

## THE PROBLEM OF TRUTH IN BAKHTIN'S THEORY OF DIALOGISM

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This paper seeks to examine the problem of truth as one of the major underpinnings of dialogism. The main thesis argued here is that truth is not an abstract concept anymore, since it arises from the unique position that each individual occupies in being-as-event, and that the history of the novel is a continuous development toward a dialogic mode of truth-making, which requires multiple consciousnesses. Also discussed are the Russian words for truth, their appearance and meaning in Bakhtin's philosophy, and their aesthetic dimensions in Dostoevsky's "minor" works. The paper concludes that literary evolution can be viewed as a movement toward a more advanced understanding of truth.

**Key words:** *Bakhtin, truth [istina, pravda], Dostoevsky, dialogue*

The problem of truth in Bakhtin's work can be examined along multiple planes (gnoseological, ethical, aesthetic, and teleological), but I will discuss it in the hope of shedding more light on how it affects his view of literary change. My intention is to provide further clues about the Russian-Bakhtinian meaning of truth, since it not only shows the direction literary practice takes, but also lies behind the most advanced type of novelistic discourse. Only thus can we understand the development of culture as an evolutionary process because, much as has been written, it is still not enough to truly reveal the connection between the modes of veracity and the logic behind Bakhtin's historical poetics. That the all-embracing scope of monologic thought is replaced by an interacting plurality of consciousnesses has already been commented upon and analyzed, but rarely, if ever, has the ensuing impact on the development of the novel been explicitly examined, especially in terms of the systematicness of Bakhtin's method of study. Accordingly, I argue here that truth now arises from the unique position that each individual consciousness occupies in being-as-event, and that the history of literature can be seen as part of the continuous development of culture toward a dialogic mode of truth-making, which requires multiple consciousnesses.

In order to develop my thesis, I will seek to substantiate it by looking into the preconditions for Bakhtin's lexicon, by delving into the meaning of truth in his philosophical works, and by reexamining some of the aesthetic dimensions that truth acquires in Dostoevsky. In comparison to its English equivalent, the Russian notion of truth tends to be more context-sensitive, but its semantic bifurcation, though well-grounded, is not unlikely to cause confusion among speakers.

If Bakhtin uses more than one word, what gives him the initial impetus? M. Chernikhov tells that N. K. Mikhailovsky noted as early as the 1870s that truth [*pravda*] is nothing but a unique Russian word that seems to have no counterpart in any other European language (Mikhailovsky 1911: v – qtd. in Chernikov 1999: 164). Chernikov himself places emphasis on what Berdyaev says about the traditional irresponsiveness of Russian mentality to *istina* in contrast to *pravda*, which ordinary people, in their attempts to find salvation, view through the prism of religion, ethics, and the current social situation (Berdyaev 1990: 83 – qtd. in Chernikov 1999: 165). Understandably, use has been made of both *pravda* [*правда*] and *istina* [*истина*] not only in “Toward a Philosophy of the Act” (1919-1921), but also in other writings.<sup>1</sup> This poses at least two questions: “Why does Bakhtin need two notions so often?” and “Why does he use them so discriminatingly?” Roughly speaking, both of them can be understood as some kind of congruence between *A* and *B* whose elements, however, can have slightly, but importantly, different shades of meaning. It can be difficult to distinguish between the two Russian words, so it seems reasonable first of all to look them up and compare their definitions in order to dispel any misperceptions that may ensue. Besides, it is hardly ever necessary to divorce anyone's conceptions from their original linguistic apparel. It is perhaps for this reason that Averintsev elucidates, though only in passing (endnote 40 – Бахтин 2003: 453), that this synonym relationship is the point of intersection between the abstract [*istina*] and the mundane [*pravda*]. Let us first look at them as “nonspecific” ideas couched in standard Russian, and then consider the changes they undergo in Bakhtin's philosophical vocabulary.

Strange as it may look, neither native speakers nor dictionary definitions are totally immune to confusion. The basic meaning of *pravda*, “[w]hat corresponds to reality; truth” (Kuznetsov, ed., 2000: 951),<sup>2</sup> is an

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<sup>1</sup> For example, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (1920-1923), “The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art” (1924), “Discourse in the Novel” (1934-1935), “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (1937-1938), etc.

<sup>2</sup> „1. То, что соответствует действительности; *истина*“ [emphasis added].

almost perfect match to the basic meaning of *istina*, “[w]hat corresponds to reality; truth” (Kuznetsov, ed., 2000: 403),<sup>3</sup> the only difference being the additional mutual references (see fns. 2 and 3), which, instead of bringing us relief, complicates the picture even further. Each of the two words is expounded through its partial synonym so, were it not for the additional meanings these words can convey, their correct interpretation would totally elude one’s grasp. A little further down the two dictionary articles, the similarity begins to slowly fade away: there we read that *pravda* can also denote “what is imbued with truth; veracity”<sup>4</sup> (Kuznetsov, ed., 2000: 952), and that “a true reflection of objective reality in human consciousness” (Kuznetsov, ed., 2000: 403) is another (philosophical) denotation of *istina*. Truth is a many-sided notion, which, depending on its pragmatic context and sociolectal features, can slip into and out of various verbal garments and can thus be translated differently. Its ontological meaning is the bedrock that supports the rest of the semantic features. In a nutshell, *pravda* is associated with the concrete, the factual, the fractional and hence it is only part of a bigger entity, while *istina* brings out whatever is universal, objective, and absolute on account of its irrefutable veracity. What this non-specialized Russian vocabulary tells us about the sharpened sensitiveness of the Russian words for truth is insufficient, but it is only the first step. The next is to move on to the realm of specialized knowledge.

Thus, it is necessary to look into Bakhtin’s so-called philosophical period between 1918 and 1924 (see Clark and Holquist 3) because the contributions he made stood as a beacon throughout the rest of his scholarly career. The principles underpinning the modes of veracity are those of opposition and reciprocal complementarity: *istina* stands in stark contrast to and complements *pravda*. This relationship can at times be problematic, but, as C. Sigov points out, the fact that these words are believed to cause difficulty does not mean that they are impervious to translation (Sigov 2011a: 50). Elsewhere, but in the same vein, he notes that *pravda* can be rendered as “justice”, “righteousness” and “truth,” but what is of special interest here is its being interwoven with “action” (*delo*), which determines one of its meanings: “truth in action, truth manifested, the good”<sup>5</sup> (Dal’ 1882: 242 – qtd. in Sigov 2011b: 813). Moreover, its derivative form, *pravdivost’* [*правдивость*], conveys “complete adequation between

<sup>3</sup> “1. То, что соответствует действительности; *правда*” [emphasis added].

<sup>4</sup> „2. То, что исполнено истины; правдивость“.

<sup>5</sup> „Истина на дѣле, истина во образѣ, во благѣ“ (Dal’ 1882: 391). A more direct rendition would be: “truth-in-action, truth [that occurs] in an image, in good” (my trans. – A. M.)

utterance and action”<sup>6</sup> [emphasis added] (Dal’ 1882: 242; cf. Sigov 2011b: 813). Besides, Kochergin, who considers the issue in a modern context, rightly contends that, “from the perspective of post-non-classical rationality”<sup>7</sup> (2016: 101), the link between truth [*istina*] and reality is not passive, and that it is therefore suggestive of the interaction between them. No doubt, Bakhtin puts a new slant on this semantic knot. Since there must be „a receptive habitat” where the two strands of veracity can be interwoven into an intricate whole, the essential prerequisites for the very happening of truth (as both *istina* and *pravda*) are individual consciousness and the answerable deed in which the event achieves its unity.

The inspiration Bakhtin takes from Russian vocabulary evolves into a more complex relationship whose intelligibility is due to its systematic clarity. His answer to Western thought as regards the yawning gulf between theoretical knowledge and practical life has already been defined along national lines as a “contribution of Russian philosophy” (Soboleva 2011: 185). Here is an overview of his distinction. First, the individual’s response to a two- or multi-participant event must be considered in its entirety since the factual and semantic aspects of each answerably performed act form a “concrete unity” (Bakhtin 1999: 28; cf. Bakhtin 2003: 29). Second, truth as the *pravda* of the event is “unitary and unique” as well as “synthetical” (Bakhtin 1999: 29; cf. Bakhtin 2003: 30) on account of its ability to piece together the universal and the particular. Third, the *pravda* of the event is individually and answerably experienced and hence very “concrete” and far from being indescribable (Bakhtin 1999: 30; cf. Bakhtin 2003: 31).<sup>8</sup> Fourth, if “the truth of the event” (Bakhtin 1999: 46; “[p]ravda sobytiia” – Bakhtin 2003: 43) is not a *theoretical* category, it is because it arises from the unique spatiotemporal placement of the individual and ethics. These ethics, however, are not at all abstract, but governed by one’s personal motivations. This inevitably involves a clash of private viewpoints in the process of social interaction. If a deed is morally justifiable, it is not because of its inherent righteousness, but because of the performer’s dialogical responsiveness, which is triggered by his own ought. Fifth, notwithstanding their functional interaction, truth as *istina* has little to do with truth as *pravda* on account of the former’s repeatability and universal appeal (Bakhtin 1999: 37; Bakhtin 2003: 36). In spite of being related to theory rather than to experience, *istina* will not

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<sup>6</sup> „Полное согласие слова и дѣла“ (Dal’ 1882: 391).

<sup>7</sup> The term has been borrowed from Vyacheslav Stepin who, in “Historical Types of Scientific Rationality” (2015), sheds light on the basic types of scientific rationality.

<sup>8</sup> See also Averintsev 2003: 453. Cf. Liapunov – note 88 (Bakhtin 1999: 94).

vanish during the required shift from “knowing-of [*znanie*]” to “answerable cognition [*uznanie*]” (Bakhtin 1999: 49; cf. Bakhtin 2003: 46). Given that *istina* and consciousness are suprapersonal, it is understandable why Dostoevsky manifests his enmity toward those who opt to erase all differences among different world pictures by placing people’s minds and their judgments “in [only] one consciousness” (Bakhtin 1984: 288). Bakhtin’s analysis of Pushkin’s poem “Parting” (1830) strongly suggests that although the components of the *pravda/istina* distinction seem to be equipollent inasmuch as they retain their autonomy, their hierarchical importance can be gauged with respect to their capacity for inclusiveness. And since it is “the truth [*pravda*] of Being-as-event” (Bakhtin 1999: 71; cf. *pravda bytiia-sobitiia* – Bakhtin 2003: 65) that, figuratively speaking, absorbs its associate-opponent,<sup>9</sup> not the other way around, *pravda* governs the practical utilization of *istina*. This specialized use of the distinction, which is consistent with Bakhtin’s views of genre, literary history, evolution and the stylistic lines of the novel, is pivotal to his entire methodological agenda.

The new understanding of truth promoted by the progress of science dramatically changes the aesthetics of novelistic discourse. In some ways, Dostoevsky’s artistic method was in keeping with the postulates of 20th-century physics, e.g. the relativity of perception. The universal theoretical propositions in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and German idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Jacobi, G. E. Schulze, Reinhold, Schleiermacher) were the apotheosis of universal Reason, each of whose eternal veracities was discovered by a single consciousness and applied to all people. The absolutist concepts of mind and truth, however, were soon replaced by multiplicity, which was fostered by the principle of relativity and concurrent frames of reference. It was stated as early as 1919 (see Bakhtin 1990: 1-2) that the systematic nature of culture is truly undeniable. The scientific and technological advances of the 19th and 20th centuries affected culture in its entirety, thereby entailing significant changes in both literature and literary theory. In purely aesthetic terms, Dostoevsky broke new ground through the narrative tectonics of the polyphonic novel, and Bakhtin explained this new artistic form along the lines of scientific advancement by equating it with the picture of truth whose multiplicity and borderline nature are far beyond the scope of the homophonic novel. Instead of only one, now we see several creative consciousnesses taking responsibility for the creation of each story world. Thus, Dostoevsky’s

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<sup>9</sup> The “truth [*istina*] of theoretical knowledge” (Bakhtin 1999: 49; cf. Bakhtin 2003: 45-46).

great contribution lies in the fact that he depicts images of independent, equipollent worlds, thereby ensuring the artistic integrity of the novel. It is the flattening of the monologic novel's narratorial hierarchy that brings about "a small-scale Copernican revolution": his main characters are allowed to gain authorial knowledge and authorial power, a technique that far exceeds Gogol's method of depiction, as in "The Overcoat," "The Nose," "Nevsky Prospect," and "Notes of a Madman".

Consequently, also important is the ensuing formation of a new type of relationship between author and hero since it substantially reorganizes the constitutive layers of narrative. Truth is a multidimensional semantic whole, a totality of individual reference frames, each of them giving its own interpretation of the experienced event. There occurs a dramatic change as a result of the fact that "[w]hat the author used to do *is now done by the hero*" [emphasis added] (Bakhtin 1984: 49). In spite of the unceasing confrontation between different views, truth maintains its complementarity-based integrity since none of them has priority over others. Truth arises from verbal-conceptual clashes, has at least a couple of makers, and, as Bakhtin argues, does not fit into a single consciousness (1984: 81). Thus, if we judge it against the background of meta- and extra-literary fields of study, it is the exact opposite of the one-dimensional and timeless validity of all poetics, methodological principles, and scientific systems of monologism.

The stance an author adopts toward his characters cannot but affect their representation. Bakhtin agrees partially with Valery Kirpotin, according to whom Dostoevsky achieves a decisive breakthrough in overcoming the subjectivist and solipsist views of Proust and Joyce (Bakhtin 1984: 37). In place of this barren approach adopted by decadent and aestheticist authors, he initiates a shift toward a completely realistic, social psychological depiction. As Bakhtin notes, Kirpotin does not use the term "polyphony" itself, but he has a proper understanding of the very essence of multi-voicedness, which enables him to conclude that Dostoevsky's psychological characterization leans not toward subjectivism, but toward pure realism (Bakhtin 1984: 37). Thus, when creating an accurate and complete picture of reality, he brings into focus a multitude of cognitive worlds that are of equal compositional value and narrative potency. The Russian writer says, "[t]hey call me a *psychologist; this is not true*. I am merely a realist *in the higher sense*, that is, I portray all the *depths of the human soul*" (Bakhtin 1984: 60; see also Dostoevsky

1883: 373).<sup>10</sup> Through this candid avowal, he might have sought to dissuade others from likening his method to psychological inquiry for the simple reason that the latter tends to bring to the fore “a degrading *reification* of a person’s soul” (Bakhtin 1984: 61), to represent a cross-section of the human psyche that is as rigid as cast iron, an approach that is inherently opposite to Bakhtin’s unfinalizability.

Strategically, Dostoevsky is not even remotely interested in “the “idea in itself”<sup>11</sup> (Bakhtin 1984: 31), but neither is modern philosophy. To put it differently, he deliberately steers away from abstractions *per se*. As already suggested, he personifies them all, “even truth in itself” (Bakhtin 1984: 31), so each idea has the human face of a living individual. Consequently, it can be beneficial to explain the relationship between truth and individual consciousness. At first glance, Dostoevsky’s foregrounding of man (through the latter’s views of the outer world) strongly reminds one of the pivotal motto of Presocratic philosophy, “Man is the measure of all things” (*Crat.* 385e – Plato 1997: 103; *Theaet.* 152a – Plato 1997: 169), which Plato attributes to Protagoras of Abdera. He does so through Socrates who, while conversing with Hermogenes and Theaetetus, makes reference to Protagoras’ principle, thereby stressing that a thing’s essence is “something private for each person” (*Crat.* 385e – Plato 1997: 103) since “knowledge is simply perception” (*Theaet.* 151d-e – Plato 1997: 168). This view seeks to debunk objective truth by relativizing it through sensation, which has no objective content whatsoever. The Protagorean *homo mensura* came into being in classical Greece and remained in circulation at least until the rise of Renaissance Humanism. At first, Socrates takes up the same idea and contends that one’s judgment of the wind, i.e. whether it is cold or not, is based on personal perception (*Theaet.* 152a-b – Plato 1997: 169). At this point, it is clear that since truth includes both sides of an argument, neither one can be victorious. Having seen his explanation discredited, Theaetetus, who acts as Socrates’ respondent, gives two more definitions of knowledge. He cautiously argues that it is “true judgment,” which he sets in contrast to “false judgment” (*Theaet.* 187b – Plato 1997: 207), and, finally, that it is “true judgment with an account”<sup>12</sup> (*Theaet.* 201d – Plato 1997: 223). With all the rationale behind the two definitions, there is always something left out, which means that they also fail to shed enough light on the true nature of

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<sup>10</sup> Its title in English is *Biography, Letters and Notes from the Notebook of F. M. Dostoevsky*.

<sup>11</sup> See “[и]дей в себе” (Bakhtin 2002: 40).

<sup>12</sup> An alternative translation of “account” is “logos” (see fn. 38 – Plato 1997: 223).

knowledge. Adopting any of the three views would be to no avail unless one considered them all carefully as parts of one whole.

But there is more to it than that. Even at this early stage, such an orderly entirety of cognitive perspectives carries direct implications for the principles of veracity. One is that truth, or rather its full cognizance cannot exist independently of the thinking subject and his world (cf. Bakhtin 1999: 10). Another is that truth is an entitative whole, which, however, is not internally uniform because of its multifaceted nature. Its mental envelopment calls for a more inclusive mode of perception, that of plural consciousnesses. While Socrates is testing Protagoras' theory of truth, namely that "things are for each person" (*Crat.* 386c – Plato 1997: 104), he actually tells Hermogenes that, as reality is bigger than anyone's understanding of it, no single person can convey the whole truth about it. The very fact, however, that the same person, Theaetetus, keeps proposing definitions of the same notion strongly implies that single-voiced inputs have not yet been fully replaced by multi-voiced ones. Clearly, perceiving truth through multiple consciousnesses has not yet become firmly habitual in Plato's writings. Whatever the case may be, it can be argued that the careful deliberation of these issues in *Theaetetus* lays the foundation for Western epistemology. It is grounded in the non-epistemic, correspondence theory of truth, which holds that human beliefs and statements correctly represent external reality. As the essence of truth has often been questioned, it has displayed impressive levels of topicality over time. Plato's detailed inquiry, which must have been sparked off by Pre-Socratic philosophy (Xenophanes,<sup>13</sup> Parmenides,<sup>14</sup> Anaxagoras, and Protagoras), gave impetus to further research like that of Aristotle<sup>15</sup> and Thomas Aquinas<sup>16</sup> whose impacts on modern philosophy are tremendous, indeed. Coming into view is a more precise notion of true knowledge on account of the limited capability of the mind to perceive reality in its totality. This more sensitive approach has gradually made its way into philosophy, natural science, literature, and literary theory.

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<sup>13</sup> Regardless of whether or not he was associated with the Eleatics (see Reale 1987: 77).

<sup>14</sup> His only surviving work is *On Nature*, wherein he expresses two views of reality – one in "The Way of Truth" and another in "The Way of Appearance/Opinion" (doxa, δόξα) – that roughly foreshadow the noumenon/phenomenon distinction.

<sup>15</sup> *Categories* (chaps. 4, 5, 10, 12), *De Interpretatione* (chaps. 1-9), *Sophistici Elenchi* (chap. 25), and elsewhere (see Crivelli 1).

<sup>16</sup> He maintained that truth arises from "the equation of mind and thing" (*Summa* Q16a1 – 1947: 272) and stressed the importance of "[d]ivine help" in attaining any kind of truth (*Summa* Q109a1 – 1947: 2528).



Understandably, a partial analogy can be drawn here between *Theaetetus* and Dostoevsky's prose, inasmuch as both seek to embrace truth by giving an account of all its constituent perspectives. In Dostoevsky's case, however, there are some small but important differences. First, the Sophistic style of argumentation necessitates an opposing person who is now substituted with an *irreplaceable* individual who, and by extension his viewpoint, is just as *unique* in himself as the location of each point in Euclidean space. Second, although there are several delineations of knowledge in *Theaetetus*, they all emerge into one man's consciousness – the unified subject has not yet disintegrated into his component mental worlds and, therefore, his big truth has not yet been split into several related yet autonomous “smaller” truths. Third, in contrast to Plato and the phenomenologists, who tend to view notions as abstract entities (Bakhtin 1984: 31), Dostoevsky enlivens each idea since it arises in dialogic response to other people's thoughts and is articulated through a human voice. Yet neither Plato's idealism (see note 1 – Bakhtin 1984: 100) nor his dialogues are entirely monologic. It has long ago been pointed out that Socratic truth is relative, not abstract, and that it arises in the course of dialogical interaction (Kristeva 2001: 233).<sup>17</sup> As Bakhtin himself notes, Plato's early debates are evidently tinged with “the dialogic nature of truth” (1984: 110), but the focus then shifts to the eternity of true judgments, which smothers the budding multivoicedness of this form of reasoning. Thus, there is some sort of “halfwayness,” and it is this insufficient or partial dialogicity that raises the question of whether there is a clear boundary between Dostoevsky's polyphonic style and other types of double-voiced discourse in Bakhtin's typology of genres.

In the search for truth, both writer and scholar tend to manifest *versatility* in encompassing many areas of life and study respectively. “The Meek One: A Fantastic Story”<sup>18</sup> (1876) was published in *A Writer's Diary* [*Dnevnik pisatelya*], which itself is a pre-electronic venture into many fields of knowledge exhibiting even greater thematic diversity than an Internet blog and which, therefore, falls into no particular genre. For this reason, not only does Gary S. Morson speak of “boundary works” and “threshold literature” (1981: 48-51), but, in his doctoral dissertation,<sup>19</sup> he also explores the literary and meta-literary complexity of the writer's two-

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<sup>17</sup> The English title of her 1967 study is “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” – in: *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.

<sup>18</sup> *Krotkaya. Fantasticheskiĭ rasskaz* („Кроткая. Фантастический рассказ“).

<sup>19</sup> It is entitled *Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer": Threshold Art*. Ph.D. diss. Yale U, 1974 (see Morson 2009: lxxi).

volume periodical miscellany, which contains writings dating from 1873 to 1876 and from 1877 to 1881.

Another feature of Dostoevsky's versatility is that his literary adroitness allows him to unify differing narrative approaches into an orderly composition. In the foreword to "The Meek One," he attaches great importance to truth in spite of the "undermined" credibility of the story. Besides being realistic, it is also fantastic, as the subtitle shows, which, in Victor Hugo's terminology, simply means that the chronology of events has been violated and that the story is narrated as if it has been overheard by the narrator. Of course, a many-sided object of study will call for a research methodology of like nature. As a rough analogy, I draw a parallel between writer and scholar: like Dostoevsky, Bakhtin generally avoids fully embracing the standpoint of any particular field of inquiry. Instead, he tends to view a number of problems as borderline states and events. For example, the subject's position and perceptual awareness is "on the frontier of the horizon of [his] seeing" (Bakhtin 1990: 37), aesthetic form, which is transgredient to the hero and completes him from outside, "*is a boundary*" (Bakhtin 1990: 90), the author's vantage point must be "on the boundary of the world he is bringing into being" (Bakhtin 1990: 191), cultural phenomena are, as a rule, "located on a boundary" (Bakhtin 2001: 207), and discourse "lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context" (Bakhtin 1981: 284). Another case in point is the very concept of *genre*, insofar as medieval verse romance takes shape "on the boundary between epic and novel" (Bakhtin 1981: 377). Given the need for consistency between each methodology and its object of study, it can hardly be an accident that the interdisciplinary borderiness of Bakhtin's research strategy is in line with the panoramic scope of Dostoevsky's vision. The latter's method is consistent since his work shows variety of form and subject matter, contemporaneity, and objectivity. In other words, his concept of truth is comprehensive since it arises from all these facets of life. The multiform reality of his day is refracted through his authorial prism. He approaches his subjects from the vantage point of an aspiring artist who aestheticizes his source material and seeks to convey a transhistorical message that immortalizes the newsworthy (Morson 2009: 6). Not surprisingly, his *Diary* is an anthology of contemporary writing (Morson 2009: 9 ff.) including genres and modes of discourse that range from publicistic articles and letters through modern renditions of Menippean satire, e.g. "Bobok" (1873) and "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man: A Fantastic Story" (1877), to critical responses. The stunningly wide variety of themes addressed in the *Diary* and the large circle of commentators he was

in correspondence with (baron Alexander Egorovich Wrangel, a lawyer, diplomat, and a close friend of Dostoevsky, Apollon Nikolaevich Maikov, a pan-Slav poet, Nikolay Nikolayevich Strakhov, a philosopher, publicist and literary critic, etc.), as documented in his *Biography, Letters, and Notes* (Dostoevsky 1883), cover many areas of social life whose integrity prefigures Bakhtin's systematic approach to culture.

In conclusion, I will summarize what has been said so far. Discrimination between *istina* and *pravda* as modes of veracity, though intermittently problematic, is deeply anchored in the Russian language. This unique feature of Russian vocabulary informs Bakhtin's ideas and grows, together with other concepts, into a coherent philosophical platform. Truth is of fundamental importance: it underlies the scholarly agenda of Bakhtin the philosopher (rather than that of Bakhtin the philologist), is the ultimate purpose of development and change, and can expound the history of the pre-Dostoevskian novel. It is essential to the relativity of perception, which in its turn lies behind the theory of dialogism as a higher form of novelistic discourse. The new type of author/hero relationship in the architectonics of the novel develops increased understanding of truth: it now arises from more than one mental world. Dostoevsky's approach is realistic, so his style is well suited to the depiction of diverse characters and the intricacies of life. However, the disintegration of truth into several verbal-semantic components is the result of a long historical process. After centuries of change, the partial dialogicity of truthmaking in Plato finally evolves into its mature polyphonic stage. Just as a research methodology is supposed to be in keeping to its object of study, so Bakhtin's scholarly approach is relevant to Dostoevsky's work. The comprehensiveness of truth, which is evident even in Dostoevsky's "minor" writings, reflects the polar opposites and objective complexity of his epoch. This particular understanding of truth underlies Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and can be used for further research in the area.

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