

Writing, Method and Hermeneutics: Towards an Existential Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT. This paper is about the nature of writing practice as an existential practice. My purpose is to explore dominant ways of speaking about writing practice and explore an alternative way in which writing can be seen as existential accomplishment. In the article, I mainly focus on some central themes on the writing practice: (a) nature of writing practice (b) issue of criteria, and (c) evaluation practice. For each of these themes, I compare dominant ways of speaking about writing as self-discovery or procedural-technical practice with a way of speaking drawn from a hermeneutic approach. At the end of the article, I explore a possibility for defining a general, but flexible list of existential criteria which may refer to a list of moral virtues which aims to provide an outline, and by means of this outline giving some help to writers' critical consciousness.

Keywords: existential criteria, evaluation practice, existential experience, polyphonic novel, glocal knowledge.

Introduction

The concept of writing as hermeneutic practice has received a great deal of recent attention. Contemporary literature pertaining to hermeneutic approaches to writing practice abounds, addressing such matters as how to become a reflective writer and how to differentiate types of hermeneutics approaches to writing practice (Kent, 1992; Crosswhite, 1992; Russell, 1999). Although arguments supporting writing as hermeneutic practice are divergent, they have in common a claim to reject the notion that writing is limited to enacting a given set of technical skills or strategies (Pullman, 2000; Russel, 1999). According to Ward (1994), in the postmodern information age, the natural and static definitions and understandings of writing practice have changed as we move away from a view of literacy as an autonomous, individually acquired cognitive skill toward a view in which literacy is seen as culturally bound, dynamic, meaning-making practice. This is a view in which writing practice is considered as a fundamentally social, moral and political process rather than as a cognitive activity (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 2001; Vygotsky, 1986). This view, especially as expanded by recent postmodernist and social constructionists (e.g., Bruffee, 1984; Gee, 1992; Kent, 1992; Ward, 1994), replaces a cognitivist analysis of literacy, which is largely derived from the traditional Cartesian thinking with a socio-cultural view that understands literacy as a fundamentally socio-political and dialogical accomplishment. In this sense, literacy practices and their meanings are always under the influence of a particular context; they embody and transform particular ways of thinking, acting, and knowing within specific communities (Gee, 1992).

This paper is about the nature of writing practice as existential experience. My purpose is to explore dominant ways of speaking about writing practice and explore an alternative way in which writing can be seen as existential accomplishment. I am not, I hope and believe, in favour of any instrumental methods, or any ends. The basic

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assumptions that I make in the paper concern the ontological issues of writing and evaluation practice with no fixed foundation.

In the article, I mainly focus on some central issues on the writing practice: (a) nature of writing (b) issue of criteria, and (c) evaluation practice. For each of these themes, I compare dominant ways of speaking about writing as self-discovery or procedure-process oriented practice with a way of speaking drawn from a hermeneutic approach. The former model is committed to and realized by means of a methodology for writing; the latter is connected to human existence, who we already are, and who we want to become.

Writing as a self-discovery or procedure-process oriented activity

In this model, there are two ways of defining writing practice that represent the assumptions of epistemological theories,” which is largely derived from traditional Cartesian thinking: a-writing as self-discovery, and b- writing as a kind of technical-procedural activity.

LeFevre (1987) defines the self-discovery model of writing as “Platonic – incomplete view.” According to LeFevre, the act of writing in this incomplete model can be defined as “ a private, asocial activity engaged in by an individual who possesses innate knowledge to be recollected and expressed, or innate cognitive structures to be projected onto the world” (49-50). Cooper (1989) also argues that this model of writing can be seen as “limited view” of writing in which the “ideal” writer can be characterized as

isolated from the social world, a writer I will call the solitary author. The solitary author works alone, within the privacy of his own mind. He uses free writing exercises and heuristics to find out what he knows about a subject and to find something he wants to say to others; he uses his analytic skills to discover a purpose, to imagine an audience, to decide on strategies, to organize content; and he simulates how his text will be read by reading it over himself, making the final revisions necessary to assure its success when he abandons it to the world of which he is not a part. (4)

The act of writing in this model can be seen as a simple one way transferal of information from one person to others (Murray, 1982; Elbow, 1981; Macrorie, 1985). Macrorie defines “good” writing in this model as that which tells the “truth.” According to Elbow, the goal of writing is to *discover* and express the authenticity of personal experience, therefore he argues that audiences have the potential to drive a writer away from truth, if they are not managed suitably (Ward, 1994). And the purpose of reflection in this model of writing is to decide how to proceed in writing practice by making a selection from the bodies of knowledge (Bruffee, 1984; Gere 1987; Russel,1999).

In the second way of defining writing practice, the practice can be seen as a kind of technical-procedural activity is the application of a methodology, theoretical and instrumental knowledge, to the writing practice in order to gradually remove error in the activity, and thus the knowledge produced will be capable of being generalized. Knowledge which is used as an instrument or methodology, or produced as a result of writing activity, in this model, has some unique characteristics. First, it is propositional; that is, it is comprised of a set of statements that can be packaged, scrutinized, and transmitted. Second, it is objective knowledge; that is, it is something outside writing

practice that researchers draw upon in order to legitimate practice. Furthermore, the knowledge produced in the activity can be stored, applied, coded, and quantified. For instance, Flower and Hayes' (1979) process model of composition can be seen as a good example of the technical-procedural model of writing. The following figure¹ demonstrates Hayes & Flower's depiction of "the structure of the Cognitive Process Model for Writing " (p. 20):

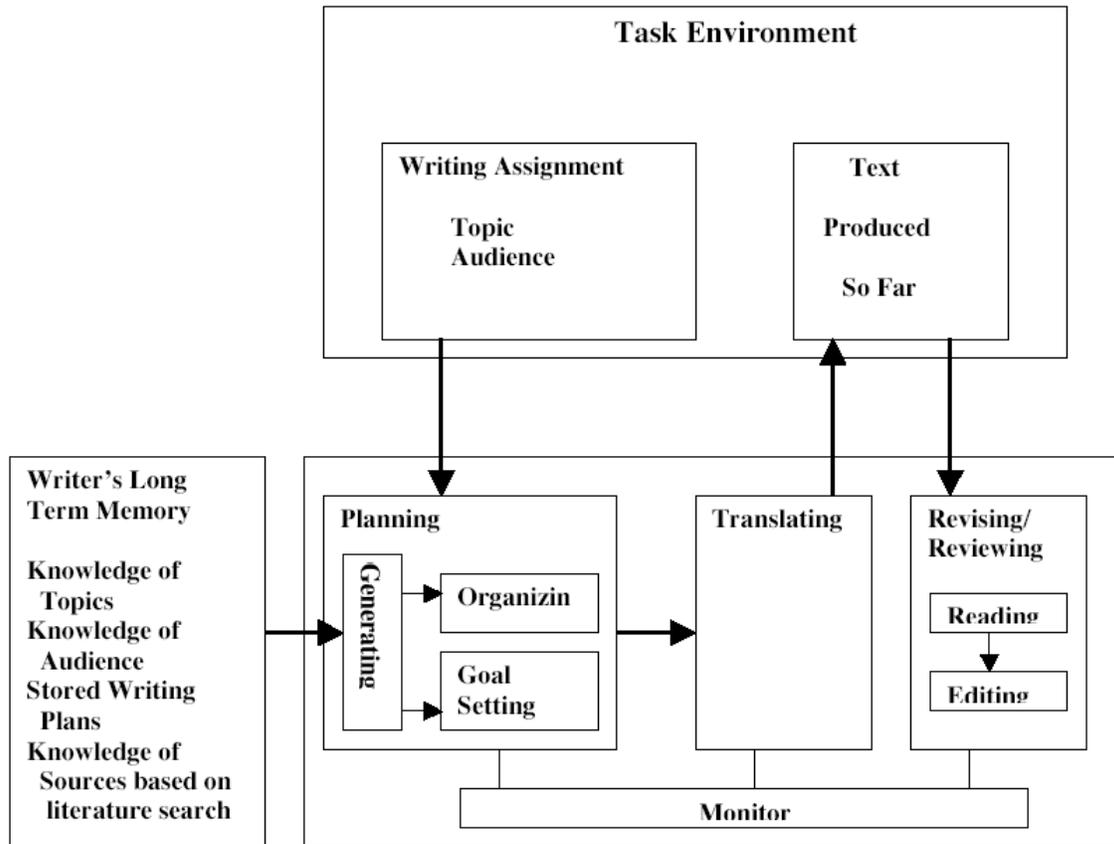


Figure-1. Cognitive Process Model for Writing

As their flowchart model demonstrates, Hayes and Flower are attempting to split the overall writing process into a set of rules that set up authorial concerns in a specific sequential order. In this way of looking at writing practice, the practice is limited to enacting a given set of technical skills or strategies, and understanding the integration means having objective, scientific, instrumental knowledge about it. What makes the writing practice objective or scientific is that it is the outcome of the application of methods that serve as an instrumental tool to protect the process from the contamination of local discourses and socio-politic and economic expectations of members of the local community (Gadamer, 1989; Kent, 1992; Russell, 1999; Taylor, 2002). The attitude of technical rationality condenses the writing practice to problem-solving. "A problem is something that can be totally objectified and resolved in objective terms because the person confronting the problem can completely detach himself from it and view it externally" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 152). Ontological issues—our 'being' in the world as

moral-political, social agents—are not part of this model. Ethical concerns in this model only play an objective-procedural role as professional ethic in which detachment, disinterest and neutrality are the major virtues of writers’ ethical consciousness (Ward, 1994; Carr, 1997).

Our dominant ways of talking about writing practice from social constructivist theory also demonstrate the some characteristics of this model: students "prewrite Monday, write Tuesday, revise Wednesday, edit Thursday, and . . . grade Friday to meet a district-imposed requirement for progress reporting" (Russell, 1999, p.83). Petraglia (1991) argues that social scientism in this model allowed teachers to make the very important assertion that an individual's writing process not only could be understood but also could be fixed.

A Hermeneutic Approach towards Writing Practice

Unlike epistemological theories that currently underlie composition theory, a hermeneutic approach of understanding for the writing practice places ontological questions and issues of selfhood and human agency at centre stage. Ontological dimensions of self in this model include: (a) human beings are self-interpreting beings, (b) the self is linguistically and historically constructed, (c) the self is dialogic in nature, and (d) to know is not separate from to be; a self both functions and interprets (Taylor, 1991). From a hermeneutic approach, the main concepts of the technical-procedural model, which are technical expertise, methodological conformity, instrumental rationality, and ethical neutrality, may only play a secondary role in writing practice. The main issue in the hermeneutic approach is that we as writers need to primarily come to an understanding of our ‘being’ in the world as moral-political, self-interpreting, meaning-making human agents. We need to realize that our embodied selves are always situated in moral and political spaces, and our linguistically and historically constructed, dialogic selves are creatures with purposes and goals and see our actions as guided and informed by these purposes and goals (Taylor, 1991).

From a hermeneutic approach, writing is a not a procedure but an existential accomplishment, which means it is praxis. *Praxis* is an activity that differs from *technique or procedure*: “In the first place, the end of a practice is not to produce an object or artifact but to realize some morally worthwhile ‘good’” (Carr, 1995, p. 68). Praxis has no fixed ends. The ends are constantly revised as “goods” are discerned. Praxis, morally worthwhile action, is not about choosing the right knowledge. It is about a way of being in the world (Kessels, 1996). The starting point is what it means to be ethical. Praxis postures the knower as directly affected by what he knows; knowing and being are not distinct in such a way that the knower “stands back” from a situation and observes (p. 153). Rather than separating knowledge about the world and being in the world, the way an individual knows is the way he or she is in a given context. Seen in this way, the writing practice has meaning, but that meaning is not self-contained, waiting to be discovered through reflection.

Praxis involves a self-understanding that is not required in technical “know-how” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 153). Technique requires clever application of skills; praxis requires understanding. Praxis adequately captures the tension between the interpreter and the object of interpretation:

Faced with uncertainty and the unfamiliar, praxis does not appeal to ready-made universal rules that would be applied in a mechanical fashion. Rather, action is to be guided by a finite understanding of the actual circumstance. Instead of classifying a specific circumstance under an already devised set of laws, praxis calls for an application in light of the existing situation within which the actor finds herself. In praxis one approaches an understanding of the universal in light of the particular, rather than the other way around. (p. 153)

Today, in terms of thinking about writing practice, *technique* and *procedure* have overcome *praxis*. As a result, a great deal of attention has been given to the problem of “connecting” theory to practice (Wagenaar & Cook, 2003). Much of the contemporary discourse pertaining to the integration policy opposes practice and theory. Theory pertains to abstract, universal ideas. Practice pertains to concrete realities (Kent, 1992; Ward, 1994; Wagenaar & Cook, 2003). According to Carr (1995):

In short, by making the twin assumptions that all practice is non-theoretical and all theory is non-practical, this approach always underestimates the extent to which those who engage in educational practices have to reflect upon, and hence theorize about, what, in general, they are trying to do. (p. 62)

A reaction to this concern about the distinction between theory and practice, like Schon’s concern with the distinction between knowledge and action, is the reconceptualization of practice as preceding theory (Carr, 1995, p. 63). As a result, there has been greater interest in locally-generated knowledge. A hermeneutic approach describes the writing practice as a way of generating both local knowledge and public knowledge about the integration--that is, knowledge developed by and useful to members of local communities themselves as well as knowledge useful to the larger society and other local communities.

The hermeneutic way of looking at the writing practice generates a different conception of the notions *knowledge* and *criteria*. In this model, knowledge is not a product of a cognitive, metacognitive, and reflexive activity which can be stored, applied, or quantified, but it is experience itself which is always improvisational, incomplete, and open to change. Furthermore, the writing practice in this model is more like an *existential experience*, which defines the process as an existential accomplishment, than a technical, cognitive activity. This is a view in which writing practice is considered as a fundamentally social, moral and political process rather than as a mere cognitive activity. This view replaces a modern cognitivist analysis of writing which is largely derived from the traditional Cartesian thinking with a socio-cultural view that understands the process as a fundamentally socio-political and dialogical accomplishment.

The way of talking about the issue and nature of criteria in a hermeneutic approach is also very different from the traditional epistemological models. Success in this approach is not measured in terms of the one best solution, or quantitative results of standardized tests.

Evaluation criteria in the hermeneutic approach are not a procedure or a product which can be stored, applied, or quantified, but they are *existential experience*, an unfinished, incomplete language which break the artificial language disengage us from our immediate contingency to being. Criterion in this approach is ethical knowledge that

“is...not knowledge that we possess in the sense that we can decide whether to apply it or even decide whether we are ethically skilled enough to apply it. Rather...we are always applying our ethical knowledge, whether adequate or not, in acting as we do” (Warnke, 2002: 84). That is, there is something about the criteria as ethical knowledge that is not detachable from our being but mainly determined by and determinate of it. Moreover, the application of the criteria is not straightforward; in other words, we do not simply apply them to reach an end. Furthermore, descriptive nature of the criteria in this hermeneutic approach is both mutable and relative. First, the criteria in this approach are mutable because their definitions change overtime. Therefore, they are always unfinished and temporal. Second, the criteria are value rational and contextually relative, because they can only be defined within a particular context.

In general, an existential criterion is a kind of criteria which is both universal and flexible. It is a kind of knowledge which is neither global, nor local. It is both global and local, which means it is a “glocal²” knowledge. Dewey’s conception of criteria for experience could be a good example to further explore the nature of existential criteria.

Dewey (1938) argues that not all experiences are educative; therefore, for him, we need to discriminate educative experiences from those are mis-educative. In order to do this, Dewey offers two general principles as criteria of discrimination. These principles or criteria are a- *continuity of experience*, which means all experiences are carried forward and influence future experiences, and b-*interaction*, which means present experiences arise out of the relationship between the situation and the individual’s past experiences. For Dewey, these criteria should not be seen as a technical tool to impose external control over experience, which distorts the growth of further experience, and limits the freedom of individuals. Application of the criteria should not be understood as a matter of instrumental rationality, a problem-solving based on objective knowledge of how to achieve ends. Instead, they are ethical knowledge—knowledge of what is right to do and good to be in a given situation. They help individuals have genuine experience, which perpetuate emancipation and enlargement of experience and lead individual growth through freedom, creativity, and dialogue. Although the criteria for experience are general-“their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience,” they cannot simply be applied to reach an end, they do not accept any fixed, unchanging formulation (Dewey, 1938, p.26). Therefore, they are both universal and flexible in their nature. They are existential criteria.

If there is no universal, objective definitions of existential criteria, and if the process of evaluating writing practice by using existential criteria is time and context dependent, how can we sure that our evaluation of the text is plausible?, or how can we sure that our understanding and definition of existential criteria are something that we can trust to evaluate quality of writing process? We may find partial answer to these questions while exploring the debate between Habermas and Gadamer on thin-thick moralities. For Habermas, “the making of norms is primarily a justice issue, subject to principles that state what is equally good for all. Unlike ethical questions, questions of justice are not inherently related to specific collectivity and its form of life (Warnke, 2002, p.88).” While minimizing moralities into universal principles such as truth and justice to which every person can hold, Habermas hopes to free communication from a particular tradition or its ethnocentric values. By doing this, Habermas hopes society to produce democratic judgments, which can have universal application while remaining

anchored within the practical realm of discourse among individuals. On the other hand, Gadamer argues that we monitor and check on the adequacy of our ethical knowledge, our aims and goals not by reconstructing a minimal rational foundation for the universal demands of morality, over and beyond our ethical values, but rather by comparing our norms and values against other alien thick possibilities of being in the world (Warnke, 2002). Following Gadamerian ethics and politics, Walzer also argues that morality is primarily “thick from beginning and what are expressed in thin moralities simply the common or overlapping aspects of a reiterated set of thick values (Warnke, 2002, p.89).” Therefore, for Walzer, Habermas’ notion of procedural morality is more than minimal; it represents “an entirely decent liberal or social democratic thickness (Warnke, 2002, p.89).”

Consequently, following both Habermas, and Gadamer, I argue that it is possible to develop universal-existential criteria, but every attempt to thinning existential criteria into a procedure for validating norms would be a failure. All we should and can do as writers is to find partial thick definitions to the existential criteria, and compare them with other alternative ethical understandings which are at least potentially capable of expanding our way of being in the world. Thus, we can check on the adequacy of our understanding of existential criteria which are universal but historically conditioned, and incomplete. This existential way of looking at the issue of criteria will help us overcome objectivism and ethnocentrism in our genuine evaluations in the writing studies.

For a genuine evaluation, writers need to risk their own self-understanding and open themselves to the possibility of a mutually generated new and different understanding. Taylor (2002) argues that genuine evaluation requires a virtue of willingness to change

In which we allow ourselves to be interpellated by the other; in which the difference escapes from its categorization as an error, a fault, or a lesser, undeveloped version of what we are, and challenges us to see it is a viable human alternative. It is this that unavoidably calls our own self-understanding into question. This is the stance Gadamer calls “openness”. “Openness to the other involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so” (pp. 141-42)

For Dewey, this kind of a genuine evaluation will develop a “Growth” in our moral consciousness “Towards realization of the potentialities which have already been sketched out in the language we are now using-towards realization of our present vaguely sensed ideas (cited in Rorty, 1997, p. 526).” Rorty also argues that this “Growth” is not a “... progress towards anything like Truth in the Platonic, realist, sense. Rather, it is progress towards new possibilities for humanity-new ways in which men can think of one another and do things for one another (p.529).”

After defining the existential criteria, and analyzing its nature, at this part of the paper, I will explore a possibility for defining a general, but at the same time flexible list of existential criteria which may refer to a list of moral virtues which aims to provide an outline, and by means of this outline giving some help to writers’ critical consciousness.

I consider at least four existential criteria in the list in order to evaluate the writing practice. I argue that when we talk about quality of writing practice in composition studies, we need to consider following existential criteria:

- 1- Intellectual maturity,
- 2- Practical and political maturity,
- 3- Ethical maturity,
- 4- Aesthetical maturity

In the next section, I will try to find partial definitions to these criteria by mostly using Bakhtin's notion of "polyphonic novel" with its characteristics of "carnival" and "heteroglossia".

Heteroglossia, Polyphonic Novel and the Quality of Text

The four existential criteria mentioned above cannot be neatly separated from each other. They are in a transactional relationship. I will define and analyze these four criteria in a transactional and dialogical discourse, while considering Bakhtin's notion of "polyphonic novel" with its characteristics of "carnival" and "heteroglossia".

Bakhtin's exploration of the polyphonic text is a democratic, pluralistic, dialogic attempt to analyze the hermeneutic notion of writing practice. I believe that Bakhtin's notion of "polyphonic novel" can be used as an excellent source to define the existential criteria.

The first existential criterion is "intellectual maturity." The intellectually mature writing should be "heteroglossic". Bakhtin (1981) describes "heteroglossia" as the multiplicity of voices engaging in dialogue within the text. Heteroglossia focuses on the production of meaning through dialogue, and it validates and celebrates the diversity of values and voices. Bakhtin uses the "heteroglossia" to criticize the monologic language, "monologia," in order to show constraints and barriers in front of the sphere of dialogic speech communication, and the process of "carnivalization." According to Bakhtin, the monologia uses centripetal forces of language, which tend to bring things to a central point. On the other hand, heteroglossia uses centrifugal forces of language, which tend to move things away from a central point and toward multiplicity. For this reason, "heteroglossia" should be the fundamental characteristic of an intellectually mature writing. This characteristic generates layered, rich and contextual description, and interpretation of the social phenomena. The intellectually mature writing demonstrates an artistry that constructs a proper representation of the voices and expectations of addresser (the author), addressee (audience), and super-addressee (third person, academia, society, etc.) in the text.

Developing the proper representation of the voices and expectations of addresser, addressee, and super-addressee in writing practice is not an easy process. According to Bakhtin (1981), every sphere of speech communication produces its own speech genres, and its particular language. In order to develop a depth interpretation of the social phenomena, or the proper representation of the voices and expectations of members (addresser, addressee, and super-addressee) of the particular sphere of communication, the speech genres of these particular spheres must be fully mastered by the author(s).

There is always the possibility for the author of the text to face a tension among represented voices in the text. An intellectually mature writing practice should show an ethical creativity to find a balance to reduce the tensions among its responsibilities to the author (inquirer), society, and readers. How could the author possibly craft an ethically mature text, while validating and celebrating the diversity of values and voices of herself,

reader, and society? We can find a proper answer to this question while analyzing Bakhtin's notion of "polyphonic novel."

Bakhtin claims that the polyphonic novel is not a direct expression of the author's representation of the world, but an active creation of the representation in the consciousnesses of the author, the characters, and the reader, in which all participation is equal. In the novel, the author does not preside as a higher authority; just opposite, all participants of the dialogue in the text create their own destinies as "free people, who are capable of standing beside their creator, of disagreeing with him, and even of rebelling against him" (p.4). They are "not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse," and the creator of their own destinies. (p.4). On the other hand, Bakhtin argues that in the polyphonic novel,

All people and all things must know one another and know about one another, must enter into contact, come together face to face, and talk to one another. Everything must be mutually reflected and mutually elucidated dialogically. Therefore all things are distant and separated must be brought together in a single "point" in space and time.(p.139)

Bringing all things together does not mean the finalization of the representation into a single voice. Bakhtin argues that

Everything in this novel- people's fates, their experiences and ideas- approaches its own borders, everything is, as it were, prepared to become its own opposite (although not in an abstract-dialectical sense), everything is taken to extreme, to its limits. There is nothing in the novel which could become stabilized, nothing which could justifiably settle down contentedly within itself and enter into the normal course of biographical time and develop in it. (p.139)

According to Bakhtin, in the polyphonic novel, "everything requires change and rebirth. Everything is depicted in the moment of uncompleted transition" (p.139-140). Bakhtin claims that repositioning the novel in this heteroglossic process requires an aesthetical imagination. For this creative process, the freedom of carnival and carnival's aesthetic conception should be used in the novel. According to Bakhtin,

Carnival is a pageant without a stage and without a division into performers and spectators. In the carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated, it is, strictly speaking not even played out; its participants live in it, they live according to its laws, as long as those laws are in force, i.e. they live carnivalistic life. (p.100-101)

Bakhtin describes the carnivalistic life as "...free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything." (p.130). For this reason, he claims that the freedom of carnival and carnival's aesthetic conception "allows Dostoevsky to see and depict aspects of the characters and behavior of people which in the normal course of life could not reveal themselves" (p.136).

While analyzing aesthetic conception of polyphonic novel, Bakhtin(1984) criticizes the dramatic aesthetic conception of Tolstoy's novels, in which characters, sooner or later, come around to the author's own views of society, ideology, and philosophy. Bakhtin explains why this kind of novel in which dramatic language play primary role, cannot be polyphonic:

The speeches in a dramatic dialog do not disrupt the world that is being depicted, nor do they make it multileveled; on the contrary, they require the monolithic unity of that world in order to be truly dramatic. The world of the drama must be made of a single piece. Any weakening of the monolith leads to a weakening of the dramatic effect...True multileveledness would destroy the drama, because dramatic action rests upon the unity of the world and is incapable of tying together and resolving multiple levels. In the drama the combination of integral fields of vision in a unity which stands above those fields of vision is impossible because the dramatic construction offers no support for such unity. Therefore the true dramatic dialogue can play only a quite secondary role in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel. (p.13-14)

This critique of dramatic dialogue also reminds us why writers should be careful about using centripetal forces of language in their writings. The dramatic dialogue has a potential to destroy a democratic and heteroglossic unity of cross-cultural representation and understanding. Therefore, the dramatic dialogue should only play a secondary role in the inquiry.

Based on Bakhtin's notions of "heteroglossia" and "carnival," I believe that writers could use the aesthetic conception of polyphonic novel to properly represent and celebrate the diversity of values and voices of themselves, their readers, and society.

Finally, the practically and politically mature writing practice should be carnivalistic, which produces hopes and emancipatory knowledge, in order to open new windows in people's lives, extend the narrow sense of life, and unmask hidden structures of power relations in society. According to Bakhtin, "the carnival attitude knows no final period, either; it is hostile to any *final ending*: for it every ending is merely a new beginning- carnival images are reborn again and again" (p.138). Therefore, the practically and politically mature writing practice should be hostile to any final ending; it should not be in the business of "naming" the world. The aim of the practically and politically mature writing is to offer new democratic perspectives and opportunities for humanity, rather than to change the people's lives with the grand social projects, which project the future of society and then organize to achieve it. As Freire (2001) said,

Dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. (p.88)

Freire argues that "it is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialog with the people about their view and ours." (p.96). Thus, the practically and politically mature writing should be open to represent multiple interpretations and understanding of the

world, in order to develop a multiple analysis of the social situations, create democratic strategies, and hope for social transformation and emancipation.

Conclusion

Writing is an existential experience which cannot be detached from who we already are, and who we want to become. It is an existential accomplishment in which we break old sense of community and develop new possibilities for humanity. It is an existential experience in which we overcome cynicism, the disbelief in shared values of the democratic communities, and perpetuate the democratic, pluralistic nature of an open society. It is not a technical enterprise which aims to eliminate uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability of the everyday life by using general, systematic foundational knowledge, methods. It negotiates with the ambiguous and unpredictable world by acting upon it, or interacting with it. In other words, it touches life, speaks language of life, the most elementary words of being, which is to fully live, to fully be. "Openness," an ability of changing ourselves, our pre-understandings and prejudgments through dialog is the "true revolution," the main goal of writing experience.

This article is an attempt to explore an ontological way of talking about issues of nature of writing practice, criteria, and evaluation. In this article, I broadly compared a procedural-expressivist and a hermeneutic model for understanding the experience of writing. And, I argued for the inevitability and inescapability of existential criteria, and the possibility of using the existential criteria for generating a general, but flexible and practical outline, a list of moral virtues. My discussion of the issue of criteria is more an ontological analysis than a theoretical one. This does not mean that I aim to develop a binary opposition between the epistemological issues and ontological issues of writing practice, or that I underscore the importance of epistemological analysis of the nature of criteria and quality text; instead, my aim is to remind writers about the importance of ontological analysis of open text to evaluate the quality of their writings, and to depict what "writing" might be when we look at the writing experience from the ontological perspective.

This article provides a post-foundational and existential framework with the theoretical and philosophical principles of a democratic and dialogical pedagogy for academicians and elementary and secondary school teachers, who teach writing and composition courses at public schools and universities, in order to help them understand the essence of teaching socially just, politically and emotionally motivated, democratic and pluralistic way of teaching writing and composition. The article aimed to show that teaching writing is more than providing and teaching technical knowledge and cognitive tools such as cognitive apprenticeship, interpersonal skills, collaborative problem-solving, and coaching and supervision; teaching writing is existential, ethical, poetical, political, aesthetical, deliberative, emotional, creative, reflective and dialogical process. This proposal is not suggesting another fixed and cognitive model of writing to define what teaching writing and composition "really" is. Rather, it explores teaching writing as another way we are in the world, and bring our notions of "practice" and "good writing" closer to the realities of everyday life activities. This alternative view emphasizes the shared nature of dialogical and existential writing through three concepts: situated cultural activity, writing as a socio-individual accomplishment, and writing as a deliberative and action oriented critical process. Writing is understood as a social

accomplishment that is embedded in everyday activities situated in school cultures that are social, cultural, moral and practical in nature, where interactions with others are an important medium in which writing and teaching composition occurs. This alternative view of writing and teaching composition requires deliberation and dialogue, and the exchange of ideas where writing itself is not contained wholly in the mind of the individual but is shared through socio-political discourses and artifacts that are embedded in the social activity of the school community. For example, action research, collaborative planning, transformative publishing, creative writing, whole language, kid-watching, etc. are the practical examples of teaching writing and composition to students, especially at the elementary school level.

I believe that a hermeneutic way of looking at issues of criteria, evaluation, and writing practice may give new insights to teachers, policy makers, program evaluators, politicians, researchers about their understanding and conceptualization of freedom, justice, education, democracy, international relations, cross-cultural evaluation and communication.

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Notes

¹ Obtained from <http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng221/Flower1.gif>

² Glocal: This term is derived from terms of “Globalization” and “Localization”.