

**The Public Space of Schools – a World Signified in Self-Other Relations /  
*O espaço público da escola – um mundo significado nas relações eu-outro***

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper we discuss culture in the public space of schools based on essays by pre-service student teachers in a Portuguese Language and Literature Teaching Credential Program. In these essays, the pre-service student teachers form representations of *self-other* relations while practicing their student teaching in supervised internships. We questioned whether these pre-service student teachers, in the practice of their field experience, in decisive moments of ethical practice in dialogue with the aesthetics of the profession, experience themselves as actual teaching subjects, through the primacy of individuality/otherness in the encounter between the physical world of life experience (the world of life), and the professional world of social experience (the world of culture). This discussion is based on the Dialogical Theory of Bakhtin and his Circle.

**KEYWORDS:** Bakhtin; Dialogism; Ethics; Culture; School

**RESUMO**

*Discutimos neste trabalho a cultura no espaço público da escola com base em ensaios de alunos de licenciatura em Letras-Português em que expressam suas representações sobre a relação eu-outro no ato da docência em estágio supervisionado. Questionamos se esses alunos, no cotidiano do labor magisterial, nos momentos constituintes do agir ético em diálogo com a estética da profissão, vivem a realidade viva do ato da docência de sujeitos, pelo primado da individualidade e da alteridade no plano do reencontro, no mundo real, do ato particular da experiência vivida (mundo da vida) com o mundo social da profissão (mundo da cultura). Os fundamentos da teoria dialógica de Bakhtin e seu Círculo respaldam a discussão proposta.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Bakhtin; Dialogismo; Ética; Cultura; Escola

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## Introduction

In Brazil, criticism of Portuguese language teaching (from the 1980s on) has highlighted classroom activities that envision language in its immanence – knowledge presented to students in an encyclopedic fashion, as closed content, dissected in parts, and always taught in prescribed and predetermined steps.

However, current pedagogy has been diverging from this framework. In many schools across the country, there have been initiatives that disrupt (or attempt to disrupt) this traditional mode. These initiatives are the result of relevant studies on language, which situate language as a social, historical, dialogical and ideological phenomenon<sup>1</sup> (VOLOŠINOV, 1973;<sup>2</sup> BAKHTIN, 1981,<sup>3</sup> 1984,<sup>4</sup> 1986,<sup>5</sup> 1990a,<sup>6</sup> 1990b,<sup>7</sup> 1993).<sup>8</sup> Student teachers in Portuguese Language and Literature programs nationwide have also had academic advising from this perspective at their respective universities. For the completion of their majors, these students must complete curricular components that stage teaching practice through supervised student teaching internships in the school communities that

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<sup>1</sup> In the theoretical field, owing to the conceptual reach that the word *ideology* involves, it behooves us to register, even as a footnote, how this concept circulates in the theory of Bakhtin and his Circle. With reservations in relation to the risky conceptual formulation of the word *ideology*, Faraco (2013, p.170) registers his contribution in the interpretation: “This tracing [research to understand the concept of ideology in Bakhtin] seems to authorize us to say that for Bakhtin the word *ideology* refers to the representations that different social groups use to construct the world” (italics in original). Original text: “Esse rastreamento [pesquisa para a compreensão de ideologia em Bakhtin] parece nos autorizar a dizer que para Bakhtin a palavra *ideologia* faz referência às representações que os diferentes grupos sociais constroem do mundo.”

<sup>2</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. New York: Seminar Press Inc., 1973.

<sup>3</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259-422. (Slavic Series, No. 1).

<sup>4</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated into English by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

<sup>5</sup> BAKHTIN, M.M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics and Philology and Other Human Sciences. In: *Speech Genres and other late essays*. Translated by Vern McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.103-131.

<sup>6</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990a, pp.4-256. (Slavic Series, No. 9).

<sup>7</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Art and Answerability. In: *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin, Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990b, pp.1-3. (Slavic Series, No. 9).

<sup>8</sup> BAKHTIN, M.M., *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

surround the affiliated universities. Thus, at this particular phase of their teaching, they are provided with an experience of teaching practice, with professional partners, such as their university peers, who are also in the teaching program, and students and professionals at the basic education schools where they intern (those affiliated with the teacher training courses). Parallel to this process, there is the lived experience (the world of life), together with the culture of the public space of the school (the world of culture), and these join with their experience in the sphere of knowledge (academy/university experience) as well as professional knowledge put in practice in the process of carrying out professional tasks.

Our proposal here is to address some of the facets of our social commitment – all of us involved in education – and the process of teacher training, in any area, to establish a closer relationship between the school and society – a proximity of the schools with the horizons of human groups in society within their varied historical experiences. In other words, to establish a connection between school and life. Given the broadness of this issue, we have delimited it to focus on the relationship of *self-other*<sup>9</sup> –student teacher/ basic education student – scrutinized through the theory of Bakhtin and his Circle.

Bakhtin, aware if what was said of him, referred to himself as a philosopher: “I am a philosopher. A thinker” (BAKHTIN; DUVAKAVIN, *apud* EMERSON, 1997, p.6).<sup>10</sup> His theoretical incursions, for the most part, focused on the aesthetic-literary context, and it was from this point of view that his understanding of the social and historical being (constituting a *self-other* or an *I – other*, relationship) originated, extending beyond the limits of the aesthetic-literary sphere.

As a philosopher, Bakhtin conceived dialogism as the basis for his theory, in which the social, historical and cultural aspects of life are inseparable. In addition, based on this thesis, ethics is contemplated (the subject’s concrete act), as well as aesthetics (the subject’s

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<sup>9</sup> TN: Liapunov (1990a, 1990b) and others translate, for the most part, ‘self’, when in this configuration of ‘self-other’, as ‘I-other’, thus, I have adopted this configuration as well throughout the translation of the Portuguese (*eu-outro*), except in a few initial instances, including the title, since inexperienced readers may mistakenly infer an “I” meaning that refers to technology, such as Ipad, Iphone, etc., without having previously established the meaning of ‘self’.

<sup>10</sup> EMERSON, Caryl. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997.

particular way of acting) – concepts that are central to teacher education, and its relation to the lives and culture of the learners.

What is represented or fails to be represented in the public space of the school will serve as an appropriate horizon for our reflections on understanding *I-other* relationships, focusing on distancing or approximation of the *I-other* (individual/collective) in this scholastic culture, and in relation to experiences outside of school (life experience).

Based on this objective, this research will discuss written samples of the discourse genre, *essay*, completed by a group of pre-service student teachers in the Portuguese Language and Literatures Teaching Credential course (heretofore denominated, Portuguese-Letters) of a Federal public university. These essays were products of their supervised student teaching, conducted in 2015. The purpose of the written essay – academic writing produced as a final activity in their Portuguese Language and Literature I Student teaching internship class – expresses their thoughts and questions (interrogations) and provides some answers, but also reflects on the ways in which language teaching and learning is envisioned, in the process of professional education, in the development of close relationships between life experience and school culture.

Aiming to achieve the objectives previously proposed, the discussions in this text are organized into three sections. In the first we highlight the dialogical constitutive condition of language, according to Bakhtinian views. In the second section, we discuss Bakhtin's architectonic contraposition between *I-other*, observing the possibility of reflecting on it in the act of teaching. In the third section, we analyze the social representations of the student teachers regarding self-other relationships, through the analysis of their texts. Finally, we advocate overcoming a pedagogical discourse rooted in that which is traditional, conversational, and artificial in scholastic culture, by adopting social practices in which the relation of *I-other*, philosophically and theoretically grounded, is established in the theoretical-philosophical presuppositions of Bakhtin and his Circle.

## 1 Individuality and Collectivity

Vološinov (1976)<sup>11</sup> asserts that as human beings, we are born as members of a group. This birth is not just of a biological being, we are also born as social beings, because we are born into objective socioeconomic conditions, and cultural domains.

A human being is not born as an abstract biological organism, but as a landowner or a peasant, as a bourgeois or a proletarian, and so on –that is the main thing. Furthermore, he is born a Russian or a Frenchman and, he is born in 1800 or 1900, and so on. *Only this social and historical localization makes him a real human being*, and determines the content of his life and cultural creativity (VOLOŠINOV, 1976, p.15, italics in original).<sup>12</sup>

In this configuration, any cultural sign, endowed with meaning, does not remain isolated, given that “it becomes part of the *unity of verbally constituted consciousness*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.15, italics in original)<sup>13</sup>. Bakhtin’s concept of culture holds the understanding of man in his living and significant context, edified in the interrelationship with society. From this perspective, the word as a social sign is an element of consciousness and an ideological creation; it “can carry out ideological functions of *any kind— scientific, aesthetic, ethical, religious*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.14, italics in original),<sup>14</sup> since, for the author: “*The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.13, italics in original).<sup>15</sup> It is also “the purest, most sensitive medium of social intercourse” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.14).<sup>16</sup> Social interaction is, then, this space of encounter between language and life; it is a condition of social consciousness; it is a site of confrontation between ideological and social values in the historical and social course of human life, even because, as he writes: “Every ideological sign – the verbal sign included – in coming about through the process of social intercourse, is defined by the

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<sup>11</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*. Translated by I.R. Titunik (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) in collaboration with Neal.H. Bruss (University of Massachusetts, Boston). New York: Academic Press Inc., 1976.

<sup>12</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>13</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>15</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>16</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

*social purview* of the given time period and the given social group” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.21, italics in original).<sup>17</sup> Within the universe of social interaction, indications of value emerge in a concrete and material reality (different semiosis) and order dialogical relationships and their consequent clashes of meaning. Medvedev, a member of the Bakhtin Circle, in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (BAKHTIN/MEDVEDEV, 1978),<sup>18</sup> elucidates his position with respect to the concrete character of the products of ideological creation:

Nor do philosophical views, beliefs, or even shifting ideological moods exist within man, in his head or in his “soul.” They become ideological reality only by being realized in words, actions, clothing, manners, and organizations of people and things –in a word: in some definite semiotic material. Through this material they become a practical part of the reality surrounding man (p.7; quotes in original).<sup>19</sup>

In his studies on language and its dialogically constitutive condition, Bakhtin affirms that, to understand language in its complexity, we need to go beyond the limits of its immanence. Being alive, it lives in relation to utterances, and these with reality and the speaker (author). Thus, in this sense, to understand language is to understand it as utterance – in which there is an underlying view of the world, a point of view, etc. (as Bakhtin defends) – it is to conceive that the understanding of the utterance (unit (evaluated) of human discursive communication) “involves *responsiveness*, and, consequently, evaluation,”<sup>20</sup> as Bakhtin argues in his essay *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, in Philology and in Human Sciences: an experiment in Philosophical analysis* (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.122, italics in original).<sup>21</sup>

Signs, in this universe of thought, are part of a reality alongside natural phenomena. However, a sign, extending beyond this condition, has the particularity, as an ideological

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<sup>17</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>18</sup> BAKHTIN, M.; MEDVEDEV, P. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Translated by Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>20</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

<sup>21</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

production of the social being, of not only being part of a reality, but also of reflecting and refracting it, given that it emerges from an interindividual terrain. This said, “the understanding of a sign is, after all, an act of reference between the sign apprehended and other, already known signs; in other words, understanding is a response to a sign with signs” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.11).<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is in the realm of social interaction that, then, one consciousness enters into contact with another, between socially organized individuals (social groups), located in a particular time and space. With this framework, the word emerges as “the purest, most sensitive medium of social intercourse” (1973, p.14).<sup>23</sup> However, it is not neutral as a social voice (in my utterance other utterances are found and respective evaluative tones). From this theoretical point of view, the word is coined by the axiological positions of those who utter it. As Vološinov proclaims, “*the word functions as an essential ingredient accompanying all ideological creativity whatsoever*” and is present “*as an accompanying phenomenon, in any conscious act*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.15, italics in original).<sup>24</sup>

Faraco (2013, p.173) notes that, in both Bakhtin’s publications and those of his peers, we find the defense of “the process of transmutation of the world in significant material, which is done always crossing through the refraction of the social axiology, or rather, from the evaluative position,”<sup>25</sup> the axiology being measured semiotically. Faraco continues, “to refract is inevitable – our representations of the world are always and necessarily in perspective” (2013, p.173).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>24</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>25</sup> Original text: “o processo de transmutação do mundo em matéria significante se dá sempre atravessado pela refração das axiologias sociais, ou seja, a partir de um posicionamento valorativo.”

<sup>26</sup> Original text: “refratar é inevitável – nossas representações no mundo são sempre e necessariamente em perspectiva.”

## 2 School and Life – Social and Ethical Commitment

One of Bakhtin's concepts – *exotopy* (outsideness)<sup>27</sup> - originating from the aesthetic-literary theory presented in his essay, *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (1990a, pp.4-236),<sup>28</sup> which gained notoriety in later works by the author himself, observed in the conjuncture of his theoretical thought, presented as an ingenious possibility of observing teaching practices of those in the institutional process of a Portuguese language teacher training/learning program, when experiencing the complex reality of practicing the profession and the respective encounter with the shifting positions as university student and student teacher, in the scholastic culture (academic; scholastic) and in life (daily experiences). In the university student position, having, above all, the responsibility of professional work, the academic would assume, in their practice, the student position (collegiate) and student teacher concomitantly, congregating, however, their experiences brought to life (personal experiences) and culture (past memory – the experiences of the past concretized and shared – and the future memory – the experiences not concretized). This constitutes the experience of dialogue as the following: *I-for-myself, I-for-the other, other-for-me* (BAKHTIN, 1990a).<sup>29</sup>

We observe, however, that these relationships are not always symmetrical. They are constituted in their completeness and incompleteness. Sobral (2008) holds, elucidating Bakhtin's reasoning regarding the proximity of the *I* and *other*:

Bakhtin, similar to Sartre and Heidegger, reformulate the “in-oneself” and “for-oneself,” which is Hegelian in terms of the human condition according to the categories “I-for-myself,” “I-for-the other” and “others-for-me.” The I-for-myself is, naturally, the self focused on itself; the “I-for-the other” refers to the initiative of the subject to get close to other subjects, in a type of “self-escape.” Attempting, as is typical of his

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<sup>27</sup> “This ever-present *excess* of my seeing, knowing, and possessing in relation to any other human being is founded in the uniqueness and irreplaceability of my place in the world, for only I-the-one-and-only I occupy in a given set of circumstances this particular place at this particular time; all other human beings are situated outside me” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.23, italics in original). For reference see footnote 6.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>29</sup> TN: Liapunov (1990a) translates these categories from the Russian into English as, *I-for-myself, I-for-the other, other-for-me* (pp.24, 37, 53, 57,129 and elsewhere), thus, I have adopted them for the translation of the Portuguese. For reference, see footnote 6.



thought process, to reach the unity of the phenomena in time to delimit some partial aspect of it, Bakhtin considers legitimate that the self leaves itself to approach the other, and vice versa, but emphatically affirms that this leaving must always be followed by the “return to self”: that which is put in the place of the other and does not return to the place it belongs betrays itself and the other! (p.229; emphasis in original).<sup>30</sup>

In one of his first texts, *Art and Answerability*, first published in 1919, Bakhtin (1990b)<sup>31</sup> explained his thesis, which claims it is in the individual that the three fields of human culture –science, art and life – acquire unity, when the individual incorporates them to his or her own unity and existence. As individuals, we are socially constructed, through the dialogical and valued relationships, therefore, through Otherness. The Other, because he or she has an external experience of *my* being, which I myself do not have, is substrate to my own self-construction. The other can see me wholly and completes me, and in this way the excess of the other’s view has repercussions in me.

Detailing a little further, in the aforementioned essay – *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* – Bakhtin (1990a)<sup>32</sup> attributes to exotopy the capacity to see in the other (in time, space and different values) what the other cannot see in him or herself. The non-coincidental position occupied in relation to the *I* and the *other* proffers an excessive view, therefore, an excess of knowledge of the *I* in relation to the *other* (individual; collective). This distancing compensates for a specific deficiency, as Bakhtin confirms, “for precisely that which only I see in the other is seen in myself, likewise, only by the other...” (1990a, p.23),<sup>33</sup> something that is contemplated in the interrelation “*I-other*.” Finally, “the interrelationship of “*I—the other*” is not convertible for me in lived life in any concrete

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<sup>30</sup> Original text: “Bakhtin, aproximando-se de Sartre e Heidegger, reformula o “em-si” e o “para-si” hegelianos em termos da condição humana segundo as categorias “eu-para-mim”, “eu-para-o-outro” e “outro para-mim”. O eu-para-mim é, naturalmente, o eu enquanto voltado para si mesmo; o “eu-para-o-outro” se refere à iniciativa do sujeito de aproximar-se de outros sujeitos, numa espécie de “saída de si”; e o “outro-para-mim” se refere à iniciativa do outro de aproximar-se do eu, também uma espécie de “saída de si”. Tentando, como é típico de seu pensamento, alcançar a unidade do fenômeno em vez de limitar-se a algum aspecto parcial dele, Bakhtin considera legítimo que o eu saia de si para aproximar-se do outro, e vice-versa, mas afirma enfaticamente que essa saída deve ser sempre seguida de uma “volta a si”: aquele que se põe no lugar do outro e não volta ao lugar que lhe pertence é infiel a si e ao outro!”

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

way” (1990a, p.23, italics in original)<sup>34</sup>. According to Faraco (2011, p.25) on interpreting Bakhtin’s words (1990a), “it is the excess of the view of others that responds to my deficiencies. Otherness has a fundamental constitutive role – the ‘I-for-myself’ is constructed from the ‘I-for-the other;’”<sup>35</sup> Along these lines, Faraco continues, “in life, I am irreplaceable and this obliges me to perceive my peculiar singularity: everything that can be done by me can never be done by anyone else, ever” (FARACO, 2011, p.25).<sup>36</sup> I have no alibi for existence, Bakhtin (1993)<sup>37</sup> asserts. In relation to the *other-for-me* he urges, “the excess of my seeing must ‘fill in’ the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render his horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.25).<sup>38</sup> It is, however, opportune to highlight that Bakhtin warns us, with relation to the compenetrating aesthetic of the other, of the importance of living aesthetically and concludes this about the other. Rather, what is seen is, and adopts what the other lives, to put yourself in the place of the other. The author continues that, in the act of contemplation, I must later return to myself and my place. From this place, the material of compenetrating can be assimilated ethically, cognitively and aesthetically (BAKHTIN, 1990a).<sup>39</sup> He even tells us that the aesthetic activity begins when we return to ourselves, outside of the other, and gives us the *finishing touches* through the compenetrating material (transgredient elements). The other is different from me, from my uniqueness, I assume the responsibility of my singular existence. The other provides me with this *finishin*; likewise, I am also its completeness through the other.

Faraco (2011, p.25) explores Bakhtin’s understanding of this and goes further by posing a question:

the other (which is not simply another person, but a different person, another axiological center and, therefore, irreducible to me in the same way that I am irreducible to him) is the basis for my responsible actions.

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<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>35</sup> Original text: “é o excedente de visão dos outros que responde às minhas carências; a alteridade tem um papel constitutivo fundamental – o ‘eu-para-mim’ se constrói a partir do ‘eu-para-os-outros.’”

<sup>36</sup> Original text: “Na vida, sou insubstituível e isso me obriga a realizar minha singularidade peculiar: tudo o que pode ser feito por mim não poderá nunca ser feito por ninguém mais, nunca.”

<sup>37</sup> For reference, see footnote 8.

<sup>38</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

In short, an ethics founded on the primacy of the moral subject over the norms and in the primacy of the otherness over individuality. A radical utopia!! Bakhtin tells us that we do not have a moral philosophy capable of expressing this architectonic counter positioning to express the absolute individual responsibility (without an alibi) and the radical otherness.<sup>40</sup>

A question of this complexity is outside of the scope of our proposal for this essay, but we aim, at least, to provoke reflections on the language used by the Portuguese-Letters students, when they, in their essays,<sup>41</sup> write of themselves, about their professional experience and about the other, their students. We aim to reflect on their language of interpreting their teaching experience, bringing the memory of the representations that they have constructed with regard to the profession throughout their personal life (world of life) and cultural life, addressing the reasons for their choosing the profession in Portuguese language and literature, both facets in dialogue with the lived professional experience in the academic moment of writing about themselves, and their particular teaching practice. Perhaps we can, even, provoke reflection in a more particular way, if we look deeper into Bakhtinian thought in one of his central theses proposed in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993):<sup>42</sup>

The highest architectonic principle of the actual world of the performed act or deed is the concrete and architectonically valid or operative contraposition of I and the other. [...] This valuative architectonic division of the world into I and those who are all others for me is not passive and fortuitous, but is an active and ought-to-be division. [...] It is not given as a finished and rigidified architectonic. [...] It is the yet-to-be-realized

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<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin denominates the *architectonic* “the activity of forming connections between disparate material” (CLARK; HOLQUIST, 2004, p.107). Original text: “o outro (que não é simplesmente outra pessoa, mas uma pessoa diferente, um outro centro axiológico e, portanto, irreduzível a mim da mesma forma que eu sou irreduzível a ele) baliza o meu agir responsável. Em suma, uma ética fundada no primado do sujeito moral sobre as normas e no primado da alteridade sobre a individualidade. Uma radical utopia!! Bakhtin nos diz que não dispomos de uma filosofia moral capaz de expressar esta contraposição arquitetônica, de expressar a responsabilidade individual absoluta (sem alibi) e a alteridade radical.”

<sup>41</sup> In the supervised internships referred to here, the understanding of essay proposed in the class is supported by the concept of Foucault (1990, p.9): “The ‘essay’ – which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication – is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., ‘ascesis,’ *askēsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought.” [FOUCAULT, M. *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. 2. v.]

<sup>42</sup> For reference, see footnote 8.

plane of my orientation in Being-as-event or an architectonic that is incessantly and actively realized through my answerable deed, upbuilt by my deed and possessing stability only in the answerability of my deed (BAKHTIN, 1993, pp.74,75).<sup>43</sup>

Later on in this same text, the author discusses the lack of a scientific basis that can account for the architectonic counter position, *I-other* in a moral, altruistic and Christian perspective:

Whence it does not follow at all, of course, that the contraposition of I and the other has never been expressed and stated-this is, after all, the sense of all Christian morality, and it is the starting point for altruistic morality. But this [3 illegible words] principle of morality has still not found an adequate scientific expression, nor has it been thought through essentially and fully (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.75).<sup>44</sup>

In fact, we point out here, in the voices of the students as expressed in the excerpts below, the manifestation of a professional culture deeply shaped by morality is, we can risk saying, both altruistic and Christian. In the student teacher essays, we found the manifestation of a representation of memory in relation to the interpersonal *I-other* in the event of being a professor (here as an intern) largely sustained by an understanding of the *I-other* relationship focused on making the life of the other better, happy: an affectionate memory of someone close to one (the other). But of what type of altruism and morality are we speaking?

### **3 Being a Teacher – Seeing Yourself in the Active Experience of the Practice**

The voices of academics signal how much the relationship between the *I* (student teacher) and the *other* (student of basic education) posits the concept of self and other, presented by semantic choices in their writing to support it.

In this discursive practice of teaching, the I-for-myself position (of the student teacher) stores the memory of the historical representations of teachers (social group),

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<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 8.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 31.

which act in some way. Nevertheless, it is characterized as a unique space and always new, unrepeatable, in which each one (intern) assumed the position as the teacher, each relating to the *other* (student – individual, collective). It is, in this way, the work of a professional in which a singular *I* (position as teacher “the teacher of”; “what’s his name”) returns to the *other* (student(s) – individual; collectivity (the group)).

Certainly, in the field of education, in the specificity of teacher education and, in this context, in the teaching of academics in supervised internships, various social representations in counter positions to other social groups are fused. In this context, as Faraco asserts (2013, p.174) “the meanings [...] are constructed in the dynamic of the story and are marked by the diversity of the experiences of the social groups, with their innumerable contradictions and confrontations of values and interests.”<sup>45</sup>

As a professional in the human sciences, in the field of teaching, facing the socio-historical representation with what we see as counterpoint to recent times, of refusing the praxis as a vocation, such as priesthood (vocation – fundamentally Christian) (cf. Monarcha, 1999).<sup>46</sup> We still question whether this representation is present, reflected or refracted, in the layers of thought of 21st century students at a high ranking Brazilian university (which is our case here). For this reflection, we rely on the perspective of Rêses (2012, p.446):

Teachers exercised, up until the 1960s, a transcendent social function. Besides being a moral and political model, teaching was also seen as a type of priesthood in the service of knowledge. Teachers’ lives were understood as a mission. Therefore, to be a teacher was the manifestation of a vocation or a transcendent mission, and not the carrying out of a profession.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Original text: “as significações [...] são construídas na dinâmica da história e estão marcadas pela diversidade de experiências dos grupos sociais, com suas inúmeras contradições e confrontos de valores e interesses.”

<sup>46</sup> In Brazil, at the beginning of the 20th Century, the criticisms of the concept of teaching as priesthood was intense, especially in the New School movement. The defense, at the time, focused on valuing the profession, from a lay State, with the performance and emphasis on scientific knowledge.

<sup>47</sup> Original text: “O professor exercia, até os anos de 1960, uma função social transcendente. Além de um modelo moral e político, era também visto como um sacerdote a serviço do saber. A sua vida confundia-se com a missão. Portanto, ser professor era a manifestação de uma vocação ou missão transcendente, não o exercício de uma profissão.”

This same author, citing Hypolito (1997), adds:

In the perception of Hypolito (1997), two tendencies are found in the teaching practice of Brazilians, through two essentially distinct discursive tones. In the first moment, it is described as when the church still represented an important space in the ideological dispute in political-religious conflicts, informing and modeling practices in the contemporary world. In this sense, vocation and priesthood were the main sources that expressed meaning for teaching practices.

[...]

In a second moment, these discourses were re-signified to accommodate a liberal modern discourse.

[...]

Liberal discourse and religious discourse represented antagonistic spaces in the field of teaching representations. While religion defines teaching practice as an essentially vocational expression, the main liberals seek to insert this same practice in the dynamic of productive relations in a capitalist system (RÊSES, 2012, pp.420-421).<sup>48</sup>

Even though the pre-service, student teacher interns are disposed to overcome and get beyond these representations, and to approximate the *I-other* in the instance of pedagogical language, the tone of this relationship will always be sustained by the “concrete and architectonically valid or operative contraposition of I and the other,” as Bakhtin (1993, p.74) advocates in his text *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993).<sup>49</sup> So we ask: What is the tone of this relationship in our contemporary context?

Certainly, as Bakhtin defends, every human act (including pedagogical) has on its horizon, the commitment to the other (the student), the commitment with the truly amorousness – the dialogic. In scholastic culture, the canonical interpersonal relationship in

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<sup>48</sup> Original text: “Na percepção de Hypólito (1997), encontram-se na prática docente, no caso brasileiro, duas tendências constituídas por meio de matizes discursivas essencialmente distintas. No primeiro momento, quando a igreja ainda representava um importante espaço de disputa ideológica nos conflitos político-religiosos, informando e modelando as práticas no mundo contemporâneo. Neste sentido, vocação e sacerdócio eram as principais fontes que expressavam o significado da prática docente. [...] O segundo momento foi quando esses discursos passaram a ser ressignificados com a inserção do discurso liberal moderno. [...] Discurso liberal e discurso religioso representaram espaços antagônicos no campo das representações do magistério. Enquanto a religião define a prática docente como expressão de uma essencialidade vocacional, os princípios liberais buscam a inserção dessa mesma prática na dinâmica das relações produtivas do sistema capitalista.”

<sup>49</sup> For reference, see footnote 8.

the classroom prefigures two subjects on distinct poles and hierarchically defined: for those who teach, the role of authority (authoritarianism?); for those who learn, the respect for the authority of the other. In this canonical perspective, could it be, even if subliminally, reflected and refracted in our particular daily actions in the public space of the school – the thesis of dialogism in which the *I* and *the other* are constructed as two axiological centers? As teachers (and here we broaden the question to refer beyond the experience of the internship) do they see themselves in the process of a professional experience *I-other*? Could it be this relationship freed from the understanding of teaching as a vocation or priesthood, and in this conjuncture, freed from the convenient and subservient, isolating atmosphere, and thus committed to a relationship of *I-other* responsiveness and responsibility in the concreteness of the teaching itself? Could it be freed from the pedagogical discourse, which has a relationship of the *I-other* that settles on the conversational artificiality that inhabits certain traditions in the scholastic culture?

We see some utterances that express the thought around the relationship of *I-other* by the teaching interns in the following excerpts from their essays:

What I take from this experience are the moments of trust; learning; and friendship. Trust that everything is going to turn out right; learning that I was not alone on this journey, since there was a teacher there to guide me; and the most important, friendship, I had a friend to share all the moments of despair and joy, which in the end brought us the feeling of a mission completed [Jana].<sup>50</sup>

I was very happy to realize that the students identified with the themes and texts we brought them, as they were especially planned for them [...] Still I realized that not all of the students were moved by our presence [the interns], to know we made a difference, that it was made in the life of just some, compensated all the effort. And, so we go in this daily struggle to learn to teach and to teach to learn [Júlia].<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Original text: “O que guardo dessa experiência são os momentos de confiança; aprendizado; e amizade. Confiança de que tudo vai dar certo; aprender que não estava sozinha nessa jornada, pois tinha uma professora para me orientar; e o mais importante, a amizade, eu tinha uma amiga para dividir todos os momentos de desespero e alegria, que no final só nos trouxeram sentimento de dever cumprido [Jana].”

<sup>51</sup> Original text: “Fiquei muito feliz ao perceber que os alunos se identificaram com os temas e textos trazidos por nós, pois os havíamos planejado especialmente para eles [...] Ainda que eu perceba que nem todos os alunos foram tocados por nossa presença [dos estagiários], saber que fizemos diferença, que seja na vida de apenas alguns, já faz todo o esforço ser recompensado. E, assim, seguimos nessa luta diária de aprender a ensinar e de ensinar a aprender [Júlia].”

We would like to say that it [the student teaching experience] was not what we imagined, it was three times more difficult, it was a shock of intellectual and emotional reality. It showed us that, above all else, first we are human beings. Even if we have all the technical knowledge necessary to develop teaching, nothing helps if we don't work with our humanity, since involvement of the heart is necessary for the teaching experience to promote true learning [...] for an experience to be true, the heart needs to be there, independent from whatever is happening in our lives outside of the classroom. We realized that the content could not be only in the mind, but also in the soul. You can only explain something true when you are speaking also with your heart and not only your head [Carol].<sup>52</sup>

In the voice of the academics, it can be observed, according to the correlations of the Bakhtinian theory regarding the dialogical relationship of *I-other*, in which exercising outsideness is warranted (reaching the other to understand him/her, without losing one's originality), which reverberates representations clung to the history of scholastic and academic culture, and also reaffirming values of the existence of a pedagogical relationship configured in altruism, Christian religious culture, and even in something that resembles what might be called transcendentalism. This may be the case here as well, in relation to the student teacher interns (academics) themselves, echoed in their writing— “the most important, friendship, I had a friend to share all the moments of despair and joy” –, and in their gaze toward the students (in Basic Education): “I was very happy to realize that the students identified with the themes and texts we brought to them...”; “Still, I realized that not all of the students were moved by our presence [...] to know that we made a difference [...] use all your efforts to be compensated”; “above all else, we are, firstly, human beings [...] Even if we have all the technical knowledge necessary to develop our teaching, nothing matters if we do not perform our jobs humanely, as involving the heart is necessary

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<sup>52</sup> Original text: “Gostaríamos de dizer que ela [experiência do estágio] não foi como imaginávamos, foi três vezes mais difícil, foi um choque de realidade intelectual e emocional. Mostrou-nos que, acima de qualquer coisa, somos, primeiramente, humanos. Mesmo que tenhamos todo conhecimento técnico necessário para desenvolver a docência nada adiantará se não trabalharmos nossa humanidade, pois é necessário um envolvimento de coração para a experiência de ensino promover um aprendizado verdadeiro [...] para uma experiência ser verdadeira, o coração também precisa estar lá, independente do que estava acontecendo em nossa vida fora da sala de aula. Percebemos que o conteúdo não poderia estar só na mente, mas também na alma. Você só explica algo de verdade quando está falando também com o coração, não só com a cabeça [Carol].”



in the teaching experience to promote true learning.”; “for an experience to be true, the heart must also be there [...] We perceive that the content cannot be only the mind, but also the soul. You only explain something true when you are talking also with your heart, not just your head.”<sup>53</sup>

While these voices may reveal that we still have not yet arrived at a deep understanding of this experience from the *I-other* paradigm in teaching practices, they may also express an indebtedness we all share (we include ourselves here). The path to this understanding requires that we return to ourselves and to the other, with similar intensities so that the (mutual) exercise of the counter word is a reality in school and not an artificial perspective in its minimal signification of a conversation strategy. We need to overcome this with reflections and attitudes focused on the subtle and infinite gradations of individuality and otherness, doing justice to the rights of both the speaker and the listener, as Bakhtin advocates in *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and the Human Sciences* (1986):

The word (or in general any sign) is interindividual. Everything that is said, expressed, is located outside of the “soul” of the speaker, and does not belong only to him. The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener also has his rights and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one) (BAKHTIN, pp.121-122).<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the experience of listening is constituted in the encounter of valued words, as a form of being alive there too, in the school. In this discursive chain, individuals in

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<sup>53</sup> Original texts: “O mais importante, a amizade, eu tinha uma amiga para dividir todos os momentos de desespero e alegria”; “Fiquei muito feliz ao perceber que os alunos se identificaram com os temas e textos trazidos por nós”; “Ainda que eu perceba que nem todos os alunos foram tocados por nossa presença [dos estagiários] saber que fizemos diferença, que seja na vida de apenas alguns, já faz todo o esforço ser recompensado”; “acima de qualquer coisa, somos, primeiramente, humanos. Mesmo que tenhamos todo conhecimento técnico necessário para desenvolver a docência nada adiantará se não trabalharmos nossa humanidade, pois é necessário um envolvimento de coração para a experiência de ensino promover um aprendizado verdadeiro”; “para uma experiência ser verdadeira, o coração também precisa estar lá, independente do que estava acontecendo em nossa vida fora da sala de aula. Percebemos que o conteúdo não poderia estar só na mente, mas também na alma. Você só explica algo de verdade quando está falando também com o coração, não só com a cabeça.”

<sup>54</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

teaching and learning take up their particular positions (even if hierarchical), however, the positions of *I-for-myself*, *I-for-the other*, *Other-for-me* would have the commitment to the understanding of the place that each occupies in this field of school culture, in this public space as a place of real encounter and mutual listening of oral discourse (word – counter word), in which individuals relate responsively and responsibly within it.

From this perspective, the teacher in his/her experience (in learning or not) with the new, which has as its horizon - otherness, would not get lost in the relationship of two or more subjects in dialogue, because the otherness would be their professional motto, since in this circumstance there is no space for forgetting oneself (singularity and otherness), nor forgetting the other (otherness and singularity). One two-way ticket – going from and returning – to the same place, and in this exotopic movement, a way of being in life, even in the dialogues in and about the schools where the individuals in teaching/learning can take up positions, each with a place that they occupy in the field of school culture.

The reach of this action could cross the borders of this field of school culture, as Bakhtin's thesis presents and pairs (our singularity constituted by otherness) could cross their own limits of action of this field itself. When we are born, "we face" the dialogical world, the world of the human discursive chain. My word is the my-word-borrowed in a profound link with the school, and with life. The encounter of words is a happening in this reality of meanings in circulation in the various spheres of human activity.

### **Conclusion – Implications in Perspective**

In the current stage we find ourselves, it is fitting to ask ourselves: when the student teacher interns present lovingness in their discourses, analyzing their teaching practices carried out in the schools, this altruistic sense with the other – the student at the school –, as a manifestation of listening to the other, is this listening of the other, the retention of a concept of teaching as a vocation, such as priesthood, or an approach, in current time, to an interaction characterized by responsivity and responsibility, which Bakhtin and his partners advocated? In the case of the latter, could it be an experience of an investment in understanding the other, of the re-evaluation of the educational word of the teacher in the

classroom, thinking about the school moment that could be dialogic, *with* another meaning for the architectonic *I-other*, or rather, the participation of that which assigns the pedagogical discourse as an amorous relationship with the other, however, through humanism mediated by otherness. Perhaps the criticism by Bakhtin that follows, presented in his text, *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Acts* (1990a),<sup>55</sup> can help us in this uneasiness of what possibly is still remote in understanding the dialogical nature of the world of life, and the quotidian ideology. Could this be a question for our age in relation to the culture of schools?

The correlation of the image-categories of *I* and the other is the form in which an actual human being is concretely experienced; this form of the *I* (the form in which I experience myself as the one-and-only me) is radically different from the form of the other (in which I experience all other human beings without exception). And the other person's *I* is also experienced by me in a manner which is completely different from the manner in which I experience my own *I*: the other person's *I* is also subsumed under the category of the other as a constituent feature of him. This radical difference is of essential significance not only for aesthetics, but also for ethics. It should suffice to recall the inequality in principle between the / and the other with respect to value in Christian ethics: one must not love oneself, one must love the other; one must not be indulgent toward oneself, one must be indulgent toward the other; and in general, we must relieve the other of any burdens and take them upon ourselves. Or consider altruism, which evaluates the other's happiness and one's own happiness in completely different ways (BAKHTIN, 1990a, pp.37-38; italics in original).<sup>56</sup>

In the utterances of the students, as we have seen in the previous examples, there are ideological intonations of commitment to humanity (well-being communal—individual—collective), and others that are left to apprehend. Meanwhile, the question remains: does altruism still shape our school culture?

As one can see, many questions have been left unanswered, and many gaps still need to be filled regarding the development of the process for teacher training in which we

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<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

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achieve the responsive and responsible interaction, as advocated by Bakhtin, or rather, to concretize an effective approximation of the *I-other*, both in school and in life.

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