

Professor Brandist replies:

I was disappointed by Alexandar Mihailovic's intemperate and ungracious response to my review of his interesting book. In no way did I suggest Bakhtin was interesting only as a receptor of western philosophy, indeed I stressed the significance of showing the "weight of orthodox theology" in Bakhtin's terminology and commended Mihailovic's attention to "historical developments." My criticism was that no concrete evidence of Bakhtin's direct borrowing from theological sources was adduced, while most of the confirmed philosophical sources of Bakhtin's ideas were left unexplored. Bakhtin's debt to Orthodox theology can be judged only in relation to the German philosophical influences Bakhtin *himself* stressed. Close attention to "Bakhtin's Russian text" is, of course, important, and to interpret Bakhtin's unusual terminology in the light of the past usage of a term in theological texts may be enlightening. But to do so *in isolation from* the philosophical ideas with which it is integrated at a "molecular" level ultimately distorts our understanding of that terminology. Assessing this is a difficult task. One must judge the extent to which a Russian term with religious connotations has been exploited simply as a means to render ideas from German philosophy (in the absence of an established secular-philosophical discourse in Russia at the time) and the extent to which a philosophical idea has consciously been invested with religious significance. Mihailovic's book certainly provides material relevant to such research, but it requires an approach that can discriminate between a productive cosmopolitanism and the blinkered purviews of both colonialism and nationalism.

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