy, to exist, then, there must be in Man not only *positive*, passive contemplation, which merely *reveals* being, but also *negating* Desire, and hence *Action* that *transforms* the given being. The human I must be an I of Desire – that is, an *active* I, a *negating* I, an I that *transforms* Being and creates a new being by destroying the given being (Kojève, 1980, p. 37-38).

Through desire, human beings overcome the contemplative consciousness that is detained in a passive way before an object which is motionless, equal to itself, becoming self-conscious by means of the “desire of human beings”. Desire is a void (presence of an absence), a negating action which transforms the given being into a created being,

before which man transforms himself when he is assimilated into this given being, which is motionless and equal to itself.

Conclusions

According to what has been discussed in this paper, the images of grotesque realism are composed of the simultaneity of negating the old and affirming the new, death and birth, combined with Hegel's concept of becoming, but nonetheless distancing from it because of its obvious, visual, tangible, bodily character. The grotesque body in F. Rabelais, conceptualized by M. Bakhtin, is a historical restless body, i.e., this concept of body is inspired by the historical and progressive time formulated by Georg Hegel and commented by Alexandre Kojève. Thus, Mikhail Bakhtin finds that the images of grotesque realism debase Hegelian dialects and take it to a material level.

Another important argument of Mikhail Bakhtin's historical approach is to demonstrate that the grotesque image in F. Rabelais comes from the comic culture and from laughter, which negates the official, established, stable reality, conceived by a human being in constant transformation of himself in time. In Hegelian dialectics, the human active and creative consciousness overcomes the consciousness that contemplates the other (self-sufficient object) through desire. In grotesque realism, laughter has a central role in the historical movement of mankind, as laughter is not contemplative, but an action of subverting the official culture through which people are placed as protagonistic agents of history.

Finally, Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology is not restricted to the texts *Towards a philosophy of the act* (Bakhtin, 1993b) and *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (In: Bakhtin, 1990). It is the basis of all Bakhtinian theory on the novel and on François Rabelais's work through the concepts of ambivalence (presence of both poles of transformation), of inconclusiveness or "unfinished metamorphosis" (materialized in the grotesque festive-popular images) and "concrete, and realistic historic awareness". The comparison of these concepts with Georg Hegel's dialectics allowed for, on the one hand, better understanding the historicity, the dynamicity and the creative character of the popular culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance present in François Rabelais's work and analyzed by Mikhail Bakhtin. On the other hand, it allowed for perceiving an image of human being in his ambivalent becoming, in an unfinished existence and among other human beings (Geist, people), as, only by being recognized by his peers, human beings realize their singular and sociohistorical existence.

Translated into English by Raquel D. Elboux Couto Nunes

GRILLO, Sheila Vieira de Camargo. A dialética hegeliana no livro de Mikhail Bakhtin sobre François Rabelais. **Alfa**, São Paulo, v. 69, 2025.

- **RESUMO:** *O objetivo deste artigo é mostrar que os princípios da ambivalência e da inconclusibilidade da cultura popular do riso, da ação do povo na Idade Média, do corpo histórico e da relação ser humano/mundo no banquete festivo-popular presentes no livro A obra de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento (1965) e no texto “Rabelais e Gógol (A arte da palavra e a cultura cômica popular)” (1940, 1970) foram desenvolvidos, entre outras abordagens, à luz da dialética hegeliana. De caráter bibliográfico, a metodologia desta pesquisa se constituiu dos seguintes passos: a busca por declarações do próprio Bakhtin e de estudiosos de sua obra a respeito da pertinência da dialética como origem do conceito de ambivalência e de outras categorias do livro de M. Bakhtin sobre F. Rabelais; a leitura e a identificação dos princípios da fenomenologia e da dialética nos textos de Georg Hegel e de seus comentadores; a identificação das categorias do livro de M. Bakhtin sobre F. Rabelais desenvolvidas mediante a dialética hegeliana; por fim, a determinação dos desdobramentos e avanços da teoria bakhtiniana em relação ao filósofo alemão. Os resultados apontaram que as imagens do realismo grotesco se filiam, por um lado, ao conceito de devir hegeliano, mas, por outro, se distanciam deste por seu caráter imagético, visual, palpável, corporal.*
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Dialética; Ambivalência; Georg Hegel; Mikhail Bakhtin.*

Data Availability Statement

All datasets supporting the findings of this study have been published within the article itself.

REFERENCES

- ARANTES, P. Um Hegel errado mas vivo. **Revista Ide**, São Paulo, n. 21, p. 72-79, 1991.
- BAKHTIN, M. O Problema do Conteúdo, do Material e da Forma na Criação Literária. In: BAKHTIN, M. **Questões de Literatura e estética (A Teoria do Romance)**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Editora da UNESP, 1993 [1990]. p. 13-70.
- BAKHTIN, M. **A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento**. O contexto de François Rabelais. Tradução Y. Frateschi. 4. ed. São Paulo-Brasília: Edunb-Hucitec, 1999 [1965].

БАХТИН [BAKHTIN], M. M. **Собрание сочинений т. 1.** Философская эстетика 1920х годов [*Obras reunidas vol. 1. Estética filosófica dos anos 1920*]. Org. S. G. Botcharóv, N. I. Nikoláev. Moscou: Издательство русские словари/Языки славянской культуры, 2003.

BAKHTIN, M. M. **Os gêneros do discurso.** Tradução Paulo Bezerra. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016 [1953-54].

BAKHTIN, M. Fragmentos dos anos 1970-1971. In: BAKHTIN, M. **Notas sobre literatura, cultura e ciências humanas.** Org., trad., posf. e notas P. Bezerra. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2017[1970-71]. pp. 21-56.

BAKHTIN, M. **Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski.** Org. trad., posfácio e notas P. Bezerra. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2010 [1963].

BAKHTIN, M. **Teoria do romance I: a estilística.** Tradução, pref., notas e glossário P. Bezerra; org. da ed. russa Serguei Botcharov e V. Kójinov. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2015.

BAKHTIN, M. **Teoria do romance III: o romance como gênero literário.** Tradução, posfácio e notas de Paulo Bezerra. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2019.

BAKHTIN, M. **Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski.** 5. ed. Tradução, notas e prefácio P. Bezerra. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2010 [1963].

BAKHTIN, M. **Problemas da obra de Dostoiévski.** Tradução, notas e glossário S. Grillo e E. V. Américo. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2022 [1929].

БАХТИН [BAKHTIN], M. M. **Собрание сочинений. Т. 4(1).** Франсуа Рабле в истории реализма (1940 г.). Материалы к книге о Рабле (1930-1950-е гг.). Комментарии и приложения. [*Obras reunidas vol. 4(1).* François Rabelais na história do realismo (1940). Materiais para o livro sobre Rabelais (anos 1930-1950). Comentários e anexos]. Москва: Языки Славянских Культур, 2008.

БАХТИН [BAKHTIN], M. M. BAKHTIN. **Собрание сочинений. Т. 4(2).** Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура Средневековья и Ренессанса (1965 г.). Рабле и Гоголь. Искусство слова и народная смеховая культура (1940, 1970 гг.). Комментарии и приложения. [M. M. BAKHTIN. *Obras reunidas vol. 4(2).* A criação de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento (1965). Rabelais e Gógol. A arte da palavra e a cultura cômica popular (1940, 1970). Comentários e anexos]. Москва: Языки Славянских Культур, 2010.

BAKHTIN, M. **A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento.** O contexto de François Rabelais. Tradução Y. Frateschi. 7. ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010b.

BAKHTINE, M. **L'oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen âge et sous la Renaissance** [A obra de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento]. Tradução A. Robel. Paris: Gallimard, 2022 [1970].

ДУВАКИН, В. Д. **М. М. Бахтин**: беседы с Дувакиным [DUVÁKIN, V. D. *M. M. Bakhtin: conversas com Duvákin*]. Москва: Согласие, 2002 [1996].

ГОГОТИШВИЛИ, Л. А. [GOGOTICHVÍLI, L. A.] *Коментарии*. In: БАХТИН, М. М. [BAKHTIN, M. M.] К философии поступка [Por uma filosofia do ato]. **Собрание сочинений т. 1**. Философская эстетика 1920х годов [*Obras reunidas vol. 1. Estética filosófica dos anos 1920*]. Org. S. G. Botcharón, N. I. Nikoláev. Moscou: Издательство русские словари/Языки славянской культуры, 2003. p. 351-438.

GRILLO, S. V. C. Mikhail Bakhtin: pensador do riso, da crise e da mudança na teoria dos gêneros do discurso. **Revista de Estudos da Linguagem**, v. 30, p. 1185-1205, 2022.

GRILLO, S. V. C. A polêmica sobre a cultura popular na Idade Média: diálogos entre Arón Guriévitch e Mikhail Bakhtin. In: PISTORI, M. H. C., GONÇALVES, J. C.; STELLA, P. R. (org.). **Beth Brait**: autora, personagem, diálogos. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2024. p. 275-292.

ГУРЕВИЧ, А. Я. **Проблемы Средневековый Народной Культуры** [GURIÉVITCH, A. Ia. *Problemas da Cultura Popular na Idade Média*]. Москва: Искусство, 1981.

HEGEL, G. W. F. **A fenomenologia do espírito**. Tradução P. Menezes. 7. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes; Bragança Paulista: USF, 2002 [1807].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Ciência da lógica**: 1. A doutrina do Ser. Tradução C. G. Iber; M. L. Miranda e F. Orsini. Petrópolis: Vozes; Bragança Paulista: Editora Universitária São Francisco, 2016 [1832].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Ciência da lógica**: 2. A Doutrina da Essência. Tradução C. G. Iber e F. Orsini. Petrópolis: Vozes; Bragança Paulista: Editora Universitária São Francisco, 2017 [1813].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Ciência da lógica**: 3. A Doutrina do Conceito. 2. reimp. Tradução C.G.Iber e F. Orsini. Petrópolis: Vozes; Bragança Paulista: Editora Universitária São Francisco, 2021[1816].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Enciclopédia das ciências filosóficas**: em compêndio (1830) volume I: a ciência da lógica. Tradução P. Menezes e Pe. J. Machado. 3. ed. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2012.

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Cursos de estética I**. Tradução M. A. Werle. 2. ed. e 1. reimp. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2015[1842].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Cursos de estética II**. Tradução M. A. Werle e O. Tolle. 1. ed. e 1 reimpr. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2014a[1842].

HEGEL, G. W. F. **Cursos de estética IV**. Tradução M. A. Werle e O. Tolle. 1. ed. e 1 reimpr. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2014b[1842].

KOJÈVE, A. **Introdução à leitura de Hegel**. Tradução E. dos S. Abreu. 1. reimp. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2014 [1947].

MEDVIÉDEV, P. **O método formal nos estudos literários**. Introdução crítica a uma poética sociológica. Tradução e notas E. V. Américo e S. Grillo. São Paulo: Contexto, 2012 [1928].

VOLÓCHINOV, V. N. **Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem**. Problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem. Tradução, notas e glossário S Grillo e E. V. Américo. 3. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2021 [1929].

Received on November 17, 2024

Approved on June 6, 2025