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In the Fullness of Time: M. M. Bakhtin, In Discourse and in Life

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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In the Fullness of Time:
M. M. Bakhtin, In Discourse and in Life

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By

James C. Hall

The Centre for the Study
of Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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The University of Western Ontario
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Chair of the Thesis Examination Board
ABSTRACT:

The phrase “the fullness of time” touches upon one of M. M. Bakhtin’s most consistently upheld tenets; for Bakhtin, philosophical and everyday utterances rely on their historical embeddedness for the material and concrete reality from which they draw their meaning and through which they are conditioned, inflected, and re-evaluated. In his very last work Bakhtin stated that all meanings are in continuous evolution. In this thesis the attempt is made to interpret Bakhtin’s corpus by concentrating particularly on the movement of historical and philosophical becoming, the art of responding to philosophy and the events of everyday life, and the particular mutual inter-relatedness of the disciplines of ethics, aesthetics, biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, and linguistics as these discourses are taken up in Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle’s writings.

Key words:

A work of literature... is revealed primarily in the differentiated unity of culture of the epoch in which it is created, but it cannot be closed off in this epoch: its fullness is revealed only in great time.

—Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 5.
For my parents...
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Introduction

A. The Vertigo of History

“Finally the Great Artisan ordained that man, to whom He could give nothing belonging only to himself, should share in common whatever properties had been peculiar to each of the other creatures. He received man, therefore, as a creature of undetermined nature, and placing him in the middle of the universe, said this to him: ‘Neither an established place, nor a form belonging to you alone, nor any special function have We given you, O Adam, and for this reason, that you may have and possess, according to your desire and judgment, whatever place, whatever form, and whatever functions you shall desire.”

—Pico della Mirandola¹

Pico della Mirandola called us the “nuptial bond of the world,” and the “interval between enduring eternity and the flow of time,” but he failed to mention the vertigo caused by this suspension between heaven and earth.² ‘Man’ is free! So says Pico. Free to crawl as low as vermin, free to fly as high as the angels. But there is an ambivalence tied up in this freedom. We are chameleons, as much shaped by as shaping our environment.³ My intent in this thesis is to speak with many voices. Do men and women—and those for whom these gendered categories prove insufficient—have the capacity for self-conscious becoming, or contrariwise does becoming have human beings? Am I free to speak with many voices? The institutions and ideas that make us what we are, as beings, sometimes grip us very tightly indeed. Pico struck M. M. Bakhtin as a cautious man, somewhat still held by the past, by the cultural inheritance of his forebearers and by the idea of a natural order in which humans fit snugly in their place.⁴ The idea of hierarchy was archetypally embedded in humanism during the Renaissance. Of this there is no doubt. But Pico focused on movement rather than on a static one-time creation; in some sense he placed the importance on the event rather than being. You are what you sow. According to Pico, where we cultivate vegetative germs in human soil, we grow into carrots, and where we plant the seeds of sensitivity, we grow into animals. But where ‘man’ is rational there he will be a brother to the angels.⁵ His ideas about the mutability of ‘mankind’ bumped up against similar notions in Giambattista Porta and Giordano Bruno, and “especially Campanella.”⁶ This metaphor of the seed as it appears in Renaissance humanism evinces, as the story goes, the first loosening of the great chain of being. The importance of this epochal and perceptual shift away from the Medieval mind cannot be overestimated.

At first glance, the problem of speaking with many voices and of knowing when and how to listen are not complex questions. It seems self-evident that I speak for myself
and no one else and that no one else speaks for me. Yet no one seriously believes they are objects among objects, or that they can communicate in private languages. In our everyday lives, we usually use words as if they are transparently our own property. Yet we do not invent the language in which we speak, play, think, pray, work, and love. If pressed most of us will readily admit this. We are not wholly self-consistent. I will claim my action to the extent that I do not trip over myself, and the rest... well ‘the devil made me do it.’ Yet a wholly transparent selfhood is not supported by the evidence. There are exceptions and endless qualifications of course, all the necessary reservations. We rest assured: we have the power to speak with at least a tacit and tentative voice of our own—from the very heart of our subjectivity? Somewhere at the centre of my existence, a voice reassures me that I am a centre around which the world has arranged itself, even if what I try to say comes out somewhat garbled and double-voiced. A little reflection on this felt freedom to speak our minds, however, and we grow worried. We know that we are not free where our institutions are concerned. And these institutions have a hand in making us who we are. Are they not at least in part responsible for shaping what we believe? Do they not mediate between the world and this little tacit voice that whispers ‘I am myself, after all, of that there can be no doubt?’ Even where others are concerned, we are by turns impugned and praised, assisted and resisted, taught how to love, how to pray, how to speak, and how to live. And much of this teaching and assistance, criticism and approbation, takes place before we learn to write our own name. So just like Pico, each one of us is as much shaped by the past as we are active in shaping the future. The same antecedents who provided Pico with the new humanist certainty that ‘man’ is born free also haunted him with hierarchies; they told him that the nature in which he was immersed was prepared in advance, fixed, ready-made. The belief in a God pantocrator has no small part to play in many of the conflicts that arise between human beings, since what we believe translates into how we act. In this sense, it makes all the difference in the world whether one defers their motivation to an unseen hand or, contrariwise, whether one believes humans beings alone have the power of meaningful action.

Our institutions should also worry us. Without denying that this worry is itself given shape within the milieu of institutions, the greater part of critique is nevertheless born among and falls back upon institutions. One might speak in an almost child-like
manner when grasping to understand the intuition: to riff on Deleuze and Guattari, in a slightly different key, we might allow a little silliness here and say that everything is an institution. Engels, for example, said the hand and the tool were mutualist institutions. Critique is only meaningful when it takes the form of a dialogue between human beings and the institutions they create. The human being is itself an institution. Where they are working at their highest capacity—i.e., crystallized in the institution of thought—the efficacy of our institutions ought to be continually questioned. Do they provide us with the maximum ‘freedom’ while at the same time offering the least resistance? After all, is that not what an institution does? In terms of essences—and one should always retain a healthy scepticism as regards essences—an institution facilitates and lubricates the world while making sure to get out of the way of the human bodies it supports. In a world where everything seems to live and die according to its status as institution, there arises an emergent necessity to perpetually question the value of our institutions in all their ubiquity. But if the human being is itself an institution—i.e., an inherited idea passed to us by our antecedents, and if everything knowable about the human being is made known by the human being, how do we measure the value of this knowing? The old humanist problem of ‘man’ as measure of ‘himself’ rears its head here. How does a ruler measure itself? Can a ruler tell you how big a centimetre is?

History should also worry us. We are likewise conditioned by as much as we condition history. Tied up in history, between the earth and the sky, are many major and minor narratives. There is a canon of our dearly departed and kindred philosophers’ proper names, which we must recite and learn as if by rote. But for how long? Is it not sad if we go on forever thinking this way? Jules Laforgue said, “La vie est trop triste, trop sale. L’histoire est un vieux cauchemar bariolé qui ne se doute pas que les meilleures plaisanteries sont les plus courtes.” Insomuch as we are unconsciously conditioned by history it bears us up tightly in its arms, and we suffer from the delusion that the more we critique it the more we shall loosen its grip, never suspecting that we are this history incarnate. But history is not only a nightmare, it is an adventure and a farce. The same history that holds us from absolute possibility provides us with its legacy. Our forebears’ accomplishments in religion, ethics, natural history, psychology, linguistics, literature, physics and all of our institutions restrain our freedom to become while
providing the very possibility of historical becoming. We never move forward without presupposing a firm footing on the cultural achievement of the past.

In my graduate work I have been twice blessed.

First I have discovered in the work of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin a crossroads of sorts. Which comes first, being or responsibility? Ontology before ethics! This used to be a personal maxim until Bakhtin convinced me otherwise. Language conditions being, and—by extension—our ethically active human understanding. To proceed from a strictly theoretical ontology without the living ingression into being, without answering theory by architectonically conjoining it with practice, is to remain wholly on the side of theoretical cognition—as Graham Roberts defines it, the word architectonic refers to “the science of relations, of how parts relate together to form a (dynamic) whole.”

In proceeding from this strict theoretical point of view we amputate the real everyday material aspect of our lives qua becoming. To proceed from the other direction, wholly from the sensual aspect of our lives, consigns sense itself to the rubble of human history; living this way, we lose our cultural and socioeconomic birthright to a wholly aestheticized life.

As we will see, in Section Two, both of these approaches to ethics are necessary but insufficient. Ontology and ethics are wed inseparably to each other in Bakhtin. The world calls out to us and exhorts us to answer what he terms once-occurrent being-as-event—i.e., life in its creative and ever-rejuvenating present. For Bakhtin, we ought not cease asking the question of the relationship between discourse and life. Life as it is lived is a perpetual process that human beings are self-evidently held responsible to answer—this is the price demanded us for the gift of self-consciousness. Bakhtin calls the ethically active process of responding to the present moment the architectonics of answerability.

Since the sensual world is in constant flux, and since our answers are ineluctably conditioned by the history we are attempting to answer, a constant re-phrasing is necessary. In Section Two I will take up Bakhtin’s phenomenological and ethical writings. These seek to establish the architectonically formed meaning of a life through co-authorship. Never complete, co-authorship of a life is a perpetually renewed process that takes place between self and other—i.e., between the author and hero. Authorship is always conditional and pending upon the verification grounded in the body and life of the
other. This verification is possible because, for Bakhtin, the other has an *excess of seeing*—a sort of overflow of insight into the subject, which the other has and uses to help temporarily complete—*consummate*—the subject. Since human beings are caught up in a situation, they always have a view from somewhere, a position, and their self-understanding is necessarily limited as a result. The other’s excess of seeing provides insight into those blind-spots, and the other therefore fills out the purview of the subject through an intersubjective relation. It is only by being-with, only this *exotopic* condition—i.e., by being located outside of the other rather than being co-extensive with the other—that we can answer the call of being-as-event and consummate our lives. Authorship and ethical answerability are always active. They take place through unending *dialogue* between the subject and other and between the subject and the world.

Second, Bakhtin has been a profound teacher and touchstone for me in terms of what I consider the question of 20th century philosophy—namely, ought humanism give way completely to what Foucault has called the hermeneutics of the subject? Bakhtin stands in the interstice between our fading faith in humanism and the rise of what Allon White refers to as “semantic personalism.” M. M. Bakhtin provides us with a rich account of world history from the point of view of the life’s ‘big questions.’ Post-1960’s philosophical cynicism and the suspicion of all things relating to the subject do not tend to humour these distinctly humanist concerns. But in a world that is once again all too ready to throw its history in the dust-bin, to return to its repressed ground of existence, to grant its corporations personhood while rolling back the welfare state, I have yet to hear an argument that can dissuade me from the conviction that humanism is not wholly beyond redemption or that post-structuralism can save us from ourselves. The first task as human theorists, it seems to me, is to be theorists without ceasing to be human, and to be human without ceasing to think critically.

There will never be a satisfactory grand narrative, and certainly humanism must reject *monological*—i.e., univocal—teleology. But there is nevertheless an ongoing great *dialogue* in which we need to actively seek a seat at the table, because we are all implicated. This dialogue is neither wholly historical nor purely immanent to textuality, but both the text and history require a “rejoinder” from us—we historical-semantic human beings. What is the question asked in this great dialogue? That is part of the territory of
this little survey. We need the right ears to hear this question, but we can say from the very beginning that it is heard in a several modes and in a multiplicity of voices—it is polyphonic. The question is not one but many. I have already begun to hint at the intonation of this question as I hear it: what does it mean to be a human being? What is the relationship between human beings and their institutions? How is the relationship between human beings ethically and ontologically constituted? How are we historically conditioned and how do we condition our history? And perhaps most tacit of all, I hear these questions: What am I responsible for? How do I ethically answer these questions?

I do believe in redemption and its necessity. If this makes me a utopian thinker, so be it. Yet perhaps we need to begin critically rethinking Utopia as a polyphonic, double-voiced struggle, according to the logic of evolution and becoming. As Michael Gardiner points out, both Merleau-Ponty and Bakhtin “uphold the Utopian possibility of an ‘ideal community of embodied subjects.’” ¹⁴ This ideal is bolstered not for the sake of some monological vision of a singular collective telos realized at the end of history, but to keep ever-present at the forefront of dialogue the reminder that our situatedness is not solipsistic but intersubjective. Let us be clear here: I believe in redemption’s necessity, but I do not believe in its absolute actualization. Like the problem of history, justice is aporetic. It calls to us and requires us to answer, but this in no way means that we are equal to the task. Life compels us to live without ready-made answers. Redemptive embodiment and ideal communities are virtualities not eventualities, but they are nevertheless embedded in the real socioeconomic milieu of everyday life and are self-reflexive, like the “critical Utopias” of Gardiner’s own theoretical position. ¹⁵

There is no alibi we may give to the Reaper—he knows his chaff—and just so, it is not permissible to scapegoat my personal situation. To live as if I am not myself is to live in an illusion, and to live passively is to rebuke life itself. Where I hear a voice in the event that calls me to act—be it to help a fellow traveller or to seek to leave the world a more sustainable place for your grandchildren whom I will never meet—I must act.

The ethical project of answering life as once-occurring being-as-event is an endless task. As human beings, we tend to seek ready-made solutions, easy answers, and to lead finalized lives—i.e., as if we are wholly self-consistent and can live according to a blueprint. The more we stutter toward uttering a true word, however, the more our words
It is essential to enter this great dialogue with a view to great time. That is to say, we are mortal players on this planet, but we nevertheless participate in immortality. Yet at the time I am writing this, we have turned the page of history to the 21st century having almost entirely forgotten this long view of historical time—at least in our everyday and non-theoretical lives. Even when we do look to the long view of history, there is a danger of seeing only its negative aspect. Interpreted from the point of view of an individual life and death, the image of great time is often only negatively inflected; in the wholly negative polarization of the image of great time, we are reminded that our mortal lives are insignificant in comparison with images of immortality.

The quasi-immortal Californian redwood, for example, can evince a feeling of temporal impotence. In Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* there is a scene in which Jimmy Stewart (a.k.a. ‘Scottie’) and Kim Novak (a.k.a. ‘Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton’) are found walking among the California redwoods. Both characters ostensibly suffer from personal limitations that obstruct their forward progression in life: Scottie from vertigo and Barton *cum* ‘Madeleine Elster’ from the belief that she is the reincarnated spirit of ‘Carlotta’—a high society woman who drowned herself in the mid 19th century. In a sense, both characters are immobilized by the vertigo of their personal history. The audience overhears Stewart’s character read from a tourist placard: (referring to the redwoods) “‘Their true name is sequoia sempervirens... always green, ever living.’” When Scottie and Madeleine stop to view a cross-section of one of the fallen sequoias, Hitchcock uses one of his famed slow-moving camera pans across the trees-rings to intimate historical unfolding according to great time. We see “1066: The Battle of Hastings,” “1215: Magna Carta Signed,” “1492: Discovery of America,” etc., with arrows pointing to the chalked tree-rings. Pointing to the rings Novak speaks the iconic
Somewhere in here I was born ... and there I died. It was only a moment for you. You ... you took no notice.” The great age of the trees upsets Novak’s character. They remind her she will have to die—that her life is insignificant relative to the quasi-eternal redwood. As we will see in the fourth and in the last sections of this work, for Bakhtin there are both positive and negative polarities in images of life and death. Elster/Barton’s verbal utterance expresses the wholly negative pole from which we understand great time. Understood only negatively, our lives certainly appear insignificantly short when compared with the sequoia, the age of the earth, of a star, or of the solar-system. Nevertheless, there is also a positive polarity that can be coaxed out of images of life and death in great time. When seen outside of the point of view of the individual, when understood in terms of the collective cultural and historical life, great time takes on a positive character in which the quasi-immortal human dialogue comes into sharp focus. From this vista, even the image of individual life and death becomes re-infused with the larger importance of the collective body of humankind to which it is connected. In taking the problem of great time seriously, and by retaining in the image of individual life and death its bi-polar negative and positive aspects, our lives may undergo a dramatic re-intonation of what it means to live in the face of death; great time pushes to the background some aspects of life with which we are often preoccupied and it brings into sharp focus matters that we do not usually consider from day to day. If we have forgotten how to view great time in terms of the great dialogue, we are in danger of hearing only its negative inflections: ‘But why must I die?’ ‘I expected more out of life!’ ‘You only live once, better take while the taking’s good!’ Such attitudes are the expression of a vertiginous relationship between the individual and the larger whole with which he is connected. Bakhtin provides us an alternative to the strictly negative and impotent image of individual life and death, and we need now more than ever to hear what he has to say.

Bakhtin’s corpus and the writings of the Bakhtin Circle give us particular cause to celebrate. By taking a long view of history and by returning to the big problems of science, the humanities, and philosophy, he provides us a path back into the human historical and cultural past with an eye to redeeming and rejuvenating what we cannot leave behind without ceasing to be embodied self-reflective and semantic persons. As such, he brings the self-autonomy promised in humanism back to life without promoting a
manifest destiny or re-inscribing dogmatism, and at the same time he avoids the spirit of absolute relativity that leaves philosophy and science without direction. In a sense, Bakhtin is a funambulist. He walks a tightrope between the largely authoritarian human past and the complete openness of the undisclosed future. The problem of history is the problem of determining the proper weight we ought to ascribe to freedom and necessity, and this problem is one belonging to the ontological category of *becoming not being*. In other words, the problem of history is something *set out for humans as a task* and we deceive ourselves when we propose ready-made solutions or attempt to *finalize* it. In offering his particular perspective on history, Bakhtin shows a way forward that does not dismiss the past as a mere nightmare. He never loses sight of the big picture—he always has an eye to how the individual opens onto the greater narrative of species, of the bi-polarity inherent in images of life and death. Only when understood with an eye to this bi-polarity can the great weight of history be reborn as laughter. Only where we have an ear for hearing the great dialogue and when we have taught ourselves to see the fullness of time will we place the image of human beings back in the scale of *great time*. 
B. Outline of the Whole

Rather than proceeding strictly analytically, I will attempt a more thematic and narrative style throughout this work. This is not to say that analysis will not be an essential component. No commentary can answer its subject without detailed and acute analysis, but I wish to follow a style more akin to that of Bakhtin himself. Therefore, I hope that what follows will be productive for the reader by gradually building up these themes in additive rhythms rather than by providing a strict analytical reconstruction. This latter approach is sometimes unavoidable, but I have usually found it leads to dry and spiritless prose. There are now so many monographs on Bakhtin that I would be remiss if I did not attempt to entertain as well as to inform.

Before we begin I will briefly outline some of the themes which I will take up section by section. Those who wish to plunge right in without this spoiler can skip to Section One.

Section One will outline some of the more salient details of Bakhtin’s early biographical education leading up to his first book length publication *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* in 1929.

Section Two provides a perspectival account of Bakhtin’s ethics. That is, it does not attempt to exhaust his ethical writings, which are found, for the most part, in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and *Art and Answerability*. Since *no neutrality is possible*, no attempt at neutrality can or will be made here. My reading of Bakhtin’s ethics attempts to find a middle ground between Christian-doctrinal/liberal and Marxist-semiotic and semantic appropriations. The former are found in the writings of Ann Shukman, Michael Holquist and Katerina Clark, and others. I take Allon White as a proponent of the latter. I tend to fall closer to White’s reading, by emphasizing the conceptual rather than religious basis for Bakhtin’s own appropriation of both Christian and Marxist concepts. The first part of this section will therefore focus on Bakhtin’s notion of ethical *consummation* between subject and other. As we all know in experience, we appear differently to others than we do to ourselves. Phenomenologically speaking, the subject appears open to the world while the other appears as something whole unto itself, but because of this fundamental difference neither subject nor other can achieve a synthetic unity of this inside and outside appearance by their own power. Under only my own
power, I cannot author my own life from both the point of view of the subject as well as the point of view of my subjectivity as seen from the other’s perspective. The world viewed from inside my own consciousness and my world as viewed from the perspective of the other require a fundamentally phenomenological moment of analysis from inside consciousness where the two perspectives of my life can be fused together in an ethically active moment of answering what I have understood about myself through the other. The self from inside and outside consciousness will never fuse without the help of the other’s transgredient position—i.e., her state of being outside of my consciousness. As a result, the subject needs the other in order to see itself from outside, and vice-versa. This surplus of seeing, or transgredience, allows for co-consummation—or temporary ontological completion—of self and other. As we will see, consummation has two essential moments, an intuitive projection of the subject into the other and its return into its unique perspective outside the other. It cannot do without either of these moments and still achieve the ethical act of answering between self and other. In this section I focus on projection of the self into the other as it might be inflected through the Orthodox virtue of kenosis. In doing so, I hope I have shown that while Bakhtin is heavily influenced by Russian Orthodox concepts, his concern is not with the spiritual supermundane aspects of theology, but with their socioeconomic and materially contextualized implications for ethics.

In the fourth subsection of the Section Two, I turn to the genealogy of Bakhtin’s theory of intersubjective relation. Implicated in this is Bakhtin’s cornerstone idea developed out of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, namely architectonics. Like Kant, Bakhtin was concerned with how externally unrelated faculties—or what I have called institutions in this introduction—might be brought into immanent relations and influence one another within the same conscious existence. Today we might refer to this as interdisciplinarity. By adding to this concern the distinctly Russian virtue of responding/responsibility to one’s fellow human being, Bakhtin essentially maps the concern with interdisciplinary relations onto a second ethically-inflected field regarding self-other relations. Again, these relations are always read through the notion of responsibility—of the necessity to answer the human sciences, the event, and the other as
they arise as a problem within conscious existence: hence the architectonics of answerability.

The concern between both self-other relations and interdisciplinarity will set the tone for the larger whole of this work and shall be revisited throughout the subsequent sections. Bakhtin’s philosophical corpus is polyvalent, but he is everywhere preoccupied with the dialogue between subjects, between disciplines and between ideas. We will attempt to show how he seeks an answerable and additive response between the disciplines of ethics, biology, psychology and psychoanalysis, linguistics, literature, and history in the relevant sections that follow. In this work, ethics comes first in that it grounds the possibility of answering the other disciplines while at the same time establishing the dynamics of their ontological relation and exploring the possibility of dialogue between the disciplines.

The third section of this thesis explores a paper published under the name of Bakhtin’s friend I. I. Kanaëv entitled “Contemporary Vitalism”. The authorship of this paper is highly debatable, but I proceed under the assumption that whoever penned it, the essay is the product of collaboration. This section will begin by reviewing in brief the history of vitalism. I will then review Bakhtin and Kanaëv’s critique of the vitalist Hans Driesch’s work The Science and Philosophy of the Organism. As the paper ends with the authors’ proclaimed commitment to dialectical materialism in the sciences, I attempt to develop an account of how the sciences are fundamentally grounded in sociology and cultural production—i.e., I try to show how the limited methods of biology are themselves answered by their relation to sociological theory. In transitioning to the following section I take up Freud’s borrowings from biological science to reinforce his dualistic turn found in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. This new stage in psychoanalytic theory evinces no small influence from the relation between body and mind and to the spiritual agency that haunts vitalism.

The fourth section moves into psychoanalysis proper and its critique under the pen of another member of the Bakhtin Circle, namely Valentin Voloshinov. Voloshinov’s book Freudianism: A Marxist Critique attempts to replace Freud’s ontological distinction between consciousness and the unconscious with the ideological distinction between official and unofficial discourse—roughly categorical distinctions between sanctioned and
unsanctioned utterance, not wholly unlike what Deleuze and Guattari call major and minor literatures. Following Voloshinov, Freud is critiqued in this section for remaining committed to a highly introspective approach to psychology—albeit an ingenious and highly nuanced one. I will show that Voloshinov attempts to find a middle ground between introspective and behavioural psychology by once again turning to dialectical materialism and the architectonically answerable dynamic relation between discourse in scientific theory/praxis and discourse in everyday socioeconomic life. As Voloshinov’s book is largely a propaedeutic invitation to further research along these lines, the final part of this section will then go on to show how *Freudianism* can ameliorate contemporary visions of Freud. In doing so, I review the merits of Allon White’s attempt to extend the Bakhtin Circle’s critique of psychoanalysis—as a bourgeois repression of the carnivalesque and the grotesque body, and I also attempt to extend White’s productive revisitation of psychoanalysis within the fields of sociological theory and modernist literature.

The fifth section takes on Saussurean linguistics, first from the point of view of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s critique in his lectures on “Child Psychology and Pedagogy” and then along the lines found in Voloshinov’s second book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. A pattern will begin to emerge here, as Voloshinov again seeks to establish a middle ground based on everyday socioeconomic discourse. Here the third term falls between two major trends in linguistic study, namely what Voloshinov calls *individual subjectivism* and *abstract objectivism*. In order to show how the Bakhtin Circle makes use of this third term, I will then go on to explicate Bakhtin and Voloshinov’s own theory of discourse in art as it is related to and founded upon discourse in life. This analysis will set the stage for the subsequent section on *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*.

Section Six will attempt to explicate the first territory of *Problems* by showing how the *polyphonic novel* marks a new and important development in the history of novelistic discourse. At the same time, I will also show that by emphasising Dostoevsky’s *personalist* approach to the characters in his novels, he is able to effect a profound critique of German Ideology and enter into the great dialogue as it existed in his own time and to show how the ground is prepared for its future life within his literary corpus.
Finally, Section Seven will take up a number of major themes in Bakhtin’s *oeuvre* regarding novelistic genres, space-time, and history. Not least among the problems within these spheres is the historical aporia between freedom and necessity. The exploration of this historical aporia is explored through Bakhtin’s theory of *chronotopicity*—loosely, the perceptually relative experience of space-time. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the oppressive weight of neo-Platonic philosophy and the part it has played in enframing occidental human self-understanding. In this section I will also review the major chronotopes provided in Bakhtin’s essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel”; the Rabelaisian chronotope and Goethe’s talent for seeing the *fullness of time* play the starring roles in this section.
§ 1. Biography: M. M. Bakhtin

1.1 A Novel Education: Bakhtin’s Bildungsroman in Brief

“By biography and autobiography (the account of a person’s life), we understand the most immediate transgressed form in which I can objectify myself and my own life artistically.”
—Bakhtin

The narrative of Bakhtin’s early years is muddled and distorted by both a lack of evidence and false testimony. The Gospel of M. M. Bakhtin according to Clark and Holquist’s eponymous biography often strays into the apocryphal. By his own word, Bakhtin graduated from St. Petersburg in 1918, but this has since been disproven. It seems that Bakhtin’s ‘autobiography’ was part truth and part creation. Before arriving in St. Petersburg in 1914 to study alongside his brother and mentor, Nikolai, Clark and Holquist place Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin in the gymnasiums of Vilnius and Odessa. We may go on faith that aspects of this are correct, since Bakhtin’s writings evince an intimidating breadth of knowledge of the classics. He is said to have studied both Latin and Greek, and it is apparent that he was saturated in theology and the philosophical thought of the 19th and early 20th centuries—especially Martin Buber and Kierkegaard. He was also influenced by the Russian symbolist Vyacheslav Ivanov, and had already read Marx, Engels, and Nietzsche. St. Petersburg was newly christened Petrograd at the time Bakhtin came into contact with Russian Futurists and Formalists. These two strains of the avant-garde he would co-opt and critique by turns throughout his career.

Bakhtin seems to have been heavily influenced by his brother’s professor in classical philology at Petersburg University, one Faddei F. Zelinsky. Zelinsky may quite possibly be the source of one of Bakhtin’s most controversial claims—that distinctly novelistic genres can be traced back to ancient times. Zelinsky believed that the ancient writers had already formulated and begun actualizing all species of literary genres, from the epic to the novel. It is Bakhtin’s commitment to this canonically eccentric definition of what constitutes the novel as a literary form which in turn allowed him both to display his exhaustive familiarity with the history of literature as well as to begin to develop a theory of folk culture the scope of which would likewise span some “thousands of years”; this founding idea of Bakhtin’s theory of the novel is perhaps defended most strongly in his essay “Epic and Novel.” He believed that the remnants of ancient Grecian cultures
that lay dormant in this millennial folk culture could be reborn “periodically” throughout history.\textsuperscript{24} For some intellectuals the October Revolution marked the commencement of a hoped for Renaissance of Hellenism.\textsuperscript{25}

Mikhail’s brother Nikolai left St. Petersburg, joined the White Guards, and would communicate with Mikhail little before his hasty departure from Russian soil soon thereafter, and the two brothers would never again see each other in the flesh.\textsuperscript{26} By 1918, at the tender age of twenty-three years, Bakhtin had already begun to evince a maturity and philosophical insight that won him the friendship of some of those destined to intellectual and cultural fame in Russia and abroad. Bakhtin’s friend Lev Vasilievich Pumpiansky had coaxed Bakhtin into joining him in the unlikely cultural Mecca of Nevel.\textsuperscript{27} Once in Nevel, Bakhtin had made the acquaintance and begun a philosophical dialogue with, among others, Valentin Voloshinov, Pavel Medvedev, and Matvei Isaevich Kagan; with these intellectual friendships Bakhtin began a lifelong commitment to dialogue, co-authorship, and professional collusion. This so-called ‘Nevel School’ of philosophy discussed subjects as diverse as theology, the theory of language, philosophical discourse, art, and dialectical materialism. Their conversations were as heady as the copious samovars of strong tea they sat drinking long into the night.\textsuperscript{28} The group was also publicly active and produced plays, lectured, and staged musical performances.\textsuperscript{29}

Pumpiansky was tempted away to Vitebsk in 1919 where he organized a seminar in neo-Kantian philosophy.\textsuperscript{30} Bakhtin followed Pumpiansky to Vitebsk and the Nevel Circle gradually began to disband. What remained of the group slowly re-orientated its intellectual centre around Bakhtin himself.\textsuperscript{31} Since the revolution Vitebsk had grown increasingly bohemian; the town was transformed overnight from a quaint outpost in what is now Belarus, to a bustling base of experimental art and radical politics. Parenthetically, Vitebsk was also the childhood home of Marc Chagall, who had returned from Europe in 1918 to actively participate in the left-leaning cultural explosion now in full swing.\textsuperscript{32} It is perhaps most surprising that this artistic upspring was taking place in the midst of what was effectively a civil war, but the early days of the revolution were every bit as much aesthetic as political. Theory and practice were in no way separate for these artists and intellectuals, and the civil war did not begin and end in politics. For
example, the Futurist Malevich and the “folkloristic” painter Chagall had themselves fought an ideological war wherein Malevich achieved supremacy and eventuated Chagall’s departure from his hometown. Clark and Holquist hint that Bakhtin had ambivalent feelings about the seismological cultural inversion taking place in Vitebsk. He had still not exorcised the influence of the second wave of Russian symbolists represented in the figure of Ivanov—an influence against whom Formalists such as Shklovsky were constitutionally opposed. The state of being outside of these artistic movements no doubt had a profound effect on him.

For a man who suffered from painful inflammations brought on by osteomyelitis and who was struck with typhoid, losing his right leg in the process, Bakhtin managed to keep surprisingly active. His days in Vitebsk were spent in service to the community. He earned his modest living by teaching, while at the same time organizing literary and women’s liberation seminars, provided economic and bookkeeping services to the local statistical bureau, and staged theatrical mock defence trials for infamous literary personae; this last item is an extraordinary biographical detail considered from the perspective of Bakhtin’s later theory of polyphony and the central idea in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics—i.e., that Dostoevsky hear the voices of his characters. By all accounts Bakhtin became a skilled orator, though this talent was not always manifest in his youth. In 1921 Bakhtin met and married Elena Aleksandrovna, who steadied and cared for him during his frequent periods of convalescence.

In the same year that Bakhtin arrived in Vitebsk, he wrote the earliest extant text of his oeuvre. In English it is known as “Art and Answerability”. The brief essay silhouettes the particular strain of thought which would occupy him for the next five years in various guises. Like the artistic trajectory of the so-called Nevel Circle, the essay opposes an immanent, life-orientated art to an accidental, mechanical form of art; as we will see later, this latter type constitutes a clumsy synthesis of disparate elements that Goethe would have rejected as “arbitrary constructions.” A truly immanent unity of the artistic experience can only be achieved inside of consciousness and only through an effort to bring back to life what is experienced in the work of art. Taking a page out of Kant, Bakhtin asserts that there is an architectonic relationship that can be constructed between art and life and that it is, moreover, our responsibility to consummate this
relationship as authors of our own lives. Anything short of such an attempt is a perversion of the properly conceived relationship between art and life: “inspiration that ignores life and is itself ignored by life is not inspiration but a state of possession.” It was precisely this effort to place art back into the realm of life as it is lived that inspired Kagan’s exhortation that art ought to “involve itself more closely with life and not to serve the interests of any one faction or ethnic group.” This turn toward everyday life was in the air and was equally expressed by the Circle’s communist counterparts in those early days of revolutionary optimism.

As is well known, the two texts re-discovered during the 1970’s shortly before Bakhtin’s death, one set of writings anthologized as Art and Answerability and the other an unfinished treatise on ethics, Toward a Philosophy of the Act, belong to this period; however, the transition from these notebooks to translated and published texts is convoluted and not without controversy. The central themes that hold this body of writings together are their consistent dedication to questions of authorship—the so-called “master trope” of his worldview. Existential responsibility does most of the heavy lifting in these texts, as Bakhtin attempts to position himself in the history of philosophy. His early approach to authorship, disciplinarity, and the responsibility inherent between subjects and the world is overwhelmingly phenomenological and neo-Kantian.

Bakhtin’s earliest surviving notebooks evince a multifaceted philosophic avenue into various theoretical concerns that at times contract together in agreement and at times expand into different points of view—for example, the different approaches to ethics and authorship evoked in his phenomenological and textual studies. Bakhtin’s oeuvre is, in short, dialogical from its very beginning. This kind of contradictory co-existence in the same body of work is part and parcel of Bakhtin’s style of writing, which consistently privileges theme over analysis; moreover, Bakhtin is not the most economic writer, and his works tend to be prone to long digressions that do not always fit back into the whole of his stated task. What it lacks in Germanic economy, however, it manages to compensate for in fairness and insight, polyvocality and virtuosic journalistic performance. Indeed, the voice of the poet journalist Walt Whitman often enters into conversation with me when I read Bakhtin’s works, for example:

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed
on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.49

Throughout his corpus Bakhtin remains committed to seeing the other side of an argument, to hearing the voice of the internal ‘thou’ and the external other. It is precisely this commitment that allows us to speak of his work as being informed by both centripetal and centrifugal forces, by both contraction and expansion, both ergon and energeia, both being and becoming, and to approach these works from a polyvocal rather than dogmatic perspective. These themes will stay with us throughout the present text, just as they tarried with our Russian thinker throughout his own life and work.

Bakhtin’s philosophical apprenticeship, in those revolutionary days of tumult, sickness, economic depression, and profound productivity, was perhaps most consciously and directly shaped by the proponents of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism. Most notable among these was the so-called “sage of Marburg”, Hermann Cohen.50 Cohen attempted to expunge the gap in the Kantian dualism between mind (phenomenon) and world (noumenon), and his philosophy won him many devotees in both Russia and Germany. For Cohen, Kant’s Ding an sich (thing as such) was not to be approached as an absolutely unknowable substance, but as “merely the limit of conceptualization.”51 Our concepts of the thing as such, according to Cohen, proceed to greater and greater clarity. If this is the case, then it follows that the conceptualization of the thing as it is in itself is not wholly beyond conceptualization, but quite to the contrary, there is no end to its conceptualization. Cohen wanted to make Kant over into a monist, to permanently bridge the gap between subjectivity and the world: there is no world wholly unto itself; there is only the world of conception and concept formation.

According to Clark and Holquist, this placed Bakhtin on the far side of the neo-Kantian divide diametrically opposed to Cohen.52 While he was greatly influenced by Cohen’s assertion that conceptualization could never come to a full stop—that at its limit concept formation was wholly unfinalizable, Bakhtin rejected the idea that matter could be nothing other than a conception.53 ‘The other’ and ‘alterity’ are important categories which Bakhtin respects in the formation of his concepts. Moreover, the gap between mind and world is not a division that Bakhtin would want to permanently conjoin in a
unity without difference. In other words, for Bakhtin, “all that is living is alive precisely because of a noncorrespondence with others.” Unlike Cohen, Bakhtin sees this gap between mind and world as an ontological divide that can be crossed but never completely closed, and he therefore remains a dualistic thinker. In fact, it is precisely because this dualism is hardwired into what he calls the *once-occurrent being-as-event* that we cannot foreclose on the sense of existence. That is to say, everyday conscious life as it arises phenomenologically maintains a gap between subject and world and between subject and object. Today we would describe Bakhtin’s philosophy as a body of utterances that expresses an ideological preference for discourses of becoming.
§ 2. Ethics: *Toward a Philosophy of the Act and Art and Answerability*

2.1 Lost in Translation?: Bakhtin Meets the West

“In the beginning was the deed.”
—Goethe

No commentary can wholly resist predication. Ideological intonation is inevitable. In *Art and Answerability*, Bakhtin says, “no one can assume a position toward the I and the other that is neutral.” In this section I intend to accomplish two essential tasks that I hope will outline how the present work ties in with the very large and growing body of Bakhtinian scholarship. First, I want to show that Bakhtin’s early notebooks translated as *Toward a Philosophy of the Act and Art and Answerability* are informed by Christian doctrine, and specifically the Orthodox kenotic tradition. This influence is not transparent, but it can be elucidated by a careful exposition of the intersection between the distinctly Russian virtue of *kenosis* and Bakhtin’s conception of *projection* as an essential, but not exclusive, moment in his ethics of answering what he calls *once-occurrent being-as-event*. Kenosis is essentially the word used to describe Christ’s sloughing off his Spiritual substance and taking on a wholly material body when he became incarnated as ‘man.’ In Russian Orthodoxy the virtue of kenosis is essentially the doctrine that one should attempt to empathize with the other and treat them as a worldly brother to whom they must respond ethically. It is my belief that Bakhtin’s projection self-consciously allies itself with the virtue of kenosis. As projection is used in Bakhtin’s writings, the notion is not without dispute, and it is crucial to state at the outset that projection is an intuitive moment of union between subject and other and not ontologically actualizable. There is a very real connection here with Kant’s concept of *Einfühlung*, or empathy, which was adopted by a number of Germanic thinkers including Wilhelm Dilthey and Hermann Cohen. This is not to say that Bakhtin accepts the possibility of unmediated co-empathizing between subject and other. In a very real sense there is no overcoming the alterity of the other and no reduction of difference to a monological unity. For Bakhtin, in the words of Michael Gardiner, empathy is “only the initial moment of alterity; after this, we must ‘return’ to ourselves.”

Second, this section will seek to establish the so-called ‘master trope’ of both Bakhtin’s corpus and the present work: namely the *architectonics of answerability* as an
authorship of self through a deeper understanding of self-other relatedness. Since this is
the section of my thesis devoted to ethics, I will attempt to show how this architectonic
method of answering works within Bakhtin’s ethical thought—with a particular focus on
the relations between subject and other. In doing so, however, it is my intention to lay the
ground-work for the remainder of this thesis, vis-à-vis how answerability also informs the
manifold of relations between disciplines as Bakhtin understands them. Bakhtin’s
interdisciplinarity—or peregrinations between disciplines—will then be further explored
in the subsequent sections of this thesis.

Julia Kristeva’s “Une poétique ruinée” launched Bakhtin’s Problems of Dostoevsky’s
Poetics on the French reading public in 1970. Kristeva asks “how will this text be
understood” at the remove of some forty years since its publication. Her work is tightly
associated with other key figures in the semiotics movement in Europe in the late sixties
and early seventies, and most especially Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, and Tzvetan
Todorov, the last of whom composed a monograph on Bakhtin entitled Mikhail Bakhtin:
le principe dialogique (1981). Kristeva praises the Circle, including Medvedev and
Voloshinov, for effectively correcting Russian Formalism’s failure to capture the truly
objective “‘scientific object’” of study they sought: “Bakhtin and his group show that one
could cover fresh ground, within the Formalist and poetic range of problems, if one were
to question the workings of literary meaning from the point of view of their place in the
history of meaning-systems and of their relationship to the speaker.” Kristeva follows
Medvedev and Voloshinov’s charge that the Formalists collapsed the object of their study
into mere “categories of language”—which is to say, they fallaciously reduce literary
utterances to linguistic and formal categories. The Circle primarily adds two important
facets to literary study that were missing from the Formalist method of scholarship. First,
the material value-laden “meaning-systems” were not reducible to a “unified field,”
regardless of whether this field was conceived of as composed entirely of mind or
meaning. Second, one could not treat the social-context, or milieu, as an empty husk—
material and socioeconomic context could not be stripped away from the utterance. The
practice of language production therefore jumps out into the forefront as a problem of the
construction of a theoretical apparatus which can account for the “language-user.”
According to Kristeva, the tangible language-user nevertheless remains deficient in Bakhtin’s first publication—i.e., *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Kristeva accuses Bakhtin of psychologism, a common philosophical fallacy in fin-de-siècle European philosophy, which attempts to ground logic and semantics wholly in the space-time of psychological discourse.\(^64\) Finally, Kristeva accuses Bakhtin of apparently glossing over his own covert Christian commitments and humanist remainders.\(^65\) By her own admission, Kristeva therefore reveals these supposedly latent religious undertones in order to redeem the remainder of the text; she wants “to salvage,” however unknown to its author, the “kernel” of what he “really meant” to say; her critical intervention would then bring this authorial intention into contemporary semiotics as one of its “hitherto unknown precursor[s].”\(^66\) It was thus that Bakhtin was introduced to the West.

I have no interest in taking up Kristeva’s accusation of psychologism here, as it will not foreground in any way my anticipated discussion of Bakhtin’s philosophy, nor will it add to or interfere with my account of his critiques of ethics, vitalism, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or humanism. Bakhtin does provide an account of the language-user that takes a phenomenological tack, however, and it will figure importantly here. The texts in which he does this were still unknown, even inside of Russia, at the time of Kristeva’s writing of this essay, so it would be unfair to criticize her for this omission. We are on firmer ground if we state, along with Charles Lock, that while Kristeva’s attempted semiotic appropriation of Bakhtin says much about “her perception and scruples that she was able to recognize and admit traces of Christianity; less happily, it says more about the need to stereotype Bakhtin.”\(^67\)

In addition to Kristeva’s introduction of Bakhtin to the West, Sergey Bocharov’s “Conversations with Bakhtin” and Clark and Holquist’s biography have become standard sources for the study of the theological inflections in Bakhtin’s work. In an important passage from Bocharov’s “Conversations”, Bakhtin stresses the fact that he was vitally aware of Soviet censors and intimates that he repressed his religious and philosophical views in his publications; this supposed repression had left them “morally flawed” as a result.\(^68\) Aesopian prevarications or not, the titles of the 1920’s penned under the names of Voloshinov, Kanaëv, and Medvedev show a precocious and unique extension of the philosophical thought of Marx, Freud, the Russian Formalist school, behavioural
psychology, and biological science. We will have opportunity to explore a great deal of this critical work in the sections to follow. Suffice it to say, there is no absolute authority, no last word, on the authorial intent of these works.

2.2 Christ or Marx?: How to Read Bakhtin’s Ethical Writings

Bakhtin’s interest in theology is essential in understanding the narrow contractions of his philosophical thought and how he perceives alterity. This account is also central to his theory of the materiality of the word, and therefore also implicates his translinguistics—i.e., a linguistics that is founded in the surrounding extraverbal socioeconomic milieu.

This is a fine line to walk, since it seems that the motivation for this exploration is usually one of misappropriation according to an extra-Bakhtinian agenda. I have no intention of repeating liberal selective readings of Bakhtin for the purposes of furthering personal religious commitments, since I have none. For my part, I will also leave to one side Bakhtin’s personal faith in matters of religious devotion. What is more interesting and productive is Bakhtin’s nuanced exploration of Christian themes, or what we might call—somewhat paradoxically—Bakhtin’s radical orthodoxy.

In his ethical writings, Bakhtin attempted to erect a bridge between his theological interests and his theoretical activity and writings. The deeply philosophic traditions of Orthodoxy as a cultural storehouse from which Bakhtin fortified many of his most important concepts tends to be dismissed out of hand. The reasons for this, I suspect, often have more to do with the personal experience and unfounded worries of those who want to appropriate his work along Marxist avenues, however selectively. This is not to say that there are not more academically sound concerns underlying the shying away from these Christian themes. It is often held—and usually without question—that if one accepts Christian conceptions of the world one must also reject strong materialist accounts. But I believe this supposition has more to do with the history of the early Christian church, especially after Augustine’s conversion from Manichaeism as well as with the official censure of various heresies during the fourth and fifth centuries.69

In letter and not spirit, I follow Clark and Holquist’s argument that there are “connections between Bakhtin’s Christology and the major, apparently non religious concerns of his thought.”70 Clark and Holquist make themselves easy targets, since their
claims regarding Bakhtin’s ‘religious’ views seldom turn on direct textual evidence from Bakhtin’s own oeuvre. Instead, the biographers conjecture that as Westerners, it is unlikely that readers outside of Russia are truly qualified to judge such connections. This claim is dubious, first since as Westerners—at least those of us outside of Slavic and Religious Studies discourse—it is at least equally likely that we would paint all religious Russians with the same orthodox brush and assume that they have all read The Way of the Pilgrim thoroughly. This Franny and Zooey-ization of the Russian religious-other must inevitably yield proskynesis to those specialists in the know, as it were. We would therefore take Clark and Holquist’s Christianisation of Bakhtin at face value.

Alternately, one could say that those of us who are in the West could not only understand Eastern Orthodox tradition but could help to consummate it from the outside—i.e., we could help it to better understand itself through dialogue. The claim that non-specialized Westerners are simply not knowledgeable enough to understand the nuances of the Russian Church is made according to precisely the same logic as the claims made by Bakhtinian Russian scholars who explain—with feigned professional concern—that non-Russians simply cannot comprehend the nuances of M. M. Bakhtin’s work and therefore are doomed to misappropriate it. But to state with a straight face that well-intentioned and otherwise acutely knowledgeable academics are incapable of moving beyond a cultural-linguistic barrier is highly unsatisfactory. Not only are these positions based on a dubious faith in the assumed authorial intention of the author, they are neither constructive of anything resembling theoretical substance, nor are they productive in making Bakhtin relevant to contemporary theoretical pursuits. What is more, they overlook the value of Bakhtin’s theory of transgredience, the ability of the other to stand outside and help consummate a life, and therefore have no purchase on reanimating Bakhtin’s theoretical corpus. In my reading of Bakhtin, it can be shown that the idea of kenosis not only founds the theological underpinnings of the Russian religious mind, it is also an essential moment in transgredience itself.

Clark and Holquist are on much safer ground if we read them factually and leave to one side their speculative remarks on Bakhtin’s personal faith—especially where it is supposed to come into his work. The way I would like to approach this problem, as I will try to demonstrate—and the only way forward as I can see it, is to place ‘Bakhtin’ back
into scare-quotes as Allon White does in his article “The Struggle Over Bakhtin” and to read him strictly intertextually against the religious traditions that are supposed to have held sway over these texts known as ‘Bakhtin.’ Anything less than this approach runs the very real risk of epistemological anarchism. We simply don’t know what Bakhtin, the man himself, believed. We have only the author ‘Bakhtin,’ and he requires a reader to breathe new life into his lungs.

Clark and Holquist often run into trouble with the intentional fallacy and provide little textual evidence to support their claims. As a result, we are left to take it on authority that Bakhtin’s association with the likes of A. A. Meier, his love of Cohen and Buber—both Jewish—and his frequent references to Manichaean-like oppositions, make Bakhtin into a believer whose work is everywhere (covertly) infused with dogma. We are told that Bakhtin was referred to as a Cerkovnik, or churchman—i.e., someone who took his faith seriously. Yet Bakhtin was not strictly Orthodox, and he also openly discussed the value of other religions. This openness is only in keeping with his commitment to what he will later formulate as dialogism.

2.3 Beyond Orthodoxy: Kenosis and an Ethics of the Event

It is no great secret that Christianity in the West has been profoundly marked by neo-Platonism and through it by the Platonic polarizing elevation of spirit and corresponding “degradation” of matter. More often than not Platonic dualism between mind and body has been carried over wholly intact, at least effectively, into the Christian ethos. This is the meaning of the so-called musiktreibender Sokrates, an inversion of the figure of Socrates embossed out of historical obscurity by Plato. As Nietzsche reminds us, this is the Socrates who knows how to dance, who has remembered his lyre and now obeys the god’s bidding that he should compose poetry rather than philosophy. A Socrates who plays music and who does not fear such imperfect, embodied, degraded copies, throws off his overly rational adherence to the ideal and the world-denying bad-conscience that causes every good Western Christian after the Council of Trent to put fear and hatred into his song. The “negative-theology” of Plotinus, after Plato’s Republic, situates the good beyond the reach of mortal man in his earthly digs—effectively reinforcing this world denial. What Ricoeur calls “empirical individuality,” and what Derrida calls the “tode ti
of brute existence”—i.e., embodied sensual experience—has largely been put to one side in Western Christianity. The reaction against this bad conscience and world denial, rigorously critiqued by Marx and Engels’ dialectical materialism, and then psychologized by Nietzsche, has been amplified into a practically universal suspicion of all things Christian in the 20th century—and not least by the disciples of Marxism and Nietzschean philosophy. At the slightest whiff of the familiar logic of the topos ouranios and supermundane, or the world-denying search for guidance from on high, well-meaning commentators take flight.

In the Republic, Plato placed “the good” outside of the world of appearances; his method is worked out into the two-fold process of hypothesis making and testing according to dialectical reasoning. This was supposed to be the proper method to approach true knowledge of the good. This method still works well enough to put it to use as a crucial part of scientific method—i.e., where science must presuppose the unified sense of a particular scientific discourse. But in constructing this method, Plato also erected a hierarchy moving from conjecture to true knowledge. There are four rungs on this ladder which ascend into the supernal realm of knowing; they are: conjecture, belief, understanding, and knowledge. ‘Knowledge’ for Plato was exclusive to the world of ideal knowing. Thus one moves from mere opinions or doxa, which arise from the senses, to understanding, which can be verified by apodictic verification—algebraic truths and geometric forms belong to this category. Finally through the formation of hypothesis—literally ‘to put under’ qua the support for an idea—one arrives at the invisible transcendental category of knowledge, vis-à-vis ideas. The “Idea of Ideas” in Plato is the good, but the good is not directly accessible by human cognition. It is what has become known in philosophy as the invisible, and is the supposed by Plato to be the perpetuum mobile of thought—that is, the unconditioned Idea of Ideas is the generator of all conditioned ideas. By analogy, Plato provides the example of Helios. The sun provides the means of seeing, but is not itself light or the condition of seeing. The good would here correspond to light, the transcendental condition of seeing. In this way, Plato places beyond sense-certainty the condition of possibility for the senses; he does not place the good in any object but posits the good in-itself. Later Kant’s idea regarding the intuitions of space and time will follow the same logic. By taking up this logic of the
visible and the invisible, by making the good essentially supermundane, Western
Christianity after Proclus has tended to emphasize the next life and the otherworldly
class character of holiness and right living, and he effectively creates in humanity the need for
redemption—an absolute redemption that we inevitably are powerless to bring about
ourselves, as mundane creatures.  

We are right to be suspect of this kind of world-denial that has by and large
gripped the West for two millennia. The atheistic declaration of the death of God and the
humanist flattening of the hierarchical order in scala naturae, did not catch up with all
ideological discourse immediately. No doubt there is still ideological and psychological
residue in the Western soul from the great chain of being—just as there is a long delay
between Darwin and Scopes. Kristeva’s auto-immunity to Bakhtin’s theological
influences is, however, misplaced. I believe she has unfairly quarantined Bakhtin with
patients who are indeed infected with the virus of bad conscience and ressentiment.
Bakhtin’s work is not uncritically influenced by Christian dogma, and where this
influence is at all overt, the emphasis is on bringing the theological and the properly
philosophical into a conceptual mutualism. Nowhere do any of his appropriations of
Christian concepts betray these Platonic and neo-Platonic commitments to the
supermundane. Rabelais and His World is more than a thinly veiled Aesopian polemic
against Marxism in favour of Bakhtin’s hidden commitments to another, more Christian,
world. Regardless of Soviet suppression of the Orthodox Church in the USSR, Bakhtin
had absolutely no need to transcribe his supposed Orthodoxy into disguised concepts,
since unlike its Western counterpart, the kenotic tradition understands the incarnation to
imbue all matter with divinity and all divinity with matter—“all matter is potentially
divine.”  It is difficult to see, therefore, how the distinctly Russian inflection of Kenosis
could contradict a Marxist and materialist worldview—at least on the surface and putting
to one side the overt antipathy between Marxism and religion in general.

Bakhtin seems to have been sympathetic to the kenotic tradition, and yet from
what evidence we have of his religious activity during the early twenties, we may still
infer that he was not a devotee to any particular sect. Where he was outspoken, and
where recognizably Christian ideas do enter into dialogue with his works, he privileges
Christology not eschatology, embodiment not spiritual ascension, and he ascribes to a
collectively active spirituality not a solemn, solipsistic, individual austerity. David Lodge’s attempted Catholic appropriation cannot stand the test of this simple contextual framing. In kenotic virtue, the image of Christ as an attendant to the poor as well as charitable human sympathy are stressed. Naturally there is an emphasis on pouring oneself out into the other human being, on living for the other, and on “self-humiliation.”

Kenosis is an essential aspect of what G. P. Fedotov calls “ethical dualism.” For Fedotov, kenosis exists as one pole of the Russian religious mind. There is another side of the polarity of spirituality motivated by fearful submission to Christ-Pantocrator; this aspect is named the Byzantine ethical component by Fedotov. While it would be wrong to say that the social hierarchical structure of Russian society was wholly flattened in kenosis, hierarchy is only “presupposed,” while ethical responsibility exhorts devotees to self-degradation through the imitation of the “humility of Christ.” Kenotic monasteries, as a matter of fact, practiced submission and communal service, equality among “high and low,” and the “loosening of discipline.” Therefore fearful submission is practiced, but so is humility and life lived for the other. Byzantine subservience and kenotic love for the other are both observed side by side; they exist as a bi-polar movement of spiritual and earthly devotion. The mundane and the supermundane exist together. This is ethical dualism. The tenet that “all men are brothers” is meant to encourage an active engagement with the lower orders of society, while judgement is often most strongly felt for class positions of higher rank. Here we already see traces of the inversion of social hierarchies that will play such a prominent role in Rabelais. Social hierarchies are not actually inverted, however. They are only suppressed and again only in the kenotic polarity. Nevertheless, the pyramidal structure of power in Catholicism and the role of priest as intercessor would have an apocryphal ring in Bakhtin’s ear. He appears to have been concerned instead with the teachings of ‘Christ’ and the role of the earthly community not a heavenly hereafter.

Allon White’s complex discussion of Bakhtin’s position between post-structuralism and humanism will further help us to position the kenotic elements of Bakhtin’s philosophy. In his paper “The Struggle over Bakhtin”, White rejects outright the notion that Bakhtin can in any way be appropriated by Christian apologists such as
Lodge, Ann Shukman, and “more seriously,” Clark and Holquist. Although White gives no credence to theological influences—indeed they do not seem to be on his radar at all, he deems that Clark and Holquist’s attempts to discard Bakhtin’s Marxism in favour of a less critical and indeed “conventional biography,” is nothing less than a misprision of the office of theoretical commentator. As I am arguing in favour of Bakhtin’s Christological influences, it may seem paradoxical that I also agree with White’s assessment of Clark and Holquist’s biography. This apparent contradiction, however, is just that, merely apparent. In fact, it is from Clark and Holquist that much of White’s own knowledge of Bakhtin’s life and the life of the Circle have for the most part all come through the filter of Clark and Holquist. However, the fact that Clark and Holquist attempt to downplay Bakhtin’s commitment to Marxism is not overruled merely by their proximity to the original texts. Clark and Holquist suggest that “the second part [of Marxism and the Philosophy of Language], while not free of Marxist declarations, seems more purely Bakhtinian in its stress on context and intonation in meaning and its analysis of different speech levels.” For both White and for myself, this supposition seems to ignore Bakhtin’s own commitments to authorship as a collaboration. It also seems highly unfair to indict Bakhtin for the “familiar casuistic” use of Marxism, since Marxism and the Philosophy of Language engages with Marx precisely to the extent that is necessary to compose a propaedeutic theory of language from the Marxist point of view. It and Freudianism are meant as entry points into a Marxist theory of linguistics and psychoanalysis; they are self-consciously prolegomenal rather than exhaustive. As such, they should be read as an exhortation to a larger effort by a community of theorists.

What Clark and Holquist cannot possibly argue convincingly is that the Voloshinov texts attempt to undercut Marxist theory, since everywhere they are informed by its theory of ideology and by dialectical materialism. They may claim that these texts are cursory efforts, superficial analyses, even opportunistic, but they cannot claim that they are not authentically Marxist. Moreover, the form of these texts is saturated with collaborative thought as is the content. The problem of indirect and quasi-direct discourse, for example, and of reported speech, as well as speaking throughout in the first person plural “we,” all of these factors point to the stress on an open-ended and cooperative creation which liken literary and theoretical products to the solidarity of
workers called for by Marx and Engels. These texts are academic and extra-academic social experiments in Bakhtin’s tripartite theory of authorship. I will not go so far as to assert that Bakhtin is most definitely the author, hero, or apostrophe in these works, but they are most definitely produced within the framework of a division of labour. Thus ‘Voloshinov’ and ‘Bakhtin’s’ voices, if they are indeed both present, are no doubt intertwined. We may bow to Bakhtin’s conviction that these voices do not merge, but I am not convinced that these voices can be distinguished within the Voloshinov texts. ‘We’ simply cannot agree with Clark and Holquist’s supposition that they have some special privileged ear with which to do so. As a brief aside, we do have every reason to not only believe that Bakhtin could hear distinct conflicting voices in Dostoevsky since we can hear these voices ourselves. The conversations between Alyosha and Ivan in “The Grand Inquisitor” chapter of The Brothers Karamazov, for example, is a tour de force of multi-voicedness; Alyosha, Ivan, the author ‘Dostoevsky,’ the Grand Inquisitor, and the Prisoner (‘Christ’), all speak with separate and distinct voices even while they are overlapping and embedded—without fully merging—within the single consciousness of the reader.

White wishes to read Bakhtin between post-structuralism and humanism without simply resolving this contradiction into a unity, but instead he wants to place the author ‘Bakhtin’ on the frontier between these two discourses. Just as dialogue takes place between interlocutors, so Bakhtin’s thought fluctuates between this “contemporary disagreement” between humanism and post-structuralism without ever coming to a rest or being reduced to a homogeneous unity. White makes use of Kate Soper’s division of humanism into territories of human agency and teleology, and he accepts agency in Bakhtin’s humanism while denying that dialogism can in anyway be reconciled to a humanist teleology. In order to embed this humanism in its apparent opposite—i.e., post-structuralist thought, White relies on Bakhtin’s account of what he calls semantic personalism and what White refers to as vocalic intonational ghosting. By these enigmatic phrases we simply mean to invoke Bakhtin’s notion that the “who” of an utterance is irreducible to the “what” or wholly verbal or textual meaning of that utterance; yet if this who remains intact, it is nevertheless inseparable from both the semantic content and the context in which the utterance emerges.
between the discourses of humanism and post-structuralism, the latter of which has given
to us the discourse now known as post-humanism, “appears to be [a] *contradictio in
adjecto*, an impossibility”\textsuperscript{104}; in other words, White puts their very inter-communicability
into question. Nevertheless, this contradiction is merely an appearance, since it is clear
that “the putative poverty [of humanism] only serves as a semantic device to underpin
post-structuralism,” which is to say that we are to understand the semantic person—the
subject of the utterance, as itself conditioned by the social *milieu* in which it speaks.\textsuperscript{105}
The humanist agency here is a semantically conditioning agency. Humanism is itself read
through the human condition—which is, for Bakhtin, steeped in historical materialism
and textuality. The semantic personalism, for example, that Bakhtin endorses in the
penultimate paragraph of his late essay “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences”
points toward studying the subject as *per se* a subject of meaning who is always-already
engaged in a dialogue with another semantic subject—insomuch as an address
presupposes the “anticipation of a response.”\textsuperscript{106}

As we have already seen, Cohen sought to ‘expunge the gap in the Kantian
dualism’ with which Bakhtin continued to struggle. Here Bakhtin was unable to follow
Cohen. He could not posit a permanent closing of the gap between the polarities of
matter and the conceptual, ideological being—or again, between the *tode ti* of brute
existence—what Kant would have called the noumenal—and phenomena. It is not the
case that the subject is entirely devoid of a personal agency. The subject of Saussurean
*parole* is inept. Husserl’s idealism does not convince me that the intentional act can
account for an autonomously acting subject. What White calls Bakhtin’s semantic
personalism ostensibly leaves room for this autonomy by (un)grounding it in everyday
lived experience. Not unrelated is the capitulation by that greatest of all sceptics, Hume,
to the force of sensation: ‘I play backgammon therefore I am.’\textsuperscript{107} Bakhtin does not
reinscribe the Cartesian knowing subject, or the *gnoseological subject* as it is found in
Kant, or the liberal personalism that flows from the humanist tradition—a tradition that
cannot escape the solipsism inherent in a reduction of language to rationalism and
subjectivity to idealism.

Nevertheless, White’s apparent fear of Bakhtin’s theological forays is as
misguided as was Kristeva’s before him, even if he does not fall into the transparent
liberal agenda for which he critiques Lodge, and Clark and Holquist. This is because Bakhtin’s kenotic commitments do not represent a retention of the subject as such, but an emptying of it.\(^{108}\)

As we have already suggested the notion of \textit{kenosis} refers to the self-emptying of the divine Christological spirit out of the flesh and blood Christ as ‘man.’ By implication, we do not understand Bakhtin’s commitment to kenosis to be a betrayal of his faith in materialism; quite to the contrary, it is a fulfilment of this commitment. To be fair, kenosis is divisive even within the Orthodox tradition, and notably divisive along class lines in Russian history. The \textit{degree} to which a devotee is meant to imitate Christ as a flesh and blood being is contentious within the tradition.\(^{109}\) It seems that there is a gradation in the praxis side of kenosis which is meted out along class lines. Nevertheless, Bakhtin seems to interpret the virtue as active and universally applicable to all ethical subjects. For Bakhtin, kenosis is the moment in his theory of transgredience or outsideness that requires a \textit{projection} of self into the other through what he calls “empathetic co-experiencing.”\(^{110}\) It bears repeating: kenosis is one moment of transgredience and the return into self is a second—non-successive—moment required in the act of \textit{consummation}.

In \textit{Art and Answerability} Bakhtin’s phenomenology of the experience of empathy as actively understood from the point of view of the author. Here the author can complete the hero—i.e., provide his consummation—only from “outside [the hero’s] bounds.”\(^{111}\) By dint of my ability to project myself into another, and empathetically co-experience life from within its internal rhythm, I can then complete her. But we must be careful here. For projection in itself is not sufficient. Kant’s notion of \textit{Einfühlung}, or standing in someone else’s shoes, is only a moment—and is not even the chronological primary moment.\(^{112}\) Ann Shukman clarifies the matter as follows: “Bakhtin disputed the neo-Kantian expressive aesthetics based on the concept of \textit{Einfühlung} (empathy), and Cohen’s version of it, ‘aesthetic love,’ for its failure to take account of form and of the separate identity of perceiver and perceived, author and his created hero.”\(^{113}\) A complete fusion of consciousness is not only undesirable, it is impossible.\(^{114}\) It does not follow from this that kenosis is likewise impossible. Bakhtin does endorse “self-renunciation” for the sake of
the other, only this refutation cannot be understood as a renunciation of my unique position in once-occurrence being-as-event.\textsuperscript{115}

There is no wholly identical moment between the subject and other, author and hero. If this were the case the author would be powerless to create a truly dialogical life outside itself—i.e., the hero and author would merge—and the ethical subject would be powerless to complete and find his completion in the other. Projection is essentially the first movement in the intentionally understood condition of becoming self. The second movement is, as we have said, a return into the self to re-establish the necessary distance from the other in order to answer for the other. This answering is to be understood as an ethically responsible act of supplementation, redemption, and temporary (in)completion of the other. The return is not only absolutely necessary to this consummation, but it cannot be ontologically avoided:

Even if we succeed in encompassing the whole of our consciousness as consummated in the other, this whole would not be able to take possession of us and really consummate us for ourselves: our consciousness would take that whole into account and would surmount it as just one of the moments in its own unity (which is not a unity that is given but a unity that is set as a task).

Even the unity of consciousness in Bakhtin is therefore something yet to come. We can understand the semantic personhood of the subject in the sense of a present participle form—the -ing—of becoming. Semantic personhood remains in motion. In this way, it is not a matter of deciding the either/or—either there is a subject or there is not, but in understanding the subject as aporetic, open, and undecidable.

The subject of language in Bakhtin, the so-called semantic personalism, is a disappearing/appearing subject and not merely the copular subject of propositions and deduction; by this we mean that the Bakhtinian subject is disappearing from the pages of the history of philosophy as it has been written and appearing momentarily in the ethical act of answering for the other. The subject is a subject of becoming not of being—Bakhtin’s subiectum is a dialogic subject.

The fact that Democritus and Epicurus, on whom Marx wrote his dissertation, were ancient theorists of kenos—i.e., were theorists of the vacuum or nothingness—presents circumstantial evidence that a marriage between Marx and the concept of kenosis on which the tradition has been founded is not entirely indefensible.\textsuperscript{117} Hegel speaks of
kenosis as Spirit’s “externalization of itself,” but through the mutual kenotic externalization of self-consciousness and substance he posits a spiritual unity between the two. For Bakhtin this proposed unity found in Spirit would be too much to posit either intuitively or to justify ethically. One could not live in this unity and have anything more than an aesthetic existence. If kenosis suggests a pouring out, therefore, there must nevertheless be a return into self. Again, Bakhtin is working specifically with a kenotic notion of degree rather than a complete negation of self. The logic of peregrination and return is repeated in the phenomenology of love provided in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. The pouring out of oneself into the other, i.e., kenosis, may even be said to be one of the fundamental virtues of phenomenal existence. In fact, the projection of self in kenosis is a fundamental condition of living ethically in the world; without it we could neither justify the existence of another nor find this justification for ourselves. Nor, as we shall see, could we answer once-occurrent being-as-event.

More recent Bakhtin scholarship has allowed for a rejuvenation of the interface between kenotic theology and intersubjective ethical understanding in Bakhtin’s early notebooks. For example, in “Bakhtin and the Hermeneutics of Love” Alan Jacobs argues, along the same lines that I have been trying to trace here, that there is indeed a kenotic thread woven throughout these texts:

> the early Bakhtin understood at least theism and perhaps even Christian belief to be necessary for anyone who hopes to love the other in the ethical or aesthetic (hermeneutical) spheres. The *kenosis* of ‘Christ’ establishes the pattern for our own answerable deeds: it is his ‘I-for-myself’ and ‘I-for-another’ that reveal to us the proper form of self-activity and empower us to pursue it persistently and faithfully. This may be a point at which the Bakhtinian ethics-aesthetics-hermeneutics cease to be merely consistent with Christian theology and becomes an elaboration of that theology.

In other words, Bakhtin argues not that we must all become Christians, or even that we ought to adhere to kenotic belief, but instead appropriates the gospels symbolically and emphasizes the Christological sacrifice of divinity. The weight of his appropriation of kenosis falls entirely on a vision of emptying out of the ideal self in order to take on flesh.

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin attempts to move ethics away from abstraction and show the fundamental difference which exists between once-occurrent being-as-event and its abstracted conceptual representation. There is in some sense an
impossibility of representation in Bakhtin. To follow Kant and found ethics on merely “theoretically valid judgement[s]” is only to “assign to it a certain theoretical unity” and to abdicate my active participation in the world. We see this in what Fedotov calls “Anglo Saxon ethics” where law hovers above the entire order of nature. Fedotov calls this species of ethics the “cult of purity,” which appeals to the law in the form of custom. But here custom—the nomos—is nothing more than a pure abdication of the ethical responsibility to answer the event as it arises in its unique once-occurent being-as-event. Anglo Saxon ethics assumes an alibi in being—that is, it abdicates personal ethical responsibility by deferring to the law. Fedotov writes “never in Russian history was either purity or law dominant morally.” The law does not adjudicate itself; ethics cannot provide its own evaluative grounds on which to answer being in the act of becoming. The law can only answer being through the architectonic unity accomplished within a real living consciousness. In the manifold of a theoretical unity, on the other hand, every proposition is valid, no matter how atrocious the conclusions which follow. They may have apodictic certainty and still be unjust. Ethics requires a life to consummate it and deem that it is just through the ethical act of answering—and this can only be done with an “emotional-volitional referral” to oneself from the position of a unique chronotopic and perspectival embodied existence. It cannot be accomplished in theoretical or intuited aesthetic consciousness alone.

Bakhtin’s semantic personalism consists of a constantly self-emptying subject of meaning; it is a humanist subject whose very humanism is grounded in a constantly shifting verbal and extraverbal milieu. This semantic subject cannot be entirely alienated from its material existence into a purely theoretical form. An analogous example can be taken from technological research and development; when technology is alienated from human life and is developed only according to its immanent manifold existence—i.e., only according to what is possible, allowing proposition after proposition to become actualized sheerly by the force of its permissibility and according to its own internal structure, the result is then not founded for human existence but for itself. Ethics can only find its justification by bridging the gap between theoretical and practical being through the actively answering act of practical consciousness; again, this answering cannot be performed by cognition alone:
The theoretically cognized world cannot be unclosed from within cognition itself to the point of becoming open to the actual *once-occurrent world*. But from the performed act (and not from the theoretical transcription of it) there is a way out into its content/sense, which is received and included from within that actually performed act; for the act is actually performed in being.\(^{125}\)

A wholly lawful cognitive-theoretical approach to ethics fails, but what if we approach from the other direction—i.e., from sensuous existence and specifically through aesthetic intuition?

Aesthetic intuition achieves a greater synthesis than theoretical cognition, since in it consciousness has passively synthesized the content and form of the external world.\(^{126}\) But while aesthetic being can achieve what theoretical cognition could not, *vis-à-vis* “pure empathizing,” the aesthetic world from which this empathy is achieved is not the world of once-occurrent being.\(^{127}\) Whereas the unity achieved within theoretical cognition is an abstract theoretical unity and cannot provide ethical norms from within itself, aesthetic consciousness’ achievement of pure empathizing is likewise an abdication of the ethical subject’s responsibility to its own unique place in being.\(^{128}\) It is literally a senseless abstraction of oneself—i.e., the very opposite of a theoretical abstraction. Kenotic projection is therefore a necessary moment but not yet sufficient for a truly answerable act by *participative consciousness*. Unlike theoretical cognition, one can live within the aesthetic being of empathetic co-experiencing, but then life amounts to a mere performance; a wholly aesthetic life merely “play[s] a role,” and does not live life for itself and for the other as a responsibly ethical subject.\(^{129}\)

Thus theoretical cognition and aesthetic intuition go astray when they attempt to live entirely from within theoretical unity, on the one side, and pure empathy on the other. I would liken the ready-made ethical activity of the law in theoretical cognition to “Christ-Pantocrator” whose lawful word is outside of time and space—i.e., is valid now and for all time.\(^{130}\) Theoretical cognition is therefore to be likened to the Byzantine virtue which appeals to hierarchical class structures to regulate the enforcement of the law.\(^{131}\) For its part, kenosis can be likened to aesthetic intuition, since it is only in intuition that we have the power to co-experience life from the point of view of the other. As human beings, we must effectively and ethically empty ourselves of content in order to take up the other’s perspective. Both movements are necessary but neither is sufficient for the
truly ethical act. Even kenosis thus proves insufficient, if necessary, for the consummation of the other by the ethical subject.

Bakhtin repeats this line of argumentation again in the two extremes of content ethics and formal ethics. Content ethics takes as its law either the veridical propositions in the theoretical unity that we have already seen, or else it founds its laws on “primordially relative” fiat.132 Either way it goes wrong by attempting to fabricate a ready-made universal imperative out of that which is actually contingent upon once-occurrent being. This moment would likewise align with Christ-Pantocrator, or what Bakhtin calls the “lawgiver.”133 These laws cannot be justified from within themselves either. They require a transgressient outside consciousness capable of bringing the theoretical (law) and the practical (the event) into a synthesis. This synthesis is short-lived, inchoate, and requires the continual practice of a lifetime. This synthesis is what Bakhtin means by ethical answering. An event is made answerable when it is not understood as merely beholden to one of the forms of abstraction we have been discussing. The event therefore cannot be ethically justified either by the merely theoretical cognitive unity, the aesthetic (quasi-practical) intuited unity of subject and other—i.e., empathy—or by attempting to formulate the theoretical on pre-established, ready-made, content.

Finally, what Bakhtin calls “formal ethics” attempts to decline the event by way of a pre-established, ready-made form.134 In this way ethical thought proceeds from the opposite direction of content ethics. Theory is no longer made to follow life but life theory. However, the presumption that ethical comportment can follow pre-established rules of engagement leaves the propositions of formal ethics entirely one-sided.135 Formal ethics thus determines the “law as such, in itself, or the idea of pure legality,” as its ground from which all its propositions follow.136 But this ground is only assumed and is nowhere proved scientifically. Formal ethics thus loses the object of its inquiry, the ethical deed itself, and replaces it with an abstract conception of law for law’s sake. Colloquially, we typically call this species of ethics legalism, and Kant’s categorical imperative can be said to be one of its avatars. Legalism does not broach life itself: “The actual deed is cast out into the theoretical world with an empty demand for legality.”137
Formal ethics is founded not in the answerable act, but wholly within theoretical cognition.

The ethically answerable deed (postupok) is not directed toward this sort of theoretical legalism, but it is instead concerned with answering actual existence. For example, if I am a proprietor of some business and am asked by someone for a job, how can I go about ethically answering for myself in this situation. Let us make the problem easy, let us say that I have need of one additional worker. Let us also say that there are no special skills required for the position. I can only become ethically answerable by responding to this request according to the real living person here in front of me. Whether I hire this applicant, my decision cannot be based upon some ready-made company policy that would leap over the present situation and find my pending approval or rejection of her application already decided in the past. For an answer to be ethical it must find its justification in the supra-rational and unique, singular, character of the present situation.\(^{138}\)

I will provide an example from another concrete situation—a disagreement between husband and wife. The two truly love each other in our example, but they have had a disagreement about whether they can continue to support their political party. They have always voted for this party, since they found a matter of ideological agreement that trumped other conflicting political concerns. Let us say that this concern was an environmental policy. The party has recently gained numerous new seats in government and has gone from supporting a carbon-tax on business to supporting a tax on middle-income families. The couple is divided, since the husband will continue to support the party. He has reasoned that the change in policy is merely to make the party more palatable for a wider swath of voters. The wife no longer wants to support the party, not as a matter of principle, but because she believes a carbon-tax is practically efficacious and will not cripple middle-income families. Nevertheless their discussion becomes argumentation and then full-blown anger. They begin to argue more and more from polarized positions, both of which become more and more hypothetical and abstracted from their current situation. They forget for a moment the common ground that is always-already established beneath their feet: this tangible kitchen where they prepare their meals together, the social and economic alliance they have erected, and most of all
the real life, perhaps even banal, fact that they love one another. They lay all of this aside in order to argue from their new abstracted positions, and as such they have ceased to participate in the real life socioeconomic conditions of their lives and have therefore abdicated the immediate meaningful context in which all ethical concerns must be rooted. What I am attempting to state here in writing, in all truth, cannot even be stated on paper. It is an irony, and one we should not fail to observe, that the language which conditions semantic personhood also fails us. Merleau-Ponty had something like this in mind when he proposed his “tacit cogito.”

In Bakhtin, one’s word (slovo) demands embodiment. Everything follows from this, whether we are speaking of the ethical comportment between subjects or the ongoing architectonic answer that the subject gives in response to the event. There are no alibis for existence.

### 2.4 I and I: A Genealogy of Ethics

In *Art and Answerability* Bakhtin provides a genealogy of the *I*-for-*myself* and the *I*-for-*another* in the section translated as “The Value of the Human Body in History”, which is framed as the “‘idea of man’”—i.e., as a humanism. This “value” changes throughout history. Indeed, the genealogy that Bakhtin offers us is one of different polarizations of the ‘I’ and the other. These are axiological categories which are not absolute but are moments of experience. The dominant mode of perception of the I and other in the world of antiquity are interlocking, and the I is wholly determined according to the aesthetic external body of the other—as opposed to a psychological inner mode of self-understanding. This explains why the ancient’s self-identification was wholly on the side of the physiological group; the Spartan was born to go to war, for example, and Achilles becomes a sacrificial lamb for the Greek people—a fate from which even his demigod status cannot redeem him. And they say double-dipping is uncouth!

At the time of the Bacchanalian mystery cults, the *I*-for-*myself* begins to emerge, is present, but is not yet distinct from the category of the *I*-for-*another* and remains wholly determined by it. Individuation sets in here and the wholly aesthetic existence of ‘man’ begins to give way to an ethical mode of being. This being is presented to Hellenistic ‘man’ and to us “as a task to be accomplished,” and this process of
individuation is experienced as something inwardly painful. Ethics does not exist before this historical moment. The emergence of Epicureanism marks the historical moment of the cordonning off of the body as a separate organism while not fully alienating itself from the other; furthermore, the notion that I-for-myself is a spiritual problem begins to emerge with the Stoics; the corresponding notion of ‘man’ modelled off of spirit owes itself to this paradigmatic shift. The “plastic” outward physical body as the ground of the I-for-another completely disappears with neo-Platonism and is replaced with an I-for-myself that wholly encompasses the category of otherness. Henceforth, otherness is only understood as a negation of the I-for-myself, and not by dint of its own existence for itself. The other is then wholly conditioned as a moment within the I-for-myself polarization: “I give birth to the other inside myself, without going beyond my own bounds and without ceasing to be alone.”

Fission occurs at this point in the category of the ‘I,’ “the emanationist theory prevails,” and the I becomes at once that which thinks and that which is thought. Here we may posit the genealogical beginning of semantic personalism. I now have not an I-for-another, experienced as objective reality, but an I-as-I-appear-for-the-other—a wholly phantasmal spectral I. This spectral I in turn ossifies the notion that ‘man’ is a project of religious self-justification; this is the emergence a completely ethical mode of being. For Bakhtin, it is at this point that the supermundane—i.e., the merely theoretical or formal ethical consideration—first becomes a motivating principle for human action, and the body as it is given in time and space is understood as degraded being while at the same time it is the condition of possibility for all truly answerable ethical action:

Hence, neo-Platonism also includes the most consistent denial of the body: for me myself, my body cannot be a value. Purely elemental self-preservation is incapable of engendering any value out of itself. In preserving myself, I do not evaluate myself, for self-preservation is accomplished outside any valuation and justification. An organism simply lives, without any justification from within itself, for the grace of justification can descend upon it only from outside. I cannot be the author of my own value, just as I cannot lift myself by my own hair. The biological life of the organism becomes a value only in another’s sympathy and compassion with that life (motherhood). It is the other’s sympathy and compassion that introduce biological life into a new value-context.

From this vantage point we now begin to see the phenomena of Christianity forming, but in a highly aggregated unfolding. Here the movement has traversed the initial stage of
formation of the collectivity—“the people”—as one undivided organic entity we bear witness to a complete interiority of the subject requiring justification from outside itself.\(^\text{148}\) What comes into existence here is the realization that self-justification is impossible—the Baron von Münchhausen moment.\(^\text{149}\) Bakhtin repeats the image between this self-lifting by one’s own hair and self-justification in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*\(^\text{150}\). Here the metaphor is invoked in order to emphasize the inability of theoretical cognitive unity to find immanent self-justification. We can already see, therefore, that Bakhtin’s account of answerability according to ethics and his account according to the subject-other co-relation can be mapped onto each other. Just as theoretical cognition must find a transgredient justification outside itself in once-occurrence being so to must the phenomenological subject—the I-for-myself.

In the genealogy of transgredient justification, the figure of ‘Christ’ comes to represent the model of a perfect “ethical solipsism,” whereby ‘Christ’ is recognized as an infinite I-for-myself in all its depth—and is therefore alone capable of redeeming the other.\(^\text{151}\) ‘Christ’ becomes flesh, the internal spiritual I externalizes itself (*kenosis*), and pours itself into the other, since it has depth and can redeem while the other is all surface, an empty husk in need of redeeming. While therefore it is true that there is an aspect of this account that seems to retain the neo-Platonic world denial of the I-for-myself in need of redemption, the I has already understood ‘Christ’ as the I-for-myself that has infinite depth which can complete the other, *vis-à-vis* myself. Conversely, since “I-for-myself can also be the other for God,” I take up the attitude of the I-for-myself of infinite depth—modelled on ‘Christ’—that I may likewise sacrifice myself, or pour myself out for the sake of the other. ‘Christ’ therefore becomes the model of the I-for-myself whereby I assume the sacrificial mode of being; I empty myself out into the other (*projection*). Then I return into myself that I might consummate the other; the other performs the mirror image of this redemption for me. Both formal ethics and content ethics miss this moment.

Lastly, we observe that the necessity of redemption appears to be at least as historical as ontological in Bakhtin; it has grown out of the genealogy of perception of autonomy and the becoming-isolated of the subject. It is unimaginable that the Spartan would have conceived of the need for redemption in the other, since he lived a wholly
physiological existence—since even his cultural self was wholly defined according to his preparedness for battle. The lack of historical evidence of this genealogical account of the emergence of the solipsistic subject does not negate the present necessity of redemption in human perception. Another way to say this is that we must take a detour through the other in order to come back to ourselves as consummated subjects and especially as subjects of meaning-making. The idea that we can have and create a world without the other is absurd, and yet how often do we catch ourselves lost in moral solipsism and uninterested in trying to listen to the other’s voice on its own terms.

2.5 In the Flesh: Slovo, or the Word as Deed

The kenotic ‘Christ’ of Philippians 2:5-8 is therefore not a hidden theological motivation of Bakhtin’s work, but the theological equivalent of ontological projection. Theorists who would excoriate this moment of grace do nothing more than mortify the flesh of Bakhtin’s theory of self-other relationality. Moreover, they overlook the fact that Bakhtin is attempting to provide a genealogy of how our present ontological understanding of self-other relations has been passed down to us from the Greeks. In this way he is following the methodology that can be traced through his teacher Zelinsky and inevitably through Nietzsche. But where the latter theorizes the genealogy of ressentiment and bad conscience, Bakhtin provides the conceptual line of descent for the necessity of external justification, or grace. Bakhtin scholars who bypass the role of grace, which comes from outside and is equally for me to give as it is for me to receive, do his early philosophy a great injustice. What’s more, they risk losing the line of sight between these theologically motivated concepts and his notion of outsideness on which all ethical justification is grounded.152 This is, after all, the meaning of transgression—that only I can consummate the other, and only the other can provide me with the gift of justification. It is also an essential moment in all economic exchange, metabolic existence, and, in the final analysis, it is at the heart of the experience of love.153

The movement that Bakhtin describes in this section ultimately founds itself on a gradual move inwards to self-conscious awakening to the need of redemption by the consummating activity of the other. The crisis of neo-Platonic world-denial not only hampers Christian ethics, but to my mind it is also echoed in all instrumental reasoning.
It is a movement away from ethical existence into a merely theoretical cognitive and ready-made virtue. On the other side, a wholly aesthetic intuitive form of absolute empathizing does no better at providing an account of the other as a subjective I. This form equally reduces the other to an object, finalizes her, although this time it does so by assuming it can speak from inside the other’s consciousness. As we have seen, there is no merging of consciousnesses, and the other cannot be reduced to an objectivised other—which would amount to nothing more than an object among objects.

I would like to make it clear that it is not the case that Bakhtin is following the road of the middle-term or seeking a compromise between the two. Theoretical-cognitive and aesthetical-intuitive approaches to ethics, while they are comprised of active ingredients necessary to a truly ethical answering, are completely deficient in themselves. They are also completely deficient if they are merely combined together. There is no middle road between them that will lead to ethical answering, and to take this view-to-compromise would merely make a monstrous assemblage out of their ethically active ingredients. It is true that cognition and projection are essential moments in ethics, but an a priori-aesthetic assemblage composed of ready-made categorical imperatives and aesthetic merging with the other will not bring me a step closer to answering for the other from my unique place in once-occurrent being. In themselves or combined, these approaches are deficient—one wholly gnoseological and the other wholly aesthetic; as such, they each express only compartments of life as lived and do not approach the type of synthesis that we experience within participative consciousness. This type of synthesis is a unity-in-difference, or the subject who understands the other as another I who cannot be reduced to a monological mergence with subjectivity. For this reason perhaps Bakhtin’s early notebooks would more aptly have been anthologized as From Theoretical and Aesthetic to Ethical Answerability.

Bakhtin emphasized the kenotic strain of Orthodoxy; as such, we can understand his commitments not as some world-denying longing for a supermundane spiritual life, but as bolstering his conception of embodiment of the word as flesh. Thus it might also be interpreted as a renunciation of the ressentiment toward life that Nietzsche condemns in the Western tradition. Messianism and the utopian eschatological refutations of the present are themselves subject to excommunication in Bakhtin’s thought; this rejection...
of eschatology again shows up in the theme of unfinalizability and great time, which we will have opportunity to say more about below. Arguably, unlike the Western or Byzantine Christian tradition, the community trumps the individual in Bakhtin’s stance towards theology. He genuinely seems to believe in an “ideal community”—perhaps not so unlike the occasional utopian movements in the West such as the Hussite rebels of Bohemia. Clark and Holquist call this communal ethical basis “something like the Bakhtinian polyphony or heteroglossia translated into social terms.” What they seem to miss, is that the essential thread running through these themes is in no way akin to the liberal and heavily individualist shades of thought that would pervert the corporeal and material focus of Bakhtin’s writings. It is this focus which manifestly saves Bakhtin from the accusation of an “‘unrecognized influence of Christianity in a humanist terminology.’” As we have shown and will continue to show, neither Bakhtin’s Christological or humanist tendencies are strictly orthodox.

The ideal community is not a separate community, however. Bakhtin was repelled by the isolationist spirit of certain factions that began to form within Voskresenie and whose utopian spirit impelled its adepts to withdraw to separate communities. Like humanism, Bakhtin’s relationship with utopian thought is again not strictly transparent. We will return to this in the section on dialogue and dialectics below.

We ought to take up the question of Bakhtin’s Christological influences from the outside. He invites us to do so, even as he skirted various forms of faith while nevertheless abhorring the pyramidal and hierarchical structures of organized religious affiliation. Bakhtin practiced what he preached, namely transgression, exotopy, outsideness. There is a double movement between the virtue of the law, personified by Christ-Pantocrator, and the virtue of kenotic/empathetic projection of the subject into the life of another, but neither of these movements is sufficient. The architectonic consummation between external elements—here between system ethics and ethical acts, between subject and object—is an art. The art of answerability assures my non-alibi, my non-abdication, of becoming an ethical being from my unique place within it. In answering the other and life from the outside I may bring to each the excess of being that can neither be understood or witnessed from within itself.
Finally, there is a real sense here in which Bakhtinian ethics and the Circle’s translinguistics overlap—here one should think of the figure of the Venn diagram, and this too is not a wholly satisfactory image. Bakhtin’s philosophy is self-reflexive in that his individual studies complement and complete each other from the outside. Nevertheless, it takes some reading before one begins to perceive the inner dialogue along disciplinary lines between socioeconomics, linguistics, ontology, phenomenology, biology, psychology, ethics, and cultural history, which is being perpetuated in Bakhtin’s corpus. None of these faculties are reducible to the other, but they are taken up throughout his oeuvre as mutual-aids. The whole remains inchoate and is set as a task. Ethics brings to translinguistics the idea of the word made flesh. As we will see below, Voloshinov emphasizes the materiality of the word and the primacy of this materiality in shaping consciousness—hence the concept of a translinguistics. There is no question for either Voloshinov or Bakhtin that in the beginning was the deed, or more precisely, the word as deed. When the witness and judge first appeared on earth—i.e., when the phenomenon of reflection first came into earthly being, it emerged in the form and content that the word actively constituted.¹⁶⁰

Saint Cuthbert’s is the oldest surviving codex on earth, housed in the British Library, and it happens to be the Gospel of Saint John. The earliest extant book on earth, therefore, begins ‘In Principio erat Verbum’ (In the beginning was the word).¹⁶¹ The Latin verbum connotes both word and verb. In the Greek original, the ὁ λόγος of the opening verse of St. John’s Gospel (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), was understood as half god and half man, both spirit and material in nature. Verbum, like slovo, like logos, carries the connotation of both meaning and action, or perhaps meaning-in-action. The English word was once understood as everywhere active rather than passive. Etymologically word can be traced from its Indo-European roots not only to a familial connection with verbum, but to the Latvian vārds—to give one’s word and to promise to take action.¹⁶² It is to change the event itself through evaluative inflection. When I give my word I change the material nature of the social situation in which this word is embodied, just as the spiritual nature becomes incarnate in the kenotic moment. The merely symbolic and abstract character of the wholly theoretical and cognitive side of life again catches up with embodied life in motion—if only temporarily. When one’s word ceases to be connected with the material
conditions of life, when it is wholly spiritual, his words become ready-made and passive. The passive word, impossible before the advent of writing, no longer seeks to materialize and change the situation in which it is enmeshed. When I treat my word as a detachable abstraction of myself, rather than a material bridge from the world to myself, I begin to lose my ideological orientation in the world; that is, I pretend that my utterances can be axiologically neutral. Ironically, Marxist political-economy is haunted by the materiality of the word. The political-economic focus of Marxism, as Gardiner points out, in which a “determining base” determines the superstructure, was simply inadequate to the task of explaining the utterance. It was entirely too abstract.¹⁶³

Now that we have begun to see how an ethically active subject answers once-occurent being-as-event, we will widen our inquiry into the answerability that ought to take place between the faculties. We must everywhere keep in mind the materiality of the word—the word is an ethically active deed or it is nothing but an empty-husk. Although we typically talk as though our thoughts are wholly produced internally, somewhere deep in the somatic, before they magically appear as material for the phonological apparatus and finally become meaning for another, this is not the case. We will see in what is to come, for Bakhtin—and notably for infants—words are not born inside of people but between them. Both verbal and extra verbal words are actions before they are things and they are things before they are abstract notions. It also seems to be the case that the virtual or written word has this same existence or potential existence for Bakhtin, since he suggests that one can live on through one’s rewritings—or more precisely that one’s words can be reborn.¹⁶⁴ The written word is action in potentia.

Words are materialistic from top to bottom, and exist much as things in the world exist; they are matter in motion, subject to inflection and intonation. We may state that naïve consciousness implicitly understands words as intentional entities—we think of them as an outward embodiment, the clothing of our thought. Words everywhere seem to be directed outward. Bakhtin reverses the ontogenetic order here, so that the word is delivered of the subject rather than the subject delivered of the word. Just as the baby first learns to say ‘mama’ when her mother is present and only then internalizes the word as inner speech, thought itself begins with words that help to shape our concepts. So it is that Bakhtin’s translinguists, as we will see below, runs deeply into the movement of
being and the sensual world around us. Insomuch as the *architectonics of answerability*
constructs bridges *between* our institutions, therefore, this bridge-building is to be
accomplished only alongside of a socioeconomic and materialist account of the word.
This material existence requires a response outside itself, from within the life of
consciousness. The life of consciousness itself begins with matter in motion—with
becoming—just as the word begins with the deed. The verbally and extraverbally active
word—i.e. intonation—is the medium with which we witness, answer, and judge
existence. In what is to follow we will look closely at the line of critique embraced by the
Bakhtin’s Circle’s writings on biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, linguistics and
discourse, and theories of space-time. Each of these disciplines are brought together
through the construction of architectonic bridges between them and by attempts to ground
them in the material and socioeconomic origins of conscious life.
§ 3. Biology: Bakhtin, Kanaëv, and “Contemporary Vitalism”

3.1 A Brief History of “Contemporary Vitalism”: Contextualizing the Kanaëv Paper

Life can be consciously comprehended only in concrete answerability. A philosophy of life can only be a moral philosophy. Life can be consciously comprehended only as an ongoing event, and not as being *qua* a given. A life that has fallen away from answerability cannot have a philosophy: it is, in its very principle, fortuitous and incapable of being rooted.

—M. M. Bakhtin

“Life... is [nature’s] best invention; death means greater life to it.... It is whole and eternally unfinished. As it creates, so can one create eternally.”

—Goethe, “Nature”

In this section I will review Bakhtin and I. I. Kanaëv’s paper “Contemporary Vitalism,” still largely ignored in Bakhtinian scholarship. After providing a brief account of the history of vitalism, I will then show how their paper critiques neo-vitalism as a subjective and uncritical approach to biology. I also intend to provide an account as to how dialectical materialism fits into the Bakhtinian critique of vitalism specifically and also the architectonics of answerability more generally. Then I will proceed to an analysis of Freud’s borrowings from the biological sciences and the vitalist theory that seems to influence his “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. The present section will primarily take up the question of forming an architectonic between biology and sociology—or more properly, dialectical materialism. I will transition from bio-scientific-sociological answerability to psychological-sociological answerability in the next section. In order to accomplish this transition, I want to take up the question of Freud’s peregrination into biology in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. This will achieve three ends. First, we will see where the strictly subjective account of biology that Freud provides goes wrong. Secondly, and almost cursorily (almost, but not entirely), this analysis will establish Freud’s relation to vitalist-like principles and their detrimental influence on psychoanalysis. Finally, this analysis will set the stage for Voloshinov’s critique of psychoanalysis proper; Voloshinov’s critique shall be the subject of our next section.

Between 1924 and 1927, Bakhtin and Elena Aleksandrovna were living in an apartment building owned by Kanaëv in Leningrad on Preobrazhenskaya Street. Under the auspice of intellectual curiosity, the biologist Kanaëv took Bakhtin to a lecture that was to
be given on the concept of *chronotopicity* by the Russian physiologist A. A. Ukhtomsky. The lecture was held in Peterhof; the year was 1925.168 This seems to have been the occasion which would inspire the composition of “Contemporary Vitalism,” an article critiquing the vitalist theory of Hans Driesch which Kanaëv and Bakhtin co-wrote.169 George Rousseau locates the heart of Bakhtin’s scientific disposition in the short two part paper which appeared under Kanaëv’s name; there were to be more papers to follow in subsequent issues of the journal *Man and Nature*, but these never materialized.170 The paper concludes with a short defence of dialectical materialism as the proper road for science to follow.171 It is dialectical materialism as a scientific method that Bakhtin wants to endorse, according to Rousseau, because he understood the efficacious approach to scientific inquiry to move along “the axis of empirical subjects from physiology to biology.”172 Bakhtin was in no way a follower. We have seen already this in his critical appropriation of Russian Orthodoxy and, even more narrowly, of the kenotic tradition. His neo-Kantian commitments were no less critical, and he did not blindly react to vitalist doctrine and reject Driesch’s neo-vitalism only to fall back into a “merely logical and epistemological” set of relations; that approach could at best only revivify the spectre of Cartesian rationalism.173 This supposition is in agreement with Michael Gardiner’s work on Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty, “‘The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism’”:

> From his earliest writings[, and “Contemporary Vitalism” is his first co-authored work.] Bakhtin likewise argues that the impoverishing dualism of Cartesian rationalism can only be combated by a repudiation of the abstractions of idealist philosophy, so as to grasp the nature of the concrete deed or ‘act’ as it constitutes the essential ‘value-centre’ for human existence.174

The question that opens the paper on vitalism, “what is life,” therefore takes on added significance in light of Bakhtin’s commitment to moving beyond Cartesian-rational and Kantian-categorical paradigms. Marx’s famous paradigmatic inversion of Hegel, expressed in the dictum that consciousness is determined by life, everywhere informs Bakhtin’s work, from the earliest notebooks—*Art and Answerability*—to the very *last word* in “Toward a Methodology of the Human Sciences.”175 If we are to understand why Bakhtin and Kanaëv put so much emphasis on dialectical materialism as the proper methodology of the *biological sciences*, then, we must follow his post-Cartesian critique of Driesch and Bergson. For simplicity sake I shall again invoke the proper name
‘Bakhtin’ as the author of “Contemporary Vitalism”, although this in no way supposes that I am deliberately excluding the possibility that Kanaëv was actually penned the article.\footnote{176}

There are three approaches to the question “what is life,” which are taken up in “Contemporary Vitalism”: namely the mechanist, the vitalist, and the positivist. The first declares that there are no essential boundaries between the organic and the inorganic, and they can each therefore be reduced to self-consistent planes of physical and chemical properties from which all experiments and explanations are to be conducted.

Contrariwise, vitalism grants that life itself follows distinctive non-physico-chemical laws, and the whole is therefore greater than the parts. Finally, positivism lives and dies by what is in essence Newton’s maxim: \textit{Hypotheses non fingo}, and works merely with what is given. Positivism hesitates to provide hypotheses until such a time as when Science is “on firm, reliable, footing.”\footnote{177} This last position is necessary for the “descriptive stage” of biological science, but this stage had long passed by the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and Bakhtin therefore rejects positivism outright, since looking for nothing, it was sure to find it.\footnote{178} What Bakhtin was looking for was a philosophically active science; science is supposed to respond to life, after all. Between biology and life, therefore, he placed the method of actively and \textit{architectonically} answering life by bio-scientific means. In biology as in life, we are responsible not merely to say what is but also to establish what \textit{ought} to be—in other words, what should properly be \textit{set as a task} for biology. In this supposition, Bakhtin shows where he remains indebted to the Kantian philosophy even while trying to supersede it by placing it back in life as what he calls a \textit{participative consciousness}.\footnote{179} Positivism attempts to establish “a well-founded’ neutrality between the mechanists and the vitalists,” but this position ignores both the fact that biology has already established a methodology and that a full answer to the question “what is life” is not only unnecessary, but is not wholly answerable.\footnote{180} Positivism therefore ought rightly to be discarded, both because the descriptive stage of biology is already behind it and because no neutrality is possible.\footnote{181}

Vitalism has passed through a series of stages throughout history; it has travelled through what Hegel would have described as a succession of forms.\footnote{182} Although Rousseau latches onto two main important categories of vitalism in Bakhtin’s paper, the
old and the new strain, there are three essentially different historical stages through which
vitalism has had to move and which are described in “Contemporary Vitalism”. These
are the ancient, the modern, and the contemporary forms. Recognizably vitalist and
mechanist strains of philosophy were both debated by the Greeks. According to Bakhtin,
the Greeks understood the distinctive characteristics of life to be purposiveness, freedom
and answerability. Vitalism has survived more or less throughout the Western
philosophical tradition since Aristotle, and was roughly patterned after Aristotelian
thinking. There are in fact only two moments in the history of Western philosophy in
which vitalism could not be considered alive and well, for a relatively short period during
the seventeenth century—directed as it was toward rationalism and the mathematization
of nature, vitalism was in its death throes. More recently, vitalism has suffered a
second excommunication from the biological sciences roughly since Crick and Watson’s
discovery of DNA. It could be argued, though I will not do so here, that a vitalist style of
thinking has fled the world of sciences altogether and found a new life in the
humanities—that the false imposition of agency as a necessary fiction is equally applied
to political thinking, and that the idea of organic unity has since been equally applied to
the concept of the autotelic text.

By all accounts the 17th century was overwhelmingly mechanist and tended to
push vitalism to the margins of philosophy. However, vitalism was not altogether
expunged—and even the mechanists often admitted the necessity of teleological
principles. In the 18th century, William Paley’s universe may have been a clockwork,
but it still required a watchmaker to set it in motion. Newton himself could not shake the
idea that celestial mechanics required something akin to Aristotle’s first mover, and, as
Hans Eichner points out, “the arch-materialist... Baron d’Holbauch, as late as 1770,
ascribes to dead matter an innate ‘nisus,’ or striving, which, rather than gravitation,
accounts for the fall of bodies.” Finally, what Bakhtin refers to as contemporary
vitalism is a self-described critical vitalism, since by and large it owes its epistemic
grounding to the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment” in Kant’s third
critique. Bakhtin denies, however, that there is anything objective or critical about
Driesch’s contemporary vitalism.
The vitalism of the 18th and early 19th centuries was dogmatic, and its proponents largely presumed some form of *nisus* or agency was necessary to explain life and the motility of matter. As far back as William Harvey’s *opifex* or “artificer,” proponents of the modern dogmatic line of descent, who posit some form of vital agent, stretches through Caspar Friedrich Wolff (*vis essentialis corporis*), Albrecht von Haller (vital spirit), Georg Ernst Stahl (vital fluid), the Brunonians (*Lebenskraft*), Blumenbach (*nisus formativus*), Robinet (*élan vital*), and many others, culminating with Kant’s critical positing of a teleological principle in the power of reflective judgement. In the second part of the third critique, Kant injects the tension between mechanical and teleological principles directly into to his critical philosophy, relying on his concept of reflective judgement and final cause as merely regulative principles, so as to leave the epistemological door open and retain his critical—i.e., non-dogmatic—position.

According to Kant, living organisms, unlike inorganic matter, cannot be thought merely according to “*nexus effectivus,*” or efficient cause, but require the subordination of mechanical causal explanations to the “*nexus finalis,*” or final cause. In the “antinomy of the power of judgement,” Kant begins from the thesis that “all generation of material things is possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws,” while his antithesis states that “some generation of such things is not possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws.” All of nature **ought** to be thought according to mechanical or efficient cause, or there can be no science of nature at all. Without these laws science has nothing to quantify. However, experience teaches us that we cannot help but to understand organisms according to a second, higher cause, which works according to the logic of *ends*. Organic things therefore present us with an *apparent* contradiction; they are at once self-caused and determined. As with the antinomy of causation in the first *Critique*, the antinomy of judgement will turn out to be illusory. The antinomy collapses when we posit a special reflecting power of judgement as a merely regulative judgement which can account for natural ends where a priori determining judgement cannot do so. The central practical importance of this principle, as Helmut Müller-Sievers rightly points out, was to enable “scientists to determine the range of their problems and to avoid the trap of answering questions outside their fields, precisely the temptation that had led to the inconsistencies in Haller’s, Buffon’s, and Wolff’s
systems”\textsuperscript{192}; that is, each of these philosophers of the organic had dogmatically assumed life required a non-mechanical causal agency. Bakhtin follows Kant half-way; he also wants to provide a propaedeutic to the biological sciences. Unlike the efficient cause supplied by determining judgement, however, reflective judgement’s \textit{nexus finalis} “is a mere idea, to which one by no means undertakes to concede reality.”\textsuperscript{193} It is merely reflective, and in principle does not contradict or subvert mechanical causal accounts.\textsuperscript{194} Thus Immanuel Kant erects the framework on which the “critical vitalism” of Driesch shall be presented, but of course Driesch actually posits an hypostasized forming agency. Bakhtin therefore deems neo-vitalism every bit as dogmatic as ancient vitalism:

We in no way want to say that vitalism has actually succeeded in making itself critical. We do not think it has; we hope to convince the reader that vitalism, by its very nature, can never transcend dogmatism; in other words, that in the final analysis, it may only be a matter of personal faith, in no way a basis for scientific knowledge. We term contemporary vitalism critical in the subjective sense, that is, we mark only the fact that its representatives strive to be critically-minded, whether they succeed or not. They give their constructions a principled, methodological shape; they endeavour to consider the strengths of the mechanistic position in biology, and this side of neo-vitalism must be noted.\textsuperscript{195}

As we will see, it is not Driesch’s empirical practices that err but the conclusions he draws from them. In forming his hypotheses he leans too far toward the hypostatization of an autonomous formational agency.

\textbf{3.2 Bakhtin and Kanaëv’s Critique of “Contemporary Vitalism”}

Bakhtin focuses his critique on Driesch’s work, and specifically the three—non-technical—of his four proofs of vitalism. The first of these is known as “organic regulation” and is supposed to ground the theory of Driesch’s neo-vitalism. Organic regulation is further subdivided into regulation of \textit{process}, or “morphological regulation or restitution.”\textsuperscript{196} Regulation includes any attempt by the organism to restore damaged parts or interrupted functions, and the example is given of the self-regeneration observed in earthworms. Organic regulation is held up by Driesch as the first and most important evidence for an extra physico-chemical force necessary to and inherent in all life.\textsuperscript{197}

Driesch’s first proof for the autonomy of life is most fully expounded in his reported experiments with sea-urchin “fission,” through which he gives a fuller account of organic regulation by artificially interrupting normal cell division of the blastomeres.\textsuperscript{198}
In sea-urchins, blastomeres are cells under normal conditions, which divide from their initial state of the embryo as a single cell. Fission occurs from this first blastomere until about 800 cells have accumulated. An internal “cavity” is formed. This is the stage of the “blastule.” The blastule simply marks a “new period of embryonic development” in which the endoderm and the ectoderm begin to form and the embryo begins the gastrule stage of development.

Driesch preformed three experiments on interruption of ‘normal’ cell duplication and was satisfied that there was sufficient proof that each cell has at any point in this process an “equipotential” to perform the task required for one stage of growth or another. First, at the two cell stage Driesch artificially separated the blastomeres and thus interrupts the progression to the third stage. The individual cells then repeat the normal growth from stage one to stage two without any abnormal result from their having been divided—except for a slight diminution of size. In the second experiment a single blastomere is artificially separated off from the group during the four cell stage. The cells will again achieve normal growth, and again there is a slight diminution in the size observed in the organism. In the third experiment artificial fission is performed on a fully grown blastule, and each half then forms a slightly smaller but otherwise complete sea-urchin.

The enormous flexibility of the blastomeres seems to point to a freedom of potential development which Driesch calls “prospective potentials.” This is to say that each blastomere potentially has the capability of contributing any functionality required for the realization of normal growth. Which part each blastomere actually plays he calls “prospective significance.” A second type of experiment seems to play out the idea that every blastomere possesses “equipotentiality”—meaning that “all the elements of our system have identical prospective potentials.” In this experiment the developing embryo’s ‘vertical’ axis of growth is restricted by placing it between glass plates from the four cell stage to the eight cell stage. The group of blastomeres are then released and they proceed uninhibited, developing both vertically and horizontally.

What is at stake here? An explanation of the sea-urchin’s growth does not seem to be exhausted by the “spatial location” and “size of the system.” In addition to the mechanical constituents guiding the sea-urchin’s development, Driesch’s conception of
equipotential requires a third, actively participative influence. This agency has the power to freely direct growth toward the consistent organization of the whole. Driesch calls this *entelechy* after Aristotle, but his meaning is closer to the Aristotelian *eidos*—or the “blueprint of the whole.” The notion here is that while this agency cannot interfere mechanically with the physico-chemical properties of the organism, it nevertheless has the power to govern form.

No matter how many ways you slice it, says Driesch, the machine theory of organicity cannot account for the consistent unfolding organization of the blastomeres, and we must look beyond mechanistic causation. Unlike inorganic matter, organisms cannot be thought merely according to *nexus effectivus*, but require the subordination of mechanical causal explanations to the *nexus finalis*. For Driesch, therefore, *morphogenesis* is autonomous of physical and chemical causality:

> It seems to me that there is only one conclusion possible. If we are going to explain what happens in our harmonious-equipotential systems by the aid of causality based upon the constellation of single physical or chemical factors and events, there *must* be some such thing as a machine. Now the assumption of the existence of a machine proves to be absolutely absurd in the light of the experimental facts. *Therefore there can be neither any sort of machine nor any sort of causality based upon [a] constellation underlying the differentiation of harmonious-equipotential systems.*

> For a machine, typical with regard to the three chief dimensions of space, cannot remain itself if you remove parts of it or if you rearrange its parts at will.

> Here we see that our long and careful study of morphogenesis has been worthwhile: it has afforded us a result of the very first importance.

The essential error in Driesch’s theory occurs entirely on the side of his theoretical hypothesis. It is the logic of the concept that errs, however, and not the observations he has made or the state of biological knowledge at the time these experiments were conducted. Driesch’s equipotentiality is an example, and we will see more below, of the subjective theoretical projection onto what *ought* to be an objective theoretical practice. We remember that Driesch claimed there were *many prospective potentials* for each blastomere. This was universally true and true at each stage of development, but there was also *only one prospective significance* actualized in each stage. Driesch thesis posited equipotentiality for each blastomere at all stages of development until the formulation of the blastule was achieved. Yet the experiments with the sea-urchin embryo were conducted at each stage of development and even under conditions that
restricted growth along the vertical axis altogether. At no time during these experiments were any alternate possibilities expressed or signified by the organism itself. There is, therefore, a gap between what has been observed and what Driesch’s theory of equipotentiality posits.

Driesch’s mistake is to overstep the bounds of the role of subjective interpretation in the hard sciences. By attributing to the organism a hypostatized teleological form of causation—i.e., final cause, he has snuck in subjectively perceived ends by the back door. Without wit of it, he has secretly changed *nexus effectivus* into *nexus finalis*—hey, presto! For Kant, however, final cause can only play a regulative function for scientific theory as it progresses forward. Institutionalized science is self-motivating, and refines and discards its concepts by turn and according to the degree of adequation they obtain for the progression of scientific knowledge. In the sciences we are not free to hypostasize purposiveness or to anthropomorphize nature; where we attempt to exchange mechanical laws with subjective agency, we commit a paralogistic ingression of perceptual phenomenon into the things themselves. This is the part of Kant which Bakhtin accepts, but not as an epistemological limit. The limit is rather to be understood as a limit between being and becoming. Kant’s limit remains gnoseological. Bakhtin’s limit is built into the limit of the historical framework which has conceived, birthed, and nurtured biological science to its current state. Note, there is nothing in Bakhtin’s paper that would contradict Crick and Watson’s discovery of DNA and RNA or protein guided growth of organic bodies, since in the latters’ work proteins do the work of the autonomous agent presupposed by vitalism, and Crick and Watson do not, therefore, require an extra-materialist account of the organism and do not have to appeal to forces beyond the physical and chemical to account for self-unfolding and self-individuation.

Neither Kant nor Bakhtin deem life to actually have a teleological agency. This becomes especially tricky since we tend to look at the world in terms of its use and according to our own ideologically directed ends. This is also true of the way we look at biology, but we must be careful not to attribute *actual* ends to life. As a regulative principle, *nexus finalis* provides biology with light enough to go forward but not enough to claim this type of cause is *real*. 
We see this everywhere in biological study. Take the eye, for example. We used to say the eye is *for* seeing. It is efficacious to say so, since the eye is principally thought of in terms of sight and since sight plays such a large role in our culture and biology. Yet we cannot strictly say that the eye developed exclusively for sight in reaction to light. There is nothing about light that should require an organism to develop the eye as an organ of sight. There is nothing in light that is exclusively devoted to vision or to making visible. It is only the visual function of the eye that tempts us, retroactively, to say the *telos* of light is to make visible. Lacan, for one, takes skin pigmentation as evidence against this teleological account of the ocular.\(^{211}\) Of course, the eye is still studied according to its ends as a receptor of light, but this oracular course is tied up in the concept eye, as well as the fact our world is overwhelmingly visually orientated, and not the organ itself, and which may even possess non-ocular or even anti-ocular capacities.

Likewise, the purported harmony that is supposed to emerge from Driesch’s distribution of functions along the blastomeres *via* equipotentiality is nothing more than the spectre imposed upon living matter by “subjective, valuative consciousness.”\(^{212}\) Bakhtin does allow for a certain mode of objectivity which would understand the organism as a harmonious self-regulating whole, but only on the side of perception. Therefore it is no contradiction to suggest that the dance of the male bird of paradise *arouses* its mate through the power of sensual attraction, and we can justifiably substitute this for a physico-chemical explanation. Nevertheless, Bakhtin rejects the “uncritical transference” of perceptual appearances onto mechanical and lawfully bound processes.\(^{213}\) The teleological conception of nature is therefore to be understood not only as final cause, but also and only from the end that has *already* been achieved. Again, according to Bakhtin it is only in retrospect that we can contemplate the phenomenon from the point of view of *nexus finalis*.\(^{214}\) Below, “Freudianism”—so-called—will likewise be critiqued in part for its fallacious *retrogressive method*.\(^{215}\)

At the end of their essay, Bakhtin and Kanaëv also draw attention to the machine-like character of the organism. Against Driesch, they affirm that the organism is a strange machine. From the top to the bottom, the organism is a self-assembling, regenerating, regulating, and living machine. Taking this statement at face value, one might be tempted to recall in advance Deleuze and Guattari’s axiom: “Everything is a machine.”\(^{216}\) But
Deleuze and Guattari’s machines subsist on a plane of immanence, of “nondifference or dispersion.”\textsuperscript{217} Their machinic philosophy moves in both directions at once: there vitalism moves away from organic unity and toward mechanism and mechanism away from “structural unity” and toward living machines which can only be considered an open unity.\textsuperscript{218} But Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic philosophy is not mechanistic, or is not exclusively mechanical. Meanwhile Bakhtin’s account remains committed to an explanation by mechanical cause.

3.3 Biology and Dialectical Materialism

The principle importance of Bakhtin and Kanaëv’s paper is kept in the background and only surfaces briefly and is underemphasised. This is true to the extent that Clark and Holquist have become convinced that Bakhtin’s endorsement of dialectical materialism is only lip-service to the Soviet censors, but the homage to dialectical materialism is not simply a walk along the party line. It is instead an acknowledgement that scientific method itself is evolving and relies on social institutions for its momentum, and that what one learns in science in turn changes these institutions. The institutions that guide biological scientific practice are themselves changed by this practice and this symbiotic relation exceeds the sphere of the biological sciences and its epistemes; they also encompass adjacent territories—territories of governmental funding, of chemistry play sets, of the first science fiction novel, of the ability to imagine little machines, of nanobots and their technologies, of linguistic practice, of having a proper breakfast. In some sense, everything is an institution. All of these parts, Bakhtin was crucially aware, are not merely adjacent to the “complex phenomena [of] organic relations,” but are themselves part of the productive work of science. Yet if Bakhtin was committed to dialectical materialism as a method, and if he remained a dualistic thinker, he likewise accepted a gap between consciousness and the world. How could he endorse Butler’s bee-pollen-flower assemblage, or Deleuze and Guattari’s molar-molecular dispersion? Deleuze and Guattari’s machines go all the way to the bottom; they find a way to unify the vitalist-mechanist assemblage by placing the subject, the consciousness that does science, to one side, and by looking instead at the movement of desire, collectivities—the molecular, or microscopic machines, and on the other side at mass phenomenon, societies, institutions,
planets, individuals—i.e., the molar, on the other, in a real sense their solution both erases and multiplies the gap between the molar and molecularity: “at this point of dispersions of the two arguments [vitalism and mechanism], it becomes immaterial whether one says that machines are organs, or organs, machines.”

Is this really as messy—and schizo—a solution as Deleuze and Guattari believe, or does it repeat the search for an elegant unified universe? Bakhtin does not search for a plain of immanence, and this is the difference.

Perception has the effect of slowing the advance of science. Perception is as much cultural as it is biological. If the landscape of scientific consciousness is as much shaped by scientific practice as by advances in theory, then this too goes all the way to the bottom of perception. The historian of science, Steven Shapin relates the story of the Paduan professor who “refused to look through Galileo’s telescope to see with his own eyes the newly discovered moons around Jupiter,” while observers of telescoped terrestrial objects not only believed what they saw but were amazed. Seeing is believing, certainly, but the question is what do we see? What we see is always-already telescoped by an instituted socioeconomic condition.

Insomuch as it is a science of life, biology is Bakhtin’s ideological dominant. As such, he and Kanaëv are focused not on answering the question “what is life,” definitively, but in establishing a theoretical framework for biology that takes into consideration life as it is lived and the sciences as they are practiced. Biology therefore presupposes sociology. In the background of their text, therefore, Bakhtin and Kanaëv never lose sight of the methodological prerequisite that science must be self-reflexive. Scientific hypotheses are formed though conscious striving, but this consciousness is itself first formed by the material practices that give to it its distinctive style and territory and which, in turn, shape scientific consciousness. The scientific genre is borne along by the rhythm of everyday speech. Here it finds its bedrock and the sedimented ideological material with which to form linguistic communities and discourses. It is for this reason that we can say for certain that Bakhtin and Kanaëv are also in dialogue with one another in the essay, since while Kanaëv has helped to tutor Bakhtin in conversation and helped him establish the scientific veracity of his theoretical position, Bakhtin has invested biological practice with the art of sociologically answering, so to speak.
To make this clear, we must again look for a moment at the paper “Art and Answerability.” There, Bakhtin shows that the “three domains of human culture—science, art, and life” bear merely external—i.e., mechanical—relations to one another and can only achieve an internal unity in the fertile soil of a consciousness capable of consummating each by answering one with the other. Thus science is answered by life, life by art, art by science, and so forth. This is done by bringing to science what one has “understood in art.”221

Furthermore, the concept of the understanding has a technical meaning in Bakhtin, as Allon White clarifies:

Thus understanding, for ‘Bakhtin,’ always carries more than its purely cognitive meaning. It always includes that further sense of active and sympathetic solidarity with the other; it is an emotive-evaluative act as well as an act of pure knowledge. It is an act of elective inclusion, of unification, though never in the sense of denying social and cultural differences and distinction. For ‘Bakhtin’ acknowledgement and knowledge flow together.222

Understanding does not begin and end by fitting sense-perception into neat cognitive categories, and in this way Bakhtin is not only attempting to move beyond the rationalism of Descartes, but is also post-Kantian. It is therefore not simply a matter of doing science on paper or remaining within abstract theoretical formulation and deduction, but one must answer the once-occurrent being-as-event.

If we have said that biology, in its orientation toward life, is Bakhtin’s ideologically dominant approach to the sciences, it is only dominant where it can architectonically unify the other faculties—notably the sociological—within the unity and uniqueness of consciousness by the witness and the judge. The particular cultural domain of biological science as a theoretical practice is not to be understood as loosely—i.e., mechanically—connected to his larger philosophical project. It is not a matter of there being a disjuncture between the two, nor is it a matter of Bakhtin changing his mind between his early notebooks and the publication with Kanaëv. Quite on the contrary, the critique of vitalism that he offers us fits into the larger edifice on which he began to work during this period, during the early to mid-1920’s. Again, Toward a Philosophy of the Act makes a concerted effort to show how one cultural region of life, science and art—and here ethics—fits into his ontology:
Our time deserves to be given full credit for bringing philosophy closer to the ideal of a scientific philosophy. But this scientific philosophy can only be a specialized philosophy, i.e., a philosophy of the various domains of culture and their unity in the form of a theoretical transcription from within the objects of cultural creation and the immanent law of their development. And that is why this theoretical philosophy cannot pretend to being a first philosophy, that is, a teaching not about unitary cultural creation, but about unitary and once-occurrent being-as-event. Such a first philosophy does not exist, and even the paths leading to its creation seem to be forgotten. Hence the profound dissatisfaction with modern philosophy on the part of those who think participatively, a dissatisfaction that compels some of them to have recourse to such a conception as historical materialism which, in spite of all its defects and defaults, is attractive to participative consciousness because of its effort to build its world in such a way as to provide a place in it for the performance of determinate, concretely historical, actual deeds; a striving and action-performing consciousness can actually orient itself in the world of historical materialism.²²³

Of course, Bakhtin’s commitment to continued dialogue and to interpreting being as an event rather than as a thing restrict him from accepting wholesale the Marxist account of historical materialism and its eventual resolution in a classless society.²²⁴ Historical materialism, along with anthroposophy and theosophy “commit the same methodological sin,” none of these approaches attempt to be answerable to the event and cannot distinguish methodologically “between what is given and what is set as a task, of what is and what ought to be.”²²⁵ Positivism is only the most extreme form of this fallacy, which as we have said, adheres merely to what is given and makes no attempt to erect a philosophic foundation, or here an architectonic, to answer being.

It is essential for us to remember, again with Allon White, that the character of the unity Bakhtin supposes between art, science, and life is a unity-in-difference. For creative thought, which has had the historical (ad)vantage of post-structuralist hindsight, already more or less rejects grand-narratives and monological unities of the Hegelian sort, so this perspective may seem pedestrian. However, at the time of Bakhtin’s writing, we recall, other neo-Kantian practitioners—Hermann Cohen for example—continued their efforts to subdue this difference, to reconcile all historical becoming to the copular, propositional, unity of being as concept.

We still do not take the species—or “trends”—of biology and science seriously enough.²²⁶ Science must always have a frontier. Sometimes sciences share a frontier along “boader zones”; today we would call these zones of interdisciplinarity.²²⁷ Bakhtin
says that trends originate in these interstices, and we see this most notably in the wholly new discourses as they are instantiated in Darwin, Freud, and Marx. Darwin worked on the edge of the biological sciences, Freud in the interstices of psychology, and Marx in the margins of political economy and social theory. When science reflects on its own activity, this “supra existence,” or radical reflection, of science will change the practices it is looking at. In effect the entire structure of a scientific discipline changes when it becomes actively self-aware. Self-conscious reflection and the bare consciousness of an object are clearly different things. Bakhtin says that there is a discernable moment in great time in which being in and for-itself first came into existence.²²⁸

This moment is not reducible to essentially human characteristics and neither, therefore, can this ontological difference be solely shouldered by humanism. The “supraperson” effectively leads its own life, in the grand cosmic scale of great time. We can infer that to be conscious is to be a personal and singular consciousness, to have a perspective, to be a unique situation seen from a particular vista: to take part in the “supra-I.”²²⁹ In the supraperson I see myself in my entirety. I am not simply one existence among others and am definitely not an object among objects, but I am also a sense of that existence. My life takes on a second sediment of meaning from the point of view of the in-itself and for-itself. But the supraperson depends upon the external social milieu for its origin and development and it only approaches its great complexity long after birth:

Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others (my mothers, and so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional and value-assigning tonality. I realize myself initially through others: from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself. The elements of infantilism in self-awareness (“Could mama really love such a...”) sometimes remain until the end of life (perception and the idea of one’s self, one’s body, face, and past in tender tones). Just as the body is formed initially in the mother’s womb (body), a person’s consciousness awakens wrapped in another’s consciousness. Only later does one begin to be subsumed by neutral words and categories, that is, one is defined as a person irrespective of I and other.²³⁰

The discipline of biology is like this. We have constructed it in our own image. Biology only emerged as a science after thousands of years spent as a descriptive practice—and for a long time was limited to Medieval bestiaries and was driven by a profoundly
sympathetic (microcosm and macrocosm) and anthropomorphised style of thought. The answers given in chemistry and physiology have in turn reflexively calibrated natural history, and we have been able to re-organise genetic taxonomical families around genetically veridical natural species. Historical hermeneutical interpretation tends to take up the study of history through its own ideological lens.231

3.4 Introducing the Soma, Instincts, and the Pleasure Principle into Psychoanalysis

We are now ready to transition from Bakhtin’s critique of vitalism to Voloshinov’s critique of psychoanalysis. We will do so by first providing a brief analysis of Freud’s borrowings from vitalism and biology. Before moving to the next section I want to show that Freud’s account fails along the same lines as Driesch’s—vis-à-vis the purely subjective mode of analysis he provides and his omission of history from both his science and biological/psychological development. As a trained medical doctor, biology heavily bookends Freudian psychoanalysis, but we will limit our comments to the case of the hysterical biological influence that returns in his later work, in “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” and “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.”

I picture Freud M.D. and academic caught between his search for an etiologic psychoanalysis and his bio-scientific curiosity regarding the somatic origins of purposeful behaviour. It is hard to explain his speculations on “germ-plasm” and ontogeny without first promoting a distinction between how Freud seems to understand his metapsychology and what he would like it to do.232 Freud indeed set out to provide a theory for both the history and the destiny of the psyche, its functioning and its repair. There seems to be a double Freud here, however—a split consciousness. How do Freud’s biological speculations in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” jive with the Freud who wants to make a science of the psyche?233 There seems to be an inside and an outside to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis seems to evoke an unfulfilled longing to establish the essence of the somatic.

In Freud’s 1915 paper, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes”, he recognizes that all sciences must begin in description, just as we have seen in Bakhtin.234 He further admits that concepts must be “imposed” upon science so long as it remains in this natal stage; the ideas begin with “some degree of indefiniteness.”235 Ideas in science begin as
conventions, and Freud’s notion of the instincts is no different.\textsuperscript{236} He then makes the distinction between physiological \textit{stimulus}, coming from without, and to which the organism can respond by taking flight, and \textit{instinct}, which originates within the organism, remains constant, and to which “no actions of flight avail against them.”\textsuperscript{237} Freud then does something strange. He assumes, and it is nothing more than an assumption, that the interior life of the psyche is allergic to stimulus, so to speak. That it wants to return to a state or rest, or a wholly non-stimulated state.\textsuperscript{238} It is only by this will to return to a state of rest that can account for the development of the nervous system. Since instincts are a constant “afflux” of stimulus from \textit{inside} the organism, the nervous system has been developed as a sort of internal flight mechanism, whose \textit{purpose} is to nullify this internal disruption of organic quiescence.\textsuperscript{239} Freud then supposes that the “unpleasure” of these disruptive instincts is therefore subject to the pleasure principle.\textsuperscript{240} The organism wishes to fly from the unpleasureable sensation that his disturbed its dormancy. Finally, Freud posits that these instincts are not only internal to the organism, but, speaking biologically, they arise in the \textit{écart} or interstice of the psychic and the somatic:

\begin{quote}
If now we apply ourselves to considering mental life from the \textit{biological} point of view, an “instinct” appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body.\textsuperscript{241}
\end{quote}

We are therefore assured that “instinct” is a frontier conceptualization, and the concept itself therefore must be more clearly, if tentatively, defined in terms of this body to mind dualistic relation.

For psychoanalysis interprets biological and psychical development as a negotiation of the interior-exterior relation as it pertains not only the organism as a unity, but between its psyche and the somatic. For Freud, the subject must come to identify with those desired objects exterior to it and only thereby does it interiorize them and make them its own.\textsuperscript{242} This renegotiation of identity-alterity as interiority-exteriority, then, seems be in flux and has a vector moving from high to low irritation, with the aim of releasing building pressure, or \textit{“Drang.”}\textsuperscript{243} Under the constant afflux of pressure the individual develops an economy and valuation of interior-exterior relations. This is Freud’s \textit{principle of constancy}: he says, “the pleasure principle follows from the principle
of constancy: actually the latter principle was inferred from the facts which forced us to adopt the pleasure principle.” The instincts coax the organism to let down its defence in order to interiorize those objects deemed necessary for survival. Ultimately, this interiorization is accomplished by thwarting or rerouting the defence mechanisms of the nervous system through self-identification with those exterior objects; again, for Freud, it is only through such identification that the psychic and somatic defences against exogenous stimuli can be compromised.

The drive which motivates the gaze—the scopophilic “aim”—is defined generally as “looking as an activity directed toward an extraneous object,” and the scopophilic vicissitudes of reversal of the active to passive form—i.e., scopophilia becoming exhibitionism and “turning round upon the subject’s own self” can, and should, be seen as vicissitudes through which the scopophilic instinct will have to pass. In first turning his scopophilic instinct to his own body, the subject makes himself the object of his own inspection. This is the primary scopophilic stage and it would correspond to the stage of primary narcissism in Freud’s theory. In the next stage of scopophilic drive development, the subject solicits the gaze of the other. The important take away here is that for Freud, scopophilia is born in the subject as an instinct whose source is somatic but ultimately unknown. The instinct must achieve its aim by cathecting, i.e., investing desire in, an object. Again, in primary narcissism, the object selected is the subject’s own body. Freud posits this as the beginning of the scopophilic instinct, when the subject contemplates his own genitals, and they are cathected as the desired object through which the instinct may achieve its aim. Through repression and the castration complex, however, the child must learn to displace his object of choice and find a proxy—though Freud does not here specifically elucidate the vicissitudes of “repression” or “sublimation, as the subject first passes from the auto-erotic stage, the “active scopophilic instinct” takes hold of an external object, cathects it, and thereby “leave[s] narcissism behind.” Again, note that the movement is unidirectional in terms of origin, that the movement is one of exteriorization, even if “instinct” is a truly frontier concept between mind and body.

Freud complicates the categories of interior and exterior through the further positing of the “three polarities of mental life,” each of which complicate in divergent
manner according to their subject matter. All three polarities can be understood as a 
(re)negotiation of the relation between interiority-exteriority. The three polarities are 
categorized in terms of the biological, the real, and the economic; but more importantly, 
Freud categorizes the three polarities according to the instinctual aims themselves, which 
tend to hold sway.\textsuperscript{253} The biological polarity is defined in terms of individual organisms, 
the real polarity is demarcated by the ego-to-externality relation, and as the borders of the 
ego are redefined through identification and projection, so too is the interior-exterior 
relation renegotiated. Finally, in the development of the pleasure principle in primary 
narcissism, the economic polarity of the interior-exterior relation emerges. In this 
polarity interiority and exteriority of the subject are (re)negotiated strictly in terms the 
pleasure and unpleasure. Subjective identification is bound by pleasure, whereas 
unpleasure is to be expelled and disavowed\textsuperscript{254}: “[t]hus the original ‘reality-ego,’ which 
distinguishes internal and external by means of a sound objective criterion, changes into a 
purified ‘pleasure ego’, which places the characteristic of pleasure above all others.”\textsuperscript{255}

Henceforth this economy of pleasure-unpleasure helps condition identity and 
alterity and ultimately what is considered endogenous or exogenous to the organism. The 
split-ego then abandons the portion of itself it finds unpleasureable by projecting the 
abhorred part of itself out into the world. The external world is no longer seen as 
indifferent, but now is considered strictly “hostile” by default.\textsuperscript{256} According to Freud, we 
may here begin to discern a second opposition in the normal development of object 
love.\textsuperscript{257} In this second opposition he terms “love-hate”; indifference is now considered 
secondary to, or merely derivative of love or hate. This is because in Freud there are no 
passive instincts.\textsuperscript{258} The example of scopophilia should express a resistance to the 
external world by the secondary opposition that is characterized by indifference that now 
stems out of the primary love-hate opposition. The indifference to the world is 
manifested in the subject’s auto-erotic play during narcissism, the exploration of his 
limbs,\textsuperscript{259} or quite literally in the obsessive self-appraisal of the scope of the subject’s 
body.\textsuperscript{260}

We are now ready to formulate a preliminary thesis on the movement of the 
Freudian vicissitudes: the logic of interior-exterior is grafted onto and runs parallel to the 
logic of the subject position in general. For all practical purposes, development always
pushes toward a resolution of any contradictory evidence that ‘I am in here’ and ‘the world is out there.’ In short, in the change from the “reality-ego” of the earliest developmental stages of the I, to the “pleasure-ego” born in primary narcissism, the ego comes to identify with those things it finds pleasurable and therefore attempts to reconcile those exteriorities it finds pleasant by interiorizing them into itself.

Toward the end of “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, Freud writes that “the third antithesis of loving, the transformation of loving into being-loved, corresponds to the operation of the polarity of activity and passivity, and is to be judged the same way as the cases of scopophilia and sadism.” This third psychoanalytic declension of love, qua instinct, also will require a little unpacking. The first listed vicissitude, an instinct’s reversal into its opposite form, from active to passive, Freud explains in terms of the sadistic instinct. Moreover, for Freud, masochism is never a primary aim of the drive. This will make sense if we also recall that in love it was only through identification that the object could be internalized. Meanwhile, masochism maintains the otherness of its object. The possibility of being-loved implies that we have long since passed from the primacy of the biological polarity through the real-external vicissitude of the real polarity and into the pleasure-unpleasure dynamic of the economic polarity. Therefore, the love of the other always requires a highly complex interworking of all three polarities. This intertwining of the pleasure principle, the reality principle and the somatic functioning of biology are the instinctual Gordian knot that Freud is trying to untie. The biological polarity of activity and passivity remains operant, as does the real-external, even with the emergence of the third polarity during narcissism; in other words, what was a temporary and preliminary state has become a psychically adjunct state—which is to say that they psychically “co-exist alongside one another.”

In the third antithesis of love, we are concerned with the transformation of activity into passivity. In wanting to be loved by the external object, the subject must pass through the vicissitude in which the instinct turns into its “opposite,” and then finally enters the vicissitude in which the instinct falls “back on itself.” All of this is to say that in seeking to be loved by another, the subject displaces himself. He takes his pleasure vicariously through the eyes—the gaze—of the other. Only the object has changed, however, and not the aim, since the subject has successfully displaced himself
while the subject’s *Eros* instinct remains intact and falls back upon himself vicariously through the other. In the case of scopophilia, the vicissitudes follow the same trajectory and find their satisfaction in the release of somatic instinctual pressure from an unknown source. In gaining their satisfaction, instincts will either direct the ego toward narcissistic self-absorption, fall directly upon the other as projected gaze, or thirdly, fall back on the subject through his vicarious enjoyment of the other’s gaze. But the other is always treated as an *external object* during the vicissitudinous movements of the instincts.

Although “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” is only a preliminary attempt toward the description of the frontier concept “instinct,” Freud’s analysis intertwines the three polarities and the two vicissitudes that it explores with astounding perspicuity. Still, it is often difficult to know for certain at which points he crosses the gap and helps himself to the biological and anthropological theories of origins that border on the mythic, Romantic, vitalistic, and wholly subjective mode of analysis; in the next section we will have opportunity to review Voloshinov’s charge that Freud remains too subjective in his analysis. We will provide a specific example of how this plays out in the “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”. Beyond the primary stage or narcissism, it is hard to be certain from this essay when Freud means the vicissitudes as stages of ego development, and when he means them as descriptions of adult psychical activity. Assuming that Freud implies both as possible descriptions of the function of the vicissitudes—i.e., that any one of these vicissitudes might repeat themselves in adult life, we can then say that the primary stage will merely cease to dominate *universally* through the necessity of “self-preservation” *alone.*²⁶⁷ Hence the development of the ego-interior and the real-external division. As a result, in the stage of primary narcissism, the reality-ego becomes the pleasure-ego and is regulated according to the economy of pleasure-unpleasure. Again, we find a de-emphasis on what is purely interior in terms of biology—i.e., the somatic. External objects can be identified with and internal objects projected alienated from the ego according to the new parameters of the pleasure principle. We see then that the word “polarity” emphasises the frontier, or the relation, between interior-exterior, and it does so especially in terms of the dynamic dialectical movement of the ego through the various psychical and developmental stages in psychoanalysis. In Freudian psychoanalysis, these themselves turn states-evidence, so to speak, in the form of the underlying ideological
utterances. Tellingly, at no point does Freud offer us a wholly objective method of analysis of the conventional notion of “instincts.” Whereas copious behavioural phenomena has become subject to a quantitative set of analytical practices within psychology and biology, the term “instincts” has yielded to no such objectivity. As such, it has not moved beyond the scientifically natal stage of development; the term instincts remains a wholly subjective notion, and as such it will always belong to the domain of the descriptive science known as psychoanalysis.

Before turning to “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” I will briefly sum up what we have witnessed in “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”. In our example, Freud understands the psychical instinct scopophilia as born out of the individual alone in the primary stage of psychical development; it results from an afflux of tension originating in an unknown somatic source that remains constant. Qua instinct, scopophilia has four important vicissitudes; they are: first, the reversal of the instinct into its opposite; secondly, the instinct falls back upon the subject (Deleuze and Guattari’s “il se rabat sur”); thirdly, the instinct is repressed; finally, an external object is sublimated and the instinct thus acquires its satisfaction. I have briefly dealt with the first two vicissitudes here, as does Freud. The first vicissitude has to do with the active-passive dichotomy, and in keeping with Freud’s principle of instinctual constancy, it is hard to see how an instinctual pressure could be other than active. Therefore, the first vicissitude sets the stage for the explanation of the second—whereby the subject displaces the object of his desire; the ego displaces itself and thus scopophilia becomes exhibitionism, while the pressure (i.e., activity) remains positive and constant even while appearing to be externally displaced. In this way the ego is able to identify with the gaze of the other and exploit it for his own pleasure. In this displacement, the ego remains the object of its own pleasure. Through the three polarities, Freud has given an account of the dialectical development of the interior-exterior relationality of subject to world. Nevertheless, this relation remains in flux. The primary state of the biological polarity Freud calls activity-passivity, and it is presumed to psychically co-exist alongside the real polarity of ego-external world and the economic polarity of pleasure-unpleasure. Only after these relations have been themselves economized—summed, or “synthesized”—can the “word ‘love’” be employed. In other words, the source, or proper name of the instinct lies behind this
tangled weave of active negotiations of ego-instinctual motivations for self-preservation. Everywhere the ego remains the object of its own affection, so to speak. The primary operative logic of interiority remains the subject’s ideal psychical position at any one time, and it never ceases to re-align itself to this ideal; we must never lose sight of the fact that for Freud the interior is always associated with pleasure from the narcissistic stage onward. This is not the real interior of the individual organism; it is the psychical interior which remains in flux and is defined according to the economy of pleasure-unpleasure and ego self-identification. This is to say that regardless of Freud’s compounding of polarities, in “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, pleasure remains his ideological dominant. This is not what Freud says, but this is what is revealed in the logic of the ūr-polarity of interior-exterior relations between ego and world. Moreover, this ūr-polarity is everywhere guided by an ūr-motivation—that of seeking pleasure or, what amounts to the same thing, taking flight from unpleasure. Pulsion always moves toward expulsion, from interiority to exteriority. If all of this seems rather like the fortuitous dialectic of a mental contortionist, this is not accidental; by following Freud in the black letter of his theory we are attempting to make manifest the univocal directionality of the psychoanalytic subject.

3.5 Freudian Appropriations of Biological Theory and Praxis: Beyond the Pleasure Principle

In the 1920 paper, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Freud resumes the development of his economic model of psychic experience by again borrowing from biology. He presumes stimulation to be the primary origin of distinction between the interior-psychic—“perceptual consciousness”—and the exterior world. Psychoanalysis takes up into its theory of psychic origins a recapitulation of a natural-historic and embryological development. This is not to say that Freud actually historicises psychoanalysis; he does not. He merely appropriates the theory of recapitulation for his own programmatic ends. Moreover, recapitulation is itself not fully historical but is merely mimetic of the historical evolution of species at the plateau of the individual. Instead of a blastule or a central nervous system being formed, Freud posits an outer layer of the psyche whose primary function is to protect against stimuli, like a crust, “some
degree inorganic.” After this psychical aegis has formed the outer layer begins to die, essentially taking on inorganic properties as “a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli.” We briefly note the messianic phrasing “by its death, the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate.” The sensory organs sit physiologically and topographically beneath the outer nervous crust and make only “tentative advances” into the world due to their acute sensitivity. The outer layer then differentiates itself as the stimulus receptor at the psycho-somatic threshold of the external world.

The “perceptual Consciousness,” however, does not have a mechanism to shield it from “internal excitations.” We have already seen this logic in Freud’s distinction between instinct and stimulus, between what is internal and external to the organism. As a result, what we might call the internal nervous condition of the subject will be overwhelmingly more influential than external stimuli. Particularly stressful internal excitations will be treated as external stimuli. As such, the external psychic shield can be deployed against internal excitations. “This is the origin of projection,” in psychoanalysis, but we note that this portrayal of projection does not take into consideration the world as an event but as a screen—an object—on which the psyche alienates itself; unlike in the account Bakhtin has provided us, Freud is not interested in the phenomenal limitation of consciousness at the intersubjective hinge between self and other as herself an autonomous subject. Moreover, Freud’s vision of the cell here is entirely militaristic; it is seen from the point of view the bourgeois pathologist implicitly fortified against the outer world of society. Therefore, Freud’s vision of the cell is likewise a projection of the psychopathology of everyday bourgeois life. As we will see in greater detail in the next section, the problems of trauma originate here for psychoanalysis, as do the problems of mastering and binding loose energy, the polarity of pleasure and unpleasure, and of the dualism between Eros and the death instinct. Each of these problems emerges and is analysed wholly in accordance with a subjective conjecture made to appear objective—by objective we simply mean that which is methodologically repeatable in principle. While Freud’s observations may be repeatable his conclusions and analyses are not; we have already seen this subjectivism in Driesch’s leap from observations to conclusions.
“Beyond the Pleasure Principle” begins with the attempt to define pleasure and unpleasure. He suggests that unpleasure results from unbound energy, but is more likely directly related to the interval of time in which this energy remains unbound rather than to its quantity. But unlike his earlier work in “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, Freud now admits of the possibility of an interruption of the pleasure principle. Here, he finally falls back upon the notion that an individual organism—as a unity—must sometimes reject the pleasure principle as disruptive of its own ends and even as dangerous to its survival. The status quo qua inactivity cannot be maintained without damage or even the death of the organism:

Under the influence of the ego’s instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction [delay], the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. The pleasure principle long persists, however, as the method of working employed by the sexual instincts, which are so hard to ‘educate,’ and, starting from those instincts, or in the ego itself, it often succeeds in overcoming the reality principle, to the detriment of the organism as a whole.

It becomes painfully obvious here that Freud is working without a conception of the mutualism or symbiosis of organism and environment, and that his conception of the organism therefore remains without the complexity witnessed in real life within the milieu of organism and environment. Everything is determined according to the isolated individual, and the wider sphere in which it finds its means of life is entirely abstract in psychoanalysis.

Freud says that the drive to self-preservation conflicts with the pleasure principle, and often instincts are repressed which, if fulfilled, would destroy the viability of life. Thus it happens that instincts which seek pleasure are made manifest as unpleasure when their energy escapes cathexis and is not properly bound. Freud attributes “all neurotic unpleasure” to the anti-cathected repression of detrimental instincts.

Beyond the pleasure principle, as it were, the compulsion to repeat plays an essential role. In support of his theory, Freud presents the circumstantial explanation for dreaming as the retrospective attempt to master the influx of stimuli during waking life. Here one is compelled to return to an earlier, and often unpleasant, state of affairs. It is
not enough to recollect this prior state, but one must play it out. Ostensibly this
dissatisfaction with the mere memory of the traumatic event, mother leaving you behind
for example, causes Freud some concern; one seeks to relive the event in order to
master the unpleasant stimulus. It is not only neurotics who practice this mastery; this
repetition is also a part of the psychopathology of everyday life. For example, children
also try to master “unpleasureable experiences” through repetition. Upon observing
the child’s game of Fort-Da or ‘gone’ and ‘there’ (return), Freud hypothesises that
there must be a dominant instinct more primeval than the pleasure principle. Officially,
Freud supposes the compulsions to return to former psychical states implicates the
biographical moments in the individual’s life that were anything but pleasurable. On the
face of it, the pleasure principle is simply not equipped to explain the active repetition of
unpleasure. He therefore concludes that there must indeed be a second more primitive
drive which may commune and even be brought into the service of the pleasure principle,
but which cannot be reduced to the same origin:

> on mature reflection we shall be forced to admit that even in the other instances
the whole ground is not covered by the operation of the familiar motive forces.
Enough is left unexplained to justify the hypothesis of a compulsion to repeat—
something that seems more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the
pleasure principle which it over-rides.

Indeed, but Freud has explained very little. His genius is to open up problems rather than
to solve them, as I hope to show in what follows.

Freud may be primarily concerned with the psychoanalytical source of repetition
in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, but he is not content to restrain himself to
speculations within his field. The somatic returns in this essay; psychoanalytic thought
again takes a peregrination into the field of evolutionary biology. Freud muses that
compulsion to repeat may also explain the migratory habits of birds and what appears to
be the embryological recapitulation of species descent, as well as what Driesch has called
the regulatory and regenerative functions of the organism. The salamander, one might
say, regenerates its tail, not simply to replace what has been lost, but for the sake of
returning to the former state. These are clearly different explanations in that one proceeds
from the image a normalized whole, understood from an exterior point of view, and the
other purports to give an explanation immanent from within the organic system itself.
Freud then toys with the theory that we are physically and instinctually marked by the history of our antecedents. He is convinced that the compulsion to repeat is not only the stamp of a biological interest in our figure within the grounding environment, but is a cosmic echo of the very first moment of the universe in what Bakhtin has analogously referred to as great time: “In the last resort, what has left its mark on the development of organisms must be the history of the earth we live in and of its relation to the sun.”

Again, in all of its speculative accounts, psychoanalysis proceeds according to a logic of the original state. Whatever phenomena are to be explained must contain seeds that were present from the very beginning of our universe—in principle, at least. If we posit the dualistic principles of Eros and the death instinct, for example, they must be shown to have been present in great time, from the start. In this way psychoanalytic recapitulation is actually more akin to preformationist theory in which there is nothing new under the sun. We do not mean that Freud believes there can be wholly new phenomena, only that he hesitates to postulate a truly spontaneous and emergent phenomena. In this way also, psychoanalysis is entirely retrospective in its explanatory direction. It always appeals to a backward reference and is in no way forward looking.

Dr. Freud discursively deduces that if the aim of the instinctual compulsion to repeat is to return to an earlier state of things, then we must eventually arrive at non-existence, although here he says “death.” Again the recapitulatory echoes of biological and organic death repeat themselves here in a psychoanalytic theory of the instinctual death drive. To paraphrase Bakhtin, physiological death is born of Eros to become thanatos on a higher level. Importantly, the inorganic pre-life historical state of nature is assumed to be somehow contracted in the instinctual memory of the individual; this instinct-memory is then redeployed as a forward-looking death-orientated inflection of this so-called original historical state. This future orientation does not contradict what we have said about the backward referential directedness of psychoanalysis, since it is only looking forward in order to return to a previously extant state.

Freud speculates that returning to the inorganic state of affairs may have been delayed by unavoidable and indefinite suspension of individual death. Taking into consideration the great time of evolutionary progress a great many circuitous “détours” may have become hardwired in the instincts, and “what we are left with is the fact that the
organism wishes to die in its own fashion.” Thus Freud asserts the second, primeval, “ego-instincts” which compel the organism to return to its original inorganic state. As a result he commits himself to a dualistic theory that distinguishes two primary instinctual principles, namely Eros and the death instinct:

ego-instincts [the death instincts] arise from the coming to life of inanimate matter and seek to restore the inanimate state; whereas as regards the sexual instincts, though it is true that they reproduce primitive states of the organism, what they are clearly aiming at by every possible means is the coalescence of two germ-cells which are differentiated in a particular way.

We are now in a position to analyses the meaning of what I am calling Freud’s Weismannian turn.

The Weismannian turn represents a somatic revolution of sorts in psychoanalysis; specifically, Freud’s turn toward the dualism of Eros and the death instinct and away from the monism of libido. The biologist August Weismann’s theory of the relation between species and individuals posits a dualism between immortality and mortality in the figures of the germ-cell and the soma. While the soma is “destined to die” the germ-plasm concerns reproduction. However, Weismann makes a clear distinction between these two struggling tendencies only in the higher organisms. Freud cannot follow him in this and uses his recent dualistic amelioration to psychoanalysis to refute this claim. He does not accept natural death in organisms on face value but wants to provide an account of death from the point of view of the natural forces which drive living beings toward death. In Weismann, death is nothing but a “matter of expediency.” The trouble with this account, in Freud’s opinion, is that the elemental forces that drive reproduction and death must be traced back to the first appearance of life upon earth. This cannot be done if physical death only appears with multicellular organisms. That said, Freud is not interested in the merely internal physical death of the organism. He wants to define death from the point of view of the forces operant in it. In this way Freud actually proves a more subtle thinker than Weismann—although Weismann is actually in the laboratory conducting observations of protozoa and metazoia, whereas Freud is only speculating from a textual and subjective position. Nevertheless, Maupas and Calkins provide evidence to contradict Weismann’s assumption that physical death only applies to metazoans. It would appear from these experiments that even protozoan organisms will
die if they are not rejuvenated through conjugation. What is more, Freud goes further to grant that death is the result of an organism’s “incomplete voidance of the products of its own metabolism.” He therefore suggests that far from invoking physical death for the first time, metazoans may actually have the power of self-rejuvenation and the prolongation of life precisely by dint of their multicellularity, since one cell may help to rejuvenate another.

What happens next is most extraordinary and essential for our purposes. While Freud claims to have arrived at his dualistic theory of Eros and the death instinct independently of biology, and while he purports to be searching for the real internal primal forces responsible for reproduction and organic death, he shows very little interest in doing anything but appropriating from and critiquing biology. Yet he is willing to apply elements of his metapsychology to germ-cells by attributing to them a form of narcissism: “to use the phrase that [he is] accustomed to use in the theory of the neuroses to describe a whole individual who retains his libido in his ego and pays none of it out in object-cathexes.” Thus the avenue Freud constructs between bio-science and psychoanalysis is a one-way street.

Naturally, we ought to be suspect of a retroactive implementation of the biological theory of Weismann et al. to bolster Freud’s dualist principles, Eros and the death instinct. Our suspicion is well-founded since for all of Freud’s borrowings from biology to, ostensibly, architectonically answer psychoanalytic dualism, nowhere does he attempt to struggle with contrary evidence—at least with regard to the influence of evolutionary biology. In fact, he claims to have arrived at his dualism independently of Weismann’s mortal and immortal soma and germ-plasm. As a result, his production in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” is artful, no doubt, but it is also wholly mechanical. That is, Freud’s synthesis of biological and metapsychological theory at times remains entirely aesthetic intuitive in method and at other times theoretical cognitive, but nowhere does it seek to ground itself in the dialectical materialist movement of biological or psychological theory—or for that matter in everyday life. As such, it cannot truly pretend to objectivity.

Nowhere does Freud present us with methods of testing his hypotheses that are repeatable by anyone and yet he claims the scientific—i.e., objective—validity of his theories of the pleasure principle, the ego and its vicissitudes, internal-external polarities
of the organism, the biological, real, and economic polarity, the germ-plasm and soma, dream analysis, *Eros*, and the death instinct. It is this lack of objectively repeatable methods, combined with his apparent disregard of the socioeconomic history of biological and psychological practice, more than anything else, which has contributed to his demise in the latter half of the 20th century. This is not to say that Freud no longer has any value. His theories remain useful descriptions—if entirely bourgeois and subjective in their concepts. Ironically, they offer us a unique historical plane from which to view, rewrite, and reanalyse the *fin-de-siècle* cultural *milieu* in which he himself was immersed.

In closing this section I want to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” was published hard on the heels of Freud’s introduction to a book on war neurosis. The cessation of hostilities at the end World War One loom large in the background, with all its political, socioeconomic, and historically traumatic *disjecta membra*. Perhaps it would be reading too much into Freud’s trauma at seeing Europe descend into an apparent death wish. Would it be too much to suggest that the repression of the social in Freud begins to suggest itself to him after the catastrophic collision and suicidal conflagration of the whole of society? In any case, I am certainly not the first to do so. History surely plays its part as ghoulish *persona non grata* in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, as well as in Freud’s theory of the instincts—although I would argue that “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” is written from a completely a-historical point of view, whereas in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” Freud is clearly beginning to think the socio-historical implications of his theory, even if he will not be ready to give this aspect of psychoanalysis a self-conscious evaluative utterance until *Civilisation and its Discontents*. It is transparently clear that the pleasure principle does not remain dominant in Freud after WWI.²⁹⁸

Finally, to my mind the gap between the individual and species remains what is essential to “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. While the vast majority of ink has been spilt on the compulsion to repeat, the dualism that opens up between the individual and the species in this essay is one of those ‘big picture’ problems with which philosophy will always concern itself. I cannot help but think that there is a great deal more to the idea that once the individual has reproduced it becomes superfluous. I am aware that this supposition will not be warmly received by all readers. Nor should it. It is not that I lack
belief in the sanctity of all life, but when our world has brought itself to its knees, as I believe it will in the coming years, through the perceived absolute import of individual pleasure seeking, we ought to take this proposition more seriously than we do. I will provide an anecdote as a microcosmic example of what I mean to say. In the 1960’s my grandfather watched as the many family-owned farms surrounding his were bought up one by one. When he retired he passed his farm on to his son, who wanted to work it. Eventually his son was also tempted away from the life he loved simply because it was economically infeasible that he keep it. The life that had persisted for the vast majority of people in this hemisphere since they arrived here—and we could trace this back by millennia if we followed their antecedents into Europe—disappeared overnight. My grandfather was a simple man, and he had one question: but who will feed my grandchildren when all the farms are owned by these big companies? I am not an economist or an agriculturalist, and I do not pretend to be an expert in markets. But I am a grandson and I do know a lack of foresight when I see it. Given the present rapidity of the growth in income disparity, drought, species extinction, global warming and famine, should it not concern us that it now seems the world would be better off without us? The individual, after all, is supported by the generations which came before him, and ought to try to save something for those who will come after he has long since passed on in great time.
§ 4. Psychology and Psychoanalysis: *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*

4.1 Between Marxism and ‘Freudianism’:
Valentin Voloshinov & Psychoanalysis

You’re like my yo-yo
That glowed in the dark.
What made it special
Made it dangerous,
So I bury it
And forget.

—Kate Bush, “Cloudbusting”

It would be futile to say that love has to do with proteins and society. This would amount to reviving yet once more the old attempts at liquidating Freudianism.

—Deleuze & Guattari

In this section I intend to review, in brief, Valentin Voloshinov’s critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. In order to do this I will first distance myself from Clark and Holquist’s view that Voloshinov’s supposition that Marxism is a legitimate avenue to critique Freud is somehow disingenuous and merely a prevarication aimed at flying under the Soviet censors. I will then show where there actually are shortfalls in Voloshinov’s analysis and attempt to make clear the merits of a Marxist critique and an analysis of official and unofficial discourse in Freudian psychoanalysis. This will require us to look closely at the last two sections of Voloshinov’s treatise, especially in terms of the highly introspective type of psychological method that Freud prescribes. It will also entail making visible the bourgeois ideology that everywhere infiltrates Freud’s theories of transference, the Oedipus complex, and his introspective approach to psychology in general. Once we have reviewed these central aspects of Voloshinov’s *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, I will then show what I perceive to be the proper extension of both Freudian theory as viewed through the lens of the Bakhtin Circle and Allon White’s paper “Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis.” This in turn will implicate Bakhtin’s notions of the carnivalesque and the grotesque, and will therefore prefigure the last section of this thesis, which takes up *Rabelais and his World* directly. I believe White’s paper goes a long way to show how sociology and psychoanalysis can be brought into an architectonic relation of the type Bakhtin has in mind. In this way I hope
to consummate my exposition on the Bakhtin Circle’s work on Freud, both in the previous section and in what follows.

First published in 1927, Valentin Voloshinov’s *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, presents psychoanalysis as an introspective, subjective, and bourgeois ideological inflection of the sciences. Generally speaking, this critique follows the same pattern of the Bakhtin/Kanaëv essay and Voloshinov’s *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. There is the obligatory exposition of the monological, isolated, basis of Freidianism as wholly subjective. Voloshinov shows how both the psychoanalytic and behavioural methodologies go wrong, and ultimately undercut their own socioeconomic ground. As such, these approaches to psychology prematurely draw indiscriminate lines between the everyday discourse of life and the more specialized discourse of the sciences. Bakhtin’s “Speech Genres” also performs this line of critique. Proper attention to the “primary” everyday genres is not stressed in the monological approach to science and theory tends to outstrip practice.\(^{301}\) This one-sidedness in turn effects a vulgarization of the purportedly objective scientific theory, and in psychoanalysis specifically the cult of bourgeois subjectivity prematurely forecloses its larger socio-historical and material context. The writings of the Circle then tends to emphasize the diachronic and historical mutualism between science and discourse in everyday life. Bakhtin and the Circle seek to establish the importance of dialectical materialism between scientific practice and scientific theory; this ultimately leads to an attempt to supplant the established monological theory directly with what Holquist calls *dialogism*. Finally, the architectonics of answerability which the young neo-Kantian Bakhtin first sought to establish, with all of its ontological commitments to a fixed gulf between life, science and art, everywhere underpins and bolsters the Bakhtin Circle’s critical method. In every way, Voloshinov’s critique of Freud follows this pattern.

Clark and Holquist rightly acknowledge in Bakhtin’s stead that Freud made an attempt to incorporate sociological method into psychoanalysis in his final texts *Civilization and its Discontents* and *Moses and Monotheism*.\(^{302}\) However, in my estimation, the biographers are largely mistaken that Voloshinov’s text is not authentically sympathetic to Marxism. This *méconnaissance* leads them to a second and more profound error: they deem the final chapter of *Freudianism*, “The Content of
Consciousness”, to be largely a critique of Soviet psychologist appropriations of Freud. Far from utilizing Freud to critique behavioural psychology, however, Freudianism is very much a polemic against the essence of Freud’s subjective methodology, and its greatest merit is along these lines.

Where behavioural methods are concerned Voloshinov is ready to endorse Pavlov, so long as he sticks to quantitative analysis of outward behaviour and likewise seeks a socioeconomic ground in the discourse of life on which all science is founded. Clark and Holquist argue that the book “is a critique less of Freud himself ... than of Soviet psychologists who sought to appropriate Freud into a new science of the mind.” This proposition seems to me to be in bad faith. One might just as well argue that Voloshinov is trying to do is to disprove in one blow the theories of introspection and behaviourism in order to put up in their place a middle term grounded in gestalt theory, as Wolfgang Köhler attempts to do in his Gestalt Psychology. While the work certainly serves to warn against following the psychoanalytic edifice, since its concepts remain in essence entirely subjective, the general thrust of the book is certainly directed as a polemic against Freudianism proper. If one were to follow Clark and Holquist’s lead here, one could again disregard the fact, which I believe is quite clear, that Voloshinov and Bakhtin are everywhere influenced by Marxism and want to found psychology and all sciences on the firm ontological grounds of a socioeconomic theory and dialectical materialism; regardless of how Voloshinov may privately resent Soviet interference and censorship, both he and Bakhtin were ready to engage in a dialogue with Marx and Engels. They seem to have perceived in the sociological theory of Marxism and in dialectical materialism the last-best hope of grounding psychology, which was still in its early stages of development. As we saw regarding biology, science cannot afford to wait for its last word to begin constructing its conceptual framework, hypotheses making, and building a methodology. The simple fact of the matter is that Voloshinov is attempting to critique both the subjective, thinly masked, bourgeois psychoanalytic method of Freud as well as the Soviet trends in behavioural psychology. He wishes to ground both in the socioeconomic discursive practice of dialectical materialism without destroying what is truly valuable in either theoretical direction. He is not always successful, but we must not
mistake his missteps and *cul-de-sacs* for a veiled liberalism and disingenuous prevarications.

Nevertheless, while Voloshinov’s critique of Freud is correct in essence, he does tend to gloss Freud’s marked evolution from his early days in studying and hypothesising on hysteria with Josef Breuer. From that point in his career until his abandonment of “the cathartic approach,” which led eventually to the formulation of his systematic theory of the Unconscious, Freud constantly changed his mind and, I believe, genuinely attempted to modify his theory to fit his observations. The trouble is that he did so, by and large, in isolation, and as such, his theory remains wholly introspective. Notwithstanding the fact that many of these changes came within the influence of the *milieu* of Freud’s inner circle of psychoanalysts and analytical psychologists, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Stanley Hall, Ernest Jones, C. G. Jung et al., introspection everywhere remained Freud’s primary mode of concept creation and analysis.

By 1912 Freud had already publicly explicated the different vectors of the theory of the unconscious, distinguishing between the *descriptive*, *dynamic*, and *systematic* unconscious. Perhaps the most notorious amelioration of his theory, as we have seen, is the dualist approach he presents in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. There, the addition of the death instinct, which caused Wilhelm Reich and others to abandon the International Psychoanalytic Association altogether, probably marks his greatest evolution since *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared in 1900. Reich acted rejected Freud’s turn away from the univocality of the pleasure principle to the dualism between *Eros* and the death instinct. Voloshinov describes this dualism as follows:

By *Eros* Freud means the *instinct striving toward organic life*, toward its preservation and development at whatever cost, whether in terms of the continuation of the species (sexuality in the narrow sense) or preservation of the individual. The *death instinct* is understood as aiming toward the return of all living organisms to the lifeless state of inorganic, inanimate matter—a striving away from the exigencies of life and Eros.

Voloshinov goes further than we have, and states that where there is life the *Eros* principle retains its dominance. He calls this period the “third period of development” of psychoanalysis. To this period also belongs Freud’s move away from the merely systematic unconscious, which *dream analysis* played no small part in helping him formulate, to the dynamic unconscious model. Here all important theory of the *id* comes
to play the central role. What is important in this shift away from system is the renewed emphasis on the “shadowy, elemental force” which accounts for the pulson of the instincts.\textsuperscript{313} I will not deal with the superego, or the elemental and rational aspects of the id and ego, as does Voloshinov. It is enough that we have pointed to the renewed importance of the primal forces of the unconscious during this third period. Below, this will become essentially important to Voloshinov’s critique.

4.2 \textit{Freudianism: A Marxist Critique}

\textit{Freudianism} presents an uncanny presentiment of the possibility of a semiotic Freud \textit{avant le mot}—and before Lacan. Here we see the possibility, in seed form, of reading Freud contemporaneously through Marxism and Saussure. In the final two chapters of \textit{Freudianism}, Voloshinov attempts to show that the “strife” of the psyche can actually be better interpreted as a struggle between two ideological positions in conflict, what Voloshinov calls official and unofficial discourse. This seemingly idiosyncratic and superficial Marxist reading runs counter to the official psychoanalytic attempt to posit “psychical” forces wholly from the subjective position of the great man of science, as Freud himself tries to achieve.\textsuperscript{314} Amid admonishment, Voloshinov evinces a great admiration for Freud, later echoed by Bakhtin, since even as a proponent of subjectivist psychology his ingenuity broke away from classical introspective starting points and specifically their “naïve psychological [and] biological optimism.”\textsuperscript{315}

As we have seen in the biological sciences, every new science has a honeymoon period in which it must remain merely descriptive. Nascent science is developmentally delayed by its lack of field knowledge, but this is only true retrospectively. However, in evolving from psychoanalysis’ first theory of the unconscious—the descriptive, to the systematic unconscious, Freud’s theory moves in the opposite direction, away from distinctly objective ideas grounded more strictly in observation. Psychoanalysis becomes progressively more subjective; the methods for determining the systematicity of the unconscious rely to a great extent on dream analysis and talk therapy. But this talk is limited to doctor and patient, and therefore it remains saturated with a bourgeois and highly-subjective ideological perspective.
Voloshinov wants to make the claim that Freud has not exposed ontologically different kinds of entities in the consciousness and the unconscious—a claim implicit in psychoanalysis, but only that consciousness and the unconscious are ideologically different kinds of evaluative inflections, namely the official and the unofficial. Psychoanalysis’ claim that it has discovered the “elemental forces” of the psyche are simply mistaken:

The motives of the unconscious that are disclosed at psychoanalytical sessions with the aid of ‘free association’ are just such verbal reactions on the patient’s part as are all other, ordinary motives of consciousness. They differ from the latter not in kind of ‘being,’ that is, ontologically, but only in terms of content, that is, ideologically. In this sense Freud’s unconscious can be called the “unofficial conscious” in distinction from the ordinary “official conscious.”

Since consciousness is, according to Voloshinov, packaged in the shape of “verbal expression,” and since all verbal expressions are axiologically intoned by ideology, and since finally everything made conscious “operates through words,” there is no ontological distinction possible that can be posited by the subjective methods of psychoanalysis.

It follows from what we have said that not only is psychoanalytic method not objective, neither can it be made objective without a thoroughgoing justification. This justification is delivered from the “social situation in which the utterance emerges.” It must find its ground there rather than in the non-witnessed unseen primeval psychical forces—even if these do exist, we simply have no evidence with which to theorize this existence. Without this theoretically bounded social territory—let us give it the visual image of a socioeconomic eruv, all that is possible are the “arbitrary constructions” of the type that Freud provides. The systematic topography must first be assembled. The personalities, if we may refer to them as such, of the systematic unconscious—i.e., the ego, the id, and the superego remain descriptive, not truly objective hypostasized elements in psychic life, as Freud presumes. They are objectively “unverifiable” and, like all merely descriptive and purely theoretical conceptualizations, entirely one-sided.

Freud seems almost to have implicitly understood the weight of social context in his conception of doctor patient transference. It is not the persona of the id that will ground psychoanalysis, but the real socioeconomic and specifically bourgeois familial relations—i.e., the holy family. The family becomes the ür-structure of all human relationships in Freud: “Here is the source for the dramatism that marks the Freudian
construct. It is also the source for that personification of psychical forces which we have already mentioned. Here, indeed, people, not natural forces, are in conflict.”

To be precise, this quotation refers to the doctor-patient relation, but transference is built upon the Oedipus complex, which in turn is directed primarily back to the familial relation before it becomes embedded and shapes the doctor-patient relation. Voloshinov separates these two moments, but I believe this to be a mistake. The doctor, insomuch as he is informed by the ‘science’ of the Oedipus complex, injects the entire baggage of the holy family—and by it a microcosm of capitalist hierarchy—into this moment of the doctor-patient relation. It is not easy to untie these knots, as even the present social milieu, which Voloshinov privileges, implicates absent ideological constellations.

The attribution of mental illness—as well as the psychopathology of everyday life—to personified psychical forces is nothing other than a typically bourgeois resistance to social life in all its forms. Freud simply projects the dynamic, strife-ridden, relationships between people, in their social and ideologically saturated context, onto his theory of the unconscious. He does this by making a distinction between thought and things where there is no clear distinction here—for Voloshinov thought and things are inseparably tied together in the materiality of the word:

> When contemporary psychology attempts to draw a borderline between experience and things, it is compelled ultimately to come to the paradoxical conclusion that there is no such borderline, that everything depends on the point of view. One and the same thing, depending on the connection and context in which we perceive it, is now a psychical body or social phenomenon.

As we will see, Voloshinov seeks to ground the discourse of the sciences and arts architectonically in the verbal and extraverbal socioeconomic base of everyday life—i.e., in the social milieu with all its axiological inflections of ideology. It is only by first preparing this propaedeutic sociological research that ethics, biology, psychology, and linguistics can objectively answer once-occurrent being-as-event and thus seek to form an architectonic method of answering between these disciplines. All of this, points back to a philosophy from the point of view of becoming; for Bakhtin, this becoming is a dialogical or architectonically answerable disposition in which the autonomy of the event, or the other, is respected.
Freud’s leap of faith from his discursive and symbolic practice to the hypostatisation of the Oedipus-complex is an especially telling example of where his introspective psychology fails. The edifice of this complex is built not on the testimony of children but only ‘retrospectively’ from the point of view of the grown-up. Deleuze and Guattari also make this point in Anti-Oedipus: “Oedipus is first the idea of an adult paranoiac, before it is the childhood feeling of a neurotic.”

Freud’s error is to have put too much faith in the adult’s perspective and the evidence presented therein. Regardless of the fact that he must then interpret this evidence, he treats this testimony as if it were wholly transparent and amenable to interpretation. What is more, his interpretation is founded on his bourgeois idea of sexuality and the holy family. The result is that the trial is rigged. There is no chance of finding objectivity by interpreting childhood ‘complexes’ strictly from the “point of view of the present.” Why is this? It is because the purely verbal point of view of the present cannot escape the evaluative intonations of the ideology of the adult witness. Who is the witness? The adult patient who views the world through an adult ideological lens! Who is the judge? The bourgeois doctor—and in this case a doctor for whom the ‘holy family’ is the cornerstone of his social milieu.

Nevertheless, the ideological significance of the doctor-patient relationship is privileged in psychoanalysis and mimics the holy family’s little milieu at the expense of a wider social sphere. Voloshinov puts the case as such:

“Sexual attraction to the mother,” “the father rival,” “hostility toward the father,” “wish for the father’s death”—if we subtract from all these “events” that ideational significance, that evaluative tone, that full measure of ideological weight which accrue to them only in the context of our conscious “adult” present, what would they have left?

The answer is a deserted anteroom in the Freudian psyche.

Freud’s leap is no doubt informed by factual observations and by patients who want very much to help their doctor help them, but this is not what is at issue. “Freudianism is not at all a series of facts.” It is a naïvely formed ideological construct. Voloshinov provides us with the example of Otto Rank’s birth trauma, which is little more than a birth drama built on the top of the bare fact of physiological trauma during birth. The facts, real as they are, have been staged to appear under a certain light, are clothed in a particular disguise, as if someone were rearranging the scene of a crime.
The room is the same, but the furniture has changed position. Certainly “the organism experiences a physiological shock at the moment the child is born into the world,” but Rank wants to make of this fact a “purely ideological formulation projected into the psyche of a child.” All we are left with is a psychologically introspective methodology; as a result, psychoanalysis is impoverished by its absolute adherence to bourgeois individualism: What is your problem? Why don’t you tell me? I can’t possibly answer for myself! Aren’t you the doctor, why don’t you tell me? The wider social milieu of the we has dropped out entirely. In hysteria, for example, it is assumed that it makes no difference that Anna O., Breuer, and Freud together established the efficacy of catharsis. Likewise, the causal effect of the milieu in which psychoanalysis establishes its practices is assumed to have, at best, a benign influence.

The challenge to psychology, according to Voloshinov, is to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of subjectivism and “naïve, mechanical materialism.” It would appear that for Voloshinov only dialectical materialism can institute a dialogue between the methods of objective psychology and “the extremely important issues raised by psychoanalysis.” Only dialectical materialism begins from presuppositions which effectively serve to ground psychology, since it begins by assuming that the socioeconomic social milieu has a determining role to play. Because dialectical materialism answers psychology with what has been learned in translinguistics, it endeavours to account for both verbal and extraverbal ideological content. In short, a dialectical materialist psychology begins from the materiality of the word and can account for its shifting axiological meaning, since this ideological-linguistic component itself is given with the whole of the event as a task to be accomplished. Voloshinov supports dialectical materialism as the proper method for the science of the psyche because it alone can keep one eye trained on the mutual influence of psychological practice and the theory of the psyche.

Bourgeois psychoanalytic subjectivism attempts to retain an ontological divide between psychical forces and the material basis of everyday life while at the same time arbitrarily isolating doctor and patient as privileged purveyors of these forces. Thus psychoanalysis puts aside the “sociological essence” that not only ought to ground the work of objective psychology but is germane to all its hypotheses and practices.
essence, psychoanalysis haunts behavioural psychology, since left to its own quantitative practices, the latter steers too close to the eddy of mechanical reductionism. The former, meanwhile, so long as it remains isolated from its sociological grounding, will inevitably flounder on the rocks of bourgeois subjectivism. Meanwhile, Voloshinov prescribes a broader historical account grounded in material practices and socioeconomic context: vis-à-vis dialectical materialism. Nevertheless, the interface between praxis and theory cannot be reduced to a dialectics of nature, but in keeping both polarities connected, dialectical materialism can “illuminate” the ‘fact’ that ideological conflict is inherent in all scientific utterances.331 No neutrality is possible. An objective account is at the same time an account that illuminates the ideological undercurrents of the scientific hypotheses. With an eye to this omnipresence of ideology, science can thereby embed a corrective measure with the teeth to make visible the axiological motivation behind all scientific utterances—even, for the sake of argument, where this ideological content is simply ‘I want to present a theory that is ideologically neutral.’ The investigation of the unconscious through strictly verbal and behavioural analysis is not sufficient. These verbal utterances and behavioural patterns have been given shape by wider socioeconomic forces; these are essentially historical forces, and these utterances cannot be understood—and understood in the active sense we spoke of above—if these material roots of psychological phenomenon are not likewise considered alongside them.

I am not wholly transparent to myself. Freud understood this very well and founded the entire edifice of his project on what is in essence a psychology of the double, of the I and thou, of the ghost in the machine. But his introspective methods run too deeply in one direction, they are wholly one-sided, and as a result he misses the externality of this otherness of self. As we have already said, the self originates from the external social environment and not the other way around. Even though words are not things, they begin as things and have primarily a material basis for us when we first become conscious of the world.332 This is to say that I cannot become more transparent to myself merely by looking inward. My own subjectivity begins in objectivity and not the other way around. The personalities of the unconscious, however inchoate they may be, are produced as a result of the social sphere in which I am immersed. One can think of the individual who tries to use a wholly private language. As Allon White says,
“Freud’s insistence on a purely sexual aetiology and an individualist perspective obscures a fundamental sociohistorical matrix of his narrative.”333 This matrix is made up fundamentally of the verbal and extraverbal material content of the everyday life of the patient, which is always-already historical and which is evinced in the uttered and the axiologically intoned word. Ideology, for Voloshinov, is as deep as perception. There is no unconscious realm in which ideology is manufactured; the mental unconscious, if it is anything, is more akin to a warehouse then a factory. Words are produced between living ideological subjects, between semantic persons. Meanwhile, Freud’s ego-logical subject can only enter discourse through the door of the descriptive. This is why Voloshinov is right—rather than idiosyncratic—to say that the unconscious and consciousness are not ontologically but ideologically different. They exist on an immanent plane; they are descriptive.

Voloshinov’s accusation that the high degree of isolation of the bourgeois subject has been detrimental to the objectivity of psychoanalysis is judicious, but he does not go far enough to show how socioeconomic factors enter into the dialogue between doctor and patient. John Parrington also espies a gap between Voloshinov’s claims regarding the socioeconomic and material base of the word and his exposition of how he would transform this observation into a scientific or linguistic method: “what Voloshinov’s own work lacks is the empirical scientific evidence that proves such a connection [between consciousness and reality] exists.”334 Likewise, his supposition that Freud has monstrously overestimated the role of sexuality is correct to the letter but insufficient in substance.

If sociology, as a psychologically transgredient discipline, is to form an architectonic unity—an idea that has itself fallen out of fashion, then it must make this architectonic unity from the art of what we now call interdisciplinarity. Thus, I agree with Kant that we would need to see a “schema” which would give a blueprint or map as to how this answering might take place, but I also disagree with Kant that this schema could ever be provided a priori.335 In this sense, *Freudianism* requires something more. What is missing is precisely the spadework of *showing* that the psychological event can be made answerable—i.e., brought at least temporarily into a *unity of a systematic consciousness*, if I might be allowed this play on Freud’s terminology. Again,
Voloshinov is right, this consciousness cannot be perceived as isolated unto itself as it is in bourgeois naivety—and, for that matter, in Kantian philosophy. The ground of consciousness is not transcendental categories but living linguistic beings. Nevertheless, this unity is not achieved outside of consciousness, as Bakhtin has stated and as everyone intuitively knows—there is no collective consciousness, no sphere of unified intentionally directed acts outside of people. As an aside, this is a source of great frustration for many of us who would see a more collectively directed effort in shaping our global economies. That we only find the ground of this unity in consciousness does not mean that ideas do not have an immanent power to move, only that they need the fuel of living unified organisms to turn over the engine. It is not enough to say that consciousness is multi-sided, or that words are material or that genres and official and unofficial ideologies are the “drive belts” moving history and scientific theory along their road. This road must lead somewhere.\(^{336}\)

All of this is to say that I am thankful that *Freudianism* is not a stand-alone manifesto on interdisciplinarity, for as such it is insufficient and preaches rather than practices grounding the work of psychoanalysis. We must peregrinate elsewhere, into other texts and other thinkers if we want to establish a method of ideological analysis, and I am not hopeful that even with a thoroughgoing self-reflexivity that these relations would ever bring anything like a scientific systematicity from sociological to psychological practice as Voloshinov envisions it. It is therefore difficult to imagine that we could likewise re-establish psychoanalysis as an objective science through the broad strokes of official and unofficial ideological and historical research. This brand of analysis is much more conducive to scientifically dialogic practices that are themselves descriptive rather than quantitative and analytical—i.e., I believe we can use Voloshinov to attempt to establish a self-reflexive hermeneutics of science rather than a science proper, but I do not believe this propaedeutic can seriously and everywhere ground psychology in social science.

Before closing this section I want to take a look at a piece of work that actively takes up the Bakhtin Circle’s work on Freud in what I consider to be a productive and natural extension of the propaedeutic presented in *Freudianism* and also in Bakhtin’s work on the carnivalesque. Taken together, Allon White’s retrospective on Freud’s
studies on hysteria and Bakhtin’s writings on carnival present an excellent case study on
the type of hermeneutical and critical work that can come of Freudianism. I will
therefore proceed to a brief description of White’s paper and try to tease out the art of
hermeneutical answering of the historicised ego-logical subject of psychoanalysis with
which it engages.

4.3 Extending the Bakhtin Circle’s Critique of Psychoanalysis
To my mind, there is no question that White’s paper “Hysteria and the End of Carnival:
Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis” is the right kind of addition to the work implicitly set
as a task by Freudianism—vis-à-vis placing psychoanalysis within its historical and
cultural milieu. White understands Voloshinov’s insight into the bourgeois ideological
sublimation of the so-called elemental forces into hyper-individualized personifications—
the id, the ego, the super ego, etc. For White, an organized process of substitution, or
repression, began sometime in the 17th century, whereby ancient folk-festive and carnival
culture became re-inscribed by state ideology, militarization, and symbols. This process
gradually pushed carnival from the centre of public life. Symbolic forms gradually co-
opted ritual. Sublimation of the real everyday life of the lower orders of social practice
forced the internalization of carnival forms of catharsis. This in turn led to the growing
dissolution of unofficial public gatherings, to the victory of Victorian common sense, and
especially to bourgeois hysteria. The result was a sort of hyper-individualized, über-
intellectualized, popular isolation. Under these circumstances, what Bakhtin calls the
lower bodily stratum was driven into the underground of psychic life.

White cites the transformation of folk-festive culture by state apparatuses of
capture into a militarization of carnival as the site which still requires the most attention
from Bakhtinian cultural critiques of the carnivalesque:

By and large, literary critics have not asked how or why this ‘carnivalesque’
material should inform modern art because, busy with the task of textual analysis,
they move too rapidly away from the social practice of textual composition. Yet
the social historians who have charted the demise of carnival as social practice,
have not registered its displacements into bourgeois discourses, like art and
psychoanalysis: adopting a naïvely empirical view, they have outlined a simple
disappearance, the elimination of the ‘carnivalesque’. 
White’s paper is motivated by two essential suppositions in the work of Voloshinov and Bakhtin. He follows the distinctively—although not exhaustively—Marxist claims in Voloshinov’s *Freudianism* that bourgeois ideology distorts the true empirical value of psychoanalysis. Secondly, he takes up one of the essential and yet inchoate claims made by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*. The Romantic error degrades carnival by interpreting it wholly from the perspective of “individual life and death” and thus glosses the importance of its cyclicality.\(^{338}\) Romantic sublimation effectively reduces the grotesque to its negative polarity alone, and the trope of renewal emphasised by the grotesque is forgotten—in the gothic genre for example. In the Romantic epic the importance of the hero’s “individual destiny” short-circuits the emphasis on cyclicity that emerged historically within the Rabelaisian chronotope and in Medieval cultural more generally. Thus the positive nature of carnival and its populist roots are hidden beneath 19\(^{th}\) century ideology.\(^{339}\)

Bakhtin notes that Goethe’s description of the Roman carnival in his *Italian Journey*, to which we shall return in the final section of this thesis, senses the “cosmic principle” of this cyclicity, but also leaves it underdetermined.\(^{340}\) But if Goethe comes close to diagnosing cyclicity as a symptom of the larger historical and collective social body, the Romantic movement on the whole misunderstands it and interprets it from a largely individualist point of view: “The negative aspect of [the Romantic’s] appreciation [of the grotesque] is its idealism, its false concept of the role and limitations of subjective consciousness... human freedom broke away from necessity and became a supermaterial force.”\(^{341}\) The negative aspect contributed to the repression of the lower bodily stratum, to the clinicalization of the material flows of the body, to the degradation of carnival laughter and the loss of its rejuvenating power, and lastly to the acquisition of “a private ‘chamber’ character” in the Romantic genre.\(^{342}\) Most importantly, Romantic idealism misunderstands both the form and especially the content of Rabelaisian discourse; because it fails to recognize the cyclical and rejuvenating character of the Rabelaisian *chronotope*, Romantic idealism becomes instead the “expression of subjective, individualistic world outlook [that is] very different from the carnival folk concept of previous ages.”\(^{343}\)
As we have seen, psychoanalysis improperly interprets the past from the point of view of the present. The retrogressive transference of adult hysterical symptoms onto childhood games “obscures the fundamental sociohistorical matrix of this narrative.” White points to a lacuna in the historicity and sociological reconstructions of “the complex relation of the discourse of psychoanalysis to festive tradition.” Interpreting the copious *disjecta membra* of carnivalesque ritual as it surfaces in the symbolic symptoms of hysteria, White provides us with a compelling account of bourgeois hysteria as a “return of the repressed” of the once cathartic traditions of carnival: “The language of bourgeois neurosis both appropriates and disavows, fears and longs for, a communal festive tradition no longer available.” Social historians have missed this connection, according to White, and they have missed it precisely because they do not give enough attention to either sublimation or the so-called return of the repressed. In this supposition, White not only follows a properly Bakhtinian critique of bourgeois neurosis, nor just a simple repetition of the Bakhtin Circle’s critique of psychoanalysis, but he also manages to carry the banner of carnivalesque critique forward by making a productive use of Freudianism itself. Thus psychoanalysis and Bakhtian cultural critique are drawn into an architectonically answerable relation in which both benefit from their mutual interaction.

What we are dealing with here in this submersion of the carnivalesque is essentially an inversion of an inversion—what White calls an uncanny reversal. White reworks Dr. Schnyder’s analysis of a patient named Renata. Here the negative aspect of the Romantic carnivalesque surfaces. Renata’s symptoms can possibly describe a case of clinical *anorexia nervosa*, and in any case can certainly be diagnosed as an internalization and symbolic inversion of the *grotesque*. According to White, Schnyder’s patient symptomatically expresses the repression of populist elements of the carnivalesque in favour of the merely subjective image of the body. The body *qua* other is therefore *anti-cathected* as if it were the source of a painful memory from childhood. In Romantic idealism, we also see this growing self-isolation among bourgeois culture. Renata wakes every evening to don a corset, she vomits when she eats or when she thinks of her womb, and she tries to push back these unpleasant sensations (‘*repousser ces sensations*’) which arise from the somatic, the chthonic, *vis-à-vis* her body. White’s perspicuity is a
convincing argument that Renata’s hysteria can be interpreted as this same bourgeois inversion of *material lower bodily stratum*. By converting repressed carnivalesque images and memories “into symptoms of the top half of the body,” bourgeois culture effectively cuts itself off from the now abject earth, which is its ground and origin.\(^{351}\) Thus the inversion of the inversion is accomplished. Although this inversion may have begun with the Romantic and lyrical hero, it nevertheless continues throughout the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century. I will argue below that it can also be traced in the modernist writings of Gertrude Stein, Mina Loy, and Djuna Barnes.

Bakhtin paints in broad brush strokes and the grotesque image of the body may indeed be at work here, but let us consider this proposition for ourselves. First there are poles of the grotesque body, both positive and negative. This is, as we have noted, likewise true of the Romantic image of the subject and the other. Only, the polarity is not entirely one-sided in the grotesque body. In the Romantic image, the subject is wholly on the side of himself; there is a strict topographical division between subject and body *qua* other, without the ability to actively “understand the possibility of combining in one image both the positive and the negative poles.”\(^{352}\) Bakhtin specifically refers to G. Schneegan’s “The History of Grotesque Satire” (1864).\(^{353}\) Schneegan makes the typical error common throughout the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century, of ignoring the positive aspect of the grotesque. Schneegan’s grotesque is relegated to the satirical species of literature; as such it is wholly formal in content and leaves out the positive pole of the grotesque genre altogether. Bakhtin follows Schneegan’s example of Harlequin in the Italian *commedia dell’arte* also discussed by Flögel and Fischer before him. In this clownish genre, Harlequin gives birth after much labour to a “difficult word.”\(^{354}\) The latency in the image of the pregnant body that nearly chokes on the satirical word can be understood as a virtual pointer to the lower bodily stratum, but Schneegan’s interpretation encompasses only the self-directed subjective laughter of Harlequin. The positive collective laughter that would point to the comedy of life as a cycle is omitted from Schneegan’s commentary. By the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century the Rabelaisian intonations that carry with it both the negative and positive polarities is missing.

Grotesque laughter in satire revolves around the axis of pleasure and displeasure with uncrowning as the elemental force to effect this symptomatic laughter. The comic
aspect is supposed to be created by “the impossible and improbable nature of the image”; the image is “hyperbolic,” but it also has a foot in reality. What the late 19th century ideological lens misses in the comic and grotesque alike is that the colour, warmth, nonsense, transgression, and joy makes possible the bi-polarity of Rabelais’ world. Schneegan is blinded to the possibility that birth and death can reside in precisely the same grotesque image: “The pregnant and two-bodied images could not be grasped by Schneegan; he did not see that, in the grotesque world of becoming, the limits between objects and phenomena are drawn quite differently than in the static world of art and literature of his time.” What is most interesting for our purposes is that Bakhtin places in the middle of his review an image of Schneegan as psychologist: “he sought to discover through analysis the purely formal psychological mechanism of their perception, instead of concentrating on the objective content of these images.” Schneegan’s model of the psyche is likewise one-sided. He simply does not recognize the reversible polarity of the grotesque image: “he could not understand the possibility of combining in one image both the positive and the negative poles” of the grotesque; as a result, he likewise represses the social ground of psychology. The Rabelaisian image does not have this problem, since “the limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects.”

The scene in which Harlequin nearly chokes on the word, properly understood, marks an inversion of high and low and emphasizes the unofficial image of cyclicity over the official Byzantine-hierarchical image. This inversion is the source of the humour because of the polarity of pleasure and unpleasure, and the audience therefore laughs at this degradation. Here the satire emphasizes that the material word necessitates that even official discourse is born in a low state. There are echoes here of Christ’s emptying out of his spiritual divinity to be reborn in this low state. The word is associated with the head, with the discursive light of reason; no doubt, this is the grotesque actively understood according to the logic of hardnosed Victorian realism. But if the grotesque and comic elements in Schneegan’s example were properly emphasized, the unborn word’s inverted association with the genitals, the abdomen, and the “ugly Proserpine, queen of the underworld,” are all reminiscent of the chthonic character of the underworld—i.e., the unconscious. It is the Victorian axiological refraction of the grotesque that provides
the polarized view of the grotesque, just as the petit bourgeois analyst makes sexuality the cornerstone of his theory. The ‘official’ ideological inflection of Romanticism and 19th century realism glosses over the lower bodily stratum and what is suggested in the unofficial ideology of folk-festive images. In these it is as if the very elemental forces of life were about to be unleashed; it is as if individual life existed as so much fodder for the assurance that the cosmic and collective aspect of life will continue unrestrained:

The mighty material bodily element of these images uncrowns and renews the entire world of Medieval ideology and order, with its beliefs, its saints, its relics, monasteries, pseudoasceticism, fear of death, eschatologism, and prophecies. In this world to be swept away the pilgrims are only tiny, pitiful figures, which can be swallowed down unnoticed in salad and almost drowned in urine. The material bodily element has here a positive character.\(^{361}\)

But this positive character is lost in the revulsion of the 19th century repression of the lower bodily stratum.

Similar examples of revulsion at the phallus, for example, can be found in the modernist poet Mina Loy. The influence of Gertrude Stein’s poetics cannot be overestimated in Loy’s work, and both poets sought to “recapture the value of the individual word, [and] find out what it meant and act within it.”\(^{362}\) Both Loy and Stein fashioned the word after its immanent ideological content, but they tend to place this content entirely on the side of official discourse. This is typical of the Bohemian sublimation of carnival, as described by White.\(^{363}\)

Loy’s poem “Gertrude Stein” is more than a character sketch or ode, and it reveals as much about its author as its subject; here there is a surfacing, symptomatic preoccupation with the consciousness of the artist:

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Curie
of the laboratory
of vocabulary
She crushed
the tonnage
of consciousness
congealed to phrases
to extract
a radium of the word\(^{364}\)
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This radium of the word is, notably, a metal extraction—categorized chemically as an alkaline earth metal. In ‘Aphorisms’ Loy writes “you stand not only in abject servitude to
For Loy, there is a distinct connection between the act of becoming conscious of the systematic and the unconscious nature of the mind as it unearths the word. In her poem “The Effectual Marriage or the Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni”, an early attempt to exorcise her estranged lover, Italian futurist Giovanni Papini, it is Loy’s preoccupation with the emptiness of married life and lack that is conveyed in an image which expresses absence:

In the evening they looked out of their two windows
Miovanni out of his library window
Gina from the kitchen window
From among his pots and pans
Where he so kindly kept her
Where she so wisely busied herself
Pots and Pans She cooked in them
All sorts of sialagogues
Some say that happy women are immaterial.

The tension is heightened by the “sialagogues,” another abject addition that implicates the bodily fluids and the connection between love-making and cooking. But here both are noticeably absent. The pots and pans are now empty, and although the libidinous images remain, the connection between consummation and consumption do not draw together in a positive fashion; since the image of the body is likewise absent, they cannot be positively united within the same image. Finally, Loy’s infamous “Love Songs” provides us with an image of the phallus as “Pig Cupid” whose “rosy snout root[s] erotic garbage.” Again, the bare nature of the language and the degraded image of the phallus do not achieve the bi-polarity of the Rabelaisian grotesque image. Like Napoleon’s caricatured proboscis in Schneegan’s example of the grotesque—an obvious metaphor for the phallus—Loy’s “rosy snout” is grotesque without being positive and linked to the communal ground of the cosmic bi-polar image. The snout/phallus ought to link high and low, positive and negative polarities, but Loy fails to fuse the image with the all-important comic element. What Bakhtin calls “the social, choral nature of laughter” is simply not present—nor is modernism, in general, prone to its invocation. Laughter is wholly absent, as is the rejuvenating possibility of the pleasure-unpleasure bi-polarity of the Rabelaisian image.
The laughing rejuvenating function of carnival is likewise repressed in the work found in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*. In the latter case, the theme of class turns on the dying aristocratic culture and circus imagery. In *Nightwood*, the character Felix is latently motivated by the unofficial life of the circus but quietly remands himself to the solitude of official life in the church:

The emotional spiral of the circus, taking its flight from the immense disqualification of the public, rebounding from its illimitable hope, produced in Felix longing and disquiet. The circus was a loved thing that he could never touch, therefore never know. The people of the theatre and the ring were for him as dramatic and monstrous as a consignment on which he could never bid. That he haunted them as persistently as he did was evidence of something in his nature that was turning Christian.

He was, in like manner, amazed to find himself drawn to the church, though this tension he could handle with greater ease; its arena he found was circumscribed to the individual heart. 

White himself cites the example of Jean Rhys, for whom autobiography is equally revealing of this continued bourgeois repression of the lower bodily stratum. Moreover, White also contends that modernism continues the (originally Romantic) privileging of the individual and the introspective over the rejuvenating and collective elements of carnival: “The modernist novel in general tends toward a selective sublimation of certain carnival practices and as such is deeply ambivalent, both comforting and disturbing a polite and decorous culture.”

The fact that Ulysses was censured and banned would seem to reinforce this repressive aspect of modernism. Joyce’s novel tidies up the gore of childbirth by obscuring it in old English roots and high Germanic etymons. Bloom’s onanism on the Strand while watching Gerty MacDowell is the height of lower bodily expression in the novel, and the most overt image to attract the censors. But it is hardly an image at all. In spite of my own passion for both Joyce and this novel, it does not work with images, and it does not paint pictures for its readers. Under this circumstance, it would be difficult to understand *Ulysses* as without a like repression of the lower bodily stratum, which is textually omnipresent and yet never quite made visible. Bloom’s masturbatory adventure may adeptly capture the modernist tropes ‘stream of consciousness’ and ‘Edwardian indecency’—Gerty’s thigh is showing “high up above her knee”—but one has to rationalize these images before taking pleasure in them. In short, the lower bodily
stratum has to enter through the head. The modernist “‘agency of disgust,’” described with such acuity in White’s paper, is also keenly felt in the sterility of modernist stylistics. This sterility makes itself felt with ubiquity from Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* to Ezra Pound’s ‘imagism’—home to some of the most antiseptic images in the canon.

Looking forward, we may say that the materiality of the sign becomes the ideological dominant in Voloshinov’s work. While Ferdinand de Saussure seems to have known this implicitly, his dualism between *langue* and *parole* negates the effectiveness of conceiving of words as part of the real fabric of everyday life that helps to shape consciousness. Marx and Engels likewise stop short of providing a full account of how language shapes consciousness *qua* its materiality. This does not mean that the formation of consciousness by the materiality of language is in any way transparent. Ideology is refracted in language and to gloss over this fact would be to oversimplify the relationship of the word to other ideological, and material, phenomena:

Words cannot wholly substitute for a religious ritual; nor is there any really adequate verbal substitute for even the simplest gesture in human behaviour. To deny this would lead to the most banal rationalism and simplisticism. Nonetheless, at the very same time, every single one of these ideological signs, though not supplantable by words, has support in and is accompanied by words, just as is the case with singing and its musical accompaniment.  

Nevertheless, even where ideological refraction occurs, the word is implicated both as the vehicle of intonation and axiological inflection and is actively employed by the understanding and the work of hermeneutics.

In their critique of Freud, the Bakhtin Circle shows that psychoanalysis leans too heavily on introspective methods of analysis, and thus its propositions regarding the primal forces in which the instincts find their origin cannot be raised to the level of objectivity. While Freud does turn toward sociological theory toward the end of his career, he never quiet acknowledges the full importance of the social and linguistic vehicle through which his theory is formed and practiced. As such, he could use a good dose of the Marxist theory of consciousness and its dependence on the socioeconomic milieu with which it is saturated. Moreover, Freud pays lip service to history and natural history but his method, like Saussure’s, effectively castrates the diachronic and relegates history itself to the dustbin of scientific praxis. For this reason, and because he is not
keenly aware of the importance that the medium of language plays in the externalisation of thought, psychoanalysis has, to this day, been largely unable to pretend toward objectivity. For their own part, the Bakhtin Circle’s invocation of dialectical materialism does not seem to be disingenuous, but neither does it really add any serviceable method to found a closer relationship between scientific theoretical discourse and practice. It is true that scientific speech genres found themselves on everyday utterances, but one must say more in order to effectively assemble a self-consciously productive relation between the two. In order to compel science to answer the everyday, to bring to life what one has learned in science and art, it is not sufficient to write propaedeutic treatises. This will only reinforce the disconnect between scientific method and philosophy. The need to show to practitioners of science the importance of philosophy grows each day, but the growing complexity and specialization of researchers daily makes this task infinitely more difficult. For John Parrington, the work of L. S. Vygotsky is a useful extension of Marx’s tenet that life determines consciousness. To my mind, as I hope that I have shown, the work of Allon White likewise builds bridges over the gaps that both the Bakhtin Circle and contemporary social theorists have opened between what is and what ought to be within the territory of their own research fields. The task of science, as well as the task of building bridges between the disciplines, must be understood not only as a collective task, but also as a task for generations to come.
§ 5. Discourse: A Critique of Saussurean Linguistics

5.1 Merleau-Ponty’s Critique of Saussurean Linguistics: Child Psychology and Pedagogy: the Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952

In this section I will first provide a critique of Saussurean linguistics along the lines of that provided by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his recently translated Child Psychology and Pedagogy: the Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952. Although on first glance this may seem like an odd digression, Merleau-Ponty’s appraisal of Saussure will lead directly into Voloshinov’s own account—which for its own part lacks the breadth of Merleau-Ponty’s exposition. The first part of this section will therefore serve to ground my subsequent exposition of Voloshinov’s own critique of what he calls abstract objectivism in linguistics—i.e., the species of linguistics to which Saussure belongs. This critique in place, I will then show that Voloshinov and Bakhtin’s approach to discourse in everyday life and verbal artistic creation establishes the concrete social reality of real living human beings at the centre of their own linguistic thought. This trajectory will accomplish four objectives. First, it will serve as a survey of both this previously obscure lecture of Merleau-Ponty regarding the ontogenetic development of language in children, as well as continue our estimation of the merits of the Bakhtinian corpus by taking on their linguistic work. As such, Voloshinov’s texts Marxism and the Philosophy of Language and “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, and Bakhtin’s own “Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art” will be essential to our little study. Second, it will, as we have just stated, clarify both Merleau-Ponty and Bakhtin’s critique of Saussurean linguistics. Third, the present analysis will set out clearly the Bakhtin Circle’s own concerns regarding linguists and discourse in life and art. Finally, in delineating the Bakhtin Circle’s linguistic commitments, this section will prepare the ground for the penultimate section of the present work which deals with Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics.

The origin of language is the “prehistory” of language, explains Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his lecture notes on Child Psychology and Pedagogy: “to explain the origin of language is to try to derive it from other things,” and he espies just such a misstep in Otto Jespersen’s Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin. In other words, to try to locate the aggregates of language before its formation presupposes a sort of hysteron
proteron pre-existence of language itself—as if language could be found avant le mot, preformed and encapsulated, in the elements from which it is composed. But this etiological line of reasoning ignores the spontaneous creation of language in history—or, indeed, in prehistory. Proceeding in this way ignores the phenomena of language itself as it truly arises in the life of its community of users. It is not to recognize that the origins of language are obscured, and not only by our lack of historical evidence—not the least of which is the lack of a record of how our first linguistic ancestors actually spoke. There is, after all, no vehicle outside of language to convey this record. We must realize, once and for all, against Herder and his contemporaries who sought to explain our linguistic origins, the fundamental contradictory nature of the search. As it will turn out, a community of speakers is not even sufficient. We must try to understand language as the stuttering active internal difference of creative utterances in themselves. These arise with no small degree of spontaneity, and Saussure’s structural account of the negative differential relation of signs is not wholly sufficient to explain the essence of the linguistic phenomena in itself. As we will see below, it is as if language leads a life of its own.

Part of the trouble in coming to an understanding as to the nature of language can be attributed to a “gap between expressive forms and language” in-itself. Both 19th century philosophy and proto-linguistics attempt to close this gap with a theory of the spoken utterance as a complex form of phonation that was built on top of, or evolved out of, onomatopoeia. If a mimetic theory of language were a sufficient etiology, however, the origin and development of language could be shown to have continuity between the first human stuttering toward speech and that prelanguage which came before it. We would find our linguistic roots everywhere in the natural world. Thus one could trace the communicative function of language back through simpler forms until reaching an animistic society that took its spoken language directly from sonorous nature, but “no one supports this idea anymore.” Still others thinkers thought the origin of language is to be found in the interjection. However, almost all interjections can be shown to be, after all, conventional constructions.

Linguistics does not study signs as if there were a mimetic relation between spoken word and the object to which it refers. In structural linguistics, the signifier does
not bear a natural resemblance to the signified and in fact has no positive or affirmative value. It is the task, therefore, of post-Saussurean linguistics to deconstruct the negative differential relation of the sign.\textsuperscript{382} For the Saussurean linguist, the signifier can achieve its referential power to the signified only in virtue of the virtual negative differential of one sign to another; in Saussurean linguistics it is the structure, or what is called the negative space in the plastic arts, that can do the accounting where the structural bestowal of meaning is concerned. A sign has its value \textit{according to all other signs} within a given language, and especially its relation to all other signs that congregate around it, due to their difference from and relational position to all other signifiers. A sign is given weight only through the negation of all other signs—\textit{A} is \textit{A} because it is none of the other significant values in the alphabet, but \textit{A} in itself has no positive value. It is only through this multiple negation, through these negative sets, that \textit{A qua} sign, holds its place and takes its meaning.

Since Aristotle, objects have usually been thought of as having an essential quality or species which makes them what they are. ‘Furniture,’ for example, is what it is according to its species, \textit{vis-à-vis} being that which furnishes, whether this connotes comfort, or holding our bodies or furnishing our lives, etc. The same logic of species and genera has come to be applied to signs themselves, and especially from the influence of Boethius onward.\textsuperscript{383} Again, for linguistics it is the differential between species of signs—furniture, vehicles, animals, buildings, which help each to take their meaning according to its negative associative value.\textsuperscript{384} Is it sufficient to say that ‘furniture’ may also distinguish itself according to the genera and species of other signs? Is it sufficient to say that the sign ‘electric chair’ is the sign ‘not love seat,’ ‘not hammock,’ ‘not my favourite chair,’ and ‘not the chair of Le Collège de France,’ and that it \textit{is not} any of these at once. Saussure answers a resounding yes: all of these negations hold their positions insomuch as they also sediment within a linguistic community to form a static structural unity of language—at least for a time.\textsuperscript{385} However, Saussure’s idea of a \textit{state} of language, a synchronic system, leaves wholly to one side the question of the historical movement and foundation of language. Synchrony goes a long way to explain the significant value of the sign in relation to all other signs, but it cannot account for the (spontaneous) birth of
the sign, nor does it leave any room for the emotional valuative intonation of the sign as it is used in the living speech of flesh and blood human beings leading real lives.

The linguistic state, as studied in “synchronic linguistics,” purports to deal exclusively with “coexisting terms” and not diachronically fluctuating signs, just as the historical study of epochs excludes the study of historical periods, which are to be understood as successive events. Thus it would seem to hold that the study of signs in terms of the unique historical utterance can gain no purchase according to their negatively determined synchronic and associative clusters which surround that historical utterance. Synchrony alone, according to Saussure, is responsible for its sense. This would effectively render the work of philology, and we also must admit, all work of linguistic reconstruction of the past—in short the question of origins of both word and world—puerile and superficial in comparison with synchronic linguistics:

Generally speaking, static linguistics is much more difficult than historical linguistics. Facts of evolution are more concrete, and stir the imagination more readily: the connexions link sequences of terms which are easily grasped. It is simple, and often entertaining even, to follow through a series of linguistic changes. But a linguistics concerned with values of coexisting terms is much harder going.

Moreover, the diachronic study of the emotional-volitional tone in the utterance would require the addition of the self-understanding of historical subjects as revealed through their utterances. Since, however, these speech acts remain utterly tied to an unknown past synchronic system of emotional-volitional tonescapes—if I may be allowed the coinage, the diachronic is left entirely outside of the study of linguistic states. These past states are epistemologically and critically excluded. Yet for this to be the case, it must be admitted that the history of words—their genealogies, and their evolution—can add no significant weight to the molar mass of the sign. To admit anything less than this axiom would call into question the very possibility of a science of synchronic linguistics as Saussure imagines it. We could call this the problem of the steady state of language. One must assume language has a steady state through time, that through it linguistic phenomena can be studied from the point of view of being rather than becoming. The reverse proposition is to admit that language proceeds entirely according to becoming and is tantamount to application of a version of the uncertainty principle to linguistics.
The problem of the historical utterance does not magically disappear into the ether of history; quite to the contrary, the diachronic calls into question the methodology of synchronic linguistics as a science: “we cannot deny, at the very least, the historicity of language ... In certain constellations, there is a given creation that was not possible until now. To admit a history of language is to simply admit that we cannot come to a certain state without passing through successive stages.” Thus Merleau-Ponty complicates Saussure’s desire to draw a hard division between the historical development of language—i.e., a “diachronic” linguistics—and the unchanging states of language, or the “synchronic.” The synchronic cannot escape its diachronic movement of linguistic change and verbal creation (and spontaneity), and the establishment of a new utterance that was until this time not possible remains outside of the scope of the linguist’s territory. Nevertheless, this spectre that haunts Saussurean linguistics makes the puissance of history felt even in the Cours:

Demarcation in time is not the only problem encountered in defining a linguistic state. Exactly the same question arises over demarcation in space. So the notion of a linguistic state can only be an approximation. In static linguistics, as in most sciences, no demonstration is possible without a conventional simplification of data.

The question we would pose to Saussure, then, is how scientific can this conventional simplification be? Since you seek a mathesis of language, what is the coefficient of error and how is it determined?

If we attribute to the synchronic system alone the cause of the utterance, then we truly have no foothold on the past utterance, having privileged a once living “system” of language that is now dead and subjected it to the striations of mathematical calculation. This is not to say that one cannot submit the linguistic event to calculation, but merely that in doing so one makes of it a paschal lamb readied for (s)laughter. If we look at the past condition of language simply as what is given in a historical example, we have left out the spatial and temporal problem of its becoming—we have said nothing of the living interval which lies between Saussurean states. It is this interval, in which the mystery and creativity of language comes into being that was, after all, the origin of human linguistic curiosity. But in turning toward the speech event Saussurean linguistics inevitably casts it aside and has captured only a dead butterfly to add to its collection of patterns and
hypostatized linguistic structures; it has totally disregarded the linguistic state’s indirect relation to and transcendental dependence upon the living speech event. Therefore, even the past, dead, utterance must be grounded in the living tongues of human beings who may breathe into it a new life—what we might call the Pentecostal linguistic moment.

Language, like fire, is a process not a state. It carves out a space for itself where nothing had previously existed. However, this is not where the question of historical utterance itself dies, nor is it rendered unintelligible; quite on the contrary, the question of this vector, with all its mysteries, fractures, splitting and especially where it leaves no discernible future legacy, presents itself as a question to the living linguistic community:

Language neither accommodates itself to one or to the other. It obliges us to consider history as a contingent course and a logic of things where phenomena can outline themselves and then be systematized by acts of social life or of thought. For example, the negation “pas” was begun by being a word that designated a man’s progression when walking (“I do not do that” \{ *je ne fais pas* \} in the sense of “I am not advancing a step” \{ *je n’avance pas* \}. It is by a sliding that the word “pas” is given its negative sense.\(^{391}\)

Therefore, to short-circuit Piaget and the behaviourists, we may also state that whatever else might be the case, there can be no possibility of an “empirical origin of language.”\(^{392}\)

If we still take seriously, then, the question of the origin of language, we need some conception of a pre-history of language—a “‘prelanguage.’”\(^{393}\) As Merleau-Ponty points out, Otto Jespersen proceeds precisely along this vein. He proposes the emergence of language from an analysis of song,\(^{394}\) a process by which a verbal sign may be produced. The central tenet here is that language diachronically grows progressively more complex—“more expressive forms [grow] from the less expressive.”\(^{395}\) Deleuze and Guattari are helpful here:

Speech communities and languages, independently of writing, do not define closed groups of people who understand one another but *primarily* determine relations between groups who do not understand one another: if there is language, it is fundamentally between those who do not speak the same tongue. Language is made for that, for translation, not for communication.\(^{396}\)

Were this not the case, language as representation would not so much be impossible as it would be wholly unnecessary. In this sense the Babel moment of humanity is not the providential destruction of language, but the gift of its necessity—i.e., its very condition of possibility. Language is from the beginning a multiplicity and therefore it is a struggle
between differences by its opposed users. Against Hobbes, we may say that language is
born through the need to translate collective forms of thought into action between
different social groups; it does not come into being through the Adamitic bestowal of
proper names.\(^{397}\) Indeed, one wonders if the linguistic concept could have ever grown out
of a unified community—but then at base such a concept as ‘unified community’ is
etymologically and otherwise a *contradictio in adjecto*, as Derrida has made clear.\(^ {398}\)
Whatever retrospective foothold linguistic science achieves after the speech event, it is
clear that it nevertheless arises from the necessity to dialogue—i.e., between users.

In terms of the origin of language, therefore, what we want is a theory that has the
power “to describe certain forms of prelinguistic expressions that, without being causes of
language, would be language’s cradle.”\(^ {399}\) The mystery of language is such that it is first
nowhere to be found and then it is omnipresent as a multiplicity. Saussure’s great
achievement is to prove once and for all that there can be no first word exclusive unto
itself, for were this the case, the theory of the negative differential, which is supposed to
give language its sense, would lose all effectiveness. Language springs forth like a geyser
up from a reservoir (*Ursprung*)\(^ {400}\); it is a dehiscent and emergent phenomenon. Saussure
recognized this and therefore exhorted his students to study the immanent system of
negative differential signification instead of looking outside of the linguistic circuit, but in
doing so he misses the positive nature of linguistic expression at the site of its creation.\(^ {401}\)
He did this for fear of muddying the waters of linguistic evidence. However, Saussure’s
axis of simultaneity, which “concerns relations between things which coexists, [and in
which] relations from the passage of time [are] entirely excluded,”\(^ {402}\) leaves behind
precisely the momentum of expressivity and the becoming of language (spontaneity).

In brief, by relegating the study of language to the synchrony of this simultaneity,
and by doing so at the expense of the successive diachrony of the historical utterance, we
not only leave out the non-empirical question of origin completely, but we sacrifice our
original question: what is language? We put in its place the truncated empirical question:
how can we effectively capture, quantify, and decline the utterance according to what it is
not. Neither the philosophical project nor the scientific one, therefore, is open to
completion. Both *are* open, however, to interpretation and reinterpretation—or if we like,
to definition and redefinition. Saussure’s linguistic science remains descriptive, since it
actually does attempt to study ideal forms from the concrete speech event, or to deduce causes from effects—and this can only be done descriptively and is never finalizable. That said, it also remains true to this day that no more thorough going scientific method has taken us so far up that mystic linguistic river than has Saussure’s two fundamental and related distinctions: the one which is between langue and parole and the other between synchrony and diachrony.\textsuperscript{403} The philosophy of language stands forever in his debt:

Whether or not we can expect from science the knowledge of being itself, in no case can philosophy dispense with finding a philosophical link and status for its “verification” methods. Linguistics is the most rigorous examination of language as an institution; we cannot conceive of a philosophy of language that is not obligated to collect and articulate on the basis of its own truths the truths that linguistics establishes. If we consider philosophy to be the elucidation of human experience, and science as an essential moment of that experience, the dilemma disappears.

Thus, what we will ask linguistics is not their philosophical conclusions (as philosophers, they are not more solid than others). We will seek to participate with their experience of language.\textsuperscript{404}

In contradistinction to Saussure’s assertion that it is the sign system of simultaneity, the synchronic that determines the structure of language, Merleau-Ponty suggests that parole has a fundamental role to play, since it contains within it an immanent “pregrammar” which would contain the necessary pitch for erecting a conventional and written grammar.\textsuperscript{405}

The evolution of language seems to proceed according to a law of sufficiency and a ‘law’ of play. When a sufficient expression is found that is considered necessary—i.e., essential—to a linguistic community, it may take hold for a time, but there is nothing as sure as change in language and this change would seem to proceed according to chance. It is not an accident that there are relatively few discernible parts of speech.\textsuperscript{406} As Merleau-Ponty tries to show, these forms of semantemes and morphemes are far from stable across time, nor are they steadfast at the frontiers of particular languages. At no time are we able to call prescriptive or even universal grammar essential to language itself—for language is of another order which does not exhaust itself with its play upon the phonatory organs, the written form, or the ostensibly unified system present in the Saussurean experience of language. Let us be clear: language in the moment of its
creation escapes the circuit. It can no longer be a question merely of reducing language to its most essential and categorical structures or grammatical aggregates, and we cannot do so even if they appear to be universally realized across all human languages—for language would seem to have its own essence that is not anthropomorphic, but which lies outside of all linguistic communities and is beyond a communicative telos, convention, or mimesis. It has one foot in all of these to be sure, but is also otherwise engaged with that “which has no name in any philosophy” and which the ancients hinted at in their designation “element.”

It is as if it were personified and stood at the Four Corners, simultaneously a visitor in each state, but a citizen to none.

For his part, Saussure cannot embrace at once both of the “Humboldtian aspects of language, ergon and energeia, but must focus exclusively on the ergon, or structure, of language phenomena, and to abandon as hopeless any leaping over this seemingly fixed gap between the synchronic system langue and the diachronic dynamism of parole. The virtue of Saussure’s method is that it cuts short all the lacunae—those usual epistemological gaps, which always come to the surface when one wishes to quantify qualitative experience: “one solution only, in our view, resolves all these difficulties. The linguist must take the study of structure as his primary concern, and relate all other manifestations of language to it.”

5.2 Between Ergon and Energeia: Voloshinov’s Marxism and the Philosophy of Language

Voloshinov identifies two distinct “trends” or “arteries” of language study in the modern period—namely “individual subjectivism” and “abstract objectivism.” Not surprisingly this distinction essentially follows the vein we have already seen in the previous section between the two major trends in psychology, vis-à-vis introspection and behaviourism. The first trend takes language to be essentially an individual creative act of meaning-making that regards ready-made forms of language a mere “inert crust,” heuristically useful but otherwise inessential to the formative linguistic act. The second takes the reverse approach and regards linguistic phenomena as essentially a ready-made, closed, non-ideological system in which individual creation amounts to little more than an ineffectual and temporary distortion of the otherwise stable synchrony. Wilhelm von
Humboldt is the preeminent proponent of the first trend and, not surprisingly, Saussure is that of the second. Voloshinov also distinguishes two dispositions toward linguistics which he rejects outright; they are “academic eclecticism” and “academic positivism.”

As we have already seen, Bakhtin and Kanaëv reject positivism for its refusal to develop a working bio-scientific method and for its misleading argument for neutrality; Voloshinov likewise charges academic positivism with a “surreptitious” disposition toward the facts of linguistic inquiry. Academic eclecticism fares no better; in fact, both theoretical positions “amount to one and the same thing,” since by either accepting or rejecting all theoretical propositions neither school can establish a foothold on linguistic science.

Voloshinov’s critique of abstract objectivism, and by implication of Saussure, is materialist in its approach. It is self-evident, according to Voloshinov, that the view from above—i.e., objectivity—will never provide us with a wholly synchronic system of negative differentials based on an unchanging normative state. Quite to the contrary, this normative aspect of language is itself in constant motion. A truly objective linguistics would have to grant that the life of language in-itself is a ‘state’ of pure becoming:

Thus a synchronic system, from the objective point of view, does not correspond to any real moment in the historical process of becoming. And indeed, to the historian of language, with his diachronic point of view, a synchronic system is not a real entity; it merely serves as a conventional scale on which to register the deviations occurring at every real instant in time.

Therefore, and quite remarkably, the synchronic is actually a wholly subjective view of language—it exists only for the subject. The critical move that Voloshinov condones prefigures the post-structuralist tenet that the normative is subjective and historically based. It also looks back to Marx and Engels insomuch as the normative-subjective must admit to standing in alliance with the official.

We must be clear here, however, that the normative-subjective can be understood as temporarily objective, but it is not unchangeable and it relies on its situatedness for its power qua objective fact. What is objective here is precisely the relation between a given semantic person and his normative disposition toward his language as a synchronic system of linguistic facts, but this no more makes it an “incontestable” and unchanging
set of facts for all time—or for a given state, in the sense we discussed above—than a
geo-centric model of the cosmos. Without denying a truly objective transcendental state
of affairs—a question which he leaves open—Voloshinov is interested in a “certain kind
of objective relationship”; that is to say, the type of factuality which can be admitted to
has more to do with what is perceived to be effectively real rather than reality per se.\textsuperscript{418}

For the most part, therefore, abstract objectivism depends upon a faith in the
transparency of linguistic facts—the parts of speech, etc.—and the uncritical acceptance
of the existence of the synchronic system of negative differentials and the linguistic state.
The problem of objectivity sits on a razor’s edge—do we put the word objective in scare
quotes of not? Abstract objectivism “provides no clear-cut solution.”\textsuperscript{419}

As it turns out, for Voloshinov the very idea of language as an abstract objective
system is itself an idiosyncratic—and ideological—point of view; moreover, it is also
limited to a handful of highly specialized theorists. The average language user does not
produce the verbal utterance from the position of the linguist, and least of all from the
ideologically synchronic vista of the Saussurean. To put this another way, a normative
‘objective’ notion of language adds nothing to the ability to speak from “some particular,
concrete context.”\textsuperscript{420} Abstract objectivity ignores the speaker and bases its theory on the
listener who understands what is said—even Saussure admits this, since it is the
understanding that is equated with the ready-made synchronic unity of \textit{langue} rather than
the messiness of the production of a verbal utterance from the point of view of \textit{parole}.\textsuperscript{421}

But the understanding—\textit{vis-à-vis} she who understands—likewise does not rely on the
deployment of the synchronic system of signs in order to comprehend what has been said.
Here abstract objectivism has confused the understanding with recognition and the sign
with the signal: “only a sign can be understood; what is recognized is the signal.”\textsuperscript{422} The
signal is most certainly a moment in linguistic activity, but it is not an essential moment,
nor does it originate in linguistic activity. The signal can even become an obstacle to
linguistic production. We see this in foreign language learning—a form of linguistic
acquisition that is wholly different from the learning of one’s native language. If I am
learning French, for example, and I do not understand that the sign ‘\textit{repousser}’ means ‘to
push (to the) background,’ then the word is nothing more than an obstacle to my learning.
This is a problem of recognition rather than of understanding. The whole point of the
understanding is that it removes the necessity of recognition by making language immediate. It makes no difference that this recognition can become a passive moment, since synchrony is supposed to function universally as a necessary moment of understanding, yet here the signal actually becomes an obstacle to the understanding. Saussure’s theory simply cannot incorporate this contradictory evidence.

The case is entirely different once the absorption of the signal by “pure semioticity” has taken place. Here the personal historical context in which a word has been used comes to the fore. Everything depends upon context where the understanding is concerned. The present situation invokes past associations of usage, and these situations insomuch as they are invoked are material and embodied, ideological, and find their home in the consciousness of the speaker—her verbal intonation, axiological and evaluative inflection, and the like. Voloshinov goes even farther. The word itself is pushed to the background. What is presented front and centre, so to speak, is value:

In point of fact, the linguistic form ... exists for the speaker only in the context of specific utterances, exists, consequently, only in specific ideological context. In actuality, we never say or hear words, we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. Words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behaviour or ideology. That is the way we understand words, and we can respond only to words that engage us behaviourally or ideologically.

We find a similar critique of Saussure in the work of the Gestalt psychologist Karl Bühler. In fact, his work can be read as the application of a theory of linguistic context to Saussure’s theory itself. In his *Theory of Language*, Bühler contends that Saussure’s systematic displacement of inner sense is unanalysable, that the intuition of the language researcher plays an altogether more fundamental role in erecting an architectonic of language study than has hitherto been admitted. One does not arrive at the historical epoch of Saussurean synchrony without already owing a debt to the previous evaluations of the linguistic phenomena, and one cannot simply proceed in the reductive manner of the physicist. Just as we have seen with the laboratory practices in the biological sciences between biologist and biological theory, there is a mutualism in the evolution of linguist and linguistic theory. The language researcher must turn once again to “the concrete speech event,” as it is embodied, and one must do so without attempting to answer it according to its immanent and individual sense: indeed, the concrete speech event is
“something unique like each stroke of lightning and sound of thunder and Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon, a happening here and now that has a certain place in geographical space and in the Gregorian calendar.”

We therefore proceed not in the manner of the physicist, who is free from the incumbency of giving an account of the qualitative phenomena of thermodynamic entropy in human bodies. The physicist, of course, does not deny that he lights a stove to keep himself warm and not to increase the entropy of his kindling, but neither were Boltzmann or Joule concerned to record the emotive vicissitudes of an increase or decrease in body temperature. Roy Orbison’s evaluation that “love is like a stove that burns you when it’s hot” will never be relevant to the quantitative entropic analysis, but it is relevant to the person who has just broken up with his partner. By analogy, the language researcher ought not to be primarily interested in the particular amplitude or pattern of sound waves issuing from the phonatory equipment of a speaker—the history of structural and behavioural linguistic analysis notwithstanding. While doing so, linguistic research does provide valuable quantitative results which may be objectively paired off against one another; but where linguistics assumes such exclusivity, it is bound also to achieve only a limited result which, in the final analysis, misses altogether its original object of investigation—an answer to the embodied speech event provided “in vivo.”

As John Parrington notes in his paper “Valentin Voloshinov”, there is no ontological difference between inward and outward speech for Voloshinov, both are essentially of a material origin. The materiality we are concerned with here centres around the material nature of the word itself: “we do, after all, think and feel and desire with the help of words; without inner speech we would not becomes conscious of anything in ourselves.” Language is always-already social in character. Neither linguistics nor psychology can be studied without a view to this social and objective character of language, and in fact they presuppose this social ground; indeed, for Voloshinov no conscious thought is possible without a corresponding grounding in the material aspect of words themselves. What we have already said about language becoming possible only between societies is a fortiori true about communications between organisms, and in this Voloshinov—like Bakhtin—has in mind the long view of history—i.e., great time: “The complex apparatus of verbal connections is worked and
put into practice in the process of long, organized, and multilateral contact among organisms. Psychology cannot, of course, dispense with objective, sociological methods." Indeed, the material and organized labour of organisms has, since Engels’ *Dialectics of Nature*, been the interface for not only the attempted application of dialectical materialism to nature herself, but is nothing short of the attempt to unify a theory of linguistic and social production:

the development of labour, necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by increasing cases of mutual support and joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual. In short, men in their making arrived at the point where *they had something to say* to each other. Necessity created the organ; the undeveloped larynx of the ape was slowly but surely transformed by modulation to produce constantly more developed modulation, and the organs of the mouth gradually learned to pronounce one article sound after another.

While Freud brings to centre stage the conflict between inner and outer speech by attempting to develop his theory of the psyche as part unconscious and part conscious, he misses the social origin of this process and, by implication, ignores the possibility of a wholly objective grounding for his psychology. Likewise, Saussure cannot account for the mediation of language as a tool of communication between a speaker and an “understander.” It is for this reason that Voloshinov feels that he has found the proper grounding not only of a Marxist philosophy of language, but has managed to correct Freud’s gloss by asserting history as the material basis of the word and therefore, by extension, of consciousness itself.

Insomuch as words are the fulcrum on which the social text is authored, therefore, they are also the dialogical slate on which all ideologies of the organism—always already social, are written, erased, and rewritten:

This “content of the psyche’ is ideological through and through; from the vaguest of thoughts and dimmest and most uncertain of desires all the way to philosophical systems and complex political institutions, we have one continuous series of ideological and, hence also, sociological phenomena. Not a single member of this series from one end to the other is the product solely of individual organic creativity.

Nevertheless, this ideology cannot simply be reduced to meaningless dichotomies as is sometimes done in vulgar Marxism. We are not dealing here with a naïve Manichaeism, and over-simplified binary distinctions between individual and state, between good and
bad, or right and wrong, or proletariat and bourgeoisie, or insider and outsider, or especially between false consciousness and class consciousness. That said, there is always an uneven conflict between the unofficial discourse and what Voloshinov calls the “ideological dominant” of any discourse—and this dominant therefore perpetuates a Manichaean-like struggle, not between opposites, but between active and affirmative differences in themselves.

Ideology is not wholly transparent. There is no one to one ratio between the materiality conditions that shape consciousness and their expression. The Bakhtin Circle’s linguistic turn couched in a nuanced formulation of Marxist ideology—itself diversely formulated throughout Marx’s life—is necessarily inchoate and unfinalizable. In an attempt to formulate ideology as it is, to quote Gardiner, “imbricated with language, or, more precisely, with its concrete instantiation in forms of oral and written discourse,” the Circle first wanted to bridge—rather than close—the gap perpetuated in the dualism of form and content. This involved “stressing that the formal organization of discourse was itself essentially a social construction, and that the signifying medium influenced the production and reception of ideological messages as much as overt thematic content.” In other words, because ideology is itself a material phenomenon, its form and its content are always found together in an interplay that is productive of the conscious subject, but in a way that adds the “refraction” of reality to Marxist “reflection.”

Ideology adds an emotional volitional tone such that, when speech interference occurs in the quoted utterance, for example, the active listener can hear two voices somewhere between syntax and intonational difference—the utterance is found to be “serving two masters” as it were. This struggle occurs through the immanent manifestation of what the Circle came to call “speech genres,” roughly the conventionally accepted mode of speech within a given particular social context. There are primary and secondary speech genres, those of the everyday patois and those of discourse within the scientific and literary faculties. There is, however, no such thing as a discourse of the individual and therefore it does not make any sense to pit individual against society in terms of ideological discourse—just as we have seen was the mistake made by bourgeois psychoanalysis.
Speech is always a social phenomenon and it always partakes in more or less overtly ideological speech genres. As we have said, the distinctions between everyday and scientific speech genres are not absolute but transform one another in a dialogic give and take. In Bakhtin’s essay “The Problem of Speech Genres” he attempts to show that these genres are both topographical and dynamic, that their form is open and influences and is influenced by their socially determined content. To quote Bakhtin:

Hence the more or less distinct dialogization of secondary genres, the weakening of their monological composition, the new sense of the listener as the partner-interlocutor, new forms of finalization of the whole, and so forth [come about]. Where there is style there is genre. The transfer of style from one genre to another not only alters the way the style sounds, under the conditions of a genre unnatural to it, but also violates or renews the given genre.439

Speech genres are for Bakhtin the “drive belts from the history of society to the history of language.”440 They are that force which perpetuates the constant shift in meaning. “The Problem of Speech Genres” argues that no utterances escapes from a relation to one or multiple speech genres, but they are instead “real unit[s] of speech communication.”441 As such, they are constitutive of the meaning, style, and grammar appropriate to words and sentences and by extension are constitutive of the subject herself—vis-à-vis her semantic personhood.

5.3 “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”

As we have seen, the once-occurrent being-as-event requires a response from the position of the subiectum, or subject. Voloshinov’s works reflect and refract this ideological point of view. His most concise word on the matter is to be found in the short essay “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”. The intention of this essay is to show that discourse in art is grounded in discourse in life. Discourse in everyday life relies on extraverbal socioeconomic content from the surrounding milieu and is a necessary and transcendental condition of literature, although everyday discourse in no way exhausts the species characteristics of artistic discourse. At the same time, the essay serves as a two-fold critique of the formal method in literary criticism and of the hyper-subjectivism of psychology—and as such echoes the critique of psychoanalysis contained in Freudianism. Here, verbal and non-verbal intonation and gesticulation serve to bridge the...
abyss between the formal properties of the utterance and the evaluative, ideological, undergirding of all dialogical speech acts.

In artistic discourse the speaker from whom the utterance issues is called the author in both Voloshinov and Bakhtin. But no true utterance is left to metastasize on the lips of the speaker; all utterances require a listener. There is always a doubled direction of vector of the utterance present in every intonation; dialogue is not limited to two interlocutors diametrically opposed faccia a faccia.442 Certainly, the utterance is directed toward the “ally or witness”443; this is Voloshinov’s name for the listener in discourse. But there is also a second vector which is always directed toward “who or what” is being addressed in discourse, although stating it this way will sound deceptively oversimplified.444 There is always a “third participant” in discourse, and not simply the author—or speaker—addressing the witness or listener,445 as we typically understand authorial activity or as we naïvely understand everyday speech. In both discourse in life and discourse in art, there is always a third participant. This third term, the who or what that is addressed, can be equated with an apostrophe, and it is therefore usually understood as a personified agent whom Voloshinov names “the hero.”446

We are now in a better position to understand Bakhtin’s apparent mystical relation to projection that we spoke of in Section Two of the present work. Voloshinov’s hero, the apostrophic other, has a regulative function within discourse; she is addressed as if she were present. The relation to the apostrophic other, and by implication to Christ qua third party addressee, could be called mysterious, but only so long as we naïvely assume that there are only two interlocutors in discourse. Theologically, Christ would not even be the proper analogy here; one would have to admit that the apostrophe or hero is something more allied to the Holy Ghost. Typically we do not think of the apostrophe when we address a listener, and its invocation in this tripartite scheme therefore seems to mark a religious or mystical turn in Bakhtin’s thought. This is, however, not the case. In discourse we always address a listener even while we implicitly address a situation or ideal listener—i.e., an apostrophe. Again this second form of address is merely regulative in speech. We may chose to see it as mysterious—the very fact that we can convey inexhaustible meanings to each other through the finite material body of signs can be seen as a mystery in human conversation. From the phonetic and auditory apparatuses
somehow an infinite world of sense emerges. Another way to say this is that form and content have a mysterious relationship to one another, and that while the idea is very much a spiritual aspect of life—insomuch as it is virtual, it is nevertheless inseparable from the matter which conveys it. However, where Christian apologists would have us convert Bakhtin into the Saint John of the Cross of discourse, we cannot follow them. There is nothing mystical in this tripartite schematic of author, reader, and hero in art—or alternately of speaker, listener, and apostrophe in life.

Authorship and interlocution is very much grounded in the real material situation and everyday experience of discourse. In Salinger’s Franny and Zooey, Franny’s maxim that she has lifted from The Way of the Pilgrim to “pray without ceasing” functions as a perverse form of asceticism, and would run counter to our argument here. The problem is with Zooey’s interpretation of this maxim, not with its possible content. We could understand the exhortation as a simple reminder to be attentive to the fact that every utterance we make is akin to a prayer to a third party interlocutor: a fact that once again we normally forget in naïve everyday interlocution. Mysticism was a late arrival in Russia. The idea to pray without ceasing seems to have originated with Saint Theodosius, who preached “perpetual” prayer—what is commonly known as the Jesus prayer. As Fedotov reminds us, the prayer was indeed practiced by religious mystics, but for Saint Theodosius it was “but a form of ejaculatory prayer, the shortest and easiest formula for perpetual prayer.” Likewise the apostrophe is omnipresent in speech, but it is not to be regarded as a hypostatization of a Pentecostal spirit from on high.

Why is this important? Let us take the example of a literary theorist who works with Dostoevsky. If he omits the apostrophe regulative function in speech, then he has lost sight of the hero’s own context altogether and will inevitably attribute the hero’s motivation to that of the author’s. In essence the theorist will conflate the author with the hero—their intentions and ethically answerable acts will be entirely undifferentiated. Thus, what Raskolnikov or the Underground Man say in earnest may be inflected by the theorist as merely ironic—or vice versa. The intonation will be wrongly interpreted. In life the consequences might prove more dire. Problems of the omission of the apostrophe from the utterance often occur between cultures, since within speech communities the apostrophe is usually implicit and understood. When the first pacts were made between
the aboriginal tribes of North America and their colonizers, for example, the phrase ‘as long as the waters run and the grass is green’ was a ubiquitous phrasing of the promises made to seal the treatise. But the colonizers usually ignored such promises as mere nonsense, since they were interpreted merely from the point of view of a written and legalistic culture rather than from the understanding implied by the oral culture—where, as we have seen, one’s word still implied a promised action. The apostrophes in this case are wholly different on either side. For the colonizers the apostrophe is meaningless or puerile, but from the aboriginal vantage point it implies a situation in which nature will continue to follow her course, and therefore the pack is believed to be vouchsafed for all time.\textsuperscript{451}

The inchoate interlocutor in discourse, however, serves to demythologize the hero as the omnitemporal participant in speech. Voloshinov also likens speech directed toward the apostrophic hero, the “agent of life,” to a prayer or incantation.\textsuperscript{452} We do not have to understand the agency of the hero here as hagiographic, since the intonation of speech can swing both ways on the Manichaenesque fulcrum—like the listener, who can be interpolated as either an ally or enemy. The apostrophe is not to be understood as a mystical or divine agency. Nor is the hero fully formed, he (it) remains open and unfinalized. It is as if the form of address to nature which is present in animism has survived in the verbal art of intonation, which not only bridges the gap between evaluative ideological disposition and the situation of the surrounding world, but also brings the very utterance with which it is pregnant to life:

\begin{quote}
The aboriginal myth-making spirit seems to have remained alive in it. Intonation makes it sound as if the surrounding world were still full of animate forces—it threatens and rails against or adores and cherishes inanimate objects and phenomena, whereas the usual metaphors of colloquial speech for the most part have been effaced and the words become semantically spare and prosaic.\textsuperscript{453}
\end{quote}

It is in virtue of this animistic element that the hero becomes personified in speech. As we have already hinted, in “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” this personification assumes the \textit{figure} of ‘Christ’ of the Pentecostal ghost, and here Voloshinov gives the hero an archaic spiritual shape. This shape is no less material for all its virtuality; it is present in every inflected word. Material is the \textit{metaphor} of spirit, just as form is \textit{carried} along with content that is germane to it.\textsuperscript{454} Formal content and material-form are
restorations of the properly embodied event. The uniqueness of any given utterance depends upon both verbal and extraverbal gesticulation and intonation. Only the abstractions and anxieties of a “déclassé” formalism, psychological subjectivism, or linguistic abstract objectivism could project this self-ostracy of sense into the mere signal. As such, the utterance that remains purely formal or introspectively subjectivist and does not find its home in the extraverbal socioeconomic milieu is nothing but an empty husk.

Voloshinov describes the heroic regulative function as an enthymeme which implicates the un-vocalized, non-actualized premise grounded in the broader social milieu. Where this milieu is by and large in sympathetic harmony with the speaker, where the listener is conceived of as being in ideological agreement with the speaker, here Voloshinov posits a “choral support”; the choral support, like the supporting stretcher of a painter’s canvas, serves to provide a surface on which intonation can be “embroidered.” Of course, it is not always the case that this choral support will be present to the reader or apparent to the listener. Sometimes the utterances come in the presence of an enemy. The provisional exemplar given here is the man who laughs aloud only to find that he is laughing alone. Under this circumstance of conflicting ideologies, the utterance may take on the character of tactile, sometimes visually haptic, anxiety—as when one says ‘you could cut the tension in the room with a knife’:

Thus, we now have a right to claim, any locution actually said aloud or written down for intelligible communication (i.e., anything but words merely reposing in a dictionary) is the expression and product of the social interaction of three participants: the speaker (author), the listener (reader), and the topic (the who or what) of speech (the hero).

Discourse in life and discourse in art are not wholly co-extensive. The above tripartite schema of discourse in life—vis-à-vis speaker, listener, and topic (apostrophe), is self-complicating and requires a special, albeit related, analysis of discourse in literary creation—vis-à-vis author, reader, and hero.

In art form and material are not to be conflated. Content is likewise distinct, but inseparable from the form and the material. If, for example, Earth was visited by sentient beings long after all human beings had evacuated the planet, and these beings happened to come upon Michelangelo’s David, we could forgive them if they did not recognize the form of a man let alone the ideological content signified by this hero in the service of
King Saul who stands triumphant after having slain Goliath. Nor should we presume they would read the implicit ideological content present in *David*. Content is always an ideologically *refracted* evaluation—here the “triumph” of Florence over the expelled Medici clan, and in art it always reflects the evaluative authorial intonation and gesture. Form must likewise be distinguished here, although it could not be by the extraterrestrial creature who had no surviving human being with which to compare *David*. The form of Michelangelo’s best known work would look like little more than an oddly shaped slab of marble—perhaps idiosyncratically so, but certainly not artistic. Bakhtin believes that the artist has an answerable responsibility to the work which alone can form and select the right content for its unified consummation: “it is impossible to isolate some real moment in a work of art that would be pure content … content and form interpenetrate, they are inseparable.” Yet the artist does not, or *ought not* inject his own personal ideological intonation into the work. Instead, to create a true work of art it is necessary to raise the evaluative tone of the piece to “the level of social significance.”

It is the artist’s position outside of the work alone—and his ethical *disinterestedness* that provides him with the capacity to actively wed form and content into a unity within the work. An overbearing artist who conflates his personal ideological beliefs cannot do justice—i.e., answer—the work. Here we already note a difference from the ideological intonation in the discourse of everyday life; there the speaker does not attempt to represent someone else’s social *milieu* but speaks as a semantic person—he attempts to reflect his own evaluative intonation; however successful he may be in this assay we leave to one side. Yet the verbal artist must be prepared to participate consciously in art *as if* he had no other interest than the “adequate” relation of form and content. Without this disinterested outsideness the artist cannot hope to achieve his purpose. He must, in a sense, get out of the way of this higher social purpose: “‘the enemy’ might even be repulsive, the positive state, the pleasure that the contemplator derives in the end, is a consequence of the fact that the form is *appropriate to the enemy* and that it is *technically perfect* in its realization though the agency of the material.” Nevertheless, the discourse of life remains essential to the artist’s activity, but not in terms of its everyday *personal* ethical and cognitive component, which is regarded only in terms of its aesthetically appropriate relation to the work.
When we turn from discourse in life to discourse in art, therefore, there is a shift from the ethical and ideological intonation to the aesthetic intonation of the author. As theorists we must attune ourselves to this shift so as not to mistake the person who writes with either the authorial ideological position or the heroes. The first consideration should have very little weight regarding how we read a text. The author should be thought of as in scare quotes and present in the text rather than as a separate living entity; and again, the hero and author’s ideological positions ought not to be conflated. Rest assured the verbal and non-verbal intonation and gestures remain constantly present, although active reading in terms of ‘hearing voices’ within the text is also an art—and one that also, no doubt, requires the commitment of a lifetime to master. We have already discussed the tripartite relations of the author, listener, and hero as they appear in real life, but it bears repeating that these relations change drastically when they inhere in the world of the verbal art; they are no longer “to be understood… as entities outside the artistic event but only as entities of the very perception of an artistic work.” This perception is that of the author’s, but again not of the author’s merely personal ideological intonations. Unlike the everyday semantic person, the artist shapes his material toward an adequation of form and content; he must raise the axiological inflection of the work to a socially significant achievement. The most drastic shift is with the listener, who must not be conflated with the reading public; the reading public must remain outside of the author’s sphere of influence, who is again to be thought of as (phenomenologically) within the text. Instead, the listener becomes the authorially-perceived ideal listener. This listener, like the hero and the author himself—since he is also heard strictly according to his social significance, are formed *qua* form with an adequation to their immanent content. Shakespeare would be a lesser author if he did not set aside a personal distaste for Iago and instead liquidated his detestable characteristics. Iago must remain beyond redemption. Without Iago’s genius for evil, Othello would not fall by his subterfuge, and the tragedy would amount to little more than a forgotten Elizabethan farce.

There are three significant *ür*-relations involved in verbal work of art. These are the hierarchical value between the hero and the author, their “degree of proximity,” and the proximity and relation to the hero borne by the listener. At times the listener is the ally of the author; this is often the case in classical works where there is no “presumed
“disagreement” between them.\footnote{471} This is a repetition in the discourse of art of what Voloshinov calls choral support in the discourse of life. When the listener and the hero are understood as mutual enemies of the author, both are the object of the author’s ridicule—this is often the constellation heard in polemics and satires.\footnote{472} If the author finds himself in league with hero and at war with the listener, the result is something akin to the Byronic hero, where any resultant laughter is at the expense of the listener.\footnote{473} In the case of “playing the fool” and “lyrical irony” species of utterance, a complexity of relations can emerge; here the listener is given full autonomy to make what she will of what has been said and what is hiding, ideologically, beneath the verbal integument.\footnote{474}

It is essential for the verbal artist to have the ‘sides’ of discourse ever-present in his mind. Short of this the author-listener-hero tripartite relation threatens to collapse into mere “stylization.”\footnote{475} Without outsideness, the author cannot sustain its aesthetic existence, and what ought to be perceived as exterior speech collapses into interior speech.\footnote{476} Style itself cannot be controlled, but is a matter of the verbal artist hearing his own voice, and again this takes a lifetime.\footnote{477} Anyone who has attempted to edit his own work of verbal creation knows precisely how his daimon can toy with what he believes he is actually conveying to the listener. One’s own voice is likewise elusive and it requires real artistry to master it. Moreover, mimicry of other voices is easily as difficult: “It is naïve to suppose that one can assimilate as one’s own an external speech that runs counter to one’s inner speech—that is, runs counter to one’s whole inner verbal manner of being aware of oneself and the world.”\footnote{478} Without this lifetime dedication to listening, style becomes forced, and the creation of the artist achieves nothing beyond the highly subjective form, a monologue, what Voloshinov calls the “maxim.”\footnote{479} Thus the ends which are ideologically reflected in the verbal work of art are thereby degraded and resemble the ends of a bourgeois publisher more than the verbal artist. More importantly, the implied socioeconomic base—meant in the widest sense—likewise collapses, and we are left with nothing more than a highly idiosyncratic piece of black letter legalism and not a work of art.

In closing this section we will attempt to connect what has been said about discourse in life and discourse in art to the art of answerability. For Voloshinov, and \textit{a fortiori}, for Bakhtin, theoretical poetics necessitates the propaedeutic study of
socioeconomic theory, but they cannot be exhausted by sociological study. Aesthetics depends upon the disinterest of the verbal artist to sustain a unique artistic discourse grounded in the discourse of everyday life. But it is also necessary to construct an architectonic, an art of answering, between the various genres of everyday life, between the scientific disciplines, and between the two types of genres. Michael Gardiner describes architectonics aptly as

a continuous dialogue with the ‘other’, with oneself (inner speech), and with the external world—which involves the active construction of relations between diverse phenomena… [and which] is constitutive of human subjectivity as such and represents an inescapable component of any possible creative thought or deed.\(^{480}\)

The advent of an architectonics then always signals a moment of conflict between competing ontologies and competing voices. Competing ontologies because the subiectum is always experienced from within as an open and unfinalizable entity, whereas the other is always seen as a finished project complete unto herself. The subiectum can only be “consummated” as a whole and autonomous person through the evidence given him by the grace of the shared and constructed world and by the other. It is the “transgredience” or “outsideness”—i.e., the excess of the subiectum’s being beyond its own self-disclosure and his overflow into the world, through which the other has a surplus of my character. I am only given access to this excess of seeing through my interaction with the other. This conception is not unlike the Greek idea of the \textit{daimon}—that side of myself that only others see directly and which follows me like a shadow. The related idea of exotopy, or an excess of seeing—of my own character and behaviour—grants to the other a perception of myself as a complete and whole unity, final and as real as the bread that sustains her. I likewise perceive the other as complete and whole unto herself. It is only through a dialogue of self and other, only through their non-coextensive presence to one another, that meaning can enter into the world—that there can be meaning or a world at all. The witness and the judge forever modify the world. The ontology of the subiectum is, contrariwise, not perceived as a closed system unto itself, but is open to interpretation and competing voices.\(^{481}\)

The deed or act in Bakhtin is not only this act of sense bestowal and consummation of the other through my ontological outsideness. The deed is also the
word itself (slovo). Words and actions exist on a continuum with each other. In Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, Voloshinov writes “the organizing centre of any utterance, of any experience is not within but outside—in the social milieu surrounding the individual being.” In other words, the dual character of the word, or what Voloshinov calls outer and inner signs, or official and unofficial discourse, is always-already formed and given shape in the world as a social phenomenon outside of the individual. The word is therefore addressed to a ‘who’ in the outer-world that I understand myself to be addressing within a “concrete social milieu.” This ‘who’ is the imagined apostrophic hero—i.e., a situation—to whom I direct the personal intonation of my voice. In other words, while the ideology expressed in the word is never completely fixed, it is nevertheless framed within the confines of a particular social context and by the always-already social discourse of a particular class. Linguistic abstract objectivism of the type we find in Saussure simply cannot account for this milieu even though, as we have seen, it is the ground from which significant abstraction first takes place. As Voloshinov states this idea: all “utterance … depends on their real, material appurtenance to one and the same segment of being and gives this material commonness ideological expression and further ideological development.” This development therefore is not simply an upside-down reflection of material conditions but is itself a creative refraction of both material and ideological form and content. Abstract objectivism leaves to one side the expression of this concrete ground.

Ultimately the various ideologies are expressions of competing values, and systems of values strive to extinguish and obliterate one another in an attempt to “make the sign uniaccentual.” But the word itself is resistant to such stasis, just as all ideologies are ultimately unstable and may contain the seeds of their opposites. Voloshinov privileges language and understands the sign as a critically important “arena” of class struggle. If these various social ideologies have their base in material, they likewise have a history—i.e., diachrony—that may be understood as the history of signs acquiring “social value” through a struggle of competing ideologies. Signs require more than a state or manifold unity that is prescribe in the theory of synchronic systems of language. A ‘system’ that is wholly synchronic is merely a system of signals that must be first recognized before they can be absorbed by the understanding. Of course, diachrony
is not a pristine forward progression. It is first and foremost in periods of crisis, according to Voloshinov, that the inner dialectical struggle within the sign becomes externally visible.\textsuperscript{487} In Marxism he writes,

This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crisis or revolutionary changes. In the ordinary conditions of life, the contradiction embedded in every ideological sign cannot emerge fully because the ideological sign in an established, dominant ideology is always somewhat reactionary and tries, as it were, to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday’s truth as to make it appear today’s. And that is what is responsible for the refracting and distorting peculiarity of the ideological sign within the dominant ideology.\textsuperscript{488}

What we have seen in the categories of prescriptive grammar and in the linguist’s experience of language holds doubly for objective knowledge. We therefore put objective truth into scare quotes. As Voloshinov hints in the above quoted passage, that which is considered common knowledge for us today will tomorrow have grown stale.\textsuperscript{489} No knowledge beyond the tautological ought to be considered objectively true for all humans now and for all time. It is my position that no laws are immune to this rule, not even our cherished laws of physics. Moreover, that prized trophy of all human intellectual activity—namely pure logic—may stand as an exception, but only if we could be sure that we really do have a tautology in mind. Only the syllogism admits of a true unity of opposites, and such tautologies are hard won and difficult to reduce to self-evidence. There is a truth, therefore, which lies beyond us, but listening for its voice is like attempting to listen to one of those wax cylinder records of Caruso as it melts in the sun, or like listening for an extra-terrestrial voice from deep space via satellite. It is like listening for what Merleau-Ponty has called the “voices of silence.” As we move forward into the penultimate section of the present work, we shall keep in mind the ideological nature of objectivity and the difficulties posed in what Bakhtin has termed Dostoevsky’s ability to hear voices in the “dialogue of his epoch.”\textsuperscript{490}
§ 6. The Polyphonic Novel: *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*

6.1 Hearing Voices: Polyphony in the Novel

“I do not judge. These characters praise one another, condemn one another—all that is none of my business”

—N. G. Chernyshevsky

“Dostoevsky was capable of representing someone else’s idea, preserving its full capacity to signify as an idea, while at the same time also preserving a distance, neither confirming the idea nor merging it with his own expressed ideology. The idea, in his work, becomes the subject of artistic representation, and Dostoevsky himself became a great artist of the idea.”

—Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*

Bakhtin published *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* in 1929 shortly before he was arrested. Caryl Emerson tells us in her preface to the book that Bakhtin may have had the book ready for publication as early as 1922. A second extensively reworked edition appeared in 1963 at the encouragement of a new group of scholars who had stumbled across the original publication. According to both Tzvetan Todorov and Michael Gardiner, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* consists of three perspectives on Dostoevsky’s oeuvre: first, the formal perspective and through the lens of German ideology—although polemically so; the second view places the literary corpus in line with Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque; from the third vantage point Dostoevsky’s work is viewed from the vista of merging and diverging novelistic discourses. I will only cover the first perspective—the first three chapters of *Problems*—since we have already taken up the theory of discourse and the carnivalesque in the previous sections of the present work. As a result, we will be centrally concerned here with three major themes of the volume, namely the polyphonic novel, the emphasis on heroic self-consciousness, and the idea as it appears in Dostoevsky. These three aspects are intimately related to one another and are expressions of what could be formulated by the following proposition: as an author of the polyphonic novel, Dostoevsky is primarily motivated by a “profound personalism” which locates the idea between subjects where it exists as an open-ended and living object of dialogical struggle.

Both Bakhtin and Bakhtin’s ‘Dostoevsky’ found univocity to be entirely antithetical to life as it is expressed by real people in everyday life. As a novelist dedicated to accentuating polyphony—i.e., diverging ideological voices within simultaneous space of the novel—Dostoevsky’s works mark a new achievement in the
millennial folk-festive culture crystallized in novelistic discourse. The search for a univocal system in German ideological philosophy is a highly rationalized genre of discourse, highly specialized, and torn out of real everyday contextual foundations; we have already seen a similar disconnect between the specialist’s account and everyday life in linguistics as abstract objectivism and in introspective psychology. German Idealism seeks a unity outside of individual and personal inflections of truth; the gnoseological subject requires a universal truth that would be true in any context for any thinking being what-so-ever—a subjectless transcendental field. In contrast, Dostoevsky sought to show the relation between the idea and simultaneous inflections of it by individual consciousnesses, through whom the supposed ideal truth is inflected in a movement between a “pro and contra” with a double-voiced logic. In Saussurean terms we might call this the synchronic aspect of the polyphonic novel. However, Dostoevsky wanted to show the future life of the idea as it extended—still dialogically—from its current historical epoch into future. To likewise call this the diachronic aspect would be somewhat misleading, however, since Dostoevsky is all simultaneity, even as regards the future. The possible future worlds he heard within the idea still emphasized how the idea was inflected in the present. In this way, the life of the idea could be shown in its perpetual re-appropriation by individual consciousnesses within their personal-historical situation without ever coming to rest in one avatar or finalized embodiment.

In the polyphonic novel, all relationships between personalities, and between individual personalities and an idea, are essentially dialogical, and only those relations that are understood as merely mechanical are truly monological—that is, those relations which are merely externally related to one another and do not affect any immanent change within the personalities or events of the novel: “one could say that for Dostoevsky everything in life [is] dialogue, that is, dialogic opposition.” Unlike monological novels in which the author conflates his own idea with that of the hero and makes of the personality a mere mouthpiece of the author’s dominant theme, Dostoevsky’s particular brand of realism attempts to show life from the perspective of his heroes themselves. The hero’s self-understanding is more important than ‘getting it right’ in terms of a moral or philosophical/rational idea. The hero interests Dostoevsky as a particular point of view on the world, and not as the spokesman of the author’s ready-
made agenda: “What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself ... ultimately the hero’s final word on himself and on his world.”

The author must therefore cut the “umbilical cord” between himself and the hero, and must stand outside him as one more consciousness among many with no privileged perspective. If the author is unable or unwilling to achieve this distance then the realistic aspect of the work suffers and the novel takes on a univocal manifesto-like quality in which realistic personalities are not given the opportunity to speak for themselves. In the homophonous—single voiced—novel there is no objective distance from the hero; the author presumes to stand over and above his hero and assumes an ostensibly objective and God’s-eye view over the novelistic universe. Contrariwise, the polyphonic novel portrays the hero not according to “who” or what he is, but in line with how he understands himself and his relation both to the idea and to others. Heroic self-consciousness is therefore the “artistic dominant” the dominanta in Dostoevsky.

6.2 Heroic Self-Consciousness

Since we have no absolute authoritarian position from which to view the hero under these polyphonic conditions, what becomes important is the vocal evidence presented to us by the personalities of the text. Instead of finding out the elements of the hero’s biography or what it is like to know him definitively, we are given voiceprints, confessions, testimonies from the hero and those who know him, editorials and journal articles written in the hero’s hand, memories, dreams, fears, and all of these are given first and foremost by way of the utterance. In the polyphonic novel the truth is perspectival, polyvocal, and determined according to what the personalities say about themselves; once again, no neutrality is possible:

the ‘truth’ at which the hero must and indeed ultimately does arrive through clarifying the events to himself, can essentially be for Dostoevsky only the truth of the hero’s own consciousness. It cannot be neutral toward his self-consciousness. In the mouth of another person, a word or a definition identical in content would take on another meaning and tone, and would no longer be truth. Only in the form of a confessional self-utterance, Dostoevsky maintained, could the final word about a person be given, a word truly adequate to him.
According to Bakhtin, Tolstoy’s stories do not broach this kind of truth. Even where characters are “ethically unfinalizable” we nevertheless know them so completely that we could never mistake them for actual personalities. The truth is everywhere determined by the author’s message. We get the sense that they could not hide anything from us or from the omniscience of the author. Tolstoy’s characters are simply unable to achieve a real autonomy. They are ready-made in the sense that they always serve the ends of the narrative and never serve their own implicit ends; neither are they capable of circumventing the larger blueprint of the novel. In his short story “The Overcoat”, Gogol caricatured Devushkin as Akaky Akakievich, the “little man” who cannot change—not even in death. Bakhtin explains that it was this static and inept quality of Akakievich that raised Devushkin’s person ire. What really offended him was the character’s finalizability and inability to speak for himself. What offends Bakhtin’s sensibilities is the reduction of the personality, with all its contradictions, to the voiceless automaton created simply to serve its master—namely, the author; for Bakhtin there is something false in this kind of reduction: “In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.”

Representing mere characters in this way—i.e., without a real personality—denies the author the ability to truly bring them to life. Even if some aspect of these characters is true to flesh and blood reality in general—for example, Ivan Ilych’s hypochondria as symptomatic of his superficial relationship with the world, in the end these aspects either serve the author’s pre-established system or have the flavour of a blemish on the purported artistic purpose. As such, the artistic dominant in the homophonic novel by-passes self-consciousness as the primary mode of revealing character; it surreptitiously betrays the personality by subjugating it to the all-knowing “high-altitude thought” of the author Pantocrator. In a sense, how they see themselves can only achieve a secondary and tangential importance. The homophony of these novels takes on the reductive and solipsistic character of the modern cult of Cartesianism. Characterological representation never ascends to the level of the real life experience and the free action of other embodied subjects. Yet, “man is not a final and defined quantity upon which firm calculations can be made; man is free, and can therefore violate any
regulating norms which might be thrust upon him” even by the supposedly omniscient author.\textsuperscript{510} To speak for the person, to interfere with his autonomous sovereign power to speak for himself, one attempts to define him “from above.”\textsuperscript{511} Between the monologue and the dialogue there are in effect two logics of sovereignty at work. On the one side, the monologue, a hyper-cognitive embodied subjectivity is displaced in favour of what Michael Gardiner calls the “irrefutable system of crystalline logic and conceptual rigour” of Cartesian rationalism, in which the cogito splays out the embodied world and reduces it to the singular ideological value of knowledge.\textsuperscript{512} Gardiner paints us a picture: “Accordingly, the world lies prostrate before this omniscient subject’s preview, like the captured booty and slaves paraded triumphantly before a victorious warrior-potentate.”\textsuperscript{513} On the other side exists the respected sovereignty of the self-conscious subject \textit{qua} other, whose autonomy is equal with those of all other characters and the author himself, just as in everyday life the subject appears among a multitude of other subjects and is not solipsistically left alone at sea with only himself as company.

The difference between the dogmatic or authorial representation of dialogue that is ready-made and reducible to the author’s solipsistic vision and that of the true dialogue in Dostoevsky’s work, according to Bakhtin, is that the former is the mere \textit{image} of a dialogue, while the latter is a real dialogue with actual conflicts and moments of intractable disagreement; as a result, Dostoevsky legitimately grants to its hero an autonomous life that testifies on her own behalf: “the author speaks not \textit{about} a character, but \textit{with} him.”\textsuperscript{514} As we saw in Section Two, the transgressence or outsideness of the subject must not attempt to achieve a co-extensive life with the other. Under such circumstances the \textit{subj ectum} could never provide an ethical answer for the other’s life \textit{from outside} and therefore could not consummate that life. The same situation occurs in verbal art. If the novel is to represent actual life and not simply deploy the philosophical message of the author, then the lives of each of the characters must maintain their proper weight. The author’s voice ought not to fuse with the heroic voice, “not swallow it up, not dissolve in itself the other’s power to mean.”\textsuperscript{515}

In this situation, the personality is in no way transparent to either the reader or the author, and indeed the hero can hide his deepest darkest secrets and even misrepresent himself throughout the course of the novel. Raskolnikov, for example, provides a
rationalization for his murderous actions in a newspaper article, but the article is published, as it were, off stage, “before the action of the novel beings.”\textsuperscript{516} Moreover, just as in life, the personalities of Dostoevsky’s poetics are not even fully transparent to themselves. They exhibit something akin to what Antonio Gramsci called “contradictory consciousness” in which one consciousness is indeed legion\textsuperscript{517}:

the consciousness of the solitary Raskolnikov becomes a field of battle for others’ voices; the events of recent days (his mother’s letter, the meeting with Marmeladov), reflected in his consciousness, take on the form of a most intense dialogue with absentee participants (his sister, his mother, Sonya, and others), and in this dialogue he tries to “get his thoughts straight.”\textsuperscript{518}

At no time, therefore, is the self-determination of the heroic consciousness co-extensive either with the author or with itself. It is portrayed as a slice of consciousness taken simultaneously within a milieu of other convergent and divergent consciousnesses in becoming.

None of what we have said regarding the self-conscious autonomy of the hero is meant to imply that he exists independently of the work itself—i.e., as if the hero could actually write himself into existence or could compose his own story. As we saw in the previous section, the Circle’s tripartite structure of discourse in art—\textit{vis-à-vis} the author, hero, and reader, asserts itself within the textual and semiotic plane of consistency and not in real life. It nevertheless retains a fundamental relation with real life—i.e., partially maps onto the speaker, \textit{apostrophe}, and listener, but again discourse in art cannot be reduced to this ground as a mere textual repetition of actual—non-textual—existence:

we must warn against one possible misunderstanding. It might seem that the independence of a character contradicts the fact that he exists, entirely and solely, as an aspect of the work of art, and consequently is wholly created from beginning to end by the author. In fact there is no such contradiction. The characters’ freedom we speak of here exists within the limits of the artistic design, and in that sense is just as much a created thing as is the unfreedom of the objectivised hero.\textsuperscript{519}

In the next section we will see how human beings have defined themselves over the last two millennia first according to the \textit{image of God} and later according to the \textit{image of ‘man.’} In the verbal work of art the hero takes shape adjacent to the wholly textual \textit{image of the author}, and in Dostoevsky most frequently according to the \textit{image of the idea}. We repeat, the hero takes shape adjacent to the image of the author and not fused with the
authorial intent or thesis statement. As far as it goes, this was the writer N. G. Chernyshevsky’s notion of authorship. He is almost correct, according to Bakhtin, but authorship is itself not a merely negative support on which the characters become self-aware. The author-image is itself involved dialogically with the text; the author enters as a voice within the polyphony of the truly multi-voiced novel. Here a pattern is emerging for us in the Circle’s corpus—within each polarized proposition there is a second pole that struggles to be heard. In this case, the wholly negative image of the author hides the bi-polarity of authorship. As such, Chernyshevsky’s proposition is not wholly monological but neither does it achieve a fully polyphonic status, since for Chernyschevsky the author is merely the negative tabula rasa on which the text is written. His poetics represent a middle ground between the older image of the author Pantocrator who does not enter the text himself and the truly polyphonic novel in which both author and hero enter and dialogue as equals.

It is not enough for the author to refuse to fuse his perspective with the hero’s into a dialectical synthesis of oppositions. The author must not only let his characters speak of their own accord as unfinalized open and embodied wholes, he must also “actively broad[en]... his consciousness” in order to communicate directly with his hero.520 Rather than to stand over novelistic personalities from above by assuming the God-like status of the artistic creator, and rather than pretending to absolute passivity, the writer actively shapes his material by selecting what is important, by deciding what to leave in and to leave out. As such the author’s own voice does enter the text to a limited degree, but again he nowhere attempts to subordinate the hero’s perspective to his own. The polyphonic artist is not the dogmatic artist. This is easy enough to see, but we must not mistake him for the artist of pure relativity either.521 Just as every voice is given its proper weight—and therefore its proper autonomy, the author also respects his own voice, which must not be simply brushed aside as one more arbitrary position. No ideologically unique voice in the polyphonic novel is to be regarded as merely relative—quite to the contrary, every voice is a monologically authoritative voice which asserts its essential correctness. What makes the polyphonic novel—as a whole—dialogical, is both that no voice can be simply annulled and neither can it achieve supremacy. The so-called “great dialogue” in the novel depends upon this struggle of competing voices, at times over-
lapping and at times opposing the wills of the author and hero. Bakhtin provides the counter-example of Tolstoy’s “Three Deaths.” In this story the author compares the death of “a rich noble-woman, of a coachman, and of a tree,” but he does so from outside of their worlds, without ever entering into them and thus achieving an immanent position with which to dialogue with these characters; they are not allowed the possibility of resisting or testifying against his authorial vision, since they never meet and dialogue with the author himself.\textsuperscript{522} He unites their deaths within his vision, but the characters only mechanically relate to each other—i.e., their relations are merely external to one another; they never co-exist on a plane in which they could enter into dialogue. As such, Tolstoy’s homophonous story unfolds from beginning to end according to a preconceived idea. At no time is the “counterpoint” operative; at no time is the free act of creation within the present moment of composition expressed.\textsuperscript{523} Homophony renders the novel a merely ready-made formulation of the author’s vision, which remains dominant—“all else being merely objects of its cognition.”\textsuperscript{524}

The situation of the “Three Deaths” would have been essentially different if Dostoevsky had composed it, according to M. M. Bakhtin. While the author, as organiser, retains some element of transgressent excessive sight, he would not have mechanically parsed out the worlds of the coachman, the noble-woman and the tree completely. The three worlds would come into a proximity in which they could mutually refract each world dialogically: “He would have arranged a face-to-face confrontation between the truth of the noble-woman and the truth of the coachman.”\textsuperscript{525} Thus argumentation and struggle between their competing voices would be heard—only through such argument could polyphony and “echoes of the great dialogue” come into play.\textsuperscript{526} However, death does not provide a suitable ground in which a living dialogue may occur. It is the struggle, the “turning points,” the “thresholds” of life which present the spaces in which dialogue can come to fruition, and not in the closed pre-established harmony of the authorial vision.\textsuperscript{527} Naturally, Dostoevsky’s author does obtain a surplus of vision, but this surplus restricts itself to the facts “necessary to carry forward the story”; authorial transgressence “enters on an equal footing” with the other characters in the novel.\textsuperscript{528}
6.3 The Idea in Dostoevsky

In the literary work of art, Idealism tends to utilize the idea in three main ways. First, the idea becomes the *Ürprinzip* through which the entirety of the represented world takes its shape; the world takes on a singular tonality. Second, the idea can therefore be deduced from the material that has been represented—i.e., it can be torn out of the reality or extrapolated from the various motifs of the novel, which themselves become a mere secondary vehicle of their conveyance. Third, the protagonist or “main hero” becomes the mere mouth-piece of the absolute idea; he is nothing more or less than its personification. However, these three pathways to the idea do not have to be absolute, but so long as the text is monological any deviation or contradictory voice will not establish itself as anything more than an error or flaw in the artistic edifice: “Idealism recognizes only one principle of cognitive individualization: error. True judgements are not attached to a personality, but correspond to some unified, systemically monological context. From the point of view of idealism, only error individualizes.”

When the hero is conceived of as only advancing the ideological tenor of the author, the plot suffers; it is treated as interchangeable with any given number of alternate plots. In this situation plot is perceived as “merely accidental.” Romanticism takes this view of plot; the situation, the chronotope—i.e., the perceived space-time of the novel—is uniform and empty and serves only to advance the author’s idea. Even here the character often maintains an individual personality, but he can be found stating a thesis of the author or the singular idea of the work that is quite alien to this personality. This singular intonation of the monological work of literature is “expressed directly, without distance”; the homophonous source of the work, even where it truly sets the narrative world in motion, reduces all differences to an occasion for the negation of all dissent voices: “within the bounds of that monologic world shaped by [authorial ideas], someone else’s idea cannot be represented. It is either assimilated, or polemically repudiated, or ceases to be an idea.”

According to B. M. Engelhardt’s essay “Dostoevsky’s Ideological Novel”, the hero of Dostoevsky’s novels is the idea itself. Strictly speaking, however, this is not the case. According to Bakhtin the idea for-itself does not exist in Dostoevsky. Ideology is always embodied within the personality of the hero and cannot be torn away from him.
The converse is also true: the “person is born of that idea.”\textsuperscript{535} The two are wed inseparably to one another and wedded unto death. But until death occurs, of course, neither the life of the “‘man in man’” nor the life of the image of the idea can be finalized.\textsuperscript{536} But this does not mean the idea and the hero wholly map onto one another; the idea is not merely the cookie-cutter shape of the personality of the individual hero. Instead of conditioning the hero absolutely according to the idea or vice-versa, the two exist in a relationship with one another. The hero pursues his idea throughout the novel, trying to understand it, and the idea likewise actively changes the hero:

Dostoevsky’s ideology knows neither the separate thought nor systemic unity in this sense. For him the ultimate indivisible unit is not the separate referentially bounded thought, not the proposition, not the assertion, but rather the integral point of view, the integral position of a personality. For him, the referential meaning is indissolubly fused with the position of a personality. In every thought the personality is given, as it were, in its totality. And thus the linking-up of thoughts is the linking-up of integral positions, the linking-up of personalities.\textsuperscript{537}

Personalities and ideas are united in a dialectical relationship, but one that finds no synthetic moment. At heart, the hero remains unfinished; he is set out as a task for the author.

In his pursuit of the idea, the hero in Dostoevsky’s novels attempts to live beyond himself in some sense; he cannot be enclosed even by the ideas he purports to belong to in taking them as his guiding principle—as his most essential characteristic and as that tenet which he holds most dear. Without this dialogic overlapping non-coincidence of idea and hero there is no real danger that the hero will fail to live up to the task his idea has set out for him. In other words, he will not be human. If Alyosha pursues virtue, it is only to find that he will disappoint himself and remain human and irreducibly other than his ideal self, which can never be finalized or arrived at. He will pursue this ideal self unto death in a dialogical struggle and without ever achieving the all-elusive synthesis between his particularity and the image of the idea that floats above him just beyond his reach:

It is given to all of Dostoevsky’s characters to “think and seek higher things”; in each of them there is a “great and unresolved thought”; all of them must, before all else, “get a thought straight.” And in this resolution of a thought (an idea) lies their entire real life and their own personal unfinalizability. If one were to think away the idea in which they live, their image would be totally destroyed. In other words, the image of the hero is inseparably linked with the image of an idea and
cannot be detached from it. We see the hero in the idea and through the idea, and we see the idea in him and through him.  

In this marriage the hero sacrifices himself to the pursuit of the idea and the idea remains conditioned through the particular life circumstances and utterances of the hero. Bakhtin calls even the most atrocious deed—Raskolnikov’s murder of the pawnbroker—a wholly “unselfish” act. His crime can only be understood as unselfish if we subordinate this atrocity to Raskolnikov’s unwavering devotion to the idea that even the most heinous act is permissible—i.e., if we always have before us his self-sacrificial commitment to nihilism: “We repeat again: what is important is not the ordinary qualifications of a person’s character or actions, but rather the index of a person’s devotion to an idea in the deepest recesses of his personality.”

Ideas do not exist in a vacuum and there is no one absolute Platonic Idea of Ideas in Dostoevsky. Unlike the bourgeois subjectivist spirit of isolation or the liberal feeling that the individual is sufficient unto himself—that is, so long as he is provided the basic infrastructure to achieve the necessities of life, the idea in Dostoevsky exists only by dint of its dialogic interaction with other ideas. In this way ideas are born, struggle with one another, comingle, give birth to yet new ideas, grow, ripen, weary, rot, die, and are reborn. In short, they live their lives within a quarrelling and cooperative environment among allies and enemy ideas alike. Ideas cannot be wholly subsumed within an individual knowing consciousness; they are “intersubjective” and as such, they have an event-like quality toward which individual consciousnesses flock to struggle over their meaning. Just as linguistic sense seems to have a life of its own, and just as the event requires an answer from the ethically active subject, the idea calls to the various Dostoevskian personalities to be heard, embodied, and ideologically inflected from various perspectives:

The idea is a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses. In this sense the idea is similar to the word, with which it is dialogically united. Like the word, the idea wants to be heard, understood, and “answered” by other voices from other positions. Like the word, the idea is by nature dialogic, and monologue is merely the conventional compositional form of its expression, a form that emerged out of the ideological monologism of modern times.
Bakhtin therefore links the idea, specifically as it is enframed within the great dialogue between consciousnesses, to the greater edifice of both his translinguistics and the architectonics of answerability. As such, the idea, like the event, requires an answer from the ethically active semantic person. We have said that a personality both knows himself through the idea and the idea through the personality—they are wed, but this is not to say that the semantic person is reducible to the idea he pursues nor the idea to the person. Such a monological conflation of the two would stop all movement in Dostoevsky’s texts; it would set out in advance the answer for the event as it arises in the present living and creative context. The monological conflation of the author and hero performs this reduction of the embodied person to the mere image of the idea. That is why the monological text provides the key to all its secrets ab ovo. It gives us the formula to the novel’s blueprint at the outset. It is only by providing a multiplicity of incomplete inflections that the reader receives an image of the idea as it exists as a living dialogue that spans over a whole “epoch” and makes a forward and backward reference to other epochs.\textsuperscript{543} It is only because the idea cannot be reduced to one consciousness or one historical period that it can achieve the weight of its historicity. The reduction to a synthesis or even to the so-called life of the Hegelian Spirit would, ironically perhaps, negate this very conflict that brings it to life and that raises it as a question for consciousness in the first place. The dialogic life of the idea can only exist between consciousnesses and between these voices which struggle to reduce it—to tame its feral existence—to an easily handled and inevitably “easily refuted” state.\textsuperscript{544}

The idea of ‘Dostoevsky’ himself—as an author-image—is therefore something that we must continue to struggle over. As an author he equally exists for us as a ‘hero’ or apostrophe which we address but cannot wholly tame. As such, Bakhtin has built into his Problems a dialogic self-critical stance, for ‘Bakhtin’ is also an author-image.

The primary thesis in Problems is that Dostoevsky could hear the dialogic conflict over the ideas of his age, and within this conflict he could likewise hear the genealogical life of this struggle stretching backward and forward in history. Dostoevsky bore witness to the ground being prepared for their future life; he had no interest in creating ideas from scratch, but listened for them in this intersubjective ground. The wholly personal idea is
short lived. Ideas are conveyed across generations and are pulled and stretched within different and often opposed ideological and socioeconomic milieus.

Let us look at the example of the European idea of nihilism and show how it is ideologically inflected into opposite polarities and yet remains the same idea. We will take Ivan Karamazov’s inflection of the idea that “infamy must be and is permitted.” Ivan’s nihilistic idea of absolute permissibility prepares the ground for his future act over the course of the novel, but we also witness it in the Second World War and in Hitler’s ‘final solution’ as Arendt reminds us. Arendt explains that where not even the Fürhrerprinzip could bind certain members of the upper echelons of the Nazi party under a common cause, they where nevertheless bound by the idea that had been born in European nihilism:

the loyalty of those who believe neither in ideological clichés nor in the infallibility of the Leader also has deeper, nontechnical reasons. What binds these men together is a firm and sincere belief in human omnipotence. Their moral cynicism, their belief that everything is permitted, rests on the solid conviction that everything is possible. It is true that these men, few in number, are not easily caught in their own specific lies and that they do not necessarily believe in racism or economics, in the conspiracy of the Jews or of Wall Street.

The particular inflection of the idea, insomuch as we take Arendt’s thesis to be correct—and this is itself contestable—is markedly different from Ivan’s. For those of Hitler’s inner circle who did not believe in his personal infallibility still believed that they could expunge substance itself through the absolute will of the over-man—who was above all morality. Contrariwise, for Ivan the very possibility of the ‘man in man’ can only be understood if everything is permitted, since only thereby could a space open up for his ability to know good and evil, and without this knowledge no morality could exist. Therefore the same idea—that everything is permitted—is inflected to into opposing polarities: “Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted? Without it, I am told, man could not have existed on earth, for he could not have known good and evil. Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much?”

I have stated that Dostoevsky’s special talent in Bakhtin’s eyes was that of hearing voices in the personalities of his characters; however, it would be more exacting to say, in choral support with Bakhtin, that Dostoevsky heard “the dialogic relationship among voices, their dialogic interaction.” The artistic material of The Brothers
Karamazov or Crime and Punishment or The Possessed is not fabricated from the author’s mind, as we have typically come to understand the image of the author Pantocrator under the myth of the artist-genius. To no small degree, Dostoevsky possessed the ability to step outside himself and incorporate the real political and social matter that surrounded him—what Bakhtin calls the prototypical idea-images in human history.\(^{549}\) Where this material was monologically inflected he also expanded it to fit into the great dialogue of human history; he had the ability to step aside and allow the great dialogue to express itself—without assuming that he could or should dismiss the importance of his own voice as author. In this way, the image of the idea as it appears in Dostoevsky’s polyphonic novels does not evolve into the typically monological ideal type often found in philosophic and scholarly works.\(^{550}\) In fact, “there is no evolution, no growth” of the idea at all.\(^{551}\) While it is true that ideas have a life of their own, they only appear to change as they are inflected through various consciousnesses. Insomuch as they are open and not fully conditioned, they will of course appear to evolve, but they themselves do not actually change as if they could exist wholly independent, as objects, outside of individual consciousnesses. On the contrary, like the once-occurrent event, they themselves do not change but are struggled over hermeneutically within the biographical lives of personalities. From the point of view of a single consciousness, the idea is monological. It is only when it is torn out of its static and univocal point of view and placed outside itself between voices that it can be perceived as dialogical. The great achievement of the polyphonic novel is that it shows the dialogical flexibility of the idea where the basic intentional relation between an individual consciousness and the idea cannot.

The world represented in Dostoevsky’s multiple ideological mosh pit is therefore not systematic. Against the current of typical systematic ideology, the polyphonic novel places the litmus of veridicality back at home in the person to whom it is attached and inflected. Logic of the Hegelian sort runs in the opposite direction—and we might add Plato and Husserl’s Ideas to this species. There the truth belongs to no one and is not perspectival. In order to circumvent psychologism, Husserl was forced to define truth as universal and outside the influence of particular inflections, even if the manifold of relations must enter into an individual consciousness. The whole point of the
phenomenological reduction is to ground meaning in the absolute truth of a unified set of relations. Dostoevsky does not approach these types of unities at all. His world is unapologetically messy. But his idea does not seek to ground itself in an atemporal a-spatial no-man’s land.\textsuperscript{552}
§ 7. Chronotopicity: Bakhtin’s Writings on Rabelais and Goethe

7.1 Seeing Auras: Bakhtin’s Concept of Chronotopicity

“There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. The problem of great time.”

—Bakhtin

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

—The Apostle Paul

“Everyone treats death as an important matter; but as yet death is not a festival.”

—Nietzsche

In this, the last section of our little survey of Bakhtin, I want to explore the theme of chronotopicity as it is applied to François Rabelais and Johann Wolfgang Goethe. I will begin by saying a few words regarding the development of Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope, its derivation, and its context within the wider cultural and philosophical milieu with which Bakhtin is in dialogue. In this section I will make the case for why the major works on both chronotopicity and novelistic genres exhibit a continuity in Bakhtin’s oeuvre as well as where his theory of both are lacking—with respect to distinctly modern forms of time and chronotope. The major essays with which one must struggle to gain insight into the concept of chronotopicity are “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”, “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel”, and certain thematic trends in Rabelais and his World. I will then review the major forms of chronotope in the novel which Bakhtin himself explores in the first two of these works. This done, I will explore what I see as the central chronotopic theme in Rabelais and his World which is by no means overtly stated therein. In doing so I will tie together what is essentially a genealogical account of the shifting understanding of time and space between the Medieval and the Renaissance world—this account is dispersed throughout the Rabelais book. The shift occurs, as we will see, according to the fracturing of the rigid hierarchical
great chain of being which we have already begun to discuss as it emerged out of neo-
Platonism. This exegesis will serve two purposes. First, it will undercut Caryl
Emerson and Gary Saul Morson’s supposition that the carnivalesque and chronotopicity
are nearly mutually exclusive concepts. This is not the case. In fact, the Rabelaisian
chronotope depends upon the \textit{horizontalization of hierarchical} structures; this
horizontalization could also be called the historicization of Medieval culture which takes
place during the Renaissance—but which has its roots in the unofficial folk-festive
chronotopes that date back to at least a millennium before the dawn of modern ‘man’;
Bakhtin provides us with a thematic but compelling narrative of a human reawakening to
the positive function of time and becoming during the Renaissance. Finally, I will pass
from the Rabelaisian chronotope to the image of time and space as it is taken up during
the Romantic period by Goethe. Let me say at the outset that Goethe’s chronotope is by
no means wholly Romantic, however, and in many ways it resists the conflation of the
individual and bourgeois image of ‘man’ that emerges in that epoch. I will somewhat
tangentially provide an account of Goethe’s relation to carnival as it appears in his \textit{Italian
Journey}.

Bakhtin shares Kant’s belief that time and space are crucial to cognitive processes, but he
moves away from Kant’s supposition that they are merely empty formal conditions of
experience. Furthermore, Bakhtin makes no secret of his reliance on Einstein’s theory
of relativity, but the latter’s theory of time and space is invoked more than it has any
methodological or performative influence on Bakhtin’s usage of the term \textit{chronotopicity}.
He picked it up, no doubt, on the occasion of the Ukhtomsky lecture that he and Kanaëv
had attended. Loosely following Einstein’s theory of relativity, chronotopicity was
defined by Ukhtomsky as “the perceptions of intervals of time and space,” and therefore
we may see at once both the importance of the Kantian Copernican turn and the 20\textsuperscript{th}
century addition by Einstein, who makes time-space relative to perception.

As is true elsewhere, we can confirm that Kant looms large in the background of
his theory of the chronotope in that Bakhtin wishes to distance himself from the merely
epistemic basis for Kantian and neo-Kantian apposition and temporality. Kant radicalized
time and space after Newton, who treated them as absolute and empty forms outside of
‘man.’ Kant rejected any talk of time and space from the vantage point of the things-in-themselves, and instead makes of time and space empty forms of intuition which in turn make possible synthetic a priori perception of objects.\textsuperscript{559} As transcendental conditions, however, they remained unconditioned and outside the categories of the understanding—hence this special restriction of time and space to forms of intuition. Kant’s account, however, is merely an epistemological critique of the extent to which time and space are presupposed by our experience of objects. As such, the Kantian Critical notions of time and space are nothing more than the “gnoseological subject” thinking time and thinking space; they are not lived space-time itself.\textsuperscript{560}

In a seemingly surreptitious comment, now infamous among scholars, Bakhtin states that he has borrowed Einstein’s Theory of Relativity “almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely).”\textsuperscript{561} As to what degree Bakhtin truly meant it as metaphor we will leave to one side. He says that he utilises the term as a literary-theoretical device and although we may presume he was familiar with Einstein’s General and Special Theories, he makes no direct use of them. Nevertheless, Emerson and Morson note five points of intersection between Einstein’s theory of time-space and Bakhtin’s chronotopicity.

First of all, time-space connotes an irreducible whole.\textsuperscript{562}

Second, there are multiplicities of time-space, and we “must entertain the possibility, or consider the necessity, of choosing among available ones or discovering new ones.”\textsuperscript{563} Morson and Emerson point to Lobachevsky’s thesis that space has multiple possible autonomous logics and the Euclidian “cannot be assumed in advance.”\textsuperscript{564} We ought to think about time-space as a unity but with a multiplicity of virtual—i.e., possible—actualizations that cannot be determined beforehand or deduced apodictically. Morson and Emerson also point to what Bakhtin calls the “Galilean chronotope consciousness.”\textsuperscript{565} The reference is not given but they seem to be referring to the so-called “Galilean linguistics consciousness;”\textsuperscript{566} which is a polyphonic linguistics that relativizes discourse to its particular “double-voicedness” and seeks to give an account for it in its “living and evolving” dynamism. If Morson and Emerson did missspeak it has nevertheless been a productive parapraxis, since it emphasizes the special theory of the chronotope which relates to Bakhtin’s theory of discourse in the novel. In any case, Bakhtin chooses to focus on the age old trope surrounding the epochal change effected by
Galileo. Galileo’s celestial discoveries and the Copernican heliocentric model of the universe led to the displacement of ‘man’ from what was hitherto his cosmic centrality in creation. Here the idea of a point of view, or perspective, casts doubt on the divinely fixed order of nature and of ‘man’s’ place in it. Reflexively this new order of nature will further complicate the Renaissance and modern image of ‘man,’ and we will return to this theme below. Third, Morson and Emerson point out that we can assume a special organization of the chronotope centred around the body of each individual; and by this we mean bodies and individuals in general and not only the bodies of human individuals. These bodies may include but are not limited to molecular bodies, social organizations and institutions, individual persons, texts, utterances, extraverbal phenomena, and so forth. In the concept of the chronotope Bakhtin links certain types of the novel—as a body of literature—with the specific genres and thematic content that lends to it its specific sense of space-time. Buy these genres are themselves treated as irreducible bodies around which space-time is uniquely structured.

Fourth, the chronotope is a diachronic concept and is in flux. Later ameliorations to the Newtonian chronotope as expressed in celestial mechanics, for example, can stretch and change the chronotope without breaking it; for example, specialists can work antagonistically but recognizably as Newtonians within Newtonian physics. Nevertheless, Kant’s a priori intuited time and space as pure “sequence” and “apposition” which have a wholly transcendental character would necessitate a chronotope of its own that is essentially different from the Newtonian. Likewise Galileo and Einstein would have their own distinct time-space perspective.

Finally, the focus of Bakhtin’s conceptualization of chronotopicity may not be transcendental, as in Kant, but the chronotope is presupposed by all experience nonetheless. Time-space is not an object of experience but is a condition of its possibility. The chronotope could be understood as a transcendental category in the sense that it opens up all possibility of experience, but it is nevertheless relative in that each particular chronotope is subject to contextualized ideological inflections and a historically conditioned faculty of perception. To be more precise, there is no chronotope—singular; there are only chronotopes. Insomuch as they implicate a particular socio-historical space-time, chronotopes are essential to axiological intonation.
Central to both Bakhtin’s theory of discourse and chronotopicity in the novel is the *image of ‘man’* which a particular motif embodies. In fact, all images can become saturated with “chronotopic motifs”; they can carry an “aura”—the gothic castle is an example. Yet even though the chronotope plays a large role in the background, and even though the notion of chronotopicity informed Bakhtin’s thought at least since the Ukhtomsky lecture, Morson and Emerson believe the carnival theory of the novel often contradicts chronotopicity; nevertheless, they find the discourse and chronotopic theories of the novel to be largely in accord. They seem to want to reduce one theory to the other instead of setting them in dialogue. It is not clear that they understand that the Rabelaisian chronotope envelopes the carnivalesque—that is, carnival is essential to the Rabelaisian chronotope. For example, the much-discussed image of the “pregnant death” ties together the historical past and future in the present. This grotesque image therefore requires a certain historically conditioned perspective regarding time-space. As such, it hardly seems possible that the theories of chronotopicity and carnival could be mutually exclusive. Morson and Emerson’s ambitious critical work tends toward a hyper-rationalized account of Bakhtin’s work in which all the pieces are supposed to fit smoothly in place. This approach is impossible for a thinker like Bakhtin, who is really more of a cultural theorist and scholar than a ‘critical’ philosopher—in spite of his early flirtations with Kant.

The image of a pregnant death returns in highly complex way in Bakhtin’s work on Dostoevsky. Here there is another explicit connection with a life and death series directly associated with temporality and space. In fact, it is tempting to see the complexity of the life-death series in *Crime and Punishment* raised to a higher level than is seen in Rabelais; Raskolnikov’s crisis of existential inaction seems to point to a folding over of the grotesque image of the pregnant death on itself. That is to say, whereas Rabelais ‘gives it to us straight,’ Dostoevsky adds another layer of complexity. His images—where there are any at all—are incomplete and rely on what is said or thought by the personalities in the novel. Although suffocating, Raskolnikov’s room opens onto the world and is the very opposite of *à huis clos* scenes in other existentialist works—Sartre being the primary example, of course. Consider what Bakhtin says: “Raskolnikov lives, in essence, on a threshold: his narrow room, a ‘coffin’ (a carnival symbol here)
opens directly onto the landing of the staircase, and he never locks his door.\textsuperscript{575} Here he stifles himself in an open room. He broods and deliberates. His inaction weighs on him like death. But the specifically carnivalesque invocation of the coffin suggests to us that this death is also an incubation of life. How can this be? We know that what he is waiting for is the transubstantiation of his spiritual struggle into the murder of the pawnbroker. The life that gestates in this room, therefore, is a death. So long as he is suspended by inactivity in his coffin/room he carries the symbol of death within himself. When he finally actualizes this symbolic death it is as if he is giving birth to death.

If we regard the threshold between the life-death series in terms of this bi-polar double-voiced carnivalesque image, the positive polarity of Raskolnikov’s delay immediately emerges. During the long slow movement of Raskolnikov’s deliberation regarding the brutal murder he will commit, we implicitly understand that time is everywhere marked by a plenistic delay and threshold space which must be traversed. As a result, the threshold images play an essential role in \textit{Crime and Punishment}:

The threshold, the foyer, the corridor, the landing, the stairway, its steps, doors opening onto the stairway, gates to front and back yards, and beyond these, the city: squares, streets, façade, taverns, dens, bridges, gutters. This is the space of the novel. And in fact absolutely nothing here ever loses touch with the threshold ... we can uncover just such an organization of space in Dostoevsky’s other works as well.\textsuperscript{576}

The trope of the threshold leaves the reader suspended to tarry on that which is always \textit{about to happen}. As such, it is intimately associated with positive delay—i.e., a time which must be traversed and which actively incubates death. Once again, we can see no reason why Morson and Emerson indict Bakhtin for having contradictory allegiances to the notions of the carnivalesque and the chronotope; in-themselves, these notions are simply not contradictory.

In terms of the speech genre, Bakhtin calls the invocation of an entire genre by the use of a single evaluative word the “stylistic aura” which surrounds the word.\textsuperscript{577} By analogy we would say that the chronotopic motif—here the threshold—invokes an entire chronotopic organization. The motif of the public square, the façade, the doorway, and in particular this coffin-like room in which Raskolnikov procrastinates, all auratically conjure this chronotopic sense of delayed time and threshold space.\textsuperscript{578}
Michael Gardiner reminds us that the idea of the aura in Bakhtin is reminiscent of Benjamin’s similar concept; there the aura is described as the irrefutable sense that is carried by a “presence in the here and now.”\(^{579}\) Strictly speaking, the aura is more limited in Benjamin. The filmic genre, for example, cannot carry an aura of the actor or character on screen.\(^{580}\) Here we begin to perceive Bakhtin’s noteworthy silence regarding specifically modern chronotopes and genres; again, this omission has been drawn out in Gardiner’s *The Dialogics of Critique*, and very interestingly for us, bears some connection to “Benjamin’s account of the demise of ‘aura’ in the modern world.”\(^{581}\) If we take an example from *fin-de-siècle* stage-craft, the difference between aura-less film and aural stage presence is akin to the different experiences one would have at watching Sarah Bernhardt perform the role of Hamlet in the opera houses of Europe versus watching her perform the same role in the short film *Le Duel d’Hamlet* of 1900.\(^{582}\) For Benjamin, it is the gulf between the past—tradition—and the modern that effects “[t]he *perte d’auréole* (the loss of halo, or aura)”\(^{583}\). Filmic reproducibility destroys this halo and changes the medium of art *qua* reproducible artefact.\(^{584}\) Gardiner’s observation that Bakhtin shies away from modernist forms of artist production may be likened to the Critical Theoretical school’s neo-luddite-ESque reservations regarding modern technology in general. Thus the evaluation of the chronotope as a stylistically aural motif alongside speech genres invites a stand-alone work on the modern and postmodern chronotopes in literature and art. The same could be said of the need for a study on the postmodern or poststructuralist chronotope. Here the Bakhtinian might suppose, in choral support of Fredric Jameson, that the postmodern chronotope has exhibited a progressively more depthless, weak and schizophrenic historicity, and is ultimately temporally and spatially intensive.\(^{585}\) Such an analysis is quite beyond the scope of the present work, but we mark its possibility here parenthetically. In any case, the aural power of the genre motif applies equally to the chronotopic motif. The chronotopic motif has the power to evoke a “whole complex of concepts” which implicate a particular image of ‘man’ and by implication a whole literary chronotope.\(^{586}\)
7.2 A Little History of the Novel: Novelistic Genres and Forms of the Chronotope

We will now review some of these chronotopic genres as they are presented in both “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” and “The Bildungsroman”. These genres to follow in detail are the novel of ordeal, the Greek adventure novel, ancient biography and autobiography (specifically the Platonic and the encomium), the folkloric, the Medieval chivalric romance, the baroque novel, and the Bildungsroman.

The hours and days traversed in the novel of ordeal leaves no permanent mark on its hero and heroine. As Morson and Emerson explain, the novel of ordeal exhibits an “unreal conception of the effect of experience and time in traditional romance.” Chance figures at the forefront of adventure-time in the ordeal, and specifically the chance which submits the protagonists to a test by some god or Loki-like prankster. Nevertheless, these chance happenings mark only a digressive time rather than the time of pure “duration”, the delay to which the hero is subjected is an empty delay for its own sake and merely serves to create an obstacle of empty time and space which must simply be traversed. Since the trial of the hero is not meant to change him, he emerges from it wholly unscathed. Time therefore has an absolute “reversibility” and space is completely interchangeable. Morson and Emerson point out that simultaneity plays a dramatic influence in the development of this intensive delay—“suddenly” is frequently used. I would suggest that Shakespeare’s The Tempest uses the reversible adventure-time first found in the chronotope of the Greek romantic novel. The shipwreck, Caliban’s plotting, Ariel’s half-mocking lament for Ferdinand’s father who is assumed dead—“those are pearls that were his eyes”—none of this makes any difference in the least to the unfolding of events, and everything is put right in the end. The world against which the Greek romance takes place must be of the empty-husk variety—i.e., univocal, and it must also be an “alien” world. If it were too familiar, if it took place “at home,” inevitably the chronotope would be destabilized by realist or other contextualizing factors. The hero must travel, just as Telemachus does at the beginning of the Odyssey in setting out to find his father. Testing is prominent in the Greek romance, but if the hero and heroine are to prove their mettle they must hold fast to an unchanging character: the ordeal tests their virtue to show their character is immutable and unalloyed. There is no trace of the all
important chronotopic motif of becoming and change.\textsuperscript{596} Certainly standard Shakespearean comedies such as Pericles also rely on the vast empty delay of arrival, since Pericles spends most of the adventure-time of the play racing between ports.

The second type of ancient chronotope is found in Apuleius’ \textit{The Golden Ass} and Petronius’ \textit{Satyricon}; these constitute the two lonely examples of the \textit{Greek adventure novel}. These works present an admixture of two chronotopes “adventure-time” and “everyday-time.”\textsuperscript{597} The central motif is that of the metamorphosis, and Lucius’ transformation into an ass and back is an example of the peculiar change inherent in metamorphosis. Change is not absolute; it is change alongside identity. Lucius is both ass and Lucius at once. Bakhtin cites three specific genealogical lines from which the idea of metamorphosis is formed: Greek philosophy, the Eleusinian cults, and the “purely popular folklore.”\textsuperscript{598} The Greek adventure novel moves forward in fits and starts, and it has an unusual “temporal sequence” as a result.\textsuperscript{599} One thematic component of this chronotope bares the stamp of cyclicity while another that of the unfolding series of events. As the adventure novel genre changes, the trope of metamorphosis gets cut off from its wider significance and becomes narrowly construed and employed to dramatize the hero’s merely individual change; this hermeneutical proposition remarkably echoes the sublimation of the carnivalesque by the bourgeois cult of the individual.\textsuperscript{600} Regardless of this diminution in status of the theme of change from cosmic to individual, however, the “crisis” faced by the hero will compel him to change.\textsuperscript{601} The positive polarity of time is therefore explored in the Greek adventure novelistic genre.

In antiquity, the \textit{ancient biography and autobiography} genres did not exist in novelistic form. Nevertheless there were two such examples of Greek texts which explicitly take up this “new type of biographical time.”\textsuperscript{602} In the first type, the Platonic form—such as is found in the \textit{Phaedo}—is organized around the Platonic maxim ‘know thyself.’\textsuperscript{603} What is Bakhtin thinking here? He posits an ancient genre for which there is no exemplar text. The motifs of ancient biography and autobiography remain scattered throughout various works and will become important—in changed form—in the \textit{Bildungsroman}; he obviously wants to trace the roots of biographical space-time back to its earliest forms, even if these forms exist only in fragments. Again, in the \textit{ancient biography and autobiography} genres we bear witness to the individual metamorphosis
that was first developed with the Greek adventure novel, only instead of seeking the
cosmic truth of universal metamorphosis of becoming, Platonic biographical motifs tend
toward an “idealized-biographical scheme.” What counts for biographically pertinent
information here is not the personal and merely private affairs of the individual but the
idealized individual as he is in essence. This is perhaps the first instance of the
gnoseological subject’s entrance into Western thought. The form of time is that of the
metamorphosis, of course, but this transformation functions according to a hierarchical
logic of knowledge. We return here then to the four rungs of Plato’s ladder of knowledge
that we saw in Section Two of the present work: vis-à-vis the supernal realm of
conjecture, belief, and understanding as well as the supernal realm of knowing. We
will have more to say about this hierarchy below.

The second type of chronotypical biographical motif is the encomium and its
emphasis is on the real-life chronotope of the individual who is being memorialized. The
biographical form of life in the encomium is one opened outward and formed by the
spaces of the public square—the agora. The public square shaped public life completely.
It was the site of official political manoeuvring, of collective defence, of civic pride, and
even where “revealed truth [was] realized concretely and fully incarnated, made visible
and given a face.” One’s “public self-consciousness” is determined by the entelechy or
purpose, and the energetic and analytic biography are the two structural strategies for the
ancient biographical motif. In the energetic form character is predetermined from the
start, but it is only revealed through a logic of discovery or unfolding, while “character
itself does not grow, does not change, it is merely filled in.” In the analytic, time
remains empty and unimportant beyond providing a space for this unfolding of character-
logical traits. In this second type of ancient biography, we are given just enough
information throughout the life of the hero to support an analytical reconstruction of the
protagonist’s life, but again the biographical events are mere facts; they do not effect
change in the character. In neither of these cases, the Platonic or the encomium, do we
yet have a depth image of ‘man.’ The Greeks notoriously tended to ignore the home
economy of the private sphere and inner life, and therefore whatever personal inflections
and biographical information that appears here is crucial for the public exterior man and
not his inner life.
Essential to the idea of chronotopicity in general is Bakhtin’s notion of the fullness of time. This idea expresses the tenet that time cannot be understood solely by making reference to its separate aspects. My present establishes its sense according to what has come before it and what is anticipated to come after it. As we have said, Morson and Emerson note the essential difference between Bakhtin’s theory of chronotopicity and the carnivalesque. We said that they misunderstand how time-space is subsumed in the Rabelaisian chronotope—and notably in the image of pregnant death. The folkloric chronotope is very nearly co-extensive with the Rabelaisian, although no doubt the Rabelaisian images of gluttony, of the grotesque body, of those infamous billingsgate (and blasphemes), of the underworld, giagantism (scale), etc., all add such a richness and uniqueness that Bakhtin could not help but give Rabelais his very own unique sense of space-time. Bakhtin’s idiosyncratic theory of the novel is built on the presumption that folkloric culture was, up until the modern period, the populist mode of existence. Folkloric culture remains embedded in the bi-polar life processes of life and death, of work and leisure, of sowing and reaping. Its chronotope is therefore everywhere stamped by cyclicity. Nature and ‘man,’ as macrocosm and microcosm, both find themselves everywhere marked by this cyclicity. There is also a second prominent feature regarding time, namely “historical inversion.” Another major difference between the folkloric and the Rabelaisian chronotope leaps out at us: the folkloric chronotope is nostalgic for a lost golden-age, and it tends to interpret present and future events from the vantage point of an idyllic past or a singular future event—i.e., it is eschatological. In spite of this eschatological and gold-age longing, the folkloric chronotope is steeped in the real time of natural events and processes. As such the Rabelaisian chronotope will draw heavily from it.

As a genre, the Medieval chivalric romance is largely steeped in the Greek romance trope of testing, only the ordeal here is distinctly that of testing Christian virtue. The temporal motifs of this genre are broken down into a series of “adventure-fragments.” The motif of an alien world returns here to set the hero on his adventure away from home and into the ordeal. Unlike the Greek romance, the chivalric adventure novel requires a hero for whom this miraculous alien world is welcomed with open arms. Here the hero maintains his identity because of providential interference not in spite of it.
The logic of the chivalric romance is therefore that of living up to one’s potential through time rather than retaining one’s atemporal identity which is more or less set in stone *ab ovo*.

In its later manifestation, in Dante, in Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose*, in Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, the Medieval chivalric romance stretches itself out into an “encyclopaedic” form. Here both the vertical axis of simultaneity and the horizontal axis of succession take hold, but only the vertical axis carries with it the intuited fullness of time, and the real historical succession of events counts positively only insofar as it can be sensibly relocated in vertical simultaneous groups of relations. Nevertheless, Bakhtin seems to espy the loosening of the official hierarchical (neo-Platonic) great chain of being *within the genre of the Medieval chivalric romance*. Time begins to fill up with its positive aspect; time is becoming the effectual time of becoming, so to speak.

For example, Dante’s circles of hell reorganize various historical sinners not according to their temporally causal date of damnation, but according to the intensity of their sin. In this way Count Ugolino is found in the ninth circle of hell, physically above rather than temporally after Judas, Brutus, and Cassius—for Ugolino’s treachery is merely to Florence etc., not the whole of the Roman Empire or the Kingdom of Heaven. It makes no difference here what historical order to which each transgression belongs; the sinners are accorded their lodgings spatially according to the grotesqueness of their act of betrayal. Still, the vertical scale of nature is torqued in Dante:

> The mighty impact of the upward vertical movement is opposed by the no less mighty impulse to break through toward the horizontal of real space and historic time, the tendency to understand and form destiny outside the hierarchical norms and values of the Middle Ages. Hence the extraordinary tension of the balance created in his world by Dante’s titanic power.

This tension is caused by the ambiguity and the double-voiced tendencies in Dante that mark, for Bakhtin, the early warning system of the poet *avant-garde* who sees the writing on the wall. History is becoming positively marked. The fixed hierarchy in which there exists nothing new under the sun is beginning to horizontalize into historical becoming. Ugolino and Judas occupy the spatial territory they do because of Dante’s sense of the shifting ground underneath the feet of official culture. Things are changing. Measure according to the *image of God* and custom is becoming measurement according to ‘man.’
Dante’s chronotope is therefore not marked exclusively by verticality but by a tension between ordered simultaneity and plenary succession. It is as if the slow realization that the pure simultaneity of the ideal world of forms began to become embedded in the real historical formation of concepts. It is as if the roots of the supermundane began to be unearthed to show, quite literally, the material embodied and historically contingent source of our ideas.

The *baroque novel* is the last novel of ordeal that occupies Bakhtin’s attention. The hero is writ large in the baroque novel. The ordinary events of everyday life do make an appearance but on a grand scale. The interval between the normal unfolding of the hero’s life is once again interrupted by the ordeal, and again it “lacks any real biographical duration”; however, the baroque novel establishes a positive “psychological time” within this interval: “this time possesses a subjective palpability and duration.” Nevertheless this psychological time is not localizable to any specific situation in the hero’s life. The hero does not effect change in the world and neither does the world change him.

The *Bildungsroman* combines the complexity of the baroque ordeal with its “psychological time” with the biographical motif. Stendhal, Balzac, and Dostoevsky all exemplify this generic typology. The trope of testing breaks down into sub-generic species: artistic competence, bureaucratic and vocational testing, ethical suitability for life, biological fitness, intellectual and social aptitude, and the various ordeals of the ‘new woman,’ all by times inflect the category of the *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman*—typically translated as the “novel of education”—emerges as a genre in the late 18th century in Germany and especially with Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. The image of ‘man’ portrayed in the novel of education has now overturned the static characterization of the ‘man’ who can withstand the ordeal and remain himself. Whether this self is latent and must unfold or is extolled by the author from the beginning is no longer relevant to the form of the chronotope, since the protagonist’s life now is understood as one which is set out as a task to be accomplished rather than merely to be endured without compromise. Thus the “ready-made hero” is discarded by the *Bildungsroman* for a new image of the ‘man’ of emergence and becoming; in essence he becomes temporalized: “Time is introduced into man, enters into his very image, changing in a
fundamental way the significance of all aspects of his destiny and life. This type of novel can be designated in the most general sense as the novel of human emergence.\textsuperscript{627} Emergence can take five different forms: the cyclical (related to the life-cycle of the hero), emergence from youth into adolescence, biographical and autobiographical emergence (the cyclical element is dropped), didactic-pedagogical emergence (the ‘novel of education’ is of this type), and finally the image of ‘man’s’ individual emergence is portrayed according to and alongside historical time.\textsuperscript{628} The importance of this last type of emergence cannot be over-stated for either the history of the novel or for Bakhtin’s theories of chronotopicity. The novel as a thousand year-old cultural technology of folk culture begins to move out of the shadows into a self-reflexive dialogue with the image of ‘man’ in terms of becoming. One might say the novel becomes a plateau in which human beings culturally dialogue with themselves about where they have come from and where they are going.

There is a real sense in Bakhtin that he is not only interested in preparing a taxonomy of novelistic genres. In itself this would be a pointless exercise that would be productive only for highly specialized literary theorists. The emergence of the novel of emergence, if one might put it so circuitously, seems to have a special significance for Bakhtin; his Bildungsroman book was, after all, dedicated to it. It is as if the novel has itself come of age. The Bildungsroman of historical emergence presents us finally with a literary genre that has the teeth to show not only ‘man’s’ becoming but the becoming of the world in history. This sub-species of novel catches a view of its protagonist at the very precipice of personal and societal change—although as we have just seen not every type of Bildungsroman deals with both personal and historical change; in any case, what is important here is that the genre in its entirety links the personal and social becoming. The destiny of the individual and the destiny of the world meet in the singular series of events portrayed, and these events “achieve a significant assimilation of real historical time.”\textsuperscript{629} For Bakhtin, Rabelais’ Gargantua and Pantagruel achieve the greatest synthesis of these two moments in the entire history of the novel. Goethe plays a secondary but likewise crucial role, and the remainder of our reconstruction and analysis shall focus on the chronotope and image of ‘man’ in these two authors. In regards to Rabelais’ chronotope, I propose to draw from Rabelais and his World rather than simply...
to repeat what Bakhtin has said in “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel.” This will add to what Bakhtin has said in the chronotope essay as well as help draw together the less overt traces of the Rabelaisian chronotope in his Rabelais book, and it will also serve to further contradict the notion that carnival folk-festive culture cannot be reconciled to the chronotope.

7.3 A Pregnant Death: The Rabelaisian Chronotope

I will begin with a prehistory of the horizontalization of hierarchy found in Rabelais. The neo-Platonists believed that all things emanate and return to the One. Pseudo-Dionysius’ *De divinis nominibus*, Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis* were the Medieval sources for the neo-Platonic notion of hierarchy. Not only did the Medievals believe in hierarchical order, but the order almost always descended from high to low and was caused by the One and not the other way around. Edward P. Mahoney’s commentary on Proclus shows this logic of high to low in action: “even the last or lowest kinds of existents depend on something above them, for if they did not they would withdraw into non-being and vanish.” Points of disagreement emerge around the possibility of gaps between the gradations of being which ascend the scale as well as whether or not these gradations represent species or individuals. The One serves here as the literal zero sum from which all other beings emanate, just as all numbers begin and progressively grow more distant from the number one or the single unit. Pseudo-Dionysius’ legacy for his Medieval inheritors lay in adding the language of spatiality and distance from the One to this zero sum hierarchy:

Dionysius’ adoption of spatial language to explicate metaphysical hierarchy is particularly noteworthy, since it will be reflected in various Medieval and Renaissance thinkers. In like fashion, his acceptance of a principle of continuity, according to which the lowest in a higher rank of things touches the highest in a lower rank, would be reflected in Medieval discussion.

Pseudo-Dionysius also held that if God—i.e., the One—was being in-itself, then all beings had their being only in him. This idea is called the “doctrine of participation.” Aquinas expanded this argument and claimed that the closer any entity climbed on the ladder of being the more actualized it becomes. Matter on the other end of the scale is
mere potentiality, and the further the entity falls from grace, as it were, the more potential replaces and degrades actuality. Matter also plays this role for Marsilio Ficino, “since it is closest to non-being and further from God.” Nevertheless, for Aquinas, humans were the most actualized of species—likewise gold was the highest actualized mineral. Paul of Venice begins at the opposite pole of non-being and posits that all beings can be ordered according to their distance from non-being. Paul offered this thesis as a bolster to the idea that God himself, as a perfect being, must be infinitely—and therefore equally—distant from all other beings. Therefore, beings must be ordered strictly according to the pole from which they are not infinitely distant—i.e., from matter or non-being. The central conflict here arises from the notion that while God is being in-itself and therefore must be the measure of all things he is likewise perfect and therefore cannot partake in imperfect being. This contradiction has contributed to the philosophical factions and fragmentation surrounding the notion of hierarchy within the scholastic discourse of scala naturae.

Lovejoy’s central tenet, out of which emerges his entire history of the idea of the great ladder leading up to God, is that the good as it appears in Plato sets out the Medieval philosophic cornerstone that he calls “cosmic determinism.” As we have already seen in Section Two, Platonic philosophy placed ‘the good’ outside of the world of appearances; this had the effect of making hypotheses and testing by dialectic the proper method to approach true knowledge of the good. Thought had to leap over appearances. This view was, according to Lovejoy, a “dialectical necessity” in the Academy:

The idea of the good is a necessary reality; it cannot be other than what its essence implies; and it therefore must, by virtue of its own nature, necessarily engender finite existents. And the number of kinds of these is equally predetermined logically; the Absolute would not be what it is if it gave rise to anything less than a complete world in which the ‘model,’ i.e., the totality of ideal Forms, is translated into concrete realities. It follows that every sensible thing that is, is because it—or at all events, its sort—cannot but be, and be precisely what it is. This implication, it is true, is not fully drawn out by Plato himself; but since it is plainly immanent in the Timaeus, he thus bequeathed to later metaphysics and theology one of their most persistent, most vexing, and most contention-breeding problems.
While Mahoney suggests that Lovejoy is simply mistaken regarding this latency of cosmic determinism in the Timaeus, we can only fault Lovejoy with a retrogressive projection of this determinism from the standpoint of the Medievals onto Plato. While we mark this methodological and hermeneutical error on the part of Lovejoy, we can nevertheless uphold the supposition that cosmic determinism did come down to us from at least the time of Proclus in the form of a hierarchical chain of being. The mutability of this chain is another matter entirely and we shall not deal with it here. What is essential for our purposes is that this notion of a dialectical necessity not only existed as a profound centripetal force in scholastic and popular thought during the Middle Ages, but also that it held all official creeds firm within its grasp. One could (sometimes) argue as to whether or not God’s perfection was infinitely distant from ‘man,’ but not the centrality of God in the universe. One could (sometimes) argue whether God was the measure of all things, but one could not argue the same for ‘man.’ This marked fixity of the Middle Ages begins to slide during the Renaissance, and not just in the well-schooled opinions of the philosophers, but primarily in unofficial art and popular culture. We say again: this loosening begins in culture, in everyday life, not in philosophy! This sliding was not born overnight, but quite to the contrary, was celebrated in unofficial folk-festive cultural production, simultaneously alongside byzantine hierarchical agelast austerity, and the ‘sobriety’ of scholastic dialectical thought.

The new image of ‘man’ as the measure of all things is essential to understanding the change that was occurring during the Renaissance. I would suggest that the import of this change in the history of the West, from a vertical hierarchy where the image of God is the cosmic determining principle to the image of ‘man’ as the new standard of measurement, cannot be overestimated. While Rabelais was himself immersed in the bipolar sympathetic notion of microcosmic echo of macrocosm, the polarity that measures everything from the point of view of the image of God is overturned in Rabelais and in the Renaissance in general. This polarity was destined to fracture the hierarchical cosmic logic that we have been reviewing; Bakhtin says: “The human body was the centre of philosophy that contributed to the destruction of the Medieval hierarchic picture of the world and to the creation of a new concept.”
Bakhtin glosses Aristotle’s influence over the Medieval hierarchical ordering of nature. He also says nothing of Paul of Venice or other’s inversions of gradation according to the distance from God to the distance from non-being. He does give an account of Aristotle’s four elements—so important to the late Medieval understanding of movement and substance, these being earth, water, air, and fire. The image of the elements themselves is hierarchical in nature, since they are adjudged to be at home or away from their natural cosmic quarter depending on their spatial location in the cosmos. Above fire—often considered the highest element—there is a purported fifth element known as the *quintessence*. We have already noted that the neo-Platonic and Christian worldview of the Medieval period indeed had a polarity of high and low which was, without fail, arranged hierarchically. We have also noted that these poles, again without fail, were the *first principle* at one end and *matter* at the other. According to Bakhtin this movement from high to low shifts during the Renaissance to a reference forward and backward.  

A sense of ‘man’ in a state of becoming begins to enter into the discourse of the *scala naturae*, and this idea—which originates out of Medieval hierarchical being—is destined to overturn it, just as, we might say, the unofficial presents from within the official seeds of its own overturning. Bakhtin does not explicitly state this, and we must never lose sight of the fact that the two types of being—i.e., static hierarchical being and dynamic being as becoming—exist together as poles. Rabelais exemplifies this flattening of hierarchies since he is “consistently materialistic” and makes the human body—i.e., the image of ‘man’—the measure by which all other “material components of the universe disclose ... their true nature.” By exceeding his terrestrial limits, ‘man’ exceeds his own nature. By defeating his fixed place in *terra nostra*, ‘man’ boldly ventures out into *terra incognita*. By making the unofficial-fantastic an official reality, Renaissance ‘man’ brings to life the knowledge of the ancient world only to finally part ways with it. The unquestioned hierarchical order of things is replaced in the Renaissance by a new image of ‘man,’ and this image is of a human animal beholden to becoming—to material nature—and not to the fixity of a dogmatic feudal order:

Thanks to navigation and the invention of the sail, men have entered into material contact. Mankind has become one. After the invention of aviation (which Rabelais foresees), man will direct the weather, will reach the stars and conquer them. This entire image of the triumph of mankind is built along the horizontal
The *succession* of generations does the heavy lifting in this paradigmatic shift. It is only because my children’s children’s children will arrive at *terra incognita* and begin to map it that this new image of ‘man’ can take hold and vouchsafe the human becoming. For Rabelais, this horizontality of successive discovery concerns human beings in general and not individuals. This picture of the body as the measure of all things is historical and material but not personal. Neither is it merely biological.

One could be tempted to see in Freud and Weismann a similar account of the non-personal becoming of the human species, since generally speaking this notion serves to ground Weismann’s germ plasm and soma and Freud’s *Eros* and death instinct. This was the case with Freud’s Weismannian turn in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, as we have seen. There, Freud’s conjectures that the mortal part, the soma, could be seen as simply a means for the germ plasm to perpetuate itself—this is Weismann’s theory and Freud is tempted to accept it. Of course, he does not. But the supposition that death itself is a mere “expediency” to remove the “pointless luxury” of individual immortality borders in close proximity to Rabelais’ grotesque image of a pregnant death; however, as we have likewise seen, Freud’s bourgeois subjectivism renders him incapable of seeing the positive polarity in this subterfuge of the soma by the germ plasm. There is no Rabelaisian laughter in the idea that the individual is a mere luxury—a mere plaything of destiny. Moreover, Weismann’s mortal and immortal aspects of life are indeed merely biological. Notwithstanding his transference of these biological hypotheses to his psychoanalytic principles, *Eros* and the death instinct, Freud also omits the importance of cultural history from this account of species unfolding. What is important for Rabelais, and *a fortiori* for the Renaissance world, is the new cultural turn realizing itself through the image of ‘man’ in historical becoming. Freud remains an agelast. He cannot see the positive polarity of becoming—the real pleasure motive of the death instinct.

As we have seen, the gradations of being were not univocally held to be top-down in the Middle Ages. Nor was every theologian a Thomist, and thus not everyone held that measurement ran according to the two poles, the first principle and non-being, or alternately God and matter. Indeed, figures such as Paul of Venice and Richard
Swineshead believe that if God had placed ‘man’ at an infinitely distant and fixed gulf from perfection, then the gradation of beings must be wholly determined from the bottom polarity of non-being.\textsuperscript{651} Bakhtin tells us that the marriage of the Christian cult of redemption and Pseudo-Dionysius’ hierarchy of gradations lent to the Medieval world a bi-polar and vertical logic of “ascent and fall.”\textsuperscript{652} It is clear that Bakhtin is again painting with very broad strokes. The official Medieval world was not as univocal as he seems to believe, but depended to a great extent on who was speaking \textit{ex cathedra}; be it a particular political family represented by Papa on St. Peter’s chair or whomever was currently serving as Charlemagne’s \textit{de facto} heir, there is not one but a multitude of Medieval periods.

Nevertheless, one understands here that Bakhtin wants to talk about the Medieval period thematically in order to provide a general account of the transformation to the Renaissance without over complicating the transformation. This shift can therefore be generally understood as the rise of a new standard of measurement. The universally important and ostensibly unchanging image of God becomes the liquid and relative image of ‘man’ in the process of becoming. It will be objected that we already are well aware of this fact, and that Bakhtin adds nothing to what has been made explicitly in Pico’s preface to the \textit{900 Thesis}, the so-called “Dignity of Man.” Nevertheless, the general thrust of the official Medieval axiological inflection indeed seems to have been highly polarized in favour of the supernal image of the Demiurge and Pantocrator. Bakhtin shows us that the new ‘dignity’ of ‘man’ is centred specifically in the image of ‘man’s’ body.

The Medieval conception of time is also highly polarized high to low. The unmoving first principle negates the movement of matter and its constant shifting of forms. The simultaneity of the vertical insured the possibility of an instantaneous rebirth in Christ through redemption. Officially there was no possibility of growing into this new life in Christ, nor was the city of God built upon the real life urban denizens. All merely human history is negated by a double movement. First the official vertical hierarchical order is privileged and then polarized high to low. While the everyday communities of ‘men’ were by and large the exclusive sites around which our antecedent broke bread together and suffered in silence, it was the univocal image of the city of God that
mystified the noble, cleric, and popper alike in official life. However, Dick Hebdige reminds us that the official polarization of the community of the realm itself has a history:

In classical Mediterranean cultures, once the hospitality traditionally extended to the stranger had been exhausted, access to the civitas—the community and its sustaining networks of ritual, privilege, obligation—remained contingent on a more primeval order of belonging: an investment in the urbs, literally, in the stones of the city. With the establishment in 18th century Europe of a bourgeois public realm where differences, ideally, were to be ‘aired’—owning property and speaking ‘properly’ became the dual prerequisites for being heard at all. 653

In other words, if we attempt to understand the modern and ancient world through the lens of the Medieval hierarchical order, we find that this hierarchy does not disappear during the Renaissance and even repeats in other forms during the Enlightenment in the form of early bourgeois ideology. Additionally, if we project this hierarchical reference backwards, we see that this hierarchical order appears in the civitas and is organized around the real material social structures inherent in Roman civic duty and earlier in the political organization surrounding the Greek polis. No doubt, showing the historicization of hierarchical forms is itself an infinite task. Although this task remains outside of the present critique, we mark here not only that the Medieval vertical hierarchical structure itself has a pre-history, but that it has left remainders. Hierarchy itself is subject to becoming and does not disappear during the Renaissance.

Nevertheless, Bakhtin is correct to show, albeit retrospectively and from the point of view of the present, that official Medieval culture “devalued time.” 654 But with the cultural rejuvenation during the Renaissance, the ‘centre could not hold,’ so to speak. The official hierarchical structuring of high to low in which “historic time was obliterated” began to collapse in Rabelais’ world. 655 The Medieval trope of the underworld plays this collapse out. For Bakhtin, the official fear inducing Pantocrator that rebuked the underworld began to give way to the flesh and blood chthonic source of real everyday and biological life—albeit a biology within a cultural history.

At the time of Rabelais the hierarchical world of the Middle Ages was crumbling. The narrow, vertical, extratemporal model of the world, with its absolute top and bottom, its system of ascents and descents, was in the process of reconstruction. A new model was being constructed in which the leading role was transferred to the horizontal lines, to the movement forward in real space and in historic time. 656
Now the lower bodily stratum which had been officially censured begins its work of grounding—in every sense of the word—the scholastic and idiosyncratic simultaneity of forms in their actual loam and earth origins. The abstraction from these material origins had placed the emphasis on the soul’s personal redemption or damnation—and to hell with the acquisition of one’s daily bread. What was important was how one spent the next life not the millennial folk-festive celebration of collective embodied existence through time. But in Rabelais’ world this is all supposed to have changed according to Bakhtin. Unofficial folk-festive culture, the images of the grotesque body, billingsgate, curse words—i.e., parodied excommunications, the low culture of the marketplace, all of these socioeconomic realities of everyday life begin to slip into the mainstream cultural production. What is at stake is no longer a merely individual abeyance to the authoritarian Byzantine Pantocrator, but the growing awareness that our ancestors have become, quite literally, the earth out of which our nourishment grows. And as they are, so shall we be, as the ubiquitous late Medieval and Renaissance memento mori remind us.

Collective life does not end in individual death. The “vital process” is in some sense a continuum. This is what is lost in the agelast austerity of the Medieval focus on the deceased’s successful assent up to heaven—i.e., the knowledge that material life will blossom anew and for its own sake. The sobriety of the bourgeois culture likewise forgot this truth. Although it has survived—in the ‘good-old’ Irish wake, for example, by and large, and sadly, the contemporary mind knows nothing of the promise of life inherent in death. We see even in contemporary monotheistic religious belief of hierarchy that the distinctly individual conception of death, as ascension to the pearly gates, or descent into hell and damnation not only merely repeats the vertical hierarchical logic of official Medieval culture, it also obfuscates the truth latent in folk-festive culture—death is not impotent but full of the power of life. This truth is lost in Paul’s epistle to the church at Corinth. There, faith is placed solely on the power of the resurrection. There, the early neo-Platonic polarities of the first principle and matter, of God and earth, of being and nothingness, of life and death, are first sown into the fresh soil of Christian dogma; these polarities become highly polarized. There, we already see the apotheosis of the Pantocrator at the expense of the degradation of the earth. Consider what Paul says:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And
so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from Heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

The “man of dust” is degraded being. The first Adam who came from the dust is fated to return to it. Only the redemption offered in Christ can vouchsafe the transmigration of his soul, but not to the underworld. The earth becomes something wholly morbid, and is polarized as mere corruption. The spirit and the flesh are eternally alienated from each other. The lower bodily stratum and the grotesque, by association with all that is low, are both corrupted by association with the seedy underbelly of life in decay. Sexuality, via its association with the sexual organs, is merely a necessary evil. The seed can only be redeemed through a metamorphosis into a spiritual organ. He who worships the earth and all that is low becomes an eternally corrupted pariah by association. The flesh is soiled, grimy, dirty, alloyed, maculate; literally and etymologically speaking, it is profane—i.e., “not dedicated to religious use, secular.”

Contrariwise, in the Rabelaisian image of death, there is also the victory of life—life does triumph over death just as in the Apostle’s epistle. However, this triumph is announced in death; it is immanent to it—and an earthly death at that. It is not a victory from outside and it is not a refutation of the flesh, but a rejuvenation of it: “in Rabelais’ novel the image of death is devoid of all tragic or terrifying overtones. Death is the necessary link in the process of people’s growth and renewal. It is the ‘other side’ of birth.” The birth of Pantagruel, Gargantua’s son, marks the loss of his mother; Gargantua’s wife dies in labour. There is an ambiguity here, at the moment of the interstice between death-life. In the bi-polar Rabelaisian images of life and death series, death is composed from the point of view of ‘death’s’ immanent power to generate new
life and not from the individual birth and death of Pantagruel and Badebec respectively.\textsuperscript{663} The mother-son continuum of life is emphasized.\textsuperscript{664}

There is solace in death, even individual death, but it is not merely the solace that others will be born. The joy in death is not a mere decrease in the surface population, as Alastair Sim’s \textit{Scrooge} would have it—agelast that he is.\textsuperscript{665} The merely biological repetition of the organism is not the species of joy that Gargantua nourishes. The birth of his son would be small comfort if it were merely the guarantee that the generations will continue on \textit{ad nauseam}; a merely biological death pertains only to bare life. Instead, inherent in the pregnant death is the assurance of progress. Life will not go on as it has; the death that is the cause of life is a promise of history, it is the “growth of historic man.”\textsuperscript{666} Our children’s children’s children will inherit the benefit of hindsight—a terra \textit{incognita}—but even this truth is too polarized and idealistic for Bakhtin. Even progress alone is not enough to provide a “gay death,”\textsuperscript{667} so long as we mean a progress that considers only individual reward. Death is the joyful embodied rejuvenation of life. Only once we step entirely outside of individual ego can death become a festivity. Calculations of individual gain and loss do not belong here. Bakhtin espies in Rabelais the celebration of the very principle of human historical progress. The sting of death is amputated only when viewed in terms of the life historical process and the cosmic body replaces the individual body.\textsuperscript{668} Decay is also the influx of vital minerals into the soil. Sickness is also the quickening of a virus—viruses that also strengthen future generations of their hosts. Christian nourishment is the sacrament; the spirit is fed on the body, blood, and wounds of Christ. But human bio-historical nourishment is grown quite literally from the bodies of our ancestors.

Thus Rabelais’ world begins to find official expression for the unofficial truth of folk-festive culture and the grotesque decaying body. The double body of life and death finds its expression in the bi-polar image of the collective social body and most especially in the frontier between growth and decay: “if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception.”\textsuperscript{669} The cosmic body in no way reflects the obsession of the Medieval mind with the fate of the individual soul, nor
does it make a forward looking reference to the bourgeois morality of the individual which we have discussed above. The cosmic body is the supernal (spiritual) body, to be sure, but only insofar as it remains inseparable from the material body and the lower body polarity of existence. The cosmic body is also and everywhere the chthonic body.

On a macro-level, the Rabelaisian chronotope expresses more than this dual body of life and death viewed simply from the vista of the cosmic body. The revelation of the historical becoming of ‘man,’ the birth of this new image of ‘man,’ is the death knell of the “old dying world [which] gives birth to the new one.” In a tour de force Bakhtin closes the chapter on the “Material Bodily Lower Stratum” by conjoining all the major elements of his entire corpus. The dual body present in the grotesque image and the lower moiety of the human animal must also be understood as the flesh made word. Just as Harlequin’s stuttering sickness gives birth to the word, so the image of the dual body gives birth to a double tonality—high and low. Just like the soma, the utterance is also beholden to decay and rejuvenation, and is pulled into the cycle of birth and death. The official worship of the blood and wounds of Christ is also an unofficial curse—it is “stately, plump Buck Mulligan’s” jesting invocation: “For this, O dearly beloved, is the genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns.”

Rabelais’ world was complex and contradictory, and his chronotope is Janus-faced as a result; his discourse is double-voiced. Within it, the inward dialogical struggle between the official Eucharistic utterance and the unofficial joyfully parodic blaspheme are co-present. Both the monotone of orthodoxy and the duality of folk-festive culture are locked in an inseparable polarity. This is not to say that in the Rabelaisian chronotopic motif the stylistic scales are wholly balanced. There is no question that Rabelais did not extol the virtues of the agelasts and folk-festive laughter equally, but neither does he attempt to expunge either the negative or positive poles of death, of life, of the image of God, and of the new image of ‘man’:

In reality, it is a dialogue of the face with the buttocks, of birth with death. We find a similar manifestation in the antique and Medieval debates between winter and spring, old age and youth, fasting and abundance, old times and new, parents and children. These debates are an organic part of the system of popular-festive forms, related to change and renewal. (Such a debate is recalled by Goethe in his description of the Roman Carnival.)
But this dialogue does not reduce to a unity. The struggle between the official and unofficial, the vertical and the horizontal, simultaneity and succession, being and becoming, these are all “incompleteness” itself, they are unfinalizable and undecidable.\(^{673}\)

### 7.4 In the Fullness of Time: Goethe’s Chronotope and the Roman Carnival

We will now restrict ourselves to a few remarks regarding Goethe’s chronotope and the *Bildungsroman*. Bakhtin appears to have worked on the two major studies dedicated to chronotopicity, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” and “The *Bildungsroman*”, contemporaneously.\(^{674}\) What survives of Bakhtin’s book length work on Goethe covers much of the material we have discussed regarding the various genres of the novel in history. The chronotopicity text is to some extent a lengthy expansion of the Goethe monograph, and we are thankful to have an overlap in the material, although the destruction of the *Bildungsroman* book by advancing German troops during World War Two is a great loss by any standard.\(^{675}\) There is also a connection to later 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) century thought regarding time and space, vitalism, and morphological and historical-evolutionary studies in both essays. As Larissa Rudova states, in “Bergsonism in Russia: The Case of Bakhtin”, there is much that is similar in Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope with Bergson idea of temporality, most notably his praise for Goethe’s second sight—his ability to “see time in space.”\(^{676}\) For his own part, Bakhtin highlights the fact that Goethe “did not want to (and could not) see that which was ready-made and immobile.”\(^{677}\) What is essential here is to distinguish Goethe’s reliance on this time in space, and more generally, how the theory of the chronotope merges time added to space as a fourth dimension. There is also a felt necessity in Goethe to be present to morphological change—to be a witness to becoming in action. It is as if time itself becomes a living entity which can be seen “in its course” by the right pair of eyes.\(^{678}\)

The role played by the Renaissance in loosening the vertical hierarchical fixity of *scala naturae* is evidently complimented by this visual figuration of time during the Enlightenment.\(^{679}\) The roots of historicity are found in the 18\(^{th}\) century, which further cultivated the soil of cyclical time and the Medieval immobile and ahistorical sight. A prescience for what is to come as well as an acute awareness of the actual philological
and socioeconomic history is sown in this period, and for Bakhtin this new kind of seeing the present through a forward and backward reference culminates in Goethe:

one begins to see signs of historic time. The contradictions of contemporary life, having lost their absolute, God-given, eternal nature, revealed a historical multitemporality—remnants of the past, and rudiments and tendencies of the future. Simultaneously the theme of the ages of man, evolving into the theme of generations, begins to lose its cyclical nature and begins to prepare for the phenomenon of historical perspectives ... In Goethe—who in this respect was the direct successor and crowning figure of the Enlightenment—artistic visualization of historical time ... reaches one of its high points. 680

Two points stand out here. First, we are concerned specifically with the faculty of a historical vision, and second, this vision is properly understood as artistic. The artist’s eye goes right to the bottom of metamorphological existence. Goethe often claimed that he could even see ideas as they grew out of or were added to experience. 681 Thought was tied up with seeing for Goethe and vice versa. He says, “my observation is itself thinking, and my thinking is a way of observation.” 682 Yet as visually astute as Goethe was, he had trouble conceiving of the invisible; indeed, for Goethe, “the invisible did not exist,” and nature could not be theorized in an abstract disjunction from the object in question. 683 We will therefore note parenthetically that Goethe would have had trouble accepting Platonic philosophy, with its reliance on what Lovejoy calls the “Idea of ideas” or “the good,” which is itself invisible while making visible. Instead, it is the concrete marriage of thought and objects in succession that was Goethe’s remarkable aesthetic talent. Even words could not be detached from the occasion of their inspired poetic or scientific instantiation, and this distinct poetics Goethe calls “objective writing.” 684

The word and the diagram have a special relationship for Goethe. Ideas were equally expressible in words and images; in fact, the word and the diagram complement one another: “Goethe was averse to words that were not backed up by any actual visible experience ... With a few strokes he would sketch on paper a subject or locality that interested him, and he would fill in the details with words, which he would inscribe directly on the drawing.” 685 We see the importance of the diagram in his so-called “propitious encounter” with Schiller. On the night he first met his future Sturm und Drang alumni, Goethe found himself forced to resort to a diagrammatic expression of his idea of plant metamorphosis in order to make it visible for his interlocutor. 686
Furthermore, he connects this manifold relation between the ideas, words, and diagrams directly to time in his *Italian Journey*. Immediately after Goethe arrived in Italy he was struck by the extent to which sunrise and sunset still determined local quotidian practices: “We Cimmerians hardly know the real meaning of day ... But here, when night falls, the day consisting of evening and morning is definitely over, twenty-four hours have been spent, and time begins afresh.”687 ‘When in Rome’... set your watch by the local clock. An efficacious rule, no doubt, but what if local time still runs according to a Medieval logic of the liturgical hours or diurnal time? Daily ritual in Verona was organized according to what we would today call the circadian clock, from *matins* to the obligatory “*Felicissima note!*”688 In order to orientate himself to the local custom of counting the hours from sunset, Goethe devised a complicated table—a “diagram”—for comparison with Carlsbad clock time. The tangible need to make time visible is itself made visible in this diagram.689

The visual basis of Goethe’s thought saw the past well up inside the present. He saw the present heavily laden with an unfolding future. If we want an image for this phenomenon, we might compare Goethe’s imaginative seeing to Eadweard Muybridge’s time-lapse photography. Meteorological phenomena, the expansion and contraction of vegetative matter, geological sediment, the Medieval and Roman ruin, the whole of his world could not be understood merely according to simultaneous apposition of objects in space—as was the case in the Kantian chronotope of the intuitions of time and space. Objects emerged in time and Goethe everywhere tried to show that all phenomena were in the process of emergence, regardless of the fact that they appear to the naked eye in ready-made form.690

We would not want, however, to give the impression that this second-sight was in anyway mystical or omniscient. Quite to the contrary, Goethe abhorred abstract hypotheses which “lacked any necessary and visible connection with the surrounding reality.”691 As he told Schiller, the intentional direction of Goethe’s work always proceeded “from the whole to the parts” and not the other way around.692 Therefore, if some fragment of the past could not be *shown* to be connected in an “unbroken line of historical development,” Goethe was less than interested and even fearful of these spectres.693 The “estranged past” could not be made visually coherent as a process of
The isolated individual object that could not be conditioned in terms of the larger whole was unstable and one could not deduce its necessary connection with the successive flow of time. This is the first methodological principle with which Bakhtin’s analysis of Goethe’s vision supplies us. We may see this as the negative polarity of Goethe’s vision of time.

The second principle can be seen as the positive polarity. If the isolated fragments of the past are dead spectres from which Goethe could not see a visible connection with the present, the contiguous parts which could be seen in terms of a whole were “creative.” Past natural objects and cultural ruins expressed a dehiscence that overflowed into the present and even projected themselves in anticipation of their destiny. Where the past and future find their effectiveness in the present, Goethe’s visual imagination bore witness to the “fullness of time.”

The Goethean chronotope is at once forward and backward looking and is always grounded in the duration of unbroken temporal succession. Goethe’s botanical studies trained his sight to be active and to see beyond the mere apposition of objects in spatial simultaneity. Thus it would not be too much to posit that temporally-continuous objects provided him with an organic architectonic method of answering all phenomena that displayed even a microscopic trace of continuous metamorphosis:

When I see before me something which has already taken shape, and inquire about its origin and trace back the process as far as I can follow, I become aware of a series of stages. Naturally, these cannot be observed side by side with the physical eye but must be pictured mentally as a certain ideal whole.

Inclined at first to postulate certain stages, I am finally compelled, since Nature never proceeds by skips and jumps, to regard the sequence of uninterrupted activity as a whole, annulling individual details so as not to destroy the total impression.

Goethe corrected the romantic vision of the past as a golden age; he resisted the messianic eschatological vision of the future as an unchanging mass to be endured until the instantaneous of the second coming. These types of chronotopic vision—the folkloric for example—denied nature her creative impulse and the law of continuous successive development through time; for Goethe they are versions of an unnatural and perverse seeing. By contrast, Goethe displays a poetic and scientific comprehension of the holistic process of growth and decay according to the fullness of time.
Third, Goethe’s interest in the unity of time does not extend to a universal or cosmic whole. He is not invested in reducing all of nature to a monistic principle merely in the unity of local objects in temporalized space. Bakhtin emphasizes the socioeconomic and historical basis of this “locality,” and therefore Goethe remains a humanist thinker who shunned the non-human speculative perspectives of abstract thought. The vast spaces emptied of human habitation, which are the bread and butter of the Romantic pictorial expression, were “pathetic” and impotent in his eyes. The paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, for example, or the slightly later American landscape painting of the Hudson River School, are too depopulated and evince nothing of “man the builder” or time from the vista of human perception. The “living human scale” is missing from these ostensibly sublime depictions. Where these Romantic tropes do show up in Goethe—and his early career is practically obsessed with them—he retrospectively attributes to them a “gloomy” sort of omission of the real living present, even in his own work. He need not have been so self-critical, since the trope of the isolated and depopulated locality nowhere lacks a “realistic component.”

Not every subject lent itself to Goethe’s “chronotopic visualizing.” Goethe lamented that the French Revolution was an “unsurveyable subject,” and he thus attributes the frustration of his attempts to finish The Natural Daughter to the general-economy and disparate openness of this event. The revolution was simply too complex and unruly to form a conception from the whole. The same impotence recurs in terms of conceiving the invisible in Italian Journey during the Roman Carnival: “I know I shall encounter the objection that a festivity of this kind cannot really be described, that such a tumult of people, things and movements can only be absorbed by each spectator in his own way.” The Roman Carnival is simply too big to see all at once, one must participate and accept her perspectival view.

As is well known, Goethe was a source of inspiration to Bakhtin throughout his career, but the descriptions of carnival here will be surprisingly familiar to anyone coming to Goethe’s Italian Journey after reading the Rabelais book. Folk-festive and carnival culture is still alive in the Roman Carnival. It is the time of the upside down inversion of official culture. Here the festival is not paid for by the Vatican or the Roman politicians, but is instead a festivity that “the people give themselves.” Nothing seems
to be out of bounds during the Carnival, and there is every kind of social degradation and merry-making—“except fisticuffs and stabbing.” Goethe also notes that the division between official and unofficial society “seems to be abolished for the time being; [moreover,] everyone accosts everyone else, all good-naturedly accept whatever happens to them, and the insolence and licence of the feast is balanced only by the universal good humour.” Perhaps most interestingly, there is actually an official signal for “complete licence” given in the afternoon by ringing the bells of the Capitol. Licentiousness between men and women is also common in the Roman Carnival, and Goethe accounts for the permissibility of this unofficial behaviour by pointing out that the men have travestied their gender by donning women’s garb:

Young men disguised as women of the lower classes in low-necked dresses are usually the first to appear. They embrace the men, they take intimate liberties with the women, as being of their own sex, and indulge in any behaviour which their mood, wit or impertinence suggests.

One young man stands out in my memory. He played the part of a passionate, quarrelsome woman perfectly. “She” went along the whole length of the Corso, picking quarrels with everyone and insulting them, while her companions pretended to be doing their best to calm her down.

Fools, or Pulcinellas also play their role in the festivities, and notably “imitating the God of Gardens” by, one assumes, displaying his priapic member. Other carnivalesque moments include mock trials for women and their cicisbei, the wearing of Janus-faced and “humourous and satirical masks” and caricatured costumes, confetti wars, and mock coronations.

As we might imagine, the interstice between parodical brawling and the danger of earnest violence is very fine. Goethe notes this most clearly in his section on the confetti wars which often ensue during processions through the thronged crowds: “There is no doubt that many of these fights would end with knives being drawn if that famous instrument of torture of the Italian police, the corde, was not hung up at various corners to remind everyone, in the midst of their revelry, that it would be very dangerous to use a dangerous weapon at this moment.”

There are also so-called “grotesque performances” complete with the premature pregnancy of a grotesquely deformed infant. Curses and profanities are heard during the festival of the moccoli, or candles. In this festivity those who are not carrying candles
are ‘threatened’ with (s)laughter: “‘Sia ammazzato chi non porta moccolo—Death to anyone who is not carrying a candle,’” and no doubt the threats and the curses have their effect from the metaphorical blowing out of the candle, which of course symbolizes death. Finally, Goethe waxes sentimental in his “Ash Wednesday” entry as the festivities draw to a close. He comments briefly on the symbolism of public obscenity and this topsy-turvy world that combines the images of pregnancy and death, of love and hate, of festival and war, and of the ubiquitous double-voicedness of this official and unofficial world:

> In the course of these follies our attention is drawn to the most important stages of human life: a vulgar *Pulcinella* recalls to us the pleasures of love to which we owe our existence; a *Baubo* profanes in a public place the mysteries of birth and motherhood, and the many lighted candles remind us of the ultimate ceremony.

> The long, narrow *Corso*, packed with people, recalls to us no less the road of our earthly life. There, too, a man is both actor and spectator; there, too, in disguise or out of it, he has very little room to himself and, whether in a carriage or on foot, can only advance by inches, moved forward or halted by external forces rather than by his own free will; there, too, he struggles to reach a better and more pleasant place from which, caught again in the crowd, he is again squeezed out.

Most imagistically, Goethe compares the brevity of life to the horse as it rushes by on the *Corso* during the race. Although Goethe does not make explicit reference to it, the horserace is itself a millennial image that must remind one, especially in Rome, of the political races that took place in the hippodromes of the ancient Empire. In this way we understand that the celebrations during the Roman Carnival are not simply a moment outside of the official quotidian time; they are instead the outward sign of the swelling and dehiscent effusion of a folk historical culture whose living waters still course beneath the urbs of the Roman roads.

Bakhtin is clearly attracted to the concrete reality of the Goethean chronotope, and likely draws from him much of his ideas regarding the carnivalesque. Even where there exists a dialogic struggle between Goethe’s chronotope and the Romantic abstraction of “geological and geographical landscape,” this Romantic abstraction carries along with it the positive polarity of plenistic—human-cultural—time and space. We must stress here the infused synthesis which Bakhtin espies in Goethe between living “terrestrial space” and its reciprocal relation with historically productive and popular culture.
Bakhtin does not speak of answerability in the *Bildungsroman* fragment, but it clearly underpins this reciprocity between ‘man’ and his localized natural environs as they achieve their visible synthesis in the Goethean chronotope—i.e., the fullness of time taken according to contiguous human history. The Roman aqueduct at Spoleto, for example, serves as an example for Goethe of a human cultural production that is organically wedded to its environment. To paraphrase “Art and Answerability”, the Roman builders had to answer ‘with their own architectural constructions for what they had experience and understood in the natural geography of their surroundings.’

Neither Goethe nor Bakhtin believed a sufficient historic and socioeconomic production could be “torn from reality.” In discourse and in life time and space are merged into an inseparable whole. This is not to say that time is wholly reduced to space or vice versa, only that they must be seen together within the social *milieu* and socioeconomic succession of human historical production: “space and time are bound together into one inseparable knot. Terrestrial space and human history are inseparable from one another in Goethe’s integrated concrete vision. This is what makes historical time in his creative work so dense and materialized, and space so humanly interpreted and intensive.”

In this section we have stated that, for Bakhtin, the Renaissance break with the Medieval world slowly replaces the image of God Pantocrator with the image of ‘man.’ Often derided for its torpid response to the “feeling for time,” the Enlightenment nevertheless produced some of our first philosophers of historicity. Bakhtin names Lessing, Winckelmann, and Herder as examples. Kant’s distinction between *Naturbeschreibung* and *Naturgeschichte*, or physiography and physiogony, is an important addition to this list. This awakening to the flow of time as the real everyday historical continuity that finds its home only in the human animal became the formative force of Goethe’s chronotopic visualizing. For Bakhtin, the force of history comes to the fore in Goethe’s humanist sensitivity to time as it is realized by the unfolding of objects heavily laden with the past and pregnant with the future. Goethe likewise injects the past into the present but *a past that is as much a becoming as is the present*. In Goethe’s chronotopic vision of the fullness of time “everything is intensive”; even petrified nature can come alive again to the studied eye that has learned to see, while the invisible
Platonic worship of the ideal is something that keeps us shoe-gazing. The Bildungsroman provides its own novel education for historical humankind with which it teaches itself a new image of the world and our place in it; so too, we must continue to endeavour to learn from the past which wells up around us, if we do not want to be simply swept away in the deluge.

As it was with Pico so it is with Goethe. Humans are the “nuptial bond of the world,” in whom the whole of the object in its history, its sense (historicity), its productive actuality and potential, and its very living essence are wed in this plenary effusive Goethean vision that Bakhtin calls the fullness of time.
Conclusion
At the beginning of the last section I appended a long quotation from Bakhtin that has by now been very well trodden by scholars. In it, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin penned some of the last words that he would write during his lifetime. He exhorts his reader to take up the works of the past and infuse them with a new life, since “nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival”—I hope that I have lived up in some small way to his expectations and answered as an ethically active reader. We read philosophy as members of a species in becoming who are beholden to time. We are bound by the greatest weight imaginable. Too often we are caught up for weeks and months and years in a style of life that forgets the movement of time and the great cosmic comedy in which we are but momentary players—but we are players, witnesses. As a result, many of us have forgotten or never learned how to see with a temporally piercing vision; we treat time as something to be leapt over or merely endured. We treat ourselves as coextensive with our proper names. We forget how to laugh when the daimon comes out and plays its little joke on us. Great time destroys our best intentions and erases our most erroneous missteps, but we ought to try to remember—as a culture rather than merely as individuals—that time is likewise creative. Reading the Greeks, the Medievals, Rabelais, Goethe and Dostoevsky edify us. But this activity in and of itself is pointless if we do not take what we have learned in these authors and attempt to ethically respond to the world in which we are living, and if we do not attempt to anticipate what is to come. Lastly, because in the last analysis, and with a view to great time, we really are bound up in a comedy of human errors, we need to learn to laugh at ourselves again—as the cosmos does.

Heraclitus personifies time as a child playing at draughts and on whose shoulders the sovereignty of the cosmos rests. Shakespeare called those buffoons who are summoned by their master to witness his death “the fools of time”; they were to mark the greater truth in his passing and thus offer some solace. Marx rogueishly rejuvenates Hegel: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.” Rabelaisian laughter fits squarely within this tradition of time’s serious playfulness:
Time itself abuses and praises, beats and decorates, kills and gives birth; this time is simultaneously ironic and gay, it is the ‘playing boy’ of Heraclitus, who wields supreme power in the universe. Rabelais builds an extraordinarily impressive image of historical becoming within the category of laughter. This was not possible before the Renaissance, when it had been prepared by the entire process of historical development.\(^{730}\)

History itself has a double-voice. To seriously mix metaphors, the dust-bin of history burst into spontaneous laughter; in the Rabelaisian chronotope, time’s laughter is personified in the concrete material image of the fool.

In closing out this little history of Bakhtin, I would like to provide a short narrative of my own creation. Like Ivan Karamazov, I never wrote the story down, and half in the spirit of jest and half in keeping with the occasion, I shall allow Ivan to introduce it in a quoted utterance:

“I made up this poem in prose and I remembered it. I was carried away when I made it up. You will be my first reader—that is, listener. Why should an author forego even one listener?”\(^{731}\)

Here is my story: Nietzsche says the gods died laughing when one of their number, an “old wrath-beard of a god,” proclaimed himself as the only deity.\(^{732}\) Rabelais would have finished the story as follows: this agelast god then proclaimed himself king of all ‘men’! He was so tightly wound, old and brittle, that every day he beshit himself so that everyday his chasuble had to be discarded. The god said, “I must not let men see that I have soiled my own garments! If they see that I have beshit myself, they will think that I am no god at all, but only a lowly creature like themselves.” Saying this he hid his garments underground, in Hades. A millennium passed like this, and then another. And, when time it was that he came near unto the Earth, all the men cowered in fear of the ‘one true god.’ But, when he returned on high on the days leading up to Lent, and when they were sure that he could not hear them—for his hearing was very poor, then they themselves burst out in laughter. It was a spontaneous bum-gut laughter like that of the old gods before them. And when they could not laugh any longer for fear of rupture, the folk spoke to each other and said: “By the testicles of Hercules! Who is this creature who calls himself ‘the highest’ and ‘almighty god,’ but has not even the sense to bathe his soiled robes and instead buries them in the earth?”\(^{733}\)
Notes:

7. For our purposes we will put to one side the schizophrenic who believes he is an acorn in the literal sense, or the man who mistakes his wife for headdress. As interesting as these phenomena may be—and indeed painful for those who suffer from mental illness—I do not have the expertise to broach them here.
8. See Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 364.
10. Laforgue, qtd. in Thornton, Allusions in Ulysses, p. 39. The translation provided there reads: “Life is too sad, too coarse. History is a gaudy old nightmare who does not suspect that the best jokes are the shortest.”
14. Gardiner, “The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism”: Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty”, No Last Words: Bakhtin and the Human Sciences, pp. 128-9; the quotation is from Merleau-Ponty’s Themes form the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952-1960, p. 82.
Critical utopias reject domination, hierarchy and ‘identity-thinking’ in order to explore
“emancipatory ways of being as well as the very possibility of utopian longing itself.” They are
not merely imaginary projections of ideal cities or societies, in that they are linked to actual socio-
historical movements and the activities and desires of particular social groups. Moreover, they are
reflexive in the sense that they are aware of the limitations of the dominant utopian tradition, but
also in that they are self-ironising and “internally” deconstructive.
The quotation is from Moylan’s Demand the Impossible, p. 212.
17. See Brandist, The Bakhtin Circle: Philosophy, Culture and Politics, p. 7:
It is known that neither Bakhtin nor Pumpiansky, the future literary scholar, ever finished their
studies at Petrograd University, despite the former’s repeated claims, now disproven, to have
graduated in 1918. It seems that Bakhtin attempted to gain acceptance in academic circles by
adopting aspects of his older brother’s biography. Nikolai Bakhtin had indeed graduated from
Petrograd University, where he had been a pupil of the renowned classicist F. F. Zelinsky, and the
Bakhtin brothers discussed philosophical ideas from their youth.
18. See Perlina, Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, p. 6: “Following the
guidelines provided by Bakhtin’s biographers, one learns that he studied foreign languages at Petrograd
University: Greek (with I. I. Tolstoy), Latin (with Professor Malein), French, German, and English. He also
took courses from Professor A. Vvedensky, R. Lange, and F. Zelinsky in Philosophy, Linguistics, and
History of Ancient Greek Theatre and Drama.”
19. See Holquist, Dialogism, pp. 1-2. See also Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 22-25.
20. Clark and Holquist tell us that both Mayakovsky and Shklovsky were active in and around St. Petersburg
University while the Bakhtin brothers were matriculating there, pp. 28-9.
21. Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 28.
22. See for example, James M. Curtis’ “Michael Bakhtin, Nietzsche, and Russian Re-Revolutionary
Thought,” Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 240. There the parallels between Bakhtin and his
professor in classics are outlined as follows: Zelinsky was continuously concerned “with the problem of
unity and multiplicity” and “thought of unity as manifesting itself in multiplicity”; he did not believe it possible to “isolate literature from culture as a whole,” and he “believed that humanity perfected itself in struggle.” Zelinsky also had “made a connection between the world of classical antiquity and Dostoevsky,” and his influence spread directly to Bakhtin in his conception of dialogue as “the literary expression of freedom.” Remarkably, Zelinsky also formulated notions of official and unofficial culture, although these concepts are in no way reducible to said influence; they seem to find their beginnings under Zelinsky’s charismatic nurturing of the budding theorist. In light of Zelinsky’s belief that the classical cultures of the Greeks should be “‘a living force in our culture,’” p. 32, Bakhtin’s perennial obsession with folk culture and ancient forms of social literary production can be seen as more than simply the esoteric reportage of a classical scholar. See, for example, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 106:

A literary genre, by its very nature, reflects the most stable, ‘eternal’ tendencies in literature’s development. Always preserved in a genre are undying elements of the archaic. True, these archaic elements are preserved in it only thanks to their constant renewal, which is to say, their contemporization. A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre. Therefore even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive; that is, archaic elements are capable of renewing themselves. A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development. Precisely for this reason genre is capable of guaranteeing the unity and uninterrupted continuity of this development.

The direct source of Bakhtin’s inspiration for literary genres through Zelinsky seems to have been the latter’s notion of the “life of ideas” (Iz zhizni idei). See Perlina, Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, f.n. 14, p. 8: “Bakhtin’s theory of genres is directly related to ideas developed in Zelinsky’s articles Ideia nравственного оправдания, 1-4, and Proiskhozhdenie komedii.”

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 274.


24 See, Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 32-4. See especially Brandist, The Bakhtin Circle: Philosophy, Culture and Politics, p. 30-1:

Bakhtin and Pumpliansky were both drawn into the Hellenistic cult among the intelligentsia at the time and were, at first, adherents of the idea of the “Third Renaissance” in the early 1920’s. First formulated by F. F. Zelinsky in 1899 and refracted through the views of the symbolists I. F. Annensky and V. I. Ivanov, this idea was based on a cyclical account of history in which the growth, decline and rebirth of culture was repeated. It became a new form of slavophilism, with advocates arguing that where the first Renaissance had been Italian and the second German, the third would be Slavonic. At the time of the October Revolution, Nikolai Bakhtin had been a member of Zelinsky’s so-called “Union of the Third Renaissance,” when he spoke of “the coming dark age,” which would lead to the rebirth of classical culture in Russia.

26 Cf. Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 18-19, where the biographers provide the extraordinary details of the Bakhtin brothers destined estrangement:

Nikolai’s decision to join the White Guard had been fateful, for it meant that the two brothers, who had for so long been close, would never see each other again. Mikhail wrote his brother at first, then just the mother and sisters wrote, and after 1926, when it became too dangerous to write, all correspondence between them ceased. Nikolai did not find out about Mikhail’s Dostoevsky book until 1930 when he discovered it by chance in a Paris bookshop. Not until the Second World War did he learn of his brother’s arrest in 1929, and at the time of Nikolai’s death in 1950 he still assumed that his brother must have perished during the purges. Mikhail, however, in the early 1970’s received a posthumous greeting from his brother in the form of a packet of materials on Nikolai collected by his friends in Birmingham.

27 Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 40.

28 “Strong tea” was a staple and particular favourite crutch of the Circle members; see Clark and Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 39.

29 Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p.42.
See also Curtis, “Michael Bakhtin, Nietzsche, and Russian Re-Revolutionary Thought,” Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 245: “Unlike the Formalists, he had a classical education, and was exiled by the authorities because of this work.”

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 38:

The Revolution, which coincided more or less with Bakhtin’s entry into adult life, did not propel him into early establishment as a writer and scholar, as it did many other young provincials. He did not enjoy the “academic ration” or find a place for himself in one of the institutions of higher learning where he could teach or publish. For Bakhtin, the post-Revolutionary decade was one long struggle, both to earn a livelihood and to broadcast his word. This struggle came about in part because he was unaggressive and impractical, but mainly because he was, as the Soviets say, “out of step with his age” (nesozvučen époxe). He was out of step not merely with the dominant Marxist thinking of the period but with the avant-garde nonconformism as well. He preached not a structural revolution but cultural complexity and innerness.

See also Curtis, “Michael Bakhtin, Nietzsche, and Russian Re-Revolutionary Thought,” Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 245: “Unlike the Formalists, he had a classical education, and was exiled by the authorities because of this work.”

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 46-7.

Ruberg, Art of the 20th Century, Vol. I, p. 91. See also Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p.35, where we are told that Mayakovsky went so far as to sleep on the floor of the telegraph office in Moscow so as to transform incoming news of the revolutionaries’ progress directly into propaganda.

Indeed, Russian formalism began its work as a reaction against the second wave symbolist movement in Russia; see Kristeva, “The Ruin of a Poetics”, Russian Formalism, ed. Bann and Bowlt, p. 104, where she describes formalism as a “legitimate reaction to Symbolist aesthetics.”

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 38:

The Revolution, which coincided more or less with Bakhtin’s entry into adult life, did not propel him into early establishment as a writer and scholar, as it did many other young provincials. He did not enjoy the “academic ration” or find a place for himself in one of the institutions of higher learning where he could teach or publish. For Bakhtin, the post-Revolutionary decade was one long struggle, both to earn a livelihood and to broadcast his word. This struggle came about in part because he was unaggressive and impractical, but mainly because he was, as the Soviets say, “out of step with his age” (nesozvučen époxe). He was out of step not merely with the dominant Marxist thinking of the period but with the avant-garde nonconformism as well. He preached not a structural revolution but cultural complexity and innerness.

See also Curtis, “Michael Bakhtin, Nietzsche, and Russian Re-Revolutionary Thought,” Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 245: “Unlike the Formalists, he had a classical education, and was exiled by the authorities because of this work.”

Gardiner, “Bakhtin’s Prosaic Imagination”, Critiques of Everyday Life, p. 45. See also Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 51.

See, for example, Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 40. For these and more details as to how Bakhtin occupied himself in Vitebsk, see also Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 49-51.

See for example Sergey Bocharov’s “Conversations with Bakhtin”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 5:

On the 26 August at the rest home, M. M. gave a lecture on Dostoevsky for schoolteachers of the local district. It was held in the movie hall, and about thirty women attended. For the first and only time, I heard M. M. In the role of a professor delivering a lecture, performing publicly, and I could imagine what kind of university teacher he had been. I discovered that he possessed a well-trained voice, {...} which was audible throughout the big auditorium, as well as a classic professorial manner, with appropriate gravity. The teachers most likely heard things about Dostoevsky they did not expect to hear. {...} The lecturer’s voice almost acted out Raskolnikov’s drama, transposing the idea of the polyphonic novel into easily understandable terms.

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 51-2.

Qtd. in Bakhtin, “Bildungsroman”, Speech Genres, p. 39. See also Goethe, Italian Journey, “Terni, 27 October, Evening”, p. 124. We shall return to Goethe’s views on art and philosophy in the last section of the present work.


things as they have been selected and published in both Russian and in English translation, see Perlina Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, p. 4:

Bocharov’s highly selective publications impede proper textual attribution and textological analysis of the whole. At the present time, some Bakhtinian fragments are known in three non-identical but overlapping versions—as published in K filosofii postupka, Avtor i heroi v esteticheskoi deiatel’nosti (fragment pervoi glavy), and in the 1979 publication of the Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. Other identical passages are published twice—in Arkhitektonika postupka and K filosofii postupka; in K filosofii postupka and in 1979. The contextual framing of the duplicated fragments varies from publication to publication. Finally, the largest available fragment, K filosofii postupka, does not integrate smoothly into the textual fabric of Author and Hero, at least as this work is known from its 1979 publication. In many instances, the epistemological, thematic, and compositional connection of K filosofii postupka to Author and Hero has to be simply divined.

Michael Holquist seems to agree. See “A Note on Translation”, The Dialogic Imagination, p. xiii: “Bakhtin is not an efficient writer, but we believe he pays his way.” It may be evident that I am in sympathy with this approach given the digressive patterns in the present work. It is my belief that life itself is not prone to complete synthesis. Life is more like a puzzle with missing and superfluous pieces. Often works in the humanities devalue these digressions, forgetting or discarding the beauty of the particular in order to artificially compose a unified whole. Truth rarely arrives in tidy non-contradictory forms. The polyvocal nature of Bakhtin’s work does not lend itself to these ready-made constructions.

“A Song of Myself”, 2, Leaves of Grass, p. 50. I do not want to accept Charles Lock’s seemingly throwaway statement that “Bakhtin would not... accept Whitman’s affirmation, for even if you found Whitman under your boot-soles it might not lead to dialogue.” See Lock, “Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 296. In the end, Bakhtin thought dialogue inevitable—as do I—and that it rested as the root of even monologic thought. This is the meaning—perhaps the essential meaning—of the Dostoevsky book and the supposition that struggle is at the heart of all utterances. Consider, for example, the passage in which Stravrogin speaks with two internal voices, seemingly merged in ambivalence, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, pp. 262-3, and which is followed by the conclusion that

A dialogic feeling for the world, as we have seen, permeates all Dostoevsky’s other works as well, beginning with Poor Folk. Thus the dialogic nature of the word is revealed in his work with enormous force and with an acute palpability. Metalinguistics research into the nature of this dialogicality, and especially into the diverse varieties of double-voice discourse and its influence on various aspects of the structure of speech, finds in Dostoevsky’s creative art extraordinarily rich material.

Of course, I assume that Lock seems to think that the Bakhtinian objection to Whitman would be directed toward his 19th century American hyper-individualist naturalism—a perceived solipsistic communion with nature—not to mention the rebirth of the epic that his work represents in American literature and the lack of dialogue in Leaves of Grass itself. In fact, this is not the most interesting reading of Whitman, but washes over passages in which Whitman finds himself speaking with soldiers and sea-farers, and with other authors. More importantly, it betrays the struggle between Whitman the contemporary, the journalist, who deals with “contemporary” questions and Whitman the prosaic poet, who has all of the populist espirit found in Rabelais and also an eye to great time: “there are millions of suns left,” “Song of Myself”, 2, Leaves of Grass, p. 50. Of course it is most especially the apparent lack of the personal faccia a faccia conversation in Whitman that Lock most strongly reacts against, and with this I simply disagree—even in the Rabelais book the personal is only infused with meaning because it is forever in dialogue with great time, because it can laugh at its own morality, which nevertheless partakes in the immortality of great time. Cf. also Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71”, Speech Genres, pp. 151-2:
Every great writer participates in such a dialogue; he participates with his creativity as one of the sides in this dialogue. But writers themselves do not create polyphonic novels. Their rejoinders in the dialogue are monologic in form; each has one world of his own while other participants in the dialogue remain with their worlds outside the work. They appear with their own personal worlds and with their own immediate, personal words. But prose writers, especially novelists, have a problem with their own word. This word cannot be simply their own word (from the I). The word of the poet, the prophet, the leader, the scientist, and then the word of the ’writer.’ It must be grounded. The need to represent somebody. The poet relies on inspiration and a special poetic language. The prose writer does not have this poetic language.

Only a polyphonist like Dostoevsky can sense in the struggle of opinions and ideologies (of various epochs) an incomplete dialogue on ultimate questions (in the framework of great time). Others deal with issues that have been resolved within the epoch.

The journalist is above all a contemporary. He is obliged to be one. He lives in the sphere of questions that can be resolved in the present day (or in the near future). He participates in a dialogue that can be ended and even finalized, can be translated into action, and can become an empirical force. It is precisely in this sphere that ‘one’s own word’ is possible. Outside this sphere ‘one’s own word’ is not one’s own (the individual personality always transcends itself); one’s own word cannot be the ultimate word.

Whitman is not easily placed in this scheme, but neither is he easily excluded. He is indeed committed to the infinitude of becoming and as such ought to be given to the unfinalisability of dialogue. Though his poetry is formally epic, it is well known that it is prosaically so. Jason Frank picks up on the distinctly polyvocality of the American patois which was, after all, Whitman’s immediate contribution to the American epic. See his essay “Aesthetic Democracy: Walt Whitman and the Poetry of the People”, The Review of Politics, p. 419:

On the topic of polyvocality and the multitudinous self, Whitman has a striking affinity with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who is similarly concerned with the socially embedded forms of speech that occupy different and overlapping regions of a given language. Bakhtin calls this complex social background of meaningful speech production ‘heteroglossia.’ For Whitman, a key distinction of the American language, which emerges from and helps (re)enact American democracy, was precisely such luxuriant proliferation of speech idioms. Whitman writes that the immense diversity of race, temperament, character—the copious stream of humanity constantly flowing hither—must reappear in free rich growths of speech.... The opulence of race-elements is in the theory of America. Land of the Ensemble, to hear consenting currents flow, and the ethnology of the States draws the grand outline of that hospitality and reception that must mark the new politics, sociology, literature and religion [emphasis added].

In speaking with Dock Angus Ramsay Currie regarding this problem, he suggested I imagine the two figures speaking together over a pint. Would they both recognise avenues in which they might build bridges toward the other’s position that they might communicate with understanding? I have a hard time to believe that they would not. And we need not look beyond the evident personalities that emerge from Bakhtin and Whitman’s writings—Bakhtin’s theories of polyphony and authorship remains textual even where it suggests such personalities can be heard in the texts. I also cannot help myself but quote again Whitman’s own utterance, which betrays at once his personal commitment to language as a concretized real-life process: “‘Language... is not an abstract construction of the learn’d, or of dictionary makers, but it is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has bases broad and low, close to the ground. Its final decisions are made by the masses,’” qtd. in Frank, p. 424. As to Dostoevsky’s own infamous obsession with journalism and especially with the newspaper, see Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 30 and especially f.n. 40, p. 45: “‘Do you get any newspapers?’ Dostoevsky asked one of his female correspondents in 1867. ‘For God’s sake, read them, one can’t do otherwise nowadays—and this is not to be fashionable, but so that the visible connection between all things public and private might be stronger and more obvious.’” Bakhtin is himself quoting from Leonid Grossman’s Poetika Dostoevskogo.

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 60. During Bakhtin’s philosophical apprenticeship, the primary nucleus of the “Marburg School” of neo-Kantianism consisted of Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), Paul Natorp (1954-1924), and Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), see Craig Brandist, “The Bakhtin Circle”, Internet
Nina Perlina places Paul Natorp’s paper “Free Will and Responsibility” high on the list of Bakhtian influences during his neo-Kantian days. See Perlina Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, p. 3: “The Natorp-Bakhtin illustration is only one of many primary sources that inspired Bakhtin’s work, and all await their definitive integration into his creative biography.” See also Ann Shukman, “M. M. Bakhtin: Notes on his Philosophy of Man”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. II, ed. Gardiner, p. 358: “Closest of all to Bakhtin was probably Hermann Cohen who so deeply influenced Bakhtin’s friend Matvei Kagan. In a letter of 1921, we find Bakhtin writing urgently to Kagan to ask for a copy of ‘Cohen’s ethics’ so that he could finish his study ‘The Subject in Morality and the Subject in Law’ (evidently never finished).”

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 59.

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 60.

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 59. Since for him there was nothing truly noumenal and since all phenomena was conceptual, Cohen went so far as to claim that “‘matter is only an hypothesis.”

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 60.

The full passage from Faust follows the movement of Faust’s thought as he contemplates which comes first word or deed, as he cannot believe that words are the apex of all things—the origin of all existence, and the supreme power he seeks to usurp. Contemplating all the possible meanings of das Wort, before arriving at what he takes to be the divinely inspired conclusion that the connotation is deed and not sign. The audience is no doubt meant to assume that the impetus for this thought is John’s gospel, 1:1, p. 713, which reads, “In the beginning was the word,” or, more precisely, ἐν αὐρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. No doubt this passage would have stood out to the Bakhtin who wrote Toward a Philosophy of the Act, since one of the keynote ideas found therein is crystallized in the Russian word slovo, which indeed carries the connotation of both word and the action which puts it to use. It is therefore not a far cry from act or deed (postupok) itself and would doubtlessly be understood as such in the Russian imagination. Cf. Gardiner, “The Bakhtin Circle and the Theory of Ideology”, The Dialogics of Critique, f.n. 13, p. 209:

It worth noting that the Russian term slovo utilized by the Bakhtin Circle, which is generally translated as ‘word’, actually means both word as it is generally understood in English (that is, as a discrete phonetic entity forming a meaningful element of language) as well as the method of putting words to use (their concrete implementation) in actual discourse. It is therefore very similar to the ancient Greek logos, which designates “not merely the capacity for rational discourse but the rational faculty underlying and informing the spoken word in all its forms” (Harris and Taylor 1989:xi).

The full passage from Faust is as follows:

'Tis writ, 'In the beginning was the Word.'
I pause, to wonder what is here inferred.
The Word I cannot set supremely high:
A new translation I will try.
I read, if by the spirit I am taught,
This sense: 'In the beginning was the Thought.'
This opening I need not weigh again,
Or sense may suffer from a hasty pen.
Does thought create, and work, and rule the hour?
'Twere best: 'In the beginning was the Power.'
Yet, while the pen is urged with willing fingers,
A sense of doubt and hesitancy lingers.
The spirit comes to guide me in my need,
I write, 'In the beginning was the deed.'


See Kristeva, “The Ruin of Poetics”, Russian Formalism, ed. Bann and Bowlt, p. 104:
Formalism, when it became a poetics, turned out and still turns out to be a discourse on nothing or on something which does not matter.... What was new in Formalism was the prime importance which it accords to the linguistic raw material in the process of drawing up a theory of literature—and Formalism successfully reduced its scope to a merely technocratic level, a supplementary proof of the conventional concept of literature as an expression of historical reality.

A supplement, that is, to the “historical attitude” of early 20th century literary study which had rejected Symbolism in favour of a method that could deliver up the internal laws of the literary device, see Kristeva, “The Ruin of Poetics”, Russian Formalism, ed. Bann and Bowlt, p. 103.


Husserl’s first book The Philosophy of Arithmetic was indeed psychologistic, and the “Prolegomena” to his second book, Logical Investigations, was a refutation of his earlier position regarding the origin of numbers. See Logical Investigations, Vol. 1, § 3, p. 13: “Logic is a theoretical discipline, formal and demonstrative, and independent of psychology: that is one view. For the other it counts as a technology dependent on psychology, which of course excludes the possibility of its being a formal, demonstrative discipline like the other side’s paradigm arithmetic.”

For these fallacies see Kristeva, “The Ruin of Poetics”, Russian Formalism, ed. Bann and Bowlt, p. 106.


Bocharov, “Conversations with Bakhtin”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, pp. 6-7. Here Bakhtin begins to answer Bocharov’s question about the authorship debate surrounding the Voloshinov books and Medvedev’s The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship and winds up talking more generally about religious censorship in 1920’s Russia; presumably Bakhtin is also sorry that he had to frame his work within the discourse of Marxism. We would have to take Bocharov at his work here, as Bakhtin’s gestures and utterances are here quoted and inflected through Bocharov’s representation. We should therefore be wary about accepting this account wholesale and without critical distance. Bakhtin says,

“You see, I felt that [writing those books] was something I could do for my friends. It wasn’t hard for me to do, for I thought that I would still write my own books, books without these unpleasant additions.” Here he grimaced at the title [Marxism and the Philosophy of Language]. “After all, I didn’t know that it would turn out the way it has. And then, such things as authorship, a name—what significance do they have? Everything that was created during the past half century on this graceless soil, beneath this unfree sky, all of it is to some degree morally flawed.”

“But, M. M., if we forget about Voloshinov’s book for the moment—it’s a rather difficult case—may I ask what could be morally flawed in your book on Dostoevsky?”

“How can you say that? The way I could have written it would have been very different from the way it is. After all, in that book I severed form from the main thing. I couldn’t speak directly about the main questions.”

“What main questions, M. M.?”

Philosophical questions. What Dostoevsky agonized about all his life—the existence of God. In the book I was constantly forced to prevaricate, to dodge backwards and forward. I had to hold back constantly. The moment a thought got going, I had to break it off. Backward and forward” (he repeated this several times during the conversation). “I even misrepresented the church.” M. M. had in mind the passage in the first chapter in which he argues with B. M. Engelgardt’s article “The Ideological Novel of Dostoevsky.” Engelgardt interprets Dostoevsky’s world in Hegelian terms as the dialectical becoming of one spirit. But, insists Bakhtin in his book, “the unified evolving spirit was organically alien to Dostoevsky. ... An image for Dostoevsky’s world that reflects his perspective,” continues Bakhtin, “would be the church as a communion of unmerged souls ... or perhaps it would be the image of Dante’s world.” This statement is indeed followed by a qualification: “The concrete artistic links between the various planes of the novel, their combination in the unity of the work, must be explained and demonstrated by the material of the novel itself, and both ‘Hegelian spirit’ and ‘church’ distract equally from this immediate task.”

Bocharov quotes from Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, pp. 26-27.
Development of Doctrine
early scholastic or legalistic encounter between Christian Church(es), but here too we ought to be careful to separate the dogmatic from the thematic. In no and, ironically enough, as a political enterprise to overcome factionalism within them Empire. Most political striving to unify a front against an exterior secular world that was often still hostile to Christians of divine grace was incompatible with both of these heresies. Today these struggles may appear to us as an form does the Christian Church encompass all of its own philosophical bases, which often begin before it and continue after it. We cannot be committed materialists of the kind Bakhtin would endorse and ignore the very real history of ideas which courses beneath the stones of the Christian Church; these ideas are and, ironically enough, as a political enterprise to overcome factionalism within them Empire. Most academics rightly have reservations that anything productive can come from the conceptual traditions of the Christian Church(es), but here too we ought to be careful to separate the dogmatic from the thematic. In no form does the Christian Church encompass all of its own philosophical bases, which often begin before it and continue after it. We cannot be committed materialists of the kind Bakhtin would endorse and ignore the very real history of ideas which courses beneath the stones of the Christian Church; these ideas are human ideas before they are Christian, and they are as equally double-voiced as are all other human ideas. This is why I have attempted to frame my discussion in terms of the Byzantine and Kenotic traditions rather than Christian vs. secular, or perhaps worse still Christological vs. philosophical. It is not enough to state that we are anti-Christian or irreligious. We must determine what it is in Christian doctrine and religion that we oppose. Short of this we are very much in danger of bringing these oppositions into our thought by the back door, and surreptitiously repeating in the secular what we have thoughtlessly rejected in the religious. Below I will attempt to show that it is the mystical, the austere, the dogmatic elements, as well as the doctrine of original sin in Christianity to which Bakhtin was opposed; as a materialist interested in building a bridge to the theological and the critical, he emphasized the here and now, flesh and blood, compassionate, and concrete aspects of the Christian conception of the world and self-other relations. Bakhtin’s relationship to Christian doctrine is not as transparent as some theorists have thought. To say ‘Bakhtin is a thinker of the social’ or a ‘materialist’ is not enough. Not only would this position dismiss much of Bakhtin’s early writings, it would paint all Christian ideas with the same brush. We in the West and especially from the vantage of 2000 years of atrocious crusading, marauding, and hierarchical structures of power, have good reason to do so, but this ought not be taken as an excuse to look no further.  

Bréhier provides a final detail, p. 3: “The Church in its role as an institution necessary for the dispensation of divine grace was incompatible with both of these heresies. Today these struggles may appear to us as an early scholastic or legalistic encounter between agelast austerity, but we ought also to see behind it a political striving to unify a front against an exterior secular world that was often still hostile to Christians and, ironically enough, as a political enterprise to overcome factionalism within them Empire. Most academics rightly have reservations that anything productive can come from the conceptual traditions of the Christian Church(es), but here too we ought to be careful to separate the dogmatic from the thematic. In no form does the Christian Church encompass all of its own philosophical bases, which often begin before it and continue after it. We cannot be committed materialists of the kind Bakhtin would endorse and ignore the very real history of ideas which courses beneath the stones of the Christian Church; these ideas are human ideas before they are Christian, and they are as equally double-voiced as are all other human ideas. This is why I have attempted to frame my discussion in terms of the Byzantine and Kenotic traditions rather than Christian vs. secular, or perhaps worse still Christological vs. philosophical. It is not enough to state that we are anti-Christian or irreligious. We must determine what it is in Christian doctrine and religion that we oppose. Short of this we are very much in danger of bringing these oppositions into our thought by the back door, and surreptitiously repeating in the secular what we have thoughtlessly rejected in the religious. Below I will attempt to show that it is the mystical, the austere, the dogmatic elements, as well as the doctrine of original sin in Christianity to which Bakhtin was opposed; as a materialist interested in building a bridge to the theological and the critical, he emphasized the here and now, flesh and blood, compassionate, and concrete aspects of the Christian conception of the world and self-other relations. Bakhtin’s relationship to Christian doctrine is not as transparent as some theorists have thought. To say ‘Bakhtin is a thinker of the social’ or a ‘materialist’ is not enough. Not only would this position dismiss much of Bakhtin’s early writings, it would paint all Christian ideas with the same brush. We in the West and especially from the vantage of 2000 years of atrocious crusading, marauding, and hierarchical structures of power, have good reason to do so, but this ought not be taken as an excuse to look no further.  

Bréhier, *The History of Philosophy: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, pp. 3-5. Bréhier charts the hypostatization of these heresies within the early Church. Notably he marks that “we must carefully separate West from East” where heretical determination is concerned. The Church of Antioch “refused to see in Jesus Christ anything but a man perfected by divine grace, and it rejected metaphysical combinations of God and man,” p. 2. Arius thought Christ was wholly mortal even if he was prima inter pares in terms of creation, p. 2. The Council of Trent was in part meant to resolve this issue, p. 3. St. Augustine himself combated both Donatism and Pelagianism, see Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, p. 308:

Of the many “heresies” against which Augustine defended the catholic faith, the two most virulent were Donatism and Pelagianism, both of which dealt with the doctrine of divine grace, and specifically with the relation between grace and perfection. Donatism charged that the mediation of grace through the church and the sacraments was vitiated when the administrator of the sacraments had lost his Christian perfection through a serious fall into sin. Pelagianism maintained that man still faced the same choice faced by Adam between sin and perfection, and that therefore grace was helpful, but not necessary in the sense in which Augustine taught. Bréhier provides a final detail, p. 3: “The Church in its role as an institution necessary for the dispensation of divine grace was incompatible with both of these heresies. Today these struggles may appear to us as an early scholastic or legalistic encounter between agelast austerity, but we ought also to see behind it a political striving to unify a front against an exterior secular world that was often still hostile to Christians and, ironically enough, as a political enterprise to overcome factionalism within them Empire. Most academics rightly have reservations that anything productive can come from the conceptual traditions of the Christian Church(es), but here too we ought to be careful to separate the dogmatic from the thematic. In no form does the Christian Church encompass all of its own philosophical bases, which often begin before it and continue after it. We cannot be committed materialists of the kind Bakhtin would endorse and ignore the very real history of ideas which courses beneath the stones of the Christian Church; these ideas are human ideas before they are Christian, and they are as equally double-voiced as are all other human ideas. This is why I have attempted to frame my discussion in terms of the Byzantine and Kenotic traditions rather than Christian vs. secular, or perhaps worse still Christological vs. philosophical. It is not enough to state that we are anti-Christian or irreligious. We must determine what it is in Christian doctrine and religion that we oppose. Short of this we are very much in danger of bringing these oppositions into our thought by the back door, and surreptitiously repeating in the secular what we have thoughtlessly rejected in the religious. Below I will attempt to show that it is the mystical, the austere, the dogmatic elements, as well as the doctrine of original sin in Christianity to which Bakhtin was opposed; as a materialist interested in building a bridge to the theological and the critical, he emphasized the here and now, flesh and blood, compassionate, and concrete aspects of the Christian conception of the world and self-other relations. Bakhtin’s relationship to Christian doctrine is not as transparent as some theorists have thought. To say ‘Bakhtin is a thinker of the social’ or a ‘materialist’ is not enough. Not only would this position dismiss much of Bakhtin’s early writings, it would paint all Christian ideas with the same brush. We in the West and especially from the vantage of 2000 years of atrocious crusading, marauding, and hierarchical structures of power, have good reason to do so, but this ought not be taken as an excuse to look no further.  

Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 84, emphasis mine.

See White, “The Struggle Over Bakhtin: Fraternal Reply to Robert Young”, *Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I*, ed. Gardiner, p. 211: “as ‘Bakhtin’ notes, ‘the word used in quotations marks, that is, felt and used as something alien’ indicates how the word is distributed on various places and at various distances from the plane of the authorial word. For the moment, ‘Bakhtin’ is more appropriate, more appropriate, than Bakhtin. He will have to wait a while for his homecoming festival.’”

For Cohen, see Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 59-62; for Buber and Manichaeism, p. 80. Holquist is certainly aware of the differences that enter into the dialogue between Cohen and Buber, see his introduction to *Art and Answerability*, p. xxxv: “Of course, the whole emphasis on architectonics and aesthetics in these early Bakhtin essays is quite different in its implications from anything in Cohen or Buber.” My concern is that Holquist tends to equate these three thinkers because of the religious connection only to find that this supposed connection is actually quite differently orientated; this connection seems to trump the other very real influences exhibited in Bakhtin’s particular stance on the I/Thou in Buber or Cohen’s neo-Kantian monism. That said, Clark and Holquist’s account is relatively balanced, but they are not explicit enough as to their motivation for making these connections or in showing how this
equation benefits Bakhtin scholarship beyond providing interesting background information as to which philosophical trends Bakhtin was in dialogue with. As we have already stated, the biographers do provide cursory checks and balances regarding the Cohen-Bakhtin interface, see Clark and Holquist, MB, p. 60.

Regarding Meier: Meier was the founder of a religious sect known as Voskresenie. He was a “mystical anarchist” and was a “very tough Marxist” in Bakhtin’s estimation, who sought to build bridges between the two ideologies. He wanted to “link religion and revolution, communism and ‘Christ.’” See Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 128.

72 Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 120.

74 Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 122. Dialogism is Holquist’s term for Bakhtin’s Ürpri nzip. I am not entirely satisfied with this term, since it would seem to hypostatize what to my mind is not an ontological assertion but a method or disposition toward thought and action—even though it is based on the ontological divide between subjects.


76 Raymond Geuss’ “Introduction”, in Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p. xii. See also Plato’s account of the Socrates’ recurring dream “in different shapes” in which he is told to “compose music,” Phaedo, 60r,ff. See also Nietzsche’s commentary on this passage in the The Birth of Tragedy, §14, p. 71. James M. Curtis also picks up on this theme in his “Michael Bakhtin, Nietzsche, and Russian Pre-Revolutionary Thought”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 235-6:

For Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, it was Socrates who dissociated the Apollonian and the Dionysian by asking such abstract questions as, ‘What is the Good?’ and ‘What is he Beautiful?’ Throughout the first third of twentieth century, intellectuals all over Europe found in this historical scheme a way to analyze the malaise of their own times. The Birth of Tragedy served as a major source for T. S. Eliot, for example, who found what what he called a ‘dissociation of sensibility’ had occurred in the seventeenth century after the death of John Donne, the last poet who could fuse thinking and feeling.

80 If he was the last metaphysical poet however, Donne was far from the last poet drawn to metaphysics; it may be remembered that Eliot pursued post-graduate work in philosophy at Harvard where he studied under non-other than George Santayana, and then studied Bergson and Maurras—“the reactionary Catholic monarchist”—at the Sorbonne, cf. The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 1, ed. Jahan Ramazani et al., p. 460.

77 See Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Philosophy, p. 15: “For Christianity the fact of suffering in life means primarily that life is not just, that it is even essentially unjust, that it pays for an essential injustice by suffering, it is blameworthy because it suffers. The result of this is that life must be justified, that is to say, redeemed of its injustice or saved. ... Even when Christianity sings the praises of love and life what curses there are in these songs, what hatred beneath this love! It loves life like a bird of prey loves the lamb; tender, mutilated and dying.”

78 Cf. John Dillon’s “Introduction” to Plotinus’ The Enneads, p. lii. The reference is to The Republic, vi, 509b.


81 On the Idea of Ideas, see section seven below.

82 For Plato’s discussion of this hierarchy, cf. The Republic, vi, 507a-511e.

83 For more on Kantian intuitions of time and space see section seven below.

84 I will return to this otherworldly character and to neo-Platonic thought, as well as Proclus’ place in it, the last section of the present work, on Chronotopicity below.

85 Lock, “Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology”, Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 288-9. Lock’s understanding here is most perspicuous and accurately shows that there is no “virgule” between Bakhtin’s orthodoxy and his philosophical concepts:

It is important here to insist that we are not talking about ‘theology in code’ or of an ‘encrypted’ Christianity. Such concepts imply a system and a stability of meaning which happen to be provisionally or contingently obscured by exigency, wit or cunning. That would be a form of Gnostic heresy such as Docetism, which sees the flesh as mere clothing or guise, or pedagogical device for the Divine. Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia can be well expressed in anti-gnostic
terms: context is not that which enables text to be manifest, but that which is integral to text if text is to avoid the abuses of system and monologue.

86 Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 84.
91 Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind, Vol. I.*, p. 390. Notably, the idea that all ‘men’ are related in faith tends to subvert both Byzantine hierarchical virtue and the neo-Platonic hierarchical virtue (supermundane): “All men are brothers not in a spiritual Christian sense, as having a common Father in heaven, but in an earthly sense, of a common origin, or common blood.”
92 Again, see section seven below.
95 What’s more, Holquist is responsible for co-editing *Toward a Philosophy of the Act, Art and Answerability, Speech Genres*, and he helped Emerson translate *The Dialogical Imagination*.
97 See also Michael Gardiner’s *Critiques of Everyday Life*, p. 44: “Voloshinov and Medvedev, were more overtly Marxist. Medvedev even occupied several important government positions in education and culture in the nascent Soviet regime.”
98 Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 167. For more on Voloshinov’s writings as a propaedeutic, see Section Five below.
99 On indirect and quasi-direct discourse, as well as reported speech, see Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 116:

Reported speech is regard by the speaker as an utterance belonging to someone else, an utterance that was originally totally independent, complete in its construction, and lying outside the given context. Now, it is from this independent existence that reported speech is transposed into an authorial context while retaining its own referential content and at least the rudiments of its own linguistic integrity, its original constructional independence. The author’s utterance, in incorporating the other utterance, brings into play syntactic, stylistic, and compositional norms for its partial assimilation—that is, its adaptation to the syntactic, compositional, and stylistic design of the author’s utterance, while preserving (if only in rudimentary form) the initial autonomy (in syntactic, compositional, and stylistic terms) of the reported utterance, which otherwise could not be grasped in full.

Certain modifications of indirect discourse and, in particular, quasi-direct discourse in modern languages evince a disposition to transpose the reported utterance from the sphere of speech construction to the thematic level—the sphere of content. However, even in these instances, the dissolution of the reported utterance in the authorial context is not—nor can it be—carried out to the end. Here, too, aside from indications of a semantic nature, the reported utterance preserves as a construction—the body of the reported speech remains detectable as a self-sufficient unit.

Thus, as Allon White has recently argued, Bakhtin et al. remain ‘humanists’ in the sense that they retain an interest in freedom, the fulfilment of human potentiality, and the cessation of oppression, but also in the more technical sense that they continue to ascribe importance to the category of ‘agency’—that is, a belief in the creative or active role of collective human praxis vis-à-vis the making of history. The conception of ‘history’ maintained by the individual members of the Bakhtin Circle is not, however, teleologically inscribed or inexorable: it is ‘open’, a horizon of unfulfilled possibilities which is ‘capable of death and renewal, transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries”
In his essay on “Speech Genres” ‘Bakhtin’ makes it clear that speech is generic and conventional to an astonishing degree and that there is no linguistic space in which the individual makes utterance free from systematic cultural inflection. But ‘Bakhtin’ does allow individuals a reflexive and creative relation to speech genres such that, to parody Marx, people make language but only on the basis of what language has made of them.


Hume’s thoroughgoing scepticism does not precisely preclude the force of sense-certainty. By analogy White’s interpretation of the Bakhtinian subject as semantic personhood does not preclude the feeling of being a subject, even though it would be impossible to point to where this subject has not first been conditioned to from head to toe qua subject. The trouble I often have with post-structuralism, especially of the Foucauldian brand, is that there the world seems devoid of people. On Hume’s ambivalence toward the force of certainty granted in sensual existence, see Treatise of Human Nature, pp. 268-9:

But what have I here said, that reflections very refin’d and metaphysical have little or no influence upon us? This opinion I can scarce forbear retracting, and condemning from my present feeling and experience. The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? And on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, in viron’d with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv’d of the use of every member and faculty.

Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterates all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours’ amusement, I wou’d return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain’d, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.

Here then I find myself absolutely and necessarily determin’d to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life. But notwithstanding that my natural propensity, and the course of my animal spirits and passions reduce me to this indolent belief in the general maxims of the world, I still feel such remains of my former disposition, that I am ready to throw all my books and papers into the fire, and resolve never more to renounce the pleasures of life for the sake of reasoning and philosophy.

As a theological term, kenosis originates in Philippians 2:5-8, where St. Paul speaks of ‘Christ’s’ ‘self-emptying’:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in ‘Christ’ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

The issue remains controversial among the theologians, especially with regard to the degree of ‘Christ’s’ self-emptying. While the conservative tradition maintains that ‘Christ’, in his kenosis, did not give up any of his divine attributes, the most radical interpretations suggests that not only did ‘Christ’ cease to be God at that moment, but that God as such became incarnated and thus lost all of his original attributes and died, which seems to justify Nietzsche’s infamous insight concerning the death of God.

On degree see previous footnote.

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, Art and Answerability, p. 78.
112 I owe the phrase “standing in someone else’s shoes” to a conversation with Michael Gardiner; the phrase was his, not mine. On lack of chronological order, see Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 27: “It should be kept in mind that the constitutive moments of projecting oneself into the other and of consummating the other do not follow one another chronologically; we must emphasise that the sense of each is different, although in living experience projection and consummation are intimately intertwined and fuse with one another.”

113 Allon White has reservations about the appropriateness of Shukman’s own Bakhtinian appropriations, as I mentioned briefly in this section. Nevertheless, Shukman’s commentary on Einfühlung, at least, notes that Bakhtin indeed rejects or partly rejects the idea as it is expounded in Dilthey and by the neo-Kantians. See Shukman, “M. M. Bakhtin: Notes on his Philosophy of Man”, *Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. II*, ed. Gardiner, p. 357-8.

114 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 16: pure empathising as such is impossible. If I actually lost myself in the other (instead of two participants there would be one—an impoverishment of being), i.e., if I ceased to be unique, then this moment of my not-being could never become a moment of my consciousness; non-being cannot become a moment in the being of consciousness—it would simply not exist for me, i.e., being would not be accomplished through me at that moment. Passive empathising, being-possessed, losing oneself—these have nothing in common with the answerable act/deed of self-abstraction or self-renunciation.

115 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 16: “In self-renunciation I actualise with utmost activeness and in full the uniqueness of my place in being. The world in which I, from my own unique place, renounce myself does not become a world in which I do not exist, a world which is indifferent, in its meaning, to my existence: self-renunciation is a performance or accomplishment that encompasses being-as-event.”

116 Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 16.


119 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, C, CC, “Religion in the Form of art”, p. 457: The externalization (or kenosis) of substance, its growth into self-consciousness, expresses the transition into the opposite, the unconscious transition of necessity; in other words, that substance is in itself self-consciousness. Conversely, the externalization of self-consciousness expresses this, that it is in itself the universal essence, or—since the Self is pure being-for-self which in its opposite communes with itself—that is just because substance is self-consciousness for the elf, that it is Spirit. Of this Spirit, which has abandoned the form of Substance and enters existence in the shape of self-consciousness, it may therefore be said—if we wish to employ relationships derived from natural generation—that it has an actual mother but an implicit father. For actuality or self-consciousness, and the in-itself as substance, are its two moments through whose reciprocal externalization, each becoming the other, Spirit comes into existence as their unity.

120 In reality, even a wholly aesthetic subject must admit of a unique life apart from the other. Again, no absolute mergerge is possible, and my consciousness will never appear within the consciousness of another.


123 For “alibi in being,” see *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, passim. For example, p. 42: An answerable act or deed is precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgement of my obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness. It is this affirmation of my non-alibi in being that constitutes the basis of my life being actually and compellently given as well as its being actually and compellently projected as something-yet-to-be-achieved. It is only my non-alibi in being that transforms an empty possibility into an actual answerable act or deed (through an emotional-volitional referral to myself as the one who is active). This is the living fact of a primordial act or deed which produces for the first time the answerably performed act—produces its actual heaviness, compellentness; it is the foundation of my life as a deed-performing {postuplenie}, for to be in life, to be actually, is to act, is to be unindifferent toward the once-occurrent whole.

That is, the answerable deed is not achieved through its simple rational justifiability, but this does not make it irrational. This simply means that what counts as the ethically affirmative component in answerability is the attention to the unique actuality of being in its everyday becoming. See Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 30:

> The ongoing event can be clear and distinct, in all its constituent moments, to a participant in the act or deed he himself performs. Does this mean that he understands it logically? That is, that what is clear to him are only the universal moments and relations transcribed in the form of concepts? Not at all: he sees clearly *these* individual, unique persons whom he loves, *this* sky and *this* earth and *these* trees... and what is also given to him simultaneously is the value, the actually and concretely affirmed value of these persons and these objects.


See Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, pp. 52-9.

See Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 53.

See Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 53: “The inward has lost any authoritative outward form, but has not yet found a ‘form’ for the spirit (‘form’ in the strict sense does not apply here, for it is no longer aesthetic: the spirit is not something given, but something present in itself as a task to be accomplished”

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, pp. 53-4.

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 54.

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 54. We begin to see here Martin Buber’s influence on Bakhtin’s thought, where there is an internal ‘thou’ category burped into existence.

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 54.


Münchhausen is supposed to have been able to raise himself by his own hair.

See Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 7.

Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 56.


On love, particularly as it relates to the non-coincidence of subject and world or subject and object—and these are not wholly the same phenomenal relation—see Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 82:

> Sympathetic co-experiencing of the hero’s life means to experience that life in a form completely different from the form in which it was or could have been, experienced by the *subjunctum* of that life himself. Co-experiencing in this form does not in the least strive toward the ultimate point of totally coinciding, merging with the co-experienced life, because such merging would be equivalent to a falling away of the coefficient of sympathy, of love, and, consequently, of the form they produced as well. A sympathetically co-experienced life is given form not in the category of the *I*, but in the category of the *other*, as the life of another human being, another *I*. In other words, a sympathetically co-experienced life is the life of another human being (his outer as well as his *inner* life) that is essentially experienced from outside.
See also Bakhtin’s analysis of love in Pushkin’s lyric “Parting,” Toward a Philosophy of the Act, pp. 65-75; this analysis provides an excellent example of the non-coincidence of subject and other in the ethical moment of sympathetic co-experiencing as it takes place in verbal art.

Bakhtin also takes up this theme of the other as reduced to pure objectivity in Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics. See, for example, his commentary on the Romantic novel where the hero is reduced to mere function of “implementer of authorial pathos,” p. 12.

Cf. Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p.128.

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Clark and Holquist, MB, p. 130.

On the witness and the judge, see Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71”, Speech Genres, p. 137:

The witness and the judge.  When consciousness appeared in the world (in existence) and, perhaps, when biological life appeared (perhaps not only animals, but trees and grass and also witness and judge [the Bergsonian image?]), the world (existence) changed radically.  A stone is still stony and the sun still sunny, but the event of existence as a whole (unfinalized) becomes completely different because a new and major character in this event appears for the first time on the scene of earthly existence—the witness and the judge. And the sun, while remaining physically the same, has changed because it has begun to be cognized by the witness and the judge. It has stopped simply begin and has started being in itself and for itself (these categories appear for the first time here) as well as for the other, because if has been reflected in the consciousness of the other (the witness and the judge): this has caused it to change radically, to be enriched and transformed. (This has nothing to do with “other existence.”)

Note that while Bakhtin calls this the advent of consciousness I have called it the beginning of reflection. Obviously there is a distinction being made here, but I do not believe by consciousness—in this section at least—Bakhtin means nothing short of what Merleau-Ponty has termed “radical reflection.” This notion emphasizes the incomplete and distinctly perspectival and essentially creative phenomenological, participative, consciousness of something; the witness is not the transcendental ego, and the judge is not a form of absolute reflection—nor is it a return to the rationalistic gnoseological subject. See Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 70-1:

If a universal constituting consciousness were possible, the opacity of the fact would disappear. If then we want reflection to maintain, in the object on which it bears, its descriptive characteristics, and thoroughly to understand that object, we must not consider it as a mere return to a universal reason and see it as anticipated in unreflective experience, we must regard it as a creative operation which itself participates in the facticity of that experience. That is why phenomenology, alone of all philosophies, talks about a transcendent field. This word indicates that reflection never holds, arrayed and objectified before its gaze, the whole world and the plurality of monads, and that its view is never other than partial and of limited power. It is also why phenomenology is phenomenology, that is, a study of the advent of being to consciousness, instead of presuming its possibility as given in advance. It is striking how transcendental philosophies of the classical type never question the possibility of effecting the complete disclosure which they always assume done somewhere. It is enough for them that it should be necessary, and in this way they judge what is by what ought to be, by what the idea of knowledge requires. [This is not the ought as it appears in Bakhtin; it is the ought of the transcendental a priori ego.] In fact, the thinking ego can never abolish its inherence in an individual subject, which knows all things in a particular perspective. Reflection can never make me stop seeing the sun two hundred yards away on a misty day, [or by perceptual constancy,] or seeing it ‘rise’ and ‘set,’ or thinking with the cultural apparatus with which my education, my previous efforts, my personal history, have provided me.

Recently purchased by the British Library. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-17732310>, 08/07/2012. According to the unofficial history of St. Cuthbert’s Gospel, it had been buried inside the coffin of St. Cuthbert’s. According to the British Library, there is a “13th century note added on f. ii verso: ‘The Gospel of John which was found at the head of our blessed father Cuthbert lying in his tomb in the year of his translation.’ The codex was purchased for £9 million, 08/07/2012. See images of the text at the British Library website: <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_89000_fs001r>, 08/07/2012.
narrow, but evolves in fits and starts, contractions and false starts. See the 1872 preface to the French edition of *gaffe* here, however, stating that Hermann Cohen was one of the more noteworthy members of the Leningrad Circle professing themselves to be neo-Kantians. Given that Cohen was *the* leading proponent of neo-Kantianism up until his death in 1918 and worked out of Marburg, and that to the best of my knowledge never set his foot in Leningrad or even on Russian soil, I cannot see how this was possible, unless of course some of the members had learned the art of resurrecting the dead from their affiliation with *Voskresenie*, whose name means ‘Sunday’ or ‘resurrection,’ see Clark and Holquist, p. 141. Rousseau

162 See OED “word.”


164 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 56.

165 Qtd. in Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 254.

166 Rousseau, “The Perpetual Crises of modernism and the Traditions of Enlightenment Vitalism”, in *The Crisis in Modernism*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, p. 52. See also Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 100-102. Clark and Holquist name Kanaëv “the most important new member of the group for Bakhtin”, p. 102.


168 The occasion, that is, according to Clark and Holquist, but Nina Perlina reminds us that before Nikolai Lossky was forced to leave Russia in 1922 he had written a brochure titled *Sovremennyj vitalizm* (contemporary vitalism). Kanaëv and Bakhtin’s article not only takes this title, it “is a studied copy of several chunks cut from the first part of Lossky’s work. It seems clear that inspiration for this article cannot be granted exclusively to Ukhtomsky. Kanaëv and Bakhtin’s paper appeared in 1926. See Perlina, *Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum*, p. 13.

169 Cf. Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* “The Leningrad Circle”, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, f.n. 13, p. 367: Baxtin, ‘Sovremennyj vitalizm,’ *Čelovek i priroda*, no. 1 (1926): 33-42; no. 2 (1926): 9-22. Nos. 2 and 3 of this periodical announced another ‘Kanaëv’ article in the next issue, but none appeared. Kanaëv concentrated on the topic of Goethe as a naturalist but also wrote on morphological questions and the history of evolutionary theory, multiple births, hydras, and Leclerc de Buffon. In providing his concise history of vitalism, one which Rousseau fears that “no single chapter, no matter how well researched or well written, can hope to do justice to,,” p. 17, Rousseau’s scholarly achievement is actually quite stunning. Moreover, he remembers to address all the right questions regarding historical-critical aspects of his survey; regarding the term ‘science’ for example—“Whose science? Which science? Where? When? Under what conditions?, p. 21.” He also provides the right interface between the political motivations of various currents in the vitalist and mechanist controversies of the 17th through the 19th centuries—and his position seems on face value to itself be informed by Bakhtin’s own commitment to a loosely Marxist historical materialism: “one cannot generalize that a vitalist’s politics, religion, science, and so forth, ought to be of a piece: uniform, homogenous, isomorphic. Yet one is persuaded that there was something then approximating a ‘vitalistic mind-set’ as distinguished from the previous mechanistic one, and that it extended from scientific method to ideological mind-set and personal politics”, p. 44—i.e., from life to consciousness.

170 Indeed, Bakhtin seems to follow Marx in his supposition that the path to science is not straight and narrow, but evolves in fits and starts, contractions and false starts. See the 1872 preface to the French edition of *Capital, Vol. I*, p. 104: “There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.”

171 Rousseau, “The Perpetual Crises of modernism and the Traditions of Enlightenment Vitalism”, in *The Crisis in Modernism*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, p. 53. Rousseau commits a pretty glaring gaffe here, however, stating that Hermann Cohen was one of the more noteworthy members of the Leningrad Circle professing themselves to be neo-Kantians. Given that Cohen was *the* leading proponent of neo-Kantianism up until his death in 1918 and worked out of Marburg, and that to the best of my knowledge never set his foot in Leningrad or even on Russian soil, I cannot see how this was possible, unless of course some of the members had learned the art of resurrecting the dead from their affiliation with *Voskresenie*, whose name means ‘Sunday’ or ‘resurrection,’ see Clark and Holquist, p. 141. Rousseau
himself is an accomplished cultural theorist working at or affiliated with various prestigious schools in the United States and Britain, it is hard for me to believe that this is anything more than a simple paraphrase. Nevertheless, the obviousness of the slip does not bolster one’s confidence that Rousseau has read Clark and Holquist carefully. This could be problematic, since they remain the cornerstone reference on which he is building his case for Bakhtin’s critical assessment of vitalism. Since Clark and Holquist are also one of my own touchstones of reference, I have everywhere endeavored not only to read them closely, but critically.


Gardiner, “‘The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism’: Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty”, p. 136. See also Clark and Holquist, p. 102: “This interest [in biological science] led Bakhtin to write the review article ‘Contemporary Vitalism,’ which appeared in 1926 in the popular scientific journal Man and Nature... under Kanaev’s name, the first of Bakhtin’s articles to be published under a friend’s name.”

We have already seen how the shift from the purely external physical body to the internalization of consciousness of the world as a task of seeking redemption informed Bakhtin’s work, first in the theory of the human sciences. Thus the external world of the ancients was likewise the origin of the movement of consciousness for the Greeks—although it was not yet material in the modern sense. A similar notation is expressed in “Toward a Methodology of the Human Sciences”, p. 165: “The influence of extra-textual reality in the shaping of the writer’s artistic vision and the artistic thought (and the vision of thought of others who create culture).” It is certainly arguable that Bakhtin did not follow Marx and Engels in all things, but one cannot help imagining Bakhtin sipping black tea and nodding his head in agreement while reading The German Ideology, and specifically this passage worthy of An Introduction to Marx 101, p. 47:

Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of their intercourse corresponding to these, up to its fullest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else then conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

Again, cf. “Toward a Methodology”, p. 164: “True understanding in literature and literary scholarship is always historical and personified.”

Perlina takes this undecidable approach. See Perlina, Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, p. 15: “Without denying the validity of Kanaev’s statement that Bakhtin had published at least one text under his name, we are still not sure whether Bakhtin actually wrote the article... What we can now clearly see is that in 1926, Bakhtin had copied several parts of Lossky’s brochure on vitalism for his friend Kanaev.”


For the original formulation of these tidy distinctions at the heart of Kant’s critical philosophy, cf. “On the ideal of the highest good”, Critique of Pure Reason, A805/B833, p. 677: “All interest of my reason (the speculative as well as the practical) is united in the following three questions:
1. What can I know?
2. What should I do?
3. What may I hope?”

For the “participative thinking” (uchastnoe myshlenie) performed by participative consciousness see Toward a Philosophy of the Act, passim, and esp. p. 8:

Participative thinking predominates in all great systems of philosophy, either consciously and distinctly (especially in the Middle Ages) or in an unconscious and masked form (in the systems of the 19th and 20th centuries). One can observe a peculiar lightening of the very term ‘being’ or ‘reality.’ Kant’s classical example against the ontological proof, that a hundred real thalers are not equal to a hundred thinkable thalers, has ceased to be convincing.

Bakhtin here refers to Kant’s logical exposition against the ontological proof for God’s existence, Critique of Pure Reason A596/B624-A600/B628, pp. 566-68. The ontological proof is excellently summarized by
Schopenhauer in his *On the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, II, § 7, pp. 16-7: “According to Descartes, the existence of God is contained in the conception of God, therefore it becomes an argument for his actual being.” With his heel, Schopenhauer strikes at the head of the viperous precision of rationality: “Wär’ der Gedank’ nicht so verwünscht geschuet, Man wär’ versucht ihn herzlich dumm zu nennen” (“Were not the thought so cursedly acute. One might be tempted to declare it silly”), p. 12. Kant’s refutation of the ontological proof simply arrives at the conclusion that simply thinking a thing adds nothing to its existence, and if this were not the case the conception of the thing would not be the conception of the thing since something has been added to the predicate—namely, being, which Kant understands as relegated to the copula alone. Therefore, in Kant’s example, “a hundred actual dollars do contain the least bit more than the merely possible”, A599/B627, p. 567. The reason why we think a hundred actually dollars greater in sum to the conception of them is because the two are joined synthetically, and so further conceptions follow such as ‘I am rich.’ But the concept of a hundred thalers is not changed by the actual existence of the money.

Bakhtin no longer finds this argument convincing since the argument is ordained merely in the theoretical sphere and does not actually participate in being. For him once-occurent being-as-event does add a valutative accent to the concept in participative consciousness; he continues:

What is historically on hand once and only once in the reality that was determined by me in an once-occurent manner is, indeed, incomparably heavier. But when it is weighed on theoretical scales (even with the addition of a theoretical constatation of its empirical existence) in detachment from its historically valutative uniqueness, it is highly unlikely that it will prove to be heavier than what is merely thinkable. Historically actual once-occurent being is greater and heavier than the unitary being of theoretical science, but this difference in weight, which is self-evident for a living and experiencing consciousness, cannot be determined in theoretical categories.

As an aside, Vadim Liapunov conjectures that Bakhtin’s “participative thinking” could be related to interest in Kierkegaard and more generally the German *das seinsverbundene Denken*, or “thinking that derives or relates to ‘eine reale Existenz’ (an actually existing human being),” and which is contrary to *Bewußtsein überhaupt*, or “pure cognizing,” Toward a Philosophy of the Act, f.n. 29, p. 86. I am in full agreement with the spirit if not the letter of Liapunov’s observation.

180 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 79.
181 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 79.
182 Cf. Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, C, (DD), p. 492. There Hegel compares the movement of history, which he sees as the negative aspect or reflection of ‘Spirit,’ to a “gallery of images.” In the process of revealing itself to itself through the movement of history, Spirit takes on a succession of forms each of which is, according to Hegel, internalized and preserved in the inward being of Spirit. The process is supposed to continue through this internalization of the forms of Spirit achieved in their external extensive historical aspect until absolute knowing is achieved, at which time history ceases to unfold, or so it is typically held that Hegel believed this to be the case, especially by apologists for capitalism such as Fukuyama, although the very idea of such an eschatological achievement was detestable to Bakhtin and I am inclined to agree with him. The difference between Hegel’s use of the phrase “succession of Spirits” and my own, “succession of forms” is therefore meant to call attention simply to the analogous and often inherited continuity of concepts from one age of vitalism to another, and in no way is to be understood as an attempt to rejuvenate Hegel’s idea of Spirit, or “the absolute notion.” Another example lies in the work of Tran-Duc-Thao, who attempted to wed Husserl’s *transcendental subjectivity*, as described in *The Crisis*, with dialectical materialism via this type of Hegelian historical-spiritual synthesis, and who could be said to be an adherent to the positivist camp in the philosophy of science; see for example Leonard Lawlor’s *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, pp. 55-6:

Dialectical materialism... ‘defines the truth of scientific concepts insofar as it reproduces in consciousness the real processes by which life constitutes itself in the general movement of material structures. Even consciousness, a region apparently heterogeneous to the physico-chemical, presents no great difficulty for ‘the very movement of positive explanation’; as Tran-Duc-Thao says, ‘the act of consciousness in its lived meaning is defined exhaustively by the dialectic of behavior.’ Transcendental structures such as temporalization ‘coincide in a strict manner’ with real structures which merely preceded them in real time; real time is the only type of priority for Tran-Duc-Thao. Dialectical materialism’s subject matter, therefore would be the ‘evolution of life leading to humanity’
Far from deconstructing Tran-Duc-Thao’s line of argument, the young Derrida destroys Tran-Duc-Thao’s account in the latter’s thesis *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Phenomenology*. According to Lawlor, Derrida’s account leaves Tran-Duc-Thao either entirely on the side of dogmatism or without having grounded the sciences: “It is hard to know how [Tran-Duc-Thao] can account for objective knowledge... by rejecting phenomenology’s subjectivism, Tran-Duc-Thao seems to appeal again to some sort of thing-in-itself. If this interpretation is correct, then Tran-Duc-Thao relapses into dogmatism. But, on the other hand, if Tran-Duc-Thao is not presupposing some sort of materialist metaphysics, then it must be the case that the natural sciences remain entirely ungrounded for him. Basing their priority entirely on real time, he does not provide the conditions for the possibility of the sciences,” Lawlor, p. 56. Husserl had initiated his project explicitly to account for this ground by way of intentionality, and specifically meaning-intention and meaning-fulfilment, see Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Vol. I, “Investigation I”, “Chapter 1”, §§ 9-12, pp. 191-8.


184 See for example, Husserl’s direction on this point, regarding what he calls the *mathematization of nature* in which “nature itself is idealized under the guidance of the new mathematics; nature itself becomes—to express it in a modern way—a mathematical manifold (*Mannigfaltigkeit,*” *Crisis*, II, § 9, p. 23. Against the Husserlian culture of idealism we may read Heisenberg’s commitment to empirical verification as the ground of the sciences, *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 83:

> Descartes considered [*cogito ergo sum*] as the solid ground on which he could build his system. It is in fact true that this statement has the certainty of a mathematical conclusion, if the words ‘cogito’ and ‘sum’ are defined in the usual way or, to put it more cautiously and at the same time more critically, if the words are so defined that the statement follows. But this does not tell us anything about how far we can use the concepts of “thinking” and “being” in finding our way. It is finally in a very general sense always an empirical question how far our concepts can be applied.

For Arendt, Galileo’s remarkable discovery of the universal application of math to nature—Husserl’s so-called “Mannigfaltigkeit” had colonized the lifeworld and corroded the active life of man, sic., *The Human Condition*, p. 261:

> The modern astrophysical world view, which began with Galileo, and its challenge to the adequacy of the senses to reveal reality, have left us a universe of whose qualities we know no more than the way they affect our measuring instruments, and—in the words of Eddington—’the former have as much resemblance to the latter as a telephone number has to a subscriber.’ Instead of objective qualities, in other words, we find instruments, and instead of nature or the universe—in the words of Heisenberg—man encounters only himself.

185 See Rousseau, “The Perpetual Crises of Modernism”, p. 39, where we are reminded that Geoffrey Cantor had recognized and written a dissertation on Newton’s vitalism as early as 1743.

186 Eichner, “The Rise of Modern Science and the Genesis of Romanticism”, p. 9. To hear David Abram speak, who is a self described eco-phenomenologist rather than a vitalist, one might think that d’Holbauch supposition that an invisible hand guided gravity was still very much alive. See David Abram, “*How to Think about Science*”, Ideas, CBC Radio, <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2009/01/02/how-to-think-about-science-part-1----24-listen#episode12> 17/07/2012:

> ...gravity was an uncanny mystery to our brothers and sisters at the dawn of the scientific age, but once it began to be spoken of as a law—the law of gravity—as soon as we speak of it as a law we stop noticing it, because it’s just happening automatically and so there’s nothing very mysterious there. But what is this mystery? We define it even today as ‘mutual attraction of bodies at a distance,’ which is as good a definition for Eros as I know. The attraction of my body to the body of the earth and the earth’s flesh for my flesh, that I am in a kind of ongoing erotic relationship to the earth at every moment as is each stone that I toss up into the air and finds its way right back to contact with the ground. But how different our experience would be if we find out that gravity is Eros. So it seems to me that, with a bit of attention and a careful attentiveness to how we speak, we can begin to notice and make evident once again how wild and quite outrageous everything still is. This interaction or reciprocity between our organism and a larger world that we did not create or invent—a world that created us.

187 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 81: “We term contemporary vitalism critical in the subjective sense, that is, we mark only the fact that its representatives strive to be critically-minded, whether they succeed or not.”
presumption of an originary free-cause that initiates the succession of causes entirely on the side of the transcendental spontaneous self-generated causes. Furthermore, it is only from experience that we come to understand only efficient cause, relies on the fact that nowhere in experience are we presented with direct evidence for a priori antecedent external cause. Therefore, we must assume a second type and one which is self-generating that any self-caused event implies, one cannot at the same time hold that this free cause will then follow can no longer provide a basis for efficient cause at all. By assuming an original freedom and spontaneity thereby claims to have done away with the necessity of an exterior cause, then one

188 See Rousseau, “The Perpetual Crises of Modernism”, pp. 29-37. For Robinet, see Lovejoy, p. 281: “Robinet was one of the earlier prophets of the élan vital.” See also, p. 277, where he points to what he calls Robinet’s “‘retrotensive method’... the result... was the establishment, by a single stroke of logic, of a whole group of important philosophical conclusions—among them, hylozoism, panpsychism, and a peculiar sort of panlogism, a doctrine of the ubiquity of the rudiments of rationality in all natural things.” See also, p. 282: [h]ere, manifestly, is a philosophy of l’évolution créatrice in outline; and its resemblance to its twentieth-century counterpart is heightened by the fact that it too is, in the end, puzzlingly combined with a species of phenomenalism; the matter which hampers the active principle is nevertheless its product and exists only as an appearance, while the active principle is in itself non-spatial.” Also, for Nisus Formativus, see Blumenbach, An Essay on Generation, p. 68; also “On the Natural Varieties of Mankind”, On the Natural Varieties of Mankind, p. 194. Kant is one of the first to present the purported purposiveness of nature as a merely “regulative principle,” and is by far the most thorough in attempting to expand and ground this purposiveness (Zweckmäßige) in epistemology—specifically in reflective judgement. See Critique of the Power of Judgement, II, § 61, 5:359-5:361, p. 233-4.


191 An explanation of the third antinomy, or “Third Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas.” Beginning from the thesis that there is more than one type of causality, i.e., more than just natural—or efficient—cause, Kant deduces an “absolute causal spontaneity” that is self-caused. A wholly efficient account of causation amounts only to an infinite succession of causes. We also must presume a first cause. Nevertheless, an infinite regress of causes is assured a priori, since this first cause, being efficient, would necessarily rely on an antecedent external cause. Therefore, we must assume a second type and one which is self-generating and does not itself rely on a prior external cause.

The antithesis account that Kant provides begins from the assumption that there is only efficient cause. The proof runs like this: if one assumes a free cause at the beginning of a successive chain, and thereby claims to have done away with the necessity of an exterior cause for this original cause, then one can no longer provide a basis for efficient cause at all. By assuming an original freedom and spontaneity that any self-caused event implies, one cannot at the same time hold that this free cause will then follow according to the necessity that efficient cause implies: “one cannot say that in place of the laws of nature, laws of freedom enter into the sources of the world, because if freedom were determined according to laws, it would not be freedom, but nothing other than nature.”

The third antinomy does not resolve itself into the univocal thesis of efficient cause or the equally univocal antithesis of free cause, since their seeming mutual exclusion is illusory. Kant places the presumption of an originary free-cause that initiates the succession of causes entirely on the side of the transcendental a priori side of cognition. The understanding does not derive the idea of a first cause from experience, but provides it as a necessary presupposition. Likewise, the antithesis statement, that there is only efficient cause, relies on the fact that nowhere in experience are we presented with direct evidence for spontaneous self-generated causes. Furthermore, it is only from experience that we come to understand a priori that there must have been a beginning, since it is only through experience that we witness change. In the example Kant provides, I can think the possibility of my free decision to get up out of the chair I am sitting in without contradicting the determinism of efficient cause. On the one side there is an absolute beginning—i.e., my decision which causes me to purposively get up out of the chair. This spontaneity is to be viewed as a truly self-caused beginning to a succession of causes and does not require a reference to any prior external cause. On the other side mechanical cause continues according to its laws. There is no conflict, since any mechanical account of causation will be wholly on the side of temporal succession, and therefore must always presuppose an antecedent cause. On the one side reason insinuates a first mover. On the other side experience provides us with the idea of succession, change, and efficient cause. Finally, we can only think the possibility of freedom as existing outside of the world, since it cannot admit antecedent causes, and since we must think of nature according to efficient cause, without which it could only be thought of as “confused and disconnected.” See Critique of Reason, A444-51/B472-79, pp. 484-89.

192 Müller-Sievers, Self-Generation, p. 44.
The Critique of the Power of Judgement, §71, “Preparation for the resolution of the above antinomy”, 5:389, p. 260-1. See also Steigerwald’s Kant’s Concept of Natural Purpose and the Reflecting Power of Judgement”, p. 729:

[Kant] argued that if the tow maxims are converted into constitutive principles for determinative judgement, the antinomy is transformed into ‘a conflict within the legislation of reason.’ If the principles of the reflecting power of judgement are taken as having objective reality, and an idea of reason regarding the final cause of nature as either intentional or unintentional is used for determinative judgements, the dispute between them becomes dogmatic, similar to the antinomy of the first Critique. And as in the first Critique, Kant’s solution was to expose this conflict as illusory by critically examining the principles in relation to our cognitive powers and their limitations. Reason’s demand for principles aims at the unconditioned, at the supersensible basis that makes things possible and that makes nature itself possible. But for human cognition not all possible ideas have actuality, for our ideas to have an objective basis, they require the understanding to be conditioned by given sensible intuitions.

Cf. The Critique of the Power of Judgement, §. 71, “Preparation for the resolution of the above antinomy”, 5:389, p. 260-1:

All appearance of an antinomy between the maxims of that kind of explanation which is genuinely physical (mechanical) and that which is teleological (technical) therefore rests on confusing a fundamental principle of the reflecting with that of the determining power of judgement, and on confusing the autonomy of the former (which is valid merely subjectively for the use of our reason in regard to the particular laws of experience) with the heteronomy of the latter, which has to conform to the laws given by the understanding (whether general or particular).

Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 81. He names the usual suspects of this brand of ‘neo-vitalism’ as follows: Hans Driesch, Johannes Reinke, William Stern, and E. von Hartmann, although these do not “comprise a single school of thought.” Reinke is spelled Rainke in the translated paper, though I take it that this is a typographical error.

The fantastic regenerative properties of the polyp, or hydra, plays an important role here in convincing Driesch and provides a powerful visual image of the regulative powers of the purported life force as it did for Blumenbach before him. For Leeuwenhoek, who discovered the polyp’s regenerative powers, and for Trembley who rediscovered them, the polyp did not represent the regenerative nisus so much as the “missing link” between plants and animals, see Lovejoy, p. 233. Blumenbach had made experiments with cutting individual polyps to watch the process of regeneration and even succeeded in more radical attempts at splicing halves of green and brown armed polyps together. When he cut the polyp, he found that the little mutilated animal” regenerated the excised part of its body, but did so such that the new growth was “always diminished in bulk,” Blumenbach, On Generation, p. 69. The new growth did not show any marked change in form, however, and Blumenbach became convinced that there must be some Lebenskräft, and of a “material basis” (Lenoir, “Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism”, p. 84), which both stimulated and guided its generation, nutrition, and production, see Richards, “Kant & Blumenbach on the Bildungstrieb”, p. 18. It was essential, however, that this force not be taken as something somehow external to the matter of which the organism was composed—as for example in Robinet’s active principle which impresses itself on matter from the outside. Cf. also Lovejoy, p. 281, where he explains that for Robinet, in the beginning, brute matter is dominant where matter is actually a ‘clogging’ of spontaneous action, which the puissance active must struggle to overcome. Gradually that “matter becomes less an obstacle than the instrument whereby the force achieves its end.” Lovejoy also notes that Robinet seems to have discarded the principle of continuity that had guided him to his theory of individual gradations in the principle of plenitude.

Lenoir draws our attention to this point, Lenoir, “Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism”, p. 84:

Two features of Blumenbach’s Bildungstrieb are extremely important to bear in mind. The first is that it could not be reduced to the chemical constituents of the generative fluid. Blumenbach repeatedly emphasized the immanent teleological character of his conception of the Lebenskräft. The formative force existed in the organization of the Zeugungssaft [i.e., the procreative fluid] as a whole: change any of its constituent elements and the organization of the whole was not just altered; it was completely destroyed. On the other hand, it is to be emphasized that this teleological agent was not to be considered a kind of soul superimposed on matter. This form of
vitalism he found objectionable in Buffon’s concept of the *moule interieur* and in Wolff’s conception of the *vis essentialis*. For Blumenbach the *Bildungstrieb* did not exist apart from matter, but is could not be explained in terms of its constitutive elements.

See also Zammito on the *Nisus formativus/Bildungstrieb* in Blumenbach, p. 80:

In the terminology of Blumenbach, Kant discriminated between a *Bildungskraft*—‘the *vis plastic* of the ancients, which works merely via mechanism’ and a *Bildungstrieb* which Blumenbach conceived as a ‘*nisus formativus*’ that worked organically’. Girtanner was clear that Blumenbach’s *Bildungstrieb* was a *Lebenskraft*, namely ‘that force by virtue of which the chemical and physical laws are subordinated under the laws of organization’. Because life forms showed characteristics reproduction, growth through nourishment and assimilation, regeneration of lost organs and self-healing generally—which could not be assimilated to the mechanistic model of natural science, they represented anomalies requiring recourse to teleological judgement, the analogy of ‘purposiveness.’

Lenoir also reminds us that the holy grail of organic science in this early stage of its development was the unification of the forces of “reproduction, generation, and nutrition under a general law,” Lenoir, “Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism”, p. 84.

198 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 84.
199 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 84.
200 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 84-5.
201 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 85.
202 These experiments are recorded in Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 85.
203 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 86.
204 On “prospective potential” and “prospective significance” see Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 86.
205 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 86.
206 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 87.
208 See also, *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 61 “On the objective purposiveness of nature”, 5:360, p. 233, and Müller-Sievers, p. 58: “In organic beings, Kant argues, ‘normal’ causality *[nexus effectivus]* is conjoined with a causality of final causes *[nexus finalis]*....”

Furthermore, it is not that the eye has to be photo-sensitive—we know this. The whole surface of the tegument—no doubt for various reasons that are not visual—may be photosensitive, and this dimension can in no way be reduced to the functioning of vision. There is a certain adumbration of photo-sensitive organs in the pigmentary spots. In the eye, the pigment functions fully, in a way, of course, that the phenomenon shows to be infinitely complex. It functions within the cones, for example, in the form of a rhodopsin. It also functions inside the various layers of the retina. This pigment comes and goes in functions that are not all, or always immediately discoverable and clear, but which suggests the depth, the complexity and, at the same time, the unity of the mechanisms concerned with light.

I would add the example of photosynthesis too, perhaps, unless we would like to wax poetical and speak of photosynthesis in terms of the plant seeing the sun through its own visual organ. This would be the inverse—as opposed to the obverse reading of photosynthesis as vision. Lacan would, however, reject this reading as leaving out the internalization and projection of the name-of-the-father, or the function of the law of the phallus in the scopic drive.

212 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 94. Bakhtin waxes poetic here: “Harmony is a subjectivist construct, like the beauty of crystal or the grace of the fallow deer.”
213 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 94.
214 Bakhtin, “Contemporary Vitalism”, p. 94. In other words looking back from the end to the beginning... we term this series of causes teleological and purposive. Thus the teleological series reveals itself to be simply a causality posited retrospectively, the wished-for end, a *telos* (goal), and all that is necessary for its realization, the means.”
215 Interestingly Voloshinov uses the suffix *–izm* in his 1927 title *Frejdizm*, rather than the more “derogatory” *–shchina*, which, “when attached to a proper name... means the excesses or bad times
associated with that personality” as in Dostoevshchina as used in Lunacharsky. See Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, f.n. f, p. 35. Voloshinov’s choice, assuming it is self-conscious, betrays his ambivalence toward Freud’s psychoanalysis.

216 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 2.
217 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 284.
218 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 284.
223 Bakhtin, Toward a Philosophy of the Act, pp. 19-20.
224 This misdiagnosis of the event is similarly described in Deleuze’s Logic of Sense, pp. 4-5:
all bodies are causes in relation to each other, and causes for each other—but causes of what?
They are causes of certain things of an entirely different nature. These effects are not bodies, but,
properly speaking, ‘incorporeal’ entities. They are not physical qualities and properties, but rather
logical or dialectical attributes. They are not things or facts, but events. We cannot say that they
really exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere.... They are not substantives or adjectives but
verbs.
See also “Of the Event”, Logic of Sense, pp. 148-53.
225 Bakhtin, Toward a Philosophy of the Act, p. 20.
231 Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71”, Speech Genres, p. 139:
Even in antiquity we single out what is ready-made and finalized, and not what has originated and
is developing. We do not study literature’s preliterary embryos (in language and ritual). The
narrow (‘specialists’”) understanding of specifics. Possibility and necessity. It is hardly possible
to speak about necessity in the human sciences. Here it is scientifically possible only to disclose
possibilities and the realization of one of them. The repeatability and unrepeatability.
In other words, the work of the humanities is to be judged from the point of view of the supra-I. Does it speak to objective existence? Does it artfully answer one of the big questions in life through a personal,
i.e., embodied form? Does it itself have a rotund semantic personality? Can you engage it in conversation?
232 For “germ-plasm” and Freud’s ontogenetic account of the organism, cf. for example, Freud’s “Beyond
the Pleasure Principle”, On Metapsychology, §. VI, pp. 316-35, and esp. p. 318:
What Strikes us in this is the unexpected analogy with our own view, which was arrived at along
such a different path. Weismann, regarding living substance morphologically, sees in it one
portion which is destined to die—the soma, the body apart from the substance concerned with sex
and inheritance—and an immortal portion—the germ-plasm, which is concerned with the survival
of the species, with reproduction. We, on the other hand, dealing not with the living substance but
with the forces operating in it, have been led to distinguish two kinds of instincts: those which seek
to lead what is living to death, and others, the sexual instincts, which are perpetually attempting
and achieving a renewal of life.
Later Freud questions whether or not there is, after all, only one instinct, p. 325:
But it is all the more necessary for us to lay stress upon the libidinal character of the self-
preservative instincts now that we are venturing upon the further step of recognizing the sexual
instinct as Eros, the preserver of all things, and of deriving the narcissistic libido of the ego from
the stores of libido by means of which the cells of the soma are attached to one another. But we
now find ourselves suddenly faced by another question. If the self-preservative instincts too are of
a libidinal nature, are there perhaps no other instincts whatever but the libidinal ones? At all
events there are none other visible.
233 For example, in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Freud speculates that even death has come down to
multicellular organisms as “a matter of expediency” and not, as Anaximander held, of necessity. Here
Freud tries to show his own theory of “Eros” or the “sexual instincts” and Thanatos—here “the death drive”
or the “ego-instincts”—can be found also independently through the study of morphology. Like the “slipper-animalcule” (a.k.a. ciliate infusorians—p. 320), which dies as a result of “its incomplete voidance of the products of its own metabolism” (p. 321), Freud’s entire theory of the instincts moving from pulsation or agitation in the somatic to the release through their sublimation in objects depends on an assumption of pressure building from within that seeks release by expulsion from the organism—i.e., exteriorization. We will see how, in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes”, Freud complicates this theory and shows it to be a highly dynamic and ambiguous process.

The Anaximander fragment to which I am referring, is that which is the subject of Heidegger’s infamous paper “The Anaximander Fragment”. David Farrell Krell’s translation reads as follows:

Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time.


242 Cf. for example, Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 134: “At the very beginning, it seems, the external world, objects, and what is hated are identical. If later on an object turns out to be a source of pleasure, it is loved, but it is also incorporated into the ego; so that for the purified pleasure-ego once again objects coincide with what is extraneous and hated.” The radical reading of Freud, I suggest, would then be that love—or Eros—is always a positive force that expresses itself by affirming that which it loves by incorporating it into one’s own identity, which can include consuming it, etc., but also simply working to ameliorate a project, fix a table, mend a jacket, etc. I think Freud wants a radical separation of what is loved as an extension of one’s own identity and that which is hated as an object that is always-already other. It is clear that while this synonymy of love/interiority/subject may not be absolute, for Freud they do stand in polar distinction to hate/exteriority/object and certainly become absolutely synonymous by the instantiation of the pleasure-ego.
244 Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, On Metapsychology, § i, p. 277. For more on Freud’s principle of constancy of pressure see Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, f.n. 1, p. 117. For afflux see ibid., bottom of p. 116. See also “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, On Metapsychology, § i., f.n. 2, p. 277: “The ‘principle of constancy’ dates back to the very beginning of Freud’s psychological studies. The first published discussion of it of any length was by Breuer (in semi-physiological terms) towards the end of Section 2(A) of his theoretical part of the Studies on Hysteria.”
245 Cf. Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 116: “Above all, [the instincts] oblige the nervous system to renounce its ideal intention of keeping off stimuli, for they maintain an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation.”
246 Again see Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 127.
249 Cf. Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 127: “For at the beginning of its activity the scopophilic instinct is auto-erotic: it has indeed an object, but that object is part of the subject’s own body. It is only later that the instinct is led, by a process of comparison, to exchange this object for an analogous part of someone else’s body.”
250 I will not deal with repression and sublimation here. “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” was followed by a paper on “Narcissism” and, it is thought, one on sublimation “formed the subject of one of [Freud’s] lost metaphysical papers, Freud, “Instincts”, Metapsychology, f.n. 4, p. 123. To deal with all four vicissitudes would be beyond the purpose of touching upon them here. In any case, Freud’s own feelings on the repression of the scopic drive would have to be worked out according to his paper on “Repression” and his definition of sublimation in his paper “On Narcissism”, Metapsychology, p. 88: “Sublimation is a process
that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct's directing itself toward an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality.”


For the pleasure-ego the external world is divided into a part that is pleasurable, which it has incorporated into itself, and a remainder that is extraneous to it. It has separated off a part of its own self, which it projects into the external world and feels as hostile. After this new arrangement, the two polarities coincide once more: the ego-subject coincides with pleasure, and the external world with unpleasure (with what was earlier indifference).

257 The three opposites in love are love-hate, loving-being loved, and love-unconcern or indifference. Freud enters into this discussion of love to show how Eros and the other instincts such as scopophilia, have their vicissitudes as they pass through the three polarities. Cf. Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 131:

Perhaps we shall come to a better understanding of the several opposites of loving if we reflect that our mental life as a whole is governed by three polarities, the antithesis:

Subject (ego) – Object (external world),

Pleasure-Unpleasure, and

Active-passive.

The antithesis ego-non-ego (external), i.e., subject-object, is, as we have already said, thrust upon the individual organism at an early stage, by the experience that it can silence external stimuli by means of muscular action but is defenceless against instinctual stimuli. This antithesis remains, above all, sovereign in our intellectual activity and creates for research the basic situation which no efforts can alter. The polarity of pleasure-unpleasure is attached to a scale of feelings, whose paramount importance in determining our actions (our will) has already been emphasized. The antithesis active-passive must not be confused with the antithesis ego-subject-external-world-object. The relation of the ego to the external world is passive in so far as it receives stimuli from it and active when it reacts to these.

258 Cf. Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 118: “[e]very instinct is a piece of activity; if we speak loosely of passive instincts, we can only mean instincts whose aim is passive.”


260 But not his body’s object. Note, this is before the organ—the phallus—is split from the body in the Lacanian movement from imaginary to symbolic.


262 For these two principles of mental functioning, the “reality-ego” and the “pleasure-ego” cf. also “Two Principles of Mental Functioning”, On Metapsychology, p. 42: “While the ego goes through its transformation from pleasure-ego into a reality-ego, the sexual instincts undergo the changes that lead them from their original auto-eroticism through various intermediate phases to object-love in the service of procreation.”


264 Cf. Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 125: “[a] primary narcissism, not derived from sadism in the manner I have described, seems not to be met with.”


266 Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 35.

267 Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, On Metapsychology, p. 135


269 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 10.


The game referred to was played by an un-precocious child who was apparently upset at the absence of his mother but nevertheless repeated the painful departure by substituting “any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner.” Freud assumes that the game is meant to mete out revenge upon the mother’s head for going away and to obtain some control over the situation by being the one to symbolically compel her departure, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, § ii., p. 285: “Throwing away the object so that it was ‘gone’ might satisfy an impulse of the child’s, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going way from him. In that case it would have a defiant meaning: ‘All right, then, go away! I’m sending you away myself.’”

Freud makes the claim that he has always been a dualist thinker. I see no evidence that this is the case—as we have tried to show regarding the vicissitudes of the instincts that are always orientated in such a way as to serve to benefit the subject, to bolster the ego, and which ultimately ignore or attempt to incorporate all difference—the other—as merely a moment within the ego. We may take the following quotation as further evidence, as Freud himself does not seem to understand that dualism implies an irresolvable and essential difference in kind, and he attempts to make of it instead a matter of difference in degree by supposing that his thought has become “even more definitely dualistic than before.”

For his own part, in this essay, Freud makes the claim that he has always been a dualist thinker. I see no evidence that this is the case—as we have tried to show regarding the vicissitudes of the instincts that are always orientated in such a way as to serve to benefit the subject, to bolster the ego, and which ultimately ignore or attempt to incorporate all difference—the other—as merely a moment within the ego. We may take the following quotation as further evidence, as Freud himself does not seem to understand that dualism implies an irresolvable and essential difference in kind, and he attempts to make of it instead a matter of difference in degree by supposing that his thought has become “even more definitely dualistic than before.”

See, for example, Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, On Metapsychology, § ii., 287: “even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasureable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind.”

From the 1986 album Hounds of Love.

Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 291.


Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 172.

Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 172.
unconscious, "Editor's Note" to "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis", and retained 'Unconscious Metapsychology 309 consciousness—i.e., "consciousness of something", see "Editor's Note", "The Unconscious", of the merely latent, and he therefore posited the 'inchoate and not fully formed, but he soon changed his mind. The unconscious did not seem to be a realm made after hypothesizing that the unconscious was both "active and unconscious at the same time," p. 52, his own admission, Freud originally believed the unconscious was the territory of "weak" ideas that were and therefore suggests a continuous stirring beneath consciousness—i.e., a latently active unconscious. By the systematicity of the unconscious during sleep. Dreams are therefore a window into the unconscious, p. 55-6. After this new development, Freud posited his theory of the systematic unconscious which does the work of repression, etc: “The system revealed by the sign that the single acts forming parts of it are unconscious we designate by the name ‘The Unconscious’, for want of a better and less ambiguous term.... And this is the third and most significant sense which the term ‘unconscious’ has acquired in psychoanalysis,” p. 57. Freud reserves the term Bewusstsein for that which is actively known in consciousness—i.e., “consciousness of something”, see “Editor’s Note”, “The Unconscious”, Metapsychology, f.n. 1, p. 165.

304 See for example, Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 83: Certain of these objective facts of behaviour are physiological (ultimately, physiochemical) in character. Such facts can be studied by the methods that form the basis of the reflex doctrine of Academician Pavlov and his school by the methods that have been so brilliantly and soundly argued by the late Jacques Loeb in his renowned theory of tropisms or by other variants of the basically unitary physiological method. But when it comes to an explanation of human behavior all this supplies us very little. In particular, those conflicts of verbalized behaviour, with which Freudianism confronts us, need, if they are to be properly understood, a rigorous and thoroughgoing account of socioeconomic factors. Only with the help of the flexible methods of dialectical materialism have we the possibility of illuminating those conflicts.


306 See Köhler chapters I and III, “A Discussion of Behaviourism” and “A Critique of Introspection” respectively.

307 Freud’s theories regarding association are another intersection in the narrative of the development of Freud’s theory of the unconscious. See Allon White’s “Hystera and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”, *MB*, vol. IV, ed. Gardiner, p. 340: White reminds his reader that ‘Anna O.’ was actually responsible for the ‘discovery’ of the cathartic method from which Breuer formulated his theory; this qualification was first made by Ernest Jones.

308 See Freud, “A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis”, *Metapsychology*, pp. 50-7. Freud also makes the distinction between the descriptive and the systematic unconscious in the 1915 paper on The Unconscious, but there “no plain distinction appears to be made between the latter and the ‘dynamic’” unconscious, “Editor’s Note” to “A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis”, *Metapsychology*, p. 49. The “purely descriptive” unconscious describes that which appears to be latent in consciousness (Bewusst), such as was the case in Bernheim’s experiments with post-hypnotic suggestion. Here the patient would be placed under hypnosis and then given a command. After being brought out of hypnosis the patient has no recollection of this command. Nevertheless he obeys, performs the task which had been suggested by Bernheim consciously “though not knowing why.” Thus the descriptive unconscious is very simply the name Freud gives to the “condition of latency,” p. 50. The dynamic unconscious is the distinction Freud made after hypothesizing that the unconscious was both “active and unconscious at the same time,” p. 52, and therefore suggests a continuous stirring beneath consciousness—i.e., a latently active unconscious. By his own admission, Freud originally believed the unconscious was the territory of “weak” ideas that were inchoate and not fully formed, but he soon changed his mind. The unconscious did not seem to be a realm of the merely latent, and he therefore posited the ‘foreconscious’ (vorbewusst) to do the work of latency and retained ‘unconscious’ (Unbewusste) for “ideas [kept] apart from consciousness in spite of their intensity and activity,” p. 53. Finally, largely through his work with dream analysis, Freud ‘discovered’ the inner workings of the unconscious were systematic and partook in active repression. This ‘discovery’ comes about by understanding that the ordinary content of waking conscious life comes into contact with the systemativity of the unconscious during sleep. Dreams are therefore a window into the unconscious, p. 55-6. After this new development, Freud posited his theory of the systematic unconscious which does the work of repression, etc: “The system revealed by the sign that the single acts forming parts of it are unconscious we designate by the name ‘The Unconscious’, for want of a better and less ambiguous term.... And this is the third and most significant sense which the term ‘unconscious’ has acquired in psychoanalysis,” p. 57. Freud reserves the term Bewusstsein for that which is actively known in consciousness—i.e., “consciousness of something”, see “Editor’s Note”, “The Unconscious”, Metapsychology, f.n. 1, p. 165.

309 See Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, pp. 124-5:

In 1920, Freud had published "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", in which initially as a hypothesis, the death instinct was placed on an equal footing with the sexual instinct, indeed was accorded deeper instinctual force. Young analysts who had not yet begun to practice and those analysts who did not grasp the structure of the sexual theory began to apply the new ego theory. It was a very disturbing situation. Instead of sexuality, analysts began to speak of 'Eros.' Mediocre therapists claimed that they were able 'to put their hands on' the superego, a concept that had been theoretically postulated to help grasp the psychic structure. They operated with it as if it were a concretely established fact. The id was 'wicked,' the superego sat on a throne with a long beard and was 'strict,' and the poor ego endeavoured to 'mediate' between the two. ... Sexuality became
something shadowy; the ‘libido’ concept was deprived of every trace of sexual content and became a figure of speech. ... Form eclipsed content; the organization [, the International Psychoanalytic Association,] became more important than its task. The process of deterioration, which has destroyed every great social movement in history, set in. Just as the primitive Christianity of Jesus was transformed into the Church, and Marxist science became fascistic dictatorship, many psychoanalysts soon became the worst enemies of their own cause.

Bakhtin’s idea that Freudian psychoanalysis is wholly subjective becomes especially compelling when the following lines are considered in connection with Freud’s own life, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, § iii., p. 292:

The compulsion which is here in evidence [vis-à-vis the compulsion to repeat] differs in no way from the compulsion to repeat which we have found in neurotics, even though the people we are now considering have never shown any signs of dealing with a neurotic conflict by producing symptoms. Thus we have come across people all of whose human relationships have the same outcome: such as the benefactor who is abandoned in anger after a time by each of his protégés, however much they may otherwise differ from one another, and who thus seems doomed to taste all the bitterness of ingratitude; or the man who time after time in the course of his life raises someone else into a position of great private or public authority and then, after a certain interval, himself upsets that authority and replaces him by a new one.

310 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 45.
311 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 45: “Every cell in the living organism contains the combination of both kinds of instincts—Eros and Death; to the one and the other, respectively, correspond the physiological processes of construction (anabolism) and destruction (catabolism) of living matter. As long as a cell is alive, Eros is dominant.”
312 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 46.
313 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 46.
314 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 88: Let us now return to those ‘psychical’ conflicts upon which psychoanalysis is based and which psychoanalysis attempts to explain in terms of a struggle between the conscious and the unconscious. From an objective point of view, all these conflicts are played out in the element of behavioural ideology. They are not ‘psychical’ but ideological conflicts and, therefore, they cannot be understood within the narrow confines of the individual organism and the individual psyche. They not only go beyond the conscious, as Freud believes, they also go beyond the individual as a whole.

For Bakhtin on the vocabulary of ‘official’ and ‘unofficial,’ see “Discourse in the Novel”, passim. See also Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel”, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 20, and *Problems in Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 90.
315 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 75-6. On Bakhtin’s ambivalence toward Freud, see Caryl Emerson’s “Bakhtin at 100”, *MB* vol. II, ed. Gardner, p. 299: “Bakhtin admired [Freud] as a great innovator, an otkryvatel’ or opener up of new worlds, whose work unfortunately had no ‘serious continuation on Russian soil’; when pushed toward a personal assessment, Bakhtin admitted that with his Kantian orientation, he of course found the Freudian orientation ‘alien to him.’”
317 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, pp. 77 and 87.
318 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 79.
319 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 78.
320 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 79.
323 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.274. As usual the terms of expression of their critique is breathtaking and perspicacious, and in this case actually somewhat ‘childlike’, pp. 273-4:

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg—but also the father and the mother, or the child? Psychoanalysis acts as if it were the child (the father is sick only from his own childhood), but at the same time is forced to postulate a parental pre-existence (the child is sick only in relation to a father and a mother). This is clearly evident in the primal position of the father of the horde. Oedipus itself would be nothing without the identifications of the parents with the children; and the fact cannot be hidden that everything begins in the mind of the father: isn’t that what you want, to
kill me, to sleep with your mother? It is first of all a father’s idea: thus Laius. It is the father who raises hell, and how brandishes the law (the mother tends to be obliging: we mustn’t make this into a scene, it’s only a dream, a territoriality). Lévi-Strauss puts it very well: ‘The initial theme of the key myth is the incest committed by the hero with the mother. Yet the idea that he is ‘guilty’ seems to exist mainly in the mind of the father, who desires his son’s death and schemes to bring it about... In the long run it is the father who appears guilty, through having tried to avenge himself, and it is he who is killed... This curious indifference toward incest appears in other myths.’... So it is that psychoanalysis has much difficulty extracting itself from an infinite regression: the father must have been a child, but was able to be a child only in relation to a father who was himself a child, in relation to another father.

324 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 81.
325 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 81.
326 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 82.
327 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 82.
328 Voloshinov, *Freudianism*, p. 23.
332 Sartre charged Merleau-Ponty with equating words and things, and in a sense he is correct, since we first gather our lexicon not as a lexicon but as things in the environment. For the child, ‘wa-wa’ means equally ‘water,’ and ‘I am thirsty,’ and is not even separable from the gesture he makes to grasp the glass his mother holds out to him. Cf. Sartre, “What is Writing”, in *What is Literature*, p. 6: “Once and for all he has chosen the poetic attitude which considers words as things and not as signs.” See also p. 12, where Sartre is building his argument that poetry makes objects of words, and that Merleau-Ponty conflates both the word with the object and poetic writing with painting:

[Tintoretto’s sky’s, like poetic word-objects, has a] strangeness [that] arises from the fact that, in order to consider it, we place ourselves on the other side of the human condition, on the side of God. If this is the case, one easily understands how foolish is would be to require a poetic engagement. Doubtless, emotion, even passion—and why not anger, social indignation, and political hatred?—are at the origin of the poem. But they are not expressed there, as in a pamphlet or in a composition. Insofar as the writer of prose exhibits feelings, he illustrates them; whereas, if the poet injects his feelings into his poem, he ceases to recognize them; the words take hold of them, penetrate them, and metamorphose them; they do not signify them, even in his eyes. Emotion has become thing; it now has the opacity of things....

334 Parrington, “In Perspective: Valentin Voloshinov”, *MB*, Vol. I, ed. Gardiner, p. 63. Parrington goes on to show that this type of research was being actively carried out by Voloshinov’s contemporary, the child psychologist and linguist, L. S. Vygotsky.
335 Cf. Kant, *Critique of Reason*, “A833/B861, p. 691-2:

For its execution the idea [of an architectonic] needs a schema, i.e., an essential manifoldness and order of the parts determined a priori from the principle of the end. A schema that is not outlined in accordance with an idea, i.e., from the chief end of reason, but empirically, in accordance with aims occurring contingently (whose number one cannot know in advance, yields technical unity, but that which arises only in consequence of an idea (where reason provides the ends a priori and does not await them empirically) grounds architectonic unity.

Actually, to clarify, what I disagree with is that reason itself can be established a priori without a historically contingent component that gathers its force from the socioeconomic descent of human beings and cultural practices. A lot is tied up in this and we could certainly write a whole treatise on the difference between Bakhtin’s allocation of architectonic unity to consciousness (material consciousness that is) and Kant’s transcendental a priori reason. We simply do not have the space or time to do so here.

336 “Speech Genres”, *Speech Genres*, p. 65.
337 Allon White’s “Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”, *MB*, vol. IV, ed. Gardiner, p. 342: “as Wolfgang Hartmann has shown, in Germany in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian
war, traditional processions and festivities were rapidly militarized and incorporated into the symbolism of the state.

343 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 36.
347 White’s “Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”, *MB*, vol. IV, ed. Gardiner, p. 345:

Bourgeois carnival is a contradiction in terms. Positive elements of the carnival tradition—such as the “regenerative power of laughter,” the utopian and politically subversive aspects of folk culture and its social openness—become lost or perverted by the emergence of bourgeois individualism. Bakhtin is right to suggest that post-Romantic culture is, to a considerable extent, subjectivized and interiorized, and on this account is related to private terror, isolation and insanity rather than to robust, communal celebration. Bakhtin, however, does not give us a convincing explanation of this sublimation of carnival. Social historians, on the other hand, tend not to consider processes of sublimation at all: for them, carnival came to an end and that was that. Social historians tend not to believe in the “return of the repressed.”

348 White’s “Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”, *MB*, vol. IV, ed. Gardiner, p. 348: “A common mechanism the hysteric employs in order to cope with the threat of the grotesque body is a top/bottom displacement in an uncanny manner, the *ritual inversion* of the body found in carnival.”
349 For White’s interpretation of the case of Renata, see “Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”, *MB*, vol. IV, ed. Gardiner, p. 344-5. Dr. Schnyder was influenced by Freud’s work on hysteria.
352 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 308.
357 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 308.
358 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 308.
361 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 312.

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 306.


Emphasis mine, Barnes, Nightwood, p. 15, see also p. 14:

He moved with a humble hysteria among the decaying brocades and laces of the Carnavalet; he loved that old and documented splendour with something of the love of the lion for its tamer—that sweat-tarnished spangled enigma that, in bringing the beast to heel, had somehow turned toward him a face like his own, but which though curious and weak, had yet picked the precise fury from his brain.


Placed on the outside of the grotesque carnival body articulated as social pleasure and celebration, the female bourgeois subject introjects the spectacle as a phobic representation. Exclusion here entails the return of the excluded as desire and fear.... Carnival was too disgusting for bourgeois life to endure... it was a symbol of the community and communality which the bourgeoisie had had to deny in order to emerge as a distinct and ‘proper’ class.


Joyce, Ulysses, pp. 366-7.

Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 15.


Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 50.

Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 50.

Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 50.

Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 50.

Merleau-Ponty uses the word “exclamations,” Child Psychology, p. 50.

For Saussure, the sign, or “linguistic entity” can be studied synchronically from the vantage point of two essential characteristics, namely its association with and negative differential from other signs. Cf. “Concrete Entities of a Language”, Course in General Linguistics, pp. 101-2:

1. Any linguistic entity exists only in virtue of the association between signal and signification.

2. A linguistic entity is not ultimately defined until it is delimited, i.e., separated from whatever there may be on either side of it in a sequence of sounds. It is these delimited entities or units which contrast with one another in the mechanism of the language.

Cf. Émile Bréhier’s The History of Philosophy: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance, p. 30:

The sharp distinction between the problem of universals and accidental [species and genera] attributes makes possible a clear statement of the problem of universals. For universals, whose reality was the subject of speculation, are nothing but the genera and species—for example, ‘animal’ and ‘man’—which are essential attributes of the individual like Socrates. On this point Boethius’ commentators, such as Pseudo-Hrabanus Maurus (whose Super Porphyrium is generally assigned to the first half of the eleventh century), followed the hints that appeared in the writings of their master and that had their source in Aristotle. They repeated what had been said by Boethius and also by Simplicius: that the Categories, the study of attributes, cannot refer things (since res non praedicatur) but only to words as signifiers of things. Hence the solution, imbued with the spirit of Aristotle, the problem of universals; genus and species exist only by virtue of predicates essential to the individual. “Individuals, species, and genus are one and the same reality (eadem res), and universals are not, as is sometimes stated, something different from individuals.

Here is not the place to enter into the scholastic debate between realists and nominalists. What we may want to get at here, is the profoundly idiosyncratic differentiation between the primary and secondary, the essential and accidental parts to wholes and the confusion that can occur through time. We are not referring
to the conception of species in biology that has tended to change throughout the history of Linnaean science; although there is evidence for this, it can be usually accounted for by simple error of classification and stays within the same tired game whose rules have ossified and are beginning to crack. What we are referring to has more to do with an idea of becoming, where I may treat myself or others as the genera “animal” at times and all that that term may connote, and at other times I might treat myself as the species of animal “human” and sometimes a species of human on down to “Jim.” Still this model appears to remain arborescent. It does not have to be regarded as such, however, for the determination does not have to be made from outside, as if a topography is always primarily responsible for the determination of properties. We can also begin from within the “organism” taking it immanently and affirming the value it itself expresses dynamically; the same can apply the play of signs, but it is really premature to introduce the idea here, so we append it as a footnote to a footnote. Sufficed to say, in becoming categories shift and have not the holding power they do in that long used tree like model of Aristotelian categorization. This discussion will be more essential and less accidental to our own when we have occasion to critique universal logic according to the possible play of differences.

For Saussure’s theory of linguistic value there are two main categories of such association: the syntagmatic—or value by proximity in the constructed sentence, and the associative value—or value weighed by family or species association. See his students’ lecture notes from “Syntagmatic Relations and Associative Relations”, Course in General Linguistics, pp. 121-5.

By static we are implying Saussure’s idea of a state, and we shall return to this conception of the historical non-movement of what Saussure calls the synchronic aspect of language below.


For more the difficulties surrounding the problem of the historical utterance, diachrony v. synchrony, etc., cf. Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, “Static Linguistics and Evolutionary Linguistics”, esp. § 9 “Conclusions”, pp. 96-8.

Saussure, See Course in General Linguistics, “General Observations”, p. 100. Here we may also consider Deleuze’s attempt to show that the difference in linguistics is itself relative and not absolute, as Saussure purports it to be, p. 118:

> Everything we have said so far comes down to this. In Language itself, there are only differences. Even more important than that is the fact that, although in general a difference presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds [i.e., associative differences which imply positive significations and thus family resemblances], in a language there are only differences, and no positive terms. ... The proof of this lies in the fact that the value of a sign may change without affecting either meaning or sound, simply because some neighbouring sign has undergone a change.

For Deleuze, Saussure actually translates difference for-itself into a difference of opposition, and therefore the linguistic idea (of difference) is not difference as the active play of the speaker of language, but is the reactive passivity of the listener—of the scholiast one might say as ‘opposed’ to the philosopher, Difference and Repetition, pp. 204-05:

> To return to the linguistic Idea: why does Saussure, at the very moment when he discovers that ‘in language there are only differences,’ add that these differences are ‘without positive terms’ and ‘eternally negative’? Why does Trubetzkoy maintain as sacred the principle that ‘the idea of difference’ which is constitutive of language ‘presupposes the idea of opposition’? Everything points to the contrary. Is this not a way of introducing he point of view of consciousness and actual representations into what should be the transcendent exploration of the Idea of the linguistic unconscious—in other words, the highest exercise of speech in relation to the point zero of language? When we interpret differences under the category of opposition and as negatives, are we not already on the side of the listener, even that of the bad listener who hesitates between several possible version of what was actually said and tries to find himself by establishing oppositions? In other words, are we not on the lesser side of language rather than the side of the one who speaks and assigns meaning? Have we not already betrayed the nature of the play of language—in other words, the sense of that combinatory, of those imperatives or linguistic throws of the dice which, like Artaud’s cries, can be understood only by the one who speaks in the transcendent exercise of language? In short, the translation of difference into opposition seems to
us to concern not a simple question of terminology or convention, but rather the essence of language and the linguistic Idea. When difference is read as opposition, it is deprived of the peculiar thickness in which its positivity is affirmed. Modern phonology lacks a dimension which would prevent it from playing with shadows on a single plane.

What we have in the linguistic idea then is a conflation of difference and opposition that is typical of the listening subject rather than the speaking other; Saussure’s account has not left the ontology of representation and does not touch upon presentation and active creation. In this situation the listener, an a fortiori the linguist—is passive and not active; we might think here of the aforementioned notion of the understanding as answerable in Bakhtin’s account (see previous section). This type of listening and this type of difference as opposition is indeed ‘ready-made.’ It does not sponsor or understand—i.e., answer—the active speech event.

393 Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, p. 52.
394 Cf. for example Jespersen’s *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin*, p. 420:

Now, it is a consequence of advancing civilization that passion, or, at least, the expression of passion, is moderated, and we must therefore conclude that the speech of uncivilized and primitive men was more passionately agitated than ours, more like music or song. This conclusion is borne out by what we hear about the speech of many savages in our own days. European travellers very often record their impression of the speech of different tribes in expressions like these: ‘pronouncing whatever they spoke in a very singing manner,’ ‘the singing tone of voice, in common conversation, was frequent’...

These facts and considerations all point to the conclusion that there once was a time when all speech was song, or rather when these two actions were not yet differentiated; but perhaps this inference cannot be established inductively at the present stage of linguistic science with the same amount of certainty as the statements I am now going to make as to the nature of primitive speech.

This would be precisely the legacy in which David Abram makes his attempt to show that language is indeed connected primordially to the world in out of which it comes into being by its sonorous affect. We shall have more to say on this later. In any event, he has been much criticised for this position; Ted Toadvine accuses him of a return to animism:

things are not inert and passive in Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions but alive, suggesting to Abram a kind of phenomenological animism that would demand from us the revision of an entire series of traditional dualisms... but it is precisely this “subjectivization of nature” [Rudolf Bernet’s, which Toadvine compares to Abram’s own view] that reveals the limits of the dialogical view of perception, as Merleau-Ponty himself brings out. I the course of his descriptions of the correlation between the body and the world, he already calls attention to its anthropomorphizing teleology...

Merleau-Ponty is explicit... that defining the thing as a correlate of the body and our life does not exhaust its meaning, since it does not disclose the ‘non-human element’ that it harbours (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 375), Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature*, p. 57.

The validity of Toadvine’s critique of Abram’s, to my mind, correctly diagnosis a spirit in Abram’s work that betrays a seeing that shows up the connectedness in all things, but the ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty’s own position rests upon the difference between naive-consciousness’ view of the world as that which is as it is experienced and radical reflection which must have a respect for the fundamental alterity in all things: ‘This [alterity and self-standing] will become clear if we suspend our ordinary preoccupations and pay a metaphysical and disinterested attention to it. It is then hostile and alien, no longer an interlocutor, but a resolutely silent Other, a Self which evades us no less than does intimacy with an outside consciousness.’ Toadvine understands this distinction and mentions it, but I have trouble damning Abram’s approach since it is implicitly marked by a concern for finding new or forgotten modes of our connectedness with the world, and can be equally found in Merleau-Ponty’s work... and there is a distinctly dialectical action happening here where I am a part of an earth that is nonetheless an Other. See also “Sense Experience”, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 249:

The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place. As I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not set over against it as an a cosmic idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it, I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it ‘thinks itself
in me,* I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself...

...and we could go on dialectically attempting to think this relation, as we shall have occasion to. For now let us just make a note for ourselves of that which we have left to think... this dialectic between myself and the object I “consummate” as Bakhtin has put it in Art and Answerability. We have not yet even begun to think the problem of the Other inside ourselves... that which the Greeks knew as the daimonion [Birth of Tragedy, p. 66 and Arendt's Human Condition, pp. 179 and 182], and which we require Other’s outside of ourselves to consummate through an exotopic excess of seeing “which provides the foundation for a certain sphere of my own exclusive self-activity... all those actions, that is, which render the other complete precisely in those respects in which he cannot complete himself by himself,” Bakhtin, Art and Answerability, p. 24.

* ["En soi se pense et convient à soi-même"] qt. fr. Valéry, Le Cimetière marin


397 As was the case according to Hobbes. Cf. Leviathan, I, iv, p. 101:

But all this language gotten, and augmented by Adam and his posterity, was again lost at the tower of Babel, when by the hand of God, every man was stricken for his rebellion, with an oblivion of his former language. And being hereby forced to disperse themselves into several parts of the world, it must needs be, that the diversity of Tongues that now is, proceeded by degrees from them, in such manner, as need (the mother of all inventions) taught them; and in tract of time grew everywhere more copious.

398 On the aporetic nature of community, see Caputo’s Deconstruction in a Nutshell, pp. 107-9.

399 Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 52.

400 Cf. Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 52, “the appearance of articulated language is like an ‘Ursprung’ (a springing forth).”

401 The “speech circuit” is depicted on p. 11 of Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics.

402 Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 80.

403 By comparison, the two ameliorations of language study which are usually evoked the conventional/arbitrary nature of the sign and the negative differential apply specifically to langue and are more obvious and less suggestive in producing a method for linguistic study. They are not the primary distinction which must first be made, but are secondary and follow from this first set of distinctions between synchrony and diachrony and langue and parole.

404 Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 53.

405 Merleau-Ponty, Child Psychology, p. 57.

406 Usually we say that there are eight parts of speech, and these are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, interjections and conjunctions.


408 See for example, “The Object of Study”, Course in General Linguistics, p. 9. Bühler makes this claim on p. 8 of his Theory of Language. In his Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, Voloshinov also touches upon these conflicting/complementary streams in language, where he describes the “four basic trends” of what he calls the “individualistic subjectivism” experience of language—a trend he criticises as unsupportable, since it misses the fundamentally social network in which the utterance maintains its existence. He follows Humboldt’s definitions of ergon and energeia, where the former is a “ready-made product... as a stable system,” and the latter “an unceasing process of creation.” The other two trends are as follows: “the laws of language creation are the laws of individual psychology” and “creativity of language is meaningful creativity, analogous to creative art.” According to Voloshinov “Hamann and Herder were Humboldt’s predecessors so far as this trend is concerned. See Voloshinov p. 48. More on Voloshinov’s critique of the Russian Formalists and his pro-paedagogic to any future Marxist philosophy of language to follow, esp. regarding the four opposed trends in abstract objectivist linguistics of which Saussure is a proponent, according to Voloshinov.

409 Saussure, “The Object of Study”, Course in General Linguistics, p. 9. Cf. also Husserl’s Logical Investigations, Vol. II, p. 73, which takes a similar tack but with pure logic or the a priori as its own object of inquiry which is to be kept separate from normative reasoning:

here, as elsewhere where philosophical interests are concerned, it is important to separate the a priori sharply from the empirical, and to recognize that, within this widely conceive discipline, the
findings of formal semantics relevant for grammarians have a peculiar character: they belong to an
*a priori* discipline that should be kept apart in its purity. Here as elsewhere, one must subscribe to
a great Kantian insight, and steep oneself in its sense: that one does not enrich, but rather subverts,
the sciences if one blurs their boundaries. One must realize that a universal grammar in this widest
sense is a concrete science which, like all concrete sciences, frequently brings together for
explanatory purposes findings whose theoretical place lies in hand, and in *a priori* sciences,
frequently brings together for explanatory purposes findings whose theoretical place lies in
essentially different theoretical sciences, in empirical sciences, on the one hand, and in *a priori*
sciences, on the other. Our age, orientated towards natural science, sees to it that generalizing,
empirical investigations are not neglected in the grammatical field, nor in any other. What is *a
priori* is not so favoured; even though all basic insights lead back to the *a priori*, our age’s sense
for it almost threatens to wither away. I therefore fairly take up the cudgels for the old doctrine of
*a grammaire générale et raisonnée*, a philosophical grammar, for its obscure, undeveloped
intention aiming at the ‘rational’ in speech, in the true sense of the word, and in particular at the
‘logic’ of speech or its semantic *a priori*.

We may compare this nomological priority to Kant’s own programmatic in the first *Critique*, “The
Architectonic of Pure Reason”, A842/B870–A843/B871, pp. A696-7:

It is of the utmost importance to isolate cognitions that differ from one another in their species and
origin, and carefully to avoid mixing them together with others with which they are usually
connected in their use. What chemists do in analysing materials, what mathematicians do in their
pure theory of magnitude, the philosopher is even more obliged to do, so that he can securely
determine the proper value and influence of the advantage that a special kind of cognition has over
the aimless use of the understanding. Hence human reason has never been able to dispense with a
metaphysics as long as it has thought, or rather reflected, though it has never been able to present it
in a manner sufficiently purified of everything foreign to it. The idea of such a science is just as
old as speculative human reason; and what reason does not speculate, whether in a scholastic or a
popular manner? [The scholastic and popular manners Kant refers to are two contemporary
schools of thought against which Kant opposed his architectonic of pure reason, the former being
much more canonical and the later much too loosey-goosey for Kant’s liking and of which his
student Herder was a proponent.] One must nevertheless admit that the distinction of the two
elements in our cognition, one of which is in our power completely *a priori* but the other of which
can be derived only from experience *a posteriori*, has remained very indistinct, even among
professional thinkers, and hence the determination of the bounds of a special kind of cognition, and
thus the genuine idea of a science with which human reason has so long and so intensively
occupied itself, has never been accomplished. For the scholastic, or academic, vs. the popular
approaches to philosophy in Prussia which were contemporary in Kant’s day, see the
“Introduction” to Kant’s *Logic*, p. 22.

410 Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*: for trends see p. 47; for “arteries” p. 61; for
“individual subjectivism” and “abstract objectivism” see p. 48.
412 See Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 48 and 57:

The fundamental outlook on language of [individual subjectivism] amounts... to these four basic
principles:

1. Language is activity, an unceasing process of creation (*energeia*) realized in individual speech
acts;
2. The laws of language creativity are the laws of individual psychology;
3. Creativity of language is meaningful creativity, analogous to creative art;
4. Language as a ready-made product (*ergon*), as a stable system (lexicon, grammar, phonetics),
is, so to speak, the inert crust, the hardened lava of language creativity, of which linguistics
makes an abstract construct in the interests of the practical teaching of language as a ready-
made instrument.

The outlook of the second trend can, on the whole, be summarized in the following basic
principles:
1. Language is a stable, immutable system of normatively identical linguistic forms which the individual consciousness finds ready-made and which is incontestable for that consciousness.

2. The laws of language are the specifically linguistic laws of connection between linguistic signs within a given, closed linguistic system. These laws are objective with respect to any subjective consciousness.

3. Specifically linguistic connections have nothing in common with ideological values (artistic, cognitive, or other). Language phenomena are not grounded in ideological motives. No connection of a kind natural and comprehensible to the consciousness or of an artistic kind obtains between the word and its meaning.

4. Individual acts of speaking are, from the viewpoint of language, merely fortuitous refractions and variations or plain and simple distortions of normatively identical forms; but precisely these acts of individual discourse explain the historical changeability of linguistic forms, a changeability that in itself, from the standpoint of the language system, is irrational and senseless. There is no connection, no sharing of motives, between the system of language and its history. They are alien to one another.

4\textsuperscript{13} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 64.
4\textsuperscript{14} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 64.
4\textsuperscript{15} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 64.
4\textsuperscript{16} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 66: “if we were to look at language in a truly objective way—from the side, so to speak, or more accurately, from above it, we would discover no inert system of self-identical norms. Instead, we would find ourselves witnessing the ceaseless generation of language norms.”

Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 66.

4\textsuperscript{17} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 66: “Whether or not the fact itself is correctly constituted, whether language actually does appear only as a fixed and inert system of norms to the speaker’s consciousness—that is another question. For the time being we shall leave that question open. But the point, in any case, is that a certain kind of objective relationship can be established.”

Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 67.

4\textsuperscript{19} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 67.
4\textsuperscript{20} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 67.
4\textsuperscript{21} Cf. Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 58: as was the case with the rationalist theory of the understanding, abstract objectivism is interested only in the inner logic of the system of signs itself, taken, as in algebra, completely independently of the ideological meanings that give the signs their content. Rationalists [and a fortiori synchronic abstract objectivists] are not averse to taking the understander’s viewpoint into account, but are least of all inclined to consider that of the speaker, as the subject expressing his own inner life. For the fact is that the mathematical sign is least amenable to interpretation as an expression of the individual psyche—and it is the mathematical sign, after all, that the rationalists hold to be the ideal of any sign, including the verbal sign. This is exactly what found graphic expression in Leibniz’s idea of universal grammar.

Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 68.

4\textsuperscript{23} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 69.
4\textsuperscript{24} Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 70.
4\textsuperscript{25} Bühler, Theory of Language, p. 20. Voloshinov also cites Bühler’s distinction between signal and sign. See Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 68.

Bühler, Theory of Language, p. 20.

4\textsuperscript{28} Voloshinov, Freudianism, p. 21.
4\textsuperscript{29} Voloshinov, Freudianism, p. 22.

4\textsuperscript{31} Again, see Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p. 58.

4\textsuperscript{32} See Voloshinov, Freudianism, p. 24:

Freud’s strength lies in his having brought these issues pointedly to the fore and in having gathered the material for their investigation. His weakness lies in his having failed to understand the sociological essence of all these phenomena and in having attempted, instead, to force them into
the narrow confines of the individual organism and its psyche. Processes that are in fact social are treated by Freud form the point of view of individual psychology.

With this disregard of sociology is coupled another basic deficiency in Freud—the subjectivity of his method (granted, a subjectivity somewhat disguised, for which reason it has been a debatable feature).

436 Gardiner, *Dialogics of Critique*, p. 69.
437 Gardiner, *Dialogics of Critique*, p. 70.
438 Voloshinov, “Indirect and Direct Discourse”, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 137.
440 Again, see Bakhtin, “Speech Genres”, *Speech Genres*, p. 65.
442 Italian for ‘face to face.’
446 On the *apostrophe*-like character of the hero, see Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, *Freudianism*, p. 103-4. See also Dostoevsky and Bakhtin’s contemplation of the role of the “stenographer” in Dostoevsky, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 55-6. A The fact that Dostoevsky married his stenographer after dictating *The Gambler* to the future Dostoevskaya, tempts us to see parallels between the pursuit of the hero by the author in Bakhtin’s writings and the amorous relationship between Dostoevsky and his real life heroine. See Jacques Catteau, *Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, p. 144, where he quotes the Russian novelist:

My stenographer, Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina, was a young girl of twenty, quite appealing, of good family, excellent secondary education, endowed with an extremely good and pure character... At the end of the novel, I noticed that my stenographer truly loved me, although she had never said a word about it, and I found her more and more attractive. As, since the death of my brother, I find life dreadfully boring and wearisome, I asked her to marry me. She accepted, so we are now married.

One is also tempted to parallel Bakhtin’s marriage to Aleksandrovna, who played no small part in keeping the couple in her husband’s ill health and exile. The lack of attention to the importance granted to this relationship has been noted by Caryl Emerson and others. I must also admit culpability in this area. See Caryl Emerson’s “Bakhtin and Women: A Nontopic with Immense Implications”, f.n. 2, in *Mikhail Bakhtin, Vol. III*, ed. Gardiner, p. 67: “The absolute solidarity and silence of Bakhtin’s marriage has not gone unnoticed. Hajdukowski-Ahmed, for one, has criticized the Clark/Holquist biography for its insufficient, merely derivative attention to Elena Aleksandrovna’s contribution to her husband’s writing style, themes and very survival.”

451 Thomas King’s *Green Grass Running Water* makes great use of this phrase.
454 Cf. *O.E.D. Online*: “metaphor,”


Middle French metaphore (c.1275 in Old French as metaphore; French métaphore) and its etymon classical Latin metaphora < ancient Greek μεταφορά < μετα- prefix + φορά carry ( < the o- grade of the stem of ἕφερν to bear, carry; see BEAR v.1), after μετατρέπειν to transfer. Compare Italian metafora (a1375), Spanish metáfora (1st half of the 15th cent.), Portuguese metáfora (15th cent.).
For example: ‘Socrates is a man, therefore he is mortal.’ The assumed premise: ‘All men are mortal.’


Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freidusimian, p. 103. See also, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, Art and Answerability, p. 121, where Bakhtin suggests that one looses oneself in the choral support of the other, becomes subjectively disinterested, and is enveloped entirely by the social sphere—notably this is the case in both aesthetic creation (production) and in labour:

Sometimes I become justifiably alienated from myself axiologically—I live in the other and for the other. And in that case I may become a participant in rhythm, although, for myself, I remain ethically passive in rhythm. In my lived life, I participate in a communal mode of existence, in an established social order, in a nation, in mankind, in God’s world. In all these cases, I live my life, axiologically, in the other and for others, i.e., I am clothed in the axiological flesh of the other. In all these cases, my life can submit rightfully to the sway of rhythm (although the very moment of submission or subordination is characterized by sobriety); I experience, strive, and speak here in the chorus of others. But in a chorus I do not sing for myself; I am active only in relation to the other and I am passive in the other’s relationship to me; I exchange gifts, but I do so disinterestedly; I feel in myself the body and the soul of another. (Whenever the purpose of a movement or an action is incarnated into the other or is coordinated with the action of the other—as in the case of joint labour—my own action enters into rhythm as well. But I do not create rhythm of myself: I join in it for the sake of the other).

Without taking upon oneself the provisional role of the choral support, therefore, one cannot join with the other—a necessary step in the phenomenologically complex process of consummation.

Voloshinov does not directly invoke space in this way. We will have more to say about space when we come to Bakhtin’s work on chronotopicity below.


See Bakhtin, “Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art”, Art and Answerability, p. 283.


Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freidusimian, p. 108. See also Bakhtin, “Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art”, Art and Answerability, p. 284: the artist “must immediately assume an aesthetic position with regard to the extra-aesthetic reality of action and cognition.”

Cf. Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 90:

As an artist, Dostoevsky did not create his ideas in the same way philosophers or scholars create theirs—he created images of ideas found, heard, sometimes divined by him in reality itself [—i.e., in the discourse of life], that is, ideas already living or entering life as idea-forces. Dostoevsky possessed an extraordinary gift for hearing the dialogue of his epoch, or, more precisely, for hearing his epoch as a great dialogue, for detecting in it not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the dialogic relationship among voices, their dialogic interaction. He heard
both the loud, recognized, reining voices of the epoch, that is, the reigning dominant ideas (official and unofficial), as well as voices still weak, ideas not yet fully emerged, latent ideas heard as yet by no one but himself, and ideas that were just beginning to ripen, embryos of future worldviews. ‘Reality in its entirety,’ Dostoevsky himself wrote, ‘is not to be exhausted by what is immediately at hand, for an overwhelming part of this reality is contained in the form of a still latent, unuttered future world.’

See also Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freudianism, p. 114: “The poet acquires his words and learns to intone them over the course of his entire life in the process of his every-sided contact with his environment.”


Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freudianism, p. 110: “Let us stress once again that we have in mind here not those ideological evaluations that are incorporated into the content of a work in the form of judgements or conclusions but that deeper, more ingrained kind of evaluation via form that finds expression in the very manner in which the artistic material is viewed and deployed.”


Othello would not fall, that is, because the hero’s breadth of character must not be lowered beneath the status of Iago. Even if one believes that Othello is brought morally lower than Iago by the end of the text, this breadth must remain greater than Iago’s. Nevertheless, this does not suggest that Shakespeare subordinates their world to his authorial intent. Consider, for example, N. G. Chernyshevsky’s utterance on the relation of Shakespeare to his heroes: “the most difficult thing would be to write as Shakespeare wrote: he portrays people and life without saying what he himself thinks on the questions that are resolved by his characters in a way appropriate for each. Othello says ‘yes,’ Iago says ‘no,’ Shakespeare says nothing, he has no desire to state his love or lack of love for a ‘yes’ or a ‘no,’” qtd. in Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 66. Yet even if he does not subordinate their world to his own, the dramatic genre itself does not support the polyphony that one finds in the novel and almost exclusively, for Bakhtin, in Dostoevsky. Apparently following up on the original publication of Problems, Lunacharsky believes that Shakespeare exhibits the same ability to create a multitude of worlds and, thus, polyphony within his works as does Dostoevsky. For Bakhtin, Shakespeare was certainly one of the greatest talents in literature, but the dramatic form does not lend itself to the co-existence of multiple worlds, since “drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony; drama may be multi-levelled, but it cannot contain multiple worlds; it permits only one, and not several, systems of measurement.” Thus, while Shakespeare may not subordinate Iago and Othello’s world to his own, they themselves belong to one monological world and not to two monological worlds in dialogue with one another. “In our opinion Dostoevsky alone can be considered the creator of genuine polyphony.” See Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 33-4.


Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freudianism, p. 112.

Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freudianism, p. 112.

Byronic, at least, in my best estimation, since Voloshinov simply says “Romantic.” Surely this is the form of listener found in part, however, in embryo in “Childe Herald’s Pilgrimage” and more fully fleshed out in the bathetic Don Juan, since the listener is by turns derided and neither the hero nor the author seem to care one speck for what she makes of their discourse. See Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, Freudianism, p. 112. It may be the case, however, that Voloshinov à la Bakhtin means to imply the Romantic hero more generally, as certainly this is how Bakhtin describes the lyric in Romantic poetry in “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”. Cf. also See Art and Answerability, p. 180:

It is inevitable that lyrical moments occupy a prominent place in the Romantic hero (the love of woman, just as in lyric). The attitude or position with respect to meaning that is deposited in the Romantic character has ceased to be authoritative and is only re-experienced, lyrically re-experienced. The author’s position outside the Romantic hero is undoubtedly less stable than it was in the case of the Classical type of hero. The weakening of this position leads to the disintegration of character; the boundaries begin to be effaced, the centre of value is transposed from the boundaries into the very life of the hero (into his cognitive-ethical directedness from within himself). Romanticism is a form of the infinite hero: the author’s reflection upon the hero is introduced inside the hero and restructures him; the hero takes away from the author all of his transgressive determinations and uses them in his own self-development and self-determination, with the result that his self-determination becomes infinite. Parallel to this occurs a destruction of
the boundaries that demarcate cultural domains (the idea of the whole or integral human being). In this context, we find seeds of irony and of “playing a fool.” The unity of a work often coincides here with the unity of the hero; the transgressed moments become fortuitous and dispersed, losing their unity. Or the unity of the author becomes emphatically conventional, stylized. The author begins to expect revelations from the hero. There is an attempt to force an admission from within self-consciousness, which is possible only through the other; an attempt to do without God, without listeners, without an author.

Note that the author’s responsibility not to imbue the work with his own personal cognitive-ethical ideological intonations begins to collapse here; this taboo is transgressed precisely to the extent to which the author collapses into the hero; the discourse of life breaks through into art rather than supporting it, which is precisely the opposite of the architectonic role of answering for the hero (from outside) that the author is meant to play in heroic composition. The result is a destruction of the unity of the work, which itself fragments into merely mechanical relations. The same mechanical relations we are warned in “Art and Answerability” cannot ethically answer the event, p. 2, for example: “Nor will it do to invoke ‘inspiration’ in order to justify want of answerability. Inspiration that ignores life and is itself ignored by life is not inspiration but a state of possession.” No doubt Wordsworth’s “Intimations of Immortality” would suffice as an example of this kind of possession.


Again, see Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, p. 180.


As opposed to rhythm; see Voloshinov, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”, *Freudianism*, p. 108.

Gardiner, *Dialogics of Critique*, p. 73.

For excess of seeing, unfinalizability, transgression, subjectum, consummation, etc. See especially “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, *Art and Answerability*, pp. 24-7.

Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 93.


Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 23.

Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 23.


Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 23.

I am here tacitly referring to Hegel’s “Sense Certainty”, § 95, p. 60: *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

“To the question: ‘What is now?’, let us answer, e.g. ‘Now is Night.’ In order to test the truth of this sense-certainty a simple experiment will suffice. We write down this truth; a truth cannot lose anything by being written down, any more than it can lose anything through our preserving it. If now, this noon, we look again at the written truth we shall have to say that it has become stale.”

If pressed on the issue, however, I will deny that I am partial to the simple sophistry involved in this assertion, but one is always of two minds on the issue. Ultimately I believe Hegel could do well with a distinction between truth (as limited to the tautological) and mere correctness.

Again, see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 90.

Qtd. in Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 66.


“Pro and Contra” (Za i protiv) is both the title of one of the books of *The Brothers Karamazov* and Shklovsky’s book on Dostoevsky. See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 38.


Cf. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 49: “We see not who he is, but how he is conscious of himself.”


Cf. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 53: The author of the polyphonic novel “constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament, in fact he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all, but rather the hero’s discourse about himself and his world.

“Dostoevsky’s hero is not an objectified image but an autonomous discourse, pure voice; we do not see him, we hear him.”


For “high-altitude thought” see Merleau-Ponty’s “Interrogation and Dialectic”, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 73. See also Gardiner, “The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism’: Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty”, *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: No Last Words*, pp. 129 and 132.


Liza of *The Brothers Karamazov* qtd in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 60. For the original dialogue between her and Alyosha Karamazov, see “The Engagement” chapter, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 225.


See Gramsci, “Philosophy, Common Sense, Language and Folklore”, *A Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacs, p. 333:

The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless is an understanding of the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world [not wholly unlike the unofficial consciousness in Bakhtin/Voloshinov]; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed [not wholly unlike the official consciousness in Voloshinov/Bakhtin].

Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 68.


On homophony as counterpoised to polyphony, see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 21.

On the counterpoint, p. 22.
Dostoevsky sought to describe not the character of man or the idea in man, but the “profound personalism” of man. See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 31.


We will say more about this notion of the Idea of Ideas in the next section.


See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 89.


Dostoevsky, “Rebellion”, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 251.

See also Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 387.

Dostoevsky, “Rebellion”, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 251.


Here we find the source of Kristeva’s accusation that Bakhtin’s *Problems* is problematic for its participation in psychologism. But Bakhtin no-where denies this type of unified truth, he simply determines that it is monological and does not respect the personal inflection that ideas take on as they are liberated from the virtual realm and brought into a participatory struggle between consciousnesses.


1 Corinthians 15:55.


See Section Two.

See Morson and Emerson’s *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, p. 367:

Kant, of course, argued long ago that time and space are indispensable forms of cognition, and Bakhtin explicitly endorses this view. But he differs from Kant by stressing that in Chronotopic analysis, time and space are regarded “not as ‘transcendental’ but as forms of the most immediate reality.” Bakhtin’s crucial point is that time and space vary in qualities; different social activities and representations of those activities presume different kinds of time and space. Time and space are therefore not just neutral ‘mathematical abstractions. Or, to be more precise, the concept of time and space as mathematical abstractions itself defines a specific chronotope that differs from other chronotopes.

See also Bernhard F. Scholz’s “Bakhtin’s Concept of ‘Chronotope’: The Kantian Connection”, *MB Vol. II*, ed. Gardiner, p. 151:

_time and space were for Kant forms of perception rather than of thought. How, then, can Bakhtin speak of the chronotope as a ‘formally constitutive category of literature,’ and of the ‘image of man in literature,’ and support this claim with a reference to a passage in Kant which deals with forms of perception rather than with categories of thought? The phrase ‘not as ‘transcendental’ but as forms of the most immediate reality,’” which, as we shall see later on, stands most in need of commentary._


Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A39/B56, p. 183:

_Time and space are accordingly two sources of cognition, from which different synthetic cognitions can be drawn a priori, of which especially pure mathematics in regard to the cognitions of space and its relations provides a splendid example. Both taken together are, namely, the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and thereby make possible synthetic a priori propositions. But these a priori sources of cognition determine their own boundaries by the very fact (that they are merely conditions of sensibility), namely that they apply to objects only in so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves._

See Michael Holquist’s “Introduction” to *Art and Answerability*, pp. xxi-xxiii. See also *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 115, where the gnoseological is characteristic of the ‘academic’ or Socratic dialectic.
This much discussed statement is left unexplained. See Emerson and Morson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 367: “By this cryptic comment Bakhtin appears to mean that the relation of ‘chronotope’ to Einsteinian ‘time-space’ is something weaker than identity, but stronger than mere metaphor or analogy.”

Morson and Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 368.
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Morson and Emerson, and Emerson’s Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 368: Bodies must organize their own external activities and internal processes in time and space. Organisms operate by means of, and must coordinate, a variety of rhythms differing from each other and from those of other organisms. Furthermore, different social activities are also defined by various kinds of fused time and space: the rhythms and special organization of the assembly line, agricultural labour, sexual intercourse, and parlour conversation differ markedly.

Both of these latter chronotopes are relative in essence—albeit not in the same manner.

Morson and Emerson, and Emerson’s Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 369: “for Bakhtin all meaning entails evaluation, chronotopes also define parameters of value.”

Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel”, The Dialogic Imagination, p. 85: “The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.”

Morson and Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 372.
Morson and Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 372-3:
In effect, the discourse and chronotope theories of the novel are two aspects of the same theory. The form-shaping ideology of the novel includes both a view of languages of heteroglossia and a way of understanding time and space. ... Whereas the discourse and chronotope theories are almost fully complementary, the carnival theory is only occasionally complementary with, and more often contradictory to, the other two.

As we already know, “Contemporary Vitalism” was published in 1926. Rabelais and his World was completed in 1940 at which time it was “submitted as a doctoral dissertation” and subsequently rejected.

See Gardiner, The Dialogics of Critique, p. 45.

See for example, Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 412:
It is the world passing through the phase of death on the way to birth. This is not to understand by those who see in such images a bare, purely negative satire of definite, strictly limited contemporary manifestation. It would be more correct (though not quite accurate to say that these images are oriented toward the entire scope of the contemporary world, toward the present as such, and that they represent this present in the sequence of the past giving birth to the future, or in the past’s pregnant death.

Of course here Bakhtin is referring to the grotesque image of the dying body; however, insomuch as carnival makes light of individual death through the medium of cosmic laughter, the carnivalesque does not contradict the theory of chronotopicity so much as it infuses the Rabelaisian chronotope with a particular space-time that contradicts other chronotopes—especially chronotopes such as the Newtonian, Kantian or the neo-Platonic chronotope, all of which abstract from the present materially grounded time-space. See also Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” The Dialogic Imagination, p. 198: The nature of Rabelaisian laughter is revealed in its full vividness in the death series, at the points of intersection of this series with the eating, drinking and sexual series [, also found in the carnivalesque,] and in its direct association of death with the birth of new life. Here are revealed the authentic sources and traditions of this laughter; the application of this laughter to the whole wide world of sociohistorical life (“the epic of laughter”), to an epoch, or more precisely to the boundary line between two epochs, exposing its perspectives and its subsequent historical generative force.

Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 170.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 170.
For Raskolnikov’s coffin-esque room, see Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, p. 170.

Cf. Benjamin, “The Work of Art…”, The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility, § xi, p. 31. Strictly speaking, Gardiner link’s the process of significant contextualization with the artistic device of defamiliarization in Bakhtin to the Benjaminian auratic character of the work of art—re-contextualization of this sort was the bread and butter of the Dadaist movement. See The Dialogics of Critique, p. 92. Nevertheless, there is nothing to restrict us from expanding the defamiliarising power of the sign with the invocation of an auratic aspect of the chronotopic motif in the work of art, since the motif—and the word—invokes not only the genre to which it belongs but is also the particular expression of the type of perceptual time-space to which it belongs—i.e., chronotopicity is also invoked by the auratic character of the word.

In film we have a double mediation: on the one hand we have the filmic apparatus, vis-à-vis the camera, lights, staging, and also the “specialists” who direct the action even while fragmenting it. For Benjamin’s discussion of the media of film and its transparent use of the apparatus to convey the preservation of one’s humanity in the face of the apparatus, cf. Benjamin, “The Work of Art…”, The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility, § X, p. 29-31. Film is not all bad for Benjamin. Film tends to open up the room for play. See Benjamin, “The Work of Art…”, The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility, § xi, f.n. 23, pp. 48-9: “[what is lost in the withering of semblance and the decay of the aura in works of art is matched by a huge gain in the scope for play] [Spiel-Raum]. This space for play is widest in film. In film, the element of semblance has been entirely displaced by the element of play.”

It is indeed strange that Bakhtin, although living in a period of accelerated technological and industrial development (that was, of course, even more pronounced in the Russian context, which helps explain why Russia was such a hot-bed of avant-garde modernist experimentation in the arts, architecture, design and so on) never attempts to assess the nature or importance of other forms of media (film, photography, radio) and their possible impact on the prevailing structures of human communication and consciousness. This is congruent with his seeming lack of interest in modernist literature an his habitual utilization of pre-bourgeois writers as exemplars of a literary dialogism (Cervantes, Rabelais, classical Greek and Roman authors) or, in the case of Dostoevsky, on the periphery of capitalism. Parenthetically, it could be remarked that the loss of ‘immediacy’ in speech and writing was inevitable with the consolidation of typographic culture after the mid-19th century. This can certainly be ‘dehumanizing’ in a certain sense, but in another (pace Benjamin’s account of the demise of ‘aura’ in the modern world as developed in his seminal essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproduction”), typographic culture is at least potentially more democratic and emancipatory than previous modes of communication and information storage (chirographic, oral, and so on).

Bernhardt’s film is available for viewing at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mp_y_dP8s-8> 22/07/2012.

This loss is supposed to affect the poet first and foremost. “Hence [Baudelaire’s] mythomania,” see Benjamin, “Central Park”, New German Critique, § 13, p. 38.

Benjamin, “The Work of Art…”, The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility, § v, p. 24:

The first truly revolutionary means for reproduction (namely photography, which emerged at the same time as socialism), art felt the approach of that crisis which a century later has become unmistakable, it reacted with the doctrine of l’art pour l’art—that is, with a theology of art… for the first time in history, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual. To an ever-increasing degree, the work reproduced becomes the reproduction of a work designed for reproducibility.

See also Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, p. 23: the changing technical capacity to reproduce, disseminate, and sell books and images to mass audiences, coupled with the invention of first photography and then film (to which we would now add radio and television), radically changed the material conditions of the artists’ existence and, hence, their social and political role. And apart from the general consciousness of flux and change which flowed through all modernist works, a fascination with technique, with speed and motion, with the machine and the factory system, as well as with the stream of new commodities entering
Before the age of technological reproducibility, the artist himself “had to assume an aura of creativity, of dedication to art for art’s sake, in order to produce a cultural object that would be original, unique, and hence eminently marketable at a monopoly price,” The Condition of Postmodernity, p. 22.

See Jameson’s thesis statement to Postmodernism: or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, p. 6:

The exposition will take up in turn the following constitutive features of the postmodern: a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary ‘theory’ and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose “schizophrenic” structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone—what I will call “intensities”—which can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime; the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole system; and, after a brief account of postmodernist mutations in the lived experience of built space itself, some reflections on the mission of political art in the bewildering new world space of late or multinational capital.

An interesting exploration of the postmodern chronotope could begin in this thesis statement with a special emphasis on the weak and highly fragmented—schizophrenic—temporalities and depthlessness and technologically sublime space in the postmodern. The work of Edward Burtynsky exhibits particularly apt motifs with which to begin this auratic exploration of the postmodern chronotope. Another possibility would be the exploration of multinational spaces of what David Harvey calls “flexible accumulation” and its effect on the postmodern chronotope in individual lives. See Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, Part III, “The Experience of Space and Time”, pp. 201-359. Yet again, Reinhard Koselleck’s idea of “Neuzeit” would offer a possible genealogical account of the rise of the modern chronotope of ‘new time’—the time of the daily news and of progress. Cf. “‘Neuzeit’: Remarks on the Semantics of the Modern Concept of Movement,” Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, pp. 231-266. Reinhard Koselleck describes what he dubs the immanent temporalization of history. In using this phrase Koselleck identifies the Modern’s concept of time as it may be distinguished from the pre-modern or Medieval concept. Specifically the phrase refers to the inherently subjective way in which time is experienced by humankind in the modern period. According to Koselleck since the modern period began, historical events have increasingly taken on their own internal time, and this internal time is distinct from a natural or objective time or clock time, or circadian time. Internal time is contingent upon the Moderns’ emphasis that the annals of history are the record of humankind’s progress toward its telos—vis-à-vis, the unfolding of human capacities. Since the Medieval era, any historical event that speeds the process toward that goal—whatever that telos may be—is understood as accelerating time, and vice versa. The immanent temporalization of history, then, is the adding of a temporal component to historical events and their analysis. According to Koselleck, historical events have their own internal time which can be said to be relative; that is to say, historical events come to influence how humankind experiences time. Time is no longer empty and additive as it was in the Middle Ages—in the sense that ‘there is nothing new under the sun,’ but it now has a qualitative component that distinguishes one day from the next such that it is better by virtue of it being new. It is this newness with which a genealogy of a distinctly modern chronotope—one that Bakhtin does not take up, would have to first explore. Koselleck’s following chapter in Futures Past on the “Space of Experience” would no doubt also be enlightening in this regard.

Morson and Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 379.

Much of what is to follow regarding the three ancient forms of Chronotope may well have their original inspiration in the lectures and work of Ivan Ivanovich Tolstoy, whether by direct influence in the classroom, through Bakhtin’s brother Nikolai, or through Tolstoy’s works. See Perlina, Funny Things are Happening on the Way to the Bakhtin Forum, p. 8-9:

While teaching language courses, Tolstoy was responsible for translating the major body of early Greek prose into Russian. In his seminars, he raised a group of young scholars who translated Lucian, Longus, Chariton, Heliodorus—in short, the very Greek authors that Bakhtin discusses in the pages of his essay Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel. Professor Tolstoy worked on menippean dialogues and translated the famous Lover of Lies by Lucian.

Bakhtin, “Forms of time and Chronotope in the Novel”, The Dialogic Imagination, p. 94.
Delay might give [Manfred] time to reflect on the horrid measures he had conceived, or produce some circumstance in [Hippolita’s] favour, if she could for that night at least avoid his odious purpose.—Yet where conceal herself! How avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle! As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of Saint Nicholas. Could she reach the castle! As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of Saint Nicholas. Could she reach the altar before she was overtaken, she knew even Manfred’s violence would not dare to profane the sacredness of the place; and she determined, if no other means of deliverance offered, to shut herself up forever among the holy virgins, whose convent was contiguous to the cathedral. In this resolution, she seized a lamp that burned the foot of the staircase, and hurried toward the secret passage.

Far from obstructing the movements of the protagonists, the emptiness of spaces and lack of spatial description lends to this sudden freedom of movement. Suddenly there is a lamp in front of Hippolita that is placed in this empty space by a *deus ex machina* function.  

See for example Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*:

All the peculiarities that we have pointed out so far may be said to be positive features in folkloric time. But a final feature of this time (on which we will now pause), its cyclicity, is a negative feature, one that limits the force and ideological productivity of this time. The mark of cyclicity, and consequently of cyclical repetitiveness, is imprinted on all events occurring in this type of time. Time’s forward impulse is limited by the cycle. For this reason even growth does not achieve an authentic becoming.
and present forms). In this respect it makes no difference at all whether the end is perceived as
catastrophe and destruction pure and simple, as a new chaos, as a Twilight of the Gods, as the
advent of God’s Kingdom—it matters only that the end effect everything that exists, and that this
end be, moreover, relatively close at hand. Eschatology always sees the segment of a future
separating the present from the end as lacking value; this separating segment of time loses its
significance and interest, it is merely an unnecessary continuation of an indefinitely prolonged
present.

618 See Dante, The Divine Comedy: Inferno, xxxiii-xxxiv, pp. 300-17.
619 Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 403.
622 Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, Speech Genres, p. 16. Bakhtin also provides a chronology of
instantiations of the bildungsroman on pp. 19-20:

There exists a special subcategory of the novel called the ‘novel of education’ (Erziehungsroman
or Bildungsroman). Usually included (in chronological order) are the following major examples of
this generic subcategory: Xenophon’s Cyropaedia (classical), Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival
(Middle Ages), Rabelais’ Gargantua and Pantagruel. Gimmelshausen’s Simplicissimus (the
Renaissance), Fénélon’s Télémaque (neoclassicism), Rousseau’s Emile (since there is a
considerable novelistic element in this pedagogical treatise), Wieland’s Agathon, Wetzel’s Tobias
Knout, Himmel’s Lebensläufe nach aufsteigender Linie, Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister (both novels),
Jean Paul’s Titan (and several of his other novels), Dickens’ David Copperfield, Raabe’s Der
Hungerpastor, Gottfried Keller’s Der grüne Heinrich, Pontoppidan’s Lucky Peter, Tolstoy’s
Childhood, Adolescence, and Youth, Goncharov’s An Ordinary Story and Oblomov, Romain
Rolland’s Jean-Christophe, Thomas Mann’s Buddenbrooks and Magic Mountain, and others.

623 Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, Speech Genres, p. 16:
In subsequent history the very idea of the ordeal is filled with the most diverse ideological content.
This type includes (in later Romanticism) testing for vocation, for genius, and for membership in
the elect. Another subcategory includes the testing of Napoleonic parvenus in the French novel,
testing for artistic genius and, in parallel, the artist’s fitness for life (künstlerroman), and, finally,
testing the liberal reformer, the Nietzschean, the immoralist, the emancipated woman, and a
number of other subcategories.... A special subcategory of the novel of ordeal is the Russian novel
of ordeal, which tests man for his social fitness and general worthiness (the theme of the
‘superfluous man’).

No doubt the Underground Man would be a hero of this latter type, as well as the (anti-)hero in Gide’s The
Immoralist.

624 Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, Speech Genres, p. 19. The Bildungsroman is also referred to as the
Erziehungsroman, literally the novel of upbringing or rearing.
630 According to Edward P. Mahoney, in his “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, this is not strictly true
in terms of cause. While the “one highest being” is the origin of all things, neo-Platonism holds that
“beings intermediate on the scale” of nature cause each other according to their position in the hierarchy
of the great chain of being.

631 Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 220. For Pseudo-Dionysius, see also
Dionysius the Areopagite, “On the Heavenly Hierarchy”, The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite III, i-ii,
pp. 13-4:

hierarchy is, in my judgement, a sacred order and science and operation, assimilated, as far as
attainable, to the likeness of God, and conducted to the illuminations granted to it from God,
according to the capacity, with a view to the Divine imitation. ... The purpose, then, of Hierarchy is
the assimilation and union, as far as attainable, with God, having Him Leader of all religious science and operation, by looking unflinchingly to His most Divine comeliness, and copying, as far as possible, and by perfecting its own followers as Divine images, mirrors most luminous and without flaw, receptive of the primal light and the supremely Divine ray, and devoutly filled with the entrusted radiance, and again, spreading this radiance ungrudgingly to those after it, in accordance with the supremely Divine regulations.

For more on the link between early Christian thought and neo-Platonism, see Bréhier, *The History of Philosophy: The Middle Ages and The Renaissance*, pp. 17-8:

The Christian image of the universe and the neo-Platonic image share a common rhythm: both are theocentric images that describe dual motion of things, the way in which things move outward from their first principle and then return to the principle. In the Christian image the succession of these moments is a series of events, each of which has as its starting point a free initiative: creation and fall, redemption and a future life of bliss. In the neo-Platonic image, successive moments are derived from a natural, eternal necessity: outward motion or movement away from the first principle represents a change in that the same reality that was initially in a state of absolute unity (the first principle) is divided more and more as it proceeds through the lower levels of being, and the return represents a reversal of the process of division, which now gives way to unity.

On the attribution of the *Liber de causis* to Aristotle, see Leo Catana, *The Concept of Contraction in Giordano Bruno’s Philosophy*, p. 104.

Arthur O. Lovejoy notes the tendency in human thought to prejudice the direction of this chain of causation, *The Great Chain of Being*, p. 316: “the causal relation [between these graded beings of *scala naturae*], however gratuitous, seems natural to the human mind—that the ‘lower’ must be derived from the ‘higher,’ the cause be, at the least, not less than its effects.” In other words, since the higher beings in the hierarchy are themselves closer to the one, they have greater perfection than the lower and therefore also the *puissance* to cause the lower. The lower beings, since they are inferior, cannot be the cause of the higher beings.


For example, Aquinas thought that the gradations did represent species while Plotinus believed these rungs were not species but “spheres of being.” This difference is glossed over by Lovejoy. See Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 219 and Lovejoy *The Great Chain of Being*, p. 75-6.

See Edward P. Mahoney, in his “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 221.

Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 221. Locke will later adopt this language of spatiality, ibid, p. 228.


Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 222. The ‘subtle doctor,’ Johannes Duns Scotus rejected the notion that non-being—i.e., absolute potential—had any part to play in the great chain of being; he likewise rejects the idea that matter can play any part in the degree of perfection-imperfection, see Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, pp. 223 and 224. Albertus Magnus is a gradation between Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas both in chronology and as regards the development of this notion of hierarchy in the Medieval period.


Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 224: “For Paul the scale of being (*latitude entis*) begins with the zero grade of being (*non gradus entis*) and runs through species insofar as each species is at a different distance from the zero grade.”

Edward P. Mahoney, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, p. 224. Perhaps it is an unfortunate truth for us that this conflict continued to harass the best minds in the West for centuries. Of course Bacon, Gassendi, Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes and Leibniz, and many others of the early modern period are often credited with having de-linked the divine chain of being, and at the very least to have spent their time working on combating dogmatism in all its *recognizable* forms. Nevertheless, Galileo’s teacher Francesco Buonamici took part in this debate, and Galileo himself “argues against the notion of God serving as a measure of all things according to their distance or receding from him...” Nevertheless, for Galileo “there seems to be no ‘metaphysical’ explanation for the order of things other than what lies hidden in the Divine Mind,” Mahoney, p. 226-7. Certainly it bears repeating that no paradigmatical shift happens all at once but comes about only in fits and starts. While Descartes declared the subject wholly un-philosophical, Leibniz
attempted a reworking of the great chain of being that did not rely on the poles of God and matter or perfection and imperfection, see Mahoney, p. 227. Even the benefit of hindsight should come with a modicum of critical reserve, and we ought to hesitate before making of these enlightened van-guards of the Renaissance prescient men of the future come to set the record straight. This type of retrospective method always projects onto the past the ideology of the present, as we have seen, and it typically also betrays an intellectual audacity where one is certain we now have the correct story.


Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, p. 54.

Mahoney’s article serves as an excellent critique of Lovejoy regarding the origin of the notion of great chain of being. Lovejoy locates its pre-history in Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Republic* as well as Aristotle’s supposed metaphysical basis for the principle of plenitude, which itself is taken by Lovejoy as a pre-history of the notion of the one as found in Plotinus. Lovejoy also goes astray, says Mahoney, in excluding Proclus’ very original notion of hierarchy which are “simply not there” in Plotinus, as Lovejoy asserts. Regarding the so-called “Idea of Ideas” in Plato from which the travesty of the *scala naturae* was originally supposed to have sprung, see Lovejoy p. 39. For Aristotle’s basis for the principle of plenitude, see Lovejoy, p. 55. For Plotinus, see Lovejoy, pp. 61-3.


For Bakhtin’s gloss on Aristotle’s metaphysical image of the cosmos and this change from verticality to horizontality, see *Rabelais and his World*, p. 363.


For this wedding of Christian redemption and neo-Platonism, see Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, pp. 401 and 402 respectively.


Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 404:

Not the ascent of the individual soul into the higher sphere but the movement forward of all mankind, along the horizontal of historic time, becomes the basic criterion of all evaluations. Having done its park upon earth, the individual soul fades and dies altogether with the individual body; but the body of the people and of mankind, fertilized by the dead, is eternally renewed and moves forever forward along the historic path of progress.


1 Corinthians 15:12-13: “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”

1 Corinthians 15:42-55.

See O.E.D. Online entry “profane,”


Middle French *prophane, prophaine, profane* (French *profane*) not sacred (1228 in Old French), not pertaining to a religious order (1384), that acts impiously (1486) and its etymon classical Latin *profānus* (in post-classical Latin also *prophanus*, frequently in Medieval MSS; see note) not dedicated to religious use, secular, not initiated into a religious rite, ceremonially unclean, impious, also as noun, denoting a person who is uninitiated or impious, lit. ‘before (i.e., outside) the temple’ *(pro-)* + *fānum* FNÉ n.² Compare Catalan *profà* (1460), Spanish *profano* (late 14th cent. as *prophano*), Portuguese *profano* (15th cent.), Italian *profano* (a1321).


See Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Book II, Chapter III, “Of the Grief Wherewith Gargantua was moved at the decease of his wife Badebee”, p. 128:

“My wife is dead, well, by G—*(da jurandi)* I shall not raise her again by my crying: she is well; she is in paradise at least, if she be no higher: she prayeth to God for us; she is happy; she is above
the senses of our miseries, nor can our calamities reach her. What though she be dead, must not we also die? The same debt, which she hath paid, hangs over our heads; nature will require it of us, and we must all of us, some day, taste of the same sauce; let her pass then, and the Lord preserve the survivors, for I must now cast about how to get another wife."

One could argue it’s actually the father-son continuum. Rabelais’ was a man of his time. It seems clear to me that both are implicated, although Rabelais clearly emphasizes Pantagruel’s likeness—and therefore his connection—to his father not his mother.


Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 408.

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 318:

let us point out that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents. It can fill the entire universe.

The hierarchy to which Bakhtin refers here in no way reflects the Medieval official hierarchy of vertical polarity. Note that he says “cosmic hierarchy.” It is clear in this passage that Bakhtin is referring to pre-mediaeval Aristotelian thought, not the hypostatized system of ethics based on Aristotle’s cosmos.

Although it is beyond the scope of the present work, a comparison between Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space and the cosmic body is begging both in this passage and, so far as I am aware, in Bakhtinian scholarship generally.

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 318.

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 435.

Joyce, Ulysses, p. 2-3. This is Buck Mulligan’s spiritual invocation of the body of Christ during his black mass at the opening of the novel. James Thornton, as always, sheds more light on the passage than I could hope to, Allusions in Ulysses, p. 11-2:

Mulligan’s statement seems to be a general parody of lesson 26 of the Maynooth Catechism (“On the Blessed Eucharist”) and to relate especially to the first question of that lesson: “What is the Blessed Eucharist?” to which the reply is “The Blessed Eucharist is the sacrament of the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine.” The version cited is that of 1882, which was in use throughout Joyce’s lifetime. Farmer and Henley’s Slang and its Analogues lists “blood-an’-ouns” and explains it as “an abbreviated form of an old and blasphemous oath—‘God’s blood and wounds!’”

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 434.

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Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 434.

Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 435.

According to Clark and Holquist’s annotated bibliography, Bakhtin was began “Roman vospitanija i ego značenie v istorii realizma” (“The Bildungsroman and its Significance in the History of Realism”) in 1936 and “Formy vremeni i xronotopa v romane” (“Forms of time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” in 1937. Both were finished the following year, in 1938. Clark and Holquist, Mikhail Bakhtin, p. 354.

Just one more casualty of Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa, the manuscript was actually at the publishers ready for printing. See Holquist’s Introduction to Speech Genres, p. xiii. See also Morson and Emerson, and Emerson’s Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, p. 373-4:

At times, the chronotope essay reads as if it were written intermittently, its author occasionally running out of steam or leaping over topics and periods less interesting to him. And, as we have noted, the essay’s history of the assimilation of history ends, for no discernible reason, with Rabelais. As if to fill in some of the gaps, Bakhtin in two other essays offered further observations clearly derived from the same complex of ideas: “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (toward a Historical Typology of the novel),” apparently a surviving fragment of a complete book on the novel of education, and portions of “Epic and Novel.”


Goethe makes this claim during his discussion of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Influence of the New Philosophy”, *Goethe’s Botanical Writings*, p. 229:

Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* had long since appeared, but it lay completely beyond my orbit. Nevertheless, I was present at many a discussion of it, and with some attentiveness I could notice the old question continually reappearing, namely, how much we ourselves and how much the outside world contributes to our intellectual existence. I had never separated the two and when I did philosophize about subjects in my own way, I did so with unconscious naïvety, in the belief that I actually saw my views before my very eyes.


Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, *Speech Genres*, p. 28. See also Goethe, “Considerable Assistance from One Ingeniously Chosen Word”, *Goethe’s Botanical Writings*, p. 235. There one Dr. Heinroth is quoted as praising Goethe for his “objectively active” thought in which there is an absolute reciprocity between seeing and Goethe’s thought ingressing into objects.

Goethe, “Considerable Assistance from One Ingeniously Chosen Word”, *Goethe’s Botanical Writings*, p. 236: the concrete situatedness of the object is at root of Goethe’s poetic method and explains his “inclination toward the occasional poems to which I was irresistibly inspired by special occurrences. And thus it has been noticed that something particular is always at the basis of each of [his] poems, a definite nucleus for a more or less significant product.”


The recounting of this encounter is really a charming anecdote; Goethe’s ambivalent feeling for the young poet was clearly present in this first meeting. See “Propitious Encounter”, *Goethe’s Botanical Writings*, p. 217:

We had reached [Schiller’s] house, the conversation lured me in. I gave a spirited explanation of my theory of the metamorphosis of plants with graphic pen sketches of a symbolic plant. He listened and looked with great interest, with unerring comprehension, but when I had ended, he shook his head, saying, “That is not an empiric experience, it is an idea.” I was taken aback and somewhat irritated, for the disparity of our viewpoints was here sharply delineated. ... Controlling myself, I replied, “How splendid that I have ideas without knowing it, and can see them before my very eyes.”


Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 61. See also Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, *Speech Genres*, p. 31-2:

Goethe goes on to develop in detail the method he has chosen for translating organic Italian time into German, that is, ordinary time, and he appends a sketch in which he uses concentric circles to give a visually graphic image of the relationship between the two kinds of time.

This organic Italian time (the calculation of time proceeds from the actual setting of the sun, which, of course, takes place at different hours during different times of the year) is inseparably interwoven with all of Italian life, and Goethe repeatedly turns his attention to the latter. All his descriptions of Italian everyday life are pervaded with a sense of everyday time, measured by the pleasures and labour of the vital human life. This feeling for time profoundly permeates his celebrated description of the Roman Carnival.

Cf. Reproduced from Goethe, *Italian Journey*, p. 61 where the diagram is reproduced.


Bakhtin points to the example in *Italian Journey* in which Goethe rebukes a tourist guide for trying to infer an ancient battle scene which had left no visible trace. See also Goethe, *Italian Journey*, pp. 227-9. There, on his visit to a “pleasant valley in the mountains south of Palermo,” Goethe provides us the example of the “stupid” tourist guide who arbitrarily mixed up “past and present” by trying to make visible an ancient battle fought by Hannibal during the Punic Wars. Goethe had no interest in these invisible remnants of the past. He spent the day collecting sediment that had been deposited on the banks of the river, instead, and tried to explain to the guide that these “specimens” were visible traces of the “prehistoric earth.”

Goethe, “Propitious Encounter”, *Goethe’s Botanical Writings*, p. 217


In the process of developing a sense of time, Goethe overcomes the ghostly (Gespensternässiges), the terrifying (Unerfreuliches), and the unaccountable (Unzuberechnendes), which were strong in his initial feeling of a merged past and present. But the very sense of the merging of times remained in complete and undiminished force and freshness until the end of his life, blossoming into an authentic fullness of time. The ghostly, terrifying, and unaccountable in it were surmounted by the structural aspects, already disclosed by us above, which are inherent in this way of visualizing time: the aspect of an essential link between the past and present, the aspect of the necessity of the past and the necessity of its place in a line of continuous development, the aspect of the creative effectiveness of the past, and, finally, the aspect of the past and present being linked to a necessary future.

Goethe, “Considerable Assistance from One Ingeniously Chosen Word”, Goethe’s Botanical Writings, p. 236.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 446, written on the occasion of Goethe’s second visit to Rome.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 447.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 450.


Goethe, Italian Journey, pp. 451, 454, 548-9, and 460, respectively.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 459.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 461.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 467.

Goethe, Italian Journey, p. 469.

For more on the Roman, or “New Year” Carnival’s relation to Rabelais and his World, see also Gardiner, Dialogics of Critique, pp. 44-5.

Cf. the phrase which we have already quoted from “Art and Answerability, Art and Answerability, p. 1: “I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art....”

Bakhtin draws a similar conclusion in terms of the fullness of the folkloric chronotope vs. the negativity with which its eschatological aspect regards the present form of reality, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel”, The Dialogic Imagination, p. 149: Images of [the eschatological future] were inevitably located in the past, or transferred to some Land of Cockaigne, beyond the seven seas; their dissimilarity to a cruel and evil present-day reality was measured by temporal and spatial distancing. But such images were not taken out of time as such, they were not torn out of the real and material world of the here-and-now. On the contrary, one might even say that all the energy of this presumed future served only to deepen and intensify images of material here-and-now reality, and above all the image of the living, corporeal human being: a man grew up at the future’s expense.

The complexity of this passage cannot go without further commentary. The eschatological and mythic chronotopes that seek a golden utopic age are not wholly without their own striving for reality, but the
and monological absolute, but it is nevertheless embedded in what it sees as a very real and oppressive reality for which they strive remains a mere possibility. The eschatological vision takes itself for a univocal present.


There Kant distinguished once and for all between a true genetic history of nature and its mere description on which the taxonomies of Linnaeus and Buffon had been constructed. See for example Sloan, “Buffon, German Biology, Historical Interpretation of Biological Species”, p. 126:

But in his 1777 paper, Kant achieved a clarity far greater than that of Buffon, with his explicit distinction between Naturgeschichte, meaning the genetic history of nature, and Naturbeschreibung, the description of nature…. With this new basis, Kant was able to achieve a significantly greater rigour of analysis than Buffon ever achieved, and with this made a rigorous distinction between the taxonomic concepts as applied in the domain of Naturbeschreibung from their function in Naturgeschichte.

See also Kant’s paper “Determination of the Concept of the Human Race”, Anthropology, History, and Education, p. 153:

Initially, when looking only for characters of comparison (in terms of similarity or dissimilarity), one obtains classes of creatures under a species. If one looks further to their phyletic origin, then it must become apparent whether those classes are so many different kinds or only races. The wolf, the fox, the jackal, the hyena and the house dog are so many classes of four-footed animals. If one assumes that each of them require a special phyletic origin, then they are so many kinds. However, if one concedes that they also could have originated from one phylum, then they are only races of the latter. In natural history (which is concerned only with generation and phyletic origination kind and species are not distinguished as such. This distinction occurs solely in the description of nature, in which only the comparison of marks matters. What is here called kind, is often only called race there.

See also Kant’s “On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy” where this distinction is most clearly stated: “I would propose the word physiography (Physiographie) for the description of nature and the word physiography (Physiogonie) for natural history.”

See also Bakhtin, “The Bildungsroman”, Speech Genres, p. 40: “In it, space and time are bound together into one inseparable knot. Terrestrial space and human history are inseparable from one another in Goethe’s integrated concrete vision. This is what makes historical time in his creative work so dense and materialized, and space so humanly interpreted and intensive.” See also p. 42:

Everything—from an abstract idea to a piece of rock on the bank of a stream—bears the stamp of time, is saturated with time, and assumes its form and meaning in time. Therefore, everything is intensive in Goethe’s world; it contains no inanimate, immobile, petrified places, no immutable background that does not participate in action and emergence (in events), no deteriorations or sets. In Goethe’s world there are no events, plots, or temporal motifs that are not related in an essential way to the particular spatial place of their occurrence, that could occur anywhere or nowhere (‘eternal’ plots and motifs). Everything in this world is a time-space, a true chronotope.

...everything is intensive....

Heraclitus, Fragment 52, The Cosmic Fragments, xiii. Deleuze tells us that “Heraclitus had two thoughts which are like ciphers: according to one there is no being, everything is becoming; according to the other, being is the being of becoming as such”, Nietzsche and Philosophy, p. 23. These, it would seem, are related to the two tables, the chance of the gods and the necessity of man: “these two tables are not two worlds. They are the two hours of a single world, the two moments of a single world, midnight and midday, the hour when the dice are thrown, the hour when the dice fall back.” Cf. also p. 24: “the child plays, withdraws from the game and returns to it. In this game of becoming, the being of becoming also plays the game with itself; the aeon (time), says Heraclitus, is a child who plays, plays at draughts.”


Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, p. 435-6.

Dostoevsky, “Rebellion”, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 255.

I have borrowed the phrase “By the testicles of Hercules” from “Book IV” of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, p. 535. “Bum-gut” comes from the same, Chapter IV, “Book I”, p. 13.
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