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## APPLYING BAKHTIN SCHOLARSHIP ON DISCOURSE IN EDUCATION: A CRITICAL REVIEW ESSAY

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**ABSTRACT.** Recently, Bakhtinian philologists have charged scholars of education with misapplying Bakhtin's scholarship in their field. In this critical essay, Eugene Matusov reviews two recent edited collections relevant to this issue: Arnetha F. Ball and Sarah Warshauer Freedman's *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning* and Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey's *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*. He uses these texts to consider whether Bakhtin has been misapplied in education, how and whether Bakhtin's literary scholarship can be useful for education, and how education can inform Bakhtinian scholarship. Matusov shows that the philologists' critique of educational scholars is grounded but unjustifiably all-encompassing. Finally, he problematizes whether Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and internally persuasive discourse are compatible with institutionalized education.

Since the early 1990s, educational scholars have shown increased interest in Mikhail Bakhtin's work. In this essay I review two edited volumes that are good examples of such interest: Arnetha F. Ball and Sarah Warshauer Freedman's *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning* and Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey's *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*.<sup>1</sup> As I will argue in my analysis of these works, the central contribution of Bakhtin to education is his emphasis on "internally persuasive discourse" as the goal that should guide educational design.

My review is organized as a polemic with Bakhtinian philologists about the quality of Bakhtin scholarship in education. Our (that is, Western English-speaking educational scholars') contact with Bakhtin's work is mediated by philological studies of Bakhtin. Unfortunately, we cannot engage his work directly because we need at least three translations to access his scholarship: one is obviously a translation of Bakhtin's texts from Russian to English, another is a translation from his philosophico-literary work into the problematics of education, and the third is translation of Bakhtin's Russian-Soviet cultural, social, historical, and political context into our modern Western context.<sup>2</sup> None of these translations would exist without the work of philologists. Until our contact with Bakhtin's scholarship matures, we must depend heavily on philologists in applying his ideas in education. I think that, especially for now, educators who try to use Bakhtin cannot and should not ignore our relation with Bakhtinian philologists.

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1. Arnetha F. Ball and Sarah Warshauer Freedman, eds., *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey, eds., *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For all subsequent references, these two works will be cited in the text as *BP* and *CP*, respectively, followed by the specific chapter number and (for quoted material) page number(s).

2. Of Bakhtin's own work, it should be noted that with the exception of one known article on education – M.M. Bakhtin, "Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistics in Teaching Russian Language in Secondary School," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 6 (2004): 12–49 – his scholarship focused on literary material.

Unfortunately, some prominent Bakhtinian philologists give very low marks to educational scholars who use Bakhtin's work in their research. In July 2005, I attended the Twelfth International Bakhtin Conference in Finland. Although the conference was represented as multidisciplinary, philologists dominated the event. This was understandable to some degree, since Bakhtin's primary contribution is to the field of literary studies. Very few educational researchers attended the conference, and those who were there came mainly from the United States. My educator colleagues and I were rather surprised (and upset) when, at the session titled "The Future of Bakhtin Studies," two leading philologists — David Shepherd from the United Kingdom and Caryl Emerson from the United States — independently mounted an acute attack (at least that is how we perceived it) on how many educational researchers misapply, if not abuse, Bakhtin's work.

My understanding of their charges was that educators often pay only lip service (or a reference game) to Bakhtin's scholarship, "appropriating" his literary concepts (such as "ideological becoming," "heteroglossia," "dialogism," "internally persuasive discourse," "authoritative discourse," "chronotope," among many others) and popular quotes for their own educational work that often has little to do with Bakhtin scholarship. Shepherd and Emerson charged educational scholars with having little knowledge of contemporary Bakhtin scholarship — a problem that, according to these critics, is evident in the fact that many educators do not quote the current and important philological work on Bakhtin.

In reviewing Ball and Freedman's collection for *Russian Review*, Shepherd asserts that to critique the book's contributors for misapplying Bakhtin scholarship

is not to argue that Bakhtinian concepts cannot or should not be "applied" to real-life problems; but it is to suggest that, unless we try to understand how Bakhtin came to assemble his potent analytical instruments, we cannot achieve more than an approximate calibration of their true usefulness, and their application may become somewhat mechanical and unskillful.<sup>3</sup>

In their conference presentations, Shepherd and Emerson used Ball and Freedman's edited collection as a case study of the misapplication of Bakhtin's scholarship by educators. By "misapplication," they seemed to mean "inappropriate, erroneous, or shallow use" of Bakhtin scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Initially, I strongly disagreed with

3. David Shepherd, "Review of [Arnetha F. Ball and Sarah Warshauer Freedman, eds., *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy and Learning*]," *Russian Review* 64, no. 4 (2005): 695.

4. Actually, in his presentation at the Bakhtin conference, Shepherd charged not only educational scholars with misapplying Bakhtin scholarship but also scholars in many other nonphilological fields within the humanities and social sciences (such as psychology and sociology). He singled out education only as a typical example of a larger problem. In a similar line of argument, Emerson introduced and discussed "the divide between 'intrinsic Bakhtinians' (translators, Slavists, textologists, intellectual historians) vs. 'extrinsic' (other professions which find his ideas useful and productive in their own fields)" (Caryl Emerson, personal communication with the author, January 28, 2006). My understanding of her argument is that "internal Bakhtinians" mediate the original texts by Bakhtin for "external Bakhtinians" and thus have to be closely followed by the "external Bakhtinians." I will discuss this point in greater detail further in the essay.

Shepherd and Emerson, but the more I thought about the issues they raised, the more I found them important to address. I have crafted this review essay as a dialogical response to their criticisms, going so far as to show Shepherd and Emerson drafts and incorporate their replies in the text. Ultimately, I use their critiques as a starting point for my own critical review of the contributions in these two books and for a brief discussion of the role of Bakhtin scholarship in education.

It is well known that such different fields within the humanities and social studies as philology and education have different problematics, different methodologies, different communities, and different discourses. Attacks on educational scholarship by Bakhtinian philologists might reflect some interdisciplinary struggle over who “owns” Bakhtin scholarship. But putting aside possible interdisciplinary rivalry, gatekeeping, and jealousy, putting aside the unproductive question of whether philology or education has a monopoly on the Bakhtinian scholarly legacy, I think that Shepherd and Emerson have raised some important points worth considering within the field of education. Here, I want to consider the following issues that Shepherd and Emerson’s critique of education raised for me while I was reading these two books:

- How can and does Bakhtin scholarship inform educational research and the practice of education?
- Is Bakhtin’s scholarship misapplied by educators?
- How can and does the field of education inform Bakhtin scholarship and productively push it beyond its limits?
- Are Bakhtin scholarship and the field of education fully compatible?

#### HOW CAN AND DOES BAKHTIN SCHOLARSHIP INFORM EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATION?

I think that it is a good idea from time to time to summarize the advances made in the field of education through our use of Bakhtin’s literary scholarship as well as to summarize how education affects Bakhtinian scholarship itself. In this regard, I strongly disagree with Shepherd and Emerson’s wholly negative judgment of how Bakhtin’s work is used in the field generally and in Ball and Freedman’s collection specifically.

The field of education has a long history of defining the educational process by its goals. Traditionally, the primary educational goal has been defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge (through different processes such as transmission or discovery learning). However, for the last twenty years this goal has been criticized as too decontextualized and nonontological.<sup>5</sup> A number of different goals for education have been proposed, including identity development, transformation of participation in a community of practice, raising critical consciousness, and so on. Based on Bakhtin’s work on the development of characters within the novel,

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5. See, for example, Jean Lave, *Cognition in Practice: Mind, Mathematics, and Culture in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Freedman and Ball propose a new defining goal for education: “ideological becoming” (see *BP*, chap. 1).

They point out that the Russian term “ideology” has different connotations than the corresponding English term. The Russian term implies a (systematic or unsystematic) set of ideas and their contexts (in the way that “ecology” is a system, in a broader sense, of organisms and their habitats) rather than inflexible ideas imposed through the use of propaganda and other coercive mechanisms. Ideological becoming, therefore, is the development of ideological subjectivity within “the ideological environment” in which an individual lives.<sup>6</sup> This concept is central to a number of contributions to *Bakhtinian Perspectives*. Freedman and Ball and Cynthia Greenleaf and Mira-Lisa Katz present this ideological becoming of students as a transformation of their discourse from authoritative to internally persuasive (*BP*, chaps. 1 and 8).<sup>7</sup> Using examples from his own experience teaching academic writing to college students, Charles Bazerman further concretizes the notion of ideological becoming by insisting that pedagogy has to aim at fostering a powerful sense of authority, agency, and texts within the students’ internally persuasive discourse around academic subjects (*BP*, chap. 3).

A pedagogical challenge of teaching for ideological becoming rests in the fact — revealed to us by Bakhtin<sup>8</sup> — that a strong, powerful voice and authorship is rooted in a discursive community, which the voice addresses and to which it must respond. Thus, a strong discursive community seems to be a prerequisite for the development of a strong voice. However, the typical classroom usually lacks a strong discursive community of many academic subjects. Students rely upon either their own often uninformed, capricious, and poorly developed opinions shaped by the invisible authority of social traditions or upon voices of the external authority of expert texts or the teacher. There is a pedagogical paradox within education for ideological becoming: a strong voice requires a strong community based on internally persuasive discourse while internally persuasive discourse requires strong voices.

In his research on narratives of rethinking among senior high school students studying Malcolm X’s autobiography, Christian Knoeller describes and analyzes a dialogical pedagogy that addresses this paradox (*BP*, chap. 7). This pedagogy involves three recursive circles of assigned compositions (textualization of a dialogue) and student-led classroom discussions (dialogization of a text) focused on helping students to reveal and resolve the contradictions in their own feelings

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6. M.M. Bakhtin and P.N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 14.

7. As I will show in the next section, Freedman and Ball (along with Kelleen Toohey and Bonnie Waterstone in *CP*, chap. 15) also view ideological becoming as the voluntary assimilation of other discourses. I find this concept of “appropriation,” which also stems from Bakhtin, less interesting in the context of education, because without a focus on critical discourse, it easily leads to the traditional pedagogical approach of transmission of knowledge masquerading as dialogical constructivism.

8. M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, vol. 8, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

about Malcolm X. Each previous phase of the recursive circle becomes a text in the following phase — for example, an assigned composition was used to prepare the students for a classroom discussion, which then became the subject for the next composition. The students were learning to reply to the text in a manner that could be shared with their peers and the teacher in classroom discussion and to address the issues raised by their peers and the teacher (and newly revealed issues raised by Malcolm X in his autobiography) in their own texts.<sup>9</sup> Classroom dialogue guided the students' writing while the students' compositions helped them develop their own arguments and analysis for classroom discussion, which provided an opportunity for them to test their own and each other's ideas. Knoeller documents how, through this recursive dialogical and reflective process, a strong academic discursive community emerged around Malcolm X's autobiography and the students' voices. Students' development of a strong sense of authority in their writing, which Bazerman calls for, serves to document their ideological becoming in a classroom discursive community as it was envisioned by Bakhtin: "The struggle and dialogic interrelationships of these categories of ideological discourse [that is, authoritarian and internally persuasive discourses] are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness."<sup>10</sup>

In the regime of internally persuasive critical discourse, both pedagogy and educational institutions themselves come under participants' scrutiny. The third composition students were assigned to write was an essay to the school district's English chairperson arguing for or against incorporating *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* into the academic curriculum for high schools. This composition forced the students to reflect on and to evaluate their entire classroom experience. It is important to notice here that the dialogical pedagogy Knoeller describes leaves everything subject to rethinking; in other words, the relation between the student's own opinion/argument/worldview, the opinion/argument/worldviews of other students, and the text of Malcolm X's autobiography has a transactional character. Similarly, Judy Kalman analyzes a dialogical pedagogy of literacy teaching for adult Mexican women that also involves rethinking and testing students' perspectives, the texts used, and the pedagogical practices employed (*BP*, chap. 11). This dialogical approach differs from the approaches described by Freedman and Ball in their chapter and by Melanie Sperling in her contribution to *Bakhtinian Perspectives*, in which the students' initial opinions were tested by academic texts and classroom discussions while the texts themselves and the school practices were not examined through comparisons with other, conflicting texts and student evaluations (see *BP*, chaps. 1 and 10).

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9. It would be interesting to compare internally persuasive discourse as presented in Knoeller's "Narratives of Rethinking: The Inner Dialogue of Classroom Discourse and Student Writing" and Carol Lee's "Double Voiced Discourse: African American Vernacular English as Resource in Cultural Modeling Classrooms" (*BP*, chaps. 7 and 6). Both Knoeller and Lee studied classrooms in which the students had to grapple with texts that arguably were not addressed to their community.

10. M.M. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 342.

In their chapter Greenleaf and Katz examine teacher professional development — that is, the ideological becoming of teachers that was aimed at promoting the ideological becoming of their students (*BP*, chap. 8). They worked with high school teachers specializing in traditional literacy instruction, many of whom initially saw their students as deficient, ignorant, and disabled. The challenge of the professional development was how to transform these teachers into the type of teacher described by Knoeller — one concerned with developing a discursive community in the classroom and thus fostering students' ideological becoming. Like Knoeller's teacher, Greenleaf and Katz were concerned with creating a community of discourse, but they wanted to do so not among students on the subject of a particular text, but among professionals around the topic of teaching literacy. The pedagogical challenge for the organizers of the professional development workshop was to create two discourse communities: one around literary texts that the teachers use in their classrooms and the other around pedagogical texts (that is, teaching case studies). As in the pedagogical practice described by Knoeller, each previous phase of the recursive circle becomes a text for the following phase: the processes of textualization and dialogization followed each other in recursive circles. However, in the case of teachers' professional development these circles were much more complex. They also involved teachers' pedagogical actions.

The professional development workshop started with the teachers' small-group discussions of literary texts that had previously been offered to a ninth-grade student in videotaped sessions. First, the teachers discussed the literary stories and how they would teach them in their own classrooms. Then they watched videotaped interviews with the student who had read and discussed the same literary texts. This pedagogical process not only created a discursive community of teachers around the selected literary texts, but it also allowed the teachers to see the student as a fellow member of their literate discourse community rather than as an inept reader (as they had perceived many of their own students in the past). In analyzing the videotaped reading by the student, the teachers developed an imaginary dialogue with the student, similar to that they had with each other, as if she was a member of their group — this imaginary dialogue became a blueprint for developing a dialogical approach to guiding students.

In this case, the teachers authored their lesson plans rather than compositions, in contrast to Knoeller (*BP*, chap. 7). Through this process they learned the importance of (1) developing their own pedagogical texts — that is, case studies — by videotaping and reflecting on their teaching, (2) subjecting examples from their own teaching experience to a professional reflective dialogue with colleagues, and (3) developing new lessons based on these professional dialogues. This process served to build both a professional community and a strong teachers' voice through their shared history of ideological becoming as teachers.

Bakhtin's concept of ideological becoming as a process of transformation from engaging in authoritative to internally persuasive critical discourse is very compatible with critical pedagogies that call for

scrutiny, whether embodied action or discursive practice, of the rules of exchange within a social field. To do so requires an analytical move to self-position oneself as Other even in a market or field that might not necessarily construe or structurally position one as Other (that is, on the basis of color, gender, class, etc.)...There can be no more overtly normative challenges to educational systems, educators, and the state other than how they manage their cultural and linguistic Others. (Allan Luke, *CP*, chap. 2, 26 and 28)

As Norton and Toohey characterize his analysis in their introduction to *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*, "Luke sees critical pedagogy as necessary to engage with the experiences of these marginalized learners" (*CP*, chap. 1, 2). Put in Bakhtinian terms, this means critical pedagogies involve internally persuasive discourse about power in education and beyond.

Bakhtin showed that there are two major related pitfalls for establishing the regime of internally persuasive discourse: excessive monologism (in other words, the solitude of the powerful) and excessive dialogism (in other words, the solitude of the powerless). In the context of critical pedagogies, excessive monologism involves their normalization and decontextualization. It leads to prepackaged curricula (and standardized classroom syllabi), totalizing dichotomies of "oppressed" versus "oppressors," the finalization and objectivization of the experiences and voices of others, and the positioning of teachers as "experts" (supported by traditional institutional power) regarding how to empower the "oppressed." Several chapters in *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning* address this problem in one way or another. Aneta Pavlenko summarizes the critique of excessive monologism in critical pedagogies, listing as some of its chief consequences the privileging of talk over silence, of public forum over private reflection, and a strict teacher-student hierarchy (*CP*, chap. 4, 55). In addition Sue Starfield cites Elizabeth Ellsworth's critique of critical pedagogies to emphasize the pitfall of excessive monologism, "Ellsworth's challenge to critical pedagogy and its repressive myths, against which she argued that 'strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact,' was forcefully titled, 'Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?'" (*CP*, chap. 8, 140–141).<sup>11</sup>

Angel Lin presents a particularly interesting ethnographic account of her struggle with excessive monologism in her own use of critical pedagogy in teaching inservice teachers in Hong Kong (*CP*, chap. 14). Because of the negative connotations of the term "critical" in Chinese Hong Kong culture, Lin named her course "Language, Culture and Education." However, she explained to her students that the course would actually focus on critical pedagogy at the first class meeting. As a result, one third of students dropped the class and the students who were left were all women from Lin's previous class who already trusted her and were sympathetic to her perspective. As Lin's ethnography and analysis show, the instructor was not able to turn the students' initial trust into internally persuasive discourse (at least not to the extent that she had hoped). The students complained

11. See also Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (London: Routledge, 1992), 98.

to her about what they felt were difficult and somewhat irrelevant readings she assigned, alien academic discourse that she forced them to engage with during the class, and a hierarchical and somewhat disrespectful classroom regime that she had imposed on them.

The problem of excessive monologism is evident in the way that Lin had defined the curriculum as suggested by her assigned readings: "I said to myself, 'Yes, I believe that introducing [James] Gee's concepts to [my students] is important because it will give them some analytic tools to do their own analysis later on in their critical analysis projects, and I've got to find ways of making Gee's concepts easier to understand and relevant to their daily experiences'" (*CP*, chap. 14, 275).<sup>12</sup> Lin designed her curriculum to move from an emphasis on the analytical tools of academic literature on critical pedagogy to the inservice teachers' own professional problems. This "bottom-up" instrumental instructional approach is based on several assumptions that arguably promote the excessive monologism that plagued Lin's classroom.<sup>13</sup> It assumes that the analytical tools that the instructor wants to teach his or her students will be useful in tackling the students' problems, even though the instructor does not know what these problems are in advance. It further assumes that the functionality of the tools can be understood and appreciated by the students outside of the particular contexts of problems and goals for which these tools were originally invented. Finally, it assumes that the teacher can unilaterally decide what the students need to learn. Although the students initially trusted their previously successful instructor to guide them unilaterally, their trust quickly ran out as a result of Lin's failure to jump-start an internally persuasive discourse. When the students' trust disappeared and an internally persuasive discourse did not emerge, the instructor was left only with authoritarian methods for enforcing her monological pedagogical regime — methods well developed and maintained by traditional educational institutions (such as management by guilt, for instance).<sup>14</sup> The students perceived this problem of excessive monologism as having been assigned unnecessarily difficult and irrelevant readings, while the instructor conceptualized the problem as the gap between the academic discourse on critical pedagogy and the practitioners' discourse.

To Lin's credit, she managed to create an atmosphere in her classroom in which the students felt comfortable providing her with their feedback and sharing their professional and student concerns with her (although this occurred a bit too late). Lin might have had much greater success had she begun her curriculum with inservice teachers' professional concerns about globalization, standardization of educational processes, testing, and neoliberal educational policies rather than with the academic literature that could have supported analysis of these concerns. It

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12. The concepts Lin refers to here come from four chapters in James P. Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, 2d ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996).

13. Michael Cole and Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, "Kids and Computers: A Positive Vision of the Future," *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 1 (1989): 73–86.

14. For a discussion of management by guilt, see Andy Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age* (London: Cassell, 1994).

seems to me that such a focus on the teachers' concerns as professionals and as students might have jump-started the internally persuasive discourse at the outset of Lin's class. Had she committed herself first to helping the students address their problems and concerns, even when she disagreed with how her students conceptualized these, Lin might have been able to initiate a transformation of the students' conceptualizations — a feat accomplished by Greenleaf and Katz in their work with inservice teachers, as we have seen. Although the inservice teachers in their study started the professional seminar using deficient models to conceptualize their instructional problems, Greenleaf and Katz embraced these concerns (rather than rejecting them) and helped the teachers transform their understanding and thus build literate communities through the use of internally persuasive discourse. We learn from Greenleaf and Katz that instructors should not be afraid of and should not overrule students' concerns, as these can become starting points of internally persuasive *critical* discourse. This is arguably a true instance of "activation of prior knowledge."

In my view, Lin is right in viewing her instructional problems of excessive monologism as rooted in her institutional environment rather than in her own individual beliefs. This ethnographic account for her experience in institutional university settings highlights the lack of institutional support for a community of teacher-educators and their discourse. The institution prioritizes publication of academic research, service through participation on committees, and delivery of courses. As Lin reports, there is a strong emphasis on globalization and neoliberal educational policies. In Hong Kong, there is an institutional perception that its academic community exists on the periphery of U.S. and British academia. Furthermore, there is national, political, and cultural distrust of "critique" and openly "critical" discourse. All of this creates no or very little institutional space for critical pedagogy to be practiced by university instructors. Critical pedagogy is not just a curriculum for students, but it has to be practiced by instructors with the support of their institutions. I want to praise Lin for her brutal honesty and bravery in providing an ethnographic analysis of her instructional problems. This gift to the practical and theoretical sphere of critical pedagogy within the field of education provides a pathway toward solving the problem she describes so effectively.

Excessive dialogism is another pitfall for critical pedagogy. Bakhtin argued that excessive dialogism is caused by alienation, marginalization, solitude, and a lack of solidarity and community:

Capitalism created the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness. Dostoevsky exposes all the falsity of this consciousness, as it moves in its vicious [dialogical] circle.

Hence the depiction of the sufferings, humiliations, and *lack of recognition* of man in class society. Recognition has been taken away from him, his name has been taken away. He has been driven into forced solitude, which the unsubmitive strive to transform into *proud solitude* (to do without recognition, without others).

Complex problem of humiliation and the humiliated.<sup>15</sup>

15. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 288.

In a more detailed account of this process, Bakhtin explained,

The Underground Man conducts the same sort of inescapable dialogue with himself that he conducts with the other person. He cannot merge completely with himself in a *unified monologic* voice simply by leaving the other's voice entirely outside himself (whatever that voice might be, without a loophole), for, as is the case with Golyadkin, his voice must also perform the function of surrogate for the other person. He cannot reach an agreement with himself, but neither can he stop talking with himself. The style of his discourse about himself is organically alien to the period, alien to finalization, both in its separate aspects and as a whole. This is the style of internally endless speech which can be mechanically cut off but cannot be organically completed.<sup>16</sup>

Excessive dialogism creates minefields, in which any step is criticized by the educator. It may create paralysis of action, relativism or cynicism, and even rationalization of oppression among educators. In my view, Ryuko Kubota's critique of critical pedagogy in *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning* presents an example of excessive dialogism in critical pedagogy. Kubota follows Troy Richardson and Sofia Villenas in criticizing the use of "white European notions of democracy, equality, human rights, Marxism, and so on" (*CP*, chap. 3, 43) — something Richardson and Villenas call "dancing with whiteness."<sup>17</sup> Rather than analyzing the limitations, ethnocentrism, and oppressive features of the European categories (such a critical analysis has been provided by Richardson and Villenas) while preserving what is useful about these categories, Kubota seems to suggest that we abandon them altogether, arguing "against dancing with European categories of meaning" (*CP*, chap. 3, 43).

In my view, excessive dialogism in critical pedagogy appears to be promoted by analytical and individualistic bootstrapping — as it is exemplified in the description by Luke, for whom critical pedagogy entails "an analytical move to self-position oneself as Other.... This doubling and Othering of the self from dominant text and discourse can be cognate, analytic, expository, and hypothetical, and can, indeed, be already lived and narrated, embodied, and experienced" (*CP*, chap. 2, 26). Bakhtin argued that even when we look at ourselves in a mirror, we dialogically address the self from positions of significant real or imaginary others. In other words, internally persuasive critical discourse is not rooted in a special and direct relation with the self (that is, "doubling"), as Luke seems to argue, but in a special relation with actual others (and, thus, through these others, to the self). To avoid excessive dialogism, our dialogical and discursive relations to others have to be examined *with* others. In my view, the issue is neither whether to double ourselves

16. *Ibid.*, 235. The wording "Underground Man" may sound sexist in English; however, the original Russian wording does not have any sexist connotation. The same is true of the use of the masculine pronoun "he."

17. Troy Richardson and Sofia Villenas, "'Other' Encounters: Dances with Whiteness in Multicultural Education," *Educational Theory* 50, no. 2 (2000): 255–273. I found Richardson and Villenas's critique of neo-Marxism, humanism, and democracy based on movements to secure the sovereign rights of indigenous people (for example, *indigenismo*) and tribalism very interesting. They point out the conflicts between Marxist governments and indigenous movements, for instance. However, their analysis contained no corresponding critique of *indigenismo* and tribalism. This one-sidedness, I submit, promotes an untested romantic relation to these indigenous movements and thus makes the authors deviate from the regime of internally persuasive critical discourse.

through analytical moves nor whether to avoid dancing with European categories (or even dancing with whiteness), but rather how to engage others in a dialogue about “our dancing with others.”

Finally, I want to turn to an appreciation and analysis of the role silence plays in how internally persuasive discourse is used in educational literature. Discourse has often been associated with verbalism. Silence, on the other hand, has generally been viewed negatively and associated with passivity (lack of talk, articulateness, comprehension, reflection, and thinking), nonparticipation, oppression (fear of speaking), or resistance in educational (and psychological) literature — a perception that probably reflects a lack of appreciation for silence in discourse among the Anglo-American middle class.<sup>18</sup> However, Bakhtin argued that silence is an important part of discourse.<sup>19</sup> He focused primarily on two types of silence: first, silence-response, when silence is a response to verbal statements in a discursive exchange (consider, for instance, the famous example from Aleksandr Pushkin’s drama *Boris Godunov*: “People are silent” in a response to bloody events in the Kremlin), and, second, silence-address, when silence is an evaluation of ongoing verbal discourse by a third party to which the discourse is directed (as, for example, in the case of a jury). In her contribution to *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*, Pippa Stein suggests including a positive approach to silence in education, although she does not elaborate on the details (*CP*, chap. 6). Further research on the positive function of silence in educational discourses is definitely needed.

As I noted previously, David Shepherd and Caryl Emerson have raised some interesting and very important points in their critique of educators’ application of Bakhtin scholarship, but they also fail to see the possibilities of dialogue among philologists and scholars of education or to recognize as valid differences in how educators use Bakhtin’s work. Shepherd and Emerson may not see educators’ applications of Bakhtin scholarship as productive because, as philologists, they are not familiar with educational issues. I think that their narrow field specialization has prevented them from seeing Bakhtin in educational research. Different fields face different research questions and, thus, rely on different discourses. The importance of research questions essential to a particular field may not be apparent to those in another field. However, as I will show in subsequent sections, philologists can make constructive contributions to the field of education when they study educational issues seriously.

Shepherd and Emerson direct another interesting charge at educators (and non-philologists in general) when they imply that contemporary Bakhtin scholarship is essentially philological. Thus, in his critique of Ball and Freedman’s collection, Shepherd writes, “Although pioneering studies from the 1990s by Michael

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18. In Russian culture, silence has traditionally been highly valued. For example, there is a rather popular Russian proverb “Silence is golden,” which has taken on different meanings depending on socio-political circumstances. For more on silence in discourse, see Barbara Rogoff, *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

19. M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

Holquist, Caryl Emerson, and Gary Saul Morson are cited [in the book], one searches in vain for evidence of acquaintance with more recent, and no less groundbreaking, work by the likes of Craig Brandist, Ken Hirschkop, Brian Poole, or Galin Tihanov.<sup>20</sup> It is true that historically many Western educators have learned about Bakhtin from and through comments and translations by Western philologists.<sup>21</sup> Western philology (and other research by “internal Bakhtinians,” as Emerson calls them) has been the window to Bakhtin scholarship for Western education (as well as psychology, sociology, and other “applied” fields populated by “external Bakhtinians”). Speaking on behalf of educational scholars, I think that Western education is thankful to Western philology for serving that function. However, the idea that philology can and should remain the field that exclusively defines and mediates contemporary Bakhtin scholarship for “external Bakhtinians” is highly questionable. The time for that is past.

As more disciplines begin using Bakhtin’s original scholarship, they can produce independent analyses grounded in their own field’s “direct contact” with Bakhtin. Of course, there can be productive cross-fertilization with philology (and other fields), but there is no need to require such collaboration. “Internal Bakhtinians” may make critical discoveries that dramatically affect “external Bakhtinians.” However, just as Bakhtinian philologists may find the work of Bakhtinian educators irrelevant to their current scholarship, Bakhtinian educators may find the work of Bakhtinian philologists irrelevant to their scholarship in education. Moreover, although it would be nice for all Bakhtinian scholars from different fields to read each other’s work, this may be impossible or, even if possible, unnecessary precisely because field specialists face different contexts in their disciplinary research problems (and paradigms). I believe that there are and always will be intermediaries who read and do interdisciplinary work, but this should not be expected of every scholar — not even of every “external Bakhtinian.”

#### IS BAKHTIN’S SCHOLARSHIP MISAPPLIED BY EDUCATORS?

Are philologists such as Shepherd and Emerson indeed right that scholars in education routinely misapply Bakhtin scholarship? After carefully rereading *Bakhtinian Perspectives*, I think that Shepherd and Emerson are right to some degree that educational scholars sometimes misapply Bakhtin’s scholarship. This happens, I think, because of our excitement with engaging Bakhtin’s ideas, given that we discovered his scholarship relatively recently. Sometimes we may use Bakhtin’s work not because it really adds substance to our educational research, but because it is the fashionable thing to do. The chapters by James Gee and Carol Lee (two of my favorite educational scholars) in Ball and Freedman’s collection exemplify this

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20. Shepherd, “Review,” 694. In this review, he goes on to acknowledge that Ball and Freedman’s collection is “an already rich volume” (p. 695), but not because of its fruitful application of Bakhtin scholarship.

21. As to non-Western countries, based on my personal but limited experience of studying, working, and living in the USSR until the end of the 1980s, I can make the following observation. In the USSR, while Soviet philologists contributed significantly to other fields through their distribution and interpretation of Bakhtin scholarship, Soviet scholars within the social sciences and humanities had more unmediated contact with Bakhtin’s original scholarship than scholars in the West.

problem. In my view, Gee and Lee use Bakhtin superficially, as window dressing, by translating their own already intriguing and productive work into Bakhtin's terminology. Gee does not even attempt to cover his apparent disinterest in Bakhtin when he observes that

I have nothing novel to add to Bakhtin scholarship [in this chapter]. What I want to do here, rather, is meditate for just a moment on how one contemporary semiotic domain — namely, video and computer games — might illuminate some of the ways in which the dynamic between these two sources of meaning works out, especially in our “new times.” (*BP*, chap. 12, 298)

Gee's chapter about new literacies promoted by computer and video games and changes in the economy and society is a valuable contribution to education (as well as to many other fields) — I highly recommend that anyone interested in literacy education read it. However, it should not be published in a volume titled *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning* because it does not add or describe a Bakhtinian perspective on language, literacy, and learning.<sup>22</sup>

Lee's chapter is a direct, but also unnecessary translation of her very fruitful theory of cultural modeling into Bakhtin's terminology. In this essay, she studies how African-American students can use and can be guided to use their own cultural modes of understanding texts (in a broad sense) in order to understand art texts specifically (she uses the HBO movie *Sax Cantor Riff* as an example). Lee describes the purpose of this educational research as follows:

I make the claim here that there are multiple voices speaking through the utterances of these students: (1) cultural models regarding death, regarding what gives people power in life and cultural scripts for what happens when one dies that are rooted in traditional African American (and by extension African) ontology; (2) literary modes of reasoning that privilege the figurative over the literal; and (3) [African American Vernacular English] discourse norms that privilege ways of speaking and entering conversation. (*BP*, chap. 6, 136)

This is a very interesting and important series of points with extensive implications for educational practices that involve using students' cultural capital for academic instruction. However, it has little to do with Bakhtin's concept of “voice” (or with the “double voiced discourse” that Lee discusses in her chapter, for that matter). Bakhtin articulated the ontological (and dialogical) aspects of discourse in his definition of *voice*: it “includes height, range, timbre, aesthetic category (lyric, dramatic, etc.). It also includes a person's worldview and fate. A person enters into dialogue as an integral voice. He participates in it not only with his thoughts, but with his fate and with his entire individuality.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, voices are born through ontology, not through some kind of division of labor, modes, cognitive aspects, or positions. Many commentators on Fyodor Dostoevsky's artwork admired his portrayal of philosophical ideas in his novels; however, as Bakhtin pointed out, Dostoevsky did not use his characters as puppets representative of particular philosophical ideas in purely intellectual debates: “Dostoevsky begins not with the idea, but with idea-heroes of a dialogue. He seeks the integral voice, and fate and event (the fates and

22. To Gee's credit, when he was seriously interested in Bakhtin's work, he made a very important contribution to this scholarship in the field of education through his book *Social Linguistics and Literacies*.

23. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 293.

events of the plot) become means for expressing voices."<sup>24</sup> Voice is dialogically shaped by address and response to real or imaginary audiences. Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse involves the use of direct or indirect quotations from other speakers in a discourse. In contrast, Lee talks not about multiple *voices* but rather about multiple (cognitive) modes of the students' utterances. She successfully tracks several distinct modes: (1) a mode of cultural models or schemes used to consider events in the text, (2) "literary modes of reasoning that privilege the figurative over the literal," and (3) a mode of cultural ways of speaking accepted within the students' local community. This is an interesting contribution to the field of education, but, arguably, it does not contribute to Bakhtinian perspectives on education.

Of course, there is a relation between Bakhtin's notion of "voice" and Lee's notion of "mode" (that I extracted): mode is, among many other things, a part of voice. However, I do not see this relation as organic. Bakhtin's notion of "voice" is deeply dialogical — it results from a dramatic encounter between at least two people. Lee's notion of "mode" is analytical, cognitive, and, I would argue, essentialistic. Cultural models, norms, and literary modes exist by themselves "out there" and are not constituted by dialogical relations.<sup>25</sup> It is not clear what Lee's theory of cultural modeling or Bakhtin's scholarship — or Bakhtin scholarship, for that matter — gains from her application of Bakhtin's terminology.<sup>26</sup> In my view, Lee's use of Bakhtin obscures rather than illuminates her very important conceptual-pedagogical ideas regarding cultural modeling and her analysis of the empirical data she compiled. Of course, I do not have a monopoly on understanding Bakhtin scholarship, and perhaps I have missed or misunderstood something important in the chapter. If so, future dialogues in the field will probably reveal this.

My primary contention here, however, is that Bakhtin's original conception of voice could potentially be quite useful to educational research and theory. For example, Suresh Canagarajah's chapter in *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning* describes how minority students play with identity and with official academic discourse (CP, chap. 7). While, on the surface, they use official language, they do so with a twist, revealing that they are actually parodying it. Canagarajah conceptualizes this phenomenon as minority students' attempt to create

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24. Ibid., 296.

25. Eugene Matusov, Mark Smith, Maria A. Candela, and Keren Lilu, "Culture Has No Internal Territory: Culture as Dialogue," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Socio-Cultural Psychology*, ed. Jaan Valsiner and Alberto Rosa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

26. Lee points to an interesting phenomenon of high school students' "signifying," or mocking their own seriousness in interpreting the movie *Sax Cantor Riff*. She interprets this phenomenon as an effort by the students to satirize "the very literary quality of the [movie] story" (BP, chap. 6, 138). She refers to Bakhtin's notion of *carnival* in which the serious official culture of the school that privileges figurative interpretation of a text collides with the laughter of the unofficial culture of peers. An alternative (but not mutually exclusive) explanation for this phenomenon may be that the adolescent students did not want to admit publicly the emotional response that the movie and the classroom discussion evoked in them (out of concern that such feelings would not be seen as "cool" by the relevant others in the class). Lee's interpretation might have been more persuasive if she had interviewed her students about their signifying. In general, given Bakhtin's framework, I think it might have been very informative if Lee had analyzed the emerging addressivity — construction of the audience by the participants — in the classroom discourse.

“pedagogical safe houses” and subversive identities. Unfortunately, she does not use Bakhtin’s notions of double-voiced discourse and carnival in her fruitful analysis. While Norton and Toohey, the editors of this collection, observe that the minority students Canagarajah describes in this chapter are developing “*multivocal literacies*” — a clear reference to Bakhtin — Canagarajah does not herself make this connection (CP, chap. 1, 5).

My final example of the apparent misapplication of Bakhtin scholarship by educators comes from Freedman and Ball’s opening chapter in *Bakhtinian Perspectives*. They view the purpose of education as that of moving students from authoritative discourse based solely on the power of external authority to internally persuasive discourse. I agree with the authors that this goal is linked in spirit to Bakhtin’s purpose (as I discussed in the previous section). However, when Ball and Freedman operationalize Bakhtin’s notions of “authoritative discourse” and “internally persuasive discourse” using their research in post-apartheid South Africa and post-genocide Rwanda and Bosnia (and Herzegovina), they deviate from Bakhtin’s ideas that are potentially very useful to education by psychologizing the notion of discourse. Ball and Freedman seem to define “authoritative discourse” as discourse associated with violence, while they define “internally persuasive discourse” as discourse in which participants freely accept the claims and statements of others. As an example of “authoritative discourse,” Ball describes a South African student in a teacher education program talking about being beaten by her father and teachers as a young school student. Although it is true that violence can be a part of “authoritative discourse” — when it is used to force a person to accept certain ideas, for instance — violence alone does not always or necessarily constitute authoritative discourse. When violence does not serve the purpose of persuasion — as, for example, in a case of a punishment voluntarily accepted by the perpetrator of a crime, or in a case of genocide where perpetrators use violence to kill people rather than to persuade them or use it as a form of anger relief — it is arguably not an instance of “authoritative discourse.” In her discussion, Ball does not provide any evidence that the past violence inflicted on this student by her father and teachers served the purpose of persuasion, or was intended to do so. Furthermore, authoritative discourse can be based not on violence but on tradition, convention, or ignorance.

Similarly, I argue that freely accepted ideas and statements do not constitute internally persuasive discourse, although it is unquestionable that the freedom to accept (or reject) ideas is a necessary condition for it. Ball quotes many fragments from the reflective writing of one of her South African students, claiming that these samples illustrate the student’s free and willing acceptance of the ideas of Lev Vygotsky, Wayne Au, James Gee, and Henry Giroux among others (whose work the student was assigned to read by Ball, as her instructor). Readers can see from these snippets how the South African student incorporates (“appropriates”) the ideas of these scholars into her own past experiences and future professional goals. However, I claim that this evidence is not sufficient to prove that the student was involved in internally persuasive discourse in Bakhtin’s sense. According to Bakhtin, a person is involved in internally persuasive discourse when different

ideas that embody diverse voices collide with each other in a dialogue that tests these ideas.<sup>27</sup> As Gary Morson observes in his chapter in the same volume, in internally persuasive discourse “truth becomes dialogically tested and forever testable” (*BP*, chap. 13, 319). Internally persuasive discourse implies a special dialogical and critical exposure, facilitated by an instructor, of the student to alternative discourses — alternative to Vygotsky, Au, Gee, Giroux and other scholars in the context of a “crisis of truth.”<sup>28</sup> Ball does not present any evidence that her student has undergone such an experience. Moreover, although I do not claim this is true in the scenario Ball describes, the South African student might conceivably accept the pedagogical ideas of Vygotsky, Au, Gee, Giroux, and other scholars not as a result of her involvement in internally persuasive discourse, as Ball insists, but as a result of her involvement in an instructor’s authoritative discourse of uncritical indoctrination (this is, of course, a very extreme possibility, but it should be considered). Part of the problem seems to be indicated by Shepherd in his review of the book — he points out that many contributors to *Bakhtinian Perspectives* appear to rely primarily on Bakhtin’s “Discourse in the Novel,” with its emphasis on the voluntary assimilation of the words of others. This work does not emphasize the dialogical and critical properties of internally persuasive discourse (although these are still present) to the degree that *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* and Bakhtin’s other texts do.

An alternative possibility is that this controversy results from contradictions in Bakhtin’s scholarship itself rather than from any misunderstanding on the part of Ball and Freedman regarding his notion of two discourses. One can argue that Bakhtin defined authoritative and internally persuasive discourses (or similar concepts) differently in his different texts. However, a close look at his essay “Discourse in the Novel” reveals that Bakhtin defined internally persuasive discourse as a critical stance in relation to a text: he talked about experimenting with the text, questioning the author, imagining alternatives, evaluating diverse discourses, and challenging the text. This critical aspect of internally persuasive discourse was noticed by several contributors to Ball and Freedman’s collection.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, I agree that Bakhtin’s focus on the critical aspect of internally persuasive discourse is less explicit and central in “Discourse in the Novel” than it is in his other writing. To be fair to Ball and Freedman (as well as to several other contributors to the two books under review here), it is easy to miss this critical aspect of internally persuasive discourse if one limits his or her analysis of the notion to this essay.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Freedman, like Ball, equates the free but uncritical acceptance of ideas with internally persuasive discourse. She cites an example from her interview with Bosnian Croats:

The Bosnian Croats, in contrast [to Bosnian Muslims — Bosniaks], argued for their language rights, and rarely mentioned the similarities across the languages [that Bosniaks, Bosnian

27. See Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination and Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*.

28. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

29. Specifically, see the contributions of Eileen Landay (*BP*, chap. 5, 112–113), Judy Kalman (*BP*, chap. 11, 258), and, of course, Gary Morson (*BP*, chap. 13).

Croats, and Bosnian Serbs use]. *Their internally persuasive discourses sound quite different from those of their Bosniak neighbors.* They espoused the same rights for other national groups, and claimed every group had the right to keep its language and school curriculum separately.... Most interesting is this student's claim that she has discussed her views with students of other nationalities and that they agree with her. "I talked about it with friends of different nationality, and they also agree." Her claim about what others think conflicts with what the Bosniaks say in their interviews. (*BP*, chap. 1, 26–27, emphasis added)

I believe that Freedman's data provides evidence that her Bosnian Croat interviewees were involved in authoritative discourse rather than internally persuasive discourse. This anecdote suggests many characteristics of authoritative discourse: intolerance, speaking for others, an unwillingness to listen to and genuinely question others, the failure to test one's own ideas and assumptions, and the desire to impose one's own views on others. In the spirit of Bakhtin scholarship, I argue that freely, but uncritically, accepting the views of the dominant ideology in a community is characteristic of authoritative, not internally persuasive, discourse. It is interesting to consider what (different or similar) conclusions Ball and Freedman might have reached if they had more closely followed Bakhtin's dialogical concepts of "authoritative discourse" and "internally persuasive discourse" in their research. I argue that focusing on the critical aspect of discourse — what is, I think, the core of Bakhtin's notion of "internally persuasive discourse" — is extremely important for education.

Several factors have made it difficult for educational scholars to apply Bakhtin's literary and philosophical scholarship productively in the field of education. First, for reasons stemming from the field of philology, the first major text by Bakhtin that was translated into English (in 1981) was *Dialogic Imagination*, a collection of his writings from the 1930s that includes his essay "Discourse in the Novel" — the Bakhtin essay most frequently cited in the field of education (this point has been made previously).<sup>30</sup> Many Bakhtinian philologists would argue that these texts have to be read through the prism of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky, which he wrote in the 1920s and reworked in the 1960s and in which he introduced "global concepts" such as dialogue.<sup>31</sup> I agree with this position. Second, the issue is also complicated by internal and unavoidable squabbles in the philological field of Bakhtinian studies itself. Thus, scholars of education have inherited "Bakhtinian" concepts, such as "intertextuality," that Bakhtin not only did not originate but that, as some philologists argue, violate the antiformalist and antistructuralist spirit of his work.<sup>32</sup> Third, to a great extent (although there are notable exceptions), educational scholarship adapts Bakhtin to serve its own purposes without experiencing what Bakhtin called "the resistance of material." Put differently, we often

30. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Holquist, trans. Emerson and Holquist.

31. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990). See also Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

32. For a discussion of intertextuality, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). For an analysis of the problem with such "Bakhtinian" concepts, see Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*.

see Bakhtin as a convenient support for arguments that we have developed without reference to his scholarship. In many ways, Bakhtin has not yet disrupted our scholarship to such a degree that it can be said to be genuinely *informed* by his work. This fact raises an important question: Can Bakhtin's scholarship in itself offer something distinctive and valuable to education, or is it merely useful in supporting already established positions? As I have discussed already, and will discuss further, my personal answer to this question is an enthusiastic "yes." Finally, many Bakhtin scholars have commented that his texts are intentionally (and probably unintentionally) unfinished, incomplete, polysemic, nuanced, context-bounded, and unsystematic. This complexity makes it difficult for educators to develop in our own work the spirit of Bakhtin's scholarship, which, it should be noted, was developed in response to literary material.

I think that educators' fascination with Bakhtin is genuine (like psychologists' fascination with Vygotsky). Our occasional misapplication of Bakhtin (or Vygotsky or activity theory) often results from this fascination and our desire to keep it alive. Thus, this misapplication, I contend, is a natural by-product of educators' interest in Bakhtin — it has to be noticed, examined, and criticized. However, there is no final authority to decide what is "misapplication" and what is not but the authority of discourse itself within the academic community — an open, public discourse for the purpose of testing each other's ideas and claims.

HOW CAN AND DOES THE FIELD OF EDUCATION INFORM BAKHTIN SCHOLARSHIP AND PRODUCTIVELY PUSH IT BEYOND ITS LIMITS?

I maintain that the field of education promotes new contributions to Bakhtin scholarship. For example, Morson (although it should be noted that he is a philologist, not an educator) makes an excellent point about the limitation of Bakhtin's binary opposition between "authoritative" and authority-less "internally persuasive" discourses (*BP*, chap. 13). He argues that this limitation is especially evident in, and thus relevant for, education. Morson argues convincingly that internally persuasive discourse cannot be sustained without authority. He points out that it is impossible to create *shared classroom attention* solely on the basis of internally persuasive discourse as it is described by Bakhtin. In order for me to engage readers in an internally persuasive discourse regarding this essay, for instance, they must trust my assertion that investing their attention, time, and effort in reading it is worthwhile. In other words, readers must trust my authority at least to some extent. This trust is not unconditional; it must ultimately be rooted in the authority-less internally persuasive discourse that I have tried to weave into my essay. As early as the 1920s, the American educator Henry Morrison similarly articulated the need for the teacher's authority to be clearly in place initially in order to jump-start the authentic learning process: "In a sense, the fundamental problem of teaching is to train the pupil, so arrange his studies and so apply an effective operative technique that he will eventually be able to become so absorbed in any study which in

itself is worthwhile [for the pupil]."<sup>33</sup> Stated differently, the teacher must gain control over the classroom *in order to lose it* through the development of internally persuasive discourse. The issue for Morson was not the complete elimination of authority, as it apparently was for Bakhtin,<sup>34</sup> but rather to define the purpose and nature of authority so that it could serve valid educational ends.

Employing terms from the educational literature on parental and teaching styles,<sup>35</sup> Morson offers not two but three types of discourse: (1) *authoritarian discourse*, which is based on the authority of power, imposition, tradition, and ignorance (what Bakhtin previously called authoritative discourse); (2) *authoritative dialogical discourse*, which is based on the authority of trust and respect; and (3) *internally persuasive discourse* (similar to Bakhtin), which is a discourse without authority that is based on dialogical questioning, testing, and evaluation of statements. Morson's notion of the authoritative but not authoritarian discourse seems to be similar to Bruno Latour's idea of bifurcating science discourse between "ready-made science" and "science-in-action" and Etienne Wenger's idea of reified participation.<sup>36</sup> Like Latour, Morson argues that it is impossible and not necessary to challenge or test every statement or utterance if these statements and utterances are reasonable — that is, if these statements can be tested and if they have been achieved through internally persuasive discourse. Dialogical pedagogy has to be based on both authoritative (in Morson's sense) and internally persuasive discourses. It should start with a nonauthoritarian authoritative discourse used to develop a shared attention in the classroom that is based on the students' trust in the teacher and then move to internally persuasive discourse that is supposed to generate more student-teacher trust and thus facilitate future authoritative

33. Henry C. Morrison, *The Practice of Teaching in the Secondary School*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 135.

34. Bakhtin's position on the desirability of authority in discourse is not as clear as it may appear to be at the first glance. At least in some of his work, it appears that Bakhtin envisioned a unity of authority and internally persuasive discourse: "Both the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness may be united in a single word [that is, discourse] — one that is simultaneously authoritative and internally persuasive — despite the profound differences between these two categories of alien discourse. But such unity is rarely given — it happens more frequently that an individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterized by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one the [authoritarian] word (religious, political, moral, the word of a father, of adults and of teachers etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other the internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code. The struggle and dialogic interrelationships of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 342). Morson makes an important next step in unpacking the dense, fuzzy, and often polysemic concepts articulated by Bakhtin.

35. See, for example, Diana Baumrind, *Current Patterns of Parental Authority* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1971); and Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippit, and Robert K. White, "Patterns of Aggression in Experimentally Created 'Social Climates,'" *Journal of Social Psychology* 10 (1939): 271–299. I do not have space here to elaborate on how the nonstructural understanding of authority developed by Bakhtin and Morson contrasts with that of the psychologists mentioned previously. Briefly, the notion of authority is based not on a structural (a)symmetry of power but on a discursive process of legitimation of power. I plan to address this issue in my future work on dialogical pedagogy.

36. See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

discourse. Dialogical authority, in other words, results from a combination of reified past and anticipated future internally persuasive critical discourse.

In essence, through the transition from authoritative to internally persuasive discourse, the teacher loses his or her authority — understood as unilateral control over students — in order that internally persuasive discourse can establish collaborative control among teacher and students over the classroom. Under a regime of internally persuasive critical discourse, the teacher is an equal (though perhaps more skillful and knowledgeable) partner in discourse without additional authority beyond of the persuasive power of his or her critical argument in the discourse. This idea of the teacher losing authority runs against one of the chief goals of many traditional teachers to establish firm and permanent authority in the classroom.<sup>37</sup> Traditional teachers are afraid to lose their authority — that is, unilateral control over their students — because they believe this will lead to chaos, student violence, and unilateral control (unilateral power) in the classroom by students.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the successful establishment of internally persuasive classroom discourse creates the conditions necessary for the students to develop trust in their teacher and for the teacher to develop trust in the students. This mutual trust, in turn, lays a foundation of temporal authority that acts as a precursor for future internally persuasive discourse. This process is similar to that of the impressive credentials of a scholar “authoritatively persuading” other scholars to read his or her latest article. However, Morson argues that internally persuasive discourse is not predictable and involves negotiation among the participants over goals and agendas. This means that discourse is often not limited to a single topic. Similarly, in their contribution to *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*, Constant Leung, Roxy Harris, and Ben Rampton provide research revealing that in the classroom setting, classroom discourse often involves multiple and simultaneous agendas and tasks (*CP*, chap. 13). There is an interesting question of how these multiple agendas and tasks are regulated in internally persuasive discourse. Morson’s typology of discourse expands Bakhtin’s typology and makes an important contribution to such educational issues as how to organize dialogical instruction, establish teacher authority, and implement classroom design.

#### ARE BAKHTIN SCHOLARSHIP AND THE FIELD OF EDUCATION FULLY COMPATIBLE?

In her chapter in *Bakhtinian Perspectives*, Eileen Landay asks, “By using Bakhtin’s...key concepts...to explore and analyze a particular approach to literacy teaching and learning..., do we stray too far afield from the circumstances for

37. It would be interesting to consider other authoritative discourses besides the discourse of control — the discourse of care, for instance — but such analysis is outside the scope of this essay.

38. For more on teachers’ concern with control, see Philip W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968); Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Peter McLaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Towards a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures*, 2d ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Linda M. McNeil, *Contradictions of Control: School Structure and School Knowledge* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Alexander M. Sidorkin, *Learning Relations: Impure Education, Deschooled Schools, and Dialogue with Evil* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); and Willard W. Waller, *The Sociology of Teaching* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1932).

which these concepts were developed?" (*BP*, chap. 5, 123). Can Bakhtin *literary* scholarship be fruitfully applied to the field of education? This leads me to another accusation that Shepherd and Emerson seem to put forward (although very indirectly). It concerns a possible contradiction between education as a practice (real and desired) and the very spirit of Bakhtin's literary scholarship. Specifically, is Bakhtin's scholarship on discourse compatible with educational practice — beyond the strategic use of cherry-picked quotations, that is. It is important to take into account that Bakhtin worked with different material and addressed different problems from those central to education.

Bakhtin's use of education as an example of excessive monologism does not seem to be a chance occurrence:

In an environment of...[excessive] monologism the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence...[excessive monologism] knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can be only a *pedagogical* dialogue.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, many educators have argued that in this analysis Bakhtin specifically meant the traditional adult-run pedagogy of transmission of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Although I am very sympathetic to this argument, I am not entirely convinced that this is the case.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, it is important to consider whether Bakhtin's notion of dialogue as he developed it in his book on Dostoevsky is compatible with the practice of education. I see at least two problems that preclude the systematic occurrence in the classroom of Bakhtinian-Dostoevskian dialogues based on a collaborative regime of internally persuasive discourse. The first problem is the quality of issues discussed in the classroom as a part of the academic curriculum versus those discussed in Bakhtinian-Dostoevskian dialogues. Dialogues involving Dostoevsky's characters in his stories and novels seem to be very different from typical classroom dialogues concerning, to take one example,  $2 + 2 = 4$ , regardless of the pedagogical approach taken by the teacher (whether constructivist, community of learners, collaborative, and so on). Although it is possible to teach  $2 + 2 = 4$  in a constructivist, collaborative, and even social activist way, this is not one of "cursed perpetual questions" that Dostoevsky's characters (and the author) tried to resolve in their dialogues. Genuine problemat�icity, dramatism, and ontological

39. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 81 (emphasis added). It seems to me that, in this context of "pedagogical dialogue," Bakhtin is using "dialogue" as a synonym for "pedagogical interaction" — it does not have the same characteristics as Bakhtin's concept of "dialogue" as a certain quality of discourse (that is, internally persuasive critical discourse).

40. David Skidmore, "From Pedagogical Dialogue to Dialogical Pedagogy," *Language and Education* 14, no. 4 (2000): 283–296.

41. Bakhtin was a very good teacher himself and seemed to use dialogical pedagogy in his teaching. See M.M. Bakhtin, "Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistics in Teaching Russian Language in Secondary School," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 6 (2004): 12–49; and Eugene Matusov, "Bakhtin's Debit in Educational Research: Dialogic Pedagogy," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 6 (2004): 3–11. However, the issues raised here were not addressed in Bakhtin's essay on education.

importance for all participants seem to be absent from specific curricular topics such as  $2 + 2 = 4$  (and the like), especially for teachers who are teaching the same material in class after class. Ira Shor and Paulo Freire asserted that “the teacher selecting the objects of study knows them *better* than the students as the course begins, but the teacher *re-learns* the objects through studying them with their students.”<sup>42</sup> However, what new thing can teachers re-learn and co-learn with their first-grade students each time they teach that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? Moreover, why do teachers need to learn anything new about  $2 + 2 = 4$  in order to teach their first-grade students effectively? It is symptomatic that in analyzing classroom discourse many authors in the two books under review here exclude the instructors of the classes they studied *as* participants in the internally persuasive discourse they successfully organized among their students. Teachers are not treated as participants in the discourse, themselves struggling with the ideas under discussion, but rather they are presented as the designers and facilitators of the discourse.

The second problem is the educational need for teachers to reproduce the curriculum — and their discourse about it — again and again. *Doing* science, math, literature, reading, and morality is not the same as *learning* science, math, literature, reading, and morality. Reproduction is not the same as production. It is not by chance that educators have found Bakhtin’s notion of “appropriation” to be particularly useful. In my view, it is the least dialogical notion of Bakhtin’s scholarship.

Even in cases where some component of the academic curriculum engages all participants (including the teacher) with its genuine problemativeness, dramatization, and ontological importance, these cannot be sustained again and again each time the teacher teaches the curriculum.<sup>43</sup> When the teacher is faced with the issue again, he or she has a history of dialoguing about it with previous students — the teacher cannot authentically reproduce the dialogue that he or she formerly had with a new set of students. It is true that the new students bring their own ontology (new for the teacher) to the issues under study, and this ontological novelty creates pedagogical novelty for the teacher, but it does not necessarily add an intellectual-ontological novelty to the teacher’s engagement with the issue at hand. In other words, despite claims made by many educators, including myself, Bakhtinian-Dostoevskian dialogues seem to be accidental rather than essential to pedagogy and education.<sup>44</sup> It may not be possible to achieve internally persuasive critical discourse in the classroom on a systematic basis. Perhaps it is no mere chance that neither of the books under review here provides an example of internally persuasive discourse around some topic important within the academic curriculum — a discourse in which both the teacher and the students are fully involved and that is reproduced again and again from class to class. Can pedagogy

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42. Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, “What Is the ‘Dialogical Method’ of Teaching?” *Journal of Education* 169, no. 3 (1987): 14.

43. For an example of this, see Vivian G. Paley, *You Can’t Say You Can’t Play* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992).

44. Matusov, “Bakhtin’s Debit in Educational Research.”

be truly dialogical (that is, within the regime of internally persuasive critical discourse)? Should it be? How much internally persuasive critical discourse is possible *and* desirable in education?<sup>45</sup> Since Bakhtinian scholarship in the field of education is relatively young and immature, and in order to remain within the Bakhtinian spirit, I want to end this essay with these questions (“cursed perpetual questions” of education?). I look forward to hearing answers from readers with diverse interests in education as well as other fields.<sup>46</sup>

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45. Consider the discussion of this point in Nicholas C. Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

46. Bob Fecho provided such an interesting response to my questions that I decided to share it here: “Although IPD [internally persuasive critical discourse] may not be essential to a classroom and may not occur with the kind of frequency some of us would like, it is not nonexistent in classrooms and is certainly more than accidental. If it remains a goal to shoot for, then so be it” (Bob Fecho, personal communication with the author, January 17, 2006).

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