



The contribution of Bakhtin's Theory for the study of the languages of religion

Contribuição da teoria de Bakhtin ao estudo das linguagens da religião

Antonio Carlos de Melo Magalhães*

Abstract

The article proposes in dialogue with the Bakhtin's theory an interpretation of the religion as infinity of possibilities. The concepts of dialogism, polyphony and unfinality criticize the reductionistic theories of the languages of religion. The perspective based on the Bakhtin's theory opens horizon meaning for interpretation of languages of religion that inhabit the chaos-world as place of religious experiences which characteristics are the poesis and the concrete situations, that originate the singularities in the languages of religions. Dialogism as a theory of culture and as a philosophy of life, polyphony as theory of novels and unfinality as a theory of history constitute the theoretical approach of an interpretation of languages of religion in their processes, future making and cultural transformation.

Keywords: Bakhtin; dialogism; religion; language.

Resumo

O artigo, em diálogo com conceitos da teoria de Bakhtin, propõe uma leitura da religião como infinitude de possibilidades. Ao recorrer aos conceitos de dialogismo, polifonia e não-finalizabilidade, o artigo estabelece uma crítica a teorias reducionistas das linguagens da religião. A perspectiva advinda da teoria bakhtiniana abre horizontes para leituras das linguagens da religião que destacam o caos-mundo como lugar das experiências religiosas, caracterizadas pela inventividade (poiésis) e eventividade (situacionalidade), originando singularidades nas linguagens da religião nem sempre contempladas por teorias mais reducionistas. Dialogismo como teoria da cultura e filosofia da vida, polifonia como teoria do romance das personagens de Dostoiévski e não-finalizabilidade como teoria da história formam o referencial teórico de uma interpretação que entende as linguagens da religião em seus processos, devires e bricolagens.

Palavras-chave: Bakhtin; dialogismo; religião; linguagem.

Article translated by José Martins dos Santos Neto, PhD.

Article submitted on September 22, 2018 and approved on November 7, 2018.

* Doctor in Theology - Universität Hamburg (1991). Post-doctorate in Literature at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (2015) and at Universität Hamburg (2018). Professor at Universidade Federal da Paraíba, working in the Master's Degree in Literature and Interculturality. Home country: Brazil. E-mail: magalhaes.uepb@gmail.com

Introduction: about (almost) obvious things

"Religion has been badly treated." This is an expression I recently heard from an interlocutor who spoke about the (undo) treatment given by some studies in the sciences of religion to its research object. To that spoke I added that this is no different from the treatment of scholars in fields other than the sciences of religion. What unites us with regard to criticism is the reiterated realization that religion is taken as an object that confirms other realities of human life, part of the conceptualization itself being a form of celebrating its penury and the place of its doom, without forgetting that, depending on who operates the concept, religion can also be used to celebrate revolutions and announce rebellions. Within this line of thought, religion would become the proof of social injustice, the repressed will, the ill-articulated "will to power"; a place of alienation in society, or in the thought that articulates itself more to the *left*, religion could become the necessary force to bring about the *victory of the oppresse*. Part of the conceptual charge is a modern machine, a real machine to consider past languages as outdated or even to make the past narratives speak and confirm the critical revolts under the sign of a supposedly emancipated and autonomous modernity.

Social sciences are a powerful expression of that kind of approach, but other fields have also been permeated by such a "methodological atheism" typical of an approach that always predicts religion as a kind of backwardness, childishness, misrepresentation, and obscurity; one should not also forget that some studies of religion are taken by a flurry of paladin angels from the world's righteousness's, in this apparent counterpoint to modernity, when in fact it is only one face of it, because it needs to make experiences different, complex, contradictory, somewhat uniform, linear and efficient reproductive machines. Such approaches determine the outcomes that will build consensus communities in a modern-critical asepsis. Even before the themes, groups and concrete places are presented, we already know in some ways *where this will end* in the game of the sciences of religion as well as in other observatories regulating the spiritual welfare of society: religion is only the one who has passed through the sieve of what it has to be in its penury and

its backwardness - to show how alienated it is - or what it should be - to make humans move around any ideological struggles for new worlds. Part of the game of this kind of science is to know the results beforehand and to make its "field" or "object" the place of the proof that needs to be reified to secure the place of science: the only survivor, after all, that matters. Religion is mistreated not by its tormentors, but by its scholars, by those who have made religion its theme, its object, its intellectual trajectory.

These obvious things should be our starting point, but I presume that this current state of affairs is still the arrival point of some studies: desert zones of intellectual creativity and inhabited mansions of a dogmatism disguised under conceptual hygiene.

In what I propose in this article there is an attempt to distance itself from this aforementioned way of elaborating the studies of religion. The strategy is to seek in theoretical horizons normally not assimilated by the sciences of religion the possibility of elaborating dialogues and approaches with the languages of religion. In this sense, the dialogue with Bakhtin presents itself as a possibility to break both with an exegetical tradition established in a restrictive understanding of the text as well as with a tradition of the meanings previously decided by "theoretical totalitarianism" either of theology or of the social sciences, or from any other areas.

The study models of religion more or less guarantee the significance of anything that can be discovered. We only discover what we already know, but religion is inventiveness (poiesis) and evenness (situationality) and it constitutes an arc of uncomfortable and sometimes surprising possibilities. Religion is the most radical language of the infinity of human possibilities in their becoming.

The languages of religion (human languages: gesture, image-metaphor, narrative, corresponding to rite, icon-poetry, myth, according to Nogueira (2016), continuously aggregate, but also disaggregate, generate modifications in what was gathered, creating a chain of experiences and unfinished and non-finalizable narratives, something important to the Bakhtinian theory of non-finalizability of

history. The best design of language is like the biological dimension of the human: an imperfect design. Disorder and repair are the characteristics, not the perfect fit, not the order. World chaos (GUATTARI, 1992) is the world of religion.

1 The concepts

I operate with three concepts in Bakhtin: non-finalizability, polyphony and dialogism; and, besides, I briefly present their possible meanings. I understand the concept of non-finalizability as the key to a theory of history in Bakhtin, in rejection of a Hegelian view; there is no culmination of history in Bakhtin, or even in the Marxist view of history, in what it has of a mechanistic dialectic, without granting rights to a "bourgeois philosophy" in its sterile individualism. Non-finalizability is a concept that shows a certain Bakhtin on the frontier of the great theories of the history of his time. The story is never closed; there is always one more game which means that there are open possibilities.

Polyphony is clearly a theory of romance, driven by Dostoevsky's literature, with plenary and immiscible characters. Dialogism presents itself as a theory of culture and philosophy of life, whose dialogic processes break with the monologisms and with a dialectic that would determine the dialogue simply from pre-seen actions.

According to Bakhtin, a great part of the theoretical commitment happens in its interpretations of literature, of its constitution. The relation between literature and the "extra-linguistic" presupposes both the profoundly dialogical dimension of life and the signic dimension of the human psyche, which presents itself as the concretization of consciousness, this relation between the self - always thought of its collective weaving - and the others in the cultural and ideological practice of daily life. For Bakhtin, therefore, there are no ruptures between the interior and the exterior; rather, what exists is the process that is constant and unified, but never uniform or repetitive. There is, therefore, no inner life that does not become a sign, so that consciousness is always a social and cultural datum. Moreover, what we

perceive in Bakhtin is an understanding of linguistic change not only in its systemic but disordered ordering, produced by unpredictable events of everyday activity. Linguistic change does not result from abstractions, but from the actions of real people in their everyday actions. People are inventor of languages, in the words of Haroldo de Campos. This is because words and forms exist in us as they exist in the social world, as living impulses marked by memory, activity, dialogue and confusion. Language, in its daily use and also in the work of art, is effectively constituted by extralinguistic forces, because discourse is always dialogic, and dialogism should not be reduced to any formal linguistic categories. Dialogism rises and develops itself in life; it continues in art and results in cultures; it inhabits its own ideology and even monologues indicate the dialogical processes of the self-thinking subject. The self is always a for-itself, permanently interpellated by the out-of-itself (so-and-so is out-of-itself - we are always out-of-us).

A growing realization in recent texts by scholars of Bakhtin's work in Brazil concerns the urgency of (re) discovering his work and of being less dependent on French commentators. The rather quick and consensual use that has been made in monographs, articles, dissertations and theses, which has reduced or confused the dialogism to theories of intertextuality or interdiscursivity, leads us to a new search for nuances of Bakhtin's theory. Moreover, we should not deny the confusion between dialogism - a philosophy of life, and a theory of culture - and dialogue - an interlocution among subjects. There is an exaggerated dependence on Kristeva and the way in which she established the mediation of Bakhtin's works in the context of France extended to other academic contexts. Brazilian academic community has for a long time reflected Kristeva's theses more than Bakhtin's, a process that is in part outweighed by the contribution that Bakhtin studies have made in our context (as examples: Bezerra (2011), Brait (2006), Maciel (2017). Kristeva circumscribes Bakhtin's work within structuralism, even though she attributes to him a certain dynamism of structuralism, thus reducing his theory to the text and functional aspect of the character. On the other hand, Bakhtin emphasizes discourse, enunciation, and especially the process of enunciation and character not taken as a

function but considered a conscious subject of his discourse. It is especially taken as complex, called upon, moving, fractured and cracked consciousness. In addition, Kristeva appeals to the role of meaning, a closed term that foreclose content. In turn Bakhtin prefers to work with meaning, once it is more responsive and dialogical, thus allowing an understanding of the relationship that literature establishes not only with other texts - that would confuse dialogism with intertextuality - but especially with the world and with culture that are present in the text and, in a way, does make the text.

The direct reading of a classic of theory (controversial term, I know), as is the case of Bakhtin, places us before a broad theoretical field, including the linguistic-discursive approach, literature theory, philosophy, theology, the semiotics of culture, the confrontation with psychoanalysis. To be inserted in the Bakhtinian texts is to be challenged by a vast field of theoretical confrontations and also by surprising theoretical associations, which indicates that dialogism is not only an operational concept to read certain data of the culture, but a form of research, a style of research. For Bakhtin, dialogism is not only a theoretical reference so that, instrumentally, the effectiveness of interpretation is guaranteed. Dialogism is the process of research; it is the way research is constituted, the way the researcher's gaze moves in the search for complex, comprehensive frameworks. Research thus becomes an extension of life, now taken in complex fields of reflection and writing.

Largely, this dialogic form of doing research became possible because the "object" of the theory itself triggered conceptual sophistication. Dostoevsky's literature, in inaugurating the polyphonic novel, offered the most important basis for formulating the concept (Todorov even stated that Dostoevsky was responsible for polyphony, and Bakhtin, in turn, turned it into a concept). Literature emerges in Bakhtin's theory not only as the *locus* of research from pre-defined theoretical frameworks, but as a privileged hermeneutic place for the understanding of enunciations, of life forms, of the arrangements of culture, in short, for dialogism

as conception of the world. Can literature change or even foster theories? This seems to be the case in Bakhtin's theoretical work.

I therefore take the concept of dialogism as a broad theory and I confront it with theories of text and culture. The first aspect to be highlighted is the scope of Bakhtin's proposed theory, linked not only to the text, but also to life in its different performances, from everyday life to literature, to criticism of totalitarian theory, including criticism of linguistics and Marxism as philosophy. However, let us understand Bakhtin's critique within the principle of dialogism, never as a mere desire to overcome. In particular, Bakhtin emphasizes the critique of semiotics by focusing on the question of code and obscuring the force of context - sometimes Bakhtin refers to the semiotic totalitarianism of some interpretations - and to the dialectic, since it signifies the abstraction of dialogue or having has become an abstract product of dialogue. "Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the division of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing), draw abstract concepts and judgments from words and live answers, put everything into an abstract consciousness - this is how the dialectic is obtained." (BAKHTIN, 1986b, p. 147). Dialectics destroys the dialogical dialogue. In addition, semiotics can work like this, taking life out of language and culture. For Bakhtin, semiotics and dialectics are instruments of analysis of secondary aspects of the constitution of the text and the performance of life, and dialogism focuses its interpretation on the constitutive dynamics of text and life, without resorting to closed theories and systems that enclose life and terminating words or monologues.

It is possible to indicate here a convergence between a theory of literature and a philosophy of culture, because Bakhtin is constantly occupied with the extra linguistic data, although these data are configured in the speech, in the enunciation of the text, but never restricted to it. In fact, it is important to emphasize Bakhtin's quest to work with what he himself called Metalinguistic, which would be a discipline on the frontiers of linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, theology and literary studies, capable of interpreting ways of thinking and acting without the monocausalities of the theories of his time.

In Bakhtin's critique of monologisms, he emphasizes dogmatism and relativism, the first one because of its intent to interdict dialogue from a causal or normative view on life; The second is criticized, in turn, for hindering any possibility of positioning, since nothing matters and anything goes.

The theoretical and thematic vastness, however, does not confuse the attentive reader. The concept of dialogism comes from a complex theoretical reflection, but it does not appear as something vague, diluted in fragments of theory. Dialogism is the concept for the dialogical relations that Bakhtin notes in the different field ones of life, pointing to the event of language as

[...] relations of meaning that are established between statements produced in verbal interaction. In this sense, the concept of dialogism is based on the notion of voices that face each other in the same statement and represent the different historical, social and linguistic elements that cross the enunciation. (ZOPPI-FONTANA, 2005, p. 111).

Even this realization does not account for the Bakhtinian concept as fundamental to interpreting culture, because culture has to be interpreted as mess, chaos, confusion and openness.

What in fact constitutes the world and establishes the criteria for the functioning of the world in its daily life? For Bakhtin, unity, organization, systems are efforts; they are projects and attempts at systematization, but the world is, first, mess, confusion and openness. We strive to organize the world, but it continues to function with permanent openings. Their dialogue networks are not restricted to pre-established code commands and systems. Life, as Riobaldo would say in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, is too spongy. As Bakhtin himself says: "Nothing conclusive has yet occurred in the world; the last word of the world and "about" the world has not yet been said; the world is open and free; everything is still in the future and will always be in the future." This happens around what Bakhtin calls centrifugal (unofficial) and centripetal (official) forces; the former being responsible for the messy practices of life and the centripetal forms of organization of which we are worth to try to order the world.

Its conception of history avoids both causalism and the ordering of the meanings of those schemes already drawn, since both subtract the becoming of history, for the world in its becoming aggregates and disaggregates, and non-finalizability in turn, such an important concept in Bakhtin, characterizes what would be the whole of the historical process and the particular parts alike.

Bakhtin does not fail to recognize the monologizing forces of certain systematic and theoretical efforts in finalizing, ending the discussion, offering the "last" word on a theme, an idea, an experience. Bakhtin illustrates this monologistic attempt in Plato's philosophy by trying to turn the dialogues into forms of catechism around the truth, when initially they were dialogical quest for truth, often by having The *aporia* as conclusion. One's thinking may begin in a dialogical way and in its development try to organize and close a process. From there the truth is confused with rule and model and ceases to be inventiveness (*poiésis* in flux) and eventivity (marked by the situation and possibilities of saying and acting).

Another fundamental aspect in the elaboration of the Bakhtinian concepts is the role assigned to the other. "All the verbal part of our behavior (whether it be external or internal language) should not, in any case, be attributed to an individual subject, considered in isolation." (BAKHTIN, 2007, p. 182). Let us remember that the irreducibility of the other within a broader social and cultural framework in Bakhtin's theory, in the confrontation he establishes with interpretations he calls bourgeois, as he does in his short essay on Freudianism. The other constitutes us because we belong to complex and continuous socio-historical relations. There is no escaping the alterities that the concrete history in which we live reveals us. And when we avoid specific alterities, it is because they have already become part of our trajectory. "Bourgeois" individualism is a foundational misconception of modern philosophy, as Bakhtin understands.

The dialogic principle is articulated around the radically socio-cultural nature of existing, by its intersubjective character. The second aspect to be considered is that the sign is, by nature, to act, what is explained by the fact that we

live in these permanent intersubjective interlacings. It follows that the subject is made of what is not, of this process of discontinuity in which it is, in this detachment from the "discursive surfaces". The discourse that the subject produces – a place par excellence for his understanding – is a property of voices, a permanent dialogical state with the other, that exists loving, hating, being indifferent, irritating, finally, putting us in the displaced trajectory, discontinuous, although much of the trajectory itself evidences searches of organizations, controls, domains, security and stillness. The human being accedes to the authenticity of his voice in this game of permanent "us" in which he finds himself.

Finally, one aspect always to be considered is the relationship between dialogism and polyphony; in this case, we should not avoid the role of Dostoevsky's literature for Bakhtin's theory of culture and text. It is in this context of Bakhtin's restlessness with so many currents of thought that he will highlight the role of Dostoevsky, whose work became the principal object of his literary criticism, but also of his philosophy of life and of his theory of culture. In Dostoevsky, Bakhtin finds a fundamental support for his own revision of knowledge. In a way, literature compels theory to revise its assumptions. In Dostoevsky's work, we find the examples of true dialogism as a unit of multiple voices whose conversations are non-finalizing, with polyphony as a recurring characteristic. The work of Dostoevsky inaugurates the polyphonic novel and puts the consciousness of the characters in a constant dialogue with the voices of the others. "The multiplicity of voices and consciences, independent and immiscible, and the authentic polyphony of plenary voices constitute, in fact, the fundamental peculiarity of Dostoevsky's novels". (Dostoevsky's Problems of poetics, 4). Here you need to indicate nuances. Despite the proximity, we should not confuse dialogism - culture and language theory - and polyphony - the theory of the characters and their protagonism in the literary narrative. It is plausible to say that the scrambling of voices in the novel, the fact that they are constantly immiscible, the fullness of the characters denying the idea of central and secondary characters, is one of the important bases of dialogism, but it certainly does not cover the many nuances of this Bakhtinian concept.

Bakhtin pursues this perspective by addressing the theme of laughter and carnival in the work of Rabelais, something that points to the other truth before any official truth. There is always the other to say, a parody to be told about what is considered normative and legal, but it is the studies on Dostoevsky that will mean an important turn in Bakhtin's thought. Some citations indicate this:

Dialogic relations are a much broader phenomenon than the mere replicas of a dialogue presented in a compositional way in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human discourse and all the relations and manifestations of human life - in general, everything that has meaning and meaning. (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 40)

Being means to another, and through the other being means to himself. A person does not have internal sovereign territory; He / she is always and totally at the border; looking within herself; he / she looks into the eyes of the other with the eyes of the other. (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 287).

This dialogical process is increasingly spread in different spheres of culture, extrapolating a theory of text and reaching the theory of language and culture.

Indeed, any concrete discourse [...] is intertwined with thoughts, points of view, strange values, judgments and shared accents. The word, directed to its object, enters into a dialogically agitated and tense environment of words, judgments of value and strange accents; it engages in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, departs from others, and crosses itself with a third group. (BAKHTIN, 2010, p. 276).

Each culture has its unknown meanings; that happens not only because the scholar would held, through its system, the true understanding, but also because this web of meanings is a universe that goes through many tricks and associations. "If an answer does not raise a new question, it is outside the dialogue." (For a methodology of the human sciences, 168). The listener (real or imagined) shapes the statement from the beginning. All Bakhtin's discussion of language, in his criticism of linguistics, stylistic and poetic in its context, is the option for a discipline that surpasses all of them: metalinguistic. Each language reflects a particular unsystematic way of aggregating and agglutinating the contingent historical and social forces that produced it. Hence, in his critique of linguistics, for Bakhtin, any linguistic change is never systemic, but disordered, produced by unpredictable events of daily activity. Moreover, it does not result from purely

abstract forces (systemic imbalances), but from real people's actions in response to their daily lives. Hence, the ethical question is fundamental in Bakhtin. Change is always generated in the concrete life of people, not in systems abstracted from the complexity of life. Words and forms exist in culture, in life, in the social world not as naked corpses, but as living impulses, with memory and activity. Bakhtin focuses on creation, not simply in the created, ready-made work:

An object is ready-made, the linguistic means for its description are ready-made, the artist himself is ready-made, and his vision of the world is ready-made. In addition, here with ready-made means, in the light of a ready-made worldview, the ready-made poet reflects a ready-made object. However, in fact the object is created in the process of creativity, as are the poet himself, his vision of the world and his means of expression. (BAKHTIN, 1986c, p. 120).

This does not mean that he does not know or relativize the past as something-given.

It is impossible to change the factual side, the side-thing of the past, but the significant, expressive side can be changed, because it is un-finalized and does not coincide with itself (it is free). This is the role of memory in this eternal transformation of the past: cognition/understanding of the past in its open-endedness, in its non-coincidence with itself. (BAKHTIN, 1986c, p. 132).

The searches of my own word are in fact searches for a word that is not mine, a word that is more than myself; it is a struggle to renounce my own words, with which nothing essential can be said. [...] These searches led Dostoevsky to the creation of the polyphonic novel. (BAKHTIN, 1986b, p. 149).

In short, dialogism and non-finalizability constitute permanent, creative, conflicting, uncomfortable hybridism, so well-articulated in aesthetic purposes in the studies of polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels. Dialogism is, therefore, both cultural and "unconscious" – a complicated term for Bakhtin's theory, which emphasized the dilemma of consciousness as part of an aesthetic project.

Things are therefore always interrelated in Bakhtin, the theory of self, criticism of the sciences of his time, development of a conceptual universe focused on dialogism and polyphony, everything is related in the Bakhtinian theory of culture, and both this dialogical procedure of research as well as some of the results summarized here may be of interest to the study of the languages of religion.

2 Languages of religion: dialogic, non-finalizable and polyphonic

Religion moves itself into vast and complex fields of discursive arrangements and symbolic and ethical cross-links. There is no limit to the processes of bricolage; transversalities can be surprising and practices can point to the various belongings of the subjects and cultural practices, removing the seriousness of studies of religion that try to reduce it to any essentialized being, trying to present a definite order that religion in its different languages do not know. Religion has no limits in its possibilities of becoming. The texts of religion are never the same and cannot be so, because of the cultural complexity to which they are subjected and because of the many moods and interests of readers in their developments. The rites of religion are never mere monotonies, because they always depend on bodies with their inscriptions, their affections and memories. The ethics of religion is never uniform or a handbook of rules, because it can generate both sympathetic and poetic gestures as well as stupidity and violence. The narrative of religion is never discursive linearity, but rather the gathering of intonations, the immiscibility of voices, and the contradictions of actions. Religion does not have some domesticable language. It is, at the same time, a realm of stillness and tranquility, but also conflict and rebellion. In religion, everything fits. Perhaps that is the reason why it is always possible to instrumentalize it and try to reduce it to a single field of experiences and sayings. That is why it is possible to coexist side-by-side, traditional churches in their rigidity - increasingly in extinction - along with the countless communities whose names we may not even know for our systematizations. Understood as life and process in culture, the languages of religion should not be censored in any kind of "must be" determined either by theology or by the social sciences. Not that certain aspect of religion cannot be channeled, for example, in favor of a theological indoctrination for the ethical performance of a group. That is not the point. What should not be confused and presupposed is that when this is done, we are still in a position to reduce religion to this practice or to that ethical attempt to do something in the world. The words of religion are of multiple associations. The rites of religion have confused

constitutions. The symbolism of religion is open. The ethics of religion are tenuous because we find in it both the possibility of, for example, fighting for the oppressed as well as defending the right of the oppressor. History, this failed teacher who taught us nothing, is full of these "extremes" in one religion. In this sense, religion can be, rather, a will to power (who does not have it?), as sociology attested in recent times, but to reduce it to that will to power is a theoretical collapse and a conceptual misunderstanding. What can most acutely characterize the languages of religion? Here is the answer: What can most characterize it, no doubt, would be its incomparable intensity, its many routes of collision and encounters. Religion is the infinity of human possibilities in their narratives, celebrations and actions.

Bakhtinian concepts point to consequences that I consider fundamental in the study of religion: to deal with languages that are infinite, in the sense of being multiple, diverse, unexpected, and that should not be treated with reductionist concepts. To reduce the Christian religion, for example, to a program of social struggles, as did the theology of liberation, is to practice doctrinal asepsis of a very complex reality. On the other hand, reducing religion, as an experience and possibility of making sense of the world, to an anthropological deficit, is another violence that we have become accustomed to in some of the science of religion programs.

Assuming what should be the obvious of our findings, it would be important to move forward in studies that would assign contributions from a theology such as Liberation Theology to the study of religions to their proper place; this would be an attempt to establish a limit to the diversity that is the multifaceted presence of Christianity in our continent. The question here is whether this attempt should be of interest to the study of religion. In my opinion, it is not anymore. In the same way, we should also assign some sociological studies of religion to its proper place: an attempt to reify what modernity has already pointed out in its beginnings and in its development: religion originates in some anthropological and cultural deficit. Either we break with these perspectives or we will always return to the familiar

uses of schools, disciples and affiliations. It is necessary to recognize the monstrosities, inventiveness and bricolage that religion does every day so that it returns to occupy its place: the most radical infinite language that we know. In order not to confuse the reader and those interested in defending religion always as fantasy, party, aesthetics, beauty: religion is this and that, it is peace and violence, it is struggle, torment, but also distance and mystical island. The fascinating and difficult is precisely this reality of religion, which embraces horizons, practices and values that are not contemplated by any reductionist theory, or in Bakhtin's words, by no dogmatic theorizing or semiotic totalitarianism.

In contravention of modernity, religion is not an uninhabited mansion of meanings and possibilities of signification. Just the opposite. Religion is a house inhabited by many. In this amalgam of things and experiences, narratives and iconography, characters and gods in movement and flow plurality, not uniformity, non-finalizability, not ideological-theoretical closure, dialogism, not monology and repetition, should be the presuppositions in the studies of religion. After all, this should also have consequences for the results we have reached, because reduction is always a violence to the object we choose.

Now, if religion lives in this continuous flow of overlapping, how should we understand the languages of religion? How could we achieve reliable results in our studies? If everything is open, nothing is finalizable and the dialogical process characterizes and moves the quotidian of religion - language of singular infinity - , how can we still get results of research? This is a question that may be necessary, but the question itself needs to be questioned. On the one hand, it seems that we have become accustomed to the reductionist identitary typologies of the sciences in such a way that we fail to consider how fragile they are in dealing with the complexity of our field of study. The problem is not that a theory such as that of Bakhtin puts us in such a fluid process around religion that it would hinder any more consistent outcome, rather the problem lies in our scientific culture of securing the result from any reduction made a priori. The dialogism and non-

finalizability of the many cultural-religious bricolages should not inhibit us from seeking the results. These concepts and postulates only require us to leave our zone of conceptual comfort and venture to view religion in such a way as to consider its surprising aspects, its uncomfortable inventiveness and its unique events. Perhaps, as we radically move out of our comfort zones, we find that some concepts so firmly established in our academic circles are now considered more as a doctrinal exercise of control than a daring practice of constructing challenging thinking.

Is part of what we have done in the studies of religion in Brazil no more than a long but monotonous course of religion in its complexity and in its much dialogism? Perhaps the idea that the Christian religion is a religion of the oppressed and serves to organize the oppressed, as well as the idea that religion is reducible to a social function that it can assume or which, according to some theorists in our context, often assumes, perhaps this idea of thinking religion in these terms only reveals how narrow and authoritarian our view of religion: this happens because in many everyday affairs, religion overflows these circumscriptions and continues to operate in a more transverse and disrespectful way than our aseptic science tends to recognize and allow.

Bakhtinian concepts may help us to recognize in religion a material that is still crude and rude enough to demand from us a less ethical-doctrinaire, less typological-functionalist and less modern science, for the excess of discrimination and prejudice that modernity creates about religion. Perhaps then, we recognize that dialogism and non-finalization point to the many fractured expressions of the various sensitivities that are grouped together and constituted in the languages of religion, sometimes assuming unpublished forms. To recall Glissant, a reader of Bakhtin: "All possibilities, all contradictions are inscribed in the diverse world." (GLISSANT, 2002, p.27), noting that diversity is not simply the "melting pot" but the points of encounter of differences and antagonisms, with always unpredictable results. If world chaos is the world of religion, even though religion presents solid parameters of attempted world ordering, but world chaos is its place of origin and narrative construction, we should not forget that we would have to think of other

poetics to deal with this reality. "The poetics of chaos cannot be thought of with abnegation of formal parameters." (Glissant, 2002, p. 81). If world-chaos were the world of religion, then we would have to think of religious subjectivities from the aesthetics of relationships, bricolages, and creations. The "erratic" character of religion would interest us much more than the systematized and monologizing order. If dialogism is a possibility of approaching religion, then its languages could not be at the service of a science that claims for itself the restrictive and reductionist judgment of religion. Have we practiced such a science?

Conclusion: open question

In its infinity religion is often a world order, which can "save" or even watch over and control. Such ordering does not take place without a significant dose of authoritarianism. Would it be possible to imagine the end of the dialogical aspect of religion because of an authoritarian and reductionist monologism that we have found in some of its practices? In other words, could religion be such a perverse monologism capable of putting an end to any possibility of dialogism?

Without responding directly to the question - it is open - I remind the reader that Bakhtin's theory arises precisely in a context marked by excessive authoritarian and totalitarian forces. It is precisely in this context that Bakhtin speaks of dialogism, polyphony and non-finalizability. Theories can be creative resistances and indicate that creative processes live underground in a story that has gotten tired of over control, repetition, and formality. There is always something lurking in the process of culture that breaks down the linearity of discourse.

REFERENCES

- BAKHTIN, M. M. **Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski**. Tradução Paulo Bezerra. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2011.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. Os gêneros do discurso. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. **Estética da criação verbal**. Tradução Paulo Bezerra. 4. ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003. p. 261-306.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. Towards a methodology of the human sciences. In: EMERSON, Caryl; HOLQUIST, Michael (Ed.). **Speech genres and other late essays**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986a. p. 159-172.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. From notes Made in 70-71. In: EMERSON, Caryl; HOLQUIST, Michael (Ed.). **Speech genres and other late essays**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986b.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. The Problem of the text in linguistics, philology and the human sciences: an experimente in philosophical analysis. In: EMERSON, Caryl; HOLQUIST, Michael (Ed.). **Speech genres and other late essays**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986c. p. 118-138.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. **O freudismo**: um esboço crítico. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2007.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. **A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento**. O contexto de François Rabelais. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. Metodologia das ciências humanas. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. **Estética da criação verbal**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003. p. 393-410.
- BAKHTIN, M. M; VOLOCHÍNOV, V. N. **Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem**. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2009.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. O discurso no romance. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. **Questões de literatura e de estética**. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010. p. 71-210.
- BEZERRA, P. Prefácio: uma obra à prova do tempo. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. **Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski**. Tradução Paulo Bezerra. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2011.
- BRAIT, B. (Org.). **Bakhtin**: outros conceitos-chave. São Paulo: Contexto, 2006.
- BRAIT, B. (Org.). **Bakhtin**: dialogismo e construção do sentido. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2005.
- GLISSANT, Édouard. **Introducción a una poética de lo diverso**. Barcelona: Ediciones del Bronce, 2002.
- GUATTARI, Felix. **Caosmose**: um novo paradigma estético. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1992.

KRISTEVA, J. **Introdução à sem análise**. 3. ed. revista e aumentada. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2012.

MACIEL, Lucas Vinício de Carvalho. A (in) distinção entre dialogismo e intertextualidade. *Linguagem em (dis) curso – LemD*, **Tubarão**, SC, v. 17, n. 1, p. 137-151, jan./abr. 2017.

NOGUEIRA, Paulo A.S. Religião e linguagem: Proposta de articulação de um campo complexo. **Horizonte**, p. 240-261, abr./jun. 2016.

PONZIO, Augusto. **A revolução bakhtiniana**. São Paulo: Editorial Contexto, 2008.

ZOPPI-FONTANA, Mônica Graciela. O outro da personagem: enunciação, exterioridade e discurso. In: BRAIT, Beth (Org.). **Bakhtin**: dialogismo e construção do sentido. Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP, 2005, p.108-118.