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Mikhail Bakhtin

The Dialogical Principle

Tzvetan Todorov

Translated by Wlad Godzich

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Chapter Two

Epistemology of the Human Sciences

Natural Sciences and Human Sciences

Introducing the notion of *chronotope*, a spatiotemporal complex characteristic of every novelistic subgenre, Bakhtin makes a curious terminological remark:

The term *chronotope* is used in mathematical biology where it was introduced and adapted on the basis of [Einstein's] theory of relativity. The specific meaning it has come to have there is of little interest to us; we will introduce it here, into literary studies, somewhat like a metaphor (somewhat, but not quite) (23: 234-235).

This "somewhat, but not quite" can set one to think, especially since this type of transferral across fields is far from uncommon in Bakhtin's writings. For example, Dostoevsky's revolution in the field of the novel is compared to that of Einstein.

The problems encountered by the author and his consciousness in the polyphonic novel are far deeper, and more complex than those to be found in the homophonic (monologic) novel. Einstein's world possesses a far deeper and more complex unity than Newton's; it is a higher level unity, of a qualitatively different order (31:324).

Another comparison between some facts of language and some aspects of the physical world appears occasionally but strategically in his writings.

When cultures and tongues had interanimated each other, language became altogether different; its very quality altered: instead of a Prolemaic linguistic world, unified, singular, and closed, there appeared a Galilean universe made of a multiplicity of tongues, mutually animating each other (24:429-30).

The Renaissance witnessed a decentered use of language that occurred especially in the novel, which corresponds to the Galilean conception of the world rather than the Ptolemaic. For Bakhtin, this correspondence, which is thus more than a metaphor, can be explained by the fact that the arts and sciences follow the evolution of ideology, hence a "family resemblance" among them. Consequently, Bakhtin will not speak of relations of determination but rather of an "adequation" between these different forms of ideology:

Only a Galilean linguistic consciousness could be adequate to the era of the great astronomical, mathematical, and geographic discoveries that destroyed the finitude and closure of the old universe, the finiteness of mathematical values, and extended the boundaries of the old geographic world, an era—the epoch of the Renaissance and Protestantism—that destroyed the verbal and ideological centralization of the Middle Ages (21:226).

There exists then, between the natural and the human sciences, a historical parallelism that can be explained by their common rootedness in the ideological and the social. However, alongside this first thesis on the unity and homogeneity of the fields of knowledge, there is also a principle of differentiation that separates human and natural sciences. Bakhtin discovers this principle almost by chance while studying the role of *discourse (parole)* in various human activities. Essential in the human sciences, it is of no account in the natural ones:

Mathematical and natural sciences do not acknowledge discourse as an object of inquiry. . . . The entire methodological apparatus of the mathematical and natural sciences is directed toward mastery over *reified objects* that do not reveal themselves in discourse and communicate nothing of themselves. In their practice, knowledge is not bound to the reception and interpretation of discourses or signs coming from the very object to be known.

In the human sciences, as distinct from the natural and mathematical sciences, there arise the specific problems of establishing, transmitting, and interpreting the discourse of others (for example, the problem of sources in the methodology of the historical disciplines). And of course in the philological disciplines, the speaker and his or her discourses are the fundamental objects of inquiry (21: 163-164).

This simple finding justifies after the fact certain hypotheses

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2 concerning the very nature of knowledge in the human sciences, and especially in those disciplines that have discourse as their object (thus leaving linguistics aside).

In poetics, history of literature (and in the history of ideology in general), or to a considerable extent even in the philosophy of language, no other approach is in fact possible; even the most arid and earthbound positivism cannot treat discourse neutrally as if it were a thing but is forced to engage in talk not only about discourse but with discourse in order to penetrate its ideological meaning, which is attainable only by a form of dialogical understanding that includes evaluation and response (21:164).

This decisive separation between the sciences of nature and those of the spirit, as well as the assertion that the latter's specificity resides in their handling of texts, and therefore in interpretation, obviously recalls the theses first advanced by Dilthey. They are far from unknown to Bakhtin, who subjected them to explicit criticism in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. Here is the summary he gives in that work:

[According to Dilthey] the task of psychology should not be the causal explanation of psychic experiences, as if they were analogous to physiological or physical processes. The task of psychology is to describe with understanding, to analyze and interpret psychic life as if it were a document subject to philological analysis. Only such a descriptive or interpretive psychology can, according to Dilthey, be the basis of the human sciences or, as he calls them, the "sciences of spirit" (Geisteswissenschaften) (12:29-30).

That is the very program adopted by Voloshinov/Bakhtin. Bakhtin's critique of Dilthey consists in simply charging the latter with the failure to draw all the consequences of his thesis. (In that respect, Bakhtin was wrong, but he did not have access to Dilthey's then unpublished work.)

For Dilthey, the juxtaposition of psychic experience with discourse is indeed no more than a simple analogy, an illuminating image, actually quite rare in his work. He is far from drawing the necessary consequences from such a comparison (12:30-31).

In a later text, Bakhtin ascertains that Dilthey's and Rickert's formulations are no longer applicable; nonetheless in a very Diltheyan mode, he calls for "the rigorous distinction between understanding and scientific study" (38:349). Bakhtin's goal is actually the radicalization of Dilthey's program, with some subtle shading. He will come to identify two points where the difference between natural and

human sciences is precipitated: in their object and in their method (4) (that is, in the knowing subject).

Difference in the Object

The difference in the object is a factual given: the object of the human sciences is a text, in the broad sense of signifying matter.

We are interested in the specificity of the human sciences, which are oriented towards the thoughts, the meanings, the significations, etc., that come from the other, and that are realized and become accessible to the scholar only sub specie of the text (30:282). The text, written or oral, is the primary datum of all of these disciplines [linguistics, philology, literary studies] and generally of human and philological sciences (including theologico-philosophical thought at its origin). The text is the immediate reality (reality of thought and of experience) within which this thought and these disciplines can exclusively constitute themselves. Where there is no text, there is neither object of inquiry nor thought (30:281).

The object of the human sciences is therefore not just man, but man as producer of texts.

The human sciences are the sciences of man in his specificity, and not the sciences of a voiceless thing and a natural phenomenon. Man, in his human specificity, is always expressing himself (speaking), that is always creating a text (though it may remain in potentia). Where human being is studied outside of the text and independently of it, we are no longer dealing with the human sciences (but with human anatomy, or physiology, etc. . . .) (20:285).

Both the idea and the distinction it makes were already present in Voloshinov/Bakhtin's first theoretical publication. "Physical and chemical bodies exist outside human society as well, whereas the products of ideological creation develop only within it and for it" (7:246).

Bakhtin will use different formulations to define the object of the human sciences. In the writings of the twenties, he relies on an opposition of venerable antiquity, since it dates from Saint Augustine, between things and signs. In the subsection entitled "The Word as Ideological Sign" of an article signed Voloshinov, the sign is described as that which refers back to something else, in distinction to things that are, for their part, intransitive; in further imitation of Augustine, signs are then divided into "already existing" and "specially created." The human sciences are then subdivisions of semiotics. At the same time, Voloshinov/Bakhtin seems to consider as interchangeable the two notions of set of signs (or semiotic) and ideology:

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By ideology we will mean the set of reflections and refractions of social and natural reality that is held by the human brain and which the brain expresses and fixes through words, drawings, lines, or whatever signifying [znakovoj] form (17:53). Ideologically: that is in a sign, a word, a gesture, a graph, a symbol, etc. (17:60).

This idea will be picked up, always in programmatic fashion, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, and it is still to be found in Bakhtin's very last writings:

The human act is a text *in potentia* (30:286). Science of spirit. The spirit, mine as well as the other's, is not a given, like a thing (like the immediate object of the natural sciences); rather, it comes through expression in signs, a realization through "texts," which is of equal value to the self and to the other (30:284).

In a text originally written in 1941, and then returned to in 1974, Bakhtin attempts to define once again the specificity of the human sciences; this time, the opposition is no longer between things and signs, but between things and persons.

Knowledge of the thing and knowledge of the person. They must be depicted as boundaries: the thing, pure and dead, is nothing but externality; it exists only for the other, and it is the other (the knowing subject) who can reveal it entirely, down into its deepest recesses. . . . The second boundary is the thought of the person in presence of the person itself, dialogue, interrogation, prayer (28:409). Two boundaries of thought and praxis or two types of relations (the thing, the person). The deeper the person, that is the closer we edge to the personal boundary, the less applicable any generalizing method; generalization and formalization efface the boundaries between genius and mediocrity. . . . Our *thought* and our *praxis* (not the technical one, but the *moral*, i.e. the set of our responsible acts) take place between two boundaries: the relation to the *thing*, and the relation to the *person*. Thingification and personification (40:370).

Another way of stating this would be to say that in the natural sciences we seek to know an *object*, but in the human ones, a *subject*.

The exact sciences are a monological form of knowledge: the intellect contemplates a *thing* and speaks of it. Here, there is only one subject, the subject that knows (contemplates) and speaks (utters). In front of him there is only a *voiceless thing*. But the subject as such cannot be perceived or studied as if it were a thing, since it cannot remain a subject if it is voiceless; consequently, there is no knowledge of the subject but dialogical (40:363).

Such an insistence on the "person" must not be taken for a defense of psychological individualism; we shall see that nothing could be

further from Bakhtin's thought. It is rather a question of insisting upon the singular, nonrepeatable nature of the facts that form the object of the human sciences.

Personalization is in no sense subjective. The boundary there is not the *I*, but this *I* in interrelation with other persons, that is *I* and the *other*, *I* and *Thou* (40:370).

This personalism is semantic and not psychological (40:373).

Here, as elsewhere, one may be surprised by the absence of the word "historical": the term does not appear to have been thematized by Bakhtin, whereas the notion it covers (history) is actually basic for him.

The human sciences, and literary studies especially, suffer from an inferiority complex with respect to the natural sciences, and they would like to follow the latter's lead; but to do so is to sacrifice their specificity, forgetting that their "object" is precisely not an object but another subject. This fascination with "real" science can take several forms. Already in his earliest writings, Bakhtin shows that we tend to substitute for the real object of the human sciences (or literary studies) a reality that is purported to be more immediate, more tangible than their own. Two types of empirical objects are available for this enterprise: the text can be reduced to its materiality (a form of objective empiricism), or it can be dissolved into the psychic states (those that precede it and that follow it) felt by those who produce or perceive such a text (subjective empiricism).

The scholar latches on these two aspects, afraid of going beyond them in any way, habitually convinced that only metaphysical or mystical substances are to be found beyond. But such attempts to treat purely empirically the aesthetic object have always failed, and, as we have shown, are methodologically altogether illegitimate. . . . There is no reason to be afraid of the fact that the aesthetic object cannot be found in either psychical phenomena or in the material work; in no manner does it then become a mystical or metaphysical substance. The proteiform world of action, of ethical existence, is in the same situation. Where is the State? in the psyche? in physico-mathematical space? on the paper of constitutional documents? Where is the law? Nonetheless, we have a relationship to the State and to law, which we fully assume; more even: these values give meaning and order to empirical material as well as to our psyche, by allowing us to overcome its pure subjectivity (4:53).

In literary studies, both modes of empiricism are to be found among the Formalists. On the one hand, they commit the sin of objective empiricism when they want to reduce the work to its linguistic

structures, and reduce the latter, if possible, to phonic material. Or else, they abandon all inquiry into intentions since these are not subject to direct observation. Bakhtin will oppose his own attitude to that of the Formalists:

We constantly insist upon the objectal and semantic aspects as well as upon the expressive, that is the intentional, since those are the forces that stratify and differentiate the common literary language, and we do so rather than pursue the linguistic markers (lexical colorations, semantic harmonies, etc.) of the languages of genres or of professional jargons, etc., markers which are, so to speak, the ossified deposits of the intentional process, and the signs of an interpretation of common linguistic forms abandoned along the way by the living labor of intention. These external markers, observable and identifiable on the linguistic level, must, in order to be apprehended, first be understood by means of an interpretation that follows the intention which animates them (21:105).

The requirement that language be apprehended not only in the forms produced but also through the productive forces (Humboldt's formulation: *energeia*, not *ergon*) finds its correlate on the recipient's side of the process, in insistent use of the notion of *horizon*.

It is necessary to emphasize once again that by "social language" we mean not the set of linguistic markers that determine the dialectological formation and differentiation of any given language, but the concrete and living set of the markers of such a social differentiation, which may occur just as easily within the framework of a linguistically homogeneous language, and be defined only by semantic displacements and lexical choices. It is a concrete sociolinguistic horizon that differentiates itself within the boundaries of an abstractly unified language. Frequently, this verbal horizon does not permit a rigorous linguistic definition, but it is pregnant with the possibility of eventually constituting itself into an autonomous dialect: it is a potential dialect, the embryo of a dialect not yet formed (21:168).

* Objective empiricism is thus one of the figures of Formalism in literary studies; the other is *subjective* empiricism, particularly visible in such concepts as "habituation," "sensible" or "palpable" form, "defamiliarization" (*ostranenie*).

* The foundations of their theory (to escape habituation, to make construction visible, etc.) definitely presuppose a subjective consciousness that "feels" (10:200). To assert that the work seeks to be "felt" is to practice the worst kind of psychologism, because the psycho-physiological process becomes then entirely self-sufficient and devoid of content, that is of any attachment to objective reality. Neither habituation nor perceptibility are objective features of the work,

they are not within the work or its structure. The Formalists deride those who look for the "soul" or the "temper" in a literary work, but they themselves look in it for a psycho-physiological capability to produce stimulations (10:202).

It should not be too surprising that both forms of empiricism are to be found together among the Formalists: they have a common point of departure, which is the (Aristotelian) idea that it is possible, or even necessary, to conduct the study of the work independently of any idea that considers the participants in the communicative act that is literature (the author and the reader). But to proceed along this line is to study merely a part of a process that is understandable in its totality only.

In summary, these two points of view share the same defect: they try to find the whole in the part; they represent as the structure of the whole the structure of the part, which they isolate abstractly. Actually, the "artistic," in its totality, does not reside in the thing, or in the psyche of the creator, considered independently, not even in that of the contemplator: the artistic includes all three together. It is a specific form of the relation between creator and contemplators, fixed in the artistic work (7:248).

It is still a variant of objectivism, albeit a more abstract one, that is at work, according to Bakhtin, in the more recent structural studies.

In Structuralism, there is but one subject: the scholar himself. Things are changed into *notions* (of variable abstraction); but the subject can never become a notion (he speaks and answers for himself). Meaning is personal: there is always within it a question, an appeal to, and an anticipation of, the answer; there are always two subjects in it (the dialogical minimum) (40:372-3).

Another note elaborates his differences with Structuralists:

* My relation to Structuralism. Against shutting oneself in the text. . . . The resulting formalization and depersonalization: all relations are of a logical nature (in the broad sense of the term). I, on the other hand, hear voices everywhere, and dialogical relations among them (40:372).

The strictures drawn against structural studies are thus part of a larger quarrel between subjectivists and objectivists (cf. Kierkegaard criticizing Hegel: "the subject can never become a notion.") Bakhtin defends subjectivity, but not that of the knowing person, as is usually the case, but that of the "thing" to be known. Or, as he puts it in one of the notes dating from the last years of his life:

The sciences of the spirit: their object is not one but two "spirits" (the studying

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one and the studied, which must not fuse into a single one). Their true object is the interrelation and interaction of the spirits (38:349).

Difference of Method

It will be no surprise that to such a radical difference in the object there should correspond a difference of method; Bakhtin prefers, in fact, to speak of understanding with respect to the human sciences rather than knowledge, thus faithfully following the tradition of Dilthey, Rickert, and Max Weber. Already in the writings of his youth, on the occasion of an attack against the aesthetics and epistemology of empathy (*Einfühlung*), Bakhtin describes understanding as a transposition that keeps nonfused two autonomous consciousnesses.

In its naive and realistic interpretation, the word "understanding" always induces into error. It is not at all a question of an exact and passive reflexion, of a redoubling of the other's experience within me (such a redoubling is, in any case, impossible), but a matter of translating the experience into an altogether different axiological perspective, into new categories of evaluation and formation (3:91).

In subsequent writings, he will particularly stress the irreducible duality of utterer and receiver. The first characteristic feature of understanding is that it tends to take the form of a reply elicited by the initial remark (the object to be known).

All true understanding is active and already represents the embryo of an answer. Only active understanding can apprehend the theme [the meaning of the utterance]; it is only by means of becoming that becoming can be apprehended. . . .

All understanding is dialogical. Understanding is opposed to utterance like one reply is opposed to another within a dialogue. Understanding is in search of a counter-discourse to the discourse of the utterer (12:122-3).

There is no difference of nature here between the knowing discourse and the discourse to be known: they are cosubstantial, something that is obviously not the case as far as the natural sciences are concerned.

Thoughts upon thoughts, experiences of experiences, discourse upon discourses, texts bearing upon texts. Therein lies the fundamental particularity of our (humanistic) disciplines by opposition to the natural sciences, although there, too, there are no absolute or impenetrable boundaries (30:281).

Logically, one can certainly distinguish between language and metalanguage, text and metatext, but, for Bakhtin, the metatextual

relation is not specific; the metatext is actually an intertext; the utterance that describes another utterance enters into a dialogical relation with it.

The shorthand record of the human sciences. It is always the record of a dialogue of a particular kind: the complex correlation of the text (object of study and reflexion) and the context that frames it and which is being created (as questions, objection, etc. are raised), where the scholar's knowing and evaluating thought accomplishes itself. It is the encounter of two texts: the already given text and the reacting text being created, and therefore, it is the encounter of two subjects, of two authors (30:285).

Understanding as a setting in relation with other texts and as reinterpretation in a new context (mine, that of my epoch, the future's). . . . True understanding in literature and in literary studies is always historical and personal. . . . *Things pregnant with words* (40:364-365). Is there a counterpart to "context" in the natural sciences? [No.] Context is always personal (an infinite dialogue without first or last word), whereas the natural sciences deal with an objective system (devoid of subjects) (40:370).

Or more briefly: "Metalanguage isn't just a code: it is always in a dialogical relation to the language it describes and analyzes" (38:340).

Because of this fundamental difference, the very terms of "science," "knowledge," etc., do not have the same meaning as they are applied in one area or the other.

The interpretation of symbolic structures is forced to go deep into the infinity of symbolic meanings; that is why it cannot become scientific, in the sense of the term in the exact sciences. The interpretation of meanings cannot be scientific, but it is profoundly cognitive (40:362).

Bakhtin is not content with this negative observation; he proposes to introduce two different terms to describe the ideal sought in each case (these ideals are not identical, and the inferiority complex of the human sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences is groundless). For the natural sciences, accuracy counts above all.

Accuracy presupposes the coincidence of the thing with itself (28:410). The limit of accuracy in the natural sciences is identification ($a=a$) (40:371).

For the human sciences, on the other hand, it is depth that is essential.

There the knowing subject does not question itself nor a third party standing in front of the dead thing; it puts the question to the knowable itself. The criterion is not the accuracy of knowledge but the depth of the insight (28:409). The

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object of the human sciences is *expressive* and *speaking being*. Such a being never coincides with itself, that is why it is inexhaustible in its meaning and signification (28:410). The importance of the stake in gaining access to the creative kernel of the person, ever more deeply (in the creative kernel, the person continues to live, s/he remains immortal). . . . In the human sciences, accuracy consists in overcoming the other's strangeness without assimilating it wholly to oneself (all sorts of substitutions, modernizations, non-recognitions of the stranger, etc.) (40:371).

Linguistics and Translinguistics = pragmatics

The text is the common object of all human sciences, yet human sciences are several, and are not reducible to only one from among themselves. The epistemology of science rightly asserts that a science is not determined by a real object but by an object-to-be-known which arises in the adoption of a different perspective with respect to the very same object.

From the indication of the real object we must pass to a precise settling of the boundaries of the objects of scientific research. The real object is social man speaking and expressing himself through other means (30:292).

Language, discourse, that is almost the totality of human life. But it must not be thought that this totalizing and multifaceted reality can be the object of a single science—linguistics, and thus be understood through linguistic methods exclusively (30:297).

Among all the perspectives possible for the consideration of this unique object, two receive Bakhtin's attention: one is linguistics; the other is a discipline that, initially, has no name (unless it be sociology), but he will come to call it, in his last writings, *metalingvistika*, a term which I will translate by *translinguistics*, to avoid possible confusion. The term in current usage that would correspond best to Bakhtin's aim probably is pragmatics, and one could say without exaggeration that Bakhtin is the modern founder of this discipline.

Linguistics and translinguistics represent two different points of view on the same object, language. In his early thinking, Bakhtin does not see things quite as neutrally, but rather tends to say, especially in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (a work signed Voloshinov), that translinguistics (yet to come) must supplant linguistics, because one of the objects of knowledge is more real, or more important, or more legitimate than the other. But, in other texts, some of which are written contemporaneously with this book, he insists, on the contrary, on the legitimacy of both perspectives.

In its construction of the notion of language and that of its elements—syntactical, morphological, lexical, and others, linguistics brackets away the forms of organization of concrete utterances and their social and ideological functions. . . . Such a bracketing away is perfectly legitimate, necessary, and required by the cognitive and practical objectives of linguistics itself. Without it, the notion of language as system could not be constructed (10:117).

Language as the specific object of linguistics, obtained by the bracketing away, perfectly legitimate and necessary, of some aspects of the concrete life of discourse . . . ; some aspects of the life of discourse that exceed, in perfectly legitimate fashion, the frame of linguistics (32:242).

One may well wonder if this desire to assure the others of the "legitimate" character of their position does not proceed in fact from the reciprocal desire to have the others, namely the linguists, recognize for their part the fact that Bakhtin's own position is "perfectly necessary."

From this distinction emerges a consequence of considerable importance, glimpsed by Bakhtin in his earliest writings: the impossibility of patterning a science of discourse (such as poetics) on a science of language (linguistics).

In perfectly uncritical manner, the Formalists project the constructive particularities of poetical works into the system of language, just as they transpose directly linguistic elements into poetic construction. This leads, whether openly or surreptitiously, to the wrong orientation of poetics toward linguistics in greater or lesser measure. . . . Such attempts are based upon the entirely unproven presupposition that the linguistic element of the tongue and the constructive element of the work must necessarily coincide. We assume that they do not, and cannot, coincide, since the two phenomena belong to different planes (10:118-19).

To begin with, the object of linguistics is constituted by language and its subdivisions (phonemes, morphemes, propositions, etc.) whereas that of translinguistics is discourse, which is represented in turn by individual utterances. To name the latter, Bakhtin has recourse to a Russian word that can have several distinct meanings: *slovo*, which somewhat like Greek *logos*, means both "word" and "discourse" (among other things). And it is obvious that when the term is used to describe the object of translinguistics, it is equivalent to "discourse."

Discourse, that is language in its concrete and living totality (32:242); discourse, that is language as a concrete total phenomenon (32:244); discourse, that is utterance (*vyskazyvanie*) (32:246).

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We will see later in detail what are the specific features of the utterance; but it is already clear that the utterance is the product of a working up, in which linguistic matter is but one of the ingredients; another is all that is brought to a verbal production by the fact of it being uttered, that is its unique historical, social, cultural, context. The decisive role of the context of the uttering in the determination of the overall meaning of the utterance, and the fact that this context is, by definition, unique (if only at the temporal level), leads to the opposition of the units of language to the instances of discourse, that is to utterances, along the line of the reiterative versus the unique.

The utterance (the verbal work) as nonreiterative whole, historically unique and individual. . . . The entities of language studied by linguistics are by definition reproducible in an unlimited number of utterances (as are equally reproducible the models of propositions). It is true that the frequency of repetition is different for different entities (maximal for phonemes, minimal for sentences). It is in fact through this reproducibility alone, that they can be entities of language and assume their function. . . . The entities of verbal communication—whole utterances—are non-reproducible (although they can be quoted) and are bound among themselves by dialogic relations (30:307).

I can certainly repeat the sentence that I have just uttered, but in spite of all apparent identities, the two utterances will not be identical: the status of the second is nearer to that of citation.

This difference between language and discourse determines very exactly the paradox of translation.

Every system of signs (that is, every "language"), no matter how limited the collectivity that adopts it by convention, can always be, in principle, deciphered, that is translated into other sign systems (other languages); therefore, there exists a general logic of sign systems, a language of languages, potential and unified (obviously it can never become a particular concrete language, a language among others). But a text (as distinct from language as a system of means) can never be fully translated, because there is no text of texts, potential and unified (30:284-85).

The disclosure of the nonreiterative nature of textual facts brings us back to the issues of general epistemology we started out with. Bakhtin begins by wondering whether the uniqueness he has uncovered pertains solely to the object of the human sciences or whether it is to be found in natural objects as well: what could be more unique, for example, than a fingerprint? Moreover, in both instances, a mechanical reproduction is always possible (a book exists in many copies; a fingerprint can be duplicated ad infinitum). Such a reasoning

holds, however, only if the text is reduced to a material object, that is, if it is already treated like the objects of natural sciences. It becomes necessary for Bakhtin then to further elaborate the (impossible) nature of the reproduction he has in mind with respect to texts: it implies the intervention of a subject (which must not be thought of in terms of individuals, as we shall see).

Natural uniqueness (the fingerprint, for example) and the signifying (semiotic) nonreiterativity of the text. Only a mechanical reproduction for the fingerprint (in unlimited quantity); such a mechanical reproduction is, of course, also possible for the text (a reprinting, for example); but the reproduction of a text by a subject (return to the text, new reading, new performance, citation) is a new and nonreiterative event in the life of the text, a new link in the historical chain of verbal communication (30:284).

A new epistemological difficulty arises then. If utterances are unique, can they still constitute the objects of a science? It will be recalled that this argument led Saussure to exclude speech (parole) from the object of linguistics. Bakhtin will explicitly oppose this manner of approaching the issue by asserting, as we shall see, that the domain of speech belongs to the social order, and not merely to the individual. How then to overcome this difficulty? Bakhtin makes an attempt in one of his very last texts.

The question arises whether science can deal with individual entities of absolutely nonreiterative nature such as utterances, or whether these do not fall beyond the scope of generalizing scientific knowledge. Of course it can. First of all, the points of departure of every science are nonreiterative unique entities, and the science in question remains attached to them all along its course. Second, science, and especially philosophy, can and must study the specific form and function of such unique entities (30:287).

This answer may leave us bemused, not because it seems inappropriate, but because it appears to simply annul the distinctions worked out previously. The two justifications Bakhtin advances apply equally to all sciences and preserve nothing of the specificity of utterances: not only linguistics, he appears to claim, but the natural sciences as well deal continually with individual fact; the only question is to know its place. And translanguistics sheds its special status since it studies, in turn, the general aspects (the forms and functions) of the peculiar beings that are utterances. Must we conclude then that Bakhtin's previous reflections were groundless?

It may be possible to go beyond this aporia if we accept a dissociation of two oppositions that seem to be confused in Bakhtin, who,

in this respect, remains faithful to Dilthey's teachings. If utterances are considered in their specificity and uniqueness, they become the objects of history (literary history in the case of works) and not of translinguistics. The latter does not study each utterance as to what makes it unique, but as to the laws of its functioning, as indeed is the case in Bakhtin's own work in translinguistics. The same is true of the other human sciences: general sociology or anthropology are not to be confused with history or ethnography, no more than psychology can be reduced to the study of particular cases, whether pathological or not. The difference lies, in each instance, between the general theory of an object and the interpretation of the particular instances that constitute it. By no means can this signify that translinguistics is confused with linguistics, since the objects of knowledge in each of these perspectives remain distinct. Yet it is this confusion that appears to explain the absence, in Bakhtin, of a theorization of the relation between translinguistics and (literary) history. Even less can one assimilate human and natural sciences, and abandon Bakhtin's contribution in the matter: the distinction does rest, as he states, on the difference of nature of the objects of knowledge (or upon the absence of "object" in the human sciences). But this does not allow us to grant, in Dilthey's fashion, all theorizing exclusively to the natural sciences, and to reserve the sole use of interpretation to the human sciences; here as well as there, both must necessarily be practiced.

Chapter Three Major Options

The Individual and the Social

At the end of the twenties, three books were published by Bakhtin's circle; they deal respectively with psychology, linguistics, and literary studies; all three are written in polemical style, and present themselves as Marxist. The opposition at stake in these polemics, as indeed in other writings from this period, is that of the social versus the individual, the latter term designating the schools or currents of thought under attack, while the former is claimed as the necessary point of departure for Marxist psychology, linguistics, or literary studies.

Psychology is the object of Voloshinov/Bakhtin's book *Freudianism* (1927). In the early pages, the author adumbrates contemporary tendencies in psychology, finally grouping them into "subjective" and "objective" psychology; the first, which is the target of the polemic, is represented most notably by psychoanalysis. The critique of Freudianism is based on the postulate recalled in the preceding chapter: language is constitutive of human existence. Yet—and that is the first important assertion in *Freudianism*—language is also thoroughly social.

There is nothing obvious about this assertion. It could in fact be objected that the act of sound production or perception is purely individual, and physiological, and that no sociality need be presupposed. This is granted readily by Voloshinov/Bakhtin, but only to add that these two acts are nothing without a third: the production and reception of meaning. It is this act that truly founds language.

aren't purely physical categories, but a historical time and a social space. Human intersubjectivity is actualized through particular utterances.

Every element of the work can be compared to a thread joining human beings. The work as a whole is the set of these threads, that creates a complex, differentiated, social interaction, between the persons who are in contact with it (10:205).

In this book, we remain at a level of generality. But as early as the following year, Bakhtin published, under his own name, his first studies of specific works, those of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (especially the "Preface" to *Resurrection*); these seem to represent an implementation of the principles formulated earlier, since it is by means of the determination of voices and horizons, and therefore of the conceptions of the world that are expressed in them, that the analysis proceeds. The writings of the thirties, and especially those upon the chronotope, will reinforce and complete this approach, that intends to neglect neither form nor content.

It would be legitimate then to grant to Bakhtin the position to which he aspires, namely that of the synthesis that comes after the ideologist (thesis) and the Formalist (antithesis). It is in this sense that he is "post-Formalist": he exceeds Formalism, but only after having absorbed its teachings. It is certainly not by chance if the great works of criticism produced since, which one would think of comparing with the work of Bakhtin, proceed from a similar movement of going beyond, but also absorbing, previous formalist schools; for example, Auerbach's *Mimesis*, which puts the "new stylistics" (of Spitzer's vintage) in the service of a historical and social vision, or Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, which leaves I. A. Richard's semantics to build a literary history that would be in relation to the history of ideas and to social history. The simple rejection of, or the pure ignorance of, Formalism, on the other hand, have never led to any kind of movement "beyond."

Chapter Four

Theory of the Utterance

First Formulations

Bakhtin formulates his theory of the utterance twice: in the texts of the late twenties, signed almost exclusively by Voloshinov, and then, some thirty years later, in some writings from the late fifties. I shall present these two syntheses separately, though the differences between them are not major.

The first formulations attempting to define a theory of the utterance are to be found in one of Voloshinov/Bakhtin's oldest articles: "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry" (1926). It starts with an observation: linguistic matter constitutes only a part of the utterance; there exists another part that is nonverbal, which corresponds to the context of the enunciation. The existence of such a context has not been unknown before Bakhtin, but it had always been looked upon as external to the utterance, whereas Bakhtin asserts that it is an integral part of it.

In no instance is the extraverbal situation only an external cause of the utterance; it does not work from the outside like a mechanical force. On the contrary, *the situation enters into the utterance as a necessary constitutive element* of its semantic structure. The quotidian [zhiznennoe] utterance endowed with signification is therefore composed of two parts: (1) a realized or actualized verbal part, and (2) an implied part. That is why an utterance can be compared to an "enthymeme" (7:251).

What does the context of enunciation consist in? To find the answer, Voloshinov/Bakhtin imagines a minimal utterance of the kind: "So!" or "Hm . . . yes!" and puts side by side our perplexity in the face of the verbal part alone and the interpretation we easily come up with when we know the context in which the utterance was made. By a kind of subtraction, he arrives at the following elements:

The extraverbal context of the utterance is composed of three aspects: (1) The spatial *horizon common* to the interlocutors (the unity of the visible: the room, the window, etc.); (2) *Knowledge and understanding of the situation*, also *common* to both; (3) Their *common evaluation* of the situation (7:250).

The implicit part of the utterance is nothing more than the interlocutors' common horizon of spatiotemporal, semantic, and evaluative (axiological) elements.

Common to the interlocutors: this feature—essential in Voloshinov/Bakhtin's perspective—must be emphasized, for, he insists, it must not be taken as what *I* know, *I* want, *I* see, or *I* love:

Only that which *we*, the set of interlocutors, know, see, love, and recognize—only that in which *we* are all united—can become the implied part of the utterance. . . . "I" can actualize itself in discourse only by relying upon "we." In this way every quotidian utterance appears as an objective and social enthymeme. It is like a "password" known only to those who belong to the same social horizon (7:251).

A few years later, Voloshinov/Bakhtin proposes a slightly different description of the context of enunciation: he keeps the third characteristic feature (collective evaluation) but drops the second (shared knowledge); the first (the common horizon), however, is analyzed in two aspects, spatiotemporal coordinates and object (referent).

Let us agree to use the familiar word *situation* for the three implied aspects of the extraverbal part of the utterance: the *space* and *time* of the enunciation ("where" and "when"), the object or *theme* of the utterance (that "of which" it is spoken); and the *relation* of the interlocutors to what is happening ("evaluation") (18:76).

We can understand better now why Voloshinov/Bakhtin had to begin not only with a critique of the Saussurean school, for whom the utterance, as individual, was not relevant, but also of the "individualistic subjectivism" school (Vossler and his disciples): although better than the Saussureans in that it does not dismiss the utterance, it is nonetheless wrong to believe it is individual.

Whatever the moment of the utterance-expression we may consider, it will always be determined by the real conditions of its uttering, and foremost by the *nearest social situation* (12:101).

Verbal communication will never be understood or explained outside of this link to the concrete situation (12:114).

In other words, the difference between the utterance and the proposition (or the sentence)—a unit of language—consists in that the first is necessarily produced in a particular context that is always social, whereas the second does not need a context. Sociability has a dual origin: first, the utterance is addressed to someone (which means that we have at the very least the micro-society formed by two persons, the speaker and the receiver); second, the speaker is always already a social being.

Voloshinov/Bakhtin is especially attached to the first part of this assertion; it recurs repeatedly in the writings published at the end of the twenties: the utterance is not the business of the speaker alone, but the result of his or her interaction with a listener, whose reactions he or she integrates in advance.

The utterance is constructed between two socially organized persons, and, should there not be present an actual interlocutor, one is presupposed in the person of a normal representative, so to speak, of the social group to which the speaker belongs. *Discourse is oriented toward the person addressed*, oriented toward what that person is (12:101).

The listener is thus either a present individual or the ideal image of an imaginary audience (G. H. Mead had coined the term "generalized other" to designate this last variant).

The sociability of the speaker is just as important, even though it is less manifest. After having taken the precautions discussed earlier (acts of sound production and acoustic perception are indeed individual, but they do not bear upon what is essential in language: meaning; there is also a biological and individual "I-experience" but unlike the "we-experience" it remains inaccessible), Voloshinov/Bakhtin asserts that there is nothing individual in what the individual expresses.

There is no experience outside its embodiment in signs. From the outset, then, there cannot even be question of a radical qualitative difference between interior and exterior. . . . It is not experience that organizes expression, but, to the contrary, expression that organizes experience, that, for the first time, gives it form and determines its direction (12:101). Outside material-expression, no experience. More, expression precedes experience, it is its cradle (6:229).

A footnote to the last sentence assures that "this assertion is actually a follow-up to Engels's words" in *Ludwig Feuerbach*; perhaps a more distant source, shared by Engels and Voloshinov/Bakhtin could be seen here: Humboldt (otherwise the inspirer of "individualistic subjectivism"), for whom experience is preformed by the possibilities of expression. Whatever the source, as soon as the formative traces of expression are found within the expressible itself, there can no longer be any claim of an area devoid of some form of sociality (since words and other linguistic forms do not belong to the individual).

Only the inarticulate cry of the animal is really organized within the physiological apparatus of an individual entity. . . . But the most primitive human utterance, realized by an individual organism, is already organized outside of the latter, in the inorganic conditions of the social milieu, and that is so from the point of view of its content, its meaning, and its signification (12:101). Even the baby's crying is "oriented" toward the mother (12:104).

Another way of formulating this observation would be to say that every utterance can be considered as part of a dialogue; it will be noted that the word does not have here yet the meaning it will take in Bakhtin's later writings (dialogue between discourses), but rather its common meaning.

Verbal interaction is the fundamental reality of language. Dialogue, in the narrow sense of the term, is but one form, albeit the most important to be sure, of verbal interaction. But dialogue can be understood in a broader sense, meaning by it not only direct and *viva voce* verbal communication between two persons, but also all verbal communication, whatever its form (12:113). It could be said that all verbal communication, all verbal interaction takes place in the form of an *exchange of utterances*, that is, in the form of a *dialogue* (18:68):

This sociality of the utterance obviously fits in well with the explicitly Marxist intentions of Voloshinov/Bakhtin during this period; for him, as earlier for Medvedev/Bakhtin, it would be just as nefarious to forget the mediations that relate the social to the linguistic as to ignore the very existence of this relation. In one of the last articles signed Voloshinov, we can find this general outline:

1. *The economic organization of society*
2. *Social communication*
3. *Verbal interaction*
4. *Utterances*
5. *The grammatical forms of language* (18:66).

With these assumptions in place let us return to the description of the utterance. The first important consequence of the new framework is the necessity to distinguish radically between signification in language and signification in discourse, or to put it in the terminology Voloshinov/Bakhtin used at the time, between signification and theme. In itself, the distinction is not new, but what is new is the importance granted to the theme. For, indeed, the oppositions in currency then between usual and occasional signification, or between fundamental and marginal signification, or yet again between denotation and connotation, all err in that they privilege the first term, whereas in point of fact there is nothing marginal about discursive signification, or theme.

The term "signification" will be reserved here to the realm of language; the dictionary hoards the signification of words, whose first property is to be always identical to itself (since it is purely virtual); in other words, signification is, like other elements of language, reiterative.

By signification, in distinction to *theme*, we mean all the moments of the utterance that are reiterative and identical unto themselves in all their repetitions (12:120). In fact, signification signifies nothing, but only has the potentiality, the possibility of signifying in a concrete theme (12:122).

In opposition to this, the theme—just like the utterance of which it is part—is defined as unique, since it results from the encounter of signification with a context of enunciation equally unique.

Let us call the meaning of the utterance as a whole its theme. . . . In fact, the theme of the utterance is individual and nonreiterative, as is the case with the utterance itself. It is the expression of the concrete historical situation that engendered the utterance. . . . It follows that the theme of the utterance is determined not only by the linguistic forms that are its components (words, morphological and syntactical forms, sounds, intonation), but also by the extraverbal aspects of the situation. Were we to ignore these aspects of the situation, we would not be able to understand the utterance, as if we had ignored the most important words (12:119-20).

An essential feature of the theme, and therefore of the utterance, is that it is endowed with values (in the broad sense of the term). Conversely, signification and therefore language are alien to the axiological world.

Only the utterance can be beautiful, just as only the utterance can be sincere or false, courageous or timid, etc. All of these determinations bear only upon the

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organization of utterances and works, in conjunction with the functions they assume in the unity of social life, and especially in the concrete unity of the ideological horizon (10:117).

This evaluative dimension of the utterance is, in Voloshinov/Bakhtin's eyes, more important than the semantic and the spatio-temporal dimensions. In a literary study, he asserts:

It is the *axiological* horizon that assumes the most important function in the organization of the literary work, and especially in that of its formal aspects (16:226).

Since it is part of the horizon shared by the interlocutors, the value judgment need not be made explicit (if it were, it would be because it had become questionable). Nonetheless, there is a certain number of means by which this judgment is expressed. First, there are non-verbal means.

Let us call all evaluation embodied in the material an expression of values. The human body itself will furnish the ordinary raw materials for this expression of values: gesture (the signifying movement of the body) and voice (outside of articulated language) (16:227-28).

Within language itself, one can distinguish semantic means from nonsemantic ones, such as the phonic, the foremost of which is intonation.

Intonation is always at the boundary between the verbal and the nonverbal, the said and the unsaid. In intonation, discourse enters in immediate contact with life. And it is in intonation first of all that the speaker enters in contact with his listeners: intonation is eminently social (7:253). Intonation is the most supple and most sensitive conduit of the social relations that exist between interlocutors in a given situation. . . . Intonation is the sound expression of social evaluation (18:78).

Actually, intonation, like all the other aspects of the utterance, takes on a dual role:

All intonation is oriented in two directions: toward the listener, in his or her capacity as ally or witness, and toward the object of the utterance, as if it were a third participant assumed to be alive; the intonation abuses it or flatters it, belittles it or elevates it (7:255).

The semantic means for expressing evaluation are themselves subdivided into two groups according to a dichotomy more familiar now

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than at the time, but the origin of which can be found in Kruszewski (and earlier, in classical rhetoric): selection versus combination.

We must distinguish two forms of the expression of values [in poetic creation]: 1. *phonic* and 2. structural [*tektonicheskuj*], whose functions are divided into two groups: first, *elective* (selective) and second, *compositional* (dispositional). The elective functions of social evaluation appear in the selection of lexical material (lexicology), in the choice of epithets, metaphors, and other tropes (the entire realm of poetic semantics), and, finally, in the selection of the theme, in the narrow sense of the term (the selection of the "content"). In this manner, almost all of stylistics and a part of thematics belong to the elective group.

The compositional functions of evaluation determine the hierarchical place of each verbal element in the whole of the work, its level, as well as the structure of the whole. All of the problems of poetic syntax, of composition, strictly speaking, and, finally, of *genre*, arise here (16:232).

Even the simplest utterance takes on, in Voloshinov/Bakhtin's eyes, the appearance of a little drama, whose minimal roles are: the speaker, the object, the listener. The verbal element is only the web from which the drama is played, or, as he puts it, the scenario.

Discourse is in some way the "scenario" of a certain event. The living understanding of the integral meaning of the discourse must *reproduce* this event of mutual relations between speakers; it must "play" it again, and the one doing the understanding takes on the role of listener. But to play this part, he or she must also understand clearly the position of the other participants (7:257).

Three aspects of this interaction seem to have the greatest importance in literary production.

- (1) the hierarchical value of the character or of the event that forms the content of the utterance; (2) their degree of proximity to the author; (3) the interrelation of the receiver with the author on one side, and with the character on the other (7:266).

The first category deals with a "vertical" relation: is the character superior, inferior, or equal to the author? (This problematic, as is well known, is already present in Aristotle's *Poetics*.) The second lies on a "horizontal" dimension, and determines the selection of narrative forms: objective narration, confession, apostrophe. The third has to do with the interlocutor's position, which never coincides exactly with that of the author: the two may form an alliance, but sometimes the author sides with the character against the reader, at others it is the reader who associates himself with the character against the

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author, etc. It is important to bear in mind throughout this discussion that it is not a question of actual authors or readers but their roles such as they can be deduced from the utterance.

We will consider the author, the character, and the receiver, not outside the artistic event, but only insofar as they enter into the very perception of the literary work, insofar as they are its necessary constituents. . . . In return, all of the definitions that the historian of literature and society will propose in order to define the author and his characters (the biography of the author; more exact qualification of the characters, from chronological and sociological perspective, etc.) are obviously excluded here: they do not enter into the structure of the work, they remain outside of it. Similarly we will consider only such a receiver as the author himself considers, the one with respect to whom the work is oriented, and who, for this very reason, determines its structure, and not at all the real public that turned out to have actually read the work of this or that writer (7:260-61).

It is in the first book bearing Bakhtin's own signature—a study of Dostoevsky's work, that a final dimension of the utterance, one destined to play an even greater role, will appear: every utterance is also related to previous utterances, thus creating *intertextual* (or dialogical) relations. In the first edition of the book Bakhtin does not elaborate a general theory but rather a typology of utterances; it suffices for him to assert:

No member of a verbal community can ever find words in the language that are neutral, exempt from the aspirations and evaluations of the other, uninhabited by the other's voice. On the contrary, he receives the word by the other's voice and it remains filled with that voice. He intervenes in his own context from another context, already penetrated by the other's intentions. His own intention finds a word already lived in (13:131; in the second edition, of 1963, the two occurrences of "intention" will disappear to be replaced, respectively, by *osmyslenie*, interpretation, and *mysl'*, thought, cf. 32:270-71).

There is a paraphrase of this statement, and some others, in an article signed Voloshinov, with a variant that, at first glance, we could take for a typographical error were we not aware of the exceptional place accorded to *intonation* (which takes the place of "intention" here) in this thought.

For the poet, language is actually totally saturated with living intonations; it is completely contaminated by rudimentary social evaluations and orientations, and it is precisely with them that the creative process must struggle; it is precisely among them that one must select such or such a linguistic form, or this or that

expression. The artist receives no word in linguistically virginal form. The word is already impregnated by the practical situations and the poetic contexts in which he has encountered it. . . . That is why the work of the poet, just as that of any artist, can only effect a few transvaluations, a few displacements in intonations, that the poet and his audience perceive against a background of previous evaluations and previous intonations (16:231).

Second Synthesis

Let us now consider the second synthesis, to be found in notes from the fifties published after Bakhtin's death under the following titles: "The Problem of the Genres of Discourse" and "The Problem of the Text," and in "Methodological Remarks" to the second edition of the Dostoevsky book, which provide a general summary. The frame of reference is no longer sociology, as it was thirty years earlier, but translinguistics, the new discipline Bakhtin wants to create and whose object is meant to be the utterance. Translinguistic entities differ qualitatively from linguistic ones. It would be a gross error to conceive of the utterance as of the same nature as the other units of linguistics, but of superior dimension, as the equivalent, let us say, of the paragraph.

The utterance, as a verbal entity, cannot be admitted as an entity of the last level or of the highest layer of the same linguistic structure (above syntax), because it enters into a universe of entirely different relations (dialogical) that are incompatible with the linguistic relations of the other levels. (On a certain plane, only the confrontation of the entire utterance with the *word* is possible.) The entire utterance is an entity, but no longer of language (or of "verbal flow" or of the "verbal chain"), but of *verbal communication* (30:304-5).

In this sense, the end-point of linguistics is but the point of departure of translinguistics; what was the end becomes a means here.

From the point of view of the extralinguistic aims of the utterance, all of linguistics is just a means (30:287).

The object of linguistics consists only of the *matter*, of the means of verbal communication, and not of verbal communication itself nor of any of the following: the utterances as such; the (dialogical) relations that exist among them; the forms of verbal communication; and the forms of verbal genres (30:297).

Every utterance has two aspects: that which comes from language and is reiterative, on one hand, and that which comes from the context of enunciation, which is unique, on the other. *

I *

Two poles of the text. Every text presupposes a system of signs understandable to everybody (that is, conventional, valid within the limits of a given collectivity), a "language" (be it even the language of art). . . . To this system belong all the elements of the text that are repeated and reproduced, reiterative and reproducible, all that can be given outside of the text (the given). At the same time, however, every text (by virtue of constituting an utterance) represents something individual, unique, nonreiterative, and therein lies all its meaning (its intention, the reason why it has been created). It is the part of the utterance that has to do with truth, accuracy, the good, the beautiful, history. In relation to this aspect, all that is reiterative and reproducible turns out to be raw materials and means. To that extent, this second aspect, or pole goes beyond the boundaries of linguistics and philology. It is inherent to the text, but becomes manifest only in concrete situations and within sequences of texts (within verbal communication in a given realm). This pole is not tied to the (reiterative) elements of the system of language (that is, to signs), but to other (nonreiterative) texts by particular relations of a dialogical nature (and of a dialectical one, if the author is bracketed away) (30:283-84).

II

Schleiermacher had already distinguished between a *grammatical* perspective on texts (their confrontation with the system of the language, the identification of their reiterative part) and a *technical* one (the relation between the text at hand with the other texts of the same author, and other relevant data from his biography, etc.). Bakhtin will use yet other terms in his attempt to delineate this opposition.

The *given* (*dannoe*) and the *created* (*sozdannoe*) in the verbal utterance. The utterance is never the simple reflection or the expression of something that pre-exists it, is given and ready. It always creates something that had not been before, that is absolutely new and is nonreiterative, and that, moreover, always has a relation to values (truth, the good, the beautiful, etc.). But this thing comes into being only from a given thing (language; the observed real fact; the felt emotion; the speaking subject him/herself; what was already in his or her conception of the world, etc.) (30:299).

It is obvious that, in such a case, a purely linguistic approach of the utterance cannot suffice; it would ignore its most important features.

To study the *given* in the created (for example: the language, the already constituted general elements of the conception of the world, the reflected real facts, etc.) is far easier than the study of the *created* itself. Frequently, scholarly analysis as a whole winds up doing nothing more than making explicit all that is given, already present and constituted before the work (what was found, and not created, by the artist) (30:299).

Bakhtin will go so far as to distinguish two attitudes toward words, according to whether they are perceived as (already existing) units of language, or as units of discourse (new utterances). To name them, he uses terms that he may be borrowing from Benveniste,¹ but that he immediately integrates with themes that have always been dear to him:

The understanding—recognition of the reiterative elements of speech (that is, of language) and the interpretative understanding of nonreiterative utterance. . . . The word as means (language) and the word as interpretation. The interpreting word belongs to the realm of ends. The word as ultimate (supreme) end. . . . Laughter and the realm of ends (whereas the means are always serious). . . . Laughter and freedom. Laughter and equality (30:338, 339).

A later text returns to and elaborates further this distinction, this time in the context of a reflection on the epistemology of the human sciences:

Understanding. Articulation of understanding into separate acts. In real and concrete understanding, these acts are indissolubly intermingled in a unique process; but each separate act has ideational semantic unity (of content) and can be detached from the concrete empirical act. (1) The psychophysiological perception of the physical sign (the word, color, spatial form). (2) Its *recognition* (as either known or unknown). The understanding of its reiterative (general) *signification* in language. (3) The understanding of its *signification* in the given context (immediate as well as more remote). (4) Active and dialogical understanding (debate, agreement). Inclusion in a dialogical context. The moment of evaluation in understanding and the degree of its depth and its universality (40:361).

What comprises then the context of the enunciation? From the outset, three factors are indicated that permit the differentiation of an utterance from a sentence: in distinction to the latter, the utterance has a relation to a speaker, and to an object, and it enters into a dialogue with previously produced utterances.

To simplify things somewhat: purely linguistic relations (that is, the object of linguistics) are the relations of a sign to another sign or to other signs (that is, all systematic or linear relations between signs). The relations between utterances and reality, the actually speaking subject and other real utterances, relations that alone make utterances true or false, beautiful, etc., can never become the object of linguistics (30:302-3).

Here again, Bakhtin recalls the particular status of the speaker in question. She or he is referred to as the constitutive element of the enunciation, and therefore of the utterance; we also speak of the image of the author that can be deduced from the utterance, and, as

a result, we have a tendency to project the second onto the first. Yet the distinction must be preserved. The author produces the entire utterance, and that includes "the image of the author"; but he, himself, is a producer and not a product, *natura naturans*, not *natura naturata*.

Even if the author-creator had created the most authentic autobiography or confession, he would nonetheless have remained, insofar as he had produced it, outside of the universe that is represented in it. If I tell (orally or in writing) an event that I have just lived, insofar as I *am telling* (orally or in writing) this event, I find myself already outside of the time-space where the event occurred. To identify oneself absolutely with oneself, to identify one's "I" with the "I" that I tell as impossible as to lift oneself up by one's hair. However realistic or truthful it may be, the represented universe can never be chronotopically identical with the real universe where the representation occurs, and where the author-creator of this representation is to be found. That is why the term "image of the author" seems to me unfortunate: all that in the work has become image, and that, therefore, enters into its chronotopes, is product, not producer. The "image of the author," if the author-creator is meant by it, is a *contradictio in adjecto*; every image is something produced and not something producing (39:405).

Let us return to the general description of the utterance. We have seen that the language, the speaker, the object, and other utterances all must be taken into account. Now enters the listener.

Discourse (as all signs generally) is interindividual. All that is said, expressed, is outside of the "soul" of the speaker and does not belong to him only. But discourse cannot be attributed to the speaker alone. The author (the speaker) may have inalienable rights upon the discourse, but so does the listener, as do those whose voices resonate in the words found by the author (since there are no words that do not belong to someone). Discourse is a three-role drama (it is not a duet but a trio). It is played outside of the author, and it is inadmissible to inject it within the author (30:300-301).

It is the relation between speaker and listener that determines what is commonly called the *tone* of an utterance (let us bear in mind the role previously played by intonation).

The exceptional role of tone. . . . The least studied aspect of verbal life. . . . The tone is not defined by the objective content of the utterance, nor by the experiences of the speaker, but by the relation of the speaker to the person of his partner (his rank, importance, etc.) (38:359).

In another series of notes, dating from 1952-1953, Bakhtin lists up to five constitutive features of the utterance, that are as many differences between utterance and proposition.

1) The boundaries of each concrete utterance, as a unit of verbal communication, are determined by changes in the subjects of the discourse, that is, the speakers (29:249).

2) Every utterance has a specific interior completion.

3) An utterance does not merely refer to its object, as a proposition does, but it *expresses* its subject in addition; the units of languages, in themselves, are not expressive. In oral discourse, a specific, *expressive* intonation marks this dimension of the utterance.

4) The utterance enters in relation with past utterances that had the same object, and with those of the future, which it foresees as answers.

5) Finally, the utterance is always addressed to someone.

These last three features are already known to us, since we have encountered them in Bakhtin's other expositions; let us consider then the formal criterion of the delineation of utterances (the alternation of speakers), as well as the idea of internal completion (which had come up in the discussion of genres in the book signed by Medvedev).

The completion [*zaveršennost*] of the utterance is, in a way, the interior aspect of the change in the subject of the discourse: the change can occur only because the speaker has said (or written) *all* that he wanted to say at this precise moment or in these circumstances. . . . The first criterion, and the most important, of the completion of the utterance, is the *possibility of responding to it*, more exactly and more broadly, of occupying with respect to it the position of responding. . . . The utterance must, in one way or another, be completed in order that we may react to it (29:255).

This completion is itself determined by three factors, and, correlatively, manifests itself on three planes: the plane of the object of which it is spoken (it is treated "exhaustively"); that of the discursive intention of the speaker, which we deduce from its very utterance but which allows us, at the same time, to measure its completion (that is Benveniste's "intended"); finally, that of the generic forms of the utterance (to which we shall return).

Signification, a property of language, is opposed here to *meaning*, a more familiar term that replaces the word "theme."

In all these cases, we are dealing not with the isolated words as a unit of language, nor with the *signification* of this word, but with the completed utterance and its concrete *meaning*, the content of this utterance (29:265).

It is meaning that relates the utterance to the world of values, unknown to language.

Isolated signs, linguistic systems, or even the text (as a semiotic entity) can never

be true or false, or beautiful, etc. (30:303). Only the utterance can be accurate (or inaccurate), beautiful, just, etc. (30:301).

And, besides, meaning is nothing but the answer:

I call meaning the *answers* to the questions. That which does not answer any question is devoid of meaning for us. . . . The answering character of meaning. Meaning always answers some questions (38:350).

Model of Communication

One could summarize the preceding observations by reconstituting the model of communication as Bakhtin sees it, and by comparing it with a model more familiar to today's reader: that presented by Roman Jakobson in his essay "Linguistics and Poetics."

| | <i>Bakhtin</i> | | | <i>Jakobson</i> | |
|---------|----------------|----------|--------|-----------------|----------|
| | object | | | context | |
| speaker | utterance | listener | sender | message | receiver |
| | intertext | | | contact | |
| | language | | | code | |

At first sight, two orders of differences are apparent. Jakobson gives independent status to contact, whereas it does not appear in Bakhtin's model, which, in turn, introduces the relations to other utterances (which I have labeled here "intertext"); something that is missing in Jakobson. Then, there is a set of differences that could be considered purely terminological. The terms used by Jakobson are more general (semiotic and not just linguistic) and they betray his contacts with information engineers. "Context" and "object" both correspond to what other theoreticians of language call the "referent."

On a closer look, however, it will be noticed that the differences are more important, and that the terminological discrepancy betrays a fundamental opposition. Jakobson presents his notions as describing "the constitutive factors of any verbal event, of any act of verbal communication."² But for Bakhtin, there are two radically distinct "events"; to such an extent that they demand two autonomous disciplines: linguistics and translinguistics. In linguistics, one begins with words and grammatical rules, and one ends with sentences. In translinguistics, one starts with sentences and the context of enunciation and one obtains utterances. Thus, to formulate propositions concerning "any verbal event," an event of language as well as of discourse, would be, in Bakhtin's perspective, a useless enterprise. The schema I have drawn up here must be handled carefully: the "language" factor

must not be put on the same plane as the others; similarly, it cannot account for the fundamental difference between discourse and language, namely, the existence of a common horizon between speaker and listener.

There is more. It is not by chance that Bakhtin says "utterance" rather than "message," "language" rather than "code," etc.: he is deliberately rejecting the language of engineers in speaking of verbal communication. Such a language carries the risk of making us see linguistic exchange in the image of something like the work of telegraph operators: one person has a content to transmit, and encodes it with the help of a key and transmits it through the air; if contact is established, the other decodes it with the same key, thus recovering the initial content. Such an image does not correspond to discursive reality: the latter institutes the speaker and listener with respect to each other; properly speaking, they do not even exist in such capacity before the utterance. That is why language is something other than a code, and that is why it would be inconceivable for Bakhtin to isolate "contact" as a factor among others; the entire utterance is contact but in a much stronger sense than is to be found in radiotelegraphy or even electricity. Discourse does not maintain a uniform relation with its object; it does not "reflect" it, but it organizes it, transforms or resolves situations.

Curiously enough, there is in the Medvedev book a page that criticizes the Jakobsonian model of language some thirty years before that model was formulated; nevertheless, it was written in response to the theories of the Formalists, a group to which Jakobson belonged.

What is transmitted is inseparable from the forms, manners, and concrete conditions of the transmission. The Formalists presuppose tacitly, however, in their interpretation, an entirely predetermined and fixed communication, and an equally fixed transmission.

This could be expressed schematically as follows: there are two members of society, A (the author) and B (the reader); the social relations between them are, for the time being, unchangeable and fixed; we also have a ready-made message X, which must simply be handed over by A to B. In this ready-made message X, there is distinguished the "what" ("content") and the "how" ("form"), literary discourse being characterized by the "objective of expression" ("how") [this is a quotation from Jakobson's first published text]. The proposed schema is radically wrong.

In reality, the relations between A and B are in a state of permanent formation and transformation; they continue to alter in the very process of communication. Nor is there a ready-made message X. It takes form in the process of communication between A and B. Nor is it transmitted from the first to the

second, but constructed between them, like an ideological bridge; it is constructed in the process of their interaction (10:203-4).

We find in 1928 a precise prefiguration of the critiques addressed today to the purely "communicational" model of language. Bakhtin does not fail, in any case, to reformulate this critique himself, forty years later, and to extend it to all of nascent semiotics:

Semiotics prefers to deal with the transmission of a ready-made message by means of a ready-made code, whereas, in living speech, messages are, strictly speaking, created for the first time in the process of transmission, and ultimately there is no code (38:352).

Heterology

If we go now from the model of the particular utterance to the set of utterances that constitute the verbal life of a community, one fact appears, to Bakhtin, more striking than all others: the existence of types of utterances, or discourses, in a relatively high but nonetheless limited number. Two excesses are to be avoided here: to recognize only the diversity of languages and ignore that of utterances; to imagine that this last variety is individual and therefore unlimited. The stress is not on the plurality but on the difference (there is no need to conceive of a higher level unit of which all the discourses would be variants; Bakhtin takes a stand against the idea of a unification). To name this irreducible diversity of discursive types, Bakhtin introduces a neologism, *raznorechie*, which I translate (literally, but with the aid of a Greek root) by *beterology*, a term that inserts itself between two other parallel coinages, *raznojazytie*, heteroglossia or diversity of languages, and *raznogolosie*, heterophony or diversity of (individual) voices.

Every utterance, it will be recalled, is oriented toward a social horizon, composed of semantic and evaluative elements; the number of these verbal and ideological horizons is high but not unlimited; and every utterance necessarily falls within one or more types of discourses determined by a horizon.

In language, there is no word or form left that would be neutral or would belong to no one: all of language turns out to be scattered, permeated with intentions, accented. For the consciousness that lives in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but a concrete heterological opinion on the world. Every word gives off the scent of a profession, a genre, a current, a party, a particular work, a particular man, a generation, an era, a day, and an hour. Every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life; all

words and all forms are inhabited by intentions. In the world, contextual harmonies (of the genre, of the current, the individual) are unavoidable (21:106).

The preceding lists indicate that the stratification of language into discourses does not occur along a single dimension. In the most detailed examination of heterology he has conducted ("Discourse in the Novel," a text dating from 1934-1935), Bakhtin distinguishes up to five types of differentiation: by genre, profession, social stratum, age, and region (dialects, in the strict sense of the term). Let us note that social classes do not play a role different from that of professions and age classes: it is a factor of diversification among others. We shall return later to the theory of genres, developed with respect to literature, that corresponds to the least obvious differentiation, since it is purely verbal. Let us indicate here though that the ignorance of genre is specifically raised as a shortcoming of linguistics in general and of Saussure in particular:

Saussure ignores the fact that outside the forms of language there exist also forms of combination of these forms; in other words, he ignores discursive genres (29:260).

And let us bear in mind that Voloshinov/Bakhtin never confines himself to literary genres only; he even sketches out, but without developing, a general typology of discourses, of which literary discourse would be but one instance.

In observing social life, we can easily isolate, outside of the artistic communication already discussed, the following types: (1) the communication of production (in the factory, in the shop, in the kolhoz, etc.); (2) the communication of business (in offices, in social organizations, etc.); (3) familiar [bytovoe] communication (encounters and conversations in the street, the cafeteria, at home, etc.); and finally (4) ideological communication in the precise sense of the term: propaganda, school, science, philosophy, in all their varieties (18:66-67).

Heterology is, in a way, natural to society; it arises spontaneously from social diversity. But just as the latter is constrained by the rules imposed by the single State, the diversity of discourses is fought against by the aspiration, correlative to all power, to institute a common language (or rather a speech).

The category of common language is the theoretical expression of historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, the expression of the centrifugal forces of the language. The common language is never given but in fact always ordained, and at every moment of the life of the language it is opposed to genuine heterology. But at the same time, it is perfectly real as a force that

Bakhtin lists several other examples of powerlessness before the heterological:

Aristotle's poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the medieval Church's poetics of "the common language of truth," the Cartesian poetics of Neo-Classicism, the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz (the idea of a universal grammar), Humboldt's ideologism of the concrete—all of these, whatever their differences of shading, give expression to the same centripetal forces of sociolinguistic and ideological life, and serve the same project of centralizing and unifying the European languages (21:84).

The surprise in this series of names is Humboldt, a distant inspirer of Bakhtin, as we have seen, and, in addition, a defender of linguistic diversity (*Verschiedenheit*). The explanation must be as follows. For Humboldt there are only two types of diversity: the diversity of languages and the diversity of individuals (language gives expression to the national spirit, and the utterance, to individual spirit). He forgets the decisive element: social diversity. Beyond classical unity and Romantic infinity, Bakhtin looks for a middle way: the way of typology.

overcomes this heterology; imposes certain limits upon it; guarantees a maximum of mutual comprehension; and becomes crystallized in the real, though relative, unity of spoken (daily) and literary language, of "correct language" (21:83-84).

As can be seen, Bakhtin will speak also, with respect to the tendency toward unification, of "centripetal force," and, with respect to heterology, of "centrifugal force." The different discourses themselves further, for variable reasons, one or the other force. The novel (what Bakhtin calls by this word), for example, reinforces heterology in distinction to poetry; that is because heterology is solidary of the representation of language, a constitutive feature of the novel.

Whereas the principal species of poetic genres arise in the current of unifying and centralizing centripetal forces of verbal and ideological life, the novel and the genres of literary prose that are bound to it have historically taken form in the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces (21:86).

Therefore the periods in which the novel flourishes are periods of weakening central power.

The embryos of novelistic prose appear in the heterologic and heterological world of the Hellenistic era, in imperial Rome, in the process of disintegration and decadence of the verbal and ideological centralism of the medieval Church. Similarly, in modern times the flourishing of the novel is always connected with the decomposition of stable verbal and ideological systems, and, on the other hand, to the reinforcement of linguistic heterology and to its impregnation by intentions, within the literary dialect as well as outside of it (21:182).

One may well be led to wonder here to what extent Bakhtin follows the rules of prudence he laid a few years earlier, and whether he does not skip a few intermediate links in the relation between social structures and linguistic forms. Besides, could it not be argued conversely that the flowering of the modern novel coincides, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with efforts to establish a common national language?

Traditional stylistics ignores this sort of assembly of languages and style into a higher unit; it does not know how to approach the particular dialogue of languages in the novel. Stylistic analysis therefore does not consider the novel as a whole, but only one or another of its subordinate stylistic planes. The scholar bypasses the basic distinctive feature of the novel as a genre; he substitutes another object of inquiry, and instead of novelistic style, he actually analyzes something altogether different. He transposes an orchestrated symphonic theme to the piano (21:76-77).