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Thomas Weiskel, Sertoli points out that whereas in Kant the subject saves itself by separating itself from the object; in Wordsworth the subject saves itself by identifying with it. But Sertoli praises Monk for his suggestive commentary on the fate of the sublime from the romantic period to Imagism and early Modernism. While Modernist poets and critics generally rejected the sublime as so much nineteenth-century afflatus, Monk showed that the sublime had injected itself into the notion of aesthetic (emotional) "disinterestedness". Sertoli writes: "Far from being a refusal of subjectivity, then, the imagistic objectivism is, on the contrary, a purification of it ...its sublimation." Monk had reinstated romanticism in the literary history of modernism—no mean feat in 1935 when the anti-Romanticism of Eliot and Pound was at its zenith.

Against Monk's model of an organic unfolding of the idea of the sublime, however, Sertoli prefers something on the order of *The Sublime* and its Vicissitudes: one may discover a

classical sublime and a neoclassical sublime, a gothic sublime and a romantic sublime; there is the sublime of Dennis and that of Addison, that of Burke and that of Kames, that of Kant and that of Wordsworth . . . and no one of them is the Sublime.

This is not to say that a history of the subject cannot be traced, only that such a history will be marked by "plurality" and "difference". The "history" of the sublime should confirm what David Perkins has argued in *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992): the "always unsuccessful attempt of every literary history to explain the

development of literature that it describes."

It is astonishing that the translator's name, Rachele Garattini, is not on the title page, and is only to be found on a white label pasted onto the back of it. *Traduttore—traditore?* No, translators are not always traitors. Garattini has been loyal to her chosen task and accomplished fine work with a difficult text of three hundred pages. Surely she deserves more recognition.

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Il dialogo della menzogna

By M. A. Bonfantini and A. Ponzio.
Bari-Roma: Millelire/Stampa
Alternativa, 1993.

This booklet is the published version of a dialogue originally held between Bonfantini and Ponzio at the *Conference on Lying, Deception and Simulation* in Naples in February 1992. This philosophical dialogue on lying (31 pages) makes its appearance as a piece of "alternative literature" with the publishers Millelire, and as such, is destined to an exceptionally wide and differentiated audience. Even more interesting is the fact that this volume has been adopted as a university course book, and, to the joy of students, all for the mere price of 1.000 lire—a provocative reply to dominant political and economic trends in Italy today, whose policies do not hesitate to penalize education.

The title of this booklet has a double orientation: it refers to the performance of a dialogue on lying which actually took place and which sets the question of lying as the object of discourse; and, as the expression "della menzogna" evidences on a grammatical level, it also refers to the dialogic character of lying itself, its constitutive dialogism, the dialogue that lying is. The authors describe, define, and analyze the art of deception through lying using the instruments of pragmatist semiotics enriched with the semiotics of dialogue. But in addition to reaching an understanding of the structure, articulation, and functioning of lying behavior, the authors wish to attempt an evaluation of lying beyond the commonplace distinction between "good lies" and "bad lies", as is the usual qualification, which oversimplifies with reference to the ends to which they are formulated. This is an intriguing task, considering the ambiguity of lying: unlike stating a falsehood whose opposite is stating the truth, lying does not have a precise opposite. As Bonfantini says, lying is morally and pragmatically ambiguous.

As the verb itself "mentire" indicates, lying involves a dialogue articulated across various levels of discourse and thus implies the condition of plurality, distancing, and otherness. At the most obvious level, we have the sign-object of discourse, the lying referent on the one hand, and the metalinguistic sign declaring that the previous sign is lying, on the other. But for there to be an effective act of lying, we soon discover that the discourse levels, the sign-interpre-

tants or interpretant roles are in fact five (though a single subject may perform more than one role): beyond the referent and the liar, we have the sign considered to be true, the "dynamical object" in Peirce's sense, with respect to which it is established that the referent is a lie, the "victim" of lying discourse (a group of people, another person, oneself as another, etc.), and the addressee of the discourse unmasking the lie.

Starting from the assumption that dialogism implies openness toward the other, and having ascertained the dialogic structure of lying, one might expect a positive evaluation of this particular figure of discourse. In reality, with reference to their typology of dialogue as established in another volume, *Dialogo sui dialoghi* (Longo, Ravenna, 1986), the authors demonstrate that lying classifies as a "dialogo di ottenimento," that is, as a dialogue aiming at achieving a specific end, and conducted with a view to concretely realizing a precise intention, according to given beliefs and convictions. As such, lying, where the truth is deceptively hidden with the intention of achieving a given purpose, contains a relatively low level of dialogism and otherness. Contrary to the spirit of substantial dialogism, lying proves to be essentially monologic given its orientation toward the selfish interests of identity, of the totality. The dialogic limit of lying, therefore, lies in the fact that the end to be achieved is imposed and external with respect to the dialogic mechanisms of verification, scientific research and eventual modification. Truly dialogic discourse, says Ponzio, allows for the participation of the

other in its narrative project, is open to dialogic verification, gives "otherness" thematic status, and is thereby incapable of lying. In spite of its dialogic structure, the dialectic of lying is monologic and not dialogic, otherness and new knowledge being considered as a means used in achieving a given end and not as an end in themselves.

Lying is achieved through the production of messages intended to deceive. This statement points to the need of focusing attention on lying as an expression of intentionality. Only he who knows the truth can lie, otherwise we have error or falsehood due to ignorance of the truth. In any case, falsehood and lying share the fact that both require a second level of discourse in order to establish that something is a lie, an untruth. Intentionally deceptive messages are conveyed and formulated through signs which may be verbal or nonverbal, or a mixture of both, unless we limit our attention to nonhuman animals.

If, as Sebeok maintains, signs are not proper to human beings alone, but are also produced by nonhuman animals, then given that to use signs also means to know how to lie, an interesting question is whether animals lie. Sebeok addresses a series of studies to this issue: for example, the chapter "Can Animals Lie" in *I Think I Am a Verb* (Plenum Press, New York, 1986; It. trans. by S. Petrilli, Sellerio, Palermo, 1990). Given the semiotic nature of lying, we soon realize that the capacity for lying is structural to both the human and non-human animal worlds, granting variation in the degree of "intentionality" involved.

Prior to Eco, who defines semiotics as the discipline that studies what may be used for lying, Vailati had already registered the fact that signs may be used to deviate and to deceive as a consequence of their nonisomorphic relation to reality. And in 1907, he in fact reviewed Prezzolini's, *L'arte di persuadere*, with the title "Un manuale per i bugiardi." This aspect of Vailati's research is examined by Ponzio in a paragraph entitled "Plurivocality, homology and lying" in a chapter devoted to the relation between Vailati and Rossi-Landi (cf. *Rossi-Landi e la filosofia del linguaggio*, Adriatica, Bari, 1988: 195-97). Cheating and lying, the ability of signs to deceive, deviate, disguise, pretend, or make believe, are fascinating topics for anyone wishing to study sign life. The fact that a sign may refer to an absence, to a referent that is non-existent according to the modality of existence of a given universe of discourse (the designatum in Morris's sense), implies that the chain of deferrals characterizing semiosis is strong with the potential for deception, for lying, even if not manifest. Semiosis tells of the power of lying and lying tells of the power of semiosis.

Following Bettetini in *La simulazione visiva* (Bompiani, Milan, 1991), Bonfantini and Ponzio distinguish between "signifying simulation" and "signified simulation" and classify lying as an example of "bad signified simulation," by contrast with "good signified simulation" such as fiction. Reflection on the relation between simulation and lying involves considerations on the relation between simulation and modeling devices,

simulation and the acquisition of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. Furthermore, as a simulation mechanism, lying is further qualified with respect to other forms of practical verbal behavior based on simulation such as keeping secrets, making errors, uttering unintentional falsehoods, ideology intended as false consciousness, and the distorted vision of reality, pretense, and fiction. Each of these different forms of simulating behavior resembles truth, to which they relate iconically, as Peirce teaches us. However, beyond this common mark, Bonfantini and Ponzio, following Socrates, are mainly concerned with analyzing the differences, and focus, for example, on the difference between lying and ideology in its negative acceptance as false thought, false consciousness, false praxis. Here, the degree of consciousness varies as to the ends regulating these two forms of deceptive behavior, so that a distinction is made between acting or speaking according to a given ideology and *pretending* to act or speak according to a given ideology, that is, lying.

What may be contrasted to lying? Given the power of mass media, its all-pervasiveness, lying these days can no longer count on secrecy. In line with the times, the strategies of deceptive discourse have changed: ostentation, for example, serves as a means for revealing the truth, but without thematizing it, without allowing it to enter one's consciousness: think of such episodes as Piazza Fontana, Brescia, Bologna, Moro, Ambrosoli, Ustica, Gladio, the Gulf War, Somalia! As our increasing awareness of interdependency be-

tween politics, power, and lying has made all too obvious, far from serving to denounce, to reveal the truth, ostentation is yet another device serving deception. The politics of transparency in Italy, "glasnost" in the former USSR, political correctness in the United States, all run the same risk—that of avoiding thematization and hiding the truth, of exchanging the transparency of surfaces, the apparent, for the complex and tormented depths of reality. Recalling previous warnings from such intellectuals as Anders, Pasolini, and Marx before them, we are now witnessing the implementation of discourse strategies for hiding the truth which simply make the effort of lying unnecessary, superfluous.

Having put into focus the deceptiveness of transparency and the silence of ostentation, what do Ponzio and Bonfantini propose as an alternative to the monologism of lying? *Semiotica ai media* (Adriatica, 1984) and by Ponzio in *Signs, Dialogue and Ideology* (Benjamins, 1993), dialogic participation in the choice of topics to be thematized is a possibility. In other words, without making impossible claims to objectivity, what we need is a broader basis for common decision-making concerning truths to be revealed and understood, concerning priorities of community behavior: authentic dialogic choices involving responsible participation on the basis of the logic of otherness by contrast to the dulling of consciousness provoked by the redundancy of a world teeming with mystifying messages.

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