

Rhetoric and Ideology in Communication Today: A Semioethic Perspective

Augusto Ponzio

ABSTRACT

This article describes how the concept of communication is reconsidered under two aspects, theoretical and historical-social relatively to today's world. The first: communication cannot be reduced to a process of exteriorisation according to a limited view of communication. This contrasts with global semiotics (Sebeok) and the fact that being, life is communication. The second: with respect to economic reality, the industrial revolution of automation, globalisation of communication, universalisation of the market, communication in the production, exchange, consumption cycle is present in all three phases and not only in exchange. The dominant communication-production system tends to present itself through massmedial communication, and through the rhetoric of its ideo-logic as the only system possible, to maintain and reproduce at all costs, despite its openly destructive character. Semiotics must cultivate a global vision, which as semioethics and in a "semio-dialogic" perspective will interrogate dominant ideo-logic and propose new forms of living together.

KEYWORDS

Communication, Dialogics, Ideologies, Production, Semioethics

1. COMMUNICATION AND PRODUCTION

We wish to start by denouncing a fallacy concerning the concept of communication in certain theories of the sign, and say first of all that the word "rhetoric" in our title has a negative value, meaning deceitful and biased argumentation.

The concept of communication needs to be reconsidered under two aspects, one theoretical, the other historical-social relative to present day reality. We will begin from the second considering that all theories are generally connected to the historico-social reality in which they are formulated and which affects them. A concept that intends to be faithful to the reality it refers to must keep account of the latter and fundamentally of its potential for transformation and innovation.

Up until recent times and according to "classical" conceptions of the economic science, communication in economic reality indicates exchange, the exchange of merchandise and consequently the market. According to the traditional formula, communication in the production cycle, "production- exchange-consumption" is central, not only in the sense of position, but also in terms of value. In fact, the productive cycle begins over and again firstly if the object-merchandise is purchased, and secondly if it has been consumed.

Now for the other aspect we intend to examine: generally, the concept of 'communication' is understood as a process of exteriorization through which an interior content is made manifest. On this account, communication is an e-mission that starts from a being, the e-mitter, and takes place between the e-mitter considered as a *terminus a quo* and another being (the receiver) considered as a *terminus ad quem*.

Communication is what happens between one being in the role of emitter and another being in the role of receiver. According to this model we have a being that communicates, that first is and then communicates, a being that exists prior to and independently of its acts of communication.

Not only is this conception of communication widespread in everyday opinion, but it is also shared by otherwise very different theoretical positions (e.g., innatism and empiricism, mentalism and behaviourism). In any case, the conception of communication as the e-mission from a being which another being receives remains unquestioned.

This conception of communication is obviously connected to a given conception of being, to a given ontology. Just as communication in general is considered as a process beginning from a being, as an e-mission of being, being in general is considered as the presupposition and foundation of communication. Communication theory and ontology are in general closely connected: all communication theories have their ontologies, whether explicit or implicit; conversely, all ontologies have a theory of communication, even if it is not explicated.

Against this mistaken interpretation of communication, we can very simply say that there is no being before communication, but that 'communication is being.' Given that communication concerns the whole organic world, Thomas Sebeok (2001a, b) claims as a central axiom in the framework of his global semiotics that communication is life and that living beings do not subsist without communication. But here our focus is on human social reality. Consequently, we will consider communication in the sphere of our economic reality (see also Chomsky 1995, 1999; Danesi, Petrilli, Ponzio 2004).

In capitalist production today, economics confirms that being and communication identify with each other. The current phase is characterized by the industrial revolution of automation, globalisation of communication and universalisation of the market in spite of delusive attempts at curtailing the market with walls and boundaries with protectionist functions (see Ponzio 2009). This universalisation is not only a quantitative fact of expansion, but above all a qualitative transformation represented by the fact that anything can be translated into goods and by the continuous production of new goods. What we must realize today when we study communication, whether in studies on human social signs, or in the sphere of the economic sciences is that today, as is evident, communication is no longer just an intermediate phase in the production cycle (production, exchange, consumption). Instead, communication now represents the constitutive modality of production and consumption processes themselves. The current phase is characterized by the industrial revolution of automation, globalisation of communication and universalisation of the market. This phase in capitalistic reproduction can be characterised as the 'communication-production' phase.

The whole system of social reproduction is made possible by communication and, therefore, by signs, verbal and nonverbal signs. One of the tasks (among others) that semiotics is called to carry out in the present day and age is to examine signs as a constituent part of the processes they belong to. Such an approach puts into evidence the effective connection between communication and ideology—and between the disciplines that deal with them both at the foundational level as well as at the level of general theory: semiotics as the general theory of signs and as theory of ideology (see Petrilli & Ponzio 2000a, b, 2005, 2007, 2016).

To examine communication in the processes of social reproduction to which it belongs,

means not only to consider communication in relation to the systems of sign exchange, but also of sign production and consumption. And as part of the totality of social reproduction, ideology must also be viewed in its necessary relationship with sign systems. Certainly, an important question concerns the way we pick out the tricks used by false reasoning to seem true or at least valid and acceptable. As to this question, a good basis and repertoire to begin with is no doubt Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1966) famous treatise on argumentation. But we wish to recall yet another far more ancient work which Peirce too studied very closely—Peter of Spain's *Tractatus or Summule logicales* (see Peter of Spain 1972, 1985). By comparison with other Medieval books in logic, the latter has the merit of presenting itself as a system of definitions and dialectical rules, without involving metaphysics, which for us means without the prejudicial conception of being as antecedent with respect to communication. On this account and for what concerns us here we signal the part titled *Fallacies* in book VII.

In today's communication-production world, mass-media is a constitutive part of the productive process and participates directly in that process. For example, publicity, generally present in mass-media communication, explicitly or implicitly, not only contributes to production by inciting to consume, but is productive itself: in fact, one of the most profitable industries today is the publicity industry (Bonfantini 2005; Bonfantini, Petrilli, Ponzio 2006).

Consumption of communication by mass media (through use of mobiles, TV, social networks, new media, etc.) is today a central source of profit. In mass-medial industry information too belongs to communication-production cycle.

To inform for the sake of informing would seem a worthy cause, but the truth is that the sole end of information is to reproduce the information process through the consumption of information itself. As Ferruccio Rossi-Landi teaches us with his socio-semiotic investigations, "information for the sake of information" is the other face of "production for the sake of production" in today's dominant reproduction system (see Rossi-Landi 1977, 1983, 2013).

In fact, the aim of the information industry is to achieve homologated, increasingly speedy and repetitive consumer behaviour: consumption of homologated news and information; of merchandise and fashion, which defer to each other, continuously citing each other in monotonous alternation; consumption of values and attitudes with a tendency to diverge less and less.

This is a trap we must evade, one day or another we must stop the productive cycle of daily information: to get uninformed and reflect.

Because consumption in general is communication, any object-merchandise is in a sense mass-medial. It is purchased and consumed above all to communicate (this aspect is fundamental for the industry of fashion, motoring, free time, etc.). For example, when clothes or automobiles are considered as objects to get rid of, the cause is generally not wear or tear, but the fact that they no longer communicate their original messages. Today's production-communication phase calls for a new conception of communication in contrast to old conceptions, including that of the sender-receiver relationship.

From this point of view, a new conception of mass media is also necessary, because not only merchandise are messages and messages are merchandise, but any product-merchandise, material or immaterial (relatedly to so-called "material" and "immaterial work"), has essentially become a communication-production medium. This is a further confirmation of the fact that any product-merchandise somehow belongs to the

production, circulation and consumption cycle, whether directly or indirectly. The latter occurs when it communicates the ideology, or, better, the ideo-logic of the communication-production system.

Mikhail Bakhtin formulated a critique of this conception in linguistics that may be extended to semiotics, specifically to semiotics of mass-media, intended also as described above in new terms.

Still current in linguistics are such fictions as the "listener" and "understander" (partener of the "speaker"), the "unified speech flow", and soon. The fictions produce a completely distorted idea of the complex and multifaceted process of active speech communication. Courses in general linguistics (even serious ones like Saussure's) frequently present graphic-schematic depictions of the two partners in speech communication—the speaker and the listener [...]. The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it.[...] An actively responsive understanding of what is heard [...] can be directly realized in action [...], or it can remain, for the time being, a silent responsive understanding [...], but this is, so to speak, responsive understanding with a delayed reaction. Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener. In most cases, genres of complex cultural communication are intended precisely for this kind of actively responsive understanding with delayed action (Bakhtin 1986:68-69).

We believe that these considerations are particularly important in the study of the communication process referred to mass-media where this expression is understood extensively, given that any object- merchandise in communication-production today is at the same time its medium. Communication- production media in this general sense belong therefore to the cultural genres considered by Bakhtin, and may be a type of actively responsive understanding with a delayed action (Bakhtin e il suo circolo 2014; Ponzio1998).

2. COMMUNICATION-PRODUCTION AND ITS DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER

On the basis of our reflections so far we can now claim that communication-production is not only supported by mass-medial communication, but in a sense is itself mass-medial communication. Mass-medial communication-production is the communication of the world as it is. It is global communication not only in the sense that it has expanded over the whole planet but also in the sense that it adheres to the world, relates to the world as it is, and contributes to reproduce the world as it is. Communication-production of mass-media is communication of this world. Yet again, therefore, communication and reality, communication and being, coincide. Realistic politics (but only realistic politics counts as politics) is the only kind of politics appropriate to global communication, to the being of communication-production. And this aspect of political communication is reflected in mass-medial communication.

Social reproduction in general, the process through which human society reproduces itself (materially and culturally) involves no doubt – as the expression 'reproduction' clearly indicates – regeneration, maintenance, conservation. In social reproduction, identification between communication and being is overcome in so far as we are dealing with the semiotic animal, that is, the animal that not only has communicative relations,

but is also capable of evaluative relations, of consciousness, responsibility, deliberation, of planning communication relations (Deely, Petrilli, Ponzio 2005; Petrilli 2010, 2012, 2014). In other words, the semiotic animal can exceed and escape being-communication (Ponzio 1993, 2009a).

As such it contrasts with persistence of communication-production understood as persistence of the same social system, as occurs today with the capitalist social system. With its continual adjustments and metamorphoses functional to its own perseverance, capitalist society has not yet ceased to set, has not yet finished finishing, in spite of its having emerged only at sunset (already at Hegel's dusk), in spite of the signs of its finishing. Only the ideology functional to maintaining capitalism can identify the being of this particular social system, the being of communication-production, with the being-communication of social reproduction in general, to the point that the capitalist social system is made to seem natural to human beings, a part of the human beings' own nature. In other words, being-communication as it emerges in this particular phase in social reproduction is passed off as the necessary and unmodifiable mode of being for man once he has reached a high degree in economic, cultural, and scientific-technological progress, according to a linear process of development.

As we have stated already, in the expression 'global communication', global not only refers to the fact that communication extends over the entire planet, but that it accommodates the world as it is. Realism in politics is part of this and its unquestioning relation to reality even includes accepting the *extrema ratio* of war, insofar as it is dictated by the "strict law of the force and of things" (see Petrilli, ed., 2017c). Semiotics, specifically semiotics as we understand it, that is, as "semioethics", must interrogate this overtly ideological vision, its rhetoric, interested in maintaining the advantages which the dominant part of society draws from safeguarding reproduction of the same social system (see Petrilli and Ponzio 2007). Semiotics must consider this fundamental aspect of mass-medial communication and explicate it in its messages. In this sense semiotics of mass-medial communication carries out a critical function towards the reproduction of communication-production.

Reproduction of communication-production is the mass-medial program. The character of mass in the mass-medial consists precisely in this program. And this program is so realistic, so consistent with the being of things as they are, that it flaunts the good news of the end of ideologies, appearing more like a logic than an ideology. We have chosen to call such ideology, mass medial ideology, the 'ideo-logic' of global communication-production.

Indeed, whether in good or bad faith, ideology functional to maintaining this particular social system ends up passing it off as corresponding to social reproduction in general. On the contrary, social reproduction must escape the established being-communication order, it must be free to reinvent and reorganize social relationships in order to get free of social systems like today's which obstacles and endangers social reproduction.

To preserve the being of communication-production is destructive (see Benjamin 1931, 1933, 1986; Benjamin et al. 1985). The being of communication-production, its persistence and reproduction puts social reproduction into serious danger.

Reproduction of the being of communication-production stops the human historical-social being from reorganizing himself into new social systems.

Communication-production exalts communication of the same, to the detriment of invention, innovation, re-planning-and-re-construction-capacities all specific to the

human being thanks to the modelling device called language (Sebeok 1991, 2001a,b).
Reproduction of communication-production endangers the existence of man, not only his existence as an intelligent being, the preservation and expansion of his intellectual faculties, his semiotic capacity, but it also endangers his existence as a living being, vital semiosis, health and survival.

The preservation, reinforcement and expansion of today's social system, that is, communication- production, at all costs, presents a lethal threat to life over the whole planet: think of the ozone hole, ecological disasters caused by normal reproduction cycles, and exceptional disasters. 'Normal' disasters include those connected with the communication-production of war (see Petrilli 2016, 2017a, b).

3. POWER OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATION OF POWER

Mass communication is a structural part of social reproduction and human behavior is signifying and programmed behavior insofar as it is social. The presence of sign systems in social reproduction as a mediating element makes all human behaviour signifying behaviour insofar as it is social.

This is to say that all behavior, either consciously or unconsciously, is programmed behavior and develops against the background and on the basis of social programs. All sign systems are pseudo- totalities which function through the game of pieces as well as through the game of pseudo-totalities acting as pieces. Consequently, all programs are controlled by a higher social level.

This leads us to consider the problem of the interests involved in integrating mass signs systems in a given society, the problem of the conditions of power which control behavior in politically defined situations, in other words, the problem of ideologies as social planning, which is the definition of ideology by Rossi-Landi (1992, 2005, 2007). Sign production processes are also ideology production processes. Progressing from the restricted programs of pseudo-totalities to the increasingly broader programs of the totalities to which pseudo-totalities belong, we reach a general overview of the control that production programs exert upon each other concentrically in processes which are mainly retroactive and not unidirectional. This overview coincides with the general system of mass communication. Whoever controls this system is in the best position to achieve a situation of hegemony and power.

In all societies, although this has become clear only in the present day, the realization, management and reproduction of power is achieved through control over communication structures. Especially in today's capitalist phase in communication-production, dominion is not the result of possessing things, but of controlling communication relations, exchange at the level of market and production. The ruling class owns capital, but what we mean by "capital" must today be specified as control over communication. If, generally speaking, the arcane of merchandise in mercantile exchange relations can only be revealed by unearthing the relations of communication among humans, in the current phase of capitalism today more than ever before capital is a sign fact. With the expansion of capitalism, the market has concretized its tendency to be coming a world market and with the expansion of the market communication has also achieved a world-widespread.

This means that all communication programs are part of a single general plan identifying with the plan for the development of capital. This plan is grounded in the reality itself of capital, so that the ideology of capital is its logic.

In the light of a critical semiotics of political economy, which evidence reciprocally the material nature of signs and the sign nature of merchandise, it is now clear that the structures of economy and the structures of verbal and nonverbal communication coincide (see Ponzio 2006a, 2009a, 2013; Ponzio, Calefato, Petrilli 2007). World-wide expansion of the market coincides with the world-wide expansion of the communication network so that whoever controls the communication system detains power. For a critical approach to today's society characterized by the hegemony of identity and by monological communication, by monolingualism, we need a critique of ideology, language and subjectivity grounded in the logic of dialogism and alterity (see Ponzio 1993, 1998, 2006b, c, 2008).

4. "ORDER OF DISCOURSE" AND DIALOGISM

The "order of discourse" in our title does not merely allude to exterior discourse in the context of a dialogic relationship with another person, but also to interior discourse in which this other person is our own interior double self through which we evaluate the validity of a given argument (see Perelmam & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1966). Understood in such terms our problem implies a discussion along the boundaries interconnecting logic and semiotics in what may be described as a "semio-dialogic" perspective.

Three authors we believe fundamental for the adequate development of such a perspective are Charles S. Peirce, Mikhail M. Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas (1961, 1972, 1974, 1987).

A common denominator linking logic and semiotics, or, better, these two aspects implied by the semio-dialogic approach, to the order of discourse, to which belong the individual's questioning and answering whether internal or external, is interpretation. In fact, as Peirce repeatedly underlines in his papers, interpretation plays a central role in semiosis and argumentation which are reciprocally inseparable and dialogic behaviors.

To evidence the connection of argumentation and semiosis to dialogue is to evidence the dialogic character of interpretation in so far as interpretation is not only decodification, identification, recognition but also "answering comprehension", an expression adapted from Bakhtin. In other words, we must consider the identification interpretant, which is connected to the *signifié* understood in the Saussurean sense, therefore, in its dependency on the "code"; but, in addition to this, we must also consider the interpretant of answering comprehension which does not simply identify signs, but responds to them dialogically, takes a stand, makes a choice, and therefore refers to values, habits, norms of behavior, stereotypes, ideologies (cf. Ponzio, Calefato, Petrilli 2007).

But the "order of discourse" is also connected to power and ideology. Consequently, it also implies logic understood as the ideo-logic of a given social system to which belongs the external or internal questioning and answering of an individual.

Our topic develops along the boundaries of the fields of logic, semiotics, and theory of ideology in a perspective that may be characterised as "semio-ideo-logic". According to this point of view another author is very important, the Italian philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. He demystified both external and internal discourse through which the individual is presumed to answer personally, to be responsible as a moral entity, when in fact all human behavior is programmed behavior in so far as it is communicative behavior, that is, sign behavior. Programs, programming and social projects are closely

connected, and the more the capitalist production system in the phase of global communication develops the more such interconnection becomes closer and ever more necessary.

The connection of mass-media semiotics to the study of ideology in individual moral and institutional responsibility depends on the fact that without studying signs there is no way of understanding anything about programming, projects, ideologies of individual verbal and non-verbal behaviours. In general, the whole system of social reproduction is made possible by communication and, therefore, by signs, verbal and non-verbal signs. What semiotics should do is examine signs as a constituent part of the processes they belong to.

Such an approach evidences the effective connection between the individual internal and external order of discourse and ideology – and between the disciplines that deal with them at the foundational level and at the level of general theory: semiotics as the general theory of signs, as mass-media semiotics and as theory of ideology.

As anticipated above, on examining communication as part of the process of social reproduction to which it belongs, we must not only consider it in relation to systems of sign exchange, but also of sign production and consumption. And as part of the totality of social reproduction, ideology must also be viewed in its necessary relationship with sign systems. Rossi-Landi's pioneer research deserves due consideration given its central importance for a semiotico-critical approach to false consciousness. Rossi-Landi defines the dominant class "as the class that holds control over the emission and circulation of verbal messages in a given community" (Rossi-Landi 2007:203-204).

Study of the ideo-logic of individual internal and external discourse, through which the individual answers for himself, requests a focus on the relationship between dominant forms of discourse and the "world" conceived as a totality to which the individual belongs, as Being, as Reality, which imposes its hard laws on individuals.

As Levinas (1961, 1974, 1993, 1998) demonstrated, the world is indissolubly tied to politics, as a projection, a plan, as the space for the satisfaction of needs. The world is tied to politics as a totalizing vision and functional system, as the strategy of productivity, efficiency, as adherence to reality, as guarantee of the *conatus essendi*, as mediation of the interests—in Latin *inter-esse*, which plays on the concept of being-of both the individual and the collective subject, as the awareness and management of becoming, starting from a realistic view of the present and through re-adaptation to the present by the past, as economy of the lasting, of the persistent, of the progressive in being, at all costs. Even at the cost of war, the *extrema ratio* of war, war considered as part of the world, which is foreseen by it, is part of its logic, of the ontology of the *conatus essendi*.

The world foresees war given that, being structurally based on identity, it exploits that which is other for the maintenance, reinforcement, duration, and expanded reproduction of the same. The world is ready, it is prepared for the sacrifice of alterity – alterity of the I and of the other – to individual and collective identity.

The connection between World, History, Reality, Identity, Responsibility, Truth, Force, Reason, Power, Job, Productivity, Politics, War is inscribed in our experience, in our mentality as Westerners. And this connection has always been exploited and exasperated by capitalism, even more so these days. Communication functional to the reproduction of this social system extends and consolidates this connection.

The Gulf War of 1991 marks a decisive phase in recent history, a kind of watershed

between a period that begins from the Second World War and is characterised by the widespread refusal of war as a solution to conflicts in international relations, and another period, today's, characterised by the ideo-logic of capital and assent to war largely accepted as a just, necessary and legal means of asserting peace, the rights of identity, and of difference. "War is the peace" is the slogan of the social system described by George Orwell in 1984, but it also applies to today's social system (Petrilli 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

Today there is an increase in the danger of submitting passively to social programs that mask widespread forms of "refined oppression" under mystifying banners paradoxically mistaken for liberating practices.

The wide spread effects of mass communication and, therefore, of ideology or, as we prefer, of the dominant ideo-logic supporting the whole multi-medial communication network, represent this kind of danger. The conjunction between telecommunications and informatics is favoring expansion of this network at a planetary level, and this is producing a form of socio-cultural reality without precedents from the viewpoint of the messages teaming in it in terms of quantity, immediacy, and circulation.

A direct consequence of advanced technology and of the intensification of sign traffic is the overlap of messages. This also implies translating and evaluating such progress in terms of alienation of the human subject, in terms of mystification and fetishisation of its linguistic and non-linguistic products made ready for the market. The more message production is redundant, the more the individual as a critical subject is suffocated despite active participation in such production processes. Even those subjects who would seem to be immune from the effects of the so-called electronic revolution variously contribute to the expansion of the world 'sign market' (see Sebeok 1991: 144-150) in which consciousness and praxis are alienated for a productive cycle whose end is production itself. With reference to the problem of the status of the subject considered as a user-consumer, the obvious truth is that such developments in the communication network, which inevitably end up involving us all, do not necessarily imply higher levels of critical awareness, creativity, responsible participation, or "freedom". Quite on the contrary: the risk is that of remaining trapped in this communication network, which becomes ever more oppressive the more it expands.

In today's order of discourse lying is no longer based on keeping things hidden, thanks also to the power of media and to the preponderance of images. Think of techniques used by dominant information services. Intangibility based on secrecy is no longer possible in a culture aspiring to "transparency", to glassiness – "glass things do not have an 'aura'. Glass is the special enemy of secrets" (Benjamin 1933). The impossibility of gaining awareness and of intervening transformatively on things and situations which instead must be preserved, concealed and handed down, is obtained by organizing things so that to see does not mean to understand, which, if anything, is impeded.

"The destructive character" (Benjamin) of the present-day world – meaning today's society as it is characterized by production for the sake of production, by communication for the sake of communication – shows, unveils, has its own constitutive obscenity. Destructive work needs a public, witnesses, says Benjamin. The succession and overlapping of information in the name of "transparency" and to the satisfaction of a sort of wide spread "voyeurism" makes it possible to level reality onto appearance and destroys the very notion of control by public opinion. The possibility of attention is replaced by confusion, the possibility of scandal by inurement, comprehension by

misunderstanding. Indeed, says Benjamin (1931), in the end one lets oneself be misunderstood, which eliminates gossip, and this happens because people don't want to be misunderstood; more exactly, the destructive character requires a continual provocation to misunderstanding.

Demystification of ideology in today's order of discourse, as much as of such notions as Responsibility, Subject, Reason, Truth, Reality, Work and War is only possible through a critique of signs that is capable of accounting for the production, exchange and circulation of signs in the global process of social reproduction. This project is committed to the development of a new and more conscious form of humanism, which not only focuses on the sign dimension of human beings (as semiotics has done so far with an enormous contribution from Peirce), but also on the human dimension of signs, as established by a project conceived and developed by such figures as Bakhtin, Levinas, Rossi-Landi.

The logic of internal discourse of the I is a dia-logic. The I is not a closed totality standardized and conformed to the order of discourse functional to power and dominant ideology. The constitution of sense for the I always implies dialogically structured argumentation. Sense is always the answer to a question, a sort of rejoinder in a dialogue where question and answer do not simply involve information exchange, but far more than this, values and evaluative orientations. The kind of question we are alluding to calls for a pragmatical-evaluative stand point, just as the answer involved in comprehending sense also requires a standpoint, whether implicit or explicit. Question and answer logic in which sense is decided evades the limits of monologism.

As Levinas (1961, 1974) has demonstrated, otherness is not outside the sphere of self, which does not lead to its assimilation, but quite on the contrary, gives rise to a constitutive impediment to the integrity and closure of self. Instead, the relation with the other is intended as a relation of excess, a surplus, the overcoming of the objectifying thought, release from the relation between subject and object and from the relation of equal exchange. The self/other relation irreducibly goes beyond the realm of knowledge, the concept, abstract thought, even if it is just this relation that makes them possible.

For Sartre as for Hegel, the oneself is posited on the basis of the for-itself. The identity of the I would thus be reducible to the turning back of essence upon itself. The I, or the oneself that would seem to be its subject or condition, the oneself taking on the figure of an entity among entities, would in truth be reducible to an abstraction taken from the concrete process of self-consciousness [...]. (Levinas, Eng. trans., 1974, p.103)

Contrary to Sartre and Hegel, Levinas believes that the self of "being conscious of oneself" neither coincides with consciousness nor presupposes it; instead, self pre-exists with respect to consciousness to which it is connected by a relation of otherness and autonomy (see Levinas 1993; Petrilli 2013; Ponzio 2009b, c, 2010, 2011).

With respect to identity of the person as delineated in the order of discourse, the individual as social living being is double and escapes from identity.

Here is a person who is what he is; but he does not make us forget, does not absorb, cover over entirely the objects he holds and the way he holds them, his gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin, which escape from under the identity of his substance, which like a torn sack

is unable to contain them. (Levinas 1948, Eng. trans, p.135)

The question and answer in the internal and external discourse of the I are not absolute and impersonal abstract categories of *Logos*. Rather they are concrete aspects of dialogue. Monological sign relationships do not seem to have spatio-temporal and axiological limits, they are situated in the space-time of monological discourse (Marcuse 1999).

Contrary to the latter, dialogical question and answer relationships have a precise and diversified spatial, temporal and axiological collocation. This determines the degree of irreducible otherness foreseen by such relationships. We believe Bakhtin's main contribution to the problem of the conditions of possibility, to the foundations of dialogical argumentation lies in his approach to the problem of sense, in the terms just described.

The capacity for critique with respect to a "closed universe of discourse" (Marcuse), and for moral and legal responsibility functional to the dominant order of discourse is only possible where dialogical potential is at its highest; therefore, where the answer required for the comprehension of sense is grounded in the logic of otherness, and calls for a standpoint. This means to assume responsibility as the responsibility of interrogating the value of behavior beyond its systemic contribution to the process of reproduction of today's communication-production process.-

The places of argumentation internal to the order of discourse are the places of the logic of identity. Our forms of Reason, which include the reasons of war even if in the form of *extrema ratio* which makes war itself seem legitimate, just, legal; our Reason inclusive of reason that justifies elimination of the other – from emargination and segregation to extermination –, is the Reason of Identity. Its logic is asserted by barricading, isolating, expelling, or exterminating the other, there by allowing for construction of the concrete abstractions in which such logic is founded. This includes the Individual who is forced in the first place to sacrifice its otherness to itself in order to assert itself as identity.

The critique of Reason and argumentation thus intended requires a point of view that is other. This requires preliminary recognition of the other, or, rather, recognition of the fact that recognition of the other is inevitable (cf. Ponzio 1993). Recognition of the other not as a concession, a free choice made by the Individual, the Subject, the Same, but as a necessity imposed by alienation, the loss of sense, by the situation of *homo homini lupus*. And the situation of *homo homini lupus* is consequent and not mythically antecedent to-Hobbes' fallacy!-the concrete abstractions of State, Politics, Law.

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Augusto Ponzio is Professor Emeritus in Philosophy and Theory of Languages, University of Bari "Aldo Moro". He founded the Department of Philosophy of Language in 1970 and inaugurated the PhD program at the same university in Theory of language and the science of signs, in 1988. From 1970 to 2014 he taught Philosophy of Language and from 1999 to 2012 General Linguistics. He has contributed with his monographs, as editor and translator to the dissemination in Italy and internationally of works by Peter of Spain, Karl Marx, Mikhail Bakhtin, Emmanuel Levinas, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Adam Schaff, Thomas Sebeok and Roland Barthes. He directs various book series in collaboration with Susan Petrilli and from 1990 "Athanos. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura", originally an annual series, now a book series with Mimesis publishers. He has translated works by Peter of Spain, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Emmanuel Levinas, Karl Marx, Adam Schaff. Among his more recent books: Linguaggio, lavoro e mercato globale. Rileggendo Rossi-Landi, Mimesis, 2008; A revolução bakhtiniana, San Paolo (Brasile), Contexto, 2008; Dadoveversodove, Guerra, 2009; L'écouter de l'autre, L'Harmattan, 2009; Encontros de palavras. O outro no discurso, San Carlo (Brasile), Pedro e João Editores, 2010; Procurando uma palavra outra, San Carlo (Brasile), Pedro e João Editores, 2010; Incontri di parole, Mimesis, 2011; Bachtin e il suo circolo, Opere, 1929-1930, bilingual Russian/Italian text, for book series "Il pensiero occidentale", Bompiani, 2014; Tra semiotica e letteratura. Introduzione a Michail Bachtin, Bompiani, 2015; Il linguaggio e le lingue, Mimesis, 2015; Lineamenti di semiótica e filosofia del linguaggio (con Susan Petrilli), Guerra, 2016; La coda dell'occhio: Letture del linguaggio letterario senza confini nazionali, Aracne, 2016. His works are translated into English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Croatian, Chinese.