

**Bakhtin and Heidegger: Paths to the Understanding and Interpretation of the Event of Being in Language / *Bakhtin e Heidegger: caminhos para a compreensão e interpretação do acontecimento do ser na linguagem***

*Maria Cristina Hennes Sampaio\**  
*Karla Daniele de Souza Araújo\*\**  
*Ezequiel Bezerra Izaias de Macedo\*\*\**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this article is to place into dialogue the paths indicated by Bakhtin and Heidegger that lead to the understanding and interpretation of the event of being in language. Thus, we analyzed the philosophers' common proposal for establishing a first philosophy (*prima philosophia*), which questions the origin of meaning. This is equivalent to inquiring about the access to reality that every language and thus every discourse/text/utterance provide. We also examined the ontological character of *Dasein* (being-there) and the role of thinking for the interpretation of the ethical act materialized in the event of being. In order to lay the theoretical foundation of the paths of an architectonics and hermeneutics of ontological facticity, Bakhtin and Heidegger, respectively, revisited several traditions. What would the role left to philosophy be in understanding and interpreting the event of being? The answer to this question seems to point to an ontological-hermeneutic understanding/interpretation whose paths we attempted to unveil.

**KEYWORDS:** Bakhtin and Heidegger; Event of Being; Language; Architectonics; Hermeneutics of Facticity

**RESUMO**

*O presente estudo tem como objetivo colocar em diálogo os caminhos sinalizados por Bakhtin e Heidegger para a compreensão e interpretação do acontecimento do ser na linguagem. Para esse fim examinamos a proposta comum, a ambos os filósofos, de instituir uma filosofia primeira, que pergunte acerca da origem do sentido, o que equivale a indagar sobre as vias de acesso à realidade que toda a linguagem e, por conseguinte, todo o discurso/texto/enunciado comportam. Foram examinados também o caráter ontológico do ser-aí (Dasein) e o papel do pensamento para a interpretação do ato ético concretizado no acontecimento do ser. Para fundamentar os caminhos de uma arquitetônica e hermenêutica da facticidade ontológicas, Bakhtin e Heidegger, respectivamente, revisitaram diversas tradições. Que papel restaria à filosofia para a compreensão e interpretação do acontecimento do ser? A resposta a esta questão parece apontar para uma compreensão/interpretação ontológico-hermenêutica cujos caminhos tentamos desvelar.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Bakhtin e Heidegger; Acontecimento do ser; Linguagem; Arquitetônica; Hermenêutica da facticidade.*

---

\* Universidade Federal de Pernambuco - UFPE, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil; mc.hennes@hotmail.com.

\*\* Instituto Federal de Pernambuco - IFPE, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil; karladani@hotmail.com.

\*\*\* Universidade Federal de Pernambuco - UFPE, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil; e.bim@hotmail.com.

The present study is part of the ongoing research project called *The Origins of Bakhtin's Ethical Philosophy of Language: Rereading Metaphysics and Ontological-Hermeneutic Phenomenology*. In this project we seek to understand the philosophical foundation of the Dialogical Theory, which is a theoretical and methodological source for studies based on the Dialogical Discourse Analysis (DDA) as well as a theoretical and practical basis of an ethical philosophy of language for an enunciative-discursive semantics.

From this perspective, we aim to place into dialogue the paths that Bakhtin and Heidegger indicated for the understanding and interpretation of the event of being in language. This indication is found in the ethical-philosophical foundation of their work, specifically in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (BAKHTIN, 1993 [1920-24]),<sup>1</sup> *Being and Time* (HEIDEGGER, 1962 [1927]),<sup>2</sup> *On the Way to Language* (HEIDEGGER, 1971a [1959]),<sup>3</sup> *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)* (HEIDEGGER, 2012 [1936-38]),<sup>4</sup> *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (HEIDEGGER, 1999 [1923]),<sup>5</sup> *On Time and Being* (HEIDEGGER, 1972 [1969]),<sup>6</sup> and *Letter on Humanism* (HEIDEGGER, 1993 [1947]).<sup>7</sup>

In order to achieve our objectives, we chose to discuss two themes that stand out in the aforementioned works, viz., thinking and language, and the event of being.

## **1 The Path in Search of a First Philosophy (*Prima Philosophia*)**

In the essay *Para uma filosofia do ato: válido e inserido no contexto* [Toward a Philosophy of the Act: Valid and Contextualized], Amorim (2009, p.20) points to the

---

<sup>1</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *On the way to Language*. Translated by Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971a.

<sup>4</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Translated by John van Buren. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *On Time and Being*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Letter on Humanism*. Translation by Frank A. Capuzzi in collaboration with J. Glenn Gray. In: HEIDEGGER, M. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollings Publishers, 1993. pp.217-265.

need for the identification of the philosophical genesis of Bakhtin's ideas so that we can investigate his original contribution. According to the author, Todorov himself had already stated that Bakhtin's idea that dialogue is a language condition stemmed from Heidegger, who is considered a key author in Bakhtinian intertextuality. Although Heidegger published little from 1915 to 1927, the year of the publication of *Being and Time*,<sup>8</sup> his reputation as a professor at universities in Marburg and Freiburg (Germany) spread out to other higher education institutions, and the lectures of this young Philosophy professor attracted many students. Besides, it is noteworthy that Edmund Husserl, the German philosopher and mathematician, was Heidegger's mentor, and in 1929 Heidegger succeeded him at the University of Freiburg. Husserl used to declare that Heidegger and he were Phenomenology itself. In fact, Heidegger's *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* [Introduction to Phenomenological Research]<sup>9</sup> contains the lectures given at the University of Marburg between 1923 and 1924. In this work, he states that he is convinced of the end of Philosophy and recognizes that his task has nothing to do with traditional Philosophy. Thus, he introduces the notion of *Phenomenology* by tracing it back to Aristotle. He then revisits Husserl's self-interpretation, his return to Descartes and to the ontology that determines it. Finally, he shows that the issue of *being* as the demonstration of existence has been dealt with carelessly.

As to Bakhtin, we know that he was a fluent German reader. In fact, he read Husserl and, according to his writings from 1920 to 1924, he knew different philosophical trends. We have showcased this in different publications and studies, presented in national and international congresses.<sup>10</sup> In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*,

---

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>9</sup> It was first published by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann in Frankfurt, 1994. The English version of this work is: HEIDEGGER, M. *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*. Translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> (a) Origens filosóficas da Ética em Bakhtin: re-leituras da Metafísica e da Fenomenologia ontológico-hermenêutica [The Philosophical Origins of Bakhtin's Ethics: Rereading Metaphysics and Ontological-Hermeneutic Phenomenology] was presented in the 14<sup>th</sup> *International Bakhtin Conference* in Italy in 2011. It was published in 2013 in a book collection edited by Ana Zandwais under the title *História das Ideias. Diálogos entre linguagem, cultura e história* [History of Ideas: Dialogues between Language, Culture, and History]. It was published by Editora da Universidade de Passo Fundo; (b) Bakhtin e Heidegger: a Linguagem como experiência pensante [Bakhtin and Heidegger: Language as a Thinking Experience] was presented in the 13<sup>th</sup> *International Conference on the History of the Languages Sciences* at the Universidade de UTAD [The University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD)], Vila Real, Portugal, in 2014; (c) Dimensão ontológico-hermenêutica no pensamento ético bakhtiniano e heideggeriano e construção do sentido [Ontological-Hermeneutical Dimension of Bahtin's and

Bakhtin (1993)<sup>11</sup> weaves a conceptual network on life, art, and science, which integrates ethical, aesthetic and cognoscitive dimensions and introduces the ethical category of answerability.

In this context, we have to consider both philosophers' proposal to establish a first philosophy (*prima philosophia*). This means that they wanted Philosophy to recover its original vocation, which is, from the perspective of historicity, to think the truth of being as an event. That is equivalent to reconsidering the question of the origin of meaning and of the access to reality that every language and thus every discourse/text/utterance provide. According to Bakhtin and Heidegger, respectively,

[h]ence it should be clear that a first philosophy, which attempts to describe Being-as-event as it is known to the answerable act or deed, attempts to describe not the world produced by that act, but the world in which that act becomes answerably aware of itself and is actually performed – that a first philosophy of such a kind cannot proceed by constructing universal concepts, propositions, and laws about this world of the answerably performed act (the theoretical, abstract purity of the act), but can only be a description, a phenomenology of that world.[...] the performed act sees more than just a unitary context; it also sees a unique, concrete context, an ultimate context, into which it refers both *its own sense* and *its own factuality*, and within which it attempts to actualize answerably the unique truth [*pravda*] of both the fact and the sense in their concrete unity (BAKHTIN, 1993, pp.31-32; 28; emphasis in original).<sup>12</sup>

The question of “meaning,” i.e. [...] the question of the *truth of beyng*, is and remains my question [...], for at issue in it is indeed what is *most unique*. [...] When grasped and worked out historically, it becomes the basic question, versus the previous question of philosophy, the question of beings [...]. [...] The question of being is *the* leap into beyng, the leap carried out by the human being as the seeker of beyng, i.e., as the *thinker* who creates. [...] This being [*Sein*] – historicity – is never the same in every era. [...] What opens up in the grounding of Da-sein is the event. [...] Beyng essentially occurs as the event. [...] Thinking of beyng as event is inceptual thinking, which prepares the other beginning by confronting the first one (HEIDEGGER, 2012, pp.4; 11; 24-26).<sup>13</sup>

---

Heidegger's Ethical Thinking and Meaning Production] was presented in the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference Day of the *Linguagem, Identidade e Memória* [Language, Identity, and Memory] Research Group/CNPq [National Council for Scientific and Technological Development] during the 19<sup>th</sup> InPLA [Interchange of Research in Applied Linguistics] in São Paulo in October of 2013.

<sup>11</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>12</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>13</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

Now, if the understanding of the truth of being (BAKHTIN, 1993;<sup>14</sup> HEIDEGGER, 2012)<sup>15</sup> must be found in the event of being in life, we need to reflect upon the way it comes into existence. In this sense, Bakhtin (1993)<sup>16</sup> proposes the idea of a concrete architectonic of the actual world of the performed act or deed, arranged around values. He then compares it with the architectonic of the world in aesthetic seeing, showing some characteristics they share. For Bakhtin (1993, p.54),<sup>17</sup> if the event of being is composed of “common moments or constituents in their various concrete architectonics,”

[i]t is this concrete architectonic of the actual world of the performed act that moral philosophy has to describe, that is, not the abstract scheme but the concrete plan or design of the world of a unitary and once-occurrent act or deed, the basic concrete moments of its construction and their mutual disposition. These basic moments are I-for-myself, the other-for-me, and I-for-the-other.

He then states that every value of real life and culture is “arranged around the basic architectonic points of the actual world of the performed act or deed: scientific values, aesthetic values, political values (including both ethical and social values), and, finally, religious values” (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.54).<sup>18</sup>

As to Heidegger (1972),<sup>19</sup> in his work *On Time and Being*, he poses the question of the task still reserved to thinking at the end of philosophy and reflects upon the way being appears into existence. He uses the metaphor of the clearing, an open space that is free for brightness and darkness, for resonance and echo, to illustrate that *truth* can only *present itself* [appear], that is, be brought into existence through the *clearing* that is opened and made possible by being. The task of thinking is to bring being into existence, for it is through thinking that being is drawn close to the clearing:

The end of philosophy is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its most extreme possibility [...] As a completion, an end is the gathering into the most extreme

---

<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>15</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>16</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>17</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>18</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>19</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

possibilities. [...] a task of thinking [...] which can be neither metaphysics nor science?

It is necessary for thinking to become explicitly aware of the matter called opening here. [...] Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it. But light never first creates openness. Rather, light presupposes openness. However, the clearing, the opening, is not only free for brightness and darkness, but also for resonance and echo, for sounding and diminishing of sound. The clearing is open for everything that is present and absent. [...] But philosophy knows nothing of the opening. Philosophy does speak about the light of reason, but does not heed the opening of Being. [...] For truth itself, just as Being and thinking, can only be what it is in the element of the opening (HEIDEGGER, 1972, pp.57,59, 65-66, 69).<sup>20</sup>

However, it is in Letter on Humanism that Heidegger's precision is evident. Here he states that thinking is "the thinking of Being" (and not the thinking of reason); moreover, "[a]t the same time thinking is of Being insofar as thinking, belonging to Being, [it] listens to Being" (HEIDEGGER, 1993, p.220)<sup>21</sup> so that it can tell its truth.

Heidegger's (1972)<sup>22</sup> reference to the metaphor of the clearing and to the role of thinking (so it can listen to Being) allows us to associate the image of a forest with human existence, which, similarly to the forest, offers different possible paths to reach the clearing. In this sense, the path that Heidegger suggests is the Analytic of *Dasein* (being-there), which lays its foundation in the question of being, in the way being is present in human existence. It thus differs radically from the ontic determinations of entity, which, in science, are called categories. As to Bakhtin (1993),<sup>23</sup> the path to reach the event can only be in the concrete plane of the world of the act, which is unique and singular. Its moments are set in a relation of otherness, between I and the Other, and presuppose the ethic and aesthetic planes, which includes the plane of cognition. In these planes we find all the values of real life and culture.

It is possible to conclude that both philosophers made considerations of a historical and philosophical nature in favor of a first philosophy (*prima philosophia*). They thus privileged the ontological character of being, which can only be found in existence and in the concrete world of the act, and the role of thinking in understanding and interpreting the event of being.

---

<sup>20</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>21</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

From this perspective, the task of thinking *being* is necessarily connected to language: If it is through language that the event of being happens, to investigate it is to try to understand the very opening of Being in the world. In the following section, we will discuss Bakhtin's and Heidegger's thought on language as a thinking experience.

## 2 The Path to Thinking: Language as a Thinking Experience

“What does it mean to think?” This is a fundamental question of Philosophy in general, and to philosophers such as Bakhtin and Heidegger. It takes us to the core of the issue, that is, to think of being without recurring to the basic principle of being based on entity. This premise establishes the difference between the ways of knowing and of knowledge that stem from the world of cognition and those that stem from the world of actually lived life. They are two different things, namely, scientific and philosophical knowledge about language and the thinking experiences that we have with it: “Historically language grew up in the service of participative thinking” (BAKHITN, 1993, p.31)<sup>24</sup> and “[l]anguage is the house of Being” (HEIDEGGER, 1993, p.217).<sup>25</sup>

The second premise seems to indicate that language is in the closest vicinity to human beings, for in language man finds the dwelling of his own presence in the word. Bakhtin (1993)<sup>26</sup> agrees with that by stating that participative thinking is done in the concrete architectonic of the world of the performed act, which cannot be defined based on categories of an indifferent theoretical consciousness: The word is the way to dwell in<sup>27</sup> and to express the life of the ethical act and the unique event of being.

Thus, what does it mean to deal with language thoughtfully? Metaphysics is based on the entity model, understood as a simple presence. It considers only that which every entity has in common. Thinking, on the other hand, does not move directly towards where man is; it moves towards where being is: thinking is the thinking of being. It understands being (HEIDEGGER, 1993 [1962]<sup>28</sup>).<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it is possible to realize

---

<sup>24</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>25</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>27</sup> In regard to the life of the ethical act and the word, the reference to the verb *dwell* must be understood as thinking the essence of the word in its correspondence to being. Therefore, the essence of man dwells in it.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

that one of the means by which thinking is done is through presence. Thinking only moves forward because of its presence and its questioning. Thus, it is necessary to question, for this questioning is the theme that will help us find the path, the path of being-in-the-world. It is paved by questions and answers, which open clearings that here and there grant us greater freedom. This freedom is the questioning of thinking.

The task of thinking must accompany Philosophy. Heidegger (1972)<sup>30</sup> invites us to see the end of philosophy as the solution to the question of thinking. He rejects Metaphysics' scientificity and valorizes the widening of the scope of Philosophy and its *completion*; in other words, this end means improvement, a place. The philosopher states that "[t]he end of philosophy is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its most extreme possibility. End as completion means this gathering" (HEIDEGGER, 1972, p.57).<sup>31</sup> Heidegger points to Philosophy as a means of knowing: knowing as a guarantee of knowing, as support for truth, as a kind of anticipatory thinking. In this sense, he rethinks the issue of being and criticizes the fact that concepts are only repeated. He states that it is necessary not only to repeat them, but also to seek creative thinking. He summons us to give up on sameness, singleness, and simplicity in order to seek multiplicity and variety. Because sameness is fragile, it is necessary to look for creative thinking. In this sense, we realize that creative events are permeated by language, which is the basic condition of thinking.

As to Bakhtin, the value of the knowledge (content) produced by theory (abstract cognition) is different from the content produced by living experiences: the former corresponds to a given, presumed value whereas the latter corresponds to an affirmed value of those who think in an emotional-volitional tone. It is an "act-performing thinking [...] *a thinking that intonates*" that "[...] circumfuses the whole content/sense [...] in the actually performed act and relates it to once-occurrent Being-as-event" (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.34; emphasis in original).<sup>32</sup> Thus doing, it tries to express the whole truth of the entire situation, of a unique moment, in what constitutes its unrepeatable uniqueness.

This means that for us to actually have a language experience we must bring ourselves to its place of being, to its essence. The German word *Wesen*, translated as

---

<sup>30</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.



essence, means the experience that lies in its way of being, its vigor: “*Language speaks*” (HEIDEGGER, 1971b, p.188; emphasis in original).<sup>33</sup> However, language cannot be limited to the saying that “[m]ortals speak insofar as they listen” and that “[e]very authentic hearing holds back with its own saying” (HEIDEGGER, 1971b, pp.206, 207).<sup>34</sup> In Bakhtin (1993, p.32, 33),<sup>35</sup> in turn, the living word, the whole word, “does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity,” but expresses our valuative attitude toward it, setting “in motion toward that which is yet-to-be-determined about it.” Thus, having a language experience seems to be very different from acquiring linguistic knowledge about a language through Linguistics, Philology, or Psychology.

According to Heidegger (1971a, p.30),<sup>36</sup> language is “what prevails in and bears up the relation of human nature to the two-fold. Language defines the hermeneutic relation,” which means that “man, in his very being, is in demand, is needed, that he, as the being he is, belongs within a needfulness which claims him” (HEIDEGGER, 1971a, p.32).<sup>37</sup> He then offers the example of language itself, for according to him it lies in the metaphysical distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, as fundamental elements, such as phoneme/grapheme and meaning/sense, give support to the structure of language.

When Bakhtin (1986)<sup>38</sup> discusses ‘text’ in *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis*,<sup>39</sup> he makes clear that the two articulated levels of the word, namely, theme and meaning, are distinct. Theme refers to the *unique* and *unrepeatable* element of an utterance, to its entire significance, whereas meaning lies at the level of the language system, in which the elements of enunciation are reproducible and identical every time they are repeated. Thus, meaning lies at a lower level of interpretation. According to

---

<sup>33</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971b.

<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 31.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>36</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>37</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>38</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis*. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.103-158.

<sup>39</sup> TN. The essay *The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis* was published in the book collection entitled *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, published by the University of Texas Press. Differently, in Brazil, it was published in the book collection entitled *Estética da criação verbal [Aesthetics of Verbal Creation]*, whose original was published in Russia in 1979. For reference, see References at the end of this article.

Holquist (1993),<sup>40</sup> this discussion gives way to the notion of dialogism, which will be developed in later works.

We can state that in science the path to knowledge is subject to method and the path to the thinking experience with language presupposes listening to the word that comes towards us, in its vigorous essence, as the saga of “Saying” (HEIDEGGER, 1971a, p.47)<sup>41</sup> and of the answerable act (BAKHTIN, 1993).<sup>42</sup> In order to do that, we need to quit the habit of only listening to what we already understand.

### 3 Listening to Language as Path and Opening

If it is through language, speech, that being is *presented* in the world and shares experiences with others, what we are interested in knowing is: How do we authentically listen to language?

As we have mentioned before, according to Bakhtin (1993)<sup>43</sup> and Heidegger (1999),<sup>44</sup> this has to do with a new way of thinking, one that comes towards being and moves in an opening. It also refers to the commitment of radically adopting its historicity, i.e., being, in the event, in the uniqueness of event. Besides, we need to take into account that both philosophers believe that language possesses given meanings and structures, with which we enter into contact with beings in the world. However, these structures do not yet represent an articulation of *Mitsein* (being-with), nor do they constitute an experience of reality.

For us to discuss listening to language, we must think in terms of encounter and opening. Here encounter is not understood as the movement towards the object itself, which would be related to the notion of word as instrument, by means of which we came into the world. Besides, opening does not mean total explicitation; rather, it means opening to the being that is revealed in speech, sheltering it and responding to its appeal.

---

<sup>40</sup> HOLQUIST, M. Foreword. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993. pp.vii-xv.

<sup>41</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>42</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

To use Heidegger's words, thinking is Hermeneutics; in other words, it is an encounter with language, an exercise of interpreting the word without wearing it out. His proposed Hermeneutics is grounded in the *event of being*, in its eventness and uniqueness, and in *thinking*. He calls it the *Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1999).<sup>45</sup>

Although Bakhtin may not have made explicit claims to a hermeneutics of facticity, as Heidegger did, he did so implicitly: He established a constitutive relationship between the event of Being, the unique answerable act, and the world of experience, of lived life. He thus opened a new path to consider the forms of knowledge of human life *via* language. In *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, Vattimo (1997)<sup>46</sup> suggests that Heidegger's Hermeneutics of facticity is a thinking that is primarily motivated by ethical reasons. In thinking, the value of dialogue, of interpretation and of sheltering the other by listening is at play. Thus, we can say that the authentic hearing of the word that comes towards us is a fundamental part of the path of the thinking experience with language.

#### 4 Paths to the Event of Being

Bakhtin (1993) starts out *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* by stating that “[a]esthetic activity as well is powerless to take possession of that moment of Being which is constituted by the transitiveness and open event-ness of Being” (p.1). S. Averintsev writes the following footnote to this passage:

1. Aesthetic activity is powerless to take hold of Being insofar as Being is an ongoing event, *insofar* as Being is in transit, in process of actual becoming. It is in this sense that Bakhtin speaks below of *sobytiie bytiia* – “the ongoing event of Being,” “Being-as-event,” “Being-event” (cf. German *Seinsgeschehen*). Note Bakhtin's clarification in M. M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p.188 (footnote): “The event of being is a phenomenological concept, for being presents itself to a living consciousness as an [ongoing] event, and a living consciousness actively orients itself and lives in it as in an [ongoing] event” (p.78).

---

<sup>45</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

<sup>46</sup> VATTIMO, G. *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

In this footnote we observe Averintsev's effort to make clear the meaning of the Russian expression *sobytie bytiia* in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*: "the ongoing event of Being," "Being-as-event." He thus confirms its affiliation with Phenomenology and finds, in *Art and Answerability* (BAKHTIN, 1990),<sup>47</sup> the evidence that in fact this relationship is firmly grounded insofar as the event refers to the notion of a living consciousness as an event, which lives in it and is actively oriented.

There is another footnote that clarifies the meaning of the expression *moral answerability* and its philosophical affiliation. It is found in the Spanish version of *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, which was translated from Russian into Spanish as *Hacia una filosofía del acto ético* (BAKHTIN, 1997a)<sup>48</sup> by Tatiana Bubnova. The footnote refers to the passage in which Bakhtin refers to the projection of the act as a two-faced Janus, which looks at the objective unity of the domain of culture and at the unrepeatable uniqueness of lived life:

It is only the once-occurrent event of Being in the process of actualization that can constitute this unique unity; all that which is theoretical or aesthetic must be determined as a constituent moment in the once-occurrent event of Being, although no longer, of course, in theoretical or aesthetic terms. An act must acquire a single unitary plane to be able to reflect itself in both directions - in its sense or meaning and in its being; it must acquire the unity of two-sided answerability - both for its content (special answerability) and for its Being (moral answerability). And the special answerability, moreover, must be brought into communion with the unitary and unique moral answerability as a constituent moment in it. That is the only way whereby the pernicious non-fusion and non-interpenetration of culture and life could be surmounted (1993, pp.2-3).

In footnote 1 (BAKHTIN, 1997a, p.8), Tatiana Bubnova explains the meaning of *moral answerability*, stating that

[e]vidently here he refers to ontological answerability, which is inherent to the very fact of being, for being (*bytie*) in its eventness

---

<sup>47</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov and translated by Vadim Liapunov. Supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990.

<sup>48</sup> TN. The reference to this work is in this article's References.

(*sobytie*) is but “being together,” the I and the Other. Being in the world is a commitment.<sup>49</sup>

In this case, for Bubnova, *moral answerability* refers to the Ontological tradition (ontological answerability). Now, in classical tradition, Ontology is the doctrine of being as such in its general determinations. In its modern usage, Ontology is employed as a theory of a formal nature, applied to the objectivity of an entity. It may either coincide with Ancient Ontology (Metaphysics) or relate to Phenomenology in its strict sense, limited to living experiences (HEIDEGGER, 1999).<sup>50</sup> However, Heidegger observes that the inadequacy of traditional and modern Ontologies is twofold, for being applied to being-an-object and to “an indifferent theoretical meaning” (p.2), they end up blocking access to entity, which is decisive within philosophical problems of *Dasein* (being-there):

[...] an indifferent theoretical meaning, or a material being-an-object for the particular sciences of nature and culture concerned with it, and by means of the regions of objects – should the need arise – the world, but not as it is from out of its being-there for *Dasein* and the possibilities of this being-there [...] What results from this: it blocks access to that being [*Seienden*] which is decisive within philosophical problems: namely, *Dasein*, from out of which and for the sake of which, philosophy “is” (1999, p.2).<sup>51</sup>

The result of this point of view is that the term Ontology will not suffice for the understanding of the event of being, for any questioning and investigating will only be directed to being-an-object.

However, when Bubnova gives the word *event* a moral value, stemming from its inherent answerability, in its eventness, which is but *being together, the I and the Other*, she does not refer to that being-an-object that coincides with the entity. Therefore, it is not possible to give Ontology a general meaning, nor limit Phenomenology to living experiences anymore.

---

<sup>49</sup> Text in original: “Evidentemente, aquí se refiere a la responsabilidad ontológica, inherente al mismo hecho de ser, porque ser (*bytie*) en su calidad del acontecer (*sobytie*) no es sino “ser juntos” el yo y el otro; ser en el mundo compromete.”

<sup>50</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

<sup>51</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

Further on, Bakhtin (1993)<sup>52</sup> makes it clear that “this world-as-event is not just a world of being, of that which is given: no object, no relation is given here [...] as something totally on hand, but is always given in conjunction with another given” (p.32). As it is not possible to be conscious of an indifferent and finished object, “[p]ure givenness cannot be experienced actually” (p.32). Thus, when we experience an object – even if we do so by thinking of it – “it becomes a changing moment in the ongoing event of my experiencing (thinking) it, i.e., it assumes the character of something-yet-to-be achieved” (p.32). This means that it is made known “within a certain event unity,” whose “moments of what-is-given and what-is-to-be achieved, of what-is and what-ought-to-be, of being and value, are inseparable” (p.32).

In this sense, Heidegger (2012)<sup>53</sup> goes further in his thinking and states that “[t]ransitional thinking accomplishes the grounding projection of the truth of being as historical meditation,” for “[i]n the transition, thought places in dialogue the first having-been of the being of truth and the extreme to-come of the truth of being and in that dialogue brings to words the hitherto uninterrogated essence of being” (p.7). In this line of thinking, there is room to express the uniqueness of the truth of being. Being can no longer be thought on the basis of entity. It must be thought from itself: “the essential occurrence of being itself; we call this essential occurrence the *event*” (p.8; emphasis in original).

Throughout *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, we find the expression event of being (translated as *acontecimiento de ser* in Spanish and *existir-evento* in Portuguese)<sup>54</sup> in different contexts, such as the attempt to understand the *ought* (or *ought-to-be*) and veridicality as the ought-to-be act of thinking (p.4): “Why [...] must I think veridically?” (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.5).<sup>55</sup> From a theoretical-cognitive determination, this veridicality [*istinno*] gains its “validity within an aesthetic, a scientific, or a sociological unity” (p.5); on the other hand, the ought “gains its validity within the unity of my once-occurrent answerable life” (p.5). This is due to the fact that “[t]he ought is a distinctive category of the ongoing performance of acts or deeds [*postuplenie*] or of the actually

---

<sup>52</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>53</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>54</sup> TN. The Portuguese version of this work was published by Pedro & João Editores. The full reference is: BAKHTIN, M. *Para uma filosofia do ato responsável*. Tradução aos cuidados de Valdemir Miotello e Carlos Alberto Faraco. São Carlos, SP: Pedro & João, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

performed act (and everything is an act or deed that I perform – even thought and feeling); it is a certain attitude of consciousness, the structure of which we intend to disclose phenomenologically” (p.6).

Referring to Kant’s *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Bakhtin observes that “[t]he discovery of an *a priori* element in our cognition” did not open a way out to a “historically individual, actual cognitional act”; hence, for this transcendent activity, “one was compelled to think up a purely theoretical *subjectum* [...], a historically non-actual *subjectum* – a universal consciousness, a scientific consciousness, an epistemological *subjectum*” (1993, p.6).<sup>56</sup> In a footnote, Bubnova (BAJTIN, 1997a, p.13) explained that when Bakhtin wrote “a historically non-actual *subjectum*,” he used the word *istoricheskii* (historical), which in this context is not commonly used in Russian. It is used here as an expression that is close to *sobytiinyi* (eventness/with characteristics of an event) and reminds us of the German word *geschichtlich*, which is an important term in German Philosophy that semantically differs from *historisch*. Heidegger and his followers use the latter term as an antonym of *geschichtlich*. Bubnova also observes that for Bakhtin’s German contemporaries, *Geschichte* means “the stream of events that are concretely existential, irreversible, and unrepeatable; it is different from the systematized *Historie*” (BAJTIN, 1997a, p.13).<sup>57</sup>

On the linguistic plane, the examples we have discussed help us to retrieve the more original meaning (as Heidegger would put it) of key ideas in Bakhtin’s philosophy, such as unrepeatable uniqueness of lived life, moral answerability, once-occurrent event of Being, veridicality as the ought-to-be act of thinking and, more importantly, his affiliation to philosophical traditions. It is at this point that reading Heidegger is always enlightening, for as Bakhtin establishes his point of view, he does it by thoroughly retrieving and questioning the philosophical traditions that nurtured him – from Metaphysics, Ontology, and Phenomenology to Hermeneutics.

---

<sup>56</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>57</sup> Text in original: “la corriente del acontecer concretamente existencial, irreversible e irrepitible, a diferencia de la esquematizada *Historie*.”

## 5 An Attempt towards Final Remarks: Open Paths to the Clearing of Being

This reflection is far from wearing out the complexity of the theme we have proposed. Our intent was to shed some light onto a few philosophical fundamentals that point to the ontological-hermeneutic dimension of Bakhtin's and Heidegger's thinking on language and on the event of being/*Dasein* (being-there). It is ontological because the understanding (meaning) of human existence is necessarily associated to the historical opening that only being, as an event and a project of ought-to-be in the actually lived and experienced life, can grant to entity: being is existence. It is also hermeneutic because the understanding (meaning) of the answerable act and of *Dasein* (being-there), in the event of being-in-the-world, is necessarily associated to a different kind of understanding. This understanding is not reduced nor is it confounded to a simple explanation that we can find in a general founding system governed by reason, as are the rational methods of (founding and explaining) science. Having a hermeneutical experience is not remaining with a pre-conception of the world, which is already given, explained, and whose meaning is stable. The intended understanding is that which can only be found in the answerably performed act and in the facticity of *Dasein* (being-there). In other words, it is that whose understanding life itself gives in a world that has an emotional/affectionate-volitional tone.

As we can see, Bakhtin and Heidegger summon us to tread the path of language in the event of being. Thus, we have to go beyond the relationship between thing and word in order to find being and saying. In other words, "language is the guardian of the being of things, as presence, and of the mode of event occurrence insofar as it circumscribes the field of our possible experiences in the world" (SAMPAIO, 2013, p.5).<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, we can say that being is the beginning, the opening to the world. On the other hand, we also understand that entity is simple presence, that which is susceptible to be known, manipulated, or transformed. Thus, looking at being (and not at entity) allows for a thinking experience with language and gives a new meaning to investigations that attempt to observe its phenomena. We must also rethink how we

---

<sup>58</sup> Text in original: "É a linguagem que detém a guarda tanto do ser das coisas, enquanto presença, como também do modo de acontecer do evento, na medida em que ela circunscreve o campo da nossa possível experiência no mundo."



should approach these phenomena by keeping an eye on what is being said, keeping the room of the unsaid, and sheltering speech as it is revealed as such (not as we would like it to be or as we want to understand it).

We must also consider each experience as unique: it belongs to a historical community that lives *in* language. It is only from this unique place that we can find the nexuses, the echoes that resonate in countless connections. We need to prioritize the exercise of careful listening, for it is only through it that we can reach the being that enunciates. This makes it possible for our saying to be transformed and to unveil the knowledge that opens the clearing. In this sense, we can state, with Heidegger (1962),<sup>59</sup> that the presence of being-in-the-world is enunciated in speech. It is this presence that makes the articulation of comprehensibility possible, which is the reason why speech is on the basis of the interpretation of every utterance.

To conclude, we can say that as we are faced with the understanding and the interpretation of the event of being in language, we are summoned to seek the clearing by our moral answerability for thinking and for participatory ethical acts. The privileged paths to this search for knowledge, as suggested by Bakhtin and Heidegger, are of interest to every single one who intends to go beyond the logical system of natural languages, for if it is only through language that we can reach the event of being, investigating it means seeking to understand how the very opening of being-in-the-world occurs.

## REFERENCES

- AMORIM, M. Para uma filosofia do ato: “válido e inserido no contexto”. In: BRAIT, B. (Org.). *Bakhtin, dialogismo e polifonia*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2009, p.17-43.
- BAJTIN, M. *Hacia una filosofía del acto ético. De los borradores y otros escrito*. Trad. Tatiana Bubnova. Barcelona: Anthropos; San Juan: Universidade de Puerto Rico. 1997.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. The problem of the text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In: *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trad. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006, p.103-131.
- BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

---

<sup>59</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

HEIDEGGER, M. *Ontologia. Hermenêutica da facticidade*. Trad. Renato Kirchner. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A caminho da linguagem*. Trad. Márcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. *El ser y el tiempo*. Trad. José Gaos. El Salvador/Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sobre a questão o pensamento*. Trad. de Ernildo Stein. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Aportes a la filosofía acerca del evento*. Trad. Dina V. Picotti C. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, [1989] 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Carta sobre o humanismo*. Trad. Rubens Eduardo Frias. São Paulo: Centauro, 2005.

HOLQUIST, M. Prefácio. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Para uma filosofia do ato*. Trad. Carlos Alberto Faraco e Cristovão Tezza (para fins didáticos), 1993.

SAMPAIO, M. C. H. Bakhtin e Heidegger: a linguagem como experiência pensante. In: *13th International Conference on the History on the Languages Sciences, 2014, Conference Handbook of the 13th International Conference on the History on the Languages Sciences*. Vila Real, Portugal: Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro 2014: 235-236.

VATTIMO, G. *Para além da interpretação: o significado da hermenêutica para a filosofia*. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1999.

Translated by Orison Marden Bandeira de Melo Júnior – [junori36@uol.com.br](mailto:junori36@uol.com.br)

*Received March 09, 2015*

*Accepted August 26, 2015*