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From Dialogical Ontology to the Theory of Semiosphere: the Idea of the Dialogue of Cultures in the Philosophical Concepts of M. Buber and Yu. M. Lotman

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Today, the dialogue is regarded as a basis for cultural being, while the dialogue of cultures has become a key notion in modern philosophical thinking. The concept of dialogue has been transformed over the past century, acquiring new meanings and changing its internal content from understanding it as an ordinary exchange of information to a complex creative interaction and mutual influence of different cultural and value consciousnesses. Not only different personalities, but entire ethnoses, cultures, and civilizations may become subjects of the dialogue, thus increasing the dialogue functionality up to the means of developing inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-civilizational relations and accentuating commonality of the global historic process and cultural heritage of mankind. Appearing as a form of interpersonal relations in the ontology of M. Buber, who was one of the first to focus on the transition of relations from "subject-object" to "subject-subject", the concept of "dialogue" has become an important philosophical concept throughout the mid-XX century. Brand new turn of development of the theory of dialogue, and the entire human culture in General, was due to the concept of Semiosphere Yu.M. Lotman. The article deals with genesis of the philosophical concept of the dialogue between cultures in the 20th century. The focus is on its emergence — in the early 20th century — in M. Buber's theological concept and at the highest point of its development in Yu. M. Lotman's semiotic philosophy.

Keywords: dialogue of cultures, text, inter-cultural communication, dialogic ontology, semiotics, sign system, M. Buber. Yu.M. Lotman

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Introduction

In the epoch of establishment of a new type of culture, the notion of the dialogue acquires new meanings, while the field of research based on such notions as a dialogue, a dialogic relationship, and a dialogue of cultures expands.

Today, the dialogue has become a subject matter of not only philosophy, but also areas of knowledge such as culturology, linguistics, literary criticism, sociology, psychology, pedagogy and others. The subjects of the dialogue are not only individual personalities, but entire ethnoses, cultures, and civilizations.

The core of the dialogical philosophy is, first of all, recognition of the fact that an individual is formed and realized in communication. In order to become a subject of history and a subject of learning, he needs to enter a dialogue with himself, another individual, God, or nature. In this case the basis of mankind's cognitive activity is not the abstractedly logic thinking based on a monologue, but a practical and speech-based function aimed at interaction with other people.

Over the past century, the notion of the dialogue has undergone a transformation, acquiring new meanings and changing its implication from a simple information exchange to a sophisticated creative interaction and mutual influence of different cultural value systems.

In the 17th to 20th centuries, the science developed rapidly as the chief form of a man's spiritual life and culture. That is precisely why the rationalistic gnosiology is considered the dominant trend of that time. The progress of science is the basis for development of a person and society. In this connection, the determining methodological approach is becoming the subject-object relationship in which the subject can be defined exclusively in the learning context, while the object is interesting only in terms of a combination of its properties essential for analysis and build-up of experience and keen intelligence.

The early 20th century was a time of upheaval for mankind. The two world wars turned the public consciousness around, making people peer into themselves, their essence, and their substance. The pivot towards the subject was also depicted in philosophical works by researchers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, M.M. Bakhtin, V.S. Bibler, M.K. Mamardashvili, and Yu.M. Lotman.

This article explores the development of the theory of a dialogue of cultures in the 20th century with a focus on its emergence in the early 20th century in M. Buber's theological concepts and then maturing in the semiotic philosophy by Yu. M. Lotman.

About the dialogue in M. Buber's theological philosophy

It seemed to me that my skin bordered on the element of vitality, something that was not me, not me at all, not my normal self, but something really Different; and still it admitted me, trusted me, communicated with me, as You in relation to You.

M. Buber

The dialogical ontology, as a new trend in historical and philosophical knowledge, emerges thanks to the outstanding thinker of the last century Martin Buber. In his works, he directly compares two philosophical approaches to the being. The first one is gnosiologic, or “functional,” implying existence of the subject-object relationship. It is characteristic of natural sciences and helps a man to orientate in the world, since the being serves here only as a combination of objects and things at which the subject's learning is directed. The physical world has signs of time, special fixation, and cause-effect links. The philosopher calls the subject-object relationship the I-IT relationship, where IT can be a thing, a man, God, etc., but is essentially just the sum total of certain properties of the object.

The second ontological approach is defined by M. Buber as “embracing” or “dialogic”. Two equally valid beings, the subject and the subject (or I and YOU), where YOU is a person, a friend, while the relationship the two entities enter is an ontological dialogue. M. Buber calls for treating the surrounding world as a friend, an association with whom is vitally important. He writes: “Meeting a related YOU makes the entire world familiar and close to me. [2. P. 65]. This association is intimate and spiritual. It opposes the process of learning and teaching: “I will not learn the man to whom I say YOU; but I am in a sacred basic word in relation to him, and I will learn him again only after quitting this relation. Knowledge is the distancing of YOU.” [2. P. 9]. The thinker says that the desire for association and dialogue is inherent to human nature, installed by God for communication with all existing entities.

Thus, the dialogue performs as a self-sufficient structure of the being. M. Buber singles out several types of a dialogue: a routine, or technical, dialogue required for understanding individuals in the society; a dialogue, which is essentially a monologue, since interlocutors do not communicate with each other, but with themselves. There is no communication in such association. The Other One remains just an object, whereas a true dialogue is what both participants seek for mutual understanding and “a meeting.” Such a dialogue can be expressed by words or silence, because this is a subtle spiritual activity: “There, where it occurs it testifies to the presence of organic spiritual substance.” [3. P. 141]. The philosopher dedicated many of his works to the idea of this dialogue.

According to Buber, the dialogue has its special features. “YOU in the I — YOU relationships can perform in different guises: as nature (plants, animals, birds), spiritual substance (God, artworks, artifacts of culture), or other person. In

dialogic relations between people, a responsibility, arising “only where a real possibility of a response exists,” becomes an important factor [3. P. 137]. Thus, each I is responsible for YOU, because it addresses YOU and asks YOU. Importantly, M. Buber was a religious philosopher relying on Judaism, which is why in his concept the idea of understanding YOU as containing something eternal and absolute is all-embracing. More specifically, YOU includes God, that which is why a man in his dialogue with the world is simultaneously communicating with the Supreme Being [9].

A dialogue is taking place only in the present time, when there is “the real world, I and YOU.” Furthermore, it has no material space and cause-effect relationship, i.e., everything which is characteristic of the learning world: “The world of IT is in the context of space, time and causality. The world of YOU is outside of the context of space, time, and causality” [2. P. 84]. However, M. Buber does not disclaim the existence of the IT world. Rather on the contrary, he accentuates the dual direction of the being due to the man’s dualistic attitude to this: “Without IT, the man is unable to live. But he who lives only in the world of IT, ceases to be a man” [2. P. 85]. Thus, a man can treat things either as physical or spiritual objects, which prevents the doubling of things themselves. Only the man’s attitude to them is dualistic. A thing becomes YOU if it is close to I and enters a relationship with I.

I and YOU are interconnected at the point of their inner worlds’ contact, at the point where a dialogue occurs, which dialogue is “something arising between a being and a being, the like of which is not to be found anywhere in nature... This (the value being sought) makes a man a man... It is based on the fact that the being considers another being a different entity, specifically as a certain different being for blending with it in the sphere that spreads beyond their own spheres. I define this sphere that arose after a man became a man as “The Between” (das Zwischen). Realizing itself in rather various degrees, the required value is nevertheless a primary category of human reality” [3. P. 230].

The I — YOU relationships are always mutual and always directed towards each other. The I needs a dialogue with the YOU like air, because it is built on relationships, their mutual inner attraction to each other, and on intersection of their mutual activity [3. P. 99].

An important feature of Buber’s theory of the dialogue is the fact that it needs no words, i.e., speech as such, because a dialogue between people may proceed in an objectively incomprehensible form with no reference to the message contents: “Only silence with YOU, silence of all languages, silent expectation in an unformulated, unsplit, pre-verbal word leaves YOU free, making it possible to remain with it in the obscurity where spirit is present without displaying itself” [2. P. 26; 3. P. 230].

M. Buber, as a religious thinker, is concerned with the man’s inner world, his spiritual life. N.A. Berdyayev, the founder of Russian existentialism, speculates in the same vein: “The meaning becomes evident only when I control myself, in a

good mood and when I face no objects and things. Everything that makes up an object for me has no meaning. The meaning is only in what is in me and with me, i.e., in the spiritual world” [1. P. 5]. In connection with the above, it should be pointed out that, according to M. Buber, the ideal dialogue is an adequate exchange of certain meanings between spiritual domains of two persons, which results in mutual understanding and divine revelation.

To start a dialogue, for the first I and YOU contact point, the philosopher introduces the notion of “the meeting”; for conveying a wide variety of conditions arising between I and YOU during association — almost mystical notions of “revelation,” “emotional experience,” and “closeness.” M. Buber’s language differs in being extremely poetic and metaphoric. His books are full of picturesque examples from real life, parables, and tales. However, that is precisely where the problem lurks. Stepping away from the theory of learning, the thinker tries to find new, not scientific terms for denoting the links he describes, replacing words he failed to find with long descriptions.

We believe M. Buber was the one who theoretically revolutionized the understanding of a man’s being in the 20th century. The principal thought of his theological philosophy is perception of the *being* as a *dialogue* between God and man [10], the world and man, man and man, in which case a subject fully turns and reveals himself to the partner, accepts him for what he is in all his being and genuineness. This is a manifestation of remarkable humanism, since M. Buber calls for opening up one’s soul to the partner and treating the surrounding world with love and respect, because a man is surprisingly close to the entire universe.

Understanding the dialogue in Yu.M. Lotman’s concept of semiosphere

The space of culture — semiosphere — is not something that works in compliance with designed and simply computed paths. It boils like the Sun and, like the Sun, it has its excitement areas that change their location and activity, which flares up now in unfathomable depths, now on the surface, irradiating energy to relatively quiet spheres. The results of this never-ending boiling is emission of colossal energy. But the energy issued by the semiosphere is energy of information, energy of Thought,
Yu. M. Lotman

In the late 20th century, Yuri Lotman, a prominent Russian philosopher and culturologist, tackled the problem of dialogue of cultures, drawing conclusions chiefly in terms of semiotics, according to which any cultural phenomenon stems from the nature of signs.

In the last years of his research, summing up his discoveries and theoretical investigations, Lotman introduced the notion of semiosphere, a certain semiotic space, a blend of sign systems, equal to the notion of culture in terms of object presentation. Semiosphere is a precursor of a sign situation and a sign itself, which

do not work separately: “They function only when immersed in some semiotic continuum filled with polytypic semiotic formations located at a different level of organization. By analogy with the notion of “biosphere” introduced by V.I. Vernadsky, we call such continuum semiosphere” [7. P. 13].

Semiosphere has borders that translate external messages into its internal language and vice versa. Thus they are characterized by a tense dialogue: “External extreme space of the semiosphere is a place of never-ending dialogue” [6. P. 191].

The interaction of cultures, regarded in a broad historical perspective, is always dialogic. Actually, culture, too, is essentially a dialogue since, according to Lotman, it can be regarded both as the aggregate of messages between different addressees (“I” — “THE OTHER ONE”) and a single collective message of mankind addressed to itself. Thus, “the culture of mankind is a colossal example of auto-communication” [7. P. 88].

According to Lotman, a dialogue is always an exchange of texts. But, unlike Bakhtin, who regarded the interaction of texts as '*a dialogue of persons*' creating those texts, Lotman sees a contact with the Reader and cultural context as a dialogue between '*the texts themselves*', which are persons capable of generating new meanings. So, the development of culture is impossible without permanent updating of the dialogic situation, i.e., without continuous appearance of texts from the outside.

Besides, the genesis of culture, like any creative act, is a process of exchange, which always implies a feedback from “THE OTHER ONE.” It means that a single semiotic personality always implies presence of another without which the first one cannot exist and vice versa. These persons' immersion in semiotic space implies that they have a previous semiotic cultural experience. In other words: “A person can exist if he/she is preceded by another person, a text should be preceded by another text, a culture by another culture.” [8. P. 57]. However, for a dialogue to occur, there should be a possibility of building a notion (“construct element”), which one of the cultures forms in relation to another and which, Lotman believes, is its inverse reflection.

Thus, the dialogue is construed as a state of culture in which it inevitably resides both as a form of its existence and development: “It is possible to divide interaction and immanent development of persons or cultures only theoretically. In real life, these are dialectically connected intermingling components of a single process” [7. P. 119].

Yu.M. Lotman's important innovation in the theory of dialogue was reorientation of the problem of interpretation (possibility of a dialogue) from the maximalist approach of “possible — impossible” to a relative and partial one, defined as “to which extent.” According to Lotman, interesting was only a dialogue which had an area of non-concurrent elements. In this case, the most active is the exchange of meanings and their mutual adaptation, because the dialogue results in intersection of two sets with a different number of non-coincidences.

Of special importance was Lotman's development of the theory of dialogue mechanisms and five stages in perception process.

Yu.M. Lotman singled out several characteristic features and conditions for a dialogue:

1. An asymmetry displaying itself on the one hand in that the semiotic structure of the dialogue participants differs, and on the other in that message traffic proceeds in alternatively different directions.

2. It is this alternatively changing position of "reception" and "transmission" that makes up the second important characteristic of the dialogue. "Discreteness, i.e., an ability to provide information in batches, is the law for all dialogic systems" [6. P. 270].

3. The mutual interest of dialogue participants capable of overcoming the arising semiotic barriers.

4. A need for a dialogue, a presence of a dialogic situation, which, in turn, is a precursor of the dialogue.

Thus, Lotman has illustrated a dialogue mechanism by the following formula: "The relative inertness of a certain structure proceeds from the state of rest of text flows coming from associated structures being in a state of excitement. What follows is the state of passive saturation. A language is digested and texts are adapted. As this takes place, the text generator is, as a rule, in the nuclear semiosphere structure, while the receiver finds themselves on the periphery. As saturation reaches a certain stage, the recipient structure's text generation internal mechanisms are triggered. It passes over from the passive to excited condition and independently starts to single out new texts, bombarding other structures by them, including its "exciter" [6. P. 271].

The receiving parties of the dialogue perceive the information in several stages:

1. Texts arrival from the outside. They retain their status of "strangers" within the culture to which they were sent. However, they are taken as an ideal standard.

2. At the second stage, the texts start being digested, which restructures both cultures by insertion of imported codes into the meta-culture sphere. "New" texts are perceived now as part of development and successors to new ones.

3. A trend is discovered for separating from the original culture transmitter. The focus is put on the fact that the true disclosure of meanings could take place not in the culture which supplied those texts, but in the culture from where they arrived.

4. The fourth stage is text dissolution in the culture recipient, after which a role exchange takes place in the dialogic process. The recipient culture starts creating new texts and broadcasting them.

5. The semiosphere center shifts to culture receiving center, becoming a culture transmitter and distributor of texts to various semiosphere peripheries.

However, in real cultural interactions, this dialogue procedure scheme can be realized incompletely. For the dialogue to take place after going through all those phases, it is necessary to provide the most favorable social, historical,

psychological, and political conditions, such as a need for interaction and mutual enrichment, an interest in and understanding of the partner’s motives, a complete retention of individuality in each culture, finding of common cultural codes, emergence (if missing) of the common mental layer, respect for the stranger’s culture in learning its value system, and overcoming of multiple stereotypes.

Yu.M. Lotman made a breakthrough in the theory of culture dialogues, given that evaluation of the dialogue development and observation of its sophisticated and controversial properties at different stages can help analyze mistakes and discrepancies in the progress of real intercultural communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would be interesting to follow the mechanism of dialogue theory development in terms of the change of epochs and transformation of the main forms of spiritual life of man and culture inherent to a particular time.

We have attempted to present those changes in the following Table:

Epoch, timeframe	Epoch of scientific progress, 17th — early 20th century	Epoch of dialogue — 20th century		Epoch of technocracy — late 20th — 21st century
Entrants’ special features	subject — object person — amount of properties	subject — subject person — person	subject — subject person — person culture — culture	culture — culture sign system — sign system
Relationship	No dialogue	Interpersonal dialogue	Personal culture dialogue	Semiotic persons’ culture dialogue
Philosophical convictions, representatives	Rationalistic gnosiology	M. Buber’s dialogic ontology according to	Dialogism (theory of culture dialogues) M.M. Bakhtin, V.S. Bibler	Yu.M. Lotman’s dialogic semiotics
Basis of man’s spiritual life and culture	SCIENCE	MAN		TECHNOLOGY

Thus, the notion of “dialogue” in the philosophical thinking had been transforming all through the 20th century. Having arisen as a form of interpersonal relationships in the ontology of M. Buber, who was one of the first to draw attention to the transition from the subject-object to the subject-subject relationships (where “the subject” in both cases implied a human person, unique in its nature and being), the notion of “dialogue” became the most important philosophical notion of the entire mid-20th century. This came about largely due to philosophical concepts of the prominent Russian scientists M.M. Bakhtin and V.S. Bibler. It was they who developed an integrated concept of permanent interaction and succession of

cultures and persons as cultures that became the main subjects of dialogic relationships.

Yu.M. Lotman determined a fundamentally new stage in the development of dialogue and culture in general. In his concept of semiosphere and dialogue of cultures as semiotic persons, he focused on the sign-related nature of culture and showed emergence of a totally new epoch of the 21st century, an epoch of technocracy in which the dialogue has no personalities.

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От диалогической онтологии к теории семиосферы: философия диалога культур М. Бубера и Ю.М. Лотмана

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В настоящее время диалог рассматривается как основа культурного бытия, а диалог культур стал ключевым понятием современной философской мысли. Понятие диалога трансформировалось на протяжении прошлого столетия, обрастая новыми смыслами и меняя свое внутреннее содержание от понимания его как обычного обмена информацией до сложного творческого взаимодействия и взаимовлияния различных культурно-ценностных сознаний. Субъектами диалога теперь становятся не только различные личности, но и целые этносы, культуры, цивилизации, тем самым расширяя функционирование диалога до средства развития межкультурных, межэтнических и межкультурных

отношений и подчеркивая общность мирового исторического процесса и культурного наследия человечества. Появившись как форма межличностных отношений в онтологии М. Бубера, который один из первых акцентировал внимание на переходе отношений от «субъект — объект» к «субъект — субъект», понятие «диалога» стало важнейшим философским понятием всей середины XX века. Но абсолютно новый поворот развития теории диалога, да и всей человеческой культуры в целом, был обусловлен концепцией семиосферы Ю.М. Лотмана. Статья посвящена рассмотрению генезиса философской концепции диалога культур в XX веке. Основное внимание уделено ее зарождению в начале XX столетия в теологической концепции М. Бубера и точке ее максимального развития в семиотической философии Ю.М. Лотмана.

Ключевые слова: диалог культур, текст, межкультурная коммуникация, диалогическая онтология, семиосфера, семиотика, знаковая система, М. Бубер, Ю.М. Лотман

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