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Mikhail Bakhtin

The Dialogical Principle

Tzvetan Todorov

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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

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 original 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

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 [*tektonicheskiju*], 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

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.

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).

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 preexists 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 echronotopes, 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, *raznorečie*, which I translate (literally, but with the aid of a Greek root) by *heterology*, a term that inserts itself between two other parallel coinages, *raznojazyčie*, 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 word, 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 kolkhoz, 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 centripetal 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

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 heteroglottic 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 social 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).

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 unicity and Romantic infinity, Bakhtin looks for a middle way: the way of typology.