

Language and philosophical anthropology in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle

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Abstract The Bakhtin Circle's conception of language is very much still alive, still productive, in the language sciences today. My claim in this paper is that to understand the Bakhtin Circle's continuing relevance to the language sciences, we have to look beyond the linguistic theory itself, to the philosophical groundwork laid for this project by Bakhtin in what he himself referred to as his philosophical anthropology. This philosophical anthropology, at the center of which stands an architectonics of self—other relations, opens the door for a radical rethinking of what language is and how it works; a rethinking that in turn opens up and coincides with new directions being explored in the language sciences today. Within the context of Bakhtin scholarship, this paper also argues for taking Bakhtin's early philosophical works more seriously when discussing the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language.

Keywords: Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov, philosophical anthropology, intersubjectivity, philosophy of language

The writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle which deal with linguistic topics,¹ are still frequently cited in linguistics, communication studies, and other language sciences today (e.g., COOREN 2010, COUPER-KUHLEN 1996, DU BOIS 2007, GASPAROV 2010, HOPPER 1998, PASCUAL 2006, SANDLER 2012a, SWALES 2000, VERHAGEN 2005). This is notable. Few other linguistic theories dating back 80 years, let alone ones that received little or no attention when they were composed, can boast such current relevance. Moreover, Bakhtin and Voloshinov are cited not as venerable relics of the past, but rather as direct inspiration for innovative work and new developments.

The Bakhtin Circle's conception of language is thus very much still alive, still productive, in the language sciences today. How come? My claim in this paper is that to understand the Bakhtin Circle's continuing relevance to the language sciences, we have to look beyond the linguistic theory itself, to the philosophical groundwork laid

¹ These are primarily Valentin Voloshinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (VOLOSHINOV 1986), first published in Russian in 1929, Bakhtin's posthumously published article, "The Problem of Speech Genres" (BAKHTIN 1986b), written around 1953, the section in Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (first published in 1929) discussing double-voiced discourse (BAKHTIN 1984a: 185–203), and Bakhtin's introduction of the concept of heteroglossia in his "Discourse in the Novel" (BAKHTIN 1981: 260–300, written in the mid-1930s).

for this project by Bakhtin in what he himself referred to as his philosophical anthropology. This philosophical anthropology, I shall argue, opens the door for a radical rethinking of what language is and how it works, a rethinking that in turn opens up and coincides with new directions being explored in the language sciences today.

Within the context of Bakhtin scholarship, this paper also argues for taking Bakhtin's early philosophical works more seriously when discussing the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language. Studies of Bakhtin Circle linguistic works (ALPATOV 2005, LÄHTEENMÄKI 2001) have often paid little attention to this philosophical subtext behind the linguistic studies.

1. Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology

Since Bakhtin is not often listed among the major proponents of philosophical anthropology,² some remarks to explain the relevance of the term "philosophical anthropology" to his work are in place.

As the last several decades of scholarship reveal, Bakhtin was a thinker who worked within, broadly, a Kantian tradition and absorbed influences from such philosophers as Ernst Cassirer and Max Scheler (BRANDIST 2002, POOLE 1998, POOLE 2001, SOBOLEVA 2010). Cassirer and Scheler are among the founders of philosophical anthropology as a discipline. But apparently the term "philosophical anthropology" itself, as denoting such a discipline, only came to Bakhtin's attention late in life, to be more precise, in late 1964 or early 1965, when he read and summarized Otto Friedrich Bollnow's book, *Die Ehrfurcht* (BOLLNOW 1947). The summary can be found in Bakhtin's working notes of that period (BAKHTIN 1996–2012: 6.373–6.379) and begins with the words: "The field of philosophical anthropology". Shortly afterwards, we find Bakhtin inserting a generally positive (despite the obligatory Marxist-sounding critical remark) reference to philosophical anthropology, citing two more works by Bollnow, into the manuscript of his book on Rabelais, which he was then preparing for publication (BAKHTIN 1984b: 276–277).³ In a conversation with Aleksei Aleksandrovich Dorogov in the summer of 1965, Bakhtin already used the term "philosophical anthropology" to describe his work in general (BAKHTIN 1996–2012: 6.563).

Around the same time, Bakhtin writes down in his working notebook what appears to be an outline for an article, or perhaps a longer work, titled "Notes in philosophical anthropology" (BAKHTIN 1986a: 146–147). This is one of many such embryonic plans that never materialized in Bakhtin's notes, but what is special about the "Notes in philosophical anthropology" is that they offer a concise summary of Bakhtin's philosophy as a whole, and also mark Bakhtin's return—after a long hiatus—to the themes that occupied his interest in his early philosophical works (BAKHTIN 1990a, BAKHTIN 1993). Indeed, six years later, after the rediscovery of his long-lost early manuscripts, Bakhtin said of these texts: "This is my philosophical anthropology" (BAKHTIN 1996–2012: 1.351).

² It is more common for Bakhtin scholars, especially in Russia, to examine Bakhtin's work in the context of philosophical anthropology, following Isupov (1990) and Bonetskaia (1991).

³ The English translation inconsistently refers to philosophical anthropology in that passage also as "philosophy of anthropology" and as "this philosophy." The Russian original consistently uses the term philosophical anthropology (*filosofskaia antropologiia*) throughout.

Bakhtin's philosophical account of human existence is organized around "three basic moments" (BAKHTIN 1993: 54): *I-for-myself*, *I-for-the other*, and *the other-for-me*. In what follows, I will discuss each of the items on this list, using the "Notes in philosophical anthropology" as a sort of key to the corpus of Bakhtin's (and Voloshinov's) work, following each of them through to its implications for the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language.

2. I-for-myself

The space and time differences between *I* and *other*. They exist in living sensation, but abstract thought erases them. Thought creates a unified, general world of man, irrespective of *I* and *other* (BAKHTIN 1986a: 147, translation modified).

A group of people boards a plane. For the next several hours, they will all simultaneously be passing, roughly, through the same trajectory in space. In a sense, they will also all be doing the same thing—taking a flight from, let us say, Moscow to Rome. But each person on that plane will in fact be experiencing and doing something quite different from the others. A family is flying abroad to a holiday. Another is flying back home from one. One passenger travels to conclude an important business deal. Another is making a religious pilgrimage. One passenger is flying home after spending years in another country. Another is going into exile. A third expects to reunite with relatives she has not seen for a long time. One traveler expects to spend many hours in the destination airport, waiting for a connecting flight. Another fears missing his connection. A third fears the flight itself, while a fourth is excited: this is her first time on a plane. And for the cabin crew, meanwhile, it is just another working day.

Now, all these details about the passengers are subjective. They use such shoddy spatiotemporal concepts as "home," "abroad," "exile," "reunite"—not to mention emotions, such as fear and excitement—to describe the journey these people are making. In objective terms, this journey should properly be described using the sort of information that gets displayed on the flight information screen—a line on a map, plus some data about the exact hour, altitude, etc. On the other hand, while the information contained in such abstract representations is objectively correct, none of the passengers actually experiences her flight in terms of these representations—they do not experience altitude as a mere number when looking through the window; they are situated in space, and from their positions they turn their gazes onto things and people around them, and this experience of space is nothing like the view from outside, from nowhere-in-particular, represented by the map.

The *I* hides in the other and in others, it wants to be only an other for others, to enter completely into the world of others as an other, and to cast from itself the burden of being the only *I* (*I-for-myself*) in the world (BAKHTIN 1986a: 147).

Traditionally, metaphysics tells us that what is objective is real, that what remains constant when things change or is common to the many *underlies* the fleeting and the uniquely individual. Bakhtin—following Søren Kierkegaard (FRYSZMAN 1996, SANDLER 2012b: 229–232, SCHITTSOVA 1999) and possibly Max Stirner (NIKIFOROV 2006)—reverses this order of priorities (and see BAKHTIN 1993: 37ff.) This is what Bakhtin's use of the notion of only-ness (*edinstvennost'*; the

translation was proposed by NIKIFOROV 2006), of being the *only* I-for-myself, comes to express. I am the only *I* in the world. I am the one who *actually* experiences my experiences, however fleeting. I am the one on whose *deeds* I decide and then, once they are done, bear responsibility for these deeds, however unique the motives and purposes behind them. “That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone” (BAKHTIN 1993: 40, translation modified).

What I *actually* experience stands against the merely *potential* nature of objective and theoretical knowledge. Knowing the objective data about that flight from Moscow to Rome can tell us something about what a person—*any* person—on that flight *may* experience, *if* she were to be on it. If we augment this by knowledge about that person’s particular personality traits, we get to know more about what *any* person with such traits *may* experience, *if* she were there. But when I board the plane and make the journey, I *actually* live through my experiences. The “if” and the “may” can now be dropped, as can the “any”—nobody else lives through my first-person experiences with me. Moreover, my actual experiences bear meaning for me in the context of *what I am doing*. Objective, “nobody’s,” space is not the space I live and act in. The space *I* occupy has what Bakhtin called an axiological or aesthetic dimension. It is value-laden. It is structured around such “coordinates” as “home” and “away,” “to,” “from,” “here,” “there,” “in front,” “behind”—all these expressions become meaningful relative to where I am situated, what I am looking at, what I am doing or intend to do, and what I care about more generally. The space and time *I* live in are the space and time of a world constituted by what early Bakhtin calls my *deed* (*postupok*), and it is to this world, subjective as it is, that Bakhtin assigns the ultimate reality.⁴

Now, as anyone even superficially familiar with Bakhtin’s work knows, this is not where the story ends. Bakhtin was a philosopher of dialogue, not monologue. But the subjective or personalist aspect of Bakhtin’s thought that I presented so far also has significant implications for the Bakhtinian philosophy of language. What is most likely Bakhtin’s very first discussion of language already offers an explicit statement of his unique approach to this subject:

I think that language is much more adapted to giving utterance precisely to [concrete] truth [*Pravda*], and not to the abstract moment of the logical in its purity [...] Historically, language grew up in the service of participative thinking and the deed, and it begins to serve abstract thinking only in the present day of its history. The expression of a deed from within and the expression of the only Being-as-event in which that deed is performed require the entire fullness of the word [*slovo*]: its content/sense aspect (the word as concept) as well as its palpable-expressive aspect (the word as image) and its emotional-volitional aspect (the intonation of the word) in their unity. And in all these moments the unitary full word can be answerably valid, i.e., can be the truth [*pravda*] rather than something subjectively fortuitous (BAKHTIN 1993: 31, translation modified).

Early 20th-century philosophers, who emphasized the gap between the concreteness of lived human experience and objective forms of knowledge, considered the word,

⁴ It should be noted that despite this emphasis on the first-person perspective, Bakhtin was never a relativist or subjectivist (see, e.g., BAKHTIN 1993: 9–10). Objective information for Bakhtin is subordinated to first-person experience and to the deed, but it is no less objective and objectively correct for that. Bakhtin’s philosophical project is concerned with changing meta-philosophical priorities, but it is not a skeptical project.

denoting a general idea, not a concrete experience, to belong to the realm of the objective, and therefore thought concreteness to be ineffable (a position shared, among others, by Max Scheler. See CROSBY 1998: 26). It is to such positions that Bakhtin responds in the quoted passage, and at the center of this response stands a novel understanding of the nature of language: language is essentially suited to express the concrete, more than the abstract.

In part, Bakhtin took his cue from a linguistic tradition (Humboldt, Steinthal, Croce, and especially Vossler and his school) that in one way or another saw language as expression—individual self-expression or the expression of the spirit of a nation or a historical time. For Bakhtin, language embodies not the expression of some substantive inner essence, and surely not the abstraction of Spirit, but people’s active engagement with the world and with each other, in the full particularity of the context in which this engagement takes place. Bakhtin’s understanding of language is thus grounded (to use a much later and not fully adequate term) in pragmatics.

The abstract, conceptual, aspect of the word, or discourse (*slovo*), is here only one moment of the totality of discourse as deed. In other early works Bakhtin explicitly lists the deed-in-word (*postupok—slovo*) alongside the deed-in-deed (*postupok—delo*), as one of the ways in which the deed can be realized (BAKHTIN 1990a: 70, 98, and cf. BAKHTIN 1990b: 310). And just as the deed as concrete actuality is prior to the objective content that can be abstracted from it, so discourse-as-deed is the ground from which the conceptual or logical aspect of language can be derived, not the other way around.

Another interesting point about the quote above is its reference to three different and equally important aspects of the word: the word as concept, the word as image, and the word’s intonation (to which I shall return later). Bakhtin’s understanding of language integrates, already at this early stage, all these aspects, not relegating intonation and image to a secondary status, as most linguistic and linguistic-philosophical theories do. Moreover, the list of aspects is not accidental. It reflects the major categories that Bakhtin’s early philosophy makes use of: the word as concept pertains to cognition or epistemology (*poznanie*), the word as image pertains to aesthetic activity, and intonation pertains to ethics, at the center of which, for Bakhtin, stands the deed.

Bakhtin’s view of language as expressing concrete individual existence, rather than abstracting from it, remained central to the discussion of language in later works by Bakhtin himself and by Voloshinov. Long before the rise of discourse pragmatics, we find in Bakhtin Circle works close attention being paid to the situation in which utterances are made when analyzing them. The analysis of the single-word utterance “Well!” in Voloshinov’s 1926 article, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry” (VOLOSHINOV 1983: 10–11) is a stark example. The word “well” itself, which is the entire verbal content of the utterance (and thus its entire *objective* content, reproducible independently of the concrete speech situation) offers us almost no insight into the meaning of the utterance. It is only when we look at the utterance as part of an actual situation (where two people look out of the window and see snow beginning to fall) and consider also the speakers’ and audience’s shared knowledge and *value judgments* about this situation (they know it is the month of May and want the winter to end and spring to begin), that its meaning becomes clear to us. This analysis shows that:

Discourse in life is obviously not self-sufficient. It arises from the non-verbal real-life situation and maintains a very intimate connection with it. Moreover,

discourse is directly filled with that life and may not be detached from it without losing its sense (VOLOSHINOV 1983: 10).

Voloshinov's critique of Saussurean linguistics (VOLOSHINOV 1986: 52–82) is based on the same philosophical commitments. By viewing language as a system of normative forms, setting aside as inessential people's actual acts of utterance in their real-life context, Saussurean linguistics—Voloshinov tells us—misidentifies the proper object of study of linguistic science (and see BAKHTIN 1990b: 292–294). A quarter century later, in “The Problem of Speech Genres,” Bakhtin (1986b) argues forcefully for the primacy of situated acts of utterance over the sentence as the basic unit of language, again echoing his philosophical anthropology, grounded in the deed.

3. I-for-the other

My image of myself. What is the nature of one's perception of oneself, of one's *I* as a whole. Where lies its essential difference from my perception of an other. An image of the *I* or a concept, or an experience, a feeling, and the like. This image's order of being. What is the composition of this image (how do, e.g., perceptions of my body, my exterior, my past, etc. enter into it) [...] What in me is given to me directly and what is given only through the other (BAKHTIN 1986a: 146, translation modified).

The world of my living deeds and experiences is arranged around my body, my gaze, my preoccupations and concerns, my emotions, my intentions. But unlike a Cartesian subject, established through self-reflection, the *I* of Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology lacks direct access to itself. In the world, as I perceive it, I myself am nowhere to be found. I do not see myself. This is the principle of “absolute self-exclusion” (BAKHTIN 1993: 75), central to Bakhtin's philosophy.

Bakhtin's favorite way of elaborating on this point (also mentioned in the “Notes in philosophical anthropology”) is by discussing the apparent counterexample of what happens when I look at my reflection in the mirror (BAKHTIN 1990a: 32–35, BAKHTIN 1996–2012: 5.71, and see NIKULIN 2011). It would seem that looking at my reflection I see myself, just as I would see any other person, but—Bakhtin tells us—this is not really the case. Looking at another person I get a coherent image of that person, of the way she looks and behaves. Looking at my own reflection, on the other hand, the coherence of the image is broken—the movement of my body and the expression on my face fail to form a unity with my inner feel of moving my body, with the emotions that I feel and are reflected in my facial expression. Instead, when looking at my reflection, what I see—indeed, typically, what I am trying to see—is the way I would appear to others. I am, as it were, looking at myself through the eyes of the other. It is thus from others that I may receive any image of myself (BAKHTIN 1990a: 128ff.) And, of course, this pertains not only to the perception of my exterior, but to any substantive (as opposed to purely active, purely functional) perception of myself, of what and who I am. To use a much later formulation, “Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in the other's consciousness (BAKHTIN 1986a: 138, translation modified).

The historical development of self-consciousness. It is related to the development of signifying means of expression (language above all) (BAKHTIN 1986a: 146, translation modified).

In Bakhtin's philosophical framework, the forms of language, like aesthetic forms, come from others. This insight—which should have been trivial, considering the basic fact that children learn to master their native tongue from the people around them—was in fact a radical break both from the views of the likes of Vossler and Croce, for whom the forms of language express the self, and from the tradition, represented by Saussure, that looked at language as an abstract, impersonal, system of normative forms. The act of utterance, the deed-in-word, is a two-sided act (VOLOSHINOV 1986: 86), which exemplifies the complex self—other opposition that early Bakhtin calls “the event of being” (see SCHITTSOVA 2002).

The dependence of self-expression on concrete forms received from others is a recurrent theme in Bakhtin Circle linguistic works. We find it in Bakhtin's notion of speech genres, which he claims are necessary for any utterance people make (BAKHTIN 1986b: 78–81),⁵ and it receives its most detailed development in Bakhtin's exposition of the notion of heteroglossia (*raznorechie*):

As a living socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes “one's own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. and not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (BAKHTIN 1981: 293–294).

This stubborn resistance of others' words to the speaker's appropriation of them brings us to our next topic.

⁵ One feature of Bakhtin's understanding of genre, which distinguishes his late works from his early ones (we also see it reflected in the last quote from the “Notes in philosophical anthropology”), is that genres are forms that develop in the course of history. Such historical considerations were less central to Bakhtin's early philosophy (for all we can tell based on surviving texts). This point is not essential to the main line of argument in this paper, but I mention it to avoid creating the false impression that Bakhtin's conception of language remained entirely static throughout his life.

4. The other-for-me

My temporal and spatial boundaries are not given to me, but the other is given entirely. I enter into the spatial world; the other is always located in it (BAKHTIN 1986a: 147, translation modified).

Unlike my own image, the images of others are given to me as coherent wholes (just as my image is given as a coherent whole to others—such an image can never exhaust me as a person, capture my I-for-myself, but that is a separate matter). To understand how this aspect of Bakhtin’s philosophical anthropology is reflected in the Bakhtinian conception of language, we should first take a step back and consider Bakhtin’s concept of intonation.

Intonation (tones, overtones, etc.) has a significant place in practically all discussions of language by Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle. It is also the only central term of the Bakhtinian conception of language that receives its most extensive development in the early works. Notably, while Bakhtin first discusses intonation in a linguistic context, it soon becomes apparent that it is in fact an important term in Bakhtin’s philosophy as a whole: “An emotional-volitional tone is an inalienable moment of the actually performed act, even of the most abstract thought, insofar as I am actually thinking it” (BAKHTIN 1993: 33).

Intonation plays an evaluative role. Recall that Bakhtin emphasizes the primacy of reality as actively experienced and evaluated by the individual over objective givenness. “Intonation” or “emotional-volitional tone” is how Bakhtin conceptualizes the difference between the two: everything in the world as I experience it has intonation, which marks what it means to me. A mere objective givenness becomes part of my experience when it is intonated, and thus things only truly become real for me, can only fall within my purview, when they have intonation:

The active experiencing of an experience, the active thinking of a thought, means not being absolutely indifferent to it, means an affirming of it in an emotional-volitional manner. Actual thinking-in-deed is *an emotional-volitional thinking, a thinking that intonates, and this intonation permeates in an essential manner all the moments of a thought’s content*. The emotional-volitional tone *circumfuses the whole content/sense of a thought in the actually performed deed and relates it to the only Being-as-event*. It is precisely the emotional-volitional tone that orients within the only Being (BAKHTIN 1993: 34, translation modified).

Of course, intonation for Bakhtin is not a mere accidental additive to what it intonates (see BAKHTIN 1993: 34–39). On the contrary, it is the mark of actuality, and is also central to the event of contact between self and other. Here, however, Bakhtin’s discussion of intonation comes back to language. More specifically, it comes to “the aesthetics of verbal art,” i.e. to literature. Why literature? Because Bakhtin conceptualizes self—other relations in terms of the relationship between author and hero in a literary work (BAKHTIN 1990a). The same literary paradigm applies to linguistic utterances. At one point Bakhtin even talks of the heroes of a simple sentence, distinguishing between an active and a passive form according to the number of heroes in each (BAKHTIN 2004, and see HALASEK 2005). But, like all the things and people that matter in the world of my living experience, the heroes or characters that appear in my utterances are intonated. This forms the basis for Bakhtin’s discussion of double-voiced discourse (BAKHTIN 1984a: 185–203).

Double-voiced discourse is called double-voiced because we hear in it two voices, two personal positions, at the same time. How is this possible? Well, consider the case of parody, for example. Imagine a comedian parodying the famous words of a politician, let us say, Bill Clinton's much-abused "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." In terms of the verbal content ("the word as concept," to use the phrasing in BAKHTIN 1993: 31, cited above), the parody simply reproduces the words uttered by the politician, but the comedian does not utter the words for their content, she does not deny having had sexual intercourse with anybody. Rather, the words belong to a hero, a character—Bill Clinton—and make him present in the comedian's utterance ("the word as image"). Of course, it is not Bill Clinton who is actually speaking, but the comedian, and the comedian's utterance not merely reproduces Bill Clinton's utterance, but *mocks* or *ridicules* it. This (in this case—negative) evaluation of Clinton's words is transmitted in the comedian's voice, in her *intonation*. We thus have two voices—Clinton's and the comedian's—overlaid one on top of the other.⁶

The forms of double-voiced discourse thus exemplify how linguistic utterances not only play the role of deeds in "the event of being," envisioned in Bakhtin's early philosophical works, but reproduce *within them* the complex forms of intersubjectivity central to Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology.

5. A quarrel with Aristotle

Sergei Sergeevich Averintsev (1976) famously remarked of Bakhtin's theory of literature that it is engaged in a debate or quarrel (*spor*) with Aristotle's poetics. This remark is no less apt for describing the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language. The quarrel is indeed a quarrel with Aristotle.

The first chapter of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* contains what is by far the most influential text in the history of linguistics (ARENS 1984):

Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of—affections of the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of—actual things—are also the same [...] Just as some thoughts in the soul are neither true nor false while some are necessarily one or the other, so also with spoken sounds. For falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation. Thus names and verbs by themselves—for instance "man" or "white" when nothing further is added—are like the thoughts that are without combination and separation; for so far they are neither true nor false. A sign of this is that even "goat-stag" signifies something but not, as yet, anything true or false—unless "is" or "is not" is added (either simply or with reference to time). (BARNES 1984: 1.25).

⁶ While it is often the case that the speaker's attitudes toward characters represented in her utterance are indeed transmitted through intonation and other prosodic means (e.g., COUPER-KUHLEN 1996), this needs not be the case. Such attitudes can be equally well communicated by manipulating the context of utterance, by modifying the verbal content of quotes, and by many other means. "Intonation," in the sense under discussion, refers to any such expression of the speaker's attitude. Indeed, Bakhtin, in the first edition of his book on Dostoevsky (BAKHTIN 1996–2012: 2.5–2.175), did not use the earlier term "intonation," but rather appropriated for this purpose a similar-sounding term from Franz Brentano—"intention." We also saw the same term used in the quote on heteroglossia (BAKHTIN 1981: 293–294) brought above.

This passage, and Aristotle's logical writings more generally, formed the basis for almost two and a half millennia of linguistic theory and for the grammar taught in grammar school. It breaks people's talk into units—the shorter units that name affections in the soul and things (and forms) in the world, which were later called “words” and the longer units, combining the shorter ones together to form statements that can be true or false, which were later called “sentences”.

But Aristotle's conceptualization of language served the purposes of creating and establishing his logic. From Bakhtin's perspective, such an approach to language exemplifies “the prejudice of rationalism [...] that only the logical is clear and rational” (BAKHTIN 1993: 29). Note Aristotle's tacit assumption that what is the same for all is more fundamental than what is not. Note how the role of the human soul in this account of language is reduced to copying the likenesses of things from the outside world. Note, finally, the total absence from Aristotle's account of any communicative setting, any form of intersubjectivity.

The greatness of the Bakhtin Circle's linguistic works lies in the fact that they took nothing—not even school grammar—for granted. Instead, these works used Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology to make a fresh start, to seek new ways of classifying linguistic phenomena and of defining linguistic units: the utterance, delimited by the change of speaking subject (BAKHTIN 1986b: 71ff.), the inner dialogic division of the utterance following the “faint traces of changes of speech subjects that have furrowed the utterance from within” (BAKHTIN 1986b: 99), and the different voices heard even in the very same stretch of discourse.

It was not until the last several decades that the empirical study of conversation recordings and linguistic corpora more generally led linguists and other scientists to begin a process of radically reconsidering the traditional Aristotelian framework of conceptualizing language (see, e.g., CHAFE 1980, FORD 2004, LANGACKER 1987, OCHS, SCHEGLOFF, & THOMPSON 1996, SACKS, SCHEGLOFF, & JEFFERSON 1974). In that process, the alternative framework laid out by Bakhtin and his circle proved to be a valuable resource.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I examined the close connection between the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language and Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology (developed mostly in his early, explicitly philosophical, works). I argued that this philosophical grounding has a lot to do with the unusual productiveness the Bakhtinian conception of language exhibits in the language sciences to this day.

Bakhtin's philosophical anthropology takes as its starting point the primacy of concrete individual first-person perspective on and engagement with the world. This first-person position is, however, not self-sufficient; rather, the individual subject is constantly dependent on others for the forms in which self-reflection and self-expression can only be achieved.

The resulting architectonics of self—other relations is the central model which Bakhtin and other members of his circle then applied to the analysis of various cultural phenomena. Their conception of language is no exception: It rejects traditional logical models of language structure and semantics in favor of an approach that studies the concrete individual act of utterance as the true object of linguistics. Within the utterance it then explores the formative role played by others, their voices and intonations, and their past, present, and future utterances.

Intersubjectivity thus becomes, as it were, the very stuff from which linguistic utterances are made.

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