

# ***The Dialectic of Dialogue versus the Metaphysic of Post-Modernism***

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1. This article began to take shape in Vorontsov Park in the Crimea in the summer of 1998, and was written in response to the book by Caryl Emerson. To be candid, we had great trouble understanding (if we understood at all) why this work had become so popular in the West and to some degree, in Russia. But the authors are accustomed to trusting the judgments of their Western friends, so when Emerson's book was recommended to us, first by Robin Blackburn and then by a number of American colleagues preoccupied with matters remote from literary scholarship, we dutifully set to work.
2. In essence the book is a review of the literature about Bakhtin, of high quality and making claims to objectivity. It contains a minimum of authorial appraisals, except for a justified anger against Stalinism that crosses the bounds into a pathological aversion for any socialist and at times even socially oriented ideas.
3. So why, then, an article about Emerson's book? The reason is Bakhtin. The latter, however, wrote mainly in the first half of the century, and became highly popular in our country only a little later, in the time of the Khrushchev "thaw", while the twentieth century is now almost over....

## **I. WHY BAKHTIN?**

4. Why then is Bakhtin now so popular and topical, both in the West and, through a sort of echo, here in Russia? Why is he of interest to the authors of this article and to our potential readers, not so much professional philologists or philosophers as people concerned with solving the profound social problems of the present day, in the course of a far from simple movement from the "realm of necessity" to the "realm of freedom"?
5. First, however, we shall provide a little history, with the accent on the social – philosophical life of the USSR in the middle decades of our century, a topic that has never been well known to Western readers and is now largely unfamiliar to Russian ones as well.
6. It was during those years that the works of Bakhtin were not only in demand in our country, but were read until they were in tatters (the copies of Bakhtin's writings that we were able to obtain in libraries during that period were in just such a condition). Consequently, an idea that forms a thread through Emerson's work - the idea of the isolation and lack of recognition of Bakhtin in his homeland - needs to be corrected. Whatever difficulties Bakhtin encountered with the authorities, especially during the Stalin period, his works were nevertheless published, and as well as being read and discussed by specialists, were also widely known to the broader public. There was a lively and continuous interest in them. In addition, Bakhtin was understood, and his works made a contribution to the further progress of scholarship. From the very first, Soviet scholars entered into dialogue with Bakhtin, arguing with him, and in the case of some of them such as V. Bibler and G. Batishchev, developing his ideas. This has not happened in the West, even now and even in Emerson's book; for her, Bakhtin is an object to be studied in the way animals are studied, partly on the basis of observation but mainly, through systematizing and referring to the literature that pertains to them.
7. The interest shown in Bakhtin's work in the USSR during the 1950s and 1960s - an interest which which was focused mainly on the questions of dialogue and carnival - was due not only and not so much to the fact that reading him was permitted, as to other phenomena. The same period in the Soviet Union saw the beginning of a unique process of

searching for a methodology and theory for the removal of alienation from social life and human relationships, for the achieving of a free and rounded development of the personality not outside of society, but through voluntary association between people, through free creative labour. It was this period that saw the appearance of the works of E. Ilyenkov, of the already-mentioned G. Batishchev and V. Bibler, and somewhat later of V. Vazyulin, N. Zlobin, V. Mezhuiev, V. Tolstykh and other writers addressing the question of free creative activity as the basis for the society of the future. Free creative activity was perceived by them as a subject-subject relationship, a dialogue, a polyphonizing of personalities, each of them the subject of activity, and of relations of collaborative creativity.

8. This orientation toward the future, and the general atmosphere of romanticism that characterized the “generation of the sixties”, intersected organically with the world of Bakhtin. It needed his theoretical and methodological constructs not only as more or less well-established means of interpreting the literary works of Dostoevsky or Rabelais, but as a window into a new world - the world of the methodology and philosophy of unalienated, subject-subject human relations.

9. The so-called “stagnation era” (from the late 1960s through the 1970s), typified by a stultifying atmosphere of bureaucratic passivity and full-blown philistinism, soon stifled this enthusiasm for seeking a new world. The interest in Bakhtin (who by this time had become a well-known Soviet intellectual phenomenon) was diverted into the channel of academic criticism of his ideas on topics that belong to the area of literary scholarship rather than those of social philosophy and methodology. The participants in these debates (S. Averintsev, F. Losev and others - this aspect is very scrupulously covered by Emerson), discussed whether Dostoevsky and Rabelais had really written and thought as Bakhtin maintained they had done.

10. In reality, this was quite unimportant. What was important was the fact that Bakhtin, seizing on various peculiarities of Dostoevsky's poetics and Rabelais' humour, and using their insights as his starting-point, should have succeeded in finding the key to a new world lying beyond alienation. Unfortunately, our academics were later to lose this “golden key”, of whose existence writers such as Emerson are not even aware. The window which Bakhtin cut through into a new world was again closed, and Bakhtin from being the discoverer of a new world was transformed at best into a “singer of prose” (Emerson). Bakhtin, who had proclaimed the existence of the new world, vanished into the smog of stagnation, from which “Bakhtinology” began to sicken as well.

11. Perestroika, the collapse of the USSR and the Westernization of cultural life in Russia in the 1990s, and also the growing popularity of post-modernism, resurrected Bakhtin. He was resurrected, however, in a new capacity, as the herald of a new style of thinking and of understanding the world. Here pluralism was replaced by indifference to the views of others, critical attitudes by agnosticism, and anti-totalitarianism and openness by the rejection of all systems and of the idea of progress itself.

12. Post-modernism thus laid claim to Bakhtin, while turning his creative achievements inside out.

13. Why did it lay claim to him? Because post-modernism has almost nothing in the way of its own really new and distinctive theoretical and methodological foundations, while superficially and formally (something very important for post-modernism), Bakhtin could be included within several canons of this new current. Moreover, the personal status of this genuinely important thinker (and the post-modernists have only a handful of such people)

proved especially suitable; he had been almost a dissident, almost a victim of Stalinism, and so forth).

14. Why did post-modernism turn Bakhtin's achievements inside out? Because in his theoretical constructs (above all in his theories of dialogue and carnival) it is only at first appearance that formal pluralism and elements of an extrasystemic character hold sway, and that the post-modernists' bugbear of "metatheory" is absent. In essence, Bakhtin's dialogue and carnival amount to a metatheory, profoundly dialectical and constructed on a contrapuntal basis - that is, incorporating its opposite within itself. Or to be more precise, they provide an integral view of a new type of human relations, and hence, a new way of knowing and perceiving the world.

## **II. THE WORLD OF BAKHTIN. PROLOGUE**

15. The creativity of Bakhtin is indeed a new world, since his thoughts cannot be called theory in the strict sense of the word. In essence, they are a dialogue carried on by Bakhtin with Dostoevsky, Rabelais, and his readers.... (As a small aside, we shall note that unfortunately, the dialogue is not with all his readers. Others, who sadly include Emerson, are only capable of apprehending what is immediately apparent, without perceiving the world of the author whom they read and about whom they write. They are capable of relaying debates "on the topic of...", while regaling the reader with an abundance of quotations, and they have a sincere love for the object of their analysis, but they cannot see in Bakhtin the subject of a dialogue - a writer with whom it is both possible and necessary to argue, forgetting about oneself and from him, returning to oneself. To be capable of this, one must oneself be a living, creating subject, and not... but enough on all this).

16. Moreover, it is important that Dostoevsky, Rabelais and the reader themselves enter into dialogue with Bakhtin, while he argues heatedly and enters into polyphony with them. Other critics of Bakhtin, including in the USSR, have seen in this a weakness of Bakhtin as an analyst, considering that he makes "strained interpretations" and excessive generalizations, while taking an incorrect attitude to "the material". The truth is different: Bakhtin sees in Dostoevsky and Rabelais not rigid material to be depicted in an indifferent, objectivist fashion, but personalities, subjects - people who are alive in the dialogue with him, in the process of co-authorship, the polyphony. This means that Bakhtin can and must criticize and correct Dostoevsky and Rabelais, subjectively (or rather, personally) perceiving and as it were "revivifying" them, not turning them into icons.

17. Indeed, the world of Bakhtin is a window into a new world, the world of collaborative creativity.

18. But this is only a window. A prologue.

### **1. DIALECTICS AS THE BASIS OF BAKHTIN'S WORLD**

19. The inability of present-day Western analysts (and of Russian ones who embrace their ideas) to understand Bakhtin as a living subject in acts of collaborative creativity is not accidental. To the degree to which such analysts grew up amid a methodology of metaphysical, formal and functional relationships, they are incapable of entering into dialogue. As understood by Bakhtin, dialogue is a totally dialectical interrelationship of subjects.

20. This thesis is at least to some degree contentious, and therefore requires proof. In its briefest form, this proof may be put as follows.

21. In the first place, dialogue presupposes that the subjects who enter into it are qualitatively different. These participants are not formal, cybernetic objects, different and interacting on the external plane, and with the relationship between them able to be described by some more or less complex formula. As individuals and as subjects we differ qualitatively, and this means that each of us represents a particular integrity, which the other participant in the dialogue has to learn to accept as a whole (as it were, “forgetting” himself or herself and accepting the other totally). Dialogue is fundamentally different from relating to a person as an object, particular features of which might arouse your approval or dislike. In dialogue, you do not relate to the other participant on a functional basis, as to a buyer or seller, a superior or underling. In the world of alienation, that is, today's world, people relate to one another primarily as objects; dialogue represents a breakthrough into a different world.

22. Consequently, the subject-subject relationship of dialogue is a relationship of qualitatively different integral beings, whose interaction gives birth to a new (“third”) quality, “dialogue”. The nature of this qualitative interaction can be understood only in the context of dialectical logic.

23. We shall take the risk of formulating a hypothesis: the logic of dialogue and of polyphony is (1) a method; (2) a process of cognition-activity; and also, (3) a subject-subject relationship characteristic of a world where people are not dominated by relations of alienation (in particular, objectification and reification). This logic and method take the place of the “old” dialectical logic, oriented primarily toward the reflecting (naturally, in an active fashion, immersed in practice) of objective processes, which do not depend on the will and activity of the subject. The “old” dialectic thus suffices best for the systematic cognition of the “realm of necessity”, of the worlds of objective natural and alienated social relationships. Unlike this “old” dialectic, the dialectic of dialogue, polyphony and collaborative creativity is about the joint creation and cognition of the “realm of freedom”.

24. Secondly, the subject-subject relationship is a living dialectical contradiction of a particular type - the contradiction of a new human cultural world that is coming into being. Why? When put briefly, the answer appears simple: on the one hand, when entering into dialogue, I have to “remove” my own qualitative personal being. To remove a particular phenomenon means to subject it to dialectical negation, to “not killing”, to the negation of the negation that subordinates it (let us hope that the reader has at least some familiarity with the world of dialectics, since we cannot explain all these complex categories here). At the same time (NB! At the very same time, in the same relationship) my individual personality has to assimilate into itself my partner in dialogue, become him or her, become not-I; it is necessary for me to “see the world from his or her viewpoint”, not only in debate but also in life, in terms of my understanding of the world. My partner in discussion performs the same process of “removing” his or her “I” in the same process of dialogue; as a result, I recreate him or her, while he or she does the same for me.

25. Conversely, when entering into dialogue and subjecting my own world to removal, I cannot and must not “remove” my individual world, since otherwise I would simply become “uninteresting” for my partner. If I were to lose the peculiar, qualitatively unique

integrity of my personal world, I could no longer be a participant in dialogue. The same also applies to the other participant in the subject-subject relations.

26. So, is it necessary to “remove” oneself or not? Both yes and no, and at one and the same time and in one and the same relationship. Otherwise there will be no dialogue of personalities, only a functional interaction of social agents.

27. Because it is the latter that prevails in today's world, while a dialectical world-view (not to speak of dialogue, of unalienated subject-subject relations, as a way of life and mode of interaction) is now untypical, life rejects dialectics the way the average person in the fifteenth century (and in Russia as late as the nineteenth century) rejected the idea of a spherical world orbiting around the sun. Moreover, the “acceptance” of dialectics and a dialogic mode of interaction is now useless, harmful and even dangerous for everyday life, just as four or five hundred years ago it was useless (but not for Christopher Columbus or Giordano Bruno) and dangerous to argue that the earth moved around the sun.

28. Thirdly, the world of Bakhtin is dialectical, since it is based on a complex, multi-layered system of relationships where there are content and form (in most cases form transformed, negating its content so that this content, as it were, is turned inside out), essence and appearance (the sort of appearance, moreover, that camouflages and hides the essence).

29. All this is to be seen most clearly in the world, revealed by Bakhtin, of carnival. This is not merely contradictory essence (carnival as “another truth” of life, the opposite of an official hierarchy), and not simply critical character (the humorous culture of carnival as negation and mockery of the established system of canons and values). No, carnival is something greater. It represents the hidden essential, profound bonds of life, the genuine “truth of life”, cleansed of the distorted forms created by the world of alienation. In the world of Rabelais, carnival represented the cleansing, through the force of laughter, of the dead flesh represented by the thoroughly regulated, hierarchic world of the late middle ages, where only power and class status made a person an individual from the official social viewpoint, and where clerical dogmas served as the only form of spiritual life.

30. The ability and the desire to “remove” distorted forms (in particular, through the cleansing carnivalization of life and consciousness), and to penetrate to the essence of processes, represent Bakhtin's most important attributes (attributes which have remained invisible to those of his critics and followers, including Emerson, whose scholarly eyes and minds are unable to distinguish between appearance and essence just as a victim of colour-blindness cannot distinguish colours). This is also the key characteristic of the dialectical view of society - a view which distinguishes distorted forms (the fetishization of bureaucratic hierarchy, commodity and money fetishism, ideology, religion and so on) which arise objectively as the result of alienation, and genuinely existing links (such as relations of non-economic compulsion and the power of bureaucracy; commodity alienation and the exploitation of labour by capital; the subordination of culture to such false forms as religion, and much else).

31. Dialogue and carnival are thus dialectical through and through. At the same time, they are somewhat more complex phenomena than dialectics, though also more narrow. Dialogue (the phenomenon of carnival will be discussed later) grows out of the dialectic and extends beyond it, though without exhausting it.

32. So what is Bakhtin's dialogue, and why is this idea so important for scholars oriented toward the search for paths to the liberation of humanity?

## 2. DIALOGUE: A WINDOW INTO THE WORLD OF COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY

33. We repeat: for Bakhtin the idea of dialogue was originally only a way of representing and recreating the poetics of Dostoevsky. Both in the works of Bakhtin, and especially in those of his obvious and not-so-obvious followers in the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s (Bibler, Batishchev, and others), dialogue served merely as a stimulus for the appearance of a number of highly interesting hypotheses - subject-subject relations, collaborative creativity, and free (in some of the works of Batishchev and others, communist) labour.

34. But first about Dostoevsky. Bakhtin's choice of this writer in particular was far from accidental. In Dostoevsky's writings (and in Dostoevsky himself), dialogue, involvement, and the lack of alienation of the author from his heroes and from the reader had a uniquely vital existence. But this is not all.

35. No less important is the fact that Dostoevsky's novels contain a world in which the heroes are (1) close spiritually to earlier and present-day intellectuals preoccupied with exploring and reflecting upon their own psyches. Meanwhile (2), these are heroes who attempt to tear themselves free from the world of alienation, affirming themselves through action - from the saintly non-resistance of Prince Myshkin to Raskolnikov's murder of a pawnbroker. This is why Bakhtin, with his idea of Dialogue as the basis of Dostoevsky's poetics, was acceptable to non-socialist intellectuals (and even those close to such intellectuals), despite the fact that concealed here is the key to the world of unalienated (in the broader scheme of things, communist) relations and activity.

36. So what is dialogue? If you want a brilliant answer, read Bakhtin. If you are prepared to be satisfied with a retelling, look at the text on the previous pages concerning the dialectic of the self-negation of "I" and its self-reproduction in the subject-subject relationship.

37. Here we shall restrict ourselves to a few remarks about dialogue as a window into the world of unalienated human relationships.

38. Firstly, only a subject can enter into dialogue (for a definition of this type of activity-relationship-cognition, read Bakhtin). This means an individual who  
*a) is not an object of alienation (for example, an object of commodity, monetary or capitalist alienation is no longer an individual, but a non-person. What we find in the latter case is a function - Ford, MacDonalds, Siemens - and not people; these are the functions of automobile/fast food/refrigerator corporate capital....);*

*b) is capable of perceiving another human being as an individual, and therefore offers the possibility of and capacity for relations with another through self-estrangement - through self-irony and self-criticism (we recall that laughter is the beginning of the carnival world of anti-alienation);*

*c) engages in dialogue as a process of collaborative creativity, the joint creation of a new world of communication, of creation of the participants themselves. Such a dialogue is in essence the free, unalienated activity of those who take part in it.*

39. Secondly, dialogue as a free relationship of individuals/subjects can and must issue forth solely in an unalienated social space-time - a world which (even if only to a certain degree - to the degree to which Dialogue is possible) is not subject to the power of money, of capital, or of bureaucracy. Otherwise, instead of the communication and collaborative creativity of subjects, we find market transactions, political intrigues and so forth.

40. Thirdly, dialogue is a value in and of itself. Subjects enter into it not because they want to receive something from the other participant. Nor is this cooperation in a process of

material production (as when it takes the energies of two or three people together to shift a stone). Dialogue is the world of penetration into the personality of another and through the other, into oneself; it is a means of “cracking the husk” and of releasing both the other participant and oneself from the shell of alienation, of removing from both individual beings the social mask (of millionaire or beggar, minister or clerk) which in the world of alienation grows tightly onto each person. Through dialogue a person is potentially able to free himself or herself from the power of alienation and thus to become free and capable of collaborative creativity.

41. It is important to make a qualification here: dialogue does not necessarily have to take place in the present (two people sitting at a table...). It is possible for a contemporary writer to conduct dialogue with Bakhtin or Dostoevsky, with the dialogue mediated by cultural phenomena created by the two of them (hence collaborative creativity, dialogue, is a means of breaking down the barriers of personal life).

42. In dialogue, however, a person is able to break out of the world of alienation both through overcoming relations of alienation, and through “escaping” from this world.

43. These are two fundamentally different paths, and even the intellectual who loves Bakhtin and Dostoevsky tries at all costs to avoid noticing the difference. Such an intellectual, without even seeing cause for doubt, considers the only real path out of alienation to be that of “escape” - to an “ivory tower” of refined art and pure science; to the world of hippies and vagrants (in Russia a whole mass of intellectuals have chosen this option, sometimes against their will but often deliberately); or at best into a ghetto of left-wing intellectual associations (this, to some degree, represents a self-criticism).

44. Even this “escape”, however, is a nerve-wracking business for an intellectual conformist (or as Marx and Engels wrote, philistine). This window, even if it is only partly open, looks onto a new world, from which a fresh breeze of the unfamiliar is blowing. This breeze forces us to have doubts, to look at ourselves critically, from outside the framework of “common sense”. And for a philistine, even a talented one, this is unpleasant and dangerous.

45. Hence Emerson's sympathetic (if we read her correctly) critique of Bakhtin from the point of view of “common sense”: dialogue as a literary archetype and especially, as a type of human relations is not typical; it arises only seldom in this world....

46. Exactly so, we reply. In this world (the world of alienation, which for people like Emerson is the eternal and only possible world), dialogue is the exception. But we can draw two conclusions from this. The first is that the idea of dialogue is excessively far-fetched, and is not something for our time. The second is that a world where there are not and cannot be relations between people that are primarily subject-to-subject dialogue relations has to be changed, since it is inhuman and anti-human.

47. Here it is time to recall that dialogue is merely a window (or even a small vent) looking onto a new world - the world of subject-subject relations, growing as the dialectical process of breaking down the world of alienation goes ahead. The task is one of enormous complexity: how to create a world in which people can enter into social relations and activity primarily as individuals, as free subjects, creating the world according to the laws of Truth, Goodness and Beauty (the dialectical unity of these three pillars of the “realm of freedom” was brilliantly demonstrated by E. Ilyenkov, a Soviet philosopher of the 1960s who was less well known to Westerners than Bakhtin, but who was no less powerful). We are not dealing here with the irony of the existentialists, not of an egoist detached from



others, but of a subject who realizes his or her “I” only through other people, through dialogue with them.

48. Hence through the “window” of Bakhtin's dialogue we enter a world where “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”, where the human individual acquires his or her freedom only in and through voluntary association. We enter the “realm of freedom” which is not divorced from the world of “necessity” (economic and so forth), but which develops on its basis while transforming this basis.

49. Have we just invented the bicycle? By no means. The world of Bakhtin is not just an alternative way of arriving at the ideas of creative Marxism. It is also a way of enriching these ideas in a whole series of directions.

50. First of all, the world of Bakhtin allows us to begin a richer search than earlier (since we are “dropping in” from the world of artistic culture) for the secret of new interpersonal relations in a world where (1) the person is an individual and a subject (of creativity); (2) the relations between individuals are constructed not through the mediating factor of alienation or reification [?], but through the objectivization and deobjectivization of cultural values; and (3) the elements of relations-communication-activity coincide “in one single unity” (Bakhtin) - the process of collaborative creation.

51. (In parenthesis, we should note that all these philosophical categories-hieroglyphs had, as has already been pointed out, largely been deciphered by Soviet scholars as early as the 1960s and 1970s).

52. Furthermore, there is the possibility of making a dialectical synthesis of the Marxist ideas of free association and of the ideas of dialogue, of subject-subject relations, and of integrating them in a single theory of social creativity. The latter task represents nothing other than the joint creation of new social relations by free individuals - that is, subjects - in the process of dialogue. This collaborative creation, naturally, is restricted by objective laws, but it is not determined by relations of alienation. Moreover, it breaks down these relations, setting human beings free within their immediate social life rather than outside it.

53. In this world as well, freedom becomes the alpha and omega of social and at the same time of individual life (though not of “private” life in the exclusive sense). Not just freedom from this or that (from oppression or exploitation); not just freedom of the individual to the extent to which this does not restrict the freedoms of others (the law-governed state and so on); not only cognition of the circumstances that hold sway over the human individual; but freedom as power over the circumstances, as a collective changing (in voluntary “working” association, based on dialogue between the participants) of the rules and conditions of life, in line with recognized objective limits - the collaborative creation of a new life, in production, in the social system, but above all, in education and culture.

54. Examples of such free social creativity are well known to everyone (from the collaborative creation by voluntarily united citizens of trade unions, environmental movements and so forth, to social revolutions. One of the simplest and best known forms of social creativity is self-management; it should be acknowledged, of course, that the forms of social creativity which prevail in the present-day world are not “pure”, but are transitional relations that embody the heritage of the “realm of necessity”). The essence of free social creativity has, however, received little study until now. Although the present authors have written a good deal on this topic, we must leave it to one side here, especially since the “realm of freedom” belongs only to the future, and Bakhtin did not speculate on these topics even indirectly.

55. Meanwhile, there is another theme, even more down-to-earth (in all senses of the phrase), which is highly relevant for us and extremely important for the study of Bakhtin's creative work. That theme is the Rabelaisian material fundament. The theme of eating, drinking, breeding - but as acts of an alternative culture, mocking and protesting against formal authority.

### 3. VIVAT CARNIVAL!

56. The more fearsome and ruthless the material and spiritual power of the forces of alienation (Bakhtin takes as an example the Rabelaisian world of the late European middle ages, with its absolute monarchies and inquisition), the greater the potential energy of protest. The more formal this power, and the more divorced from real life, the more material the form of protest is likely to become. The more that official social life is hierarchized and bound up with complex artificial rules and rituals, the more the alternative actions are simple, commonplace and down-to-earth.

57. These alternative actions have their origins in derision, in buffoonery, in the searching for and uncovering of a "different" truth - as though for fun, as in a children's game. Here anything goes; depictions of a monstrous phallus may be not just proper, but sacred. Excrement may be the legitimate continuation of food, and the cult of gluttony may represent the highest form of spirituality. The jester reigns over the king, and carnival triumphs.

58. The above might serve, more or less, as a primitive kind of prologue to Bakhtin's theory of carnival. Even such a prologue is complex, rich and sharply grotesque (because of this, Emerson's criticism of Bakhtin for inadequately grounded generalizations is absurd within the framework of carnival logic). The prologue, moreover, is precisely a prologue to a theory - the theory of carnival, founded on the carnival method and language, and according to the carnival rules. We are not concerned here with expounding this theory, but we cannot fail to note that the learned scholar Emerson has been unable to immerse herself in this Carnival logic. She has been unable to understand it, feel it, accept it (and hence also to mock it, crudely, almost boorishly, but entering into dialogue with it, and not leaving it on the opposite side of the fence of the capitalist world).

59. What is important for us is something else - to show that the world of carnival is an outburst of the simplest form of mass dialogue within the framework and beneath the sway of the world of alienation.

60. Carnival is indeed a very simple form, in the first place because it arises from below, spontaneously, without a complex cultural base, and secondly, because it is aimed from the first at simplification as the antithesis of the complex and elevated (with inverted commas and without) official life.

61. Carnival is the simplest form of dialogue, since in this active relationship individuals who are naked in the literal (nude, semi-clad) and in the figurative sense (having put off their social roles) can act and do act, seeking forms of unregulated, unalienated communication - laughing, eating, copulating, excreting - that are very simple and deliberately primitive, and which at the same time are the only ones possible. But these are not (or not only) purely natural, material actions; for all their primitiveness, they are acts of alternative culture. Carnival is the simplest form of truly mass dialogue. This is something of fundamental importance, since inherent in this is not only the accessibility of all these

forms to the masses (as a result of their primitiveness), but also their primordial orientation, celebrated by Bakhtin, toward the population as a whole.

62. Carnival is mass dialogue, and hence represents action against the world of alienation. It is not only action against the power of the hierarchs, but also against the “rules” of those at the bottom, rules imposed by respectable philistines and their intellectual followers (this, we might note, is why Bakhtin's idea of carnival is little welcomed by the conformist intelligentsia, including so-called Bakhtin scholars).

63. Carnival is mass action against the world of alienation, remaining within the context of this world and hence not destroying its real foundations. Here everything is “as if”, and “for fun”.

64. In this lies the essence and purpose of carnival –to counterpose the laughter and fun of carnival to the real, serious world of alienation. But here too is the weakness of carnival.

65. And now, a number of hypotheses that arise out of this world–idea–theory.

66. First hypothesis. Carnival as an imitation of mass social creation, or as mass social creation “for fun”, is at the same time a sort of imitation mini-revolution. On the one hand it is a valve letting off steam from the overheated boiler of social protest, but on the other, it is also part of forming the cultural preconditions for a new society.

67. Here the question arises: does every society give birth to the phenomenon of carnival (naturally, we are not talking here about specific European carnivals), and if not, what substitutes might arise in its place?

68. The authors have no finished theoretical answers to these questions, but they do have various thoughts aroused by the issue.

69. In the rigidity of its political and ideological structures, and in the organized nature of official intellectual life, the Soviet Union might well have rivalled the late medieval monarchies. But did the phenomenon of carnival exist in our country?

70. The answer is both yes and no.

71. Yes, because in the USSR during the time when our homeland was prospering and progressing, popular Soviet culture represented a sort of carnival. “Popular” in this case does not signify “primitive”, exclusively folkloric. Ulanova and Dunaevsky, Mayakovsky and Yevtushenko, Eisenstein and Tarkovsky were all popular favourites.

72. No, because in the period of “stagnation”, with its formal but all-encompassing atmosphere of the dominance of “socialist ideology”, and with the shortage of consumer goods in “socialist consumer society” (“goulash socialism” with a universal shortage of goulash), there was never a really common, mass atmosphere of celebration, full of laughter and dialogue. The question thrusts itself upon us: was not the lack of this “safety valve” among the reasons for the rapid and outwardly at least, easy collapse of this superpower?

73. These sketches on themes of the USSR, especially in the period of late stagnation in the latter 1970s and early 1980s, can serve as the basis for posing an important question. We know that in the society of the late middle ages the formal-official dictate of the “spirit” called forth a carnival antithesis in the shape of the “body”. We also know that the USSR in the epoch of its decomposition saw the emergence of two alternatives to the artificial official-conservative ideology –(1) the semi-clandestine cult of consumption (hence the powerful conflict between the yearning for consumer society and the economy of shortage), and (2) the “rude gesture in the pocket” intellectual life of the elite intelligentsia, despising Suslov and idolizing Solzhenitsyn. But we do not know what might be the real antithesis at

the popular level of the consumer society that now exists in the First World. Is it (and if it is not, might it yet be?) carnival as a mass anti-alienation game, mocking all the bases of the present world of the market, of representative democracy and of monstrous exploitation by corporate capital? Or will another hypothesis (the second which we propose in this text) prove more accurate: the Western world is so saturated with the hegemony of global corporate capital, that it is incapable of giving birth even to carnival forms of protest?

74. A third hypothesis bears on the carnival-like nature of the social system that has come into being in our country since the dissolution of the USSR. At first glance, this new system seems like a super-carnival. "High" and "low" are intermingled in preposterous fashion. Criminal godfathers become respected state functionaries, and patronize the arts and sciences. Members of the government take part in machinations whose actual results you would not expect to see in a satirical farce. The president lies more cynically and brazenly than any mountebank. Most importantly, the concepts of good and evil, moral and amoral, sublime and vulgar, are universally confused. A sort of hyper-carnival reigns supreme.

75. The point is, however, that when the "super" or "hyper" form of carnival transgresses a certain boundary (and losing its character as protest, that is as something exceptional and alternative, is transformed into a general, self-sufficient phenomenon), its positive basis, the social creativity of the masses, is destroyed.

76. Earlier, we noted that carnival of its very nature is a transmuted form of social creativity, involving the glorification of the "anti". It represents the mockery, belittling, subversion, parody and caricaturing of the semi-official world of alienation. But the constructively creative social role of carnival is narrow. Carnival is a valve that releases the negative, destructive energy of social protest, a caricature form of anti-systemic culture.

77. Carnival as an imitation of social creativity, an imitation of revolution that accentuates the negatively critical sides of these phenomena, may (as the experience of the former USSR indicates) be transformed into an all-encompassing form of social life. By the same token, however, it destroys everything positive that it bears within itself, transforming criticism into nit-picking, the inversion of high and low into a cult of immutability, the mocking of out-of-date convention into the advocacy of amorality, the parodic destruction of the social hierarchy into universal lumpenization.... No longer simply the criticism through laughter of the society of alienation, this "super" carnival turns alienation inside out, becoming not less but even more cruel. Unlike carnival, the imitation of social creativity, pseudo-carnival becomes a parody of social creativity. The reason for this is the lack of authentic mass social creativity.

78. This is what Russian society became after the fall of the USSR - a parody of carnival, a parody of the grotesque. There is no longer anything funny here; what confronts us is no longer a "different" (alternative, oppositional) truth, but a parody of it, that is, a lie. The lie is so obvious, that it seems like a joke. (In parenthesis we shall note that one of Russia's leading humourists once read out on stage, with the appropriate gestures and vocal nuances, a transcript of a speech by our country's then prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. The audience collapsed with laughter).

79. Those are the three hypotheses called forth by the image and theory of carnival.

80. The world of Bakhtin, of course, is far broader and deeper than the three outlines - Dialectics, Dialogue and Carnival - that we have briefly sketched out above. But for us, these outlines have been important because they have made it possible to substantiate, at least in part, the thesis formulated at the beginning of this article: the world of Bakhtin is a

window thrown open from the world of alienation (depicted satisfactorily by materialist dialectics, by theories of class struggle, and by the reification of people in the form of commodities, money, capital and states) onto the world of freedom (for which the methods of dialogic, polyphonic cognition-communication-activity, and subject-subject, personal, unalienated human relations in the process of social creativity are best suited). The first essential (but insufficient!) step in this direction is the mockery and carnival subversion of the false official forms of the alienated world, present and past; the cleansing and creation, out of laughter and by means of laughter, of an alternative truth (that is, one not perverted by false forms). But woe to the society that transforms carnival from a step in the direction of social change to the alpha and omega of its existence; it is doomed to the rule of lies, amorality and unlimited arbitrariness.

### **III. WHY DO “THEY” NEED BAKHTIN?**

81. An attempt has been made above to explain why we need Bakhtin. But why have this scholar and his ideas been drawn into the circle of fashionable questions preoccupying contemporary Russian and Western “intellectuals” carried away and consumed by post-modernism?

82. This question was posed earlier, and hence it will now be formulated somewhat differently: can the reason be that Bakhtin was a forerunner of post-modernism? Here it is quite appropriate for us to turn once again to Emerson's book, which does not simply illuminate Bakhtin's creative work in ample fashion, but which is also concerned to defend this thinker. A noble mission and a credit to the author, who surveys the questions surrounding Bakhtin's work so thoroughly, and who provides many historical details that are very important, especially for the Russian reader. Consciously or unconsciously, Emerson lays claim at least to a certain inner affinity with Bakhtin, and at most, to a philosophical kinship with him. But here a question arises: how conceivable is the combination of this “elective affinity” (to use the terminology of Goethe and Hegel) with the defence of the philosopher Bakhtin from the positions put forward in Emerson's book, which in turn is one of the phenomena of present-day post-modernism?

83. Hence we arrive once again at the question: what do Bakhtin and post-modernism have in common? What links are there between them? Before attempting to answer this question, we shall try to compare several methodological positions of Bakhtin and post-modernism.

#### **1. BAKHTIN VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBLE ACTIVITY**

84. In the preceding sections of this article, we were concerned primarily with the questions of dialogue and carnival as key themes of Bakhtin the philosopher. Resolving the issue posed above is impossible, however, without referring to Bakhtin's philosophy of the deed, in which the central element is the concept of “responsible activity”. This concept in turn is the key to an understanding of integrity, a vital component of Bakhtin's philosophical conception, a component which stands in opposition to the post-modernist critique of “meta-theories”. In the philosophical language of Bakhtin, to partake of the “whole” is to join in a single being (which exists as historical reality) through an act of personal activity, that is, through one's deed. It is one's deed that unites the objective being and the subject (the “I”) in a whole in which the being becomes a being-event, and the “I” its subject. The

main “nerve” of this deed is one's responsibility, or more precisely, “unity of responsibility”.

85. For Bakhtin, meanwhile, the most important thing is the dialectical nature of the concept of integrity. Any part or element that is outside the whole bears responsibility only for itself, for its autonomy. The whole, however, accepts a qualitatively different principle of responsibility - responsibility for others. The force of mutual attraction that combines all these parts into a single whole only manifests itself when each of these parts takes responsibility for this whole. This act of “taking responsibility” by every part of the whole not only for itself, but also for the whole is a deed, conditioned and free at the same time.

86. For post-modernism the basic principle of integrity - the “unity of responsibility” - is inadmissible since within the framework of the post-modernist paradigm a world takes shape that has no place for far-from-indifferent, decidedly interested relationships between people. But such a world is precarious and unsatisfying for the human individual, since the whole richness of one's “I” can manifest itself only through relationships with others, and if there is no “other”, the possibility of self-expression is blocked. Thus the world of post-modernism, in which there is no “other”, is in reality a world in which there is also no “I” as a value in itself. This is why we define post-modernism as a type of culture in which there is no human individual as the cause for this unique reality, the cause for being.

Post-modernism is a world in which there is no “you” or “I”; correspondingly, it is a world in which there are no relationships (and consequently, no relationship of responsibility), since the main element is lacking - there are no subjects for these relationships.

87. Post-modernism is thus a world in which there is no integrity, since the bases for it do not exist. And since it does not include the principle of the “whole”, this means there is no part of the whole either. The principle of a particularity that is indifferent to everything holds sway (in parenthesis, we shall note that in the language of Dostoevsky this could be designated as “isolation” or “the underground”. Is Dostoevsky not close to post-modernism in this? But the difference between Dostoevsky and the post-modernists is nevertheless profound. Dostoevsky, unable to find a way out of the “underground”, posed this question as that of the “underground person”, and through his inimitable talent showed the tragedy of this individual. Unlike Dostoevsky the post-modernists, who are also in the “underground”, do not seek a way out, and if they look for anything, it is merely proof that there is not and cannot be any door leading out of this subterranean existence. What the post-modernists love is not Dostoevsky but what might be called the Dostoevsky syndrome).

88. Another detail of no small importance is that such emotional colourings as humour and merriment are virtually absent from post-modernism. The cultural world of post-modernism lacks emotional taste and smell. This is to be explained, if by nothing else, then by the fact that the whole possesses a lightness and happiness that arises out of the inner freedom of its formation. This lightness and freedom of the self-development of the integrity and joy of a whole being exist despite the dramatic historical events, and often tragedy, which accompany its life. The whole does not fear self-criticism; it is free from an inferiority complex, just as it is free from other complexes, since it is extroverted in its very essence, and is open to the world.

89. Bakhtin himself in his studies of Rabelais notes that the whole in its “eternal incompleteness” has a “humorous character”; it is merry, and is open to understanding in a humorous culture. By contrast, post-modernism is bereft not only of merriment, laughter

and mockery, but even of fear, since fear, as Goethe said, “is the feeling of the part that senses it has been separated from the whole.”

90. In general, the world of post-modernism comes into being when the part, having tried but failed to attain its homeland of the whole, degenerates into the private.

Correspondingly, the sense of fear that arises in the part as a result of its restlessness, of its unsuccessful search for its wholeness, gradually accumulates and takes on a morbid form. Then the moral and philosophical problem of the “underground person” becomes transformed into the problem of a sick psyche, and the cultural phenomenon of Dostoevsky degenerates into a Dostoevsky syndrome, as a sort of psychiatric diagnosis.

91. Therefore, if classical art is addressed to the soul with all its moral and aesthetic imperatives, the art of post-modernism is addressed to the psyche, and in most cases to a sick psyche. The spiritual and intellectual opening-up of the artist, trying to draw the viewer or reader into his or her world with its definite values, ideals and relationships, turns into an attempt to draw the latter into the world of sickness. In the art of post-modernism the artist evokes in the reader not sympathy, so much as a similar psychic indisposition. The more gifted the artist, the greater the likelihood of just such a reaction. Instead of embodying a critical attitude to the world of alienation, therefore, art in post-modernism legitimizes this alienation through artistic forms. If only for this reason, post-modernism differs fundamentally from the position of Bakhtin, who as a philosopher not only posed but also tried to solve the question of how to break down alienation.

## **2. BAKHTIN VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: “ONENESS” AND THE “PHILOSOPHY OF THE DEED”**

92. The concept of “oneness” is a sort of “trunk” in the “tree” of Bakhtin's “philosophy of the deed”, a trunk from which many other concepts grow out like branches: the “single unity of being in realization”, the “objective unity of the field of culture”, the “single living historicity”, “reality defined by me in unique fashion”, the “unique participation in being”, the “unity of style” and so forth.

93. Like the concept of “integrity”, that of “oneness” is another “delayed-action mine”, since it is through it that the fundamental difference between post-modernism and the philosophy of Bakhtin becomes apparent. Why?

94. We shall begin to answer this question with a relatively obvious assertion: if you so much as try to say aloud anything good about this fearful concept of “oneness” among post-modernists, especially Russian ones, even while not referring to Bakhtin, there is a high likelihood that you will immediately be called a totalitarian or worse still, a Stalinist. For post-modernists, the concepts of “oneness” and “freedom” are “two incompatibles”. How can one talk of oneness, especially in the field of culture, when post-modernism proclaims the freedom of everyone and everything?

95. In point of fact, one of the main principles of post-modernism - its internal democracy, which allows any style to exist on an equal footing with others - appears incompatible with the oneness of anything, of truth, kindness, beauty.... But in reality this pluralism of post-modernism has the result that every current of thought and each style exists as though independently. Moreover, they are indifferent to everything else, since at the basis of this post-modernist democracy there in fact lies alienation and indifference to the Other.

96. As was shown earlier, for post-modernism such alienation is a norm, a credo which is affirmed and confirmed by post-modernism's artistic style. This is why in the cultural world

of post-modernism there are no problems associated with relations between subjects, or with relations with Others. Post-modernism in general is a culture from which the main “nerve” has been excised - the principle of the existence of moral questions.

Post-modernism denies the existence of a drama of subjects and ideas, even though it is only through a moral drama in the relations between the “I” and the “Other” that the uniqueness of each can ripen. In the absence of this moral nerve, culture mutates over time, and post-modernism is in essence a mutant culture. The only difference is that in the West post-modernism is a consequence of the total power of liberalism, while in Russia it is the bastard child of Stalinism.

### **3. BAKHTIN VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: HUMANISM**

97. This focus on morality as a permanently unresolved question (and note that for Bakhtin, not merely art but also scholarship in the strict sense was full of moral questions) renders Bakhtin's philosophy profoundly humanist. Meanwhile, his philosophy is not simply burdened with the moral problematic; it poses and (something that is especially important) tries to resolve the question of the indissolubility of life and culture in general. According to Bakhtin, life and culture can be united only by an act of deliberate morality - a deed. Here is what Bakhtin himself says on this point: “Life can be perceived only in concrete responsibility. A philosophy of life can only be a moral philosophy. It is possible to perceive life only as an event, and not as the gift of being. A life that has renounced responsibility cannot have a philosophy; such a life is fundamentally casual and rootless.” Indeed, it was no accident that Bakhtin called his philosophy “the philosophy of the deed”, singling out as its main principle the unity of responsibility.

98. In post-modernism, by contrast, art, philosophy and even morality are all divorced from humanistic problems. To pose the issue more sharply, we might say that the “sun” of that universalism which gathers everything in a single, unalienated whole, has long since gone out in the culture of post-modernism, especially in the West. Its place has been taken by another universalism - total technologism as the basis for all social relationships. This technological totality (if not totalitarianism) can be traced in the economy, in politics, in science and even in art. Moreover, even the most intimate and personal of human relationships - love with its whole palette of rich colours, including the erotic - is now reduced in the stream of this paradigm to sex, that is, to the technology of the physiological use of one person by another. The present-day Russian experience of attempts by theatre directors to reduce the tragedies of Shakespeare to sexual histories represents a typical example of the way in which the principles of drama are being replaced by the principles of technology, and those of culture, by the post-modern.

99. The technologism which has become the new principle is not the technologism of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, but that of the twenty-first, when alienation will become the universal principle according to which everything is commingled, from the film “Titanic” in art and the Monica Lewinsky scandal in politics to the financial crisis in the economy.

100. In post-modernism the human individual as a moral, cultural or philosophical being is replaced by the individual as a technological motive. The human being is assigned the role not even of a function, but of a thing. In no sense is he or she an individual or a subject.



101. Such is the situation in the West - the consequence of the fact that as alienation has grown human individuals have first been forced out of society, then out of culture as well. Post-modernism has finally slammed the door after them. To use the language of Stalinism, where there are no people, there are no problems.

102. Yeltsin's Russia has not avoided this tendency either. Russia today has made haste to affirm this principle, trying not only to catch up with the West but to surpass it. Foreigners are amused to see how Russia, trying to develop the world's most advanced post-modernism, has shown the rest of humanity its wretched naked backside. Even without this "victory", Yeltsin would still be remembered not just as the "father of Russian democracy", but also as the first Russian post-modernist.

#### **4. BAKHTIN VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: EPISTEMOLOGY**

103. As it develops, post-modernism is now asserting itself in the field of epistemology. It is also freeing itself from the principle of addressing problems, which is being replaced by the principle of technologism, reflecting various earlier philosophical approaches characteristic of Western Europe. Instead of the posing of problems, the conducting of discussion and the search for truth, scholarship now consists of description, and not even of problems, but simply of phenomena. Caryl Emerson's book is proof of this; while devoted to Bakhtin, this work nevertheless fails to touch on the essence of his philosophy. It is a collection of very detailed information, often less about Bakhtin than about the hostility of the former Soviet scholarly and literary world to his work. The abundance of information, though often important and necessary, cannot save Emerson's book from its main flaw. In essence, it explains neither Bakhtin himself, nor the literary milieu which surrounded him, nor the position of the author herself. The structure of the book as a whole also fails to provide an answer to the question: what is the basis that determines the architecture of the work?

104. The book also fails to answer the question of whether there is a dialogue between Emerson and Bakhtin, and if there is, what the theme of this dialogue might be. On which issue do the positions of Bakhtin and Emerson intersect, leading ultimately to the writing of this book? All this remains a mystery. In the book, a great deal of attention is devoted to Bakhtin's Soviet critics, but despite this Emerson does not criticize these critics, and does not reveal the causes which gave rise to the cultural context of those years. That is, the author of a book on Bakhtin - a philosopher of dialogue - shows a complete inability to conduct dialogue with Bakhtin.

105. This is no accident. The scholarship that develops in the atmosphere of post-modernism strives to acquire knowledge, but only the kind of knowledge that on the one hand is unburdened by a problematic character, and that on the other hand liberates the scholar himself or herself from subjectivism, from the need as author to expound a definite position. It follows that in fulfilling these two conditions, the scholar is transformed simply into a bearer of knowledge. Epistemology, instead of being a tool for the recognition of truth, is turned into a set of technological methods for the acquisition and exchange of information, oriented mainly toward market demand, and only in one set of coordinates: here and now.

106. Hence the epistemology of post-modernism, oriented basically toward the market, is devoid of the search for truth, since questions have no place within it. Questions are lacking

because there are no problems, and there are no problems because in post-modernist culture, as in society, (to use the language of Bakhtin) there is no such thing as the human subject of a deed. In scholarship, correspondingly, there is no subject of cognition, searching and pondering. In place of the subject, the bearer or consumer of information holds sway. Hence in the conditions of post-modernism the gap between life and culture, about which Bakhtin has so much to say, is transformed into an unbridgeable gulf.

107. The following question might be expected to arise here: how can this gulf between culture and life be overcome? But this is our question. Among post-modernists, in the best of cases, the following question might be posed: should this be done, and if so, why? This is understandable, since for post-modernism the existence of such a gulf is the best argument in favour of not changing anything in this world. The wider this gulf, the stronger the basis and justification for post-modernists of their uneventful existence in this alienated world, where they are free not just subjectively, but (as they perceive it) objectively as well from their main role as subjects of deeds.

108. In any case, what impulse is there that can help us overcome the growing gulf between life and culture? Perhaps the impulse of culture itself? Bakhtin himself provided an answer here: "All efforts to overcome the dualism of cognition and life, of thought and of purely concrete reality from within theoretical cognition are completely hopeless." This gulf can only be overcome if the subject of cognition becomes accustomed to a genuinely historical, authentically realized being through action.

109. The ideology of liberalism which lies at the basis of post-modernism, and which reduces individuals with all their richness to a single-celled existence solely as consumers, has thus deprived these individuals of the ability and possibility of being the subjects of deeds both in their lives and in society. Meanwhile the epistemological projection of liberalism - post-modernism - has fully demonstrated its complete impotence before the task of ending the dualism between life and cognition. Unable to unite life and cognition, liberalism is powerless before both. Emerson's book is an example of this. However rich her knowledge of Bakhtin, Emerson is unable really to defend him against his Soviet critics, just as the latter proved powerless in their critical assault on him.

##### **5. BAKHTIN VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: HISTORICISM**

110. Finally, we shall examine a concept which sets the philosophy of Bakhtin fundamentally apart from post-modernism. This is historicism. According to Bakhtin, historicism is the acculturation of the subject to historical reality through his or her actions, or more precisely, system of actions, his or her continually active responsible activity as a deed, as a sort of bridge-building between life and culture. Only through the building of such a bridge can the problem of how to end the alienation between them be solved. Bakhtin's historicism is constructed on the basis of subject-subject relations, in which the human individual is not a cog-wheel of history, but the subject of his or her history, both personal and general.

111. This is why historicism for Bakhtin is an active responsibility or a responsible activity, while post-modernists have neither activity nor responsibility. The post-modernist, who in essence is alienated from everyone and everything, rejects any relations with others, especially relations of responsibility, the moral essence of which he or she reduces to no more than a set of defined rules and rituals.

112. Post-modernists reject the principle of historicism in toto. They yearn with all their souls to remain within the field of culture; they have no wish to venture into history, since there it is necessary to perform deeds, to act. And post-modernists are afraid to act, are unwilling to act and at times cannot, if only for the reason that they are afraid of their own lives, which they do not know, do not understand and perhaps, do not even love. There is the essence of the post-modernist.

113. So if Bakhtin speaks of a dialectical transformation of culture into history, the post-modernist tries at any cost to remain within culture. We stress: at any cost, even at the cost of consuming it. The post-modernist is then like a snake trying to swallow its own tail. Here is what Bakhtin has to say about this: "The attempt to find oneself in the product of an act of aesthetic vision is an attempt to cast oneself into non-being." Only when culture becomes the construction material of history, and the individual becomes its subject, is history filled with authentic cultural meaning, while culture becomes full of genuine historical drama.

114. If culture is the meaning of the non-existent, history is the transformation of the non-existent into the real. This is the essence of revolution (a word very frightening to post-modernists). Trying irresponsibly to remain within the field of culture, post-modernists transform it from the province of non-existent meanings to the meaning of the non-existent. Is it not because of this that their own lives, uneventful and without personal exposure, are constantly turning into something almost non-existent?

115. "So am I really alive?" the human being constructed out of the logic of post-modernism might ask. Bakhtin writes: "Neither in theoretical cognition, nor in aesthetic cognition is there a method of approach to the only real being of the event, since there is no unity or mutual interpenetration between the thought-content and the product-act. This leads philosophical thought to barrenness." This applies equally to the philosophy of post-modernism.

116. Hence, post-modernism not only fails to solve the problem of achieving access to unique historical reality through overcoming the gap between culture and life, but also argues that there is not and cannot be any such solution. Might it therefore be that within post-modernism there is a demand for some kind of transcendentalism, mysticism or virtuality?

117. Bakhtin, however, reflecting on the idea of overcoming the gap between life and culture, comes upon the idea of a consonance between culture and historical movement toward a society that ends human alienation, toward a society of people performing responsible cultural-historical deeds; that is, he formulates (and moreover, independently) an idea thoroughly compatible with that of Karl Liebknecht, "Communism is culture".

118. Furthermore, in speaking of the human individual as the subject of a deed, the subject of thinking-cum-participation, and as the person-subject creatively including himself or herself in historical reality, Bakhtin comes upon the idea of social creativity and its subject. That is, he once again addresses a range of questions associated with the idea of communism.

119. Bakhtin thus enters the world of creative Marxism, but enters it not through the corridor of ideology, but via the space of culture. Hence, after having set out at the beginning of this section to search for a similarity between Bakhtin - the philosopher of carnival and dialogue - and post-modernism, at the end of the article we have discovered a kinship between Bakhtin and Marxism.

120. Here we shall again ask ourselves the question: if Bakhtin is the antithesis of post-modernist philosophy and methodology, why is he nonetheless so beloved of its adherents? It remains only to examine the hypothesis with which we began this article, transforming it, we hope, into a dialectical spiral.

121. The first and main postulate is that Bakhtin's ideas, when given a formal, superficial reading by the human individual of the world of alienation, are akin to post-modernism.

122. Why? Because post-modernism is an attempt to find a way, at least in the sphere of appearances, for intellectuals to escape from the present-day world of the hegemony of global corporate capital - a hegemony that is outwardly gentle, but which is powerful and universal. In real life this hegemony gives rise to a powerful determinism, enslaving human beings as workers, as "clients", and as the half-thinking consumers of the products of the mass media. What is there that might serve as a visible, undestructive and unchanging pseudo-alternative to this determinism? (Post-modernism is not a real alternative, if only because there is no place for an alternative within this paradigm). The role of such a pseudo-alternative might also, it seems, be played by the lack of a meta-theory, by a pluralism in which people are indifferent to the choices, by the removal of values (when, as argued by one of the leaders of Russian post-modernism, Shakespeare and Schwarzenegger, Dostoevsky and Madonna are of equal value as cultural phenomena), and above all, by the rejection of all social actions and social creativity.

123. Bakhtin's alternative of dialogue and carnival, which has also received only slight attention, lies in the sphere of culture, and outwardly resembles post-modernism (because it arises out of similar contradictions). But if Bakhtin represents a window into social creativity, destroying the world of alienation, post-modernism is no more than a cave, one of the dead-ends of this world.