

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN AND MARTIN BUBER: PROBLEMS OF DIALOGIC IMAGINATION

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Mikhail Bakhtin is gaining in authority in the scholarly community. Along with this increase in visibility, one can observe a remarkable increase in definitions, attributes, and academic nicknames given to Bakhtin, and, as contemporary labels multiply, an actual sense of Bakhtin's own context is diluted (Thomson, Morson). Because of the diversity of non-homogeneous definitions one has to go back to the history of Bakhtin's intellectual development and elicit information from his biography to recover this sense of context. Such a work is presently in process, Michael Holquist's and Katerina Clark's forthcoming book, for example, *The Life and Works of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Another important source of biographical data which has appeared recently is the correspondence between Mikhail Bakhtin and Matvey Kagan.¹ This correspondence, as well as other documents from Kagan's archives, helps us to understand the most significant cultural influences Bakhtin underwent in the years when he came to formulate his views. In addition to Kagan, one must note the influence of Herman Cohen—in particular Cohen's works *Kants Begründung der Aesthetik*, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* and *Kants Begründung der Ethik*. And one cannot help noticing an astonishing similarity of opinions and formulaic renditions between Mikhail Bakhtin and Martin Buber.² In his recent publication *Mikhail Bakhtine: Le principe dialogique*, Tzvetan Todorov also establishes this parallel. "*Ich und Du*," or "myself and another," the central opposition and starting point of Buber's and Bakhtin's systems, is, of course, not original for either of the thinkers. Following Buber's own explanation of the nature of *Ich-Du* relationship, Todorov notes that this idea is found in classical philosophy at least since the end of the

18th century. Bringing together a wide variety of sources that influenced Bakhtin's dialogic imagination Todorov writes: "As is usual in such matters it is not the idea which is new, but the place it occupies in the system of his thought and the consequences to which it leads" (151). One can apply this maxim to Buber's philosophy of dialogue as well. Such a discussion of dialogic imagination will be more fruitful if we claim, at the outset, the identity of the individual chronotopes³ of both thinkers rather than analyze their parallel development or the direct influence exerted by Buber on Bakhtin.⁴

Throughout their lives, both thinkers were open to intellectual communion, and the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of others were indigenous components of their own awareness. A recent voluminous study of the life of Martin Buber, written by his student and disciple, Maurice Friedman, is subtitled *The Life of Dialogue*. While this subtitle speaks eloquently in itself, "Life in Dialogue" would be even better. The title of the forthcoming Holquist-Clark biography, *The Life and Works of Mikhail Bakhtin*, is also well-chosen. Here, the discussion of the dialogic imagination has a triple function. It is (1) the fundamental principle underlying the composition of the biography, (2) the central subject in the study, and (3) the universal metaphor of Bakhtin's life.

Dr. James Mundackal, a Buber expert from India, has put it this way: Buber's philosophy of dialogue, "his concepts and imagery have become part of the intellectual currency of our age" (22). Thus, the teachings of Buber have helped form the chronotopic awareness of the modern world and have worked to widen our understanding of ethics, psychology, morality, arts, religious and social science. Buber's individual chronotope, the entire sum of his intellectual knowledge and the wide space of modern culture open to his influence, is just as variegated. From his grandfather, a distinguished Talmudic scholar, Buber inherited the dialogic foundations of Hasidism, and he complemented this with the dialogic principles of the German Mystics, Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, and with the anthropological principles of Feuerbach. Buber's readings in oriental thinkers, in Max Stirner, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Cassirer, Dostoevsky, Kant, and, particularly, his thorough study of Neo-Kantian philosophy were the landmarks of his intellectual development. As he wrote in 1954, his *Ich and Du* sums up all preceding stages of his philosophical thinking and suggests ideas that were to be unraveled in his later work (*Werke* 1: 293-305).

Bakhtin's dialogic imagination is also rooted in the binary subject-object relation. As with Buber, Bakhtin's individual chrono-

tope absorbs and tolerates variegated and non-homogeneous components: the dialogic foundations of Judeo-Christian religious concepts (Buber, Cohen, Rosenzweig); the philosophy of Early Christianity, as interpreted by the twentieth-century Russians Faddey Zelinsky and Vasily Rozanov, along with the German theologian Adolf von Harnack. Bakhtin's readings in patristics, in Dostoevsky and Jung were complemented by his knowledge of French and German Romanticism and German Classical philosophy, Kierkegaard and Cassirer.⁵ Each of these thinkers contributed something vital to the concept of "myself and another," which Bakhtin formulated as "responsibility," or as *individual awareness and its responsiveness to life* (*Estetika* 5-6). This binary, internally dialogic statement was the embryo of his later works, in which this dialogic formula grew and widened Bakhtin's own understanding of ethics, aesthetics and psychology ("Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity"). This formula was also a clue to the secret of the individual's dialogic relationship with his surrounding world ("The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism," "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book"). And finally, the dialogic formula of responsiveness has actualized itself in Bakhtin's universal theory of speech-genres ("The Problem of Speech-Genres").⁶

Now we can deal in detail with the particular items in both teachings. Within the narrower philosophical context of the early twentieth century, Martin Buber (1875-1965) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) were both followers of Herman Cohen and his Neo-Kantian philosophy. Both were attracted by the general stance of Cohen's theory to make philosophy a discipline that studies the main regulating forces of intellectual awareness. This notion has been repeated insistently in every volume of Cohen's writings. When Cohen stated: "not to Nature, but to the knowledge of Nature," he meant that only through the knowledge of theory can one achieve access to practice. When he wrote: "Everything that is in existence has its roots in thinking," he advanced the comprehension of the phenomenal world through the intelligibility of the noumenal world. Cohen's post-Kantian philosophy takes as its subject a thorough study of mankind's comprehensive awareness (105). Cohen substitutes transcendental reality for empirical reality—an intellectual operation which enables him to discuss the real, time-spatial causally determined world as "only one of the directions that mankind's comprehensive awareness takes" (*Besondere Richtungen des Bewusstseins der Menschheit* 14).

This statement of Cohen is well known to all students of Bakhtin

as a cornerstone of his aesthetic edifice. Indeed, Bakhtin provides us precisely with an inquiry into aesthetic awareness, rather than with a scrupulous aesthetic analysis of various authors. He discusses the theory of speech genres, but neither speech nor language is the subject of his investigation. With his concept of polyphony, Bakhtin discusses the hero's perception of ideology, not ideology itself. Like Cohen and his post-Kantian theory, Bakhtin does not study the verbal manifestations of a speaking individual in their prime material instance. For him the word is not a free morpheme, and phrase, sentence and paragraph are not syntactical elements of language; rather they are all *utterances*: rejoinders, statements and replies in ongoing discourse (*Estetika* 237-80). Like Cohen, Bakhtin studies *transcendental units of human awareness*. Bakhtin's other basic word, *direction*, can be understood as *relation*, or some transcendental appeal (*obrashchenost'*, addressivity). This word, basic for Bakhtin's theory, relates him to Martin Buber.

Martin Buber also conceptualizes word and speech as a transcendental conversation. Not just dialogue, but *Das dialogische Prinzip* is the general title of Buber's voluminous collection of articles (1923-62) dealing with this problem. Like Cohen and Bakhtin, Buber is not interested in discussing *das Zwiegespräch* (the German term for dialogue, often used in grammatical definitions); his domain is *Zwiesprache*—the communion or discourse of two. The primary element of Buber's discourse theory is the basic word-pair "*Ich-Du*." This pair does not signify primaries of the material world (myself and the things around me), but rather "relation," or "mode of existence in the world."⁷ The world is built on these manifold reciprocal relations. Like Bakhtin, Buber discusses various directions that mankind's comprehensive awareness might take. Similar to Bakhtin, Buber considers the word-utterance both as an infinitesimally small, and as the most universal bearer of dual, internally dialogic relations. Furthermore, since knowledge of the Torah was the basis of his Judaic education, transcendental dialogue is extremely palpable and strong in Buber. In fact, it is precisely here that reading Buber helps to amplify and make more distinct some aspects of Bakhtinian dialogic imagination. By attributing Buber's statements to Bakhtin, Bakhtin's discourse-utterance theory becomes more tangible and audible, and several hitherto latent dialogic relations can be discovered in it.

A fundamental subject of Bakhtin's writing is a speaking person and his discourse (the speaking person and his word). As Bakhtin constantly emphasized, this topic has enormous importance in all

verbal and behavioral manifestations of a human being: in people's everyday life, arts, literature, philosophy, and ideology. In his essay "Discourse in the Novel" Bakhtin writes: "The topic of a speaking person takes its significance in the ordinary ideological workings of our consciousness, in the process of assimilating our consciousness to the ideological world. The ideological becoming of a human being, in this view, is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (*Dialogic Imagination* 338-41). The whole of human ideological consciousness, the realm of ethical and legal thought and discourse, all actualize themselves in the speaking person.

In Buber's cycle, *Das dialogische Prinzip*, there is an article whose title sounds in fact like an accurate translation of Bakhtin: "The Word that is spoken" (*Werke* 1: 442-53). It is in a way misleading to cite from this work of Buber's, for its ten pages sound like an uninterrupted quotation from Bakhtin: the topic, the message, the wording, even the generative cultural context and the authorial subtext of Buber and Bakhtin are identical here. Consider, for example, the following statements uttered by Martin Buber, which display an unmistakable and unnerving Bakhtinian intonation:

The real author and the real conversation both create from the body of the language, though not from the dusty corners of bookcases, but from the fresh running springs of the language. . . . The real author has to obtain his creative power from the speech-partner. Where there is no real dialogue, there is no real creativity. I mean that the significance of the uttered word is rooted in the fact that it never stays with the speaker, but is aimed at the listener, and it reaches him. The word is able to create a listener, no matter if the speaker is eloquent or tacit. The uttered word is conceived in the swinging space between speech-partners, in the space I call 'the inbetween' and which does not actually belong to either one of the partners. The uttered word is pronounced at one place and perceived at the other, yet the trace of utterance leads through the inbetween to the point of perception. (*Werke* 1: 443-44)

Like Bakhtin, Buber believes that even monologue possesses hidden dialogic properties. Furthermore, like Bakhtin, he states that living language is built up of words of polysemantic meaning, and that a multiplicity of meanings results in the concept of discourse. The word that is spoken leads to the comprehension of another "I" as the

necessary and ultimate component of any speech communication (*Werke* 1: 446).

Martin Buber, whose dialogic imagination springs from the Bible, formulates this maxim as "In the beginning was the relation," "relation is reciprocity," "the relation to the *Du* is unmediated" (*I and Thou* 62, 67, 69). Buber introduces the problem of relation distancing, sign and meaning and the problem of the communicative space that he calls "the interhuman" (*das Zwischenmenschliche*). He advances the necessity of the *Du* as the constant addressee of any speech event (*Werke* 1: 176-77, 180-81, 192-94, 280-86), precisely as Bakhtin does in his works "The Problem of Speech Genres" (*Estetika* 246, 247, 263) and "Discourse in the Novel" (*Dialogic Imagination* 331-66). In both of these works Bakhtin develops his idea of the dialogic principle. In the domain of his dialogic imagination "a work of art (which always bears unmistakable hallmarks of the individual style of the author to whom it belongs) should be considered to be an artistic utterance, and as such numbered among the elements of speech communication." Thus, by direct analogy, the work of art can be compared to the rejoinder in a dialogue. Bakhtin says:

The work of art, like a rejoinder, seeks a response from other(s); it seeks their active comprehension, which eventually functions as an educating influence on the readers, as an influence on their world views and on their critical response. . . . The work (the rejoinder) exerts its influence on the author's direct followers and on his remote successors. . . . In various situations of speech communication which exist in a culture, a work of art anticipates the retaliatory positions of others. A work [of art] is the link in the chain of communication. (*Estetika* 254)

Bakhtin's aesthetic theory provides a multi-leveled hierarchy of artistic rejoinders, all isomorphic by structure and composition. The largest unit of the system is an artistic genre (i.e. the novel). This is the widest component of speech communication. Then follows an individual work of art (a particular novel), which is an element of the whole communicative system and also an individual discourse act. The third is the discourse of the hero. This is an element of the entire dialogic context both within and beyond the clear-cut boundaries of a given novel, yet at the same time it is an individual statement of the hero. The hero's discourse is his own verbal manifestation that makes

him a speaker, a protagonist, and advocate of his own ideology. In its turn, this statement, due to its indigenous property of being a rejoinder, seeks a response from others, and is related to other word-utterances. Bakhtin distinguishes between two basic species of human discourse: *authoritative* and *internally persuasive*. The most definitive feature of discourse (both authoritative and internally persuasive) is its ability to be *related* to other utterances (*The Dialogic Imagination* 342).

According to Bakhtin, a person who possesses only his own word is inaccessible to the words of others. This monologist would postulate only one diametrical opposition: myself vs. another person. This is the I-It opposition in Buber's language. As Buber formulates it, in this opposition "the I assumes a position before things, but does not confront them in the current of reciprocity" (*I and Thou* 80-81). Translating Buber into Bakhtin, one will find here a speaking person who is not predisposed to any comprehensive adaptation of the other's uttered word. Another person's words are completely foreign to this monologist, and there are no relations at all between his language and the languages of others. Bakhtin's idea of absolute monologic discourse is precisely what Buber has in mind by his "relation to It." These ideas are identical twins, and from here on, the voices of Bakhtin and Buber sound in unison. Buber says: "In his contemplation he [that is, the monologist of Buber and Bakhtin] isolates them [an aggregate of various "He," "She," "It" in Buber, or the words of others in Bakhtin] without any feeling for their individuality or joins them without any world feeling. The former could be attained only through relation" (*I and Thou* 80).

What Buber means by a lack of *Ich-Du* relations, Bakhtin describes as a lack of the internally persuasive word and absence of "individual ideological development." Bakhtin's internally persuasive word, "the discourse that strives to determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 342) is the *Du* of Buber's system. "The *Du* possesses its own time-spatial context," as Buber says (*I and Thou* 81), or, in Bakhtin's rendering, an internally persuasive discourse introduces its own chronotope (*The Dialogic Imagination* 243-54). In Buber, "the *Du* receives its place, its course, its measurability and conditionality as a result of the reciprocal confrontation with the I" (*I and Thou* 81), and in Bakhtin the person's own word achieves the finalizing meaning of a fully weighted concept only as a result of a reciprocal confrontation and response to the

words of others. For Buber, the *Du* appears in time which is not a vector, but “a process which is lived through, the *Du* knows no system of coordinates” (*I and Thou*, 81). For Bakhtin, an internally persuasive discourse is a characteristic of the individual who lives through dialogue, whose entire awareness is “a becoming,” a process which is lived through (*The Dialogic Imagination* 341).

While the analysis of internally persuasive discourse is exhaustive in Bakhtin, authoritative discourse is described only in passing. One feels that Bakhtin is preposterously and eloquently tacit in this discussion. The types of authoritative discourse he mentions are not large in number: religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults, and of teachers. Bakhtin says: “The authoritative word *demands* that we acknowledge it, it binds us, we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. . . . The authoritative word . . . is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among possible discourses that are its equal. It is given in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 342).

Bakhtin’s work is dated 1934–35, an epoch remarkable for the pervasiveness of its authoritative discourse, all given in lofty spheres of Stalinism: “Long live Comrade Stalin, the father, the leader and the teacher of all progressive mankind!”; “The Teachings of Marx are almighty, because they are true,”; “Mayakovsky was and will remain the best and most gifted poet of our Soviet era,” and the astonishing phrase coined by Stalin: “The most equal of equal, the very first among the first” (*ravneishii sredi ravnykh, perveishii sredi pervykh*) (Payne 392). Bakhtin had no need to discuss the authoritative word: it was everywhere. There was, in any case, no way to converse with such an authoritative discourse. A dialogue with the lofty spheres was even more eloquent when one party remained silent.

Meanwhile, the concept of an authoritative discourse is essential for Bakhtin’s aesthetic theory. His understanding of human aesthetic awareness needs, anticipates and suggests a thorough study of this category. Bakhtin’s understanding of the novel and its discourse, his concept of the hero and the reciprocity of aesthetic relations between author and hero implicitly make necessary an investigation of authoritative discourse within the open-ended dialogic universe. But this expectation is frustrated. It is absolutely clear that Bakhtin’s aesthetic system was built in order to establish relations between different sub-genres of the novel and different species of discourse. However, even a penetrating reader finds no indication of the type of relations these

might be. In my work, I use Martin Buber as a clue to one possible interpretation of the function of authoritative discourse in different sub-genres of the novel. Within this combined Bakhtin-Buber system, authoritative discourse is used to signal different sub-genres of the novel: the novel of confession, *Bildungsroman*, and autobiography.

The first is *the novel of confession*. Confession is the narrative unit, a novel that incorporates in its aesthetic whole *the ideal dialogue*. Through this dialogue, the penitent and the confessor are shown as interlocutors. Confession is valid if the authoritative word is actualized in it and is incorporated into its dialogic tissue. It must be the confessor's discourse, adapted and assimilated by the penitent as his own word. The chronotopic unit of the genre of confession is the person's own word imbued with the awareness of the other. Of course, the ways in which the authoritative word is actualized and incorporated into the text of the confession are various: these can include not only the dialogue, but also soliloquy, with a hypothetical addressee and a hypothetical reader.

The second large subdivision of the novel, the *Bildungsroman*, is also built by reciprocal relations between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. As an aesthetic entity, the *Bildungsroman* can neither exist nor be examined separate from the concept of authoritative discourse. Here the searching and striving of the hero—the entire metaphor of his way of life, temporal and spatial landmarks along his path, are all actualized as his distance from, or approach to, the word of authoritative truth. To the extent that *autobiography* is the *Bildungsroman* in retrospect, the significance of authoritative discourse is critical to its structure.

The authoritative word is dialogic in nature, but rather than “myself and another person” its specific essence can be better described as “another person and myself.” Bakhtin left some notes which can be interpreted as his attempt to envision the speaking person who incorporates and reveals ideal authoritative discourse. One of those notes in his “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” concerns the figure of Christ, as the ideal of ethical solipsism (*Estetika* 51). Naturally, the incorporation of ideal ethical and aesthetic solipsism simultaneously gives us the image of the ideal conjuror and the ideal perceiver of discourse. Bakhtin's second note in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* introduces us to the figure of Socrates, the ideal dialogist and teacher of dialogic relations. Bakhtin says: “The truth is not born and does not reside in the head of an isolated individual, it is born between people, in their communal

search" (*Problemy* 146-47). He reminds his readers that Socrates called himself "a midwife," because he assisted in the birth of truth. But, repeats Bakhtin, "Socrates never called himself the exclusive owner of ready-made truth." Bakhtin suggests that the dialogic discourse of Socrates reveals the ideal concept of the teacher, but he says little of Socrates' function as a teacher.

Bakhtin's unfinished "*Bildungsroman* in the History of Realism" deals with Goethe's autobiographical writings (*Eстетика* 204-36). The autobiographical works of Goethe reveal an ideal harmony between the chronotope of the speaking person and that of the surrounding world.

In Buber, the same ideal figures: Goethe, Christ, Socrates, as well as the paragon, "the genuine educator and his pupil" appear as ideal carriers of *Ich-Du* relations (*I and Thou* 115-116, 178). They all breathe life into the word that is spoken. As if he were familiar with Bakhtin's cursory notions, Buber also gives a portrayal of the "I" uttered by Goethe, Christ, Socrates. His description of the "I" of Goethe is important for a correct understanding of the autobiographical genre and its indigenously dialogic nature. The "I" of Goethe, "the I of pure intercourse with nature," helps us to reconstruct some chronotopic features of authoritative discourse from the realm of autobiographical narration. Here the chronotope of individual authoritative discourse (the manner in which Goethe recollects his past) displays its unique ability to reveal retroactively the truth in other people's views. Goethe's finalized judgment is able to embrace, harmonize and envelop all of the partial discourses of others. These "others" naturally include Goethe himself at different stages of his development, his friends, and the wider cultural milieu. Goethe's authoritative and final judgment includes the truth of history and of Nature herself, thus giving an aesthetically perfect wording for his *Naturphilosophie*.

Buber's image of Socrates, an ideal teacher of dialogic *Ich-Du* relations, is equally important. "How beautiful and legitimate the vivid and emphatic I of Socrates sounds! It is the I of infinite conversation, and the air of conversation is present on all its ways, even before his judges, even in the final hour in his prison. This I lived in that relation to man which is embodied in conversation. It believed in the actuality of men and went out toward them." (*I and Thou* 115) Buber's characteristics of *Ich-Du* relationship between "a genuine educator and his pupil" are even more revealing:

The teacher who wants to help the pupil to realize his best potentialities must intend him as this particular person, both in

his potentiality and in his actuality. . . . He must know him not as a mere sum of qualities, aspirations and inhibitions; he must apprehend him and affirm him as a whole. But this he can only do if he encounters him as a partner in a bipolar situation. And to give his influence unity and meaning, he must live through this situation in all its aspects not only from his own point of view but also from that of his partner. He must practice the kind of relation that I call embracing. It is essential that he should awaken the I-You relationship in the pupil, too, who should intend and affirm his educator as this particular person. (*I and Thou*, 178)

The aggregate image of the ideal dialogist and his discourse that we were able to extract from the unity Bakhtin-Buber, is exactly the authoritative word of the teacher we would hope to find in Bakhtin's complete writings, for instance, in "Discourse in the Novel" and in *Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Instead we find a wholly negative definition of the authoritative word: "Images of official-authoritative truth, images of virtue have never been successful in the novel. It suffices to mention the hopeless attempts of Gogol and Dostoevsky in this regard" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 344). Clearly, this lame excuse cannot hide Bakhtin's true understanding of the problem: it rather prompts one to seek a way of restoring the ideas that were forcefully expelled from his "Discourse in the Novel" and from his book on Dostoevsky as well, where Bakhtin avoids discussion of the word of ideal teachers: Myshkin, Zossima, Alyosha.

The recent posthumous publication of Bakhtin's essays and drafts transforms this assumption into a likelihood. A rough draft entitled "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" demonstrates that indeed Bakhtin was planning to re-enhance and broaden, quite in Buber's vein, his own idea of polyphony and dialogue in Dostoevsky.⁸ Bakhtin intended to introduce "dialogicality as a special form of interaction among autonomous and equally-signifying consciousness" (*Estetika* 309). Time and again in these 1961 notes Bakhtin returns to the figure of an ideal dialogist and his discourse. Like Buber, Bakhtin visualizes these figures as a multi-form set of dichotomous relationships between *Ich* and *Du*. Like Buber in *Ich und Du*, Bakhtin in this manuscript emphasizes the motifs of harmonious accord and acceptable understanding of another's views in the reciprocal relationships between "I" and "Thou." Here are new manifestations of internal harmony that unite the "I" and a "Thou" and relate one to another: "the teacher and the disciple," the author's creative consciousness that is capable of being "active in relation to someone else's living, autonomous conscious"

which Bakhtin treats as an ontological necessity for the existence of another, of a "Thou" (*Estetika* 310). "The very being of man . . . is the deepest communion." "To be means to communicate," says Bakhtin, and one immediately recognizes in this statement Buber's formula "The basic word I-Thou establishes the world of relations" (*I and Thou* 56).

In the milder political situation of the 1960s, forty years after his book on Dostoevsky first appeared, Bakhtin, when preparing his new edition, wished to make his equivocal notions quite undisputable, and to amplify the unifying aspects of *Ich-Du* relations. In doing so, he followed the logical, imaginative and spiritual directions of Martin Buber's thought, thus demonstrating once again the identity of their chronotopes. Yet even in 1961 Bakhtin's desires remained unfulfilled, and what he intended to develop was not included in the second edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963). Once again, a thorough understanding of Bakhtin comes to his reader via "another person's word," via Martin Buber. It is via Buber's mediation that the reader can perceive the unifying, non-antagonistic meaning of Bakhtin's statement: "To be means to be for another, and through the other for oneself" (*Estetika* 312). In his drafts Bakhtin repeats his old statements about the essence of Dostoevsky's poetic vision (polyphony, internal dialogism), yet now the emphasis is shifted from the sphere of dialogic abnegation to the sphere of dialogic affirmation and acceptance—the type of relationship that does not exist in alienation from "I" and "Thou," myself and another. Bakhtin says: "Confession is the object of Dostoevsky's artistic vision and depiction. 'I' must find myself in another by finding another in myself" (*Estetika* 312). This statement is the clue to unlocking the mystery of human personality in Dostoevsky; this is how his Tikhon (the religious father, teacher and confessor in *The Possessed*) comprehends all the secrets of Stavrogin's personality. To an even larger extent this is how Zossima, Dostoevsky's ideal teacher, lovingly accepts people and the surrounding world "by accepting everything in which a person finds himself and senses himself, everything he answers for." In these drafts of 1961, the ideal hero and his authoritative discourse are no longer ready-made moralistic or rhetorical formulas. In 1961 Bakhtin attempts to discuss the ideas he had silenced and expelled from his writings in 1934. He contrasts the false authority of social graces, the seeming harmony, with the true harmony "achieved on the basis of a common higher idea, on the basis of a free agreement about the higher idea" ("The Golden Age," "The Kingdom of God") (*Estetika* 320).

In 1961 Bakhtin is able to validate authoritative discourse and the

ideal heroes—Myshkin, Makar Dolgoruky, Zossima, Alyosha—the carriers of authoritative ideas in their capacity to contribute to active dialogic and polyphonic understanding, in their willingness to listen, in their ability to love. Bakhtin now advances the creative and unifying energy of dialogue, and through it he reveals the unifying and harmonizing power of poetic genres that are built of this type of dialogic discourse: confession, autobiography, *Bildungsroman*.

By restoring an “open and honest surplus” of the word, Bakhtin totally equalizes his own chronotope with that of Martin Buber. Like Buber in 1960, Bakhtin in 1961 discusses “the word that is spoken,” and he imbues this word with the property of incessant sounding in the eternal interhuman space of its existence. Now it is Mikhail Bakhtin whose writings sound like an accurate quotation from Buber: “The word, the living word inseparably linked with dialogic communion, by its very nature wants to be heard and answered. By its very dialogic nature it presupposes an ultimate dialogic instancing. To receive the word is to be heard. . . . My word remains in the continuing dialogue, where it will be heard, answered and re-interpreted” (*Eстетика* 326).

A final important aspect of Bakhtin’s and Buber’s works on the Dialogical Principle lies in the area of ontology, where both discuss the foundations of the dialogue between man and God. The hidden energy of this spiritual discourse is recognizable in Bakhtin’s chronotope,⁹ whose ultimate limits are eternity and universe, while in Buber this is the subject of his works: “Daniel: Discourse on Actualization,” “The Elements of Interhuman,” “The Problem of the Human Being.”

Bakhtin’s discourse-utterance theory provides the linguistic apparatus for the existentialist and Judeo-Christian philosophy of Martin Buber. Reading Bakhtin for Buber results in bringing more structure and regulation into the latter’s emotional and descriptive writings. An attempt to imbue the entire body of Buber’s Dialogical Principle with Bakhtin’s terminology makes Buber’s existential philosophy scientifically more precise. Reading Buber for the sake of Bakhtin emphasizes the synthesizing (and therefore the non-deconstructional), ideological and cognitive base of polyphony and discourse-utterance theory. The inclusion of Buber’s “relation to the *Du*” into the framework of Bakhtin’s dialogic imagination amplifies the multidirectional aspects of Bakhtin’s theory; it reveals the latent harmonizing and unifying power of polyphony. This promotes dialogue and polyphony to the position of key-elements in “mankind’s comprehensive awareness” (*Проблемы* 360).

I do not suggest here some hybrid personality like Martin Mikhailovich Burbach or Mikhail Martynovich Bachber. Bakhtin’s

genealogy is in the Russian nobility, and he is today worshipped by Soviet Slavophiles; Buber, on the other hand, is a Hasidic scholar, worshipped by Zionists. From some third point of view, the parallel is almost a highbrow obscenity. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in it. We must not forget that Bakhtin and Buber belonged to the same cultural epoch, and that for both Hermann Cohen was a powerful influence.

One can find Bakhtin in Buber and Buber in Bakhtin in every philosophical premise of their writings. Even Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia can be found in Buber. Developing his idea of dialogue as a discourse of the universe, Buber used the image of the Tower of Babel, which, according to him, is not a metaphor of discursive discord; for him the Tower of Babel is a beacon that sends its light into the wide unknown world to help the scattered tribes to find their way back to the Promised Land.

NOTES

¹ "M.M. Bakhtin i M.I. Kagan, po materialam semeinogo arkhiva," *Pamiat'* (M.-Paris: YMCA), 4 (1979-81): 249-82. I would like to express my gratitude to the authors of this publication. My main thesis here is based on the editors' comments suggesting a remarkable similarity between the ideas of Buber and Bakhtin (279).

² This article will refer especially to Buber's *Ich and Du*, first published in 1923, and later collected in his *Werke*, 177-176.

³ Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope is expressed in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 1981). For an explanation of the chronotope, see Perlina and Forman, 1977.

⁴ The authors of the commentary accompanying M. Bakhtin's *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*, the contributors to *Pamiat'*, Todorov, Holquist and Clark, all offer evidence that Bakhtin was familiar with the early writings of Buber ("Reden über das Judentum," 1911-23; "Daniel," 1913; "Ich und Du," 1923). Thus, direct influence is an undisputable fact. However, the philosophical and aesthetic verbal expression of Buber's ideas within the time-spatial universe of Bakhtin's own awareness, that is, the significance of Buber's dialogical principle for Bakhtin's individual chronotope, allows us to discuss this obvious evidence in a wider intellectual context. The idea of an individual chronotope makes it possible and fruitful not only to read Bakhtin for a better understanding of Buber, but also permits us to read Buber as an aid to reconstructing the whole of Bakhtin's philosophy and aesthetics.

⁵ See S. Averincev's and S. Bocharov's commentary and notes on Bakhtin's "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti," in *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*, 384-92.

⁶ The four titles just quoted are chapters from Bakhtin's *Estetika* which will appear in 1985 in English translation at the University of Texas Press.

⁷ I am quoting terms used in the English translation of *Ich and Du (I and Thou)*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970, 53). Buber gives a strong existential connotation to the term "existence" in his other works: *Daniel, Gespräche von der Verwirklichung* (1919), *Die Frage an den Einzelnen* (1936). One cannot find a similar notion in Bakhtin who, although he knew their works, was largely indifferent to the theory and poetic practice of European Existentialists.

⁸ I am grateful to my colleague Caryl Emerson, who kindly allowed me to use in this article her translation of Bakhtin's work "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book," as an appendix to her new translation of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). Emerson's endeavor to preserve in her English translation the peculiar Germanic flavour of the Russian original is especially valuable for the purposes of my article.

⁹ In "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (*The Dialogic Imagination*), Bakhtin refers to Buber in his discussion of the chronotope of the meeting (99).

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