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**THE DYNAMICS OF DIALOGUE:
HOW ARE BAKHTIN'S DOSTOEVSKY TEXTS MADE?**

Mikhail Bakhtin has emerged over the last two decades as the most influential Russian thinker in the West. Surprisingly, however, his work on Dostoevsky has not been subjected to attentive interpretation and we are yet to face its controversial multivoicedness. In this essay I attempt a chronological analysis of Bakhtin's writings on Dostoevsky in the light of recently published Russian texts.¹ My concern will be to reconstruct the dynamics of the notion of dialogue in Bakhtin's writings and to establish that the idea of dialogue, so insistently promoted in Bakhtin scholarship as an indisputable emblem of his thought, is a complicated construct, a compromise resulting from the work of several conflicting lines of argumentation within Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts. I shall argue that Bakhtin's texts employ three main strategies of interpretation – the sociological, the phenomenological, and the metageneric (with an added line of philosophy-of-history interpretation in the 1929 and 1963 Dostoevsky books) – and will chart their changing fortunes as Bakhtin's Dostoevsky images alter from the 1920s into the 1960s. Through a close reading of Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts I shall demonstrate that the sociological approach gradually fades and gives room to the phenomenological and metageneric approaches.

I will be equally concerned to prove that, regardless of the changes affecting the status of each of these three approaches over time, more than one of them can be found to co-exist and work in competition with the others in each of the texts discussed. Vitalii Makhlin, one of the most prominent Russian Bakhtin scholars, is certainly right to object against a neat division of Bakhtin's work into an early phenomenological (or 'individualistic', in Makhlin's words) and a later (starting in the late 1920s and extending into the 1930s) sociological stage.² This division, however, is untenable not because Bakhtin never wrote from a sociological perspective, as Makhlin is trying to suggest, but because even in the late 1920s, in his

¹ This article draws on, expands, refines, and up-dates earlier arguments advanced by the author in his book *The Master and the Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Ideas of their Time*, Oxford 2000.

² See V.L. Makhlin, „'Dialogizm' M. M. Bakhtina kak problema gumanitarnoj kul'tury XX veka“, *Bakhtinskii sbornik*, ed. V. Makhlin and D. Kuiuundzhich, Vol. 1, Moscow 1990, 110.

Dostoevsky book, and also later, the sociological and the phenomenological perspectives were claiming his attention simultaneously and within the same text(s), thus contributing to the complex and controversial nature of his work. Thus I will be seeking to answer the question of how Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts are 'made' and to argue that their underlying concept of dialogue has been not just unstable and dynamic, but also multi-layered at each point of its evolution.

As the argument advances, it will become clear that one of the three approaches I will be discussing – the sociological – rests on Bakhtin's fluctuating and not very sharply outlined notion of what a sociological interpretation of literature should involve. As a telling example discussed later in this text shows, Bakhtin used 'social' and 'sociological' as synonymous descriptions of an approach to literature and culture which examines them in reference to the organisation, functioning and development of society. This rather broad understanding of the sociological approach accounts for the fact that Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts accommodate, as I will show below, propositions that are couched in a stricter sociological parlance (class, social structure, crisis etc.), mainly of a Marxist provenance, along with others which address various social issues in a more oblique manner.

The corpus of Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts comprises his 1929 book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*,³ the extensive notes towards its reworking (1961-1963),⁴ the 1963 book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which was republished in Bak-

³ References are to the 1994 edition *Problemy tvorčestva Dostoevskogo*, Moscow 1994 (abbreviated as PDA). A new edition, with extensive commentaries, is available in M.M. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, Moscow 2000.

⁴ So far, three portions of the notes have been published: 1. M.M. Bakhtin, „K pererabotke knigi o Dostoevskom“, *Ėstetika slovesnogo tvorčestva*, ed. S.G. Bocharov, Moscow 1986, 326-346 [The title is given by the compiler of the volume, S. Bocharov; originally these notes were published by V. Kozhinov in *Kontekst-1976*, Moscow 1977, 296-316]. All references will be to Caryl Emerson's English translation „Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky book“, in M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. C. Emerson, Minneapolis and London 1984, 283-302, abbreviated as TRD, I; 2. M. Bakhtin, „K pererabotke knigi o Dostoevskom. II“, *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop* [further abbreviated as DKH], 1994, No. 1, 70-82 (with notes by N. Pan'kov; the Russian title comes from V. Kozhinov who published the text); all references will be to this publication, abbreviated as TRD, II; 3. M. Bakhtin, „Zametki 1962 g. – 1963 g.“, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. S.G. Bocharov et al., Moscow 1996, Vol. 5, 375-378 [first published by V. Kozhinov in *Literaturnaya ucheba*, 1992, No. 5-6, 164-165; references are to the text in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 5, abbreviated as SS]. Text No. 1 was also published in SS as part of a larger body of Bakhtin's notes of 1961 („1961 god. Zametki“, SS, 339-360). With the exception of a passage of three sentences (SS, the third paragraph on 345), this text reproduces the text from *Ėstetika slovesnogo tvorčestva*. Text No. 2, too, was published in SS as „Dostoevsky. 1961 g.“ (SS, 364-374). Despite the claims of the editors of SS that their version is textologically more accurate, on two occasions (SS, 371 and 373) the text of SS, unlike that in *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, does not indicate the alternative expressions used by Bakhtin in the manuscript; in addition, the obviously correct word ‚tektologičeskaja‘ (DKH, 1994, No. 1, 76, paragraph 5) is replaced in SS by ‚tekhnologičeskaja‘, which scarcely makes sense (SS, 374, paragraph 2). The notes of 1961-1963 are foreshadowed by a short note of 1941-1942 (SS, 42-44).

htin's lifetime (1972),⁵ and an interview on the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's novels granted in 1971 but only published in 1975.⁶ Contrary to the prevailing understanding of the 1963 book as a modified version of the 1929 text,⁷ part of my subsequent argument will be that these are two essentially different books rather than versions of the same text.

The Pre-History: Before 1929

Bakhtin's texts on Dostoevsky are preceded by an unkept promise. In his „Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity“,⁸ the reader is assured that the forms of confessional self-accounting will be considered as part of the examination of „the problem of author and hero in Dostoevsky's works“ (AH, 146). But apart from a few scattered references nothing more is said of Dostoevsky in the essay. The weight of these isolated pronouncements, however, should not be underestimated. Indeed, the germs of the 1929 book can be seen to lie in this early unfinished text. In a succinct typology of the relations between author and hero, „almost all of Dostoevsky's main heroes“ (AH, 20) are included as illustrations of the case where, as Bakhtin writes, „the hero takes possession of the author“ (AH, 17). Moreover, Bakhtin describes this case as part of a process of „crisis of authorship“, whose symptoms are seen in the contest of „the author's right to be situated outside lived life and to consummate it“ (AH, 203). What distinguishes this early proposition from those in the 1929 book is Bakhtin's unwillingness to see Dostoevsky's novels as the only embodiment of these phenomena: in „Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity“, Tolstoy's Pierre and Levin are listed alongside Dostoevsky's characters as examples of the subordinate role of the author in relation to the hero (AH, 20).

If there can be no doubt that the „Author and Hero“ essay served as a preliminary to, or was a coterminous exercise in, outlining the problems posed in the Dostoevsky book of 1929, hypotheses about the precise content of other possible prototypes of the book should be accepted *cum grano salis*. N. Nikolaev assumes

⁵ All references are to M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. C. Emerson, Minneapolis and London 1984, abbreviated as *PDP*; where the texts of *PDA* and *PDP* do not differ, reference will be made to both and to Caryl Emerson's translation. Whenever only one of the two abbreviations is used, this suggests that the text is only present in the respective book.

⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, „O polifoničnosti romanov Dostoevskogo“, *Rossija/Russia*, Vol. 2, Torino 1975, 189-198; I will not discuss this text, for it does not feature any new directions of interpretation that are not already contained in Bakhtin's earlier texts on Dostoevsky.

⁷ For strong arguments supporting this view see N. Bonetskaia, „K sopolstavleniiu dvukh redaktsii knigi M. Bakhtina o Dostoevskom“, *Bakhtinskie čtenia*, Vol. 1, Vitebsk 1996, 26-32. For an earlier overview of the similarities and the differences between *PDA* and *PDP*, see O. Osovskii, „M.M. Bakhtin: ot „Problem tvorčestva“ k „Problemam poetiki Dostoevskogo“, *Bakhtinskii sbornik*, ed. V. Makhlin and D. Kuiuundzhich, Vol. 1, Moscow 1990, 7-60.

⁸ Abbreviated as *AH* and included in *Art and Answerability. Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. M. Holquist and V. Liapnov, tras. V. Liapunov, Austin 1990.

that a prototype of the Dostoevsky book was written by Bakhtin as early as 1922 and that the ideas set forth in this prototype must have been reflected not only in the 1929 Dostoevsky book but also in „Author and Hero“ and in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*.⁹ Since, however, no text has been preserved, Nikolaev's speculations about a possible correspondence between the prototype and Bakhtin's other works of the 1920s must remain an intriguing but so far unsubstantiated hypothesis.

Dialogue and Phenomenology: The 1929 book

In addition to the prototypes in his *own* writings, Bakhtin's 1929 book is organically embedded in a long tradition of Dostoevsky criticism in Russia, which is selectively recorded in the introductory chapter of the work.¹⁰ In the preface, Bakhtin sets out his approach, based on the belief that „every literary work is internally and immanently sociological“ (*PDA*, 3). It is not hard to establish that this is a principle underlying earlier texts of Medvedev¹¹ and Voloshinov,¹² connected by a joint attack on Sakulin's *The Sociological Method in Literary Scholarship* (1925). The difficulty arises with the question of why Bakhtin sidelines the sociological approach stated by him in this study. As a way of offering an answer to this question, I shall examine the main arguments of the 1929 book and trace how they relate to the 1963 work.

From the outset, Bakhtin praises Dostoevsky for resisitng the spirit of objectification in his prose: „The consciousness of a character is given as someone else's consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object (*ne opredmechivaetsia*), is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness“ (*PDA*, 7/*PDP*, 7). Bakhtin supports this argument by celebrating Dostoevsky's remoteness from the world of the Objective Spirit: „In Dostoevsky's world generally there is nothing thing-like (*nichego veshchnogo*), no matter (*net predmeta*), no object (*ob"ekta*) – there are only subjects“ (*PDA*, 134/*PDP*, 237). In a passage from the conclusion, dropped in the 1963 book,

⁹ N. Nikolaev, „Dostoevsky i antichnost' kak tema Pumpianskogo i Bakhtina (1922-1963)“, *Voprosy literatury*, 1996, 6, 117; see also N. Nikolaev, „Izdanie nasledija Bakhtina kak filologicheskaiia problema (Dve retsenzii)“, *DKH*, 1998, 3, 120. For further speculations on the continuity between the 1922 prototype, *AH*, and *PDA*, see S. Igeta, „Ivanov-Pumpianskii-Bakhtin“, *Comparative and Contrastive Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures. Japanese Contributions to the Tenth International Congress of Slavists*, Tokyo 1988, 84-86.

¹⁰ For a very good analysis of Bakhtin's early work on Dostoevsky in the context of contemporary Russian Dostoevsky criticism, see D. Segal, „Dostoevskij e Bachtin Rivisitati“, *Bachtin: teorico del dialogo*, ed. F. Corona, Milano 1986, 336-376.

¹¹ P. Medvedev, „Sociologism without Sociology“ [1926], *Bakhtin School Papers*, ed. A. Shukman, Colchester 1988, 70-72; and *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, Baltimore and London 1978, 32-33.

¹² V. Voloshinov, „Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry“ [1926], *Bakhtin School Papers*, 6-7.

Dostoevsky's ultimate merit is to have created works of art in which „the person loses its brute external substantiality, its thing-like plainness“ (*PDA*, 172).

One can argue, then, that Bakhtin's apology of Dostoevsky is steeped in the same spirit of Romantic anti-capitalism, which one can sense in the work of philosophers of culture like Georg Lukács (suffice it to point to his Dostoevsky notes).¹³ Bakhtin's revolt rests on the representation (and glorification) of Dostoevsky as a writer who reformulates social conflicts into moral dilemmas. Bakhtin's Dostoevsky emerges as an author who challenges social evil by seeking to demonstrate that its roots do not lie in the constitution of society but rather in the perfectible, however elevated and remote, realm of human consciousness. As Bakhtin approvingly puts it, „even in the earliest ‚Gogolian period‘ of his literary career, Dostoevsky is already depicting not the ‚poor government clerk‘ but the *self-consciousness* of the poor clerk“ (*PDA*, 39/*PDP*, 48). Much in line with existing trends in Russian Dostoevsky criticism, Bakhtin locates Dostoevsky's uniqueness in the fact that in his thinking „there are no genetic or causal categories“, „no explanations based on the past, on the influences of the environment or of upbringing“ (*PDA*, 32-33/*PDP*, 29). The sole reality worthy of artistic examination proves to be the reality of mental life. By praising Dostoevsky for sticking to this choice, Bakhtin tries to defend him against the attacks of vulgar sociology while failing to recognise the inadequacy of Dostoevsky's outright rejection of the sociological accounts explaining phenomena such as criminality, for example. It is with reference to the same ‚poor characters‘ (Devushkin, Goliadkin) of Dostoevsky's early writings and to his almost exclusive preoccupation with their consciousness that Pereverzev, in another classic study of Dostoevsky, vehemently accused him of ignoring the actual earthly aspects of the human predicament: „Under the metaphysical froth he does not notice the gloomy waves of poverty and real humiliation, on whose crest this froth seethes“.¹⁴

On the other hand, contrary to the conclusions that one might expect to follow from his observations, Bakhtin also takes pains to redress the balance and celebrate Dostoevsky as an artist who offers „something like a sociology of consciousnesses“ and, therefore, „material that is valuable for the sociologist as well“ (*PDA*, 36/*PDP*, 32). In the closing pages of the 1929 book Bakhtin goes so far as to declare that the dialogue between humans in Dostoevsky's novels is a „highly interesting sociological document“ (*PDA*, 170). In explaining what precisely this document stands for, Bakhtin claims that „family, group (*soslovnye*), class and all kinds of such determinations have lost [for Dostoevsky's heroes] authority and form-building force“ (*PDA*, 171). Man asserts himself as if unmediated by any

¹³ Bakhtin's debt to Lukács can be attested on a more particular level as well. Characteristically, both Bakhtin (*PDA*, 34-35 / *PDP*, 30-31) and Lukács (*The Theory of the Novel*, trans. A. Bostock, London 1978, 152) refer to one and the same artistic predecessor of Dostoevsky (Dante).

¹⁴ V. Pereverzev, *Tvorčestvo Dostoevskogo*, Moscow 1922, 241.

social entity. „Dostoevsky's heroes are the heroes of accidental families and accidental social entities (*kollektivov*).“ They are propelled by the dream of „forming a community beyond the existing social forms“ (*PDA*, 171).¹⁵ This going beyond the established forms is no more than the sublimated artistic expression of the predicament of a particular social class: „All this is the deepest expression of the social disorientation of the non-aristocratic (*raznochinskaia*) intelligentsia, which was [...] finding its bearings in the world in loneliness, at its own fear and risk“ (*PDA*, 171).

By the same token, intense human intercourse, Bakhtin submits, need not be thought of as a sign that alienation has been overcome in Dostoevsky's novels; it could well be the manifestation of a crisis point in society. Monological discourse, Bakhtin implies, is fading because of the lack of a „solid social group, a „we““ (*PDA*, 171). A revealing episode in Bakhtin's hesitation as to whether the new artistic forms resting on non-authoritative and non-direct authorial discourse should be regarded as the outcome of a positive or a negative social development, is his discussion in the chapter „Types of prose discourse. Discourse in Dostoevsky“. Direct authorial discourse is said to express the author's intentions without inflection and obliqueness, and without refraction in another's discourse. Turgenev is the example of such direct authorial discourse, the use of which precludes double-voicedness (*PDA*, 85/*PDP*, 192). At the same time, however, Bakhtin seems to mourn the loss of the time when direct authorial discourse thrived: „Direct authorial discourse is not possible in every epoch, nor can every epoch command a style... Where there is no adequate form for the unmediated expression of an author's thoughts, he *has to resort* to refracting them in someone else's discourse“ (*PDA*, 84/*PDP*, 192).¹⁶ His conclusion, which was left out of the 1963 book, is rather ambiguous and by no means optimistic: „Direct authorial discourse is at present undergoing a socially conditioned crisis“ (*PDA*, 85).¹⁷

With this we are reaching a central proposition of Bakhtin's analysis: indirect discourses and dialogue are the result of a state of crisis in society. In his account of contemporary Dostoevsky criticism Bakhtin singles out Otto Kaus's book *Dostojewski und sein Schicksal* (1923) and joins him in finding the social prerequisites of Dostoevsky's prose in capitalist modernity. „At some earlier time“, Kaus's and Bakhtin's argument goes,

those worlds, those planes – social, cultural, and ideological – which collide in Dostoevsky's work were each self-sufficient, organically sealed and stable; each made sense internally as an isolated unit. There was no real-life,

¹⁵ Bakhtin's „po tu storonu suschestvuiushchikh sotsial'nykh form“ clearly evokes the title of Voloshinov's article of 1925 „Po tu storonu sotsial'nogo“.

¹⁶ Italics mine; in the 1929 book instead of „of an author's thoughts“ (*avtorskikh myslei*) Bakhtin uses „of an author's intentions“ (*avtorskikh intentsii*).

¹⁷ The problem of the crisis of authorship and authorial discourse was addressed as early as 1921 in Pumpianskii's *Dostoevsky i antichnost* and this may well have been one of Bakhtin's inspirations to pose this problem in the Dostoevsky book of 1929.

material plane of essential contact or interpenetration with one another. Capitalism destroyed the isolation of these worlds, broke down the seclusion and inner ideological self-sufficiency of these spheres. (PDA, 21/PDP, 19)

Thus Bakhtin equates crisis and modernity and conceives capitalism as a critical state of society marked by a healthy yet unsettling process of mutual opening up of various fields of life. While accepting Kaus's conclusion that „Dostoevsky is not the funeral dirge but the cradle song of our contemporary world, a world born out of the fiery breath of capitalism“,¹⁸ Bakhtin is eager to stress the particular propitiousness of the Russian circumstances:

The polyphonic novel could indeed have been realised only in the capitalist era. The most favourable soil for it was moreover precisely in Russia, where capitalism set in almost catastrophically, and where it came upon an untouched multitude of diverse worlds and social groups which had not been weakened in their individual isolation, as in the West, by the gradual encroachment of capitalism. [...] In this way the objective preconditions were created for the multi-levelledness and multi-voicedness of the polyphonic novel. (PDA, 22/PDP, 19-20)

These quotations offer sufficient and clear evidence of Bakhtin's desire to give meaning to the genre of the novel and to Dostoevsky's prose in the framework of a Marxist sociological analysis. As we have demonstrated, he identified capitalism as the necessary social environment of Dostoevsky's novels and the uprooted, free-floating intelligentsia as their main hero. The problem is not that such a desire was absent from Bakhtin's book, but that it was eventually outweighed and frustrated by other competing lines of interpretation.

The first of these lines can be described as a philosophy-of-history direction. It does not appear often in Bakhtin's pre-1930s work and for this reason its presence in the 1929 book is even more significant. This interpretative approach establishes a closer connection between Bakhtin and Lukács, on the one hand, and Bakhtin and an influential tradition of Russian Dostoevsky criticism on the other.

One can detect this line of reasoning in Bakhtin's distinction between what he terms the ‚monologic‘ and the ‚dialogic‘ worlds. The essential principles which govern the monological world, Bakhtin argues, are not confined to the realm of art. They „go far beyond the boundaries of artistic creativity“ and are „the principles behind the entire ideological culture of modern times“ (PDA, 54/PDP, 80). Monologism is seen here as the underlying cultural principle of modernity at large. Responsible for both philosophical idealism and European utopianism, monologism is not the creation of great thinkers: „no, it is a profound structural

¹⁸ O. Kaus, *Dostojewski und sein Schicksal*, Berlin 1923, 63.

characteristic of the creative ideological activity of modern times, determining all its external and internal forms" (*PDA*, 56/*PDP*, 82). Although in the 1963 book Bakhtin attempts a concretisation of this too general proposition by specifying the role of the Enlightenment in the consolidation of rationalism and monologism (*PDP*, 82), his conclusion remains rather indiscriminate. By allowing monologism to function as an all-embracing cultural force, Bakhtin suppresses the germs of his own historical analysis. Rather than appear as the product of specific capitalist developments affecting the fate of a particular class in Russia, Dostoevsky's *œuvre* has now to be interpreted as the rejection of an all-pervasive and vague cultural pattern. If in Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* this pattern is given an ethical name and Dostoevsky proves destined to challenge an age of absolute sinfulness, Bakhtin attaches a mixed epistemologically-ethical designation to the same pattern, and Dostoevsky becomes the denouncer of an age of absolute monologism. In each case, he is seen in the light of an epic clash between enduring cultural principles, rather than as a precisely locatable historical phenomenon.

The other line of reasoning opposing a sociological analysis can be termed phenomenological.¹⁹ As suggested at an earlier point of our argument, Bakhtin acclaims Dostoevsky for privileging his heroes' consciousnesses as the only noteworthy subject for the artist. A quintessential manifestation of the spirit of phenomenological contemplation comes in a passage where Bakhtin attempts to describe the process of 'purification' of consciousness:

The author retains for himself, that is, for his exclusive field of vision, not a single essential definition, not a single trait, not the smallest feature of the hero himself, he casts it all into the crucible of the hero's own self-consciousness. In the author's field of vision, as an object of his visualisation and representation, there remains only this pure self-consciousness in its totality. (*PDA*, 39/*PDP*, 48)²⁰

¹⁹ The early Bakhtin's interest in German phenomenology is attracting growing scholarly interest; see above all Brian Poole's articles „Rol' M.I. Kagana v stanovlenii filosofii M.M. Bakhtina (ot Germana Kogena k Maksu Sheleru)“, *Bakhtinskii sbornik*, ed. V. Makhlina, Vol. 3, Moscow 1997, 162-181 and „From phenomenology to dialogue: Max Scheler's phenomenological tradition and Mikhail Bakhtin's development from 'Toward a philosophy of the act' to his study of Dostoevsky“, in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. K. Hirschkop and D. Shepherd (2nd revised and enlarged edn), Manchester and New York 2001; cf. also Bakhtin's excerpts from Scheler reproduced in German in Vol. 2 of the Russian edition of Bakhtin's *Collected Works*, Moscow 2000, 657-680. Here I explore other aspects of Bakhtin's affiliation with phenomenology.

²⁰ There are two problems with the existing English translation here: the crucial „this“ (*eto chistoe samoznanie*), contributing to the resolution of ambiguity in the last sentence, has been omitted; and the difficult term *videnie*, with a recognisably Husserlian origin (*Wesensschau*), is translated with the more general „visualisation“. In a special section on *videnie* in his monograph about Bakhtin, M. Freise leaves this term throughout untranslated (M. Freise, *Michail Bachtins philosophische Ästhetik der Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main 1993, 117-123), only sporadically rendering it with the neutral ‚Sehen‘.

Bakhtin's description here appears rather ambiguous. To start with, it is not quite clear whose consciousness remains 'pure' as the result of this mental procedure: is it the author's, which is freed from all definitions and features of the character, or is it the hero's own consciousness, as the text intimates through the demonstrative pronoun „this“? But, then, how can the hero's self-consciousness be 'pure' after incorporating the elements and the features of his/her life? Nevertheless, „this“ self-consciousness is pure, Bakhtin insists, because, or when, it is grasped by the author „in its totality“. The implication is that consciousness should be defined not in relation to (the elements of) its content, but rather in relation to its functions, to its capacity for melting down all elements in the „crucible“ of self-reflection. This is the only viewpoint enabling the author to contemplate it *in toto*. Indeed, as Bakhtin suggests earlier in his text, „the function of this [the hero's] self-consciousness becomes the subject of the author's *videnie* and representation“ (*PDA*, 39/*PDP*, 48). The primacy of *videnie* over cognition, argued for by Bakhtin in the 1924 text on „The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art“,²¹ is reconfirmed here by attributing to *videnie* the status of source for all creative activities. Intimately interwoven, *videnie* and phenomenological purity are the principles constituting the basis of Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky as a writer who institutes the consciousnesses of his heroes as supreme artistic reality. (*Videnie* is also of crucial importance to Bakhtin's analysis of Goethe in the 1930s.)

The phenomenological purity of *videnie*, its nature as almost otherworldly knowledge, is further exacerbated by Bakhtin's belief that the reader cannot really *visualise* Dostoevsky's characters. „Dostoevsky's hero“, Bakhtin argues, „is not an objectified image but an autonomous discourse, pure voice; we do not see him, we hear him“ (*PDP*, 53).²² This struggle of the senses, enacted by Bakhtin, seems to reflect his embeddedness in a particular tradition of thought which couches the intellectual processes of approaching and evaluating the literary work in phenomenological terms. Bakhtin's is a rhetoric of elevating and ‚humanising‘ these senses by pronouncing them to be the foundation for the higher activities of aesthetic imagination. It could be – and has been – argued that the ‚purity‘ of the hero is also the result of the new regime of artistic representation, where the author cannot any more speak for the hero; the hero him/her self becomes a voice, thus no longer serving a superimposed authorial design or idea. This desire to portray a hero who is independent from the author highlights the residual importance of Aristotelian theory of narrative for Dostoevsky's poetics.²³

²¹ „The cognitive act proceeds from an aesthetically ordered image of an object, from a vision of that object“ (*PCMF*, 275).

²² „Objectified“ (*ob"ektnyi*) is an addition to the 1963 book. In the 1929 book, the sentence reads „Geroi Dostoevskogo ne obraz, a polnovesnoe slovo...“ (*PDA*, 45).

²³ Cf. B. Poole, „Objective Narrative Theory – The Influence of Spielhagen's ‚Aristotelian‘ Theory of ‚Narrative Objectivity‘ on Bakhtin's Study of Dostoevsky“, in *The Novelness of*

The option to focus on author and hero, which had been characteristic of Bakhtin's aesthetics since the „Author and Hero“ essay, is a sign of shift in the repertoire of interpretative paradigms after the rise of phenomenology in Europe. Unlike the prevailing tradition of interest in the relation between subject and object,²⁴ which would still allow ample room for sociological reasoning, Bakhtin chooses to ponder a transformed version of this relation - the bond between author and hero - in a way that distills and purifies it of any social dimension.

Bakhtin's argumentation, despite all its repetitions and digressions, turns on three underlying concepts which relate to each other in a hierarchical fashion. The nucleus from which the whole body of his theory grows is the contact between the author's and the hero's consciousnesses. Once the author has delegated the right of self-reflection to the hero, the second step in Bakhtin's interpretation emerges: the hero begins a dialogue with himself and, only on the basis of this, with others. When analysing the function of dialogue in *The Double*, Bakhtin reaches a conclusion which seems best to exemplify his phenomenological credo: „dialogue permits the substitution of one's own voice for that of another person“ (PDA, 107/PDP, 213). Dialogue, then, appears not to be about increasing the number of distinct human voices and expanding the space of their resonance in society, but rather about a widening of the internal capacity of the self.²⁵ The dialogue of the self with himself is a celebration of the internal variety and self-enclosed range of faculties an individual human being might possess or achieve, but it is not a proposal addressed to society. Bakhtin promotes dialogue as an instrument of individual perfection, not of social rationalisation. In his view, dialogue provides, above all, a chance for the human being to develop sensitivity to his own inner life. A follower of Plato rather than a predecessor of Habermas, Bakhtin's concern in this early text is with the self, not with society.²⁶

Bakhtin. Perspectives and Possibilities, ed. J. Bruhn and J. Lundquist, Copenhagen 2001, 107-162.

²⁴ Cf. Lukács's essay of the same title (1918) which, as M. Freise rightly suggests, Bakhtin must have known from *Logos* (M. Freise, *Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophische Ästhetik*, 58-61).

²⁵ The suspicion that Bakhtin's notion of dialogue „does not welcome real others at all“ has also been acutely voiced by Natalia Reed (cf. N. Reed, „The Philosophical Roots of Polyphony: A Dostoevskian Reading“, *Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. C. Emerson, New York 1999, 140). Recently Russian scholarship, too, has vigorously questioned the notion of dialogue and the very assumption of the existence of a polyphonic novel in Dostoevsky's corpus (cf. S. Lominadze, „Perechityvaia Dostoevskogo i Bakhtina“, *Voprosy literatury*, 2, 2001, 58).

²⁶ In an interview in Russian, Habermas emphasised Mikhail Bakhtin's importance as a thinker and chose to highlight Bakhtin's theory of culture as formulated in *Rabelais and His World* and the theory of language set forth in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, a book Habermas assumed to be indisputably and exclusively Bakhtin's own; interestingly, Habermas found *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* to be „more or less a Marxist interpretation of Humboldt's views“ („Filosof – diagnost svoego vremeni“, J. Habermas in conversation with Iu. Senokosov, *Voprosy Filosofii*, 9, 1989, 80-83). In another text, Habermas recognised the importance of *Rabelais and his World* as an example of how popular culture

The objection might be raised, of course, that *The Double* is too particular a case (and not even a novel at that) to be treated as a source of generalisations. Even the most prejudiced reader, though, will have to admit that no other work by Dostoevsky holds more of Bakhtin's attention than *The Double*, both in the 1929 and the 1963 books.²⁷ What is more, the conclusion he reaches with reference to *The Double* is repeated in only slightly modified fashion also with reference to the novels: „almost all of Dostoevsky's major heroes [...] have their partial double in another person or even in several other people (Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov)“ (PDA, 111/PDP, 217). Ivan, like Goliadkin, admittedly undergoes the same process of „dialogic decomposition“ (*dialogicheskoe razlozhenie*) of his consciousness, a process „more profound and ideologically complicated than was the case with Goliadkin, but structurally fully analogous to it“ (PDA, 118/PDP, 222). Evidently, Bakhtin's chapter on dialogue in the novels does not furnish new arguments for differentiating the mechanisms of dialogue in the five novels from the rest of Dostoevsky's *œuvre*. The heroes' ‚dialogue‘ with other characters is only the external manifestation, or consequence, of the truly ‚dialogic decomposition‘ of their selves. Thus Bakhtin's promise to reveal a higher and more sophisticated level of dialogism in the novels, different from that in the short novels, remains unrealised. Apart from unsubstantiated and at times inflated declarations („[Raskolnikov] does not think about phenomena, he speaks with them“ [PDA, 135/PDP, 237]), Bakhtin does not go any further than what he had already claimed to be the nature of dialogue in *The Double*: „All the voices that Raskolnikov introduces into his inner speech come into a peculiar sort of contact, *one that is impossible among voices in an actual dialogue. Here, thanks to the fact that they sound within a single consciousness, they become, as it were, reciprocally permeable*“ (PDA, 137/PDP, 239, italics mine).

can shape the public sphere (see Habermas's foreword in his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 17-18); for an intriguing attempt to see in Bakhtin's ‚public square‘ a prototype of Habermas's sphere of public communicative action, see K. Hirschkop, „Heteroglossia and Civil Society: Bakhtin's Public Square and the Politics of Modernity“, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 1, 1990, 72-73 (Hirschkop, in a later essay, criticises both Bakhtin and Habermas for trying to „derive the social and political values bound up in the idea of dialogism“ simply and only from the nature of language, see K. Hirschkop, „Is Dialogism for Real“, *The Contexts of Bakhtin*, ed. D. Shepherd, Amsterdam 1998, 187.) It is very important, however, to underline the fact that Habermas never commented on the two Dostoevsky books nor did he see his theory of communicative action in any way connected with Bakhtin's understanding(s) of dialogue. Against this background, cf. Greg Nielsen's challenging but somewhat unqualified claim that Habermas's discourse ethics is a „virtual instance“ of what Bakhtin calls in PDP ‚great dialogue‘ (see G. Nielsen, „Bakhtin and Habermas: Towards a Transcultural Ethics“, *Theory and Society*, 6, 1995, 811). For an earlier interpretation of dialogue as a social phenomenon in both Bakhtin and Habermas, see M. Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique*, London and New York 1992, 123; for criticism of the analogies between Habermas and Bakhtin, see R. Grüttemeier, „Dialogizität und Intentionalität bei Bakhtin“, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol. 67, No. 4, 1993, 764-783, esp. 766-767.

²⁷ Bakhtin himself points to this fact in his notes (SS, 365).

Note that 'actual dialogue', i. e. dialogue between people in society, is thought here to be incompatible with the truly dialogical conversation of the self with himself, which proves feasible only on the ground of a 'single consciousness'. Instead of interpreting Bakhtin as inspired by a Buberian perspective of intimate I-Thou relations,²⁸ one has to admit that the sources of his excitement lie in a notion of dialogue which glorifies the capability of the human consciousness not to emit signals to the outer world and other humans, but rather to internalise various alien voices (discourses) and to process them for the purpose of self-enrichment. A glorification of the omnipotence of the 'single' human consciousness, Bakhtin's early notion of dialogue, as we find it in the 1929 book on Dostoevsky, has indeed a strong, but so far misconstrued humanistic appeal.

Bakhtin's fascination with dialogue can be sensed in his vague but nevertheless fervent declarations that dialogue, „by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end“ (*PDA*, 153/*PDP*, 252). He claims for Dostoevsky's dialogue the status of an end in itself: „All else is the means, dialogue is the end“. Yet contrary to Bakhtin's enthusiastic, if scarcely meaningful slogans, dialogue in Dostoevsky is not an end in itself, and it is in Bakhtin's analysis that the instrumental nature of dialogue is revealed.

Above all, dialogue is an instrument of self-construction. This transpires with particular clarity from Bakhtin's discussion of instances when dialogue fails to perform this role. Occasionally, Bakhtin speaks of „the vicious circle (*durnoi beskonechnosti*) of dialogue which can neither be finished nor finalised“ (*PDA*, 127/*PDP*, 230). In contrast to his frequently expressed demand for never-ending dialogues, this admonition reveals an underlying current in Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue. True dialogue should be resolved, at the end of the day, into a monologue. The task of dialogue is to enact a cathartic deliverance from the plurality of voices besetting the inner world of the individual, so that s/he can arrive at adequate self-knowledge. The unhappiness of the Underground Man rests precisely on this inability to find himself through a salutary reduction of the voices inside him: „He cannot merge completely with himself in a unified monologic voice, with the other's voice left entirely outside himself“ (*PDA*, 131, *PDP*/235). The same is also true of Nastasia Filippovna's predicament in *The Idiot*: „Her entire inner life [...] is reduced to a search for herself and for her undivided (*neraskolotogo*) voice beneath the two voices that have made their home in her“ (*PDA*, 131/*PDP*, 234-235). A vain search, Bakhtin bitterly implies.

²⁸ See, e. g. the otherwise elegant and seminal comparison between Buber and Bakhtin in N. Bonetskaia, „Bakhtin v 1920-e gody“, *DKH*, 1, 1994, 16-62; for a recent and well-grounded objection against interpreting the early Bakhtin in a Buberian clef, see B. Poole, „Rol' M.I. Kagana v stanovlenii filosofii M.M. Bakhtina“, 168; the most concise attempt to outline the dis/similarities between Bakhtin's views of dialogue and the German-Jewish school of dialogical philosophy can be found in V. Makhlin, „Bakhtin i zapadniy dialogizm“, *DKH*, 3, 1996, 68-76.

Dialogue, then, can easily be the battlefield of dark forces, and will remain itself a destructive power, unless it is enlightened and ennobled by the saving grace of monologue. The perfect coincidence with oneself is to be sought in the harmony of monologue, not in the polyphony created by the competing voices of a never ending dialogue.²⁹

Given all this, dialogue in Bakhtin's interpretation should not be taken to be necessarily a synonym for harmony. One should meet with caution the assurance that the different consciousnesses, with their individual fields of vision, „combine in a higher unity, a unity, so to speak, of the second order, the unity of a polyphonic novel“ (*PDA*, 17/ *PDP*, 16).³⁰ This view of the novel as an abode of polyphonic unity may or may not be true in the unverifiable sense of aesthetic harmony, but it is certainly untrue in the sense of serene communication between consciousnesses whose encounter is guarded by the spirit of love and mutual edification. Rather, the consciousnesses that meet in Dostoevsky's novels are loaded with internal contradictions, they are bifurcated and dismantled, and only as such do they act as welcoming hosts of dialogue.

We can thus see that the notion of crisis casts its shadow even over the phenomenological layer of Bakhtin's interpretation and leads it to oscillate between the celebration of the self-sufficient omnipotence of the single human consciousness and the concession that this omnipotence can be fully attested only by the healthy transition from the ‚vicious circle‘ of decomposing dialogue to the surreptitiously desired stability of monologue. To be sure, Bakhtin desperately denies „that the reconciliation and merging of voices even within the bounds of a single consciousness“ can be a monologic act. What he proposes, however, does not

²⁹ For a very good recent study of Bakhtin's notion of the narratological aspects of polyphony, see W. Schmid, *Der Textaufbau in den Erzählungen Dostoevskijs*, Amsterdam 1986; cf. also Schmid's „Vklad Bakhtina/Voloshinova v teoriiu tekstovoi interferentsii“, in V. Schmid, *Proza kak poezii*, SPb 1998, 194-210. For an earlier account of polyphony in the context of contemporary Russian literary theory, see A. Hansen-Löve, *Der russische Formalismus: methodologische Rekonstruktion seiner Entwicklung aus dem Prinzip der Verfremdung*, Vienna 1978. On polyphony in the context of Nietzsche's and Viacheslav Ivanov's ideas of culture, see A. Kazakov, „Polifoniia kak zhivoe poniatie“, *Bakhtinskie chteniia*, Vol. 3, Vitebsk 1998, 104-115; see also J. Kursell, „Bachtin liest Dostoevskij – zum Begriff der Polyphonie in Bachtins ‚Problemy tvorcestva Dostoevskogo‘“, *Wiener Slavistischer Almanach*, 40, 1997, 149-173. While Bakhtin noted that in an article about *Podrostok* of 1924 Komarovich had already used the „analogy with polyphony“ (*PDA*, 23; *PDP*, 21), he appears to have been unaware of the fact that the émigré critic Georgii Adamovich, too, had spoken in 1925 of polyphony in the context of a short review of Leonov's *Barsuki*, praising Leonov's talent to „conduct a ‚polyphonic‘ narrative on the model of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi“ (G. Adamovich, „Barsuki“ L. Leonova – Chernoviki L. Tolstogo“, *Zveno*, 136, Paris 7 September 1925, 2; quoted in G. Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy*, Vol. 1, Moscow 1998, 296-297).

³⁰ „Of the second order“ (*vtorogo poriadka*) appears to be a recurrent means for the designation of a hierarchically higher level; in precisely the same meaning it is used to stress the primacy of the hero's consciousness over external reality: „the author no longer illuminates the hero's reality but the hero's self-consciousness as a reality of the second order“ (*PDA*, 40/*PDP*, 49).

look very dialogic at all. Bakhtin demands that the hero's voice be attached to the 'chorus' of shared values and perspectives. For this to happen, he concedes, one should entrust one's voice to the guiding force of monologue. Attaining authenticity and salvation by merging with the chorus presupposes a process of purging: one has to „subdue and muffle the fictive voices that interrupt and mock a person's genuine voice“ (*PDA*, 149/*PDP*, 249). Interestingly, this is the only point of Bakhtin's argumentation at which he explicitly transcends the confines of textuality and attempts conclusions that would apply his concepts of dialogue and monologue to social reality. In Bakhtin's interpretation, the aesthetic appeal for joining the chorus is expressed itself at the level of Dostoevsky's „social ideology“ as a demand for the intelligentsia „to merge with the common people“.

One final point should be made regarding Bakhtin's phenomenological approach. The domination of a 'single consciousness' which can be seen through the enthusiastic defence of dialogue is paralleled by the eventual supremacy of the author over the hero. The freedom of a character is, after all, only „an aspect of the author's design“ (*moment avtorskogo zamysla*) (*PDA*, 51/*PDP*, 65); the hero's discourse „does not fall out of the author's design, but only out of a monologic authorial field of vision“. Ultimately, the hero's autonomy proves to be negotiated and compromised by an engendering act of authorial mercy. The alleged dialogue between author and hero, both said by Bakhtin to occupy positions of equal value, turns out to be a kind of spiritualist séance in which the author gives birth to a character who has to cope with its own inner split rather than 'talk' and contest the positions of the author. Exposed to decomposition, the hero's self struggles to reach a point of stability. Thus his 'freedom' is strongly eroded and the dialogue between him and the author dwindles to mere metaphoricity. The „author's intention“ (*intentsiia avtora*) remains the ultimate authority, however bound and limited by what Bakhtin calls the 'logic' of artistic construction (*PDA*, 80/*PDP*, 188).

We may thus conclude by emphasising the prevalence of the phenomenological line of reasoning in Bakhtin's 1929 book. Together with the philosophy-of-history dimension, it stifles the germs of any sociological analysis. Sideline by arguments nurtured by interest in the timeless patterns of human consciousness, this aspect surfaces only in the guise of promises or declarative pronouncements, the validation of which is not considered a burning issue. Thus, despite appearances, Bakhtin's book does not depart far from the main trends in Russian Dostoevsky criticism of the time. It remains under the spell of ethical and psychological views of literature. Dostoevsky is once again (after Merezhkovskii and also after Lukács) presented as a complete innovator. The creator of the unprecedented genre of the polyphonic novel, he is nevertheless utilized by Bakhtin as an argument for the necessity of solving the inherited problems of moral thought: how is man's (the hero's) inner freedom possible, and how far can it stretch; how can the human being preserve the state of peace with himself; what is at stake in

the recognition of other voices in one's own voice or outside of it? Under the rhetoric of dazzlingly new concepts, Bakhtin reproduces the questions and trepidations of an established tradition of Russian existentialist reading of Dostoevsky. This largely determines the scope and the flavour of his idea of dialogue in the 1929 book. Although it remains the product of the competing interaction between three divergent lines of reasoning (the sociological, the phenomenological, and that concerned with philosophy of history), in the 1929 text dialogue is still – owing to the marked preponderance of one of these lines (the phenomenological) – a concept with relatively clear limits; it is only in the 1963 book that its semantic compass will become disturbingly inclusive.

For those wont to see in Bakhtin the great promoter of communication between people, the 1929 book may thus prove a disappointment. Rather than being a metaphor of plurality, dialogue in it is a metaphor of the power of consciousness to domesticate its own and other consciousnesses' alien voices.

Sociological vs. Ethical Argument: The Notes Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book (1961-1963)

As we move into the 1960s, Bakhtin's notes toward a reworking of the 1929 book reveal his changing agenda in discussing Dostoevsky's prose. They are suggestive of Bakhtin's growing suspicion of a rigorous theoretical style. One can see him subscribe to a rule which gives little consideration to disciplined theorising and replaces it with vague perceptiveness instead: „Not theory (transient content), but a „sense of theory““ (*TRD*, I, 294). Even more significant than before, his digression from consistent argumentation can be traced in the clash between incompatible directions of thought. Certain allowance should be made for the inevitably provisional and, in a way, private character of the notes. Nevertheless, they clearly testify to the process of revision and substantial alteration to which the 1929 book was subjected.

Let us start by examining the sociological dimension. It seems that Bakhtin sincerely intended to expand the sociological element in his analysis. Capitalism is for the first time flatly accused by Bakhtin of creating „the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness“ (*TRD*, I, 288), a gesture that may well have been provoked by Bakhtin's desire to compensate for the absence from both his old and his new project of an elaborate account of the epoch which prepared the ground for Dostoevsky's novels.

The notes also reveal enhanced attention to the problem of reification. But at the same time they demonstrate Bakhtin's uncertainty as to how and where exactly this question should be addressed (*TRD*, II, 71). Bakhtin's difficulties in finding a suitable chapter for developing his ideas of reification stem from not knowing where to break and suspend his predominantly phenomenological line of reason-

ing. The topic of reification remains beyond this line, an important but almost unassimilable outsider to both the 1929 and the 1963 books.

Despite all this reification figures prominently in the notes of the 1960s. Bakhtin is seeking to establish a direct causal relation between capitalism and reification, once again in a much more radical and unequivocal way than in the 1929 book. Characteristically, this confronts him with the problem of violence for which he, too, finds moral vindication as long as human personality remains the ultimate and sacred goal:

The reification of man in class society, carried to its extreme under capitalism. This reification is accomplished (realised) by external forces acting on the personality from without (*vovne i izvne*); this is violence in all possible forms of its realisation (economic, political, ideological), and these forces can be combated only from the outside and with equally externalised forces (justified revolutionary violence). (*TRD*, I, 298)

In the notes, a new moment emerges in Bakhtin's understanding of reification. Or, rather, the previously insufficiently stressed connection between reification and dialogue (*PDA*, 153/*PDP*, 251-252) is now explicitly foregrounded in that the dialogic attitude to man is considered to be the true remedy against reification (*TRD*, I, 291-292; *TRD*, II, 72), the only practice which precludes an objectifying finalisation of the Other. „[R]eification“, Bakhtin hopes, „can never be realised to the full, for there is in the authorial *surplus* love, compassion, pity and other purely human reactions to *the other*, impossible in relation to a pure thing“ (*TRD*, II, 72). However, this does not seem sufficient. Taking up his previous critique of *Einfühlung* (*PDA*, 153/*PDP*, 252), Bakhtin enlarges on it to formulate a more radical humanistic programme which is not satisfied with mere reliance on love and compassion. Struggle against reification should result in nothing less than the formation of true individuals: „The sentimental-humanistic de-reification of man, which remains objectified: pity, the lower forms of love (for children, for everything weak and small). A person ceases to be a thing, but does not become a personality“ (*TRD*, I, 297). Despite the insight into the socio-economic foundations of reification, Bakhtin avoids commitment to collective ideals and identities and persists instead in an abstract moral vision of men become personalities. Evoking once more the external forces of reification,³¹ Bakhtin sees the damage they produce mainly as a negative impact on human consciousness: „Consciousness under the influence of these forces loses its authentic freedom, and personality is destroyed“ (*TRD*, I, 297). Essentially and originally free, perfect and authentic, con-

³¹ Surprisingly, Bakhtin also lists the subconscious („*ono*“) among the forces exotopical to human consciousness. His plans (*TRD*, I, 297; *TRD*, II, 70) to engage in the second chapter of the 1963 book in a polemic with the psycho-analytical trend in Dostoevsky studies, above all with P. Popov's study of 1928 „*la' i ono' v tvorcestve Dostoevskogo*“, never materialised.

sciousness needs to be liberated rather than reformed. For Bakhtin, then, what is at stake in the overcoming of reification is not so much a change in existing social and material conditions, as a reinstatement of the original power and dignity of individual human consciousness.

Alterations can also be observed as regards Bakhtin's idea of dialogue. For a start, in the notes it becomes palpably more Buberian, regarding the conversation of consciousnesses as evidence for communication between people, between I and Thou. More insistently than before, Bakhtin declares here the impossibility for a single consciousness to exist in isolation. From this premise, however, he produces a leap in his argument to establish direct correspondence between the non-sufficient nature of any single consciousness and the urgent need for *sociality*. If what Bakhtin claims is that the consciousness of an I cannot exist without the consciousness of a Thou, then this still does not mean that the I-Thou relation should be identified with sociality in general, let alone pronounced the „highest degree of sociality“ (*TRD*, I, 287). Although calling consciousness *pluralia tantum* (*TRD*, I, 288), Bakhtin certainly does not mean by sociality a We or any other form of plurality; on the contrary, in the world he constructs there is room only for a dual communion of elective affinities. But even as far as the Other (Thou) is concerned, Bakhtin speaks of a connection which is „not external, not material, but internal“ (*TRD*, I, 287), i. e. lodged in the field of the psychological and the ethical. He seems constantly to be insuring himself against a profane and too material grasp of sociality. Instead, he emphasises the refinement and moral exclusiveness of dialogue. He even goes so far as to state – contrary to evidence – that Dostoevsky's novels assert „the impossibility of solitude, the illusory nature of solitude“ (*TRD*, I, 287). This exemplary instance of wishful thinking can leave few doubts about Bakhtin's analysis being saturated with a utopian desire to transcend reality; he strives to process the materiality of Dostoevsky's world into an incorporeal and unearthly bond of purified and elevated consciousnesses.

Another significant change is the expansion of the scope of dialogue to the point that one loses sight of its boundaries. Bakhtin's notion of dialogue in the notes becomes overtly Romantic; he insists on the cosmic nature of dialogue and presents a fascinating, almost hypnotic, picture of it. Every pronounced word „enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium“ (*TRD*, I, 293). The dialogue in which Dostoevsky's heroes participate is „the world dialogue“ (*TRD*, II, 73), and this ineluctably changes their nature. In the 1929 book the characters are able to enter into dialogue due only to their split and tormented self-consciousness. In the notes, Dostoevsky's heroes seem to have already been cured of their painful internal divisions. Man in Dostoevsky's novels gives himself over to dialogue „wholly and with his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds“ (*TRD*, I, 293). Reminiscent of the ecstatic bodily frenzy of carnival, this description of dialogue succeeds in stressing

its universal and cosmic scope but seems to compromise its privileged spiritual standing, so much insisted upon by Bakhtin.

A point should also be made regarding Bakhtin's idea of the author-hero relations in the notes. As we argued in the previous section, for all his revolutionary ambitions to revise the connection between author and hero in the direction of an absolute equilibrium between them, Bakhtin ends up reluctantly recognising the dependence of the hero on the author's mercy. In the 1961 notes this view is found in Bakhtin's suggestive, if theologically rudimentary, comparison between the author's activity and that of God. The author's activity, Bakhtin maintains, is „the activity of God in relation to man, a relation allowing man to reveal himself utterly (in his immanent development), to judge himself, to refute himself“ (*TRD*, I, 285). This particular advantage of the author receives only a vague explanation: „The author is a participant in the dialogue (on essentially equal terms with the characters), but he also fulfills additional, very complex functions; ([he is] the driving belt between the ideal dialogue of the work and the actual dialogue of reality)“ (*TRD*, I, 298). Apart from the banal truth that the author mediates between reality and his own work, Bakhtin says very little about why this traditional status of the author should be regarded as the source of additional power. Although the problem of the correlation of life and art was examined in Voloshinov's „Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry“ (1926) and also in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin now fails to pose it with distinct reference to dialogue. He does not differentiate between dialogue in reality and in art, and this is why the supposed responsibilities of the author, bestowed on him by virtue of his mediating position, cannot really explain his surplus power.

In anticipation of the 1963 book, in the notes Bakhtin raises for the first time the problem of deliberately chosen death in Dostoevsky's novels as a confirmation of the dignity and strength of his heroes' consciousnesses. In Dostoevsky's world, Bakhtin notes, „there are no deaths as objectified and organic facts in which a person's responsively active consciousness takes no part“ (*TRD*, I, 300). There are only murders and suicides, for they are means by which „man finalises himself from within“ (*TRD*, I, 296). Against common sense, but in a manner which is characteristic of his desire to domesticate difference and otherness at all costs, Bakhtin supplements the list of „responsively conscious“ death acts with insanity (*TRD*, I, 300). A comparison with Foucault's insight into the discursive-institutional status of insanity inevitably throws Bakhtin's philosophy of insanity into relief as personalistic and uninterested in the social dimensions of the phenomenon.

Thus the notes, as we have seen, preserve the contradictory trends in Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoevsky. Their struggle for the upperhand sees the sociological analysis challenged or very often conquered from within by personalistically-ethical arguments, as is the case with the theme of reification. Although some di-

rections indicated in the notes are left out or only sporadically taken up in the 1963 book, others prove of foremost significance. Of the latter, we have explored Bakhtin's evolving ideas of dialogue in detail. Such is also the direction of what we shall call *metagenetic* analysis, which we have deliberately left to be considered at length in the next section.

From the Sociological to the Metagenetic: the 1963 Book

Our exposition so far has attested to the high degree of overlap between the 1929 and the 1963 texts. On the other hand, even on the textological level, there are substantial differences that should not be overlooked. These alterations can be classified as changes within the confines of the existing structure,³² cuts³³ and, most importantly, additions.³⁴

It is possible to argue that the principal alteration in the 1963 book is the even stronger suppression of the sociological line of reasoning. Bakhtin's changed attitude makes itself felt as early as the preface to the 1963 book, which establishes a very different tone for the whole project. Gone are his earlier idea that every literary work is „intrinsically sociological“ and should be studied as the meeting point of „living social forces“ (*PDA*, 3). Despite the general, albeit very cautious, approval of Lunacharskii's „historical-genetic“ approach (*PDP*, 35), the cuts and the changes to the main body of the 1929 book reveal a systematic and ruthless weakening and even elimination of the explicit elements of social analysis. A case in point is the deletion of a comparatively large portion from the end of the chapter „The hero's discourse and narrative discourse in Dostoevsky“ (*PDA*, 151-152), in which Bakhtin attempted a sociological analysis of Dostoevsky's style. In this subsequently omitted part, Bakhtin reiterates his belief that discourse is „a social phenomenon, and an intrinsically social one“ (*PDA*, 151). Evoking Voloshinov's understanding of discourse, he asserts that it is not the word-thing (*slovo-veshch'*) that underlies his analysis of Dostoevsky's style, but rather „discourse as communicative milieu (*slovo-sreda obshcheniia*)“ (*PDA*, 151). Bakhtin unambiguously states that the main question to be addressed by the sociology of style is the question of the „historical socio-economic conditions for the birth of the respec-

³² The preface and the conclusion were entirely rewritten; the title and the beginning of chapter four and 57, 95-97, and 126 from *PDA* changed. Some ideas and phrases from 71-73 (*PDA*) appear in a modified version in pp. 60-62 (*PDP*).

³³ From *PDA* the following cuts of relevant passages, sentences, words or footnotes were made in *PDP*: 36-37; 55; 57; 71-73; 85; 87; 95; 123; 151-152; 168; 169-171. The preface of the 1929 book and the passages on 71-73 and 169-171 appeared in Caryl Emerson's English translation as an appendix to *PDP*. While we normally reproduce her translation in these three instances, we still give page reference to *PDA* only, so that it remains clear that the Russian text of *PDP* did not include these passages.

³⁴ The following additions of relevant passages, sentences, words or footnotes were made in *PDP*: 6; 7; 32-43; 57-63; 65-75; 82; 85-92; 95; 97; 99; 105-178; 181-185; 192; 211; 224; 227; 264.

tive style" (*PDA*, 152). He eventually has to abandon this intention, for the material for it appears „unprepared“; but he nevertheless offers his own strong hypothesis in explanation of the rise of dialogic discourse. The formulation in this deleted part seems to summarise and radicalise the scattered observations of the 1929 book. Dialogic discourse only could arise in an „environment seized by a process of acute social differentiation, a process of decomposition and of separation from previously closed and self-sufficient groups“ (*PDA*, 152). Even more concretely, Bakhtin asserts that dialogic discourse is the discourse of the „socially disorientated or as yet not orientated intelligentsia“ (*PDA*, 152). These statements appear in an extended form once again at the end of the chapter on dialogue (*PDA*, 170-171), and they, too, are left out of the 1963 book.

Besides direct cuts, the suppression of the sociological analysis in the 1963 book follows a different and much more sophisticated path. As we have suggested towards the end of the previous section, the 1963 book makes use of radically new metageneric and metalinguistic approaches, which were altogether absent from the 1929 study. Indeed, one can argue that what makes the 1963 text a book in its own right and not just a variation of another earlier text is this vital shift in approach from the sociological to the metageneric and metalinguistic.

The background to this crucial break with the paradigms of the 1929 book should be seen in Bakhtin's essays on the novel of the 1930s where Bakhtin argues the case for an unbroken historical tradition of the genre. The hypothesis of the continuous rise of the novel from antiquity up to modern times serves Bakhtin's changing perspective on literature: from still being inclined to view it as the responsible act of great authors to seeing in it the continuous workings of supra-individual patterns.³⁵

Not surprisingly, then, in the 1963 book Dostoevsky's position as a great innovator is seriously undermined. Dostoevsky is still credited with having made important artistic discoveries (*PDP*, 3; 7), but his glory and uniqueness are challenged by being inscribed within the laws of a supposedly universal poetics. Characteristically, Bakhtin's choice of title for his new book changed from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* to *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Thus Bakhtin seems to be joining in a long Russian tradition of 'poetics'. However, unlike the historical poetics of Veselovsky or the overtly synchronistic poetics of the Formalists, Bakhtin embarks on a project which I prefer to designate as metageneric poetics. Its foundation is the belief in the existence of certain universal cultural principles underlying the generic division and growth of literature. Across the centuries, Bakhtin claims to be seeing the seeds of the polyphonic novel far removed in

³⁵ A brief discussion of ideology and form from the chapter „The idea in Dostoevsky“ reveals the early seeds of this anti-individualistic trend in the 1929 book: „the deeper layers of this form-shaping ideology are of social nature and cannot be at all ascribed to authorial individuality... [I]n ideology, acting as principle of form, the author comes out only as the representative of his social group“ (*PDA*, 57).

time and reaching back to Menippean satire and carnival. Bakhtin's poetic is metageneric in the sense of disregarding the particular historical parameters of the phenomena described; instead, it promotes the understanding of genre as a fundamental and stable cultural principle which is bound to realise its essence at some point in time. For the principle of polyphony, this point coincides with Dostoevsky's novels which seem to give flesh to an inevitable process. Thus, in Bakhtin's interpretation, Dostoevsky is less an original author than the mouth-piece for impersonal powers dormant in human culture.

Bakhtin borrows three characteristics of the novelistic directly from his essays on the novel of the 1930s: contact with the living present, reliance on experience and free invention, and deliberate multi-styled and hetero-voiced nature (*PDP*, 108). There is, however, a new moment: he no longer speaks of two stylistic lines in the development of the novel (monologic vs. dialogic), but of three lines:

Speaking somewhat too simplistically and schematically, one could say that the novelistic genre has three fundamental roots: the *epic*, the *rhetorical*, and the *carnivalistic*. Depending on the prevalence of any one of these roots, three lines in the development of the European novel are formed: the *epic*, the *rhetorical*, and the *carnivalistic* (with, of course, many transitional forms in between). (*PDP*, 109)³⁶

Dostoevsky's novel, predictably, is located entirely in the realm of the carnivalistic. What is more, Bakhtin's ahistorical metageneric poetics presents Dostoevsky's novel and the menippea as essentially identical: „This is in fact one and the same generic world, although present in the menippea at the *beginning* of its development, in Dostoevsky at its very *peak*“ (*PDP*, 121). The explanation for this sameness is sought in what Bakhtin calls ‚generic memory‘, a special Hegelian faculty of consciousness ascribed to genre: „we know that the beginning, that is the archaic stage of genre, is preserved in renewed form at the highest stages of the genre's development. Moreover, the higher a genre develops and the more complex its form, the better and more fully it remembers its past“ (*PDP*, 121). Dostoevsky's work, then, is the result of efficient generic memory, not of individual talent nor, despite all the assurance Bakhtin gives, of historically specific conditions (on whose description, as we have seen from the brief review of the cuts, the 1963 book does not insist anyway). The metageneric poetics severs the connection between generic structures and individual performance, for it is always a pre-coded generic programme that is ineluctably realised by whoever happens to „link up with the chain of a given generic tradition“. In Bakhtin's own words, „it was not Dostoevsky's subjective memory, but the objective memory of the very genre in which he worked, that preserved the peculiar features of the ancient menippea“ (*PDP*, 121). But metageneric poetics also disrupts the bond between

³⁶ In the existing English translation the underlined text is omitted.

genre and history. Genre is to Bakhtin the means by which eternal principles underlying and underwriting human culture (carnival, dialogue) acquire a material existence in a continuous movement toward their self-realisation. The Menippean satire and Dostoevsky's novel both appear as embodiments of the principle of carnival; they are in the grip of a relentless entelechy, the actors of a pre-designed scenario in which the voice of history is suppressed by an Aristotelian-Hegelian trust in the productive force of artistic reason. This reason (or 'memory') defies social determination and transcends historical settings: its activity constitutes a series of sublations through which the acme preserves its unity with the beginnings.

The metagenetic line of reasoning exercises a twofold effect on the sociological argument of the 1929 book. On the one hand, it clearly enfeebles this argument; on the other hand, however, it rewrites it by displacing its meaning. Taking carnival as his starting point, Bakhtin asserts that it lends human existence a new form of sociality. In a typical manifestation of a wishful abolition of the boundary between text and social reality, Bakhtin claims that „carnivalisation made possible the creation of the *open* structure of the great dialogue, and permitted social interaction between people to be carried over into the higher sphere of the spirit and the intellect, which earlier had always been primarily the sphere of a single and unified monologic consciousness“ (*PDP*, 177). In a word, the „carnival sense of the world helps Dostoevsky overcome ethical as well as gnoseological solipsism“ (*PDP*, 177). Thus, contrary to expectations and received opinion, the 1963 book undermines the position of dialogue and no longer takes it to be an absolute value. In its stead it places carnival as the precondition and the great progenitor of real dialogue. The insufficiency of dialogue as such and its inferiority to carnival can also be seen in an added footnote placed at the end of the last chapter. Discussing the independence of Dostoevsky's dialogue of various social forms (*PDA*, 168/*PDP*, 264), Bakhtin concludes in the 1929 book: „This abstract sociality is characteristic of Dostoevsky and is determined by sociological conditions“ (*PDA*, 168). This conclusion is cut from the 1963 book and replaced by a footnote which qualifies the positioning of dialogue beyond social forms as „a departure into carnival and mystery-play time and space, where the ultimate event of interaction among consciousnesses is accomplished in Dostoevsky's novels“ (*PDP*, 269). Dialogue is shown here to be ultimately dependent on carnival for its full realisation.

We can thus observe the insidious workings of the metagenetic analysis. While designed to enforce a new and broader understanding of dialogue, it functions against this. By establishing links between dialogue and carnival, Bakhtin can no longer uphold the privileged position of dialogue as the sole, unitary and ontologically sufficient principle of Dostoevsky's artistic (and our real) world. Dialogism emerges from the added chapter on the carnival roots of Dostoevsky's novel challenged and weakened in its foundations. Its presumed 'history' does not be-

stow autonomy on it; on the contrary, it undermines its claims to unshared supremacy.

Alongside the metageneric direction, there is another line of reasoning in the 1963 book which Bakhtin himself terms „metalinguistic“. The subject of metalinguistics is described as „the word not in the system of language and not in a ‚text‘ excised from dialogic interaction, but precisely within the sphere of dialogic interaction itself, that is, in the sphere where discourse lives its authentic life“ (*PDP*, 202). At first sight, one should expect this programme to be entirely compatible with sociological analysis. In actual fact, however, Bakhtin opposes it: his formulation of the tasks of metalinguistics appears in the place of two deleted sentences from the 1929 book which profess the necessity of sociological reasoning: „The problem of the orientation of speech to someone else's discourse is of the greatest sociological importance. Discourse, by its nature, is social“ (*PDA*, 95).³⁷ The metalinguistic approach, then, is designed to cancel social analysis; the former appears only in the wake of the latter's extinction. It would be very instructive to undertake a textological comparison of the relevant passages from *PDA* and *PDP* with a view to demonstrating Bakhtin's systematic erasure of any traces which might take the reader back to the sociological. Within the same passage, he methodically replaces the „problems of the sociology of discourse“ (*PDA*, 95) with those of its „metalinguistic study“ (*PDP*, 202); „social situation“ becomes „historical situation“, while the phrase „importance for the sociology of artistic discourse“ (*PDA*, 96) is reduced and reshaped to a mere „importance for the study of artistic discourse“ (*PDP*, 203). Even more striking are two instances of complete change of the meaning due to suspiciously easy replacements. Thus the sentence „Every social group in every epoch has its own special sense of discourse and its own range of discursive possibilities“ (*PDA*, 95) becomes „Every [artistic] trend in every epoch has [...]“ (*PDP*, 202); similarly, in the phrase „If there is at the disposal of a given social group some authoritative and stabilised medium of refraction [...]“ (*PDA*, 96), „a given social group“ is reformulated into „a given epoch“ in the 1963 book (*PDP*, 202).

All the substitutions in the above-quoted examples point to the deliberate suppression of the sociological dimension for the benefit of either abstract historicism („a given epoch“, „every [artistic] trend“) or a metapoetic ahistoricism („metalinguistic study“). By rewriting his own text of 1929 and purging it of the slightest intimations of social determination, Bakhtin introduced profound semantic changes which made for a totally new text.

So far we have discussed the suppression of the sociological dimension to the advantage of the newly introduced directions of metageneric and metalinguistic

³⁷ This quotation is a particularly clear example of the co-existence and the synonymous use of ‚social‘ and ‚sociological‘ in Bakhtin's text. ‚Social‘ remains for him the broader term, through which he often implies ‚sociological‘.

analysis in the 1963 book. Before we close this investigation into the ways in which it differs from the 1929 book, we need to cast a glance at what happens to the phenomenological approach in the 1963 study. We have already observed the contradictory effect of metageneric analysis on the idea of dialogue. However, in the 1963 book Bakhtin inserts some new material immediately concerning dialogue, and by so doing seeks to change the predominantly phenomenological credo of the 1929 book, in which dialogue, as we have seen, is conceived as the morally constructive conversation of the self with itself within the infinitely expandable boundaries of self-consciousness.

Bakhtin's additions to the 1963 book are intent on rendering the idea of dialogue less Socratic and more Buberian. A crucial change in this respect can be seen in Bakhtin's interpretation of the status of the idea in Dostoevsky's novels. In the 1963 book he inserts a new passage which equates the dialogic nature of discourse with the dialogic essence of the idea and thus tries to ward off the misinterpretation, lodged in the 1929 book, of Dostoevsky's novel as traditionally ideological:

The idea – as it was seen by Dostoevsky the artist – is not a subjective individual-psychological formation with „permanent residence“ in a person's head; no, the idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective – the realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion *between* consciousnesses. The idea is a *live event*, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses. In this sense the idea is similar to the word, with which it is dialectically united. (*PDP*, 88)

Seeking to stress the dialogic encounters between divergent ideas as Dostoevsky's unique artistic achievement, Bakhtin had to face the necessity of explaining the presence of residual monologic elements in Dostoevsky's prose. Bakhtin points to „the conventionally monologic“ epilogue to *Crime and Punishment* as a convincing example, but is only too quick to dismiss it with a surprisingly conservative Marxist argument. He does not undertake a full assessment of the weight of what he calls the „publicistic“ layer in Dostoevsky's novel; instead, he prefers a convenient formula which originated in Lenin's articles on Tolstoy and was embraced and developed in the 1930s by Lukács: „Dostoevsky the artist always triumphs over Dostoevsky the publicist“ (*PDP*, 92). By giving up the opportunity of seriously examining the evidence for the interaction in Dostoevsky's novels between two different regimes of artistic representation of ideas (monologic assertion vs. dialogic trial), Bakhtin fails to argue his case for a triumphant dialogism in Dostoevsky's prose.

In summary, then, the 1963 book is at pains to correct the phenomenological line of reasoning and to assert the insufficiency of self-consciousness. But these efforts appear as efficacious only on the surface. Bakhtin's pointed conclusion

„Dostoevsky overcame solipsism“ (PDP, 99), added to the final paragraph of the chapter „The idea in Dostoevsky“, is based solely on insertions to Chapters Two and Three („The hero and the position of the author“ and „The idea in Dostoevsky“). Nothing is changed, however, in the crucial analytical part of the study (Chapter Five) where Dostoevsky's novels remain neglected in favour of the shorter prose, especially *The Double*. Thus the Buberian spirit of the new passages clashes with the prevailing Socratic idea of dialogue as an enhancement of self-knowledge and a cathartic removal of the forces eroding the inward unity of the self. The 1963 book proves to be an ill-disciplined work, in which various incompatible voices resonate and affect each other without ever blending into harmony.

Thus the sociological interpretation in Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky proves to be outweighed by approaches based on phenomenology, philosophy of history (culture), and metapoetics. They come to bear on the sociological argument and on each other by modifying the meanings of dialogue. But they never manage to constitute an uncontradictory whole. In this combination of approaches, the sociological one remains an inchoate and undeveloped option, especially in the 1963 book. Bakhtin implies it as either an ideal interpretative horizon, as is the case of the 1929 book, or, in the 1963 book, as a residual (and declarative) alternative, yet never as a working strategy. Recalling Macherey's analysis of Balzac's *Les Paysans*,³⁸ we can probably insist on the necessity of reading Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky as a document of ideology, where the unspoken (the line of sociological analysis) could have suggested truths of its own which, however, remained muffled in the contest of the dominant interpretive voices. By suppressing the sociological line of interpretation and according priority to the phenomenological and the metagenetic approaches, Bakhtin's Dostoevsky texts seem to have been domesticating rather than promoting difference and otherness.

³⁸ See P. Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. G. Wall, London and Boston 1978, 258-298.