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AUTHORITY AND PERSONALITY IN M.M. BAKHTIN'S
"AUTHOR AND HERO IN AESTHETIC ACTIVITY"

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Joel S. Ward

December 2013

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Joel S. Ward

2013

AUTHORITY AND PERSONALITY IN M.M. BAKHTIN'S

“AUTHOR AND HERO IN AESTHETIC ACTIVITY”

By

Joel S. Ward

Approved November 8, 2013

Calvin L. Troup
Professor of Communication & Rhetorical
Studies
(Committee Chair)

Janie Harden Fritz
Professor of Communication & Rhetorical
Studies
(Committee Member)

Pat Arneson
Professor of Communication & Rhetorical
Studies
(Committee Member)

James C. Swindal
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts

Ronald C. Arnett
Chair, Department of Communication &
Rhetorical Studies

ABSTRACT

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By

Joel S. Ward

December 2013

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Calvin L. Troup.

M.M. Bakhtin's fundamental claim in his seminal essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" situates verbal action as the most essential constituent of human personality. A careful reading of this text reveals important truths about the relationship between free individual personhood and the nature of the speech utterance. Bakhtin connects the human experience of speech to the life and person of Jesus Christ emphasizing the incarnation and the Trinitarian view of God as essential principles for understanding the creative power of the word and consequent liabilities. Bakhtin develops these theological and philosophical coordinates around a discussion of the author-hero relationship in the novel asserting that the verbal utterance is creatively involved in building and sustaining the inner personhood of those it addresses. Bakhtin's critical conclusion substantiates that from whom a word is received, and to whom the spoken word

appeals has weighty influence on the type and character of human personality, and that personality's relationship to authority.

DEDICATION

For Tabitha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Solo Christus
Soli Deo Gloria

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TITLE

“Art and Answerability”	{A&A}
“Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”	{A&H}
“Content, Material and Form”	{CMF}
“Discourse in the Novel”	{DiN}
<i>Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics</i>	{PDP}
“Problem of the Text”	{PoT}
<i>Toward a Philosophy of the Act</i>	{TPA}
“Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book”	{TRDB}

Chapter 1: Art and Life

“For it is certainly easier to create without answering for life, and easier to live without any consideration for art.”— *Art and Answerability*

Introduction

No art exists for its own sake. M. Mikhail Bakhtin claims in his essay “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” that the aesthetic act fundamentally constitutes human personality; particularly that verbal art holds the key to understanding the mystery of inner personhood. For Bakhtin, this means that in essence artistic action constitutes moral action, a demonstration of existential intent. For this reason, Bakhtin argues that the study of art analogously attempts to understand the original motive informing verbal action, the speech utterance. More pointedly, Bakhtin argues that analyzing the artistry of the contemporary novel remains the most generous yet reliable method of articulating the fundamental principles of discursive human life. The intimate connection between art and life lead Bakhtin to determine that art must respond to the constraints of human existence because aesthetic attitudes inform all human action. Art must take account of individual life as it occurs as well as consider the constraints of human interrelationship. According to Bakhtin, art indifferent to human existence cannot mean. Indifferent art is meaningless because it does not condescend into human life, is irresponsive and does not invite understanding. Likewise, Bakhtin argues that human action must take account of artistic creation, the ability of art to extend the boundaries of perception and unify the breadth and depth of human uniqueness. Bakhtin believes we must not say “That’s art after all! All we’ve got is the humble prose of living” (A&A 1). The “mutual liability to blame”

that art and life share brings them together in the life of a person and through this unification the constraints of life and the freedom of art are reconciled. (A&A 2)

This project looks at fundamental themes in Bakhtin's essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" with the purpose of reorienting theories of communication around these original philosophical musings. Bakhtin's view of art and life contain significant assumptions that ground his philosophy of communication but these are not the only categories important for his thinking. In order to develop a thorough description of what it means to be in dialogue, Bakhtin artfully articulates a triadic relationship between existence, aesthetic form and human personality. Bakhtin's cosmological perspective and his appropriation of fundamental tenants in the historic Christian faith are the means by which he achieves an understanding of relationship between transgredient aesthetic form and temporal human personality. In his discussion of the author-hero dynamic Bakhtin carefully explains the importance of the author's role and his relationship with the hero. He consistently defends an "outside" viewpoint that unconstrained by the experiential plane of human life. At the same time, Bakhtin resists the notion that outside authority creates an insurmountable power distance between the author and his heroes.

Bakhtin discourages thinking that attempts to describe the author-hero relationship cognitively or ethically. Instead he believes that "aesthetic seeing" synthesizes the cognitive and ethical viewpoints. For this reason the nature of "aesthetic seeing" must be understood before developing a thoroughly systematic yet adequately open theory of human communication. Christian theology in Bakhtin's thought centers on his view of the Incarnation. This historical event understood as an aesthetic, ethical and communicative act represents for Bakhtin the unification of art with life and the purity of

truth with common human being. In order for Bakhtin's discussion of aesthetics, art and dialogue to develop creatively and flexibly, scholars must acknowledge that the Incarnation enters Bakhtin's thinking as more than myth or metaphor. The incarnate celebration of the body and the descent from divinity to humanity buttresses Bakhtin's confirmation of radically individual yet stable human personalities. The following pages argue that Bakhtin's view of aesthetics is broader than a simple discussion of the novel and demonstrate how Bakhtin's defends a "transgredient" author as a necessary constituent of the human personality essential for dialogic interaction.

Art and Life

Of Mikhail Bakhtin's essays, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" is studied the least by scholars reading his work. Although it receives sufficient attention as his effort to outline a research plan spanning forty years, few have attempted to interpret the richness of this philosophical treatise or explain its connection to his later writing on speech genres, literary criticism and dialogic communication.

In Bakhtin's first philosophic conversations in "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" and *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* the relationship between the author and the hero appears prominently in his thought. The author-hero relationship has generally been interpreted as an exploration of the problem of authorship even though Ruth Coates has argued that the author-hero relationship functions as Bakhtin's analogy for God's relationship with mankind (23). Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson agree that Bakhtin's "prophetic tone verges on the theological" (61) but do not pursue the question of God or Christ in Bakhtin's philosophy at any great length. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist prevaricate on the appearance of these themes in the entirety of Bakhtin's

writings without positioning God or Jesus Christ as personalities essential to the systematic coherency of Bakhtin's ideas, a wholeness that he sought in his substantial criticism of "unconstrained philosophy" (Bocharov 1019).

The importance of understanding the author-hero relationship for Bakhtin's philosophy of communication introduces the significance of incarnation as a pivotal principle in his understanding of personhood. Bakhtin scholar, Don Biaslostosky concurs that Bakhtin's philosophical writings lay an important foundation for his later explorations into literature, culture and verbal communication even though like many others he neglects this early essay (6). The present discussion of the significant themes in "Author and Hero" involves a careful reading of the essay in order to develop a thorough understanding of Bakhtin's author-hero relationship. This study shows that the implications of the author-hero relationship are broader than the disciplinary concerns of literary criticism and philosophical aesthetics.

Bakhtin's insistence that "for a proper understanding of the author's architectonically stable and dynamic living relationship to the hero, we must take into account...the essentially necessary foundation of that relationship" calls for a closer and more persistent reading of the essay (A&H 4). Instead of a narrow relationship to a particular work, we learn very quickly that Bakhtin has more in mind when he considers the "problem of the Author's relationship to the Hero" (A&H 4). Bakhtin's inquiry purposefully peers beyond artistic creation extending the implications of the inquiry further than an immanent view of aesthetic activity. Bakhtin's question involves more than characters in a story whose life has already been textually determined. Bakhtin's work becomes even more additive and meaningful for the study of human

communication when considered in light of the fundamental philosophic and theological presuppositions revealed in the author-hero relationship.

Wayne C. Booth has argued of Bakhtin's critical work on Dostoevsky that, "Bakhtin's ultimate value is thus not to be addressed as just one more piece of "literary criticism"; even less is it a study of fictional technique or form. It is a philosophical inquiry into our limited ways of mirroring—and improving—our lives" (Booth xxv). This project approaches "Author and Hero" with this very same intent. Bakhtin's discussion of the author- hero relationship implicates interpersonal interaction as a significant part of his overall discussion. Utilizing the nature of discourse in interpersonal relationship to emphasize and articulate his arguments Bakhtin sought evidence in everyday utterances as demonstrated in his short essay "Discourse in Life, Discourse in Art." In a brief discussion of the difference between a linguistic understanding of language and the spoken utterance Bakhtin emphasizes the interpersonal nature of speech and its reliance on relational context to generate meaning in language.¹

Fully understanding Bakhtin's philosophy of communication means realizing the essential correlation between Bakhtin's theory of aesthetic action and his vision of interpersonal relationship. This correlation features saliently in Bakhtin's discussion of the author-hero relationship even though not often foregrounded by Bakhtin scholars. Bakhtin intentionally moves between art and life drawing parallels between the act of creation in artistic production and the creative principle underlying human speech. Bakhtin argues for a synthetic relationship between art and life because he believes that

¹Bakhtin also discusses in this essay the significance of the *intonational metaphor* in human speech as a means of describing the ideal being expressed in everyday discourse. This metaphor functions very much the same as the incarnation does in "Author and Hero". Rich parallels could be drawn between the language of intonation and its relation to incarnation both of which emphasize a move from purity of idea and form into particular and specific expression, an idea echoed in Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope.

creation (specifically in verbal art) principally informs human being and because a phenomenological description of the contemplative act of viewing an artistic object is the best means we have of understanding the way formal constituents result in whole and stable human personalities. Bakhtin believes that by understanding this necessary principle we can gain greater insight into the nature, purpose and tone of the author's relationship with the hero as well as the hero's own creative activity.

Bakhtin establishes the relationship between art and life in his first published essay entitled "Art and Answerability." In this essay Bakhtin asserts that art and life have experienced an artificial separation, a separation that has degraded the "aesthetics of verbal art, especially in literary history" (A&H 8). This short treatise quite aptly serves as a preface to a compilation of his early essays which include "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" and "The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art" in a volume edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. In this essay, Bakhtin very briefly lays out a general critique of the separation of art and life stating that both need to be "answerable" for each other. In Bakhtin's own words, "It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume but also mutual liability to blame" (A&A 1). This statement contains the kernel of the question Bakhtin would continue to pursue throughout his life. By claiming quite robustly that art as an "outside" point of view provides both meaning and freedom to constrained life Bakhtin shows that understanding the author-hero relationship is crucial for both art and life to exist. The outside purview of art and the practice of life must be brought together because only through their synthesis can we understand the nature and direction of responsible human action.

The Author and the Hero

Bakhtin's interest in the shared liability of art and life discloses his greater concern with the enigma of human personality, a question intertwined with the study of aesthetics and verbal communication. Bakhtin asks, "What guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person?" (A&A 1). The proposal of this question supports the premise that Bakhtin's attention directed away from formal aspects of aesthetics and towards the particular generation of human personality.

Bakhtin's concentrated gaze on the "inner connection of the constituent elements of a person" appears to situate his inquiry psychologically, but he insists that this is not the case. By introducing the problem of personality, Bakhtin lays out very clear purpose guiding his entire inquiry into language and sociality. Here, the primary revelation is Bakhtin's commitment to conceptualizing the boundaries of human existence. More specifically, Bakhtin believes that life and art act as constraints on each other and that this mutual binding becomes formally constituent of the author-hero relationship. In the particular case of human personality, Bakhtin highlights two ways in which these constraints are related to the sense of sight. Bakhtin's use of sensory organs in his argumentation reveals his bias for the body, situating his discussion literally and metaphorically around the temporal boundaries of human being.

Physically it is impossible to see inside a person's mind, to view and understand their thoughts, schematize aspects of their unique personality from the outside in. Likewise, we are physically unable to see our own physical form from the outside. We cannot view our body from an outside perspective, see what others see in the way our bodies move and interact with the world. Bakhtin emphasizes the outside viewpoint because he believes this is an integral part of general aesthetic theory as well as important

for the particularity of personality development. In fact, according to Bakhtin, individual self-consciousness depends on others for a complete and stable view, very much like achieving a valid image of one's body relies on the eyesight of others. Bakhtin writes,

For self-consciousness, this integral image is dispersed in life and enters the field of seeing the external world only in the form of fortuitous fragments. And what is lacking, moreover, is precisely the external unity and continuity; a human being experiencing life in the category of his own *I* is incapable of gathering himself by himself into an outward whole that would be even relatively finished (A&H 35).

In other words, a person's self-conscious life happens on the inside of their body and cannot with any real efficiency gain perspective of their body as it is situated in front of others. Bakhtin critiques attempts to achieve an outside perspective through mirrors, film, photographs etc. coming to the conclusion that these are soulless modes of seeing oneself from the outside. Not only are these reflections incomplete from the perspectival standpoint, the appearances that do present themselves are ghosts and apparitions that deceive us into thinking we have seen a complete view of our bodies from the outside. These attitudinal abstractions, momentary snapshots of how we appear from the outside, have no immediate connection to the life that is lived inwardly in self-consciousness. This does not necessarily mean that in some ways theoretical psychology cannot give us glimpses of what our inner life signifies in the world as perceived by others. However, Bakhtin believes that attempts by psychology, like momentary mirrored reflections, are largely based on abstractions and hardly capable of providing the encompassing and consummating viewpoint he believes is crucial and necessary for bringing together the inner constituents of a human personality.

Bakhtin explicitly differentiates his own project by opposing a fundamental assumption of theoretical psychology; he does not presuppose autonomous selfhood. Bakhtin regards the viewpoints of others as necessary constituents of personhood, which place definitive constraints on the possibility of observing an essential self.² Bakhtin argues that the perspectives of analytic psychology create outside viewpoints by relying on abstraction. This abstraction finalizes the constituent elements of personality by taking a deterministic perspective towards the whole of a person attributing human action and creativity to simplistic or singular impulses.³ Citing these constraints Bakhtin turns to aesthetics as a more elegant system or method of representing the event of interpersonal personality in communication. He writes:

We meet with it only to the extent to which it precipitates itself in a work of art. That is, we have to do with the ideal history of this process, its history on the plane of meaning, and with the ideal, meaning related laws governing this history. What the temporal causes of such a process may have been or how it may have proceeded psychologically is entirely a matter of conjecture, but in any case this does not concern aesthetics. (A&H 6)

Bakhtin continuously reminds us as readers that his own study is not an explication of the author and hero relationship “in its pure form” but instead posed in

² In his discussions of empathy or the ability to see from another’s point of view, Bakhtin does admit the possibility, in some limited way, of putting oneself in another’s place but does not pursue this phenomenon very far. His focus on the outside point of view leads him to remark that “It is enough for our purposes that this projection of myself into him is possible and in what form—we shall not consider the psychological problem of such projection—we shall not consider here” (A&H 25). Bakhtin later clarifies this situation by stating that this projection is not part of the aesthetic event and not until “we return to ourselves, to our own place outside the suffering person” that aesthetic activity begins.

³ Although Bakhtin does not openly critique the ideas of Freud, Bakhtin Morson and Emerson in *Rethinking Bakhtin* (p. 10) have identified this general critique of psychology as an inferential critique of Freud’s methodology, specifically his propensity for identifying sexual undertones as a singular motive for all human social activity.

principle (A&H 11). Most importantly Bakhtin wants to direct our attention towards a “creative principle in the author’s relationship to the hero,” a principle that he believes, if properly understood, will enable a fuller conception of human action and verbal communication *in practice* (A&H 10). Bakhtin believes that like good art, our explanation of human relationships in the world must be productive, allowing for sustained and free action rather than foreclosing the meaningful potential possible in any human relationship.

Bakhtin’s purpose clarifies the nature of this relationship as it occurs on the “plane of meaning.” The “plane of meaning,” according to Bakhtin, is the plane of human life. A plane inhabited by people, and therefore subject to the constraints of human life. On the plane of meaning the intersection between the author’s aesthetic view and the lived life of the hero occurs. This means that the author’s vision penetrates the plane of meaning introducing a dynamic tension into the relationship between an outside author and a constrained hero. According to Bakhtin, the author as another consciousness truly “consummates” the hero, making him complete and providing him with a stable and individual identity (A&H 12). According to Bakhtin, only from the author’s viewpoint is the creation of the hero possible. The hero’s point of view and that of the author’s do not originate on the same plane even if the author’s vision penetrates the hero’s plane of experience and influences the hero or heroes that inhabit his work.

For Bakhtin, the author’s point of view must be outside, or ‘transgredient’ to the plane on which his hero lives. Only from this vantage point can the author wholly see his hero and position him in his world. The author’s seeing from the outside perceives excessively, seeing beyond or further than just the hero, taking him in simultaneously

from all sides and from all moments in the hero's life. The author's viewpoint exists as a distinctly outside perspective that is necessary and important for the development of the hero's character.

Although the author is the only one who can see "the whole picture" the author is not the only person with an outside viewpoint. Heroes within a work can take an authoritative perspective and see others from the outside. However, their view is a limited in scope both by time and position. Without being able to achieve complete "outsideness" other heroes can only provide perspectival viewpoints for the hero, and because they see partially, cannot fully stabilize or create the formally complete image of a person. A hero's dependency on *the* author's seeing is, for Bakhtin, both a reality of personhood as well as a necessity for the discipline of aesthetics. In fact, Bakhtin's chief critique of disciplinary aesthetics turns on the unacknowledged necessity of this viewpoint in order to ground a systematic development for theories of art, especially in the verbal arts.

Aesthetics needs a complete or "consummating" viewpoint in order for it to function as a means of understanding and naming value. Aesthetics both as a discipline and as a viewpoint relies on an view from outside, not just an outside viewpoint but a perspective that can see also see all sides of the artistic object or the hero and through this gaze understand and consummate the object wholly and completely. Aesthetics as the discipline and system in which material receives form and content happens similarly to the outside view that consummates the image of a person. Although a good artist can "see" his artistic production prior to its completion, this does not mean that the object produced will cease to mean in its finishing. A truly artistic object will continue to mean, for others as well as the artist, long after the consummation of the artistic act. For

Bakhtin, just as aesthetics needs a way to describe the nature of this continued meaning that is “transgredient” to the author’s specific act, so also our understanding of human personhood needs a measure by which we understand the continual development of a human being while also having a sense of a person’s completeness, the wholeness of their personality beyond the constituent moments of physical maturity and biographical life.

Although interaction between heroes within a work places restrictions on what they can see in and around themselves, Bakhtin qualifies the “sight” or “aesthetic seeing” of the author as completing a person without foreclosing the meaning of their existence. Bakhtin characterization of the author’s viewpoint as “transgredient” does not suggest, however, that his vision “transcends” human life. In the background of his discussion Bakhtin never forgets the human body as an important point of reference when he says “the problem of the body as value can be located only on the ethical plane, on the aesthetic plane and to some extent on the religious plane.” (A&H 47)

Incarnation

The value of the body as a marker of human individuality is most poignantly presented on the religious plane by Bakhtin’s description of incarnation (A&H 10). The integration of incarnation is a significant move for Bakhtin because from the very beginning it indicates his reliance on the idea of the religious historical event as critical for developing his philosophy of aesthetics, human personality and communicative action.

Bakhtin’s integration of aesthetic description with Jesus Christ—as both God and man—in the historical event to save humanity from its sin, positions the incarnation as an essential idea for his view of aesthetics and human communication (A&H 56-57).

Bakhtin sees an important correlation between the event of the incarnation and the speech act when he says “the author puts his own ideas directly into the mouth of the hero from the standpoint of their theoretical and ethical (political, social) validity, in order to convince us of their truth and in order to propagandize them” (A&H 10). It is important to consider that Bakhtin does not critique this event as the diminution of the hero since he compares this particular case, with similar language, to that of the ideal principal relationship between the author and the hero.

The question of whether or not the author can create truly independent personalities in art does not often prompt too much general concern since literary characters live fictional lives. However, Bakhtin’s scenario of *the* author’s ideas being put directly into the mouth of his heroes as living people raises different apprehensions if we consider the implications of this viewpoint for the lives of actual people inhabiting and acting in the world. This is why Bakhtin’s introduction of the incarnation as a way to conceptualize the nature of relationship and the author’s word as incarnate are so very important. Incarnation is not simply a will repudiating possession of the hero’s body with the will of the author. Evidenced in Bakhtin’s discussion of Rabelais, Bakhtin imagines the incarnation as an honoring of the particular, temporal, independent person; an elevation of the body’s significance and a celebration of its distinct and specific existence (Coates 133). Elsewhere Bakhtin will introduce Jesus Christ as the personification of unity, a material unification of both the aesthetic viewpoint and an inwardly lived life giving clear indication that this event, and the person of Christ stand as significant for the systematic unity of Bakhtin’s position (A&H 56).⁴ Bakhtin’s reliance on the incarnation

⁴ Chapter four further pursues this theme. Bakhtin follows the work of St. Augustine and the significance of the Incarnation in Augustine’s thought. A detailed exposition of how this theme functions

to describe the transition from the formal to the material is a significant move, and acts as the pivotal piece in his description of the dialectic between the boundaries of the body and the encompassing and consummating viewpoint of the author. The person of Jesus Christ allows Bakhtin to see a simultaneous unity and diversity in human life and language, “a synthesis of unique depth” (A&H 56).

According to Bakhtin, understanding this event and the mystery of the outside/earthly relationship is quite impossible from a theoretical point of view.⁵ Bakhtin does not think it is conceivable to truly describe the nature of incarnation as an event occurring in a person’s inward life. Instead Bakhtin turns to the literature to describe the nature of this relationship, and it is the novel’s depiction of “unfinalized” dialogic personalities that makes it suitable for Bakhtin’s task⁶. In this way Bakhtin implicates art as something more than the individual expression of the author, possessing much more profundity than mere “inspiration” (A&A 2). An aesthetic act can be understood as truth descending to become liable for the various circumstances of human experience. Similarly, the incarnation is a single event that aesthetically addresses the individual liability of each sinner. Bakhtin believes that art and life should be brought together through this same liability because only the recognition of this “liability to blame” can instill a “unity of answerability to human action” (A&A 1-2).

When the spheres of art and life are brought together in the human speech act, the fruitful product of understanding answerable interpersonal relationship matures. Good

rhetorically in Augustine’s *Confessions* can be found in Calvin Troup’s *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine’s Confessions*, specifically pages 4-5.

⁵ In fact one might even say that Bakhtin’s attempts to identify a creative principle that creates a systematic understanding of aesthetics, verbal communication and human action found in a person.

⁶Most demonstrably found in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novels.

authors acknowledge, grapple with, and “surmount” the constraints of real life (A&H 193). In the author-hero relationship Bakhtin identifies the situated human body as a significant primary and formal constraint. According to Bakhtin, the author’s surmounting of this constraint is characteristic of his relationship to the hero.

The author not only sees and knows everything seen and known by each hero individually and by all heroes collectively, but he also sees and knows more than they do; more-over, he sees and knows something that is in principle inaccessible to them. And it is precisely in this invariably determinate stable *excess* of the author’s seeing and knowing in relation to each hero that we find all those moments that bring about the consummation of the whole—the whole of each hero as well as the whole of the event which constitutes their life and in which they jointly participate.” (12)

Through Bakhtin’s language of excess and participation we begin to get a better glimpse of the incarnational dynamic situated at the center of Bakhtin’s work in “Author and Hero.” On one hand, the constraints of the hero’s human body with his limited perspective and his inability to conceive of himself as a whole person is coupled with the “encompassing”(10) viewpoint of the author that consummates and completes the heroes. The author sees more or beyond what the hero can see in his own life. The sight lines of the author are not however a strict determination of a hero’s personhood or action. In Bakhtin’s utilization of incarnation as the exemplary event in which “the idea that has a purely theoretical validity for the author” is “modified” in its “direction,” he introduces real participation within the author’s encompassing and consummating seeing excess (A&H 10).

Bakhtin's idea of participation (elsewhere called co-experiencing) is a crucial theme in "Author and Hero." First, however, it is important to highlight the evident difference in personhood between the author and hero as conceptualized by Bakhtin; specifically how the outside viewpoint gives the author inwardly persuasive authority towards the heroes of his creation. Bakhtin's view of authority in "Author and Hero" is one distinctly informed by his discussion of the author-hero relationship in the novel and substantially different from his description of the "authoritative word" in a later essay entitled "Discourse in the Novel," even if this notion of authority contains negative overtones which are often conflated with domination and power (DI 342). The implications of Bakhtin's discussion are not specific to the novel genre but extend into interpersonal and societal relationships principally fostering a functional understanding of human relationship eschewing assumptions regarding their "pure form."

The Author

Advancing an understanding of the author-hero relationship points out an important distinction found at the basis of Bakhtin's discussion regarding the crisis in the aesthetics of verbal art; specifically, how the principle of aesthetics, when properly understood resolves the many arguments that obfuscate the terms of the crisis. First Bakhtin critiques "confounding the author-creator with the author-person" (A&H 10). In Bakhtin's view, an important and crucial distinction between an author-person—an author that is part of this world and therefore constrained by it—and the author-creator who similarly constitutes the work, subsists on the position taken outside of a work. Bakhtin does not always openly distinguish when he is speaking of the author-person or the author-creator except when specifying the difference in quality between these two

roles as they relate to the “whole of the work and a hero” (A&H 10). The author-creator situates on the boundary able to see the entire artistic event. The author –person inhabits the work, a “constituent of the ethical social event of life” living both inside the work, and inwardly as a self-conscious participant (A&H 10).

In contrast to the author-person, the author-creator as distinctly outside both encompasses and consummates the object of his contemplation. As Bakhtin develops a more vivid picture of the author-creator he offers a few more qualities that give us insight, not only into the personhood of the author but also the kind of disposition the author takes towards his heroes in preparing a space for aesthetic activity. In his initial descriptions of the author-hero relationship Bakhtin provides a “very general definition” of the author (A&H 12). He writes:

The author is the bearer and sustainer of the intently active unity of a consummated whole (the whole of the hero and the whole of a work) which is transgredient to each and every one of its particular moments and constituent features. As a whole which consummates the hero, this whole is in principle incapable of being given to us from within the hero, in so far as we “identify” ourselves with the hero and experience his life from within him...the authors consciousness is the consciousness of consciousness, that is, a consciousness that *encompasses* the consciousness and the world of the hero—a consciousness that encompasses and *consummates* the consciousness of a hero by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the hero’s consciousness and which, if rendered immanent, would falsify this consciousness. (12)

Bakhtin's description of the author's position towards the hero includes a number of significant claims about the author, which provoke questions regarding the possibility of demarcation between the author and hero. If we consider Bakhtin's proclivity to analogously substitute author for the person of God, this general definition introduces some very important claims regarding the author as God, his relationship with human beings as well the meaning in the aesthetic event of dialogue. This is an important theme that Bakhtin pursues at the end of "Author and Hero" describing the author's role as the "bearer and sustainer" of heroes rather than heroes being the generating force of their own "wholeness" (A&H 12). In very real terms Bakhtin indicates that the "particular moments and constituent features" provided by heroes in the activity of their lived life can only be understood, or more radically put, can only mean anything in view of the author's position outside, a position that is "in principle transgredient to the hero's consciousness" (A&H 12).

Bakhtin's definition clearly establishes the author as the only person who can completely bring together the cognitive and ethical aspects of a person's life. Bakhtin does not show interest in explaining the epistemological implications of this view of authorship as it may apply to theories of cognition. Instead he utilizes the aesthetic viewpoint as a means of synthesizing the cognitive, ethical, and psychological aspects of human experience. In the aesthetic purview we move beyond the problem of independent thought (the activity of the inner person) to his proposal for creative human action (outward bodily expression in the verbal arts) in light of the all-encompassing, consummating consciousness.⁷ The author not only poses as the primary source of human

⁷ In the last pages of the essay Bakhtin will make mention of memory as being an "aesthetic victory over death" and the way that a "lived out life is saved, justified and consummated in eternal memory" (A&H

consciousness, he alone is equipped with the vision necessary for this task. According to Bakhtin no inner self serves as the seed for conscious awareness and attempts by the hero to establish this reality (i.e. establish self-consciousness as a totally immanent phenomenon) results in falsely conceiving the object of personhood and or personality (A&H 51).

Bakhtin's emphasis on the author's consciousness encompassing and consummating the consciousness of the hero also demonstrates two very important ideas regarding the author in his relationship with his heroes. First, the existence of heroes, not only bodily but also consciously, is conceived and sustained by the presence of the author and second, the moments and features that give form and value to a hero's life must originate outside of the hero as well as be "transgredient" to the hero's own consciousness. Bakhtin appears to use transgredience and outsideness interchangeably to signify the connection between atemporal value and eternity. Both of these terms represent that the formal principles and values of a hero's life cannot originate from inside *or* even from the same experiential plane of the hero himself.

Bakhtin critiques both the philosophy of the mind and psychological theory because these systems generate theoretical versions of personality resulting in deterministic systems of human action. Theories of this kind often assume that the formal and value constituents of human life are generated solely from within a person which are then generalized corporately into universally acknowledged values or vice versa. Even the simplest example of artistic production gives us insight into Bakhtin's thinking.

131). This correlation of memory with the encompassing and consummating consciousness of the author demonstrates that this consciousness is not a determining viewpoint but is instead a saving view, a viewpoint that overcomes the finality and inevitability of death. Memory in this sense acts aesthetically, just as the author of a novel continues to live in the meaning of his work, so also the "eternal memory" of a person saves them from death, from becoming material without form or content.

Bakhtin finds it implausible to expect a piece of granite to shape itself from the inside out, establishing its final form through inner activity made manifest in its exterior appearance. Bakhtin turns to the fundamental principle of aesthetics because through novel art he can argue that only the outside viewpoint can provide, not just meaning for the particular and momentary constituents of a human life, but a perspective that can see them unified into a distinct whole.

Bakhtin links aesthetics with an authorial view from outside, a view that can conceptualize both the outer boundaries of the hero as well as see into the inner life, the uniqueness of a human personality. The outside viewpoint is not a constraint on the author but a willful distancing of the author from his hero to open a space for his hero to act freely. The outside position taken by the author, transgredient to the hero and his life, isn't a necessary position, which defines the author but is instead an action taken by the author because of a special disposition towards his heroes. According to Bakhtin, this position appears as "loving removal" in which the author withdraws "himself from the field of hero's life, his clearing of the whole field of life for the hero and his existence, and – the compassionate and consummation of the event of the hero's life in terms of real cognition and ethical action by a detached, unparticipating beholder" (A&H 14).

In withdrawal the author takes an outside position thereby maintaining his "aesthetically productive relationship" with them (A&H 14). We see a similar kind of distancing posited later in Bakhtin's development of dialogic speech. Bakhtin repeatedly and diligently defends the individual position of a person as an essential part of dialogic action, and a similar sentiment underlies his description of the author's purposeful distancing from the hero.

The position of outside otherness is prerequisite for aesthetic activity, as Bakhtin notes “if there is only one unitary and unique participant, there can be no aesthetic event” (A&H 22). Bakhtin’s emphasis on outsideness does not preference distance for the protection of solitary individuality. He is making two very important points that have as much to do with the role of the author, as they relate to the nature of the hero. The author must, because of his encompassing and consummating role in the hero’s life, withdraw in order to open space for the hero to act cognitively and ethically. The hero’s “fate” must remain open so that he may choose his own direction instead of being determined (A&H 176). However, a hero cannot in from his own volition exist or live without an outside viewpoint, without anything “transgredient to itself” (A&H 22). If the hero cannot be conceived as a whole by an outside consciousness then he cannot be known or understood aesthetically. This means that the formal stability available in the constituent moments of the hero’s life must be realized in the author’s outside point of view, an aesthetic viewpoint that collects the particular moments and traits of the hero’s personhood without delimiting the potential for creative and individuating action.

Bakhtin defends outside aesthetic vision as the only type of sight that can both encompass and consummate the constituent moments of the hero’s life without closing off or denying a space for answerable action. Bakhtin’s concern that art and life both have a “liability to blame” rings true. Blame vitally marks the hero’s life because individual and responsible action constitutes the development of his personality. Bakhtin distinguishes aesthetic vision as synthesizing differing ethical theories of human action because this perspective encompasses particular acts in an evaluative frame. According to Bakhtin, there are no transgredient constituents within the ethical event because reduces

the position of the author to the same experiential plane of the hero. In purely cognitive theories of human personhood “there is no hero at all, not even in the potential form.”

(A&H 22)

The distancing of the author from the hero’s life provides a space for the aesthetic event mediated by “expression in verbal art” (A&H 188). In Bakhtin’s view an author possesses the power to relate instrumentally towards his heroes, but can choose otherwise. In several examples Bakhtin demonstrates the character of such author types resulting in degenerate or subpar forms of the novel where the author creates his heroes solely for the purpose of disseminating a monologic view of the world. These forms stand in contrast to the characterization that Bakhtin presents in his own description of the author relating to his heroes.

Following his definitional introduction of the author, Bakhtin turns his attention towards “man as the organizing form-and-content center of artistic vision” returning to the “problem of the author” only at the end of the essay (A&H 187). Bakhtin understands the author’s role and relationship as a transredient principle for the basic interpersonal differentiation of the I and other. Having established the parameters of the I/other relationship, Bakhtin pursues the artistic material through which the author’s vision of his heroes translates from an outside situation to the plane of each hero’s existence. According to Bakhtin, the authors “aesthetic vision finds expression in art—in verbal art” (A&H 188). At this point in Bakhtin’s discussion of the author’s manner it becomes difficult to separate the author from the hero as a separate entity because the two persons are inextricably linked as participants in an event of aesthetic character. Bakhtin’s tone takes on a palpable feeling of insistence when he writes:

It is precisely as such an event that we must understand and know the work of art—we must understand its very principles of its value-governed *life*, in its *living* participants, and not as something that has been first put to death and reduced to bare empirical givenness as a verbal whole (it is not the author's relationship to the material that constitutes the event and has the validity and force of an event, but—the author's relationship to the hero (A&H 189).

Like in his later works, Bakhtin argues that language must be understood and studied as utterances (the word intoned by a particular person) rather than as static symbols. Bakhtin focuses attention on the event of relating that occurs between the author and hero in order to establish the aesthetic tone that surrounds their interaction. This relational tone “determines the author's position as well—the position of the bearer of the act of the artistic vision and creation in the event of being” (A&H 190). Bakhtin relies on this relational event to describe the author's disposition towards the hero, as well as his relationship to the “world's values” (A&H 190).

Although Bakhtin stylistically avoids polemical arguments, his description of the author does not leave much room for prevarication and in some ways prompts more questions than clarity. Having already asserted that the author is the “bearer and sustainer” of the hero's consciousness he writes that “the aesthetically creative relationship to the hero and his world is a relationship to him as one who is going to die” (A&H 190). This statement is indicative of the author's role towards the hero in what Bakhtin interchangeably calls the “artistic event” and the “event of being” (A&H 190). The author must live outside of the determined nature of this world, a world in which all things die. Harkening back to his discussion of the body as a value point in the world,

Bakhtin adds the conclusion of death to the list of constraints that act as constituent parts of the hero's life.

We would be wrong to think that Bakhtin is attempting to correct the problems of abstract individualism with a double portion of morbidity. Instead he describes the author as one who cares for the hero, who sets "a saving consummation over him, over against his own directedness in meaning" (A&H 190). The author approaches heroes as those who are going to die in order to save them from death. To preserve this power the author must actually exist outside the plane of lived life, beyond human experience and determinateness. Bakhtin writes:

The artist is in fact someone who knows how to be active outside of lived life, someone who not only partakes in life from within, (practical, social, political, moral, religious life) and understands it from within, but someone who also loves it from without—loves life where it does not exist for itself, where it is turned outside itself and is in need of self-activity that is located outside it and is active independently of meaning (A&H 190-91).

The disposition of the author towards the hero, from the outside, is one of loving participation in the hero's life. From this purposefully outside position the author is able to look over the hero's life and to give it a meaning that is whole, provide a completeness unachievable if the author were subject to death, and undo what threatens to close heroes off from eternal meaning.

The love of the author for his heroes is expressed in his activity towards them. He "collects the world scattered in meaning and condenses it into a finished and contained image" (A&H 190). The outside position of the author encompassing, consummating,

collecting and condensing the hero and the world that he lives in are the necessary constituents of the aesthetic event of being. Bakhtin describes this event artistically in the author-hero relationship to correct what he perceives as sufficient lack of systematic thought in disciplinary aesthetics. Here, the support for Bakhtin's analysis having significance in the study of interpersonal relationship and verbal communication is hard to ignore.

Bakhtin's fluid movement between descriptions of art and life make reading his text, at times, precarious. Bakhtin's commitment to aesthetics is unmistakable, but it's his description of the author-hero relationship that clearly reaches beyond disciplinary aesthetics quickly becoming a synthetic description of common human experience. This synthesis happens through an "aesthetic seeing" because it is only from this "transgressive" position that the constituent planes of human experience can be understood holistically. In Bakhtin's own words "all the constituents of an axiological consummation (spatial, temporal, and those of meaning) are axiologically transgressive to an active self-consciousness, that is, are not located along the line of one's own axiological relationship to oneself" (A&H 188).

When Bakhtin speaks of art, he is also speaking about life. We are introduced to this initial conviction in his statement that art and life must be brought together in their mutual "liability to blame" and that this unification can only occur in the "unity of my answerability" in the actual experience of a lived life (A&A 1). Artificially separating art and life, for Bakhtin, indicates other problematic dualisms critiqued in his proposal for a renewed aesthetics answerable for life. Bakhtin generates his viewpoint from the principal idea of incarnation, which as an event of subjection signifies the lowering of the

ideal to the material in order for the human body to inform the content of life. This model provides Bakhtin with his test for the validity of his own claims. The act of sympathy⁸ qualified by “aesthetic seeing” intends answerably towards another while preserving the individual personalities of both participants in the event (A&H 228).

Empathy and Aesthetic Action

Bakhtin carefully scrutinizes the boundaries between formal and material constituents of life, the aesthetic values that inform an answerable existence. The dilemma that Bakhtin confronts in aesthetics and ethics is their separation by analytic philosophy and theoretical psychology. This separation creates significant problems for explaining the answerable act of human empathy. In his early essay *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin demonstrates the complications in the separation of ethics and aesthetics by focusing on empathy as an essential moment in the act of “aesthetic contemplation” (TPA 12). How theories treat empathy is Bakhtin’s test of their validity because the body as an interpersonal border and boundary between inward life and outside appearance is both substantial and delicate (A&H 228). The description of how one person should approach another (along with the interaction’s outcome) reveals the fundamental value giving a theory its coherence and applicability. Bakhtin finds fault

⁸ In the introduction to their 1989 book *Rethinking Bakhtin* Morson and Emerson make a distinction between empathy and *vzhivanie*, which they translate as “live entering” or “living into.” Although this may in fact be a more literal translation of the Russian, empathy is the word of choice used in the same author’s 1990 translation of “Author and Hero.” For this reason empathy is used here in the text to describe what Bakhtin means when he discusses our attempts to understand the position of another person (i.e. suffering) qualified with his notion of “aesthetic seeing” and his assertion that in an empathic act “this projection of myself into him is possible and in what form—the psychological problem of such a projection—we shall not consider here. It is enough for our purposes that such a projection within certain limits is possible in fact” (A&H 25). Later in the text Bakhtin switches from empathy to his own term “sympathetic co-experiencing” which better captures the concept that he is trying to describe. This term avoids some of the philosophical legacy that complicates his discussion and better demonstrates how Bakhtin understands the action.

with theories that attempt to forcefully surmount the body as a boundary without accounting for the unique experience of personhood. He writes:

A theory needs to be brought into communion *not* with theoretical constructions and conceived life, but with the actually occurring event of moral being-with practical reason, and this is answerably accomplished by everyone who cognizes, insofar as the act of cognition as *my* deed is included, along with all its content, in the unity of my answerability, in which and by virtue of which I actually live—performed deeds. All attempts to force one’s way from inside the theoretical world and into actual Being-as-event are quite hopeless (TPA 12).

Bakhtin’s critique of theoretical forcefulness offers insight into the nature of aesthetic seeing. Aesthetic seeing is an outside perspective provided by another person perceiving the particular aspects of human experience while contributing transgredient constituents to the event.⁹ Theoreticized viewpoints, whether cognitive, ethical or aesthetic undermine empathy by placing a person outside themselves, in a “role” and not within their own answerable life. The inside answerable position remains essential for the aesthetic event even when “the moments of empathizing and objectifying interpenetrate each other” (TPA 15). One must act inside in order to be outside of another person. It is only from this position that one can productively contemplate the plight of another.¹⁰

⁹ In very few places does Bakhtin mention the persuasive character of the aesthetic viewpoint so this incidence is important not only for the present argument but also for Bakhtin’s project overall. In other places Bakhtin critiques the rhetorical tradition for its “judicial tone” arguing that it is ill suited to approach the particularity of common speech genres. This qualifying statement points to the nature of the dialogic interaction between the two people, and that an aesthetic viewpoint is best equipped to both see a person in their particularity while also consummate their person from the outside with constituent qualities that complete them, bringing together dispersive events of their ethical and cognitive life into an understandable and stable whole.

¹⁰ It is clear that Bakhtin understands “productivity” as being an act that creates, that does not foreclose or generalize that character of the person seen but allows for continued growth and development. This is terminologically tied to his notion of consummation that is heuristically bordering the notion of

Emerson and Morson appropriately link Bakhtin's notion of empathy to the life of Christ and highlight his use of the Russian word *vzhivanie*, which they translate as "living into" ("Rethinking" 12). Quoting *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Morson and Emerson concede that the incarnate Christ functions as an import demonstration of Bakhtin's view of empathy writing, "Christ did not empathize with people; he became one of them while maintaining his outsideness. What Christ offered was neither theoretical truth nor an example of aesthetic doubling but a "living into" the world that left it a fundamentally different place" (Morson & Emerson, "Rethinking" 12).

These preliminary themes in *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* preface Bakhtin's argument in "Author and Hero" where he continues to assert that the essential validity of an aesthetic viewpoint is its outside position. Bakhtin's critique of theoretical aesthetics is that they are problematically committed to positions of either exterior objectivity (impressive) or inner authenticity (expressive). In his survey of late nineteenth to early twentieth century¹¹ philosophical aesthetics Bakhtin's demonstrates how each position has significant deficiencies in its ability to describe the relationship between the constituents of the inner person and formal quality of transgredient value.

Bakhtin primarily critiques our naïve acceptance of expressivist or impressionist viewpoints without any systematic attempt to synthesize or explain the meeting of the inner person with an outside viewpoint. Bakhtin admits that "that the world of modern philosophy, the theoretical and theoreticized world of culture, is in a certain sense actual, that it possesses validity" but finds that modern philosophy and theoretical aesthetics

reproduction and the "productivity" of this creative act. In the birth of a new person, a new unique personality is created that is the results of creative act that in itself concludes and has formal boundaries while at the same time an example of empathic interpenetration. These themes emerge more explicitly in his work with *Rabelais* and are often misunderstood because of Bakhtin's emphasis on the grotesque.

¹¹ Bakhtin identifies this period as the source of his survey on page 61 of "Author and Hero."

cannot see “the once-occurrent world in which I live and in which I answerably perform my deeds. These two worlds do not intercommunicate; there is *no principle*¹² for including and actively involving the valid world of theory and of theoreticized culture in the once-occurrent Being-event of life” (TPA 20). The deficiency of the theoretical world is that it cannot find its way into the world of inner life, once inside the theoretical world one is in fact “outside” oneself and cannot act from within one’s life.

The attempt to conceptualize inner life from an outside yet theoretically abstract position is the fundamental problem addressed by Bakhtin’s advocacy for empathy as “aesthetic contemplation” (A&H 24). Bakhtin believes that it is only from within one’s own lived life that a person provides the appropriately outside viewpoint that can “objectify” another person, synthesizing the momentary aspects of their life into something whole and meaningful. Bakhtin grants that cognitive and psychological features of the empathic moment are in a sense a projection of oneself into the position of another person but this is merely a constituent of an event that is primarily aesthetic (outside) in character. The moments of inner projection and aesthetic objectification do not correlate causally or sequentially but are necessary components simultaneously occurring within the act of aesthetic contemplation.

Sympathy, through the act of “aesthetic objectification” is a way for a person’s life experience to be given meaning, not only for a person empathizing and for the one contemplated but for others as well. Bakhtin notes, “the person suffering does not experience the fullness of his own outward expressedness in being; he experiences his expressedness only partially, and then in the language of his inner sensations of himself”

¹² Emphasis added

(A&H 25). In this case, aesthetic action is only for others and as another, not for myself or as myself.

The objectification of another and their suffering is an aesthetic objectification, which is different from a “cognitive or ethical objectivity” (A&H 13). Cognitivist and ethical objectivity assume impartiality and are not intoned towards a particular person. Aesthetic objectivity on the other hand is directed towards a specific person, “the whole of the hero” and his life (A&H 13). Aesthetic objectivity does not replace the cognitive and ethical notions of objectivity but encompasses them within its special purview, a viewpoint able to see the whole hero and the whole of his life. This does not mean that in scope the aesthetic viewpoint is non-evaluative or that it does not have particular intonation. Much like “aesthetic objectification” justifies the life experience of one who is seen empathically, the vision of an author is a perspective that establishes the value of heroes justifying and consummating them “independently of meaning, achievements, the outcome and success of the hero’s own self-directed life” (A&H 14).

Bakhtin’s description of the author’s evaluative stance repeatedly emphasizes that the author’s perspective is completely outside the plane of meaning, outside the plane of the hero’s experience. From this non-contingent position and author is able to sustain, support and stabilize the life of the hero as a whole, himself unlimited by the constraints of human life. Bakhtin writes, “The author experiences the hero’s life in value-categories that are completely different from those in which he experiences his own life and the life of other people living together with him (the actual participants in the unitary and open ethical event of being); he determines the sense of the hero’s life in a value context that is completely different” (A&H 15).

Bakhtin articulates the crisis in aesthetics as a confusion of the author's position and a misunderstanding of the importance in different planes of experience and evaluation. Bakhtin outlines three ways in which this outside [author's] position is compromised, and how in each case there is a destabilization of the hero and his life, a personal and inward instability, instability of the hero's background and/or an unacknowledged instability where the hero himself embodies a naïve authority limited in scope to establish a holistic meaning for life, blind to the dependent and tenuous nature of his or her own position. All of these positions are impoverished because of their primary deficiency, the collapsing of two positions into one. According to Bakhtin the aesthetic event is dependent on the existence of at least two persons, "if there is only one unitary and unique participant, there can be *no* aesthetic event" and therefore no possibility for sympathy (A&H 22). When the conditions for the aesthetic event are discarded Bakhtin concludes that the remainder—ethical and cognitive theories of human interaction—perform a reduction on the relationship between the author and the hero weakening the active and participative nature of the aesthetic event (A&H 88-89). This crisis in aesthetics is therefore also a crisis of authorship. Bakhtin believes that this crisis estranges art from life as well as the hero from the author. In the impoverishment of these relationships the possibility of well-ordered and properly valued interpersonal interaction is stunted and turns to poorer modes of mediation (cognitive and ethical) to preserve the meaning of a person's place in the world, in life and in relationships with other people.

Bakhtin articulates the outcome of this crisis by looking at the act of contemplating a piece of art, understanding it as a whole by imputing value transgredient to its parts. Bakhtin's poses Leonardo DaVinci's *The Last Supper* as an example. He

asks, “in what possible way can I experience the aesthetic whole of the work” (A&H 65)? One can empathize with each character individually but each attempts a distinctly inward position or inwardly experienced perspective towards the work itself. In this case each hero as a “participant is intensely individual” and not representative of the whole of the painting’s aesthetic value (A&H 65). Bakhtin argues that in order to overcome this dilemma expressive aesthetics turns to the author’s perspective as a holistic point of orientation for understanding the value of the work. For Bakhtin this move is equally problematic because first, the author’s viewpoint like the heroes of the work is “intensely individual” and therefore unique in its own right and second, because the “result of involving the author in this way is that he is placed on a par with his own heroes (A&H 65). In other words, options for interpretation in expressive ethics either psychologize the author, or theoretically objectify him.

Bakhtin’s critique of empathy explained by expressive theories of aesthetics centers on the presumption that within an artistic object essential qualities are expressed and that in order to understand the work one must coincide with the essential expressive part of an artistic object. Bakhtin writes of the expressive aesthetic; “value is actualized at the moment when the contemplator abides within the contemplated object; at the moment of experiencing the objects life from the object itself, the contemplator and the object contemplated—ultimately—coincide” (A&H 63).

The coincidence of the person who contemplates an artistic object with either the object itself or its author’s viewpoint is what Bakhtin finds most impoverishing about expressive aesthetics. By collapsing the author’s relationship with the hero (in fundamental terms the distinction between me and another) the potential for aesthetic

activity and the necessary constituents for empathic moments are abolished. At no point in the event or moment of “sympathetic co-experiencing” should two consciousnesses completely coincide or be unified in vision. According to Bakhtin “aesthetic creation cannot be explained or made intelligible as something immanent to a single consciousness” (A&H 86).

Participation as Sympathetic Co-Experiencing

As an author, Bakhtin must have imagined that his own work would be subject to the same errors that he exposed. He would quite certainly affirm that the problems he identified in aesthetics were systemic, affecting all artistic production and even academic writing. One wonders why scholars have not clearly heard his call to “renounce our monologic habits so that we might feel at home in the new artistic sphere which Dostoevsky discovered” (PDP 272). Bakhtin’s critique of the expressive aesthetic can be similarly applied to the critical practice of reading. Any attempt to explain the significance of a work by psychologizing the author or by applying an abstract theoretical lens result in monologic interpretations because both result in a collapse of either the authors, or the reader’s position outside of the work. In typical fashion Bakhtin questioned the legitimacy of his works calling literary criticism a “parasitic profession upon which nothing serious could be based or built” (Emerson, “Next Hundred” 12).

The dialogic truth of Bakhtin’s work has so far been overlooked by scholars who engage in generic forms of literary criticism objectifying Bakhtin’s artistry with forms of evaluation that impoverish the rich learning possible in honest conversation with his texts. If his philosophical arguments attest to his own view, Bakhtin would have us think alongside him, and in this conversation add our own voice to the richer meaning that

continues to emerge from the questions he pursued. This means that we must take his artistic contribution as seriously as we take life. Bakhtin did not consider his own work as different from the work of interpersonal relationship but attempted to describe, in detail, relating to others as itself an artistic act.

Bakhtin's defense of an outside aesthetic position that sees the whole of an artistic object (whether a painting or a person) prompts significant questions for current modes of theoretical inquiry and give us insight into Bakhtin's own approach to authorship. The ideal that he incarnated was the author who did not attempt to possess his own work. Bakhtin's was remarkably charitable with his own artistic efforts publishing essays and books under the names of his friends and his colleagues (Bocharov 1012). Bakhtin's disposition illustrates not only an approach to scholarship, but also a way to relate and respond to others and their work.

The evaluative components of the aesthetic disposition are gratuitous because the scope of the event encompasses all aspects of the hero along with the possibilities of his or her life. In the excess of aesthetic seeing a lived life receives formal value and validity. The actions of life "can be infinitely varied" but "the excess of my self activity is invariable present in them all, at all times, under all circumstances" (A&H 24). According to Bakhtin, the particularity of life and its dispersion must be understood from a holistic viewpoint, not simply as a collection of the biographical moments in a person's life. Bakhtin's primary criticism against theoreticized versions of aesthetics as well as cognitive and ethical explanations of human interactivity all suffer from abstraction or a naiveté in their description of human action. The forceful insertion of these viewpoints into life has no principled means of mediating the gap between theory and active life.

Bakhtin identifies attempts to bridge this gap in “philosophies of life” which he characterizes as “an aesthetics of empathy, aesthetics of inner imitation, and the aesthetics of play and illusion” but none of these carefully preserve the position of an immediately sympathetic yet distinctly outside viewpoint (A&H 62).

Bakhtin renews hope in the practice of working dialogically with texts. Acting responsively in our aesthetic acts we contribute to the significant work of forming and extending meaning in the world. The author-hero relationship is not only a theoretical ratio but a testimonial, articulating a vision of the world promoting freedom and embracing the diversity in human individuality. Seeing in excess can provide for a context for others in which they can better understand the world and themselves. In Bakhtin’s words, “the excess of my seeing is the bud in which slumbers form, and whence form unfolds like a blossom” (A&H 25).

Conclusion

Bakhtin, showing how art and life operate in concert, also reveals the necessary situation of responsible action. His achievement offsets the false polemics within the existential condition of temporality by situating human personhood as the essential mediator of any conversation. The tension between art and life also discloses the essential association between transgredient value and particular acts. In turn, this tension demonstrates the import of understanding how human action, verbal or otherwise, is the material by which a person is given substance and boundary. These are the essential attributes of individual personality more fully developed by Bakhtin’s “Author and Hero”

Chapter 2: Aesthetic Consciousness

M. M. Bakhtin comfortably wears the titles of poet, teacher, literary theorist, and philosopher. These given designations outline the scope of disciplinary influence his work has had since his first published essay in 1919. However broad in scope, Bakhtin's thinking was by no means digressive. He often argued against unsystematic thinking, even though his own style was at times esoteric and equivocal. Select scholars have indicated that this style constitutes an explicit challenge to structural authority specifically found in his terminology of "carnival", "heteroglossia", and "polyphony", Bakhtin's descriptors of the infinite multiplicity in human speech and languages. This viewpoint is not totally imprecise because Bakhtin does amply critique the monologic nature of the authoritative word (DiN 342). However, comparative linguistic scholars concede that Bakhtin's works are better understood as an attempt to describe "the meaning of borders" (Holquist, "Introduction" xix). Morson and Emerson in their book *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of Prosaics*, call Bakhtin an "an apostle of constraints" juxtaposing their reading with a larger body of critical cultural scholarship inclined to deconstruct boundaries that Bakhtin himself carefully protected (43). Emerson has most recently argued that North American Bakhtin scholarship is thankfully reaching a stage of maturity tempering more discrete appropriations of Bakhtin's work in the late 1980's and earlier 1990's.

The previous discussion of "Author and Hero's" important themes shows that Bakhtin focused his attention on important and necessary boundaries. In particular, the unique loneliness of self-experience, our essential dependence on an outside perspective, and the physical limitations of the human body. Thus far sustained attention to Bakhtin's

articulation of these phenomenologically common aspects of human existence in the secondary scholarship is uncommon. To this point, scholars have primarily emphasized differentiation and the upsetting of socio-cultural constraints in Bakhtin's work on Francois Rabelais and his later essays on the novel collected in the book, *Dialogic Imagination* (Morson & Emerson 43). Without acknowledging the correlation between individual speech and the eternal word as the substance of freedom in Bakhtin's work, scholars have instead concentrated on the restrictive socio-political context of the former Soviet Union or the Universalist tendencies in Neo-Kantianism as the effectual context for Bakhtin's more unrestrained ideas. For traditional textual critique socio-historical circumstance is by no means inconsequential for Bakhtin's work. However, to reduce the import of Bakhtin's writing as merely responsive to his material life circumstances limits the interpretive scope and potential influence his writing can have on the study of communication. This hermeneutic emphasis neglects essential themes that permeate and enliven Bakhtin's philosophy. Bakhtin's work is much more than a coy political critique of communist totalitarianism or a simple intellectual rejoinder to Neo Kantian and Formalist contemporaries. His interests moved around and through the immanent contexts of the political, academic, and cultural. In truth, the lens of Bakhtin's historical situation provides only a glimpse into the substance of his work and fails to mine the depth of the problems he critiqued even if those problems are as revelatory of his life experience as they were affective for his thought.

A more concentrated look at Bakhtin's early essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" provides important and necessary additions to contemporary communication scholarship inspired by Bakhtin's thought. Most scholars are inattentive to Bakhtin's

earlier works when addressing the important threads of personality and authorship missing how they form supportive scaffolding for Bakhtin's larger corpus. Sustained attention on the author-hero relationship as an essential constituent of Bakhtin's thought has yet to happen. The faithfulness with which Bakhtin considered the author-hero relationship is confirmed in notes he took immediately prior to his death in 1972. The content of these notes support the claim that Bakhtin's philosophical interest neither wavered from this problem, nor did he question its primary importance as a foundational principle for aesthetics, personality, and verbal communication.¹³

Bakhtin has long been an asset to scholars working in rhetoric and composition studies because of his attentiveness to the historical elements and formal components of the novel. The development and practice of novel writing are themes more significant for Bakhtin's later work (post 1930's) perhaps answering the question of why composition scholars have not yet attempted an interpretation of his more philosophically and theologically focused works. Literature and linguistics scholars most commonly discuss the author-hero relationship associated with Bakhtin's concern regarding the disciplinary crisis in authorship (A&H 202-203).

In "Author and Hero" Bakhtin defines the authorship crisis as primarily a confusing of the author with his work. Instead of the author maintaining independence from his heroes, he is absorbed narratively or psychologically. According to Bakhtin, misunderstanding the fundamental character of the author-hero relationship not only creates a crisis in authoring but also generates problems for articulating ethical human action, incapacitates our understanding of creativity, and stifles abilities to distinguish

¹³These notes are found included as a supplement in Bakhtin's book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* edited and translated by Caryl Emerson.

unique personhood from the influence and circumstance of material contexts (A&H 195-196). Because Bakhtin considers authorship a broader problem than its impact on textual analysis, the aesthetic implications of the authorship crisis resonate with Bakhtin's vision of the author-hero relationship as analogous to God's relationship with mankind. This salient feature of Bakhtin's view when articulating the author-hero relationship raises the stakes of his project and deepens the significance of his work for the philosophy of communication.

The author-hero relationship attends openly to the problem of human consciousness, how a person distinguishes between those acts which are merely responsive to "material-literary context" and those which are additive, contributing unique self-experience (A&H 195). The author-hero dynamic is a principal component of self-conscious human experience because it represents the basic tension between the acts demarcating unique personhood while simultaneously indicative of relational differentiation. To discard the author-hero relationship as a principal characteristic of conscious human action undermines the potential for true artistic production. As Bakhtin describes, "meaningful identification cannot occur outside of contextualizing relationships because "form cannot be referred to *oneself*, for when we try to refer to ourselves we become other than what we were for ourselves, we cease to be ourselves, we cease to live from within ourselves: we become possessed" (A&H 200).

Art is profoundly intertwined with the personal, moral and responsible aspects of life. For Bakhtin, the artistic product of our creative activity represents the principal analogy for understanding meaningful interpersonal interaction, without relying on the supposed stability of tradition or normative forms. Bakhtin repeatedly confirms the

importance of this principle by stressing that understanding relational context, principally conceived as the author-hero relationship, is directly tied to living responsibly in a tangible reality. Disregarding the author-hero relationship makes answering the question of whether or not real and actual consciousness exists impossible. In Bakhtin's own words, "the withdrawal of one of the participants destroys the artistic event, and we are left with nothing but a misleading illusion of an artistic event—with a counterfeit: the artistic event is unreal, it has not really taken place" (A&H 200).

Bakhtin furthers this compelling claim by demonstrating that the absence of the author-hero relationship as a supporting context for distinguishing individual consciousness promotes the hubris of hyper individualism. Any person situated outside this context of "artistic kindness," by which he feels supported through an "other who axiologically stands" opposite, is alone (A&H 200). This solitude creates a person fearful of boundaries, afraid that they may not surpass or surmount the traditions of a cultural heritage or withstand the influence of interpersonal relationship. Rather than acting in concert this person "strives to act and create directly in the unitary event of being as its sole participant; one is unable to humble oneself to the status of toiler, unable to determine one's place in the event of being through others, to place oneself on par with others" (A&H 203).

We are reintroduced here to two important themes that reinforce the importance of the authorship crisis as integral to our study. First, Bakhtin's comment regarding humility and being able to "place oneself on par with others" resonates clearly with the Incarnation as an important principle in his thought. The direction of incarnate action is always a descent from the ideal to the material in order to be with others, to place oneself

on par with others and depend on and support their position in the world. Second, in the background of Bakhtin's discussion remains religious faith. He recurrently makes indirect but substantial connections, both implicit and explicit, about the impact of aesthetics on human perspectives of the soul and God. In an author's note¹⁴ Bakhtin distinguishes the hubris of individualistic solitude from "religious confidence or faith" which finds its certitude in "the fact that life is not solitary, that it is intent and does not proceed from within itself in an axiological void" (A&H 202 n. dd)

Individualistic solitude dismisses the position of the author as an outside consciousness and instead "contests the author's right to be situated outside of life and to consummate it" (A&H 203). This is not only a crisis in authorship. It is also a general crisis in a person's relationship with authority. As these aesthetic attitudes bleed into life they have significant effects on all other forms of relationship. Bakhtin describes how the crisis of authorship manifests itself as a "deep distrust of any outsideness," and in religion it means "the "immanentization" of God, the "psychologization" of both God and religion, with the inability to understand the church as an outward institution, and with a general reevaluation of everything that is inward-from-within" (A&H 203).

Suspicion and fear toward religion is not uncommon, and Bakhtin quite astutely identifies this broader social sentiment not only in sociocultural histories but also in modern art movements of Western societies. The suspicion that Bakhtin identifies is associated with the fear of self-conscious solitude, always searching for a power differential that would compromise one's own position, "*is afraid of boundaries*, strives to dissolve them, for it has no faith in the essentialness and kindness of the power that gives form from outside; any viewpoint from outside is refused" (A&H 203).

¹⁴ pp. 202 in "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity"

Bakhtin's discussion of the crisis in authorship is the major bridge between his work in "Author and Hero" and contemporary communication scholarship. Bakhtin's thought enters the conversation in narrative studies in which the position of the author relative to a text is a salient theme. Although historically narratology is primarily an inquiry into the structure of literary form, contemporary types involve most mediums of storytelling. The God-man relationship as analogous to the author hero dynamic is a significant part of this discussion and one that Barbara Olson believes is still important for understanding the act of authoring (Olson 340).

Authoring and Authority

Olson explores the authorship issue with breadth in *Authorial Divinity in the Twentieth Century: Omniscient Narration in Woolf, Hemingway and Others* kindly summarizing the current scholarly conversation. The issue of "omniscient narration" impels Olson's argument as she follows the history of theoretical discussion around the question, situating the debate between the poles of the omniscient versus decentered authoring (Olson, *Divinity* 11). Olson confronts a trajectory of criticism that takes issue with the conception of a god-like narrator, a narrator who knows every character intimately as well as the end of the story. Instead of confirming this perspective, Olson problematizes ideologies that under emphasize the creative and contributive position of the author. The fact that the analogy of God as an omniscient creator surfaces in many author's honest reflections regarding the act of hero creating is, for Olson, sufficient evidence for defending the author-hero relationship as a fundamental constituent of creative activity. Olson identifies Bakhtin as an advocate for authorial omniscience who also preserves the tension between freedom and limitations implicated by this position.

Olson's suggests that Bakhtin attempts to moderate or reconcile this relationship theoretically and situates his work soundly in the middle of the conversation regarding the author and hero. Olson's attention to Bakhtin is rare. Few scholars address this important question originating in Bakhtin's "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" with persistence.

Don Bialostosky, in his essay "Bakhtin's Rough Draft: Toward a Philosophy of the Act, Ethics and Composition Studies" offers preliminary explorations of the author-hero relationship in Bakhtin's early work. Bialostosky's interpretation, similar to others, connects authorship to interpersonal ethics and dialogue. Bialostosky follows Bakhtin's assertions regarding authoring and ethics in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* but does not distinguish rich differences between authoring and the "authoritative word" critiqued by Bakhtin's later work on the novel (17). Bialostosky does explicate connections between authorship and action locating the kernel of these ideas in the philosophical ethics of *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* unfolding as artistic action and answerability in "Author and Hero." Bialostosky correctly reads authoring as synonymous with true action adeptly outlining Bakhtin's description of the crisis in creativity through theories of speech communication. Bialostosky does not specifically address the pairing of the author with the hero focusing instead on the author's role as he interacts with a socio-cultural context. Highlighting the "authoritative" tone of academic knowledge Bialostosky perceives a possible threat to the individual and creative intonation of scholars. Deanne Bogdan, in an essay entitled "Situating the Sensibilities and the Need for Coherence: Musical Experience Reconsidered," exemplifies this possibility through her reticence to introduce to her students music that might transgress social and cultural constraints (126). Bogdan's

personal account describes a crisis of authorial action and her discussion of these personal constraints resonate clearly authoritative nature of socialized knowledge that Bialostosky believes Bakhtin questions (Greene154).

Both Bialostosky's and Bogdan's accounts express a sentiment signifying the principal nature of the author-hero relationship because as authors they both realize no one can escape their situated dependence on the context of relationship as an active constraint of aesthetic action.¹⁵ Bialostosky and Bogdan's foci are professional but this context does not undermine the interpersonal nature of their experience. Both are interested in creating or at least envisioning a dialogic event in which an individual voice does not lack support from a larger chorus. As Bakhtin notes, for a dialogue to occur there must be at least two people present, (and perhaps even three). Every person, in a sense, acts as in authority towards other people, affirming their action, changing their course, showing them sympathy and love, and providing outside perspective. The inability to see one's self from the outside is a fundamental constraint for Bakhtin. He affirms the fact that we experience life inwardly, not in an egotistical way, but that within our body we approach the world with a limited scope of vision. Only others can tell us how we carry ourselves, how we wear our attitudinal expressions both bodily and in speech.

¹⁵ Both Bialostosky and Bogdan along with Emerson situate the question of authorship in pedagogical practice, pondering how an individual voice can contribute to a larger conversation without being misunderstood or ignored. Emerson points to Bakhtin's own teaching style to resolve the question of how authority and personality function in his own work which resonates well with Bakhtin's own reliance on Christ, a teacher, to ground his own understanding of the simultaneous unifying and differentiating function of the spoken word even if it works contrary to his argument. Emerson rightly identifies an author's personality, his bodily circumstance, and the way that he intones his words as a common hermeneutic entrance into understanding a larger body of written work. This is the same for Bakhtin because the context of the utterance as a binding thread while also a method of articulation functions in human history to enable unique personality to occur without promoting an abstract relativity for defending human freedom. The exception, or difference is in the choice of author to open a text.

For Bakhtin, autonomous self-directed personality is a lie. Instead he posits a radically dependent self, relying on constant external authority to achieve whole and stable personality. Caryl Emerson visits this dynamic with her discussion of contemporary classrooms asking: how can teachers truly connect with students through content? She laments a common pedagogical perspective that “eschews authority and promotes an “open classroom” inherently displacing the authority of both the teacher and course content (Emerson “Next Hundred” 24). Emerson identifies genuine deficiencies in this approach saying that this “too often results in frustration, boredom, Babel, a sense of going nowhere or silence” (Emerson “Next Hundred” 24). Emerson’s commentary on popular pedagogy is revealing of the problems Bakhtin himself outlines in the authorship crisis. Emerson’s description of a classroom inhabited by impotent, passive, confused and mute people are as Bakhtin suggests, the characteristics of those who fail to realize the importance of the outside viewpoint, the position of the author revealed in discourse.

To reground pedagogical practice Emerson cites Bakhtin’s teaching style, a style that was reportedly both authoritative and grand (Bocharov 1011). For Emerson, the character of Bakhtin’s teaching practice gives insight into his ideas regarding authority and authority’s relationship to stable and creative personalities. Emerson finds in Bakhtin an advocate for “increasing the number of authoritative models” one associates with (Emerson “Next Hundred” 24). Furthermore, these associations with authority are not simple role-play but intimate and influential connections. The difference between “authoritative word” and interpersonal authority occurs in the ability to “internalize the word,” a task which requires a “great deal of time and an immense amount of discipline” (Emerson, “Next Hundred” 25).

Emerson's deft explanation of the correspondence between authority and the development of individual personality clarifies the essential character of the author-hero relationship. Instead of inhibiting the growth and development of an individual, authority becomes a tremendously vital constituent of its occurrence. Emerson argues that authority is featured prominently in Bakhtin's "Author and Hero" because he believes the primary creative principle of the author-hero relationship must be understood before the discovery of its implications. As such, "Author and Hero" lays the foundation for Bakhtin's later focus in dialogue (Coates 50). Bakhtin's analysis of the author-hero relationship reveals the fundamental principle informing the development of individual personality, the movement of the authoritative word inward through dialogic interaction.

Ruth Coates, one of the few scholars willing to address the explicitly religious intonation of Bakhtin's work, demonstrates her conversant understanding of Bakhtin's work giving special attention to "Author and Hero". Coates notes the puzzling avoidance of Bakhtin's more explicitly faith informed texts by the secondary literature finding very few interlocutors in her analysis of "Author and Hero" (Coates 38)¹⁶. Coates considers "Author and Hero" integral for understanding Bakhtin's turn to Christian theology for mediating his discussion of authoritative speech. Coates is quick to point out that authority in Bakhtin does not prefer authoritative discourse or the author over against the hero but rather that a "hero is not free to refuse to play his role, not because of authoritarian strictures of the author/other but by virtue of the hero's very nature" (52).

¹⁶ Alexander Mihailovic's *Corporeal Words: Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse* released shortly after Coate's book went to press does address some of the same themes that she discusses in her own book which she makes note of on page 177 of her own text. Each authors approach is significantly different Mihailovic's text and could be properly grouped in with other books that Coates mentions. She writes "Where the impact of religious philosophy and Christian (Orthodox) tradition on Bakhtin in his early years has been taken seriously and carefully described, it has been in general terms and with only very limited reference to the text(s) in which these religious influences are actually reflected (38).

This aspect of the hero's nature is, according to Coates, closely tied to Bakhtin's reliance on the Christianity identifying God as creator and human beings as created. The hero's dependence on the author is not characterized by domination because Christianity harmonizes the tenor of the God-man relationship with the doctrine of incarnation. The event of Christ's earthly descent restores God's relationship with fallen man and is evidence that God desires to meet humankind in Edenic communion and conversation. The Incarnation, according to Coates, is representative of overarching significance of love in Bakhtin's description of the author-hero relationship making love "the most important motif in "Author and Hero"" (Coates 53). The author, like a teacher, loves his student and therefore speaks as if to influence him.

Alexander Mihailovic follows a similar question but intones his interrogation of Bakhtin's texts much differently. Coates argues that Bakhtin's religious perspective is integral. Mihailovic emphatically rejects this interpretation of Bakhtin's work positioning Bakhtin in contrast to a T.S. Eliot-esque petition for a religiously regulated society (Mihailovic 80). Mihailovic positively discounts the possibility of Bakhtin's theological language, the doctrines of the incarnation and the person of Christ as representative of Bakhtin's belief in their reality. Although Mihailovic admits the importance of Christ and the notion of the incarnate Word as essential for reading Bakhtin's collected works he consistently argues that "Christ represents a sociological principle which, as important as it is, most pointedly does not constitute a confessional frame of reference" (Mihailovic 80). This may be the reason for Mihailovic failing to discuss the role of "Author and Hero" in Bakhtin's larger corpus beyond necessary historical and textual commentary. That this essay does not truly pique Mihailovic's interest is hard to figure since it is

considered by others to be the most theological of Bakhtin's writings (Coates 52, Emerson "First Hundred", 225). Mihailovic's choice of interpretive lens constitutes a discouraging omission in his book *Corporeal Words: Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse*, which is currently the definitive discussion of the ecclesial subtext running through Bakhtin's work. Though his perspective limits the depth to which Mihailovic can delve into this essay, it does not prevent him from making important connections between "Author and Hero" and other Bakhtinian texts.

Mihailovic bookends Bakhtin's entire body of work by focusing on the consistency between *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and his last thoughts in "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" drawing insightful connections between the earliest surviving text and Bakhtin's final notes. The most important observation that Mihailovic makes is the connection between Bakhtin's interest in "personality as a viable category" and its relationship to "real ethical obligation" (Mihailovic 215). The transition that Mihailovic identifies in Bakhtin's last notes is Bakhtin's attempt to "link up personality to a poetics of dialogue" (Mihailovic 215). This means for Mihailovic that in Bakhtin's last work there is a distinct move towards dialogue becoming the "crucible for the formation for personality" (Mihailovic 215).

These are important points that must be considered in our discussion of the author-hero relationship, and Mihailovic himself, albeit with a measure of academic distance, reckons with them when discovering these important connections. The living word and personhood are deeply intertwined not only in "Author and Hero" but in the whole of Bakhtin's thought demonstrating an "internal unity" reinforced by the Christological motifs which situate Christ as the pivotal position around which Bakhtin's

theory of dialogue revolves (Mihailovic 15). Mihailovic even goes so far as to acknowledge that Bakhtin's final description of the dialogic event includes not only one person with another, but a third person author "whose arrival on the structural scene of the novel is essential for the triumph of an ethical state among consciousness" (Mihailovic 216).

Mihailovic's discussion remains primarily concerned with Bakhtin's critique of the novel but his conclusions about Bakhtin's analysis of novelistic art overflow into the existential reality of interpersonal interaction. A second and essential discovery that Mihailovic makes is Bakhtin's transition from plot to author-person as the animator of novelistic discourse. Mihailovic traces in Bakhtin's later notes on the Dostoevsky book a definitive turn away from plot driven discourse in which the "author himself replaces the plot" and the "author very clearly becomes at this point in Bakhtin's writing a third presence that is indispensable to the full realization of dialogue" (Mihailovic 217).

In spite of Mihailovic's reluctance about Bakhtin believing the theological truths that enhanced and buttressed his thinking, he has a penetrating view of the theological subtext on the whole ignored in Bakhtinian scholarship. Mihailovic consistently argues that the theological elements of Bakhtin's thinking are only aspects of a persuasive intellectual climate. Mihailovic meticulously traces the themes of Bakhtin's work to the 451 Council of Chalcedon and to the writings of St. Augustine and to Chrysostom but doesn't venture to posit that Bakhtin may have reached his conclusions by reading the Scriptures themselves. Mihailovic's disregard of real religious faith as a constituent of Bakhtin's thought means that he engages Bakhtin's texts only as objects of literary criticism, not as a way to understand and wield the discreet yet powerful word.

Mihailovic concludes his argument with general appreciation for Bakhtin's reuniting of philosophy and theology ruling this move a timely method for tempering the polemics of ideological conflict (Mihailovic 234).

The outcome of Bakhtin's claim that personality is born of dialogic encounter has significantly different implications dependent on what voices are a part of the conversation. If the voices are immanent and temporal versus divine and eternal, individual personality and the interpenetration of the psyche by the spoken word are colored in markedly different ways. The divine "third presence" that Mihailovic locates in Bakhtin's thought fades into the background when he juxtaposes Bakhtin's criticisms and analyses against the socio-political and intellectual contest of Marxist Russian and Bakhtin's contemporaries. If Bakhtin's claims are true, the importance of immanent versus eternal voice becomes vital for how we understand and engage in the activity of personality and relationship development.

Perhaps the most important contribution Mihailovic makes is his argument for the systematic unity of Bakhtin's thought and its dependency on Christological motifs. This admission supports the premise that Bakhtin's description of dialogue in the creative event of personhood is not special to "Author and Hero" or *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* but a constituent, to greater or lesser degree, of all of Bakhtin's works. This means that, at very least, we can courageously confront the theological elements in Bakhtin's thought. Discussions of Bakhtin's work on the novel and human discourse need to recognize these important elements in order to avoid flattening and impoverishing the depth of insight that Bakhtin's philosophy can provide for the study of communication.

Leslie Baxter's book, *Voicing Relationships: A Dialogic Perspective*¹⁷ holds a similar tension between purely theoretical discussions of Bakhtin's ideas versus perspectives engaging his theological intonations. Baxter's appropriation of Bakhtin centers on her interest in developing a communication theory imaging the inherent tension in a spoken utterance. Baxter credits Bakhtin's work as the stimulus for developing her own Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) with special interest in Bakhtin's attention to the word in relational context and his dynamic description of the centripetal/centrifugal movements of an utterance. Building important bridges between Bakhtin's thought and contemporary communication scholarship Baxter emphasizes the dialogic personality of Bakhtin's work. RDT posits that within every relationship and relational context there are competing forces of interpersonal influence.

Baxter's affinity for dialectics puts her at odds with Bakhtin's own understanding of dialogue. This contradiction is not the product of Baxter's naiveté. She acknowledges 'dialectics' is not a term that Bakhtin would have considered useful in describing the spoken word among people and attempts a redefinition of the dialectics itself, emphasizing conflicting dynamics rather than dyads (Baxter "Voicing" 45). To her credit Baxter is quite honest about the difficulty of building her own theory of dialectics upon a philosophy that fundamentally rejects dualisms for their limited interpretive scope. In his earliest discussions of ethics Bakhtin repeatedly critiques dialectical theories for their failure to engage the problem of human action axiologically.

¹⁷ In Baxter's earlier book *Relating: Dialogues and Dialectics* coauthored with Barbara Montgomery she initiates her conversation with Bakhtin stressing more heavily the idea of dialectics as a method of evaluating and understanding interpersonal communication events. In her more recent book cited here she develops a softer version of this theory, "RDT 2.0" which begins to stress Bakhtin's own preference for dialogue as a central concept in his philosophy of communication. Because Baxter does not actually do interpretive work with Bakhtin's texts I have not included a review of this earlier text finding Baxter's more recent efforts a sufficient summary of her theory and her best attempt at thinking alongside Bakhtin as she develops her own position.

In spite of this complication, Baxter contributes much as the first contemporary communication scholar attempting to actually build upon Bakhtin's thought. Baxter demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the popular scholarly conversations regarding Bakhtin's writings (i.e. authorship debates) but does not spend a considerable amount of time explicating any specific text, instead invoking general qualities in Bakhtin's thought. Baxter seriously considers Bakhtin's assertion that "internal dialogism has enormous power to shape style"¹⁸ and uses similar statements as rationale for her own inquiries into the nature of the utterance as informing meaning in interpersonal relationship and personhood. Baxter follows Bakhtin's description of the word as mediatory in negotiating different influences on relationship and personality making power issues a central aspect of her theory of relational dialectics (Baxter "Voicing" 13).

Baxter views the concept of "authoring others" as only a period of development in Bakhtin's work finding his thinking on this point "vague" without "concrete methods for how this actually occurs in practice" (Baxter "Voicing" 26). This gloss prevents Baxter from engaging more earnestly the importance of responsible speech as a theme rarely absent from Bakhtin's more technical discussions of the novel. Baxter's own project traces the ethical nature of relational discourse and how normative meanings diminish marginal voices failing to making connections to Bakhtin's descriptions of answerable action and discourses that silence "alien" voices (DiN 281).

¹⁸ "Style" in Bakhtin's sense is a person's particular way of speaking, not a general form adapted to a context or of a larger group. Style infers a particular individual speaking, and that this style is demonstrative, representative and impactful on the personhood of the individual speaking. The shaping of style in this sense is the shaping of a person, because the only way a person is both created and revealed is through the vocalizing of word, both one's own and those words that have touched and shaped that person inwardly. For additional reference see Bakhtin's discussion of Makar Devushkin in "Discourse in the Novel" pp. 207 in which he explains how style and tone in speech is representative of an entire person's world view and character.

Baxter's work is a prime example of the current tone in communication scholarship that appropriates Bakhtin's work. Baxter's RDT reveals significant modes in normative speech and her modeling is certainly enhanced by her engagement with Bakhtin's thought. However, Baxter's ideas orbit rather than integrate Bakhtin's more systematic attempts at a unified philosophy of communication. She does show the potential Bakhtin's work has for enriching contemporary communication theory that might overcome the deficiencies in modernist models¹⁹ of interpersonal communication (Baxter "Voicing 8-14). However, her limited lens prevents the depth of engagement Bakhtin's thinking reveals in the tensions of human communication. Baxter erroneously aligns Bakhtin with social constructionist models claiming that truth, beauty and genuine relationship are values determined by a society's normative discourse. This misstep in Baxter's read of how Bakhtin views truth within the polyglot of human language makes her appropriation of his work incomplete.

Bakhtin's work can make deeply philosophical and unified contributions to our thinking about the relationship between authority and subjectivity for communication scholarship. Baxter's inattention to the themes of authority and personality, even though quite important for her work, weaken the contributions Bakhtin's thought can make to RDT. This is evident when Baxter tentatively critiques the debilitating nature of

*¹⁹ Baxter identifies five frameworks that she wishes to rework; frameworks that hinder communication theory from being able to truly describe the dynamics of human communication. These structural assumptions are informed by modernist presuppositions about communication modeling involving a more linear conceptualization of speech. The five that Baxter sees as problematic which are corrected by her reading of Bakhtin are: a false binary between public and private, bias against uncertainty, illusion of the monadic actor, an inattention to power, and a conceptualization of relationships as containers of meaning. All of these she elaborates on her book *Voicing Relationships* primarily juxtaposing her own Relational Dialectics Theory from previous communication theories suffering from one or more of these problematic assumptions.

normative discourse, which casts the unordinary²⁰ family and interpersonal relationships in a strange or abnormal light (Baxter “Voicing” 179). Instead of making strong and purposeful statements she waxes aesthetic lacking the sufficient ground to assert her position.

Baxter’s argument seems to be with normative discourse that represents unquestionable authority in the discursive atmosphere of culture. She questions the family categories of “nuclear” or “normal” as helpful in establishing the value of adoption as a legitimate form of family building. In light of the positive results of adoption, few could criticize the intention of Baxter’s argument. However, underlying this critique of norms is a familiar suspicion towards the authority in discourse because of its function in culture. Much like Bogdan’s personal inhibitions or Bialostosky’s wariness of an academic canon, Baxter takes a position that is regrettably unstable and lacking the generative power needed for explaining the possible contexts that might support coherent personality.

Baxter’s hesitance, although unsatisfying, is not unreasonable. Bakhtin is an appropriate companion for those wary of authoritative discourse. His life history well demonstrates the destructive potential of certain forms of normative discourse that diminish and destroy the “alien” voice. Even so Emerson reminds us that Bakhtin did not

²⁰ Even here as I attempt to articulate the difference Baxter articulates in her critique, the notion that there are ordinary and unordinary forms of family and interpersonal relationship would be considered problematic. This introduces another dilemma in the compatibility between Baxter’s own project and Bakhtin’s own thought. The reasons Bakhtin gives in “Author and Hero” for his development of this principle relationship is so a theory of dialogue can be developed. According to Bakhtin, without a rich description of the subject, an understanding of a person’s bodily perspective and a unifying theory of interconnection in language, descriptions of communication will adopt a problematic rigidity either through false conceptualization of subjectivity or through an inconsistent application of aesthetics. This is where Baxter finds herself in difficulty. Her critiques, however thorough and correct prevent her from prescription. Likewise, her critique of discursive categories undermines any sense of a stable subject or personality. It is difficult to see how much can be built on such a foundation. In fact, her desire to problematize all normative discourse makes one wonder how speech, in Baxter’s view, can help overcome the “life from within” that Bakhtin describes as type of “insanity” (A&H 128).

only critique authority but instead warned against the monologic nature of authoritative discourse that was irresponsive to life. Without a clearer understanding of the author-hero relationship interpretations like these are likely to remain salient and uncorrected in contemporary Bakhtin scholarship.

Authority and “Authoritative Discourse”

Bakhtin’s discussion of authoritative discourse in his essay “Discourse in the Novel” establishes an insightful differentiation between authority and authoritative discourse. Bakhtin’s view of the word between people and its exertion of influence interpersonally and culturally creates important clarifications. Bakhtin’s notion of “everyday verbal transmission” is highly stylized. His idea of the utterance never divorces language and meaning from the stylistic nature of personal intonation.

He writes:

When we attempt to understand and make assessments in everyday life we do not separate discourse from the personality speaking it (as we can in the ideological realm), because the personality is so materially present to us. And the entire speaking situation is very important: who is present during it, with what expression or mimicry is it uttered, with what shades of intonation? (DiN 341)

Bakhtin problematizes the simple evaluation of a person’s speech separated from context. Each voice present in the event of an utterance lends, as it were, a different pitch to the way a person intones their words. The gleaning of intent from an utterance without presence reduces the potential feeling created by the concrete and material weight that personality has on intonation. It also means that the relationship between two people in conversation essentially constitutes the utterance not only as a framing circumstance, but

also as a feature of the utterance's tone. Contextual and relational circumstances provide both the internal and external form of a person's utterance demonstrating the significance of other's utterances for understanding the way speech originates and is verbalized. This distinction separates what Bakhtin considers "authoritative discourse" from "internally persuasive discourse" (DiN 342).

The distinction is not, however, simplistic. Authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse can become "united in a single word—one that is simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive—despite the profound differences between these two categories of alien discourse" (Din 342). Bakhtin, it seems, is preparing us for the difficulty he sees in being able to truly demarcate an individual's utterance from the social world of words he describes. Authoritative discourse that is *not* internally persuasive is a word that is separate from relational context and lacks presence. Although the "authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, it's demands are made from the outside, and are not fused with our own discourse as part of our own intonation, a double-voiced or hybrid word."²¹

The problem of being able to properly distinguish an authoritative word, one that imposes itself, has to do with an inability to recognize a discursive authority that is part of the subjective world. According to Bakhtin, the difference between a word "conjoined with authority" and "authoritative discourse" is dependent on the listener's disposition towards that authority, "whether the authority is recognized by us or not— is what determines its specific demarcation and individuation in discourse; it requires a distance

²¹"Double voiced" or "hybridized" forms of the speech are utterances joined together with the words of others. Of course, from Bakhtin's point of view, a word is never completely our own because it is influenced by the words of others, the historical intonation attached to the word, and the person to which the word is directed. Here Bakhtin is touching on the delicate nature of trying to distinguish between the general tone of a social discourse and the individual intonation of a person's utterance.

vis-à-vis itself (this distance may be valorized as positive or negative, just as our attitude toward it may be sympathetic or hostile)” (DiN 343).

Authoritative discourse remains “sharply demarcated” because it is not assimilated, and requires “unconditional allegiance” regardless of the listener’s disposition (DiN 343). Bakhtin posits as example “a distant descendent” that cannot be argued with (DiN 344). The idea of the “distant descendent” who must not be questioned calcifies the free word, literally objecting the circumstances of a contemporary moment. Instead of a responsive discourse intoned for the present authoritative speech transmits, but does not translate into contemporary circumstance. Bakhtin’s final critique of authoritative discourse links to his overall understanding of verbal creation and its re-productivity. A speech utterance shares freely and relationally in multiple voices past and present. Unenclosed in familiar flesh, authoritative discourse cannot relate or be relative, nor consider the relationship into which it is spoken. For this reason authoritative discourse generally debilitates the potential of personhood. Inattention to temporality and the condition of relational life “renders the artistic representation of authoritative discourse impossible... It is by its very nature incapable of being double voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions” (DiN 344).

The conditions of temporality in Bakhtin’s description of discourse function notably in the event of the utterance. Time, particularly the rhythm of human experience, is an essential constituent of the speech utterance. Bakhtin’s critique of authoritative discourse centers on an inattention to history and irresponsiveness to the living person. Even internally persuasive discourse can become authoritative if it makes claims to rise above and transcend living discourse. Bakhtin’s conclusions indicate that speaking freely

requires that authoritative discourse become personified, become a personality. In fact, Bakhtin suggests that the possibility of forgotten or “calcified” authoritative discourse being resurrected and intoning contemporary utterances is quite common. Michael Holquist characterizes Bakhtin as “a meditator on the meaning of borders” and here we clearly see Bakhtin attempting to articulate the threadbare trip line between free speech and its more common constraints (Holquist “Introduction xix).

Time is the border crossed by the word, which by coupling past and present prompts the rebirth of novel meaning. Distancing oneself from the border of temporality, the boundary connecting both persons to the present is the authoritative claim to possess a timeless truth, truth not subject to the relativity and relationship in utterances. Bakhtin’s view of time is most clearly articulated in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” where he cites Einstein’s Theory of Relativity as parallel to time and space in the novel. Bakhtin’s description of discursive time resonates well with the contemporary conversation regarding the importance of historicity²² in our understanding of discursive practice. J. D. Peters describes this interaction wonderfully writing, “the present becomes intelligible as it is aligned with a past moment with which it has a secret affinity. There is a simultaneity not only across space, but across time as well” (Peters 3). The distinction between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse is made in meetings on the borders of time. This boundary subjects authoritative discourse to vocal intonation, it becomes personal “ideological discourse” and persuasive towards the inner person. In other words, for any discourse to be internally persuasive rather than authoritative it must be spoken in temporal relationship. Authoritative discourse becomes a voice of authority

²² For further reading see Thomas B. Farrell’s “Narrative in Natural Discourse: On Conversation and Rhetoric” in *Homo Narrans* 35.4 1985 pp. 109-127.

speaking into a person and responding to questions posed by existential and relational positioning. For Bakhtin, “this discourse is of decisive significance in the evolution of individual consciousness: consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it, and from which it cannot initially separate itself” (DiN 345).

What Bakhtin’s reveals in the transition from “authoritative discourse” to an internally persuasive voice of authority is integrally important for the development of a person’s self consciousness and personality. Once an “externally authoritative” word becomes internally persuasive it converts from a word imposition, an inert dominating objective discourse, to one that is creatively productive, awakening “new and independent words” (DiN 345). This element of Bakhtin’s discussion is of particular importance to Baxter as she examines the dialectic between individual voice and the competing narratives of culture. The tension in Baxter’s work relies on Bakhtin’s description of the dynamic event in which a person attempts to distinguish their own thoughts from the opinions of others, their own voice from other voices active on the boundaries of their personhood. This means that the development of individual personality is experienced phenomenologically as an “intense struggle” (DiN 346).

Bakhtin’s most troubling conclusion qualifies the struggle to establish one’s own individuality as without temporal resolution. The fluidity of inner experience represents the infinite word permutations experienced by any speaking subject. The essential element of “internally persuasive discourse” is that it remains open to change. According to Bakhtin “the semantic structure of internally persuasive discourse in *not finite*, it is

open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*” (DiN 345-346).

Reading Bakhtin’s discussion of authoritative discourse as only critique isn’t without reason because his classifications of authoritative discourse sound much like his later criticisms of monologic discourse, irresponsible voices coldly objective towards their respondents. However, reading more fixedly we discover that Bakhtin is not framing a blanket critique but attempting to illumine a complex communication event. As the word penetrates the temporal sphere it becomes the voice of conversation, an integral and important constituent of personality development. Bakhtin confirms this reality stating, “the importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous” (DiN 348).

Bakhtin’s position is different from claims that present authoritative discourse as stifling and inhibiting the growth of individuality and personal self-consciousness. Internally persuasive voices, even if they originate as authoritative and contrary can become essential supports for personal identity. In fact, Bakhtin notes that “in the history of literary of language, there is a struggle constantly being waged to overcome the official line with its tendency to distance itself from the zone of contact, a struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority” (DiN 345). Distancing authoritative discourse from the permeable borders of personhood means a diminishment in the productive capacity of verbal discourse. The further withdrawn from this boundary the less artistic speech becomes. For language this means “a weakening and degradation of capacity to generate metaphors, and discourse becomes more reified, more concrete, more filled with everyday elements and so forth” (DiN 345).

The fertile ground of discursive vitality from which unique personalities emerge can only be found on the borders of time and space, in association with potentially persuasive authoritative discourse. Of course, the spatial nature of the body must be continually recalled to understand the important influence the relational context has on an utterance and its construction. The boundaries of time tested in the event of a speech utterance must remain tensile in order to offer sufficient support. Favoring the past or present more severely than the present has noteworthy impacts on the flexibility of human discourse. Favoring the future or the past over the present in speech generation generates authoritative discourse which encourages imposition rather responsiveness. The spatial character of bodily existence operates as a conscious reminder that the spoken word moves discursively, and that the boundaries in play are axiological as well as temporal.

Whenever Bakhtin's own assertions verge on an authoritative concretization of temporal and axiological boundaries he resorts to the more elastic categories of aesthetics. Bakhtin's discussion exposes the delicateness of his subject matter and the importance of tenderness in addressivity. Any person having experienced objectification by the rigid nature of authoritative discourse would understandably express reservation about residing in proximity to its influence. Bakhtin establishes the temporal boundary as the liminal situation in which individuality is developed and unique personhood formed. Without these voices that invade and argue we are left to argue with ourselves, generating doubles that simultaneously justify and condemn us. Inward dialectical tension produces a pathology that Bakhtin characterizes as self-possession. The person who rejects the outside position, the one that provides necessary support whether sympathetic or

antagonistic, becomes possessed, possessed with their own personality and possessed with voices which are generated only from the inside becoming like the man of Dostoevsky's *The Double*, whose internal interlocutor eerily resembles a demon.

Viewing Bakhtin's discussion of authoritative discourse in light of his arguments in "Author and Hero" provides weight to the relationship he is struggling to articulate. The relationship between individuality and authority is contentious and tenuous. There are too many historical examples of authoritative ideology inhibiting the development of personalities and muting voices to make accepting Bakhtin's position easy. Historically, the spectrum of abuse in the deviant application of authority makes one question whether we can truly admit that it is best for a person to remain on the boundary of authoritative discourses that attempt to impose on those remaining in proximity both bodily and consciously. This is the recurring I/other dichotomy both internally and interpersonally. How can a person confront a voice of difference without fear of abuse? Likewise, how can a person prevail against the self-possession that Bakhtin warns is the inevitable consequence of attempts at self-authoring? According to Bakhtin, the answer lies in the immediate loving mediation of Christ's incarnate divinity.

Bakhtin's mediation of the self-other(s) dialectic with the Christian view of the Word as love may for some scholars complicate rather than clarify the transfer of his broader aesthetic claims into ethical and communicative recommendations. Integrating "Author and Hero" into current conversations regarding Bakhtin's aesthetics has the potential to explain the nature of this mediation. Bakhtin addresses any major objections systematically asserting that theoretical descriptions of this relationship can only occur in principle, qualifying his reliance on novel art to examine the idiosyncrasy of the God man

relationship. Bakhtin makes it clear why he eschews definitive statements about the personal character of the relationship and the importance of situating his position within aesthetics. He remains respectfully evasive when considering questions of the soul because the full mystery of divinity and humanity should not be understood intellectually but interpersonally (PDP 251-2).

Because it's vitality and is too various to theorize, even in his discussions of the novel Bakhtin avoids unqualified prescription as he surveys the dynamics of human personality. Describing how the author, acting on and in his creation, and the hero acts in something created, Bakhtin with esoteric elegance shows how the relationship, in principle, unfolds in reality. Bakhtin's critique of modern aesthetics makes it clear that the problems troubling the study of speech and language stem from a confusion of the author with the hero. The result of this misunderstanding is catastrophic, not only for aesthetics but for all human action. Without "outsideness," or an outside view there is no confidence in naming value, no measure between action and motion and no satisfying distinction between human will and social force. These are the boundaries Bakhtin tenaciously articulates in his entire body of work, boundaries established foundationally in "Author and Hero" Caryl Emerson argues along similar lines by framing Bakhtin's project with an account of his diseased body (Emerson "Next Hundred" 17). Emerson's conscious reflection on the correlation between Bakhtin's work and his own suffering represents an affinity with Bakhtin's discussion in its attempt to reconcile the dialectic between Bakhtin's authorship and her own.

Bakhtin first writings were attempts to articulate the relationship between the artist and his hero(s) as a first step towards understanding this complicated kind of

communication. However, against the thematic background of the body he develops an interpretive context delving deeper than the prudent concerns of disciplinary ethics. Bakhtin's original questions were primarily philosophical in nature and he pursued a problem that had long troubled thinkers, the difference between the "given," and original action (Emerson, "Next Hundred" 17). Even Emerson, one of Bakhtin's more astute readers demonstrates that to establish her own hermeneutic position with Bakhtin's text requires interpersonal mediation. Emerson's reconstitution of Bakhtin's ailing persona with descriptions of his life, provide her with the "outside" ethic whereby her authoritative claims are justified as original and additive.

In ethics, the matter of personality and authority begins with this distinction between the "given" and what one can define as a freely willed act. For Bakhtin this is primarily an aesthetic question with ethical implications. Bakhtin's original essay *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* is where the ethical implications of his later projects are best understood. In these first efforts Bakhtin attempts to correlate a pure unified truth with individuated human action (Walters 9). In the following work "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" Bakhtin advocates "aesthetic seeing" as the way to "consummate" or visualize the outward and inward constraints on personal action but before he can explain "aesthetic seeing" he confronts his philosophical contemporaries on the problem of "aesthetic reason" (TPA 18). Even in his earliest work Bakhtin turns to aesthetics to remedy the problems generated by coupling authority with ideology rather than personality.

Bakhtin shows in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* an early concern with the perception of truth and the ethical nature of human action. Bakhtin's critique of "content

ethics” and “formal ethics” points to a problem manifest in both types. Bakhtin faults formal ethics with erroneous descriptions of the ethical event in which the evidence provided for the possibility of human action takes little account of the real performative validity of an act and assumes the existence of an autonomous, non-contingent will. He explains:

The will-as-deed produces the law to which it submits, i.e., it dies, as an individual will in its own product. The will describes a circle; it shuts itself in, excluding the actual-individual and historical-self activity of the performed act. We are dealing here with the same illusion as in the case of theoretical philosophy: in the latter we have a self-activity of reason, which my historical and individually answerable self-activity has nothing in common, and for which this categorical self-activity is passively obligatory, while in the former the same happens with the will. All this distorts, at root, the actual moral ought, and does not provide any approach to the actuality of the act performed. (TPA 26)

Bakhtin’s concern centers around a persistent focus on inner thought and the theoretical, an interest in what occurs inwardly during an ethical act rather than the particular person interacting. For Bakhtin, “thinking theoretically, contemplating aesthetically” is the aspect the ethical event which cannot truly be perceived from the outside (TPA 28). The real lack of insight means that inward particularity must be abstracted and generalized. In this objective abstraction and generalization the individual ethicality of a human being is falsely consolidated. Even Kant’s categorical imperative, attempting to establish a universal norm by identifying patterns of cognitive particularity, deemphasizes the outward and particular nature of an act’s constitutive contingencies.

Inordinate emphasis on the inner nature of the act separates the ought from responsibility and attempts to create an active unity with transcendent truth which is then authoritatively re-imposed on a person. Bakhtin's is not a simple objection to perceived obligation, but to the disagreement between imposition from the outside and a personal compliance without agreement construed as true action. Bakhtin shows significant concern for the potential of human action for several reasons. Bakhtin opposes theoretical strategies first, because they ignore the important constraint of outward perception for evaluating the inner person and second, they do not take into account the multiplicity of voices present in every ethical event. Of course, Bakhtin asserts that this attempt by philosophy to generalize the inner person creates a false impression of the outside person furthering the pretense of singular determination in the ethical act.

How Bakhtin believed the ethical nature of an act could be determined remains positively ambiguous. In fact, there is little evidence in his writing that Bakhtin believed philosophical ethics sufficient for the task. For this reason, it is important to draw attention to Bakhtin's critique of the philosophical history of ethical theories. Bakhtin finds insufficient support for his own thinking in the philosophical tradition of ethics. He believed this tradition possessed significant deficiencies stating: "We have identified as unfounded and as essentially hopeless all attempts to orient a first philosophy in relation to the content/sense aspect or the objectified product taken in abstraction from the once-occurrent actual act/deed and its author" (TPA 27). In this statement we see Bakhtin turn from the traditional categories and language of the western philosophical tradition. In his effort to demonstrate the peculiarity of the ethical act Bakhtin finds that the approach

most commonly adopted in philosophical ethics does not provide the necessary language or context and is rather “hopeless” (TPA 27).

The hopelessness Bakhtin discovers in theoretical philosophy reappears as the impetus for his turn to aesthetics in “Author and Hero”. A consideration of ethics within the dynamic personality and authority has promise, whereas authority coupled with ideology promotes human purposelessness and fosters cultural tyranny. In either case, explanations for establishing the ought of the human act are terribly impecunious.

According to Bakhtin, “formal ethics provides no approach to a living act performed in the real world” and instead is the attempt to establish practically “one theoretical domain over all the others, and that only because it is a domain of the emptiest and least productive form of what is universal” (TPA 27). Bakhtin, in his turn to aesthetics is creating a different world for the emergence of self-conscious action, even if that world requires that the personality be contested as the immutable constituent of personhood. Bakhtin posits that it is only aesthetically permeable understanding of personhood makes possible the “once occurrent actual act/deed” (TPA 28). The relationship between the act and whole personhood can only be understood within the author-hero relationship, only in the vocal presence of authority. For Bakhtin “the author intonates every particular and every trait of his hero, every event of his life, every action he performs” (A&H 4).

Bakhtin’s essay “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” is a powerful response to the problems identified in many theoretical postulations about the nature of the human act and the possibility of human individuality. According to Bakhtin, our understanding of the former necessarily follows our view of the latter. Without a clear view of what constitutes authority, the potential for vivid and robust personality is fragile. The first

sentences of Bakhtin's "Author and Hero" state, "For a proper understanding of the author's architectonically stable and dynamically living relationship to the hero we must take into account both the essentially necessary foundation of that relationship and the individual characteristics that it assumes in particular authors" (A&H 4). Bakhtin's original claim betrays his commitment to the particularity of human action and the uniqueness of individual experience. And yet, it is the author's relationship that captures his attention as that stable yet dynamic gaze which contains both the answer to the stifling structures of authoritative discourse and the freedom of unique human personality.

Chapter 3: Incarnate Activity

Understanding Bakhtin's vision of authority in interpersonal interaction warrants a more detailed look at the personal nature of the author-hero relationship. Bakhtin accomplishes his inquiry in parallel with a discussion of aesthetics in the novel thus circumventing the calcifying exactitude accompanying theoretical explanation. Bakhtin thought art and life should be brought together into a relationship of "mutual liability," a theme evident in "Author and Hero" as well as in his other works (A&A 2). For Bakhtin, meaningful life must account for theories of art, and art must account for the humble ways of living. Bakhtin's original call for uniting art and life reminds us that when he writes about art, he is speaking about life. Likewise, when he speaks about the author-hero relationship, he is describing a real interpersonal interaction. As we study the author-hero relationship, we must consider the weightiness of this association integrating this perspective into our reading of Bakhtin's work.

Interpreting "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" as a serious consideration of reality means that the religious aspects of Bakhtin's theological tones, currently interpreted as only metaphoric, must be brought into focus as a true and purposeful description existence. Just as Bakhtin utilizes art to buttress his discussion of life, we must conclude that his integration of Christian theological elements theoretically intertwine with his artistic musings, reflecting his ideas regarding the reality of human discourse. This means that contemporary interpretations of Bakhtin's writing should take into account how this reality is transformed through the theological intonations of the Incarnation, Christ, and an eternal Word. Bakhtin's sustained interest in understanding ideological consciousness as Word incarnate, and his dependence on the Incarnation to

explain the temporal constraints of the human body as a symbolic value means that these tenants of Christian theology should be considered integral for discussions of Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse and human dialogue. These features of his thought are correspondingly crucial for understanding Bakhtin's notions of carnival, polyphony, heteroglossia, and the authoritative word (DiN pp. 331-366). Bakhtin supports his proposition with these points of orientation, which in our relationship with an authoritative word, enables the active distinction of an innerly persuasive word and enables unique ideological consciousness to emerge.²³ This position may prompt reservation when considering the implications of remaining potentially susceptible to an authoritative word that might silence individual voice. However, this reservation should not lead us to suspicion but should instead pique our curiosity. We must ask why Bakhtin dedicates so much of his discussion of the novel to articulating the character of the author-hero relationship, describing it both as a relationship of sovereignty and one in which the utterances of the hero's individual ideological consciousness are both distinguished and encouraged.

Bakhtin discovers in the novel not only the language for articulating the author-hero relationship, but also an art form that can seriously, yet freely, consider God's

²³ In his essay "Discourse in the Novel" (pp.345) Bakhtin writes of the general propensity for contemporary voices to free themselves from what would be considered an "authoritative" voice, its authority stemming from its historical quality as a voice of tradition, previous generations, cultural customs etc. Although this promotes a type of freedom in expression, it also means a "weakening and degradation of the capacity to generate metaphors" which means that discourse becomes "more reified, more concrete and more filled with everyday elements" (DiN 345). What is important to note is that Bakhtin does not consider the authoritative words as inherently threatening to individual voice but instead is characterized by that "other" position that necessarily exists for the emergence of ideological consciousness. In "Author and Hero," we "lack an emotional volitional approach to this outward image that could vivify it and include or incorporate it axiologically within the outward unity of the plastic-pictorial world" A&H 31). Of course one can emerge from the heteroglossic atmosphere of the social context but again, for this to be formulated into a personal voice with which a person can contend and disagree with, it must be concretized in the image of a person who is in many ways, an author, or at very least someone with "outside" authority (A&H 36, DiN 336).

relationship to humankind as well as the complex and dynamic character of interpersonal communication. In “Author and Hero” Bakhtin strives to reveal the “essentially necessary foundation of the author-hero relationship” (A&H 4). He claims that only by understanding this “necessary foundation” can better conceptualizations be made of the author-hero relationship manifest in particular relational types. In other words, in order to understand how authoring is done particularly, we must first establish a concrete and unified view of general aesthetics. Bakhtin’s preliminary introduction to the problem of general aesthetics responds to a reality in which a person can never be completely sympathize with another person. Any such attempts “stand in another person’s shoes” illuminates the constraints of embodied perspective even as it reveals refracted facets of an individual’s personality. Bakhtin states quite obviously that we are unable to relate to each other as whole human beings, and are rather selectively concerned with “those particular actions, which we are compelled to deal with in living our life and which are, in one way or another of special interest to us” (A&H 5). These real perceptual limitations of common interpersonal interaction are what Bakhtin attends to in his description of an aesthetic perspective that *can* see a person in their entirety, their outer appearance and the complexity of their inner person. An aesthetic perspective means reacting to “the whole of a hero as a human being, a reaction that assembles all of the cognitive-ethical determinations and valuations of the hero and consummates them in the form of a unitary and unique whole that is a concrete, intuitable whole, but also a whole of meaning” (A&H 5).

Bakhtin’s concern with seeing a person as a distinct meaningful whole demonstrates his conviction that the actual standpoint required to view someone this way

is impossible for ordinary human beings. In fact, it is only in art, as the author of a work that humans can nominally see both the inward and outward aspects of another person (hero) as well as the entirety of their historical life, each particular moment that represents both the complete person and its meaning for their personality.²⁴ This is a complicating premise in light of Bakhtin's previous calls for authors to unite the interests of art and life, consider their necessary relationship, and live out the implications of this liability. If Bakhtin's understanding of the author's true aesthetic perspective means being outside of life, it would seem he is describing a fictional situation, one that cannot actually be achieved except in artistic composition. This quandary reveals an important aspect of Bakhtin's development of the author-hero relationship. By directing his attention towards this interpersonal interaction, Bakhtin wishes to personalize aesthetic action but not as an activity that presumes timelessness or a sort of aesthetic transcendence. Timelessness and transcendence are only possible through abstraction, in leaving bodily experience through imagination and theory. To be truly liable and

²⁴ Here Bakhtin touches on the conundrum that he faces in much of "Author and Hero," which does not confute his premise that the author-hero relationship offers us a substantive analogy for understanding the relationship between God and mankind. We have so far seen that the hero's existence is wholly dependent on the author, and in fact this in art this is also true in art. But for the creative efforts of an author, characters cannot spring to life. Yet, the human author cannot fully know all of the constituent parts of a hero, what makes him or her whole as a person. An author in this sense must be divine if he is to truly be able to see all of his heroes as whole human beings, conceptualize them at every age, in every mood and their present age, at every moment simultaneously. and see all of their thoughts in reference to the whole of their life. This kind of sight, however, creates a chasm between the author and his heroes. How can the author relate to his heroes if he sees them all at once, not as they experience life as it moves fluidly yet momentarily in time? It would seem that this is an unresolved distance, and in one sense the religious experience of many throughout history testifies to it. Of course, through Bakhtin's use of the Incarnation, we see a totally different scenario in which God descends to earth and adopts a totally new kind of distance by accepting the limitation of bodily life. One in which a human is not separated by his superiority of being, but by the fact that he now has a body that separates him from all other humans as they are separated from each other. This example, as presented in "Author and Hero," is an author who, out of love for his heroes, limits himself, depending not on his omniscience to resolve the difference between human shortcoming and divine perfection but on the mediatory nature of the spoken, or in other words, vocalized word (Christ). This word can cross the boundary and resolve the polarity of bodily position while simultaneously reconciling and preserving divine/ and human positions in a new made harmony.

answerable one must unify art with life through answerable action, action modeled after the aesthetic interaction of the author with his hero. Instead of encouraging an ideal *outside* authorial stance, Bakhtin calls authors to incarnate action, to unify one's living of life with an eternal aesthetic viewpoint capable of being wholly outside yet intimately realized. This infinite aesthetic viewpoint is not an ideal position; it must be understood as an imitation of the ideal person represented in Bakhtin's description of Christ (A&H 56).

Bakhtin's reliance on Christ's cosmological position in his discussion of aesthetics shows he is particularly interested in the nature of original action as it occurs in the sight of a living and sovereign God. Bakhtin carefully distinguishes religious experience from aesthetic experience, and yet we see the role of Christ in Bakhtin's writing advance both the aesthetic and religious dimensions simultaneously (A&H 22, 146-149). Engaging the person of Christ in Bakhtin's thought answers important questions about his theory without foreclosing alternative readings that indirectly address the religious intonations of his work. The incarnate Christ appears in "Author and Hero" as a crucial figure, not only as a person who resolves the dilemma of ethical solipsism, but also one that mediates the distance between a truly *outside* (eternal, omniscient) aesthetic and the inner experience of personhood (A&H 56, 111). With this as our focus, the pressing question becomes: how does the author-hero relationship act as a principal for understanding the dialogic nature of interpersonal communication?

The parallels in Bakhtin's commentary on general aesthetics and the nature of real interpersonal relationships brought together in the theological intonations of Bakhtin's thought, exemplified in the person of Christ (A&H 115-16, 145). In fact, to read

Bakhtin's text otherwise requires us to question his sincerity, imbuing an intellectual naiveté to his demonstrably genuine concern for the position of the hero in the text. Bakhtin is speaking of true realities when he describes humanity's loss of the necessary creative principal both concealed yet also revealed in the author-hero relationship. According to Bakhtin, the loss of this guiding principal results in an existential instability where "we ourselves fall under the domination of the contingent, with the result that we lose ourselves and we lose the stable determinateness of the world as well" (A&H 5). It is in this realm of instability where acknowledging tone and character of the author's relationship to the hero becomes both essential and necessary.

The author-hero relationship as Bakhtin's primary point of entry refutes the tendency towards an "authoritative word" critiquing any position that scorns descent into the murkiness of human speech. Bakhtin may sound post-modern by characterizing humanity's existential crisis as inherently unstable, but he is not breaking theoretical ground for constructing a communicative ethic. Instead, Bakhtin eschews ethics to more aptly position himself as a voice of authority with whom we must reckon.

The Hero

Bakhtin's pursuit of the principle appeal in the author-hero relationship illustrates that his questions regarding meaning correlate directly with the act of human being (A&H 115). Bakhtin argues that aesthetic events require a situation of hierarchy, or least an author[ity] relating to a hero.²⁵ The hero as meaningful subject does not exist without the creative contemplation of an author, nor is the author-hero relationship possible

²⁵ David Patterson recognizes a similar truth in his study of the "spirit of literature" by attempting to "establish a dialogical presence answering not only to these thinkers but to the witness that stands above all human encounter" (Patterson ix). According to Patterson, the "spirit" in literature gives aesthetic form to the artistic event of human dialogue.

without this “noncoinciding” interaction (A&H 22). Bakhtin carefully differentiates the religious experience from the aesthetic distinguishing them by identifying the possibly present participants in each communicative event. In religious speech (prayer, worship, ritual), the human consciousness is encompassed in God. In the aesthetic, there are a minimum of two interactive consciousnesses, which Bakhtin defines as the author and the hero. If, as Bakhtin says, these two consciousnesses become “coincidental,” the event takes on an ethical tone rather than an aesthetic one. When the relationship becomes a task set forward for the person’s interacting, the aesthetic is reduced to an ethic. Without excluding the possibility of other types of interactivity, Bakhtin always specifies between the aesthetic and other types of human interrelationship. Bakhtin articulates the difference in how human relationships and their resulting dialogues become intoned by the presence and nature of the participants involved. The aesthetic event does not exclude events of an ethical or theoretical nature, but rather encompasses them. The aesthetic event contains both the freedom of theory and the liability of the ethical ought. The aesthetic event is the only kind of event in which the participants are viewed and related to as whole persons, people of unique character each incarnating distinct and valuable perspectives. This union of the aesthetic with the ought is accomplished through Bakhtin’s integration of Christ’s incarnation.

Bakhtin achieves a defense of answerable action related to his theological proposition through his discussion of personality in the novel. We must presume that Bakhtin’s interest in art is not an attempt to bypass the practical tensions of the spiritual, theological, and ethical, but rather to accomplishment both projects simultaneously, to

show how both God and art, when actively brought down into human life, illuminate the mystery and deity implicated in the dialogical Word.

Bakhtin's suggestion is provocative because it means that his description of the author-hero relationship is not simply literary criticism. In principle, the author-hero relationship articulates how God, as an omniscient and omnipotent author, can descend into his work(s) as a non-coincidental personality that simultaneously encourages independent heroes to participate in that work. The tone of this claim may in fact "verge on the theological" but only insofar as Bakhtin's discussions extend beyond immanent explanations of meaning and liability in human action (Morson & Emerson 61). This is the essential question of Bakhtin's "Author and Hero." His deep concern for individual, aesthetic, and answerable action as well as the fragility of human personality means he must avoid both the propositional language of philosophy and the linguistic formalism so characteristic of the academic spheres he often inhabits (Emerson 87). Bakhtin argues for the Word understood as infinite and eternal, thereby rendering theoretical methods of analysis ineffectual (PDP 300). Only in the merciful sphere of art can he defend both the importance of answerable action and the free and eternal movement of a divine Word.

Although Sergei Bocharov describes a failing Bakhtin as regretful of his prevarications regarding the existence of God and the role of the church²⁶, we must not assume that Bakhtin, having experienced more political, religious, and ideological freedom, would have neglected art and literature to write solely about humanity's relationship with God. In fact, Bocharov's conversations indicate that Dostoevsky had become something of an example to Bakhtin of what an author should seek to do through

²⁶ See Bocharov, Sergei. *Conversations with Bakhtin*. *PMLA* 109.5 1994: 1009-10024.

his art, to keep searching without attempting to provide a final or conclusive word (Bocharov 1012).

In this way, the author-hero relationship in Bakhtin's thought operates much like a Christian parable, as a revealing analogy and formal constraint, keeping both the author and his reader from having the final say (Patterson 15). The figurative particularity of the author-hero relationship is as important as its aesthetic signification of a unified principal of creative and participative activity²⁷. We would do well to acknowledge that what remains concealed in the author-hero relationship as well as what it discloses is pivotal for understanding Bakhtin's entire body of work. The unity between art and life is in "the unity of my answerability," in one's willingness to dialogically contend with Bakhtin as an author, therefore uniting his word with life and transforming it into a call for original and answerable action (A&A 1).

The subjective instability in the aesthetic categories of personality, meaning, and truth make Christ an apt companion, or more appropriately, an author-contemplator for heroes that suffer from "inner-purposelessness" (A&H 115). In the section entitled "Rhythm" in "Author and Hero," Bakhtin explores the self-consciousness of personhood, demonstrating the essential human need to be perceived aesthetically, from outside of one's own life. According to Bakhtin, "I am not the hero of my own life," meaning that my own personhood cannot be present for me as something with distinguishable

²⁷ In Paul Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor*, he discusses a similar linkage between analogy and divine signification highlighting the importance of metaphor in this relationship, as speculative philosophical discourse is insufficient for the task of explaining how the infinitely divine relates to human reality (see pp. 322-330). The attempt of philosophical discourse to exclude the poetic as a means of understanding this dynamic is precisely what Bakhtin works to remedy in his call for art and life to be brought together. The problem is understood not in intellectual terms but in interpersonal discourse. As metaphors "transfer from the proper sense to the figurative sense," attributes from one subject to another, so we can see how Bakhtin works in poetic language to bridge the distance between aesthetics and theology to human reality providing an explanation for both individual consciousness and original creative activity (Ricoeur 331).

objective significance (A&H 112). I cannot author my own life because all of that which is available to me, that which gives my life coherency and meaningful form is situated outside; “inner movement, inner directedness, and inner experience are, likewise, devoid of valid determinateness” (A&H 112). The understanding of life as something whole, valuable, and meaningful is only realized through the outside viewpoint of another person. For any person to understand their life as meaningful, they must have an “essential point of support in meaning outside the context of my own life—a living creative and hence, rightful point of support” (A&H 113). According to Bakhtin, this outside perspective must be of special character because it must overcome the fact that there is no “given that is positive, no present-on-hand that is intrinsically valuable” to understand life as meaningful (A&H 114). Bakhtin speaks of this value deficiency specifically in the case of personal moral reflection, extending it to epistemological and psychological perspectives that often serve as external viewpoints for validating inner experience. However, the only perspective that Bakhtin acknowledges as having the power to turn “inner purposelessness” into “inner determinateness,” is a loving perspective, “regardless of meaning whatsoever” (A&H 115). This means that the outside viewpoint that Bakhtin envisions must be subjective in nature, interpersonal, and answerable, or in other words, incarnate. The eyes that see and confirm my existence must be wholly outside myself, yet close by, because, “I cannot love myself as I love the other, in an unmediated way” (A&H 48).

Bakhtin situates meaning, personhood, and truth firmly within the scope of human interactivity, making the integration of Christ as the real personification of truth and love a compelling proposition for how human personality can be both eternal and yet

confirmed aesthetically in immanent interpersonal interaction. Christ as God incarnate acts as a “noncoinciding consciousness” subjectively mediating and sustaining the tenuous field of dialogic communication. How this occurs inwardly, or with the “inner man” we must see as described by Bakhtin, “in relation to verbal art” (A&H 92).

Authoring and Heroic Activity

Bakhtin utilizes the concept of rhythm to describe the experience of inward life. Inward life is experienced not as an object of experience but as a fluid movement indistinguishable as a series of discrete moments.²⁸ Inner life, in this sense, is not a series of meaningful episodes but rather a running together of uninterrupted experience. A person can attempt to halt this flow by “stepping outside,” epistemologically, psychologically²⁹ and even in moral self-reflection, but Bakhtin finds that “such temporal outsideness with respect to experience is not enough to accomplish an aesthetically cherishing determination and forming of that experience” (A&H 116). This state of inner experience is what provokes Bakhtin to turn outwards. Not to an outside position of objective validity, but one of subjective affection. Bakhtin finds that this perspective must “go beyond the bounds of the whole given experience, beyond the bounds of the whole that gives meaning to particular experiences, that is, beyond the bounds of the given experiencing soul” (A&H 116).

²⁸ Thomas deZengotita has argued that media saturation has created an environment in which the fluidity of experience inhibits our ability to distinguish significant moments in time. In light of what Bakhtin claims here it might be said that technology does not create this circumstance but simply reveals it as a self-evident truth about self-experience. The fluidity of self-experience prevents us from being able to distinguish on our own what is an important moment. It is only the viewpoints of other people that give us a framework from climbing out of “inner purposelessness” into a place in which we can find direction and pinpoint moments in a life that are both memorable and meaningful. The alternative corroborated by deZengotita is a numbness or stupidity that verges on the insane.

²⁹ A more likely way that we attempt to achieve this outside perspective in contemporary American society is through technologically enhanced record keeping activities like photography, film, and social media sites that catalogue life experience.

The rhythmic experience of inner life carries with it the ought of future expectation, what a person becomes rather than what a person *is* in a present moment of self-experience. According to Bakhtin, the ought-to-be requires an aesthetic justification; it must be confirmed from the outside because life always moves towards “new meaning” (A&H 122). This ought-to-be is felt in the experience of self-consciousness, and is the compelling feature of life experience relative to meaning. According to Bakhtin, the experience of the future is “hostility” towards oneself and towards the present; the future “stands over against me, over against my whole temporality (everything that is already present in me), is not a future in the sense of being a temporal continuation of *the same life*, but in the sense of being a constant possibility, a constant need to transform my life *formally*, to put new meaning into my life” (A&H 122).

Overcoming the uninterrupted fluidity of self-experience with something other than loving intervention of an outside viewpoint results in self-deception. Instead of remaining within one’s given inner self-experience, we attempt to step outside of life and create a holistic meaning for life independent of others. According to Bakhtin, this debilitating pretense is so damaging that he compares it to sin³⁰, a damaging of the soul signaling, not only an existential and psychological degeneration, but a spiritual one as well (A&H 112). Ruth Coates suggests that this “fallenness of being” is evident in Bakhtin’s earliest work, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, and in her discussion Bakhtin’s description of a “damaged universe” represents the Christian idea of “The Fall” (Coates

³⁰ In this section of “Author and Hero,” (pp. 112-132) Bakhtin notes several times how the activity of self justification is very much like sin, a fall from community with meaning and an inability to see or understand one’s purposeful relationship to life. Just as later Bakhtin will argue that death is a consummating event in a person’s life, so also the acknowledgement of one’s own potential death works in concert with the activity of new life which is to find meaning of one’s life in its “heroic” expression in the life of another.

30). Here Coate's alludes to Bakhtin's use of the word "pretender" as a fallen person, one who ignores his obligation to unify being in responsible action thereby perpetuating "the split between the world of endless theoretical possibility and the world of historical reality" (Coates 31). We see a similar theme functioning in Bakhtin's discussion of the author-hero relationship except that here his attention is focused on the unity of a person's "ought to be" unifying "the temporal and spatial distance separating my interior being from the meaning and object-to-be-achieved" (A&H 124). If we agree with Bialostosky's suggestion that *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* is Bakhtin's rough draft for "Author and Hero," we are less than surprised to find a more developed discussion of how the "Fall" in Bakhtin's articulation of the author-hero relationship. The Fall in Christianity requires that human's be reconciled to God through Christ, in literature the hero reconciled to the author. Through this analogy Bakhtin clearly attempts to explicate how a person can be reconciled with his own divided self, how the "inner self contradiction of being" can be fulfilled as a meaningful and purposive whole (A&H 124).

The problem of the divided self follows in the tradition of Augustine's *Confessions*.³¹ Bakhtin accepts Augustine's presupposition that the unity of being enabling purposeful and determined activity is not immediately at hand. The only self-activity that can give a "self-accounting" is the religious event of "anticipating through faith my justification in God," but this position cannot continuously be maintained within the experience of ordinary life (A&H 145). Besides the repentant posture of "confessional self-accounting," the givenness of a life, that which is most readily apparent as daily experience, represents only negative evaluation; ordinary self-experience negates the possibility of who I believe I am. Bakhtin writes, "everything

³¹ A&H pp. 145

positive in this unity belongs solely to that which is given to me as a task,” meaning what I am incomplete, and the completion for which I yearn, the understanding of my life as lived from the vantage point of a wholly unified person, is experientially unavailable as a resource for self-understanding (A&H 127). For Bakhtin, a person can artificially accomplish self-understanding by conceiving of their life as a task yet to be achieved, as a future event.³² However, the future is also unavailable and not something we have at hand. Bakhtin reaffirms this difficult truth, stating “the real center of gravity of my own self determination is located solely in the future” and compounds the uncertainty of temporal existence by locating that which collects not only our life, but our sense of meaning and personhood just out of reach in the moment beyond immediate self experience (A&H 127). Bakhtin describes this striving as a kind of hopefulness, not a hopefulness of positive expectation but one of “rightful folly or insanity” (A&H 127).

Bakhtin suggests that our cognizance of this “insanity” prompts two very different responses. Out of shame, a person engages in prideful self-possession and “believes insanely and inexpressibly in my own non-coincidence with the “inner givenness of myself” in an attempt to “count and add up all of myself, saying: this is *all* of me, there is *nothing more* anywhere else or in anything else; I already exist in full” (A&H 127). Alternatively, one loses all sense of unique personhood and attempts to become whole by finding “refuge in another and to assemble—out of the *other*—the scattered pieces of my own givenness, in order to produce from them a parasitically consummated unity in the

³² In letter fifteen of his book *Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis writing as the voice of a tempting demon describes a similar scenario in which human beings, who should instead be concerned with the present and eternity, are encouraged to focus on the future which best produces sinful anxiety and a general dissatisfaction with one’s life.

others soul using the others resources. Thus, the spirit breaks up the soul from within itself” (A&H 126).³³

Bakhtin finds that neither of these typical responses can be the means through which we truly discover and enjoy whole personhood. For Bakhtin, the primary deficiency in both of these approaches is their exclusive temporality³⁴ because “a temporally consummated life is a life without hope from the standpoint of meaning” (A&H 127). Both of these attempts at self-collection, one an act of individualistic hubris and the other self-negation, are bound by temporality and therefore cannot provide that essential outside viewpoint that principally unites the meaning of my life to the experience and activity of living it. The experience of future orientation and our inability to situate ourselves within the infinite expanse of possibility creates this hopeful insanity. Bakhtin reiterates this truth in the following passage, resolving that it is only from an outside position that this problem of personality or self-dispersion finds unification. He writes:

I cannot, axiologically, fit my whole life into time—I cannot justify it and consummate it in full within the dimension of time. A temporally consummated life is a life without hope from the standpoint of meaning that keeps it in motion.

From within itself, such a life is hopeless; it is only from the outside that a

³³ There is an interesting parallel here between what Bakhtin describes and what Sherry Turkle argues in her recent book, *Alone Together*. Turkle posits that contemporary forms of mediated communication activity strive for connection, but not conversation. Instead we find that the words we receive from other people are only fragments of a conversation, but do not add up to the complete experience of interaction with others in language. What we are left with is only parts and pieces of a person’s speech and resort to collecting these as a means of generating a sense of selfhood and personality. She reiterates this point by emphasizing a growing dissatisfaction with true solitude, because it is in these moments that we are required to “collect ourselves.”

³⁴ See Troup, Calvin L. *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine’s Confessions*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. Print. p. 169

cherishing justification may be bestowed on it—regardless of unattained meaning.
(A&H 127)

Here we see that it is only through the loving justification of another person that I orient myself in the rhythmic fluidity of self-experience. Bakhtin sees this most clearly in the deathbed confession, in which “I turn to the outside of myself and surrender myself to the mercy of *the other*” (A&H 128).

Bakhtin’s best description of the event of self-consummation emerges when he shifts his attention from the person striving for wholeness to describe how the person who makes this a reality for another. By looking at and cherishing another I objectify the infinite nature of another’s self experience and see him as whole. Not only does my gaze consider the body complete and concretely objective, I as a contemplator place the person contemplated in a steadily present temporal context relative to his own position. I can see the outer flesh of the other hero’s body as an object signifying every one of his life events, the constituent parts of his personhood (inner flesh) in perspective as a concrete and meaningful whole. This “cherishing contemplation” is the act by which the desire for new birth, (being an active human subject rather than a passive static object) the phenomenon that the contemplating author experiences in the hopefulness of his own life-as-task, is temporally realized by the other. It is only in relationship with another person, he with outside authority and I as his hero, can this also occur for myself because the form of this aesthetic event is “the result of the interaction between the hero and the author” (A&H 84).

Bakhtin’s emphasis on the interpersonal nature of this interaction demonstrates his insistence that the event of consolidating one’s person into a meaningful whole, or a

complete personality, is not a transcendent event or an escape from temporality. A person can attempt to voyeuristically escape reality by imagining the experience of another person's life, but this is neither an answerable act nor loving contemplation. Bakhtin argues that it is only "in the flesh" that one can consummate another, because it is only from within oneself that a person can engage in answerable action. It is only through this relationship with others that a person can orient himself in a determined and purposeful way. This is evident in Bakhtin's description of our hopeful desire for new birth. Through the sympathetic recognition of his inability to consummate himself as whole, a person recognizes this same "insanity of not coinciding" in others (A&H 128). Only by remaining within my own lived experience, remaining outside another and *in my own flesh* can I, like an author, provide the viewpoint necessary to meaningfully objectify and consummate another's inwardly experienced life (A&H 84). Bakhtin even goes so far as to claim that "even God had to incarnate himself in order to bestow mercy, to suffer, to *forgive*- had to descend, as it were, from the abstract standpoint of justice" to engage humanity interpersonally, from a particular bodily position (A&H 129).

This is a crucial passage for understanding how Bakhtin envisions incarnation as exemplary for how aesthetic meaning provides a stable context for orienting personhood. It is only through another's loving incarnate act, not through abstract theory or ideology that we can emerge from the fluidity of our own self-experience into an articulate world as a whole and consummate person. This is where Bakhtin's description of the act of authoring emphasizes the Incarnation and Christ as important elements for understanding the author-hero relationship.

The very real presence of Christ as a human person demonstrates Bakhtin's turn away from ideological frameworks instead emphasizing the incarnate nature of human being. Bakhtin's discussion of authoring follows his primary argument in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, where he critiques the inability of abstract ethics and aesthetics to meaningfully answer the question of human sympathy and answerable action. Here Christ serves as both a demonstration of Bakhtin's claims as well as a genuinely outside position immediately personal in the historical reality of Christ's humanity. Christ's humiliation signifies the humility necessary for overcoming the hopeful insanity of existence. By placing myself at the mercy of another's word, because this word is another's word and not my own, I am reborn, experiencing a new meaningful life as whole person. It is for this reason that Bakhtin describes one's own word taking on the tone of "prayer and penitence" (A&H 145). I desperately need the gift of another person's word because "pure solitary self-accounting is impossible" (A&H 144).

The Third Person and Authoring

Bakhtin's turn to Christ as the principle example of what might be described as the self-experience of sympathetic humility, gracefully illustrates an important simultaneity in his thinking. Bakhtin's historical survey of intellectual attitudes toward the body position Christ as prime example of a seemingly impossible unity, a "synthesis of unique depth" (A&H 57). He writes:

[In Christ] the synthesis of ethical solipsism (man's infinite severity towards himself, i.e. immaculately pure relationship to oneself) with *ethical-aesthetic kindness* toward the other. For the first time there appeared an infinitely deepened *I-for-myself*—not a cold *I-for-myself*, but one of boundless kindness toward the

other; and *I-for-myself* that renders full justice to the other as such, disclosing and affirming the other's axiological distinctiveness in all its fullness (A&H 56).

Bakhtin's description of Christ includes a double paradox. First, divinity relating personally and temporally and second the willing sacrifice of the sovereign position. Bakhtin elsewhere demonstrates that personhood exists between the abyss of self-negation and a self-imposed "interpersonal colonization," but here we witness a synthesis of both positions in the single person of Jesus Christ (Arnett, Fritz & Holba 124). According to Bakhtin, Christ serves as principal example, not only as a synthesis of the ethical dilemma (being for myself while simultaneously being for others) but also the dilemma of preserving identity in the act of self-compromising sympathy. Even though I submit to the mercy of others, the person of Christ offers the possibility of relationship with an outside viewpoint dialogically preserving and stabilizing personhood both temporally and eternally.

Michel Foucault captures this same idea in his analysis of letters between early Christians arguing that these texts operated as an outside position that ordered the soul of the author and reader enabling a much desired rebirth: "a matter of dislodging the hidden impulses from the inner recesses of the soul, thus enabling oneself to break free from them" (Foucault 212). Foucault posits that the interaction with the text was akin to speaking to a present person, provoking and promoting the reformation of both inner spirit and outward action.

Patterson furthers this theme in Bakhtin's work by presenting the carnival described in Bakhtin's *Rabelais* as the condition of the world into which the Word, Jesus Christ, descended. The Incarnation becomes a principle pattern for authoring and

answerable action. Patterson identifies authoring as facilitating “rebirth.” Much like writing is a formally creative act, so also answerable action makes something new by bringing formal change to dispersive and decentered persons. Humanity’s ability to create in this way is not simply a matter of personal expression or spiritual inspiration. It is substantially dependent on a “profound belief in a higher truth” and a “responsibility to the Creator, who is the source of meaning (Patterson 28). Patterson makes an important discovery in Bakhtin’s early descriptions of the author in “Author and Hero.” It is not enough to understand the author-hero relationship as outlining the relationship between self and other but must be considered in light of the presence of a third person in the interaction. This third person is *the* author, “the author as creator will help us gain insight into the author-as-person, and only after that will the author-person’s comments about his creative activity acquire illuminating and complementary significance” (A&H 8).

The author-hero relationship is not simply a description of the self- other dialectic. If this were the case, the ethical nature of this relationship would be realized in Bakhtin’s personalization of general aesthetics introducing the author-hero dynamic as a primary point of orientation. Instead Bakhtin indicates that interaction between self and other must be justified by a third person that objectifies and gives meaning to the interaction of the first two persons (A&H 74-75). In the text of human utterances, Bakhtin locates the interaction of not two, but three personalities. To speak of this generally Bakhtin must turn to the relationship in its principle form.

Bakhtin’s discovery of the third person appears early on in “Author and Hero,” but it is not fully articulated until the appearance of the term “super-addressee” in Bakhtin’s later essay, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” published in English in the

collection *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Problem of the Text). What the super-addressee signifies is the substantive and constitutive role of the third person making meaning as it relates to human discourse and the directedness of the spoken word. Instead of the author-hero functioning dialectically in Bakhtin's work, we have the author-creator, the author-person, and the hero distinguished as a community connected by dialogic activity. Bakhtin makes it clear, however, that before we can understand the role of the author-person, we must first understand the "essentially necessary, comprehensive, creative reaction of the author to the hero, only when we have understood the principle of seeing the hero that engenders the hero as a determinate whole" (A&H 8).

From a purely immanent perspective, seeing the hero from outside the plane of his own experience is to see him in relationship with his biographical or sociological situation. Without a third person as the author-creator valuing and justifying the interaction between two people, meaning is localized on the temporal plane. This in turn requires some sort of intellectual or psychological abstraction because there is little else available to understand and conceptualize a human life as a meaningful whole. Without this wholly outside (timeless) viewpoint, we characterize personality as either a self-possessed essential characteristic or an accumulation of coincident circumstances while remaining ignorant of "the form of experiencing it within the whole of life and the world" (A&H 9).

Immanent approaches to understanding the creative action of a person results in "aesthetic confutation," the confusion of an author with his creation, or the author as constituent of his creation (A&H 10). From this standpoint, the author as person is indistinguishable from the created *context* of their life; they are not an individual but a

conglomerate of particular historical circumstances, circumstances with which they do not actively interact. In order to avoid this kind of interpersonal schematization, Bakhtin calls for a more genuine understanding of the author-hero relationship as principal for understanding how authors might relate to heroes in particular, how a person can really have authority over others without having the final word.

Bakhtin does not presume to fully describe the character of the author-creator from whom all discourse is given meaning because this is akin to claiming a full understanding of the person of God and his particular relationship with every human he speaks to. He does, however, claim that the image of the author-creator is imprinted on the hero, and that a study of the speech utterance of the hero is the means by which we can discern the fundamental nature of the creative act as a distinctive feature of the author-hero relationship. Bakhtin likens this to the act of writing or the work of an artist when he says “the process of creation is altogether *in* the product created, and the artist has nothing left to do but to refer us to the work produced” and “he put his whole essential necessary relationship to the hero into the image of the hero” (A&H 7). In fact, our best glimpse of the author’s relationship to his hero is seen in his interaction with him as he gains independence from him; “in the structure of the active vision of the a hero as a definite whole, in the structure of his image, in the rhythm disclosing him, in the structure of intonating, and in the selection of meaning bearing features” (A&H 8).

Bakhtin’s argument for scrutinizing the speech utterance functions as the way to discern the nature of the author-hero relationship and to understand the creative and answerable principle that underlies the act of authoring. Without a clear understanding of this principle relationship and a principle of evaluation to bring meaningful order to the

centrifugal and centripetal flux of discursive linguistic practice, human speech acts cannot create personhood and or structure human interaction (A&H 8). Even though Bakhtin's evasiveness in this regard has been characterized as an apophatic theology, it can also be seen as a fundamental commitment to his vision of an incarnate Word (Poole 151). The incarnate Word intones the author-hero relationship as a highly personal one, one that occurs on the "plane of meaning" rather than in some ideal or abstract realm (A&H 6). Bakhtin calls this an "incarnation of meaning in existence," which stands in opposition to explanations which would prefer a transcendental or even a theologically established connection between the divinity of the author and the humanity of his hero (A&H 10). Rendering this relationship as one that happens in a very real and human world reaffirms Bakhtin's dependence on incarnation as a pivotal principal in his description of the author-hero relationship. By including the divine person of Christ, Bakhtin colors the author-hero relationship as one of loving contemplation. Bakhtin justifies a distinctly outside position for the author writing, "the author occupies an intently maintained position *outside* the hero with respect to every constituent feature of the hero—a position *outside* the hero with respect to time, space, value and meaning" (A&H 14).

Emerson and others identify the outside position of the author as an important feature of Bakhtin's aesthetics. His understanding of the author, especially the analogy drawn between the author hero and the God man relationship bring art closer to questions of human existence with renewed gravity. These affirmations back Bakhtin's work as not only criticism, but also claims of a cosmic order. It is only from the completely outside position, outside of time, space, meaning, and value that the author can take a holistic

perspective towards the hero. Through this absolute outside position, the author accomplishes three important things that Bakhtin believes are essential to creating individual unique and stable personalities. First, the author-creator's position means the author can "collect" the constituent moments of a hero's life into a meaningful whole and understand the hero comprehensively and completely without bias towards a particular moment or place in the hero's life. In this "collection," the author is also able to "justify and consummate the hero independently of meaning" or in other words, the author is able to interpret the life of the hero as more than the historical circumstance of his life and imbue value to the hero's life regardless of "the outcome and success of the hero's own forward-directed life" (A&H 14). The author's position outside of the plane of meaning is outside human existence but also beyond the time space continuum, in Bakhtin's own words, "the unitary and unique event of being" (A&H 14). This interest in a position of timelessness is not one that is peculiar to Bakhtin's discussion of the author-hero relationship, but one that runs through much his discussion of the Chronotope in the novel and later in "Author and Hero" in his critique of individualism.

Bakhtin's use of the author-creator's "justification and consummation" of the hero is important imagery that resonates with the salient theme of love characterizing the author's relationship with his hero. The second important feature of the author's relationship to his hero is his ability to stabilize the hero as he relates to the infinite, both the "inner infinity" of man as well as his relationship to the infinite physical universe. The author-creator's stable position as one which is both constant and personal (in the figure of Jesus Christ) means that the author provides an important point of orientation for the hero so that the hero is "removed from the open unitary and unique event of

being” enabling the author-person to “stand beside the author—as the author’s partner in the event of lived life” (A&H 14). This position of the author as outside yet also in relationship with the hero means that the author has a unique power to relate to the hero and insuring stability of existence without foreclosing the opportunity for free action. It also signals a relationship of special significance by which the author:

...places the hero beyond mutual surety, collective liability, and solidary responsibility and gives birth to him as a new human being on a new plane of existence—a plane of existence where the hero himself is incapable of being born for himself through his own power; or in other words, it invests or embodies the hero in that new flesh which is not essential and does not exist for the hero himself (A&H 14).

The possibility of new meaning in life is granted by the author-creator’s position outside the plane of meaning. The hero, as he lives with the contingencies of both time and space is able to find a stable point of orientation that not only ensures his position cosmically. However, the author also comes close in order to give the hero a relative point of orientation situating him in the present without closing off the freedom of willful life. According to Bakhtin, the distance of the outside position is not the author’s purposeful estrangement but instead a “loving removal” of the author from the “field of the hero’s life” (A&H 14-15).

The author-creator as a point of personal orientation is a significant feature of Bakhtin’s understanding of the hero’s position not only with others or with the author, but also his position towards himself. Bakhtin concurs with Augustine’s description of

inner man as an infinite abyss³⁵, who is therefore unable to provide a point of orientation for himself and cannot independently develop a consistent directedness of life or a position towards others. Without the position of the author-creator that exists outside the plane of meaning, there is the ever-present fear of insanity, an insanity that arises from the inability of hero providing self-sufficient points of orientation for his own life (A&H 128). Bakhtin locates this insanity in the hero's desire to find a future point of orientation with which to orient all present action. Even future points of orientation are unstable because they are like the present, contingent and immanent without the assuredness that the author-creator as an immovable yet immediate person offers the hero.

Bakhtin's later inquires into the phenomenon of the "super-addressee" and "loophole addressees" shows the human proclivity to locate artificial points of orientation to steady the contingency of life experience and to justify a self-possessed position of individual imperialism (PoT 126). In Bakhtin's description of this "insane hope" exhibited in death we see the author-hero relationship achieve important clarity as an analogy for God's relationship with mankind. He writes:

This insanity of faith and hope remains the last word of my life: from within myself in relation to my own givenness—only prayer and penitence are possible, that is, my givenness ends in a state of indigence (the last thing it can do is—supplicate and repent; God's last word descending upon us is—salvation or condemnation). My own last word is devoid of any consummating, any positively

³⁵ "Do I then love in another man what I would hate to be myself, when I too am a man? A human being is an immense abyss, but you, Lord, keep count even of his hairs, †58 and not one of them is lost in you; yet even his hairs are easier to number than the affections and movements of his heart" (St. Augustine *Confessions* Book IV)..

founding energies; it is aesthetically unproductive. In my last word, I turn to the outside of myself and surrender myself to the *mercy* of the other (A&H 128).

God, as author-creator, takes a position outside of his creation as a way for those created to understand the meaning of interpersonal relationship dialogically. This is not simply a theological statement but Bakhtin's demonstration of what the other does for us on the immanent plane of meaning. The other hears and receives my word. It is not only God as an omnipotent author that stands against us and assists us in achieving our own sense of personhood. Instead, humans in God's authorial image do this for others. Bakhtin writes, "what the other rightfully negates in himself, I rightfully affirm and preserve in him and in so doing, I give birth to his soul on a new axiological plane of being" (A&H 129). What Bakhtin suggests here is that not only God, but also other people provide the personal character to an essential outside supporting position necessary for a stable and meaningful personhood. This is clearly demonstrated in his description of Christ and his impact not only on history but also on our understanding of how human discourse creates and then distinguishes us from the infinite background of aesthetic value.

Personhood or personality is not a task to be individually undertaken. On the contrary, personhood means relying substantially on the words of others, be they divine, human, or both for achieving merciful consummation. Bakhtin's position is not one that ensures or grants people primary ownership of who they are or who they might become. Instead he emphasizes that it is to whom we turn outside of ourselves and to whose words we listen that will determine the character and form of our lives.

Self-authoring is a dubious if not self-deceptive proposition, one that Bakhtin envisions as wholly unstable for producing the answerable action, the event of orientation for others. We require more than “mutual surety, collective liability, and solidary responsibility” (A&H 14). We cannot truly depend on others that live similarly temporal lives to provide the necessary constancy for coherent personhood. We must have a person truly outside the sphere of human meaning and discourse that can preserve what is both real and true in the heteroglossic cacophony of human diversity. Bakhtin turns to the divine yet human person of Christ to exemplify the importance of his claim providing a principle example of how this can actually be achieved. If God is the one who can truly justify human beings, then the Christian belief that He seeks to provide a immediate yet outside support of my inwardly experienced life in the person of Christ is both promising and confirming. This demands that we inquire into our modes of interpersonal communication, our participation with this Word among us. We must ask if the intonation of our words conveys “loving contemplation,” embracing those around us with heroic form.

Chapter 4: The Aesthetic Act of Authoring

The enigmatic positioning of Christ as principal in Bakhtin's theory of dialogue means that temporality and the fleshly³⁶ nature of personhood factor decisively in his understanding of the speech utterance and human subjectivity. We have discussed the appearance of Jesus Christ in "Author and Hero" in figural and theoretical categories but not yet temporally. The majority of Bakhtin scholars have not yet carefully responded to the implications of Christ's presence in "Author and Hero" as more than an ideal metaphor. This present attempt would fail to speak a new word regarding the perplexity of human communication if we were to proceed without specifically inquiring into the presence of Jesus Christ in Bakhtin's concept of incarnate meaning, and Christ's special role in establishing and supporting the graceful freedom from which human beings speak.

In "Author and Hero" Christ appears as *the* ideal person unifying word with flesh [both inner and outer] and truth with subjectivity (A&H 56). With several notable exceptions³⁷, the authoritative scholarly voices conversing about Bakhtin's religious sentiments have decided either purposefully or tacitly, that the appearance of Christ is

³⁶ Bakhtin's use of "flesh" does not follow the common dichotomous distinction between the spirit and the body. Although this might be construed with Pauline discussions of the flesh opposed to the spirit Bakhtin is talking specifically about the bodily nature of human experience and that without enclosing flesh both the inner and outer form of human personhood is unrealizable. In this case, flesh has a phenomenological focus rather than a theological one.

³⁷ The notable exceptions are Graham Pechey in his book *Bakhtin: The Word in the World*, Malcolm V. Jones *Reading Dostoevsky after Bakhtin* and Ruth Coates's *Christianity in Bakhtin: God and the Exiled Author*. All three authors give considerable weight to the role of Christ in Bakhtin's theory identifying him as an essential and perhaps the origin of Bakhtin's view on language and dialogue. Further reading see "Philosophy and Theology" in Pechey's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World*. Jones approach to Bakhtin is through his mutual interest in the work of Dostoevsky but believes that Bakhtin's views are congruent with his own stating: "Dostoevsky clearly inclines toward the view that a realization of the 'true ideal' based on the image of Christ preserved by the Russian monasteries, was the best guarantee of stability in human relationships and of the ability to cope emotionally and intellectually with disturbances from external sources" (192). Coates project is most pointedly directed at this lack in Bakhtin scholarship by disclosing salient themes that she believes are directly related to the broader doctrines of Christian theology.

primarily categorical or no more than a poetic suggestion of Bakhtin's personal beliefs (Coates 21). Bakhtin favored a profoundly personalist viewpoint but this tenor of relativity in his perspective should not be translated as ambivalence towards eternal truth and the role Christ's incarnation plays in truth's corporal revelation. Christ's material and divine subjectivity is an essential and logical support for Bakhtin's position. Through Christ's life, death and resurrection He becomes the one person who can perfectly incarnate aesthetic value redefining and realizing the synthesis of personality, time, truth and reality within the speech act. The importance of Christ as the real/representative event in which truth is revealed appears in both *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and "Author and Hero" even reverberating through to Bakhtin's discussions of the novel in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Contending with his contemporaries, Bakhtin points out that Dostoevsky's novels were never merely ideology embodied in characters but instead incarnational, a true attempt to phenomenologically depict "truth in itself" presented "in the spirit of Christian ideology, as incarnated in Christ: that is he [Dostoevsky] presents it [truth] as a personality entering into relationship with other personalities (PDP 32). Truth is revealed in flesh, not in the ideal or transcendental nature of intellection. Much like incarnation is understood as word in fleshly form, Bakhtin models his notion of revealed truth as occurring in the utterances of living human beings, in the interaction of the fleshly word revealing and sustaining both the boundaries of the body and the boundaries of personality. This truthful word mercifully differentiates one person from another. In fact, only in this unification are dialogic relations possible, "if an experience or a deed does not pretend to some signifying power

(agreement/disagreement), but only to *reality* (evaluation) then the dialogic relationship can be minimal” (TRDB Bakhtin 286).

Ruth Coates points out that for Bakhtin, incarnation is “the incorporation of the abstract realm of truth into the concrete ‘event of being’ by the responsible human agent” (Coates 33). In Bakhtin’s *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Coates identifies Christ as the epitome of responsible action, action that unifies reality with truth. In this way incarnation signifies the answerable act’s relationship to time. In the answerable act, the concepts of personality and time are brought together demonstrating that to have truly individual consciousness, one must speak or dialogue from a unique place within time. Christ offers a unique example of this harmony, in which one must be fully embedded in the world to be seen as truly separate from it (Coates 35). Truth relates to human existence in its subjection to the disunity of the world manifest in a particular person’s speech and act.

Caryl Emerson reinforces this theme in her interpretation of Bakhtin’s concept of sympathy filtered through the lens of his physical suffering. The *truth* of her interpretation leverages the very real circumstances of Bakhtin’s diseased bones to show how his aesthetics were “born of the ill and hurting body” (Emerson, “Next Hundred” 6). Emerson connects this suffering to Bakhtin’s view of the human condition, a condition in which one grapples with a hurt that originates “from the inside” (Emerson, “Next Hundred” 6). These material circumstances of Bakhtin’s own life³⁸ coupled with his fundamental interest in human personality cloth his viewpoint with significant substance. The life and body of Christ are paradigmatic for Bakhtin’s view of dialogue as Christ

³⁸For much of his life Bakhtin suffered from osteomyelitis in his upper thigh, a degenerative bone disease that left him crippled with substantial pain for a good part of his life. The further development of the disease made it necessary to amputate his leg after which his health is reported to have improved.

personifies the ideal acts of both authoring and heroism. Emerson, perhaps intuitively, connects the body of Bakhtin the author to the body of his creative work. However, Bakhtin's own bodily suffering is not textually imaged as a discourse on the prison of physical pain but rather affirms the body's significance for the word. The parallel between these truths of Bakhtin's own life and his dependence on the life of Christ as principal analogy creates new eyes and ears for Bakhtin's vision in "Author and Hero". The most remarkable point of relationship in Bakhtin's development of human dialogue as an event distinctly connects to the historical event of Christ's life. This historical event redresses the human speech act as an event of self-sacrifice resulting in another's rebirth. Speech as an incarnate act and truth coupled with an uttered word authorizes the relative position of being wholly outside another's body yet is also able to penetrate this boundary to revive the soul (A&H 129). This is principally a sacrificial act because one must first discard concern for one's own corporal life in order to truly achieve this for another.

The suggestion that Christ, the person, is translated into only an emblem or metaphor in Bakhtin's work undermines His role as *the* source of *the* mediatory word stabilizing the act of self-sacrificial love against the "*I-for-myself*" (A&H 56). Bakhtin makes this case quite confidently writing that "This world, the world in which the event of Christ's life and death was accomplished, both in the fact and in the meaning of his life and death—this world is fundamentally and essentially indeterminable either in theoretical categories or in categories of historical cognition or through aesthetic intuition" (TPA 16). Bakhtin quite clearly refutes the tendency to read the life of a person, even the person of Christ, as an ideological, doctrinal, or metaphoric category that can be wholly understood through comparisons to historical periods and/or aesthetic

values. This inclination reduces the depth of human personality, which according to Bakhtin is immortal and does not die (TRDB 300). Christ is the true image of word as personality, truth within a person, an author that is “essentially on the same terms” as his heroes and yet “holds the reins between the ideal dialogue of the work and the actual dialogue of reality” (TRDB 298).

Such explicit connections between the real living existence and personhood of Christ with the true coherency of Bakhtin’s claims have yet to be recognized and ratified by most Bakhtin scholars. Ruth Coates acknowledges this opaque yet important association and outlines in “Author and Hero” the aspects of Christ’s life that enrich our understanding of the author-hero relationship. She states, “Bakhtin’s understanding of God and Christianity form the organizing center for his phenomenological analysis of the self/other relation” (Coates 39). Coates brings to light the design of Bakhtin’s discussion situated around the fundamental themes of sin, sacrifice and forgiveness. While sin represents the unwillingness to recognize the interdependency and necessity of human existence, the speech act becomes the graceful sacrifice of forgiveness (A&H 49). Here Bakhtin works against the speech act understood as an act of self-expression, which connotes self-authorship. Rather he asserts, “I myself cannot be the author of my own value; just as I cannot lift myself by my own hair” (A&H 55).

Bakhtin develops this notion of speech as an act of forgiveness by critiquing an aesthetic of self-expression finding it detrimental not only to interpersonal relationship, but also the potential of creative activity. According to Bakhtin, the primary flaws of an expressive aesthetic are one, it does not provide a position by which to relate to an artistic work as a whole and second, does not provide the means for applying formal qualities to

an artistic work enabling expression of the work's value as a shared phenomenon occurring between the author, hero and contemplator of the work (A&H 65-67). Both of these deficiencies rotate around Bakhtin's primary concern, the unique inner life of each participant protected and enriched by the activity of others around them.

For example, he asks how a reader might aesthetically relate to the quintessentially tragic life of Oedipus. In a strikingly compassionate description of Oedipus's life Bakhtin introduces the problem of how Oedipus can be understood as tragic *from within* the story itself. Bakhtin concludes that this is impossible without Oedipus's life becoming a mere facet of "the world of my fantasies about myself or the dream world, as I myself experience these worlds, and in which I, as their hero, am not expressed outwardly" (A&H 71). As my experience of Oedipus's life as an expression of sympathy becomes merely another aspect of my own self-experience my ability to understand its tragic value is impoverished. The collapse of my ability to understand "tragic" as an aesthetic value reduces Oedipus to a feeling or complex of my own life rather than a person independent of my own inner experience with his own soul and own inner self experience. In other words, the aesthetic value "tragedy" that formerly provided the means by which I understand the life of Oedipus and his relationship to my own life ceases to provide that formal boundary (tragic) that mediates our interaction. Aptly, Bakhtin shows almost more concern for Oedipus as a fictional character than for the reader of his story, demonstrating that diminishing the aesthetically valuable nature of our relationship means "I cease to enrich the event of his [Oedipus'] life by providing a new, creative standpoint, a standpoint inaccessible to Oedipus himself from his own

unique place. In other words, I cease to enrich the event of his life as an author/contemplator” (A&H 71).

Bakhtin’s concern for Oedipus as a vulnerable hero might strike the literary critic as peculiar. However, this not only demonstrates Bakhtin’s defense of the human personality as sacred, but also shows how our disposition towards personhood influences the creative and interpretive capacities of symbolic speech activity. This is likely why Bakhtin wishes to marry art to life, so that they are seen as inseparable, each informing the other in mutually encouraging relationship (A&H 71). Realizing the importance of an authorial position that can provide meaning for the tragedy in life not only sustains important boundaries between persons, but also opens the door for speech acts of redemption and forgiveness. Here Bakhtin implicitly presents the question of how a man guilty of patricide and incest can be forgiven, subtly yet poignantly undermining an interpretation of Oedipus’s life as marked off by fate and instead makes him the recipient of grace by a reader who, with Sophocles, becomes a merciful author/contemplator. In Bakhtin’s words,

“In the whole of a tragedy as an artistic event, it is the author/contemplator who is active, whereas the heroes are passive; *they* are the ones who are saved and redeemed through aesthetic salvation. If the author/contemplator were to lose his firm and active position outside each of the *dramatis personae*, if he were to merge with them, the artistic event and the artistic whole as such, i.e., the whole in which he, as a creative independent person, is an indispensable constituent, would disintegrate. Oedipus would be left alone with himself, unsaved and unredeemed aesthetically; life would not be consummated and justified on the

axiological plan that is different from the one on which it actually unfolded for the one who lived it...”(A&H 71-72).

Two themes evident in this quotation further our understanding of Bakhtin’s advocacy for resurrecting the relationship between art and life. First, we see the essential importance of the author’s position outside the experiential plane of his heroes and second, that this outside position is what confirms the possibility of a tragic and seemingly hopeless existence being meaningfully redeemed as valuable. An expressivist theory of creative action excludes the outside position and therefore thwarts the creative expression of contemplating and valuing a work or a person’s life from the outside (A&H 73). The outside position that the reader takes towards the novel’s hero is mercifully reformative because it extends the possible trajectories a person’s life can take in new directions not subject to the intention of the author or even the structure of fateful narrative. Bakhtin does not presume that characters are somehow mystically lifted from the page. Instead they are given new weightiness as their life is “co-experienced” by the reader, who is a potential participant in original meaning that did not exist before in the hero’s initial relationship with the author or past readers (A&H 105). In other words, sustained life “becomes imaged life only in the active and creative contemplation of a spectator (A&H 75).

The outside position that Bakhtin advocates as the only position whereby a person has their existence re-imagined as something other than unjustified “hopeful insanity” is essential for his notion of “sympathetic co-experiencing” (A&H 81). Sympathy is aesthetic rather than an ethic. An ethical act requires that a person give up the authority outside a person’s life experience (inward and outward) from which they are able to

attribute value to it and approach consolation as an intent task. This outside position is the only position from which I can truly sympathize with another person, the only position that “radically alters the entire emotional-volitional structure of the hero’s inward experience, imparting an entirely different coloring or tonality to it (A&H 81).

Bakhtin’s discussion of Oedipus introduces a question that reunites his discussion of aesthetics with life, not only a life bound temporally, but a life eternal. It is difficult to read Bakhtin’s aesthetic claims without considering their origination in the life and person of Christ as he asks “What, then, are the principles of ordering, organizing and forming the soul (the principles of rendering it *whole*) in active artistic vision (A&H 101)? The move from selfhood to soul is important because it reinforces the proposition that Bakhtin is concerned with more than a system of aesthetic evaluation. It also shows his move away from psychological descriptions of personhood into aesthetic terms that Bakhtin argues are more apt for describing the eternal character of the soul as it relates to the spoken word. The premise of Bakhtin’s aesthetic claims is the same for those he makes about human existence. Alone a person cannot achieve meaningful life, nor can they independently establish themselves as a valuable. Bakhtin might be read as a dour existentialist when he claims “My own inner life, proceeding in time, is incapable of consolidating for me into something valuable or precious, into something that should be preserved and should abide eternally,” but he does not proceed without a clear and distinct hope (A&H 101). This emptiness, this inability to provide independently a justification and meaningful perspective towards my own life means that I am in need of saving, aesthetically and spiritually. My soul, that representation of what remains when a

person's body dies, "descends upon me—like grace upon the sinner, like a gift that is unmerited and unexpected" (A&H 101).

Bakhtin's term "sympathetic co-experiencing" describes that activity by which I am aesthetically saved and likewise can aesthetically save others, "an aesthetic activity that gives the unmerited gift of form to an otherwise unconsolidated person" (A&H 81). Because formal value is not intrinsic it must be received, just as the soul receives form and life from the outside so also my personality, who I am, must be given form by others who love me. This value that I receive from others is inaccessible independent of this relationship or in other words, "sympathetic co-experiencing introduces values into the co-experienced life that are transgredient to this life" (A&H 83). It is important to note here that Bakhtin likens aesthetic activity to the ability of seeing something as whole, in the totality of its outer form. According to Bakhtin, "what makes a reaction specifically aesthetic is precisely the fact that it is a reaction to the *whole* of the hero as a human being, a reaction that assembles all of the cognitive-ethical determinations and valuations of the hero and consummates them in the form of a unitary and unique whole that is a concrete, intuitable whole, but also a whole of meaning" (A&H 5). This kind of form giving action cannot be achieved cognitively because "cognition is indifferent to value and does not provide us with a concrete human being" (A&H 83).

Bakhtin's description of sympathetic co-experiencing sounds much different than ethical suggestions to "stand in another's shoes" or "imagine what it feels like" in order to truly sympathize with others. On the contrary Bakhtin asserts that a person must maintain their position outside another, should not attempt to imagine but rather give form to, to *image* a person's suffering and therefore render it aesthetically meaningful.

Bakhtin rightly recognizes that in instances in which another person's suffering is seen by another person, it is their expression of this suffering that makes it meaningful for a given relationship and its role in the history of the person's life as an event of significance.

Much like a child is told that certain kinds of physical pain are of no consequence, so also the hero, the one for whom the author stands outside, is in a diminutive position in regards to the meaning of their own pain. With the authority of adulthood I can render the pain felt by the child unimportant in the larger scope of a child's life: 1) as it relates to the suffering possible incurred by a body and 2) suffering possible in their life. In this way the person whose suffering I "*image forth*" gives form to the meaning of the suffering that is a result of this interaction, it is the "result of the interaction between hero and author" (A&H 84). As Bakhtin describes, the person that I give form to is in many ways passive as I am active. Just as a person who receives a gift must actually be in the position to receive in order for the object they receive to remain a gift. An object taken or demanded is no longer a gift, since taking something by force constitutes theft³⁹ and demand shows self-asserting activity. In order for a person's suffering to be given form, for it to mean something other than that which is experienced solely by the person who suffers it must be acknowledged and given meaning by another who observes that pain and adds to it the weight of consequence. The hero's position is then quite tenuous, he is solely dependent on the author in this regard because "the hero's self activity is incapable of being an *aesthetic* self activity: it may comprise (give voice to) need, repentance,

³⁹ Theft in any instance is an individuating act because it takes something that could be offered as a gift and breaks this bond. It is also a form of selfishness therefore constituting a breach of the inclination to share. It is not incidental that similar actions relate to a person wanting to "define themselves" without the aid of others, without receiving the gift of personhood from others. This usually results in distinct acts of selfishness along with speech habits that promote individuation over concert or cooperation. And yet, at the same time, this deep need felt by those who believe they can "author" their own life is seen in their desire to be well regarded and have genuine companionship.

petition, and even pretensions to recognition by a possible author, but in itself it is incapable of engendering an aesthetically consummating form” (A&H 84).

The author-hero relationship that Bakhtin describes as the principal means by which people interact sympathetically and give meaning and value to each other creates difficult yet essential hierarchies for interpersonal interaction. This is a troublesome truth except for the fact that this aesthetic activity is, according to Bakhtin, only achieved through the mediation of contemplative love. In fact, the maintenance of the outside position that possesses the power to give form and meaning to a person’s suffering is in itself a loving act. Bakhtin does not naively assume that the mutual achievement of receiving and giving sympathy is not a struggle. On the contrary he describes this process as a mutual conquest, a cooperative or “co-experienced” event that is “imposed as a task” (A&H 84). Life as an aesthetic act that lovingly gives meaningful and valuable form to others “must be fought for and won by conquest with the work of art by both the author and the beholder, neither of whom invariably comes out of the struggle a winner. This conquest can be achieved only if the author/contemplator maintains his intent and loving position outside the hero” (A&H 84). It is love and only love that propels “sympathetic co-experiencing” and it is this love that preserves the aesthetic nature of this interaction making it primarily a co-participative act, because it is *in* the interaction that a transredient value is discovered, rendering both participants as whole human beings.

Rhythm and Whole Personhood

The problem of wholeness recalls the original question spurring Bakhtin’s project. The discussion above regarding sympathy resonates deeply with the incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ not only thematically but also in distinctly interpersonal tones.

Bakhtin asks the question “what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person?” It is clear that he is speaking of more than those common attributes identified in the human sciences (A&A 1, A&H 4). As we have shown, Bakhtin describes personhood as a position of tremendous need, not just biological or psychological need but a “meaning-related necessity” that requires coherent form, “justifying and consummating” the purpose of existence from without (A&H 85). This requires that we consider Bakhtin’s understanding of personhood as much more than the diminutive and immanent self since he presupposes that the personality is immortal (TRDB 300). It comes as no surprise when Bakhtin begins to relate purposeful or meaningful life to the condition of soul, an essential constituent of inner personhood. The question of wholeness reveals Bakhtin’s rationale for situating his discussion of personhood within aesthetics stating that “man, as he exists in art, is man in his totality” (A&H 99). Following his claim that the body itself functions as a “aesthetically significant moment” that becomes an “plastic-pictorial value” Bakhtin addresses the problem of the soul, how it can exist as similarly outer and inaccessible but formative value for inwardly experienced life (A&H 100).

Bakhtin’s specific discussion of the soul is brief and opaque but this is what we should expect. Bakhtin is framing his entire discussion in aesthetics, not metaphysical or religious terms, even as he approaches fundamental questions of human existence; questions only formulated in a value structure transgredient to “material-literary contexts” and the immanent nature of human activity. The question of the soul is an “aesthetic phenomenon” that lies “transgredient to the hero’s self-consciousness” (A&H 100). Art embraces the theological and metaphysical as an overarching architectonic, a

system that is both encompassing and yet open to the variability of human difference because the “soul is spirit the way it looks *from outside*, in the other” (A&H 100). According to Bakhtin, the soul, like the personality “does not exist for me as an axiological whole that is given or already present-on-hand in me. In my relationship with myself I have nothing to do with the soul” (A&H 101). We see that being or becoming a whole person is intimately associated with receiving the gift of the soul much like one receives the gift of personhood through loving contemplation, the same kind of contemplative charity that the author has for his hero. Bakhtin asks the same question of the soul that he does of personality, “what, then, are the principles of ordering, organizing and forming the soul (the principles of rendering it *whole*) in active artistic vision” (A&H 100)?

Bakhtin answers his own question by reasserting that the principle means of understanding the soul as coherent and whole is through the eyes of another. These are not the eyes of the ubiquitous “Other,” as is generally discussed in disciplinary ethics, but instead the eyes of a companion who is willing to lovingly contemplate a person’s soul, and bestow the gift of meaningful form “like grace upon a sinner” (A&H 101). Although Bakhtin alludes to the physical dimension of this gaze in his discussion of the human body as a “plastic-pictorial value” that is also found in the “physical outward eyes” of a companion he is also speaking of “inner eyes” that look upon the “exterior of another’s soul (the inner flesh of the subtlest kind, as it were)” (A&H 100-102). The activity of lovingly contemplating another’s soul is what opens the possibility of personhood, makes possible the “*individual* realization and embodiment of meaning, a clothing of meaning in inner flesh—that which can be idealized, heroicized and rhythmicized (A&H 102). In

other words, in order to be wholly human, one must be incarnate, be embedded in temporality by and through another's loving gaze.

Bakhtin's introduction of the term *rhythm* reveals that time features significantly in the aesthetic vision necessary for the development of personhood (A&H 112-132). It also demonstrates that the movement of incarnation as a descent into corporal temporality is paradigmatic for his theory of aesthetic value. Furthermore, it reminds the reader that Bakhtin's discussion is phenomenological rather than theological. The recognition and revelation of the importance of Christ in "Author and Hero" is not to attempt to re-envision Bakhtin's project as primarily a religious text. On the contrary it is to show that Bakhtin is deeply committed to the contemporary vicissitudes of lived experience, our lives lived temporally.⁴⁰ Bakhtin does not adhere to a simple version of time but instead views it in phenomenological and aesthetic categories rejecting the linearity of both chronology and narrative. Bakhtin locates the importance of temporality around the author-hero relationship, specifically in the phenomenological experience of time as experienced by oneself and by another. According to Bakhtin the problem of personality, and eternity are intertwined because the personality and the soul, as eternal formal attributes of whole personhood, rely on the limits of temporality and the constraints of corporal relationship (A&H 101). This reliance is greater than one of aesthetic value because it presumes the problem of immortality in contrast to the inevitable death of the body.

⁴⁰ Calvin L. Troup develops a very similar argument in his interpretation of St. Augustine's *Confessions* Book XI demonstrating that Augustine's use of the incarnation as paradigmatic for his theory of discourse means that instead of engaging in "sanctimonious prayer" Augustine leans on the incarnate Word (Jesus Christ) in order to continue a conversation with God that can benefit his readers. An incarnate disposition means that one remains very much inclined toward temporality even as its limitations are contrasted by the phenomenological experience and reality of eternity.

It concerns that individual and valuational whole of inner life proceeding in time which we experience in the *other*, and which is described and imaged in art, words, colors, and sounds; it concerns the soul as situated on one and the same plane with the other's outer body and as indissociable from it in the moment of death and immortality (resurrection in the flesh) (A&H 100-101).

Whereas one might presume that death functions as a limitation to the extension of life eternally, Bakhtin posits that the temporal limitations of birth and death operate as an important boundary, much like the "plastic-pictorial" boundary of the body (A&H 28). Bakhtin articulates this distinction by showing that the phenomenological experience of death is different for myself than for another, and that my own death itself is not categorically available as a formal quality of lived experience. Instead Bakhtin makes similar claims of these temporal qualities as he does of the physical qualities of a person's body. Bakhtin asserts, "The whole of my life has no validity within the axiological context of my own lived life. My birth, my axiological abiding in the world, and finally, my death are events that occur neither *in* me nor *for* me (A&H 105). Bakhtin shows here that my body, along with my birth and death are not coordinates for me in the sense that I can use them to make meaning of my life by recognizing them as important events significant to my own personhood. Instead, the birth of my body, the life lived in my body, and the death of my body are altogether inaccessible to me, they are instead "that which temporally encompasses the existence of others (A&H 105).

The language of personal sacrifice dominates Bakhtin's discussion of time because connected to the problem of experiencing personhood are memory and memorial as formal activities, "securing and consummating of his personality in the aesthetically

valid image. The aesthetic categories of giving a form to the inner person are generated, in essentials, from the emotional-volitional attitude assumed in commemorating the dead” (A&H 106-107). In Bakhtin’s understanding death becomes an important constituent of a person’s ability to become a part of another’s memory. For Bakhtin the existential limits of birth and death become the way in which a person’s life can be given value, conceived as a whole within time, not separated into discrete events but understood together as a life “ not in chronological time nor in mathematical time, but in the emotionally and axiologically ponderable time of lived life that is capable of becoming musical-rhythmic time” (A&H 110). Once again we see Bakhtin eschew concise philosophical categories for the aesthetic because he is less interested in the exacting nature of his analysis than he is the “phenomenological experience that underlies them” (A&H 110). In either case, it is striking to consider that Bakhtin believes that to truly image someone, to provide for them the formal categories of value that consummate their life into a meaningful whole, one’s approach must be as towards one who is, in essence, already dead (A&H 130-131). Bakhtin goes so far as to say that death itself functions as an important boundary to lived life of “inner determinateness” because without it personhood, and the soul are “not-actualized”(A&H 111). As already stated, a person’s position towards the givenness of en-souled personhood is both “passive or receptive (from within itself, the soul can only be ashamed of itself: from without it can be beautiful and naïve (A&H 111). What this means is that my own life, the life of inner determinateness “is born and dies *in* the world and *for* the world” (A&H 111).

Bakhtin’s interest in death as an event insignificant for the person dying yet substantial and important as a temporal coordinate for others further supports the claim

that Christ's appearance as more than a historical figure synthesizes the quandary of ethical action. Bakhtin's entire system is constructed around the truth of Christ's birth, death and resurrection. In fact one might say that Christ, as both human and divine person is the architectonic around which Bakhtin situates his claims about discourse and personhood because it is only in the potential truth of this cosmic proposition that his system of thought attains its oft questioned coherency. The problem of death shows that temporal establishment of meaning, the substantiation and justification of existence from *within* the world alone is insufficient as a way to attribute value to life. According to Bakhtin, to become a hero, a person whose meaning corresponds with his existence, requires a position of absolute need and naive passivity. This is not an obligatory passivity as much as it is a willing subjection—volitional submission. Heroism in these terms means subjection to the authoritative nature of another that holds the power to value and consummate my life as it relates to meaning and value. I cannot “strive to acquire the significance of authoritative meaning,” to become the author of my own life otherwise the soul “disintegrates and loses itself in the spirit” (A&H 132). To have a soul, that essence of human being, which Bakhtin pairs with personality, I must receive it as a gift, and likewise “the soul is a gift that my spirit bestows upon the *other*” (A&H 132).

According to Bakhtin, in order for the hero to receive the gift of the soul he must assume a disposition of naiveté and passivity (A&H 136). This means that I am approach him with the anticipation of this passivity, helplessness in being and “the inevitable nonrealization or failure of his entire life in respect to meaning” (A&H 130). This passivity means that I must act, I must take a position of authority towards this person that I approach so that he can be saved, so that his life can mean and receive its value.

Bakhtin paints a penetrating picture of the tension in interpersonal relationship, disclosing the possible power in my authority as the one who brings this gift to another person's life. And yet, the only way to achieve this for another, to give the gift of wholeness, is to sacrifice my own life and appear to him as a discrete whole completely inserted in time, a complete life framed by temporal birth and death. In this way I become both author and hero, author of others lives and yet also the hero of their lives subject to the influence of their authorship.

Bakhtin concludes his discussion of rhythm by affirming that the sacrifice of life is the context from which whole human being can be realized and the only act through which I can experience joy. As an author I am active towards others so that they may know a truly personal and soulful life and yet to experience that same joy I must become a hero, I too must "partake in the justified givenness of being, in the joyful givenness of being" (A&H 136). Of course, as Bakhtin defines it, authoring with its implicit expectation of bodily sacrifice (to live as if already dead) means that heroism may be a much-preferred state of being because it is as a hero that I am "most passive" and in "the most defenselessly pitiful condition of being" (A&H 136). Only passively can I experience the joy of existence because it is in this state that I can receive the gift of personhood and of inner wholeness. In other words, to show concern or have anxiety about one's own happiness thwarts the very possibility of joy. It is only when I become a sacrificial author, when I act in this role that I can also realize the heroic nature of my own life, its frailty of its givenness and my life's deep necessity; "Joy is possible for me only in God or in the world, that is, only where I partake in being in a justified manner

through the other and *for* the other, where I am passive and receive a bestowed gift” (A&H 136).

Bakhtin’s description of the human condition both emphasizes and resolves the impossible dialectic between oneself and others, but not how we might expect. We are still posed with the questions; how can I be active towards others and yet also passive towards their authority and who protects a person who, by eschewing self-interest, becomes vulnerably passive? Bakhtin does attempt to provide definitive answers for these questions instead refocusing the problem around the joy available to the person who sacrificially lives for others, and by adopting the meekness of naïve humility. More importantly, Bakhtin undermines the importance of mediating the power differential in self/other relationships as a point of concern. To be occupied with one’s own personhood means one is attempting self-authorship, which does not exhibit the naïve passivity necessary for wholeness and joy. Both a joyful existence and wholeness are dependent on others and cannot be created independently, “I can celebrate and jubilate in the world and in God, but not within myself (A&H 137).

Bakhtin reiterates this important claim even more explicitly by characterizing man’s speaking relationship with God as an essential formal limit of temporal life and creative speech activity. In a discussion of what Bakhtin calls “confessional self accounting” he outlines how the speech act, specifically communication with God, leads to the realization of whole personhood. Bakhtin prefaces “confessional self-accounting” as speech activity with its opposing type of “pure solitary self-accounting” which he argues, “is impossible” (A&H 144). On the contrary, “confessional self-accounting” demonstrates the limit of infinite necessity and lack of justification, which opposes

wholeness of person. Attempting to live outside the boundary created by these existential and cosmic limitations disables speech and self-consciousness, “Outside God, outside the bounds of trust in absolute otherness, self consciousness and self utterance are impossible, and they are not impossible no because they would be senseless practically, but because trust in God is an immanent constitutive moment of pure self consciousness and self expression” (A&H 144). Speaking in the presence of God is however “*not guaranteed*, for a guarantee would reduce it to the level of preset-on-hand being” (A&H 144).

The lack of guarantee means that speaking life exists between the past and becoming, in the substantial tension of Being as that essential space within which unique personhood is realized. This is the only way that bot the “passive activity” or heroism and authority of action can be performed simultaneously. According to Bakhtin this means adopting a disposition faith (A&H 144). The faithful position is the only one in which a person can “live and gain consciousness” (A&H 144). To live is the “actualization of faith; the process of life’s gaining self consciousness is a process of gaining consciousness of faith (that is, of need and hope, of non self-contentment and of possibility) (A&H 144). This means that life takes on “penitent and petitionary tones” in which one looks restively beyond their own existence, outside to a voice that both confirms and consummates the form of their body, person and soul. The lack of aesthetic justification means that the general search for meaning is,

...transformed into a need for religious justification: confessional self-accounting is filled with the need for forgiveness and redemption as an absolutely *pure* gift (an unmerited gift), with the need for a mercy and a grace that are totally

otherworldly in respect to their value. Such justification is not immanent to self – accounting, but lies beyond its bounds, in the undetermined, risk-fraught future of the actual event of being (A&H 143).

It should not come as a surprise that Bakhtin’s understanding of “aesthetic consummation” and “outside viewpoint” resonate with specifically religious intonations. For Bakhtin, the fact that one is compelled to reflect on the problem of self-consciousness at all “testifies in itself that I am not alone in my self accounting, that someone is interested in me, that someone wants me to be good” (A&H 144). The limits of absolute immanent guarantee and the axiological void of pure self accounting leave personhood and existence in space that must have “a certain degree of warmth” so that “my self consciousness and self utterance could actualize themselves in it, in order that life could commence” (A&H 144). The warmth of this context is utterly dependent on the character of that outside otherness that is essentially “axiologically transcendent” to my own life and the experience of inner personhood. Bakhtin does not appear to assert that confessional self-accounting is the only means by which one’s life can be imaged with valuable form and meaning but confessional self-accounting does present itself as a compelling way to live with the substantial tensions surrounding naïve passivity as the requisite position from which my speech takes on “tones of faith and hope” enabling “aesthetic moments to begin to penetrate into self-accounting”. In other words it is only through this passivity to the gift like nature of wholeness that my life can begin to take form as *my own* life. This process does not involve even the slightest notion of self-assertion, and we see this most plainly in Bakhtin’s description of this event as process of cosmic justification.

Anticipating through faith my justification in God, I change little by little from and *I-for-myself* into the *other* for God—I become naïve in God. It is at this stage of *religious* naiveté that the psalms (as well as other Christian hymns and prayers) have their place; rhythm becomes possible, a rhythm that cherishes and elevates the image, etc., in anticipation of the beauty of God, tranquility, concord, and measure become possible (A&H 145).

It is important to contextualize the previous passage by recalling Bakhtin’s reliance on the incarnation as a new way of understanding the presence of God in the world and the role that the word plays in revealing this presence, not only spiritually but physically in the person of Jesus Christ. According to Bakhtin the evaluative character of God in this case, in which he justifies the life of the penitent person, is subject to the incarnational principle in which “any valuation is an act of assuming and individual position in being; even God had to incarnate himself in order to bestow mercy, to suffer, and to *forgive*—had to descend as it were from the abstract standpoint of justice (A&H 128). Here we see the theological foundation for Bakhtin’s thought regarding the disposition of naïve passivity that he poses as crucial to the realization of human personhood and wholeness. Also, there is the sustained emphasis on the “individual position” as the context within I can receive positive evaluation; I can receive “cherishing justification” from another that is nearby, within the scope of my own life as a present person. Here Bakhtin is clearly showing that meaningful justification of existence, of a person’s being cannot occur abstractly in ideological categories or even from a general aesthetic but only from a specific aesthetic that is intoned and developed from a particular point of view, a point of view that contemplates me lovingly in order to provide rhythmic

form to the ultimate limit of inward experience. As we already noted early Bakhtin understands God through the event of the incarnation. Instead of an abstract being representing justice and power he is a human person that approaches humankind with mercy and love. In Bakhtin's words,

[God] is no longer defined essentially as the voice of my conscience, as purity of my relationship to myself (purity of my self denial of anything *given* within myself)... God is now the heavenly Father who is *over me* and can be merciful to me and justify my from where I, from within myself, cannot be merciful to myself and cannot justify myself in principle, as long as I remain pure before myself. What I must be for the other, God is for me (A&H 56).

Bakhtin view of God as a merciful and just Father images God as personal and familiar, as a human being that can stand outside, confirm and justify existence from a particular point of view. Bakhtin's use of the incarnation and incarnational language urges us to conclude that Christ as the Word mediates this relationship of faith and hope, stabilizing discourse and reaffirming that hope as situated temporally and corporately rather than purely and ideally (A&H 128). Christ is also revealed as that outside aesthetic viewpoint that can also be interpersonal and inwardly persuasive. As the incarnate word Himself Christ demonstrates and represents that true image of the word that both confirms the outward bodily form as well as the inner flesh of the soul, both of which are essential constituents of whole personhood. This is an critical connection since the outside viewpoint that remains transgredient to immanent value systems must also be able to penetrate the sphere of fleshly life supplying it with meaningful form and the hope. This is a hope directly related to the "new life" that pushes beyond meaning

delimited by constraints of existence, a meaning that resituates personhood as significant outside the immanent coordinates of a person's birth, life and death. Whole personhood must in some way have access to, or be related to this kind of truth, a truth that remains even in the event of death.

Salvific Dialogue

Bakhtin positions Christ as the person who mediates and synthesizes two dialectics: 1) self-interest and naïve passivity, and 2) dialectic guaranteed existence and axiological void. As mediator Christ shifts the paradigm of speech from a system of self-expressive symbols to the material forming and valuing boundaries of human personhood. The word is architectonic agency, the body and soul of a human person. This makes the lines drawn between dialogic speech and the life and person of Christ vivid yet pliable. The task of locating Christ's specific role in Bakhtin's thought has likely proven difficult for scholars because Christ appears both particularly *and* ubiquitously in the design of Bakhtin's aesthetics.

Bakhtin, consistent with his own design, warns against utilizing the supposed "inner life" of the author as a guide for interpreting his work (A&H 65-67). This makes the question of Bakhtin's personal allegiance to the divine personhood of Christ at least a distraction and at most a betrayal of his earnest explanation of personality revealed in and through dialogue. Suitably, Christ functions in Bakhtin's work not as theological maxim but as a dialogic companion. For Bakhtin, "givenness" and what can be defined as "act" is an aesthetic question meaning that his answers lie transgredient or outside the norms of culture. The outside position "makes possible (not only physically but morally) what is impossible for me in myself, namely: the axiological affirmation and acceptance of the

whole present-on-hand givenness of another interior being” (A&H 128). The incarnational paradigm modeled after the humanity of the divine Christ directs Bakhtin away from self-expressive communicative activity and towards a speech act that sacrificially accomplishes for another what every human desperately desires. Bakhtin writes “ I know that in the other as well there is the same insanity of not coinciding (in principle) with himself, the same unconsummatedness of life” (A&H 128). Bakhtin echoes here his description of Christ as “a synthesis of unique depth” not only because in Christ’s person we discover the unification of truth, subjectivity, time, and space but also a synthesis of “*ethical solipsism*” (A&H 56). Christ is the principle of dialogic answerability personified, “an infinitely deepened *I-for-myself*—not a cold *I-for-myself*, but one of boundless kindness towards the other; and *I-for-myself* that renders full justice to the other, disclosing and affirming the other’s axiological distinctiveness in all its fullness” (A&H 56).

Revisiting Emerson’s interest in the “ill and hurting body” refocuses attention towards Bakhtin’s perspective on the inwardly experienced life. Every person must have “a point of support in meaning *outside* the context” of their own life because “moral self reflection knows no given that is positive, no present-on-hand being that is intrinsically valuable, inasmuch as—from the standpoint of which is yet to be attained (the task to be accomplished)—and given is always unworthy, something that ought to be” (A&H 113-114). What Bakhtin makes clear is that the value of a life is given, not as an essential characteristic of existence, but as a gift from another life that is lived outside of my own. Meaning that extends beyond the scope self-experience, beyond the horizon of a life’s story can only be secured in the activity of another person towards me. In fact, self-

activity, that act that distinguishes a person from others, can only be “secured, determined, lovingly consolidated and measured by a *rhythm*, and that is accomplished by the self-activity of another soul, within the encompassing meaning-and-value context of another soul” (A&H 117).

Even death and the spirit of a person sustained in the memories of those who remember them are insufficient to provide the consummating form necessary for rendering a life wholly meaningful. A person’s death as we have shown is what Bakhtin believes most clearly illumines how the spoken word is not for speaker, but for whom it is spoken. In a person’s last word we see an honest turn “outside of myself” in order to receive either “salvation or condemnation” (A&H 128). Parallel with Bakhtin’s invocation of the spiritual salvation one receives from God he considers how this theological truth is incarnate in the act of “saving” another, “ I enrich the other from the outside, and he becomes aesthetically significant—becomes a hero” (A&H 129). The imagery of Christ as the sacrificial offering for all humanity is sustained as Bakhtin articulates how, I, in my answerable act can offer the grace ridden gift of personhood to another.

I from my own unique place in the event of being, affirm and validate axiologically the givenness of his being that he himself negates, and his very act of negation is, for me, no more than a moment in that givenness of his being. What the other rightfully negates in himself, I rightfully affirm and preserve in him, and, in so doing, I give birth to his soul on a new axiological plane of being (A&H 129)

Bakhtin has turned the philosophical tradition of selfhood upside down. Rather than asserting selfhood and then attempting to solve the problem of sympathy Bakhtin questions the self-secured position of personal identity (A&H 50). Without maligning the ego or the self-interested nature of human activity he maintains that any attempt to formulate one's own selfhood, to manage one's own identity, is impossible without graceful intervention from the outside. I empathize with others like me because I recognize that without them, I cannot be a subject, only an object. Furthermore, I cannot know what is true or meaningful nor understand the trajectory of being without the fleshly coordinates provided by a companion. In a brief historical survey of attitudes towards the body Bakhtin confirms the necessity of confessing this need and *subjecting* oneself to this loving affirmation. He writes:

Finally, the idea of grace as the bestowal—from the outside—of lovingly merciful acceptance and justification of the given, as of that which is in principle sinful and, therefore, cannot be surmounted from within itself. This includes the associated idea (total and utter penitence) and absolution. From within my own penitence, there is negation of the whole of myself; from outside myself (God is the other), there is loving mercy and restoration. In himself, a human being can only repent; and only the other can give absolution. (A&H 57)

Here the image of the incarnation is brought fully into view presenting the humility of attitude required to receive graceful confirmation. The impossibility of self-constructed personhood means that I must receive from the outside that which cannot be given to oneself, *by oneself* (A&H 50). In essence Bakhtin questions the foundation of Cartesian self-sufficiency, which has retained its original assertion in the theoretical

presumptions of identity management and self-concept. Incarnation reverses this abstracted version of human experience. Descartes subdued the body and sense experience in order to make his initial claim of existence. Bakhtin alternatively follows that incarnational paradigm which infuses the body with value claiming “even God had to incarnate himself in order to bestow mercy, to suffer, and to *forgive*—had to descend as it were, from the abstract standpoint of justice” (A&H 129). God becomes something other than an abstract concept of ideality, and becomes instead the other worldly person of Jesus Christ inhabiting the plane of meaning in order to confirm and establish earthly position that cannot be immanently achieved. “God is no longer defined as the voice of conscience” but is instead one “who is *over me* and can be merciful to me and justify me where I, from within myself, cannot be merciful to myself and cannot justify myself in principle” (A&H 56).

These passages in which Bakhtin identifies “the pertinent components of Christianity” follow his brief yet significant introduction to historical attitudes regarding the body indicating that without flesh there is no way to understand or realize the true constituents of personhood (A&H 56). In fact, Bakhtin suggests that our even our interaction with God post incarnation is a fleshly relationship, one dependent on our acknowledgement of the body’s special qualities and limitations. Even the inward life, the life of inward experience is understood in terms of its fleshly form. The “inner life” which Bakhtin uses interchangeably with “spirit” is differentiated from the human soul (A&H 101). The soul like selfhood is not given, something that a person possesses or lays claim to. Instead the “soul descends upon me—like grace upon a sinner, like a gift that is unmerited and unexpected” (A&H 101). Bakhtin continuously stresses the fragility

of inner life and personhood even as he defends its existence and its importance for understanding the meaning of human life. This tenuous nature of subjectivity would suggest then that truth, as it relates to subjectivity and that its revelation is at best opaque. How could Bakhtin, who maintains confidence in an eternal truth, situate its occurrence or revelation in a space between subjects who by all purposes are “incapable of consolidating” and who upon reflection of their inner life find nothing but an “eternal condemnation of the soul” (A&H 101)?

Bakhtin grapples with philosophical traditions and aesthetic disciplines that systematically generalize the human experience of truth and in contrast correlates the revelation of truth with particular human action (Walters 9). In “Author and Hero” Bakhtin advocates “aesthetic contemplation” as the means of “giving form” or to “consummate” the particular activity of a person as it correlates with a special subjectivity (TPA 13-14, A&H 130-131). Truth becomes an interactive phenomenon demonstrating that revelation, or in Bakhtin’s terms the emergence of form, happens between two incarnate personalities distinctly answerable and faithfully committed to truth’s revelation. In this interaction the ought manifests itself.

Acknowledging the feeble foundation of another’s personhood is the primary point of correlation between what Bakhtin understands as the principle unity in human experience and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Even the basic outline of the Passion narrative provides useful context for Bakhtin’s use of Christ, specifically His taking bodily form as the key disposition by which self-activity becomes dialogically answerable and properly authorial. Incarnation as an act itself is a willing subjection to the limitations and consequent suffering of the human body, both its weaknesses and

susceptibility to death. It is exactly these attributes that Bakhtin draws on to form his discussion of the author-hero relationship. For Bakhtin, in light of this truly historic change, the options for personhood are either placing oneself at the mercy of others (even those who are unjust), or reentering a fallen and splintered existence founded on nothing other than a lie (Jones 183). In the particular case of personhood, this lie manifests itself as self-possession by “selfishly exploiting my being-for-others for my own sake” (A&H 59). This self-possession is counteracted by the principle of incarnation and the ideal example of Christ in two ways. Theologically we see it demonstrated in Christ’s salvific act for all others unifying humanity through his redemptive act. Bakhtin writes “all human beings divide for him into himself as the unique one—all other human beings, into himself as bestowing loving mercy—all others receiving mercy, into himself as the savior—and all others as the saved, into himself as the one assuming the burden of sin and expiation—and all others as relived of this burden and redeemed” (A&H 56). The simple act of self-sacrifice should not distract from the complexity of Bakhtin’s description here. In fact in Bakhtin’s integration of Christ he is describing what every other human being is incapable of because Christ’s self sacrifice involves an “immaculately pure relationship to oneself” (A&H 56). Simple human self-sacrifice is impossible without being accompanied by a “negation of the whole of myself” (A&H 57). In His own sacrifice Christ is able to also take a positively active position towards Himself while simultaneously confirming and supporting all those he relates with.

Christ is not only an example of that prime relationship between I and the other but also figures as that which unites the body with word, showing that the unity and companionship between word and flesh is that which gives form and value to the inner

and outer flesh of others. The word among people is how inner and outer flesh is formed and valued as the boundary between persons.

Second, Bakhtin demonstrates how Christ's individual act in principle substantiates the possibility of harmonizing and healing others without the natural possession of divine power. The incarnate principle in the activity of Christ is translated into a basic juxtaposition in which "the *I* and the *other* are contraposed: for myself—absolute sacrifice, for the other—loving mercy" (A&H 56). Bakhtin's example of Christ cannot be imagined as an activity that is simply imitated. Rather this example operates much like Auerbach's identification of the "awakening of a new heart and a new spirit" exemplified by Peter's agony at the betrayal of Christ as not simply an individual experience but "the image of man in the highest and deepest and most tragic sense (Auerbach 41). Auerbach's description of Peter is directly contrasted with Bakhtin's description of Christ who becomes both the ideal but also the truest image of human being. Where Peter represents the absolute divorce of truth, reality, word and body⁴¹, Christ is their inseparable unity. This is how Christ is revealed as the "immaculately pure" image of "ethical-aesthetic kindness towards the other" (A&H 56).

True Reality

Bakhtin's concern with the revelation of truth originates in his desire to locate the ought in human activity. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, truth is emergent in the event of human action, "the ought arises only in the correlating of truth (valid in itself) with our act of cognition, and this moment of being correlated is historically a unique moment" (TPA 5). Truth as a value that orders human life is only present in the incarnate act, in a person's actual inwardly experienced activity distinguished from simple symbolic

⁴¹ Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 15: 66-72, Luke 22: 54-63, John 18:15-18, 25-27 (NIV)

performance. Bakhtin betrays his pre-modern presuppositions when he states explicitly “there are no moral norms that are determinate and valid in themselves as moral norms” because moral relativity is the circumstance wherein he draws his conclusion (TPA 6). Bakhtin grounds his position in “a moral *subiectum*⁴² with a determinate structure and it is upon him that we have to rely: he will know what is marked by the moral ought and when, or to be exact: the ought as such” (TPA 6). Whether this is particularly understood as the person of Christ or generally as the acting human, the implications are the same. It is in the event itself, the unity of the word with the body in correlate action that determines the ought. In Bakhtin’s critique of “content” and “formal” ethics he points to the most common problems manifest in ethical reasoning. Theoretical ethics presumes a generally measurable human ought and action while simultaneously imagining an autonomous, non-contingent willfulness. Bakhtin explains:

The will-as-deed produces the law to which it submits, i.e., it dies as an individual will in its own product. The will describes a circle, it shuts itself in, excluding the actual-individual and historical-self activity of the performed act. We are dealing here with the same illusion as in the case of theoretical philosophy: in the latter we have a self-activity of reason, which my historical and individually answerable self-activity has nothing in common, and for which this categorical self-activity is passively obligatory, while in the former the same happens with the will. All this distorts, at root, the actual moral ought, and does not provide any approach to the actuality of the act performed. (TPA 26)

Bakhtin’s primary concern is the persistent focus on the abstraction of inner thought and theory, an emphasis on what occurs inwardly during an ethical act rather

⁴² human subject

than the whole person, inward and outward, in action. According to Bakhtin, “thinking theoretically, contemplating aesthetically” is the aspect of ethical events that cannot truly be seen or perceived from outside (TPA 28). It is for this reason that in theoretical ethics inward particularity must be abstracted and generalized and by this abstraction and generalization the individual unique personality of a human being is falsely finalized. Even Kant’s categorical imperative, which attempts to assert a universal norm through identifying patterns in cognitive particularity, ends up deemphasizing the outward and particular and rhythmic nature of the act itself with its inescapable contingencies.

Placing emphasis on the inner experience of the act separates the ought of the act from its actual answerability and attempts to create a unity with truth from the outside that re-imposes itself on the acting person. This is not to say that other *people* should never impose upon a person, but that abstracted imposition from the outside results in a person’s particular compliance without internal agreement or compliance that corrupts the actuality of a person’s individual position. In other words, an act in accordance with abstract ethical value is no longer a truly answerable act. It is for this reason that Bakhtin articulates several concerns regarding the possibility of human action. First, Bakhtin opposes theoretical strategies because they ignore the important constraint of outward perception to evaluate the inner person and second, they do not take into account the multiplicity of factors that are a constituent of every human act.

Bakhtin believes the ethical nature of an act may be determined but that philosophical ethics is insufficient for the task. Bakhtin finds little support for his position in theoretical philosophy and ethics writing, “we have identified as unfounded and as essentially hopeless all attempts to orient a first philosophy in relation to the

content/sense aspect or the objectified product taken in abstraction from the once-occurrent actual act/deed and its author” (TPA 27). It is in this statement that we begin to see Bakhtin turn from the traditional categories and language of the western philosophical tradition. In his effort to demonstrate the peculiarity of the ethical act Bakhtin finds that the approach most commonly adopted in philosophical ethics does not provide the necessary language or context and is in his own words “hopeless” (TPA 27).

Instead Bakhtin envisions interaction with a “moral *subiectum*” as the means by which our actions are deemed answerable and yet retain a radically free character (TPA 6). This is an essential freedom that must be preserved if the ought of human action is to be preserved. The preservation of the ought means it cannot be segmented into the cognitive and ethical spheres but must remain surround by aesthetics because of its inimitable kindness and mercifulness (CMF 279). Bakhtin is clear that the life of the soul, that outward inner life that forms the actual individuality and responsibility of personhood depends on this freedom, “it is a whole that is individual, valuational and free” (A&H 100). The truthful spoken word as a living and on hand person is the primary means of preserving this freedom facilitating the very real consummation of human personality.

Chapter 5: Speaking without Fear

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. —1 John 4:18

The triangulated interpersonal arrangement of Bakhtin's "dialogism" is essential for accepting the claim that linguistic interaction with an internally persuasive authority promotes the freedom of individual consciousness. Bakhtin's later texts collected in *Speech Genre and other Late Essays* demonstrate the importance of Bakhtin's term "dialogic relations," for elaborating on the author-hero relationship characteristically sustained by loving contemplation. Specifically, Bakhtin's discussion of dialogue in "Problems of the Text" further extend his ideas of authority and personhood for interpersonal communication scholarship (PoT 127). Bakhtin's conception of "dialogic relations" is an essential precursor to "dialogic understanding" which he describes as, "the transposition of another's experience to an entirely *different* axiological plane, into a entirely *new* category of valuation and forming" (A&H 102). The comparison made between "dialogic relations" and the covenantal nature of understanding proposed by Bakhtin in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, will help reveal the intersubjective character of this event. In this early essay we see Bakhtin invoke marital love as the finest descriptor of the "emotional-volitional tone" necessary to prompt dialogic understanding (TPA 36).

Being One in the Flesh

Bakhtin's discussion of human differentiation emphasizes absolute uniqueness asserting that no two consciousnesses can synchronously occupy the same plane of experience unless one of them is sacrificed. At the same time, Bakhtin rejects solipsistic

alienation as a possible description of reality. In contrast, Bakhtin's dialogue shows how dissimilar people can reach understanding about what is truly real. Distinguishing between "unity" (as conceptual intelligibility) and "uniqueness" (the common feature of human experience) Bakhtin argues for an essential disposition necessary for achieving understanding in the communicative event. According to Bakhtin, *faithfulness* is the requisite disposition through which understanding occurs in discursive activity (TPA 38). Bakhtin differentiates his position from the proposition that perspectival unity is mutual understanding of value itself stating:

"It is not the content of an obligation that obligates me, but my signature below it—the fact that at one time I acknowledged or undersigned the given acknowledgment. And what compelled me to sign at the moment of undersigning was not the content of the given performed act or deed—to undersign-acknowledge it, but only in correlation with my decision to undertake an obligation—by performing the act of undersigning-acknowledging (TPA 38).

Bakhtin's combined "undersigning-acknowledgment" points to an important relationship. "Undersigning," indicates an association between my name and the act, a personal commitment to the answerable nature of speech activity. This concept should not be mistaken for Hobbes "social contract."⁴³ Instead, Bakhtin argues that,

Such views are radically unsound for the reason we have already adduced when we discussed the ought. The emotional-volitional tone and the actual valuation does not relate at all to content as such in its isolation, but relates to it in its

⁴³ Bakhtin actually refers to Hobbes in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* providing a basic critique of Hobbes notion of pre social man and the leviathan on pages 35. Also see note 107.

correlation with me within the once-occurrent event of Being encompassing us (TPA 35).

Bakhtin emphasizes the act of affirming one's own position relative to others rather than striving to uphold a particular right of contract because of its contentual validity⁴⁴. True action, instead of being an obligatory response to the self-contained validity of a particular law or ethic, occurs outside any set of reasonable obligations perceived by a rational cognizing being.

For Bakhtin the ought of commitment is in relative position to others (Holquist 19). This commitment follows an acknowledgement of our dependence on others acting around us. Bakhtin describes dialogic relationship as preemptive yet simultaneously revealed in the act of speech. The tone of dialogic relations is not universal nor is it akin to what some have identified as a primordial echo to care for the Other. It is a tone distinctly tied to the event of human being resonant in each gesture and every spoken word. Bakhtin writes:

The word that would more accurately characterize this is *faithfulness* [being true to], the way it is used in reference to love or marriage, except that love should not be understood from the standpoint of the passive consciousness of psychology.

The emotional-volitional tone of a once-occurrent actual consciousness is conveyed more aptly by the word *faithfulness* [being true to] (TPA 38).

Bakhtin's conception of faithfulness is the active commitment found in marital vows. Covenant love as constitutive of "dialogic relations" presents a significant proposition as it suggests a preexisting interpersonal relationship disclosed, rather than

⁴⁴ "Contentual validity" in this sense means the actual validity of the principle claim. In this sense it means the pragmatic reasonability would compel a person to commit to civilized behavior because of self-interest and the value in organizing against possible threats, which is the basis of Hobbes position.

determined by the event of dialogue. Contemporary perspectives on marital relationship classify covenant as private, yet civilly ratified. Currently, continuance of said covenants is often contingent only per the agreement of consenting persons. We must assume that these relationships are not the kind Bakhtin is describing simply because his emphasis on the eternal word exhibits a greater interest in the phenomenological character of vows as they intone interpersonal discourse,⁴⁵ the soundness of a non-contingent oath.

Covenantal relationship suggests an interpersonal interactivity between persons who experience “common revelation,” not egalitarianism.⁴⁶ Bakhtin describes this state of relationship as *agreement* (PoT 125). Agreements presuppose intentionality; they have a specific “emotional-volitional tone” from their outset. Covenants unlike contracts are un-finalized, already in place, confirmed and confirming, reified and reifying speech activity.⁴⁷ In “Author and Hero” Bakhtin reiterates, there are no “universally valid criteria” for identifying this intonation and instead “we must vividly feel the presence of that possible human consciousness to which these moments are transgredient and which they cherish and bring consummation” (A&H 200).

⁴⁵ Bakhtin’s use of covenantal relationship to describe the grounds of dialogue is most likely influenced by the work of Martin Buber who used similar language to describe dialogic encounter in his book *I and Thou*. Ronald C. Arnett has more recently extended the notion of covenant as the ground for dialogue in his discussion of Robert Bellah’s sociological study of religion in the United States. Arnett claims that one of the primary problems confronting contemporary communication study is “broken covenants” and the loss of “existential trust,” a promise to trust others before securing evidence of their trustworthiness. For further reading see Arnett, Ronald C. “Religious Communication Scholarship: Going Nowhere Correctly” *Journal of Communication and Religion*. 33.2 pp. 221-246 and Arnett, Ronald C. and Pat Arneson. *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope and Interpersonal Relationships*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1999. Pp. 15-17.

⁴⁶ Cornelius Van Til develops the idea of “common revelation” in his discussions of covenantal theology as they relate to how covenants are equal in agreement but not in development.

⁴⁷ This is true at least in the Western ideal of marriage in which the intention to marry happens prior to the actual statements of vows, and of course we assume that in this case, the marriage is both indicative but also a verbal confirmation of a preexisting condition of love which has already united the two persons in bond.

This covenantal relationship necessary for dialogue is as non-negotiable as our “non-alibi in Being” (TPA 49). However, the working out of the covenant is personal, participative and unique. Dialogic relations, much like covenant vows are actualized quite variously depending on participants. As marital relationships are renegotiated the activity within the relationship is perpetually revitalized by the past yet present intonation of the vow. A contract is static and suffers from semantic rigor requiring resurrection through new interpretation. Covenants are constant but responsive to contemporary constraints of life, negotiated and formalized by dialogue.

In Bakhtin’s description of covenant love we see an emphasis placed on fidelity as well as the need for faithfulness to truth. Bakhtin’s commitment to dialogic relationship informing human communication means a commitment to truth revealed in relationship. Subjectively revealed truth does not “diminish or distort autonomous truth” but instead makes truth “compellently valid” demanding a person to “live from within oneself” and “affirm one’s compellent, actual non-alibi in Being” (TPA 49).

The compellent quality of dialogic relationship is loving directedness. According to Bakhtin, loving contemplation of another person is an aesthetic act, an event in which a person receives value. In other words, a person becomes valuable only when loved, “I love him not because he is good, but he is good because I love him” (TPA 64). This love is active and not “a passive psychological” love (TPA 64). In love a person is dialogically articulated and in this articulation becomes valuable. Covenant love is not a general love for the Other. It is a particular and subjective love, the only love “capable of holding and making fast all multiformity and diversity without losing and dissipating it, without leaving behind a mere skeleton of basic lines and sense moments” and “is capable of

generating a sufficiently intent power to encompass and retain the concrete manifoldness of Being, without impoverishing and schematizing it” (TPA 64). The love that intones Bakhtin’s description of true acknowledgment is penetratingly personal and cannot be reduced to an ethic, a commandment, or code. This agreement must be personal, particular, and various like the intimacy found in marital covenant.

The keeping of covenants agreements is not contingent on reciprocity. A spoken vow establishes the conditions for further dialogue, a promise of future physical presence intoning and stabilizing immediately occurring discourse. A covenant has both eternal (outside) and temporal elements (PoT 109). Covenant vows exclude reciprocity as grounds for “being true to” because the vow is spoken to, and yet beyond the immediate addressee (PoT 126). Contract is derivative of covenant but a highly depersonalized form, not requiring dialogic interaction to retain its temporal validity.⁴⁸ Contracts are negotiated and then signed so that an offending party can be held accountable to the contracts “contentual” validity. A contract’s efficacy is its impersonality making it markedly different from covenant agreement. Temporal authority adjudicates a contract; a true covenant vow is witnessed both by an immediate addressee but also by an transgredient authority.⁴⁹ In Bakhtin’s description of “aesthetic seeing” a third addressee witnesses the taking of a vow and is an important constituent of the understanding generated in

⁴⁸ In fact, Bakhtin believes that as soon as a word is written down, in essence, it is already dead. In his notes made between 1970 and 1971 he refers to textual analysis as the dissection of cadavers which has its own necessity but is at some point is unhelpful for understanding the workings of a living body, or in this case, the action of the spoken word. See “From Note Made in 1970-71” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

⁴⁹ As religious authority diminishes in its relationship to marriage covenants we see a slow change in the way these covenants are understood and lived out. The origins of the Anglican Church are a testament to this shift from church authority in establishing marriage covenants to legal authority. This dynamic has only increased in recent history making marriage covenants primarily legal agreements rather than agreements of a covenantal nature that are first and foremost condoned by divine authority.

agreement (PoT 125). The third person is especially important for covenant agreements because he witnesses and affirms from outside the interaction. The character of this third person and his relationship to the agreeing partners is vastly significant for the tone and nature of the covenant. Bakhtin's conception of covenant introduces an interpersonal vitality through its emphasis on the promise (undersigning) subjectively understood by a third participant (PoT 125).

In "Author and Hero" Bakhtin describes this understanding as the author's role towards his hero and also the activity of God towards humankind. The love in Bakhtin's description of God as author intends towards humans in graceful, merciful and personal tones (A&H 56-57). What Bakhtin calls "sympathetic co-experiencing" has significant power to alter, not only the context of relationship but also the inner life of each participant. Bakhtin writes, "This lovelike sympathy radically alters the entire emotional-volitional structure of the hero's inward experience, imparting an entirely different coloring or tonality to it" (A&H 81).

The event of Christ's incarnation functions as a principal sign of God's love for humankind. Christ, as God, descends into time and personally relates to humans not out of necessity, but out of desire.⁵⁰ Bakhtin employs this principal identifying Jesus Christ as the ideal sign of incarnate action. First, as an example of how truth descends and is disseminated by people in speech and second, how someone can absolutely love others and be positively disinterested in themselves (TPA 64, A&H 56). The principle of marital covenant realizes even greater meaning when we consider the Biblical metaphor of God's communication with human beings as a groom with his bride, "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:5). God's relationship to

⁵⁰ John 3:16 (ESV)

mankind as covenantal is extended in the New Testament where Christ describes the church as his bride.⁵¹

The covenant in the Biblical description of Christ's relationship to humankind and in Bakhtin's recognition of Christ's unique attribute of "un-self interested love" reveals the kind of relationship needed for truly dialogic communication (TPA 64). Bakhtin even implicates the doctrine of the divine Trinity by identifying a minimum of three participants in the utterance. Bakhtin strengthens the association between person and word by locating meaning in the ally/witness of an utterance. Demonstrating this third person phenomenon in speech activity is the task Bakhtin works to articulate in "Author and Hero." He achieves this by moving this articulation of dialogue out of theoretical experience and into the aesthetic and phenomenological context of the author-hero relationship.

When Bakhtin writes, "understanding is always dialogic to some degree" he is making a clear distinction between understanding and comprehension (PoT 121). Bakhtin suggests that understanding requires more than comprehension because it requires a third person contemplator. He writes "[in] *explanation* there is only one consciousness, one subject; with *comprehension* there are two consciousness and two subjects" (PoT 111). In understanding there is a third person outside the communicative interaction generating an aesthetic context for the utterance. Bakhtin articulates this relationship in "Author and Hero" through his discussion of the author's text and his relationship to the heroes of the text. A hero's interaction with other characters is rendered meaningful and understandable by the fact that the author observes the particular utterances of the hero in

⁵¹ Matthew 9:15, Matthew 25:1, Mark 2:19, Luke 53:4 (ESV)

the outer aesthetic context.⁵² Bakhtin writes, “the author must see all of him in fullness of the present and admire him as such” in order for the hero’s verbal expressions to have meaning for himself and within the world of his life” (A&H 86). Bakhtin offsets this differentiation in several ways, highlighting the importance of spatial context as well as the distinction between the regularity of existential rhythm and the deviation in intonation. In these instances the particular meaning of verbal expression is understood in its position towards, against, or along the background of the author’s vision. It is not always clear that Bakhtin is highlighting the real presence of a person except that, for Bakhtin, the word is never separate from voice (PoT 124).

For Bakhtin, the third person viewpoint and the contextualizing nature of their word on verbal discourse is demonstrated by the fact that all verbal expression is assumed by the speaker to “make sense” even if misunderstood by the immediate addressee. This is both a loophole and a superposition. In either case, whenever an utterance is perceived to be immediately and completely understood (finalized) the more enduring meaning of the word is impoverished (PoT 126). The possibility of continued understanding beyond an utterance’s immediate context invigorates a speech utterance, making the word more than simply self-expression. This reality places important weight on the character of whom an utterance is directed towards and how the personality of this appeal intones a speaker’s communicative activity. Although Bakhtin views all human communication as dialogic, he suggests that appeals to certain persons or ideologies can diminish or

⁵² In fact, a story only has coherency because we are able to see the lives of the characters from the author’s point of view. As readers, if we were unable to participate in the author’s perspective, we would have great difficulty seeing any meaningful trajectory in the life of a hero, and the purpose of their activity as it contributes to the story of a novel. The same is true for reality; all of a person’s individual actions are set against the background of an ideology or even the stages of their life to make them meaningful. Even the idiosyncratic and often random activities of a child are set against such things as their age or the psychological, emotional or even normative description of general stages in a child’s life i.e. “the terrible two’s.”

enhance the inherently free activity of human speech. Bakhtin's discussion of dialectical forms of communication such as "argument, polemics or parody." as "crude forms" of dialogized speech pinpoints this diminishment because these types emphasize bipartite discourse without clearly identifying the third voice towards which the speech activity aesthetically appeals (PoT 121).

The number of persons present in "dialogic relations" should be considered incalculable because a spoken word projects through the immediate conversation collecting both speakers historically into the possibility of future relationship, personal and semantic. The utterance of a single word presents multiple persons because for Bakhtin "personality does not require extensive disclosure, -it can be articulated in a single word, precisely *voices* (PoT 121). The character of the utterance is simultaneously common and unique because every person is located on a different experiential plane, a particular body and voice. Bakhtin suggests understanding is participation in speech itself, the common yet wholly personal experience of a spoken word. Bakhtin redesigns the problem of understanding by situating it within the utterance. For Bakhtin the assumption that the intellectual or psychological meeting of two consciousnesses is the achievement of understanding is the privation of dialogue and closure to conversation.

Bakhtin's descriptions of dialogue prefer subjective versus objective agreement. Consistent with the claims that understanding is dialogic and requires the presence of as few as three persons, we see shared meaning in conversation not simply in the words spoken, or even between the two speaking. Understanding is made possible and confirmed by the relationship of a third person to the first and second conversant. This relational subjectivity infuses Bakhtin's articulation of dialogue with a generous

unpredictability regarding the number of persons actually implicated in a conversation. When Bakhtin claims, “the word is a drama in which three characters participate (it is not a duet, but a trio)” he makes it clear that both the semantic and relational meaning of a communicative event is understood by and through the personality of the third person (PoT 122).

The ramifications of Bakhtin’s position for the ethics of interpersonal relationship are difficult to overlook. The supremacy of subjectivity in Bakhtin’s thought is not, however, an advocacy for relational or ethical relativism (TPA 9). Ethical relativism would be contrary to Bakhtin’s deepest concern regarding the true answerability of human action, even if this truth differs from the “objective” truth of empirical science, it is a truth with “extra-temporal absoluteness” (TPA 71). Michael Holquist interprets Bakhtin’s understanding of subjectivity through Albert Einstein’s notion of relativity writing that Bakhtin’s view of dialogue overcomes the traditional limitations of subjectivity (Holquist 19). As Einstein uses the position of the observer to understand the relativity of time, Bakhtin demonstrates that the position of the third person in a dialogic event is the point of reference for understanding the value and meaning between people in conversation. The difference between observing orbiting bodies and contemplating the interaction of people in conversation is its moral intonation. Bakhtin notes that “every utterance is a claim to justice, sincerity, beauty and truthfulness” implicating the role of the third person as the judge of aesthetic value (PoT 123).

Holquist’s emphasis on the relativity of perspective highlights Bakhtin’s differentiation between the objective indifferent observer and an observer who is

relationally intended towards what he observes with a particular “emotional-volitional tone.” According to Bakhtin in every work of art we “feel” the presence of the author, the author’s tone towards the work and the way he created his work. Of the author he writes, “we feel him in everything as a pure depicting origin (depicting subject), but not as a depicted (visible) image (PoT 109). In other words the author’s intention towards the work is felt in a person’s experience of it and how the author is felt as a value-origin operates as an important constituent when experiencing his work. Likewise, our view of the author and our feeling of his intention attribute distinctly different values to the event of human communication as artistic event.

For Bakhtin, the author’s emotional-volitional approach is a significant precursor to understanding the work, the speech act itself. In dialogue, understanding is subject to how the participants understand the disposition of the observer towards their own and another’s utterances. Bakhtin is not describing the author as visibly present, but as a sensed observer, one who is an assumed participant in every person’s discourse tonally present to each person conversing. Bakhtin’s description of common conversation alludes to a very common occurrence in legal trial, the negotiation of judge and locale. Advocates, often search for sympathetic third parties, judges or places that sympathize with their argument thereby enhancing its reasonableness for the jury.

Recalling Bakhtin’s claim that true dialogue involves a trio helps explain why intonation, as an important constituent aspect of utterance, should be measured. Bakhtin’s critiques of rhetoric display his distaste for the polemics of dialectic. Such forms of human communication foster constrictive attitudes that according to Bakhtin, are diminutive to dialogue and destructive to “the dialogic sphere where the word lives”

(Notes 150). Bakhtin suggests that the dialogic sphere created and inhabited by persons in conversation is preserved by the intonation of each participant. If the presumed purpose of conversation is identifying hypocrisy (the divorce of word and body) in the other person, the likelihood of understanding is impossible. This might seem an obvious conclusion but Bakhtin pushes beyond simple ethical platitude to a point at which we are answerable not just for the words we speak, but also the tonality with which they are uttered.

The reasons for Bakhtin's stress on the importance of "dialogic relations" as an important part of both dialogue and understanding are clear. His claim is more substantial than a call to reach a common understanding. Instead it appears that Bakhtin asks us to preemptively and particularly love those to whom we speak. Bakhtin does not encourage us to love in the "passive psychological sense" but instead love actively, intending towards others with uncommon persistence and faithfulness. Bakhtin calls this act "benevolent demarcation" whereby a person positively sets others apart in order to create space for them to speak (Notes 137).

Because Bakhtin differentiates between "passive psychological" love and actively intoned love we should assume that the love he has in mind is specially and personally intoned. This loving intonation is derived from the presumed personality of the third person observer in the speech event. The third person supports and sustains the enduring significance of the speech act beyond any knowledge or understanding occurrent in the conversation. History and narrative also function as the origin of utterance intonation but even value systems such as these enter dialogue as an assumed sympathetic observer, personified in the third position of the dialogic event. According to Bakhtin the intonation

of an utterance reveals its intention, not only towards whom a word is addressed but also its relationship to what is valuable. Bakhtin's evidence for this phenomenon is the personification of value into what he calls the "superaddressee" (PoT 126).

Bakhtin's claim that "the nature of the word, which always wants to be heard, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)" means each speech act appeals to a personal respondent standing outside of time (PoT 127). The personification of value in the superaddressee is the assumption by a speaker that his utterances, when misunderstood by his immediate addressee, will be received by an atemporal addressee with "truly responsive understanding" (PoT 126). The felt presence of the superaddressee as a constituent of the utterance is evidence for how we achieve knowledge relative to our conception of interpersonal relationship and comprehension as subject to the contextualizing presence of other persons.

In many ways the "superaddressee" is the culmination of Bakhtin's argument regarding "dialogic relations" and his claim that understanding is primarily dialogic. The superaddressee phenomenon reveals as fact that everyday speech is intoned by appeal to an interpersonal relationship wherein we are always sympathetically understood. The interpersonal context created by the presumed sympathy of the superaddressee intones utterances with positive and hopeful affirmation rather than disputation or objection. This "benevolent demarcation" is more than a *general* benevolence because the superaddressee is a particular addressee who responds affirmatively to *my* utterance and not only to the logical coherency or the contentual validity of my statements. Every speaking person presumes that the superaddressee, in whatever form, knows them

intimately and from a supra-special perspective confirms his utterances and contextualizes them spatially, chronologically, and aesthetically. Bakhtin's articulation of the superaddressee suggests that this person/personification is experienced as a promise, because the expected response is always faithful even when responses from immediate addressees are not.

There is an important correlation between the superaddressee and Bakhtin's description of "dialogic relations" as faithfulness. Non-contingent faithfulness is the intonation-creating context for dialogic speech, which fosters dialogic understanding. In other words, the shared meaning of two persons happens within the promise of responsive voice and presence. Bakhtin's superaddressee is not incompatible with ideas such as higher power, universal value, or even common narrative except that as ideological systems they lack the material personality and intonation crucial for facilitating dialogic relationship. Interpersonal relationship with abstract power or ideology is impossible. A person must be interactive personally and lovingly to dialogue, especially if this dialogue should produce understanding of what is good and true. Understanding is consequently defined as interlocutors having clarity of their relational position with immediate and super addressees. Understanding is thereby subjective; realizing truth ideologically or conceptually is directly correlative to our relationship with another person(s). Bakhtin makes this claim most definitively when he writes, "the world is arranged around a concrete value-center, which is seen and loved and thought. What constitutes this center is the human being: everything in this world acquires significance, meaning and value only in correlation with man—as that which is human" (TPA 61). In this way, all understanding is a personification of value vocalized as a third person

sympathetically relating to the speaker and addressee. We speak what is true subjectively because; “only love is capable of being aesthetically productive; only in correlation with the loved is fullness of the manifold possible” (TPA 64).

Freedom and Answerability

After “Author and Hero,” Bakhtin’s translates his studies of subjectivity from discussions of the novel text into an inquiry about the complexity and diversity of voice. Bakhtin’s philosophical queries congregate around interpersonal differentiation, differentiation as a speech event that articulates unique and valuable persons. Bakhtin writes, “Each text (as an utterance) is an individual, unique, and unrepeatable, and herein lies its entire significance (its plan, its purpose for which it was created). This is the aspect of it that pertains to honesty, truth, goodness, beauty, history” (PoT 106). For Bakhtin, the unique and unrepeatable is the foundation of value, answerability, understanding, and freedom.

Bakhtin focuses his attention on the nature of human action as answerable because original acts are responsive and free. The creative liability⁵³ in Bakhtin’s perception of action reveals his desire to reconcile the infinite horizon of aesthetic value with the particular nature of interpersonal interaction. He does not contest the fact that humans are free because freedom is the origin of creativity in speech. He writes “any truly creative text is always to some extent free revelation of the personality, not predetermined by empirical necessity” (PoT 107). Everyday speech acts are primary evidence in Bakhtin’s argument because within every utterance lies a speakers

⁵³ This is a theme traceable to the earliest know essay published in *Nevel’* by Bakhtin September 13th, 1919 entitled “Art and Answerability” currently available in English in the similarly titled *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by Mikhail Bakhtin* edited and translated by Viadim Liapunov and edited in cooperation with Michael Holquist.

intentionality, disposition, values, and ideas. Therefore, human acts speech or otherwise are always valuating and interactive, always attributing value and revealing the company of a sympathetic supra position.

Evaluative speaking in the company of other people does not assume a simplistic ethic of reciprocity. Instead, the responsibility of being with other people means that speech utterances are actually and already in relationship with the utterances of others, “the utterance as a whole is shaped as such by extralinguistic (dialogic) aspects, and it is also related to other utterances. These extralinguistic (dialogic) aspects also pervade the utterance from within” (PoT 109). The speech act is a revelation of unique freedom and signification of mutual interdependence.

We uniquely and specifically assign value with our speech acts and are consequently saddled with the ought of answerability. Intonation means we are uniquely positioned to answer for what we have said in the world. Speech is not simply an expression of personality because each utterance connects to other speech acts resonating and harmonizing with different vocal intonations. Our words are events in the infinite horizon of aesthetic value moving out of the past into the future. This interrelation means that the uttered word is fundamentally common, belonging to no one and yet to everyone. Bakhtin characterizes speech activity as dialogic because every utterance is simultaneously for someone and by someone. This aspect of speech forms interpersonal association and reveals relational position, “the semantic ties between utterances become dialogic. The ideas are distributed among various voices. The exceptional importance of the voice, the personality” (PoT 114). In this way we must personally give account for how we have tonally formed value in the world using the common material of the word.

This infinite character of the utterance is the rhythmic underscore to differentiation, the eternal depth of the word gestures towards vocal independence/dependence simultaneously demonstrating the utterance's historicity, its lineage of meaning multiplied in creative speech acts. The utterance informs both axis of human life. The horizontal axis (history) of our life lived generationally from birth until death and the vertical axis relative to those things that are above and outside simple existence, "honesty, truth, goodness, and beauty" (PoT 106). These two axes intersect in the human body, the image of the word.

Infinity—the extension of human history— and eternity—the indefatigable nature of aesthetic value—opens a broad field for articulating human difference and multiplies the possible coordinates of human interconnectivity. This aspect of Bakhtin's theory might trouble philosophical ethicists and aestheticians because this expansive field infers a landscape of untethered social liberality. Julia Kristeva has argued for such liberality but finds difficulty explaining its relationship to coherent theory of personality (Kristeva 236). Failing to reconcile distinct personality within a horizon of infinite value means placing faith in an absolutely free yet equally terrifying expanse of aesthetic relativity. Bakhtin interprets this infinite-eternal through the locale of incarnate personality literally bringing aesthetics back down to earth. The irresponsiveness of the vast and open aesthetic space *without* bodies for establishing interpersonal relationship provides few coordinates for evaluation or differentiation. For the radical freedom of aesthetic value to inform human utterance it must be answerable to life. Bakhtin utilizes religious language to understand the relationship of human life to the infinity of value and the eternity of the aesthetic. The answerable act of "incarnating" value makes the ideal real, relating human

being to eternity. The word in flesh joins the infinite with the personal, aesthetic value enters time as a unique unrepeatable and unrecoverable act. This unrepeatability affords us the freedom of truly independent action without problematizing the reality of relational liability. However, if an act is catastrophic it cannot be expunged, its evaluative moment escapes into time past. This reality focuses Bakhtin's attention on the restorative responsiveness of the speech act.

Free Responsiveness

The intonation of an utterance and the intention of the speaker are directly linked to the presence of a respondent and cannot be understood outside of this context. Bakhtin writes "the second voice enters only in the combination of the words, which becomes an utterance (i.e. it acquires a speech subject, without which there can be no second voice) (PoT 108). The double-voiced nature of the utterance is inherently responsive, and the generation of the utterance is always intoned by the personality of the one addressed. The revelatory nature of the utterance is not only informational but also incarnational, involving the speaker's addressivity. The expectation of the tonality in response is implicit in an utterance's intonation.

Once spoken there is no alibi for the revelation of intention towards the addressee even when the responsiveness of the utterance is vocally diminished. Alternatives to undersigning the speech act are lying and or ambivalently claiming an "alibi in Being"(TPA 42). Bakhtin sees the first as a fear of responsiveness, withdrawing from the meaningfulness of the word and its resonance. The second approaches the speech act with indifference, as if meaning in an utterance is dubious, pure self-expression and nothing more. Bakhtin calls this "non-incarnated action, "which "falls away into

indifferent Being that is not rooted in anything” (TPA 43). The speech act is therefore indistinguishable from infinite value and is inert, without direction and purposeless.

Dishonesty and ambivalence are common, but Bakhtin is unwilling to cede that a person might actually desire no response stating “nothing [is] more terrible than a *lack of response*” (PoT 127).⁵⁴ Approaching ought-to-be responsiveness with ambivalence is possible but no person truly desires that others regard their utterances with the same disposition. Speech acts are inherently responsive and intonation discloses this intention towards acknowledgment and understanding. Even a liar attempts to justify deceit thinking “anyone in *my position* would have lied, too” (PoT 127). The inclination to assume that one’s position warrants sympathy reveals a loophole addressivity that desires understanding with no account for immediate responsiveness.

Attempting to avoid the immediacy of responsibility by looking beyond immediate addressees to broader more generalized addressees realizes both the strength and deficiency of cognitively biased ideology. Theory and/or ideology transcend the constraints of material contexts reducing tangible constraints and enhancing the ideal justifications of an utterance. According to Bakhtin, a speaking person “always presupposes (with a greater or lesser degrees of awareness) some higher instancing of responsive understanding that can distance itself in various directions” (PoT 126). This presupposition does not imply directing the utterance toward a particular immediate addressee. The immediate addressee may hear the speaker but he is not the person actually addressed. Bakhtin’s description of the utterance reveals the common occurrence and likelihood of unresponsively speaking *through* the immediate addressee. The

⁵⁴ Bakhtin relates the situation of absolute irresponsiveness to the conditions of Hell. See “Problems of the Text in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* pp.126

speaker's utterance is not to an immediate addressee (representing bodily constraint) but to an "absolutely just responsive" addressee (PoT 126). This "loophole addressee" is the real constituent voice of the utterances intonation and is the actual addressee towards whom the utterance is directed. The speaker's distancing of the addressee either in time, space, or intelligibility promotes a generalization by the speaker of the addressee and their anticipated response. The constraint of the immediate addressee is surpassed by an appeal "either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time" (PoT 126).

Bakhtin's description of generalized responsiveness is important for our understanding of the utterance's intonation. We might say that the generalized addressee or the "loophole addressee" affords the speaker freedom from the constraints of the immediate addressee who may disagree or misunderstand the speaker (PoT 126). This loophole in one way frees the utterance from the possibility of false finalization in misunderstanding or dismissal. Even Bakhtin admits, "the author can never turn over his whole self and his speech work to the complete and *final* will of the addressees who are on hand or nearby" (PoT 126).

The loophole addressee does, however, pose a dilemma when we recall Bakhtin's desire for speech acts to have responsive intonation. Generalization liberates the utterance but also, depending on the speaker's awareness, directs the speaker away from immediate responsiveness and towards an addressee at sufficient distance to sympathetically validate impoverished, irresponsive, and monologic speech. The projection of the utterance beyond the immediate situation diminishes the responsiveness of the speaker's utterance shifting attention to future people, places, and time and or the abysmal depth of unincarnated aesthetic value.

Presuming the terribly free tonality of the utterance in the loophole addressee, how can a speaker in the same word be responsive to the immediacy of present context and maintain a coherent personality? This is the original question posed by Bakhtin's notion of artistic liability. The distance between art and life is highly problematic for understanding both ethics and aesthetics. Appeals to what is honest, true, and beautiful are well and good, but if this appeal fails to realize value in life, fails to "incarnate" them; they are meaningless because they do not question the ambivalent utterance.

This creates a context for absolute aesthetic freedom without responsibility for life. Common expressions about artists such as "he was ahead of his time" or "tragically misunderstood" in which the speaker's vision is always situated beyond the horizon of his present context in order to justify the artist's product highlight this problem. This freedom is one that separates the subject from his own place in time, and justifies his action anachronistically. This kind of freedom is in many regards another form of tragic solitude, not intoned positively in the way free speech is understood.

We can also see this untethered freedom in the speech utterances of what are called "visionaries" whose utterances are always directed towards an addressee of a future moment as a means of propelling human action in a particularly intended direction. Speakers of this kind must also be able to incarnate the espoused ideal both in their person and in those who respond positively to their utterances. It is difficult to deny the relative unpredictability in speech acts of this intonation. A prophetic speech act may overthrow current constraints for a purportedly more liberal social order, but the opposite is also true. A speech act irresponsible to the present constraint of immediate addressees and appealing only to imaginary general future addressees can and has had distressing

consequences. This is a truth that Bakhtin lived, personally suffering exile under a political regime irresponsible to his creative acts.

Bakhtin's life underscores an important aspect of utterances intoned towards a generalized addressee or abstract ideology. An utterance responsive to an immediate addressee and sympathetic to their situation will place constraints on the freedom in a speaker's utterance. However, an utterance intoned toward the present addressee is inherently more answerable to reality. The possibility of rejoinder, interjection, objection or correction function as constitutive elements of the utterance requiring a different intonation than one directed towards a general addressee, or in Bakhtin's words the "loophole addressee" (PoT 126).

The "superaddressee" and "loophole addressee" open radically different aesthetic landscapes as the speaker's appeal assumes greater likelihood of affirming responsiveness through extension. This provokes an important question not only for the present case, but also for Bakhtin's articulation of human personality. What mediates a speaker's responsiveness to the immediate addressee when he must "never turn over his whole self and his speech work to the complete and *final* will of the addressees who are on hand or nearby (after all, even the closest descendants can be mistaken)" (PoT 126)?

Bakhtin does not structurally constrain the freedom of the word as it passes between and through people. Bakhtin strongly supports the freedom realized in the speech utterance even as he argues for speech constrained by an immediate addressivity. The purposeful opacity of Bakhtin's position leaves the dynamic between freedom and answerability posed as question. However, Bakhtin does defend the importance of answerability as an essential constituent of true human action, including the speech act.

Instead of outlining an ethic or rule (the loophole addressee) Bakhtin turns to the incarnate person of the superaddressee, a position that mediates between the absolute “freedom” in a generalized loophole addressee and the influential constraint of the immediate addressee. Bakhtin’s attention is focused on the promise of a personal, on hand, and immediate superaddressee that can marry the realm of eternal aesthetic value with the constraints of incarnate reality and immediately present addressees, while judiciously guarding the fragility of the speaker’s own personality.

A Divinely Personal Superaddressee

Bakhtin’s interest in the relationship between ethics and aesthetics originates with his concern that an “alibi in Being” generates purposeless, self-negating, unanswerable personalities (TPA 42). Bakhtin is not satisfied to blithely encourage his readers to pursue what is good, true, and beautiful. If this were the case, his critique of Neo Platonic attitudes towards the body would be disingenuous. Instead Bakhtin pursues Plato’s quandaries with a distinctly personalist viewpoint, one undeniably influenced by the incarnate action of Christ. Bakhtin does not accept theories of human life that devalue the body presenting bodily existence as a fundamental constituent of human communication. In Neo-Platonism Bakhtin finds a debilitating impersonality undervaluing the importance of the body as real signification of human individuality and personality (A&H 54). Bakhtin’s critiques of Neo-Platonism provide insight into his understanding of the superaddressee (and or loophole addressee) position, not only as constituent of an utterance’s responsiveness in its relationship to honesty, truth, beauty etc., but also as a marker of intentionality towards an immediate addressee.

Speech as an incarnate act locates human communication in the immediacy of interpersonal interaction. The superaddressee as an essential constituent of the utterance indicates that value personification, as communicative act, is an important feature in Bakhtin's philosophy of communication. He is deeply concerned with how truth is brought into reality; the ideal must become material to have value for interpersonal relationship. Appeals to pure ideal (loophole) are impoverishing both to speech, the speaker, and his relationship to the immediate addressee. The superaddressee present in speech activity is Bakhtin's articulation of necessary mediation between aesthetic abstraction and the acutely incarnate context of the utterance.

Bakhtin's identification of the superaddressee is typically characterized as a "generalized Other," personal memory, or an analytic concept. In all of these characterizations the superaddressee operates much like a loophole addressee blockading a speaker's self determined personhood from the social constraints of temporality (Garvey 2000, Midgley 2011, Staragina 2009, Bryzzheva 2006, 2008). The most personalized appropriation conceives of the superaddressee as the memory of a mentor. The superaddressee-as-mentor suffers from the same insufficiencies as the loophole addressee even if it retains some constraints of real existence and freedoms in relation to personal aesthetic value. The voice of the mentor is immediate in the speaker's memory and personal in relation to aesthetic value. The presence of the mentor as a present intoning memory responsively constrains, albeit distantly, the present utterance of the speaker. The superaddressee-as-mentor in part offers an authoritative and timelessness in tone and guiding voice in reference to what is valuable⁵⁵, and as a distinct personality informs the responsiveness of the speaker's utterance. However, in memory, the mentor-

⁵⁵ To what is honest, true and beautiful

superaddressee's influence on the speaker's utterance is contingent on spatial and temporal distance. This means that the evaluative function of the mentor's voice as both constraint and sympathetic response is subject to immanent limitations. This means that the memory of the mentor-addressee could in fact inhibit the immediate responsiveness of the speaker's utterance functioning more as a loophole addressee. The superaddressee-as-mentor also fails to overcome the difficulty of preserving dialogic interaction by sustaining the position of each participant's personality.

The superaddressee-as-mentor nominally captures the way Bakhtin's superaddressee functions as a responsive incarnate constraining person by which a speech utterance is sympathetically understood fulfilling the promise of freedom in temporal and metaphysical distance. The memory of the speaker incarnates a voice of mentor by generalizing its particularity into a present moment. In order to do so the speaker must de-personalize his mentor imagining "this is what he would say in this circumstance." Bakhtin argues that these generalizations have variant function in a speaker's utterance (affirmation, injunction, ambivalence) and without mediation will likely result in a clouding of either person's free subjectivity. The superaddressee-as-mentor poses the same dilemma regarding the freedom in the distance of aesthetic value and nearness of responsibility towards an immediate addressee.

Frank Farmer identifies this dilemma in post-modern pragmatism with its utopian call for new kind of theory, or a "new Eden" (Farmer 87). Farmer's proposed alternative to the polemic between theory and pragmatics is Bakhtin's superaddressee concluding that this conceptual person mediates the dialectical tension between *theoria* and *pragma*

by introducing a third position that is inherently personal, a perspective that is weighted with its intentional character.

Farmer confirms that the superaddressee does not transcend the speech event citing Bakhtin's claim that the superaddressee is not "any mystical or metaphysical being" (PoT 126). Bakhtin's superaddressee is both outside of the speech event yet also an inner constituent of intonation. The activity of the superaddressee is responsive to the speaker because sympathetic understanding is intoned within the utterance. Bakhtin emphasizes this several times stating the third party in the speech utterance is not just a third person "in the literal, arithmetical sense" (PoT 126).

The way the superaddressee functions in the speech utterance is not an analytical device even if the superaddressee is discovered within a text. The superaddressee though outside descends into and penetrates the speech utterance adding depth and value to intonation and content, the depth of honesty, truth and beauty. The superaddressee relates the utterance to transgredient value because he is present and participates tonally. Bakhtin posits that personification can be of abstract ideals ("absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science") but these are only significations of personhood. The superaddressee as a person that can be addressed particularly and personally is God (PoT 126).

Farmer identifies this nuance of the superaddressee as being a particularly important one for Bakhtin's idea of the third position in human discourse (Farmer 95). The difference between abstract theory and personhood is understood in terms of *addressivity*. A speech utterance, when addressing an ideal cannot produce the intentional responsiveness addressed to a person. An addressed person has a particular disposition

towards a speaker, and likewise the speaker has a particular disposition toward the addressed. According to Bakhtin, the disposition of the superaddressee towards the speaker in the communication event is assumed or presupposed to be “absolutely just responsive understanding” (PoT 126). A person with a positive and particular disposition towards the speaker is different from abstract forms of addressivity, which by nature do not exhibit intention. Bakhtin argues that abstract types of addressivity take on a naïve tone since “an utterance always has an addressee (of various sorts, with varying degrees of proximity, concreteness, awareness and so forth)” because the irresponsiveness of the ideal requires a speaker to incarnate a second imaginary personality that sympathetically responds to their utterance (PoT 126).

The sympathetic and loving responsiveness of abstract addressivity naively presupposed by a speaker surfaces in Bakhtin’s recognition of the responsive fear towards the eternal word which presses “on further and further (indefinitely)” (PoT 127). A person afraid of the eternal word intuitively senses the lack of sufficient depth in their speech and therefore seeks “temporary recognition (responsive understanding of limited depth) from immediate addressees” (PoT 127). Even the liar suffers from this naiveté, “always presupposes an instance that will understand and justify it, even if in the form: “anyone *in my same position* would have lied too” (PoT 127). Likewise, the superaddressee incarnate as “absolute just responsiveness” resounds with a tone of judgment because the speaker’s appeal to the superaddressee’s sympathetic confirmation requires commitment. In other words, “because a superaddressee embodies” an “integral attitude toward a value that I regard as ultimate, the superaddressee always requires something from me” (Farmer 97).

The addressivity of the superaddressee is inherently connected to the possible responsiveness of a real or imagined personality and an utterance's durability and stability relative to the depth of aesthetic value. Coupled in the promise of the superaddressee's personality is the immediate responsiveness and solidity of eternity. This means that the personality of the superaddressee presupposed by a speaker intones his speech differently as it relates to freedom and judgment.

Freedom From, Freedom Through, Freedom In

The superaddressee's relationship to the utterance is resonant with Bakhtin's discussions regarding authority, personality and answerability. Bakhtin writes "in various ages and with various understandings of the world this superaddressee and this ideally responsive understanding assumes various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the course of history, science and so forth)" (PoT 126). Read through Bakhtin's formulation of the author-hero relationship basic conclusions can be drawn from these different personifications of the superaddressee.

Even a brief consideration of Bakhtin's parenthetical list reveals ideological positions he himself critiqued. Every ideal position signifies a philosophical paradigm that Bakhtin directly confronts in the work of Plato, Kant, Marx and Hobbes, each of which creates discourse irresponsible to the responsibility in authority and fragility of personality. Bakhtin even contests science as a loophole addressee for its appeal to a radically immanent view of personality, the deficiency being the scientific assumption that "everything that has been given, already at hand and ready-made before the work existed" (PoT 120). Appealing to science for "absolute just responsiveness" reveals a

solitary concern for material existence, not the new, unique and unrepeatable action manifest in human speech.

God⁵⁶ as a superaddressee exhibits two characteristics that the others do not. In Christianity, God is understood as whole consciousness, eternal, and lovingly inclined towards his creation. God is the cosmic presence affirming the existential value of honesty, truth and beauty. These distinctions separate God from the critique of other superaddressee classifications that only become tenable when God is understood as an inaccessible and abstract higher power. Bakhtin finds a “unique depth” in the Christian view of God that translates general and suppositional characteristics into significantly stark differences separating Go-as-superaddressee from other superaddressee forms.

In Christianity, God is an eternal person with clear intentionality. God-as-superaddressee is distinctly suited for mediating the dynamic between human freedom and responsive constraint that Bakhtin grapples with in his discussion of the author-hero relationship. The mediating person of God in Christianity is particularly the person of Christ who is also the Word. In “Author and Hero” Bakhtin describes God and his relationship to humankind as gracious mediation. As we have already argued the Incarnation and “incarnating” features significantly in particularly intonated personality and answerability. For Bakhtin, God defies abstraction embracing the body as the special material wherein sympathetic intonation is realized. He writes,

“God is no longer essentially the voice of my conscience, as purity of my relationship to myself (purity of my penitent self- denial of anything given within

⁵⁶ Of course there are multiple permutations of whom and what God is in world religions but Bakhtin does not address these in his work. Although there is an argument to be made regarding the God of Christianity and its relationship to superaddressee incarnations promoting idolatry/idolatry this is outside the scope of present study.

myself), as the one into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall and to see whom means to die. God is now the heavenly father who is *over me* and can be merciful to me and justify me where I, from within myself, cannot be merciful to myself and cannot justify myself in principle, as long as I remain pure before myself. What I must be for the other, God is for me. What the other surmounts and repudiates within himself as an unworthy given, I accept in him and that loving mercy as the other's cherished flesh (A&H 56).

In Bakhtin's description God provides significant depth for God-as-person whom humans can address and also be constituent of an utterance's immediately responsive intonation. Likewise, God-as Word becomes the mediation between persons and value, the influence of authority and necessity of personality. Instead of abstract ideal as "absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the course of history or science" God-as-Word is revealed in distinct personality distant temporally yet near eternally. God-as-superaddressee is immediately present yet outside as a divine word/voice with purity in relationship to himself and to what is purely honest, true, beautiful.

God-as-Word is Christ, a superaddressee uniquely loving and sympathetically inclined towards the speaker simultaneously modeling an unparalleled self-abdicating responsiveness towards the immediate addressee. Bakhtin writes of Christ as truly unique person of history who unifies in his person both "*ethical solipsism*" with "*ethical-aesthetic kindness*" (A&H 56). Christ-as-superaddressee is pure relationship between word and body uniting the freedom of unique personhood with absolutely answerability, constrained by history yet eternally present in the utterance. Bakhtin considers Christ's

incarnation as a unique act demonstrating the personal intonation of God towards man that “renders full justice to the other as such, disclosing and affirming the other’s axiological distinctiveness in all its fullness” (A&H 56).

Christ as incarnate word represents in this instance the best possible unity between the eternal word and an immediately responsive speech act. God’s descent into time confirms the importance of temporality and the body as the form and material for the revelation of truth, refuting the self-negation of asceticism and the self-assertion in the abstract addressivity of ideology. God is personal and relative, a real sovereign authority confirming and valuing unique human personality. Christ represents in Bakhtin’s “Author and Hero” an unmatched responsive addressee with a preference for particularly free and creative speech action. Christ-as-superaddressee is *the* word of harmony for responsively free personality.

Conclusion

The dilemma in the infinite extension of aesthetic value as background to personhood recalls the original question of freely spoken utterances constrained by temporal existence. For an utterance to be free it must originate from recognizably free person, someone who is distinct and distinguishable from a social, aesthetic, physical, and linguistic background. Infinity and eternity as background are inarticulate horizons creating difficulties in locating original word from context or in other words, a hero from his author. Bakhtin’s concept of the superaddressee gives us new insight into the generation of the utterance, its individual intonation, the revelation of intention in addressivity. The superaddressee reveals an utterance’s responsiveness to human personality and action.

Bakhtin counsels against understanding human utterance as merely the symbolic manifestation of immanent context. A speaker, seeking to be heard and understood only by immediate addressees reveals too great a concern for speaking a contemporary word, rather than one with eternal value, a word that is honest, true, and beautiful. An abstract superaddressee is akin to seeking an alibi-in-Being because normative value is embedded in time, with the evaluative standards of role, effectiveness, and appropriate context. These evaluative criteria impoverish the answerability of unique action with the potential to “give birth to being on a new axiological plane of the world” (A&H 191). Abstract, immanent superaddressees are principally limited to intone an utterance with the necessary responsiveness for faithful communication with real unique personalities. Bakhtin’s encourages his readers to become less naïve of this intuitively felt truth.

The superaddressee is directly correlated to an utterance’s responsiveness to immediate addressees. An honest acknowledgement of the superaddressee as a real communication phenomenon will inform how responsible we are for our utterances as they enter communities dependent on honest, true, and beautiful discourse. The superaddressee is an important mediating position, both as a sympathetic contemplator of dialogues and an intoning constituent of utterances. The superaddressee as a presumed witness confirming value correlates directly with how our words are intoned and, how we intend toward the person we are speaking to. In the speech act, we assume meaning that is supported by a superaddressee who is a faithful and affirming respondent.

Bakhtin’s discussion of the superaddressee demonstrates that the acutely personal character of a third-personified addressee is a significant constituent of speech that continues to move and create rather than delimit or diminish the immediate addressee and

the relationship between participating interlocutors. To speak freely means to speak a word that is truly responsive, responsive to the specific person addressed, responded to by a third person addressee, and responsive to truth because a true word wants to move freely, “wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response and so forth *ad infinitum*” (PoT 127).

Chapter 6: Authority and Heroism

“The author and hero meet in life; they enter into cognitive-ethical lived relations with each other, contend with each other (even if they meet in one human being). And this even the event of their life, the event of their intensely serious relations and contention, crystallizes in an artistic whole into an architectonically stable yet dynamically living relationship between author and hero which is essential for understanding the life of a work” (A&H 230).

The superaddressee is the essential third in Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogic speech, the personified mediator between the spheres of ethics and aesthetics. Without this third, we are compelled theoretically to either ethics or aesthetics as the value basis for our speech acts. Scholars, noting this dialectical dilemma, often argue implicitly for the former as the fundamental ground upon which semiotic coherency and stable subjectivity are constituted while indirectly neglecting the latter. Bakhtin’s superaddressee is the realization of a personal and actively present mediator between these two spheres yet at the same time, if the superaddressee is understood simply as an immanent voice, his personage lacks the necessary strength to truly resolve the polemical predicament. In Bakhtin’s essay “The Problem of the Text” the third addressee is translated as “superaddressee,” and herein may lie some of the resilient obfuscation regarding Bakhtin’s reliance on a triadic semiotic to form his claims (PoT 126). The prefix “super” in both English and Russian implies only above, highly or other rather than the *outside* positioning consistent with Bakhtin’s recurring discussion of the author in both “The Problem of the Text” and “Author and Hero.” The author and superaddressee are not only “above” and in possession of great constitutive and consummatory power but are also positioned *outside* the existential plane of human/hero experience. This truth brings together the eternal character of the Word with the immortal nature of the unique human soul. Bakhtin’s discussion of the superaddressee position in

“The Problem of the Text” echoes his original work in “Author and Hero” reiterating the claim that “the writer is a person who is able to work in language while standing outside language, who has the gift of indirect speech (PoT 109). This means that *nadadresat* [над-адресам] could be just as readily translated *supra*-addressee to better indicate that the position of the recipient and mediator of the speech act exists in a personal position not only outside but *around* the event of the speech utterance⁵⁷. It is from this position that the “author of a literary work (a novel) creates a unified and whole speech work (an utterance). But he creates it from heterogeneous, as it were, alien utterances” (PoT 115). The author as the creator, or the posited *supra*-addressee as divine mediator, both consummate the spoken word acting as constituents of utterance as well as creating an embracing context wherein the value of an utterance and its vividly referential relationship to the speaker are confirmed.

The instantiation of the *supra*-addressee as an essential constitutive member of the utterance introduces a new paradigm, not only for understanding semiotic association but also subjectivity and interpersonal understanding. Understanding is the situation where this triadic paradigm becomes most phenomenologically rich and substantive. Bakhtin views understanding as primarily a dialogic event, which in his terms means the event of personal interrelationship. Cognitivist versions of understanding such as explanation and comprehension involve only one or two consciousnesses, understanding in Bakhtin’s terms requires a third, the same as dialogue (PoT 111). In this sense understanding becomes more than an event of semiotic coherence or ideological agreement, it is a

⁵⁷This translation adjustment is confirmed by personal correspondence with Caryl Emerson, one of the original editors of the volume *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* translated by Vern W McGee published in 1986 by University of Texas Press. This volume has been the object of much scholarly appropriation even before *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and *Art and Answerability* were translated and released in English.

tripartite relational event resultant of understanding as a felt attitude. In Bakhtin's own words "Understanding is a very important attitude (understanding is never a tautology or duplication, for it always involves two and a potential third) (PoT 115). Bakhtin's view of understanding correlates directly with his view of the speech utterance and each is intent on revealing the subjectivity of every circumstance. The utterance itself is a revelation of the three-person interrelationship occurrent in all human interactions with the word, "the word is a drama in which three characters participate (it is not a duet but a trio) (PoT 122). The supra-addressee position is confirmation of this truth as he enters into each speech act evidenced by double-voiced intonation ("Discourse" 9). Veracity and value are born of the third person position because the supra-addressee's position around the plane of human subjectivity confirms an utterance's contemporary assertion, its "claim to justice, sincerity, beauty and truthfulness" (PoT 123).

The emergence of these themes in Bakhtin's later essay "Problem of the Text" transposes the authority of the author's influence to the supra-addressee with a greater focus on the possible role permutations the third person position intoned in a speech act. This may be in part due to the authorship crisis that Bakhtin highlights earlier on in "Author and Hero." Bakhtin's narrower focus on textual analysis in "Problem of the Text" demonstrates that the text itself can mean nothing without the subjective position of an author, and that any possible understanding of a text *requires* the reader to at least recognize the author-as-person.⁵⁸ However, recognition alone is not sufficient to produce understanding since the author of the text and the reader remain on the same plane of experience, especially so if the author is not actually present *with* the reader but is imaged

⁵⁸ It is important to recall that for Bakhtin the addressed person receives even the immediate speech utterance as text.

by the reader in a conversation with the author's words. Intuitively the reader imagines the "spirit of the author" as a participant in his reading and yet, as we have seen, Bakhtin views this intuitive gesture as dangerously presumptive and potentially parasitic of the author's personality. The readers attempt to vivify and validate his understanding of the text by using the "spirit of the author" also endangers his own soul because it signals an abdication of his own individual position towards the text or alternatively a conquest of the author's creative spirit with his own. The reader may in his interpretation take either an aesthetic or ethical approach but these abstractions (truth, beauty, equality, and justice) are subsequently personified into a third persona that purportedly mediates the reader's hermeneutic disposition. In all interactions with the artistic object "the sheen of subjectification" is seen on even the most ideal of interpretive attitudes (PoT 113). In other words, incarnation is not simply an historical event; it is the existential condition of human being (A&H 10). Not only do we struggle with achieving the union of sign and referent linguistically we experience this subjectively in our desire to commune with what we see as most valuable, to enclose it in flesh. According to Bakhtin, this is what Dostoevsky achieved artistically, the imaging of idea (Emerson 127). This notion originates in the author-hero relationship because as the author creates an image of the idea he also "enters into the image" and is "a constitutive aspect of the image" (PoT 115). What the author considers heroic appears in novel flesh, the ideal becomes human and only then through its incarnate subjection to the human form can it truly be a consciousness interacting with other consciousnesses. It is here where ethics must be coupled with aesthetics.

In “Author and Hero,” Bakhtin’s turn to the divine phenomenon of Christ’s incarnation to demonstrate this aspect of aesthetic activity presumes only the true proposition of this event can explain this movement theoretically in artistic acts (A&H 56-57, 113, 129, 144-145). The ubiquitous appeal to divine presence in immediate human experience becomes the third that mediates the dialectical poles of aesthetics and ethics. For Bakhtin, “Life (and consciousness) from within itself, is nothing but the actualization of faith (that is, of need and hope, of non-self-contentment and of possibility)”; a life lived otherwise is lived naively (A&H 144). The life that Bakhtin is describing is textured by and tied to, the profundity of religious experience. In order to view Bakhtin’s work as less, a scholar must contend with the fact that for Bakhtin, confessional self-accounting (prayer) is the closest a person comes to adopting the necessary life tones of true faith and hope. Only from this disposition can “anticipation of beauty in God, tranquility, concord, and measure become possible” (A&H 145). Finally, in a detailed discussion of a saint’s dialogue with God, Bakhtin describes the result of supplicatory prayer as that exact process whereby a person is reborn, and assured of eternal life. He writes, “the organizing force of the *I* is replaced by the organizing force of God; my earthly determinateness, my earthly name, is surmounted, and I gain a clear understanding of the name written in heaven in the Book of Life—the memory of the future” (A&H 145). This constitutes Bakhtin’s most explicit invocation of the Christian doctrine of resurrection, a doctrine founded on the premise of Christ’s own incarnation and resurrection.

The divine proposition made in the incarnation is that Christ, in the flesh becomes the perfect unity of the ideal and the carnal. Yet this is more than a theoretical solution to the problem of creative activity. By example, Bakhtin furthers the claim that to be

incarnate requires a subordination of the will so that one can adequately become an object of orientation, another for others. As Bakhtin notes, “even God had to incarnate himself in order to bestow mercy, to suffer and to *forgive*” (A&H 129). In Bakhtin’s thought this means the formation of a community between aesthetics, ethics, and a divine voice condescending to be a contemporary and intimately responsive voice for truth, beauty and justice. In final notes taken before his death Bakhtin, not uncharacteristically, gestures esoterically towards the profound opportunity in the promise of Christ, “The word as something personal, Christ as truth, I ask him” (Notes 148). The possibility of truth as a person who can be inquired of, can serve as a mediator between the sphere of aesthetic value and the contingency of ethical action is at least compelling if not in many ways comforting. When ethics are in concert with aesthetics and interpersonally mediated by the active, present, incarnate Word the potential for responsive communicative practice becomes tangibly coherent and reassuringly constant.

Heroic Mediation

Jeffrey Stout, in his book *Ethics after Babel* concurs that the possibility of ethical judgment is inextricably linked to particular communicative practice. The revelation of an act as good is made possible through its articulation by one who sees the act and names it as such. Stout, rightly identifying the problems with the ethical and cultural plurality of our present age encourages readers to identify figures like Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King Jr., men who were “moral bricoleurs” and therefore constitute authority in the practice of discursive ethics (Stout 292). The admirable attribute of these men is their ability to marry multiple external and internal goods into a

unified image of moral action, to synthesize heterogeneous viewpoints of a given era into a coherent philosophy of ethical acumen.

Stout's attempt to reclaim primarily immanent processes of value plotting requires an appeal to personalized versions of his ideal, the "moral bricoleur". We cannot slight Stout for naming his heroes and borrowing their authority as evidence for his own position. This inclination is exactly what we have tried to articulate in earlier chapters, the common response-anticipating appeal by any such person attempting to find stability in existence, in relationship to Being. However, Stout differs on a crucial point that places his own philosophy in contrast to the position I have taken above, even if he admits the possibility available in the divine proposition. He writes,

Systematic problems can arise when the pursuit of good of one kind conflict or interferes with the pursuit of goods of another kind. Such problems can be vexing. To be certain about how to resolve them, we would have to know more truths than we know now about what sort of God, if any exists, what people are like, and what long-range consequences would result from changing the current configuration of practices and institutions (285-86).

Stout's honest location of the problem in ethical relativity that only finds absolution outside of ethics itself makes his resoundingly aesthetic turn to bricolage momentarily plausible, if still problematic. In other words, ethics as a problem of *aesthetic* discernment requires a relationship with the author of the work. Stout implicitly affirms this perspective by likening the activity of ethical discernment to the practice of a bricoleur, asserting that the pragmatism of "cost benefit calculation and human rights" needs to be artfully balanced by the good practices of "medical care, baseball, humanistic

inquiry [and] family life,” activities that can only be ordered by *personal* values found outside the scope of ethics (Stout 286). How these values can be articulated is the chief problem for Stout’s bricoleur. The complicating factor is that these practices can only be revealed as valuable, timely and tenable in the performance of the act itself. The phenomenological immediacy in this view of ethics poses an important question of how values can be carried out of particular instances and translated into different circumstances, adopted by different people, living on different planes of experience, in different times? In other words, how can aesthetic value be made incarnate *in the present*, not theoretically in the tracts of philosophical ethics but personally, in the everyday speech act? Stout’s revelation of personal models in the popular touch points of Aquinas, Jefferson and King cannot overcome the dilemma of “exclusive temporality” (Troup 169). Time intangibly stretches away from present contingency into past and future and unless men like those identified are resurrected, able to immediately answer questions and respond to the problematic of contemporary personal action, they are only artistic heroes of a past age, distant relatives, codified characters in contemporary philosophical narrative. The possibility of a past voice speaking into present context infers what is often presumed in the identification of authoritative voices. The implicit relationship that exists between contemporary “bricoleurs” and chosen thinkers from the past means that the question is primarily one of space, the distance temporally, spatially and or metaphysically means that this given person serves prototypically in reference to the good, and positively disposed towards its present proposition. The writer justifies his or her contemporary conclusions by establishing intimacy with the absent author of a text.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Charles Palmer catalogues this shift in his historiography of hermeneutics in which early scholars like Schleiermacher attempt to establish an objective outcome through methods faithful to a given

The situation of the problem in aesthetic relationship reveals the centrality of the living body as a coordinate for understanding the event of human being. The body as a constraining reality reorients the problem spatially, uniting ethics with aesthetics in inner life of conscious existence. “Author and Hero” stands as Bakhtin’s work to develop this profound truth; bodies do not simply exist within value spheres because without the human being as person, these structures no longer exist as meaningful; “all relations (spatial, temporal relations, and relations of meaning) gain the validity of artistic objects and relations *around* the human being” (A&H 187). The particularity in the true reality of human being is demonstrated by the fact that to identify temporal goods, we intuitively locate them in the active scope of a living person. The existence of human being is what constitutes aesthetic reality, the essential situation for ethics and theory (A&H 187).

This is where Bakhtin’s claim that no psychological self or human being can derive meaning from within self-consciousness finds tremendous poignancy. This is an evident truth in the continual look outward as a means of verifying subjective positioning. The question is not whether this outward look is invalid, but rather how this “out-looking” translates into an inner phenomenological experience that can become formative in relationship to human being, promoting a coherent and stable subjectivity. According to Bakhtin, the speech act alone demonstrates this intuiting in human being. The fact that the author of a work is felt to be present aesthetically in relationship to a person and to their own task of creation means that speaking is more than an expressive act of simple

text. Gadamer, following Heidegger shifts hermeneutics away from the text itself, proposing that the interpretive activity is in fact the situation that encompasses human being. Gadamer does turn to *incarnation* as a principle that aids in developing his position but does not commit to the possibility that this principle is in fact derived from a real experience of human being lived out by Jesus Christ. Further reading on this topic can be found in John Arthos’s *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*. Notre Dame. University of Notre Dame Press 2009.

cognition. The body, as the central locale of this event means that another person's word as coordinate for aesthetic discernment is *felt* personally in the speech event (A&H 309). Aesthetics and their formative energy are found in "the position assumed by the acting person" (A&H 311). Within ethics, this is understood as the problem of authentic action, coherence between the particularity of human deeds and the person as a distinct whole, not disparate in space and time but complete in every instance as that person for which the body is referent. Posed as a question, what formalizes the particular deed into its general category of good making it akin to what is judged as right and just, even as it responds to particular instances within a unique time and relationship? The formative qualities of the aesthetic may be conceived as that relationship between the ideal and the real, but the human person as a constituent of the speech event means that the original point from which aesthetic form directs human subjectivity is never pure ideology or even pure self-expression but another person's word penetrating inwardly. In the same way we ask where such intuiting originates. It is imperative to pursue why this inclination resolves in situating the good within a "heroic" figure.

The intuition to identify heroes as carriers of value—that which is good, true, and beautiful—reinforces Bakhtin's original critique of the self-sufficient purely expressive person because such a person cannot "be active in the aesthetically valid and consolidated in space time" and because as this "I am not present for myself axiologically in that space time" (A&H 188). Stout demonstrates the inclination to identify such heroes deferring to historical figures that embody an image of the valuable man, a person capable of creating moral bricolage through discursive practice. Stout unifies valuable traits by localizing them in several different heroic bricoleurs, but does not persist to answer the question of

how this is done by a living person, a person who must somehow achieve consolidation of particular acts into a coherent subjectivity faithfully exhibiting values through the vicissitudes of time. According to Bakhtin, the possibility and power in this consolidation is essential for personhood and ethical action because “axiological orientation and consolidation *around* a given human being creates its aesthetic reality (the reality of performed actions, the ethical reality of the unitary and unique event of being) (A&H 187). Stout’s proposition is exemplary of the problematic suffered by contemporary ethicists of all stripes. Solutions to this problem, how ethics interacts with aesthetics, often neglects what Bakhtin positions as essential to their interrelationship, the living situation of the human person. The human body as focal point and also locale poses the problem of ethics not simply as an individual task, “the task of artistic forming and consummating,” but as a tripartite relationship between the speaker, his immediate addressee and a supra-addressee. Bakhtin considers the recognition of this reality “aesthetic vision” a “special aesthetics” because it does not “detach itself from the fundamental aesthetic task, detach itself from the fundamental creative relationship of the author to the hero that determines, in fact, the artistic task in all its essentials” (A&H 189).

This task, which Stout identifies as moral bricolage, is similar to what Bakhtin describes as the artistic event of human being, the act of consolidating and unifying value into the image of an individual personality. The question that Stout does not answer is how this can be achieved temporally, within the artistic event. The human act as principally creative means that the paradigmatic descriptor of human being is the novel hero. Human being as a creative activity does not, however, equate the human hero with

the divinity in authorship. In fact, Bakhtin makes a crucial if often indistinguishable separation between the author and his heroes. If, as Bakhtin claims a person cannot author their own life, a hero requires an author, a voice that acts authoritatively towards the inner person providing stable coordinates for his own position and action. No person can be the hero of his or her own life but requires authorship to experience human being. According to Bakhtin “what renders the other an *authoritative* and inwardly intelligible author of my life is the fact that this other is not *fabricated* by me for self-serving purposes, but represents an axiological force which I confirm in reality and which actually determines my life” (A&H 153). In other words, the attempt to author my own life requires that I experience a schism of personality generating a secondary person that purportedly lives outside and objective to the sphere of my own self-consciousness. Bakhtin likens the role of the author to a mother who in childhood serves as an “axiological force” that “determines me” (A&H 153). Bakhtin’s example of the author as mother provides some insight into the kind of relationship he believes must exist between the author and hero in order for the relationship to have the unique personality forming power. The primary position Bakhtin identifies as crucial for tapping this vital force is to realize one’s own powerlessness because “the one who governs me internally is the lovingly authoritative other within me, and not myself” (A&H 153). The analogy is provocative because a mother literally gives birth to the life of an infant, with her own flesh and blood and her initial caress she forms the image of a unique and new life.

Bakhtin’s discussion of how others act authoritatively in relationship toward inner personhood focuses on different ideas regarding biography as literary form. Literary art remains for Bakhtin a principle way to explicate the complexity of the author-hero

relationship and how this relationship is determinative of a life heroic, while avoiding the pitfalls of ethical prescription. For Bakhtin, autobiography and biography represent efforts to justify life as self sufficient through self-negation and parasitism (A&H 154). In the first case, life must proceed “in indissoluble unity with the collective of others” and the other in a state of “naïve individualism” (A&H 153-156). Either case is an attempt at self “heroization,” the creation of meaning around a person’s life rendering that life whole and understandable against the particular parts and episodes of their experience. How this is done not only reveals attitudes about the assumptive author’s position in relationship with the hero, but also articulates what Bakhtin calls the “heroic value,” in other words those aesthetic values which are believed to constitute a meaningful life (A&H 157). The “heroic value,” according to Bakhtin, “determines the basic constituents and events of personal-social, personal-cultural, and personal historical life, the basic volitional directedness of life” (A&H 157). It is not pure value that drives and forms a life but a relationship with those who have been recognized to embody those values that in observing a heroes life named as good and beautiful. The heroic value demonstrated in biography results in the confusion of the author-hero positions and their relationship. In both cases, the author becomes an immanent participant in the world of the hero and does not exist transgredient to the hero’s life (A&H 163). The author’s position outside of the hero’s life is essential to Bakhtin’s understanding of this interaction because the hero is always on a course towards death, an event that potentially renders a hero’s life meaningless. To be saved from this meaningless end a hero must have a relationship with a person that can remember his eventful life and “heroize” him by consolidating the individual events and aspects of his life into an aestheticized whole (A&H 173).⁶⁰ In the

⁶⁰ The eulogy

event of a person's death, this is easily achieved and unlike what occurs for a living person. A living person in active position always moves in unique ways, which upset his or her outwardly given character [istics].

The primary pitfall that Bakhtin locates in personal biography as a mediating value for the author-hero relationship is its syncretism, the combining of the author and the hero on the same plane of experience. This means that "for the author, the hero does not suffer any fundamental and essential failure with respect to meaning and, consequently, he does not have to be saved by way of an entirely different axiological course of action, an axiological course of action that is transgredient to his own life" (A&H 163). In this case, death is at most a complicating factor in the biographical relationship between the author and the hero but does not constitute "an essentially necessary support for a meaning-independent justification of his life; his life in spite of death, does not require any new value" (A&H 163).

Bakhtin's significant consideration of death within his thought lends importance to the body as the location of the event of human being, because in death the physical body perishes.⁶¹ The word, a person's personality, their soul and spirit though immortal cannot take form and live with others unless imaged by the body. The body is the essential boundary between the void of formless and weightless existence and the presence of tangibly meaningful reality. Without the body, the true separation of positions cannot occur, in other words, the positions of the author and the hero are

⁶¹ Caryl Emerson argues differently in *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* stating that death does not figure heavily in Bakhtin's discussion of Dostoevsky's works in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. I concur that Bakhtin does not consider death to be the end of personality, but read through the lens of Christ's incarnation and the meaning of his eventual sacrifice situates death as an important event, not for life as meaningful, but as a passing into, a gateway into eternal dialogue with God. Death is then not to be feared, and therefore of less consequence than those who might situate the meaning of existence internally against a selfhood that considered to be demarcated by the body alone and not by the word that extends life beyond time into eternity. See *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* pp. 136-137.

indistinguishable making the saving of the hero from the meaninglessness of his immanent death impossible. For Bakhtin, the author and hero positions are essential constituents of personhood, the experience of human being. Without the minimum of these two positions, one who lives and the other who lovingly contemplates, the possibility of individual personhood is without potential, “individualism can determine itself positively and feel no shame about its own determinateness only in an atmosphere of trust, love and possible choral support” (A&H 172).

The position of the hero is tenuous existing only in concert with an outside author. The “heroic value” manifest in human speech activity is indicative, not of author type, but the character of the author-hero relationship by which the nature of both persons is understood. The primary characteristic of the author that Bakhtin identifies as essential for the existence of the hero is his otherworldliness. The author, in order to save the hero from death must exist outside the plane of the hero’s self experience. Bakhtin proposes “character” itself as the form of the author-hero relationship taking into account both the saving power of the author that the hero so desperately needs and the hero maintaining his positional distinctiveness. Acknowledging the saving power of the author as essential for the activity and position of the hero does not mean falling once again into the problem of identifying distinctive personhood. In fact, the author-hero relationship is *the* relationship by which the hero’s character becomes vivid, taking on substantial value. For Bakhtin, “Character is sharply and essentially differentiated from all forms of expression of the hero that we have examined up to now. Neither in confessional self accounting, nor in biography, nor in lyric does the *whole* of the hero constitute the fundamental artistic task, the axiological center in artistic vision” (A&H 173). The difference here between a

biographical vision of the hero and an aesthetical characteristic one is the difference between viewing his life as a series of events, the trajectory of his life versus the *whole* of the hero, the complete coherent image of his personality. According to Bakhtin “In biography, the fundamental task is a *life* as biographical value, that is, the *life* of a hero is the fundamental goal, not a finished image of his personality. What is important is not who he is, but what he has lived through and what he has done” (A&H 173). The problem identified in this approach is its bias toward ethicality and history, what has transpired in a person’s life through a series of causes and effects, a person’s action or inaction. This posits life as a series of instances that can never fully explain the existence of a whole person who is an individually unique and whole personality. Bakhtin reorients his perspective away from the historical linearity of biography toward and more spatial understanding of human being. Instead of a focus on what occurred before and what will happen after in the sequence of a person’s life he encourages a viewpoint that demonstrates more concern with “the inner and outer determinateness of the hero” (A&H 173). The activeness and quality of a person is not solely judged on the external impact of his act but also on the shaping and forming of his inner person, that which is inner to the external boundary of his body. For Bakhtin, the inner person is integrated with the bodies outer vitality, united they form the distinguishable boundary between characters. Inner life is not, of course, self sufficient, it is utterly dependent on the hero’s relationship to his or her author, the outside person who “at each moment of his creative activity uses all the privileges of his all-round position outside the hero” (A&H 174).

This form of interrelationship creates “character” which is “the task of producing the *whole* of a hero as a determinate personality” (A&H 174). Bakhtin likens the

phenomenological experience of this relationship between the author and hero as a fateful relationship because the whole reason, the whole meaning of existence and its relationship to life is aesthetically and phenomenologically unavailable as a part of self-determinateness, “Fate is not the *I-for-myself* of the hero, but the existence of the hero, i.e., that which is *given* to him, that which he turned out to *be*; it is form he has as a given, and not as a task-to-be-fulfilled (A&H 176). Bakhtin’s account of this phenomenological experience is wholly dependent on the author-hero structuring of personhood because one cannot describe the experience in theoretical terms. As he says, “It is possible to love one’s fate *in absentia*, or without actually seeing it, but we cannot contemplate fate as a necessary, internally unified and fully consummated artistic whole, the way we contemplate the fate of a hero” (A&H 176).

We must note that Bakhtin differentiates our aesthetic certainty regarding the fate of the hero from the belief “in the logic of God’s providence” (A&H 176). Bakhtin doggedly defends the experience of faith itself, the actual relationship between man and God as idiosyncratic, an inner/outer experience easily petrified by abstract structuring and postulation. He is however committed to how the author-hero relationship reveals the transition in general aesthetics away from a clear understanding of the author and how he relates to the hero, how God relates to humankind. He follows this theme quite powerfully by refusing to discard the constraints of “*guilt* and *responsibility*” as real limitations for heroic typologies (classical, romantic, sentimental, realistic) (A&H 179). Each one of these aesthetic types creates different constraints on the hero and the author confusing their relationship and restricting the freedom available in their interrelationship. What Bakhtin highlights in his description of different aesthetic theories

of the author-hero relationship is that their adoption into art mimics the phenomenological experience of human being. If as he says, “man is the organizing form-and- content center of artistic vision,” then art provides an exemplary object by which we begin to understand the vicissitudes of subjectivity and how aesthetic authority informs that experience (A&H 187).

Bakhtin’s contribution extends much further than the truth that art echoes with the tones of real human experience. Bakhtin’s careful attention to the author-hero relationship presents the important dynamic between author and hero as demonstrative of a person’s relationship to authority. In each case, in which Bakhtin provides multiple derivations and qualifications, the confusion of this relational dynamic blurs the hero’s distinctiveness from the author, the other position wholly necessary for a person to be “upbuilt and shaped,” to become “aesthetically valid and consolidated in time” (A&H 188). The formation of personality is not only the point of the author’s artistic vision but also its fundamental task. Without proper delineation of these “fundamental *value-categories*” no “*actual valuation*” is possible, impeding conscious life experience and even “the simplest sensation” (A&H 187).

Authorial Intonation

Bakhtin’s is especially interested in verbal art, the artistic activity of speech making interpersonal differentiation possible. Other art forms are by no means excluded but the spoken word presents itself as specially suited for Bakhtin’s discussion of artistic action because in “Author and Hero” Christ serves as the principle example of the Word in bodily form as well as being the unification of ethical responsibility, self-disinterestedness, and pure otherness. Christ signifies person and word undetached “from

the fundamental creative relationship of the author to the hero that determines, in fact, the artistic task in all of its essentials” (A&H 189). In other words, Christ is a living demonstration of creatively self-active other orientation, not only by intention but also through incarnation. He is both self-determined towards all others and yet acts always as another for all others.

In Bakhtin’s aesthetic terms “the organizing power of all aesthetic forms is the axiological category of the other, the relationship to the other, enriched by the axiological ‘excess’ of seeing for the purpose of achieving transgressive consummation” (A&H 189). Christ is the author-hero dynamic incarnate because even though he possesses divine authority, he relinquishes the power of his word for the hero’s life as task. As he submits to the power of the authorial word he is distinguished as a person of unique historical significance, and simultaneously becomes the other capable of timeless interpersonal authority. Christ incarnates the inner/outer Word as a word that divinely corresponds to the particular life of any respondent. For Bakhtin “the supreme outsideness” of the author is where he exhibits divinity (A&H 191). This divinity, “this situatedness of the artist outside the world of this life is, of course, a special and justified kind of participation in the event of being” which means the outsideness of the artist is purposely maintained to participate in the hero’s life (A&H 191). By submitting to the authority of the outside word the hero’s life is given form and purpose that cannot be independently generated. A humble response to the outside word of authority is the only situation by which the author comes close to the hero, and so communicates his excessive aesthetic vision as a form-giving act. In Bakhtin’s words,

“The author comes close to the hero only where there is no purity of axiological self consciousness, where self consciousness is possessed by the consciousness of another (where it becomes axiologically conscious of itself in an authoritative other—in the latter’s love and interest), and where the “excess” (the sum total of transgressive moments) is reduced to a minimum and is not principled and intense in character. In this case, the artistic event is actualized between two souls (almost within the bounds of a single possible axiological consciousness) and not between a soul and a spirit. (A&H 189).

In this case, to become a hero means something much different than commonly identified hero types. To be “heroized,” means relinquishing the last word regarding one’s own selfhood, the final formation of one’s individual personality. The truly creative construction in the author-hero relationship begins and is realized in a person’s confession of impure and unconsolidated selfhood. At the same time, a hero takes as his primary task the position of other for others. This claim appears functionally untenable and yet Bakhtin’s tone is convincingly earnest when he concludes that this preliminary act is the sure support of responsible human being, “it is only in the event of being that any kind of creation whatsoever can have weight, can be serious, significant, responsible (A&H 190).

Bakhtin’s key decision to situate his discussion around conceptions of heroism actively focuses his argument against the horizon of literary criticism and philosophical preponderance, resulting in a pointedly “down to earth” notion. The value trait of “hero” is certainly transient while at the same time ubiquitous in human culture. The hero is in simple terms the one who brings the ideal qualities of personhood into specific time,

place, and person. A hero is also recognized for pushing beyond personal boundaries, becoming more than the equal result of normative socialization. Within Western traditions, a hero is often one who faces injury and death for the sake of others, is willing to lay aside concern for his own person for others. This kind of hero is cherished and loved. As the actions of his life are observed and noted, he receives affirmation of his work, work that often creates further opportunity where before there was despair or even death.

These attributes of the western hero type are congruent with Bakhtin's own argument regarding the life of the hero. However, Bakhtin is saying much more than cultural hero types are the materialization of socially normative value systems in a single acting person. In fact, he is saying that for the idea of the hero to even exist there must be an associated *outside* author because within the scope of relative sociality there is nothing to confirm that social value will and can consolidate into a coherent and valued subjectivity.⁶² Bakhtin's entire discussion results in the conclusion that different the proposal of cultural hero types reveal fundamental assumptions about the author-hero relationship, and most importantly that heroic activity is diminished, indistinguishable or does not even exist within certain author-hero couplings.

The confusion or collapse of the author and hero positions, or the dismissal of the author entirely prohibits any hero from truly exhibiting real human being. Within the novel this results in an inartistic product inadequately shaped for heroes to freely speak

⁶²This conclusion takes to task the fundamental presuppositions of social constructionism. Social constructionism attempts to resolve the relativity of social structure by placing the inner person, the self, as the primary mediator between available social values. These are then construed into biology, sociology, psychology and other human sciences, which theorize about the primary consolidating pole of personhood. Arriving upon a singular motivation, all human action is then organized around that pole that explains whole personhood. Freud among others is an excellent example of this kind of reasoning placing his focus on the observably unavailable sub-conscious in order to explain the dissipate nature of human personality.

and interact together. In reality this means a discursive environment bordering on the precipice of aesthetic and axiological relativism. The result is heroes without time or place, heroes that must attempt to live both outside and inside of themselves because there is no author outside serving as a verbally evaluative constant.⁶³ In either case, these are heroes who are incapable of action, much less heroism.

In later work regarding the formation of speech genres, Bakhtin furthers these claims by pointing out that the true condition of human language is heteroglossic⁶⁴, it is without universal normative patterns that establish and maintain value structures. Ordinary human speech is infinitely various, which is its beauty and its bane. Within language there is no stable foundation from which to construct the necessary order for distinguishing which values, incarnate in a person, are either heroic or morally heinous. Appealing to a moral bricoleur is an option for temporally solidifying a set of values that govern social speech norms but even these traditional structures are subject to generic deterioration and even purposeful dissection.

Traditional linguistic structures like common moral narratives or institutionalized ethical codes cannot sustain themselves as mere corporately organized expressions of a human experience. The heroic type reveals this truth because a hero from one perspective is the oppressor from another; one person's victor is another's war criminal. For Bakhtin this means that an outside authorial word must provide the axiological boundaries of a hero's life, must in some way vivify and affirm that life independent of the social and

⁶³This is a phenomenon noted in Thomas deZengotita's book *Mediated* in which he argues that the inability to identify truly heroic values in American society has resulted in the hero types which are representational of heroes for their performative notoriety but not necessarily for their actual personality and character. Even more common hero types like firefighters or policemen are considered to be so most often in the event of their death, in which a single heroic act of self-sacrifice becomes the lens by which their life is evaluated.

⁶⁴ Further reading see *Speech Genre's and other Late Essays*.

cultural meaning used to establish the validity of the hero's act. This means that the hero's life and act must receive their consummation from his relationship with the author. It is in the "incontestability and confidence of the position of being situated outside that life" that a hero understands the weight of his life, the significance of his act, the purpose of his existence (A&H 202). The position of the author approaches the hero "not from the standpoint of a lived life but from a different standpoint—from a standpoint that is active outside a lived life" (A&H 190). The author engages in "aesthetic activity" which,

Collects the world and condenses it into a finished and self-contained image.

Aesthetic activity finds an emotional equivalent for what is transient in the world, an emotional equivalent that give life to this transient being and safeguards it; that is, it finds an axiological position from which the transient in the world acquires axiological weight of an event, acquires validity and stable determinateness. The aesthetic act gives birth to being on a new axiological plane of the world: a new human being is born and a new axiological context—a new plane of thinking about the human world (A&H 191).

The hero's dependence on the author means that the I/other positions link each hero's act to his felt experience of the author's presence. For Bakhtin the author-hero relationship is the principle signification of the I/other distinctiveness, the basis for all artistic activity demonstrative of unique personhood. This is an intuitive condition of human being, "besides our own creative or co-creative consciousness, we must vividly feel *another* consciousness—the consciousness upon which our creative self-activity is directed upon an *other* consciousness" (A&H 200). According to Bakhtin, this is the feeling of human being, the condition for active existence is the ability to "feel the form" given in the

outward appeal, “feel its saving power, its axiological weight—to feel its beauty (A&H 200). To feel the beauty of this weight is the condition of human freedom.

C.S. Lewis has argued that this feeling is the memory of our eternal nature, to be “noticed by God,” in other words, to be acknowledged by God not only as an object of creation but also as a unique subject of his contemplation (Lewis 41). This is a feeling is not uncommon in the experience of human personality. Bakhtin translates this experience into the attitude of faith, “I live by eternal faith and hope in the constant possibility of the inner miracle of a new birth” (A&H 127). However, constant attention to the possible glory in the gaze of eternal Being often produces fallacious self-possession and an inability to live within oneself, the only position by which we can *be* outside of others. In other words, a person situated against a backdrop of the infinite cannot serve as a coordinate for others, as a stable subjectivity that is responsive to the unique needs of another. Only by living from within can we bear this weight for others and become rhythmic context from which for inner and outer form can be distinguished (A&H 120). The givenness of this glory is the foundation of freedom for it is only in humble acceptance of the gift that a person can withstand the active temptation of inwardly generated self-image. Bakhtin characterizes independent free action as “style” which is the “unity of two kinds of devices: the devices of giving form to and consummating the hero and his world, and the devices determined by the former, the devices of working and adapting the material” (A&H 202). The formation of style, the expression of unique personality, is built by intuitively feeling constancy in the promise of the eternally responsive other.

Potential Authority

Bakhtin's repeated claim that "I can only be the bearer of the task of artistic forming and consummating, not its object—not the hero" leads us necessarily to the essential nature of the author's position. To become a hero, to be actively positioned with "respect to values," a person must relate to an author (A&H 188). The hero must approach the author humbly, without presuming self-sufficiency and recognize the author's role in supplying the "artistic vision" and axiological context wherein the hero's life is deemed valuable, "independently of meaning" (A&H 187). Before providing textual evidence for his claims in Pushkin's lyrical poem "Parting," Bakhtin recapitulates his discussion of the author-hero relationship with a strengthened focus on the nature of the author, and what the author-hero relationship reveals about the author's aesthetic character. The author is a person of divine presence and power, "someone who knows how to be active outside of life, someone who partakes in life from within (practical, social, political, moral, religious life) and understands life from within, but someone who also loves it from without—loves life where it does not exist for itself and is in need of self activity that is located outside it and is active independently of meaning" (A&H 191).

For Bakhtin, the ability to be active outside of life is evidential of the author's divinity. His divinity does not, however, mean that the author is an alien to human experience. On the contrary, he participates in the world of the hero precisely because his active presence is essential for sustaining the hero's life. Not only does the author descend into the life of the hero but he also remains actively external or in Bakhtin's terms, "internally external" meaning that the immediate presence of the author is always a part of a person's "emotional thinking about the world and life" (A&H 191). For Bakhtin, whether or not the author's active position towards the world and his

interpenetrating presence is actually *felt* determines the character and potential of human personality. This feeling determines,

“...whether or not a whole, transgredient image of outward appearance is presented; to what extent boundaries are alive, essential and persistent; to what extent the hero is woven into his surrounding world; to what extent the resolution and consummation are full, sincere and emotionally intense; to what extent the action is calm and plastic; to what extent the souls of the heroes are alive (as opposed to being no more than the misguided exertions of the spirit to convert itself into a soul through its own resources) (A&H 191-192).

Bakhtin concludes that it is one's understanding⁶⁵ of the author himself and his relationship to the lived life, which determines the existence and viability of wholly coherent personality. His description is of a robust yet responsive person. He depicts a person who is able to present himself purposefully without becoming disassociated, a person who is present and active temporally, but exhibits the soulful depth of an individual who understands and accepts his existential limitations. The axiological position of the body as the marker of, and for human being is the primary boundary through which the inner person illuminates the significance of being as more than a self-imaged spirit. In living on this vivid boundary, the author's position relative to the hero is understood phenomenologically in the experience of human being through the persistent *felt* presence of a unique, active and responsive human person, a person who's action and speech demonstrates stable subjectivity exhibiting values transgredient to the decisiveness of human mortality. Substantive subjectivity occurs in the realization of the

⁶⁵ In Bakhtin's fullest sense of the word

author's position on the boundary of human being and through living faith in the promise of the author's charitable word.

The author gives form to particular subjectivity by “using a particular material for this purpose (verbal material in our case) and by subordinating this material to his artistic task (A&H 192). The nature of the author and his relationship to the hero is understood by his adopting verbal material, words, as the means by which he establishes the parameters of the hero's existence and mediates the hero's axiological relationship to the author himself. Bakhtin makes it clear that that author-artist never approaches his artistic material objectively, because his initiate relationship to the material is constituent of both its form and content. Bakhtin's view of verbal material is not simple words but the Word (Jesus Christ), by and through which the author conveys the shape and quality of a distinct and valuable life. According to Bakhtin, “*Verbal style* (the author's relationship to language and the methods of operating with language as determined by that relationship) is a reflection of the given nature of the material of the author's *artistic style* (of his relationship to a life and the world of that life, and of the method of shaping a human being and his world as determined by that relationship)” (A&H 195). In other words, the hero receives the reason and purpose of his life through the author's verbal approach. This is a Word that shapes the hero's life and also saves him from his incoherence towards meaning. However, this Word that gives unique form and provides particular direction to the inner life of the hero is also evidence for the possibility of style itself, the individuation possible in the utilization of verbal material by the hero. For Bakhtin, this is the necessary reality for the existence of the hero, for the hero to act creatively, to live willfully and purposefully. There are no viable alternatives that provide

the same rich and generous context in which a person can freely speak, can act, can be heroic.

The inner independence of the hero can only be understood and sustained within the loving gaze of an author, a divine authority with the saving grace to speak value into the hero's life regardless of his circumstance, his insufficiencies, and his naturally self-negating disposition. This is Bakhtin's most commanding claim. The style of the author makes possible a heroic style, a style that constructively separates itself, is generative and unique. This type of heroism is only possible "in the incontestability and confidence of the position of being situated outside that life" (A&H 202). The reassurance in the author's outside position confirms the hero's position and creates "a confident unity of style (the great and powerful style)" which purposefully approaches "life's cognitive-ethical tension" (A&H 202). A hero's lack of confidence in the surety of the author's position inevitably means "a crisis in authorship" in which "it is impossible to be an artist" or in other words, to be creative, to uniquely contribute to the sphere of human society and culture. In this state the hero's position becomes passive, emphasis is placed on aesthetic *experience* of life and not on the effort of individual contribution. The crisis of authorship also means the dissolution of necessary boundaries, between I and other, between one's self and society and between contemporary task and tradition. The dissolution of these boundaries is the beginning of a general suspicion towards the "formal power" of the outside voice, the authorial Word (A&H 201). Instead "lived life tends to recoil and hide deep inside itself, tends to withdraw into its own inner infinitude, *is afraid of boundaries*, strives to dissolve them, for it has no faith in the essentialness and kindness of the power that give form from outside" (A&H 203).

The suspicion of what is outside is an important and powerful theme in current discourse on personality and communicative practice. The colloquialisms “be true” or “be real” draw interesting parallels between what is a good and beautiful person and what it is that corrupts or distorts the possibility of achieving a holistic conception of who and what one is. Bakhtin is pointing not only towards a long legacy in the history of psychological thought but also a fundamental human desire to retain control of one’s self, to have the final word regarding the importance of my person and its place in the world (A&H 120). Contemporary interpersonal communication scholarship has identified this phenomenon as central promoting research focused on issues of power and identity. Social constructionism as a paradigm has provided productive analysis of how cultural and social influences have created or closed off certain expressions of identity and personhood but problematically pivots between dialectics of power as the primary motivator for the interaction between persons interpersonally and societally. These categories do not conflict with Bakhtin’s own design but instead reveal the residue of the individualistic ideologies he critiques. These are the same problems that Stout attempts to answer by casting the negotiation of multiple goods as a dialectic between ethics and aesthetics mediated by personal biography.

Naming cultural or social heroes is a way to negotiate the phenomenological tension felt when one’s own understanding of human experience is dismissed by a larger socio-cultural order, but it is clear that these tensions result in a general suspicion of what is considered outside to the true inner person. In fact, the damage that can be inflicted on a person within different socio-cultural value structures often results in the attempt to control that which Bakhtin says provides the formal vitality and validity of personhood,

the spoken word. And yet, Bakhtin dismisses the notion that it is the “authoritative” word that actually has the kind of formative power he believes is possessed by the author.

Authoritative socio-cultural values systems are most certainly influential but do not exact the same kind of authority that the inner penetrating word has. This word is the author’s word, that word which is personified into a supra-addressee, a person who stands outside the temporal reality and validates subjectivity *in spite* of conflicting narratives and normative ethics. This does not mean that the author/authority cannot work in concert with the socio-cultural order, only that it is the presumed author to whom the personal appeal is made, not conflicting ideologies or exclusive systems of thought.

Bakhtin’s emphasis on the inner and outer aspects of human personhood reveals an important dynamic in discursive practice, evident even at the level of current American socio-political discourse. The outer voice, politically powerful or not, is presumed to possess a particularly clear and exceeding vision of the inner structures of available identities and or versions of complete personhood in both in-groups and out-groups. Attempts to sort out the validity of each perspective ethically, inevitably leads to a conflictual conversation and aesthetic reevaluation, but even this transcendence cannot escape the dialectic posed between ethics and aesthetics in the act of human being. In fact, contemporary socio-political discourse regarding identity and authority gravitates towards the experience of personality created by certain social orderings rather than what kind of social structure is created by a disparate or “heteroglossic” view of whole personhood.

This intuitive realization of the authority in the outside voice reinforces Bakhtin’s claim that “a temporally consummated life is a life without hope from the standpoint of

meaning that keeps it in motion. From within itself such a life is hopeless; it is only from outside that a cherishing justification can be bestowed upon it—regardless of unattained meaning” (A&H 127). The hero’s word in regard to his life does not possess the vital power necessary for invigorating that life; provide him with active purpose, nor to consummate his understanding of personhood. This confirming voice must be positioned outside the axiological context of meaning, whether customary, cultural, ideological or legal. All immanent categories of confirmation are truly subject to the human dissipation in language, which proves too deep for any ethical mooring let alone a stationary canvas for the bricoleur. According to Bakhtin, in order to possess a stable “naïve and immediate” subjectivity that actually experiences life one must have “ a support of meaning *outside* the context of my own life—a living creative and, hence, *rightful* point of support—in order to be able to remove the act of experiencing from the unitary and unique event of my own life and to apprehend its present-on-hand determinateness as a characteristic, as a trait the *whole* inner life, as a lineament of inner countenance” (A&H 113).

So far attempts to understand these aspects of Bakhtin’s thought have failed to address the fact that the location of the outside authoritative voice in a social order, in intimate partnership, or even in the “true self,” for Bakhtin, is an “insanity of faith and hope” (A&H 128). To live insanely hopeful of the possibility of personal consummation through the affirmative speech acts of immanent voices means not only that I will experience a diminished version of human being, but also that I will be unable to understand the nature and character of the inner life in others (A&H 128). I cannot be responsive, nor be answerable for another person without the surety of my own person

located in a relational position outside the heteroglossic world of human language. This is not to say that human authorities in their infinite variety cannot provide some sense of stability that converts into a feeling of coherent subjectivity. This is a common response to the “rightful folly or insanity of *not coinciding*—of not coinciding *in principle* with me myself as a given” (A&H 127). For Bakhtin, this fact and the phenomenological truth that “I live by eternal faith and hope in the constant possibility of the inner miracle of new birth” means that the final word about my life must be spoken by someone who actually has the capacity to save, to redeem me from a future beyond temporal meaning.

Bakhtin’s claims for some might ironically represent both the depths of existential pessimism and the windy heights of radical idealism. These are fair characterizations only if the reader neglects to acknowledge that the paradigm for Bakhtin’s perspective relies substantially on the incarnate Christ. Without this primary aesthetic principle it is difficult to resolve the distance between the poles of heteroglossic language and his original question regarding the possibility of coherent subjectivity. The incarnate principle is also how Bakhtin deftly dodges accusations of transcendentalism by insisting that the outside position is where the potential of whole personhood exists. Without a face, without the incarnate image of Christ, the outside position becomes nothing more than another abstract theory in aesthetics, a move that Bakhtin critiques throughout his entire body of scholarship.

Christ’s incarnation as the mediating principle between ethics and aesthetics means that Bakhtin can be concerned with both the creation and encouragement of individual identity paralleled with an infinite concern not for myself, but for others. The principle reality in Christ’s incarnation “makes possible (not only physically but morally)

what is impossible for me in myself, namely: the axiological affirmation and acceptance of the whole present-on-hand givenness of another's interior being" (A&H 128). The realization of this dynamic is the unmasking of the psychologically self-sufficient individual made evident in what Bakhtin calls a relationship of "mutual contradiction" where "the other, from within himself negates himself, negates his own being-as-a-given, at that point *I* from my own unique place in the event of being, affirm and validate axiologically the givenness of his being that he himself negates" (A&H 128-29). And yet, one cannot achieve this stable position of affirmation outside another unless he possesses a supportive position transgredient to the communicative event.

If I am prideful and try to find for myself affirmation within the one I immediately address, and if I presume to address him as a person who already exists wholly outside, rather than one who is in need of the same rebirth I also need and experience, "The only thing left for me to do is to find refuge in the *other* and to assemble out of the *other*—the scattered pieces of my own givenness" (A&H 126). In other words, a person can never "be himself" but can only *receive* himself, from another (A&H 111). This receptive position is the beginning of concern and active care for another person because it means the realization that every person I approach experiences the same "unconsummatedness of life" and that the final word regarding his life is in me, "the last, consummating word belongs" to me (A&H 128). Bakhtin's emphasis on the vulnerability of the inner person carries with it an imperative of great importance. Bakhtin considers this position the aesthetic form of heroism, a position of extreme "naiveté and immediacy" receptive to the positive consummation of personhood that I can only receive when it is humbly received as a gift from another (A&H 129).

Conclusion

It is a fearful thing to surrender oneself to the speech of another, to approach others in “penitential” tones (A&H 114). In fact, it is more likely that our most common speech acts are efforts at self-defense, to preserve that image that we have so “hopefully” constructed. And yet, we find in Bakhtin the weighty claim that as a human, I cannot be an author, only a hero. To be truly heroic I cannot claim the title, nor assume that my actions will warrant such recognition. My attention to this problem only draws me farther away from the possibility of achieving “aesthetic significance” (A&H 129).

I must be naïve and immediate, present for others and not for myself, even to the point of my own death. Bakhtin does not abandon his readers to this fear instead positing a reassuring alternative, living without the fear of death, physically, social, or emotionally means becoming an aesthetic coordinate for another, I can “rightly affirm and preserve” him, and “give birth to his soul on a new axiological plane of being” (A&H 129). The language here is hard to understand if we do not remember that Bakhtin is working paradigmatically from the perspective of Christ’s own incarnation which was itself, a humiliation in order to provide new life and produce a new kind of freedom, demonstrated in the unity of human personality with the eternal Word.

Practically, Bakhtin’s discovery provides a helpful lens for identifying the type of supra-addressee informing a given speech act and the implications of this particular authority. At the same time, the supra-addressee as a demonstrated constituent of the speech act reveals a stark difference between an “authoritative” word and what constitutes authority as it relates to individual personality. To be free, and to speak freely our appeals must be to a personal authority that lives both beyond temporal meaning but

yet close enough to hear the penitential tone of a prayer, to answer the most timid question, and encourage the shaken heart of a hero.

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