

**DIALOGUE AND PRAYER: MIKHAIL BAKHTIN'S DIALOGISM  
AND RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY**

by

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## Abstract

This work investigates the degree to which Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of Dialogism is founded on Russian Orthodox Christian ideas regarding 'self' and 'self/other' relations.

Controversy regarding the Christian influences in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin continues. There is no dispute as to Bakhtin's adherence to Russian Orthodox Christian faith, yet little analysis and comparison of Bakhtin and the theological axioms of Russian Orthodox Christianity has been done. This study proposes to show where there is agreement between Russian Hesychastic monasticism, specifically in the concepts of Prayer and Kenoticism, and Bakhtin's philosophy of Dialogism .

This work provides a complement to the significant volume of Bakhtin scholarship that traces his intellectual lineage to German philosophical tradition, particularly to Neo-Kantianism. A summary of hesychastic monastic practice in Russia, and a survey of the social, spiritual and intellectual milieu of western Russia in the first two decades of the twentieth century helps to locate Bakhtin's earliest published work in context, and helps trace in that work a second lineage to Russian Orthodox Christian ideas of the 'person' and interpersonal experience.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Basil McDermott, Dr. Peter Timmins and Dr. Tim Herrod, and thank them for their always courteous, occasionally helpful suggestions about this work.

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All sacred writings contain an outer and an inner meaning. Behind the literal words lies another range of meaning, another form of knowledge. According to an old-age tradition, Man once was in touch with this inner knowledge and inner meaning. There are many stories in the Old Testament which convey another knowledge, a meaning quite different from the literal sense of the words. The story of the Ark, the story of the Pharaoh's butler and baker, the story of the Tower of Babel, the story of Jacob and Esau and the mess of pottage, and many others, contain an inner *psychological* meaning far removed from their literal level of meaning.

The idea behind all sacred writing is to convey a higher meaning than the literal words contain, the truth of which must be seen by Man *internally*.

Maurice Nicoll  
*The New Man*



## Foreword

### *A. Background*

I became interested in Mikhail Bakhtin through my acquaintance with Martin Buber's 'philosophy of Dialogism'. As an undergraduate in the department of Communications at Simon Fraser University I took a course in 'Interpersonal Communication' taught by Professor M.P. Hindley which drew heavily on Buber's distinction between 'I-thou' and 'I-it' relations between people. This experience gave an intellectual form to questions I had entertained, and oriented me toward a path of scholarly and personal investigation. Buber's idea of the essentially human interrelationship, which he called "I-Thou" is at the centre of his philosophy of Dialogue, and characterizes an ideal process of human communication. This had come to be called, in the study of interpersonal communication, 'dialogism'. Bakhtin, too, uses the term 'dialogue' and 'dialogic' to refer to a particular quality of human communication. I began to try to grasp how Bakhtin was using the term.

My problem in understanding Bakhtin came not from Bakhtin's work itself, though that was demanding enough, but from the context in which I was working. The academic study of Communication is the offspring of a number of inquiries in disciplines including but not limited to Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Linguistics, Literary Criticism, Psychology, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies, just to name the obvious ones. Competing assumptions from differing disciplines posed one difficulty:

competing goals and methods for pursuing those goals posed another. These were and still are complications that needed to be kept in view, but my problem was different. My difficulty came from trying to 'fit' what I was interested in investigating into what was currently acknowledged as included within 'Communication Studies'. I was having great difficulty making sense of what Bakhtin had written, against how others had understood and applied those writings over the range of what's included in Communication Studies. Why this was so dawned on me only after I overheard someone at a party make the rather cranky comment, "Well, we don't do *human* communication, we only do technological communication."

Thinking about this, it occurred to me that it was not so much that Communication Studies includes as vast a range of working assumptions as it does that was confusing me, but that despite this, Communication Studies does *not* include in its working assumptions the ones Bakhtin does. What Bakhtin is investigating is human experience-of 'self' and of 'other', while Communication Studies more and more focusses beyond this, on social implications of new media, critiques of advertising, marketing strategies and cultures of consumption, analyses of discourses of power, so on and so forth. Realizing this helped me better grasp Bakhtin's work, and also helped me to grasp how this focus in his work can contribute to Communication Studies today.

### *B. The subject of Mikhail Bakhtin*

About the only thing scholars agree on when the topic of Mikhail Bakhtin comes up is that there is little agreement to be found. The range of his work fits

easily into no particular academic discipline. Many important circumstances of his life and of his relationships with others will likely never be conclusively confirmed. All we have are his writings, the bulk of which were never intended for public scrutiny. Those who lived through his times with him are dwindling, and the few who knew and spoke with him are nearing the end of their lives as well.

The study of a scholar's work implies we know the tradition the scholar worked in, and have an interest in it. In the case of Bakhtin, though, (particularly his early work) there is fundamental disagreement about *what* tradition, exactly, Bakhtin is working in. The question then, of 'what Bakhtin means' is premature. Before this, some work needs to be done to establish, or if that's not possible, to suggest, the tradition within which his contribution most probably fits, and can most profitably be studied. This is what I hope to contribute to with this study.

### *C. What I mean by Tradition'*

The concept of 'tradition' is fundamental to this work.

I first came across it in an interview with Roger Garaudy, who referred to Rene Guenon's definition of 'Tradition' as the "consistent effort to rediscover that which is fundamental across all the wisdoms and all the religions of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Tradition in this sense has three important implications.

First, 'tradition' seeks not to 'discover' but to 're-discover'. Everything important is not yet to be discovered but has been discovered, and needs to be remembered.

Second, 'Tradition' deals in wisdom, as distinct from information and knowledge.

Third, historically, 'Tradition' looks to practices called 'religious' to rediscover what is 'fundamental'.

To this idea of tradition I add the idea of 'lines of transmission'. Teilhard De Chardin's concept of the 'noosphere'-the sum total of knowledge held by those alive helps to imagine where knowledge resides, but any accumulation of that knowledge depends on an 'unbroken' line of transmission if that knowledge is not to be lost. When a line of transmission is broken and knowledge lost, that knowledge must be rediscovered.

#### *D. The Problem*

In the Introduction of their 1990 book Mikhail Bakhtin-Creation of a Prosaics, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson note that Bakhtin " ... has been described as structuralist and post structuralist, Marxist and post-Marxist, speech act theorist, sociolinguist, liberal, pluralist, mystic, vitalist, Christian, and materialist."<sup>2</sup> In a more thorough statement of the state of disunity concerning Bakhtin, Michael Holquist and Katrina Clark begin the only biography of Bakhtin by observing that

Bakhtin is emerging as one of the major thinkers of the twentieth century. His writings encompass linguistics, psychoanalysis, theology, social theory, historical poetics, axiology, and philosophy of the person. In addition, he

produced more specialized works devoted to Vitalism, Formalism, Dostoevsky, Freud, Goethe, Rabelais. Yet in the West, where he has already achieved considerable status among anthropologists, folklorists, linguists, and literary critics, the philosophical work on which are based his contributions to these areas are largely unknown. Major discrepancies in the establishment of his reputation are still in the process of being overcome.<sup>3</sup>

After summarizing the state of 'the Bakhtin problem' so accurately and succinctly it is either ironic or depressing to note that the balance of Clark and Holquist's foundational biographic contribution met with sharp criticism and accusations of hero-worship that amounted to hagiography, deliberate mistranslations, obfuscating citations, and overall sloppy scholarship.<sup>4</sup> The direction, then, that the novice Bakhtin scholar is continually pointed is back-beyond the commentaries on others' interpretations of Bakhtin's work, beyond interpretations of Bakhtin's work, even beyond the collections of Bakhtin's work itself. Beginning to begin to 'get' what Bakhtin has to 'give' means grappling with the social, intellectual, political and spiritual milieu in which he moved and thought.

The size of that project goes far beyond what can be accomplished in this work. But this work is an attempt to at least suggest how one of those influences-spiritual- can be seen in Bakhtin's work. I want to consider how the early work of Mikhail Bakhtin imbibes from and continues in the Russian Orthodox variety of the Christian spiritual tradition.

The first chapter provides biographical and bibliographical background on Mikhail Bakhtin. The second and third chapters proceed from the general to the

specific; the second chapter is a general historical treatment of Eastern and Western Christianity, while the third chapter describes how Russia took up Eastern Christian thought generally and hesychastic monasticism specifically. In the third chapter I also link the debates within the Russian church to the rise of, and to debates among, the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century. This provides an intellectual context for the fourth chapter where I outline how Mikhail Bakhtin's first book, Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics, shares fundamental concepts about the nature of the 'person' and 'consciousness' with the Russian hesychastic monastic contemplative tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Against Non-sense: An interview with Roger Garaudy' edited and translated by Ann Weiser in Gnosis No. 16, Summer 1990 p.34-37; Originally published in Krisis, No.3, September 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson Mikhail Bakhtin- Creation of a Prosaics Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990 p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984 p. vii.

<sup>4</sup> see especially I.R. Titunik "The Baxtin Problem: Concerning Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's Mikhail Bakhtin." and Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's "A Continuing Dialogue" both in Slavic and East European Journal 30, no.1 Spring 1986; and Nina Perlina "Funny things are Happening on the way to the Baxtin Forum" Kennan Institute Occasional Paper no. 231 Washington D.C. 1989.

## Chapter 1

### Biographical and Bibliographical Sketch

#### *Biography*

Russian documents and her Orthodox Church by the Julian calendar record the birth of Mikhail Mikhailovitch Bakhtin on November 4, 1895 in the Russian town of Orel. The second son and one of five children, Mikhail Bakhtin belonged to a well-to-do family. His father managed the bank in Orel his own family had established; the family name could be found on a school for cadets there. Bakhtin grew up in a family that was cultivated and liberal.<sup>1</sup>

Bakhtin's parents believed that above all their sons should acquire a first-class education. Until he was nine years old both Mikhail and Nikolai, his elder brother by one year, had a German governess from whom they learned to speak German and who exposed them to European culture. Both boys had a keen interest in the Ancients, and by the time their father packed up his family and moved them to Vilnius where he had been transferred, they knew the Illiad and the Odyssey well enough to amuse themselves by playing out scenes.<sup>2</sup>

In 1904 the family moved to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Here Bakhtin was exposed to a much more cosmopolitan environment. Compared to Vilnius, Orel had been small and provincial. With a population of 200,000 and a rich intellectual and cultural history, the Vilnius Bakhtin lived in was an important

and complex mix of cultures and faiths. Since Lithuania was governed by Russia at this time, Russian Orthodoxy was the official religion. A large enough Jewish presence there had Vilnius referred to often as the 'Jerusalem of the North', but by far the most prevalent faith was Roman Catholicism, a legacy of Lithuania's broken relationship with Poland after the third Partition in 1795.<sup>3</sup>

In Vilnius Bakhtin attended the First Vilnius Gymnasium at the Old University, and attended Russian Orthodox churches. At school he worked within standard Russo-centric curriculum, but because it was not taught there, together Mikhail and Nikolai hired a tutor to teach them Greek.<sup>4</sup>

Bakhtin lived in Vilnius until 1910, when his father was again transferred, this time to Odessa. The fifteen year-old Bakhtin moved south with his family, and he completed his schooling there; it was also in Odessa that, at the age of sixteen, Bakhtin was diagnosed with osteomyelitis, the inflammation of the bone or bone marrow, a painful condition from which he would suffer his whole life. Also during his time in Odessa, Bakhtin first read the works of philosopher of dialogism Martin Buber and the religious existentialist Soren Kierkegaard, and by the time Bakhtin began his university training he was "formidably" widely read, particularly, Holquist and Clark note, "in the area of speculative theology."<sup>5</sup>

In 1913, after finishing high school, Bakhtin enrolled at Odessa University and the following year transferred to Petersburg University, enrolling in the Historico-Philological faculty. Here Bakhtin spent a turbulent four years completing his university training while Russia endured The First World War and two Revolutions. The social upheaval that resulted from the massive



changes the revolution brought disrupted life from its normal pace and structure, and life at the university was not immune to this. Nevertheless, Bakhtin completed his university requirements, and after graduation moved in the spring of 1918 to Nevel.<sup>6</sup>

Nevel in 1918 was a small town about 300 miles by rail to the south of Petersburg, now Petrograd. After the Revolution there was a kind of a redistribution of the population away from the cities and the struggles of its dwellers for dwindling resources, to more rural areas where demands for food and other supplies was not so great. Bakhtin in Nevel found work in a high school, and stayed there until 1920, when he moved about 70 miles further south to Vitebsk, a resort town in pre-Revolutionary days that had become a preferred destination after the Revolution for intellectuals and other culturally sophisticated citizens.<sup>7</sup>

In Vitebsk Bakhtin met Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich, who lived in the same rooming house as he. While living there, Bakhtin's osteomyelitis spread throughout his left side and to his right hand, and in 1921 his health was further complicated when he contracted typhoid, the complications from which made an operation necessary. Elena helped nurse Bakhtin after his hospitalization, and later that year they were married.<sup>8</sup>

During these times in Nevel and Vitebsk, Bakhtin, besides writing, lecturing and taking part in various salon-type discussions, was unsuccessfully trying to secure some kind of more established and legitimate academic position either in Moscow or Petrograd. In the spring of 1924 Bakhtin returned with his wife to the city where he had spent his university days, now called Leningrad.

Bakhtin's illness had advanced to such a degree that he was now qualified for a state pension, albeit a small one.<sup>9</sup>

In Leningrad the small pension and Bakhtin's illness kept him at home, and with no institutional affiliations and little contact outside his home, Bakhtin remained almost unknown in that town's intellectual circles until the late 1920s, when his book on Dostoevsky was published. But just two months before it appeared, Bakhtin was arrested.

By the late 1920s Stalin's purges of the bourgeois intellectual class included the persecution of those involved in religious organizations of all kinds. In one of the many sweeps of arrests on these religious grounds Bakhtin was arrested, sometime around Jan. 7, 1929. He was charged with a number of offenses, among them, of being a member of the Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Seraphim of Sarov, an underground Orthodox Christian group founded by Sergey Alexeevich Alexeev<sup>10</sup>, and of 'corrupting the young'. He was held for a few months in the Prison for Preliminary Detention, but his health had been wavering. In June of that year the osteomyelitis in his leg was complicated by paranephritis in his kidneys. His disability status was re-evaluated, and upgraded back to second class, making it possible for him to be transferred to a hospital. On July 9, 1929 Bakhtin was moved to Uritsky Hospital for an operation the next day. Bakhtin convalesced there until being transferred, on August 8, 1929, to Erisman Hospital, resuming his convalescence until the fall. On September 2nd Bakhtin applied to the Commissariat of Health to have a medical examination, to provide evidence in support of the review of his case, believing he was to be sentenced to anywhere from five to ten years on the Solovetsky Islands. Confusion surrounded his arrest and sentencing; he was

never tried and thus never convicted of anything. Some of the charges were dropped, and around December 23, 1929 Bakhtin was released to convalesce at home. His wife was notified by the secret police that his intended sentence of ten years on the Solovetsky Islands had been changed to six years of exile in the town of Kustanai, in the Province of Kazakhstan. Bakhtin requested and was given permission to travel at his own expense without an escort. Once in Kustanai he could pursue any line of work he chose except teaching, and there the Bakhtins moved in early 1930.<sup>11</sup>

In Kustanai, Bakhtin was required to report to the security police once a week but this, and not being allowed to teach, were the only restrictions placed on him. Unable to get work initially, his wife worked at various jobs-as a bookkeeper and cashier, at a library and at the local bookstore. Bakhtin eventually found employment at the District Consumers' Cooperative in April of 1931, and in the spirit of academia began in 1933 working for the District Council as a consultant.<sup>12</sup>

Bakhtin's exile officially ended on August 4, 1934. Since he did not possess a residency permit, returning to Leningrad to live was difficult, though he did make a short trip there in September of that year for medical reasons, and in 1932 it was discovered that the osteomyelitis had spread to both his legs. The Bakhtins continued to live and work in Kustanai. In the summer of 1936 Bakhtin traveled to Leningrad for an extended summer holiday, and during the two months of this trip he enlisted friends and acquaintances to help him find an academic position. On September 9 of that year he was offered a teaching position at the Mordovia Pedagogical Institute in Saransk. Bakhtin quit his job

at the Consumers Cooperative in Kustanai and moved to Saransk, some 400 miles east of Moscow.<sup>13</sup>

In Saransk, Bakhtin taught a variety of World Literature courses, but his time there was characterized by increasing pressure on and suspicion of those who had been formerly exiled or sentenced. After some colleagues at the Institute were removed from their situations Bakhtin decided, in the summer of 1937, to resign and seek similar employment elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

Bakhtin and his wife traveled to Moscow and Leningrad in search of employment, then returned to Kustanai. In the fall of 1937 the Bakhtins moved again, this time to Savelevo, a small town just beyond the one hundred kilometer residency border around Moscow within which former prisoners and exiles were forbidden to live. His medical condition was worsening, and it was only a few months after arriving in Savelevo, on February 13, 1938, that Bakhtin's right leg was amputated. For the next few years Bakhtin worked sporadically at a variety of scholarly occupations, lecturing, doing internal reviewing for publishing houses, all the time writing his own material. With the advent of the Second World War, and its heavy demands on Russia's able-bodied population, Bakhtin found work in the local schools in Savelevo, teaching German and Russian language courses there.<sup>15</sup>

As soon as the war ended Bakhtin returned to his position in the department of General Literature at the Mordovia Pedagogical Institute in Saransk, and re-established himself there as the chairman of the department. For the balance of that decade and the beginning of the next Bakhtin occupied himself with his teaching duties and with presenting and defending his doctoral dissertation,

'Rabelais in the History of Realism', submitted to the Gorky Institute of World Literature. The post-war political climate in Russia, with its emphasis on "...sophistication in Literature..." and its resistance to what had been considered 'the excessive veneration of folk forms misconceived' made Bakhtin's dissertation controversial<sup>16</sup> No agreement was reached as to whether it could be passed and a hearing was planned to decide the issue. Meetings were held, some with Bakhtin present and some without. The Higher Attestation Committee postponed making a ruling on the work until June of 1951 when they awarded Bakhtin the lesser Candidate's degree rather than the Doctor's degree he had sought. The political climate that made Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais unpalatable was not going to be one in which Bakhtin's career would thrive. After the controversy surrounding his dissertation he continued his duties at the Institute but kept a low professional profile.<sup>17</sup>

In 1957 the Pedagogical Institute where he taught was upgraded to a university, and was renamed the Ogarev University of Mordovia, and in 1958 Bakhtin was made chairman of the Department of Russian and Foreign Literature. Both Bakhtin and his wife were now in rather poor physical condition. Bakhtin's wife, Elena, had heart problems and the osteomyelitis in Bakhtin's remaining leg bothered him as much as his severe emphysema. Pursuing a more prestigious career and the subsequent move that might entail seemed too daunting a proposition in their deteriorated and deteriorating conditions, so they willingly remained in Saransk.<sup>18</sup>

In 1957 the noted Russian scholar Victor Shklovsky published Pro and Contra-Notes on Dostoevsky and in it mentioned Bakhtin's Dostoevsky book. This, along with Roman Jakobson's frequent mention of Bakhtin renewed

interest in Bakhtin and his work. An enthusiastic graduate student by the name of Vadim Kozhinov read Bakhtin's Dostoevsky book while a student at the Gorky Institute and later discovered the Rabelais dissertation in the Archives there. Impressed by what he had found, Kozhinov and fellow students Sergy Bocharov and Gerogi Gachev began inquiring into the possibility having the Dostoevsky book republished, assuming its author was no longer living. When they discovered Bakhtin to be alive and teaching in Saransk, they arranged to meet. By the early 1960s a fairly steady stream of people were seeking him out, and they continued to do so even after he had retired from his position at the university in 1961 due to poor health. By 1965 both the reworked Dostoevsky book and a revised version of his dissertation on Rabelais appeared in publication, due largely to the efforts of a group of students headed by Kozhinov.<sup>19</sup>

Bakhtin's health continued to decline and by 1966 both he and his wife required dedicated medical attention, both requiring hospitalization for various intervals. The coterie of students who had adopted Bakhtin now began seeking appropriate accommodations for his wife and himself. On the strength of a school relationship with a student in a class taught in Moscow by an admirer of Bakhtin's who happened to be the daughter of the KGB director, Bakhtin and his wife were placed in the Kremlin Hospital in Moscow in October of 1969. The Bakhtins remained there for six months, then were moved to an old folks home in Grivno on the outskirts of Moscow. They lived quietly in Grivno, but Elena's heart condition steadily worsened, and after her condition became critical she was hospitalized in November of 1971. Elena died on December 13th of that year, and her death marks the beginning of the final phase of Bakhtin's life.<sup>20</sup>

With Bakhtin now alone and significantly infirm, where and how he would live became a problem. After a petition was made on his behalf by influential members of the Writer's Union, Bakhtin was granted resident status in Moscow. He purchased accommodations there, on Kresnoarmeyskaya Street. From this apartment Bakhtin continued to work as best he could given his physical condition. He had requested that Kozhinov retrieve some of his papers from Saransk, among them pieces he had written in 1918-20 and other pieces written in the 1930s and 1940s. During his last years Bakhtin worked on some of these pieces either by editing or by adding portions. In order to earn royalties when it became apparent he would need finances to maintain his medical costs, an edition of these early writings were published.<sup>21</sup>

But his health was being eroded on a number of fronts, and the combined effects of the osteomyelitis and emphysema eventually proved overwhelming. At the age of 79 Mikhail Mikhailovtch Bakhtin died in Moscow on the morning of March 7, 1975.<sup>22</sup>

### *Bibliography*

While there is much agreement on the biographical details of Bakhtin's life there is little agreement on what exactly deserves to be included in and excluded from Bakhtin's scholarly canon. That there is little agreement as to which writings are the product of Bakhtin's pen complicates any understanding of Bakhtin's thought; at another level, complications arise given the explicitly economic motivations for publishing a significant amount of his work; that the bulk of his work became available in a different sequence than its composition.

then in another different sequence in translation complicates things at yet another level. Only some of these issues can be resolved.

In a nutshell, the 'disputed text' controversy goes like this:

Besides the pieces Bakhtin is known to have authored, there are those who claim Bakhtin also wrote and had published a number of books and articles that were attributed to friends and colleagues. Holquist and Clark identify two different study groups, or 'circles' Bakhtin participated in, whose members included those credited with these disputed texts. While Holquist and Clark list twelve disputed texts in their bibliography, there are four works that are most often mentioned when this issue comes up. They are, in order of chronological appearance-

1926- 'Contemporary Vitalism', attributed to I. I Kanaev

1927- 'Freudianism, A Critical Sketch' and ' Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art', attributed to V. N. Voloshinov

1928- 'The Formal Method in Literary Study: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Method', attributed to P. N. Medvedev

1929- 'Marxism and the Philosophy of Language: Basic Problems in Sociolinguistics', attributed to V.N. Voloshinov<sup>23</sup>

Thus, some consider the Bakhtin canon to include his two completed monographs, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics and Rabelais and his World, the aforementioned 'disputed texts', some longer essays including 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art', 'Epic and Novel', 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', 'Discourse and the Novel', 'The Problem of Speech Genres', various fragments of essays, notes, and some shorter pieces written for journals, such



as "Response to questions from the Novy Mir editorial staff" and "Art and Answerability".<sup>24</sup> The main proponent of this position in North America is Michael Holquist, Bakhtin's English language biographer and the author of a number of monographs and articles on Bakhtin.<sup>25</sup>

But this configuration of the Bakhtin canon is disputed. The most detailed summary of reasons against the inclusion of the disputed texts comes from Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in their 1990 commentary Mikhail Bakhtin-Creation of a Prosaics, in which they devote an entire chapter to it.

In noting this situation it is not my intention to summarize let alone resolve the various facets of these disputes, but only to acknowledge their existence and to warn those new to Bakhtin scholarship of this issue as yet unresolved. In effect I bring it up only to acknowledge it, then leave it as soon as prudently possible.

A problem more easily solved is that of the sequence of composition of the work agreed upon as Bakhtin's own. For a variety of reasons Bakhtin published haphazardly. Because of his illness, political and social upheaval, and Bakhtin's "cavalier"<sup>26</sup> attitude about manuscripts he had completed, much of what Bakhtin has published has become available to his readership in an altered sequence to the one in which it was composed. Any grasp of development and coherence in Bakhtin's ideas is possible only after apprehending the sequence of the composition of these works. From this one not only gets a better idea of the problems Bakhtin is trying to address in the sequence he tackles them, but also where concepts applied later, to problems in different spheres, originated.

Like many scholars, Bakhtin wrote more or less constantly throughout his adult life, not only working on essays and books, but also keeping notebooks. From the time of his graduation from university through the years in Nevel and Vitebsk there is textual evidence of his written efforts, much of which has been published and translated only relatively recently. Only his very short article "Art and Answerability" appeared at this time, published in September 1919 in the journal 'The Day of Art'. Bakhtin appears to have spent the decade following the two revolutions thinking and writing about moral philosophy, taking a strong lead from the Marburg Neo-Kantians. Among the other projects he worked on during this time was one that dealt with the work of Dostoevsky, but it is not known whether this was a draft of what eventually became his 1929 publication 'Problems of Dostoevsky's creative works', or a completely different treatment and theme.<sup>27</sup>

By 1929 Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky had been published but almost immediately thereafter he was sentenced to exile in Kustanai. During his exile Bakhtin wrote and published an article on collective farming, and he probably completed much of a monograph entitled 'Discourse in the Novel'. When his exile ended Bakhtin moved to a teaching job in Saransk, and by the early 1940's after they had moved to Savelevo Bakhtin had finished or was finishing a handful of projects . including- a book-length monograph on 'The Novel of Education and its significance in the history of Realism'<sup>28</sup> ; four essay length drafts, including 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel', 'On the Philosophical Bases of the Humanities', 'From the Pre-history of Novelistic Discourse', and 'Epic and Novel'; and finally, a monograph he submitted to

The Gorky Institute of World Literature as his Doctoral dissertation, entitled 'Rabelais in the History of Realism'.<sup>29</sup>

After Russia defended herself from German attack in the first half of the 1940's Bakhtin turned his attention to defending his dissertation from a different kind of assault, and this occupied him for the balance of the decade. Teaching and other academic duties allowed Bakhtin time enough to compose only two pieces during the 1950s- 'The Problem of Speech Genres', written in 1952-3, and 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and other Human Sciences: an attempt at a philosophical analysis', which he began in 1959. By now Bakhtin had been discovered by a new generation of academics eager to imbibe what they could from him, and from the early sixties on much of Bakhtin's work comprises his own re-working, editing or amending old themes and statements.

In 1963 a revised and amended version of the 1929 Dostoevsky book was published, and in 1965 a revised version of Bakhtin's doctoral dissertation on Rabelais was released under the title The work of Francois Rabelais and popular culture of the Middle Ages. By now failing health prevented Bakhtin from any serious compositions, though he continued his practice of keeping notebooks through to the end of his life.

Knowing the order Bakhtin took up different intellectual projects clarifies the relationship ideas and insights contained therein stand to one another. But the way those projects have become available, first in his native Russian, then in translation for his non-Russian speaking audience, has at least potentially obscured those relationships, just because his work was published in such a

different sequence than it was composed. Except for his 1929 Dostoevsky book and his published dissertation on Rabelais (and that went directly into the archive at the Gorky Institute, not into any kind of ready circulation) much of what became available of his work did so only after delays, of decades in some cases. Figure 1 compares Bakhtin's sequence of composition, with the sequence in which those compositions become available, both in Russian, then in English translation.

There is some irony in this situation. Bakhtin, the historian of carnival and inversion whose work by forces unmanaged by his own hand comes available in a generally inverted sequence-his latest work first, and his earliest work last; while alongside this simultaneously Bakhtin, the proponent of simultaneity and the investigator of the intersection between the 'official' and the 'unofficial' can be seen with a foot in both those realms simultaneously. But irony aside, it is important to notice some of the practical forces that may have influenced why Bakhtin's work became available in the sequence that it did.

It is rare for a reading public ever to know all the reasons any particular work gets published. It is nevertheless assumed that manuscripts, particularly scholarly ones, are submitted for publication on the basis of an author's conviction of their worth as scholarship, then are published because the scholarship of the work makes a worthwhile contribution. Regardless of all the personal, private, social and institutional motivations that complicate the process of scholarly writing and publishing, academia (perhaps naively) maintains that the fundamental characteristic of scholarly publication, the thing that makes it 'scholarship', is precisely scholarly contribution. It is worth looking at the published and translated work of Bakhtin in this light, not to decide what ought

or ought not be included as scholarly contribution, but as clearly as possible to notice what Bakhtin himself intended as *primarily* a scholarly contribution, and what may have been published *primarily* for other reasons.

Bakhtin's 1929 Dostoevsky book and his dissertation on Rabelais in 1940, as well as their revised editions, are both clearly scholarly efforts- completed monographs intended to stand on their own internal coherence and structure- and is the reason why Bakhtin himself submitted them for publication. That Bakhtin submitted them for publication I think, is the important point, and can serve as the primary criterion for determining what can be taken *most* seriously of Bakhtin's published work. Following this principle a number of other shorter pieces and essays can be included in the 'submitted ' category. They are 'The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Aesthetic Creation' (accepted for publication in 1924 though it never appeared due to the demise of the publishing house), and a book length monograph submitted in 1937 entitled "The Novel of Education and its Significance in the History of Realism"(see note 26 ). These four pieces along with a handful of more journalistic offerings comprise the list of works Bakhtin himself saw fit to submit for publication.

The circumstances influencing the publication of the balance of the Bakhtin canon are complicated, and perhaps even invisible. It seems, however, that a few points deserve to be made in more than just a passing way.

In Holquist' and Clark's 1984 biography of Bakhtin , they write

After his [Bakhtin] wife's death, he had sent Kozinov to Saransk to search out his manuscripts.... The manuscripts included 'Author and Hero' and other pieces from 1918-1920, as well as several long essays from the 1930s and

early 1940s. Later, when it became apparent that Bakhtin's home medical care was going to eat into his finances, his friends decided to publish a selection of these essays (in the Russian journal 'Kontekst') and other earlier writings in order to secure royalties for Bakhtin.<sup>30</sup>

This passage seems highly relevant, especially when compared with the way Holquist represents the same scene in his Foreword to the 1993 English translation of Bakhtin's 'Toward a Philosophy of the Act', where Holquist writes

It was with the greatest difficulty that a group of young admirers in the early 1960s convinced him to publish again. And it was only after he achieved international acclaim as a result of these publications and at a time when he knew his death was imminent that he confessed to his supporters the existence of a cache of his earliest writings.<sup>31</sup>

The primary motivation to publish these early fragments it seems was to generate a much needed income. It may be overly picky to notice the difference between being '*sent* to search out manuscripts' versus '*confessing* to his supporters the existence of his earliest writings', but it does seem worth noting how much of an academic coup getting Bakhtin's earliest work published might be for young and ambitious academics. This is a point made by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson when, in a discussion of the earliest period from which we have work of Bakhtin's, they write

These materials were never prepared for publication by Bakhtin himself. Like all rough drafts, they must be used with care: their publication in the Soviet Union was itself a politicized event, made possible by literary executors who had their own reasons for creating a particular posthumous image of Bakhtin.<sup>32</sup>

The foregoing discussion of Bakhtin's bibliographic situation is offered not only to summarize some of the major issues concerning Bakhtin's published work. It also helps explain why I focus primarily on Bakhtin's Dostoevsky book to try and show how his early thought is compatible with Russian Orthodox thought. But some more explicit reasons are probably needed and appropriate.

First, to study Bakhtin's early thought, early work is required. The Dostoevsky book was Bakhtin's first.

Second, it is clearly Bakhtin's voice we hear in this book, since Bakhtin himself intended it to be published.

Third, it contains Bakhtin's first detailed effort to incorporate the concept of 'dialogue' into his thought.

Morson and Emerson's cautionary advice regarding the reading of rough drafts is applicable, in fact, to all drafts and all books-rough or polished, published or consigned to the desk drawer. An important point to be made about the Dostoevsky book translated and published in English is that it is a compilation of a sort: the book Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics contains the 1963 revision of the 1929 book, as well as relevant fragments from the 1929 book and an outline in essay form Bakhtin wrote on how the 1929 book would be revised. The 1929 book in its original form has not been translated into English.

Does the 1963 revision alter the 1929 book? It does. But does Bakhtin reverse or contradict fundamental ideas from his 1929 book with his revisions? He does not. And this suggests that on some fundamental level there exists, if not 'development' over time in Bakhtin's thought, then at least consistency.

What Bakhtin consistently claims is the central position of the 'person' in experience. For him there is no understanding a person's ideas without an understanding of the person, too, just as there is no understanding of ourselves without the understanding of ourselves as 'person'. That is the only level. Bakhtin insists, where things like justice and freedom can be found, and it is only on that level that human communication takes the form of dialogue. It is even tempting to hear Bakhtin claiming that only in dialogue can Reality be glimpsed, since

voices are not self-enclosed or deaf to one another. They hear each other constantly, call back and forth and are reflected in one another. And outside this dialogue of 'conflicting truths' not a single essential act is realized, nor a single essential thought...<sup>33</sup>

Bakhtin's emphasis on the 'person' and on intra-and interpersonal interrelationships can also be seen in the spirituality of the Russian Orthodox church. The intellectual climate of the Russia Mikhail Bakhtin lived his first 35 years in was typified by a special relationship between the intelligentsia and the Russian Orthodox Church. In order to understand the basis for that relationship a sketch of Eastern Orthodox Christian thought, generally, and Russian Orthodox thought, specifically, is necessary. Chapters two and three provide that sketch.



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<sup>1</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984 p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p.27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.30-38.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.55. 95-96.

<sup>10</sup> Nicolas Zernov The Russian Religious Renaissance of The Twentieth Century London: Harper and Row 1963 p.208.

<sup>11</sup> Holquist and Clark Op.Cit. p. 120-145.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.254.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.257-258.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.p.260

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.261-264.

<sup>16</sup> "Doklad t. Zdanova o zurnalax 'Zveda' i 'Leningrad,'" *Oktjabr'*, no.9(1946): 3.19; Nickolj lent'ev, "Zatylok k buduscemu," *Novyj Mir*, no.9(1948):3, 19 . Cited in Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984 p. 323.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit. p.321-325.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.329-330.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 329-335.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 336-338.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 339-340.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 343.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 356-357.

<sup>24</sup> "Art and Answerability", "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" , and "The problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art", in Art and Answerability Michael Holquist, Vadim Liapunov, editors; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990 'Epic and Novel', 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel'. Discourse in the Novel' in The Dialogic Imagination, Michael Holquist, editor Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

'The Problem of Speech Genres', 'Response to questions from the Novy Mir editorial staff', in Speech Genres and other Late Essays, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist Austin: University of Texas Press 1986.

<sup>25</sup> For example, see, Dialogism-Bakhtin and his World.

<sup>26</sup> "The only other copy of this manuscript Bakhtin-an inveterate smoker- used as paper to roll his own cigarettes during the dark days of the German invasion(which gives some idea, perhaps, of how cavalierly Bakhtin regarded his own thoughts once they had already been thought through). It was only after the most strenuous arguments by Vadim Kozinov and Sergei Bokarov that Bakhtin could be persuaded first of all to reveal the whereabouts of what unpublished manuscripts he had (in a rat-infested woodshed in Saransk) and then to be retranscribed for publication." The Dialogic Imagination, Michael Holquist, editor Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p.xxiv-xxv.

<sup>27</sup> Clark and Holquist Op. Cit. p.53.

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<sup>28</sup> see note 26.

<sup>29</sup> Op. Cit. p.263.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.340-341.

<sup>31</sup> M. M. Bakhtin Toward a Philosophy of the Act, Translation by Vadim Liapunov, edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993 p.vii.

<sup>32</sup> Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson Mikhail Bakhtin- Creation of a Prosaics Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990 p.63.

<sup>33</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics Austin:University of Texas Press 1984 p.75.

## Chapter 2

### Eastern and Western Orthodox Christianity

#### *Introduction*

Attempting to summarize the history of Christianity leaves you with a feeling like the one you get starting a long car journey-what you decided to bring doesn't occupy you near as much as what you think you might have forgotten.

But such a summary is nevertheless necessary for this discussion. After the most general summary and history of Christianity, the various breaks within the church and the resulting 'branches' of Christianity, as well as brief summaries of the issues on which the debates turned will be offered. In the third chapter, I focus specifically on the peculiar Russian version of one of those branches, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and on its revival and influence among the intelligentsia in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. This will lay the groundwork for a discussion of how Bakhtin's early work, generally, and ideas of dialogue, particularly, can be seen as consistent with Russian Orthodox Christian thought.

#### *Overview*

Christianity has been defined as " ...a monotheistic faith...essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>1</sup>

Christianity can be considered an offspring of Judaism. Judaism holds the reality of one divine God revealed to Moses and documented in the Exodus story<sup>2</sup> and Christianity adds to this that "... the God who spoke through prophets and acted through Exodus from Egypt has now spoken definitively and acted decisively in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

At the same time. Christianity has a mystical component, the sacraments its holy mysteries. "Everything in Christianity is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth": for Christians, Jesus of Nazareth is the "Christ", the incarnation of God 'the Father', and the 'Son' mentioned in the Trinity; the messiah sent to live and die as a man to fulfill prophecy recorded in the Old Testament books by the major and minor prophets.<sup>4</sup> The nature of the Christian Trinity gives Christianity a mystical quality, because it is held that the Trinity of 'The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit', while a 'Trinity', is simultaneously a Unity, three and one.

The first three centuries after the death of Jesus saw Christianity transformed from a small messianic movement into a complex religious institution complete with doctrine and authoritative structure.

The first coherent Christian theology was elaborated by Paul; while the Roman governments during this time tolerated many religious sects, Christians nevertheless suffered periodic persecutions, to which Christians responded by a willingness for martyrdom and by venerating those persecuted as martyrs and saints.

In 313 of the Common Era the Emperor Constantine gave Christians the freedom to worship in their own way, and by the end of that century Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. By then, Christians had a developed systematic theology and church government, and had established a hierarchy within the church based on the concepts of 'episkopos'(overseer),'presberteros'(elder) and 'diakanos'( servant, or deacon).<sup>5</sup> Eventually priests claimed the authority to appoint other priests on the doctrine of apostolic succession, the principle that authority belongs exclusively to those who can trace their contact to the Apostles, themselves authorized by Jesus.

But if the first three centuries brought order to the way the Christian church itself would be administered, it did not bring agreement on spiritual issues. The next seven centuries were characterized by number of controversies within the church, and it was over these issues that the Christian church branched and followed both a distinctly Roman, or Western path, and a Byzantine, or Eastern path.

### *Schisms and Issues within the Christian Church*

The final break between Eastern and Western Christianity is usually considered to have occurred in 1054 of the Common Era. The tension that led to this break had accumulated on a variety of levels. Problems of political and territorial authority, questions regarding Church doctrine, and language issues involving exegesis, interpretation and meaning all combined and resulted in a severing of relations between the Byzantine East and the Roman West.

During the first three hundred years of the first millennium Rome's status as a political and cultural power was eroding. In 324 Constantine transferred the capital of the Roman Empire to the Greek colony of Byzantium, renaming the old city there 'Constantinople. 'The new centre of political power and prestige in the Empire, the city sought and won, albeit grudgingly, the recognition of authority within Church hierarchy similar to that of Rome.

When Constantinople became the new centre of authority in the Empire, it became as well an important and prestigious see within the church. Old Rome had been and continued to be the most important and prestigious see according to the principle of Apostolic association, the idea that ecclesiastic opinions (and territories) derive importance and authority based on association with one or more of the Twelve Apostles. This principle was challenged when the Roman ruler Diocletian undertook to reorganize the empire so that areas of secular and religious importance would as much as possible coincide. Since Constantinople occupied the most prestigious place in the Empire as the location of the Imperial Throne, it followed that it as well occupy a prestigious place in the Church, though no apostle had lived or worked there.<sup>6</sup> The Bishop of the see of Constantinople was now given the title of Patriarch, a position of importance next to the Bishop of Rome, and Patriarch of the West.

The next thousand years saw the transformation of Europe from a territory for the most part ordered by and administered from Rome into a land containing all manner of groups, whose allegiances were determined by a variety of factors- family and economic relationships, commitment to geographic location and devotion to the church. The eventual fall of Rome and the decline of her institutional structure meant for Western Europe that the Church alone was left

as the oldest structure of authority in existence, an institution whose authority was not seriously challenged from outside until the Enlightenment. Internally, though, it was a different story.

This shift of political power from Rome to Constantinople set up a kind of rivalry between sees, and set the stage for a number of other disputes within the church. It became an obvious line of separation between factions within the church. When faced with the major controversies within the Church- the Arian controversy, the Filioque controversy, disputes over the language of Liturgy and the use of Icons-there were, increasingly, both Eastern and Western apologists.

Bishops in the Church had held meetings, called councils, to debate and establish doctrine even before Christianity was an accepted and legal religion. In the year 49, a meeting had been held in Jerusalem, where Paul and surviving followers of Jesus met to discuss whether the rite of circumcision was necessary in order to be saved. This Apostolic Conference, or Council of Jerusalem, is recognized as the first of these Christian councils.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Arian Controversy*

In the summer of 325 Constantine I called for a meeting of bishops to be held in the town of Nicaea to discuss a variety of issues but mainly to resolve what has come to be known as the Arian controversy.

Christian doctrine, particularly the mystery of the Trinity, begged total explanation, and where explanations are needed, there are always those willing to provide. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, had stirred up debate regarding the

relationship between God and Jesus in the Trinity by emphasizing the Unity of the divine God and de-emphasizing the mysterious nature of the Trinity. In doing so, he asserted that Jesus Christ, the 'Son' in the Latin Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) and 'Logos' in the Greek Trinity (Theos, Logos, and Pneuma) was created. Arius preached that God was One reality only, that Jesus differed in essence from God, and must therefore at least in theory be capable of sin, contradicting the foundational teachings of the church. This assertion touched off a controversy regarding the nature of Divinity and the nature of mortality, and attempts to resolve it focussed on careful language and a specific and precise interpretation of that language.

A kind of resolution of this issue took place, and out of the Council of Nicaea came an agreed-upon expression of 'what Christians believe' called the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and earth. Who for us men and our salvation came down[from heaven] and was incarnate and made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence[from the father] or that he is creature, or subject of change or



conversion-all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.<sup>8</sup>

This question, about the nature of Jesus in relation to God, was and remains an important point in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The fundamental question raised in the Arian Controversy is 'How can we understand the Incarnation and the Trinity?' Was Jesus simply a human being, and so like other human beings, or a God, and so unlike human beings? continued to plague the Church. There were, it seemed, only two possibilities- God and Jesus are either like or they are unlike; a polarized logic dictates this as necessarily so.

The council answered Arius by affirming in the Creed that "Christ was divine, that he was human, that he was one Christ and not two."<sup>9</sup> The Creed explains the relationship between God and Jesus not by landing in either of the two proposed explanations, but by removing themselves from a world of 'either/or' and replacing it with a world of 'both/and'. The Creed answers the Arian problem by stating the Trinity as a mystery within the world of 'either/or' "... Christ was Divine, and Christ was human, and he was one Christ and not two."

Later, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, an explanation was set forth of how the divine and human natures' combined in the person of Jesus in such a way as to be both a combination and not a combination. The term used was 'consubstantial'- and the issue's resolution, as far as church doctrine was concerned, was triumphantly announced. But the controversy refused to abate. And on the strength of continued debate, more explanations arose. The problem seemed solvable, for those of a certain mind, only if some kind of shared

quality or nature could be found. Various explanations were offered. If the substance of Jesus differed from that of God's, then perhaps there was yet a single 'energy', or was it a single 'will'? No agreement was found, however much agreement was announced. The problem seemed to threaten the unity of the state so much that Emperor Constantine II finally forbade discussion of the matter, an act condemned by the Pope.

The controversy flared up again and again in different forms over the centuries; inevitably, as R.M. French notes

The pattern (was) familiar. Anxious to strengthen and consolidate the Empire by securing religious unity the Imperial authority puts forward proposals which amounted to compromise. The proposed formula is backed first by argument then by force. But concessions which seemed to the Monophysites (the East) inadequate appeared to the West unwarrantedly great. And the result was no more than interminable dispute.<sup>10</sup>

### *Multilingualism*

Eventually, as the Empire essentially fractured into territories organized in accordance with church sees, and as sees officially stood on one or the other side of schisms, by the 7th century East and West had all but officially parted. Attitudes and allegiances to language illustrate, and perhaps to some extent explain, the obstacles that stood between the Eastern and Western Church.

Rome, of course, was Latin. The Liturgy was in Latin and Latin was the language of government in the western Empire, though no legitimate emperor had ruled there since 480. This left the Pope, as Bishop of Rome, occupying

both the highest position of church authority in the Empire, as well as the highest authority of any kind in the West. Byzantium, on the other hand, held to her Hellenistic history and though Byzantines called themselves 'Roman' they wrote and spoke Greek. But most importantly, the Latin West insisted that those wishing to participate in the western Catholic and Universal Christian Church must do so in Latin only; they tolerated no other languages. Conversion to the Latin church meant forfeiting, or at the very least relegating to an unofficial status, one's vernacular language.

In the late 800's the Bulgarian King Boris I essentially negotiated the conversion to Christianity of the Eastern Slavs by playing the Western church and the Eastern church against each other on this very point. To Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, he offered allegiance in exchange for autonomy, requesting equivalent status to that of the five great sees, complete with a Bulgarian patriarch. Photius declined, so Boris asked Pope Nicholas I for clarification on 106 different points of Orthodoxy, and whether Rome would be willing to award to the Bulgarian church Patriarchal status. Rome instructed Boris on theology, then not only declined his request but pointed out that Christian nations are Christian first and nations second, and the language of Christianity, as far as the West was concerned, was Latin. Eventually there was even a papal ban on vernacular languages.<sup>11</sup>

The Byzantine Church and state made no such demands-in fact, the Byzantine empire embraced multilingualism, an attitude that eventually helped the Eastern church prevail in the conversion of the Slavic territories to the north. In the 860's two brothers, Cyril and Methodius, were sent north as missionaries. Cyril, an accomplished linguist, had invented a script into which

spoken Slav could be written, and they took with them selections from the gospels already translated into a Slavic form. After much negotiation between Rome, Constantinople and Bulgaria, the Slavic nation finally took a stand. To be a national church, worship must be in the language of the people; and thus Bulgaria and eventually almost all of the Slavic world aligned themselves with the Eastern Church.<sup>12</sup>

Latin also played a part in one of the remaining two great controversies that divided the East from the West. After the Council at Chalcedon in 451 the Arian controversy gave way to the debate over the use of icons in worship, and to what has come to be known as the 'filioque' controversy.

### *The Filioque Controversy*

The 'filioque' controversy is in a way related to the problem Arius introduced, namely, the precise nature of the internal relationship in the Trinity. By the ninth century the Western church was including in the true statement of doctrine, the Nicene Creed, the term 'filioque'-'...and the son(filioque)...', stating that the Holy spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

This formulation of the Creed was rejected and attacked by the East on two grounds. The first was that the adoption of the term 'filioque' had never been proposed nor assented to at any council, and Rome had acted unilaterally by including it in the Creed. The second reason the East rejected it was that it opened the way for an interpretation whereby there existed two sources or Ultimate Divinities. In the East, the Creed was carefully expressed. They were willing to say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son', but

considered this only an opinion, where the West claimed the 'filioque' to be true.<sup>13</sup>

Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople attacked the West for its 'innovation' of the Creed, and the debate around the term itself continued right up until the Bonn Conference in 1874. The term still is still not included in the Orthodox Creed.<sup>14</sup>

If the 'Filioque' controversy was an issue about the expression of divinity, then the Iconoclastic Controversy was an issue of interpretation of piety.

### *Icons*

Icons, images and pictures of sacred persons and scenes had, been used widely in the church after about the fourth century. Until then, the effects of the Judaic prohibition of 'Idolatry' made pious regard for images suspect. But eventually the use of icons and their veneration had become more and more prevalent, and the church found them useful in more ways than one. At the Quinisext Council in 692, documents were issued stating that "...the figure in the human form...may be hence forth exhibited in images...so that all may understand by means of the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God...", recognizing that icons could be both instructive and devotional.<sup>15</sup>

Eventually, the devotional aspect of the icons intensified, the results being an increase in their production and an appeal and devotion to their miraculous powers that seemed to many nothing more than superstition, and if so, sacrilege or even heresy. A movement to abolish icons began, and with it an attack on monasticism and the monks who made and defended them. In the Eighth

century monks suffered widespread persecution due to their positions on the Icon controversy. A council in Hierra in 754 condemned the so-called 'cult of Images'; the second council of Nicea in 787 restored it. Eventually strong arguments in favour of the use of icons prevailed, most notably those of St. John of Damascene, who argued that since God took on human form in the act of Incarnation, it is right and acceptable to depict and venerate that form-to reject the reality of depiction amounted to a rejection of the reality of the Incarnation. The use of icons was reaffirmed in 842.<sup>16</sup>

The Arian controversy, the dispute over multilingualism and the Filioque controversy were all points of dispute between East and West, and their differing points of view helped define and demarcate what is characteristic about both churches. The controversy over the Icons was different because it was primarily a controversy within the Eastern church. No western bishops were even in attendance at the Quinisext Council in 692 where the icons were explained; in 787 at the second council of Nicea, of the 352 bishops in attendance, 350 spoke Greek.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the internal resolution of the Icon controversy was important in establishing the identity of Eastern Christian thought, as important as the positions it held in relation to Western thinking.

When the Bulgarian King Boris converted to eastern Orthodoxy, bringing with him the bulk of the Slavic world, a long and consistent border between East and West was established. Byzantium and Slavic nations to the north comprised the East: Rome and the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne, who had been crowned Emperor of the West by the Pope himself in the year 800 comprised the West. Now, two hundred years later, each of these two Empires consisted of communities knowing only their own political and spiritual

authorities, and who had lost any strong sense of what had once been thoroughgoing shared values and beliefs. Rapid changes in positions of authority on both sides intensified confusion; new leaders eager to make their mark led to a hardening of positions on more and more trivial points dogma. As French notes:

It provides some food for thought that a disaster of such dimensions as the Schism could be made to rest even ostensibly upon a list of charges in which such matters as fasting on Saturdays and the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist figure with some prominence.<sup>18</sup>

On July 16, 1054, the schism between the Eastern and Western Christian church was made official when papal legates excommunicated the Patriarch and his adherents. How complete the break became is illustrated by the sack of the Christian city of Constantinople in 1204 by crusading Christian armies.<sup>19</sup>

### *Summary*

Both the Eastern and Western churches consider themselves Universal (or Catholic) and Orthodox. The Arian controversy and the Filioque controversy are usually taken as the important matters of theology that separated the two: there are more distinctions, however.

Unlike the West, the East holds no concept of purgatory as a location. The West has spiritual schools, or 'orders'-Franciscan, Jesuit, etc.- the East has none. Icons hold a special place of reverence in the Eastern church, particularly in the Russian church. The Western church demands celibacy from those who are ordained, the Eastern Church has both Black(married) and White(celibate)

priests. The Eastern Church has always been multilingual, while in the Western church only Latin was recognized as language of Liturgy until reforms were finally accepted in 1966 . The entire Western Church recognizes one central authority within the church, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. The Eastern Church has no such central authority, and though all churches look to the Mother Church of Constantinople for various authorizations( the appointment of chief Bishops for example) many churches are autocephalous, thoroughly independent and self-governing.<sup>20</sup>

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There are echoes still of the different issues and controversies on which the Eastern and Western Church split. In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, particularly in Russian Orthodoxy, two of those echoes can be heard clearly. Russian Orthodoxy has long been influenced by monasticism and mysticism, and Russian Orthodoxy has continued to be fascinated by the Incarnation and kenoticism.

Holquist and Clark note that Bakhtin was "never a conventional Russian Orthodox in the sense of conforming to an organized religion. Rather, he was a religious intellectual from the Orthodox tradition."<sup>21</sup> But the use of the term 'conventional' is slippery here, because in Russia there is a long history of the rejection of the institution of the Church in favour of the reality of the person of Christ, and it is probably impossible to say which of these two attitudes more typically represents Russian Orthodox thinking. Certainly the centrality of the concept of 'the person', and his emphasis on 'communion' in communication, puts Bakhtin's thinking, particularly his thinking on dialogue, solidly in the anti-institutional Orthodox tradition. Bakhtin's attitude toward the Institution of



the Church can be seen as typically Orthodox in this sense,"skeptical about formal religious ritual, believing in the greater importance of inner spirituality and human communion."<sup>22</sup>

In Chapter three, a discussion of how these different traditions within Eastern Orthodoxy arise in Russia leads into a discussion of the details of Russian Orthodoxy's influence on the intelligentsia of Russia during Bakhtin's early years, and helps contextualize Bakhtin's first expression of his concept of dialogue during the 1920s.

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher."The Christian Faith", quoted in The Encyclopedia of Religion, Mircea Eliade.editor Vol. 3 p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 3:6 "I am the God of your father," he said" the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopedia of Religion, Mircea Eliade, editor, p.348

<sup>4</sup> It is beyond the scope of this work to opine on the quality of the relationship between biblical prophecy made then fulfilled. I only intend to sketch what Christians profess to believe, and what they profess are the reasons for their belief. Any good Bible -The Jerusalem Bible, for instance- will note how and where the circumstances of the life of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels fulfil Old Testament prophecy.

<sup>5</sup> Mortimer Chambers; Raymond Grew; David Herlihy; Theodore K. Rabb; Isser Wolloch The Western Experience , New York: Alfred.A Knopf, p.156.

<sup>6</sup> R.M. French The Eastern Orthodox Church London: Hutchinson and Co. p.28.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Johnson A History of Christianity New York: Atheneum p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Schaff 'The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers' Vol. 13, 3 quoted by Leonard Stanton in The Optina Pustyn Monastery in the Russian Literary Imagination, New York: Peter Long, Inc. p.7.

<sup>9</sup> French Op. Cit. p.28.

<sup>10</sup> French Ibid. p.43-4.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson Op. Cit. p.181-2.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson Ibid. p.185.

<sup>13</sup> French Op. Cit. p.72-3.

<sup>14</sup> French Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> French Ibid. p.51-2.

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- <sup>16</sup> French Ibid. p. 55.  
<sup>17</sup> Eliade Op. Cit. p.127.  
<sup>18</sup> French. Op. Cit. p.75.  
<sup>19</sup> Johnson Op. cit. p.246.  
<sup>20</sup> Chambers, et. al Op. Cit p.214-5.  
<sup>21</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984 p.120.  
<sup>22</sup> Clark and Holquist Ibid. p.343.

## Chapter 3

### Russia and Russian Orthodox Christianity

#### *Introduction*

One of the ways Christian spiritual experience is thought of generally is that it is tied to the Church in the sense of an institution that exists as a caretaker to preserve theological dogma, to administer its business internally and to associate with one voice with society and the world at large. It is thought of as a world of ritual and hierarchy, or solemn sermons and pious worship. This idea of Christian spiritual experience takes it to be somehow located primarily in that institution.

But there are other kinds of spiritual experiences, harder to speak of in general terms because they are personal, located entirely internally. Though this personal kind of spiritual experience resists description<sup>1</sup> this does not mean it cannot be pursued and studied.

To grasp what is considered to be a peculiarly Russian spiritual experience requires an approach from three directions. It requires an historical approach, to provide a sense of how and where Russia became involved with Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It requires a socio-political approach, to grasp the way persons and their ideal social and political organizations are imagined, and taken to operate. Most importantly, it requires a psychological/experiential approach, to grasp not only *how*, but even more fundamentally, *that* the Russian

Orthodox experience is intensely involved with the struggle of the individual subject-object, self-other relationship.

The Russian Orthodox tradition, like many religious traditions, has developed historically along two lines simultaneously. One line emphasizes the piety of experience in the human realm, and emphasizes the personal in the sense of personal and interpersonal relationships, personal responsibility, the human experience of suffering and the human expressions of compassion, and the reality of human freedom. The other line has emphasized the institution of the church as a necessary means by which tradition itself can be guaranteed through generations of social and political turmoil. Though these two lines of development often conflict it is still possible to refer to Orthodoxy as a unity- "Within the Church Universal", writes Spidlik, "the true 'tradition' consists of *traditions*."<sup>2</sup>

There are dangers in making this kind of a sketch. One of them is to too readily accept the descriptions of historical moods and attitudes as accurate on a personal or individual level. Large chunks of history- decades, generations, or centuries, can be spoken of relatively accurately only in their own terms. To say, for example, that 'familial relations are in the Russian mind the essential form of all human and social relations' is not to suggest that in the daily lives and activities and decisions of any individuals at specific moments 'Christian' or 'familial' ideas figure necessarily and conspicuously. The realm of moment-by-moment daily life of people is different than the realm of the history of a nation, or the changes within and between classes or other kinds of units of populations. Generalizations made in one realm do not necessarily hold in others.

Another danger concerns labelling movements or ideological trends. To speak of Possessors and Non-Possessors, Westernizers, Old Believers, Slavophiles and the intelligentsia seems to suggest that these various streams of thought existed in an institutional, organized way. Some of the people who held strong beliefs around issues certainly organized. But these terms as they are used in this sketch-one that is made in broad strokes- come from the discussions of historians, and are meant to refer to changes and attitudes in the realm of history.

This danger of labelling ideological trends through history requires extra attention when the ideas under discussion are moral ones, and when the moral ideas are institutionalized, as in the case of religious ideas. Discussions where one institutionalized moral perspective is pitted against another might lead one to imagine that the measure of morality is membership in one group or another. But ideological structures, and organizations political and religious, exist in a different realm than the day-to-day, moment-to-moment reality of our experience of ourselves and our relations with others. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) neither membership in any organization, nor the intellectual facility with any body of ideas-philosophical, moral, spiritual or political- ever guarantees the decent, just and honest treatment of others in that day-to-day realm; neither membership in a group nor the appeal to a body of ideas is ever acceptable as justification for the indecent treatment of others; and the decent treatment of others can never be discounted because of non-membership or lack of allegiance to ideas.

## *History of Orthodoxy in Russia*

"The important fact about Russia" writes R.M. French " is that it is Byzantine in its origin..."<sup>3</sup> Tomas Spidlik writes that "Russian spirituality sprang from the traditions of the ancient Fathers and from Byzantine trends."<sup>4</sup> Precise historical information about the arrival of Orthodox Christianity in Russia is scant, but the story of its arrival is legendary. In the tenth century there existed in the northern regions of Europe a nation of 'Rus'-occupying what is now Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The story goes that the prince of Kiev, Vladimir, sought a faith that would unify his nation, and sent emissaries to find out how others worshipped. They returned, unimpressed by both Islamic and Catholic worship.

Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the buildings where they worship their God and we knew not whether we were in Heaven or Earth. For on Earth there is no such beauty, and we are at a loss to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men... we cannot forget that beauty.<sup>5</sup>

Russian Orthodox Christianity is a unique blend of spiritual and ideological influences. The Greek Orthodox Christianity that arrived in Kiev and was adopted by the Russian people was itself powerfully shaped by Hellenism, generally, and by Greek philosophical thought, particularly Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas. Many of the fundamental concepts Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy- the organizing structure of hierarchy, and the relationship between the nature and the spirit of Man, were incorporated into Christian thought by early church Fathers. But some kind of balance needed to be struck between philosophy and spirituality, because " For the ancient and medieval Christians

Greek philosophy was the equivalent of what scientific thought is in the modern world: the intellectual explanation of reality."<sup>6</sup> The precise degree of influence taken is difficult to measure, but the need for a balance between the intellectual 'wisdom of the world' and the spiritual 'wisdom of God' was outlined by one of the early church Fathers, Origen. He noted that worldly philosophers err often by making an idol of the truth created by their own mind; however, the religious thinker, by rejecting 'pagan' philosophy outright is poor, unable or unwilling to use the human capacity to reason and to speak, to communicate and to explore.<sup>7</sup> Greek Orthodox Christians held that both the mind and the heart are required to participate in the activity of 'right judgment and act as checks on each other since both are vulnerable to misperception due to vanity, the inability to distinguish opinion from truth, and to passions of all kinds. Ideally, Greek philosophy and Greek Orthodox theology blended, in different degrees, to pursue through the capabilities of the mind and the heart an objective, higher reality than the one usually and easily perceived.

If Greek Orthodox Christianity is a peculiar hybrid of Christian theology and Greek philosophy then Russian Orthodoxy hybridizes yet again. The Orthodox theological ideas that came to Russia were Greek; Orthodox literature included both translations of Greek documents and those written in homage to that style, and for the first 350 years in all but two cases the Metropolitan of the Russian church was Greek, trained in and sent from Constantinople. Greek ideas arrived in Russia complete, a body of doctrine with a monastic system, sacred architecture and moral principles.

These ideas were woven whole into the day-to-day lives of a Russian population already immersed in its own 'pagan' spiritual worldview.<sup>8</sup>

Remarkably, and regardless of the Russian Orthodox Church's official opposition to the 'pagan' spirituality of the Russian peasants, a peaceful coexistence was established in the popular Russian mind between the two spiritual ideologies. Igor Kungurtsev and Olga Luchakova write that

... in the everyday life of the Russian people these two traditions merged in a more or less friendly manner. ...Russians would celebrate both Christian and Pagan holidays, attend church and perform Pagan rituals, and decorate their houses with Pagan art together with Orthodox icons.<sup>9</sup>

The Russian pagan spiritual worldview is pantheistic. The world is alive as one whole thing, a unity . There is an emphasis on 'nature', and on natural relations among what occurs in nature-between people, between people and animals, and between naturally occurring things like trees, rocks, soil, etc.. All these things, not only people, are imbued with consciousness and personality, and these can be perceived, by shamans especially, but by everyone to some extent. All people have, in the Russian Pagan worldview, at least the potential to perceive and communicate with nature by cultivating different modes of consciousness. To do this requires a shift from the ordinary psychological state, and in the Russian pagan spiritual worldview, a 'shift in consciousness' means literally that- both inside and outside the physical body, consciousness is shifted spatially and re-located from one area to another . To sense trees, for example, one" ...spreads one's attention all over the body so that you are aware of all bodily sensations simultaneously..." to contact the earth, you do something similar but also the attention "...is opened beneath you like an umbrella."<sup>10</sup>

Here then are important points of agreement and compatibility between the Russian pagan and the Russian Orthodox assumptions regarding the nature of



consciousness. One is that consciousness is located not centrally nor simply within the physical body, but can be shifted from place to place both outside of and within it; another is that consciousness can be active in more than one location simultaneously. In fact the development of this capacity, sometimes referred to as 'doubling' or 'double-headed attention'-'*tresvenic*' is an important part of Russian Orthodox monastic life and a primary aim of ascetic practice.<sup>11</sup>

Russian Orthodox Christianity takes its unique identity as the offspring of this marriage, informed not only by Christian theological ideas influenced by Greek philosophy, but also by the Slavic pagan worldview pervasive in the day-to-day lives of the Russian folk.

### *The Socio-Political Perspective*

The history of Russian culture is thought of as having a number of phases, each distinct from the other, the transition from one to the other occurring abruptly.

The first centre of Russian culture and Russian Christianity was Kiev, but in 1240 it fell to the invading Mongols from the East. After the fall of Kiev both the political and ecclesiastical centres of power eventually shifted to Moscow. By the fifteenth century, just as Russia had all but freed itself from Mongol domination, Constantinople, still considered the centre of Orthodox Christianity itself was taken by a Turkish invasion. Having broken its dependence on Constantinople and claiming autocephaly in 1445, the fall of Constantinople in

1453 amounted to an invitation to claim Moscow as the 'Third Rome', the new centre of Orthodox Christendom. Scriptural support was provided by the monk Philotheus, assuring an unbroken line of descent from the Patriarchate of Moscow back to Imperial Rome and beyond.

"The Russians", writes Nicholas Zernov attached supreme importance to the preservation of a link of succession from Constantinople to Moscow... justification for the belief in the special calling of Moscow was sought in the book of the prophet Daniel which described kingdoms as raised to preeminence and cast down one after another...Rome was therefore a truly eternal city; but this did not mean that power belonging to her was confined to a single spot. The incarnation incorporated all nations of the world into the New Covenant, and made both Church and Empire truly Universal. Thus the sacred centre of Christendom could be removed from Rome to Constantinople, when the former city succumbed to pride, and thence it was transferred once more, this time to Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

With this new perception of its own destiny Russian culture came of age, believing itself to be authoritative and responsible, endowed with a special destiny. If not its genesis then clearly here is an important root of the 'messianism' that many have noted in the Russian character, in what Berdayev has characterized as the 'Russian Idea.'

But with responsibility and authority comes privilege, a Trinity that carries its own mystery and inner paradoxes. In 1551, in the first heady days of governing herself after nearly six centuries of domination, and with the new responsibility that went with its self-perception of being the true centre of Christendom, the Russian Church held a conference to assess and resolve

issues pertaining to purely church matters as well as issues of church and state. Out of this Stoglav Council emerged two issues that broke the unity of Russian Christian believers and ultimately gave rise to the *intelligenstia*, a group that must be understood in order to understand almost anything Russian.

The first issue over which debate occurred concerned language and translation.

Out of the Stoglav council in 1551 came the authorization to revise the Old Slavonic Service books, since over the years various minor errors in translation and transcription had apparently accumulated in them. But the Orthodox Church had never insisted on the ultimate authority of any language *per se*, so revision seemed to some more than unnecessary. To some it amounted to an invasion-by Greeks, no less, whose ideas were now suspect since they lived under Turkish rule in a Muslim nation- by outsiders unaware of ideas and experiences Russian, that the Slavonic tongue was uniquely capable of capturing and expressing.

This quality of Slavonic language is worth looking at more closely. Nicholas Zernov makes a number of important observations regarding the Slavonic language and Russian Orthodox Christian experience that may help to understand why the Old Believers- the name of the faction against Greek 'corrections'- resisted so tenaciously revision or alteration of the books that contained their rituals and expressed beliefs.

Zernov argues that in the Western church, because of the special authority given Latin, there exists a kind of clericalism and legalism that is absent in the

Russian Church. For centuries the greater portion of the western laity had limited or no access to the special knowledge of the Latin churchmen, but in Russia the Slavonic language of the church was the same one used by the people. Church knowledge was available in Russia to all who knew Russian. Because of this, Zernov argues, the clergy in Russia never formed a ruling class in the way they did in the Latin West. Instead of priests, 'saints' led the Russian Church, and authority was given to those people who demonstrated godliness in deeds rather than those capable of expressing persuasive arguments precisely. While the Western Christians engaged in Scholasticism, the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Christians of Russia were concerned with "the worship of God and inner perfection." The most popular translations from the Greek Fathers-The Philokalia, and the collected sayings of the Desert Fathers- dealt with asceticism and conduct. The problems of speculative theology held little appeal for people in search of the Christian answer to the problems of daily life.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the Slavonic interpretation of Christian terms often varied from the familiar western definitions. Just as the primitive Christian meaning of terms like 'obedience' and 'prayer' distort the activity and experience they were meant to denote when they are quickly 'understood' to mean 'passive acceptance' and 'petitionary request', so Russian concepts of 'baptism' and 'Catholicity'-to mention just two- are distorted when we imagine them to denote in Slavonic what we take them to denote from the Latin interpretation. Zernov explains:

...'to be baptised' becomes in Slavonic no longer 'to be immersed' but 'to take the Cross', to accept ones cross of suffering and renunciation and to achieve through it regeneration and resurrection; all Christians were therefore

cross-bearing people." ...'Catholicity' was rendered '*Sobornost*', a word which cannot be adequately translated into any Western language. It means gathering, collectivity, integrity; it denotes oneness, but without uniformity or loss of individuality.<sup>14</sup>

The second issue centred on the problem of the relationship between church and state. One group held a hard line when interpreting vows of poverty, insisting they extended beyond the individual and applied to groups as well. The Non-Possessors, as they were known, were monks and laypeople who, aware of a kind of temptation to believe in the special worth of the activities of those who pursue a spiritual vocation, rejected that idea that monks and monasteries deserved any special considerations from government, nor played any particularly special role on behalf of society.

Many monasteries had managed to secure the ownership of property and with it the serfs who worked the land. The Non-Possessors, led by the hesychastic monk St. Nil of Sorsk rejected this kind of arrangement as anti-Christian, but the Possessors, led by St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, held that monks and nuns, once freed from earthly concerns, occupied the most important position in society since they could, on behalf of society, most completely devote themselves to worship. The Possessors consolidated this position of religious and civil privilege when they won the support of government by granting Basil III (1505-33) the divorce stricter adherents of the Church would not.

On a different level though, the two schisms in Russia, between the Possessors and the Non-Possessors and between the Old Believers and the

New Believers, was not essentially about privilege and authority, nor about books, translations nor interpretations. At its root the dispute was epistemological, because they disagreed about what was knowable.

Russian culture is characterized by a particular kind of idea of communalism, called *sobornost*, a seemingly paradoxical conception of 'unity in freedom' whereby people are bound by "freedom, personal responsibility and keen concern for each individual..."<sup>15</sup> This kind of an idea went hand in hand with the Russian idea of 'family', a remnant of the feudal order that had only recently begun to be shrugged off. When Zernov notes that "The Russian life was permeated from top to bottom by the family idea."<sup>16</sup> he means to suggest that familial relations are in the Russian mind acknowledged as the essential form of all human and social relations. The bond between family members is complex, profoundly shaped by shared physiological and psychological qualities, yet no matter how much is shared or even identical among kin, individual identities are always unique. Families, perhaps better than any other human group, illustrate the degree to which human beings share, simultaneously, uniqueness and difference, similarity and sameness.

These subtle but powerful relations of kinship in the Russian mind are the same ones that are in operation among all people, all the time, in society at large. And they were meant to be incorporated-in the strict sense of the term-into the details of one's daily life, in one's relations with others. The cycles of the seasons, of sowing and of harvest, overlaid with the Orthodox Christian cycles of feasts and fasts, interwoven with religious and secular rituals recognizing births, deaths and marriages hung together as tradition, ordering one's tasks and movements and most importantly, attitudes, by the hour, the

day and the year. Russians call this *Byotovoe Blagochestie* which translates literally to 'the piety of daily life' but 'the ritual art of living' might more nearly capture its meaning.<sup>17</sup>

The Old Believers accepted the authority of tradition on matters such as these, reasoning they could not know what changes to these traditions would bring. The New Believers, who advocated alterations to these traditional structures, did so based on their own estimations of what was needed and of how that might be accomplished, a realm in which, for the Old Believers, humans exercised scant and tainted abilities.

Disputes like these are rarely won or lost. Instead one or another of the factions prevails on the strength of either popular or authoritative support and beliefs held steadfastly only agree or disagree with those 'officially' held. The reforms advocated within the church in Russia found support within the Moscow Tsardom while the Old Believers and their supporters became in their own minds the true Christian voice of dissent.

In the late seventeenth century, as this schism was working itself out, a profound influence on Russian culture and thought made itself felt in the person of Peter the Great, whose rise to power in the 1680's culminated with the seat of power moving north, to a city built expressly for his imperial seat. This shift of power from Moscow to St. Petersburg signalled a transformation in Russian cultural development. The previous century's schism between the Old Believers and the Reformers had divided the Church, and eroded its popular authority, at least among the privileged.

Peter admired European models of social organization, and sought for Russia the material fruits of western progress. He found support for the 'westernization' of the Empire among those who defended progress and change and were ready to step away from both the brutalities and the limits of feudalism and poverty. Ensuring for the church the influence and authority it had previously enjoyed for Peter was no longer necessary, and when the Patriarch Nikon died in 1700, Peter simply did not replace him. His governing institutions assimilated the bulk of the monasteries, and an army officer was appointed the church's institutional 'procurator', in effect making the church a branch of government.<sup>18</sup> Only the groups like the Old Believers resisted, and by going 'underground', established themselves as the protector of "...much that was profound and sincere in the traditional religion of Russia."<sup>19</sup>

For the Russian Empire as a nation, Peter's reforms were a blessing: for traditional Russian culture and the greater mass of Russians, they were a curse. He organized the nation in a European fashion and instituted a military structure capable of defending a vast territory, but he replaced one absolutist collaboration, the Church and the Moscow monarchy, with another, the military and the St. Petersburg Tsardom. The upper classes-landowners, nobility and those with positions of authority in the reformed state and military institutions prospered, but this was a relatively small group and the poorer masses of peasants and serfs saw little improvement in daily life. Thus a growing distance between those with and without privilege eroded the characteristically Russian idea of national unity, of 'sobornost', and what had once been envisioned as a unified national family more and more was perceived to be a nation of distinct and separate classes, of the governors and the governed. The irony of this was that as Russia more and more was recognized as an authoritative voice



internationally, westernization worked to alter and suppress much of what was uniquely Russian.

The reforms the church introduced as necessary now appeared to have laid the foundation for changes that threatened the very identity of the nation, just as the Old Believers had feared. But even though the Old Believers and the Reformers opposed each other within the church, on a different level, many of these western influences ran counter to them both. The Reformers and Old Believers may have quarreled over what it meant to be Russian, but never over *that* they were meant to be Russian. The point of westernizing Russia seemed to many to be the annihilation of everything that felt especially Russian.

The Petrine Tsardom can be thought of in three distinct eras. Beginning in 1703 when the Russian capital moved north to St. Petersburg, the first era ended after the defeat of the Decembrists, a revolutionary group who attempted to overthrow the government in 1825. The second Era closed with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and the third era ended when the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II abdicated, in 1917.

Traditional Russian culture and the well-being of the serfs and peasants were the casualties of the reorganization and expansion of the Empire during the first era, while for landowners and those tied to government and the military, admiration and imitation of European thought and fashion prevailed. But the obvious injustice of serfdom-essentially form of slavery - and the distinct imbalance between social groups caused an array of the westernized Russians to voice their disapproval. The failed revolt in 1825 by the Decembrists fomented among those sympathetic to the westernizing process, who took issue not with

the idea of the westernization of Russia, but with the manner in which it was being pursued.

The Decembrist uprising marks the beginning of the second era in the Petrine Tsardom. During this time two ideologically distinct visions of the Russian nation emerged. One of them held that the most hopeful future for Russia was in the further European- or westernization of Russia, and thus this perspective was said to be held by Westernizers. The second group looked to Russian historical culture, for them derived significantly from older Orthodox Christian traditions, for guidance and a structure for their Russia. This group, known as the Slavophiles, rejected the imitation of Europe. In some ways, though, these two ideological positions were in agreement. Both rejected as unjust Imperial privilege and Empire building as it had proceeded, on the backs of the peasants and the serfs.<sup>20</sup>

The second era of the Petrine Tsardom ended with the Great Reforms, the most significant of which was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. It was in this decade, too, that historians observe the emergence of a unique group, the Russian intelligentsia "as a distinct and articulate body."<sup>21</sup> But this kind of a statement can be confusing if understood to mean that a cohesive group of like-minded individuals, espousing a coherent philosophy or body of ideas on which a programme of civil reforms was founded, had emerged and were making their unified voice heard. Secular and spiritual issues in Russia merged, distorted and transformed each other to such an extent that it seems no group nor any ideology could completely stand untouched or unchanged by any other, and this is true of the intelligentsia, too.

So to whom does the term 'intelligensia' refer? It may be useful to say who the intelligensia were not. The Russian intelligensia is not synonymous with Russian intellectual professionals, nor were they a unified body in the usual sense. Zernov writes that

The Russian intelligensia was unique. It was not a class, nor had it a common economic basis....Its core was formed by men of the liberal professions, but it also included a penniless intellectual proletariat...The Intelligensia was even less a political party in the recognized sense. Its members held such diverse views as liberalism, socialism, communism, and anarchism. Some were constitutional monarchists and others republicans, some were in favour of terrorism; others were pacifists and opposed to the use of force under any circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

The intelligensia's relation to spirituality is similarly diverse. Many of the Intelligensia were "...particularly attracted to western atheism and materialism"<sup>23</sup>, yet it has been noted that "the intelligensia bore the character of a religious body."<sup>24</sup> Berdyaev writes that "When in the second half of the nineteenth century the Intelligensia of the left took final shape among us, it took on a character like that of a monastic order..."<sup>25</sup>

If the intelligensia was this diverse ideologically, socially, and spiritually on what point did they coincide, what was the point of agreement from which they drew energy?

It was this: all members of the intelligensia believed that the realm in which change, progress, success, or salvation could be struggled over and achieved within was essentially a *political* one.

Slavophiles and Old Believers, those immersed in a Russian culture heavily influenced by traditional Orthodox Christian ideas, held that the location of

responsibility and the primary site of change was essentially internal and personal. With their allegiance to the sociopolitical realm as the essential site of personal struggles, the voice of the Intelligentsia marks not so much a shift in the popular Russian mind as the emergence of a new perspective about the location of responsibility, one heavily influenced by psychological and social theory of the day.

This view of human activity gave the intelligentsia a common vocabulary and outlook, but what welded them together was their confidence in the truth of their belief. Besides extolling as virtues attitudes usually thought of as 'religious'-asceticism, a capacity for sacrifice and the endurance of suffering...<sup>26</sup>; what made the Russian Intelligentsia more than anything else like a religious group was that they held "materialism (as) a matter of religious faith".<sup>27</sup> What Berdayaev calls the Russian intelligentsia's 'exceptional capacity appreciating the influence of ideas' resulted in an emphasis on a politicized, generalized and idealized perception of problems whose solutions were conceived in that same rarified realm. The Russian intelligentsia were faithful to ideas exercised in a social and political arena, and believed that this more than anything else was how a just and righteous society would be built.

What were the ideas the intelligentsia held? In general, they were influenced by Western, particularly German philosophical and French social thought. However, what they borrowed from the west was intellectual equipment, not attitudes. They valued the western concept of progress, yet "looked down upon western man for his selfishness and lack of vision."<sup>28</sup>

The intelligentsia were Utopian; they advocated transformation in that they sought a total reorganization of Russian society, particularly the abolition of centralized, hierarchical authority in either monarchical or Imperial form. Because they were so immersed in new, western theories of politics, economics, psychology, etc., they gave relatively little attention to their own social history, focussing instead on a transformed future Russian society. Here they differed drastically from the Slavophiles—those dedicated to the history and culture of pre-Petrine Russia and eager to resurrect the social values of those times. The enthusiasm the Intelligentsia had for a possible future the Slavophiles met with their own enthusiasm for a definite past.<sup>29</sup>

Russia in the nineteenth century was energized under the influence of this particular intellectual awakening. Enthusiastic disagreement and debate was less a goal than a by-product of the times, and one of the debates the intelligentsia engaged in, both with others and among themselves, was the role of spirituality in the social order. The Slavophile attitude, in advocating the resurrection of Russian culture as it existed before imbibing western influences, was at the same time a call to return to a particular kind of Orthodox attitude about experience, a 're-sacralization' of daily life. At the same time the Russian nineteenth century generally and the intelligentsia specifically were profoundly influenced by the German philosophical tradition, by Idealism and Romanticism as conceived by the likes of Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Fichte, that itself had spiritual roots in the academic tradition of 'Religionsphilosophie'.<sup>30</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century the intelligentsia had made a significant mark on Russian culture; but so had Slavophile ideas of culture. Voices began to be heard, critical of the aims and methods the intelligentsia advocated. A view

began to emerge that, while not Slavophil nor Old Believer explicitly, certainly could be considered sympathetic to many of their more foundational views. The most coherent and unified expression of this came in 1909 with publication of Vekhi,<sup>31</sup> a volume of essays critical of the intelligentsias aims and methods. Parallel to this growing trend of dissent, many who were unsatisfied not just by voices in the debates but by the debate itself, rediscovered Orthodox Christianity- not the Church as an institution, but Orthodox Christian practice in the monastic tradition. Zernov writes of the

re-discovery by the elite of the monastic tradition which had earlier remained hidden from the Russian intellectuals...At the end of the nineteenth century several writers and philosophers visited famous monasteries like Optina, Valaam, Sarov, and Solovki, and recognized the significance of Orthodox asceticism for Russian culture.<sup>32</sup>

The Russian monastic tradition Zernov notes but does not elaborate on is particularly important to explore against the background of the tension between the Intelligentsia and its critics. An examination of it can reveal precisely where the critics of the intelligentsia imbibed fundamental ideas from Russian Orthodox Christian views regarding anthropological and psychological questions, about the person and about social relations. To trace these connections provides an important bridge from the social and intellectual climate of the early twentieth century in Russia to the early thought and writings of Bakhtin on dialogue.

#### *Russian Orthodox monasticism: Kenosis and Hesychasm*

The Russian people took possession of and transformed the traditions of Greek Orthodox Christianity and made them their own. Because of this,

monasticism in Russia owes a kind of debt to Greek Orthodoxy, since it was Greek Orthodox hesychasm that Russian monks took up and made their own. One of the ways Russian monks accomplished this was through an understanding of the goal of hesychastic practice as seen through another spiritual process Russians felt a special affinity for, that of Kenosis.

### *Kenosis*

The influence of the idea of kenosis is significant not just in Russian monastic experience but throughout Russian thought more generally, working " powerfully beneath the surface in the thought of Russians, and leads them to look upon suffering, and especially suffering that is voluntarily accepted, not merely with compassion but with veneration."<sup>33</sup>

The term 'kenosis' means 'self-emptying', and comes from the letters of Paul in the New Testament. In a letter to Christian converts Paul charges them ...always consider the other person to be better than yourself. so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other peoples interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus. His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself (ekenosen) to assume the condition of a slave, and becoming as men are, and being as all men are, he was humbler yet even to accepting death on the cross.<sup>34</sup>

The kenotic process involves many of the peculiarly Russian ideas about human consciousness, and of the self-other interrelationship. Two ideas especially prominent in this passage, and especially important in hesychastic monasticism are the ideas of 'divinity' and 'humility'.

Paul advocates the practice of putting others interests ahead of ones own, to think of the other, and equates this attitude not just with the person of Jesus Christ, but also to a 'state', that of 'divinity'. On this level the kenotic process is both psychological and social. It is a psychological process, one that takes place internally, in the mind, because it is with the mind that one perceives the other. And it is kenotic in that it requires an intentional 'descent'- with ones mind- from a position of greater to lesser importance, in relation to the 'other' .

At the same time it is a social process. What we have access to of the other is our own internal perception of them. But the other truly exists outside of that- the real relationship between self and other occurs externally even as our perceptions are internal. To recognize this is to recognize that no matter how much we perceive of an other we are never seeing them whole. The paradox of the discovery -that our perceptions are always incomplete- is that this adds to, rather than takes away from, our real knowledge of ourselves and each other. The kenotic process is one in which persons empty themselves of a particular perception of identity and authority in order to discover in themselves a humbler but more authoritative knowledge of themselves and the world.

In commentaries, sometimes this is spoken of in spatial terms- a 'descent' is made to a 'location' from which things that had been obscured are now visible; at other times the same ideas are spoken of in terms of 'consciousness' and 'identity'. The meaning remains the same no matter the conceptual form. The kenotic process is a social and psychological task every human being faces in order to discover and realize their own divinity. A way to pursue that task is through ascetic practice; for hesychasts, through prayer. As Leonard Stanton puts it:



Among the results of the Incarnation is spiritual freedom...Another result is the privileging of created time and space here 'below.' Our world is not so utterly cut off from God in Heaven that we must abjectly withdraw, like Descartes into his eggshell, certain only of our doubts. The good news of the Incarnation is that if we are successful in attaining a sufficient understanding of how *we are limited by* space and time, and if we successfully cultivate the ascetic practice of purging the passions which bind our lesser part to the created world, then a new dimension of hope and possibility presents itself to us. In terms of the life of the soul, we can and may aspire to *theosis*, i.e., godmanhood, or deification: an actualization, within the space and time of our lives on earth, of the fullest possible sharing of the *human portion* of Christ's divinity.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Hesychastic Practice and Prayer*

A Russian Orthodox hesychastic monk began a lecture at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1981 by asking the rhetorical question "Why does a person study religion?" and answered it by saying

There are many incidental reasons, but there is only one reason if a person is really in earnest: in a word, it is to come into contact with reality, to find a reality deeper than the everyday reality that so quickly changes, rots away, leaves nothing behind and offers no lasting happiness to the human soul. Every religion that is sincere tries to open up contact with this reality.<sup>36</sup>

In Russian Orthodox Christian monasticism, 'God' is understood as identical to objective reality. Therefore, the search for the perception of 'God' is identical to the search for the perception of 'Truth'. A primary project of the monk is to arrive at the perception of ones' own capacity for God. This

identity, that each human being has, is referred to in Orthodox thought as a person's 'divinity'.

Russian Orthodox Christian monasticism, like all monasticism, offers a path, or a 'way' to God-in other words, the undertaking of the kenotic task set out for each person of 'emptying out' false perceptions of oneself and others in order to discover ones own, higher, true self, ones divinity.

Russian Orthodox Christian monks are not clergy, nor are they required to occupy any position at all within the institutional Church hierarchy. A monk is simply a seeker who has undertaken a particular, traditional 'way' toward this discovery.

Russian Orthodox Christian monasticism is considered a middle 'way'. If eremetical monasticism, the kind of monastic practice of the solitary hermit, occupies one end of a continuum, and cenobitic monasticism, the kind of monasticism that is as completely and emphatically communal as possible occupies the other, then Russian 'skete' monasticism falls somewhere in between. A 'skete' is a small group of huts, occupied by a monk; a 'skete' monastery would have, like a cenobitic monastery, buildings that are communal and shared, but also sketes for each monk to sleep in and to store personal belongings. The monastery and skete monasticism, like all monasticism, is a communal experience, one in which the emphasis is one the cultivation of ones own inner, solitary experience and at the same time on a shared communal experience. Russian skete monasticism is relatively loosely organized in the sense that novices choose their work freely, while their entire spiritual guidance comes from their guide, called a "*staretz*", literally, an elder: a

monk(occasionally a lay person) distinguished for his saintliness, long experience in the spiritual life, and special gift for guiding the souls of others."<sup>37</sup>

But this sketch can be misleading. A much quoted phrase depicting the monastic tradition is that it is 'a flight from the world', giving rise to ideas about the monastic life as one of tranquility and serenity. On the contrary, whatever kind of world monasticism is perceived as a flight from, it is at the same time a head-on collision with another less visible and but nevertheless potent, internal, world.

In the nineteenth century in Russia the mystical hesychastic tradition within Russian monasticism was renewed. The first golden age of hesychasm was Gregory Palamas' fourteenth century Byzantium; the second occurred in late eighteenth century in Greece; Russia in the nineteenth century, under the influence of hesychasts such as the startsi at the Optina and Valaamo Hermitages, represents a third period of important influence of hesychasm.<sup>38</sup>

Hesychasm derives from the Greek word for 'quietness' or 'repose'. In its simplest form it can be thought of as a kind of meditative or contemplative practice, but of a kind that neither is removed or removes one from daily life. In hesychastic monkish life, contemplative practice is meant to be woven into the very fabric of daily life, into the warp and woof of a community as its members pursue their individual and communal vocations. The idea of the serenity of monkish existence, the perception of quiet and simplicity an outside observer might imagine they see is only an external manifestation that obscures intense internal activity and struggle.

The novice hesychastic monk struggles to perceive activity in two locations simultaneously-the internal 'subjective' reality and the external 'objective' reality- with minimum distortions. In Russian Orthodoxy the term 'prayer' denotes this state: when novice hesychastic monks strive to understand and accomplish, by degrees, 'unceasing prayer' (see 1Thess. 5:17 "Pray constantly."), they are trying to maintain the *trevesnic*, or 'doubled attention' as much as they can. This state is the 'goal' of hesychastic monastic and ascetic practice, because it is the point to the practice of theology itself. As Spidlik writes " The ancient Christian East understood the practice of theology as a personal communion... an experience lived in a state of prayer."<sup>39</sup>

Literature on prayer in Russian Orthodoxy is widely available in the West, having made its way into translation and publication via Eastern Orthodox publishing enterprises associated with monasteries. Manuals, textbooks, and collections of commentary about prayer can all be found. Among the classics of this canon are-the Russian version of the Greek Philokalia, called the Dobrotoujbie, originally translated in 1793; E. Kadloubovsky' and G.E.H. Palmer's translation of Theophan the Recluse's Unseen Warfare, as well as their compilation of an Orthodox anthology entitled The Art of Prayer; Anthony Bloom, Metropolitan of Western Europe, has written Beginning to Pray and The Psycho-Somatic Method; the anonymously written The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim continues his Way, described as "a novelization of Scripture and Patrology...a book about contemplative prayer in the tradition of Orthodox monasticism."<sup>40</sup> The list of work on prayer is of course much longer than this.

The hesychastic tradition has developed around one particular prayer, called the Jesus Prayer, or the 'Prayer of the Heart'. It consists of the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." repeated in time to the beating of ones' heart and with the conscious control of ones' breath. There are three stages of Prayer: first, Oral or bodily Prayer; second, Prayer of the Mind; and finally Prayer of the Heart. The ultimate goal is to accomplish what Theophan the Recluse (born George Godorov, 1815-1894) one of the most influential hesychasts in the Russian nineteenth century, takes as the 'principal thing', to "...stand with the mind in the heart before God, and to go on standing before Him unceasingly day and night..."<sup>41</sup>.

'To stand with the mind in the heart'-what could this mean?- can only be grasped by investigating the special place 'the heart' occupies in the Orthodox doctrine of man.

Russian Orthodox Christian anthropology differs from secular anthropology. Secular anthropology asks "What do people do, and why do they do it?", whereas Russian Orthodox Christian anthropology asks "What are people for?" and finds its answers based on and consistent with its own conception of the physical and metaphysical world.

The answer Russian Orthodoxy gives to that question is, in a word, 'Perfection'<sup>42</sup>. This task links Orthodox anthropology with Orthodox psychology, since the means by which perfection is attained is through a metanoia, a completion by transformation of the mind by situating it in the heart. The kenotic act imbued people not with consciousness of their own true nature, their authentic self, or 'inner man'- their divinity, in other words-but

with the possibility of it. The answer to the question of "What is man for?" is precisely this-the discovery of their divinity, or their true nature. The 'perfection' of man means simply a transformation- from the possibility of consciousness of ones true nature into actual consciousness of it.

In this point Orthodox Christianity's roots in Greek philosophy can be seen. For Socrates and Russian Orthodox Christians alike, a person's primary aim is perfection; the way that is accomplished is to 'Know thyself'. For both, there are two essential discoveries on the path to self-knowledge: one is consciousness of one's limits, or ones nature; the other is knowledge of the limits of ones' knowledge. The limits of one's knowledge constitutes an intellectual realm; knowledge of ones owns limits-what is referred to in Russian Orthodox literature as "...the soul's knowledge of the constitution of its own nature..."<sup>43</sup> is a psychological realm. The way to this self-knowledge is through a process of gaining, then losing, then gaining again a special quality of inner consciousness, or self-awareness.

The idea of a special quality of consciousness is another important axiom Russian Orthodoxy borrows and adapts from Greek philosophical thought. In the Republic, Plato describes an *entos anthro-pos* (the man within) having rightful authority over the 'many-headed beast', meant to symbolically represent the appetites, or passions<sup>44</sup>. Russian Orthodoxy, too, takes the human being to be a duality, comprised of an inner, 'hidden' or 'invisible', part, and an outer, visible part. Orthodox literature follows Biblical interpretation in taking the term 'heart' to denote the 'inner man', the capacity for 'self-awareness' and 'conscience', It is in this 'inner man' that our divinity lives.

Remarkably, though, there are no prohibitions regarding the characteristics or attributes of the inner man. This location is the only one that offers a glimpse of a higher reality- the truth about ourselves, the world and others, so it necessarily includes the entire range of human attributes. "The heart," writes Timothy Ware," obviously includes the affections and emotions, but it also includes much else besides: it embraces in effect everything that goes to comprise what we call a person." <sup>45</sup> The explicit lack of prohibition regarding human nature shows up again and again in Orthodox commentary on hesychasm.

From the Homilies of St. Makarios

The heart is but a small vessel: and yet dragons and lions are there, and there poisonous creatures and all the treasures of wickedness: rough uneven paths are there, and gaping chasms. There likewise is God, there are angels, there life and the Kingdom, there light and apostles, the heavenly cities and the treasures of grace: all things are there.

from Triads, Triad 1, Question 2, by Gregory Palamas

'Take heed to thyself,' says Moses,' that there *be not a secret thing in thine heart*, an iniquity(Deut. 15:9)' Take heed to yourself, that is, *the whole of yourself*; not so that you heed one thing and not another-you must heed the whole.

From The writings of Theophan the Recluse

We shall not contradict the meaning of the Holy Fathers' instructions. if we say: *Behave as you wish*, so long as you learn to stand before God with the mind in the Heart, for in this lies the essence of the matter.

From the journals of Father Sylvan

No person in the Church dare speak or act with respect to another without knowing whether in that moment he is or is not experiencing the truth about himself and the Creation. *It is not demanded of us that we always be in the state of the*

*heart that grants us vision and self-mastery. It is only demanded of us that we know the state we are in.*

Why such an emphasis on the recognition and acceptance of these qualities in one self and in others? One reason is to develop discernment. By accepting and knowing the lesser parts of themselves people come to recognize what is higher. For example, if one is unable or unwilling to investigate and accept the reality of revenge, these feelings may well masquerade in the mind as justice.

Another reason is that one can eventually recognize that these qualities can only be mastered, but never removed. A third reason is that by recognizing ones' true nature, in accepting the reality of ones' limits, a quality of humility and mercy is cultivated-not as qualities in themselves, but as by-products of the discovery of ones' true nature.

The underlying assumption of Russian Orthodox monasticism that challenges our common sense western ideas about the self and identity is this: if we need to discover our true nature, our true identity, then it must be that what we assume is our identity is something else, something more superficial. In the Russian Orthodox mind this distinction between the consciousness of the outer and the consciousness of the inner man is compared to the difference between one who is drunk and one who is sober, or the difference between one who is asleep and one who is awake. Timothy Ware writes that

To repent is to wake up. Repentance, change of mind, leads to leads to watchfulness. The Greek term used here, *nepsis*, means literally sobriety and wakefulness-the opposite to a state of drugged or alcoholic stupor; and so in context of the spiritual life, it signifies attentiveness, vigilance, recollection....The neptic man is one who has come to himself, who does not daydream, drifting aimlessly



under the influence of passing impulses... As the *Gospel of Truth* (mid-second century) expresses it, 'He is like one who awakens from drunkenness, returning to himself...'<sup>46</sup>

Boris Mouravieff notes

When man ...forgets himself, he is simply carried away by one of the mental currents which pass through him-but he is not conscious of it; he thinks he acts, when in reality he is carried away all the while plunged in mental sleep. When he practices the *tresvenic* (See note 10 ), that is , whenever he is present, and as long as that state lasts, he will realize that he is being carried away. But that is all. He still continues to be carried away. Nevertheless this is great progress....<sup>47</sup>

Prayer is the means hesychasts use to discover the gulf between the authentic inner self and the superficial outer one, and it is unceasing prayer -the aim of hesychastic practice- that relentlessly situates the mind in its proper relation to oneself and others, amounting to a metanoia. It is a transformation of mind, but not from a state of corruption to one of flawlessness. It is the transformation that comes from shaking off illusions and pretensions and becoming aware of how limited and meagre our minds are in relation to the order of the universe. The heart is the inner man; the mind is our means of discernment. To stand with the mind in the heart is to discern the inner from the outer, the real from the false; it is to 'know oneself'. It is to reclaim one's status as a 'person', to struggle to know ourselves as we really are in order to become truly capable of the perception of others *as* others.

*Vehki*

In 1909 seven writers who counted themselves among the intelligentsia together published a 'Symposium on the Russian Intelligentsia' entitled Vehki

(in English, 'Signposts'). The ideas expressed in this volume caused an uproar, going through five editions in six months. Its authors criticized from various perspectives many of the fundamental outlooks of the intelligentsia, and this criticism was met with a full volley of published replies. In 1909, 195 articles were published in response to the book; In Defence of the Intelligentsia and Vehki, Following the Signposts appeared that same year, followed in 1910 by The Intelligentsia in Russia, On the Border and Vehki as a Sign of the Times.<sup>48</sup>

Essentially what the Vehki essayists objected to in the intelligentsia's social analysis was its intellectualism. How could a peoples' efforts to right decades of injustice and poverty distort into the brutality of 'Bloody Sunday', and the sociopolitical upheaval and disorganization of the ruling institutions after 1905 revolution? The Vehki authors saw the answer clearly.

In the Preface to the first edition Mikhail Gershenzon wrote that

The aim of the articles in this collection is not to pass doctrinaire judgment on the Russian Intelligentsia from the height of established truth; they were not written with contempt for the Intelligentsia's past, but with anguish for it and with burning concern for our country's future. The Revolution of 1905-6 and the events that followed it served as a nation-wide test of those values which our social thought had preserved for more than a half a century as something of the utmost sanctity...

And so, this book was born. Its contributors(...)were guided by the conviction that their critique of the intelligentsia's spiritual foundations would help meet the generally recognized need that these be re-examined.

The men who have joined forces here differ greatly among themselves both on basic questions of 'faith' and their practical preferences; but there are no disagreements on this joint enterprise. Their common platform is the recognition of the theoretical and practical primacy of

spiritual life over the external forms of community. They mean by this that the individual's inner life is the sole creative force in human existence, and that this inner life, and not the self-sufficient principles of the political realm, constitutes the only solid basis on which a society can be built.<sup>49</sup>

The intelligentsia concentrated their attention in the realm of ideology by focussing on and privileging the realm in which ideologies clashed and either prevailed or succumbed. What this amounted to, the Vehki writers argued, was not simply the diminishment of that other realm of day to day experience and moment by moment consciousness of ones' self and each other, but the denial of its very existence. For the Vehki writers, the intelligentsia's position was nothing less than Nihilism. The intelligentsia claimed that nothing existed but ideas, whereas the Vehki writers like Russian Orthodox Christians, claimed that a higher reality existed, and that it could be found both within and among people. Like the Orthodox Christian worldview, the Vehki writers saw the realm of day to day experience and moment by moment self consciousness as the location from which the perception of a 'higher reality' was possible. and from which something like real responsibility could be exercised. To deny that possibility was to deny the truth of the existence of God. The intelligentsia had given this up, and with it, their own personal truth. This more than anything else was what the Vehki writers saw as the problem facing Russians, and this more than anything was what they meant to re-affirm. The essential observation made by the Vehki writers is contained in Gershenzon's article entitled 'Creative Self-Consciousness' when he writes that " The one thing we can and must tell the Russian *intelligent* is: try to become a human being."<sup>50</sup>

These were the issues that captured the Russian popular mind in the early twentieth century, issues that need to be kept in mind when considering the underlying assumptions about the 'person' when Mikhail Bakhtin proposes that dialogue, above all else, characterizes human interpersonal communication.

"The basic scheme for dialogue", Bakhtin writes, in his 1929 monograph,

Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics

"...is very simple: the opposition of one person to another person as the opposition of "I" to "the other."

It is impossible to to master the inner man, to see and understand him by making him into an object of indifferent neutral analysis: it is also impossible to master him by merging with him, by empathizing with him. No, one can approach him and reveal him-or more precisely, force him to reveal himself-only by addressing him dialogically. And to portray the inner man, as Dostoevsky understood it, was possible only by portraying his communion with another. Only in communion, in the interaction of one person with an other, can the 'man in man' be revealed, for others as well as for oneself.

Dialogue here is not the threshold of action, it is the action itself. It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already ready-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time what he is and we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Ineffability' is traditionally one of the distinguishing criteria of such an experience. And because we can't describe it, it is termed a mystery.

"One may say truly, I think, that personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness..." James goes on to cite four indicators of an experience called 'mystical'- the first is 'ineffability', the others are 'noetic quality', 'transcendency', and 'passivity'. William James The Varieties of Religious Experience New York: Penguin Inc. 1958 p. 292-3.

<sup>2</sup> Tomas Spidlik The Spirituality of the Christian East- A Systematic Handbook Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications 1986 p.2.

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- <sup>3</sup>R. M. French The Eastern Orthodox Church London: Hutchinson and Co. 1951 p.96.
- <sup>4</sup>Tomas Spidlik Op. Cit p.17.
- <sup>5</sup>Serge A Zenkovsky.ed., Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales New York: E.P Dutton 1963 p.49-51.
- <sup>6</sup>Jacob Needleman Lost Christianity San Francisco: Harper and Row 1980 p.39.
- <sup>7</sup>Spidlik, Op.Cit. p. 10.
- <sup>8</sup>French Op.Cit. p.97.
- <sup>9</sup>Igor Kungurtsev, Olga Lchakova - 'The Unknown Russian Mysticism- Pagan Sorcery, Christian Yoga and Other Esoteric Practices in the Former Soviet Union' Gnosis, No.31 Spring 1994 p.21.
- <sup>10</sup>Kungerstsev,Luchakova Op. Cit. p. 23.
- <sup>11</sup>Boris MouraviEFF Gnosis- Studies and Commentaries on the Esoteric Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy Vol. I The Exoteric Cycle translated by S.A. Wissa Newbury, Mass.: Praxis Insitute Press 1989 p.157, 209.
- <sup>12</sup>Nicholas Zernov The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century New York: Harper and Row. 1963 p. 25.
- <sup>13</sup>Nicholas Zernov Three Russian Prohets Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press 1973 p.21,22.
- <sup>14</sup>Zernov Ibid. p. 22.
- <sup>15</sup>Zernov Ibid, p.42.
- <sup>16</sup>Zernov Ibid. p. 40.
- <sup>17</sup>Zernov Ibid p.37.
- <sup>18</sup>Mortimer Chambers, Raymond Grew, David Herlihy, Theodore K. Rabb, Isser Woloch The Western Experience to 1715 New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1983 p. 577.
- <sup>19</sup>French Op. Cit. p. 107
- <sup>20</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev The Russian Idea translated by R.M. French Boston: Beacon Press 1962 p.26-7.
- <sup>21</sup>Zernov Op. Cit 1963 p.14.
- <sup>22</sup>Zernov Ibid 1963 p.2.
- <sup>23</sup>Zernov Ibid. 1963 p.5.
- <sup>24</sup>Williams, H. Russia and the Russians London:Pitman 1917 p.129.
- <sup>25</sup>Berdyaev Op. Cit. p.28.
- <sup>26</sup>Berdyaev Ibid. p. 28.
- <sup>27</sup>Berdyaev Ibid. p.27.
- <sup>28</sup>Zernov Op. Cit. 1963 p.31.
- <sup>29</sup>Zernov passim.
- <sup>30</sup>Caryl Emerson 'Russian Orthodoxy and the Early Bakhtin' in Religion & Literature Vol. 22. 2-3. Summer-Autumn 1990 p.110.
- <sup>31</sup>"Vekhi-also known under the the English title Landmarks or Signposts- is a collection of essays first published in Moscow in 1909. Writing from various points of view, the authors reflect the experience of Russia's failed 1905 revolution- a failure not only to be blamed on the repressive forces of the autocracy but also on the intellectual bankruptcy of the intelligentsia and the Russian nation's inability to use freedom constructively." -from the frontispiece of N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov, M. Gershenzon, A.S. Izgoev, B. Kistiakovskii, P. Struve, S. Frank Vehki. translated and edited by Marshall S. Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994.
- <sup>32</sup>Zernov Op. Cit. 1963 p.54-55.
- <sup>33</sup>French Op. Cit. p. 112.
- <sup>34</sup>Phillipians. 2. 3-11.

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- <sup>35</sup> Leonard Stanton Optina Pustyn in the Russian Literary Imagination New York: Peter Long Inc. p.14.
- <sup>36</sup> Fr. Seraphim Rose God's Revelation to the Human Heart Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood 1987 p.13.
- <sup>37</sup> Igumen Chariton The Art of Prayer- An Orthodox Anthology ; translated by E. Kadloubovsky, E.M. Palmer; edited by Timothy Ware London: Faber and Faber 1966 p.10 Note 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Chariton Ibid p.32.
- <sup>39</sup> Spidlik Op. Cit. p.1.
- <sup>40</sup> Leonard Stanton 'Three Levels of Authorship in The Way of a Pilgrim', in St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly Vol. 3 No. 3 1989 p.221.
- <sup>41</sup> Chariton Op.Cit. p.63
- <sup>42</sup> Perfection in this sense is meant to indicate 'completion' , rather than 'flawlessness'.What is meant for 'completion' is each person; 'completion' comes in the recognition of the truth in oneself, a truth that may well included what is considered to be flaws.
- <sup>43</sup> Origen, Origen. The Song of Songs:Commentary and Homilies; annotated and translated by R.P. Lawson. quoted in Spidlik Op. Cit. 1986 p. 90.
- <sup>44</sup> Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, editors The Collected Dialogues of Plato Bollingen series LXXI Princeton: Princeton University Press 1961 p.817.
- <sup>45</sup> Chariton Op. Cit. p.13.
- <sup>46</sup> Archimandrite Kallistos(Timothy) Ware, The Orthodox Way New York: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary 1979 p.152.
- <sup>47</sup> Mouravieff Op. Cit. p. 157.
- <sup>48</sup> Zernov 1963 Ibid. p.125.
- <sup>49</sup> Berdyaev et al, 1994 Op. Cit. p.xxxvii.
- <sup>50</sup> Berdyaev et al, Ibid. p.51.
- <sup>51</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984 p.251-2.

## Chapter 4

### Bakhtin's concept of Dialogue as Russian Orthodox Prayer

The concept of 'dialogue' is fundamental to the thought of Mikhail Bakhtin. Throughout his work he uses it as a lens, seeing with it special qualities of language, literature, and consciousness, and his thoughts on the process of dialogue gives form to his thoughts on the interrelationship between 'persons'- between the 'self' and the 'other'. Coming to terms with Bakhtin's ideas means coming to terms with his particular concept of dialogue, one he develops in detail in his first book Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.

But no matter how original Bakhtin's concept and application of 'dialogue' is, it did not spring whole from him alone. The aim here is to suggest where similar ideas reside, and to suggest where and how Bakhtin might have imbibed those ideas. One place where ideas that resemble Bakhtin's concept of dialogue can be found is in the literature on Eastern and Russian Orthodox Hesychasm, especially in the concept of Prayer.

*Why should we even suspect such a thing?*

One of the topics Bakhtin took an interest in was theology, but he didn't leave an ultimate, or even an explicit, expression of his ideas on that subject. We do know that his style of thinking was holistic, that he "thought on the edges of several disciplines".<sup>1</sup> This suggests that his work offers multiple

interpretations, but even so it's worth being careful. Though Bakhtin himself asserted the reality of multiple interpretations, he was not so loose in his thinking to imagine that 'many interpretations' meant that *any* interpretation was as good as any other. He was as dismissive of extreme relativism as he was of dogmatism.<sup>2</sup> Good interpretations are good because evidence supports them. In the case of the religious influences in Bakhtin's Dostoevsky book, it first needs to be established that those influences could be there before it can be argued where and how those influences might be visible. In other words, the external conditions of Bakhtin's production of his Dostoevsky book can tell us something about whether he was influenced by Russian Orthodox ideas. The evidence about those external conditions is circumstantial, and it is evidence worth considering.

First of all, we can ask "To what extent was Bakhtin interested in Russian Orthodox thought?"

"Bakhtin", writes Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, "was a religious man. In his childhood he had had a conventional upbringing as a Russian Orthodox. By the 1920s, religious thought had become one of Bakhtin's central interests."<sup>3</sup>

In Bakhtin's thinking, religion, generally, and his own Russian Orthodox faith, specifically, was a consistent theme. Clark and Holquist write that "He(Bakhtin) was known in intellectual circles as a *cervonik*, a 'churchman' or 'adherent of the church'", and one of the members of the first Bakhtin 'circle' even characterized the primary aim of their initial collaborative philosophical efforts as nothing less than "...to rethink all the categories of modern thought in terms of the Russian Orthodox tradition."<sup>4</sup>



But what exactly is meant by 'Russian Orthodox tradition'? There are a number of things within Russian Orthodoxy that could be called 'traditional'; hesychasm is only one of them. Why choose hesychasm as a source of shared concepts ?

In their biography Clark and Holquist observe that what Bakhtin was trying to come to terms with in his early intellectual life was " to bring philosophy somehow into congruence with theology....much of his early work(was)...an attempt to understand and describe a world in which prayer makes sense ."

What kind of a definition of prayer is necessary for that statement to be consistent with the ideas Bakhtin presents? The Russian Orthodox hesychastic tradition has one- it places the concept of 'prayer' at the very heart of not only their spiritual life, but their moment-by-moment lived experience. Prayer is not a means but a end, the path that lies between. For hesychasts it is the state of prayer that provides a bridge to the inner man from the outer, and makes real communion with others possible. This kind of definition of the term 'prayer' clarifies rather than obscures Clark and Holquist's observation as to Bakhtin's early thought.

The debates concerning Vehki were of such a magnitude that it would be more far-fetched to imagine Bakhtin was not influenced by them . The book was so widely read that its circulation numbers have been used to make demographic calculations, on the assumption that virtually every educated person had read it.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that the social and intellectual climate of Russia in the early twentieth century, the one Bakhtin thought and moved in, was one deeply influenced by the debates concerning the Vehki critique of the Russian intelligentsia, just as it is clear that these debates themselves were steeped in

Russian Orthodox Christian ideas about 'the person'. And it has been noted earlier in this work that the Vehki critique itself took influences from what Zernov has called the "rediscovery by the elite of the monastic tradition which had earlier remained hidden from the Russian intellectuals." <sup>6</sup>

The idea that there are influences of Russian Orthodoxy and the Vehki debates in Bakhtin's work is suggestive enough that it has been considered elsewhere- in isolation- by two writers, Caryl Emerson and Gary Saul Morson. In 'Russian Orthodoxy and the Early Bakhtin'<sup>7</sup> Emerson surveys the manuscripts Bakhtin worked on in the early 1920's, and sees there applications and extensions- in ways, Emerson argues, that both are and are not especially Orthodox- of Orthodox Christian values, especially those of the Russian "idealist philosopher and religious visionary Vladimir Soloviev"<sup>8</sup>. Gary Saul Morson, in "Prosaic Bakhtin: *Landmarks*, Anti-Intelligentsialism, and the Russian Counter-Tradition"<sup>9</sup> reads through Bakhtin's work and finds in it threads traceable through the Vehki debates.

Both Emerson and Morson observe influences in the early Bakhtin that derive from Russian Orthodoxy and the Vehki group. But they leave important relations between the two either under-emphasized or unexplored. One point to be made is that there is a range, for lack of a better term, of 'styles' that Russian Orthodox thought and practice takes. Soloviev's Orthodoxy is one particular manifestation: there are others, among them hesychastic monasticism, that enjoyed a revival during Bakhtin's early years. Another point overlooked is the degree to which the Vehki writers, explicitly in most cases, were thinking in and writing from an especially Orthodox Christian perspective, one that shares a conceptual lineage with hesychastic monasticism. Emerson and Morson

notice in Bakhtin's early work connecting threads through both Russian Orthodoxy and the Vehki writers, but what is missing is an investigation of the link between these two. Russian Orthodox anthropology and hesychastic monastic thought and vocabulary provides that link. It reveals an unusual coherence in Bakhtin's intellectual lineage, and acts as a key that unlocks an alternative reading of Bakhtin's first book, on Dostoevsky.

### *Bakhtin on Dostoevsky*

In the early 1920's Bakhtin first took up the subject of Dostoevsky in order to tackle the problem of explaining not only 'what' but also 'how' Dostoevsky was able to accomplish what he did in his novels. Many literary theorists and critics had attempted the same project, but none had focused on the particular thing Bakhtin argues made Dostoevsky's work special. For Bakhtin, Dostoevsky did something special, and that allowed him to see something special.

Bakhtin proposed that what Dostoevsky had accomplished artistically signaled the creation of a new genre of novel, one he called the 'polyphonic' novel. In the original monograph, Bakhtin moved through the first four chapters<sup>10</sup> investigating more closely exactly how the polyphonic novel is constructed, focusing on three of the genre's primary characteristics; the nature of the Hero and the relationship between the Hero and the Author; the position of the Idea in Dostoevsky's novel; and Characteristics of Genre and Plot Composition. At this level Bakhtin's treatment of Dostoevsky's work is literary and technical, but on another his observations and conclusions have implications beyond those for scholarship and the study of books.

Essentially, Bakhtin argues that what Dostoevsky had accomplished in his literary efforts was a higher form of artistic representation than had theretofore been accomplished. This is so, Bakhtin argued, because he had more accurately captured the actual quality of consciousness and relations at work in people-self-conscious beings who are capable of considering themselves the way they would consider others. In other words, by accurately depicting in his novels the on-going quality of consciousness and self-consciousness, and all of the permutations, connections, relationships and interrelationships something like that must imply, Dostoevsky accomplishes the artistic goal he sets for himself, to "With utter realism, find the man in man...They call me a psychologist; this is not true. I am merely a realist in the higher sense...".<sup>11</sup>

The first of Bakhtin's observations about Dostoevsky's work appeals precisely to this. Bakhtin observes that the hero in Dostoevsky's work is not a character nor an ideological a position; the hero of Dostoevsky's novel "was a man, (but) in the final analysis he represented not the idea in man, but (to use his own words) the 'man in man'".<sup>12</sup>

To reveal the 'man in man', Dostoevsky had to do something special. Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky had to forfeit the position of authority an author usually takes up in relation to the characters that populate his work. Dostoevsky had to account for two relationships of consciousness that are in operation simultaneously: one, the constant availability of self-consciousness, the persistent position of observation from within oneself; the other, that at all times this precisely exists in the other to a degree that is largely unknowable to anybody else. In order to capture and reveal this quality of consciousness, and

the nature of the interrelationship among consciousnesses in the way he did, Bakhtin claims Dostoevsky himself had to enter into a different kind of relationship with the characters in his works. Bakhtin describes this shift, this metanoia, in Dostoevsky this way-

One might offer the following, and somewhat simplified, formula for the revolution that the young Dostoevsky brought about...

He transferred the author and the narrator with all their accumulated points of view and with the descriptions, characterizations, and definitions of the hero provided by them, into the field of vision of the hero himself, thus transforming the finalized and integral reality of the hero into the material of the hero's own self-consciousness...

Dostoevsky carried out as it were a small scale Copernican revolution when he took what had been a firm and finalizing authorial definition and turned it into an aspect of the hero's self-definition."<sup>13</sup>

In sum, what Bakhtin argues Dostoevsky did was, as an author, relinquish the assumption not only that he did know all about these characters, but more importantly that he *could* know all about them. And because of this particular shift in his own perspective, Dostoevsky was capable of seeing and then capturing this particular quality of human interrelationships elsewhere.

Bakhtin argues that this quality -he calls it 'self-consciousness'- that Dostoevsky emphasizes is essential to understanding what Dostoevsky has been able to accomplish, but more importantly it is the degree to which he was able to depict the complexity of how self-conscious beings interrelate that made Dostoevsky's work profoundly objective,<sup>14</sup> realistic beyond mere 'realism'.

For Bakhtin, this complexity of interrelating conscious beings capable of self-consciousness and consciousness of others, but not capable of consciousness of an others self-consciousness, is what is essentially Dostoevskian. It amounted to

"...the discovery of a *new integral view on the person*- the discovery of 'personality', or the 'man in man'- possible only by approaching the person from a correspondingly new and *integral* authorial position."<sup>15</sup>

The 'view of the person' Dostoevsky has been capable of capturing is founded on this premise- We don't- and can't- know how others know themselves. There is always more to them than we can ever know, and thus we can never 'finish' them , they are never a finite, known entity. Because this is true, human interrelations are characterized by a quality of 'openness', of 'unfinalizability'.

"The consciousnesses of other people cannot be perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or things-one can only *relate to them dialogically*. To think about them means to *talk with them: otherwise they immediately turn to us their objectivized side*: they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished objectivized things."<sup>16</sup>

For Bakhtin, only Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels capture this real quality of human experience, of the multiple intersections between consciousness and self-consciousness.

Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky's novels polyphonic-or multi-voiced- because of the way Dostoevsky depicts this intersection of consciousnesses and self-consciousnesses. For Dostoevsky, a human interrelationship is always an intersection of voices, and so his novels are multi-voiced, in contrast to other forms of novelistic structure where only one voice is heard. In the monologically voiced novel, only the voice of the author, or the voice of the

hero-and thus only the view of reality as expressed by that voice- has ultimate authority. Dostoevsky's unique artistic accomplishment was to create a literary structure capable of accommodating and depicting more accurately a sometimes cacophonous but never chaotic dialogic quality of human interrelationships.

### *Dialogue*

Bakhtin gave no explicit definition of 'dialogue' in his work on Dostoevsky, but others have. In a glossary of Bakhtin terms and neologisms, Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson describe 'dialogue' this way-

A word, discourse, language, or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Un-dialogized language is authoritative and absolute.

Dialogue may be external (between two different people) or internal (between an earlier or a later self).<sup>17</sup>

This kind of a definition certainly captures some of the qualities of the term 'dialogue' as Bakhtin uses it. But there is nevertheless absent something so fundamental to Bakhtin's concept of dialogue that without it it is impossible to grasp it at all. It is this- for Bakhtin, dialogue is above all else a special *quality* of consciousness toward oneself and towards an other. It is not so much 'language' as it is a quality of the language user(s).

Also fundamental to Bakhtin's thinking on dialogue is the idea of 'authenticity'. For Bakhtin, a chief characteristic of dialogue is that it somehow accommodates the revelation of authenticity, what he calls 'the genuine life of the personality'. It is a revelation that occurs not only from one to another, but also a revelation to oneself about oneself. And for Bakhtin this 'authenticity' is related to 'self-consciousness'.

The idea of authenticity with regard to identity can make sense only if we assume that what we usually take to be a person's identity, and our own identity, is by its nature not a single, unified thing, and this is precisely what Bakhtin suggests. "A man", writes Bakhtin

never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity  $A=A$ .

...the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between a man and himself...

The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a *dialogic* penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself.<sup>18</sup>

This idea goes powerfully against our common sense view of ourselves. We think we know who we are, we act as though we know what we're doing, we imagine we know who our acquaintances are. In doing this, Bakhtin says, when we imagine that we or others *are* a unified identity, we have fallen into a monologic position. In his words we have, or have been, 'finalized', and in so doing impose rather than expose qualities and characteristics of ourselves and others. Those impositions, taken together as the sum of a person's identity, constitute an identity that is always something less than genuine, less than authentic.

If that is not one's authentic identity, what is it? Here Bakhtin connects his ideas of 'self-consciousness' to those of 'authenticity'. For Bakhtin, authenticity is not so much a location in space as a moment in time. It is that moment of self-consciousness when we are aware of our own and others 'unfinalizability', of that "non-coincidence between a man and himself". For Bakhtin



*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..*

"As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not finalized...<sup>19</sup>

For Bakhtin, the moment of a "free act of self-consciousness" is the one where one recognizes and acknowledges the real limits of ones knowledge. It is a moment of profound honesty, where one recognizes what one does not know because it is what cannot be known.

Bakhtin calls this kind of a moment 'dialogical' because he sees in it echoes of the form and manner of the Socratic dialogues. It is the 'way' to what Bakhtin calls the 'dialogic nature of Truth'- not the truth of the world, but the truth of oneself. For Bakhtin

The dialogic nature of truth and the dialogic nature of human thinking about truth...is counterposed to *official* monologism, which *pretends to possess a ready-made truth*, and it is also counterposed to the naive self-confidence of those people who think that they know something, that is, who think they possess certain truths. Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.<sup>20</sup>

What makes Dostoevsky a great artist for Bakhtin is that he was able to capture and depict these dialogical interrelationships as well as and alongside monological ones. He could only accomplish this, Bakhtin argues, by altering the position traditionally occupied by the 'author'-one that is completely monological- and by instead consciously entering into a dialogical relationship himself. But even if Dostoevsky had never accomplished what Bakhtin argues

he had accomplished, the process Bakhtin claims Dostoevsky underwent and the relationship he claims results from it could still be found. The process of altering consciously ones relationship with the other mirrors the 'self-emptying' kenotic process. When Bakhtin observes that Dostoevsky created " a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with his own world*(that ) combine but are not merged in the unity of the event"<sup>21</sup>and that he accomplished this by transferring the author and 'all his accumulated points of view' to 'he same level as the hero himself ' he is describing an essentially kenotic process.

Kenoticism in the Russian Orthodox tradition of hesychasm in fact shares many of the same features of Bakhtin's concept of dialogic relations as they pertain to both intra-and interpersonal relations. An examination of the kenotic process and the Russian Orthodox hesychastic concept of prayer helps illustrate how Bakhtin imagines the nature of dialogical relations both within and between people.

#### *Bakhtin's Interpersonal Dialogue as Kenoticism*

Bakhtin, Holquist and Clark assert, was familiar with the concept of Kenoticism.

Bakhtin's immersion in the Russian kenotic tradition...emphasizes the degree to which Christ is a God that became a man...

...grounded in a Christian tradition that honours the present. the human. the richness and complexity of everyday life.<sup>22</sup>

Holquist and Clark go on to emphasize two concepts in the kenotic tradition - the concept of *sobornost*, the peculiarly Russian idea of community, and the

importance of the 'material realities of everyday experience'<sup>23</sup>. Yet for Holquist and Clark the 'Russian kenotic tradition' is a primarily social process. But without the Russian Orthodox hesychastic psychological interpretation of the Incarnation and the kenotic process, it is difficult to see exactly how these two ideas fit in with Bakhtin's thinking on dialogue. The idea that *sobornost* and the kenotic process are both social *and* personal processes is one that hesychasm holds, and offers a more thorough understanding of Bakhtin's dialogism.

In the hesychastic tradition, the Incarnation is interpreted not only as an historical event but also as a symbolic depiction of the psychological processes on the way to self-knowledge.

For hesychasts, because of the Fall, God and man had become separated; the Incarnation healed this split. In psychological terms, what has been separated is identity itself; a split that is mended upon realizing- making 'real' to oneself- one's status as a human being. This is why the Incarnation is God's supreme act of deliverance, restoring us to communion...

The Incarnation of Christ looked at in this way effects more than a reversal of the fall... When God becomes man, this marks the beginning of an essentially new stage in the history of man...It (the Incarnation) is an essential stage upon man's journey...

Only in Jesus Christ do we see revealed the full possibilities of our human nature; until he is born, the true implications of our personhood are still hidden from us.<sup>24</sup>

A hesychastic psychological interpretation of the story of the Fall sees it as a story about the loss of a quality of consciousness, the loss of the ability to discern between one's authentic 'inner' man and the outer man. Regaining this quality of discernment means to 'realize' ourselves as human beings, to fully and truly incarnate, in other words. In this sense the Fall and the Resurrection refers to everyday, every moment, occurrences. In Holquist and Clark's terms it refers to 'the material realities of everyday experience' as they occur within the person.

On this level the kenotic act is a personal one. But at the same time that personal kenotic process underwrites a profoundly social kenotic process, a process that is the goal of *sobornost*, the Russian concept of community. Though *sobornost* "cannot be adequately translated into any western language" we can still say this- it is meant to convey a particular quality of social relationship that emphasizes integrity without uniformity, collectivity without loss of individuality.<sup>25</sup> Add to this a profound respect for freedom and a deep suspicion of authority<sup>26</sup>, and imagine these seemingly contradictory qualities as organized in an 'organic' way, and you have something like *sobornost*.

*Sobornost* is less a vision of 'community' than a vision of a certain quality of interpersonal relations, relations that demands a particular quality of consciousness. In a word, it demands precisely Bakhtin's dialogic relations, a quality of consciousness that recognizes its own consciousness and the consciousness of others as something free, active, and in a profound way ongoing.

But how to imagine this seemingly paradoxical interrelationship of free and unknowable consciousnesses? In what sense is something like

'communication' occurring ? Bakhtin's concept of interpersonal dialogue not only accommodates but insists on this openness, on the unknoweableness of free consciousnesses. And this gives rise to another question: among profoundly free individuals, what is the nature of their contact? On this Bakhtin takes his answer from Patristic reasoning on the Incarnation and the Arian controversy.

The dispute over the incarnated second person of the Trinity in the fourth century centred on the difficulty in grasping the nature of Jesus Christ. Both obvious explanations, that his nature was different than that of the Father, and that it was the Father's, led to philosophical and theological disaster. One explanation that was embraced in the Patristic literature took advantage of a Greek term to explain the result of the kenotic process. Gregory of Nazianzus offered an explanation of how the human and the divine was mixed in the Incarnation by using the word 'perichoresis', a Stoic term meant to indicate 'penetration at all points'. "Perichoresis", writes Leonard Stanton "allows for a complete interpenetration of substances at all points without a confounding of the discrete nature of either mixed element."<sup>27</sup>

This is also how Bakhtin conceives of dialogical contact- "The genuine life of the personality is made available only through the dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself."<sup>28</sup> It occurs between human beings, persons in that particular state of consciousness, of awareness of oneself and the other as free and active conscious beings. In dialogue one can

sense this peculiar *active broadening* of his consciousness, not solely in the sense of an assimilation of new objects (human types, character, natural and social phenomena), but

primarily in the sense of a special dialogic mode of communication with the autonomous consciousnesses of others, something never before experienced, an active dialogic penetration into the unfinalizable depths of man.<sup>29</sup>

For Bakhtin it is "by a special *dialogic intuition* (that one can) penetrate the unfinalized and unresolved soul."<sup>30</sup>

Here then are essential characteristics of Bakhtin's interpersonal dialogism that are shared with Russian Orthodox hesychastic thought. The recognition of one's own consciousness, the recognition of the nature of that consciousness, and the recognition of the other as a uniquely individual consciousness is a prerequisite for Bakhtin's dialogue; Russian Orthodox hesychasm recognizes and interprets the kenotic process of 'self-emptying' in psychological terms as illustrating precisely that three step process as an on-going moment of self-knowledge on the way to perfection. For Bakhtin, the meeting of such consciousnesses, aware of their own and the others 'unfinalizability' paradoxically implies an even more profound quality of communication between people, one that 'penetrates' into 'the unfinalizable depths of man'. In a word, it is the dialogical knowledge of oneself that allows one to recognize but not know the existence of an other as a whole but unfinalized self. In this dialogical interpersonal relationship individual consciousnesses do not 'confound the discrete nature of each mixed element', just as divine and human nature are to be found together and separate in any person.<sup>31</sup>

The idea of dialogue as a model for explaining human interpersonal relationships is in some sense an obvious one. If the sophistication of our language capacities is what makes human beings unique in the world, then it seems to follow that contact with each other via language is what makes human

interpersonal relations unique, too. But for Bakhtin, 'dialogue' points to more than simply an exchange of language. For Bakhtin, dialogue is no mere exchange, but a conscious act of responding to an acknowledged other- a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, (is) one that affirms..independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy...(where) someone (is) actually present, someone who hears him and is capable of answering him.<sup>32</sup>

Human beings, because of their capacity for self-consciousness are, in a sense, 'duty-bound' to respond, precisely because they are conscious that there is no way not to respond. And though a response is always demanded, at the same time one is free to respond in any way at all-Human beings, provided they are conscious of their capacity to choose, may freely create their response. Like Bakhtin, the Russian Orthodox Church recognizes the paradoxical quality of being 'duty bound to respond' in a 'moment of freedom'.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Bakhtin's Intrapersonal dialogue as Hesychastic Prayer*

Holquist and Clark note in their glossary entry on Dialogue that, for Bakhtin, dialogue occurs internally as well as externally. This points to two important axioms pervasive throughout Bakhtin's thought on dialogue as well as throughout hesychastic practice. The first is the idea that intrapersonal communication takes the form of 'dialogue'. The second is so important that it deserves a paragraph of its own.

Neither Bakhtin nor Russian Orthodox hesychasm describe the 'self' of any human being as a unified entity by nature.

Bakhtin states it plainly when he observes that "a man never coincides with himself"; hesychastic thought follows Boris Mouravieff's observation on the same topic.

When we ask someone who lives under this constant pressure of contemporary life to return his mental vision towards himself, he generally answers that he has not enough time left to undertake such practices. If we insist and he acquiesces, he will in most cases say that he sees nothing: Fog; Obscurity. In less common cases, the observer reports that he perceives something which he cannot define because it *changes all the time*.

If we follow up this interior observation, this introspection, without prejudice, we will soon constate, not without surprise, that our 'I', of which we are consistently proud, is not always the same self: the 'I' changes.<sup>34</sup>

For Bakhtin and hesychasts alike, the self one is normally aware of is not unified; to perceive and acknowledge that fact is to shift one's consciousness, to accomplish a metanoia in other words. What is remarkable is that this shift is not conceived of as from one 'location' to another-instead, it is conceived of as a 'non'-location, a space that is 'between'. For Bakhtin "the genuine life of the personality takes place at that point of non-coincidence between a man and himself." Clearly Bakhtin is talking about an identity that is in some sense 'authentic'-it is after all referred to as a 'genuine' life of the personality- that just as clearly if somewhat paradoxically takes the genuineness of its identity from *non-identity*.

For Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's recognition of this 'authenticity in non-identity' as the essential but unrecognized truth of human psychology gave him creative direction as well as an artistic form to strive for. Dostoevsky, Bakhtin says, had no sympathy at all toward the psychology of his day, seeing its particular



assumptions of identity as a "degrading reification of a person's soul, a discounting of its freedom and unfinalizability, of that peculiar indeterminacy and indefiniteness" that for Bakhtin is what is authentic in a person.<sup>35</sup> This explains why Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky captured accurately the internal life of a person, "because he(Dostoevsky) always represents a person *on the threshold..*"<sup>36</sup>

Here is Bakhtin's concept of intrapersonal communication. It's one that understands consciousness as operating on a number of levels, exactly because human beings are capable of not only consciousness but the consciousness of being conscious. For Bakhtin genuine human experience of consciousness is in fact an intrapersonal relationship of communication between consciousnesses; a dialogue, in other words. "Every thought", writes Bakhtin "senses itself to be from the very beginning a *rejoinder* in an unfinalized dialogue. Such thought is not impelled toward a well-rounded, finalized, systematically monologic whole. It lives a tense life on the borders..."<sup>37</sup> For Bakhtin, the genuine 'self', the genuine human experience of consciousness, is not a single thing. Nor is it simply a location. It is a location, but one occupied at a particular moment in time-the living present- in that free moment of non-identity from which one can glimpse the 'higher realism' Dostoevsky sought to capture in his artistic representations.

Communication is *not* dialogical unless it is active, that is consciously undertaken.

'At the heart... lies the discovery of the *inner man*-"one's own self", accessible not to passive self-observation but only through an *active dialogic approach to one's own self*, destroying the naive wholeness of one's notions about the self...

A dialogic approach to oneself breaks down the outer shell of the self's image, that shell that exists for other people,

determining the external assessment of a person (in the eyes of others) and dimming the purity of self-consciousness."<sup>38</sup>

The same active pursuit of the same moment of non-identity Bakhtin insists upon is the one that Russian Orthodox hesychasts strive to live in, and that they describe as 'unceasing prayer'.

Like Bakhtin, Russian Orthodox hesychasts acknowledge the process of dialogue as the ultimate 'way' to self-knowledge.

The monks of old called prayer the divine philosophy, the science of sciences. Philosophy has always searched out first principles, the reason for things that are. For Christians, this is the Father... and because he is a Person (and not a 'cosmic law') the approach to him presupposes a dialogue, that is, prayer.<sup>39</sup>

It is given to human beings to perceive their own consciousness, to perceive their non-identity with their consciousness, but only *in potentia*. It is the task of every human being to apprehend this truth of themselves; in other words to 'complete themselves' by becoming aware of their consciousness and maintaining their awareness of their non-identity with it. It is in this sense that hesychasts speak of perfection, as in 'completion', and it is the meaning behind Theophan the Recluse's<sup>40</sup> claim that "The way to perfection is the way to Consciousness."<sup>41</sup>

Here, too, is another way to understand the importance of the 'self-emptying' image of the kenotic process, one that for hesychasts has a direct link to their concept of prayer. The ambiguity in the use of the 'self' in a phrase like 'self-emptying' points to the multiple quality of identity. For hesychasts to 'self-empty' is not meant to convey the idea that the 'self' is emptied leaving 'no self', but that a 'superficial' self is emptied in order to

reveal a more authentic self- this why it is described as ' a man returns to himself'-a self returns to an authentic state, rather than the entire structure of 'self' dropping away.

For hesychasts this process is important in order to expose false assumptions about the qualities of identity, false assumptions that amount to a wrong belief that our true identity is unified, and corresponds to the 'outer man'. The aim of hesychastic prayer is, to use Bakhtin's terms, by intrapersonal dialogue to reveal the inner man.

This process of 'self-emptying' can be thought of as having three dimensions to it -time, space, and (for lack of a better term) quality. The temporal dimension refers to a specific moment in time when we make the conscious act of noticing our own consciousness; the act itself is conceived of spatially, as a 'descent' from consciousness that is exclusively in the mind: this descent, from the mind to the heart, results in a higher quality of consciousness. The formula goes- in the living, present moment one descends with the mind into the heart (a state of prayer) one is 'on the threshold'-for that moment only- and in a higher quality of consciousness, a metaconsciousness.<sup>42</sup>

Like Bakhtin, hesychastic literature specifically emphasizes the idea of intrapersonal 'dialogue', and the necessity of this internal dialogue on the way to self-knowledge. Intrapersonal dialogue is a single rung on 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent' as described by John Climacus (579-649?), held by hesychasts as a guide to the internal 'stages' on the way to inner perfection.

Climacus gives a detailed description of the psychological stages by which a thought arises and develops in us. For him there are five steps to this process:

- (1) The arising in our mind of a subject, an image a representation,
- (2) coupling, conversation or dialogue with the image,
- (3) Consent given to the thought,
- (4) Slavery to it. and
- (5), passion.<sup>43</sup>

Climacus is representative of all the Patristic literature on this subject in that the first two stages of this process are not in themselves sinful. In other words there are no thoughts, images or representations that one cannot acknowledge and consider consciously; one need only be wary of what is given 'consent'. Without conscious attention and dialogue with thoughts as they arise, the ability to discern different sources and qualities of thoughts, images and representations disappears, and without discernment judgment cannot be exercised. another danger is that without conscious attention and dialogue with thoughts as they arise, one may well fall into a state of identification with thoughts, especially those that have their origins amongst the 'passions'.<sup>44</sup> This is why discernment is considered so necessary in hesychastic thought. With the disappearance of the capacity of discernment, which is itself the product of dialogue, comes the disappearance of the psychological distinction between thoughts and thinker. Losing that distinction is symbolically represented in Scripture as the Fall; the return to dialogue, the Incarnation.

### *Summary*

For hesychasts, prayer is dialogue, the way to perfection. Prayer is the means by which meaning comes to us, and for hesychasts meaning comes from

three relationships. It can be found in "relationship to the world, relationships within myself...(and) in my relationships with other human persons".<sup>45</sup> Each of these relationships, taken up consciously, constitute a state of Prayer in the Russian Orthodox hesychastic tradition. For them, "Prayer is a living relationship between persons"<sup>46</sup> and at the same time it is an internal state of awareness, a constant returning to oneself. As they say "How can you expect to be heard by God, when you do not hear yourself? How do you expect God to remember you when you pray, if you do not remember yourself?"<sup>47</sup>

For Mikhail Bakhtin, dialogue, like prayer, is also a return to oneself, a conscious act. And this is why neither dialogue nor prayer is a 'technique'. Neither has any effect unless entered into as a 'live' state of mind. For Bakhtin and for hesychasts, since metanoia is possible, it is our duty; but at the same time neither Bakhtin nor hesychasts are moralistic. Precisely because of man's unfinalizability, every moment offers another opportunity to enter consciously into intra- and interpersonal dialogue, every moment another chance to descend with the mind into the heart, to acknowledge and engage the 'inner man' both within oneself and the other.

To present either Bakhtin or hesychasts as supreme optimists and carriers of good news in that sense would be to misrepresent their thinking. Instead both take a view of human interrelationships as highly complex and only partially knowable; for both, a conscious recognition of this is the required starting point of any investigation of human activity. But neither Bakhtin nor hesychasts suffer needlessly the unknowable complexity of the person- in fact, it may capture best their attitude toward the human condition by saying that the suffering the complexity of the interpersonal realm brings is, for Bakhtin and the hesychasts, of the most necessary kind. To consciously extend to oneself

and to the other the right to be fully human may be the fullest expression of communion we can achieve. For Bakhtin, it is to live in dialogue, for hesychasts, in prayer. To accomplish this is beyond difficult; we are mortal and prone to error. But at the same time we are capable, and every moment another chance. For this theme in his thinking on dialogue Caryl Emerson has characterized Bakhtin as the 'high apostle of the second chance'; a parable about Orthodox monks captures the same idea-

A monk was once asked, "What do you do there in the monastery?" He replied, "We fall and get up, fall and get up, fall and get up again."<sup>48</sup>

Maybe this is the best news both Bakhtin and hesychasts offer.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Holquist "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Trans-Linguistics" in Critical Inquiry Vol. 10 Number 2 December 1983 p.308.

<sup>2</sup>"But it should be noted that both relativism and dogmatism equally exclude all argumentation, all authentic dialogue, by making it either unnecessary(relativism) or impossible(dogmatism)." Mikhail Bakhtin Problems of Dostoevskys Poetics edited and translated by Caryl Emerson Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984 p.69.

<sup>3</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist Mikhail Bakhtin Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press . 1984 p.120.

<sup>4</sup> Clark and Holquist Op. Cit. p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Gary Saul Morson "Prosaic Bakhtin: *Landmarks*, Anti-Intelligentsialism, and the Russian Counter-Tradition' Common Knowledge Spring 1993 p.38 note 6.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Zernov The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century New York: Harper and Row 1963 p.54.

<sup>7</sup> Caryl Emerson 'Russian Orthodoxy and the Early Bakhtin' Religion & Literature Summer-Autumn 1990 p.109-131.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.119.

<sup>9</sup> Morson. Op. Cit. p. 35-74.

<sup>10</sup> The structure Bakhtin *proposed* for the first book-it was supposed to be in two sections,each four chapters in length- differs significantly from what was actually produced; the expression, but not the gist, of the content in the revised version differs from the original. See note 33, Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup>Biography, Letters and Notebooks from the Notebook of F. M. Dostoevsky St. Petersburg,1883 p.373 quoted in Bakhtin Op. Cit 1984. p.76.

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin Ibid. p.31.

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin Ibid. p.49.

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin Ibid. p.51.

<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin Ibid p.58.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin Ibid. p.68.

- <sup>17</sup> M. M. Bakhtin The Dialogic Imagination Michael Holquist, editor; Michael Holquist, Caryl Emerson, translators, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981 p.427.
- <sup>18</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Op. Cit. p.59.
- <sup>19</sup> Bakhtin Ibid. p.58-9.
- <sup>20</sup> Bakhtin ibid. p. 110.
- <sup>21</sup> Bakhtin Ibid p.6.
- <sup>22</sup> Clark and Holquist 1984 Op. Cit. p.84.
- <sup>23</sup> Clark and Holquist Ibid. p.85.
- <sup>24</sup> Archimandrite Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, The Orthodox Way New York: St. Vladimirs' Orthodox Theological Seminary 1979 p.92-3.
- <sup>25</sup> Nichols Zernov Three Russian Prophets Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press 1973 p.22.
- <sup>26</sup> "Kohmyakov's theological work...coincided with the doctrine of *sobornost*, and further the spirit of *sobornost* was in his view the spirit of freedom...and a radical opponent of the principle of authority...(for Kohmyakov)" The Church is not an authority even as God is not an authority and as Christ is not an authority, for authority is something which is external to ourselves. It is not authority but truth and at the same time life, which is the inner life of a Christian." quoted in Nichols Berdyaev The Russian Idea Boston: Beacon Press 1962 p.163.
- <sup>27</sup> Leonard Stanton Optina Pustyn in the Russian Literary Imagination New York: Peter Long Inc. p.18.
- <sup>28</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Op. Cit. p.59.
- <sup>29</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Ibid. p.68.
- <sup>30</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Ibid. p.61.
- <sup>31</sup> For a discussion of Bakhtin's 'penetrated word' see 'Caryl Emerson 'The Tolstoy connection in Bakhtin' in Rethinking Bakhtin Caryl Emerson and Gary Saul Morson, ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1989.
- <sup>32</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Op. Cit. p.63.
- <sup>33</sup> (In a church in Karyes, the central village of the Mount Athos hesychastic monastic community, after travelling for several wearying days)  
"And now I am here in front of the Karyes Cathedral. I enter. Intense silence. Darkness. Icons glowing on the walls as though by their own light. Yet somewhere I am smiling to myself at everything my body has been through, the aches and pains-the sense of adventure still buoying my spirits. My eyes move up to the ceiling: there again the stupendous face of Christ, like the central fact of the universe, looks down at me.  
My thoughts are stopped. A certain sensation passes through my body, down my spine and into the pit of my stomach, from deeper down in my mind, something I have known about the Orthodox tradition rises to awareness:the whole universe rests on the sacrifice of God. But this Christ looks directly at *me*. The immensity of this sacrifice, which I do not understand or even wish to understand, is directed to me, personally. For the first time, I feel something is required of me, a response to this sacrifice. I glimpse, for the first time, what it means that Christianity demands a response. I am obliged by the fact of Reality and the fact of my existence." Jacob Needleman Lost Christianity San Francisco: Harper & Row 1980 p.31.
- <sup>34</sup> Boris Mouravieff Gnosis- Study and Commentaries on the Esoteric Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy translated by S.A.Wissa Newbury, Mass.: Praxis Institute Press 1989 p.4.
- <sup>35</sup> A similar observation has been made using the psychological terminology of the day by Ivan Illich, when he writes that "The perception of ego as a *human* and the demand that social institutions fit the ego's egalitarian human needs,

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represent a break with all pre-modern forms of consciousness." Ivan Illich Gender Berkeley: Heyday Books 1982 p.10.

<sup>36</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Op. Cit p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> Bakhtin 1984 Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Bahktin 1984 Ibid. p.120.

<sup>39</sup> Tomas Spidlik Spirituality of the Christian East translated by Anthony P. Gythiel Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications Inc. 1986 p.307.

<sup>40</sup> Born George Godorov(1815-1894) at Chernavsk in the Russian province of Viatka."Of all the Russian monastic authors, Theophan is probably the most highly educated...Theophan left a substantial body of writings..." Theophan translated and revised both the Philokalia and Unseen Warfare, as well as publishing his collected commentaries on Scripture and collected letters. from Igumen Chariton The Art of Prayer An Orthodox Anthology Translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1966 p.11-13

<sup>41</sup> Bishop Theophan, quoted in Mouravieff 1989 Op. Cit. p.13

<sup>42</sup> A related point has been made by Leonard Stanton, who argues that this depiction of the kenotic process accomplishes for psychological reasons a contradiction, since the 'descent' with the mind into the heart results in a qualitative 'ascent' in consciousness. Stanton argues that these forms of inversion are peculiar to the apothegmatic sayings in the Gospels and in Patristic literature. Spatial, temporal and qualitative dimensions are left concealed or are collapsed into one another in order to accomplish contradiction, antinomy, and paradox. In hesychastic practice, these writings are often used precisely for this reason, to 'snap' one out of ordinary habits of consciousness and interpretation. See Stanton Op. Cit. p.19-22.

<sup>43</sup> George A. Maloney Russian Hesychasm Paris: Mouton 1973 p.79-80.

<sup>44</sup> What have come to be known as the 'seven deadly sins' originated in the eight sources of Passion. They are Gluttony, Fornication, Avarice, Anger, Sadness, Acedia, Vanity and Pride. Over time Acedia and sadness were collapsed into one another, though they are distinct concepts. Acedia is meant to denote the 'desire to give up'.

<sup>45</sup> Archimnadrte Kallistos Ware The Orthodox Way New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press 1979 p.24-25.

<sup>46</sup> Ware 1979 Ibid. P. 142.

<sup>47</sup> St. Cyprian, quoted in Chariton 1966 Op. Cit. p.48.

<sup>48</sup> Ware 1979 Op. Cit..p.173.



## **Random Concluding Remarks**

I began by noting in the Foreword how the academic study of Communication these days takes as its basic unit of study activity organized on some other level than that of 'the person.' This is not to suggest that those who study 'The social Implications of New Technology' or 'Media and Ideology' imagine that the issues and problems dealt with in these important topics have no implications for people in their day-to-day activities; of course they do. But what is all too often missing in treatments of those topics, and even more generally in Communication studies, is an explicit theory of human experience. One of Bakhtin's great strengths is that he combines erudition with a sensitivity to the richness, complexity, and importance of the human experiential realm when pursuing the human sciences.

His immersion in his particular Russian context and his training as a Classicist may account for this perspective in his work. In both Russian Orthodoxy and Greek philosophy there is an emphasis on the need for mental, moral and physical preparation of the person before they begin the demanding ascent to wisdom. That preparation consists precisely of the investigation of the particular nature of human experience itself, in order to establish the fact that human experience is not anything like what we usually imagine it to be. In other words, there has been a long and consistent tradition that acknowledges the need to investigate and ascertain the nature and limits of human experience before we can be said to be having anything like a genuine experience. Bakhtin

partakes of this line of thought, and extends and applies it the human experience of 'self', suggesting that in the same way we need to investigate the nature and quality of experience in order to gain a genuine experience, so must we investigate the nature and quality of our experience of self, in order to arrive at a genuine experience of self.

It is this sense that I mean to invoke the idea of 'Tradition', and it is in this sense that I mean to invoke Teilhard's concept of 'the noosphere'. To understand Bakhtin the way I have suggested he can be understood aligns him with the 'tradition' of philosophy-the love of wisdom- that acknowledges the necessity of rigorous introspection as preparation for the pursuit of wisdom. The nature and extent of that preparation and its fruits exists nowhere else in the world except within the person. This is how Teilhard conceives of the noosphere; more importantly, why he conceives of it.

Man alone in the material world can say 'I'. He alone is a 'person'. able to communicate with other persons...

The true evolution of the world takes place in the souls of men and in their mutual union...

People usually speak of person as if it represented some quantitative reduction or qualitative diminishment of total reality. Exactly the opposite is the way we shall have to understand 'person'. The 'personal' is the highest state in which we are privileged to grasp the stuff of the universe...<sup>1</sup>

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These days only the intellectually naive would have the temerity to observe that there are 'two sides to every story'. To claim such a thing in the story-saturated, analysis-rich late twentieth century is to invite scorn, pity, or both. But since his death in 1975, Mikhail Bakhtin's intellectual legacy can be thought of as a resurrection of this very claim. Before considering all the other elements that influence the meaning of a story, Bakhtin invites us to consider that

meaning follows consciousness, and in human beings consciousness has two sides, *one that faces out, and is conscious of all that is not 'I', and one that faces in, and is conscious of its own consciousness*. It is in this sense that a story has two sides, and Bakhtin's method of investigating how meaning derives from consciousness is to ask first 'How does consciousness feel?' and 'What does consciousness look like?' Though the meanings we take from the world shift, depending on various variables, the realms demarcated by Bakhtin's questions are fundamental.

The relationship between self-consciousness, consciousness and meaning is fundamental to the study of human communication, and one of the ways these ideas are often discussed is to appeal to the metaphor of language and literature, generally, and that of the 'book' or the 'text', specifically. Many scholars work with the tentative assumption that we might understand consciousness and self-consciousness by appealing to concepts and categories belonging to literate and literary culture. There is talk of the 'Book of nature', or the perception and exercise of authority when, in the Middle Ages, those who did not even know how to hold a writing tool nevertheless knew that when they did something, said something or thought something, an entry into the Book of Life would be made against their name for which they would be judged and to which they would have to speak. Others observe literacy and by way of metaphor suspect its colonizing effects on the mind, arguing that the form of literate expressions, with its emphasis on sequence and rationality actually works to structure along the same lines our perceptions of the world and our place in it.

One important quality in all of these metaphoric borrowings is that they are relatively passive-the fundamental relationship emphasized is that the text is a *readable* entity-the self as a reader of the world-text, or the self as a text that is read.

Bakhtin makes an important contribution to that tradition by taking advantage of a completely different set of metaphoric qualities of 'the book', those of the active relations between a text and its creator. Bakhtin goes beyond simply acknowledging the explanatory power of a metaphoric description of the self as a text, emphasizing the relationship of freedom and creativity between an author and hero, suggesting by way of metaphor similar aspects of freedom and creativity at that point of non-coincidence between the inner and outer man, between consciousness and self-consciousness. For Bakhtin there *are* no texts without authors, no creations without a creators; just as there is no authentic consciousness without self-consciousness. For Bakhtin, the moment of self-consciousness is a uniquely human moment of freedom. To acknowledge and extend that moment to an other he calls dialogue. And because it is a uniquely human moment of communication, it is not captured in any way by the appeal to technological metaphors of 'exchanges of information' or 'messages sent and received'. These kinds of metaphors fail because for Bakhtin a human being is a qualitatively unique entity when it comes to communication. His anthropological assumptions are those shared by Russian Orthodox Christianity in that human communication is at least potentially a sacred act -to speak to another, to communicate dialogically with an other is to speak from one's heart, from their 'inner man'. In this sense Bakhtin is probably guilty (or maybe Guilty) of 'essentialism'.

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The point of trying to show all of this, it seems to me, is not to suggest that Bakhtin imagined dialogue to be some pollyannish panacea for personal and interpersonal problems, just as hesychastic prayer is not an occasional petition to an ever-loving Sky Daddy. On the contrary, it is to suggest that dialogue, like prayer, may well be a terrifying project to undertake. But for Bakhtin, without it the real choices one has are never known, and without that knowledge the freedom one really has can never be exercised. At the same time, what Bakhtin has recognized is that the degree to which any person has entered into that internal project is largely unknown and unknowable to any one else.

In their biography of Bakhtin, Holquist and Clark note that as Bakhtin was dying he requested that his favorite story be read aloud to him. It comes from Boccaccio's Decameron, the story of "How Cer Cepielletto became Saint Cepielletto"; how a particularly horrible man, a liar, a thief, a fornicator, etc. through circumstances and the manipulation of a friar to whom he makes his confession is perceived as a virtuous and unexpected holy man. Holquist and Clark cite the story and its position as Bakhtin's favorite and suggest that the appeal such a story might have had for Bakhtin lay in its subversive nature, its 'carnival' spirit.

And that might be exactly why Bakhtin liked it. Still, Holquist and Clark miss a detail that is suggestive. They write that Cer Cepielletto's occupation was that of an 'evil merchant'. But he wasn't—he was a notary. And more than that: he was the kind of notary who thought he had done a particularly bad job if any document he certified as authentic turned out to be so.

What Cepielletto knew, and what made him a successful human being if an unsavory notary, is that people perceive language to carry a special quality of authority, one that in Boccaccio's time was loosening its strong ties to identity itself- the document he would happily certify was meant to re-present a person's oath, their authentic word<sup>2</sup>, and Cepielletto was keenly aware of what Bakhtin claims, that not he nor anyone else could ever do such a thing, to certify all of the meaning of another's word, and that no one could know the entire meaning of his.

What of an other we have access to always gives us an incomplete picture. It is the difference between the fact that we can know *why* we've done something, but only *what* others do. For Bakhtin this 'gap' amounted to a difference in the quality of knowledge one could have about oneself and about another, and what he concluded from this is that while people are more alike than different, at the same time they are more different than they could ever imagine.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher F. Mooney Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ New York: Harper and Row 1966 p.42.

<sup>2</sup> See Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind New York: Vintage Books 1988 p.29-52.

I felt like praying or something when I was in bed, but I couldn't do it. I can't always pray when I feel like it. In the first place I'm sort of an atheist. I like Jesus and all, but I don't care too much for most of the other stuff in the Bible. Take the Disciples, for instance. They annoy the hell out of me, if you want to know the truth. They were all right after Jesus was dead and all, but while He was alive, they were about as much use to him as a hole in the head. All they did was keep letting Him down. I like almost anybody in the Bible better than the Disciples. If you want to know the truth, the guy I like best in the Bible, next to Jesus, was that lunatic and all, that lived in the tombs and kept cutting himself with stones. I like him ten times as much as the Disciples. that poor bastard. I used to get into quite a few fights about it, when I was at the Whooton School, with this boy that lived down the corridor, Arthur Childs. Old Childs was a Quaker and all, and he read the Bible all the time. He was a very nice kid, and I liked him, but I could never see eye to eye with him on alot of stuff in the Bible, especially the Disciples. He kept telling me that if I didn't like the Disciples, then I didn't like Jesus and all. He said that because Jesus *picked* the Disciples, you were supposed to like them. I said I knew He picked them, but that He had picked them at *random*. I said He didn't have to time to go around analyzing everybody. I said I wasn't blaming Jesus or anything. It wasn't his fault He didn't have any time. I remember I asked old Childs if he thought Judas, the one that betrayed Jesus and all, went to Hell after he committed suicide and all. Childs said certainly. That's exactly where I disagreed with him. I said I'd bet a thousand bucks that Jesus never sent old Judas to Hell. I still would, too, if I had a thousand bucks. I think any one of the Disciples would've sent him to Hell-and fast, too-but I'll bet anything Jesus didn't do it. Old Childs said the trouble with me was that I didn't go to church or anything. He was right about that, in a way. I don't.

J.D. Salinger  
Catcher in the Rye

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Figure 1

Decade	Composed	Published in Russian	Published in English Translation
Pre 1920	Art and Answerability	Art and Answerability	N/A
1920s	Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity Toward a Philosophy of the Act Problem of Content, Material and Form Problem of Dostoevsky's Creative Works	Problem of Dostoevsky's Creative Works	N/A
1930s	Discourse in the Novel The Novel of Development and Realism Forms of Time and the Chronotope On the Philosophical Bases Human Sciences	N/A	N/A
1940s	From Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse Rabelais in the History of Realism Novel and Epic	Rabelais in the History of Realism	N/A
1950s	Problem of Speech Genres Problem of the Text	Problem of Speech Genres Problem of the Text	N/A
1960s	Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics(revised) Rabelais and his World(revised)	Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics(revised) Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse Rabelais and his World(revised)	Rabelais and his World
1970s	Response to Novy Mir Essay on the Polyphonic Novel Notebooks 70-71	Response to Novy Mir Art and Answerability Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity Problem of Content, Material and Form Forms of Time and of the Chronotope	Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics(revised)
1980s	N/A	N/A	The Dialogic Imagination Speech Genres and Other Late Essays
1990s	N/A	N/A	Art and Answerability Toward a Philosophy of the Act