

Language and memory as a way of power and resistance / *Linguagem e memória como forma de poder e resistência*

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ABSTRACT

We examine different discourse situations in which we identify marks of historical transformations of our society: in the incongruity between intonation and meaning, in the absence of link and sequence in the dialogue and in the indifferenciation between enunciative positions. Such transformations point to a new form of power designated as totalitarian non-authoritarian, which operates through the erasure of the singularity of the subject and the promotion of an indifferent memory. The approach built for the examination and interpretation of those situations is based on dialogic discourse analysis and on the enunciative theory, supplemented by concepts of contemporary philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Intonation; Meaning; Utterance; Memory; Response

RESUMO

São examinadas diferentes situações de discurso onde se identificam marcas de transformações históricas da nossa sociedade: na incongruência entre entonação e sentido, na ausência de elo e de sequência na interlocução e na indiferenciação entre posições enunciativas. Tais transformações apontam para uma nova forma de poder designada como totalitária não-autoritária que opera através do apagamento da singularidade do sujeito e da promoção de uma memória indiferente. A abordagem construída para o exame e a interpretação das referidas situações baseia-se na análise dialógica do discurso e na teoria enunciativa, completadas por conceitos da filosofia contemporânea.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Entonação; Sentido; Enunciado; Memória; Resposta

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Introduction

The idea of observing language in order to read in it the making of History comes from two fields of reflection. On the one hand, from the works of Bakhtin and the Circle. In Medvedev, for instance, we can read:

Every concrete utterance is a social act. [...] Its individual reality is already not that of a physical body, but the reality of a historical phenomenon. [...] The very presence of the utterance is historically and socially significant. This presence passes from natural reality to the category of historical reality. The utterance is not a physical body and not a physical process, but a historical event, albeit an infinitesimal one (BAKHTIN/MEDVEDEV, 1985, p.120).

And in Vološinov:

It stands to reason, then, that the word is the most sensitive index of social changes, and what is more, of changes still in the process of growth, still without definitive shape and not as yet accommodated into already regularized and fully defined ideological systems (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.19).

A few lines ahead, we can also read that “the word has the capacity to register all the transitory, delicate, momentary phases of social change” (1986, p.19).

On the other hand, the work of Victor Klemperer (2009) opens an equally important perspective for the studies of language. As a Philologist and Literature Historian, he explains that everyday language, with its subtle transformations and dissemination power, worked for Nazism in a much more efficient way than did Hitler’s speeches and even massive propaganda. According to his analysis, what happens with the word is that everyone starts to use it without realizing. By means of certain terms and expressions, he demonstrates that, although bearing prejudice against the jews, they started to be imperceptibly adopted by the jews themselves.

In France, the publishing of Klemperer’s book stimulated the appearance of countless works about the relationship between transformations in the realm of language and our socio-historical context. According to Bakhtin and the Circle’s theory of language, History, society and its values are necessarily part of the phenomenon of

language. It is impossible to study the latter without taking the former into consideration.

My work over the last few years has been that of observing everyday discourse practices or situations in an attempt to identify points of articulation between language and the values of contemporary or post-modern culture. The results indicate social devices that menace or underestimate that which we could name discursive intelligence, thus generating some sort of *bêtise* (nonsense or boloney) characteristic of post-modernity (AMORIM, 2012).

As demonstrated by Stiegler (2012), *bêtise* is a philosophical object already approached by authors such as Adorno, Derrida and Deleuze. These authors analyze the issue in the field of reason or in that of rationality and seek to identify in them the way the dialectics *bêtise-raison* produces itself. And there we are in the context of a theoretical and conceptual piece of knowledge which we name demonstrative knowledge.

The research we present here is an attempt to think of *bêtise* in the field of narrative knowledge that involves knowing how to tell stories, no matter whether they are long or short, as well as the simple reporting of an everyday experience or situation. Well, narrative knowledge can be taken for human speaking activity itself, for – when we speak – we are always in the process of reporting or interpreting something that has been reported to us. Therefore, whenever we can identify a situation that underestimates our discursive intelligence, we can come to the conclusion that our narrative knowledge is under threat.

1 Falsified intonation and non-event

I sought to observe the discourse-narrative overlap in a situation that is perhaps, in our society, the most commonplace of all: the television. Much has already been said about the low quality level of television contents, but one statement, which has now become widely known, is the best one when it comes to summarizing the problem. Patrick Le Lay, president of TF1 Channel (an open channel which has the largest audience in France, equivalent to the Brazilian Globo Network), declared the following in a meeting with other company directors: “our programs are meant to make [the

human brain available], that is, to amuse it, to relax it in order to prepare it from one [ad] to another. That which we sell to Coke is the available time of the human brain. There is nothing harder to get than that availability”¹ (Les associés d'EIM, 2004, p.92, translated by the author into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English; a book from and for the French employers - MEDEF²).

According to Bernard Stiegler, television brings up the problem of the formation of attention, which is a central aspect in the process of broadcasting. The formation of attention is that which determines to what extent the drive in children or the youth can be turned into desire and invest cultural objects. The work of turning the drive into desire requires a certain type of educational relationship which is at a loss when this relationship becomes industrialized. The *relationship industries* of our contemporary world, including television, in Stiegler’s words, aim precisely at the capturing of attention so as to direct it to the additive functioning of the consumption society. We would then be watching the process of desinvestment of cultural objects in order to be set to the drive mode of relationship with the object: once it is consumed, it is then discarded so that another one can be bought (2001). Stiegler therefore depicts television as the *psychotechnology of nonsense (or boloney)*.

Well, if we think, as Stiegler does, that television is a relational piece of technology, we will need to question its discourse in order to complete the analysis of the mode of relation that it brings onstage. Following Bakhtinian indications, I decided to analyse the aspect of intonation in television discourse. Intonation is one of the components of meaning and is the discourse mark of a fundamental dimension of the word: the ethical dimension. Designated also by the terms *tone* or *accent*, in the Bakhtinian thinking it represents the index of values that directs dialog.

Similarly, the living word, the full word, does not know an object as something totally given: the mere fact that I have begun speaking about it means that I have already assumed a certain attitude toward it – not an indifferent attitude, but an interested-effective attitude. And that is why the word does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity, but also expresses by its intonation (an actually pronounced word cannot avoid being intonated, for intonation follows

¹ Check <<http://totosurlelavabo.free.fr/TF1-Coca-cola.htm>> and <<http://www.acrimed.org/article1688.html>>, which have been accessed on 28/09/2012.

² MEDEF International is a worldwide network serving French companies in emerging and developing markets.

from the very fact of its being pronounced) my valuative attitude toward the object, toward what is desirable and undesirable in it [...] (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.32).

In linguistics, the study of intonation is part of prosody and the non-verbal elements of speaking: pitch, intensity, rhythm, prolonged vowels, etc. Prosody depends partly on the formal system of each language in so far as it is part of typical intonation standards. But it is in the condition of valuative mark in singular and concrete utterances that it is of interest for the Circle's Philosophy of Language. In Medvedev, we can read: "As distinct from the more stable syntactic intonation, expressive intonation, which colors every word of the utterance, reflects its historical uniqueness" (1985, p.122).

The question of intonation can be observed in a very frequently viewed TV program from the open French network: the 8:00 PM news. It was possible to identify in it an intonation standard in the speech of the presenters, which repeats itself each day, and on different channels. It occurs at a very precise moment, when there are shifts from the studio to the outdoor news. As soon as the presenter announces the transition and the name of the reporter, the speed goes down, with a descending pitch and a pause. This is accompanied by half a smile and a slight blink of the eyes. In some cases, the total absence of coherence between the intonation and the contents of the piece of news brings up the question: why the smile? It is for instance perfectly possible to see and hear this intonation standard following the announcement of horrifying scenes of massacre in Syria.

The identical and invariable intonation in relation to the contents constitutes what I call falsified intonation: it ceases to be a hint at the comprehension of the broadcast information in order to become a component of the program format which seems to tell us: "even if we are showing you that a catastrophe has just occurred, do not worry and simply stay with us!". As monotone as a litany, it reveals the intention of producing a calming effect: "come what may, we are here with you every day". It is a sort of non-event discourse which reduces uniqueness to the sameness of the already known, whose central message is: "do not turn it off and do not change channels" (I imagine it is possible to do the same exercise of analysis with Globo's presenters: Willian Bonner and Patrícia Poeta).

We know that *the event* is a key notion in the bakhtinian thinking. It is the *locus* of meaning making in so far as it is the encounter between subjects. Television broadcasting places itself in the middle of this encounter by means of the attention capturing device described by Stiegler. Once more, it is appropriate to cite Medvedev: “Social evaluation unites the minute of the epoch and the news of the day with the aim of history” (1985, p.121).

2 The system without the subject

Other equally commonplace discourse situations naturalized themselves precisely because they have become commonplace. I employ here the verb *to naturalize* as a reference to an old marxist concept which is perhaps still necessary: the concept of ideology, which explains the power mechanism by means of which that which is not natural naturalizes itself, even though it is in fact a social product. Something that imposes, generalizes and, at the same time, hides itself. The discourse situations we analyze here rupture subtly, but systematically, with the elementary conditions of dialogue. In doing so, they prevent the subject from exerting his or her discursive and narrative intelligence, thus constituting a new form of power. They can be gathered in a category that I have called “the system without the subject”.

First kind of example: talking to machines.

Nothing is more common nowadays than to be in need of a service that only offers the possibility of talking to machines: the telephone with automatic messages which I can only reply to by dialing 1 or 2; web sites, etc. The automation of company services, by means of the internet or automatic telephone messages, is not just a way of making more money by cutting down on the number of employees. It is also useful to deprive the user or the client of an intersubjective relationship. The employee-client contact, in as much as it is a human contact, would give rise to a singularizing relation, that is, one between singular subjects that resingularize themselves in each dialogue. The understanding of the situation would then be liable to be remade by new interpretations, generated in the dynamics of verbal exchange. Hence the unpredictable character of all human interaction, something the present form of management seems not to be able to stand.

A real example gives away the *bêtise* situation that this kind of “dialogue” can bring about. It occurred a few days ago when I resorted to the 102 service, to get directory assistance:

Machine: You called directory assistance. Please say the name of the city you wish to contact.

Myself: Campinas.

Machine: I got it. You said Campina Grande, right?

Myself: No.

Machine: I got it. Repeat the name of the city you wish to contact.

Myself: Campinas.

Machine: I got it. You said Campina Grande, right?

At this point, I decided to say “Yes” in order to check out what would happen:

Machine: I got it. Now say the name of the person you wish to locate.

Myself: Mariana Fantini.

Machine: I got it. You said Municipal Guard, right?

Myself: No.

Machine: I got it. Please repeat the name of the person you wish to locate.

Myself: Mariana Fantini.

Machine: I got it. You said Municipal Guard, right?

Myself: ...?!

Second kind of example: the wireless telephone.

This occurs in telephone services, for instance, when we have a problem with the internet connection or with the credit card insurance policy. As in the majority of cases, the problem is not solved with the first call and countless other calls are necessary. It is then possible to observe the following phenomenon: in each call, we never talk to the same employees. They say their names and are very polite: “Good afternoon, Samantha here. How can I help you?”. But, if you wish to talk to the first person who served you, it will not be possible. On the telephone, it seems that the tension that this situation causes us to feel is more intense because we can only count on the “wire of the conversation” to fall back on and to orientate ourselves. And it is precisely such “wire of the conversation” that does not come to be woven. They are *wireless* conversations. Then you complain to them about having to repeat and restart the process, to which they reply that you have nothing to worry about, for your problem is registered in the “system”. The memory of the system thus replaces that of the employee. And, indeed,

several utterances serve as a proof that the greatest subject is now the system (the great “Other”). On the internet we very often bump into the message: “an error in the system did not allow to process your request”. Or it is even the employee who tells us: “I am sorry. The system is out”.

A set of information is what remains in the system, not a relationship. The memory of a relationship is not translatable into the memory of the system. A relationship is that which creates engagement and answerability. If the subject tells me: “I promise you, Madam, that...”, a classic performative from Austin’s studies, next time we meet, he is going to feel embarrassed before telling me that he did not keep his promise. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that, for the employees themselves, constant change and the absence of continuity, of link, of relationship and, therefore, of dialogue, is also a source of suffering and anguish. Even more than for the customers because – once the problem is over – the client is free from that company, but the employee continues to work there, under those circumstances. One of the French companies that most frequently practice constant employee change is France Telecom, a telecommunications giant. It launched a management program that was just called *Time to move*, in which the employees were constantly transferred. Along the program, between 2008 and 2009, there were 35 suicides in the company and the so-called professional suicide became frequent in the French society.

The absence of a link, of a sequence and of an intersubjective memory seems to correspond to the cybernetic model according to which human relationships can be conceived as information systems that auto-regulate themselves without the subject’s direction or control. But a dialogue is not an exchange of information and a human subject does not transmit messages, he talks. Information is repeatable in its identity, while speech has meaning: it is something unique and singular. According to the principle of dialogism, in discourse, A is never identical to A. Maybe that’s why being able to speak to the *other*, to talk, has become in these situations, even if they are commonplace, something almost impossible or prohibited because it eludes any self-regulation system. If we take as true that it is by talking that the subject emerges, we can actually think of that system as a system without a subject. A system which has memory or that is memory. But what kind of memory is it?

3 The indifferent memory

Speaking of memory nowadays instantly brings informatics into play, along with its extraordinary speed and capacity of storing data. In relation to writing, which is the first great revolution in human memory, informatics takes a leap forward. Informatics now plays a central role in the advancement of science because of what it allows in terms of simulations due to its extraordinary power to perform calculations of virtual situations.

From the social and political standpoint, as well as printed writing enabled many people to have access to a multitude of texts, thereby fostering critical thinking, the internet allows citizens to have access to information that the mainstream media does not provide. Still from the political point of view, the expression of individual subjects who no longer depend on institutions or parties to say what they think is a priceless achievement. If we also consider the speed and extent to which this is all spread, we understand that informatics is actually the second major revolution in the field of communication and expression techniques. All of this is due to its immeasurable capacity and speed of storing data and, therefore, of constituting a memory.

Socrates' reflection about the relationship between writing and memory, in Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, brings up an element that remains valid for informatics because, in both cases, an externalization of memory and the disjunction of the subject's body are at work. Socrates distinguishes *hypomnese* from *anamnese*: the first one refers to memory auxiliaries that, like writing, are a technique that allows you to record something on a given external support, whereas the second one refers to the work of remembering what was recorded. It is important to point out that this distinction takes place between technique and work. Technique serves precisely to spare us an immense amount of work: it is sufficient here to think of the practicality and the comfort that informatics and the internet provide us. But we cannot be spared every piece of work. It is then possible to associate the idea of memory work with the answerable act of cultural transmission between subjects, which results in something that, to paraphrase Bakhtin, would correspond to a non-indifferent memory. The evaluative attitude that is implicit in the act of recording and transmitting culture refers primarily to the choice of what deserves to be transmitted. If, as Socrates used to say, it is necessary that writing

be accompanied by memory work, with the Internet this work is more necessary than it has ever been.

Let us now take a look at what B. Bachimont, Scientific Director of the NAI (National Audiovisual Institute), who takes care of the computerization of the French audiovisual heritage, says in his lecture "Preserving the audiovisual heritage: when computerization is not the solution, but the problem" (2009, translated by the author from French into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English). According to him, what is truly at stake when it comes to the question of collective memory is the problem of the readability of computerized files, and not the infinite storage capacity of computer hardware. Let us quickly mention the aspect of technical readability in which the problem comes from the fact that the numerical support is essentially mutable. With each change, it is necessary to build conservation strategies such as migration from one medium to another (from vinyl to CD or from .wav to .mp3, for instance), which always brings about problems involving fidelity to the original because, according to him, filing is editing. In this sense, when comparing analog to digital storage, we realize that the latter degrades more easily, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it is more faithful. Just remember all the controversy that arose around the digitalization of music concerts originally recorded on vinyl. The author points out that this problem is old and that it already existed in the case of writing: the ancient manuscripts, with their "speaking margins" altered the original. The medieval oral memory was perhaps more reliable than the copyists. But, Bachimont goes on, the fact that a problem is old does not solve it and it would be necessary for storage to undergo a permanent critical work that would allow the identification of the chain of transformations and, at the same time, the questioning of what constitutes the identity of a content.

For our discussion, the second aspect of the problem of readability of stored contents is even more pertinent. It is the issue of intellectual readability formulated by Bachimont as follows: "under what conditions can we retrieve what is recorded?" (2009, translated by the author into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English). Content quickly becomes unreadable if it is not accompanied by a reading activity that preserves it and gives it meaning each new generation. He gives us the following example: Aristotle's readability is not due to the text in itself. It is constructed

by a series of readings and comments. Even though Etruscan writing is entirely preserved, it is incomprehensible because it lacks a reading tradition associated with it. Physical access to Etruscan writing remains, but intellectual access got lost. Bachimont says: "memory is not a stock, it is present work. The problem is not the stocks, but it is the maintenance of the intelligibility of stocks" (2009, translated by the author into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English). This maintenance, always according to the author, is made up by those who produce readability: schools, books, seminars, research, new editions, etc. He summarizes his argument as follows: "the book is not the condition of reading, it is reading that is the condition of book conservation. It is because we read it that it is conserved, not the opposite" (2009, translated by the author into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English).

The work of memory should produce and entertain the cultural and scientific appetite for reading in order for the contents to remain as an issue, and not to be reduced to a mere access problem. It is the work of interpretation, and therefore of reading, that gives meaning to a text and this is produced as intersubjective activity. Without the continual renewal of meaning, the text is lost, becomes mute and dies. I understand then the *work of memory* as that which makes possible the *non-indifferent memory*. We find in Bakhtin indications that he also was among those who cared about the problem of the relationship between technique and uniqueness:

All that which is technological, when divorced from the once-occurrent unity of life and surrendered to the will of the law immanent to its development, is frightening; it may from time to time irrupt into this once-occurrent unity as an irresponsibly destructive and terrifying force (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.7).

The non-indifferent memory is the one in which the value of cultural objects does not point to the market economy, but to the other human economies: symbolic, psychological, semiotic or aesthetic. That is why it implies speaking responsibility in the act of transmitting it. This is about the concept of "human economy" formulated by Dufour (2007). He calls *economy* all exchange activity between subjects. We exchange several things that are fundamental to humanity: we exchange meaning relations when we speak (it is, for example, what we are doing here in this paper), we exchange social

values, we exchange aesthetic values. However, ultraliberalism caused the economy of monetized goods to invade other economies and to impose its logic on them. This is what he calls the religion of the market.

In our Western society, the market has invaded all spaces and therefore all social spheres and human economies. We can think of this new form of power as *totalitarian non-authoritarian*. This is different from the totalitarianism Klemperer analyzed. Market dictatorship has no center and no hierarchy because the goods must be able to circulate freely. Similarly, its ideology wants us to believe that we are free to choose. As long as such a choice entails consumption. This invasion of the market in different spheres of human activity creates a genre hegemony. Marketing and management discourse genres invade all the other discourse genres and transform them, making them uniform. Well, when we talk to someone, even in a simple informative dialogue of a banking service, we are always narrating, making reports and reconstructing versions. The new form of power identified here would thus act in that which is central for the human subject, his discourse intelligence, and in that which he or she is made of: stories and reports.

4 The fusional utterance

One last transformation can be observed from the standpoint of another trace: the linguistic marks of enunciation in certain social discourses. To this end, a corpus of public place utterances was constituted and analysed by means of the personal deictics I/you/he and interpreted through the Bakhtinian concept of *response*. The empirical starting point of this part of the research consisted of something seemingly insignificant: a Brazilian patient information leaflet. Despite its insignificance, this material works as a sign that forces you to think, to use here the Deleuzian expression. In the leaflet, I found the following utterances:

Patient information:

How does this medicine work?

It acts to ease symptoms X, Y, Z. [...] Your doctor is the best person to give you further information. Always follow his guidelines. You should not use higher doses than recommended.

When should I not use this medicine?

Patients with a history of allergy to any component of the formula. [...]
Tell your doctor etc... [...]. Do not use medications without your
doctor's knowledge. [...]

Where and how should I store this medicine?

Store the product at room temperature ...

[...]

Technical information for health professionals:

[...] Indications: [...]. Contraindications: [...]. How to use and storage
care once opened: [...]

The medicine leaflet genre appears here to differentiate the enunciative form when informing the patient and when informing professionals. In some items, the information is identical, but the address changes. For the patient, the question and answer form is used. Traditionally, however, the form in use was generic and impersonal: "Patient information: *Expected Action of the medication*: due to its antioxidant action, acetylcysteine is able to prevent [...]. / *Storage Care*: protect from light, etc. / *Administration care*: Follow the guidance of your doctor [...]. / *Contraindications and precautions*: This medication is contraindicated [...] / DO NOT TAKE MEDICINE WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR DOCTOR. IT MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH. "

An initial feeling of strangeness comes from it. Increasingly, products or product selling websites use the form of questions and answers. In some of them, these utterances are preceded by the expression "frequently asked questions". But upon clicking on the link "Ask your questions", you find out that it is impossible to ask whatever you want, because what you encounter is a ready-made and closed list of information. In other words, it is not truly with questions or answers that we are dealing. In English, the acronym "FAQ" for "Frequently asked questions" has already been created and it started to be adopted as such in French websites, with the words: "Vos FAQ".

What does this change mean? At first sight, the effect seems to be that of presenting a lighter, more interactive and easier to understand text. But is it really? It gives the impression that there is something infantilizing in this form. As if the reader needed that kind of gimmick to get excited about reading it and to be able to understand its explanations. Moreover, among the patient's most frequently asked questions about a drug, it seems unlikely that one of them would be: "How should I store this medicine?".

What draws the most attention, however, is that beyond the question and answer form, the use of “I” appears in the question. Until recently, the question would appear in the generic forms "When not to use this medicine?" or "When this drug should not be used?". But in the leaflets of the corpus, the “I” appears without preparation or transition, even without being preceded by the expression "Frequently Asked Questions". Well, in France, the use of this enunciative form generalized itself in various genres. In some drugstores, different sectors that were once indicated by signboards such as "Medicines", "Cosmetics", etc., now have signboards containing the first person possessive: "My medicines" "My cosmetics", "My phytotherapies", "My prescription", "My pharmacist advises me", etc. We can also almost always read in commercial websites: "Am I already a customer?".

On the subway, we can traditionally read or hear the warning: "Ladies and gentlemen, pay attention to the closing of the doors". But recently, the RATP, the company which is responsible for the subway, launched a campaign on line 13, which serves an outskirts population that is considered "difficult". The campaign was targeted at young people and, to that end, we could read on stickers glued on the doors: "At the tone, I move away from the doors," or "When the doors open, I let the others get off". On the road, instead of "In case of rain, slow down", we can already see: "In case of rain, I reduce the speed".

What meaning effect is this new form trying to produce? In the field of rhetoric, Perelman (2009) identifies the *figure of communion* with the audience that the speaker uses in an attempt to persuade. It is the procedure of person enallage by means of which the speaker replaces the “I” or the “You” with “We”, like the mother who says to her child: "Now, we are going to bed". Perelman then says that through this figure, "the speaker is assimilated to the listener". In the cases cited here, it is not the “You” or “We” that replaces the “I”, but the opposite: instead of saying “You”, the speaker says “I” where the address to the recipient would be marked. Instead of "Buy Now" or "To buy now" there appears "I buy now", or instead of "Buy Here" there appears "I buy here". Instead of "stand in line," there appears "I stand in line".

It is important to distinguish this new enunciative form from that in which the audience’s question is anticipated: "Why am I saying all this?" or indirectly "One might ask why...". In this case, it is an internal dialogue with the figure of anticipation, a

classic figure of rhetoric that occurs within an argumentation process. It is also important to distinguish this new form from the argumentative use of “I” and “You” in which it is possible to go from one to the other within a course of reasoning whose claim to generalization is subject to the audience or reader’s verification. It is the use that has been made famous by Descartes: "I think therefore I am". Here, what Descartes says is valid for himself and for each and every reader because we are dealing in this case with a claim to universality.

In the cases of this research, the “I” utterances are not always valid for the speaker: he who should buy is the addressee and not the advertiser. Moreover, the “I” appears rather abruptly and conclusively, without being in the service of any reflective process. They are utterances that replace imperatives, injunctions or instructions. I then called this form the *fusional utterance* because in it there is the fusion of the speaker and his interlocutor. The speaker addresses him or herself to me by saying “I” in my place, therefore suppressing the dynamics of tension and reversibility that exists between the two enunciative places. We know, based on the theory of enunciation, that it is because there is an “I” that addresses him or herself to a “You”, designating “You” as interlocutor, that “You” can occupy the position of someone who responds and, in doing so, in his or her turn, says “I”. In this new form we are examining, the interlocutor has no turn because it has already been taken in the speech of the other. Or rather, the other has usurped his or her place and said what he wanted to be said: "I buy now".

We can identify in this various meaning effects. The first one of them is infantilizing: it underestimates the enunciating intelligence of the interlocutor, as if it were simpler or easier to save him or her the task of interpreting the utterance address and of taking his or her turn in the verbal chain. Just as in Perelman’s figure of communion, there is closeness to utterances from mother to child, here, in the fusional form: the genre mother-baby is activated in our discursive memory. The baby is the one who does not yet speak, who is not an interlocutor like the others. Still, every mother knows that it is crucial that she talk to the baby so he can access the language. Intuitive knowledge that is broadly confirmed by psychoanalysis. She then says “I” in the place of the baby and interprets its minimal signs. The baby cries and she says: "Oh, how hungry I am!". Piera Aulagner analyzes this process in a psychoanalysis classic which is entitled *The violence of interpretation* (1979).

Saying “I” in the place of the other is indeed an act of violence only justifiable in relation to someone who does not yet speak: the infant (*in-fans*: negation + verb “to speak”). In discourse situations involving adults, saying “I” in the place of the interlocutor brings about an unjustifiable and hidden act of violence that, nevertheless, spreads itself and becomes the norm. It deserves then to be interpreted in the context of ideology, that is, of a form of power which at the same time imposes and hides itself.

Concealment is produced by the erasure of the imperative and of asymmetry. When the driver of the subway train says: "Pay attention to the closing doors", he is telling me what to do and he does so in his place of authority: as RATP's safety representative. Between him and me, not only is there a difference between speaker and listener, but also an asymmetry between the subway safety authority and the passengers (According to Benveniste, the first asymmetry is given as the difference between speaker and listener because it is the “I” who designates the “You”, not the opposite). In the conventional formulation, the two places are clearly arranged: he who talks and he who is talked to. Once fused, the place of authority disappears as well as its typical utterance which is in the imperative. This effect seems to converge with the dominant values of the contemporary Western culture in which the idea of authority is gradually getting lost. The social sciences and the humanities have focused on the analysis of this phenomenon and its consequences, especially for education. The discursive marks of this phenomenon are produced by a kind of entertaining game in which orders and imperatives are banned. In their place, there is a proliferation of “I’s”. It is the culture of the “I”. I this, I that. Reducing the speed on the road is no longer an imperative that arises from a third instance that was commonly called the Law. It became a choice that I can or cannot make.

The illusion that is created, since all ideology aims at creating illusions, is the idea that the contemporary subject is freer and not under any form of Order. It happens that, beyond erasing the enunciative figure of authority, the fusional utterance suppresses the place of the interlocutor, since he is not designated and his turn of speech is stolen. There is the suppression of the place from which he could interpret what he was told or ordered to do and from which he could *respond*. Being able to respond, even though silent, is what constitutes him as a subject in the dialogue. In Vološinov, the

response occupies a central place in the theory of language and is inherent in the concept of dialogism.

[...] this kind of understanding, with built-in exclusion of response, is not at all in fact the kind of understanding that applies in language-speech. The latter kind of understanding inextricably merges with an active position taken apropos of what has been said and being understood (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.73).

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, Bakhtin formulates a gradation inherent in the presence of the voice of the other in discourse and he talks about the bivocal utterance. At first, one might think that the fusional utterance would be bivocal, in so far as the “I” and the “you” are present. But bivocality, like in every truly dialogical utterance, designates a tense relationship between two voices, which implies necessarily a difference between them. In the fusion, there is no tension because the speaker’s voice is dissolved in the interlocutor’s. There is a speaker who talks in the place of his or her interlocutor. Well, this corresponds to what Bakhtin defines as monologically closed-off discourse: “that expect[s] no answer” (BAKHTIN, 2006, p.63). Tolstoy is the author presented to illustrate this form in the novel:

A dialogic position with regard to his characters is quite foreign to Tolstoy. He does not extend his own point of view on a character to the character's own consciousness (and in principle he could not); likewise the character is not able to respond to the author’s point of view. In a monologic work the ultimate and finalizing authorial evaluation of a character is, by its very nature, a secondhand evaluation, one that does not presuppose or take into account any potential response to this evaluation on the part of the character himself (BAKHTIN, 2006, p.70).

Tolstoy is opposed to Dostoevsky:

Secondhand discourse – discourse which, without interfering in the interior dialogue of the hero, would neutrally and objectively structure his finalized image – is unknown to Dostoevsky. “Secondhand” discourse providing a final summary of personality does not enter into his design. Whatever is firm, dead, finished, unable to respond, whatever has already spoken its final word, does not exist in Dostoevsky’s world (BAKHTIN, 2006, p.251, *italics added*).

We thus discover that the fusional utterance corresponds to a power relationship and that it is pertinent to designate it as totalitarian, since it suppresses the place and the voice of the other. By suppressing the response, the secondhand discourse suppresses the critical distance of interpretation, reflection and judgment. This is a new form of power, perhaps more difficult to identify and combat because it is non-authoritarian and hides the speaker: power without subjects, in which there is neither answerability nor signature. The idea of answerability supposes the possibility of response: one who is answerable takes responsibility for his own speech and his own place in relation to the other. This becomes clear when we read Bakhtin's *Toward a philosophy of the act* and see that answerability is the ethical side of the concept of responsiveness.

To conclude, it is worth asking: where does this power come from? What social force does it correspond to? Do all those who produce this kind of utterance intend to exert this new form of power? I do not think so. I think that the phenomenon in question corresponds to the one analyzed by Victor Klemperer in the *Language of the Third Reich*: language serves power by its simple but effective property of spreading. As in the relationship between the Nazis and the Jews, without realizing it, even those who suffer the exercise of power end up saying and confirming that which they do not want.

Making me say "I" or "mine" where it is simply not me is the essence of the perversion of this new enunciative form. In an apparent paradox, the utterance which seems to be more interactive and friendly is in fact monologic. In short, my interpretation is that the fusion of the enunciative places constitutes a typical utterance that manifests the present day "commercial-marketing" discourse. It is also that its hegemony through other spheres corresponds to the ideology of ultraliberalism in which all exchanges and interactions must be reducible to the market economy.

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