

**M. BAKHTIN'S THEORY OF BIOGRAPHY, METHODOLOGY
OF THE JEWISH STUDIES AND MODERN
BIOGRAPHICAL STRATEGIES IN HUMANITIES**

1. Biographical turn» or Biographical turns» in Humanities.
2. Fundamentals of the M. Bakhtin's theory of biography: new biographism».
3. Theory of biography and methodology of Jewish studies in the modern Ukrainian philosophy.

1. Biographical turn» or Biographical turns» in Humanities.

I follow for the American philosopher prof. Simon Critchley (New School, New York) and Ukrainian philosopher prof. Vadim Menzhulin (Kyiv Mohyla Academy) that have proposed the title biographical turn» approximately the same meaning as linguistic turn», narrative turn», anthropological turn» etc. The philosophical background of the biographical/autobiographical tradition in culture, the nature and ontology of biography/autobiography were investigated by German thinkers Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and George Misch (1878-1965).⁽¹⁾ In my opinion, it was the first biographical turn» in methodology of Humanities. I can specify on some prominent examples of the deep scientific investigation of the nature of biography as the social and the cultural phenomenon in Russian and Ukrainian tradition.

Foremost, it is the book of the Grigory Vinokur *Biography and Culture»* (1927)¹ (2) in which he relied on the ideas of the Lebens-philosophy and Phenomenology (W.Dilthey, E.Spranger, G.Shpel). Biography is represented as an inner form» and Lebensformen» of the culture.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895 - 1975) proposed the theory of biography (*Toward a Philosophy of the Act»* («К философии поступка», 1919 - 1921) *The Author and the Hero in Aesthetic Activity»* (1920-th), *The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism»* (1936 - 1937) , *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel»* (1937 - 1938))². (3) Bakhtin considered the biography,

Винокур Г.О. Биография и культура / Г.О. Винокур. – М.: Гос. Академия худож. наук, 1927. – 85 с.

Бахтин М.М. Автор и герой в эстетической деятельности / М.М. Бахтин // Эстетика словесного творчества. – М., 1979. – С. 7–181; Бахтин М.М. Роман воспитания и его значение в истории реализма / М.М. Бахтин // Эстетика словесного творчества. – М., 1979. – С. 188–237; Бахтин М.М. Формы времени и хронотопа в романе.

autobiography, self-report - confession» in context of the sociologies and historical poetics», philosophy of dialogue» and philosophy of act» He described biographical and autobiographical acts as a representations of the ontology of culture», manifestations of the inner sociality» and primary historicity». Bakhtin's theory of biography I will discuss in more detail in the next section

The 1960s and 70s years was the turning point in the modern history of the traditional *genre*. Since this time, study of biography has become the scientific method of investigation in many spheres of Humanities Biographical method was elaborated in sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology. Also phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalysis structuralism, semiotics, linguistics and other intellectual strategies were applied. Biographical studies are one of the interdisciplinary strategy in contemporary Humanities. They are exist in the field of the two tendencies: *biographical turn»* and *death of the author»* conception.

Linguistic turn» and narrative turn» have led to the *second (probably third) post-Diltheynian biographic turn»* in contemporary Humanities.

One of the brightest *figures* in Russian Humanities of this period Sergey Sergeevich Averintsev (1937 - 2004) (4)in his work *Plutarch and Ancient Greek Biography»*(1973)' had studied historical, cultural and literary sources of a *genre*. He connected evolution of the biography forms with transformation of the phenomenon of indivk/walism. Sergey Averintsev has named Plutarch the revolutionary of the biographical genre». At the same time book *Plutarch and Ancient Greek Biography»* really became revolutionary for the Soviet Humanities. S. Averintsev was awarded by the Lenin Komsomol Prize for his book.

Yuri Lotman (1922 - 1993) - prominent literary scholar, semiotician and philosopher of the culture investigated biography and autobiography in context of the semiotic of the culture, semiosphere theory². (5) He

Очерки по исторической поэтике / М.М. Бахтин // Вопросы литературы и эстетики. – М., 1975. – С. 234-407.

¹ Аверинцев С.С. Плутарх и античная биография: К вопросу о месте классика жанра в истории жанра / С.С. Аверинцев. – М.: Наука, 1973. – 278 с. See also: Аверинцев С.С. Добрый Плутарх рассказывает о героях, или счастливый брак биографического жанра и моральной философии / С.С. Аверинцев // Плутарх. Сравнительные жизнеописания: в 2-х т. – М., 1994. – Т.1. – С. 637–658; Аверинцев С.С. Почему Евангелия – не биографии / С.С. Аверинцев // Мир Библии. – М., 2001. – № 8. – С. 4-12.

² Лотман Ю.М. Биография – живое лицо / Ю.М. Лотман // Новый мир. – 1985. – № 2. – С. 228-236; Лотман Ю.М. Литературная биография в историко-культурном контексте (к типологическому соотношению текста и личности автора) / Ю.М. Лотман // Избранные статьи. В 3-х т. – Таллин, 1992. – Т. 1. Статьи по се-

claimed culture to be the polyodimensional and complex-organized text. Two of the most representative cultural texts are biography and autobiography- These phenomena embodies *mumal* additionality and transitivity of life - text» and existential-narrative». Lotman proposed the syndetic interdisciplinary model of the biographic reconstruction (novel - biographic reconstruction genre» in the Creation of Karamzin») which combines literary, cultural, historical and philosophical aspects. His project of the poetics of culture» was close to new historicism» (S.Greenblatt, A.Etkind). New historicism» considers biographical analysis to be one of the theoretical basis of this concept along with inter-textual and discourse analysis.

I could continue to list the names and ideas of the scholars who developed the theories of biography and biographical studies in Humanities. However, I want to return to M. Bakhtin. At the conclusion of the first part I emphasize that S. Averintsev and Y. Lotman were in permanent dialogue with Bakhtin, argued with him, wrote about his ideas.

2. Fundamentals of the M. Bakhtin's theory of biography: new biogranhism

It is impossible within a brief presentation to characterize all aspects of the M. Bakhtin's theory of biography. I chose the most important points. I'll start with the biographical details that clarify the theory. The first detail: as you know, Bakhtin said in his *memoirs* that he studied at the Faculty of History and Philology in the Novorossiyskiy (Odessa) University (1911 - 1913?). He mentioned that it is in Odessa on the advice of his fellow student, he had first read Kierkegaard whose personalistic ideas had a great influence on young Bakhtin. It should be noted that M. Bakhtin was not *registered* in the list of students and irregular student of the Novorossiyskiy University. The second detail: two notebooks with detailed summaries of the George Misch book *History of Autobiography»* were found in the Bakhtin's archives.

Bakhtin proposed the *biographical form»* concept of (Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel»). The historical examples of the biographical form are good luck-bad luck in antiquity, hagiography, confession in the Middle Ages, family novel from XVIII century. He defined features of the biographical form: a) a special type of biographical time (real time of life, included in a longer process of historical time, age, gen-

миотике и типологии культуры. – С. 365-377; Лотман Ю.М. Сотворение Карамзина / Ю.М. Лотман. – М.:Изд-во «Книга», 1987. – 336 с.; Лотман Ю.М. Культура и взрыв / Ю.М. Лотман // Семносфера. – СПб., 2001. – С. 12-150; Лотман Ю.М. Внутри мыслящих миров / Ю.М. Лотман // Семносфера. – СПб., 2001. – С. 150-390.

eration); b) specifically constructed image of a person passing the course of life; c) plot, which is correlated with normal and typical course of life (birth, childhood, marriage, activity, death); d) the degree of publicness» or intimacy» of the biography / autobiography; e) relationship between the inner and outer life chronotope.

Bakhtin poses the problem of *biographical value*. This is the force that forms from the outside biography and autobiography. He distinguishes the two types of biographical consciousness (biographical axiological consciousness): adventurous-heroic and social-domestic. Principle of the second type is being with the world, observation and experience of the world again and again, love for the simple things and ordinary people. The main *figure* of the social-domestic type is not a hero, and the witness.

Bakhtin's *author and hero» architectonics* is very important for the theory of biography and autobiography, biographical and autobiographical narration. Principle of asymmetry of author and hero, vnenakhodimost», finding oneself outside», exotopy (Todorov) of author closely related with love, tenderness, compassion, mercy, gift, amorous contemplation»(contemplation with love»), merciful consciousness». Amorous contemplation», merciful consciousness» are not just emotional characteristics (emotional-volitional tones») but fundamentals of humanistic paradigm of biographical discourse, methodological and ethical presupposition of the biographical studies.

It is interesting what Bakhtin sharply criticized biographical method, which was developed in the style of positivism under the influence of Charles Sainte-Beuve(1804-1869) and Gustave Lanson(1857-1934). He put a biographical approach in one line with the *vulgar* sociological and *causal* explanation in the spirit of the natural science, with the history without proper names . Bakhtin wrote about biography - organic product of organic *epochs*»

However, we should not *exaggerate* the critical attitude of Mikhail Bakhtin to biography and biographical method. In my opinion, Bakhtin's position - it's not anti-biographism, but *rather* new biographism» which is more consistent with the specifics of the Humanities, Geisteswissenschaften. I use the term new biographism» coined by British writer and literary critic Christine Brooke-Rose (1923 - 2012) in her article *The dissolution of character in the novel»* (1986). *However, my understanding of the term does not coincide with the position of Brooke-Rose.* Theoretical foundation of «new biographism» is also revealed in philosophic *hermeneutics*, phenomenology, existentialism, philosophy of dialogue.

3. Theory of biography and methodology of Jewish studies in the modern Ukrainian philosophy

Theoretical space of biography is mastering now by Ukrainian philosophy which develops tradition of Kiev ontological and anthropological school» (G.Skovoroda's Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences - V.Shinkaruk, V.Tabachkovsky, V.Ivanov, S.Proleev, V.Gorsky, S.Crimsky, V.Malakhov and others). Foundation of Biographica» by Alexey Valevsky (1993)¹ is the first special philosophical investigation of the nature and ontology of biography. Scholar represents biographical writing as a type of humanitarian knowledge and as a textual representation of a personal individuality formation history in the language of a given culture. Ontology of biographical knowledge is defined by Valevsky as a certain set of conditions providing the possibility of textual representation of individual phenomena. The concept of biographical discourse makes it possible to explicate the basic epistemes of this representation and particular rationality» of every stage in the biographical tradition (for example, *episteme* of orderliness» for antiquity, medieval and Renaissance type of biography or mirror *episteme*» of Modern European biography).

The author of the book *Biographical Approach within the Western Tradition of the History of Philosophy»*(2010) Ukrainian philosopher V.Menzhulin investigates development and establishment of biographic approach (biographistics) within the historiography of philosophy as a *legitimate* form of cognition in its own right, with its own strategies, principles and methods as well as its common *pitfalls* and restrictions². He outlines the main tendencies and landmarks in the formation of the attitudes towards biographic *components* of the history of philosophy from antiquity to our days. The scholar reconstructs and analyses the particular models of *mutual* influence and interaction between the biographies

¹ Валеvский А.Л. Основы биографии / А.Л. Валеvский. – К.: Наукова думка, 1993. – 111 с.

² Менжулін В.І. Біографічний підхід в історико-філософському пізнанні / В.І. Менжулін. – К.: НаУКМА; Аграр Медіа Груп, 2010. – 455 с. See also: Менжулін В.І. Біографістика між філософією життя та герменевтикою: досвід Дильтея / В.І. Менжулін // Докса: зб. наук. праць з філософії та філології. – Вип. 12: Німецька традиція в філософії та культурі. – Одеса: ОНУ ім. І. І. Мечникова, 2008. – С. 211-220; Менжулін В.І. Біографія філософа як складова історико-філософського пізнання: досвід фахівців з англomовних країн / В.І. Менжулін // Практична філософія. – 2008. – № 3. – С. 237-248. Менжулін В.І. Новий історизм : елементи філософсько-біографічної прагматики / В.І. Менжулін // Філософська думка. – 2008. – № 4. – С. 81-99.

and philosophic views within such influential philosophical approaches as neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism, philosophy of life, psychoanalysis hermeneutics, phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism and post-structuralism, pragmatism and neopragmatism, analytical philosophy (by the examples of the lives and works of K. Fischer, W. Windelband F. Nietzsche, S. Freud, W. Dilthey, K. Jaspers, J.-P. Sartre, H. Arendt, m' Foucault, L. Wittgenstein and others). V. Menzhulin concludes that every philosophic tradition, no matter how scientific or anti-biographical it appears at first, eventually can give rise to processes that may be described as a biographic turn». He gives special attention to a new historicism» in context of elaboration of the philosophic biographic pragmatics. Vadim Menzhulin wrote not only the theoretical work in the field of philosophy of biography. I want to draw your attention to the book "Another Sikorsky"; uncomfortable pages of history of psychiatry» (2004). This is a biography of the well-known in pre-revolutionary Russia psychiatrist Ivan Sikorsky. He is the father of the prominent aircraft designer Igor Sikorsky. Menzhulin convincingly shows unseemly role of the Ivan Sikorsky in the anti-Semitic trial of Mendel Bayliss in Kyiv (1912). Jewish worker was accused of committing ritual murder of Russian boy on the basis of a psychiatric examination and pseudo-scientific arguments of Ivan Sikorsky's about specifics of the national Jewish psyche (Morbus judaicus»).

My research and professional interest are connected with investigation of biography as a cultural, social and anthropological phenomena¹. From the point of view of «social and cultural ontology» biography in variety of its forms and types is a cultural invariant, an essential expression of basic self-reflexivity and fundamental

¹ Голубович І.В. Біографія: силует на фоні Humanities: монографія □/ І.В. Голубович. – Одеса: СП Фридман, 2008. – 397 с.; Голубович І.В. Біографічний метод в сучасному гуманітарному знанні і його філософсько-методологічні основи / І.В. Голубович // Наукове пізнання: Методологія та технологія. – 2003. – № 1 (11). – С. 104-109; Голубович І.В. Событие жизни – событие мысли (Методологические основания интеллектуальной биографии) / І.В. Голубович // Наукове пізнання: Методологія та технологія. – 2003. – № 2 (12). – С. 33-39; Голубович І.В. Біографічний акт: на острії життя і письма (сопоставлення нарративного і екзистенційного вимірів) / І.В. Голубович // Філософські пошуки. – Вип. XVII–XVIII. – Львів–Одеса: «Cogito»-«Центр Європи», 2004. – С. 588-597; Голубович І.В. Сміх Демокрита і сльози Геракліта: сміхове початок в античній біографії / І.В. Голубович // Докса. Збірник наукових праць з філософії та філології. Вип.9. Семантичні й герменевтичні виміри сміху. – Одеса: ОНУ ім. І. І. Мечникова, 2006. – С. 162-171; Голубович І.В. Біографія як соціокультурний феномен: методологія аналізу в гуманітарному знанні / І.В. Голубович // Філософська думка. – 2008. – № 4. – С. 122-135.

narrativity of the human life. At the same time phenomenon of biography exists in «double optics» of opposite directed vectors: a) «personalization» of the objective social and cultural meanings; b) «universalization» of unique personal senses.

For the first time in Ukraine I have offered teaching course «Fundamentals of Biography» at the philosophy faculty (Odessa National University). Students-philosophers participate in the research project «Oral History of Philosophers» and collect autobiographical interviews of their teachers. This project was proposed by Tatyana Chayka (Senior Researcher of the Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine)¹. The impulse for «Oral History of Philosophers» for the Tatyana Chayka became her participation in the creation of audio and visual archive of biographical interviews with victims and witnesses of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Ukrainian collection is the part of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, which was established by Steven Spielberg after his «Schindler's List» (1994), now - USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education.

M. Bakhtin theory, his philosophy of dialogue are the one of the priority theoretical, ethical and emotion sources for us. Teaching course «Fundamentals of Biography» in September 1 specially for this seminar have devoted to the work of students with collection of biographical interview of the Shoah Institute for Visual History and Education. Students wrote *essays* about their experiences and impressions. I have no doubt that they have experienced in despite of exotopy (внезапність) acts of compassion, love, merciful consciousness» and amorous contemplation».

¹ Чайка Т. Доторк. Презентація проекту «Усні історії філософів» / Т. Чайка // Філософська думка. – 2009. – № 5. – С.140-146.