On the Methodics of Common Speech

Augusto Ponzio

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A Chapter in the History of The Philosophy of Language

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1. *A text of great topical interest;* 2. *The* a priori *in language;* 3. *Metalinguistics in common speech;* 4. *Common speech and the plurality of universes of discourse;* 5. *Contributions of the methodics of common speech;* 6. *Initial meanings and additional meanings;* 7. *Criticism of the postal package model;* 8. *The river under the boat.*

1. A TEXT OF GREAT TOPICAL INTEREST

The current situation in semiotics and the philosophy of language can be characterized in general by the overcoming of that phase which we might call the semiotics of the code. This phase began in 1916 with the publication of Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, was still very strong through the 1960s and starts to weaken from approximately 1980 onwards. During this period

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the following theses dominated:

1) The (verbal/nonverbal) sign presupposes a code, that is, a sign system which is defined and fixed antecedently to the actual use of the sign (message) and its interpretation. As a result, the difference between sign and signal is suppressed: signs, including signifying verbal units (from the moneme to the text), are confused with signals (e.g., road signals). Both are in fact determined by a preconstituted code, given that the context does not come into play and that there is a univocal correspondence between *signifiant* and *signifié*.

2) Two fundamental theoretical orientations emerge: one considers the sign from the point of view of the sender and must deal, therefore, with the intention of communicating something (the semiotics of communication: Buyssens and Prieto); the other considers the sign from the point of view of the interpreter, so that the sender's communicative intention is no longer relevant. In this case the code underlying the sign (viewed as a symbol in the psychoanalytical sense) is not necessarily recognized by the sender: rather, he or she "discovers" it (semiotics of signification: Barthes 1964). A variant of the semiotics of signification is offered by the Chomskyan theory of language: communication is not a characterizing function of language, and the utterance does not necessarily require awareness of the code (transformational generative grammar), which only the linguist is in a position to discover.

3) The whole complex process of semiosis in which something works as a sign is traced back to two poles: one is collective, stable, common and normative—this is the code (*langue* or grammar in the Chomskyan sense); the other pole concerns the use of the code by the individual in a free and innovative manner—this is usually called the message, *parole* or utterance.

4) Nonreferential semantics—that is, a semantics which denies the semiotic pertinence of the referent (Ullman, Jakobson 1952; Eco 1975)—is opposed to referential extensional semantics, which instead considers the referent as a constitutive factor of semiosis: we are dealing here with the traditional dichotomy between intension (connotation) and extension (denotation).

5) The sign is viewed as an autonomous totality. It is severed from both the historical-social tradition to which it belongs genetically as well as from social practice, in spite of the fact that it is only within social practice that the sign is used and its sense determined.

The overcoming of the semiotics of the code is not simply the chronologically inevitable result of a sequel in ideas, nor does it concern a single specific field of knowledge. Broader changes of a sociocultural nature come into play. They lead to wider signifying practices and prove to be intolerant of the polarization between code and message, *langue* and *parole*. Criticism of code semiotics is related to the weakening of the centripetal forces of linguistic life and of sign-cultural life at large. Such centripetal forces characterize the tendency in semiotics to privilege the unitary system with respect to the sign. As it is not possible to consider all these aspects here, I will limit my attention to the following:

A) The semiotics of the "third sense" or the "semiotics of writing" (Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva) is theorized as early as the late 1960s. It is characterized by the concepts of *renvoi*, deferment and shifting (see the notions of *difference* and *déplacement*), which act upon the sign so as to free it from the guarantee of a code.

B) As of 1979-1980 there is a return to Peircian semiotics—and not only in the United States. This view is based on the concept of sign as what exists only in relation to another sign, which acts as an interpretant and so forth, in an open chain of interpretants.

C) The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and his Circle become known thanks to the translation of his works. As early as the 1920s Bakhtin criticizes code semiotics and proposes a model of sign based on the centrifugal forces of sign-cultural and linguistic life. His conception is related to a polylogic and dialectic logic.

It is surprising that a book containing theoretical perspectives which were to emerge only in more recent times (and not without great difficulty) was to appear in Italy as early as 1961—that is to say, before the advent of structuralism and semiotics. Furthermore, this book is a re-elaboration of ideas which had already been conceived and expressed in writings by the same author during the fifties. This remarkable book is *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* [*Meaning, Communication and Common Speech*] by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. With these writings, the author places himself outside the Saussurian perspective, and is therefore free of the reductive dichotomy linguistic system (*langue*/individual *parole*), as well as of the conception of communication as the exchange of messages between independent individuals pre-existent to the communication process. *SCPC* is an original attempt at making two distinct traditions meet for the first time: the Italian

line of thought, with its German and Continental influences at large, is made to encounter such trends as British analytical philosophy and American pragmatism. More exactly, for the first time ever, this book grafts the line of thought that goes from Peirce to Morris—together with elements of Oxonian analytical philosophy, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, and Ceccato's and Dingler's operationism—onto the trunk of Continental, nonidealistic historicism.

SCPC introduces the original notion of *Common Speech* which indicates all those operations in speech essential to successful communication between human beings—and this independently from the obvious complications that take place in reality.* What is presupposed here is the fact that beyond all possible historical and geographical differences, there are basic similarities in the biological and social structure of all human communities.

After this book, Rossi-Landi develops the notion of Common Speech into that of linguistic work and sign work in general. Subsequently (for the first time in Rossi-Landi 1971: 201), he introduced the still wider notion of social reproduction. It was only in 1968 with *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* [*Language as Work and Trade*] that Rossi-Landi dealt specifically with Saussure—the official Saussure of the *Cours*—even if with his notion of Common Speech, he had already distinguished himself from the Saussurian perspective. Common Speech was also something entirely different from Oxonian ordinary language as well as neopositivistic constructions of ideal languages:

> Within all real or possible languages, we can distinguish as a necessary, fundamental and constitutive part a *"collective speech"* which I have for some time referred to as *Common Speech* to separate it both from the Saussurian individual *parole* and the ordinary or daily or colloquial language of the Oxonians, as well as from the technical or special or ideal languages of the builders of generic models. In a certain sense, it stands as a synthesis of the three conceptions which are individually to be rejected. Common Speech is a specification of language, not of this or that language alone; and it is a social, not an individual, specification. As a specification reached through investigation, it retains in part the nature of a special language. (Rossi-Landi 1968: Amer. trans. 1983: 40)

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*It should be noted that some of the implications of the Italian *parlare* would be better rendered by *speaking* rather than *speech*; the latter term, however, was here preferred as being more "common" in English [*Tr*].

As the author observes under the entry "Semiotics" in the *Dizionario teorico-ideologico* of the journal *Ideologie* (12, 1970: 38-44; now in Rossi-Landi 1979: 301-08), the Saussurian model of the sign has the merit of having insisted upon the connection between *signifiant* and *signifé*, or—to express ourselves in Augustinian terms which avoid the mentalistic ambiguity of Saussure's *signifié*—upon the union of *signans* and *signatum* (see Rossi-Landi 1979: 21ff.). At the same time, however, the Saussurian model runs the risk of reifying the sign totality thus understood, turning it into an autonomous and separate entity. Compared to such a model—or to that offered by information theory as expounded by Shannon and Weaver—the sign model developed by Peirce and taken up by Morris has the advantage of using the sign situation or *semiosis* as the starting point, and of considering the sign-vehicle, the meaning, the referent, the interpreter as well as the very code, as nonexistent outside the semiosis totality: all these things are no more than different aspects of the same process, that is, the articulated process of semiosis taken in its wholeness.

The notion of Common Speech, however, was introduced by Rossi-Landi in his 1961 book in opposition, especially, to the "ordinary language" of the Oxonians. In spite of some efforts to the contrary, one of the limits of the Oxonian conception consisted in its claim of being able to describe ordinary, daily or colloquial language in general, while in reality describing the characteristics of a given natural language. Such confusion between two levels, the general and abstract level of so-called ordinary language and the particular and concrete level of a given natural language at a given moment in its historical development—in this particular case the English language—is recurrent not only in the Oxonian conception and in the more recent analyses of language that are inspired by it, but also in Chomsky's linguistic theory, where the specific characteristics of a language—yet again English—are actually mistaken for the universal structures of human language. The untranslatability of the phrases used by Chomsky as examples of his theories is symptomatic of the problem at hand. One of the fundamental limits evidenced by Šaumjan in the transformational model proposed by Chomsky lies precisely in the fact that such a model confuses elements which in fact belong to two different degrees of abstraction, ideal language and natural language. As is well known, Chomsky's model cannot be extended as it is to natural languages different from that privileged by his description. This leads Šaumjan to oppose his bigradual theory of generative grammars to Chomsky's unigradual theory by distinguishing be-

tween two levels of abstraction: genotypic language and phenotypic language (see Šaumjan 1965).

The notion of Common Speech is not in contrast to that of plurilingualism—that is, to the co-presence of thousands of languages, each one different from the other. On the contrary, precisely because Common Speech is nothing more than a similarity of functions fulfilled by the various languages in satisfying needs of expression and communication, it can explain and justify the difference, variety, and multiplicity of the different languages as due to the variety in expedients, solutions, and resources that each language offers—never in a complete and definitive fashion, as language is in continual development and transformation—for the satisfaction of the basically similar social needs of expression and communication. The notion of Common Speech does not neglect or underestimate what, together with George Steiner (1975), we might call "the enigma of Babel," that is to say, the diversity and the multiplicity of languages, in contrast to those tendencies in the study of language that try to reconduct the multiplicity of languages to an *Ursprache* or to the universal linguistic structures of *Logos* or of the biological nature of man. The Common Speech Rossi-Landi speaks of is certainly not the product of a mythical unity at the origin of all languages, and even less so of a natural law unity of the human species; this is evident throughout the entire 1961 book in which the notion of Common Speech is advanced, and it is stated explicitly by Rossi-Landi in 1968 (Amer. trans.: 41), where the same notion is more fully expressed in terms of work:

> The similarity of the functions fulfilled by the various languages is derived from the fact that in the process of language development the general forms of social formation, that is, the basic work and production relationships that separate any human society from any pre-human (*only* animal) society, are necessarily represented.

Subsequently, both the notion of expressive and communicative needs as well as that of basic social processes were re-examined by the author (cf. now *Ideologia* 1982, 1.3, especially 1.3.5, and Rossi-Landi and Pesaresi 1979).

We said that the notion of Common Speech was formulated in contrast to the Oxonian conception of language. This should not lead us to believe that at the time of writing *SCPC*, English analytical philosophy was a major interlocutor in either Italy or most Continental countries. It did not represent a position to be dealt with whenever studying problems of a theoretical order.

The pioneer character of Rossi-Landi's works—begun with the monograph on Charles Morris (1953), followed by the Italian translation and ample comments to *Foundations of the Theory of Sign* (1954), and subsequently by the rewriting in Italian of Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1955, reprinted in 1982)—was such that, apart from some rare exceptions, *SCPC* appeared in a situation of almost total ignorance as regards the theoretical orientations under discussion. Not only was Rossi-Landi's research the object of misunderstanding as regards the problems he dealt with, but his approach even to the study of such problems was also misunderstood, discordant as it was with the current dominating conception of philosophical work. (For a study of these aspects of Italian culture, see Rossi-Landi's "Introduction" to the 1980 edition of *SCPC*, and also "On Some Post-Morrisian Problems" [1978], as well as his introduction to the American edition of *Language as Work and Trade.*) The paradoxical situation in which the 1961 book was written and published was such that it discussed attitudes toward interlocutors who were in the main ignored or considered unworthy of serious reflection and who might have "overestimated" problems concerning language. In such a perspective, Morris appeared to be an "analytical philosopher" or a "linguist," while in the best of cases Rossi-Landi's book was itself viewed solely as a contribution to analytical philosophy. The local tradition to which Rossi-Landi's work could in a certain sense be seen to belong to formed no more than a minority group, the main representatives of which were Cattaneo, Peano, Vailati, Calderoni, Enriques, and Colorni. This meant that the continual reference in *SCPC* to Vailati (one of the most quoted authors in the volume) did nothing to hinder the general impression that the 1961 book was at the service of Ryle and other analytical philosophers from Oxford and Cambridge (incidentally, at the same time Wittgenstein too was freely associated with this school of thought, cf. Rossi-Landi 1981).

In some of his well-known essays, Ryle had attempted to distinguish between *use* and *usage.* To a certain extent this distinction does in fact correspond to the phenotypic distinction between *linguaggio* and *lingua* (or, in French, between *langage* and *langue*). Rossi-Landi goes a step further in trying to identify the *general* conditions of language as seen against both a linguistic and nonlinguistic background. It could be said that there is here an existential dimension to Common Speech.

By resolving to explain linguistic use rather than just describing it, *SCPC* was already in the line of research which was to lead to *LWT* with its criticism of the notion of *use* as elaborated by

Wittgenstein. In this book, in fact, Rossi-Landi develops a theory of linguistic production according to which any linguistic unit can be viewed as the product of individual and social linguistic work. In the light of such a conception, Wittgenstein's notion of linguistic use concerns something which is given only because it has already been produced, but leaves out of consideration the question of how that something came into existence. Rossi-Landi criticizes the notion of linguistic use in terms which are basically Marxian, while at the same time taking into account some notions from both Peirce and Bradley. Here Wittgenstein is said to lack in the notion of labor-value because "from the linguistic objects, he moves only forward and never backwards" (*LWT*: 31).

In the "Preface to the American Edition" of *LWT*, Rossi-Landi says that many of the ideas in this work "were already present, if only in an embryonic form, in the 1961 book." However, I believe that *SCPC* has an autonomous value and that, independently of any subsequent developments, it constitutes an important event in the philosophy of language. In this sense, I agree with Rossi-Landi when he says that the criticism he makes of his 1961 book in *LWT* (pp. 26-27) needs to be in some way modified (see the "Introduction" to the 1980 edition of *SCPC*: 25-26). With respect to the project of a linguistic-semiotic reflection in the perspective of historic materialism, the concept of Common Speech could have seemed "mentalistic" and led to the need for a reformulation in terms of social work. If, on the other hand, we consider this notion independently of the subsequent development in Rossi-Landi's thought, his own criticism is "excessive," and even out of place. In his introduction to the 1980 edition (*SCPC*: 26), it is Rossi-Landi himself who, in fact, gives us the key: the theory of Common Speech constructs models, that is, it is a theoretical construction and not a *direct* description of real processes, although a reference to such processes is obviously involved. This distinguishes it from the ordinary language of analytical philosophy as well as from Chomsky's notion of competence or of generative grammar. Common Speech is a model with interpretive functions, a hypothesis applicable to various languages. Rather than being a *description* of linguistic use, the theory of Common Speech (or "Speaking") proposes a general model of speaking which is capable of explaining linguistic use and is, moreover, applicable to a plurality of languages. In this sense, what underlines linguistic use is not at all something mentalistic or in any other way ontologically pre-existent to natural languages: it is the result of interpretive hypotheses which put us into a position to approach real linguistic phenomena with an appropriate conceptual instrumentation.

Much like Šaumjan, in his 1961 book Rossi-Landi proposes a bigradual theory of language. This theory explains the concrete linguistic use of this or that language (phenotypic level) in terms of a common speech hypothesis (genotypic level) whose validity increases the more it is extensible to the different languages. Rossi-Landi himself guides us toward an interpretation of this kind when in the foreword to the first edition of *SCPC* he says that

> both the pretension to a science of sign behavior of the biopsychological or sociological type, and competition with the analytical and historical work carried out by glottologists on the facts of the various languages, are excluded. It does not follow from this that what I wish to offer is some sort of theory or general doctrine, of the cognitive speculative kind, as regards the phenomena under examination. Rather, I merely want to offer a structural background and make an attempt at clarification. Studying the *a priori* in language does not mean adopting a deductive aprioristic method. (1961: 9)

We could speak then of the hypothetical-deductive method, or more properly, recalling the Peircian concept of "abduction," of the abductive method in which a given event is explained by positing hypotheses on the general conditions that make such an event possible.

2. THE *A PRIORI* IN LANGUAGE

"Common Speech" indicates that part of speech which is common to the various languages in spite of the differences. When we speak, no doubt we speak a particular so-called natural or historical language such as Italian or English etc. Furthermore, speech is always relative to a specific sectorial language (familiar, ethical, scientific, theological, poetic, etc.) of a given national language in a specific historical moment. However, even though we always speak in a specific national language and in one of its particular sectors, it is possible for us to identify a constant and common factor. In short, there are *repeatable* operations in common speech that guarantee its relative constancy. Even if these operations are not *completely* constant they are, however, sufficiently so for them to be regarded as the *same operations*, and this in spite of the variety in languages and linguistic contexts. We may establish what forms Common Speech by studying the general conditions that make meaning and communication *possible*. Here, we intend "possible" in Kant's sense, so that research orients itself as the study of the *a priori* in language, as the investigation not

so much of facts as of conditions that make such facts possible.

For Rossi-Landi, Common Speech has a *methodic function*. In fact, it is in the light of such a notion that the study of language is characterized as a general methodology of language and of human speech in its signifying capacity (see *SCPC* 1980: 158ff.). Common Speech puts into evidence how language functions, as it signals those operations we inevitably perform when we speak. In relation to this aspect, Rossi-Landi's investigation is inspired by Kantian transcendental logic, which, however, undergoes decisive reformulation. Common Speech insists precisely on what was left aside by Kant, that is to say, on the general methodic capacity of language. A return to Kant filtered through Cassirer (in particular "Structuralism in Modern Linguistics"), the "Kantian Peirce" and some British analysts.

The *a priori* exists in language. However, it is not to be studied in its "expressed linguistic" results, but rather in its "internal and hidden structure" (*SCPC*: 165). There is, here, an implicit reference to the "innere Sprachform," which Cassirer borrows from Humboldt and which is connected to the idea of language as *energheia* rather than as a product, that is, as *ergon*. We could speak of taking an *ante litteram* standpoint as regards Chomskyan "Cartesian linguistics" (in his 1966 essay of the same title, Chomsky too tries to make Humboldt and Kant enter into his own perspective). The Chomskyan conception of language remains tied to the classical alternatives between consciousness and experience, rationalism and empiricism, and in this sense it is extraneous to both Kantian criticism and the overcoming of the latter by abstract rationalism and abstract empiricism. Cassirer continues in this approach, which is that of linguistic structuralism. However, he affirms the need of not limiting oneself to the structure of language in its preconstituted form (as does, instead, a certain structuralism of the descriptive and taxonomical type), but rather of highlighting the formation process of such a structure. We could say that structural linguistics, as we find it in Cassirer's late writings, is a dynamical theory in Šaumjan's sense: that is, a theory which does not identify the synchrony of language with statics, but concentrates rather on the dynamic aspect of the synchrony of language. In this way, not only does such a theory differentiate itself from structural linguistics of the taxonomical type, but also from the theory of language as elaborated by Chomsky. Yet Chomsky sees no alternative as regards linguistic behaviorism, other than that of appealing to the rationalistic philosophy of the seventeenth century, and maintains that the only valid approach to the study

of linguistic behavior is that offered by mentalism and innatism (cf. *SCPC* 1980: 142; see also my 1971 essay, now in Ponzio 1974).

Peirce's semiotics is also connected to Kantian philosophy. In fact, Peirce proposes a "new list of categories" (see *Collected Papers* 1.545-59) as well as a reinterpretation of the *a priori* and the transcendental, in linguistic and semiotic terms. Peirce's semiotics takes an explicitly anti-Cartesian stance too, and refuses the rationalism-empiricism dichotomy as unfruitful and abstract (see the two 1868 essays, "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties of Man" and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," 5.215-263, & 5.264-317).

A similar stance was taken by Rossi-Landi when he maintained that Common Speech could be considered as containing something *a priori*, thereby assuming a methodic function. He evidences the inconsistency and arbitrariness in the study of meaning as the contraposition between idealism and empiricism, as well as that between logico-linguistic inquiry and historicism, to which Italian philosophy was still quite tied at the time he wrote *SCPC*. In fact, Rossi-Landi points out how modern historicism has given an essential contribution to the study of language according to regions and universes. By going back to Vico's historicism, Rossi-Landi underlines the importance of the criticism, operated by Vico, of the Cartesian model of knowledge which, insofar as it is based on evidence and deduction, cannot be applied to the historical or "human" sciences. Rossi-Landi also finds the refusal of an equal and unitary procedure in Comte. Despite the prejudices (still very strong at the time) inherited from Croce and Gentile against Comte's positivism, Rossi-Landi acknowledges the importance of Comte, who insisted on the impossibility of an absolute empiricism, and then demonstrated that scientific knowledge does not consist in the mere accumulation of facts, but rather in connecting such facts and identifying constant elements upon which to construct laws capable of predicting phenomena.

The pages of *SCPC* dedicated to Francis Herbert Bradley show how a neoidealistic conception inspired by Hegel influenced the logico-linguistic method in philosophy. This conception is very different from Croce's and Gentile's neoidealism, especially as it is deeply rooted in the tradition of scepticism characteristic of English philosophy (see pp. 87-95). Bradely's sceptical idealism made its influence felt on empiricism: both George E. Moore and Bertrand Russell derived something from Bradley's logic; and it is precisely here that Rossi-Landi identifies the historical matrix of the use of the adjective "logical" together with the terms "em-

piricism" and "positivism." *Logical* positivism and empiricism cannot be traced back to the traditional opposition between idealism and empiricism. According to Rossi-Landi, these notions are incomprehensible to both those empiricists who have remained tied to a "pre-logic" phase, and to those idealists who still take a metaphysical anti-empiricist stance (see 1980: 95-96).

Rossi-Landi also attaches particular importance to Russell's anti-Humean polemics on the logical and not psychological character of analysis and to the criticism of psychologism in logic by such authors as Bolzano, Bradley, Brentano, Frege, Meinong, Vailati, Husserl, and Dingler. He does this in view of the overcoming of traditional empiricism in the direction not only of logical empiricism but also of what he calls the *Methodics of Common Speech.*

All this may certainly be seen in connection to the teachings of Kant, who distinguished between anthropology and philosophy. But it may also be developed, as Rossi-Landi proposes, by proceeding with Kant beyond Kant, by identifying the *a priori* in language, and by attributing a methodic function to the notion of "Common Speech."

It is Rossi-Landi's conviction that the *a priori* can certainly be identified in language through the methodology of Common Speech. This is so because the *a priori* is connected to thought and considered as a *model* rather than as an event, as the *Bild* of the world rather than as a part of it; but even more, the *a priori* is identifiable in *speech*, intended here as the "concrete linguistic acts" through which language is actualized. Or again, it is identifiable in *common* speech (that is, that part of speech which concerns all humans), understood as a part of social practice, as a *system of human techniques* which are relatively repeatable and constant. Repeatability and constance concern fundamental categories, structures, signantia-and-signata of various descriptions because the human situation, biologically and socially, is what it is all over the earth, and this in spite of relevant local variations.

3. METALINGUISTICS IN COMMON SPEECH

The constant-and-repeatable is *not* located in the unitary language of a single nation or group of speakers, that is, in the *langue*. As a system of relatively constant human techniques, Common Speech is distinguished from natural languages insofar as it is not limited to national-cultural spheres, but is rather an international phenomenon. The search for what is constant in language does not move in the direction of philological studies which are the

theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic uni-fication and centralization, of the centripetal forces in language. I would say that Rossi-Landi's research moves in the very opposite direction: his investigations go beyond the limits of those linguistic studies which search for the constant factors of a single given language viewed as a system of linguistic forms. Using a term employed by Bakhtin in 1963, we could say that Rossi-Landi's research presents itself as a "trans-linguistics," that is, it exceeds the limits of linguistics, philology, and philosophy of language in which the common factors of speech are identified with the linguis-tic norms of a given natural language. From this point of view, the methodics of Common Speech is also a criticism of linguistic and philosophical theories that give expression to forces that may serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world: it is the same critical stance we find in Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-35, English trans. 1981: 269ff.).

Furthermore, the notion of Common Speech is explicitly fashioned as a means of freeing oneself from the pretension of explaining all linguistic phenomena with the two notions of system of *unitary language* and *individual* speaking.

Much like the rest of Bakhtin's writings, the already men-tioned essay "Discourse in the Novel," was completely ignored until very recent times. In that text Bakhtin writes:

> Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of the speaker to his unitary and singular "own" language, and have postulated as well a simple realization of this language in the monologic utterance of the indi-vidual. Such disciplines actually know only two poles in the life of language, between which are located all the linguistic and stylistic phenomena they know: on the one hand, the system of *unitary language*, and on the other the *individual* speaking in this language. (Bakhtin 1934-35, Eng. trans.: 269)

Unaware and independently of this position, Rossi-Landi had arrived at analogous critical considerations (see especially pp. 168-69 of *SCPC*), as regards linguists and philologists who re-propose the dichotomy between the system of language and individual speech (the reference in Italy was to G. Devoto, G. Nencioni, A. Pagliaro, and B. Terracini). Rossi-Landi points out that these lin-guists and philologists concentrate particularly on linguistic *results*, rather than studying the general conditions of language which make meaning and communication possible. The consequence was that they would either take an ideological stance that favored

the centripetal forces in language, thus focusing on the concept of unitary language, or they would evince the possibility of "linguistic liberty," thus concentrating on the other term of the dichotomy, that is, individual speaking. These linguists as well as such Italian philosophers as Enzo Paci (1957: 311-19), who did not disregard the work of the linguists, examined the permanent-and-constant in speech in terms of language as a historical institution, while attributing innovation and creativity to individual speaking. In such a perspective, therefore, we have, on the one hand, the permanent and constant, what in language is institutional, traditional or objective, and is called *inventum*; on the other we have the *inventio*, that is, the new and the creative, all that which in language is individual and subjective.

Every reader is certainly acquainted with the fact that in language—in any language whatsoever—there are elements which remain sufficiently constant and others which change continuously. Whatever is constant, even if relatively so, is what makes language possible, in Kant's sense, because with respect to the actual use of language it is transcendental. The mutable or flowing, instead, is conditioned in two ways: by diachronic variation, and by the shifting of contexts and universes of discourse. As Rossi-Landi says, the methodics of Common Speech "cuts across" the dichotomy linguistic institution or *inventum* and individual speaking or *inventio*. In fact, what in speech is constant cannot be allotted to either of the two poles of this dichotomy. Bakhtin too had refused this dichotomy, showing that it could not be made to correspond to that between permanence and innovation:

> A unitary language is not something given *(dan)* but is always in essence posited *(zadan)* [. . .]. Language [. . .] is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is a characteristic of all living language. Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems; within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound. (1934-35, Eng. trans. 1981: 270, 288)

On the other hand, innovation is limited even in individual speaking: repeated elements are continuously present because of the simple fact that, despite efforts of appropriation, words never become exclusive private property of the speaker:

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into
> the private property of the speaker's intentions. [. . .] Expropriating
> it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a
> difficult and complicated process. (Ibid. 294)

Bakhtin's considerations continue a line of thought begun in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* with its criticism of "individualistic subjectivism" (Vossler) and "abstract objectivism" (Saussure).

In 1961 the cultural climate in Italy was such that Croce's idealism had not yet been overcome and new linguistic studies were not free of the *impasse* resulting from the dichotomy institutional permanence/individual innovation (a situation which continued until very recent times). It is against such a background that Rossi-Landi elaborates an approach to the relation between the "constant" and the "mutable" (or "flowing") in language. He maintains that what is constant in language and constitutes the presupposition common to the different natural languages, to individual speech and ideal or artificial languages, is neither to be found in the *inventum* nor in the *inventio*:

> The *inventum* can change, and in any case, it too is always historical
> and thus always "flowing"; and the *inventio* cannot but consist at
> least partially in repeatable operations and uses. In short, to reach
> the "constant," we need the notion of language-in-general-as
> human work. (*SCPC* 1980: 169)

At the moment, my interest lies in highlighting the autonomous value of the notion of Common Speech as it was initially proposed in the first edition of *SCPC* in 1961. In view of the fact, however, that there is a line of continuity between the 1961 book and the 1968 book (as the last sentence, which anticipates ideas later developed in *LWT*, of the quotation above shows), I will briefly examine the 1968 book with the intention of pointing out, parenthetically, not *how* but *what* has developed directly out of the methodics of Common Speech. Of particular interest is the homonymous chapter of *LWT* (first published in 1965) in which criticism of the dichotomy collective language (*langue*)/individual speech (*parole*) is recalled. Rossi-Landi maintains here that the bipartition language/speech must be replaced by a tripartition between *collective* or *common speech* (now, collective linguistic work), *collective language* (necessarily founded on common speech), and *individual speech* (exercised upon and with collective language as it uses that assemblage of social techniques which go into making up Common Speech):

> By making *langage* a simple combination of *langue* and *parole*, we preclude the study of the collective and communitary techniques of language. (Rossi-Landi 1968, Eng. trans.: 39-40)

Our author returns to the notion of Common Speech in Chapter VI (originally written in 1966-67), paragraph 8, entitled "The Notion of Collective Speech and the Use of Models" (Eng. trans. pp. 148-52). He affirms that individual speech necessarily requires the dialectic co-presence of language *(langue) and* speech, both of which are collective (p. 152). It is a matter of admitting that not only language *(langue)*, but speech too is collective. Individual speech is secondary insofar as it is formed uniquely on the basis of collective speech. Common unitary language *(langue)* is also relative to Common Speech: as a system of linguistic norms, common unitary language is a mere abstraction when taken in isolation from Common Speech.

An utterance arises and flourishes in Common Speech, its authentic environment. Similarly to the *langue*, Common Speech is anonymous and collective; at the same time, however, similarly to individual speech, it is orientated toward specific communicative objectives and situated in relations between the speaker and listener. The relation between individual speech on the one hand, and common unitary language on the other, is mediated by Common Speech. Insofar as it is produced by Common Speech, common language is never wholly and definitively a language *(langue)*, that is, a neutral and unitary system, a univocal and autonomous code with respect to concrete communicative and interpretive relations. Likewise, insofar as it is secondary to Common Speech, individual speech in never totally and absolutely individual. The individual utterance uses models and techniques taken from common language and thus lies on the borderline between oneself and the other: the individual speaker does not get his words from a neutral and impersonal language, but rather uses materials, instruments and models which are already a part of collective speaking, his speech is always "half someone else's," as Bakhtin would say. Not only individual speaking, but the individuals themselves take shape within collective speech:

> There are no speakers without listeners, nor listeners without speakers, nor speakers and listeners without messages that go from one to the other, and so forth. The whole situation slowly takes shape together; and the individual sets himself or herself off and assumes a particular position within it only much later. (Rossi-Landi 1968, Eng. trans.: 149)

4. COMMON SPEECH AND THE PLURALITY OF UNIVERSES OF DISCOURSE

The notion of universe of discourse is central to *SCPC*. A universe of discourse is a linguistic and conceptual organization founded on certain fundamental terms expressing one or more guiding ideas. All that can be said in a universe of discourse is determined by such guiding ideas. Just as the notion of Common Speech does not exclude the differences between the various languages, it also does not exclude the differences between the universe of discourse or contexts in which words are used. On the contrary, it actually conditions the individual utterance to the extent that each time we speak, we do not merely speak in this or that natural language, but also in a particular context and universe of discourse, and we use a language which is familiar, or scientific, or theological, or professional, etc. According to Rossi-Landi (*SCPC* 1980: 43), a universe of discourse is an inevitable fact: the universe to which any discourse belongs must be identifiable. Analogously, any linguistic piece endowed with meaning, from the single word to the sentence to complete discourse, is specified in relation to the context to which it belongs.

Just as the plurality of natural languages presents different ways of satisfying basically similar needs of expression and communication, the pluridiscoursivity characteristic of a single national language is indicative of the specific orientations and specializations present in Common Speech: in passing from one universe of discourse to another, we move along the leading edge of human activity, from one operative cycle to another, and consequently we deal with different aspects of the phenomena to which operations refer (Ibid.: 83).

The fact that contexts, universes of discourse and special languages are manifold does not exclude that factors from Common Speech persist in the transition from one universe to another, and from one context to another. For example, when a mystic sees an angel sitting to the right of another, and when a mason lays a brick to the right of another, we are dealing with cases from two very different universes of discourse; but this does not at all change the meaning of "to the right of." Specific expectations as regards words and sentences, individual interpretive operations, and particular strategies deployed to get at meanings, which belong to the normal and ordinary use of language in the customary exchange between persons—all these things persist. Rossi-Landi puts this into evidence by analyzing our possible attitude toward different cases of scarce signification, non-sense, linguistic "strangeness,"

"non-familiarity" and so forth. And it is precisely through limited cases of "strangeness" and "debatability" that we are able to examine the common attitudes we assume in the interpretive work of all kinds of words and utterances.

On the other hand, the presence of something constant and common to the different universes of discourse does not exclude the contextual function of the latter, or deny the importance of the context as a totality with respect to its parts.

Without the constancy of Common Speech we would not be in a position to explain what it is that binds the innumerable individual "speeches" together (see Rossi-Landi 1968, Eng. trans.: 148); nor would we be able to explain how it is that the speaker, on the mere basis of a limited number of utterances experienced as a child, is able to produce an unlimited number of sentences, which is proof of a relative noncontextuality of speaking (see *SCPC* 1980: 150). Chomsky attempts an explanation of this phenomenon with his notions of "generative grammar" and "linguistic competence." However, as useful as they might be for a description of the noncontextual component in language, these notions are unable to explain certain aspects which must not be underestimated, that is, the pluridiscursivity and contextuality of linguistic use—and this is largely because Chomskyan theory is largely tied to innatistic presuppositions of a biological kind, and leaves aside considerations on the notion of *communicative competence:*

> Contexts *always* contribute to determining the sense of the linguistic material they enclose, to the point, at times, of reversing the effect; each proposition, however it may be uttered, is always to be interpreted against the right background. (*SCPC* 1980: 150)

The double affirmation that there is a Common Speech which no universe of discourse, individual speaking, natural or artificial language can leave aside, and, at the same time, that all that we say, we say in different languages, universes of discourse, and contexts, is what orients the methodics of Common Speech toward the respect for the plurilinguistic and pluridiscursive character of speech. In this way it keeps at a safe distance from the monologic temptations that characterize investigations in search of what is common in language, as in Chomsky's theory of language:

> To a certain extent, languages, universes and types of discourse are independent from each other, even as regards their very function concerning the linguistic material they are composed of. (Ibid.)

By placing Common Speech as the mediating term between the unitary language *(langue)* and individual speaking *(parole)*, in *SCPC* Rossi-Landi recognizes both the plurality as well as the autonomy of sectorial, special or technical languages, of the different universes, fields, strata and types of discourse, and of contexts (see pp. 44-46). It is precisely in this, I believe, that we must recognize the unmistakably polylogic character of the methodics of Common Speech as it is proposed by the author.

5. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE METHODICS OF COMMON SPEECH

Now let us look at how the methodics of Common Speech influences our approach to certain fundamental problems concerning language. I will only examine what seem to me to be the most important contributions that such a methodics offers. The first is the metalanguage employed in the study of language. The second concerns the problem of the division of language into the object, on the one hand, of logical investigation, and on the other, of empirical anaylsis. To some extent, this corresponds to the traditional division of language into *syncategorematical* and *categorematical* signs. A third important contribution of the methodics of Common Speech concerns semantics. First of all, there is the problem of the meaning of "meaning"; furthermore, in connection with this issue, we need to re-examine the distinction between *intension* and *extension*; and finally, we have the question of the distinction between "initial meanings" and "additional meanings." Other noteworthy consequences of the methodics of Common Speech concern, in particular, 1) the relations of interdependence between semantics, syntax and pragmatics (see p. 171); 2) the problem of communication between different languages (interlinguistic translation) and different universes of discourse (endolinguistic translation); and 3) the problem of the definition of the very communication process as regards both a) identification of the factors in play in semiosis, and b) opposition between the linguistic and nonlinguistic (see pp. 154-58). In *SCPC* Rossi-Landi anticipates the approach to these problems in his subsequent writings.

Concerning the language employed in the actual study of language, the methodics of Common Speech certainly does not exclude use of some sort of "technical" language. However, this technical language must always be related to common speech, which is its very foundation. As Vailati had already suggested, in view of the methodics of Common Speech, technical languages (all of them, especially those developed in relation to such methodics), must move away from common speech as little as possible. Concerning this last aspect we have Rossi-Landi's criticism of the

"technicalism" which characterizes the language of much tradi-
tional philosophizing. He interprets such "technicalism" as the
expression of total detachment from, or clamorous contempt for,
the linguistic heritage that speakers have in common, that is, for
the "indefinite wealth of common speech." Rossi-Landi identifies
an eloquent example of arbitrary separation from common speech
in Benedetto Croce's introduction to his *Estetica come scienza dell'es-
pressione e linguistica generale:*

> Knowledge has two forms: it is either *intuitive* knowledge or *logical*
> knowledge; knowledge for the *fantasy* or knowledge for the *intellect;*
> knowledge of the *individual* or knowledge of the *universal;* of *single*
> *things* or of their relations; in other words, it is either a producer of
> *images* or a producer of *concepts.* (see *SCPC* 1980: 172)

"Technical language is not necessarily a formal language":
Rossi-Landi makes this extremely important specification against
certain excesses of formalism in the construction of ideal metalan-
guages often used to avoid the indeterminacy and imprecision of
common language. In relation to this point, the notions, models
and abstractions elaborated by Rossi-Landi distinguish themselves
from those offered, for example, by Šaumjan's dynamical theory
(up to now we have simply looked at the analogies between the
theories of the two scholars). Šaumjan persists in the identification
of technical and formal language, or at least he considers formaliza-
tion as the highest aspiration of a technical language. On the
contrary, Rossi-Landi employs a language that in adhering as
much as possible to the wealth of Common Speech, has nothing to
do with fashionable formalizations, especially when they prove to
be useless, misleading and without justification in Common
Speech. In fact, he often takes terms and expressions from for-
malized contexts in order to deformalize and use them in a broader
sense. This is the case, for example, of the term "universe of
discourse" as it appears in *SCPC.*

In line with the methodics of Common Speech is also the
specification—made by Rossi-Landi from the very beginning—
or reduction of the multiplicity of meanings that words have in
their ordinary use. In the very attempt to fulfill the different and
multiple needs of expression and communication, such im-
poverishment would be in strong contrast with the orientation
toward plurivocity proper to common speech (see *SCPC* 1980: 42).
We need to be specific about words and expressions but without
forcefully making them univocal. On the contrary, we need to
examine the very similarities and differences in the multiple mean-

ings of words. Such an attitude enables us to appreciate the wealth of Common Speech rather than impoverish it.

Another important aspect of Rossi-Landi's 1961 study is the demonstration of the relative lack of relevance of the distinction between categorematical and syncategorematical terms, a distinction often considerd to be objective and unquestionable. Up until very recent times (see Eco 1975: 88) there was always someone ready to resort to such a distinction as proof of the nonreferential character of semantics. If, however, we turn our attention to the techniques, models and objectives which remain constant in language and which go to form common speech, the distinction between syncategorematic and categorematic terms loses value— and this is so because constant and repetitive elements are present in both these terms. From this point of view, the methodics of Common Speech cuts across the subdivision between syncategorematics (involving such terms as "and," "or," "not," etc.) and categorematics ("idea," "book," "table," etc.), and evidences the impossibility of making such a subdivision coincide with that between the constant part of language—object of logical analysis, and its flowing aspect—object of empirical analysis: in fact, any term whatsoever has its own logic concerning the operations that may be performed with it. Two radically different types of terms do not exist in language; the differerence, rather, lies in the various uses we make of the same term: such a state of affairs enables us to identify a relatively constant nucleus in the different uses of words. This is what constitutes Common Speech as distinct from the flowing part of language which is itself determined by the variation of contexts (see pp. 47-49, 124).

Another distinction which is "cut across" in *SCPC* is that between intension and extension. The intension of a single term or other broader discourse unit, or more precisely, what belongs conceptually to each of these linguistic units, is determined by what that term or any other broader part of discourse can possibly stand for. In fact, the operations we perform in using any linguistic unit and which specify the meaning of a sign or sign complex, are operations which enable us to refer to certain things, thanks to the concepts which belong to such linguistic units and to the way in which they go to form such units. Vice versa, concepts belong to given linguistic units and form them in a certain way as a function of the different ways of referring to certain things. The distinction between intension and extension also proves to be of little relevance—even if this is not true of restricted and formalized languages—once it is traced back to the operations we perform

when we speak and to the rules that govern such operations. By means of these operations and rules, therefore, the methodics of Common Speech will distinguish between what is flowing and what is relatively constant in language (*SCPC* 1980: 46-47). In the light of such methodics, the distinction between intensional and extensional semantics, such as it is proposed by the semiotics of codes and messages, is untenable (see Eco: 88-100).

6. INITIAL MEANINGS AND ADDITIONAL MEANINGS

The conception of meaning in *SCPC* takes up Wittgenstein's approach to meaning as use and shows traces of a semantics inspired by analytical philosophy. However, the influence of Morris's semiotics is also strong. In his monograph on this author (1953), Rossi-Landi had already stressed the importance of placing meaning and signification within the total context of the process of semiosis. The properties of being a sign vehicle, an interpretant and a referent (distinguished by Morris in 1938 into *designatum* and *denotatum*) are relational properties relative to any process of semiosis:

> "Meaning" is a semiotical term and not a term in the thing-language; to say that there are meanings in nature is not to affirm that there is a class of entities on a par with trees, rocks, organisms and colors, but that such objects and properties function within processes of semiosis. (Morris 1938, now in 1971: 20)

This leads Rossi-Landi to state that to say "sign," or "semiosis," or "meaning," is *almost* to say the same thing: the difference is given by the fact that using one term instead of another means stressing different aspects of the situation (1975: 202). In *SCPC* Rossi-Landi identifies a strong analogy with the semantic conception of Ryle as expressed in 1957 in his "The Theory of Meaning." According to this philosopher, meanings are not things, and knowing the meaning of a term, or of other linguistic units, means knowing how to *use* them appropriately.

In Chapters VII and VIII of *SCPC*, Rossi-Landi proposes a distinction between *initial meanings* and *additional meanings* on the basis of his methodics of Common Speech. This distinction is part of a comprehensive conception in which meanings are not detached from the real processes of communication and interpretation:

> Meanings are the way we use terms and other linguistic units, the operations we perform when we use them, and so forth: in any case, pieces of human behavior. (*SCPC* 1980: 179)

"Initial meanings" are meanings given in a direct, immediate, explicit, literal, or conscious manner. Meanings belonging to these categories are subject to, and more often than not depend upon, other meanings which, on the contrary, are indirect, implicit, metaphorical, latent, or unconscious. Upon all that we openly say is exerted the manifold influence of what we do not say. "Additional meanings" are those meanings which are not immediately present but which in the actual process of interpretation are subordinate to initial meanings—they come later, as it were. Apparently simple utterances may potentially refer to infinitely complex realms of signification such that the interpreter must draw upon himself or herself in order to completely understand the original utterance. Thus utterances prove to be pluristratified and this pluristratification is not a feature of their internal structure but rather concerns their relation to the outside: to other linguistic units, to contexts and to what remains of the universes of discourse to which the original unit belongs. I do not believe it possible to reconcile such a distinction to that elaborated by Chomsky between surface structure and deep structure. The latter considers language separately from its communicative function, and from its social, intersubjective and dialogic dimension. On the other hand, Rossi-Landi's "initial meanings" do in fact involve experiences, practices, values, knowledge of a particular environment, and thus speakers ranging from the restricted family group to the broader environment of a whole culture. "Additional meanings" are determined by the intersubjective and dialogic character of the practice of signifying, which presupposes co-knowledge, orientation toward the viewpoint of others, and toward various sectors of cultural life. The implicit is relative to the receiver of the message and increases or diminishes according to the experiences, knowlege, values, and competences that the sender and receiver share. Initial and additional meanings are given in the concrete process of semiosis and in the relation between signs and interpretants, between expressive needs and capacities and interpretive needs and capacities. By evidencing the multiple and complex stratification underlying initial meanings which in themselves are simple, Rossi-Landi emphasizes the complexity of the operations implicit in common speech:

> The quantity of mental work which, in using language, we all exercise and presuppose continually, is immense, even in the case of the most simple sentences in common speech: if on the one hand these constitute the *small change* of the daily exchange between men, on the other they always represent complex situations and

refer to the enormous *social patrimony* accumulated by mankind during the course of its biological and historical evolution and transmitted from one generation to the next through the learning of language; subsequently these sentences refer to the habitual notions possessed by all men living in a civil community. (*SCPC* 1980: 180-81)

The distinction between "initial meanings" and "additional meanings" raises questions concerning the recurrent distinction between meanings fixed by use, tradition, the common code, on the one hand, and mutable meanings connected to a specific communication and interpretation context, on the other. It cannot be made to correspond to the distinction between meanings of the *langue* and those of the *parole:* meanings of the *parole* modify, renew or in any case add something extra to what is fixed in the linguistic institution by adapting the latter to the context. Instead, what corresponds to the distinction between *langue* and *parole* is that worked out by Vološinov (Bakhtin) in 1929 (see Ponzio 1980 and 1981), between "meaning" and "theme," and that conceived by Peirce between "immediate interpretant" and "dynamical interpretant": the former is fixed by use and tradition, while the latter is the actual effect that a sign in fact determines in a given situation of semiosis. To use a recurrent expression in *SCPC*, I think we could maintain that the distinction between initial meanings and additional meanings "cuts across" that between meanings fixed by use and meanings dependent upon the context. In fact, we are able to identify something implicit, mediated and latent, not only in meanings dependent upon context, but also in those meanings which are far more autonomous as regards the circumstances of a given communicative situation. The very meanings we share and which are fixed by tradition are more dependent than others upon the implicit, indirect, mediated, hidden, absent, remote, secondary, or unconscious in language. In any case, initial meanings and additional meanings are present in the *langue* and in the *parole,* in the "meaning" and in the "theme" (Vološinov), in the "immediate interpretant" and in the "dynamical interpretant" (Peirce).

The correspondence is perhaps greater between Rossi-Landi's "additional meaning" and the notion of "implication" as examined by Vološinov-Bakhtin in a 1926 essay entitled "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry." In this essay the author shows how the meaning of a real-life utterance does not exhaust itself in what is said explicitly and directly—the uttered word is impregnated with the implied and the unsaid:

> A real-life utterance, as an intelligible whole, is composed of two
> parts: 1) the verbally realized (or actualized); 2) what is implied. So
> we may compare a real-life utterance with an "enthymeme." (Vol-
> ošinov 1926, Eng. trans. 1983: 12)

Events, experiences, values, behavior programs, knowledge,
stereotypes, etc. are all implied and are by no means abstractly
individual and private. From the term "implied" (*pad-
razumevaemoe*, lit. "under-mind-ed")—says Vološinov—over
subjective-psychological connotations must be eliminated. As re-
gards the implied part of the utterance in the sense of the above
text, the individually subjective recedes into the background as
against the socially objective. What is implied in the utterance is
the "socially determined and necessary act":

> What I know, see, desire and love cannot be implied. Only what *all
> of us* who are speakers know, see, love and acknowledge, in which
> *we* are all at one, can be the implied part of an utterance. [. . .]
> Thus each real-life utterance is an objectively social enthymeme.
> (Ibid.)

The implied part of an utterance, says Vološinov (1929), is the
"real-life context" ("a form of life" as the Wittgenstein of the
Philosophische Untersuchungen says, even if this expression is in-
tended in a more limited sense: see Rossi-Landi 1968):

> This unified purview upon which the utterance depends can
> broaden both in space and time. *What is implied may be family,
> kinsmen, nation, class, days, years and whole epochs.* The implied ele-
> ments of an utterance become more and more *constant* in propor-
> tion to the broadening of this shared purview and the social group
> to which it corresponds. (Vološinov 1926: 12-13)

As much as what is implied may be narrow, it must at least coin-
cide with the actual purview of the two people. In this case, even
the most ephemeral alteration inside this purview can be implied.
On the other hand, the broader and more complex what is im-
plied is, the more it is based on the stable and constant elements
of social life, on essential and fundamental behavior and evalua-
tions:

> Particularly important significance is attached to implied evalua-
> tions. The point is that all the fundamental social evaluations
> which develop directly from the specific conditions of the economic
> life of a given group are not usually uttered. They have become the
> flesh and blood of all members of that group, they organize actions

and behavior, they have, as it were, fused with the objects and phenomena to which they correspond, and for this reason they do not need special verbal formulations. (Ibid.: 13)

7. CRITICISM OF THE POSTAL PACKAGE MODEL

As Rossi-Landi himself says, the initial meaning, especially when it is literal and direct, "floats" upon one or more strata of meaningful materials (see *SCPC* 1980: 201ff.). The qualification "especially" indicates the fact that in many cases the initial meaning is not itself literal and direct: for instance, it can be metaphorical as in "that man is a fox." Thus the utterance does not communicate initial meaning alone, but also additional meanings. From the very moment of its formulation—that is, considered from the point of view of he or she who emits it—the utterance is conditioned by the meaningful material of the situation it is used in. This does not mean that the sender is aware of all the meaningful material which is being communicated, nor that interpretation must consciously refer to all the additional meanings.

Rossi-Landi examines the relation "conscious"/"unconscious" (see pp. 207-10) with reference to the communication process and in particular to the distinction between initial and additional meanings. He shows how it is not possible to speak of consciousness and unconsciousness in an absolute sense and on the basis of the stratification of the message into initial and additional meanings. In *SCPC* he suggests an approach to the study of communication which is different from the perspective in which it was subsequently framed in the debate between the "semiotics of communication" and the "semiotics of signification." In fact, contrast between the former and the latter arises from the mistaken assumption that what is voluntary, intensional or conscious can be clearly separated from what is not, and that communication may be examined by taking as the starting point situations of consciousness or unconsciousness already given outside the actual communication process: in reality, consciousness and unconsciousness are relative conditions obtained within expressive, communicative and interpretive (interpretive for the sender also) processes.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the fact is that semiotics (of communication as much as of signification) as semiotics of the code and message—derived from Saussure's *Cours* and information theory—remains tied to the model of communication in which the message is posited as an object traveling from one point to another. Today this model proves to be more and more

inadequate thanks also to the recovery of Peirce's semiotics of interpretation and Bakhtin's philosophy of languge. Such a model was already questioned in *SCPC*. According to Rossi-Landi, communication cannot be understood in terms of something which passes from point A to point B as though we were dealing with a postal package sent from one post office to another:

> What in communication may correspond to the postal package is only its vehicle, that is, words insofar as they are physical objects which are pronounced or written and heard or seen [. . .]. But as concerns the interpretive process and the quantity and quality of the information transmitted, the model of an object which changes place is totally inadequate [. . .]. It would be better, perhaps, to speak of an "informative river": we immediately see, that is, capture the surface, and we know that underneath is all the volume of the moving waters. Enriching the image, we could speak of a boat on the river. The first corresponds to "initial meaning," denominated because it is the more visible and conspicuous, that is, direct and immediate, the second, to all the rest. What is communicated is not only the boat, but also the river, and we have already spoken above of the "floating" of initial meaning upon the thick of meaningful material. (*SCPC* 1980: 207-08)

In relation to the entire informative flux, we are only able to make relative distinctions between conscious and unconscious parts. What flows on the surface is the immediately conscious, what moves in depth is not immediately conscious. We could speak of a succession in degrees of consciousness. In recovering the model of mental work as *polyphony* from Sivio Ceccato (the simultaneous flowing of various superimposed melodic lines), Rossi-Landi also purports that the initial meaning may be construed as the "main melodic line" and additional meanings as all the others. Thus he develops a comparison between understanding music and understanding verbal communication. The notion of "polyphony" brings to mind further comparisons with Bakhtin. In dealing with these models, Rossi-Landi never does in fact convey a sense of finality: models are instrumental to the ungarbling of such a complex situation. An attempt at a solution, for instance (see pp. 222-24), is that a sentence does not simply convey only its own meaning but also instructions for its use.

In *SCPC*, as we said before, there is an affirmation that was already present in Rossi-Landi (1953), and to which the author later returns, especially in his criticism of certain distorted interpretations of Morris's semiotics. It concerns the inseparability of the three dimensions of the sign, that is, the syntactic, the

semantic and the pragmatic. This view of things is particularly rich in theoretical implications: the sign does not exist if not *with other signs*; the sign does not exist if not *for an interpreter*; the sign does not exist if not with a *signification* or *designation*, and eventually a *denotation*. From this point of view, Rossi-Landi's theory of Common Speech provides an important point of reference for Chomskyan linguistic theory. In fact, even if Chomsky, in contrast to what he had previously affirmed (see *Syntactic Structures*), recognizes the necessity of connecting the syntax to the semantics of verbal language, and of examining them together with the phonological aspect, he continues to deliberately leave aside the pragmatic dimension. In contrast to such an approach, Rossi-Landi maintains that pragmatics is at the basis of syntactics and semantics, just as in their turn syntactics and semantics are at the basis of pragmatics (see *SCPC* 1980: 171). Concerning this point, most relevant is Rossi-Landi's specification that signification and denotation belong to the dimension of semantics, whereas meaning, intended as having sense or signifying something, "is present in all three dimensions."

8. THE RIVER UNDER THE BOAT

Today, Rossi-Landi's 1961 study on the conditions that make communication possible between human beings is still topical. It is rich in indications and orientations that open it to confrontation and dialogue with other currently important theories in semiotics and the philosophy of language. But the very reasons that make for its topicality are what caused this research to be considered incomprehensible at the time of its publication, and this contributed to its being isolated: in his introduction to the 1980 edition, the author himself speaks of his research in terms of a "reckless intellectual expedition into an inexistent territory."

On examining *SCPC*, I have chosen to concentrate especially on the contents, leaving aside aspects that are by no means less significant and topical than those examined. For example, in a chapter dedicated to communication between different languages, there are analyses of problems concerning translation as well as contributions to "contrastive linguistics." Nor have I mentioned Rossi-Landi's style: his shunning of systematic rigidity and argumentative hastiness, his deliberately anti-academic tone, his ingenious use of amusing exemplifications, his close adherence to the semantic, argumentative and dialogic wealth of everyday speech.

The very reading possible today of this 1961 book is the best indication of the fact that only gradually do "additional meanings" make themselves felt. For certain works which prove to be particularly rich and stratified, as in the case in question, it is necessary to find ourselves outside the context in which they were written (Bakhtin speaks of *exotopia*) so as to fully understand and appreciate their innovative vigor. A look from a distance is necessary if we want to frame together the boat and the river which flows under it. Today, we can view the whole of Rossi-Landi's research itinerary from the early fifties to recent years. Thus, should we remain at the level of the immediately and directly conscious, we have at least the advantage, for example, of seeing a connection between the *"methodics* of Common Speech," "philosophical *methodics"* and the science of signs.