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Bakhtin between the Personalist Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Novel¹

**(on: Wyman, A. *The Gift of Active Empathy: Scheler, Bakhtin, and Dostoevsky.*
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Abstract: This article considers the role Bakhtin's philosophical interpretation of novel plays in contemporary Bakhtin studies. The main discourse of this article comments the recent research by Prof. Alina Wyman (New College of Florida) who considers the concept of active empathy - a multi-faceted term deduced by her from the dialogue between personalism in Sheler and early Bakhtin, on the one hand, and Dostoevsky's spiritual motives, on the other hand. Although this kind of approach refines the intertextual analysis and additionally establishes Bakhtin's theories as a new methodological attitude uniting philosophy with literary criticism, it also deals with the problem of relations with the whole intertextual tradition used by Bakhtin and inspired by him. This article considers the attitudes and restrictions this conceptions acquires in contemporary Bakhtin studies - in particular, considering Bakhtin's interpretation of the novel as peculiarly linked with the philosophy of language and the philosophy of time. As a result, this article proves an impossibility to unite Bakhtin's interest to the novel as a peculiar form of reflection with the motives of personalist philosophy appearing in his legacy - especially because of such crucial points of his theories, contributed essentially to Bakhtin's place in contemporary humanities, as analysis of Dostoevsky's literary style and of the relations between author and character within the novel as a peculiar type of speech and self-reflectivity.

Key words: dialogism, novel, author, Bakhtin, Dostoevsky

Alina Wyman's recent book undoubtedly embodies a lot of hopes the project of intertextual literary criticism in its broad sense was endowed with. Her analysis of Dostoevsky's writings becomes enriched by her expertise in theories of dialogism by Bakhtin and Sheller. Wyman, however, does not leave this enrichment unilateral: it appears plurivocal because of the influence which Dostoevsky's writings themselves have on these theories in the whole complex of Wyman's analysis. This attitude, of course, ruins a linear logic of expounding: although Wyman starts her analysis with a peculiar concept, the "active empathy" which turns out to be the third termin uniting Sheller's idea of Christian love and

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Dostoevsky's idea of textual "vzhivanie" (Einfühlung - a German synonym used by Bakhtin), this concept reveals its sense utmostly only at the end of the book, after different characters and plot fragments by Dostoevsky was considered through this "active empathy's" prism (yet still incomplete). Consequently, Wyman's book impressively realized such a dialogism which is rhymed and looped on the structure of research dedicated to it.

The risks of this approach are connected with the limits of intertextual senses which it is possible to seize in the framework of single analysis. This is the reason why such an approach becomes both impressive and vulnerable before criticism. In particular, it is unobvious for what reasons Bakhtin's "vzhivanie", or active empathy should be returned to the contemporary dialogue with Dostoevsky via mediation by Sheller's philosophy. The author explains it through the prism of Bakhtin's early works, such as "vzhivanie" (empathy in Wyman's translation) and "stanovlenie" (becoming):

Dostoevsky's fictional world provides many intriguing case studies that could be productively illuminated through the lens of the Schelerian-Bakhtinian theory of intersubjectivity. The relevance of these phenomenological reflections to Dostoevsky's ethical concerns, only partly explained by the authors' common philosophical heritage, is due to the personalist agenda shared by all three thinkers and to the crucial importance of the Christological ideal in their respective models of the world. [...] A Dostoevskian character is deeply and often painfully aware of the profound divide between himself and others, lamenting that unavoidable asymmetry between individual experiences that makes complete self-revelation to the other impossible (Wyman 2016, p. 64).

Although this attitude is innerly coherent, it includes also a kind of conceptual dead-end for intertextuality realized by the book. In other words, it encloses Bakhtin's references to Dostoevsky with a certain philosophical metaphor. This author's choice becomes a kind of contextual violation, because Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky was written essentially later, at the end of 1920s. However, it is not a historical and contextual approach which is at the stake here, but the role of history and contextualism for Bakhtin's dialogical principle. This approach means additional risks on the domain of interpretation because it leads to the thesis on the anti-objectivation as the crux of Bakhtin's theory. For instance, if Wyman points at Bakhtin's scepticism towards Marxist and Freudist explanative models and consequently develops the thesis of Bakhtin's heiring phenomenological personalism, the same contradictions between Bakhtin's and Freud's treating the question of the Other are considered by Tsvetan Todorov, who explained Bakhtin's disinterest in Freud with his concentration on the history-based interpretational shifts which were rhymed by him with the everlasting process of misunderstanding and dealing with the difference appearing from the gap between sense in the statement and perceived sense (Todorov 1984, p. 72). Bereaving

Bakhtin from structuralist “technicism” for the sake of his putative reconsidering idealism is also a controversial point because of the well-known Bakhtin's engagements (including those mediated by such his collaborators as M. Kagan) with a broad circle of theoretical approaches connected with positivism, including those in sociology, psychology, and even natural sciences.

What seems to be of the most importance here is that Bakhtin's dialogue with Dostoevsky, while being interpreted through the prism of the empathy question, lacks its connection with the history of ideas - in other words, with the optics crucially changing the terms Bakhtin's theory of literature is interpreted with. Interpreting Bakhtin through the lenses of personalist phenomenology and its own intertextual tradition (including Dostoevsky's texts as a common referent for different philosophers) is a reasonable and stems from the common logic of considering Bakhtin's complicated intellectual trajectory in comparison with other directions and schools he reflected or was influenced by. This comparison appears as devoid of dynamics - whereas this dynamical dimension of apparition or event is one of the crucial elements for those post-Bergsonian philosophies and theories which Bakhtin himself shares.

However, it is probably impossible to convincingly distinguished some certain part of these broad intellectual contacts in order to acclaim it the key point for explain the whole corpus of Bakhtin's work. For instance, in his interview given to Duvakin in the mid of 1970s, Bakhtin emphasised the importance for his theoretical worldview of so different authors, as Kierkegaard, Cohen and Cassirer - and these authors are anyway became an addition to Bakhtin's own work with literary analysis, which is far from philosophical discourse in its own.

Trying to find a coherence of these logics, some authors consider Bakhtin as replacing personalist phenomenology with a kind of historical phenomenology (Brandist) (Poole 2004). This approach allows to unite Bakhtin's different topics as a philosophy of time. Temporality becomes in this case united on the historical level and on the level of personal development and interaction. Consequently, the dialogical principle by Bakhtin turns out to be a kind of post-Bergsonian reflection on dynamics posed at an ontological crux of any object and apparition. In this case the concept of intertextuality (related to history and historical sociology, expressed last but not least in peculiarities of literary style and in its connections with the worldview) coexists with the context of dialogism (related to social and psychological aspects of the connection between self-awareness and relations with the Other, where all this aspects are some transformations and its' reflection as a reflection of time). This could be illustrated, for instance, by Bakhtin's sociological explanation of Dostoevsky's polyphony. Bakhtin characterises Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel with the term "sociological

document" which peculiarity consists in seizing an "exceptionally acute feeling [oschuschenie] of another person" as a sociological phenomenon.

Yet understood by Bakhtin in the terms similar with personalism (for instance, in constation that any mediating social institutes and authoritative hierarchies loose its' importance), this phenomenon is linked by Bakhtin not with a spiritual experience, but with possibilities of social transformations based on a "micro-sociological" level of dialogical unity - where social transformation are following from changing of personal interaction, in such a way when a subject of this interaction reduces his or her brinks with another one (Bakhtin 2000, p. 173-174). Or, in case of Bakhtin's work on Rabelais, the temporal dimension turns out to be reacted in a single element of dynamics - namely, a temporal moment when the birth and the death are united in a single principle of rhetorical decline to the obscene. "Prohibited" themes appear here as the themes of life's renewal, where some lives come to its' ends, whereas some another lives - to its' births. As a result, the carnival deduced by Bakhtin from Rabelais, turns out to be a specific philosophy of history where the Renaissance cosmogonical sense of the "low" themes (compared bt Bakhtin with Cassirer's theories of the Renaissance worldview) rhymed with Bakhtin's contemporaneity which included wars, revolutions and violent extinction of the modernist culture, so that this carnal devouring became turning into a worldview by being truthful and avoid being hypocritical by evading the "prohibited themes".

It corresponds with another approach to Bakhtin - namely. to consideration of his works through the question of temporality. In this vein Bakhtin's approach to Dostoevsky as a crucial author sometimes compared with those authors (such as Viktor Shklovsky and Lydia Gynzbourg) whose interpretation of history were concentrated around Tolstoy whose realism turn history into a peculiar and, in fact, central character in the novel. Consequently, Tolstoy's monologism is appreciated as a kind of theoretical choice where the artfullness of fiction is deduced not to the multiplicity of voices, but to a phenomenological view on the entity observable in the presenting time and space (Morson 1991). However, Bakhtin's approach is remarkable in this context because he emplasises another dimension of temporality via considering Dostoevsky's dialogism. In Wyman's optics this temporality acquires spiritual or sublime traits where dialogial disappearance of personal borders overpass principles of linear temporality. It is considered by Wyman as being realized through the different implication of "Christian love", diferctly mantioned by Dostoevsky's characters and migrating into theoretical principles by Sheler and Bakhtin deducing their questions of empathy from it. However, it is important that Wyman does not concentrate on "The Problems of Doestoevsky's Poetics" by Bakhtin, only on his "Toward a Philosophy of the Act" and "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity". Dedicated to relationships between author and character in the novel, these texts do not concentrate on Dostovesky, although it

pays some attention to a comparison between spiritual experience resisting to the subject's condition of aloofness and loneliness, and the situation of aesthetic unity realized in the novel.

It is a remarkable trait of Wyman's attitude that she uses a "polyphony" as her own research tool and applies it to Bakhtin's works first and the text influenced by Bakhtin's interpretation in our contemporary perception (such as Dostoevsky). This strategy is undoubtedly risky, because starting a deconstruction of the intertextual "chain", it's worth to remember it's proportions and all the multiplicity of references united by this chain. Instead of it, this chain will be torn and reduced to some certain point - unescapably outer for the work of Bakhtin's own logic of intertextuality.

Wyman's approach to Bakhtin then paradoxically becomes paradoxically perceived as a complicated form of intellectual history concentrated on contextualizing Bakhtin - in particular, on placing his early understanding of dialogism through the prism of German phenomenological personalism contemporary to him. But this point omits a peculiar conceptual language by Bakhtin - namely, his concentration on literary analysis instead of using conventional philosophical implements. The early works by Bakhtin expressed it in the most impressive way because all the arguments are taken from the writing and reading experience. This aspect breaks a bridge between Bakhtin-Scheler dialogism instead of the unity of the subject - and Bakhtin's references from Dostoevsky which should in its turn provide the linkage with Scheler's emphasising of "the Christian love" concepts in his novels. Consequently, Bakhtin in fact disappears from this scheme. But it is Bakhtin who justifies the very idea of "dialogization" and "intertextualization", realized by the Wyman research.

Wyman notions this by describing the following difference between Bakhtin's and Scheler's concepts of empathy in its comparison with love:

The divergence between Bakhtin's and Scheler's views on value-realization stems from the differences in the philosophers' concepts of the ontological gulf. If Scheler posits the discrepancy in value between all individual persons, independently of the I/other division, Bakhtin proclaims the radical difference between my self-value and my valuation of others. [...] For that reason the bestowal of value is precisely that, a bestowal, an unsolicited yet precious gift from the privileged other in Bakhtin's architectonic (Wyman 2016, p. 30).

It seems to be important to concentrate on this comparison, aiming at acuting this difference. In fact, Bakhtin's concentration on the self diminishes the very possibility to consider his conceptions through the "love to the Other" as a central category. Such a centralization would omit the question of *where* does these dialogical relationships place themselves. Bakhtin's work with author and hero allows to initiate a question of in what grade

the subject's self-reflection is possible only through thinking her- or himself as the Other (for instance, in creating the hero from the position of the author).

This way of interpretation seems to be prominent after an apparent crisis in interpretations of Bakhtin in humanities. In particular, the principle described just above becomes frequently reflected in gender studies and queer studies. For instance, Jeffrey Nealon notices that Bakhtin's "voice" is so remarkable as a concept because it is not linked essentially to some point of view. Rather, a person should find it's own voice and hear the other's voice into their common social context. Because of this fact, dialogism becomes literally ethical, because it marks this social context as not based on struggle and domination (Nealon 1997, p. 130). However, it is important to continue these observations to pose Bakhtin's Other *into* a single character, practice, position, or identity. In this case, Bakhtin's terms would be working as "indication" of the techniques and rhetorical grades between subject's finding some traits of "Otherness" in within her or his position or identity - and this subject's losing of this Otherness in a strict categorization of "the Other". In this way, Nealon compares Bakhtin's dialogue as a way to problematize identity with Adorno's criticism towards the unproblematized identity in "the dialectics of Enlightenment" - and remarkably considers Bakhtin's "I" with Odysseus who passed through different adventures, who "completed" himself but at the same time preserved himself from being "completed", so that only this "completing" reveals to Odysseus his own incompleteness (Ibid, p. 138). So that, it is important that Bakhtin's "I" revelation towards the "Other" concentrates on a certain kind of experience: measuring the borders of outer expression - including such it's example as an entity of novel or other fiction - from the view of the gap left between this expression and the inner experience.

But does it mean that Bakhtin's conception could hardly be interpreted in the social vein? It seems that it is important to reflect Bakhtin's understanding of sociality as linked with a certain and paradoxical way of communication: a literary fiction, and especially novel where it is difficult to find the aethetical completion (in comparison with a poem, for instance). And here lays the difficulty with Wyman's statement about "an implicit connection between the author's intuition of the hero's essential unity and any act of real life "authoring" or consummation, which allows a loving person to perceive the individualizing unity of the beloved (Wyman 2016, p. 44). The accents in Bakhtin's project of the novel as a peculiar form to express the "I" with the "Other" as the limits of sayable and understandable. In fact, Bakhtin's work with novel turns the latter into a peculiar kind of space where the process of reflecting or guessing becomes placed and visualized - underscored by the very composition of the novel, as it's main intellectual surplus gaining by telling words. To transform this question into the question of love or empathy means to shift those accents which are crucial for Bakhtin's phenomenalization of the novel speech. We could compare this optics with a recent work by Jean Rancière (Rancière 2023) on the landscape which are also understood by such an

artificially created space which concentrate the time-consuming, dedicated to it, at imagining the situation of vision without technical restrictions of optics and space-orientation. In case of Bakhtin's novel the same sense acquires the union of inner and outer between persons speaking and acting together.

Bakhtin's intention to affirm this peculiar space into the novel consisting from. The role of love and empathy for Bakhtin succeeds actually from the experience seized by the novel text - the experience conditioned by the novel's being a peculiar spatial and temporal *locus*. This locus concentrate all our attention on the rhythm in which our wishes, thinking and positions could only be expressed and felt. Consequently, the novel as aesthetic experience means, as the first, an appearance of character- as a *somewhat* ("nechto") identical with itself, as a certain reality which is affirmed lovely in the novel (Bakhtin, p. 58), and secondly - the emphatical feeling caused by juxtaposing this affirmation with the rhythmical factor in our lives - such factor which terminates our live and consequently our ability to experience and express empathy and love (Ibid, p. 60). As a result, the novel becomes a form for repositioning the roles and relationships which appear as usual in the real life interactions and interlocutions. Speaking about the contemporary context of Bakhtin studies, it seems prominent to concentrate on such interdisciplinary value of Bakhtin's theories which could compare the experience given by the author and hero relationships in the novel with the experience of interaction. Bakhtin shows the novel as a form overriding the gap between inner and outer, which is applicable most accurately not to the difference between "the I" and "the Other", but between inner and outer by the subject, such as appearance and self-awareness, realized conducts and unpredictability of the new actions and reactions of the present day.

As first, it outlines the perspective of considering Bakhtin in the context of semiotics which receped his ideas in the late Soviet humanities. Whereas there are special works comparing Bakhtin's understanding of the sign with the same of Lotman and Pierce (Reid 2016), it is possible to pose a wider question on impossibility to separate Bakhtin's dialogism and polyphony from the common Saussurean roots they have with the philosophy of language. Secondly, if Julia Kristeva's influent interpretation of Bakhtin prepared the ground for developing Bakhtin's ideas in the broad domain of Cultural studies, these ideas have to lose those important parts which contribute to its' acuity and inner tension. Bakhtin's way of posing question could unite this early structuralist attitude of the surplus between sign and it's interpretations with, for instance, Lotman's occupation with the problem of uncertainty (in interpreting ot in translation) which becomes a genuine locus for seeking answers and expressing inner contradictions. Referring back to Wyman's book, it is remarkable that some places of her discourse on Dostoevsky considered thought the prism of active empathy touch this optics and elaborates the theses common with the philosophy of language. Although it is formulated in the terms unconventional for this philosophy, this kind of formulation suggests

some development and renewal for the philosophical view on communicative situations where it is senseless and impossible for its' participants to lead their conversation in accordance with logical principles or to persuade their interlocutors in accordance with their goals and convictions. Using an example from "The Brothers Karamazov" Wyman demonstrate this idea of the sense's dependence from the conversation - because it is very the conversation which makes this sense required because of the whole situation's ethical and logical deadlock (and these are Dostoevsky's novels which outlined this phenomenon extremely poignant and detailed):

Having thus usurped her judgment, he has disarmed his naive interlocutor by using her potential weapon against himself. A similar reactive strategy of using "words with a sideward glance" followed by "loopholes" is employed throughout the whole narrative against the reader, whose arguments against the major tenets of the underground philosophy are cleverly anticipated by the narrator (Wyman 2016, p. 97).

Consequently, the attitude to the character of the novel which appears because of the principles the novel is possible as a coherent and aesthetic unity, or the "artistic vision" ("khudozhestvennoe videnie") becomes for Bakhtin the model of how and why we are able to concentrate on some certain event or phenomenon: both them have an empathy in it's center (Ibid, p. 81). However, it is not the empathy as some kind of sublime or spiritual experience which is crucial here. For the contrary, it means that empathy could hardly be experienced and expressed without digitalization and mediation realized in the artistic form (for instance, by the novel) in discovering certain traits and peculiarities which composite and distinguish a character - an novel embodiment of the single form our experience, position and individuality could bear the pressure of temporality and changeability.

In this context, Wyman's choice of interpretational paradigm (comparing Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoevsky with Sheler's concepts of "Christian love") creates an effect when theoretical contexts contemporary and topical for Bakhtin becomes omitted and replaced by an intertextual idea of Dostoevsky's writing as a peculiar kind of religious philosophy. Consequently, it evokes some contradictions from the view of contextualism - in both, a "micro" level of intellectual history (paying attention to Bakhtin's Circle, and it's Marxist and sociological optics) and a "macro" level of Bakhtin's own references during the whole period of his work.

In particular, if we directly refer to the main Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky ("Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo", 1929) we will find really scant evidences of this personalist phenomenology expressed in connection with religious terms. Bakhtin's dealing with the questions of author and hero took place much more earlier, so that the inner logic of Bakhtin's

work does not demonstrate a coexistence between interpreting the authorship as a dialogic experience (or a kind of philosophy seizing this experience) and analyzing Dostoevsky's style as a "polyphonic novel".

For instance, Bakhtin notes that no one of Dostoevsky's romans includes the dialectical becoming of the spirit; they don't include becoming or growth at all. The same is related, according to Bakhtin, to Dostoevsky's position as an author, because the author's spirit does not develop himself in the roman's frameworks as well - this spirit there only contemplates or becomes one of the participants, or characters of the novel (Bakhtin, p. 34). Then Bakhtin directly claims that it is not becoming which is the main part of Dostoevsky's aesthetics, but coexistence and interaction. That's why Bakhtin eliminates any explanatory motives which appear from the temporal dimension of the novel: his imagination was not temporal, but first and foremost spatial. This is the outcome of the character's lack of recollections and absence of biography: they are immanent with the present movement which is as well immanent for them as a certain dialog with other character (or, with the Other) happening on this moment (Ibid, p. 36).

It seems like Wyman's book helps in the future quests for strategies of dealing with this intertextuality. Probably, the most convincing way to threat the intertextual tradition is to pose a research question from the position within it, continuing this intertextuality not by using it as a "device" (in Viktor Shklovsky's terms), but by enhancing some of succeeding lines included in the intertextual "complex" and become more obvious in process of time.

Wyman's analysis, however, is not restricted by the earlier period in Bakhtin work. This work finds a new type of intertextuality in Wyman's research - namely, in her hermeneutical work with Dostoevsky. As a result, the new branch of intertextual genealogy appears, which is actually placed not before Bakhtin's semiotic turn from his synthesis between dialogism and the question of "creativity" ("tvorchestvo"), but in fact after the new turn in the interpretation of Bakhtin which has changed Kristeva and Todorov's reinterpretations of his works. Wyman poses Bakhtin's legacy not as conceptually framing the whole 20th-century tradition of finding the dialogical and heteroglossic dimensions behind a putative unity of text - the tradition which was initiated last but not least by Dostoevsky's writing, but as an anachronistic kind of harbinger of Dostoevsky's philosophy of active empathy.

Bakhtin's position beyond coherent tradition or school - including cultural and language contexts. Consequently, if Kristeva and Todorov's interpretations include Bakhtin into cultural studies, literary criticism, as well as those authors who inherited their interpretation of dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony extend their interpretation of these concepts over applied humanities, cultural anthropology and psychology, other authors put

their efforts for incorporating Bakhtin's work into a complicated context of Marxist tradition where Bakhtin's theoretical innovations share such domains as sociological thought and Marxist philosophy of history - in particular, for those parts of Bakhtin's work which are related to the questions of temporality. In the same vein, Bakhtin's works, in particular his earliest essays on the authorship, turn out to be interpreted through the prism of Russian phenomenological tradition and, last but not least, of such peculiar trait of this philosophy as coexistence with spiritual and religious questions.

It is difficult to find which texts are the core of such intertextuality. In this vein, the idea of intertextuality is a possibility to seize more complicated and subtle concepts and statements than it is possible to use in communication via implements of institutional disciplines, such as philosophy and philology. In the case of Dostoevsky - it is a questionable problem in what degree his texts suffice this trait and does not turn a discourse dedicated to it into a hermeneutical exercise which is not intertextual - because it does not try to operate with conceptual and referential commonplaces which are frequently borrowed from literature - but not only from it, and of course without restriction by the legacy of a single author and an intentional and self-sufficient exegesis of it. As a result, there is a contamination of languages - those of philology and philosophy, on the one hand, of theory and ideology, on the other hand, and last but not least, of the rhetorical or literary topos based intertextual intention and the intention of hermitization on the basis of a restricted circle of texts and paradigms endowed with some symbolic or sacral senses.

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