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Bakhtin's Philosophy of Literature and its Relation to Literary Theory, Literature and Culture

1 The questions of Bakhtin's timelessness and his profession

If 125 years after his birth and 45 years after his death we once again take a look at Bakhtin's concepts of literature and philosophy and their reception, mainly in Europe, we find a stimulating motif in the question as to what his thinking can mean for human beings, the humanities and human cultures in the early twenty-first century, after the end of postmodernism and its theoretical correlative, deconstruction: what do his concepts say to us after the end of the extreme relativism of postmodern culture with its negation of the responsibility of authorship ('anything goes', 'death of the author') and the doubt concerning all essential(ist) propositions besides the essential(ist) proposition that an essential proposition is not possible that have formed and deformed Bakhtin's reception for half a century? A similar question was posed in 2010 by Natan Tamarchenko with regard to Bakhtin's poetics and its relation to aesthetics. He came to the conclusion that Bakhtin's poetics finds its position between philosophical aesthetics and philosophical linguistics (Tamarchenko 2010, 70).

Bakhtin has received more discussion over the world than any other philosopher and scholar of the humanities in Eastern Europe of the last fifty years. It is tempting to consider the migration of his thinking through foreign continental European countries (and back to Russia) in the framework of the model of a 'dialogue of cultures' (that is, an 'intercultural dialogue'). This notion was developed by the Russian philosopher Vladimir Bibler (1991) in his dispute with Bakhtin's ideas on culture. It is based on the consideration that we can shape a culture only if we presuppose a minimum of 'two' cultures (Bibler 1991, 85). If this is the case, we can conceive cultures in analogy to the relationship between languages in the field of communication, which implies different languages – that is, at least more than one. The diverse views on Bakhtin can serve, then, as complementary parts of a multifocal panopticon:

Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each of which in its own way reflects a little piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp behind their inter-reflecting aspects for a world that is broader, more multi-levelled and multi-horized than would be available to one language, one mirror. (Bakhtin 1981, 415)

In this respect, cultures can be seen as acting somewhat like human beings, which in Bakhtin's anthropological model (1996g, 351; 2002c, 379; Isupov 1990) can be understood exclusively in terms of their (for instance verbal) interaction with other people. In this context, the dialogue of cultures includes not only the perceivable answers of one culture to another and the reaction of the latter to the counter-action of the former, but also by their reciprocally enriched potentials. Besides this cultural-anthropological parallel, we also have to take into consideration the possibility that concepts of culture themselves develop in relation to the historically changing notions of the human being and vice versa. We point to the recent 'anthropological turn', which not only gave anthropological concepts a new standing in culture but in so doing also changed the very model of culture we examine here. Bakhtin's claim that truth is not available for a single person or in a temporally restricted moment ("truth is only revealed in an unfinished/unfinishable dialogue"; Bakhtin 2002d, 464) is valid for both his own thinking and reflection on it. This approach is legitimately carried out both inside and outside of Russia and also finds in this double location an impulse for its dialogical diversity.

After Malcolm Jones (1990, 720) registered Bakhtin's reception in world culture as an extremely diverse accumulation of concepts presenting the figures of "structuralist and post-structuralist, Marxist and post-Marxist, speech-act-theorist, sociolinguist, liberal, pluralist, mystic, vitalist, Christian, and materialist" and Carol Adlam (2000, 156) wrote about the "mastering and appropriation" of Bakhtin, Klaus Städtke (2001, 131) even lamented the "intercultural mystification of [his] theory". Nataliia Avtonomova (2008, 635) objected that the Bakhtinian dialogue is only a positive parade form of the relationships between cultures: they also occur as indifference and as fights. For instance, after the Cold War the American political scientist Samuel Huntington (1993) expected a *Clash of Civilizations* as the main way cultures in the world would be interrelated in the future. And indeed: in the international discussion about Bakhtin and his friends Jean-Paul Bronckart's and Cristian Bota's book *Bakhtine démasqué. Histoire d'un menteur, d'une escroquerie et d'un délire collectif* (2011, *Bakhtin unmasked. The story of a liar, a fraud and a collective delusion*) we find an example of interculturality in the form of a fight: it reminds us of the worst traditions of Stalinist 'class struggle'. Here, Bakhtin is denigrated as a representative of a "radicalment réactionnaire" (radical reactionary, meaning 'evil') ideology (Bronckart and Bota 2011, 408). This negative picture has stimulated the 'unmasking' of Bakhtin by Aleksej Korovashko

(2017) in the first extensive Russian Bakhtin biography, which completely ignores his philosophical impact. With regard to Bakhtin's remarkable (non-)reception, for instance in Israel (Ginsburg 1996), we have to state that (verbal) non-action in a case where action is possible or even expected is also an act.

For half a century, the international reception of Bakhtin's thinking has been interferingly shaped by the (usually implicit) question as to whether the author of the famous books on Dostoevskii and Rabelais could/should be regarded as a philosopher, a linguist and/or a literary critic. Although from his earliest lectures and publications up to the very last Bakhtin seems to have seen himself primarily as a philosopher, if not more generally as a 'thinker' (*myslitel'*), for quite some time, in the Soviet Union, in Russia and also abroad, he was read primarily as a literary critic and/or a linguist. (We must bear in mind the difference between the Russian notion of the *myslitel'* and its English equivalent thinker. A significant case of the use of the Russian noun *myslitel'* is Aleksej Losev's novel *Zhenshchina-myslitel'* [1933/1934, *The Woman Thinker*], which has been seen as a parody of the gifted pianist Mariia Iudina, a member of Bakhtin's Vitebsk circle.)

In Bakhtin's case, the question of his profession is not a minor one; it is not a question of the optics or the main emphasis of his concepts. Rather, it makes an enormous difference whether one reads his books on dialogue and carnival as treatises on French and Russian prose or on the human being and world culture. The question as to the place of the spoken word, the role of the human body in human life, in culture and the cosmos, implies an altogether different problem (a philosophical and anthropological one) than asking in the context of literary studies how the narrative is organized in Dostoevskii's prose or laughter in Rabelais' novels. Vitalii Makhlin (1997, 198–199) determines the "social ontology of participation" as the foundation for both Bakhtin's philosophy and his philology, for his social anthropology as well as for his metalinguistics. Today it seems to be evident that Bakhtin's handling of language was much less that of a linguist than that of a philosopher of language. His concept of 'speech genres' grasps the interference of (everyday) life, thinking and talking (Lachmann and Sasse 2017, 186–190).

As we have stated previously (Grübel 2008, 329), we are convinced that it was Bakhtin's aim to revise traditional metaphysics, to found a new one which was to be closely grounded in life (*bytie*). Bakhtin (2003a, 12) formulated this 'first philosophy' (cf. Guseinov 2017) as the mediation of ethical practice, cognition and aesthetic processing on the one hand (Bakhtin 2003c, 284–289) and of cognition, perception and 'experience' (*perezhivanie*) on the other (Bakhtin 2003b, 116–119). This project, formulated by Bakhtin (Averintsev et al. 2003, 496–497, 711) in 1922–1924, conceived of a 'critical' or 'negative' metaphysics: it could be neither a rational metaphysics of science, which is abstract and completely independent

from the experiencing and thinking person (Bakhtin 2002c, 379) nor an arbitrarily subjective metaphysics grounded solely in individual experience. It was thought as a responsible relationship with the world itself and a response to the vision of the world of other human beings.

Scholars have yet to profoundly investigate (cf. Turbin 1990, 10–14) how Bakhtin's heavy illness, his meningitis and pulmonary tuberculosis, but most of all his chronic multiple osteomyelitis from which he suffered from his childhood and youth (Bakhtin 2002a, 53–54, 232; Korovashko 2017, 20) to his later years, the operations they necessitated (as a child, and again in 1921 and 1929) and the amputation of his right leg in 1938 influenced not only his biography (he probably did not receive a high school diploma, and no university degree until his doctorate in 1952 at the age of 56) but also his philosophical thinking, his 'singular place in being' (as he called it). This is not the case with Albert Camus, whom Bakhtin (2002c, 382; 2002d, 461) mentions as a follower of Dostoevskii. Bakhtin's heavy illness prevented his wife, a trained librarian, from ever taking a job (besides as a cashier around 1935 out of economic necessity). More attention has been paid to the biographical fact that until 1917 the brothers Nikolai and Mikhail, only one year separating them, lived like mental twins (Clark and Holquist 1984, 16–35). In the mid-1920s, after Lenin's expulsion of all prominent philosophers from socialist Russia in 1922, Bakhtin, who always considered himself a philosopher and sometimes a literary critic, but never a linguist, was well aware of the fact that in this Soviet context he could present neither his philosophical work on the ethical foundation of the human act nor that on the complementary relationship between the author and the hero in aesthetic activity; nor could he present himself as an independent, non-Marxist thinker. Unlike Aleksej Losev (1893–1988), who in the years 1926–1930 dared to publish six philosophical volumes in his 'own' publishing house, and was therefore sentenced to ten years in a labor camp (where he lost his sight), unlike his friend Matvei Kagan (1889–1937), who in 1924 switched to a principally non-ideological position at an Institute of Energy and later wrote philosophical texts only seldom and strictly privately, and also unlike Gustav Shpet (1879–1937), who, after losing his philosophical position in 1929, no longer wrote philosophical texts and nevertheless was shot, Bakhtin changed his public philosophical focus from life and ethics to literature and language.

The (misleading) idea that Bakhtin's authorship is primarily that of a literary critic and only then that of a linguist and only incidentally or implicitly also that of a philosopher was caused *inter alia* by the Russian editors of his works in the 1960s and 1970s. Sergei Bocharov and Vladimir Kozhinov initially published his fragments about the epistemology of humanities (on the many misreadings, cf. Sadeckij 1997, 101–105) under the banner "K metodologii literaturovedenija"

("On the methodology of literary criticism"; Bakhtin 1975), then under the label "K metodologii gumanitarnykh nauk" ("On the methodology of the humanities"; Bakhtin 1979a; Bakhtin 1986a). It was only in 1996, years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, that it appeared under Bakhtin's own title "K filosofskim osnovam gumanitarnykh nauk" ("On the philosophical principles of the humanities", Bakhtin 1996a). Caryl Emerson has accurately stated that "like many scholars of the Stalinist Soviet period, who had something profoundly their own to say, Bakhtin was often obliged to route those ideas through disciplines not of his own choosing" (Emerson 2003, 297).

The reason for this evident shift is twofold: on the one hand, in the Soviet Union the place of philosophy was occupied by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism(-Stalinism). As an only incidentally changing dogma it was strictly controlled by the Communist Party. On the other hand, in the ever-changing framework of the doctrine of *Socialist Realism* first established in 1934, control over the methodology of literary critics was less strict: it rather developed, as demonstrated for instance by the discussion of the novel as a genre in the 1930s and 1940s, in which, besides Bakhtin (Pan'kov 2009), the Marxist Lukács (Tihanov 2000) participated, and by the emergence of Tartu and Moscow semiotics (to which Bakhtin reacted, cf. Avtonomova 2008; on the Moscow Tartu School also see Rainer Gröbel's chapter in this volume) in the 1960s and 1970s, and it remained a subject of continuous, sometimes even fierce debate. While in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist USSR it was practically impossible to have a (public) dialogue about the strictly installed truth of Marxism-Leninism(-Stalinism) (at least beyond minor questions), the rules of literary criticism in correlation with its object were debated constantly (cf. Segal 2011; Dobrenko and Tikhanov 2011). Genrikh Batishchev's (1997) Bakhtin-inspired "Introduction to dialectic aesthetics", ready for print in 1981, could not be published until the end of the Soviet Union.

After the dethronement of Socialist Realism (due to the collapse of the USSR in 1990), some Russian Bakhtin followers even expected that his work itself could/should become the foundation of the coming (Russian) literary criticism if not of a new aesthetics in general (Frolov 1995, 131). In Germany, Rolf Klöpfer (1999) proposed Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogicity' as the foundation of the literary and cinematic criticism of the future. Recently, Matthias Freise (2018), in cooperation with some colleagues from different countries and diverse disciplines, introduced a four-part model evolving Bakhtin's concept of dialogical intersubjectivity as the foundation for a common epistemology in the humanities. However, in the early 1990s, the Russian philosopher Aleksandr Piatigorskii (1992), an expert on Indian philosophy who has taught in London since 1974, could write the article "'The other' and 'my own' als notions of literary philosophy" without (in a figure of philosophical litotes) even mentioning the name Bakhtin.

The publication of the anthology *Bakhtin kak filosof* (*Bakhtin as a philosopher*) in 1992, edited by L.A. Gogotshvili and I.S. Gurevich at the Nauka (Science) publishing house signaled the broadening of his reception in the direction of philosophical thinking. The ground had already been prepared in 1982 by Igor' Nikolaevich Sukhikh with the programmatic article "The philosophy of literature of M.M. Bakhtin" (Sukhikh 1982). Bakhtin himself practiced a special concept of philosophy that placed it in opposition to (literary and linguistic) theory as well as to criticism. Reflecting on it and its place in culture(s), he wrote: "It [philosophy] starts where precise science ends and other science begins. It can be defined as the metalanguage of all sciences (and all kinds of cognition and consciousness)" (Bocharov and Gogotishvili 1996, 384; Bakhtin 2002c, 424). This philosophy has to overcome the traditional opposition of the Cartesian 'I' and 'the world' (later: subject and object) in epistemology (cf. Makhlin 2018, 287). Thus philosophical thinking is – unlike the appeal of analytical philosophy – opposed to exact science (for instance physics, chemistry, biology). It is called a "different science" ("ino-nauchnost"; Bakhtin 2002c, 424), a science of its own kind, which is seen as the way we can think and communicate about science(s). For Bakhtin, philosophy and science are engaged in a permanent dialogue, which presupposes their principal difference. Linguistics and literary criticism also differ from philosophy, but they can either be closer to science, if they use (for instance) empirical data, or they can come closer to philosophy when they reflect on the theoretical (for instance epistemological and anthropological) foundations of their possibility. And this is, for Bakhtin, always necessary. Historically, we can trace shifts of Bakhtin's main focus from the philosophy of the act – that is, ethics – via aesthetics to the philosophy of literature and the philosophy of language. In English-language-contexts, Bakhtin emerged as a philosopher of culture and as a theorist of literature simultaneously in the 1980s (cf. Ulicka 2006), but in historical inversion: English-speaking audiences first encountered the late Bakhtin. In contrast to some critics, we do not see a shift from an idealistic philosophy to a materialistic one. We also have our doubts about his "shift to science" (Hirshkop 1999, 157–169). As we have explained elsewhere (Grübel 2008, 317–330), we understand Bakhtin's philosophy as a new metaphysics that includes (Bakhtin would say: does not exclude) the material world. In this sense, it comes close to the New realism of Maurizio Ferraris, Markus Gabriel and Rossano Pecoraro. Very recently, Vitaly Makhlin (2019, 276), a leading Russian Bakhtin scholar, has described Bakhtin's reception as a "sad misinterpretation of the thinker's ideas, which is present worldwide, but particularly in Bakhtin's fatherland". Today, Scarlett Baron (2020) relates "The Birth of Intertextuality" to Darwin's theory of evolution, thus binding Bakhtin, against his intention (Bakhtin 2003b, 250), back to positivism.

Bakhtin's work about questions of language is surely not part of linguistic research but part of a philosophy of language, more precisely: a philosophy of communication that crystallized in his productive concept of speech genres (*rechevyevye zhanry*, Bakhtin 1996d; 1996e). This philosophy of dialogic communication essentially contributes to his understanding of the human being, his anthropology, and to his project of a 'first' philosophy. For Bakhtin, it is only by communication that the human being is able to perform his/her dialogical anthropological nature. Confronted with the world and him/herself, seen in the perspective of 'the Other', the human 'I' achieves a non-monological idea of the world and of him/herself. Besides the inter-subjectively conceived single person and the in-dismissible Other, Bakhtin's anthropological philosophy also implies the possible presence of a Third – be it a witness, a judge or (a) God. In our context, it is the philosophy of literature that is our main interest.

2 Dialogic consciousness as the basis or Bakhtin's philosophy

Bakhtin's early ethical philosophy of the act and his aesthetics of the interrelation between the author and the hero implies the concept of a dialogic consciousness (cf. Samokhvalova 1992). This notion denies the Cartesian idea of the autonomous consciousness of a subject and its counterposition to the world, which can be traced up to Fichte and Hegel and in its collective form also to the 'class consciousness' (*Klassenbewusstsein*) of Marx and Lukács. For Bakhtin, consciousness itself takes part in 'being' (*bytie*) and is itself also a part of this being (Zinchenko 2010, 81–85). He creates the figures of the "event of being" (*sobytiye bytiia*; Bakhtin 2003a, 41) and the "being of the event" (*bytie sobytiia*; Bakhtin 2003a, 31), which even in their phonetics and graphics stress the inner binding of acting and being.

Bakhtin's dialogic concept of consciousness is grounded in the principal otherness of human understanding. His notion of being (*bytie*) is opposed to the concept of an objective 'reality' (*deistvitel'nost'*), which traditionally is separated from, if not confronted with, the recognizing and deliberating 'I'. Being itself, the 'I' inevitably takes part in the material and the spiritual world, in the universe and culture. Inspired by his friend Matvei Kagan (a scholar of Hermann Cohen), who conceived a new – messianic but not teleological – philosophical model of history which includes the human being's relationship with God (Kagan 2004), Bakhtin created a new concept of the phenomenon, which in opposition to Husserl always has to be seen at least from two sides (Haardt 2000, Pape 2016). It was developed

in (sometimes implicit) discussions with the philosophies of Bergson and Simmel, of Cassirer and Scheler.

Unlike the French reception, which more or less integrated Bakhtin into Russian literary (post-)structuralism, the German reception saw in Bakhtin someone who overcame Russian formalism in the field of the theory of communication (Hansen-Löve 1978), a reformer of the Western and the Russian philosophical tradition (Grübel 1979) and of the traditional theory of culture (Lachmann 1995). Hansen-Löve (1978) published in his book on Russian formalism an extended chapter about Vygotskii's psychology of art (and especially on his concept of *inner speech*) and Bakhtin's (/Voloshinov's) model of a semiotic science of ideology (also see Sylvia Sasse's chapter on Vygotskii in this volume). Hansen-Löve considers Bakhtin's (Voloshinov's) concept of inner speech a continuation and reformation of Vygotskii's thinking. (The authorship of Voloshinov's books is debated.) The aim is to develop a metalinguistic concept of the theory of communication that stresses the dialogical aspect of communication and polyphonic speech, also in the relationship between the author (the narrator) and the hero. Hansen-Löve (1978, 438, 451–455) interprets Bakhtin's concept of polyphony as a model of narrative multi-perspectivity and ideological pluralism and his concept of 'carnivalism' as a model of the principle of 'estrangement' (*ostranenie*), the foundation of which is ambivalence.

3 The (philosophical) problem of the translatability of Bakhtin's word(s) and the quest for historical concreteness

Participating in the dialogue of cultures, we use different formats. These formats differ in their closeness to or distance from the donor culture, which are (also) expressed by the language used. Formats very near to the original are those dialogic responses known as transcripts and excerpts of books in a foreign language. From 1929 onwards, far away from good libraries (Bocharov and Melikhova 2000b, 657–680; Bakhtin 2008b), Bakhtin himself engaged in this practice a lot, one reason being that he did not have the opportunity to make copies of the books; he usually had them to hand for a limited time only, sometimes just a week. With respect to the first Dostoevskii book, the handwritten transcripts were produced by Bakhtin's wife; with respect to the Rabelais book, they were mainly outlines and summaries produced by Bakhtin himself, going along with translations. Even the process of writing-up is a dialogical response: it transforms the original text

or its part into new, different material as well as into a new context. A greater act of intervention that is much more evident, however, is this dialogical moment in the process of translation and transcription in(to) another language, because it unavoidably implies the interpretation of the original text in order to make its incorporation into the target language possible in the first place.

Such translations of texts are an important part of, if not a precondition for, the dialogue of cultures in our time too. Their philosophical implication is the question as to whether translation is possible at all. Bakhtin himself had a very ambivalent opinion regarding translatability (cf. Zbinden 2006b). In its ambiguity, it can be compared with Benjamin's (1968) thesis concerning the un-translatability of texts and the necessity of their translation. On the one hand, Bakhtin was convinced that every 'language' can be translated from any culture to another without any difficulty. In later years, he formulated this conviction in a way that testifies to his mental contact with (Soviet) semiotics of the 1960s and 1970s:

Any sign system (i. e. any language), on which narrow collective its conditionality would not rely, can always be deciphered, that is, translated into other sign systems (other languages); therefore, there is a common logic of sign systems, a potential single language of languages (which of course can never become a concrete single language, never one of the languages). (Bakhtin 1996 f, 309–310; my translation)

On the other hand, Bakhtin articulated fundamental philosophical doubts about the translatability of 'texts': "But the text (in contrast to the language as a system of means) can never be translated to the end, because there is no possible single text of texts" (Bakhtin 1996 f, 310). Sergei Fokin (2011) has related Bakhtin's thesis of the untranslatability of texts to a general disdain for translation in Russian philosophy. This is in contrast with the well-known openness of Russian literature to translation (Emerson 2017).

Due to the discussion concerning the question as to whether translation is a prerequisite of understanding or (vice versa) understanding a prerequisite of translation, we interpret this relationship as a double bind: each translation presupposes understanding, all understanding presupposes translation. The same is the case with the relationship between dialogue and translation. For Iurii Lotman, dialogue presupposes translation, while for Bakhtin, translation presupposes dialogue (Avtonomova 2008, 552–553). Whereas Bakhtin sees a (possible) meta'language' which enables us to transgress the boundaries of any (natural) language in the direction of any other language and to see each language as a concretization of this abstract metalanguage, he denies the possibility of an abstract meta'text', which could be the common wording of the concrete original and even its concrete translation. Hence, in Bakhtin's vision, unlike languages, texts behave like individuals that cannot be converted into one another. The reason for this astonish-

ing consideration is the fact that each text is generated in a certain unrepeatable (un-reproducible) historical, cultural and personal situation. For instance, Bakhtin's book *Fransua Rable v istorii realizma* (1940, *Rabelais in the History of Realism*; Bakhtin 2008a) was originally written by a politically oppressed person in the culture of high Stalinism, before World War II. Its correlate (reworked) equivalent published in 1965 – *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia smekhovaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa* (*Rabelais' Work and the People's Laughter-Culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*; Bakhtin 2010; translated into English as *Rabelais and his World* in 1968, Bakhtin 1968) – is a different book because it came into being in the area of Soviet post-Stalinism and was published by the professor of a provincial university. The editors of Bakhtin's Russian *Sobranie sochinenii* (*Collected Writings*) got it right, then, when they took 'both' books as independent items into their canon of Bakhtin's writings, as one and the same sentence has a very different sense in the years 1940 or 1960: "All swearing always contains in one corporal-topographical form or another a picture pregnant with death" (Bakhtin 2008a, 355; Bakhtin 2010, 378). Immediately after the Great Terror of 1937–1938, death was actually present in the corpses of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims of Stalinism illegally killed by the state and in the topographical concretion of the GULag and exile, which applied to the author himself, who risked his life by leaving his place of banishment, Saransk, in the fall of 1937 (Korovashko, 2017, 308–318). Bakhtin was not 'rehabilitated' until 1967 – that is, 38 years later. In 1960, these deaths were part of the (suppressed) Soviet memory and supplemented by the memory of the million deaths of Soviet people during World War II. In its methodological perspective, the first book is a contribution to the discussions of (Socialist) Realism, the second a vote for a more comprehensive and more complex view on and practice of human culture in the late Soviet Union.

A similar change can also be observed in Bakhtin's two books on Dostoevskii: the first (Bakhtin 2000) with its main label 'creation' (*tvorchestvo*) is still placed in the framework of an aesthetics of creativity (also in the context of the artistic avant-garde, cf. Bakhtin 2002a, 140–142), whereas the second (Bakhtin 2002b) with its notion of 'poetics' is more closely connected with literary criticism, even though it involves the history of the dialogical word much more than its earlier counterpart. In this respect, it also stands in the historical perspective of Bakhtin's own development and witnesses the growing relevance of prose genres as well as that of carnival: the second Dostoevskii includes the possible knowledge of the first Rabelais and the second Rabelais includes the potential acquaintance with the second Dostoevskii. Both are opposed to Lenin's and Gor'kii's ban on Dostoevskii.

The reason for the untranslatability of texts is the same as the reason for the un-reproducibility of human lives and human beings: it is their concrete situation in history, their personal character as 'life events' (*sobytiie bytiia*) in world

history. This history (a sequence more of ideas than of authors and texts) is, as 'great time', marked much less by its development than by the possibility of its renaissance. Even if we were able to replicate a human being genetically, we could never replicate them with their concrete situation in life, history and the cosmos, which is marked by its personal events (impressions, experiences, acts). As early as *K filosofii postupka* (Bakhtin 2003a; *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin 1993), Bakhtin conceives a theology of the act, highlighted by the repeated use of the word 'communion', convinced that the event cannot be determined within the categories of a non-participant theoretical consciousness. For him, it can be grasped only in the categories of actual communion, that is, of an act actually performed in the presence of another person. In "Avtor i geroi v ésteticheskoi deiatel'nosti" (Bakhtin 1986b; "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", Bakhtin 1990) his emphasis is on the consequences of the introduction of a second participating consciousness into the event. He notes that without co-evaluating the other to some extent, one cannot contemplate an event as an event in its specific quality. In his book *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo* (1929, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*), he explored the idea that the inner interpenetration of aesthetic and ethical events might be played out at the point of the dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses (Bakhtin 1929). H. J. M. Hermans (2003) has traced this aspect in the direction of constructive psychology without taking into consideration Bakhtin's discussion of Vygotskii's concept of inner speech (cf. Hansen-Löve 1978, 436–440).

One could even see the constitution of events as the permanent process of interpersonal translations. Historical concreteness, then, is itself a phenomenon which is grounded in its aesthetics, in the tone and the rhythm of the act, which are the precondition for their answerability: as recent research argues (Gritten 2016), the balancing of aesthetic and ethical moments within an answerable act even requires a specifically musical attitude of consciousness.

4 The historical reception and problems of translation

Bakhtin's books themselves lived in the perspectives of their historical national and international reception. After the long break of almost three decades and after Seduro's (1958) retrospective of Dostoevskii critics, including passages on Bakhtin's 1929 book, in March 1961 Vittorio Strada (1997, 374) proposed in a letter to the author the publication of a reworked version of the Dostoevskii book in Italian translation by the Turin publisher Einaudi. Originally planned as the

introduction to a new (never realized) edition of Dostoevskii's complete works in Italian by the same publishing house (Bocharov and Melikhova 2000a, 504–505; Bocharov and Gogotishvili 1996, 550–551; Bocharov and Gogotishvili 2002, 476–477), according to Strada the new version was sent to Turin with official Soviet approval in the summer 1962. (This foreign publication has to be seen against the background of the publication of Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* 1957 by Feltrinelli, which Soviet officials considered a scandal.) As the first translator couldn't cope with the difficult text, the book was given to another one, Giuseppe Garritano, whose translation did not appear until 1968, however. Almost ten years later, Strada (Bakhtin 1976) edited Lukács's and Bakhtin's main texts on the theory of the novel in Italian. And as late as 1997, Margherita De Michiel and Augusto Ponzio also edited a translation (by M. De Michiel) of the first version of Bakhtin's Dostoevskii in Italian (Bakhtin 1997). Meanwhile, Bakhtin's Russian original of his 1962 reworking was published in 1963 by the Moscow press *Sovetskii pisatel'* (The Soviet Writer) thanks to the commitment of Vladimir Kozhinov. This took place despite the stubborn resistance of Soviet hardliners such as A. Dymchits, I. Vasil'evskaia and A. Miasikov, but with the help of the daughter of the chief of the KGB and later leader of the Communist Party Andropov. The Russian journalist Sergei Kurginian (over-)interpreted this support for the publishing of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevskii (and also of that on Rabelais) as the reason for the end of the Soviet Union: "The shell is Bakhtin. The cannon – Andropov. The goal is the Communist Party of the USSR as a secular red church" (Kurginian 2009).

Translations play an irreplaceable role in the process of intercultural reception. They transfer books and articles, notions and terms not only from one language to another but also from the donor culture with its specific historical situation to the target culture (Avtonomova 2008, 397) with its different specific historical context. Due to profound changes of mental and ideological and verbal and historical contexts, this process often entails enormous problems. The transfer of utterances from one culture to another confronts us with the question of the extent to which the (con)text and the lingual specificity of the original can and should be preserved and the extent to which they should be adapted to the target culture and its language.

In the early 1980s, Todorov (1981, 11) already complained about the weakness of the French Bakhtin translations. When the linguist (with a Russian background) Marina Yaguello rendered Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's book *Marksizm i filosofiia iazka* (1929, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*) in 1977 into French (Bakhtin 1977), she rendered the Russian words "rech'", "vyskazyvanie" and "slovo" ("speech", "utterance" and "word") with the French noun "*discours*", as Foucault's analysis of discourse was in fashion in Paris at the time (Avtonomova 2008, 383–384). This translation was accompanied by a preface by Jakobson

(Bakhtine [and Voloshinov] 1977, XI–X); however, we do not know whether he had access to the translation before it went into print. Some thirty-three years later, Patrique Sériot (Voloshinov 2010) avoids the term *discours* in the second French translation of this book completely, and with good reason. The context of the receiving culture has changed.

In English translations, one of the most drastic violations was the representation of Bakhtin's clearly different terms 'multilingualism' (*raznoiazychie*), which refers to the abstract level of languages and 'heteroglossia' (*raznorechie*), which is related to concrete utterances, by only one single concept: 'heteroglossy' (cf. Zbinden 2006a, 23, 69). Following the problematic French example, in English translations the expressions 'word' (*slovo*) and 'speech' (*rech*), so important and different to Bakhtin, have often been replaced by one and the same current term, discourse, for instance even in the title: *Discourse in the novel* (Bakhtin 1981, 259–422).

An even more rigid rendering was the replacement of Bakhtin's concept of the dialogicity of words in utterances and texts with their 'intertextuality' in the work of Kristeva (1970; cf. Rolet 2010) (on Kristeva's theory of intertextuality via Bakhtin also see Valentin Peschanskyi's chapter on "Case Study of a Migrating Concept: Intertextuality" in this volume). Its basis was the negation of the role of the author in Foucault's philosophy. One even could suppose that Kristeva's deletion of Bakhtin's concept of personal responsibility rhymes with her possible covert work as Sabina for the Bulgarian secret service from the 1960s onwards (Kenarov 2018; Kristeva 2018). In her early works, Kristeva intended not only to construct a "sémanalyse et gnoseologie materialiste" ("materialist semanalysis and gnosis", Kristeva 1969, 191–198, 380) but also to found it (possibly influenced by the stochastics of the Russian mathematician Andrei Kolmogorov) in mathematics! This already reduced the role of the author, who in Bakhtin's thinking is determined by his extremely relevant intersubjectivity (Batishchev 1997, 129–130), to a minimum: "Instead of the notion of intersubjectivity, that of intertextuality is installed" (Kristeva 1969, 146). Thus in France, Bakhtin's texts were broadly used as instruments in the debate between poststructuralists and structuralists. These interventions resulted in the deletion of the concept of the subject that was so indispensable for Bakhtin and that in his case culminates in an intersubjective personalism (Kovács 2012). In the translation of Bakhtin's work on aesthetics produced by Reese and myself, we had to restore Husserlian terms such as 'intention' (*Einstellung*, *ustanovka*) and 'horizon' (Horizont, *gorizont*) to the German text, which the editor of the publishing house had eliminated and replaced with 'more pleasant' German expressions (Bakhtin 1979b).

What Bakhtin had seen as a quality of the perception of texts – "Every understanding is the [inter]connection of the given text with other texts" (Bakhtin

2002c, 423) – has been transformed by the deconstruction into a quality of its production: the discourse arises via its inter-correlation with other discourses. The author no longer has any function. It is the death of the author. Nevertheless, the negation of the notion of the text as a stable phenomenon was Bakhtin's strongest contribution first to French and then to international poststructuralism.

In 1967, Bakhtin had already been related to structuralism by the philosopher Nikola Miloshevich, who wrote the preface to the Serbian translation of Bakhtin's second book on Dostoevskii (Bahtin 1967, 8). Bakhtin's integration of the human person into a relationship with at least one other person in Russian contexts is often seen as rooted in the religious tradition of a sociality inalienable to every person (*sobornost'*) (cf. Esaulov 1997, who traces the path from Viacheslav Ivanov's *sobornost'* to Bakhtin's 'polyphony'), while in the West it is most often related to sociology and/or Marxism (Bernard-Donals 1994, Hirschkop 1999). Ulrich Schmid (2011) detected crypto-marxistic elements even in Bakhtin's early texts, but Sériot (2011) claimed that even Voloshinov's (and Bakhtin's) *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* is not a Marxist book. Carol Adlam and David Shepherd (2000) have compared the different reception of Bakhtin's work in Russian and the West and Danuta Ulicka (2006) has shown how in American academic circles Bakhtin's works have been used as an argument for both a textual (poststructuralist) and the opposite contextual (deconstructivist) concept of culture. When Kulikov (2012, 186) recently stressed the relevance of value in Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope' for political discussions, he completely disregarded Bakhtin's skeptical attitude towards the then current notion of the text. Gogotoshvili (1992) had long since discussed the problem of relativism in Bakhtin's model of value from a much broader perspective.

There are evident obstacles that make adequate reception of an element of another culture very difficult or even impossible. One of them is reflected in Bakhtin's thesis of the untranslatability of texts due to their special situational context. Because of the deformations of Bakhtin's concepts in the West, Larissa Polouboiarinova even stated there was "almost a non-reception" (Polouboiarinova 2000, 385) of Bakhtin's thinking (excluding from this negative assessment Lehmann [1977] and Grübel [1979]). We have already encountered one of the reasons for this difficulty in the case of the delayed Italian translation of the Dostoevskii book. This problem is caused on the one hand by Bakhtin's specific tendency to use metaphorical, sometimes almost poetical expressions, as for instance in his counter-reflexive word combinations *sobytiie bytiia* and *bytie sobytiia*, which cannot adequately be translated as 'the event of being' and 'the being of the event' (cf. Shchitcova 2002, 40–49, 153–156; Grübel 2005). In other cases, too, in translations of Bakhtin's writing into languages that use articles, such as Danish, Dutch, English, German or Swedish, we encounter the problem of having to decide to

choose in the target-language a syntagma either with definite or indefinite articles or even without any article at all (cf. Denishenko and Spektor 2017, 149). For instance, “Metalingvistika i filosofii slova” (Bakhtin 2002c, 371) can be translated as “Metalinguistics and philosophy of the word” or “The metalinguistic and the philosophy of the word”, or “A metalinguistics and the/a philosophy of the word”, giving three very different philosophical senses to Bakhtin’s idea.

Problems of the translation of Bakhtin’s texts into Western languages are also related to one of his most fundamental terms, the word (*slovo*), which he uses very often. In his most elaborate linguistic work, the draft of the book *Problema rechevykh zhanrov* (*Speech genres*, Bakhtin 1996d, 1996e), he distinguishes between the word as an abstract linguistic item that we find for instance in a dictionary from the word in its specific usage (‘my’ word and the word of the ‘other’). The second he defines as the “abbreviation of an utterance” (Bakhtin 1996d, 192). It has been noted by Sadeckij (1997, 19) as *mot* and *parole* in Daria Oliver’s translation of “The aesthetics of the verbal creation” (“Ésthetique et théorie du roman”, Bakhtin 1978) and as *mot*, *terme*, *parole*, *vocabulaire* in the French translation of the Rabelais book (Bakhtin 1970). The transformation of a notion (not a term!) into a different concept becomes obvious when we recall the representation of Bakhtin’s title “The ‘word’ in the novel” (“Slovo v romane”) as “‘Discourse’ in the novel” in the American translation (Bakhtin 1981, 258, my emphasis). Here we should keep in mind the difference between the homonyms discourse 1 – the logical-linguistic unfolding of a perception – and discourse 2 – a socially regimented utterance. Avtonomova (2008, 379) has shown the complementary problems with the reverse translation of Foucault’s lemma “discourse” into Russian.

As Danuta Ulicka (2009) stressed, Todorov retained Bakhtin’s conceptual difference between *raznorechie* (different speech-acts) and *raznoiazychie* (different languages), whereas it has been abandoned in the English translation and replaced by the misleading single term heteroglossy. Other neologisms of Bakhtin’s presenting difficulties for translations are *odnoaktsentnost’* (being defined by only one accent, one vision of the world), *vnenakhodimost’* (outsidedness/exotopy), *inoiazychie* (being situated in another language) and *raznomirnost’* (differing in terms of the world in which something/someone is situated). Considering the Russian situation with regard to the philosophical terminology, Makhlin (2004, 63) has stressed that even in its homeland Bakhtin’s work has to be translated – from a Soviet context into a post-Soviet one. At the same time, he expresses his doubt as whether such a translation is at all possible (Makhlin 2004, 54). And once more we must recall Bakhtin’s skeptical view of all conceptualisation as translation: “I translate into the language of an abstract worldview that which was the subject of concrete and vivid vision and became the principle of form. Such a translation is always inadequate.” (Bakhtin 1996g, 345)

5 Bakhtin reception as a historical process

In the study of the international reception of Bakhtin's theories, it is elucidating to trace the temporal sequence of translations appearing in different languages, for instance that of the (second) Dostoevskii book (cf. Adlam and Shepherd 2000, 32): the first foreign editions appeared in (Serbian) Yugoslavia in 1967 (new editions in 1997 and 2019), followed by translations in Italy and Japan in 1968, (in part) in (West) Germany in 1969, in France, Poland, Romania and Switzerland (here in French) in 1970, and in Czechoslovakia and (this time as a complete version) in (West) Germany in 1971. In 1973, the first English translation, by R. William Rotsel, appeared in the USA (Bakhtin 1973), followed by editions in Bulgaria, Hungary and Portugal in 1976 and Brazil in 1981. In 1984, a new English translation (Bakhtin 1984; by Caryl Emerson) was published in the USA, and in 1986 the first Spanish version appeared in Mexico. Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish editions were published in 1991. As late as in 2007, there appeared a Slovenian translation in Ljubljana, while a Croatian edition was not published until 2020, in Zadar (Bakhtin 2020).

For publishing houses it is, of course, a relevant argument on the part of an editor and/or translator that a book has already been transferred (with success) into (an)other language(s). While a Turkish translation was published in Istanbul in 2004, we have no information about a Chinese translation, or one in India or Africa, whereas an eight-volume Bakhtin edition has been published in Japan, perhaps because a certain congruence has been recognized between Bakhtin and Nishida Kitarō, the founder of modern Japanese philosophy (Botz-Bornstein, 2004). In East Germany, no translation was published of either the Dostoevskii or the Rabelais book. Hence neither was available for the average East German reader until the end of the GDR.

The history of Bakhtin reception also knows isolated *unica* without evident consequences. For instance, as early as 1937, a Serbian translation of Voloshinov's (Bakhtin's?) book on Freud's psychoanalysis by Vladimir Fabijančić (Voloshinov 1937; Adlam and Shepherd 2000, 18, indicate the wrong date of 1939) appeared in Belgrade. There seems to have been neither a review nor any other testimony to its reception.

In the intriguing framework of an 'alternative history', we can bear in mind even the potential translation of Bakhtin's first book on Rabelais into French as early as the late 1940s. At least, Louis Aragon, who was married to Elsa Triolet, the sister of Maiakovskii's lover Lili Brik, seems to have transported the manuscript from Moscow to Paris in 1946 (Popova 2008a, 9; 2008b, 900–902; 2010, 633). The entire Bakhtin reception would have surely taken a different turn if his book on carnival had been published in Paris then instead of in 1970.

Of much interest for the question of intermingling cultures is the role of migrating scholars such as, for instance, Jakobson and Matějka (to the USA), Todorov and Kristeva (to France), and Smirnov and Groys (to Germany). One of the first cases of migration relevant in this context is, however, that of the Polish classical philologist Stanisław Srebrny (1890–1962), who studied in St. Petersburg, where he was in contact with Bakhtin and took his concepts (developed as a scholar of T. Zieliński) from Petrograd to Lublin as early as 1918 and later to Toruń. He was the classical counterpart to Bakhtin's philosophical friend Matvei Kagan, who transported the ideas of Cohen's neo-Kantianism from West to East.

Another aspect is the appearance of 'secondary' translations, such as the Portuguese version of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Bakhtin 1979c), which appeared in São Paulo and was a translation from the French (Bakhtine 1977; cf. Brait and Pistori 2020). Of course, the problems are compounded in secondary translations. Another relevant phenomenon is the fact that languages are not restricted to countries and even not to continents. For instance, French publications from Paris or Lausanne were also broadly read in francophone Canada (and vice versa) and Portuguese publications in Brazil (and vice versa), and the Spanish Bakhtin publications from Madrid also reached the Spanish-speaking public in both Americas (and vice versa). Anglo-American editions of Bakhtin texts were widely read in the English-speaking communities in Europe and on other continents. An interesting Anglo-American point of view on translation is expressed by Emerson (2017).

A further aspect deserving attention is the ideological horizon of the recipients. From the 1960s to the 1980s, in socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, Bakhtin was often seen as an alternative to the official, philosophically repressive materialism. In August 1968, at the Sixth International Congress of Slavists, the name Bakhtin was associated with the slogan of 'socialism with a human face'; in that very year, Iurii Lotman curated an anthology including work by Bakhtin and the Russian formalists. In Poland too, the early readers of Bakhtin saw in him an ally against the dogmas of Socialist Realism. Irina Wutsdorff (2006) has reconstructed the principal openness of the aesthetic work as the main congruence of Bakhtin's aesthetics with Prague structuralism, the main difference being the personal subjectivism of the former and the impersonal objectivism of the latter. As late as 1992, Emil Volek edited in Madrid an anthology with works by the Russian formalists and the Bakhtin group. In Yugoslavia, the early reception of Bakhtin was significantly limited to Serbia, if we consider the translations' places of the publication. It is only recently that Croatian translations of Bakhtin's work have started to appear (Bakhtin 2019).

In German cultures there was an obvious difference between the reception of Bakhtin in the socialist GDR and in the ideologically more diverse West. While in

East Berlin and in Jena literary critics were interested in Bakhtin's historical model of narrative genres (particularly the novel) in order to modernize the theory of genre evolution and the book translations thus concentrated on the corresponding texts (Bakhtin 1986a), the interest in Austria, West Germany, and Switzerland was much broader and also involved Bakhtin's ethical and aesthetic-philosophical (Grübel 1979, Freise 1993, Haardt 2009), theoretical (Hansen-Löve 1972, 1978), general culture (Lachmann 1995) and rhetorical (Lachmann 1999) concepts. In the French context, the philosophical quality of Bakhtin's work was taken up by Emmanuel Lévinas (Lévinas 1991, Haardt 2007, 2011) and Maryse Dennes (1997).

In the West, Bakhtin's investigations of the history of the novel, which paved the way from the early monograph on Dostoevskii to the first version of the Rabelais book, and which presented the novel as the genre of the future, in opposition to the epos and the tragedy, have repeatedly been read as an riposte to Lukács theory of the novel (Tihanov 2000). First Russian and later Western critics compensated for this all too narrow a perspective with the reconstruction of the Russian view of the novel, for instance that held by Gustav Špet, who was much more important for Bakhtin (2012a, 21, 27). Bakhtin (2012b, 584–585) saw Lukács as a consistent follower of Hegel: “Hegel today” (“Gegel’ segodnja”; Bocharov and Kozhinov 2012, 809). This becomes evident above all in the different views held by Lukács (1938, 320–321) and Bakhtin (2012c, 324; 2012b 557; Bocharov and Kozhinov 2012, 811–812) on James Joyce. Of great relevance for narratology are Bakhtin's ideas about the relationship between the creating ‘primary’ (*pervichnyi*) author and the created ‘secondary’ author in prose (Gölz [Göl’c] 2011, Dzhun 2020) and his concept of the cultural integration of time and space in different chronotopes.

While Peter Zima (born 1947 in Prague, but studying and working in the West, first in Germany, then in the Netherlands, and finally in Austria) reads Bakhtin as a continuation of Young Hegelianism, he later stressed his semiotic relevance and the dialogical aspect of the subject in Bakhtin's writing and proposed a dialogical theory of the subject (Zima 2000, 2020 [1991]). We (Grübel 1979) initially also traced Bakhtin's relevance for semiotic research and regarded his thought as emanating in neo-Kantianism and highlighted the aspect of value in his philosophic work and his literary criticism. Hans Günther (1981) and Renate Lachmann (1990) underscored Bakhtin's position as a counterpoint to Stalinism (as Carina Pape did again in 2015), while the philosopher und art historian Boris Groys (1989, 1997), born in Berlin in 1947, but educated in Moscow and later living in Germany and the USA, read Bakhtin's Rabelais book in a provocative manner as a legitimization of Stalin's terror. The same reading was offered five years later by Vladimir Linetskii (1994), who considered the concept of dialogism itself to be monologic. From the perspective of the philosophy of culture, Igor' Smirnov (1996) accepted Bakhtin's phenomenological analyses of carnival, but reverted its possibility of a concept

of rebirth, of the regeneration of 'sense' (*smysl*). For Smirnov, carnival "generates the ungeneratable" (Smirnov 1996, 128–129). In opposition to this skepticism, Nikiforov (2006) finds in Bakhtin (as also in Husserl and Rickert) the rebirth of philosophy itself.

For forty years, reconstructions of Bakhtin's philosophy have been carried out from very different starting points. On the one hand, Grübel (1979, 1988, 2001) and recently Faraco (2017) have pointed out axiology (ethics, aesthetics, etc.) as a main field of interest in Bakhtin's philosophy. On the other hand, Glück (1976) and later Friedrich (1993), Brandist (2000) and many American scholars (Hirschkop 1999; cf. also Ken Hirschkop's chapter on "The (Re)discovery of Bakhtin in Anglophone Criticism" in this volume) have tried to study Bakhtin and/or Medvedev and/or Voloshinov and Vygotskij on a materialistic basic with respect to the relationship between meaning and form. Recently, a further aspect has once again been exposed, this time systematically, by Tatiana Shchitcova (2002): the relevance of the 'event' (*sobytie*). Later, Carina Pape (2016) reinvestigated Bakhtin's relationship with phenomenology and recently Vera Sandomirskaia (2017) established the 'disaster' of Blanchot as the core changing point in Bakhtin's concept, which she also sees in accordance with the formalists' concept of estrangement.

Bakhtin's relationship with semiotics has been traced most intensively in Italy. Umberto Eco (1980) wrote a positive review on the translation of the Rabelais book, and used the concept of carnival in his novel *Il nome della rosa* (1980, *In the Name of the Rose*). Here, William of Baskerville (Guglielmo da Baskerville) represents Mikhail Bakhtin in his dialogue with Jorge of Burgos (Jorge da Burgos alias Jorge Luis Borges). Later, Eco was convinced that humor plays a much more positive role in culture generally than in carnival, because of its temporal limitation in the year. More direct intertextual contact, in this case also in the field of cultural semiotics, can be observed in the case of the philosopher of language and semiotician Augusto Ponzio (1977, 1980, 1992). With reference to Bakhtin, he considers signs as cultural elements between the mode of production and ideology.

Primarily, the agreement about the Italian translation of the second Dostoevskii book, which was possible due to the help of the Italian Communist Party and Georgii Breiburd, the leader of the Italian section of the foreign department in the Soviet writers' organization, seems to have prompted Bakhtin's revision of the early version. Without the stimulus of the anticipated Italian translation, the second version probably would not have been published so quickly in Moscow. A translation as an element of the dialogue of cultures stimulated the immediate publication of a work of Bakhtin's once again when his fundamental essay "Épos i roman" ("Epos and novel") appeared in East Berlin (Bakhtin 1969) a year earlier than the original in Moscow (Bakhtin 1970). Edward Kowalski (2008, 353) has documented the conspiratorial conditions of the typescripts traveling from Moscow

to East Berlin. Thus the manuscripts' journey manifested the possibility that a phenomenon in the receiving culture can inspire the donor culture to make this item of the original culture available to its own members too.

This observation can serve as a microcosm of what happened with Bakhtin in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian culture after his most intensive reception in Western Europe and America in the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called 'Bakhtin industry' (cf. Morson 1986, 86). One of its manifestations has been the long string of biannual International Bakhtin Conferences since 1983, only two (!) of which have been held in Russia: 1. 1983 Kingston (Canada), 2. 1985 Cagliari, 3. 1987 Jerusalem, 4. 1989 Urbino, 5. 1991 Manchester, 6. 1993 Mexico, 7. 1995 Moscow, 8. 1997 Calgary, 9. 1999 Berlin, 10. 2001 Gdansk, 11. 2003 Curitiba, 12. 2005 Jyväskylä (Finland), 13. 2008 London (Canada), 14. 2011 Bologna, 15. 2014 Stockholm, 16. 2017 Shanghai, 17. 2021 Saransk, 18. 2021 Sheffield. There have also been ten International Conferences on the 'Dialogical Self', less focused on Bakhtin but also held biannually and staggered with the International Bakhtin Conferences since 2000. The peak of the Bakhtin cult was marked in October 1994 by the foundation of the Bakhtin Center in Sheffield by David Shepard, who edited the journal *Dialogism: An International Journal of Bakhtin Studies* from 1998 to 2001. Later, the Center became more interested in the Bakhtin circle (Brandist 2002; cf. also Craig Brandist's chapter on Bakhtin circles in this volume), as did some Russian colleagues (cf. Korovashko and Vasil'ev 2015). The hiatus in the Bakhtin conferences between 2008 and 2011 seems to have been caused by the scandalous book on Bakhtin by Bronckart and Bota, *Bakhtin Unmasked. The Story of a Liar, a Fraud and a Collective Delusion*, which appeared in Geneva in 2011. Its premise is the unsolved (and possibly unsolvable) riddle of the authorship of a dozen publications (1926–1931), which some ascribe to Bakhtin, others to his friends Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov, and many – to all the three. In vivid contrast to Bakhtin's philosophical appeal to an ethical habitus, the Russian journalist Anna Kudinova (2013) insinuated that he had close contacts with the Russian secret service (NKVD, MGB, KGB), on the basis that as someone banned for political reasons for fifteen years, he not only survived the Great Terror of 1937 but even became the dean of his faculty at the Mordovian Pedagogical Institute and deputy dean at the University in Saransk, which, incidentally, opened a Bakhtin Center in 2015.

There has been much speculation and fierce discussion about the authorship of three books and a dozen articles which appeared in the years 1926–1930 under the names of Bakhtin's close friends Medvedev and Voloshinov. Their main (philosophical) content most likely derives from Bakhtin, as publication under the ever stronger Stalinist control of Soviet culture became more and more difficult and Bakhtin had no place of work and was short of money. A valuable testi-

mony to this version is the letter from 14 March 1978, written by the geologist and paleontologist Nina Arkad'evna Voloshinova (1901–1994, the first wife of Voloshinov; quoted by Radovan Matijašević (1980, 14; my translation): “Both books [...] really come from the pen of M.M. Bakhtin; so too the book you have translated [...] [i. e. *Marxism and the philosophy of language*]. As well as the book on Freudianism.”). However, the linguist Vladimir Alpatov (2005) is convinced that the book on Marxism and the philosophy of language belongs more to the nominal author than to Bakhtin. The Russian critic and Bakhtin researcher Natan Tamarchenko (2008) provides good reasons for the assumption that the main ideas in Medvedev's first book on formalism are Bakhtin's. The most adequate discussion of the problem of the Bakhtin circle hitherto has been provided in French by Bénédicte Vauthier (2007; however, she overlooks the philosopher Kagan, the most important influence on Bakhtin in the early 1920s) and in Russian by Nikolaj Vasil'ev (2013). It is possible that this debate will never be decided because there do not seem to be any manuscripts that could prove one of the three assumptions. And perhaps this result corresponds best not only with the dialogic situation in the Bakhtin circle but also with Bakhtin's concept of authorship as answer-ship instead of owner-ship.

6 Bakhtin's concept of the unfinished consciousness, *gaya scienza* and some perspectives on future research

Bakhtin's philosophy of literature is grounded in the conceptualization of its dialogicity, which in his view cannot be brought to an end. In his notes, he wrote explicitly of the “inconclusivity/unfinalizability of the dialogue” (“nezavarshimost' dialoga”; Bakhtin 1996e, 280; my translation; cf. Lipovetskii and Sandomirskaia 2012). As Hegel's view on history, and also on the history of culture and with it that of literature, culminates in a teleological celebration of the end, all the attempts to reconstruct a Hegelian line in Bakhtin's way of thinking the open-endedness of culture (cf. Brandist 1999, 12) are dubious. Bakhtin referred explicitly and repeatedly to Hegel's *Philosophy of the Spirit* (1807, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*) as “monologism” (Bakhtin 2002c, 424). In his philosophy, the openness of the dialogue corresponds with the “inconclusivity/unfinalizability of the human being” (Bocharov and Gogotishvili 1996, 465), the “inconclusivity/unfinalizability of the hero” (Bakhtin 1996b; 1996c, 66) in the novels of Dostoevskii and the basic inconclusivity/unfinalizability of consciousness

(“inward unfinalized consciousnesses”, Bakhtin 2002b, 199). This aspect could be compared to the discussion between Benjamin and Horkheimer about the infinity (*Unendlichkeit*) of history. In Bakhtin’s case, it is related to the concept of ‘great time’ (Makhlin 2015), in which nothing is forgotten and everything can return.

Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue rejects, with reference to Dostoevskii, “dialectical, philosophical completion” (Bakhtin 2002b, 40) and also presents an alternative to Habermas’s (ethical) philosophy of discourse (cf. Roberts 2012). The word with a “loophole” (*lazeika*; Bakhtin 2002b, 259) is the seemingly definite but in reality indisclosable sense of speaking, the “loophole addressee” (*lazeichnyi adresat*; Bakhtin 1996b, 37) – the guarantee of the fundamental openness of communication (cf. Sasse 2013). The dependence of Bakhtin’s dialogicity on Russian (and not only Russian) philosophy has been pointed out by Russian and Western Bakhtinologists (Ivanov 1976; Hirschkop 2002; Tamarchenko 2001, Schmid 2008). Koraev (2018, 19) has recently noted the replacement of religious transcendence with secular transgression as a feature of Bakhtin’s transformation of traditional religion.

Bakhtin’s positive predicate is the (utopian) idea of an everlasting becoming. This is at odds not only with Marxism but also with its source, Jewish and Christian religious entelechy, the end of all history in the return of the messiah. Hence the precise investigation of religious elements in Bakhtin’s philosophy (inspired by Joachim de Fiore and Franciscan theology, its praise of the inter-religious dialogue and its demand of nonviolence) is of importance (Turbin 1990, Coates 1998, Bagshaw 2013, Sasse 2007).

I (Grübel 2013) have proposed considering Bakhtin’s carnival as a secular ‘art of religion’ (‘Kunstreligion’). One of continental Europe’s most carnivalistic answers of to Bakhtin’s Rabelais book is “*Askonsdag*” (“Ash Wednesday”), the third act of Lars Kleberg’s Swedish drama *Stjärnfall* (1988, *Starfall*). Here, Eisenstein and Bakhtin are discussing the former’s plans to stage Wagner’s *Valkyrie* in Moscow in 1940, although the name of the composer features nowhere in Bakhtin’s work. Towards the end, the film director tells the philosopher about the dialogue, that he would like to make a movie with him as the main character, who falls to his knees at his wife’s grave and holds an endless monologue, both apologizing to her and attacking her, as prosecutor, accused, judge and witness in one person. Bakhtin replies that he would prefer to play Chapletto in Boccaccio’s *Decamerone*, who – he says – is at once a superman and a usurer.

At the end of her dense work on *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (1997), Caryl Emerson foresees the probable impact of the Bakhtinian thought on the fields of pedagogy, literature, and the meta-humanities. And indeed, there have been relevant investigations into the possibility of using Bakhtin’s philosophy of

literature and culture as a basis for a new, dialogical concept of *Bildung* (Bakhtin 2002b, 287–297; Miller 1984; Brandist 2016) and education, pedagogy (Osovskii and Fradkin 1994; Mudrik 2003; White 2011) and didactics (Sandomirskaia 2017). All this emphasis on teaching should not overlook Bakhtin's legacy of Nietzsche's *gaya scienza* (cf. my chapter on Carnival/Laughter in this volume). It is one of the components of Bakhtin's philosophy that will probably guarantee the endlessness of the dialogue with his thinking about the philosophy of literature and thus correspond to literature's main contribution to world culture.

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