

*Dialogues
on Bakhtin:
Interdisciplinary
Readings*

Edited by
Mika Lähteenmäki
Hannele Dufva

CENTRE FOR APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

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**Edited by:
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Hannele Dufva**

University of Jyväskylä
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Preface



The ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin have received a great amount of scholarly interest both in his homeland and in the West, giving rise to a special discipline devoted to the study of the legacy of the Bakhtin Circle. Despite the huge amount of material published on Bakhtin, the appropriation of Bakhtin's ideas has remained a rather controversial issue, and thus, there are competing views, especially between Russian and Western scholars, on what Bakhtin's project was. Furthermore, the relevance of Bakhtin is not limited to 'Bakhtinology proper', nor to literary criticism, cultural studies, and philosophy, which are traditionally considered Bakhtin's home ground. It has become trendy to apply Bakhtin within other disciplines such as pedagogy, psychology, and linguistics, to name just a few, and, in certain respects, there seem to be good grounds for talking about a 'Bakhtin industry' which has created 'Bakhtins' for different purposes.

The diversity of views on 'what Bakhtin really meant' stems, at least partially, from the fact that our understanding of Bakhtin is complicated by well-known problems associated with the publication and translation of his works both in Russia and in the West. However, in the contemporary context of Bakhtin studies the situation is radically changing thanks to two projects dedicated to a complete scholarly edition of Bakhtin's work. First, the publication of Bakhtin's *Collected Works* has started in Russia, making available new and previously unpublished material, and, second, Bakhtin Centre at the University of Sheffield has launched a project that aims at an electronic edition of the works of the Bakhtin Circle in which the original Russian texts are complemented by their revised English translations. Hence, on the one hand, in the present situation there is clearly a need for a critical approach based on careful reading of source texts and also on the criticism of these sources. On the other hand, although a certain critical and analytical attitude towards Bakhtin's texts is extremely important, there is no reason why the understanding and evaluation of his own ideas in their own contexts should be considered as the only legitimate form of Bakhtin studies.

In addition to 'Bakhtinology proper', the appropriation and application of Bakhtin's ideas in new dialogizing contexts is, we argue, a perfectly justified and fruitful approach which does not necessarily lead to the exploitation and misrepresentation of Bakhtin. On the contrary, the recon-textualisation of Bakhtinian metaphors – when it is not based on an overzealous appropriation of isolated concepts, but on the understanding

of their role in the overall system of Bakhtin's thinking – can, in fact, enrich their meaning potential by offering new insights regarding the object of study. In some sense, we think, Bakhtin himself would certainly have appreciated this abundant posthumous response evoked by his ideas, since, in the end, words always want to be heard.

The articles of this volume are based on papers delivered at the seminar *The Relevance of Bakhtin's Ideas in an Interdisciplinary Context* which took place at the University of Jyväskylä in May 1997. The aim of the book, as its title suggests, is to discuss the ideas of Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle from an interdisciplinary perspective. We hope that the present book will contribute both to a critical approach to the texts of the Bakhtin Circle and also to the theoretical discussions within and between the disciplines represented by the contributors of this book.

The editors would like to express their sincere gratitude to everyone who assisted in the preparation of this book. Particularly we would like to thank Kari Sajavaara, Minna-Riitta Luukka, and Sirpa Leppänen for their critical comments on some of the articles, Carol Adlam for her thorough and expert answers to our numerous questions, Helena Valtanen and Katja Mäntylä for language revision, Sinikka Lampinen for preparing the manuscript for print, and, of course, all the contributors.

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Editor's note

Transliteration of Russian words conforms to the Library of Congress system (without diacritics) with the exception of certain commonly occurring proper names (e.g. Dostoevsky).

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From Saransk to Cyberspace: Towards an Electronic Edition of Bakhtin

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The Russian and Western reception of the work of the Bakhtin Circle has been adversely affected by the absence of a scholarly and chronologically organized Russian edition of Bakhtin's work, a problem aggravated by translations of uneven quality. Inconsistency in rendering Bakhtin's key terms has further obscured the philosophical origins and resonance of Bakhtin's work. The welcome appearance of a new scholarly Russian edition of Bakhtin's work needs to be complemented by a harmonized English translation. The development of electronic publishing opens new possibilities for a dual_language edition that will revolutionize Bakhtin studies.

Keywords: electronic publication, reception, sources, translation

1 Introduction

The history of publication of Bakhtin's work, both inside and outside Russia, has been seriously affected by the particular problems associated with intellectual life in the Soviet Union. Leaving aside the so-called disputed texts, the only book-length works by Bakhtin to be published in his lifetime were the two editions of the Dostoevsky book (1929, 1963) and the study of Rabelais (1965). In the late 1960s and early 1970s several of his central essays on the novel were published, but only in abbreviated versions, with the full texts not emerging until after the author's death in 1975. In many cases definitive versions of some of these important works still await publication. After Bakhtin's death, material never published in his lifetime began to appear in journals and in collections of essays; the latter, however, showed little concern for chronology, with works written in the 1920s placed alongside others from the 1970s (see Bakhtin 1975, 1979). New texts have continued to come to light, their dates often

uncertain and their status difficult to determine, not least because of their fragmentary nature. This now familiar story has made it extremely difficult to trace with any precision the trajectory of Bakhtin's career in general, and in particular the influence of other thinkers on the development of his thought.

2 Orthodoxies old and current

The earliest sustained attempts to bring order to this field were the books *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (1984; first published in French in 1981) by the Bulgarian scholar Tzvetan Todorov and the biography *Mikhail Bakhtin* by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist (1984). The latter assumed particular authority, particularly among Anglo-American scholars without access to Bakhtin's work in the original Russian, and thus doubly disadvantaged by comparison with their Russian counterparts. The breadth of this study, and the sheer quantity of biographical detail, often gained by talking to those who had met Bakhtin personally, which it provided, lent it seemingly unimpeachable authority, but this obscured not only the fact that its authors had been obliged to carry out their work with virtually no access to Bakhtin's archive, but also a tendency, understandable in pre-*glasnost*' times, to accept personal testimony as beyond question. I.R. Titunik was almost alone in arguing that Clark and Holquist's biography was more an impressive piece of hagiography than a critical biography, although he did acknowledge the scale of the achievement in the absence of anything comparable (see Titunik 1986). In the years since 1984, however, it has become clear that Bakhtin's biography is actually much more problematic than first appeared. For example, we now know that, despite his own claims, he never officially attended university in St Petersburg, that his supposed aristocratic roots were invented, and that many other details previously accepted as established fact were, if not wholly false, then markedly exaggerated. In search of an academic job in difficult times Bakhtin adopted aspects of his brother's biography, and sometimes that of friends.¹ As the mythology grew around him he did little to clarify matters, or adopted inconsistent positions, so that those around him in his later life were often convinced of the truth of quite contradictory accounts of his life. The most serious question to arise from all this is how to negotiate the contradictory evidence regarding the authorship of the so-called disputed texts. While some of his associates have testified that

¹On the emergence of new information about Bakhtin's biography, see Lisov & Trusova 1996.

on several occasions Bakhtin claimed authorship of the major texts published under the names of Voloshinov and Medvedev, other, no less credible evidence suggests that at other times he implied the opposite.²

Although the problematic status of Bakhtin's biography is now out in the open and a more cautious approach has begun to prevail, the influence of Clark and Holquist's understandably less sceptical account has not been totally eliminated. This applies particularly to the question of the development of Bakhtin's work. Clark and Holquist built their biography around the contention that the main structure of Bakhtin's ideas was already present at the outset of his career, and that his subsequent work was an elaboration of this structure in the form of a 'quest'. Thus Bakhtin is presented as discussing the same problem in the study of Rabelais as in the earliest phenomenological works: although the focus of his attention and his terminology may vary, the project and the unifying idea remain constant. Shifts in terminology and focus are a result sometimes of the demands of the subject matter and sometimes of adaptation to political realities affecting the possibility of publication. Thus the conceptions of carnival, dialogism, the Menippean Satire and so on all have their roots in the earliest writings on moral philosophy. This interpretation of Bakhtin, and others like it, is in large measure a product of the absence of a definitive edition of Bakhtin's work either in Russian or in English. The haphazard sequence in which individual works have appeared has led to a tendency to read the early texts through those of the central or later period, which were published first, and thus to read early concepts in terms of later ones. A particularly telling example of this is to be found in the treatment of the earliest known work 'Iskusstvo i otvetstvennost'' (1979, originally published in 1919), translated (initially in Clark & Holquist 1984, and subsequently in Bakhtin 1990) as 'Art and Answerability', whereas a more appropriate translation would be 'Art and Responsibility'. The latter would suggest that the work is one dealing with relations between art and moral philosophy, which it is, while the former immediately opens up a series of connotations associated with dialogue, connotations which do not enter Bakhtin's work until almost ten years later. While it is certainly possible to bring the concept of responsibility to bear on questions of dialogue, this is by no means the point to which elaboration of the concept will necessarily bring us, unless we apply a particularly teleological mode of thinking which most serious writers on history and culture would dismiss. Even if that is the ultimate

² For an illustration of role played by partial – in both senses – interpretation of anecdotal or hearsay testimony in the disputed-texts issue, see Bocharov 1994; for the most methodologically and theoretically astute argument yet advanced against Bakhtin's authorship, see Hirschkop forthcoming.

logic of Bakhtin's position, it is evident that a series of conceptual shifts was required in order for the transition from responsibility to dialogue to be completed, and this suggests an ongoing engagement with the ideas around him.³

The peculiar difficulty of tracing Bakhtin's engagement with different philosophical ideas and traditions has led to a situation in which Bakhtin has been seen as the inventor *avant la lettre* of a whole series of intellectual tendencies, from pragmatics and existentialism to reader-response theory and poststructuralism. Perhaps the most overt example of this is Todorov's (1984: 24) argument that 'one could say without exaggeration that Bakhtin is the modern founder' of pragmatics. At times it appeared that Bakhtin's innovative thinking knew no bounds, while serious research into the possible sources of his ideas was generally left to one side. When the question was raised, for example by Clark and Holquist, several names were mentioned as possible influences, but there was no attempt to systematize and periodize those influences, a task which would, again, be especially difficult in the absence of a chronologically organised edition of definitive versions of Bakhtin's texts. As time has gone on, this absence has become particularly conspicuous, especially as the evidence of surprisingly close correspondences between Bakhtin's ideas and those of other major thinkers has accumulated (see, e.g., Emerson 1997, Poole forthcoming, Shepherd 1998). The paucity of footnotes or other references in Bakhtin's works themselves has made the job of tracing particular influences especially problematic, thus throwing into ever greater relief the necessity of a scholarly edition of his work.

3 Defining the origins

In this context the publication of a new, complete collection (*Sobranie sochinenii*) in Russian of Bakhtin's work marks a very significant moment in Bakhtin studies. Although only one volume has been published so far (Bakhtin 1996), it is already possible to begin judge the nature and extent of the impact this new edition will have. It is to consist of six chronologically organized volumes containing works of which Bakhtin is indisputably the author, with a supplementary volume dedicated to the disputed texts. The planned arrangement of volumes is as follows: 1) the

³ For a critique of Clark and Holquist's insistence on the overall unity of Bakhtin's thought, see Morson & Emerson 1990 - where, however, an alternative unity is more or less explicitly posited, this time based on what the authors see as Bakhtin's lifelong hostility to 'theoretism' in general and Marxism in particular (see especially p. 101). For more on this question, see Shepherd 1992: 71-72, Thomson & Wall 1993, 1994, and Morson & Emerson 1993.

'philosophical aesthetics' of the 1920s; 2) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* (1929), articles on Tolstoy (1929), and notes from lectures on the history of Russian literature (1920s); 3) the theory of the novel (1930s); 4) *Rabelais* and associated materials (1940–70); 5) works of the 1940s through to the early 1960s; 6) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963) and works from the 1960s and 1970s; 7) works of the Bakhtin Circle.⁴ Volume 5, the first to appear, contains the highest proportion of previously unpublished material from the least known period of Bakhtin's life, and covers four related areas: a) philosophical problems of anthropology and aesthetics; b) 'Rabelaisian' themes; c) new approaches to Dostoevsky; and d) philosophical-linguistic problems.

Volume 5 therefore pertains to a wide range of Bakhtin's principal interests, as addressed during a particular period of his life. Returning to issues that had concerned him as early as the 1920s, Bakhtin here displays the changed approach adopted in the intervening years. After working in the 1930s and 1940s on questions of European popular culture and on *Rabelais*, Bakhtin, in notes from the early 1960s, presents Dostoevsky not as the great innovator he had appeared in the monograph of 1929, but as the heir to a tradition with its roots in popular festive culture (Bakhtin 1996: 364–374). However, this and other newly published texts also show that he was aware of crucial differences between the Rabelaisian and Dostoevskian versions of the carnivalesque, with Gogol being posited as the key mediator between the two. Gogol is seen to have grafted forms of European festive culture onto peculiarly Slavonic traditions, evoking not only joyful relativity but also the world beyond the grave. Gogolian laughter is thus a unique amalgam. Bakhtin argues that the popular basis necessary for the development of an anti-official worldview was lost in Russia, and that it is this that accounts for the tragic aspect of Gogol's laughter (Bakhtin 1996: 45–47). It thus becomes clear that Bakhtin was rather more cautious about applying the categories of the carnivalesque to Russian culture than many of his less sophisticated followers. We also gain a clearer sense of some of the stages in the development of Bakhtin's approach to Dostoevsky, and in particular of the significance of the fact that there was no mention in the first edition of the Dostoevsky study either of carnival, or of the Menippean Satire which is so closely connected with it. Thus the notes on Dostoevsky, which reveal the

⁴ Volume 7 will include works by Voloshinov and Medvedev, but not by Matvei Kagan, who studied with Cassirer in Marburg under Cohen's supervision and who had an important influence on Bakhtin, or by Lev Pumpianskii, a key participant in the meetings of the Bakhtin Circle throughout the 1920s. Separate editions of Kagan's and Pumpianskii's works are, however, to be published soon.

process whereby the central concepts of the second edition of the book were formed, assume considerable importance.

'Additions and Amendments to Rabelais', written in the 1940s (and first published in 1992) also shows Bakhtin sketching out more nuanced approaches to the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1996: 80–129). The established dichotomy between official seriousness and unofficial festivity is supplemented by introduction of the unofficial seriousness of suffering, fear, weakness and sacrifice. Bakhtin comments extensively on Shakespearean tragedy, showing how Shakespeare drew upon the fund of official and unofficial seriousness in *Macbeth*, as well as of carnival in *King Lear*. The recurrent theme in Dostoevsky's work of individual protest against absorption into the social whole is analysed in precisely these terms: social atomisation resulting from the encroachment of capitalist relations into Russian society contends with its carnivalesque negation based on an idealised version of agricultural labour. Here, as elsewhere, Bakhtin echoes the concerns of the Russian populists, and this suggests a rather complex relationship with Marxism. The interaction of the populist and Marxist traditions is a particularly interesting chapter in the development of philosophy and political thought (see Walicki 1969, Shanin 1983), and demands that we move beyond an approach which tries to portray Bakhtin's attitude towards Marxism as a simple matter of acceptance or rejection. Structural similarities between Bakhtin's work and that of, for example, Lukács or Gramsci, are much too pervasive to be dismissed as coincidence (see Tihanov 1997a), while the differences are substantial enough to exclude his simple absorption into the Marxist tradition. This is one area where a detailed account of Bakhtin's influences would be particularly valuable: one suspects that Bakhtin's ideas would have been impossible without the historical and conceptual link of what Gramsci called the 'philosophy of praxis' (see Brandist 1996a, 1996b).

The most substantial section of volume 5 deals with general philosophical questions. Bakhtin's concerns repeatedly echo those of German Idealism in general and Hegelianism in particular, but he maintains his distinctively populist bent throughout. We see Bakhtin returning to questions first addressed in the early 1920s, but now the Kantian inflection has given way to an identifiable Hegelian emphasis on the unfolding of cultural forms. While Bakhtin retains a Kantian opposition to subsuming all perspectives beneath a univocal discourse of reason, like that of Ernst Cassirer, whose work he valued very highly, Bakhtin's thought remains profoundly Hegelian in its structure (see Brandist 1997). In the most sustained piece in the volume, 'The Problem of Speech Genres', this question comes to the fore. Although the essay has

been published before, it now appears for the first time with a substantial body of preparatory materials. The editors demonstrate that the work was a response to the way in which Stalin's *Marxism and Questions of Linguistics* disturbed the field of language study in 1953. Bakhtin is shown to have produced, in a context of liberation from the canonical authority of N.Ia. Marr's mechanically determinist account of language in which language was considered part of the 'superstructure', a multilayered text which engages with Marrist determinism, Stalinist monologism and incipient structuralism. Inserted and inverted quotations from sources in these areas are shown to be utilised in a *dialogical* fashion, with the author's views refracted through alien discourses. Although this is never mentioned explicitly, what is highlighted by this editorial analysis of the text is a shift in the very structure of Bakhtin's thought away from that of the early phenomenological essays. The Neo-Kantian terminology of this period now represents only one of many perspectives struggling for ascendancy in the text. Dialogism, the relationality of discourses, has now become a method of approach, analysis and exposition, playing a role analogous to that of the dialectic in Hegel.

One of the problems faced in reading Bakhtin is the way in which he sought to render philosophical terms from German Idealism, especially that of Cohen, Cassirer and Hegel, by exploiting the considerable morphological possibilities offered by the Russian language. One of the weaknesses of volume 5 is the lack of attention given to such questions in the copious editorial annotations. The editors are very adept at placing fragmentary texts within debates in Russian literary and philosophical studies, discussing problems of interpretation and making connections between different texts. This is undoubtedly a valuable contribution. But, since crucial questions of Bakhtin's own translation of key terms are given such low priority, the philosophical resonance of those terms threatens to be obscured. In this sense the voluminous notes compare unfavourably with Vadim Liapunov's much briefer, but nonetheless extremely illuminating annotations to his English translation of *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (Bakhtin 1993). Furthermore, there is some inconsistency in the editorial treatment of Bakhtin's numerous references to more or less well-known writers, philosophers, and other figures: sometimes a considerable amount of information is provided, while at other times there is no annotation at all. Overall, the sheer bulk and undoubted erudition of the notes may tempt readers into viewing interpretations provided by the editors as authoritative, whereas in fact

the status and resonance of the often fragmentary texts under consideration in most cases remain unclear.⁵

4 New perspectives

This is not, however, to deny the importance of volume 5, or to belittle its achievement as a work of scholarship. The most significant limitation of the volume is one which the editors were in no position to overcome: the book medium itself. Within the constraints of a printed book, it is not possible to note every appearance of a key concept, or to trace consistently and thoroughly patterns of usage of key terminology. In the case of a writer whose practice is as complex as Bakhtin's, this is an especially serious limitation. Bakhtin's references, identification of which often requires considerable detective work as a result of the author's own somewhat sparing recourse to annotation, can be signalled, but cannot be reproduced with adequate amplitude; the reader who wishes to evaluate their significance has no choice but to seek them out for herself.

This, of course, is why the possibilities offered by electronic publication are so appealing, and why the Bakhtin Centre at the University of Sheffield has embarked on a long-term project, 'The Russian and European Contexts of the Works of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle', the principal planned output of which is a scholarly edition of these works published on the World Wide Web. The issues to be addressed in producing such an edition are numerous and complex, ranging from comparatively unproblematic decisions about the encoding of text to matters of permission and copyright. The way in which these issues are resolved will determine the ultimate scope of the edition and the timescale for its completion. This is not the place to dwell at length on technical or legal matters, not least because at the time of writing their resolution is still pending. Rather our emphasis will be on the advantages which such an edition will offer as it complements existing hard-form publications of primary and secondary materials by and about the Bakhtin Circle, and in particular on its relevance for the questions of intellectual biography and affiliation which have been our concern to this point, and whose importance is signalled by the title of the Bakhtin Centre's project.

The first advantage bestowed by an electronic edition will of course be increased flexibility in navigation through, and handling of, the

⁵ On the way in which volume 5, and the whole *Collected Works* project, raise new problems as they solve others, see also Renfrew 1997.

primary texts: particular passages or phrases will be more easily locatable, and it will be possible to generate information about the frequency and contexts of the use of specific terms. But for maximum benefit to be derived from this facility the primary texts must be supported by a comprehensive editorial apparatus, and it is in this area that the electronic medium has the potential to go much further than the traditional printed format. The apparatus will include the following subdivisions (these are subject to revision and refinement as the project progresses):

- 1) Textual information. This section will provide exhaustive textological information about each text, along with its publication history.
- 2) Authorial notes. This section will reproduce such annotations as do feature in the original texts, with additional editorial commentary as appropriate.
- 3) Editorial notes. These will be notes inserted by the editorial team, elucidating obscure or concealed references, commenting on issues of factual accuracy, and so on.
- 4) Glossaries of philosophical, literary, and other terms. These will include information about the sources and derivation of key terms, together with more or less extensive surveys of their development within the Bakhtin Circle's work in particular, and related areas of intellectual enquiry in general.
- 5) Indexes of references to literary works, writers, major thinkers and so on.

A preliminary mock-up of how the 'title-page' interface of a Web-based edition might look will shortly be accessible via the Bakhtin Centre's Website.⁶ (The provisionality of this illustration, and the certainty that the eventual on-line version will look rather different, must be stressed.) On the face of it, there is nothing especially innovative about this proposed arrangement of editorial matter: this is precisely the kind of information that we have come to expect from traditional scholarly editions. But there will be differences, and with these differences advances. These will lie in the changed nature of the relationship between the editorial apparatus and the primary texts, and between the various elements of the editorial apparatus itself.

First, the rigid demarcation between the various categories of information provided contrasts with the unavoidable tendency for printed editions to subsume some or all of these categories beneath the general rubric of 'Notes' or 'Commentary': the printed medium resists over-rigorous divisions which cease to be so rebarbative when text is presented via an electronic rather than paper interface. Second, only those authorial or editorial annotations which are specific to a given text will be attached to that text alone. In the case of all other references, there

⁶ <http://hippo.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/A_C/bakh/bakhtin.html>.

will be links to the editorial apparatus at every relevant point in the entire corpus of Bakhtin Circle texts. Thus each and every occurrence of a term such as 'heteroglossia' will be tagged so as to allow the user of the edition to go instantly to the appropriate point in the relevant glossary. Clearly this is far preferable to the practice of glossing a term at first occurrence only, and eliminates the dilemma faced by an editorial team of whether to repeat glosses in successive volumes of an edition, to export all glosses to a separate volume, or to rely upon the reader's willingness to locate the original gloss in a different place or a different volume. Third, the glossaries, indexes, and so on will include appropriate references back to primary texts other than that from which the link to the gloss has been followed. Fourth, the various sections of the editorial apparatus, each of which it will of course be possible to consult as an independent entity, will also embody appropriate cross-references to the other sections of the apparatus, thereby making sustained attention on the part of the reader to the issues raised much more feasible than is the case with a printed edition. Fifth, all sections of the editorial apparatus will include, at appropriate points and within the constraints of developing copyright legislation and good practice in relation to Internet publishing, links to other Websites. Such links will be analogous to the frequent references to other sources found in any editorial apparatus, but whereas a printed edition would be likely to restrict itself to a simple page or line reference to, for example, the particular passage from Homer's 'Hymn to Demeter' to which Bakhtin refers at one point in his 1941 article 'Satire', an electronic edition can offer its reader the choice of seeing the relevant passage from Homer, or indeed the 'Hymn' in its entirety, in English or in Greek, on a site such as that of Tufts University's Perseus Web project⁷. And, having once made the move beyond the confines of the Bakhtin Circle edition itself, the reader will have the capacity to explore a range of references far broader than those suggested by the editorial team. Such integration into the edition, with due scholarly scrupulousness and acknowledgement of the work of others, of links with other sites will represent not an abdication of editorial responsibility, but a combination of this responsibility, and the 'steer' to the reader it entails, with a greater degree of readerly freedom in the actual use of the edition. Moreover, the prospect that the quantity and diversity of the material available elsewhere on the Web will continue to increase means that the number and nature of links embedded in the Bakhtin Circle edition will also grow. To resort to one of the clichéd terms of Bakhtin studies, the edition

⁷ Classical antiquity is particularly well served on the Web: relevant databases are best searched via the Argos search engine at <<http://argos.evansville.edu/>>. Philosophy resources, also extensive, are best searched via Hippias <<http://hippias.evansville.edu/index.htm>>.

will be inherently, and productively, unfinalisable, making of Bakhtin's work a dynamic intertextual configuration in a far more literal sense than he could ever have envisaged himself.

5 Translation and coherence

Other features which it would be possible and desirable to incorporate in the edition, subject to the necessary permissions, include: reproduction of photographic materials and recordings of Bakhtin's extensive interviews towards the end of his life with Viktor Duvakin (a full transcript is available in Bakhtin & Duvakin 1996); a facility which would allow readers of the edition to engage with it 'dialogically' by submitting responses and suggestions for amendment (these would need to be carefully moderated by the editorial team); and the possibility of switching between, or displaying side-by-side, the English translation and the Russian original. Whether or not it proves possible to incorporate this third feature, it is beyond dispute that one of the greatest immediate benefits provided by an electronic edition would be derived by those who read the texts in translation, or whose Russian is less than adequate to deal with Bakhtin's complex language. To date, the problems with which the haphazard sequence of publication of Bakhtin's texts has beset Bakhtin studies have been compounded by the way in which translations into English have been undertaken and published. Upwards of ten different translators have worked on the Bakhtin Circle's texts, producing editions that have been inconsistent both in their general quality, and in their rendering of key terms. There are numerous examples of poor editing and mistaken translation, of which we cite just two here. First, the English translation of the Rabelais book (Bakhtin 1968/1984) omits a number of brief passages, among them a whole paragraph near the beginning of the book (1965: 10–11), two very important sentences half way through (1965: 385), and a significant footnote near the end (1965: 517).⁸ Second, in the English version of the key essay 'Discourse in the Novel' Bakhtin's reference to the '*protivorechivoe edinstvo sotsial'nogo stanovleniia*' ('the contradictory unity of social becoming') is rendered as the 'heteroglot unity of *societal* becoming' (see Bakhtin 1975: 222, 1981: 411). Such distortions of meaning may have far-reaching consequences for the understanding of specific passages and of the general thrust of Bakhtin's enterprise. Moreover, if the collections of Bakhtin's works in

⁸ Thanks to Galin Tihanov for this information. These and other examples are noted in Tihanov 1997b, chapter 9.

Russian before volume 5 of the *Collected Works* were somewhat haphazard, then things have been scarcely more systematic in the West. The result is that, alongside the questionable 'unitary' Bakhtins discussed earlier, we find a whole series of 'different Bakhtins', ranging from an ascetic, abstract thinker in the mould of a Russian monk to a figure more akin to a sharp-suited American 'new critic'. Those who first came to Bakhtin through Emerson and Holquist's 1981 collection *The Dialogic Imagination*, its very title as well as its approach to the translation of Bakhtin's texts symptomatic of a particular moment in Anglo-American theory, are often understandably bewildered when they come to Liapunov and Brostrom's *Art and Answerability* – a point duly noted by Michael Holquist in his introduction to that volume (see Holquist 1990: ix). Of course, part of the reason for this disorientation is the order of publication and undeniable differences between the works themselves, but it is liable to be exacerbated by variations of quality and idiom between the translations.

Translating Bakhtin is certainly no easy task, and this is all the more reason why a bilingual edition would be a great advantage. In the conventional medium such presentation of parallel texts is unwieldy; but an electronic edition could connect the texts at key points to facilitate comparison with the original. But even if such linking of original and translation proves not to be feasible, it will be vital that key terms be rendered in consistent ways across the range of Bakhtin's varied texts, and, in those cases where this is impossible or inappropriate, that the glossing of terms at every occurrence should ensure that patterns of usage are not obscured. The wide variation in translation of a number of key Bakhtinian terms was first systematically noted in 1989 in a glossary in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd's *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. The subsequent appearance of translations of the early works, generally much more rigorous and consistent, has thrown this rather chaotic state of affairs into starker relief. Let us take two examples from the 1989 glossary. Within a single collection of texts, *The Dialogic Imagination*, the key term *krugozor* is rendered in no fewer than eight different ways: belief system, conceptual horizon, conceptual system, cultural horizon, horizon, point of view, purview, and world view. A ninth translation, field of vision, occurs in both English translations of the Dostoevsky book (Bakhtin 1973, 1984). While each of these terms may succeed in conveying a particular connotation of this difficult term and while the Russian word *krugozor*, when used in varied contexts, may not always be best rendered by a single translation, it becomes next to impossible, on the basis of existing English texts, to be aware that, and how, Bakhtin uses this single key term, and thus to discern its philosophical resonance or origin. This

obscuring of philosophical resonance as a result of inconsistent translation is no less severe in the case of the term *stanovlenie*, which has been rendered variously as: becoming, coming-to-be, development, emergence, evolution, formation, generation, generative process, psychological evolution, and spirit of process. This term is Bakhtin's rendering of the German *das Werden*, a concept strongly associated with German Idealist philosophy, and with the work of Hegel in particular. The usual English translation of Hegel's term is 'becoming', although a case can be made for some variation. By the time one reaches 'development', however, the Hegelian connotations have been all but lost, for this word has much more banal, far from philosophical associations. Again, the case for the kind of consistent glossing of the term made possible by an electronic edition is overwhelming.

In the preparation of such an edition it is essential that translation work, both the translation of new materials for the first time and retranslation of existing works, should proceed alongside examination of the Russian and European contexts of the work of the Bakhtin Circle. For this reason the project, which will also lead to the publication of articles and monographs on these contexts, makes provision for input by research students working on specific aspects of the Bakhtin Circle's work: one student is working on the relationship between the Circle's treatment of linguistics and philosophy of language and contemporary Western approaches, while another is exploring the complex relationship between Bakhtinian dialogism and Hegelian dialectics. As well as yielding doctoral dissertations, both these projects will have direct input into the critical apparatus of the electronic edition. Such wide-ranging research must inform the process of translation, while translation will in its turn facilitate research, for adequate rendering of Bakhtin's terminology requires an understanding of the philosophical foundations on which he built. It will surely become increasingly apparent that Bakhtin was not the great innovator he has too often been considered, but equally that he was not necessarily any less important a thinker for that. He took ideas from a wide range of writings and strove to apply them to new subjects, adapting, synthesising and sometimes rejecting what he drew upon. The ideas available to him were, of course, historically conditioned, as were the possibilities of application, and an understanding of this will help future scholars both to recognise the significance of Bakhtin's work in the development of cultural theory, and to assess more clearly the limitations and occasional wrong-headedness of his theoretical legacy. While we will continue to find Bakhtin's ideas fruitful, we will need to reject certain of his formulations and to draw on other theorists to overcome his not infrequent blind-spots. Ultimately, Bakhtin's work must be an aid in

understanding the world rather than itself an object of wonder; we should not be afraid to criticize his mistakes, or be reluctant, as some are, to recognize that he was capable of error (on the tendency in Russian Bakhtin scholarship to impute a certain infallibility to Bakhtin, see Shepherd 1996: 155), but neither should we downplay his significance. We must learn no longer to idealise Bakhtin as a theorist, but rather to understand him historically. A properly scholarly electronic edition of the Bakhtin Circle's works, through which an enormously increased quantity of information will be translated into a new quality of understanding, will permit the frequently misunderstood and mythologised sage of Saransk to assume a different – more modest, perhaps, but also more fitting – place in the constellation of major thinkers of modernity. This will allow his legacy to be all the more productive in the present, and will do the greatest service to his memory.⁹

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⁹ Updates on the progress of the 'Contexts' project will appear on the Bakhtin Centre's Website: <<http://hippo.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/A-C/bakh/bakhtin.html>>.

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Bakhtin Against the Current

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The essay is an attempt to outline Bakhtin's historical significance against the background of both Western and Russian cultural contexts, taking Dostoevsky as a point of departure. It is argued that Bakhtin's main contribution to the humanities, is, to a large extent, his idea of communality as a historical condition for the possibility of a concrete act or an 'utterance' – an idea opposed to the Western 'theoretism' as well as political rhetorics and the Russian caricatures of it. Dialogism, in this perspective, is seen as a kind of 'counter-Russian' and 'counter-Western' therapy that saves both sides from themselves, by deconstructing their own tendency towards self-deconstruction.

Keywords: communality, mirror images, self-contained autonomy, self-deception, new thinking, hermeneutics of regeneration

Opening a Bakhtin Memorial Lecture Series on 31 March 1976, Leonid Pinsky, the eminent Soviet literary scholar, spoke to the effect that Bakhtin demonstrated to us the Western idea of personality by drawing on the work of Dostoevsky, and the Russian idea of communality (sobornost') by drawing on the work of Rabelais¹⁰. In this paper, I am going to say just the reverse of the witty remark by Pinsky which I myself began to circulate in print. To what extent this 'just the reverse' is itself dialogic, it is certainly not for me to decide.

In contrast to Pinsky's provocative statement, I maintain that Bakhtin, in fact, demonstrated in *both* of his monographs the *same* thing: namely, the communal character of person formation, as well as author formation, i.e., a productively dialogical character of any 'difference' – in life, in art, and in scholarship. This productive communality of any concrete meaningful act and utterance is, indeed, a *permanent* element in

¹⁰ Pinsky's words were first remembered by Iu. M. Kagan, daughter of Bakhtin's close friend Matvei Kagan. With her kind permission, I have reproduced Pinsky's witticism in one of my own publications (Makhlin 1991: 186). I must express here my ambivalent gratitude to Sergei Averintsev (1993: 344) who referred to Pinsky's paradox, and to whom I am thankful for an argument and impulse diametrically opposite to his own.

Bakhtin's thinking. Even more so, it is a permanent quality in the development of his thought as such, in what he himself called 'my love for variations and for a diversity of terms for a single phenomenon' (Bakhtin 1986: 155). The different terms that reflect this permanence are well-known: the *other* and *otherness*, *choral support* or simply *chorus*, *autonomous participativeness* or *participatory autonomy*, the *sociology of consciousnesses* or *polyphony*, *memory of a genre*, the *arrival square*, and finally the derivative, but radically inclusive meta-term *dialogue*, and the like. All these terms are not in any sense metaphors, but, on the other hand, they are not definitions of the kind that are utilized in so-called normal science, either.

Now, in his elaboration of the idea of productivity and the idea of *individualising communality* in thinking in general, and in the humanities, in particular, Bakhtin actually relativised and deconstructed the two *binary* mirror-images of the Russian ideology or *false consciousness*. Furthermore, he put to question the two, also binary, mirror-images of the self and the other in the Western (modern and post-modern) ideology. I refer here to a mirror-image as a notion of a false-consciousness-about-a false-consciousness. What are, actually, these two pairs of mirror-images?

Firstly, Bakhtin, as a matter of fact, liberated, in his own way, Russian culture from its own illusions of both 'Russianness' and 'Westernism'. Consequently, he created a kind of *new thinking*: a new mode of seeing and hearing meaningfully – something ideologically counter-ideological that Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (1990, Emerson 1990) have called the 'Russian counter-idea'. Bakhtin's work, as a whole, undermines the two Russian-and-Soviet versions of a *self-contained autonomy*, both of them being quite Western in origin. The first is an idea of a complete autonomy of the subject as an 'individuum', that is, as an isolated entity (an atom), and the second is an idea of the transcendental subject as a mirror-image of a cognized essence or truth, truth *in itself*. Both versions, or fictions, of this Utopian essentialism can be traced back to the Greek, and specifically to the Platonic and Neo-Platonic heritage of the West¹¹ (on Plato's concept, see Bakhtin 1993: 11).

These two interconnected mirror-images are binary in their very opposition to each other, that is, in their Utopian negation of both the concrete historical *mediation* of their respective existence, and their own productive possibility (not an empty possibility). It is easy to see in every

¹¹ The tendency to oppose and reduce one's own self to the philosophically 'beautiful and sublime' explains the early Bakhtin's treatment of the body, that is, creaturely limitedness and historicity. In this respect, Neo-Platonism is the fundamental opponent of dialogism. (See Bakhtin 1990: 55.)

concrete case that both of these extreme-abstractions of autonomy are 'twins', and often stand for each other.

On the other hand, Bakhtin, in my view, also deconstructed in his work another pair of mirror-images which are likewise 'Western' in their origin and 'Russian' in their radical application. What Bakhtin criticised, in respect to the West, was a specifically Western idea of the 'political' as an autonomous entity, i.e. a self-contained image of the 'official' as such: 'official' history, 'official' or 'public' sociality – a form of the thing-in-itself. What Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy (1970: 183) once called 'official logic', Bakhtin, in his turn, put to question as a *rhetorical* discourse as such, a rhetorical image and self-image of both man and society. It goes without saying that the object of his criticism was not the weaker side of the Western civilization but its stronger side – just as well as his criticism of 'our *samodum* thinkers', 'Russian thoughtmongering' (cf. Medvedev 1985), and the quasi-philosophical talk and rhetoric (*eto takaia russkaia boltovnia*) (Bakhtin & Duvakin 1996: 70) was *not* an evaluation of the 'face', but, rather, a disruption of the 'mask' (a false consciousness, a disguise) as a mirror-image. Thus, Bakhtin criticized both the Western civilization and 'Russian thoughtmongering' of self-deception rather than of a mere logical error or mere theoretical weakness. The 'political', the 'rational', the 'official', and the 'public' are not *at all* negative terms. On the contrary, they are quite positive and true within their limitation, in their mediation and openness to something that is *not only these*. Hence, we can now summarize Bakhtin's counter-Russian-as-well-as-counter-Western move against the background of Pinsky's witticism.

Firstly, following Dostoevsky's 'radically new authorial position' – a vision of communal nature and history of the 'man in man', which is the *polyphony* – Bakhtin disrupted the very opposition in-between-East-and-West. In so doing, not only did he draw a definitive borderline between Dostoevsky's creative vision and Dostoevsky's Messianic ambitions, his self-deceptive 'ethnocentrism'. Bakhtin also deconstructed certain attempts at self-deconstruction and self-negation which often sought support and justification in 'Russianness' (in Dostoevsky the 'nationalist' in particular), and, interestingly enough, have given rise, to a considerable extent, to the Western Marxism of the 20th century¹².

¹² As is well known, the metaphysical concept of the 'era of absolute sinfulness', appropriated from Fichte by Georg Lukács, was the precursor of the latter's concept of the novel as an 'epic of a world that has been abandoned by God' and which followed, soon after his writing the famous *Theory of the Novel* (Lukács 1971), his 'conversion' (prepared for by the idiosyncratic literary cult in the West of the 'Russian idea', under the influence, for the most part, of Dostoevsky) is a striking testimony to the historical connection of Western Neo-Marxism with the Russian revolution understood as cleansing the world of its abandonment by God and its sinful capitalism. (See Y. Puito's introduction in Lukács (1985), Gluck 1985: 150, 187–250, Arato & Breches 1979.)

Secondly, Bakhtin presented a radical vision of the Western 'dialogical thinking' in his emphasis on the 'profane', on the 'low' corporeal activity of what Hermann Cohen (1919) called 'correlation': an idea that man's relation to God and the transcendental is mediated by his more initial relation to other people, to the *other*. That is why, I believe, Bakhtin appreciates communality, the *social*, not so much in political – rhetorical and official – forms and terms, but, rather, in intersubjective, interpersonal and intertemporal forms of *act* and *utterance*, and *genre*. In this 'worldly', or secular, emphasis on difference (not on an abstract, or ideal, difference but on a concrete difference that *forms*, not deconstructs, history), Bakhtin, as it were, appears more 'Western' in comparison with his Western 'dialogical' counterparts most of whom represent, paradoxically enough, though in their own way, a kind of 'Russian thoughtmongering' in their tendency to think and speak as if one could exist in an unmediated, absolute realm of what Bakhtin calls – traditionally and revolutionary at the same time – 'God's world' (*bozhii mir*). *Speciality*, a productive limitation is necessary, Bakhtin insists. In this sense, Raskolnikov's name is meaningful not only in a narrow historical sense¹³, but in an ontologically metahistorical sense as well; for his dream of the Russian 'dreamer' implies that *one or someone* could take possession of a 'whole fortune at once' (*srazu ves' kapital*) (Dostoevsky 1992: 29–30). Raskolnikov ignores what Bakhtin (1993: 2) calls a 'fundamental split' in the world itself. It is this fundamental split that makes *any* Messianic attempt a lie, as well as it makes an act of *any* utterance possible. The idea of *answerability* in Bakhtin implies orientation, and a productive answer within an unescapable fundamental split within the 'criminal state of the world', which is life itself, with all its own attempts at the 'beautiful and higher'.

I conclude with Bakhtin's own words at the end of his manuscript 'Additions and Changes to Rabelais', recently published in the 5th Volume of the *Collected Works*. I quote; in my own translation: 'Everything is hindrance and an obstacle for a man to look back at himself' (Bakhtin 1996: 89). In our epoch of the cross-cultural deconstructions of self-images, the time is ripe to take Bakhtin's hermeneutics of regeneration quite seriously, as well as his idea of carnival laughter – this re-enacted source of Bakhtin's own re-enacted authorial outsidership in our modern and postmodern world.

¹³ The word 'raskol' involves the 17th century 'schismatics' (called splitters or *raskol'niki*) who dissented the official Russian Eastern Orthodox Church and are also known as 'Old Believers'. On the other hand, 'raskol' (split or schism) points to the root of Raskolnikov's name.

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Bakhtin: Soft and Hard

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The object of research, for Bakhtin, is the world as a living and functioning whole. In this paper, the soft and hard interpretations of Bakhtin are discussed, and some of his basic concepts are explored in more detail.

Keywords: Bakhtinian research, word, text, context, culture

Is the fact that we are not able to know the final truth either about ourselves or the others a safety mechanism that ensures the continuous human progress and, indeed, the life itself? Is a right to individuality and to one's own words a necessary condition of the freedom of man? Is the fact that man is never complete and finalized a life-preserving idea?

Questions like these easily arise while first reading Bakhtin. To be sure, these are not the only questions, but they seem to be evoked almost without an exception whenever his central concepts and terms are considered.

According to Bakhtin's 'philosophy of the act', the world as a functioning whole is the main object of research for scholars of all fields. To quote Bakhtin (1993: 12–13):

The world as the content of scientific thinking is a distinctive world: it is an autonomous world, yet not a detached world, but rather a world that is incorporated into the unitary and once-occurrent event of Being through the mediation of an answerable consciousness in an actual deed. But that once-occurrent event of Being is no longer something that is thought of, but something that *is*, something that is being actually and inescapably accomplished through me and others (accomplished, *inter alia*, also in my deed of cognizing); it is actually experienced, affirmed in an emotional_volitional manner, and cognition constitutes merely a moment in this experiencing-affirming.

Upon first sight, there is not much new in this. In semiotics, Yuri Lotman has defined the object of research in an almost like manner. Lotman, however, draws the line at the habitual human experience, i.e. at the

reality familiar to us. Bakhtin, however, sees it is possible to reach beyond this, to whatever we are able to become conscious of.

The difference between Lotman and Bakhtin is not of fundamental character, except from the point of view of research methods. In semiotics, the central notion is code which is seen as a tool that makes mutual understanding possible. Codes naturally change (*perekodirovanie*), but they are always only a tool or a research instrument. For Bakhtin, this indicates that they leave no room for a dialogue, since a 'code presupposes content to be somehow ready-made and presupposes the realization of a choice among various *given* codes' (Bakhtin 1986: 135). This implies that it is the researcher who comes to the fore, and, actually, also becomes the object of research. In Bakhtin's (1986: 169-170) words,

Structuralism has only one subject - the subject of the research himself. Things are transformed into *concepts* (a different degree of abstraction); the subject can never become a concept (he himself speaks and responds). Contextual meaning [smysl] is personalistic; it always includes a question, an address, and the anticipation of a response, it always includes two (as a dialogic minimum). This personalism is not psychological, but semantic [smyslovoi].

In this paper, I will examine some of the terms that are central to Bakhtin's thinking. This is important because the sense in which Bakhtin uses these words may differ from the conventional usage, and the discussion may serve as an introduction to Bakhtin's thinking and to the system he created. Or, at least, to one interpretation of it.

Text has been regarded as the main object of research of a traditional philologist, and the scholar is supposed to commit himself to the task of knowing everything about it. Thus the scope of the study is almost comparable to that defined by Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, however, text is a more problematic entity. According to him, the humanities differ from the natural sciences in that, in the latter, the researcher observes an object and says what he has to say about it (Bakhtin 1979: 363). The human sciences, such as philology, for example, are *sciences of the spirit*, and they all share the notion of the 'word' (Bakhtin 1979: 363). I shall return in due course to the definition of the 'word'.

According to Bakhtin (1979: 363), historicity and immanence are often regarded as important textual features which, in turn, may result - and indeed usually does - in the fact that an analysis of the text (becoming aware of it and understanding it) is limited to the text alone.

Thus it is important to study the question about the boundaries between a text and its context. Each word, or, each sign in a text always refers to the world outside the text, just as each text as a whole also has its

own context or contexts (Bakhtin 1979: 363). Bakhtin emphasizes that there is necessarily a dialogical relationship between the text and its contexts, as in this manner only the text can become understood. According to Bakhtin (1979: 364), to understand means to be able to relate a text to other texts. 'The text lives only by coming into contact with another text', as Bakhtin (1986: 162) says. Thus Bakhtin makes a distinction between a dialogical contact and a mechanical one, which for him refers to the oppositions that are possible within one text and that occur between its abstract elements. They are, nevertheless, essential for the understanding of the content of the text, or its meaning (*znachenie*). In other words, to understand a text, it is important to be acquainted with its vocabulary and grammatical structures. This is necessary, but not sufficient. At best, it is a good beginning.

For Bakhtin (1979: 364), inter-contextual contact is always contact between individuals. Recently, the issue of the 'author' has been raised in the Bakhtin discussion. Author alone, however, does not resolve the question of how a text is understood, as Bakhtin (1979: 283) regards also the text as an individual, constantly changing. Also, the significance of the author, his personality and his individual fate is different in different texts. The classic example is the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Homer. Even though we know that there must have been several people contributing to the epic, we choose to believe in one Homer, since the epic, as a genre, seems to require an author who is both a narrator, a witness and an agent. To contrast with, a play, for example, does not need an author like this. We do not know who Shakespeare was - whether he was a man or a woman, or whether he was an uneducated actor or a duke writing under the actor's name. Also, we will never know the poets who originally composed the oral poetry. In general, it may be argued that a poet-author is not essential for the text itself. The author's place is, in a way, taken by the reader, although the life of the poet is clearly important for the audience. It is thus no wonder that a Finnish series of biographies ('A legend in his lifetime') started with poets' biographies. It may be noted that what is central is not the author, but the legend about him.

In this connection, it may be noted that all texts in the humanities are dialogical by nature. It can be argued that it is the exact natural sciences only that may produce monological texts, since these sciences deal with one subject only - the researcher (Bakhtin 1979: 363). On the other hand, even this claim is relative, since already Newton, but Einstein in particular, have devised theories that can be seen as highly 'dialogical'. The observations in physics show that the observer has no position *outside* the observed world. (see Bakhtin 1986: 126).

There has been some confusion in the Bakhtin discussion as to the notion of *dialogism*. Often, it has been confused with the concept of *polyphony*, the opposite of which is *monologism*. Polyphony, however, refers to the stand of the author in a literary text. The fact that Tolstoy is a monologist and Dostoevsky a polyphonist does not imply that *War and Peace* would be a less dialogical text than *Crime and Punishment*.

Is dialogism, then, a matter of communication? This issue is very much of current importance as well. As Bakhtin claims, dialogism implies much more. Dialogically seen, information is not transferred, but, rather, produced. This is also seen in Bakhtin's terminology: he prefers verbal interaction (*obshchenie*) to communication (*kommunikaciia*). To simplify, dialogism could be seen as a type of creativity. Any text will open up and will be understood in a new way, once it is placed in a new context. This process is never-ending. And while it may seem frustrating to realise that one will never attain 'the final understanding' of a text, one may find consolation in the fact that one is not its last reader. Thus any new reading of a text will have an influence on the meanings that wait to be found in it in future readings. And, of course, a reader has an opportunity to enrich and deepen the text, to understand it better, and to find things in it that the writer himself did not know were there. This does not imply that we as readers write new things in the text. Rather, by setting new questions, we find new answers that already *exist* in the text.

With regard to the role of code and context in communication, Bakhtin (1986: 147) gives an answer of a kind:

A context is potentially unfinalized; a code must be finalized. A code is only a technical means of transmitting information; it does not have cognitive, creative significance. A code is a deliberately established, killed context.

It is possible, however, to attempt a definition for context, for some practical purpose, for instance. The cultural heritage of the society, the literary style, the writing process, and the historical period are among the contexts that are often mentioned in literary criticism. Also Bakhtin considered these. Well-known examples are *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, as well as his work on Rabelais, which are also known through two central ideas of his, *polyphony* and *carnivalesque* respectively. The context of polyphony can be traced back to the classical literature, but carnivalesque reaches even further in time, to the oral popular culture with its roots in pre-classical times.

Gargantua and Pantagruel is not a polyphonic work, however, but in it the monological world has been turned upside down, and a state of carnivalized monologism has been achieved. This is something that

might serve as a worth-while guideline for living even today, half a millennium later. Laughter that leads to ecstasy is liberating, while the humour we are now accustomed to is but a means – albeit a sovereign means – to use one’s freedom. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that ecstatic laughter may liberate one from everything, even from one’s freedom. This happens when the king becomes a fool and the fool becomes a king.

At this point, I return to Bakhtin's terminology. The ‘word’ (*slovo*) is one of his most central terms. Criticizing structuralism for its concentration to the text alone and for its use of mechanical categories (e.g. opposition and change of codes), Bakhtin (1986: 169) cried out: ‘But I hear *voices* in everything and dialogic relations among them’.

Bakhtin has a distinctive theory on the emergence of ‘word’. This is to be found on a few pages of his notes dating from 1970–1971 (Bakhtin 1986: 133–134):

Quietude and sound. [...] *Quietude* and *silence* (the absence of the word). The pause and the beginning of the word. [...] the disturbance of silence by the word is personalistic and intelligible: [...] In quietude nothing makes a sound [...]; in silence nobody *speaks* [...]. Silence is possible only in the human world (and only for a person). [...]

Silence – intelligible sound (a word) – and the pause constitute a special logosphere, a unified and continuous structure, an open (unfinalized) totality.

Thus the notion of ‘logosphere’¹⁴ refers to the fact that we both recognize and understand the recurring elements in speech (or, ‘language’) on the one hand, and assign meanings to the unrepeatable and unique utterance, on the other hand. Bakhtin (1986: 134) argues that elements of speech are experienced in two ways: through the repeatability of the language and the unrepeatability (uniqueness) of the utterance. Thus it is through actual utterances that language participates in the historical unrepeatability and in the never-ending, unfinalized totality of the logosphere (Bakhtin 1986: 134).

For Bakhtin (1986: 134), the ‘word’ is not only a means (in a language), but it also gives significance (in understanding). ‘Word’ is thus a goal, an ultimate goal. The ultimate word leaves nothing unsaid, everything has been said. Given this definition, it is obvious why Bakhtin criticized de Saussure in his works. Making a distinction between ‘language system’ and ‘speech’, de Saussure saw language as instrumental only. This impoverished the notion of ‘speech’ as well. A ‘word’ that is used in speech is more than an instrument; it also brings forth meaning and it ‘understands’. This is not identical with the

¹⁴ Cf. the concept of semiosphere, as used by Yuri Lotman.

mechanical repeatedness, but implies that a word is enriched whenever it is used. In a way, a word has a memory.

This is something I noticed when first analysing Pushkin's later poems. Every word seemed to have an 'owner' in the sense that there was an earlier user in a context that was related to the topic, content or the *pathos* of the poem. Thus a word's role in an utterance depends on how loaded it is with meanings and associations. To give one example, in a realistic lyric poem 'My rubicund critic, my full-bellied mocker' – which is a poem that is constructed as dialogue between the poet and his critic – Pushkin describes a gloomy autumn scene in a manner comparable to a Flemish school painting with its 'motley rubbish'. In the scholarly commentaries of Pushkin, I found indeed a profound entry on Dutch painting and of the Flemish school. I could have taken this at face value, had I not happened to know that Faddei Bulgarin, a contemporary of Pushkin, had a chapter in his novel that was entitled 'Motley rubbish of the Flemish school'. In the poem, the way in which the scene is described arrests one's attention as an 'unsuitable'. Besides being a direct reference to something, it is also clearly ironic, almost a mischoice that requires an explanation or elaboration. At a much later stage, reading Bakhtin's notes from 1970–1971, I came across the following sentence: 'Pushkin's language is precisely this kind, permeated with irony (to varying degrees), the equivocal language of modern times' (Bakhtin 1986:132). As we know, Pushkin is now regarded as the founder of modern written Russian. Also, another term used by Bakhtin, *the word with a sideward glance*, would have been just as apt to describe the argument above.

Let me take one further example. A contemporary Russian newspaper *Segodnia* ('Today') published an article the headline of which reads in English as 'Liberals assume an opposing stand on both socialism and disgusting capitalism'. The story deals with a meeting of the Russian social democratic groups, the aim of which was to unite the separate groups into a common party. The meeting was unfruitful, as the participants' understanding of social democracy was too dissimilar. One participant in the meeting was Academician Aleksandr Iakovlev, a former member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The newspaper story ends up with the following quote from his speech: 'The liberals go on trying to solve the macro-level problems of the economy, while we, Social Democrats, would like to see that Pulkheriia Ivanovna and Akakii Akakievich are able to live well, in case they do their work'. Despite an appropriate translation, it is somewhat difficult to understand the point of this extract. Further, a translation like this is hardly sufficient for a reader being truly interested in the state of social democracy in Russia. The quotation is clearly ironical. It was uttered by a

former member of the Politburo, who is now a Social Democrat, but who was awarded the title of Academician for his merits as a member of the Politburo. His empathy is here directed towards two characters of classical Russian literature, a lady of the manor (in *Dead Souls*) and a petty civil servant in Czarist Russia (in *The Overcoat*). However, although there are women who do not work outside home in today's Russia, few of them would wish to feed their husbands to death with their excessive dinners like Pulkheriia Ivanovna. Similarly, few of the poor civil servants of today would identify with Akakii who fell in love with the idea of the overcoat and who became a revolutionary after his death.

Thus there are alien words, in the Bakhtinian sense, in the text. These words refer to the literary characters invented and named by Gogol, and thus given them a literary life that makes them known and recognised even today. The interpretation given by Iakovlev, however, in which the names are used in the sense of 'poverty-stricken', is hardly the first to come to the mind. This interpretation, however, is close to the one attached on them in the literature textbooks of the Soviet era. Thus the ironic figure here is an academician whose knowledge of literature is limited to elementary textbooks.

As to the genre of the *Segodnia* article, it may be noted that the official Soviet journalism knew only two genres, an *article* which represented the only official truth, and a *causerie*, which was used to condemn those guilty of various misdemeanours and deviating from the right path. The reporter of *Segodnia* has combined these two genres, resulting in a causerie written on an event worthy of a serious article. Thus a new genre, a carnivalistic article, has been created, in which both things and genre are set upside down. Bakhtin (1979: 356–357) regarded journalism as a representative of modern rhetoric, and, as we know, rhetoric aims at convincing the listener of something. What we have here is thus a text that aims at making the reader laugh. And as we will remember, ecstatic laughter is a means of liberation.

We can certainly conclude – along the lines of Bakhtin's thinking – that there has been a shift from a culture of one shade only (odnotonnaia) to one of several shades (mnogotonnaia). The readers will see the macro-level economic problems in a somewhat amusing light – even though they are irreproachably expressed in a correct terminology – since they will associate the issues discussed with the nonsensical approach of a causerie.

It would also be worthwhile to discuss the role of the 'word' in different literary genres and speech genres – which are not fundamentally different. The only possible difference that may lie between them is how closed, finalized and ultimate (zavershennost') they are seen as. Bakhtin

sees *genre* as a kind of a bridge between the reality and the artistic, aesthetically transformed world. Consequently, its fundamental characteristics include both variation and invariance. A genre is under constant change, it is of two kinds, old and new at the same time. According to Bakhtin (1994: 314), it is reborn and reincarnated at each new stage of literature and in each individual work belonging to this genre. For this reason, the archaic nature that is maintained by and preserved in the genre is not ossified, but, rather, something that is capable of constant change. Genre derives its vitality from the present, but it always remembers its past and its beginnings (Bakhtin 1994: 314). It thus represents a creative memory in the process of literary development. And, of course, in all other situations in which words are used.

At the beginning of this article, a number of questions was brought up. I can now reply in the affirmative to all, and to summarize them into one single statement. Bakhtin developed all his theorizing from one simple observation: this is not the first day we are here, nor is it the last. Both the past and the future are part of the moment we are currently living.

This can be seen as a 'soft' conclusion – and I did not attain the hard applications of Bakhtin's thought really. One reason may lie in the fact that I was introduced into Bakhtin's writings in Moscow of the early 1960s. Upon my coming to the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, in 1976 and presenting Bakhtin's ideas, I soon noticed that he did not interest the serious scholars of the time. That was the age of structuralism. Up to this day, however, the students of Russian in our university are still examined on Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

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Bakhtin and Modernity: Crisis of the Architectonic, Crisis of the Dialogic, Crisis of the Carnivalesque

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Architectonics, dialogism, and carnivalism can be taken as attempts to solve the problems of the non-coincidence with oneself of the modern individual, the reification of communal and linguistic being in the modern world of abstract exchange, and the cynically opportunistic nature of dialogism, respectively. As the Bakhtinian utopia of democratic dialogue and carnivalistic openness seems to be realised in the actual forms of power and domination, a kind of return to the architectonics is needed, with an emphasis on the communally engendered forms of belonging that cannot be reified into the endless dialogue on dialogue.

Keywords: architectonics, dialogism, carnivalism, modernity

1 Introduction

Let me first state this clearly: in what follows, I am not attempting to find out 'what Bakhtin really meant'. Rather, I am more interested in the Bakhtin we have needed and created in our contemporary critical discourses. Many distinguished Bakhtinologists (see, e.g., Emerson 1995, Laine 1996) have recently argued convincingly that Bakhtin's trademarks – carnivalism, dialogism, and the like – have very little to do with what Bakhtin himself was really after. Be that as it may, the overuse of Bakhtinian terminology in cultural studies is nowadays likely to lead into a kind of embarrassment outside Bakhtinology proper as well. At times, it seems that any subject worthy of interest in academic conversation is either carnivalistic and grotesque or at least dialogic in the broad, Bakhtinian sense of the term. However, instead of dismissing various fashionable (mis)interpretations of Bakhtin in contemporary cultural

studies, I would like to argue that these (mis)appropriations, nevertheless, bring into focus some key problems in our (post)modernity. Put crudely, even a cursory glance at commercial rhetoric related to modern information technologies suffices to convince us that in the best of possible postindustrial information societies, things must be dialogical. And if this dialogism propagated for all of us (as potential client-participants) somehow seems to be of a wrong, non-Bakhtinian kind, then perhaps the Bakhtinian carnivalesque will provide a way out. That is, perhaps the joyful innocence of carnivalesque laughter, if such a thing is still somewhere in contemporary culture to be found, is able to counter the superficial and cynically opportunistic, market-mediated dialogism. In any case, we seem to have plenty of dialogism and various carnivalesque phenomena around us, waiting to be baptized 'Bakhtinian'. Unfortunately, from a Bakhtinian point of view, there just seems to be something profoundly wrong with them. Considering the popularity of Bakhtinian terminology, one is nevertheless tempted to conclude that at least some contemporary readers of Bakhtin continue look forward whether Bakhtin still has something new, profound and liberating to say about these phenomena. To exaggerate somewhat, if Bakhtin didn't exist, we probably would have created him anyway. Hence, by re-narrating some of those Bakhtin's ideas that have gained much currency in the past two decades, we can perhaps see more clearly the reason for Bakhtin's topicality. By appropriating Bakhtin's sometimes seemingly contradictory ideas to solve our problems, we will encounter various 'crises' in which a new cure always seems to germinate a new disease. The suffering will, nevertheless, prove worthwhile, as all this will, as I hope to show, provide a new way to formulate one of the key problems of modernity: *the struggle for subjectivity*.

2 From the crisis of authorship to dialogism

In his early works, Bakhtin derives the architectonics of aesthetic experience from basic structures of everyday experience, to counter the challenge of the 'irresponsibly destructive and terrifying force[s]' (Bakhtin 1993: 7) of modernity and the inadequacy of abstract 'theoretism' to deal with them. Abstract theoretism knows only the immanent logic of scientific reasoning, and it inevitably transcribes the 'unique and unified event of being' into instances of universal laws. Therefore, a new kind of 'participative thinking', a form of thought more firmly grounded in the 'eventness' of particular situations in the real life-world, is desperately needed.

In Bakhtin's ethico-aesthetic phenomenology of consciousness, the experience of one's own 'I' (which is outside time and space and therefore *unfinalized*, unable to coincide with oneself) and one's experience of 'the other' (which is shaped by spatio-temporal categories) are drawn together in an aesthetic form. The author's aesthetic activity organizes from within the hero's 'I-experience' into a meaningful, 'consummated' aesthetic form. The author is in this sense analogous to a real-life other, except that what the other in busy everyday life can in principle do only partially, the author is able to do in a God-like manner. In real life, the *finalized* image of myself - of what I am and what I could be - the other provides 'as a gift' is only *partially* true. In aesthetic work, however, we get a *complete* image of the Hero as a unique whole person. What is noteworthy is that in this phenomenological model, the ideal role of the other is almost God-like, loving and caring *outsideness* or *transgression*. (Bakhtin 1990: 35-36, 90, 109, 123, Emerson 1995: 406-408.)

In Bakhtin's early works, then, the hero is independent of the author on the level of *content*. The prerequisite of aesthetic *form*, however, is that the hero's life is completely finalized, so that the reader will find a complete answer to the question concerning the hero, 'who is he?' (Bakhtin 1990: 174). In his Dostoevsky book, Bakhtin, however, modifies his approach. Previously, Dostoevsky was a prime example of a failure in aesthetic finalization. But now 'the polyphonic artistic thinking' provides precisely the kind of *form* suitable for describing the unfinalizability of self-consciousness (Laine 1991: 390-391). Only the hero can answer to the question 'who is he?' (Bakhtin 1984: 48). In Dostoevsky, we have the hero as a whole person in a more real sense, so to speak, as another *unfinalized* subject.¹⁵

The polyphonic artistic thinking is therefore a form of ethics: 'a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object' (Bakhtin 1984: 58). The object required can thus be found only in the *word*. As there are only subjects in Dostoevsky's works, his 'works are a word about a word [dialogically] addressed to a word' (Bakhtin 1984: 266). The resulting dialogism is therefore extralinguistic, something that must be *induced* into linguistic material (Laine 1992: 430). The polyphonic artistic thinking, then, is also a solution to the 'crisis of authorship' Bakhtin (1990:

¹⁵ That is to say, 'the polyphonic artistic thinking' turns out to be a form of precisely the kind of 'participative thinking' Bakhtin (1993) was after in the early architectonics. In his later works, Bakhtin further develops the idea of 'participatory outsideness' in the humanities in general. In the humanities, the object of investigation is always a text in a broad sense. And the text, according to Bakhtin, is always an event, a dialogical relationship between two independent consciousnesses (Bakhtin 1986: 106). As Caryl Emerson (1995: 406) summarizes, 'all texts are personalities, that is, all texts talk back' so that as an object of investigation, a text cannot be analysed in a strict sense of the term; one can only *address* it dialogically.

203) worries about in the early essay. But the crisis has its 'objective preconditions' as well: the modernization of the Russian society. 'Capitalism [...] broke down the seclusion and inner ideological self-sufficiency of the social spheres [...] almost catastrophically', but Russia was still only on the threshold of modernity so that Dostoevsky was still uniquely able to capture 'the spirit of the world-in-the-state-of-becoming' (Bakhtin 1984: 19–20).

3 From the crisis of dialogism to the carnivalesque

'The non-coincidence with oneself' of the hero in modern novel, then, is not only a phenomenological problem. In a sociological sense, this problem is essentially connected to the erosion of communal ties in premodern societies with the advent of modernity. It is difficult to determine for certain who the modern individual, detached from traditional communal ties, actually is. The non-coincidence also follows from the fact that modern individual is *a cross-section of various social spheres*. Obviously, there is a new kind of freedom in this situation, but this freedom is also extremely fragile. The catastrophe resides in the fact that the abstract world of exchange is indifferent to the unique individuality of a person. So 'the major emotional thrust' in Dostoevsky's works is 'the struggle against *reification* of man' (Bakhtin 1984: 62). The modern person is dangerously close to an *impersonal abstraction*, unable to invest his whole personality into any particular dialogical relationship: to make such an investment means to exclude other possibilities. Thus, Dostoevsky's novels show how 'every atom of life is trembled with this contradictory unity of the capitalist world and capitalist consciousness, permitting nothing to rest easily in isolation, but at the same time resolving nothing' (Bakhtin 1984: 19).

Bakhtin naturally opposes the kind of vulgar sociology that reduces polyphony to its 'objective preconditions'. The polyphonic artistic thinking is an attempt to understand and to find a way out of the crisis in which there is, so to speak, *too much dialogism* or in which the dialogism is of the wrong kind. It is worthwhile to notice that Voloshinov actually disapproves of the predominance of 'opinions' in 'present-day bourgeois Europe'. When what is 'opined' is secondary to the way the 'opining' is done, there seems to be nothing but endless dialogue on dialogue for the sake of dialogue. (Voloshinov 1973: 159). This concluding remark on 'the reification of discourse' is usually interpreted as a kind of window dressing for Marxist censors. However, it can be argued that it is precisely the reification of the architectonic that gives birth to the

celebrated Bakhtinian dialogism (cf. Tihanov 1995). In his theory of the novel, Bakhtin states that dialogism is essentially a matter of dialogizing various impersonal opinions, or socio-ideological languages. The hero is no longer a person or an individual *voice* but rather an artistically organized *image of language* which is dialogized in relation to other languages (cf. Hirschkop 1989: 11, 22).¹⁶ The novel as such figures as a triumph of ironic or mature consciousness over monological naivety: just as in the modern world all that is solid melts into air, in the novel the epic unity of man is destroyed (cf. Bakhtin 1981: 37). The novel reveals that *language itself* is dialogic and heteroglot, and no finalizing definition – ‘who is he?’ – will ever be more than a comic, artificial mask for man (is this the case for women as well is another matter)¹⁷.

The reverse side of this triumph, however, is the fragility of the new freedom thus achieved. When everything is placed in the realm of opinions, it is common sense to be at least a bit cautious in one's compulsorily dialogic life. We can say, following Georg Simmel, that the communicational ability figures as an essential mechanism for adapting into the modern world. If ‘to be means to communicate’, and if life is nothing but ‘deepest communion’ (Bakhtin 1984: 287), one is bound to wonder whether there is something threatening in all this. Simmel's idea is precisely this: we cope with the compulsory dialogism by inventing special forms of *sociability* (*Geselligkeit*). The realm of sociability is a kind of liminal sphere, or carnivalism in its modern, chamber masquerade form (Bakhtin 1984: 130–131), from which material hard facts of life, on one hand, and deeply personal matters, on the other, are excluded. If the modern personality, detached from the communal ties of the premodern world, is somehow impersonal, he or she still manages to negotiate some kind of personality in this artificial sphere of discretion which is not

¹⁶ In Bakhtin's own words, ‘there – on the rich soil of novelistic prose – double-voicedness draws its energy, its dialogized ambiguity, not from *individual* dissonances, misunderstandings or contradictions (however tragic, however firmly grounded in individual destinies); in the novel, this double-voicedness sinks its roots deep into a fundamental, socio-linguistic speech diversity and multi-languagedness’ (Bakhtin 1981: 325–326).

¹⁷ One should note that in various theories of modernity and modernization, the modern subject is often covertly gendered as male. The complexity of the issue, however, cannot be sufficiently dealt with in a footnote. As for the question of ‘Bakhtin and women’, even if one accepts the idea that for Bakhtin, gender was not an issue and to make it such means to colonize his ideas by contemporary theories (Emerson 1995: 402), gender nevertheless is a crucial issue in *our* context. Criticism directed to the *appropriations* of Bakhtin's ideas aimed to solve our problems is therefore perfectly justified. For example, whether the attempts to construct distinctively female forms of nomadic subjectivity from historical variations of the grotesque (‘the carnivalesque’, ‘the uncanny’ and ‘the prosthetic’ forms of the grotesque body, respectively) merely effectuate a ‘becoming-woman’ of a masculine theory of subjectivity. There is, to quote Rosi Braidotti (1991: 14), an obvious ‘danger [...] of homologation, and hence of disappearing into the other's text, the master's voice, in established conceptual frameworks’.

'original' community but not the abstract world of exchange either. (Simmel 1964: 46–49, Noro 1991: 47, Vähämäki 1992: 14–15.)

For Bakhtin, however, this is not enough. The carnivalistic dialogism of modernity that permits nothing to rest in isolation but also resolves nothing comes dangerously close to a consumeristic world of fashion. In endless daydreaming the difference between a pleasant fantasy and an accomplished deed – so important in the early architectonics – is lost. But fortunately, in the novel it is still possible to build 'some sort of human community that lies beyond existing social forms' (Bakhtin 1984: 280). What this means, concretely, is that everything must be focused into 'a cross-section of a single moment' (Bakhtin 1984: 28). The novelistic dialogue that is to reveal 'the man in man', the always-yet-to-be 'I' necessarily outside time and space, must be located outside the plot. This, however, is not the case in realistic novel in general, as Franco Moretti has shown with Balzac as his prime example. In the modern world, ordinary people are rarely able to contemplate and to capture in a single fleeting moment – as kinds of 'heroes of modern life' – their busy everyday lives. The novel reflects this by showing that the meaning of dialogic encounters is revealed only as dictated by surprising turns of the plot (Moretti 1988: 125). As for dialogue, this means that what according to Bakhtin should reveal 'the man in man' is actually more close to Nietzschean *ressentiment*, intolerance, envy, vanity, hostility etc.¹⁸ In his analysis of 'the word with a sideward glance' and the like, Bakhtin actually comes close to admitting that in the modern world the idea of God-like transgression as the loving and caring other seems to be lost. All is endless, meaningless talk, in which what is actually said does not matter all that much. What matters is how to present and market oneself with the social language one chooses to adopt (cf. Bourdieu 1985: 113–115). So, in the absence of God-like transgression we have a sort of transcendence of language common to all. Communicability as such is separated into an autonomous (market)sphere, and it is precisely this spectacle of *abstract communicability* that finally comes to be an unsurmountable obstacle for 'true' communion (Agamben 1993: 82). In the predominance of impersonal 'opinions', all is dialogical, carnivalistic and polyphonic meaninglessness.

Thus, we are back in a crisis situation. If Dostoevsky's dialogism crystallizes the idea of 'human community' the modern world is unable to accomplish, it comes as no surprise that the premodern world becomes

¹⁸ For an extensive treatment of *ressentiment* as a constitutively dialogical category, see Bernstein (1992). One might also add at this point that the dialogic relationship of the 'I' and 'the other' in the modern world often seems to attain many of the characteristics described in René Girard's (1984) theory of 'mimetic desire'.

an object for nostalgia. The premodern forms of communality seem to provide the possibility of at least a kind of 'personal' impersonality, contrary to the modern world of abstract exchange where community 'out of purely human material' (Bakhtin 1984: 281) seems no longer possible. (Cf. Vähämäki 1992: 14.)

More concretely, if the dialogue turns out to be mere meaningless babble, we need something else than mere words. And it is no surprise that this something else is laughter. Only laughter has 'remained uninfected by lies' of the 'moribund officialdom' (Bakhtin 1981: 236). Dostoevsky found a possibility for 'the creation of the open structure of the great dialogue' (Bakhtin 1984: 177) by drawing from the forms of thousand-year-old carnivalistic popular culture. These forms contain the great experience of mankind, although we know only its fragments in distorted forms in our 'sociable' free time activities.

Thus, on one hand, Bakhtin wants to return all that which is fragmented in the modern world back into a primordial (non)unity. The carnivalesque is in this sense a way of transcending the repressive differentiation of life in modernity. It contains a sort of instinctive *phylonomic ethics* of eternal return, endless succession of generations where life itself feasts and procreates, kills and gives birth simultaneously (Laine 1996: 4-5).¹⁹ Bakhtin also demonstrates that the prehistory of the novel starts from the carnivalesque. So the genre tradition of the novel perhaps still contains a way out of modernity into 'the truly human'. In carnival rituals, according to Bakhtin, people were momentarily 'reborn for new, purely human relations' (Bakhtin 1968: 10). The truly or purely human, however, is now something preindividual. The modern individual - of whom it is impossible to say 'who is he?' - is possible only in the modern world of exchange. All modern differences and othernesses are inevitably lost in the ancient all-inclusive ritual, which, Bakhtin seems to forget, often culminates into a ritual killing of 'the

¹⁹ The notion of 'the phylonomic', as opposed to 'the ontonomic', comes from Bakhtin's mentor Tadeusz Zielinski. The former refers to the pre-Socratic and pre-Christian idea of ultimate value in biological immortality of continuous chain of generations, contrary to the later Christian idea of eschatological immortality of an individual soul (Laine 1996: 4, cf. Curtis 1986: 345). According to Tapani Laine (1996: 5-6), Bakhtin appreciated both the pre-Christian (*carnivalesque* non-coincidence with oneself of the world) and Christian (*architectonic* non-coincidence with oneself of the ethical subject) forms of extratemporal *unfinalizability*. To find out Bakhtin's position with regards to modernity, it is surely worthwhile to study how and from where Bakhtin finds ways to link together the phylonomic great time and the ontonomic extratemporal unfinalizability of the ethical subject - both of which transcend the 'small experience' of modern, ever fleeting temporality. But then again, too polemical dismissal of various contemporary appropriations of Bakhtin as somehow 'false' or 'superficial' means missing the possibility to study how the problems of *our* (post)modernity figure in a peculiar way in the so called Bakhtin industry.

scapegoat' or other kind of bloodshed and violence (cf. Carroll 1983: 81, Girard 1984).²⁰

On the other hand, Bakhtin puts special emphasis on the figures of the clown, the rogue, and the fool. These figures contain the seeds of novelistic, Galileian conception of a linguistically diverse world. 'The entire being of characters such as these is [...] utterly on the surface; everything is brought out on to the square, so to speak'. Their 'being coincide with their role' in the marketplace, and thus their 'existence is a reflection of some other's mode of being' (Bakhtin 1981: 159-160). Now, this 'other's mode of being' could in fact be taken to refer to the modern 'impersonal' person. The novel in general, we recall, is a decisive break from 'the epic world', and it articulates the modern idea of all that is solid melting into air. And the modern person, who works his or her impersonal personality out of various styles, fashions, social spheres etc. is very much like the clown that figures as the primordial novelist. The attempt to find an anchorage point for a modern impersonal personality in the agrarian carnivalesque seems to lead us back into urban life, only this time as ever more cynical.

4 From the crisis of the carnivalesque back to the architectonic?

We can continue by stating that the spectacular, autonomous sphere of abstract communicability is our carnivalistic marketplace. The role of the modern fool, therefore, is a peculiar one. As Michael André Bernstein (1992) has demonstrated, we are all too familiar with the repertoire of the fool. If the modern fool wants to be a critic of the prevailing forms of bourgeois life he (indeed, usually only he) cannot merely coincide with his all too familiar role and thereby reflect some other form of life. His own role as such must become the object of criticism and mockery. The new 'voice from the underground' must beat its predecessors with ever

²⁰ Yet it is possible to argue that for Bakhtin, the 'theatre of cruelty' of the carnivalesque is essentially a possibility 'to have done with the judgement', as Gilles Deleuze (1993: 158-169) might put it. Contrary to the despotic 'doctrine of judgement' that postpones the locus of ultimate meaning and value to infinity (life as endless dialogue with the superaddressee as the missing ultimate interlocutor), in the immanence of the carnivalistic 'system of cruelty' one feels directly in one's body to whom one is in debt (the continuous chain of generations). That is, in Deleuzian terms, the affirmation of finite bodily existence in the present, as a strife between multiplicity of forces directly affecting the body, is thus able to resist all attempts to judge existence from a perspective that claims to be higher (Goodchild 1996: 35, 206). In Zielinski's terms, perhaps in the strife between 'instinctive ethics' and 'our morality' it is possible to attain a new kind of innocent, youthful faith in what one is able to do in one's contemporary bodily existence, contrary to all prescribed 'higher sanctions' (Zielinski 1925: 122-123).

more vicious cynicism. Hence, the modern, self-conscious fool always already coincides with the very role he attempts to subvert. Contrary to what Bakhtin (1984: 177) says, this kind of generic 'objective memory' inevitably destroys 'the open structure of the great dialogue', as the new voice *comes into being* by resentfully *mocking* previous attempts to reach 'higher spheres of the spirit and the intellect'. As Bernstein demonstrates, the line from Jean-François Rameau to the *Underground Man* to Louis Ferdinand Céline and finally to Charles Manson is a history of ever bitterer carnival, where the only possibility for a new 'authentic' voice comes from the intertextual marketplace of all-inclusive spectacular communication. A kind of inevitably cumulative 'couldn't-care-less' attitude *produces* (not merely reflects) the disturbing mode of being of the cultural stereotype of the modern, cynically self-conscious fool.

Bernstein's analysis of the development of literary carnivalesque leads us to question further the presumed innocent 'authenticity' of the premodern carnivalesque. Bakhtin himself distinguishes the genuine from the false by stating that the carnivalesque was, until the second half of the seventeenth century, 'experienced as something unmediated', so that 'several [literary] genres in fact directly serviced carnival' (Bakhtin 1984: 131). Yet it is precisely the *mediation* of the carnivalesque into literature that interests Bakhtin. One of the 'authentic' genres 'directly servicing' carnival is no doubt the Saturnalian dialogue of the master and the fool. Now, the authenticity notwithstanding, it is common sense to say that the one who gains his daily bread by seducing his amusement-seeking master is necessarily 'self-conscious' of his role as a 'mediating' cultural stereotype. As for the general idea of 'the carnivalization of literature', the 'transposition' of the language of folk culture into literature (Bakhtin 1984: 122), we can say that while, on one hand, the carnivalesque attains a new kind of seductive power in this process, on the other hand the all-inclusive ritual is inevitably turned into an object of voyeuristic gaze. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) have demonstrated that the carnivalization is in fact a process of renegotiation and transcoding of the 'high' and the 'low': as the carnivalesque was excluded from the emergent bourgeois life, it was fetishized into an object of power, fear and desire. The 'real thing' was duplicated into an object of bourgeois desire, and this fascination then created a market for 'carnavalesque' art.²¹

²¹ As Stephen Greenblatt (1990: 68) has argued, this may be true even in the case of Rabelais: the Rabelaisian bodily excess was perhaps already at the time of publication something fascinatingly 'vulgar'.

Interestingly, in criticising the cultural sensibility of the age of cynical reason in the 1980s, Peter Sloterdijk (1988) turns into the forms of the ancient carnivalesque laughter to find a way out of the meaningless and cynically opportunistic dialogism. However, he finds out that the carnivalesque 'cynical impulse', as he calls it, was for ages ago doubled into the Fool's and the Master's cynicism, respectively. The Fool's innocent kynicism (*Kynismus*) means simply sticking out one's tongue and farting in public, and so forth. The Master's self-conscious cynicism (*Zynismus*), on the other hand, means lifting one's mask and laughing demonically at those one oppresses: '*ces't la vie. Noblesse oblige*'. Marx once said that economic relations are like 'character masks' people wear while not knowing it. In contrast, the modern self-conscious cynic knows perfectly well what he (here again, apparently only he) does, and does what he does because there are no alternatives; some one else would do it anyway. The interesting point in Sloterdijk's analysis is the fact that the modern cynic is so clearly a middle-aged hippie with an academic career, seeking consolation for the disappointment to the ideals of his youth. To lament for the faith of 'kynical impulse that wants to jump out of fiction into reality' (Sloterdijk 1988: 108) comes down to insisting whether there still are 'real' hippies in antiquity, or at least in anti-bourgeois art, some primordial carnivalistic innocence to get the real dialogue going?

But as we saw earlier, modern fools, artists, various counter-cultural icons or whatever are perfectly aware of their role. They also know that the bourgeois 'repression' is actually very weak. It can be summarized in a phrase 'if only I would dare'. This virtually begs for being taken advantage of. But in the marketplace of all-inclusive media reality the public taste has developed a desire to be seduced in a more subtle manner. Seduction, as Jean Baudrillard (1988, 1990) has written, works like an *immanence structured by conventional rules of a game*. The game knows no subjects (nor the problem 'who is he or she?'), no truth or untruth, only its own ritualistic immanence. And it is precisely in this structure that the 'obscene' simulacral transparency of the objects of consumeristic media marketplace contains its peculiar secret. Everything turns into a sign for a non-existent commodity (other sign), into the mute and flat surface where being coincides with its simulacral role. In a world of all-inclusive simulation, there is no longer any need for a modern cynic to worry how to 'jump out of fiction into reality'. Charles Manson, to cite a famous example, was perfectly aware of his role as kind of a fool supposed to reveal some hidden truth, but finally destined to become a

mere commodity with its peculiar seductive irony: 'tell me what I am, and I'll be just what you want me to be'.²²

All this comes down to the fact that the all-inclusive simulacral dialogism needs continuously new carnivalesque 'others' to be assimilated and marketed as new commodities. What in the early modernity represented a threat to the prevailing order is now a new exciting possibility for 'becoming-other'. There is, in the contemporary critical theory, a tremendous market for 'the other' (Braidotti 1991: 9). So the Bakhtinian dialogism and carnivalism have also become a part of the all-too-familiar cynical babble where all that is solid 'always already' melts into *différance*. That is, the proliferation of difference in critical discourses easily leads to a kind of comforting indifference, in which nothing of substantial value can be *all that* different.²³

Once again, we are back in a crisis situation. It is perhaps useful to follow Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their suggestion that language is not primarily a medium for communication, but *a way to transmit orders*. Every speech is reported speech, but what it conveys is orders concerning prior orders. We are part of an all-inclusive 'conversation' where everything has already been said, and only repetition and obedience is demanded. The reported speech is 'the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices [...] from which I draw my voice' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 84). The 'I' is in this sense also an order-word, a linguistic marker that indicates the way a body is at a given moment in a given context transformed into something else and to somewhere else –

²² It should be borne in mind that the seductive power of modern carnivalism can also be lethal, as Bernstein (1992) perceptively demonstrates. When the promise of 'authenticity' provided by the carnivalesque is nothing but the self-destructive assimilation into the already-said that denies personal expression, the cynically self-conscious modern fool can in fact be perfectly serious in what he appropriates tongue-in-cheek. Actualized in concrete deeds, the carnivalistic 'cynical impulse' is thus most likely to lead into senseless violence, as the case of the Manson family demonstrates.

²³ For a polemical, thought-provoking analysis of the 'ludic' poststructuralism as a form of modern, cynically self-conscious 'master's cynicism', see Zavarzadeh (1992). To somewhat reformulate Zavarzadeh's arguments, nowadays there seems to be a particularly heavy demand for Bakhtinian dialogism applied to teaching practices. This comes as no surprise, because in postindustrial information societies there is an increasing demand for labour force equipped with the kind of communicational abilities suitable for 'actively choosing one's orientation' (Bakhtin 1981: 296) in the cynical heteroglossia of the international advertizing and marketing industry. So perhaps, with the help of applied Bakhtinian dialogism in the classroom, no more '[computer-] illiterate peasants', 'naively immersed in an unmoving and for [them] unshakable everyday world' (Bakhtin 1981: 295). What seems to be easily forgotten in the praise of *dialogism*, *polyphony* and *heteroglossia* is the simple fact that in the all-inclusive dialogism of contemporary culture, something is always excluded: those 'flawed consumers' (Bauman 1997: 41) who do not have the financial and cultural capital required for participation. Hence, to have a truly 'open and free' world of endless dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense, it is necessary to face one's answerability to those excluded from the ongoing dialogism.

without any visible material chance (Massumi 1993: 33).²⁴ To reformulate Bakhtin's words, a speech act, be it of a monologic or dialogic design, forces one to act, experience, think, and be conscious within the limits of what one is without the possibility to cease to be oneself (Bakhtin 1984: 52). Fulfilling an immanent social presupposition, the speech act that performs an event in discourse thus 'refers back to a psycho-social type which functions as a subjacent third person' (Goodchild 1996: 61). 'You are no longer at home' (yes, I am at school, a good schoolboy); 'You are no longer at school' (yes, I am in the factory, a good worker); and so forth. So to 'hear voices in everything' (Bakhtin 1986: 169) is to be a docile citizen and obey commands.

However, in a globally 'dialogic' postindustrial information society, the comforting possibility 'to be what one is' is an old-fashioned luxury denied to most people. Once one is forced to realize that to be indeed means *nothing but* to communicate, life in a world of endless dialogue on dialogue seems to be, in a peculiar way, a *life lived in advance*. When the whole point of communication is nothing but communication itself, all 'contents' - actually accomplished deeds - become indistinguishable from abstract possibilities. There is nothing one cannot do 'in theory', as long as one knows how to present and market oneself in a properly sociable, non-conclusive fashion. That is, as long as one is cynically clear-sighted enough to keep the market open by not actually doing anything, besides dialogically appropriating the familiar *slogan-words* currently in the air. In modern societies, the idea of an external sovereign instance or *superaddressee* outside communication provided a promise of *finalized* meaning at some later point in life, in the manner of 'we'll talk about it later, after you graduate, after you get a decent job...'. In (post)modern information societies, however, it seems that the possibilities waiting in

²⁴ The space available to me does not permit a more extensive treatment of the parallel between Deleuze & Guattari's and Bakhtin's ideas. Let it be stated briefly, though, that Bakhtin has a term very close to the notion of order-word or slogan (*mot d'ordre*). According to Deleuze & Guattari (1988: 79-83), the primary function of the order-word is to literally 'order' or arrange bodily subjects by 'incorporeal transformations'. The order-word 'I sentence you ...', for example, transforms instantaneously the body of the accused into the body of a convict. To take another example, this type of very real and effective, instantaneous 'illocutionary force' of a slogan was apparently very clear to Lenin, who in his pamphlet 'On Slogans' saw that the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' was valid from 27th February to 4th July, but after that precise date lost all of its power to effectuate a desirable closure for an open historical conjuncture. Now, according to Bakhtin (1981: 290), 'every socially significant verbal performance has the ability [...] to infect with its own intention certain aspects of language'. This, according to him, comes about with the help of the slogan-word. These words are created anew every day, perhaps even every hour. It has often been said that Bakhtinian dialogism fails to theorize power adequately. However, to develop further the idea of 'instantaneousness' of the slogan-word along the lines opened by Deleuze and Guattari provides a useful corrective. What the order-word, with the help of the reported speech of other order-words (the illocutionary force of the 'collective assemblage of enunciation') instantaneously 'infects' is ultimately not just language, but bodies and their arrangement in society ('the machinic assemblage of bodies').

the future have already – indeed, ‘always already’ – been realized, as you either are already part of the world of endless dialogue or you will never be. When everything is structured as a rejoinder to the already-said, complying in advance with the rules of the game, as it were, everything seems to be already said and done, before anything is actually said and done. Hence, the market for exciting, carnivalesque others to open new, desperately needed possibilities for more of the same. (Cf. Vähämäki 1997: 211–213, 322–328.)

Yet the schizophrenic multiplicity of voices can also provide a way out. To reduce everything to language and voice is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, an instance of despotic overcoding. But language is in fact continuous socially motivated variation in Labov's sense. As Bakhtin emphasises, its internal dialogism always escapes linguistic overcoding. One's linguistic being cannot be so easily submitted to the pressures of the homogeneous linguistic community of modern information workers, in the manner of ‘you will construct grammatically correct sentences...’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 7). It is always possible to experiment with ‘the authoritarian word’ by dialogising it into an ‘internally persuasive word’ (Bakhtin 1981: 167). However, when the social dialogue is saturated with familiar slogan-words or no-man's thoughts so that everything seems to be worth everything else, the crucial thing is that a whole person is *not* expressed and does *not* sound in language (cf. Bakhtin 1984: 93). In his early works Bakhtin talks about the ‘emotional-volitional tone’ that transforms the linguistic material into a meaningful form in which, finally, ‘I find myself, find my own productive, axiologically form-giving, activity’ (Bakhtin 1990: 304). ‘The feeling of activity’ that generates the meaningful form in which I ‘find myself’ is, according to Guattari's interpretation, an infinitely complex process of subjectification in which the pre-individual, polyphonic ‘collective assemblage of enunciation’ effectuates *affective ‘existential territories’*. That is, a meaningful yet simultaneously unfinalized form is engendered from pre-individual affective content. As an active way of being, the emotional-volitional affective reality thus speaks ‘to’ or ‘through’ me, as it were, functioning as polyphonic pre-individual components of existential self-positioning of a bodily subject. Being the active kernel of enunciation, the ‘eventness’ of this immanently social process *cannot be discursively delimited*. And the subject thus finalized is always in the process of becoming-other in a polysemiotic field whose micropolitical forces never reduce to language and communication. (Guattari 1990: 67–69, 76–77.)

It indeed seems to be the case that ‘the [Bakhtinian] utopia of democratic dialogue’ is in our (post)modern world ‘realized in the actual

forms of power and domination' (Vähämäki 1997: 288).²⁵ In the predominance of multitude of public opinions endlessly and indifferently communicating dialogically (and preferably also carnivalistically, so that nobody gets bored), the possibility to mediate actual forms of communal life to the dialogic public sphere is all but destroyed. When each word is structured in advance according to the rules of the game, it indeed is 'inseparably linked with dialogic communion' and 'by its nature wants to be heard and answered' (Bakhtin 1984: 300). As opposed to the dialogue in Dostoevsky's novels, however, each word in the dialogic public sphere must 'by its nature' be an *immediately understandable empty phrase* or 'no-man's thought' to successfully provoke attention. Rather than 'dialogic communion' we thus have a direct reference to the *indifferent audience*. And the required immediate answer turns out to be a simple *yes* or a *no*, and nothing besides that. (Cf. Vähämäki 1997: 119, 150–153, 289.)

Guattari's interpretation of Bakhtin, however, points to another possibility. The challenge of a truly political 'coming community' resides hidden somewhere besides or amidst the spectacular 'theoretism' of the ever-present media reality. The ever-presence of dialogism notwithstanding, the possibility for 'truly human' – to once again borrow Bakhtin's enigmatic expression – forms of communal and political life hides in the 'possible' or 'virtual' that is real without being actual. What cannot be brought into the 'public discussion' subsists or inheres in the already-said as an unactualized but nevertheless real possibility for new ways of communal being. (Cf. Vähämäki 1997: 186, 193.) In Bakhtinian terms, the emotional-volitional forms of belonging that cannot be actualized in the social dialogue are nevertheless constitutive for the unique and unified event of being.

Dostoevsky 'thought not in ['no-man's'] thoughts but in points of view, consciousnesses, voices' (Bakhtin 1984: 93). He was thus able to describe the 'non-coincidence' of man, whose being, in essential sense, lies in the fact that he is always something-yet-to-be. However odd it may sound, this is also the ethical significance of the 'death of man' in contemporary critical discourses. According to Giorgio Agamben (1993), ethics is possible only if humans are not. Essential subjectivity – existence

²⁵ For example, if it is impossible to say for sure who the modern individual is, then this is an acute problem from the point of view of modern bio-power. The anonymous, potential threat of 'the dangerous individual' must, according to Michel Foucault (1988), be disciplined by transforming whatever he or she is into an identifiable category (i.e. into a solvable problem to be 'cured' by whatever institutional procedure seems appropriate). Applied Bakhtinian dialogism seems to provide a perfect tool to achieve this end. To deliberately twist Bakhtin's words, 'the genuine life of the personality' can and must be *produced* by forcing the silent and therefore dangerous individual to speak and to participate in the life of endless dialogue, where 'through dialogic penetration' one finally 'freely and reciprocally reveals himself' (Bakhtin 1984: 59).

as individual and communal property (to be an ultra-leftist student, a patriotic worker etc.) - always separates you from what you can do. So ethics must begin with the fact of one's existence as a possibility or potentiality. Contrary to the actual forms of political power (modern bio-power), ethics is not concerned with life in the abstract (that is, with the estimated opinion of the public audience), but manners or forms of life (*ethos*), with the 'free use of the self' which is 'being engendered from one's own manner'. This singularity communally engendered from its own manner is possible only in such a 'coming community' that requires no identity from its members (Agamben 1993: 28–29, 43, 85). And this kind of an idea of freedom in a community of all those who have nothing in common (Lingis 1994), based on nothing but belonging to itself (that which in itself cannot belong to anything), seems to come very close to the Bakhtinian idea of the 'non-alibi in being' that requires absolute answerability in a 'truly human' world where 'nothing conclusive has yet taken place [...], the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future' (Bakhtin 1984: 166).

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On Dynamics and Stability: Saussure, Voloshinov, and Bakhtin

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In Saussure's approach, dynamics is considered as a property of parole and, therefore, as irrelevant for the scientific study of language. In dialogism, dynamics is seen as a built-in feature of an utterance which stems from the fact that utterances are situated and reflect the characteristics of a given social context. This, however, does not undermine the fact systemicity and stability can also be found in language. Thus, in the dialogical view, both dynamics and stability are seen as natural properties which reflect and also emerge from the social relations of a given community.

Keywords: dynamics, stability, language, communication

1 Introduction

In the dialogical philosophy of language, one of the most important themes to which Bakhtin and Voloshinov frequently kept returning throughout their intellectual careers is undoubtedly the critique of Saussurean style structural linguistics. It should be pointed out, however, that although Bakhtin and Voloshinov in many occasions addressed their critical comments on structuralism explicitly towards Ferdinand de Saussure, it is not difficult to notice that the relevance of their critique is not limited to his views only. On the contrary, it seems that some of the critical comments are even more pertinent when applied to those who have interpreted and developed Saussure's original ideas than to Saussure himself (see also Kirzhaeva 1992). Hence, one possible view to the dialogical philosophy of language is to consider it as a critical dialogue with the representatives of various structural and formal approaches including Saussurean structural linguistics, more functionally oriented ideas of the Prague Circle as well as the Russian and Soviet

formal approaches to linguistics and poetics. In this respect, it can be argued that these structural and formal approaches taken as a whole function as an appropriate context for the interpretation of Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's linguistic ideas (see also Murashov 1997: 204).

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, the relationship between the dialogical philosophy of language and the Saussurean approach will be discussed concentrating on the way in which the relationship of dynamic and stable aspects of language is construed in these approaches respectively. In this discussion, I will also refer to previously unpublished material that recently appeared in Russian in Bakhtin's *Collected Works* (see Bakhtin 1996), and argue that this material can offer new insights into this widely discussed topic. Second, Bakhtin's view will also be compared with that of Voloshinov in order to point out some differences between them. In earlier research – perhaps due to the well-known dispute on the authorship of the so-called disputed texts of the Bakhtin Circle – the ideas of Bakhtin and Voloshinov have been interpreted as if they were speaking in the same voice. There are, indeed, many apparent similarities in Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's approaches, but this does not undermine the fact they also seem to emphasise slightly different aspects in their critique of linguistics (see, e.g., Dentith 1995).

2 Saussure: system and speech

One of the basic tenets of structural and formal linguistics, as well as semiotics in general, is the distinction between the *etic* and *emic* levels of organisation. In other words, the fundamental theoretical and methodological assumption of various structural and formal theories of language is that variant manifestations or realizations can and must be distinguished from the invariant systems underlying them. In this connection it is impossible to overlook the name of Saussure who is frequently associated with this distinction and also given the credit for giving it an exact formulation. On the other hand, the distinction between a system and its manifestations is not attributable to Saussure only, despite the fact that he can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the most prominent spokesmen for this distinction in the history of modern linguistics. Although it was Saussure who introduced the *langue-parole* distinction in the study of language, it can be argued that the distinction between the *etic* and the *emic* reflects the tradition of Western (scientific) thinking which started from Plato and developed into rationalism later in the 17th century. According to this view, behind the variety and variance

of the phenomena that occur in the world there exists a stable system with certain regularities.

According to Saussure (1990: 8), defining the exact object of linguistics is complicated by the fact that, unlike in other disciplines, there is no given object of linguistic study that would exist independently of some chosen point of view. To quote Saussure (1990: 10),

Language [langage] in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries separating various domains. It is at the same time physical, physiological and psychological. It belongs both to the individual and to society. [...] No classification of human phenomena provides any single place for it, because *language* as such *has no discernible unity*. (Emphasis added.)

For Saussure (1990: 8–9), language (*langage*) in all of its manifestations is a multifaceted and multilayered phenomenon that represents simultaneously two mutually dependent dimensions such as articulatory-auditory, sound-idea, social-individual, and system-evolution. Saussure argues that as a result of this multiplicity language cannot be studied as a monolithic whole from the perspective of one scientific discipline, but can be approached from a cross-disciplinary perspective only. In order to study language scientifically within a single discipline, namely linguistics, linguists are forced to delimit and specify their object of study. In other words, a linguist has to choose between different possible perspectives to language, and it is the viewpoint from which linguistic phenomena are approached that determines and constructs the exact object of study. Thus, language as a whole (*langage*) has both individual and social dimensions, and, consequently, can be approached from either of these two perspectives. Furthermore, in Saussure's view, language can be seen simultaneously as a fixed homogeneous system or as a process of constant development and change depending on the chosen point of view. For him, the system and its history are closely connected with each other which means that in reality it is extremely difficult to separate these two aspects.

One of the main arguments presented by Saussure is that it is necessary to make an absolute distinction between language system (*langue*) on one hand and concrete acts of speaking or speech (*parole*) on the other hand in order to study language scientifically. By doing this, we, according to Saussure (1990: 13–14), also distinguish '(1) what is social from what is individual, and (2) what is essential from what is ancillary and more or less accidental'. Saussure thus maintains that language as a system belongs to the realm of social phenomena whereas speech is considered as purely individual, and therefore, also more or less haphazard in its nature (cf. Thibault 1997: 24–25). For Saussure, the social

nature of language as a system means that the language system, when conceived as a system of linguistic norms, can only exist within a community or beyond any single individual (see also Kiklevich 1993: 11, cf. Thibault 1997: 48). As far as the relationship between the language system and the different idiolects of the members of a given community is concerned, Saussure (1990: 13) characterizes the language system as 'a kind of mean' which is based on the fact that the members of a given community understand the relations between signs and concepts in more or less, but not exactly, same way. Speech, in turn, is for Saussure only an occasional expression of an individual intention in which a speaker freely combines the elements of the system, although there clearly are rules regarding the possible syntagmatic relations between the units of the system. As a result of the alleged individual and occasional nature of speech, Saussure argues that the concrete acts of speech must be regarded as secondary and uninteresting from the point of view linguistic science.

The fact that in Saussurean linguistics language is predominantly seen from the point of view of static structures can be partly explained by Saussure's understanding of the social-individual distinction. According to Holquist (1990: 46), Saussure can be characterized as a *dialectic* thinker, since he sees the difference between individual and social aspects of language in terms of a binary opposition (see also Lähtenmäki 1996, cf. Thibault 1997: 117). In Saussure's view, social and individual seem to be mutually exclusive terms which means that linguistic phenomena must be approached *either* from the point of view of 'social' *or* from the point of view of 'individual'. Thus the fact that Saussure, at the level of methodology, makes an absolute distinction between social and individual would seem to exclude the possibility to consider linguistic phenomena as something that represent simultaneously both of these dimensions. When the relation between social and individual dimensions is conceived in terms of a binary opposition, it becomes logically impossible to regard speech, which by Saussure's definition is individual in character, as a form of social interaction governed by various mutually shared rules and conventions.

Before moving any further, a word of caution is in order. First, it should be kept in mind, that the notion of 'Saussurean linguistics' is somewhat unhappy, since in most cases it does not refer to Saussure directly, but, instead, to his followers who have further developed and, in some cases, misinterpreted his ideas. Furthermore, we cannot be sure what Saussure actually thought for the simple reason that *Cours de linguistique générale* was not written by Saussure himself. Thus, our understanding of this seminal work is based on reported speech of his students, and, as pointed out by Harris (see Saussure 1990: xii),

Saussure's editors may have failed to represent his views on some important points. Second, it should also be emphasised that Saussure's *Cours* is open for radically different readings depending on the perspective and the intellectual context of the reader (see, e.g., Thibault 1997). It seems that in modern linguistics and semiotics Saussure's ideas have been interpreted in the light of the *langue-parole* distinction as well as the other dichotomies introduced by him. Less attention, however, has been paid to the fact that Saussure is clearly aware of heterogeneity, variation and dynamics of language that occur at historical, dialectical, social and idiosyncratic levels.

It should also be pointed out that the question about the ontological status of the *langue-parole* distinction is a rather controversial issue. According to Thibault (1997: 6-7), one obvious reason why the work of Saussure has in some cases been interpreted one-sidedly, or even misinterpreted, is that the *langue-parole* distinction was generally understood as if it was meant to be *ontologically* real, although, for Saussure, distinguishing between *langue* and *parole* was a *methodological* solution. Thus, in Thibault's view, Saussure argues that in order to establish the exact object of linguistics proper it is necessary to separate methodologically between *langue* and *parole*, but this, however, does not imply that these categories would also exist at the ontological level, as the canonical reading of Saussure would seem to suggest. In this respect, Thibault comes close to the Soviet semiotician Yuri Lotman (1992: 11) who emphasises that the heuristic expedience of one or another methodological tool should not be taken as an evidence for its ontological reality. It is true that Saussure, on one hand, emphasises the methodological significance of the *langue-parole* distinction and sees it as a criteria for defining the domain of linguistics proper. Furthermore, he is ready to admit that the notion of language system, as defined by him, involves a great deal of abstraction from the actual concreteness of language. On the other hand, Saussure (1990: 15) also argues that the language system is a *real* object located in the brain of a native speaker of any particular language. In my view, this clearly suggests that the Saussurean notion of *langue* cannot be regarded as a purely methodological tool and an abstract construct created by a linguist, because in addition to its methodological validity Saussure also presents arguments for its psychological, and thus, ontological relevance.

To sum up, Saussure explicitly argues that the real object of linguistics proper is the stable synchronic language system to which all other linguistic phenomena should be related. In other words, although Saussure sees language as a whole as heterogeneous and multifaceted phenomenon, his methodological solution reflects the background

assumption according to which stability and order are seen as natural or given properties of reality whereas dynamics and variation are regarded as something that must be explained in terms of the invariance characteristic to the system and ultimately reduced to these invariant properties. This assumption has proved to be even more powerful in post-Saussurean linguistics in which language is predominantly regarded in terms of static structures and linguistic forms, and in which, consequently, the study of various dynamic aspects of language and communication has often been neglected.

3 Voloshinov: dynamics of verbal interaction

In his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, published in 1929, Voloshinov (1973) takes an extremely critical attitude towards Saussure's 'abstract objectivism', as he calls it. Voloshinov's major objection to Saussure's account is the categorical distinction between system and speech which can be regarded as a theoretical and methodological cornerstone of the later developments in structural and formal linguistics. Voloshinov's argument against the dichotomy between an underlying system and its manifestations can be seen as consisting of two parts. First, Voloshinov does not accept the Saussurean idea according to which language as a system of self-identical forms could be distinguished from speech on the basis of what is social versus what is individual. Second, and more importantly, Voloshinov goes on arguing that not only the criteria for the distinction between a system and speech, but also the very juxtaposition of an invariant system and variant speech must be considered fallacious.

Voloshinov finds the absolute distinction between the social and individual aspects of language unsatisfying, and argues that instead of considering language use as an individual and accidental manifestation of social language, also actual verbal interaction must be seen as social in nature. Utterance – which Voloshinov sees as a real unit of verbal interaction – cannot be regarded as monologic in the sense that it would amount to the expression or manifestation of a speaker's individual intentions only. On the contrary, an utterance is always addressed to an addressee, whether real or presupposed, and therefore, in Voloshinov's (1973: 86) view, it must be regarded as a '*product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*'. Furthermore, utterances are not used in vacuum but created in concrete social contexts, and, consequently, they are determined by the actual conditions of that given social situation (Voloshinov 1973: 85, 1995: 105).

In addition to the immediate social context, an utterance is also bound to the broader social and cultural context which, in Voloshinov's (1973: 86) view, means that the way in which an individual uses signs in actual interaction is based on social relations. Thus, this view suggests that even the seemingly individual and dynamic aspects of utterances and expressions are basically determined by various social and cultural conventions that an individual, by being a member of a given community, possesses.

According to Voloshinov, there are two ways in which language *could* be thought of as a system of self-identical forms. On one hand, language can be considered from the historical point of view, that is, as a phenomenon that manifests itself in a certain point of time and space. On the other hand, language can be approached from the viewpoint of a speaker of that given language. Voloshinov argues that when language is approached from an objective third-person perspective and considered as a concrete historical phenomenon, the Saussurean notion of an invariant synchronic system must be regarded as seriously inadequate. For Voloshinov, language is a social and dynamic phenomenon which is in the process of changing. Therefore, he sees the invariant and static linguistic system, which for Saussure stands for the essence of language, as an abstraction from the actual concreteness of language. According to Voloshinov (1973: 66), no such thing as an invariant synchronic system exists that would correspond to any real moment of a given language. On the contrary, at any chosen moment language represents a constant change if it is approached through the actual utterances that manifest themselves in concrete social contexts.

Thus, Voloshinov argues that from a historical perspective, language is not to be seen as a series of synchronic states, but must be regarded, instead, as an ongoing, emerging process. It should be pointed out, that this view is, in fact, akin to Saussure's explicit argument according to which language (*langage*) is a heterogeneous and multifaceted phenomenon. In this respect, Voloshinov's critique of Saussurean language system seems to miss its target, because for Saussure *langue* is not an ontologically real concept in the sense that it would correspond to some moment in the concrete reality of language. On the contrary, Saussure sees the notion of *langue* as conceptionally distinct from *langage*, and therefore, he would definitely agree with Voloshinov that the language system must be considered as an abstraction from the actual concreteness of language.

Although Voloshinov denies the relevance of the notion of a synchronic system when language is approached from an objective perspective, he, however, does not exclude the theoretical possibility that

language would be a static system of linguistic norms for a member of a given linguistic community. In Voloshinov's (1973: 66) view, this hypothesis is legitimated by the fact that language as a system of norms as well as social norms in general exist only in relation to the members of a community who act according to these norms. On the other hand, Voloshinov (1973: 67) argues that in verbal interaction these norms are not *conscious* in the sense that the attention of interactants would be focused on the production and identification of normative linguistic forms. On the contrary, instead of concentrating on the normatively identical aspects of linguistic forms a speaker is interested in what he or she can do with a given expression. In other words, he or she is mainly concerned with the concrete meanings that the linguistic expression in question can acquire in the social context. Thus, by engaging in interaction the participants want to achieve certain goals, and, therefore, their attention is naturally focused on the functional and meaningful aspects of linguistic expressions.

From the language user's point of view, then, language cannot be regarded as an invariant system of identical linguistic forms, but should be considered as a tool for creating unique novel meanings. Furthermore, Voloshinov (1973: 70) argues that

the linguistic form [...] exists for the speaker only in the context of specific utterances [...] a word presents itself not as an item of vocabulary but as a word that has been used in wide variety of utterances by co-speaker.

This passage suggests that when people learn or acquire a language the learner's input does not consist of isolated linguistic structures and lexical items. On the contrary, learners come into contact with various forms of situated verbal and nonverbal action rather than are exposed to words or grammar, and this is especially evident when a child acquires his native tongue (see Salo in this volume). If we accept this view, it follows that the knowledge of language does not amount to the possession of the grammatical rules and vocabulary of a given language, but should be considered as mastering a variety of socially conventionalized and patterned ways to behave in various situations. From an ontogenetic point of view this means that language acquisition is a lifelong process in which a person becomes familiar with the emerging uses of language.

It should be pointed out that although Voloshinov sees the notion of a stable language system as inadequate and approaches language from the point of view of concrete utterances, his account, nevertheless, presupposes the level of linguistic forms. According to Voloshinov (1973: 79), it is, indeed, possible and justified to extract abstract linguistic forms

from the actual utterances, but this is not to say that these abstractions would actually exist independently of language use. On the contrary, in Voloshinov's materialist view, linguistic forms emerge and exist only in social interaction, and, therefore, they are inseparably connected to the actual historicity of language. What is more, Voloshinov's own account of meaning which is based on the distinction between *meaning* (abstract linguistic meaning) and *theme* (actual contextual meaning) also necessarily presupposes the existence of linguistic forms (see Lähteenmäki, forthcoming). Voloshinov (1973: 100) argues that the theme of an utterance is partly determined by the linguistic forms of the utterance, and meaning, in turn, can be further divided into a set of meanings belonging to the linguistic elements of the utterance. On the other hand, Voloshinov (1973: 94) argues that from the point of view of actual interaction, the linguistic forms cannot be separated from their ideological implementations. In this respect, Voloshinov considers linguistic notions as abstractions that cannot help us in understanding and explaining actual interaction.

In short, for Voloshinov, it is the myriad of concrete utterances that are used in the course of social interaction between socially organised people that constitutes 'the reality' of language. When language is considered from the point of view of actual interaction, Voloshinov sees it as a dynamic and emergent phenomenon which should be characterized as a process rather than as a synchronic system. Voloshinov emphasizes the dynamic aspects of language and argues that dynamics stems basically from the fact that language is intimately connected to the various forms of social life in a particular community. The dynamic nature of language and verbal interaction does not, however, imply that there would be no systemicity nor rules that govern the verbal behaviour of the members of a given community (cf. Dentith 1997: 315). On the contrary, the social nature of language and communication, by definition, presupposes the existence of certain rules and regularities mutually shared by the members of a community. By interacting with the social environment and others an individual acquires a huge stock of social and cultural knowledge the integral part of which is constituted of various conventions concerning the socially and culturally accepted ways to behave and act verbally and nonverbally in various situations.

4 Bakhtin: structured messiness of verbal interaction

Bakhtin also criticizes Saussure, but his views can be regarded as moderate and constructive in comparison with the negative critique presented by Voloshinov. In the Dostoevsky book, Bakhtin (1994: 395) argues that linguistics, by which he refers to structural and formal linguistics, is a justified and necessary approach to the study of language, but he also emphasizes that the scope of linguistics should be limited to the study of structural aspects of language only. According to Bakhtin (1979: 297), linguistics studies the relations between linguistic elements *within* a language system, whereas the relationship between the system and a language user or between the system and context lies outside linguistics. Bakhtin also argues that the explanation and understanding of the principles of verbal interaction cannot be based on linguistic notions, since the language system functions only as material or means for communication. In this view, the study of communication belongs to the realm of metalinguistics that goes beyond linguistics and deals with the dialogical relations that are nonlinguistic in nature. Thus, the relationship between linguistics and the Bakhtinian metalinguistics cannot be regarded as a binary opposition but must be seen in terms of complementary distribution in which both approaches have their own specific objects of study, namely language and communication (see also Holquist 1983: 311). On the other hand, Bakhtin's approving attitude towards linguistics does not mean that he would be ready to accept all its background assumptions that concern the nature of language and communication.

When trying to explicate Bakhtin's views on the relation of the language system and *speech communication*²⁶ (*rechevoe obshchenie*), one is startled by the fact that Bakhtin seems to present, at least superficially, contradictory arguments in different texts. Especially complex in this respect are the working notes that appeared recently in the 5th volume of Bakhtin's *Collected Works* (see Bakhtin 1996), since it is extremely difficult to choose an appropriate context for the interpretation of these fragmentary notes. Furthermore, as pointed out by Craig Brandist and David Shepherd (in this volume), the fact that texts from different periods were lumped together in the two posthumously published collections of essays may easily create an illusion that Bakhtin's ideas from different periods must necessarily represent an overall unity and unbroken continuity. In this respect, we should be cautious and ask whether it is

²⁶ For Bakhtin, the notion of 'speech communication' is distinct from that of 'parole' in the sense that 'parole' refers to the totality of, spoken or written, texts whereas 'speech communication' refers to actual verbal interaction.

worth while to seek for a unitary account of language and verbal interaction in Bakhtin's work, or whether it is best to consider his work as a dynamic process-like phenomenon in which different aspects are emphasized.

In certain respects, the perspective taken by Bakhtin (1975) in 'Discourse in the Novel', written in 1934-35, can be characterized as 'sociolinguistic', as he is mainly interested in discussing the heterogeneity and variation within language. Bakhtin (1975: 84) approaches language as 'a language filled with ideology' and thus, as conceptionally distinct from language as a sign system - which is neutral in the sense that it has nothing to do with different ideological systems or world views. In this context the term 'language' stands for *a language*, that is, a particular *national language* which at the same time means languages, since in Bakhtin's view a national language consists of several competing and struggling ideological sublanguages. According to this view, 'language' can also be characterised as a *heteroglot* system governed by various centripetal and centrifugal forces which makes it a dynamic and emergent phenomenon, since it reflects the possible changes in the social and ideological structure of a particular community. In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin (1975: 84) also uses the notion of *a common unified language* by which he refers to an ideological language that reflects various centripetal forces, such as official language policy, and struggles against heteroglossia seeking for unity and invariance within a national language. Bakhtin (1975: 83) argues that unified language is never given but always posited (*zadan*), and that it is opposed to the actual heteroglossia within a given national language. Nevertheless, in the same connection Bakhtin (1975: 84) maintains that in spite of its positedness unified language must also be considered as real, as it puts limits to the actual heteroglossia and functions as a basis for mutual understanding.

In 'The Problem of Speech Genres' and 'The Problem of the Text', written in the 1950-60s, Bakhtin (1979, 1996) changes his perspective to language and discusses explicitly the notion of language system and its relation to language use and speech communication. This change in perspective and also the confrontation of the system and use clearly reflect Bakhtin's need to comment on the questions raised by the structural linguistics of the time. It can also be argued that Bakhtin's willingness to engage in a critical dialogue with structuralists is manifested in the language he uses, since in his later writings Bakhtin seems to adopt a more 'structuralist' terminology. As to terminology, it should also be pointed out that, in the context of the dialogical philosophy of language, the notion of 'language system' is not unambiguous and has slightly different meanings for Voloshinov and for

the later Bakhtin. In Voloshinov's use the term 'language system' refers to the Saussurean notion of a synchronic system, whereas the later Bakhtin, as pointed out by L.A. Gogotishvili (see Bakhtin 1996: 626), uses the same term in a sense akin to more functionally orientated structuralists, such as Roman Jakobson (see, e.g., 1990) who originally was one of the leading figures of Russian formalism in the 1920s.

In his writings in the 1950s and 1960s, Bakhtin argues that a language system is *given* (dan) to a speaker of a language (see, e.g., Bakhtin 1996: 308), and that it functions as a necessary condition for mutual understanding. This seems to be in sharp contrast with the views of Voloshinov for whom language is given only in the form of actual utterances. Furthermore, Bakhtin (1979: 297) pursues the idea that the distinction between the system and its use should be conceived of in terms of *potential* versus *actual*, and that a given language system has a purely potential character in relation to actual utterances and language users. In this respect, Bakhtin comes close to Voloshinov whose account of meaning is based on the distinction between potential and actual. It should also be pointed out that the distinction between potential and actual is already anticipated in 'Discourse in the Novel' where Bakhtin (1975: 84) argues that the system of linguistic norms is not an abstract obligation for a speaker, but on the contrary, must be regarded as a creative force. Thus, for Bakhtin, the language system is a potential that can be put into action in order to achieve certain communicative goals, and it can thus be characterised as material or *means* that functions as one of those elements that make intersubjective communication between a speaker and a listener possible.

Despite the fact that in the writings of 1950s and 1960s Bakhtin develops the idea of language system as a meaning potential, some rather obscure passages can also be found which seem to contradict this view. In his working notes for the essay 'The Problem of Speech Genres', Bakhtin (1996: 252) argues that

A language system lies within the framework of a single speaking consciousness. [...] Language guarantees the understanding and hence, the merging and identification of speaking consciousnesses in the act of their mutual understanding; [...] Even an individual language has to be a stable, constant system in order to guarantee its unity and intelligibility for the (single) speaker (a given word must mean one and the same thing each time, and so on).²⁷

To restate this rather obscure position, first, a language system is located in the consciousness of an individual, second, it is a stable system of

²⁷ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Carol Adlam who has kindly helped me to translate this passage.

linguistic forms with fixed meanings, and third, it should be considered as a necessary condition for mutual understanding. It can be argued that this view is incompatible with the idea of language as a meaning potential. The view according to which a language system exists only *in potentia* is based on the assumption that at the level of the language system units of language do not have any fixed meanings, but are seen as open meaning potentials which can acquire an exact meaning only when used in a certain social context (see, e.g., Rommetveit 1992). The above passage thus seems to contradict this position, and it also seems to be opposed to Voloshinov's view (1973: 68) according to which the normative identity of linguistic forms is not essential for understanding, since linguistic forms function as adaptable signs.

There are also other passages in which Bakhtin seems to present rather contradictory views. According to Bakhtin (1986: 106),

Any sign system (i.e., any language) [...] can always in principle be deciphered, that is, translated into other sign systems (other languages). Consequently, sign systems have a common logic, a potential single language of languages (which, of course, can never become a single concrete language, one of the languages).

In certain respects, this passage can be characterised as 'anti-Bakhtinian', as it contains some of the basic presuppositions of the mainstream structuralism. The above quotation implies that languages as systems of signs are intertranslatable whereas utterances, sociolects, dialects, national languages etc., which belong to the realm of ideology, can never be given a total translation. The principle of intertranslatability presupposes that languages would conceptualise reality in an exactly same way, and this, in turn, is akin to the representational view of language according to which language represents or names pre-established universal concepts and ideas. This view of language as a nomenclature was attacked by Saussure and Wittgenstein (see Harris 1988) who argued that the meanings of linguistic units are relational in the sense that they are based on the relations between the units of system (Saussure) or on their role in language game (Wittgenstein). In other words, both Wittgenstein and Saussure emphasize that words do not *stand for* something pre-given, but languages conceptualize and make sense of reality by imposing a certain socially constructed language-specific structure on it. Furthermore, in the excerpt above, Bakhtin assumes that there potentially exists, or it is possible to construct, a common metalanguage that could be used to describe all human languages as well as other sign systems. In other words, here Bakhtin clearly argues for a form of semantic universalism according to which it is

possible to make a list of invariant semantic or conceptual features into which semantic potentials of natural languages could be reduced.

Hence, the point I want to make is that it is extremely difficult to give an exact and unambiguous account of Bakhtin's views on language and verbal interaction, since, in addition to frequently cited passages, we can also find statements that would seem to contradict Bakhtin's main texts and also the views of Voloshinov. This also reflects a more general problem associated with Bakhtin's legacy, namely, whether all the texts written by Bakhtin should be considered as possessing equal authority (see also Brandist and Shepherd in this volume). Next, I will discuss Bakhtin's views on the dynamic and stable aspects of language and verbal interaction in more detail.

According to Bakhtin (1979: 283), every single utterance presupposes a language system mutually shared by all the members of a given community and can, on one hand, be characterised as a social phenomenon. On the other hand, every utterance has also its individual dimension as it is actualised in a given concrete social context, and therefore, it necessarily has certain unique properties that cannot be repeated in other occasions. As a consequence of this two-dimensionality which, for Bakhtin, is an inherent property of every utterance, utterances simultaneously represent both dynamics and stability. Utterances are unrepeatable and reflect various contextual and situational features because they emerge in concrete social contexts, the time and space coordinates of which are always unique. Hence, in the dialogical view, dynamics is seen as a built-in feature of every utterance rather than as an additional layer or component imposed on stable linguistic forms by situated use of language. The dynamics inherent in verbal interaction does not, however, undermine the fact that actual situated language use can also be characterised as a form of social interaction governed by certain rules that regulate both the form and the function of concrete utterances. These principles that reflect the special characteristics of situations of actual language use are called *speech genres* by which Bakhtin (1986: 60) refers to 'relatively stable types' of utterances associated with different contexts of use.

Speech genres can also be characterised as socially and culturally conventionalized and patterned ways of verbal as well as nonverbal behaviour associated with certain types of situations (see also Dufva & Lähteenmäki 1996: 114). From the speaker's point of view, speech genres have both a regulative and creative function. On one hand, they are social norms that establish the limits to individual variation, and, consequently, increase the stability within discourse. On the other hand, speech genres can also be viewed as a potential that provides the speaker with means to

express his or her intentions in a mutually intelligible way. What is more, they also function as a necessary link that connects unique utterances to antecedent discourses and provide interactants with a rich meaning potential which can be used in order to create meanings associated with the given speech genre and its history (see also Morson & Emerson 1990: 286). When viewed from the listener's point of view, speech genres can also be regarded as having a double role. On one hand, they function as socially shared schemata that create certain expectations regarding the speaker's communicative goals, and consequently, narrow the range of possible interpretations. On the other hand, a speech genre has a potential character also for the listener in the sense that it enables the listener to create novel meanings on the basis of the meaning potential crystallized during the history of the particular speech genre.

Thus, in Bakhtin's view, every utterance, in spite of its individuality and uniqueness, necessarily reflects typical generic forms of one or another speech genre. He also argues that in the process of language acquisition, linguistic elements and speech genres are intimately interconnected in the sense that from the learner's point of view it is impossible to separate linguistic forms and generic forms from each other. According to Bakhtin (1986: 78),

the forms of language and the typical forms of utterances, that is, speech genres, enter our experience and our consciousness together [...] to learn to speak means to learn to construct utterances.

By this Bakhtin means that we cannot speak without casting our speech to the typical generic forms of discourse simply because we have not acquired our mother tongue from dictionaries and grammar books but through utterances produced by others in various social situations. Thus, not only the language system but also speech genres are given to a native speaker of any particular language. In addition to language, speech genres are also intimately connected to the forms of social life of a particular community, as a result of which the number of possible speech genres is, in principle, unlimited. In this respect, the notion of speech genre reminds us of Wittgenstein's (1968) notion of language game, because they can both be characterized as a unified whole of complex action in which language and forms of life are inseparably interconnected (see also Hintikka & Sandu 1991: 15). Dore (1995: 157), in turn, sees the notion of speech genre as analogous to Wittgensteinian notion of *family resemblance*, because in both cases the recognition of the meaningful use of an expression is not based on a fixed set of semantic features shared by all occasions of use but on more or less fuzzy family resemblances between

each individual use of an expression. This view implies that as a consequence of the interconnectedness of linguistic and various nonlinguistic forms of social interaction, language games and speech genres are dynamic in nature, and thus they cannot be viewed as fixed patterns of speech production or static frames of interpretation with clear-cut boundaries. On the contrary, what seems to be common to both language games and speech genres which have emerged in concrete social contexts and constitute an inseparable part of social life, is that they both represent discourse types the unity, or relative stability, of which is not based on exact similarity but on family resemblances between the tokens of the types.

To sum up, Bakhtin approaches language and communication from different perspectives and acts in different intellectual contexts. For him, the real unit of *speech communication* is utterance which can be characterized as an expression of a unique meaning position that manifests itself in a concrete social context. In spite of their individual dimension, utterances must be regarded as immanently social phenomena, since the way we use language is based on observing the situated verbal behaviour and practices of others that we have come into contact during our life. Bakhtin also emphasizes that situational and immediate social contexts of utterances are embedded in, and in a certain sense also constituted by, the context of ideology, the characteristics of which utterances necessarily reflect. From '*sociolinguistic*' perspective, at the level of verbal interaction there is no neutral language system, but, on the contrary, a variety of competing ideological languages between which a speaker can make a choice. In his later texts, Bakhtin considers language as *a system of signs* and argues that a language system is given to a native speaker of a language. It must be emphasized that the givenness of a language system does not necessarily imply that there would be an invariant system of linguistic forms in the mind of the speaker that would exist in its own right (cf. Bakhtin 1996: 252). On the contrary, in my view, a language system can be understood as an abstract notion that refers to the totality of the speaker's linguistic potential based on his or her linguistic biography (see also Dufva in this volume), that is, to his or her experiences of situated verbal behaviour. Hence, language as a system is given to an individual in the sense that during his or her life as a member a particular community he or she has become acquainted with various socially and culturally conventionalized forms of situated verbal behaviour typical to that particular community. In this respect, also the Bakhtinian notion of the language system can be seen as an abstract tool for a scientist, because, as Bakhtin convincingly argues, from an ontogenetic point of view it is impossible to separate between the forms

of language and various speech genres that regard the form and function of concrete utterances.

5 Discussion

If Saussure's views and the dialogical philosophy of language are contrasted with regard to the way they conceive the relationship between dynamic and stable aspects of language and communication, we seem to get two rather different pictures (cf. Thibault 1997). Saussure's account is based on the opposition between the synchronic language system, which is stable and systematic in its nature, and speech, which, in contrast, is characterized as dynamic and unsystematic. In this view, dynamics is equated with such properties as individuality and accidentalness, and therefore, regarded as unessential from the point of view of the scientific study of language. Accordingly, at the level of methodology speech is neglected and excluded from the study of language simply because various dynamic aspects of speech cannot be described and explained by relying on linguistic notions that are designed to describe stable language systems and linguistic structures. In this respect, the Saussurean account of language seems to reflect the basic assumptions of the rationalistic world view according to which the necessary prerequisite for scientific enterprise is that the apparent heterogeneity and variation of observable reality can and must be reduced to an underlying system of rules in order to reveal 'how things really are'.

Bakhtin and Voloshinov, in contrast, emphasize the dynamic aspects of observable reality and consider dynamics as a given and natural property of language and verbal interaction. They share the view that the Saussurean idea according to which the language system and speech can be contrasted with each other in regard to social-individual dichotomy is totally misguided. They also argue that an adequate description of verbal interaction cannot be based on purely linguistic notions, because the dynamics inherent in language and verbal interaction cannot be captured by relying on notions designed for the description of the static aspects of the language system. Bakhtin and Voloshinov, however, seem to draw different conclusions from this mutually shared premise. For Voloshinov, language means utterances that actualize themselves in interaction between two or more socially organized people, and consequently, he argues against the dichotomy between the system and its use, although he is ready to admit that the distinction may be useful for some theoretical purposes. According to Voloshinov's materialist view, language and communication should be approached from the point of view of actual utterances, and therefore, any approach that abstracts

language from its ideological implementations must be considered as severely inadequate. Voloshinov thus argues that linguistics should aim at a much broader and more comprehensive account of language that would also take into a consideration the immanent ideological nature of language use and social interaction.

Also Bakhtin, who is often regarded as an antilinguist²⁸ (see Stewart 1986) and celebrated as a spokesman for the 'messiness' and 'joyful relativity' of language and communication, is mainly interested in the dynamics of verbal interaction. This, however, by no means implies that he would want to deny the existence of stability and systemicity in language and communication. On the contrary, it must be painstakingly emphasized that Bakhtin is not against linguistics as such, although he criticizes linguistics of its attempts to reduce the dynamics of discourse into invariant rules and its efforts to explain verbal interaction in static linguistic terms. It should be kept in mind that Bakhtin's (1979: 253) approach, in fact, presupposes both linguistics and metalinguistics, although he finds linguistics of limited usefulness. The business of Bakhtinian metalinguistics, by his definition (Bakhtin 1994: 395), is to study those aspects of language and communication that go *beyond* linguistics, and he only argues that one should be careful not to smuggle linguistic notions into metalinguistics and vice versa. Thus, in contrast to Voloshinov, Bakhtin argues that, at the level of methodology, it is possible to have the separate domains of linguistics and metalinguistics which, in fact, bears a close resemblance to Saussure's methodological solution. In Bakhtin's view, we need both linguistics and metalinguistics in order to understand the stable and dynamic aspects of language and communication, and therefore, these approaches should be regarded as complementary (see also Linell 1997) instead of considering them in terms of a binary opposition. Accordingly, both dynamics and stability should be regarded as natural properties of language and communication that are of social origin in the sense that they reflect and, what is more, emerge from the social relations of a given community.

Thus, in my view, it would be highly idealistic and misleading to argue, in the name of Bakhtin, that metalinguistics could provide us with an ultimate surplus of vision that would enable us to give the right answers to the questions to which linguists have failed to answer. This 'antilinguist' interpretation clearly distorts Bakhtin's ideas, since, for him, metalinguistics is not opposed to linguistics, but represents an alternative and *complementary* perspective to language and communication that

²⁸ The 'antilinguist' interpretation is also enhanced by the fact that *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* is often ascribed to Bakhtin.

brings up new questions which from the linguistic point of view may seem irrelevant or even remain unnoticed. In this respect, the representatives of antilinguist views seem to be in a great danger of falling into the trap of which Bakhtin constantly kept warning us, namely, that relativism and absolutism are in fact two sides of the same coin. The relativistic 'anything goes' stance would lead to the situation in which there is only free variation and no answerability at all which clearly is not what Bakhtin had in mind. It is also somewhat paradoxical that Bakhtin who is seen as spokesman for messiness and multiplicity can, in fact, be regarded as more systematic than Saussure, since for Bakhtin not only language but also actual verbal interaction is governed by various socially and culturally conventionalized regularities.

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Developing Language in Social Context: On the Relationship Between Dialogical Theory and the Study of Language Acquisition

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The dialogical view on language is discussed from the perspective of language acquisition. It will be suggested that the study of language acquisition can contribute to the dialogical theory of language by giving empirical evidence on the nature of speech interplay between two (or more) individuals. It will also be proposed that the study of language acquisition could use dialogism as a theoretical framework.

Keywords: dialogism, language acquisition, theory and practice

1 Introduction

One of the main assumptions of dialogism is that language is a thoroughly social phenomenon. However, this standpoint of Bakhtin and Voloshinov according to which utterances are immanently social in nature is somewhat theoretical. Even though the social nature of language is evident from our everyday experience as we use language in various social practices, it is nevertheless another thing to claim that an individual utterance is a social phenomenon. Rather, it seems that it is the individual who creates an utterance which he or she then transmits through language to another individual to decode, as the speech chain models of communication seem to suggest (see, e.g., Shannon & Weaver 1949)²⁹. When Voloshinov (1929/1973: 86), however, writes that 'Word is

²⁹ This view in which language is seen in terms of the speech chain model has been referred to as the conduit metaphor of language (Reddy 1979). This view was already prevalent in the work of the 17th century philosopher John Locke (1690) for whom language was 'the great Conduit' between communicators.

a two-sided act', he is not describing a speech chain. According to him, there are neither transmitters nor decoders, but rather, it is the two participants, i.e. the interactants, who produce the word and its meaning together. Voloshinov (1929/1973: 102) puts this in the following way:

In essence, meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers; that is, meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding.

Bakhtin adopts a similar view. He argues that understanding 'constitutes nothing other than the initial preparatory stage of a response' (Bakhtin 1986: 69). Bakhtin (1986: 72) further argues that dialogue is a fundamental form of speech communication because of its simplicity and clarity. However, although it could be questioned whether dialogue actually is as simple and clear as Bakhtin seems to suggest, that is beyond the scope of this paper. In this context, then, it is relevant to point out how Bakhtin emphasizes the necessity of the Other. According to Bakhtin (1986: 72)

the sort of relations that exist among rejoinders of dialogue [e.g. relations between question and answer, suggestion and acceptance etc.] --- are possible only among utterances of different speech subjects: they presuppose *other* (with respect to the speaker) participants in speech communication.

Nevertheless, Voloshinov's and Bakhtin's approach, according to which the utterance is a social phenomenon, appears to be theoretical, philosophical reasoning with little to do with real life. Could it be possible to empirically prove Voloshinov's theory relevant, to some extent at least? Voloshinov (1929/1973: 25) himself claims that

one of Marxism's fundamental and most urgent tasks is to construct a genuinely objective psychology, which means a psychology based on sociological, not physiological or biological principles.

Following Voloshinov, then, sociology could perhaps offer us a helping hand in examining the relevance of dialogical theory in the study of language use.

The French sociologist Émile Durkheim writes in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912/1961) that in order to be able to explain a complex phenomenon, such as present day religion, for instance, one should try to find a simpler form of religion which can be more easily analysed. Durkheim himself studied the religion of Australian aboriginals claiming that their religion has grown out of a social experience: their coming together resulted in an unexplainable and a powerful feeling of something special. However, they did not understand that they themselves were the foundation of a spiritual

experience, but believed that it had to be something in the environment, such as a cockroach or a special kind of stone, which then achieved the status of a totem. Gradually the religious system became increasingly complex: as cockroaches were considered holy, it was concluded that the birds that eat them must be holier, and, because birds fly in the sky, also the sky and, hence, the air must be holy.

This brief presentation of Durkheim's ideas on the origin of religion is relevant to the present discussion because I believe that his work gives valuable insights also into the study of language. Durkheim considered religion such a complex issue that in order to be able to deal with it one had to go *ad fontes*. It may be argued that Voloshinov's considerations concern an even more complex phenomenon – religion could hardly exist without language. If we had no language, the world would definitely look different from the way it does today. Actually, it can be claimed that the world such as we know it would not exist and, moreover, we would not exist as human beings, in the ultimate sense of the word. Therefore, linguists have a good reason to go back to the roots of language. However, it is questionable whether one can find a language that is simpler than other languages. Even though Otto Jespersen (1905), in the turn of the century, praised the superiority of English by claiming it to be more complex and masculine than other languages, it is now evident that different tongues can not be categorized accordingly. Neither is it possible for us to prove how language first came into existence (phylogenesis). We can, however, look at how children today acquire their mother tongue (ontogenesis), and I do believe that in this respect ontogenesis can give us valuable information about phylogenesis. Therefore, one could study small children acquiring language in order to look for possible empirical evidence for Voloshinov's philosophical ideas.

2 Approaches to language development

When discussing language development, one starting point may be found in the view held by Saint Augustine who in his *Confessions* described the way in which he learned new words³⁰. St. Augustine (1961: 1.8) writes:

When they named any thing, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what one would point out by the name they uttered... And thus by constantly hearing words, as they occurred in various

³⁰ For discussion on St. Augustine, see also Wittgenstein (1964) and Bruner (1983).

sentences, I collected gradually for what they stood; and having broken in my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will.

This Augustinian view on language acquisition prevailed for centuries, the most recent version of it being the behaviourist learning theory (e.g. Skinner 1957). Behaviourists believed that language did not differ from other forms of behaviour, and that language learning could be explained as a set of responses enhanced by imitation and reinforcement. However, a language acquisition theory based on imitation cannot explain how children are able to create words and sentences they have never heard before. To solve this problem a change of paradigm was needed. It was Noam Chomsky's (1959) famous review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* that started the cognitive revolution in linguistics as well as in psychology. In his criticism, Chomsky claimed that children have an innate capacity for learning a language. Chomsky (1959: 57) maintained that

human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or 'hypothesis-formulating' ability of unknown character and complexity.

Later on, Chomsky named this 'somehow specially designed' ability Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to him, the child does not need any prior nonlinguistic knowledge of the world nor does it require any privileged communication with another speaker. All the child needs is exposure to language. The child has an underlying competence to deal with the rules of the language in the environment.

Thus, Chomsky and Skinner did not seem to have much in common. George Miller (quoted in Bruner 1983: 34) described these two theories of language acquisition in the following way: 'one of them, empiricist associationism, was impossible; the other, nativism, was miraculous'.

Naturally, much has happened since the 1950's. The British psychologist Margaret Donaldson (1978: 61), for instance, has criticized the Chomskyan standpoint for

a failure to pay enough attention to the difference between language as it is spontaneously used and interpreted by the child and language as it has come to be conceived of by those who develop the theories.

After having summarized a number of child language studies, Donaldson (1978: 74) points out that children show great difficulties, for instance, in coping with imitation tasks, because the sentences in the task represent pure isolated language which is not supported by any relation to immediate context and behaviour. Thus, for children, language seems to

equal use rather than a formal system, which is contrary to what Chomsky's LAD indicates.

Another critic of the Chomskyan view, Jerome Bruner, has introduced his LASS (Language Acquisition Support System) to accompany Chomsky's LAD. By assuming LASS, Bruner implies that LAD is not enough as such, but it needs something, or more accurately someone, to reflect upon in order to work. Bruner (1983: 39) writes:

The development of language, then, involves two people negotiating. Language is not encountered willy-nilly by the child; it is shaped to make communicative interaction effective – finetuned.

Bruner (1983: 119) does not deny the existence of an innate language system, but he claims that

whatever original *language* endowment may consist of or how much or little of it there may be, for even if there was huge innate capacities for lexico_grammatical language, human beings still have to learn how to *use* language. That cannot be learned *in vitro*. The only way language use can be learned is by *using* it communicatively.

In addition, as the Russian eclectic Lev Vygotsky emphasized, learning is an interactive process. Accordingly, Bruner (1983: 18) writes:

language acquisition ... begins when mother and infant create a predictable format of interaction that can serve as a microcosm for communicating and for constituting a shared reality.

It is in this type of transactions that the child learns how to use language. Bruner shows convincingly how infants gradually learn to request while playing with their mother. Bruner (1983: 114) concludes that

requesting, like reference, goes through a negotiatory course toward socialization, whatever its form. Like reference, too, it is contextualized in conventional formats that conform as much to cultural as to linguistic requirements.

Anthony Wootton (1997) has also used requesting as an example when discussing the development of children's minds. His approach is similar to Bruner's in that they both emphasize the role of the interactional organisation in the emergence of children's skills. Wootton (1997: 196), however, stresses that Bruner's account for these matters is 'misleading with regard to how the child *first* organizes her activities so as to display attention to important elements of contextual knowledge'. Wootton (1997: 196) argues that

Instead of becoming social by picking up standard patterns and expectations which have a trans-situational relevance, the young child becomes social through having the flexibility to attend to local, sequence specific considerations. Being burdened by habits, scripts and so on would be a hindrance in such a process. The opportunity offered by discourse is the availability of orderly ways which permit interpersonal alignment to be negotiated on each and every occasion, and of ways which permit much more fine-grained co-ordination than is possible without discourse.

Wootton regards Bruner's approach which is based on speech acts as limited, while his own sequential position fosters a *tabula rasa* kind of flexibility. But how *rasa* is the children's *tabula*? The answer might be found in the field of artificial intelligence which tries to simulate the functioning of the nervous system through neural networks or connectionist modelling.

3 The connectionist proposal

The incredible speed of development in the field of computer technology has led to more and more powerful computers. Already in the early days of computers, an analogy between the human brain and computers was made. This analogy, however, has turned out to be misleading (e.g. Searle 1992), for the simple reason that digital computers are man-made machines and not biological, living beings. This does not, however, mean that computers would be useless in studying the architecture of human nervous system, quite the opposite. Recently, the simulations conducted with neural networks have proved out to be very promising. It could even be argued that the findings from these studies (e.g. Hutchins & Hazlehurst 1995, Pulkki 1995, Abidi & Ahmad 1996) support the idea of the social origin of language. Edwin Hutchins and Brian Hazlehurst (1995), for instance, present a computer simulation which shows how a shared lexicon emerges through interaction. Moreover, these networks, such as Self Organizing Semantic Maps, have been able to come up with working semantic categories without any rules programmed in advance. This implies that an innate language capacity, i.e. LAD, is not necessary for the child to be able to grasp language. The structure, or rather, as Voloshinov emphasised, the 'ever-changing' structure is in the language itself and not in the brain. Or, to put it even more provocatively, it is discourse that shapes the brain (Harré & Gillett 1994), and not vice versa.

A research group co-ordinated by Jeffrey Elman (Elman et al. 1996) has recently published a book in which human development is

approached from a connectionist perspective. In *Rethinking Innateness*, Elman et al. (1996: 1) advocate a position in which development arises 'through the *interaction* of maturational factors, under genetic control, and the environment'. Elman et al. (1996: 371) point out that they are not anti-nativists, but they argue that innateness should not be equalled to localization or domain specificity. Furthermore, they maintain that it is essential to developmental cognitive science to specify the level of innateness. Elman et al. (1996: 372-391) show effectively how the arguments in favour of domain-specific innate representations for language can be seen from another perspective. For instance, it is frequently argued that the innateness of language can be explained by localization that has been found to be plausible from a number of positron emission tomography (PET) studies. But PET studies have also revealed specific areas of the brains of chess masters that show activity at specific points in the game. Does this, then, imply that also chess would be innate?

In linguistics, the most prominent connectionist model so far is the Competition Model developed by Elizabeth Bates and Brian MacWhinney (1987, 1989). This functionalist model tries to explain grammar in cognitive terms, for Bates and MacWhinney (1989: 7) are convinced that 'Universal Grammar can ultimately be explained without recourse to a special 'language organ' that takes up where cognition leaves off'. Furthermore, Bates and MacWhinney (1987: 159f) argue that 'forms of natural languages are created, governed, constrained, acquired, and used in the service of communicative functions'. Their model is, by definition, based on the idea of competition. This means that the utterances we actually use are a result of a struggle between competing word forms. Bates and MacWhinney (1989: 52) state that 'decisions are a combined product of the number of different types in the competition pool, and the activation weights associated with each type'.

The key concept in making these decisions is that of a cue. According to Bates and MacWhinney (1989: 41), we have psychological mechanisms that lead us to act in accordance with the validity of cues in our environment. This cue validity consists of availability, reliability and conflict validity. Availability refers simply to the availability of the cue when it is needed. In other words, availability has to do with frequency: the more frequent the structure, the more likely it will be used. Reliability, in turn, represents the extent to which a cue leads to the correct interpretation when it is relied on. Availability and reliability together result in overall cue validity which can explain most phenomena, but not all of them. This overall cue validity cannot, for instance, explain certain U-shaped developments in children's language

acquisition. At first, a child can, for instance, use the correct past tense form of the English verb *go* (i.e. *went*), but at some stage she might discover that the English past tense is formed with the suffix *-ed*, and hence, she introduces the form *goed* (or even a hybrid form *wented*). Finally, she receives (or turns back to) the correct form *went*. To explain this kind of phenomena, Bates and MacWhinney have introduced the notion of conflict validity. It engages those cases where two or more cues conflict.

The notion of cue strength refers to the organism's knowledge about the validity of information. It is the weight of the connection between two units, which means the 'probability or weight that the organism attaches to a given piece of information relative to some goal or meaning with which it is associated' (Bates & MacWhinney 1989: 42). This has strong implications for learning: the more frequent a cue is, the stronger it gets, and, thus, the connection between two units becomes stronger as well. As the connection becomes stronger, it results in faster decisions, which, in turn, leaves more time for other connections to develop.

For a long time, the problem with neural networks has been the fact that they have failed to consider the role of biology. Elman et al. (1996: 357), however, emphasize that it is necessary to understand the nature of the interaction between Nature and Nurture. The connectionist framework takes care of Nurture, but in order to understand the interaction, also Nature should be accounted for.

4 The biological explanation

Although neural networks have been able to simulate language learning to some extent, it must be emphasized that this type of connectionist modelling is nothing but a metaphor (see, e.g., Zlatev 1997). Or not even a metaphor, because the architectures of neural networks are removed from biological reality, and thus, as the renowned neuroscientist Gerald Edelman (1992: 227) points out, 'neural networks are not adequate models or analogues of brain structure'. Using digital computers as an analogue for the brain would suggest a homunculus (or rather an infinite number of homunculi) in the brain corresponding to the human programmer of a computer. However, as the brain is a living thing, having evolved through natural selection, no homunculus is needed. And, as Edelman (1992: 226) points out

In contrast to computers, the patterns of nervous system response depend on the individual history of each system, because it is only *through interactions with the world* that appropriate response patterns are selected.

According to Edelman, it is crucial to incorporate biology into our theories of knowledge and language. Edelman (1992: 252) argues that

to accomplish this we must develop --- a biologically based epistemology - an account of how we know and how we are aware in light of the facts of evolution and developmental biology.

Edelman's own contributions include the theory of neuronal group selection (TNGS). Although the TNGS is a complex theory, it has only three basic tenets: developmental selection, experimental selection, and reentrant mapping. In the following, I will briefly sketch these tenets in order to point out the relevance of Edelman's theory to the study of language development.

The first tenet, developmental selection, has to do with dynamic processes leading to the formation of the neuroanatomy characteristic of a given species. This selectional process involves populations of neurons engaged in topobiological *competition* (cf. Bates & MacWhinney's connectionist model of language processing described above). Experimental selection does not usually affect the anatomical pattern. Rather, it assumes the strengthening or the weakening of synaptic connections in the anatomy by specific biochemical processes. The third tenet of the TNGS is concerned with how developmental and experimental selections act to connect psychology to physiology. Reentrant mapping underlies the way in which the brain areas that emerge in evolution coordinate with each other to yield new functions. In order to carry out such functions repertoires that have resulted from the two first tenets must form maps that are connected by massively parallel and reciprocal connections. Edelman (1992: 85) concludes that

A fundamental premise of the TNGS is that the selective coordination of the complex patterns of interconnection between neuronal groups by reentry is the basis of behavior.

By necessity, this presentation of Edelman's TNGS is extremely concise, but the point is that the TNGS convincingly pins down the dynamic and epigenetic nature of the development of consciousness, and hence, also of language.

Edelman's standpoint is related to that of the Finnish psychologist Timo Järvillehto (1994) who has introduced the theory of organism-environment system. Järvillehto's systemic psychology rejects the idea of

two separate systems (those of the organism and the environment), and argues instead for a unitary system in which organism and environment are inseparable. Together they form a dynamic system which is organized according to the results of useful actions. Thus, for instance, language development does not take place in an individual, but in the system to which he or she belongs. Because no two organisms can hold precisely the same position at the same moment (cf. Bakhtin 1986), every organism_environment system is unique. Therefore, no two organisms can possess precisely the same relationship to the surrounding world. Regarding language development, this implies the necessity of idiosyncrasy.

5 Vygotsky on language development

The study of language acquisition has also been one of the main themes in developmental psychology. Along with the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky has been one of the big names of the field since the 1970s. Vygotsky, however, disagreed strongly with Piaget's cognitive view which claimed that language development proceeds from egocentric to social speech. Vygotsky, who believed that 'the earliest speech of the child is ... essentially social' (Vygotsky 1934/1962: 19), explained what he considered Piaget's misconception in the following way:

The social forms of behaviour are more complex and more advanced in a child, and when individualized, they first acquire a simple modus of operation. For example, egocentric speech is more primitive in its structure than communicative speech, yet as a stage in the development of thought it is higher than the social speech of the child of the same age. Perhaps this is the reason why Piaget considered egocentric speech to be a predecessor, rather than a consequence of socialized speech.

(Vygotsky 1984, quoted in Kozulin 1990: 177)

Vygotsky regarded the early speech of a child as an attempt at communication which, in turn, facilitates the development of speech and thinking. Here, the notion of the zone of proximal development becomes relevant. According to Vygotsky, psychological development does not precede instruction, but essentially depends on it. The psychological development of a human child requires interaction with the more developed representatives of its species. As Bakhtin (1986: 92) put it:

After all, our thought itself – philosophical, scientific, artistic – is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well.

Here, Bakhtin is saying that interaction, in fact, influences the way we think and speak³¹.

As Chris Sinha (1988: 93) points out, Vygotskian psychology is both *genetic* and *social*. In other words, Vygotsky emphasizes both the evolutionary-developmentally as well as the historically and culturally determined forms of thought and symbolization. Sinha (1988: 104), however, extends the Vygotskian view by emphasizing that also 'the biology of human development is a product of the interaction of biological and cultural evolution at the specific site of ontogenesis' (cf. Järvillehto 1994). To some extent, this is akin to the view of discursive psychology of Harré and Gillett (1994) mentioned above. Sinha (1988: 159) maintains that in learning human practices (including the linguistic ones), the child learns

a system (or set of systems) of representation, in which many aspects of context are co-present, and integrated at multiple levels as social, psychological and neurological processes.

This kind of an epigenetic approach based partly on Vygotsky's ideas is discussed in more depth in the following section.

6 Language development: a dialogical view

Although the members of the Bakhtin Circle did not write much about developmental issues, a number of contemporary researchers in the field of language acquisition have echoed their ideas. A dialogical approach has been prevalent, for instance, in the writings of Stein Bråten³² (e.g. 1989, 1992) and Colwyn Trevarthen (e.g. 1979, 1992). Bråten (1989), for instance, talks about the dialogical mind of the infant without any reference to Bakhtin or Voloshinov whatsoever. James Wertsch (e.g. 1990), Chris Sinha (1988) and Jordan Zlatev (1997), on the other hand, have explicitly utilized Bakhtin's ideas in their own work. In the following I will concentrate on the work of Jordan Zlatev which neatly

³¹ As we know, Vygotsky was a contemporary of Bakhtin. There is, however, no decisive evidence of their being acquainted. According to Kozulin (190: 180) Vygotsky probably learned about the new 'Bakhtinian' developments in linguistics and literary theory from his cousin David who belonged to the same intellectual circle in Leningrad as Bakhtin. Wertsch (1985), in turn, proposes that the connection might have occurred through Yakubinsky.

³² After these arguments against innate language capacity, it may be interesting to note that Bråten (1989) proposes an innate inclination for interaction as the form of a virtual other. Bråten's view, however, is in line with the proposal of Elman et al. (1996).

summarises the different approaches relevant in discussing the relationship between dialogism and the study of language development. Furthermore, as I will suggest, Zlatev's approach can be seen as an extension to the 'original' dialogical views of Bakhtin and Voloshinov.

Jordan Zlatev's recent work is about the emergence of spatial meaning. Zlatev (1997) advocates a mediating view, a dialectical synthesis between the two traditional approaches to meaning in which meaning is seen either as use (e.g. Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Harré) or as conceptualization (e.g. Piaget, Lakoff). Zlatev (1997: 6) points out that Vygotsky's and Piaget's debate on the nature of egocentric speech (cf. previous chapter) is a paradigmatic example of the tension between these two traditions. Zlatev argues, however, that this tension is not antagonistic. By emphasizing both situatedness and embodiment, Zlatev strives for a more viable alternative to generativism than these two directions (i.e. meaning as use vs. meaning as conceptualisation). Not surprisingly, Zlatev calls this synthesis situated embodiment (embodied situatedness would probably be an equally plausible term).

The guiding principles for the framework of situated embodiment presented by Zlatev (1997: 5) include: situatedness, embodiment, practicality, epigenesis, and dynamism. To some extent, all of these can be found in the dialogical framework as well, though the emphasis might not be as balanced as in Zlatev. In the following, I will illustrate these principles by quotations taken from Voloshinov's and Bakhtin's work:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| a) situatedness | The meaning of a word is determined entirely by its context. In fact, there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts of its usage. (Voloshinov 1929/1973: 79) |
| b) embodiment | ... consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs. (Voloshinov 1929/1973: 11) |
| c) practicality | Words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology. (Voloshinov 1929/1973: 70) |
| d) epigenesis | After all, language enters life through concrete utterance (which manifests language) and life enters language through concrete utterance as well. (Bakhtin 1986: 63) |
| e) dynamism | Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances. (Bakhtin 1986: 69) |

Even if it were possible to find a (more or less apt) quotation for all the principles, it is, nevertheless, clear that Voloshinov and Bakhtin were more concerned with dynamic situatedness than embodied epigenesis (see, e.g. the Voloshinov quotation in the introduction). Therefore, I

believe that Zlatev's contribution gives valuable insights into the development of dialogical theory, as it widens the scope of dialogue from a bare social interaction to the interaction between Nature and Nurture (or, rather, gives a more balanced emphasis to them). For although social interplay is crucial for language development, speech communication also requires some biological prerequisites in order to succeed (see also Salo, in press).

To support his framework, Zlatev (1997) presents empirical data from cross-linguistic semantic analyses and developmental studies. In this context, the studies concerning the ontogenesis of spatial meaning are highly relevant. Zlatev (1997: 203) summarizes these studies in

an epigenetic model of semantic development which characterizes the relation between early and later speech not in terms of a dichotomy such as 'pre-symbolic/symbolic' but, above all, through the continuous process of *differentiation*.

This notion applies to the differentiation between a) situation and background, b) utterance and situation, c) the separate aspects of the situation and d) the elements of the utterance (ibid.). The process of differentiation (i.e. linguistic development) is continuous as it consists of a number of stages of linguistic competence indicated by characteristic behaviours³³. Furthermore, the transitions between the stages are brought about 'by *processes* of transcontextualization, differentiation and stabilization, which are drawn out in time' (Zlatev 1997: 202). In short, language development is epigenetic rather than maturational. Language is not determined by genetic instruction, even though genes place various constraints on its development. To quote Zlatev (1997: 191),

every consecutive stage [of language development] is determined by (a) the structure of the organism during the previous stage and (b) the organism's interaction with the environment.

7 Conclusion

Above, I have discussed several approaches to language development with regard to the assumptions made by dialogical theorists such as Voloshinov (1929/1973) and Bakhtin (1986). In the course of discussion, it became evident that often these different approaches share a common ground in many respects. I argued, together with Edelman (1992), Elman

³³ According to Zlatev (1997: 193–200), language development proceeds from moves in language games (stage 1) to minimal, differentiated language games (stage 4) through generalized language games (stage 2) and internal differentiation of utterances and situations (stage 3).

et al. (1996) and Zlatev (1997) among others, that empirical findings do not support the nativist account for language acquisition proposed by Chomsky (1959). Nevertheless, there is much evidence for human beings having some innate biological prerequisites for language (e.g. deaf babies babbling). Despite the fact that there is a need for a certain kind of innateness (see, e.g., Bråten 1989, Edelman 1992, Salo, in press), children 'still have to learn how to use language' as Bruner (1983: 119) rightly emphasizes. If a child has no chance to interact with other human beings, it cannot acquire a language. This has been proved by some, fortunately extremely rare, examples of children growing up without any human contact (see, e.g., Steinberg 1993). A lone mind has no language, for the 'word', as Voloshinov (1929/1973: 86) stated, 'is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee'. Ergo: without dialogue there can be no language.

To conclude, empirical studies have proved that social interaction is necessary for the emergence of language. These findings support the dialogical assumption of uttering being a joint activity. Thus, to turn it the other way round, dialogism with its philosophical inclination towards a sociological or rather, as the present day dialogical thought (see, e.g., Marková & Foppa 1990, Wold 1992) seems to suggest, a socio-psychological explanation of language could offer a firm ground for developmental studies.

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From ‘Psycholinguistics’ to a Dialogical Psychology of Language: Aspects of the Inner Discourse(s)

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In this article, a dialogical approach to psychology of language, based on an interpretation of Bakhtinian thought, is introduced. It is discussed as an alternative for the present mainstream psycholinguistics and involves a social and biological view to consciousness, cognition, and mental language. Some issues concerning the philosophy of science and research methodology are considered. Two case studies reflecting the dialogical approach are discussed.

Keywords: psychology of language, dialogism, non-Cartesian approaches

1 Introduction: monological vs. dialogical approach

In what follows, I will discuss the dialogical approach to language and its implications for the theory and methodology of the field known as ‘psycholinguistics’. My arguments rely on dialogical thinking as discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin and the other members of the Bakhtin Circle (see particularly Voloshinov 1973). However, it is not my aim to analyse Bakhtin’s writings as such, but to aim at relating his thinking to the recent discussion on the nature of language and mind. I will refer to recent developments within linguistics (see, e.g., Marková & Foppa 1990, 1991, Linell 1995), psychology (see, e.g., Shotter 1995) and several non-Cartesian approaches to cognition (see, e.g., Damasio 1996, Maturana & Varela 1980, Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1996, Clark 1997). To make the distinction between Bakhtinian approach and modern psycholinguistics explicit, I will replace ‘psycholinguistics’ with ‘psychology of language’ when describing the dialogical alternative.

The dialogical psychology of language is here introduced as an alternative to the tradition of psycholinguistic research which has been dominant for the last thirty or forty years. The word 'psycholinguistics' as such implies a particular scientific paradigm which emerged in the late 1950s in linguistics and psychology. The new mentalist turn, or, the cognitive revolution, as Gardner (1987) puts it, was a reaction against the antimentalism, which had been typical of both behaviourist psychology and structuralist linguistics. Thus modern psycholinguistics is a brainchild of two new mentalist approaches of 1950s, cognitive psychology and Chomskyan linguistics. Below, I will discuss some of the assumptions that underlie the current psycholinguistics, and propose an alternative view suggested by dialogical thought.

What I will suggest in this article is that the Bakhtinian notion of dialogue, if accepted as a central metaphor for the study of psychology of language, necessarily forces us to re-interpret much of what is done within contemporary psycholinguistics. First, however, it is necessary to give a tentative definition of dialogue. It is evident that Bakhtin uses the word 'dialogue' in various senses. What is essential is that it does not imply an act of conversation between two persons only, and that it refers to something more than language use in human communication. As Lähteenmäki (1994: 16) notes, dialogue can be interpreted as a metaphilosophical principle - an overall principle that governs human existence. To quote Bakhtin (1984: 293):

Life is by its very nature dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask a question, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds.

This quotation encapsulates a view on language and cognition that is thoroughly different from the mainstream cognitive sciences approach. What the quotation suggests is that all human activity is to be seen in terms of *embodied* and *situated* action (cf. Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1996, Zlatev 1997). It also implies that all human activity is dynamic in character. In what follows, I will discuss these arguments in more detail, and concentrate on how the key concepts of 'mind', 'language' and 'mental knowledge' are defined in current psycholinguistics and how they could be reconsidered within the dialogical approach.

2 Mind and language revisited

2.1 Two kinds of minds

The notion of *mind* typical of current psycholinguistics can be regarded as Cartesian. The Cartesian mind is both decontextualized and disembodied; it is assumed that there exists a categorical distinction between the mind and the body, on the one hand, and between the mind and the environment, on the other. In this manner, cognition is seen to be separate from its bodily and environmental contexts. Cognition is considered – either metaphorically or in reality – as *located* in the brain, and, studied as a property of the human brain. This definition of cognition considers the body and the environment as external contexts of cognition, not as its integral elements. Therefore the processes that occur *outside* brain have been seen as irrelevant for the study of cognition and the environment has been considered as an external *scene* of the mental phenomena.

The Cartesian dualistic approach draws a line between mind, body, and environment. A different angle will be offered by a *systemic* definition, in which mind is seen as a phenomenon that emerges in the systemic relationship(s) between an organism and its environment (see, e.g., Järvillehto 1994). Thus it is clear that it is not the *brain* alone that is responsible for cognitive functions. Rather, cognition is accomplished by the organism as a whole, and, moreover, an organism in a particular environment. Thus we cannot claim that mental (or, cognitive) phenomena occur *in the brain* but, rather, *in the system* which consists of the organism (brain-body) and its environment (for a similar argument, see also Clark 1997). This implies that in seeking explanation for mental phenomena – such as language knowledge or mental processes involved in language use – we will have to look at the systemic relationships that involve the organism (brain-body) and its environment and see cognition as embodied and situated.

The notion of cognition as an *embodied* phenomenon is supported by recent work within neurosciences. The biological and bodily basis of cognition has been argued for by Maturana and Varela (1980) and Damasio (1996). The notion of *situated* cognition has a longer history still. It was argued not only by Bakhtin but also by his Russian contemporary Vygotsky that *social* environment plays an essential role in the formation of an individual consciousness (for a comparison between Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Voloshinov in this respect, see Lähteenmäki 1994). But also the *physical* environment is crucial. The role of the environment in this

sense was discussed by Uexküll (1982, orig. 1934) who argued that there is an intrinsic relationship that exists between an organism and its particular environment, or its *Umwelt*. The relationship between an animal and its environment is a central assumption also in Gibson's (1979) ecological approach to perception.

To summarize, the *systemic view* on mind indicates that a cognizing individual is a biological and social being who is intimately connected with his/her physical and social environment. Therefore, the description of the mental events (such as language knowledge or language use) has to go beyond the Cartesian 'inside' and study the cognizing system as a whole. As Järvillehto (1994: 108) points out, the mental functions are not generated in the brain, but in the system consisting of the organism and its environment.

2.2 Knowledge or knowing - memory or remembering?

The above approach to mind implies a different epistemological view to *mental (linguistic) knowledge* and necessitates a reconsideration of both 'memory' and 'mental representation'. This far, the *container image* of memory has been a central metaphor in psychology and linguistics. The most popular metaphor for memory is a 'location' (e.g. brain area) in which 'objects' (i.e. mental representations) are stored. This view also emphasizes the fact that mental representations are basically static entities that are stored in a permanent manner. The notion of memory as a storage can be found as early as in Plato, who first described memory as a storage of knowledge, and compared memorized knowledge to traces imprinted on a wax tablet.

However, alternative ideas to how individuals remember have also been presented. The theory of a *dynamic* memory was discussed by Bartlett (1932) who objected the use of the noun *memory*, thinking that this linguistic choice enforces a view in which mental processes are seen as static entities. As memory, in his view, was a dynamic process, a more proper choice would be to call it *remembering*. More recently, Edelman (1992) has argued for a dynamic and reconstructing memory. According to him, the brain constantly updates information, correlates it, and recategorizes it. This suggests that remembering cannot refer to accessing a permanent schema or a static representation. Rather, remembering involves a continuous process of recategorization: the continually changing contexts effect the neural populations that are responsible for the original categorization and thus achieve a change in them. This view also suggests that remembering strongly involves the context. In its

processual nature and involvement of the context, the view comes close to the Bakhtinian 'dialogue'.

But is it really possible to explain remembering without resorting to the popular view of memory as an internal data-base? It seems that there is an increasing amount of data suggesting that this might be possible. For example, Clark (1997) argues that intelligent behaviour *may* be achieved without a *large* storage of explicit knowledge. In his discussion on the recent developments in robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life, Clark (1997) offers an alternative view in which behaviours are explained as emergent from the process of co-operation between the organism and the environment. The behaviours that look complex, and are intelligent, are, in fact, achieved by a relatively simple processes in which cues of the environment are effectively used and acted upon. The basic argument thus suggests that the current environment *supports* the behaviours (or, *participates* in the behaviours), and this, respectively, decreases the need for a large data-base of knowledge. A similar argument is present also in Gibson's (1979: 127) notion of *affordance*: the environment *affords* (i.e. provides, or furnishes) the animal something to act upon.

Thus it is possible to consider memory as a process that involves the environment rather than as a location within the individual. Also, *if* the environment is seen to play a greater role in the generation of behaviours, the need for a large storage of explicit information is diminished. Furthermore, the existence of memory representations themselves is under debate, and, in some current approaches, their existence ('representationalism') is rejected (as implied in, e.g., Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1996). Thus the notion of memory that does not work on a representational basis is not inconceivable and, at the very least, there are serious attempts to re-define mental representation. Clark (1997), for example, rejects the 'classical' view (of static, replica-like representations) but accepts 'action-oriented' and 'personalized' representations. In all, it is evident that the study of remembering is going through a phase of reevaluation. But although new hypotheses exist, it is as evident that no firm answers have been received yet. However, the basic arguments of the dialogical view also seem to give support to the argument for remembering as a process and, what is more, as a process which is more context-sensitive, modality-dependent and personalized than now generally considered.

2.3 Language or languages?

The notion of *language* characteristic to mainstream psycholinguistics is basically Chomskyan, but shares also assumptions – present in all modern linguistics perhaps – which are initially Saussurean, such as the notion of *invariance* (Saussure 1966). Voloshinov (1973), particularly, argued against Saussure who saw the invariant language system as the main object of linguistic analysis³⁴. Voloshinov (1973), to whom the invariant system was an artefact, saw language fundamentally as a process that varied in time and space, and therefore had to be analysed as a process as well.

Chomskyan linguistics, which shares de Saussure's emphasis on invariance, adds mentalism to it. Thus Chomskyan approach sees language in terms of an autonomous mental property, a *mental organ*, which is largely innate and species-specific. The emphasis of the linguistic description is on the syntactic and morphological properties and thus 'language' also essentially denotes form. Thus what is learned (or, in Chomskyan terminology, acquired) and imprinted in one's brain is the *form* of a language: its *grammar* and its *lexicon*. It is assumed that a speaker *internalizes* the grammatical rules that are needed for the production of the sentences of language. Similarly, a speaker is supposed to imprint lexical representations (i.e. the vocabulary) of his/her language. Further, s/he is assumed to put this knowledge (his 'competence') to use whenever s/he uses language (at his/her 'performance' level). Thus the language that exists internally is a result of filtering out the external variation.

In contrast, the dialogical approach emphasizes particularly the inherent and observable *variation* found in language. Bakhtin (1981) himself sees language in terms of *heteroglossia*, a variety of 'competing languages'. As heteroglossia is generated by the particular social contexts in which the language is used, different manifestations of language also represent different ideological points of view. In his later work, introducing the notion of *speech genre*, Bakhtin (1986: 60) argues that these are relatively stable types of utterances associated with the various spheres of the language use. Language thus consists of various speech genres that are a variety of conventionalized forms of verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviours, associated with certain forms of social life. Thus 'knowing a language' means knowing different speech genres or appropriate ways to act and react in certain social situations in a meaningful manner (see also Dufva & Lähteenmäki 1996b: 123). In its

³⁴ For a discussion of the Saussure – Bakhtin – Voloshinov relationship and its many controversies, see Lähteenmäki, in this volume.

emphasis of the social, the Bakhtinian view comes close to certain Western non-Chomskyan approaches, such as Halliday's (1978) view of language as a *social semiotic*.

With regard to the psychology of language, this view would suggest that language knowledge is primarily of social origin, acquired in actual social contexts – as opposed to the Chomskyan emphasis on the innate and universal character of language knowledge (see also Salo, in this volume). If the emphasis on the social origin and the notion of language as heteroglossia are accepted, it would strongly suggest that mental knowledge, by necessity, bears traces of this heteroglossia. In other words, it suggests that the primary function of our 'inner' knowledge has to do with how language is used, rather than how it is structured. In order to be able to use language, we must know what is appropriate in a given situation, with given groups of people, with given modalities and so forth. Thus it may be assumed that *what* is known (certain words, forms, phrases) has to go hand in hand with *when*, *where* and with *whom* it is used. Therefore, it would be more appropriate perhaps to call the knowledge we have as knowledge of *discourses* rather than as knowledge of language. This view is clearly functional, as opposed to formal, and suggests that learning a language and using it is to be seen primarily as a *meaningful* process. This argument is further developed below.

2.4 Mind, language and knowledge: from monologue to dialogue

Language knowledge, according to mainstream psycholinguistics, is memorized as grammatical knowledge (rules) and lexical items (representations). This knowledge is seen *invariant* in the sense that the effects of external variation (the effect of situations, registers, genres, individuals etc.) are filtered out so that what results is abstract 'linguistic' knowledge that can be applied independently from situation and modality. Since the elements of linguistic knowledge are innate, language acquisition is seen primarily as an 'internal' process, during which the child creates his/her own grammar. Once the language acquisition period is completed, the knowledge remains practically unchanged.

In contrast, the dialogical view of language knowledge suggests that language knowledge should be modelled in terms of a *procedure* which is evoked by, and emerges in, interaction. It is becoming increasingly evident that it is possible to model mental language without assuming a storage of exact representations and permanent knowledge structures to account for the fact that individuals are capable of using language. One argument against the 'language storage' view is that the situation always

contributes to individual's linguistic processes and gives cues as to how to proceed. Thus language knowledge is not internal and individual only, but partly, evoked in each situation. The fact that individuals are able to utter a grammatically correct utterance, for example, has been usually explained by the assumption that there is an internalized list of grammatical rules in their brain and that they apply these mental rules when speaking. But the ability can be explained in a different manner, systemically and dialogically. The linguistic knowledge individuals need does not lie *in toto* within the individual, but in the systemic relations that are characteristic of any particular situation of language use. If we consider an ordinary conversation as an example, it may be argued that both the other participant(s) in the situation and the overall context will evoke certain expectations and open up some possibilities. Thus the *situated* elements actually and genuinely participate in the process of producing a spoken conversation. In this sense, language is created 'on the spot'.

However, there is also permanence (or semi-permanence) in language: the utterances are structurally similar to other utterances and the words are not randomly chosen and irrational, but appropriate and conventional. In other words, we speak in a manner that is typical of our language and proper for the situation. In claiming that language knowledge is dynamic I am not saying that it is *ad hoc* knowledge: it is obvious that speakers are not allowed to use a grammar of their own and that they have only a limited possibility to invent new words and usages. What I am saying is that this semi-permanence does not have to be explained by assuming an internal rule or a memorized pattern.

The conventional element is explained by the fact that language knowledge *is* situational and that each new situation bears a resemblance to other situations that have preceded it. Thus there are elements in any situation that echo other situations that have been experienced by the individual before. It is suggested that individuals employ situational analogies in their language use and understanding and that these largely unconscious situational anticipations and assumptions serve as a ground for the production of external language behaviours. Thus attending a plenary lecture as a listener, meeting a friend for a cup of coffee or writing a letter to the editor all evoke very different experiences and anticipations and result in different language behaviours – which, however, share elements with the language use in similar situations.

It is clear, however, that individuals are not merely *reacting* to external stimuli and that language knowledge is, in a manner of speaking, *within* the individual. However, the metaphor of *biography* would seem to describe language knowledge more appropriately than

that of internal grammar. Biography implies that language knowledge is gathered along a person's life span through innumerable observations and experiences of language use in various situations. This view of language knowledge emphasizes two things. One is the fact that language use involves what Bakhtin (1981) called *alien words*: the speakers of a language echo what they have heard, repeat what has been said before and do what is conventional. The other aspect I wish to emphasize here derives from Merleau-Ponty's (1994) thinking: biography is also bodily knowledge. Instead of being abstract and 'substanceless' it is embodied and experiential knowledge, or, in other words, *lived* knowledge, and what is more, seen from a particular, individual point of view. Thus the view shares the Bakhtinian emphasis on the fact that knowledge is always *both* social *and* individual in character.

Accordingly, the linguistic biography of a person would not necessarily involve abstract grammatical 'rules', in the sense as they are now commonly understood. In contrast, there would be 'rules' that are closely tied with both linguistic modality (e.g. spoken vs. written) and discourse type. In order to achieve spoken conversation, for example, one would have to have learned to act upon the very characteristics of the situation – such as its oral mode, on-line nature, rapidity, and co-operative nature (see also 4.2). In contrast, to achieve a written text, one would have to resort to very different strategies and skills. It is suggested that language knowledge is not acontextual but, essentially, conditioned by the situation, genre, register, dialect etc. The use of this knowledge is similarly contextual: a particular context will evoke – by the strength of analogy – a range of potential responses and patterns of behaviour that are possible and appropriate in this very situation.

3 Philosophy of science – methodology of research

3.1 Psycholinguistics

Psycholinguistics represents what can be called a 'normal science' in the sense discussed by Kuhn (1970). The philosophy of science that underlies psycholinguistics is characterized by two trends: *rationalism* that has had a deep influence on linguistic thought and *positivism* which is pervasive in the tradition of experimental psychology. Chomsky (1966) saw linguistics as a fundamentally rationalist science and as argued above, the mainstream psycholinguistics has been thoroughly affected by Chomskyan concept of language. On the other hand, it is evident that positivism has been a strong underlying influence. Psycholinguistics is

decidedly – although not exclusively – experimental in character (as obvious in, e.g., Prideaux 1984: 34) and owes much to experimental psychology as to its ideals and methods. The close connection between psychology and natural sciences and reliance on exact methodology is as typical of psycholinguistics as it is of experimental psychology (for a critical discussion of experimental approach, see, e.g., Langenhove 1995).

Thus the premises of a rationalist linguistic theory serve as a background for a basically positivist research programme. Most commonly, the approach is *deductive*. On the basis of theoretical axioms of linguistics, *hypotheses* are formed, which are then put to test in an experiment. The experiment is designed so as to be as *reliable* and as *valid* an *instrument* as possible in testing the original hypotheses. Typically, a psycholinguistic experiment is associated with a *laboratory* experiment, although experimental design includes other possibilities as well, such as longitudinal study, typical of second/foreign language learning research, for example. The linguistic behaviours and skills of individuals, or *subjects*, are *measured*, classified and compared, with the help of certain *tasks*, for example. The experimental approach is also often associated with *instrumental* research or the use of various devices in registration and measurement of behaviours. Experiments also often yield numeric data which is subjected to a *quantitative* analysis. In the analysis, one aims at arriving at generalizations. The role of a researcher in this design is that of a neutral and objective *outside observer*. This nutshell summary of a psycholinguistic research programme is inadequate in recording the complexities of the field. Hopefully, however, it helps in highlighting some of its differences to the dialogical way of thinking described below.

3.2 Dialogical psychology of language

Some authors see dialogism as a philosophy of science itself. Holquist (1990: 15), for example, regards dialogism as an epistemological commitment that may be applied beyond linguistics or literary criticism. Even if this would not turn out to be so, it is evident that dialogical thought is able to contribute in creating such theoretical developments and methodological choices that help to outline a different view to the psychology of language. Also, it is clear that there are other directions in both psychology and linguistics that share a dissatisfaction with the mainstream *cognitivist*³⁵ approach, and although it is hardly justified to

³⁵ Cognitivism is here used in the sense similar to the critical discussion in Still & Costal 1991.

call them dialogical, they, however, share certain elements with dialogical thought.

Thus it is evident that there are *linguistic* schools and directions that argue along the lines of the dialogical approach. One increasingly important point is an emphasis on *meaning over form*. Thus different approaches that can be called *functionalist*, such as the *systemic-functional grammar* (see, e.g., Halliday 1978), *functional grammar* (see, e.g., Hopper 1988) and, even *speech act theory* (see, e.g., Searle 1975)³⁶ all regard language as a primarily meaningful system and emphasize the functional and motivated nature of language use. In this respect, they bear a resemblance to dialogical approach. Another point is how different theories see the position of the social in a theory of language, which, in dialogism, is central. In many current approaches to discourse one finds a similarly social emphasis despite their possible mutual differences. Among them, for example, *social constructionism*, *social interactionism*, and *critical discourse analysis* could be mentioned (for a discussion, see, e.g., Nystrand 1992, Luukka 1995).

Also in psychology it is easy to find trends that argue against the mainstream cognitivist view (see, e.g., Still & Costal 1991, Smith, Harré & Langenhove 1995). Smith, Harré & Langenhove (1995: 5) name these trends as 'post-positivist', and regard them as 'hermeneutic' alternatives to the tradition of psychology as a natural science (see particularly Langenhove 1995). The ones closest to dialogism are perhaps *dialogical psychology* (Shotter 1995) and *discursive psychology* (Harré 1995). What seems to be common to post-positivist approaches is that they tend to find the natural science methodology more or less inadequate in the research of human sciences and that they recognize the importance of studying human *experience*. The recognition of subjective experience as not only a legitimate object but a central focus of research brings forth also different methodological solutions.

What, then, would be the natural methodological choices for studying the psychology of language from a dialogical point of view? It may be a necessity to favour *explorative* approaches and *tentative* formulations. It is obvious, however, that an increasing amount of *field work* is needed to explore such contexts and phenomena that have been ignored or that have studied in the framework of formal linguistics only. As to the practices, the orientation would suggest that such methods as non-structured interview, (participant) observation, narrative analysis or biographical research yield relevant data on the experiential aspect of language. Further, it seems evident that the dialogical viewpoint suggests

³⁶ Note, however, that Linell & Marková 1993 explicitly refer to speech act theory as a monological approach.

a basically *inductive* approach which would allow a re-interpretation of linguistic data and, in some cases, also a re-interpretation of earlier results. In all, the most appropriate metaphor for a dialogical research programme is a *cycle*, in which *data* (the language material one studies) and the *theory of language* (that is enfolding in this process) are in a reciprocal relationship. New findings contribute to the theory of language and new theoretical developments create new angles for the study.

This also means that the individuals who are studied are no more interchangeable 'subjects' of a positivist research design (Langenhove 1995: 22), but rather, individuals whose *voice* (cf. Bakhtin 1984) the researcher aims at hearing or whose *experience* (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1994) he aims at recording. This implies that the role of researcher is also different: a dialogical scholar is not an outside observer, but rather a *participating* and, also, by necessity, a subjective *interpreter*. As the Bakhtinian notion of 'nonalibi for being' suggests, all knowledge is based on the observations made from a unique first-person perspective (Bakhtin 1993). Thus the position of the observer influences what is observed, as also argued in modern physics. What this stand seems to imply particularly for the study of language is that scientific knowledge about language is created in a dialogue in which the *researcher*, *researchee* (language user), and *their experienced world* are involved. Clearly, this also means a shift from the analysis of language (as a formal object) to the analysis of language as understood and used by individuals involved in their diverse everyday practices.

4 Two cases for the dialogical psychology of language

Finally, I will present two cases that may help to illustrate the scope and methods of the dialogical psychology of language. The first is concerned with 'everyday knowledge' and its position in scientific argumentation, and the second is a re-analysis of spoken language processing.

4.1 Talking about language: What an interview tells about mental knowledge?

The individual knowledge systems have been studied within various fields and have been called as *personal constructs* (Kelly 1955), *subjective theories* (Grotjahn 1991), *cognitive schemata* (Kamppinen 1993) or *cultural*

models (Keesing 1987). Dufva, Lähteenmäki & Isoherranen (1996) use the term *everyday knowledge* in a study which explores the individuals' experiential knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching. The aim was to find out how the individuals had experienced the role of language and languages in their life (for the results, see Dufva, Lähteenmäki & Isoherranen 1996). Moreover, an exploration of the *nature* of mental knowledge itself was also aimed at (see, e.g., Dufva & Lähteenmäki 1996a).

The data was gathered by a questionnaire, a group discussion, and an individual interview³⁷. The methodological choices (e.g., open-ended questions and an interview type that aimed at simulating a spontaneous conversation) were chosen to stress the importance of recording the subjects' own voice. At the same time, the role of the researcher as a participant was explicitly acknowledged: the researcher was not seen as an outside observer, but rather as a participant that – by necessity – contributes to the situations by his choice of questions and his manner of presenting them.

As to the nature of mental knowledge, the data seems to speak for its dynamicity. For example, an answer to a question does not seem to exist *as such* before it is were dealt with. In other words, knowledge does not seem to be 'retrieved from the memory' in the form of a schema, for example, as the cognitivist approach would suggest. The way the individuals talk and formulate their answers seems to suggest that knowledge is (partly) created upon asking, and thus, (partly) dependent on the questions and on the particular situation. Thus knowledge is described more aptly as a *narrative* or as a *construct* that emerges in the interaction between the researcher and the researchee, as a result of a *negotiation*, and therefore it is, in a sense, always being regenerated.

But although knowledge is seen as being constantly negotiated (or constructed) in a particular situation, it cannot be considered *exclusively* situational, however. There is clearly both continuity and conventionality in the narratives people tell. Therefore, it may be argued that what people 'know' results from a series of interactions they are involved in during their lifetime and it is the biography of the individual (in the sense suggested in previous chapter) that acts as a reservoir from which the knowledge emerges. This reservoir can be seen, in Bakhtinian terms, as a collection of different *voices* (for a somewhat similar application of Bakhtinian 'voice', see Leiman, in this volume). Thus mental knowledge is *polyphonic*, reflecting the many voices and different sources that

³⁷ The subjects were asked about their foreign language learning experiences, teachers, and materials but also about their attitudes toward different languages and their reflections concerning language and thought.

contribute to it. In the study of the language experiences, some voices resulted from *personal* experiences, while others were more *collective* and/or *institutional* (for a closer analysis, see Dufva 1994). Also, some voices seemed to be quiet (i.e. more difficult to talk about, more subdued, or less structured) while others were more loud (e.g., expressed quickly, in an assured manner). It was concluded that the Bakhtinian notions of *voice and polyphony* were useful tools in the analysis of mental knowledge. Using them, it was possible to gain a more dynamic view of mental knowledge and to show how intimately connected the knowledge is with the context of learning and the context of use.

Even if the above view is accepted, it is possible to claim that it applies only to what could be called 'encyclopedic' knowledge or larger knowledge systems that may be characterized as 'attitudes', 'beliefs', 'recollections', or 'memories' about language. Thus it may not seem to offer an explanation for how language *itself* is available for us, i.e. how the 'grammatical' and 'lexical' knowledge is represented. Thus the counter-argument could be made that we still need the traditional framework of rules and representations that are stored in one's linguistic memory. However, it can be argued that the above view on the dynamicity and situatedness of mental knowledge helps us to understand language knowledge in this sense as well. This argument will be developed in what follows.

4.2 Speech processing or emergent discourse?

It is of particular importance to study spoken language in a new dialogical framework as the tradition in linguistics has been what Linell (1982) calls 'written-language biased'. According to Linell (1982) and Harris (1980), many theories and tools of linguistics that are supposed to deal with 'language' actually deal with 'written language'. Thus the written tradition is the hidden agenda of linguistics and even such models and theories that aim at describing spoken language in particular end up working with concepts originating in written language analysis. One example is the persistent use of 'sentence production' as a synonym for speaking, although it should be evident that 'sentence' is a written language unit and rather dissimilar to the verbal outputs of a spontaneous conversation. Thus, to analyse spoken language, one has to first recognize its own characteristics and properties and choose appropriate tools for analysis.

To model the psychology of spoken language production (as obvious in an ordinary conversation, for example) dialogically, we can

start with an assumption expressed by Shotter (1995: 162): 'All that we need to know about is available in our dialogical or situated speech itself'. This means that to make inferences as to the nature of mental processes, we will have to see what kind of phenomena are manifest in a spoken conversation. In what follows I will try to summarize some earlier arguments and findings (see, e.g., Dufva 1992, 1996) about spoken language production.

One of the most fundamental claims of the dialogical approach is that spoken language, as apparent in a conversation, is *not* produced *by the individual*. Speaking is not seen as an individual mental act, a series of psychological processes, or a set of computations in the brain. This view is justified with regard to the notion of dialogue, but also strongly supported by the data on conversation. Dialogically, spoken language production is *not* a process in which individuals apply the rules of their internal grammar to devise a sentence plan which is then executed. In contrast, speaking is seen as a case of a responsive, reciprocal *co-operation* (Linell 1995, Linell & Marková 1993). Spoken language can be said to emerge in systemic relationships which include, for example, a relationship between the participants of the situation. Conversation can be seen, accordingly, as a case of *shared intentionality* (Searle 1992: 167) and what happens is produced by *joint action* (Shotter 1995) rather than by individual actions. The participants of a given speech situation do not only work within a common physical and social environment; they can be said to work within a (partly) common cognitive sphere as well. To obtain a picture of what goes on at the mental level we must consider what the system consists of: the speakers, their environment and the discourse they produce. The elements for the analysis of spoken language production and perception are there, in the system.

As was argued above, in the dialogical philosophy of language the relationship between form and function is different from that in the mainstream psycholinguistics: the primacy is given to functional and meaningful elements. A look at any conversation will show that it moves functionally forward as a meaningful chain of turns – topics are being developed, questions are answered, greetings are recognized and jokes are laughed at. It seems that there is a fundamental agreement on *relevance* between the participants. What individuals do is relevant in relation to what has happened in the discourse, but it is relevant in relation to the norms and practices of the linguistic community as well and also, relevant from the point of view of the participants' shared discourse history. Thus individuals have to assume that what the other does, is meaningful and aim at meaningful responses themselves. This basic meaningfulness of conversation is considered primary. Linguistic

forms (words, utterances etc.) that appear in a conversation are secondary in the sense that they serve a function and appear for a reason. In other words, they have to be motivated. However, also the forms can be explained as emergent – as they also result from an interplay of the participants. For example, speakers complete each others' remarks, modify them and develop further what the others say (see, e.g., Dufva 1996), i.e. they 'steal' part of their grammar and vocabulary from the preceding discourse. There is an inherent connectedness in a conversation at the formal level as well.

But just because spoken conversation is such a tightly and complexly intertwined external dialogue, it is necessary to argue that it is also an internal dialogue. Speakers co-operate also at the mental level and proceed on the basis of implicit and unspoken assumptions. These inferences and mental moves become manifest especially when the co-operation seems to become disrupted: when we 'do not understand', or when we 'misunderstand'. Consider the following example. My colleague asks me whether I 'like red'. I assume she refers to the office party in near future and wants to have my opinion as to whether white wine or red wine would be a good choice for a drink. When I start to explain my view, it becomes apparent that she has bought a red shirt that she does not like, and wants me to have it. It is obvious that at the mental level, our assumptions had started to diverge. For a moment, 'red' has two different referents, until after an explicit negotiation of meaning, the 'misunderstanding' is resolved. In contrast, consider the following example.

Question: What kind of shirt did you wear?
 Answer: I'm standing in the back row.

Reading the lines out of context makes the second line seem irrelevant. The exchange makes sense, however, once the situation is given. The first speaker is looking at a photograph of a large group of people and trying to locate her colleague in it. She does not ask where he is, however, but, in a more roundabout manner, inquires what kind of clothes he was wearing. The answer is relevant and co-operative, however, because he answers the question that was *impending*, or *implied*. What is essential to note is that participants in this case – which is a highly typical example of everyday communication – move on, and 'understand' each other despite of the 'illogical' nature of the exchange.

Thus when considering the nature of spoken communication it seems to be a necessity to assume that the *unspoken dialogue* plays an essential role in its description. As the examples above showed, the

participants of a conversation do not share an external context only, but also live in a partly shared mental reality. It was argued that the *mental* processes which result in articulated conversational speech must be *basically* situated and co-operative. Both the structure of a conversation and its content emerge in various systemic processes that are involved in the particular situation. Thus language use is not described as an individual process, in which stored knowledge is used in order to produce a certain linguistic behaviour. Rather, language use is envisaged as a process in which the individual engages with an environment which, as a whole, is responsible for the end result. Spoken utterances, then, are not 'planned' and 'executed' by an individual, but rather, achieved by the strength of the participating individuals, the discourse they are producing, the experiences they have had and the environment they are in.

5 Conclusion

To summarize, it seems likely that the dialogical approach to psychology of language with its enfolding theoretical and methodological developments will give us new insights into the mental reality of language users. In the dialogical approach, language is not only a structure to be dissected but primarily, meanings to be interpreted. It is with language that we are able to tell our narratives, to construct our realities, and to publicize our inner experiences. In listening these inner voices in research we may gain a glimpse into what human cognition is all about.

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Words as Intersubjective Mediators in Psychotherapeutic Discourse: The Presence of Hidden Voices in Patient Utterances

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Mikhail Bakhtin's work has several important contributions to the theory and practice of psychotherapy. His conception of signs as living messengers of their referents, his understanding of the consciousness as an in-between phenomenon, his theory of utterances as a dialectics of the author and the addressee, and his analysis of multi-voiced novelistic discourse, represent some of the directly applicable themes in our attempts to understand the psychotherapeutic relationship and the discourse between patient and therapist. In the paper only one aspect of this wealth of material will be addressed. It is the question of what is embedded in patient narratives. The dialogical sequence analysis will be presented. It is a technique inspired by Bakhtin's thinking to examine embedded voices and the shifting positions of the author in patient narratives. The method will be illustrated by case vignettes that reveal the multi-voiced quality of patient utterances.

Keywords: psychotherapy, dialogical sequence analysis, intersubjectivity, multi-voiced discourse

1 Introduction

I shall begin by quoting the texts of two British psychoanalysts, Christopher Bollas and Donald Winnicott, who represent the so-called object relations school of psychoanalysis. My aim is to illustrate the relatedness of some of their thoughts to Bakhtin's understanding of the dialogical nature of the human being.

In the early 1950s Paula Heimann, a member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, posed a simple question that became crucial to the practice of psychoanalysis in what has come to be called the 'British School' of psychoanalysis... When listening to the patient's free associations (or broken speech), and tracing the private logic of sequential association as all

psychoanalysts had done up until then, she asked: 'Who is speaking?' We can say that up until this moment it had always been assumed that the speaker was the patient who had formed a therapeutic alliance with the analyst, and therefore that he was a neutral or working speaker who was reporting inner states of mind. This assumption comprised the classical view of analytic narrative. But Heimann knew that at any one moment in a session a patient could be speaking with the voice of the mother, or the mood of the father, or some fragmented voice of a child self either lived or withheld from life.

'To whom is this person speaking?' Heimann then asked. The unconscious admits no special recognition of the neutrality of the psychoanalyst and, given the unending subtleties of the transference, Heimann realized that at one moment the analysand was speaking to the mother, anticipating the father, or reproaching, exciting or consoling a child – the child self of infancy, in the midst of separation at age two, in the oedipal phase, or in adolescence. 'What is the patient talking about and why now?', she added.

Heimann and other analysts in the British School, all of whom had been deeply influenced by the work of Melanie Klein, analysed the object relations implied in the patient's discourse. The patient's narrative was not simply listened to in order to hear the dissonant sounds of unconscious punctuation or the affective registrations that suggested the ego's position and availability for interpretation. The British analyst would also analyse the shifting subjects and others that were implied in the life of the transference. (Bollas 1987: 1-2.)

Bakhtin, of course, did not speak of the ego or the transference, but would obviously have accepted the idea of the dissonant sounds of forgotten voices, liberated from the biologist underpinnings of the Freudian instinct theory (see, e.g., Voloshinov 1976). Bakhtin also emphasized that every utterance is meant for somebody. It has an addressee and the addressee affects the very construction of the utterance. It seems that Bakhtin shares with the object relations school the understanding of the importance of the Other in our mental life (Voloshinov 1986, Bakhtin 1984, 1986). In his ever evolving conception of the utterance, he has managed to show how the significant others are present in our ways of expressing ourselves and where we can recognize their voices.

2 The word wants to be heard

Utterances are born in the inter-communion of subjects. That is why the addressee is embedded in the very structure of the utterance. It is the response of the addressee that gives life to hidden and forgotten voices, echoing the patient's past experiences or, sometimes, even the experiences of her ancestors. In Bakhtin's understanding, the embedded voices will necessarily appear if there is a responsive other willing to encounter them.

The intersubjective dialectics of utterance and responsive understanding creates the space in which internalized voices take shape.

A developmental path can be traced. The first appearance of a voice is usually embedded in a sign or a sign complex whose observable 'surface' does not directly inform us about what is involved. It may be an alien word in the patient's verbalisation. It may dwell in the intonation of her speech that conveys a particular emotional shade. It may be represented by a gesture that is performed without conscious reflection. And, finally, it is frequently reflected in the subjective experience of the therapist as counter-transference feelings and fantasies, or 'reveries', to use Bion's (1962) term.

All such subtle cues are, of course, not easy to understand. However, due to our natural (very early developed) capacity for multi-modal perception, the different sources and paths of presented signs tend to merge into a meaningful configuration. It is as if the hidden voice first spoke through fragments. When the synthesizing mind of the therapist encounters these fragments, they begin to live, join together, and, finally the voice is embedded in a psychologically meaningful body to which the patient seems to have related. The process is superbly portrayed by Prophet Ezekiel's powerful vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37). Lying scattered around the valley, the bones were addressed by God through the prophet's words and they responded to the call by joining together, eventually getting flesh around them and becoming living bodies.

My second example comes from Winnicott who, in my view, is closest to Bakhtin's thinking regarding the intersubjective nature of utterances and in the understanding of how signs are formed in the joint space between two socially organised persons (Leiman 1992).

On a Friday the patient came and reported much as usual. The thing that struck me on this Friday was that the patient was talking about *penis envy*. I use this term advisedly, and I must invite acceptance of the fact that this term was appropriate here in view of the material, and of its presentation. Obviously this term, *penis envy*, is not usually applied in the description of a man.

The change that belongs to this particular phase is shown in the way I handled this. On this particular occasion I said to him: 'I am listening to a girl. I know perfectly well that you are a man but I am listening to a girl, and I am talking to a girl. I am telling this girl: 'you are talking about penis envy.'

I wish to emphasize that this has nothing to do with homosexuality.

...

On this occasion there was an immediate effect in the form of intellectual acceptance, and relief, and then there were more remote effects. After a pause the patient said: 'If I were to tell someone about this girl I would be called mad.'

The matter could have been left there, but I am glad, in view of subsequent events, that I went further. It was my next remark that surprised me, and it clinched the matter. I said: 'It was not that *you* told this to anyone; it is *I* who see the girl and hear a girl talking, when actually there is a man on my couch. The mad person is *myself*.'

I did not have to elaborate this point because it went home. The patient said that he now felt sane in a mad environment. In other words he was now released from a dilemma. As he said, subsequently, 'I myself could never say (knowing myself to be a man) 'I am a girl'. I am not mad that way. But you said it, and you have spoken to both parts of me.'

This madness which was mine enabled him to see himself as a girl *from my position*. He knows himself to be a man, and never doubts that he is a man. (Winnicott 1974: 85-86.)

As Winnicott describes, suddenly there is another voice which breaks into the patient's utterances. It is the previously unacknowledged voice of a girl. Winnicott later discusses the origins of that voice. While pregnant, the patient's mother was expecting a girl, and when the boy was born she could not, for a while, rework her way of dealing with the baby. The madness was hers. Thus the entire scene between Winnicott and the patient was a re-enactment of this early pattern of interaction and it became Winnicott's task to represent the position of the mother. Consequently, the 'patient felt safe in a mad environment'. What we have here is a superb example of the interplay between the patient's utterance and the therapist's responsive understanding. A long development of transference in the analysis allowed this unique encounter to take place, permitting a disavowed aspect of the patient's early experience to take shape and be recognized by both parties.

One remarkable aspect in the excerpt above is the question of who is present in the voice that Winnicott heard. He hears a girl speaking. We may now elaborate the phenomenon by examining the intersubjective peculiarity of the voice that seemed to address Winnicott. The voice had, in the first place, become the voice of a girl because that had been the mother's response to the patient's early utterances. The voice of the girl is thus inseparably intermingled with the counter-words, or the voice, of the mother. Perhaps, even better, the mother's words created the voice of the girl. Voloshinov's early claim concerning the origins of subjective experience is clearly relevant here.

After all, there is no such thing as experience outside of embodiment in signs. Consequently, the very notion of a fundamental, qualitative difference between the inner and the outer element is invalid to begin with. Furthermore, the location of the organizing and formative center is not within (i.e., not in the material of inner signs) but outside. It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around – *expression organizes experience*. Expression is what first gives experience its form and specificity of direction.

Indeed, from whichever aspect we consider it, expression-utterance is determined by the actual conditions of the given utterance – above all, by its *immediate social situation*. (Voloshinov 1986: 85.)

Using Voloshinov's words, the expression of the mother in the immediate caring situation organised the patient's experience and embodied it as the

voice of the girl. Following Voloshinov's argument further we may say that the content in the girl's voice reflected the mother's expressions, the signs with which she responded to the inchoate utterances of the baby boy. Now could it be that the penis envy was hers? In that case it was the echo of the mother's voice that Winnicott could hear when he listened to his patient in the session.

But how was it possible that Winnicott recognized a foreign voice in the patient's speech? How could he locate it and hear it as somebody's voice that spoke about penis envy underneath the surface of the patient's utterance?

Responsive understanding is one of Bakhtin's key concepts, extending from the dialogical nature of words into the dialogical processes of our mind. Voloshinov (1986: 118) stated that the speaker's utterance is received by another human being actively, encountered by the latter's inner speech that relates word with word and, at the same time, seeks to formulate a response. In his late essay 'The Problem of the Text' Bakhtin (1986) elaborates this concept in a way that is directly relevant to the theory of psychotherapeutic discourse.

The responsive understanding of a speech whole is always dialogic by nature... The person who understands becomes a participant in the dialogue, although on a special level... Understanding itself enters as a dialogic element in the dialogic system and somehow changes its total sense. The person who understands inevitably becomes a *third* party in the dialogue..., but the dialogic position of this third party is a quite special one. Any utterance always has an addressee..., whose responsive understanding the author of the speech work seeks and surpasses. This is the second party... But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed...(Bakhtin 1986: 125-126.)

In Bakhtin's view the speaker needs a responsiveness that is not finalized, that always leaves room (the loophole) for yet another way of understanding. This is accomplished by the dual nature of the addressee, presupposed by the speaker. It took a long time in the history of psychoanalysis before this phenomenon was formulated as the special mode of responsiveness by the therapist. Partial descriptions were provided already by Freud in his concepts of the transference and therapist neutrality. In the concept of *containment*, as formulated by Bion (1959, 1962), the dual nature of therapist receptivity was elaborated in a way that bears resemblance to Bakhtin's formulation. When treating psychotic patients, Bion recognized their need to use the therapist as a repository for overwhelming feelings or destructive fantasies, which necessitated a special kind of receptivity by the therapist and the ability to delay the response provoked by such strong utterances. Containment,

thus, was a special blend of presence and distancing permitting the patient's utterance to live in the therapist, unfinalized. This was the source of creative changes in its meaning (Sheard 1998).

More recently, Ogden has addressed this phenomenon and further developed it conceptually. Building on Klein's and Winnicott's understanding of the subject as a dialectically constituted, multi-voiced totality of intra- and intermental processes, Ogden's recent aim has been to 'develop an analytic conceptualization of the nature of the interplay of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the analytic setting and the exploration of the implications for technique that these conceptual developments hold' (Ogden 1994: 3).

The analytic process reflects the interplay of three subjectivities: that of the analyst, of the analysand, and of the analytic third. The analytic third is a creation of the analyst and analysand, and at the same time the analyst and analysand (*qua* analyst and analysand) are created by the analytic third (there is no analyst, no analysand, and no analysis in the absence of the third).

As the analytic third is experienced by analyst and analysand in the context of his or her own personality system, personal history, psychosomatic make-up, etc. the experience of the third (although jointly created) is not identical for each participant. (Ogden 1994: 17.)

In his account of the analytic third Ogden does not directly address the nature of mediation that is involved in this interplay of three subjects (rather than 'subjectivities', as Ogden prefers it), but from his clinical vignettes it becomes clear that sign-mediation constitutes the core of the process.

Although tempting, a direct equation between the superaddressee and the analytic third should not be made. The analytic third seems to be closer to Voloshinov's early conception of the formative centre that organizes the experience of patient and therapist, i.e. the shared expressions that are mediated by jointly created signs in the immediate social situation.

Going back to Winnicott's case description, the voice of the girl manifested itself in the patient when Winnicott permitted himself to adopt the position of the 'mad' mother whom the voice addressed. However, it was important that, at the same time, he did not respond from that position, but from the distanced position of the psychoanalyst. He was letting the dialogue of the girl and the mother to be played out in him and reflected on this dialogue from another, non-judgmental and open-minded position. The voice was being heard anew, but not within the early, finalized pattern with the mother that had long been buried and forgotten. The dual receptivity of the analyst provided a space in which

the girl's voice now could enjoy its homecoming festival (Bakhtin 1986: 170).

3 Dialogical Sequence Analysis

Bakhtin's conceptions of the utterance and especially his methods of examining novelistic discourse (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) have affected our way of listening to audiotaped psychotherapy sessions. His ideas have alerted us to the simultaneity of different topics as well as the positional switches occurring within the patient's discourse. We may also observe the presence of another's voice that can be detected by the patient's choice of words, changes in pitch and tone of voice, or changes in intonation, sometimes even in the syntactic composition of the utterance.

The Dialogical Sequence Analysis, DSA, for short, has been developed as a descriptive unit for psychotherapeutic practice in Cognitive Analytic Therapy, an integrative mode of brief psychotherapy (Ryle 1990, 1997). I devised it primarily in the context of psychotherapy supervision, to be used as a thinking tool by the therapist to guide his or her efforts at understanding what the patient is repeatedly enacting both in life and in the consulting room. The DSA can also be used as a tool in psychotherapy research to trace the patient's problematic experiences and their assimilation (Stiles et al. 1990, 1995) in taped and transcribed psychotherapy sessions. It is a free application of Bakhtin's stylistic analysis on literary texts, derived from his ideas of hybrid constructions and the presence of the other's voice in utterances. Its possible uses in psychotherapy and research has been described in more detail elsewhere (Leiman 1997). Here my aim is to show, by using taped excerpts from psychotherapy sessions, the direct relevance of Bakhtin's ideas to the conducting of the DSA.

In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin (1984) gives interesting examples of the presence of the other in the utterances of a character. When discussing the epistolary form used by Dostoevsky in the *Poor Folk* Bakhtin (1984: 205) notes: 'A characteristic feature of the letter is an acute awareness of the interlocutor, the addressee to whom it is directed. The letter, like a rejoinder in a dialogue, is addressed to a specific person, and it takes into account the other's possible reactions, the other's possible reply.' Bakhtin uses the figurative term 'the word with a sideward glance' to describe the intense anticipation of another's response in the stylistic repertoire of the speaker. It 'manifests itself above all in two traits characteristic of the style: a certain halting quality to the speech, and its interruption by reservations.'

In psychotherapy, the concept of transference is used to express the patient's subjective construction of the therapist as an addressee, affecting the content and the form of the patient's utterances in the ways described by Bakhtin. The following excerpt illustrates, among other things, the patient's fearful anticipation of the therapist's inability to understand her predicament³⁸. She does not mention the therapist directly, but the thematic pattern, in which the wish to be understood and the difficulties in 'getting it out in the open' alternate, shows, indirectly, what she thinks about her addressee. In the following, the wish to be understood is underlined and the indirect references to the therapist as a person who cannot fully understand are indicated by italics. The text in boldface indicates the way she sees herself acting in the consulting room, which does not seem to solve the dilemma for her.

So when I have free weekends... I have been thinking a lot. So every time I come and **talk about such everyday matters which happen to me..** and I have a need to talk with someone... or it is like sometimes I.. there are problems or things which are difficult for me... but.. both in the Easter time and in these days I have thought that I should teach myself to... *because I can't.. find a person who all my life.. always..* **come here and talk about it, about those things that happen and..** *it was a bit like that, when one has the need to talk with someone.* So it only resides in me.. and, like **when I come here and, like talk about my job, and then talk about.. yes different things...**

The passage is full of hesitations and reservations, that make it quite disjointed as a narrative sequence. There is, obviously, an intense dialogue occupying her mind that accounts for the apparent incoherence of the text. She does say that there is much inside her wanting to be heard. However, she cannot find a person who could fully receive what she has to say. Even if expressed as a third person, the addressee does seem to be the therapist. Not being able to trust the therapist she talks about everyday matters instead of the thoughts - presumably painful - that occupy her in her free time.

The thematic development of the patient's utterance discloses the dilemma quite openly in the following passage, soon after the one above. Now the addressee, and what she thinks about him, are clearly expressed.

'I think those things.. I have worked terribly hard... to learn to manage those situations which I encounter unexpectedly. It can be.. a period which is.. a little hard.. One does not feel safe, for instance, even in the ... network which I have had around me... **but I come here and only talk about a small part** *and then you can't understand so much of what it really is about, because I have said so little before..'*

³⁸ The transcript was provided by Dr. Sverre Varvin, University of Oslo, Norway.

An additional feature that can be discerned in the excerpts is the simultaneous presence of another addressee to whom some parts of the utterance are directed. The underlined sections seem to be part of an ongoing dialogue with somebody, who knows what the things are that occupy her mind. In this dialogue, interfering with the narrative, the patient also discloses how she has tried to contain the difficulty caused by these things. She uses the words 'to teach' and 'to learn' when describing her way of trying to manage difficult situations by herself. This brings yet another complexity into the utterance. Who is the teacher? She has worked terribly hard in order to learn, but, obviously, the teacher has been quite ineffective helping her out of the difficulties. The the troubling 'things' seem to have remained as powerful as ever. As a therapist, I would be tempted to think that 'to teach' and 'to learn' are parentally derived words, internalized by the patient, representing their ways of handling problem situations. In this case, however, the voice of the parent is not powerful enough to free her mind from the pressure of 'the things'.

Bakhtin (1984) presents again his understanding of multiple addressees when analysing the discourse in Dostoevsky's *Notes From the Underground*. As the previous late text, also this is a directly relevant passage for the dialogical sequence analysis of patient utterances in therapy.

The discourse of the Underground Man is entirely a discourse-address. To speak, for him, means to address someone; to speak about himself means to address his own self with his own discourse; to speak about another person means to address that other person; to speak about the world means to address the world. But while speaking with himself, with another, with the world, he simultaneously addresses a third party as well: he squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge. This simultaneous triple-directness of his discourse and the fact that he does not acknowledge any object without addressing it is also responsible for the extraordinarily vivid, restless, agitated, and one might say, obtrusive nature of the discourse. (Bakhtin 1984: 236-237.)

Going back to the above excerpts, if we try to understand them as a monologic narrative they seem quite obscure. If we look at them from the point of view of multiple addressees they begin to make sense. The simultaneity of addressees is a basic feature of patient utterances. Instead of a temporal verbal sequence we should approach the utterances as complex spaces in which the patients adopt a position, a spot from which they speak to the addressee. And if there are two addressees, the patient adopts, simultaneously, two positions. In the life of our utterances we can indeed occupy two places at the same time.

Dynamic psychotherapists often distinguish between the surface meaning and the hidden meaning in patient utterances. These differing aspects of meaning are, in my view, nothing more than the simultaneous

presence of addressees toward which the patient adopts differing positions. This is what Bollas, in the opening quotation, calls analysing the shifting subjects and others that are implied in the life of the transference.

The next excerpt is the first utterance of a patient in her very first psychotherapy session.³⁹

[First words are missing]...[there was not anyone]... to whom I would have told anything... that was the most important..[reason]... and then.. an event that.. that burdened me so badly... and I just needed to tell about it to somebody.. and // then the fact that I do not..// I'm totally tied in knots with myself so that I do not quite.. it is as if I did not know myself... I do not know what's wrong with me and... (Therapist: Hm.).. and then yes... (sigh).. it all... /actually, everything should be OK, we should not have any...// with my partner, I mean.../ particular problems, but.. (sigh) yet.. (sigh) last Saturday I.. I did something.. very naughty and.. I was unfaithful and... and I do not quite know what it was that.. why I did it... So that was the...// a long time already, for several years I've felt that I should.. should go to somebody.. to talk about.. always, but... it's like one had'nt previously got it done, but now.. now.. now (chuckle) it became a must... I had so.. such an awful strain that I just had to go somewhere...

If we take this passage as a story, it does look quite incoherent. However, if we approach it as a multivoiced dialogue it begins to make sense. It is a good example of the simultaneous presence of three different addressees to whom the patient relates; that is, a) the therapist as an unfamiliar person who does not yet know the details, b) the patient herself, and c) a judgmental figure who reproaches the patient over what she has done.

The first internal dialogue that can be recognized in the passage is represented by two positions that may be paraphrased 'I need to tell you this!' and 'Everything should be OK. There's nothing to worry about.' We can hear the voice of an anxious girl and a maternal figure that does not see, or does not want to see, any problems. There is then nobody to turn to when in need. Moreover, if the distress is not received it cannot get an adequate shape. What remains of it is the muted feeling of being totally tied in knots. 'I do not know what's wrong with me!' Indeed, in order to become invested with meaning, the early distress must be contained by the other (Bion 1962). It must be recognised as a distress in context. It must receive meaning for the other before it can begin to make sense to the person.

In the middle of this internal dialogue the patient seems to recognize that she is speaking to a person who does not know what she is talking about and inserts an explaining comment 'with my partner, I mean'. This brings her back to her story and the therapist as the primary addressee is

³⁹ The case belonged to the first CAT training programme in Finland, 1985–88. Permission to use the material for research purposes was granted by the patient.

again foregrounded. But even there the internal dialogue breaks in and we may again recognize the echoes of a guilty girl and a reproachful other. In the middle of her narrative, there is an inclusion of a commenting phrase with a foreign, parentally derived word. 'Last Saturday I.. I did something.. very *naughty*..' There is also a kind of a slip of the tongue 'what it was that - why I did it', indicating a sudden shift in the attribution of agency. The first words seem to indicate a compelling force while the sudden change in the utterance acknowledges her responsibility of what had happened, obviously a good sign for the psychotherapist.

From all these peculiarities of the patient's expression it is possible to construct a hypothesis of an internalized pattern (Emerson 1986), or an object relation, as the British analysts would have called it, that may be significant in the patient's problems. In this particular case it turned out that she had indeed internalized a rather harsh, demanding, and depriving voice that accounted for her frequent feelings of guilt and worthlessness. In the subsequent psychotherapy the origin of this voice could be traced back to her grandmother, who never had accepted her daughter, i.e. the patient's mother. A role relationship had been transmitted over the generations, finding its muted outlet in the patient's hesitations and judgmental comments in her very first utterance.

4 Conclusion

Bakhtin's dialogical approach to novelistic discourse gives us many fruitful insights into the intersubjective nature of psychotherapy and also provides a methodological frame for understanding the utterances of patients and therapists. It is fully possible to regard psychotherapy transcripts as a text, a coherent system of sign and a living utterance of an author, in the sense that Bakhtin (1986) outlined it in his late essay on 'The Problem of the Text'. His understanding of the word as 'bottomless', i.e. the contextual and historical depth of meaning in any utterance singles out one of the most serious methodological flaws in our current research practices. The empiricist notion of reliability has compelled us to assume a fixed meaning in any unit of discourse that can be determined apart from the context, in the most extreme cases by using computerised dictionaries. Bakhtin invites us to recognize, that there are no limits to the meanings embedded in utterances, that they can never be finalized once and for all. In psychotherapy, the patient and the therapist re-enter, over and over again, the past and forgotten experiences, illuminated by the new insights that the developing discourse brings forth. In research too

we should remember that every reading of a psychotherapy document reveals aspects of meaning that may have been overlooked by the previous readings. For the strict empiricist this may be a source of despair. For a dialogically oriented researcher it is a liberating base, emphasizing the immense richness of human discourse.

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