

Разъединение традиционно связанного и сближение традиционно далекого достигается у Рабле путем построения разнообразнейших рядов, то параллельных друг другу, то пересекающихся друг с другом... . Построение рядов — специфическая особенность художественного метода Рабле. Все разнообразнейшие ряды у Рабле могут быть сведены в следующие подгруппы /см. ПРИЛ 1-А, НП):

1. ряды человеческого тела в анатомическом и физиологическом разрезе;
2. ряды человеческой одежды;
3. ряды еды;
4. ряды питья и пьянства;
5. половые ряды (совокупление);
6. ряды смерти;
7. ряды испражнений.

Каждый из этих семи рядов обладает своей специфической логикой, в каждом ряду свои доминанты... . Почти все темы обширного и тематически богатого романа Рабле проведены по этим рядам (ФВХ., 318. 19,20).



A Bakhtinian view on dialogism and meaning

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Bakhtin's notion of the text is no doubt broader than his notion of the sign taken as an isolated unit. Nonetheless, like the sign, the text can only flourish and be understood in the light of a still broader context: the intertextual context of dialectic/dialogic relationships among texts. The sense of a text develops through its interaction with other texts along the boundaries of another text. As Bakhtin says: "The dialogic relationships among texts and within the text. The special (not linguistic) nature. Dialogue and dialectics"¹.

This conception of language and the text gives full play to the centrifugal forces of linguistic-cultural life, theorizing otherness, polysemy, and dialogism as constitutive factors of the sign's identity itself. As Bakhtin says: "Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation. The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth ad infinitum"². Meaning emerges as a signifying itinerary in a sign network, as an interpretive

¹ Bakhtin M. M. (1959—61). "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis," Eng. trans. 1986. P. 105.

² Bakhtin M. M. (1986). *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, trans. by V. McGee, ed. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist, University of Texas Press, Austin. P. 127.

route at once well delineated and yet subject to continuous amplification and variation by virtue of continual dialogic contacts with alternate interpretive routes. This explains the indeterminacy, openness, and semantic pliability of signs which flourish in the context of dialogic relationships.

Interpretive routes connected with the text include both verbal and nonverbal signs. Consequently, they know no boundaries in terms of types of signs or historical-natural languages that may eventually be involved in the interpretive process. Each one of us in the interpretive process only ever activates small portions in the overall sign network (which is made of both verbal and nonverbal sign systems), indeed in a given historical-natural language or special language. In any case, all interpretive routes are necessarily part of the same global sign network, so that if an interruption is verified at a certain point this is only because the interpreter has stopped interpreting.

But, in fact, we only ever activate small portions of the sign network. This is a question of economy no different from the economy that governs all sign systems, including historical-natural languages.

Furthermore, the interpretation of a text, whether oral or written, does not necessarily require verbal interpretants, and even less so written interpretants.

Only in rare cases is the verbal or written interpretant explicitly an *interpretant of identification* (as in the case of noise hampering oral communication, or some form of illegibility relating to the written text, for example, because it is ancient and deteriorated, or because it is a specialized text); more generally, the interpretant is an *interpretant of responsive understanding* which may be of the nonverbal order, whether in the graphic form (images, graphs, etc.) or bodily (gestures, intonation, etc.).

In a paper of 1959—61, “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis,” Bakhtin distinguishes between “two poles” in the text: language as a system of signs and the text as utterance:

The two poles of the text. Each text presupposes a generally understood (that is, conventional within a given collective) system of signs, a language (if only the language of art). If there is no language behind the text, it is not a text, but a natural (not signifying) phenomenon, for example, a complex of natural cries and moans devoid of any linguistic (signifying) repeatability. [...]

And so behind each text stands a language system. Everything in the text that is repeated and reproduced, everything repeatable and reproducible, everything that can be repeated outside a given text (the given) conforms to this language system. But at the same time each text (as an utterance) is individual, unique, and unrepeatable, and herein lies its entire significance (its plan, the purpose for which it was created). [...] (*Ibidem*: 105).

It is possible to proceed toward the first pole, that is, toward language — the language of the author, the language of the genre, the trend, the epoch; toward the national language (linguistics), and, finally, toward a potential language of languages (structuralism, glossematics). It is also possible to proceed toward the second pole — toward the unrepeatable event of the text (*Ibidem*: 107).

The text as an utterance, a unique and unrepeatable event. Obviously, just as a fingerprint may be mechanically reproduced (in any number of samples), a text too can be mechanically reproduced (this is the case of a reprint). However, “the reproduction of the text by a subject (a return to it, a repeated rereading, a new execution quotation) is a new, unrepeatable event in the life of the text, a new link in the historical chain of speech communication” (*Ibidem*: 106).

If in oral or written communication we understand what is said, this is always achieved through interpretant signs that are not uniquely verbal. What we say is based on preceding verbal and nonverbal communication and occurs in an extended network of signs in which any one historical-natural language only occupies a very limited space. When we speak to communicate, this “event” is made possible thanks to communication conditions that were established previously. We can claim that seems paradoxical — though paradoxes often help to evidence how things stand: when we speak to communicate communication has already occurred. This is true in the case of the production of both oral and written texts. Whether written or oral, speech does not install communication relations, but, if anything, ratifies, maintains, notifies, declares, or exhibits them, furnishing “portmanteau words”³ which enable partners to stay in such relations, to mutually recognize each other, and to express the will to maintain and preserve those relations.

That which occurs is more or less the same as that which occurs in a love declaration: unless it is reduced to a purely conventional or formal act (in which case it is no longer a love relationship), a love declaration is formulated when the love relationship already exists, so that the declaration is only a portmanteau word anticipating a complementary portmanteau word as its reply. When a professor begins speaking in a university hall, for the lecture to be successfully delivered a communication relation must already subsist; the most interesting, new and original things ever may be stated, but the first implicit statement recites “this is a lecture, accept it as such”. When a child begins communicating with its mother through words, communication with her has already existed for some time earlier and is intense, this too being the necessary condition for learning even how to speak.

If the utterance text were to constitute its very own conditions, if it were self-sufficient, if it were not to depend on anything else but itself, if it were, so to say, autopoietic, this would mean that it is based uniquely on initiative taken by the speaking subject and on the linguistic system that subject employs. In reality, however, speech like the subject, does not have a priority in the construction of communication relations. Each time there is a subject, speech, a text of some sort, communication has already come about and that which the subject says is relative to communication as it has already occurred.

To speak, to be a speaking subject, to be an author, is always to respond as is the case for any text. The subject and the text may constitute and decide anything, but not the conditions that make them possible. This already emerges from the fact that each time the subject speaks, each time it produces a text, it is responding. Furthermore, the text cannot constitute or decide anything about its reception,

³ Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Felix (1980). “De la ritournelle”. In *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*, P. 381—434. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

about the way it is heard or read. That to speak is to respond and that speaking can do nothing without presupposing that someone is listening says clearly that initiative does not belong to the subject, to the I. On the contrary, initiative is related to the other: the other with whom the subject is already communicating, whom the subject must respond and account to not only verbally. In other words the response is not reduced to relations and sign systems of the sole linguistic-verbal order. The other under discussion must grant listening as a primary condition for communication to occur as installed by the text.

Verbal action does not presuppose another verbal action. We know that the word is a response, but that to which it responds — not at the superficial level of rejoinders in a formal dialogue — is not in turn a word, a text, but rather a communicative situation which was not produced by speech. The actions accomplished by words and texts at the level of communicative exchange, the “linguistic market,” presuppose social relations, communication relations which are not in turn relations among words and texts. In other words, the relations that produce relations among words are not in turn relations among words.

An immediate consequence of what we have said so far is that verbal action is not only limited but presupposes nonverbal communicative conditions. We can even state that it is improper to speak of “speech acts”. In fact, we prefer the expression “verbal *action*”. We propose a distinction between *act* and *action*: the latter concerns the subject and is connected with consciousness, it is intentional, programmed, already decided, and presupposes initiative from the subject; on the contrary, the act has already occurred before action thus described. The subject is involved in the act, implied, has already been acted, decided, and is subject as in *subject to*. When the speaking subject does something with words, when it produces texts, when it fulfils verbal *actions*, the *act* has already occurred: the communicative action of words presupposes a communicative act that cannot be reduced to verbal actions, but rather is the necessary condition for action to occur.

If communicative action decides its own *meaning* it does not decide its own *significance*. Performative action can do things *because it is action interpreted as being significant*.

To be significant means *to have value*. And value cannot be conferred by the same subject that signifies with its action. If in addition to having meaning the performative action of condemning becomes an event that changes things this is because it is significant as well, it has value, weight, import. All this presupposes a preceding communicative act which confers such value. Performative verbal action is action which must be interpreted to have meaning; but in order to be performative action as well, that is, capable of having an effect, of modification, it must have already received an interpretation which is antecedent and founding with respect to the relation it constitutes at the moment of occurrence. Antecedence concerns interpretation which has already invested performative action with significance.

The term “significance” is used by Victoria Welby — who introduces an area of study called Significs⁴ — in triadic correlation with another two terms, “sense”

⁴See Welby, Victoria (1983). *What is Meaning?*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1903; Welby, V. (1985). *Significs and Language*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1911; Petrilli, Susan (2009). *Signifying and Understanding. Reading*

and “meaning”. Using this terminology, we could state that the “meaning” of action presupposes “sense” understood as a derivative of “to sense” and not only as “orientation,” “direction”. In order to be performative, verbal action must be “sensed,” “felt,” “perceived,” if perhaps not by whomever accomplishes it, certainly by partners addressed by the speaker in a given communicative context.

In addition to sense as connected to listening, verbal action presupposes significance. Differently from significance, sense is associated with the senses, with feelings, with the sentiments or passions. Instead, significance refers to given values that are fixed and that flourishing in a community. This can be a minimal community as in the case of a couple or it may be a more or less extended and comprehensive community as in the case of a city, a nation, a religious group, a global financial group, an international peace movement, etc.

Both Ferruccio Rossi-Landi⁵ and Bakhtin before him⁶ reflect on the relation between “explicit meanings” and “implied meanings”. Rossi-Landi distinguishes between “initial meanings” which are explicit and communicated directly and “additional meanings” which are implicit and unsaid, where the former are dependent on the latter. Bakhtin claims that every utterance is an “enthymeme” because something always remains implicit, as in the case of the syllogism where one of two premises is implied.

As emerges less clearly or at least without special reflection in Rossi-Landi and, on the contrary, manifestly and profoundly in Bakhtin, “additional meanings” understood as “implied meanings” are related to values. More exactly, what is implied are values shared by partners in the communication relation. This not only means that something is endowed with meaning, but also that this something is significant. Charles Morris⁷ also reflects extensively on the dual acceptance of the term “meaning” understood as signification, as that which something signifies, that is, in a semantic sense, or as significance, as the value of what is signified, that is, in an axiological sense. Welby also uses the term “significance” for implied meaning involving values.

Verbal action stages “explicit meanings” or “initial meanings” on the semantic and pragmatic levels and presupposes “implied meanings” or “additional meanings,” better indicated with the term “significance” to distinguish them from the former.

While the meaning of verbal action, explicit meaning on the semantic and pragmatic levels, is in the hands of the speaking subject, the author, significance (thanks to which alone verbal action becomes performative) is implied and therefore antecedent with respect to verbal action. Sense, the way a word, an utterance is sensed or perceived can also be determined by the subject to an extent. Language has rhetorical or oratorical expedients at its disposal for this. But such is not true of significance which presupposes communicative contexts

the Works of Victoria Welby and the Significs Movement, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton. [Book series, Semiotics, Communication and Cognition 2, Editor Paul Copley, Petrilli, S. (2009). “Genere e fuori genere: il discorso e il femminile in Pier Paolo Pasolini”. *Athanon* XX/13: 147—158, ed. by A. Ponzio.

⁶ cf. Voloshinov, Valentin N. ; Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1926). “La parola nella vita e nella poesia. Introduzione alla poetica sociologica,” in *Id. It. trans.*, 19—60.

⁷ Morris, Charles (1964). *Signification and Significance*, *It. trans., Significazione e significatività*, intro. and ed. by S. Petrilli, Bari, Graphis, 2000.

that preexist with respect to the speaking subject and the text it speaks.

Verbal action can also modify or subvert preexisting communicative contexts by questioning and substituting customary significance values. But this always occurs in relation to a communicative context where the values in question are no longer taken for granted or implied. Rather, they become the direct object of thematization, discussion and criticism. So long as a communicative relation lasts, whether minimal as in the relation between a couple, or that involving a community understood in the most extended sense possible, the significance of verbal action is determined by the values implied in a given context. When significance is questioned by the word, the habitual communicative context is in crisis.

Verbal action depends on the communicative situation. Indeed the communicative situation allows for, even calls for the proposal and development of new axiological referents, for the activation of new values and correlated new communicative programs especially when values and social practice are in crisis. For the questioning of implied communicative values to be not only plausible but even conceivable, these values have already suffered a process of deterioration so that communication is no longer automatic, it no longer proceeds smoothly, but it begins to present disturbances, noise, entropy, which may even threaten successful communication.

Barthes speaks of the “rustle of language” (an expression which corresponds to the title of one of his later collections of critical essays) with reference to that system of verbal automatisms which make language comparable to a running motor, such that the noise it produces is similar to a rustling noise which nobody notices. In the light of what we have said so far, we propose to speak of the “rustle of communication” which subsists without anybody noticing it until there is a breakdown in the transmission chain leading from the implied values in a communicative situation to the senses and meanings of verbal action, which make it significant.

If verbal action has an effect this is only because it is an adequate response to the communicative situation that keeps account of the situation of crisis and contradiction. In this case too, the word capable of being performative is a response but at the same time it counts as a new portmanteau word thanks to a situation that it did not produce.

On the other hand, the communicative relations in which portmanteau words are formed, circulate, deteriorate and disappear are never homogeneous or free of internal contradictions. Consequently, as much as the portmanteau word is adequate for a given communicative situation, it resounds because it is also adequate for its contradictions, as though it had a margin which overflows with respect to functionality to that particular communicative situation, an excess which in some way anticipates new communicative relations.

In his essay, “Criteri per lo studio ideologico di un autore,” Rossi-Landi⁸

⁸Rossi-Landi, F. (1985). *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni. Nuovi saggi sul linguaggio e l'ideologia*. Milan: Bompiani. p. 167—182; cf. also Rossi-Landi, Ferruccio (1984). “L'autore tra riproduzione sociale e discontinuità: dialogo con Ferruccio Rossi-Landi,” from the Seminar, “Segno, autore e riproduzione sociale,” held at the Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere, Bari University, April 19th, 1985, Lectures 15, 149—172; and Petrilli S. “Rossi-Landi, l'ideologia dell'autore e la riproduzione sociale,” *Corposcritto* 2.

vidences this possibility of excess with respect to dominant significance, or, in his terminology, with respect to dominant “ideology”. As much as the author’s word is determined by his or her communicative reality, it resounds as an “excess” (from this point of view Balzac’s case is exemplary). Though this word expresses dominant ideology, the impression is that it is making fun of it by portraying it with ironical overtones, thereby anticipating lacerations, fractures and contradictions in social reality which are not yet completely manifest. All the same, however, this excessive, non functional word cannot become a portmanteau word nor, therefore, can its significance be acknowledged until new communicative conditions are created which allow for this.

The question “What does it mean?,” or “What does it signify?,” brings Welby to the question of the moral or ethic dimension of speech life and signification in general, to the practical bearing and ethical value of signs. According to Welby, it is important that speakers develop a critical awareness of the value and “true significance of ambiguity,” that they realize the value of experience through reflection upon the value of signs.

Similarly to Bakhtin, and coherently with the current orientation characterizing the semiotics of interpretation and the sign model it proposes, sign value according to Welby is traceable beyond the limits of intentional communication: sign value is neither founded upon the logic of exchange value nor even of use value alone, but rather upon the logic of otherness and signifying excess. Sign value is founded on sign processes described by Welby with the expression “significance,” and by Bakhtin with the expression “theme”.

Concerning this last point, correspondences can be established between that which Welby calls “sense,” “meaning” and “significance” and that which Bakhtin calls “theme” and “meaning”. Bakhtin’s “meaning” as distinguished from “theme” indicates all those aspects of the utterance that can be broken down into smaller linguistic elements, that are reproducible and self-identical each time the utterance is repeated. “Meaning” thus intended corresponds to “signality,” the “identification interpretant,” “plain meaning”. By contrast, “theme” is essentially indivisible. It refers to that which is unique, to that which is individual and unreproducible, it concerns the import and general significance of an utterance as it is produced at a given historical moment, in a specific context. “Theme” covers those aspects of signification that require “responsive understanding,” a dialogic response, the voice of another, that are endowed with a point of view and valuative orientation. In the words of Bakhtin-Voloshinov:

Theme is a complex, dynamic system of signs that attempts to be adequate to a given instant of the generative process. Theme is reaction by the consciousness in its generative process to the generative process of existence. Meaning is the technical apparatus for the implementation of theme⁹.

The boundary between “theme” and “meaning” is never clear-cut and

⁹ Voloshinov, Valentin N. ; Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *Marksizm i filosofija. Osnovnye problemy sociologiceskogo metoda v nauke o jazyke*. Leningrad. 2nd. ed. 1930. Eng. trans. by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973. It. trans *Marxismo e filosofia del linguaggio*, It. ed. by A. Ponzio, Manni, Lecce, 1999. trans.: 100.

definitive, for the two terms interact and cannot subsist independently of each other: the “meaning” of the utterance is conveyed by transforming it into an element of the “theme,” and vice versa, the “theme” is necessarily based upon some kind of fixity of meaning if communicative interaction is to be achieved at all. In Welby, “sense” concerns the way the word is understood according to the rules of conventional use, in relation to the circumstances of communicative interaction, the universe of discourse, and never in isolation (this is dialectics described by Bakhtin between “meaning” and “theme”). Welby’s “meaning” refers to user communicative intention; “significance” designates the import, implication, the overall and ideal value of the utterance.

There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as the Sense of a word, but only the sense in which it is used — the circumstances, state of mind, reference, “universe of discourse” belonging to it. The Meaning of a word is the intent which it is desired to convey — the intention of the user. The Significance is always manifold, and intensifies its sense as well as its meaning, by expressing its importance, its appeal to us, its moment for us, its emotional force, its ideal value, its moral aspect, its universal or at least social range¹⁰.

Bakhtin’s “meaning” can be related to Welby’s “sense;” his “theme” to her “meaning” and “significance”. Of course, such correspondences can only be approximate given that, among other things, the concepts in question represent different attempts at breaking down a unitary totality which in reality is indivisible. Theoretical distinctions are always made by way of abstraction and serve to focus better upon particular aspects of signs. Let us remember, however, that not only do signs exist as whole entities, but that they act in relation to each other, finding in each other their specificity and significance in the process of dialectic and dialogic interaction that characterize semiosis.

This parallel between Welby and Bakhtin is an attempt at favouring a fuller understanding of their respective thought systems. However, on relating these two theoretical orientations and translating one discourse into the other, the aim is not only to throw light on two separate discourses, but also to evidence their importance for a more comprehensive treatment of problems relevant to language and communication theory today. In this perspective, the cultural and chronotopic divide between the two authors in question is actually an advantage that favours an ideal dialogue in terms of theoretical confrontation.

⁹Welby, Victoria (1983). *What is Meaning?*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1903. p. 5—6.