

ной системы, прорваться сразу к свободе от него (которая — в понимании призрачности суда), всегда была у Йозефа К.

Надо сказать, что для героя Кафки вообще весьма типична подобная ситуация, при которой персонаж, в силу подчинения стереотипам поведения или каким-то другим императивам, оказывается неспособен к преодолению приводящей к ужасным последствиям линии развития событий, хотя потенциально такая возможность у него имеется. Таков, например, Грегор Замза, который даже не попытался покинуть квартиру своей семьи. Смог бы он выжить на воле в виде насекомого, вопрос, конечно, дискуссионный, но на то, что именно в выходе из квартиры крылось спасение, намекает последний абзац рассказа, проникнутый оптимизмом, поддерживаемым жизнеутверждающими деталями, вроде «тёплого солнца».

Нет сомнения в том, что Кафку занимал момент отсутствия у его персонажей того, что делало Алису неуязвимой для суда Страны Чудес, так что вполне естественно предположить генетическую связь двух текстов. Их отношения, разумеется, отношения не тождества, но диалога, они рисуют одну и ту же ситуацию для двух антонимичных типов поведения, вернее, отношения к происходящему; и их контрастное соположение помогает правильно расставить акценты в характеристике персонажей, а не ограничиться плоской констатацией «переключки».



From Phenomenology To Hermeneutics: Bakhtin's Analogic Thinking As An Epistemological Strategy

F. PELLIZZI

Bakhtin defined himself as a philosopher, and in my view quite rightly so, although his name appears only rarely in the West in encyclopaedias of philosophy or manuals of the history of philosophy. Of course he defined himself as a philosopher not to confine himself to some narrow discipline or field of study. I believe that there was also a more profound reason: the young Bakhtin was attempting to tackle the fundamental problems of the thinking of his time, and his approach, and the results of his youthful reflections, are the cornerstone of all his subsequent work.

Bakhtin thus attempted to deal with the fundamental problems that philosophy tried to solve in those years, and the first of these was to come to terms with

science and technology, which were considered paramount, to find some space for reflection on human deeds, existence and the world with the same kind of rigour and at the same time to reach areas that science could not reach. One of his aims, which can be read as an underlying theme in all his writings as a young man, was to give philosophical thinking concreteness and bring it much closer to reality, without wishing either to imitate science or to reject it idealistically. Bakhtin's thinking does not follow science too closely but neither does it go against science. Bakhtin is certainly aware of Wilhelm Dilthey's idea of the distinction in principle between the natural sciences and history, the former aiming to explain and the latter to *understand*, as indeed he is familiar with (and praises explicitly in *K filosofii postupka*) the later development of this position by philosophers traditionally classified as Neo-Kantian — Windelband, Rickert, and even Simmel — regarding the methods and the specific nature of the sciences of culture, aimed, unlike natural sciences, at understanding the concrete and the individual, and identifying unique and irrepeatable events. However the thinking of Bakhtin could not be further from being an idealistic approach: it does not promote the definition of the «sciences of the spirit» (*Geisteswissenschaften*) as separate from the world of phenomena, neither does it tend to focus on the world of the individual conscience, i. e. to assume a subjective perspective. Bakhtin's idea is closer to the “realistic” and anti-psychologistic spirit of Husserl's first programme, in which Husserl put forward a «return to things themselves».

His great originality, however, was in his attempt to link subjectivity with the world, uniqueness and the particular nature of each individual with the complex space of culture. And this connection takes place through ethics and aesthetics, of which Bakhtin redefines the extent and the foundations, and which characterize the world of self and of the other respectively. They are two different forms of being part of the world, and two forms of *intentionality*, of lived-experience, or, we could say, of *Erlebnis*. This too is a reformulation, already in an intersubjective perspective, of Husserl's intentionality theory.

The young Bakhtin had the merit of using just such a phenomenological approach to reflect on the foundations of being in the world, and therefore to direct his thinking in the direction of an ontology. Heidegger too worked on a similar project — and it cannot be ruled out that some rumour of this may have reached the Bakhtin circle as well — but Heidegger had a completely different approach. I shall be returning to this subject later on.

What I feel it is important to note, in the writings of the Twenties, is however the form of the thinking and of the reasoning. We could a little bit jokingly characterize this way of thinking with a couple of metaphors that Bakhtin liked to use quite often. The first of these, which already contains an element of the carnivalesque, is that of the double-faced Janus. Bakhtin's double-faced Janus always indicates separateness (often a «bad separateness»¹, which must be re-composed (and not resolved or dissolved as in an *Aufhebung* of a Hegelian type) through an architectonics that is not a taxonomy, that never in any way classifies or is definitive, but rather presents itself as a kind of magnetic field in which each

¹ M. M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Translation & notes by V. Liapunov, Ed. by V. Liapunov & M. Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1993. P. 3.

force reflects (includes and projects itself on to) the other. And here we could use another term that Bakhtin was very fond of: monad. The concept is that of Leibniz, but Husserl also uses it sometimes², and it indicates a single unit that constitutes a viewpoint over the world and is therefore the whole world from a certain viewpoint. In Bakhtin's reasoning each pole of a magnetic field can acquire these characteristics of oneness and totality, including from one's own viewpoint the other pole as well. But this assumption of a viewpoint is never definitive, it can have an oscillatory nature, it can be partly reversible, it can be like an alternating tension between two different viewpoints and produce contamination as well. Not only this, but the most important effect of this way of reasoning is the transformation or the shift of the problem posed. There is no seeking to eliminate one of the two elements or to overcome it, but rather a mutual transformation.

The procedure sometimes seems a little obscure, which is not surprising, because we are talking about an extremely ambitious attempt to establish a new theoretical thinking that is not principally based on principles of identity and non-contradiction. Not that Bakhtin actually excludes or refuses to acknowledge these principles, let's get that straight, but alongside them, especially when he is dealing with the basic concepts of his thinking, he introduces a principle that I would define as analogical. By analogy I mean a device that does not solve an antinomy by overcoming it in a synthesis or abolishing one of its two terms, but which leaves both of the terms in tension and produces a third viewpoint on their relationship. In Bakhtin's analogical thought, unlike in Aristotelian logic, *tertium datur*. Those of Bakhtin are never dichotomies, even though they are very often misunderstood and presented as binary relationships (self-other, monological-polyphonic, centrifugal-centripetal, etc.), but they are polarities.

An example can be found in the first few pages that have been preserved of *K filosofii postupka*. In them Bakhtin primarily presents an aporia: the impossibility of reconciling the world of life and the world of culture, i. e. the «objective domains»³ of science, art, history and the «never-repeatable uniqueness of actually lived and experienced life»⁴. Any attempt to fix in theoretical or aesthetic terms the value of an action we take causes it to lose its value as a unique and irrepeatable event in the «historical actuality of its being»⁵. Only ethics can constitute a plane of contact, if it is able to enter into both sides of our action, the global side of its being produced as such in the context of our life and that of its meanings and effects: «An act must acquire a single unitary plane to be able to reflect itself in both directions — in its sense or meaning and in its being; it must acquire the unity of two-sided answerability — both for its content (special answerability) and for its Being (moral answerability). And the special answerability, moreover, must be brought into communion with the unitary and unique moral answerability as a constituent moment in it. That is the only way whereby the pernicious non-fusion and non-interpenetration of culture and life could be surmounted»⁶.

We can draw another example, relating directly to the rapport between the

²E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, § 49.

³M. M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. P. 2.

⁴*Ibidem*.

⁵*Ibidem*.

ethical and the aesthetical, from the fragment of the first chapter of *Avtor i geroi*. Bakhtin is talking about the phenomena of aestheticization inside the sphere of life, and he shows us how his analogical thinking operates, through reversals of viewpoint: «The mere fact that a cognitive-ethical determination relates to the *whole* human being, that it encompasses all of him, already constitutes a moment that is aesthetic. An ethical determination defines a given human being from the viewpoint of what-is-yet-to-be-accomplished (*zadannij*); the centre of value, moreover, is in the latter. All one need do is transpose him into what-is-given (*dannij*) and the determination becomes completely aestheticized»⁷.

These asymmetrical dipolarities are characteristic of all of Bakhtin's thinking. They are asymmetrical because, as is known, and as is evident even from the examples given, the tension between the two terms (self-other, dan-zadan, outline-horizon, etc.) is never equal on both sides, because one of the terms is always more dominant than the other, producing a conceptual residue that keeps the relationship open, open even to the responsibility of the other, to the judgement and participative thinking of a «potential third».

This way of reasoning, correcting logical and taxonomic thinking with analogical thinking, is the instrument that enables Bakhtin to defend himself from abstract theoreticism, from binary thinking, from thinking as a «technique», because he always refers back to a sort of ethical, historical *Dasein* as a concrete bearer of meaning. But it also enables him not to fall into the kind of transcendentalism which even Husserl, as of the date of Bakhtin's writings, had already been approaching for ten years or so.

In fact I believe that in 1924 Bakhtin anticipated — but with better solutions — the later Husserl, the Husserl of the Thirties, intent on drawing up the *Cartesianische Meditationen* with his pupil Eugen Fink. Husserl in those years definitely had in mind the idea of bringing phenomenology back into the world and going beyond the Cartesian horizon of the ego in favour of a radical reflection on intersubjectivity as a fundamental structure of existence. It was in this Fifth Meditation that Husserl replaced the ego with the concept of the monad, which like a speed multiplier makes it possible to pass from one situation to another, from the self to the other much more easily than the Cartesian ego. Yet he does not have the instrument of analogical thought, which would enable him to leave the sphere of identity “analogically” and to take at the same time or alternately two different existential standpoints. So, it is therefore as if Husserl conceived the other from inside one and only one monad, still substantially from within the self. Heidegger does the same thing when he speaks in *Being and Time*, of the Other being like a dead body: however his reasoning will always be conducted from inside and individual standpoint, and the Other will always in fact be “indifferent” and without ontological meaning. Bakhtin, on the other hand, gives aesthetics in its totalizing function an ontological meaning. Furthermore Bakhtin introduces into the relationship between monads an element that is extraordinarily innovative: responsibility. This means thinking of ethics not in Aristotle's way (a rational and strategic ethic, which can adapt to circumstances) or in a transcenden-

⁶ *Ivi*, P. 2—3.

⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays, Ed. by M. Holquist and V. Liapunov, Translation and Notes by V. Liapunov, Supplement translated by K. Brostrom, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990. P. 226.

tal way like Kant (ethics that is disinterested, a priori): Bakhtin's ethics is *adherent* (close-fitting), *conscious and participative*, not rational; and it is based on experience, it is not a priori: it consists of answerability for one's own unique place in the world, of «taking a position» through the event-meeting of one's own actions, and in having no alibi. Leibniz regulated the relationships between monads by using the principle of universal harmony, whereas Husserl gave every monad an independent capacity to operate in the world, Bakhtin, before Husserl, gave every monad its own responsibility. Every given (*dan*) implies responsibility, an enchargement, a commitment (*zadan*). This is in my opinion the most precise meaning of *zadan*. *Dan* and *zadan* quite clearly do not translate the “given” and the “posited” of the Neo-Kantians, but cancel out the purely cognitive and mental dimension, introducing that of responsibility and otherness, of incompleteness and completeness, of ethical and aesthetic.

Let us now at this point try to sum up.

Bakhtin introduces highly innovative elements compared with the philosophers we have mentioned, and he often overcomes the aporias of their systems of thought and presents the problems in a completely different and original way. Trying to summarize, we can trace these elements back to three aspects, which are actually different expressions of the same philosophical complex and it is worth coming back to this briefly to try and show some of their consequences: 1) the introduction of a new ontological conception based on the self-other tension; 2) the introduction of a new conception of ethics and aesthetics; 3) the introduction of a new kind of theoretical thinking and of a new theoretical language.

The reflection of Bakhtin as a young man undoubtedly tends towards an ontology, in the sense that it tends to reflect on the fundamental principles of being. Self and other tend to become forms of being, and thus to assume an ontological role and position. But it is also clear that we are not talking about an abstract or conceptual ontology, but rather about a phenomenological ontology, an ontology of being in the world. Not for nothing has it been defined even as «ethical ontology» (E. A. Bogatyreva), «social ontology» (V. L. Machlin). It could also be defined as worldly, mundane ontology, because it moves the ontological difference into the world, makes it horizontal and distributes it between self and other. We could say that Bakhtin does not think of the ontological difference as a question of analysing the meaning of the verb to be, but moves it into the sphere of *Erlebnis* and *Lebenswelt*. And so he makes these concepts problematic too. Self and other are the concrete limits each of the other, they are not purely intelligible essences, but, necessarily, they belong to one's historical experience. This makes Bakhtin's ontology an operational ontology, destined to become hermeneutics, i. e. to spill over into encounters between texts, adopting literature as its privileged field. In other words Bakhtin is a great philosopher who by nature of his philosophy is destined not to remain so. Bakhtin could not have spent his whole life thinking about being or about the impossibility of thinking of being: having already thought about it so deeply as a young man made it imperative for him to follow the human and mundane expressions of it.

These roots in history and in matter allow us to say that Bakhtin's ontology is not logocentric. Perhaps Derrida would maintain that Bakhtin follows a classical process, that he belongs to western metaphysical tradition. But nothing could be further from the truth, because Bakhtin does not even make a distinction in principle between body and spirit, and thus does not subordinate the former to

the latter. And this is evident particularly in the topic on which Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, introduces his criticism of western metaphysics, i. e. the idea of writing and language: Bakhtin could not conceive of a pre-existing logos, a *ti esti* as a mere presence (of which writing would constitute a fall), because his thinking is immediately linked to matter. He is spiritualistic and materialistic at the same time. It is a big mistake to define him as a mystic thinker, (although someone has done just that) only because in any case his thinking does never tend towards any kind of transubstantiation: he lives in the tension of other dimensions — of which the self-other polarity is the paradigm — which are in any case always *incarnate*, and which overcome precisely this topos of traditional metaphysics. Thus even a distinction between signified and signifier is for Bakhtin a technical, utilitarian distinction. Whereas his distinction, in the semiotic and symbolic field, and that of his colleague Vološinov, are very different and are full of theoretical consequences: the distinction, clearly formulated in *Marxism and philosophy of language*, is between local meaning and contextual sense (or, as some translate, between theme and meaning). It only in part follows Frege's well-known distinction (*Bedeutung* and *Sinn*), because, in my opinion, it introduces a broader definition of the whole field of the symbolic, not in the Cassirer's idealistic sense, as the whole field of human expressiveness, but as that specific field where sign becomes symbol, in the sense that it becomes ambiguous, bivocal, dialogical; in other words where sign becomes a place of meeting and of contrast between at least two consciences.

Coming back to Bakhtin's ontology, Bakhtin's thinking is never intellectualistic and could not be further away from abstract conceptual oppositions, like those dear to Derrida, presence versus absence, etc. Ontology therefore never becomes ideology, but tends to be a praxis: as I said before, a hermeneutic praxis.

The reformulation of ethics and of aesthetics are consequent: they become almost the mundane projections of the self and of the other considered as two ways of being, perceiving and participating in the world. They are two dimensions that are intimately related, whose relationship and interchange grows: Bakhtin's thinking is a phenomenology not only of responsibility, but also of awareness and experience. And also of perception. And so ethics and aesthetics seem also to remind us of differences in perception, differences between analytic and synthetic perception, which are reminiscent of the interrelated functioning of the two sides of the brain.

Of ethics I have already spoken: Bakhtin introduces the principle of responsibility, a concept which reminds us of a well-known work of some years ago by a pupil of Heidegger, Hans Jonas, but which could in my view have benefited further from Bakhtin's conception of responsibility. Responsibility is the instrument that restores to thinking the historicity and the uniqueness of the events of human culture. Even here though for Bakhtin we are not talking about the ethical-ideological contamination that Derrida accuses Saussure and Austin of: it is simply a further awareness, that of the need to take into account, even in theoretical practice, as in any human act, of one's own finiteness and historicity. Aesthetics is the instrument through which one can perceive otherness. Both of these reformulations of the scope of ethics and aesthetics go beyond the idealistic contrast of intellect and sensitivity (which Klark and Holquist were still attributing to Bakhtin in the form of a «Kantian dualism of mind and world») and make

it inadequate.

But, to conclude, I would like spend a little more time on analogical thinking. Even today I think that Bakhtin's proposal is extremely relevant. Today's universe of communication may no longer even respect the principle of non-contradiction and may follow other laws, such as that of indifference or of trivialized difference: no longer *A or non-A*, but *A and non-A*, in a confused mass, in an infinite addition of everything and of the opposite of everything. Basically it is the new sophistry of entertainment. Anyway, language of public discourse is still invaded by a tendency to simplify by using binary oppositions which often are not able to or do not wish to make clear distinctions or establish differences of principle. Bakhtin even here meets a need of our times: the need to think in a more complex way. He does not confuse elements among themselves, but at the same time he leaves all meaning relations open, indeed he establishes that meaning is given in their relationship.

In Bakhtin analogical thinking is probably a mindset, but in the early Twenties it proved to be particularly suited for overcoming the aporias of all philosophies that in one way or another privilege just one viewpoint (vitalism, intuitionism, etc.) or operate under the illusion that they are pursuing a confident objectivity. In this way even the subjectivism of all empathetic projection on to the other is superseded. Through analogical thought — which, as I have said does not replace logical thought but runs alongside it, even here in a sort of ongoing dialogical thinking process — Bakhtin thinks of the other as different and similar at the same time. This does not mean finding oneself in the place of the other which, as Bakhtin says, is impossible. What it means though is developing one's otherness, and understanding it through a continual process of distancing oneself and at the same time of safeguarding incompleteness. But similarly the other is for self a continuing question, a continual putting to the test.

The principle of identity and non-contradiction of Aristotelian logic claims that between *A* and *non-A* there should be no relationship except of exclusion, or at most of univocal action of the one over the other (typical is the division between subject and object). Analogical thought, however, suggests that *A* is opposing and different compared to *non-A*, but in certain conditions can play the role of *non-A*, and viceversa. Not only, but between *A* and *non-A* a necessary tension is set up of co-implication and exchange: the self-other polarity becomes a complex expression, *I-for-myself*, *the-other-for-me* and *I-for-the-other*, and always tends to produce a residue that surpasses the simple symmetrical and one-way relationship of Aristotelian logic. Basically Bakhtin's thinking is closer to the science of his time, especially to physics: it reminds us of matter/energy reversibility or the corpuscular/undulatory theory of light and of particles. But it is clear that the reversibility is restricted, partial and asymmetrical. It is as if self and the other, if we attempt to anthropomorphisize them, had two legs tied together and two legs free. A bond that is social, historical, but also metaphorical, imposes a context, yet at the same time broadens the horizons, shows finiteness yet at the same time releases the unfeasibility of meaning.