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Dialogue entries and exits

The discursive space of discussion

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1. Communication: Interaction and co-enunciation

In order to define the concept of dialogue from an enunciative point of view, in reference to the linguistic theory of Antoine Culioli (1990, 1999a), I would like to specify what distinguishes this approach from some models of communication, the premises of which differ while presenting common traits. The point here is not to critique these philosophy-inspired models, but to specify what sets them apart from a metalinguistic system of representation supported by empirical observation and formal reasoning. As the linguistic theory in question is defined as a study of language through the diversity of languages, texts and situations, I will start from the dual performative-propositional structure of the human logos according to K.O. Apel (Apel 1994).

Seeking to broaden the semantic view of language by building into it the pragmatic dimension of communication, Apel (1994) emphasizes the presuppositional and complementary relationship between the subject-object relation and the subject-cosubject relation. In keeping with Habermas (1984), he lists three “validity claims” of discourse in relation to three dimensions of the world. ‘I thereby claim that P’ should thus answer a claim to truth with reference to P, a claim to normative correctness in relation to the communicating parties with reference to the claim to truth in its performative construction (a claim explicitly expressed in ‘thereby, I invite you to P’, for instance to accept or to reject P), and a claim to sincerity or to truthfulness. If this general approach, which Apel once described as pragmatic- transcendental semiotics, has the advantage of placing us within the referential and intersubjective space of representations and interpretations, it adheres to an idealised conception of rationality that is often contradicted by the discursive reality of everyday communication. That being said, we will see that the triple “claim” according to Apel can be reduced to the act of assertion and its implications.

Equally pragmatic, or rather logical-pragmatic in its intentions, the dialogic theory developed by Francis Jacques (1991) is closer to our concerns in that he turned to linguistic studies of enunciation, notably those of Emile Benveniste (1966). Putting verbal interaction and the interlocutionary situation at the heart of all communication of a dialogic nature, he confers a founding status upon the intersubjective relation between an *I* and a *you*, without granting preeminence to either in instituting the relationship, the one presupposing the other. Otherness and identity are thus conjoined in the communicational use of language, the signs of which are “colloquial” in nature. The same person potentially brings together the speaker, the person to whom the speech is addressed and the person to whom it pertains.

A bond of solidarity is thus formed between the dialogic dimension of reference and the referential dimension of dialogue, at the same time as a relationship of subordination is established between the semantic rules, which relate to propositional attitudes according to truth and certainty, and pragmatic rules, which relate to speech acts within the process of interaction, with communication being ensured by a dialectic between the two. F. Jacques has constructed a model of referential dialogue as a model for analysis, which enables one to understand how it is possible to reconcile the play of utterances' truth conditions in an interlocutory situation with the play of the conditions of success of the corresponding speech acts, in accordance with structural rules that govern interaction, and with strategic rules that govern the semantic relationships between utterances.

The idea is for interlocutors to establish the referent together, through reciprocal presuppositions, conjectures and mutual questioning. And the dialogue has an heuristic goal, progressing by dint of semantic debate and referential confrontation, through competition and cooperation: "In a referential dialogue, the interlocutors are not antagonists, but partners who must compare possible worlds in order to make an assessment" (Jacques 1979, p. 306, my translation). Referential dialogue thus moves away from the eristic of disputation and controversy and aims to eliminate anomalies, incongruities, incompatibilities and equivocalities, given that the interlocutors, who represent the two instances of enunciation, the *I* and the *you*, are governed by the "the ideal search for a consensus, the unison of voices, that concludes the process of communication." (Jacques 1979, p. 340, my translation).

F. Jacques's philosophical pragmatics does not leave dissent, disagreement and difference of opinion to one side, but subjects the dialogue to a norm that is not the norm of the "ideal communication community" (Apel 1994), but that guides the aspiration to Felicitous speech, which is defined as a Matrix of the human relationship of mutuality. As he writes:

We understand that Felicitous speech exchanged between the I and the you is the matrix of a relationship of *mutuality*. This complex relationship comprises a relationship of *reciprocity* in accordance with the equality agreed to by the interlocutors. The distribution of roles takes place between partners in a relationship of *complementarity*. The I and the you are then mutually associated within a communication community. (Jacques 1979, p. 386–387, my translation)

Without rejecting this normative ideal, which belongs to a philosophical tradition inherited from Buber (1935, 1958) and is renewed in a logical-pragmatic perspective, we will set aside its teleological aspect, which should not be identified with the teleonomic dimension of discursive activity. We will emphasize intersubjectivity in the interlocutory relationship, which becomes a relationship of co-enunciation – the enunciator implying a representation of himself and of the other – and construction in the practice itself of the discourse of reference. We will also argue that though there is indeed a reciprocity between the subjects that jointly determine each other as an enunciator (the speaker as an image) and a co-enunciator (the addressee as an image), their relationship is not in fact symmetrical, but equally dissymmetrical or asymmetrical depending on the movements of coming together, drifting apart or severance.

To the agreement and understanding conquered in and through dialogue according to F. Jacques, corresponds the attestation of self and the confidence in the ability to say according to Paul Ricoeur (1990). But whereas in the first case the

“dialogical atom” is made up of the interlocutors who meet *in* each other, which marks the successful conclusion of the exchange, the second case develops a hermeneutics of the self-based on an analysis of grammatical persons and speech acts, of which one of the major features is the dialectic of the same and the other, of ipseity and otherness. Interlocution then presents itself as an exchange of intentionalities reciprocally targeting each other, and its intrinsic otherness – the other and oneself as an other – is situated on the level of the reflexivity of enunciation. On the basis of this dialectic of ipseity and otherness and drawing inspiration from the phenomenologist of existence Henri Maldiney (2007) and from what he calls “the coexistence of a double otherness” (p. 218), which we experience in every human situation¹, I identify what he calls “the other *of* I” (*alter ego*) with the coenunciator (without hyphen) indicated as S’0, and the “other *than* I” (*alius*) with the co-enunciator (with hyphen) indicated as S1, it being understood that S’0 and S1 are then constructions whose subjective origin is the enunciator indicated as S0 (*ego*). The dialogue with the other is thus, on the one hand, a dialogue with oneself through a series of imaginary constructions.² The interlocutors may just as well come together in a mirror-image, the discourse of the one being confirmed by the discourse of the other, as they may be separated by points of disagreement or divergences of opinion, and sometimes to the extent of one rejecting the other outside any possible sphere of agreement or even listening.

The interconnection which I establish between conceptions of dialogue in communication, with a philosophical reference, and categories of linguistic analysis, has two aims in view. On the one hand, by observing practices and situations, it seeks to free us from a certain logicism of representation or idealism which ascribes a pre-arranged happy end to what is presented as a model of dialogue. On the other, it attempts to show the relevance which may be given to certain postulates inherent in these conceptions by an empirical and formal study of discursive activity from the viewpoint of enunciation.

The concept of discourse, from the Latin *discursus* (from *discurare*): “the action of running to and fro, of spreading oneself in different directions”, has taken on a modern meaning based on the image of the hazardous path of verbal communication, and the meaning of the word discussion can also be clarified by etymology, which refers to shaking, to sustaining a shock, through a verb, (*disquatare*, to shake, to agitate), that once meant “to search through, to unmuddle” before evolving to mean “to examine” (the cases for and against), the concept of dialogue (διά-λογος) being set aside to signify the in-between (*entre-deux*) instituted by and through discourse. Taking into account the previous

¹ “We learn ourselves through our response to the other’s call and through the other’s response to our addressing him, but not in equal shares. When the other *than* I, to whom I speak, speaks me in return through their words or their muteness, there is in them something that speaks to me *in my own terms*, because in them I hear the other *of* I. Thus, our own being is at stake in our being to the other.” (Maldiney, *op. cit.*, p. 218, my translation).

² We have touched on this question, illustrated by an analysis of linguistic forms, during a lecture given at the seminar on dialogism: *Dialogisme, langue et discours*, Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier, 2010. The text of this lecture will be published under the title “Se parler à l’autre” (Ducard 2012).

considerations, we will therefore define the discursive space of discussion in dialogue in the terms of the theory of enunciative operations (Culioli), based on the concept of assertion with all that it encompasses.

2. Assertion and commitment

An assertion, whether positive or negative, is to say of something that it is the case. The construction of the existence of a state of affairs is associated with an operation of validation by the ascribing of a referential value: the occurrence is situated in relation to a system of reference (space-time, subjective origin, relationship between subjects). Validation thus establishes a relationship between the (factual or fictional) situation and one of the possible values, the concept of value corresponding both to the meaning value and to the estimative value of the selected forms (what applies to that which is to be said).

Any assertion implies an enunciative stance linked to a *commitment* (commitment, non-commitment, withdrawal of commitment) of the enunciator subject. If one sets aside what distinguishes both approaches to language, this point of view meshes with the definition of the class of assertives by John R. Searle (1979) in his taxonomy of illocutionary acts, when he gives a general presentation of the assertoric as one of the ways of using language depending on the illocutionary goal, by telling someone else the way things are, and that he adds that this goal is to commit, to varying degrees, the locutor's responsibility as to the existence of a state of affairs or as to the truth of the proposition expressed.

Here is what A. Culioli (2001) says of the operation of validation intrinsic to an assertion, putting forward the dimension of subjectivity:

This operation of validation (selection of the value considered adequate by a subject) is accompanied by two operations of a subjective nature: (1) commitment of the enunciator who, beyond his activity as a speaker, wishes to say (to make accessible to a third party) what he knows/thinks/believes to be the correct descriptor. Hence either a marker that is null ('the weather is fine'), or modulation markers such as *certainly, surely, without a doubt, naturally, obviously, necessarily, probably, in all likelihood*. The subject takes charge of what he says, thanks to this modulated commitment, which will allow for intersubjective adjustment; (2) valuation by the enunciator who ascribes a teleonomic value (advantageous/disadvantageous, efficient/inefficient, etc.) to what is asserted, in relation to the chain of utterances and the succession of states of affairs. (p. 281, my translation)

Modalisation, of which strict assertion is only the basic form, is then an evaluation that conjoins validation and valuation (Ducard 2004, pp. 45–57). It implies a distance on the part of the enunciator from the relationships established in the construction of the utterance, a distance that varies according to whether what is involved has been validated, could possibly be validated – that which is taken into consideration or that is imagined – or else has been validated but suspended. This distance can be abolished, but in the ascribing of referential values, any assertion (in its positive or negative form) features, as a representation, its complementary counterpart ('to be the case'/'to not be the case', or 'to be other than the case'). The commitment of the enunciator, when she presents herself as guarantor of that

which she is saying, is linked in part to an *assertoric force* (Frege's *behauptende Kraft*), and secondly to the intensity that is expressed by her emotional investment, to various degrees, from the most indifferent statement to the most vivid of feelings. The implications of the act of assertion are represented in the following metalinguistic formula:

I WISH TO – SPEAK – TO SAY – THAT I THINK/BELIEVE/KNOW –
THAT P TO-BE-THE-CASE.

I WISH TO is the symbol of assertoric force, which evolves along a gradient of intensity according to the subjective appreciation of what is said;

SPEAK refers to the act of locution, the material externalization of what is expressible and communicable in an oral or written formula (that which is said);

TO SAY carries the intention of signifying, by speaking out, that which is to be said: the enunciative goal;

THINK/BELIEVE/KNOW are the three archetypical predicates of assertoric modalisation, and are used to distinguish three areas of representation of certainty or quasi-certainty and belief that are characterized by a state of stability for *know*, by the passage to existence for *think* and by an intrasubjective state for *believe*.³ In an assertion modulated by one of these three predicates, or by others that belong to the same categorisation, there is a double centering of the subject, who validates his speech according to internal states of knowledge, thought or belief.

P TO-BE-THE-CASE, where P corresponds to the propositional content or lexis, is the operation of situational reference of the enunciable complex of representation, whose occurrence is situated in a space-time frame. It is the operation of validation that makes p validated or a possible candidate for validation.

Thus, assertion, according to these different aspects, is a way of committing oneself, of making a choice between possible paths and coming to a decision.

The assertoric decision can be simulated by a graph, with directional arrows. This graph shows a fork, the junction of which localizes the whole of the conceptual domain (p, p'), each branch leading to a value (p: inside the domain) or to its complementary value (p': outside the domain, i.e.: not p, other than p, p is empty). When a journalist heads an article by quoting the utterance of a demonstrator on Tahrir square, in Cairo, during the rebellions of 2011: "it's not the Egyptian revolution, it's the Arab revolution"⁴, he reports the meaning that is thus given to the events through a labelling that, in addition to the designation using the word 'revolution', credits the movement with a scope beyond national level, in contrast with this first designation, which in his eyes has become too restrictive and inadequate.

A person contesting this assertoric choice could refute either the designator or the label 'Arab', or deny the lexis as a whole. When another journalist declares, in an article on "The fractures of the Tunisian revolution": "the Tunisian revolution is a national revolution, the revolution of an entire nation, but what direction can it take?"⁵, he is distinguishing a possible value in relation to others, such as "revolution of the youth demographic." Discussion, from confirmation (that's exactly the way it is) to refutation (that's not the way it is at all) through rectification (that's not quite the

³ This semantic categorization, according to the values and uses of the three predicates, is analyzed in Ducard 2010.

⁴ *Libération* (daily newspaper), February 24, 2011.

⁵ *Ibidem*

way it is) is a game of values in circulation in a domain that is delimited by an inside (truly P), noted I and corresponding to p, an outside (truly not p), noted E and corresponding to p', and a boundary (not truly p/not truly not p), noted IE and corresponding to p, p'.

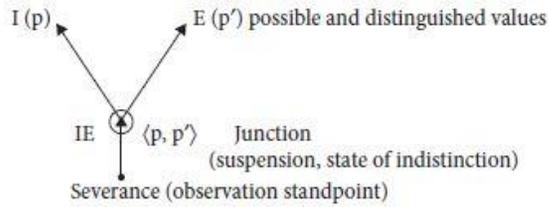


Figure 1. Domain of validation

The area surrounding the junction corresponds to the assertoric modality, when the enunciator modulates his commitment and his choice, giving herself a margin of subjective estimation (*I believe, it seems to me, according to me, I would say...*), and to the inter-subject modalities (interrogation, injunction, causation), when the enunciator relies on an other for validation (interrogation, order, prayer, suggestion wish) or refers validation to a subjective (ability, desire, will) or even external causes (coercion, as in a deontic context). When the enunciator adopts a disconnected point of view, positioning herself as an observer of the facts considered or imagined, she finds herself in the area of the modalities of supposition, of the probable, the possible, the necessary and the hypothetical. When we are faced with the forms of the exclamatory modality, in the broad sense, with extreme values (surprise, admiration, rejection, indignation, insult...), we leave the sphere of the assertion of a proposition that is or could be validated.

We then obtain a diagram featuring three directional areas, that which comprises assertoric choices, that where assertion is suspended, and an area outside the sphere of validation, with exits and re-entrances.

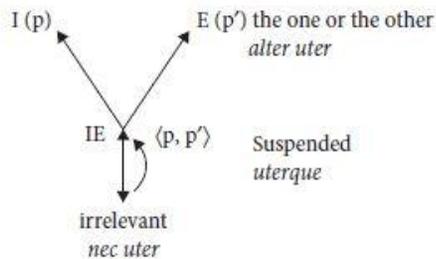


Figure 2. Assertoric choices

The measure of the distance between representation and situational reference (what is thought in what is said and that which is referred to in saying it), of the distance between the possible values (what is said in relation to what is not said), and of the distance between the enunciator and the co-enunciator (the self and the other, with its variable), takes place within the abstract space that constitutes the validation domain (p/p' et p, p'). It is this symbolic gap, which is an essential part of language activity, that we try to fill with variable degrees of success and that makes inter-subject adjustment possible.

3. Adjustment

A. Culioli (1990) gives an excellent explanation of the essential character of this constitutional gap and calls attention to the two theoretical pitfalls of referentialism and representationalism.

How clear things would be if reference operations could be reduced to ostensive designation, whether by touching or by pointing to the referent. No more distance between representation and presentation, no more risk of error, since there would no longer be any distance between the representation and the represented. Identification would be accomplished by an inescapable appropriateness and communication would consist in showing and attracting attention. It is true that there would then be no assertions, since in order to assert one must be in a position to commit oneself, to represent to oneself the possible paths, to decide, to choose. Neither would there be any deferred assertion by which one anticipates a coming event, any fictional assertions as in hypotheticals, there would be no generic assertions since the generic implies working on possibilities beyond actuality. There would be no modality or temporality. Further still, interactions would disappear, in their complexity that blends the transindividual with the intersubjectivity and the interlocution. (pp. 127–128, my translation)

We therefore cannot agree with the schema of interaction suggested by H. Paul Grice (1975), with rules organised around a principle of cooperation, following a logic of conversation where each participant contributes to a process of tuning, as one would with a musical instrument to make possible a tuneful interpretation; rules that take the form of prescriptions⁶ that the locutors are supposed to have assimilated and that would enable them, in the event of these maxims being flouted, to infer the required *implicatures*.

The term *transaction* that Grice uses in order to qualify the course of interaction and the analogies that he uses in order to make explicit their cooperative nature (repairing a car and using the suitable tools and spare parts, asking for help or the performance of a service, baking a cake following a recipe) sufficiently show

⁶ Let us recall the four maxims, with the rules and sub-rules, which rely on the principle of cooperation: Quantity: 1. "Make your contribution as informative as is required," 2. "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required"; Quality: 1. "Do not say what you believe to be false," 2. "Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence"; Relation: "Be relevant"; Modality: "Be clear," with 1. "Avoid obscurity of expression," 2. "Avoid ambiguity," "Be brief," 4. "Be orderly."

that interlocution is identified with an exchange of friendly services and with the use of the appropriate implements. It is plain that discourses are governed by norms of various kinds, which are more or less strict according to the situation, and that can sometimes go as far as becoming regulations that restrict acts of communication according to genuine protocols, but as far as the interlocutors are concerned, the possibilities of lying and deceiving, of bluffing, dissimulation, misunderstanding, *quid pro quo*, reserve or silence, indifference, seduction, showing off, attacking and fleeing, not to mention the hesitations and tremors that affect the process of speech, with the failings and accidents of expression that psychoanalysis links to a different source, when the unconscious takes to the paths of verbal expression, should not be omitted.

For linguistics of operations and representations, and with this idea that language is a dynamic and open system, an interplay of forms and meanings, adjustment has a central place. The enunciator constructs utterances in such a way that another subject, who receives them and recognizes them, is led to deconstruct and reconstruct them on the basis of markers of representations that are ordered by ascribing values to them. The meaning of an utterance, in communication, is the result of an “intersubjective accommodation” (Culioli 1999b, p. 48, my translation), or, to keep within a constructivist perspective such as Piaget’s (1936), of a sort of assimilation-accommodation, with phases of balance and unbalance, of stabilisation and destabilisation. The subject’s enunciatory activity oscillates between closedness and openness to alteration by another subject, considered, in relation to the person committing himself to what he is saying, as an *alter ego* or an *alius*.⁷

3. Exchanges

By transposing the graph of assertoric decision and of the sphere of validation within the discursive context of inter-subject exchanges, we obtain an equivalent schema, which enables us to represent positions and movements within an abstract system of localisation and orientation, and to topologically define the *discursive space of discussion in dialogue*.

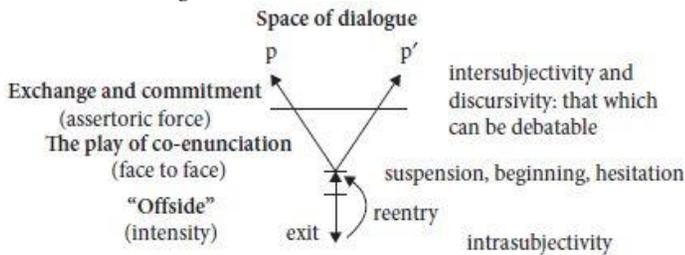


Figure 3. Discursive space of discussion

⁷ We follow the common meaning of the word *other*, that designates another person or persons, as opposed to the self of the speaker and excluding this self, whereas the *alter ego* is to be understood as “another myself”.

By way of illustration, we will take the example of a type of debate that takes the form of a montage, edited by a journalist, of a confrontation between two economists on a set topic: “to leave or not to leave the euro ?”⁸ The journalist’s questions, in what one supposes was a remote interview, dictate the course of the discussion between the two opponents. As the aim is to question ourselves about the monetary future of the euro, the enunciators’ commitment is in great part characterized by uncertainty and is based on an opinion, a belief, combined with a wish or a fear, when the speaker judges the represented state of affairs as being favourable or unfavourable, according to his point of view. A few excerpts only will be commented upon, in their order of succession during the interview, focusing on the assertions exchanged, that is to say, the utterances that answer each other.

A.C. – *I think, like Daniel Cohen, that we are in a very uncertain situation, that the crisis of the euro is both behind and before us. But you say that this crisis has been adequately absorbed by the euro, yet nobody is saying how it would have been absorbed otherwise, especially where France is concerned. Devaluations never frightened me: the one in 1958 was a success, the one in 1969 also, with no inflation, with the return of a very strong growth of the economy. One cannot keep silent about what might have been. I note that after ten years of the euro, the French economy has experienced its worst decade since 1945: just about nonexistent growth, an external trade deficit that is greater than ever, a considerable public deficit, all accompanied by a level of unemployment that affects nearly 3 million people. You may claim that the situation would have been even worse without the euro, but, as far as I am concerned, I do not accept that argument.*

The first utterance, with the assertoric modalisation (“I think that”) posits the existence of a common judgment, which establishes a co-orientation between the interlocutors. The follow-up with “but” marks an addition and a change of area that does not call into question the quoted proposition P: “this crisis has been adequately absorbed by the euro”, but pertains to the fact of saying P in the face of other-than-P or P', which the “yet” introduces: “how would it have been absorbed otherwise and especially where France is concerned”. The proposition P' contradicts P in that it constructs a representation in the past, using the conditional past, imagining an alternative (“otherwise”: without the euro) and specifying the fictional situation (“especially where France is concerned”). Furthermore, this proposition remains unspoken in the face of the spoken proposition of the opposing enunciator, and the empty enunciative instance “nobody is saying”, with which he is grouped (one could add “yourself included”), implies its complementary proposition, which can be restored in this context: “I am saying”.

What follows specifies the subjective evaluation of the enunciator backed up by the lesson of the past, then we have a repetition of the denunciation of what is being

⁸ Discussion by the economists Daniel Cohen (DC) and Alain Cotta (AC) during an interview granted to the *Les Echos* and published in issue n0 20869 on Monday 14 February 2011. Taken from the newspaper’s website, *Les Echos*: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economiepolitique/monde/actu/0201135921529-sortir-ou-non-de-l-euro-le-debat.htm>.

left aside by a collective “one” whose referent is vague, including the “you” (you and those that, like you), which takes the form of an injunction, with the deontic value of the verb can: “One cannot keep silent about what might have been.” The objective evaluation of an effective situation: *I note that* is used as a measure of another possible estimation, of a fictional nature, attributed to the other: ‘You may claim that P’, whose claim to validity the predicate disqualifies, and which is immediately refuted in its argumentative value by the enunciator, who puts the emphasis on his own stance: “but, as far as I am concerned, I do not accept that argument”. The discussion on this point is therefore closed.

To the journalist’s next question, Daniel Cohen will respond by using a similar form of reasoning, with, in succession, arguments supported by facts, the ascribing of intentionality to the other and a conjecture whose consequences are envisaged in relation to effective reality, according to a rule to be inferred.

Journalist – Would it be advantageous to some countries to leave the euro?

D. C. – No. The successful devaluations *of which Alain Cotta speaks* were planned. *When they are implemented under the pressure of an international crisis, they are almost always a failure, because the one who is devaluing is usually not the only one to do so. Alain Cotta is dreaming that France would devalue in relation to the mark, but one must imagine that Spain, Italy and others would also devalue in relation to us. Yet France’s negative balance of trade with Germany represents only half of its deficit with the euro zone.*

The convergence of theses is sometimes admitted to: “A.C. – There is a point on which we are in agreement: the euro was and remains a political currency (...)”, and the divergences are accentuated by a *for me* at the beginning of an utterance, a constitutional indication of the origin of the assertion and a marker of the non-substitutability and separation of the subjects (me, in that I am who I am): “A.C. – For me, the common currency, or ECU, would rather constitute a happy compromise between the practical necessity of the unification of the continent and the diversity of the economies of which it is made up, and, further on, D.C.- For me, this common currency does not exist.” A.C. enunciates a choice credited with a positive value in relation to other possibilities, with the conditional, a mix of future and imperfect, which places the subject as an observer of the representation he constructs, independently of any referential situation, and a *rather* that supposes a gradient and a weighting of values.

D.C., who is more categorical, refutes any possible construction of the concept and consequently rejects, with the anaphoric repetition, in which we detect critical overtones, the proposition put forward by A.C. Moreover, when A.C. projects himself into a future situation, he displays a sense of what is to come in the mode of possibility: “A.C. – The single currency only benefits Germany, and not Europe. Maybe it won’t last! We will see, in ten years’ time (...)”, just as he modulates his declarations, even when he is contesting those of his partner: “A.C. – Daniel Cohen *thinks that* the existence of a single currency is a necessary constraint for Europe to live in a certain stability. *I do not believe this, I think that* nations will continue to live and that they pay the price for democracy, which is diversity.”

The only mildly sharp protestation in this moderate and rational confrontation is the following: “A.C. – The currency snake worked... D.C. – No! It was a disaster”.

This debate, whose direction was given by a question that set up an alternative, takes us from one stance to another, in the alternation of viewpoints, each of which takes shape by confronting with the other on common questions, each of the actors seeking first and foremost to justify one of the possible choices, with or against the others. Intersubjective adjustment, in the intentions of meaning, is regulated by economic discourses and by the journalistic context of this staging of opinions.

We will give a few examples of exiting the space of discussion and of escaping into the in-between (*entre-deux*) of dialogue with more passionate debates. First, with a confrontation between the philosopher Michel Onfray, who gave rise to a virulent controversy in the French public arena following the publication of his book *Le crépuscule d'une idole*⁹, a damning condemnation of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the psychoanalyst Jacques-Alain Miller, an eminent representative of the Lacanian movement. The scene takes place in the latter's home, with the journalists of *Philosophie Mag*, who have organised the meeting and published the transcription of the exchange (Duru & Lacroix 2010). We will pay special attention to the exclamatory forms, whose values are diverse and whose degree of intensity is variable, and which tend, as markers of the enunciator's emotional investment, to sever the co-enunciatory relationship.

M. O. – (...) There, I perceived for the first time the magical power of psychoanalysis. My students saw me as a sort of guru holding the key to their existential torments. But I did not want to become that guru, owing to a refusal to take up the position of the master

J.-A. M. – Lacan calls that “the effect of the subject who is supposed to know”, a power of fascination that can be traded in various guises.

M. O. – *Traded, the word is well chosen!*

The sarcasm is perceptible, in the context of the disparagement of psychoanalysis, which is reduced here to an abuse of power both mental and mercantile. The metalinguistic repetition of the word is the focus of a judgment of value, as far as its relation to its topic is concerned: it is the right word to designate that which it refers to. The utterance cannot be a mere assertion; to repeat the words pronounced by one's interlocutor in order to comment on them adds a secondary value, either through nullification (it is not the right word for what is the case) or by modulation (it is not quite the right word), or by confirming its primary value (I'll say it is and you are right to express it in this way), or else by deformation, by making another, underlying meaning appear (I'll say it is, and you could not imagine how well you have expressed what I think, although it is not what you intended to say). What here might seem to be a finer adjustment, recognised by one of the enunciators, is in reality a way of cracking a joke based on a double meaning, with polemical intent.

J.-A. M. – *I am outraged that a man such as yourself could refer to that abominable rag, Le Livre noir...*¹⁰ Furthermore, your opposition between history

⁹ This work was published in 2010 by Grasset as *Le crépuscule d'une idole. L'affabulation freudienne*. The author denounces Freud's invention in virulent terms, considering it to be a deception and a forgery.

¹⁰ Reference to *Le livre noir de la psychanalyse*, a collective work published in France by

and legend seems to me to be crude. You are a strange creature, a positivist Nietzschean, who venerates so-called “facts”, what Nietzsche called “antiquarian history”. Psychoanalysis teaches us not to give in to this illusion. Raw facts do not exist, everything is a legend from the very beginning. You yourself produce a myth in the telling of your discovery of Freud at the Argentan market. Michel Onfray as told by himself... *Of course, Freud gave rise to a legend! And so, what?*

This counter-attack begins with an expression of indignation, which treats an established fact (“refer to that abominable rag...”) as a morally impossible possibility (“that a man such as you could...”) and ends with a pseudo-question. The asserted proposition “Freud gave rise to a legend” is repeated and validated, in its indisputable, undebatable character, with the consolidation of certainty (“of course”). After this declaration, the addition (“And...”) and the follow-up (“so what”) do not form an interrogative schema owing to the prosody in the context, but mark the suspension of any inference that could have a counter-argumentative value: it would have no effect on the discussion, would be to no avail (“one could have: and what does it change? Nothing”).

M. O. – There are no internal contradictions in Leibniz or in Hegel. J.-A.

M. – *Oh really? And in Michel Onfray?*

M. O. – I do my best to make sure there aren’t any.

There again the interrogative schema is skewed. Here, the interjection and the tone are indicative not of surprise, but of feigned astonishment in reaction to the preceding assertion aimed at exposing its preposterousness. The expressive movement begun with the *Oh* is cut short by the *really* when the expression is one of an observation, with prosodic indications of disillusionment and resignation (Oh really, well if that’s the case then), or of the taking into account of a new fact (Oh really, I didn’t know). Here, the movement is one of false expectation of an answer, reactivated by a mischievous question, which does not expect an answer either, even if the respondent seems to take it seriously. There again, the aim is to empty a proposition of its relevance, but the attempt to catch the other off balance does not produce the desired effect.

M. O. – (...) In his letters to Fliess, Freud confides that at times he would fall asleep during a patient’s talking cure! He writes that it is not the ears of the psychoanalyst that listen, but the unconscious that communicate!

J.-A. M. – *You are going to succeed in making me angry!* Free-floating attention is a poor translation. The exact meaning of the German term used by Freud is equal attention. *Learn to master your Freudian vocabulary!* And then, until it is proven otherwise, the talking cure supposes an element of consent on the part of the subject, the submission is not that complete.

The warning marks an aggressive turn taken by the explanatory scene, with the periphrastic future used to signify the threat at hand, in the sense of that which is the predictable and imminent consequence of an act or an event currently taking place.

Arènes in 2005, with the aim of discrediting psychoanalytic theory and to draw attention to the failures of analysis as a form of therapy.

The emotional state that is its result is expressed by the verb *to succeed*. The injunction that follows disqualifies the co-enunciator, to whom the lesson is being taught.

These few types of exclamation show that the two interlocutors – in an unequal power struggle – exit the place where ideas are confronted, by nullifying certain propositions and by disparaging, to the point of disqualifying the person expressing them. The exemplary form of this operation, which is absent from the debate considered, is *Whatever you say!*, which signals that what is being said by the other is irrelevant, to the point of excluding him from the intersubjective force field of interaction (Ducard 2007). The coup that this turning back on oneself constitutes, what with the elimination, on both sides, of the figure of legitimate enunciator in whom a respondent may be recognized, can lead to the ultimate exit through insult. The confrontation then takes on the shape of a quarrel and the dispute is resolved through acts of name-calling that are like as many verbal blows landed on the opponent, who is reduced to the status of mere speaker. A status that is called into question, furthermore, by the clashing of words, virulent interruptions and the uncontrolled words and gestures of the individuals. We give a glimpse of this with the lively exchanges, pertaining to the same question and transcribed during a popular television programme, between the same Michel Onfray and another psychoanalyst, Gérard Miller, closely related to the former by blood and intellectually.¹¹

G.M. – Listen for one second to what I'm going to say to you./G.M. – Wait, let me finish, otherwise I'm going to speak louder than you and we won't manage to finish./G.M. – I'm going to tell you frankly, I hope the formula will succeed; you really are the hidden son of Nietzsche and Zavatta.¹²/M.O. – You are not even able to crack a good joke on live television./G.M. – You read Freud for 20 years, and one day you discovered the truth, on day, like Bernadette Soubirous¹³ discovering the virgin; you understood that Freud was a fraud./M.O. – I do indeed think that in order to put an end to clowns like you, I think that one can invent a new kind of psychoanalysis.

The title given to this altercation: “Polemical on Freud: Michel Onfray Versus Gérard Miller”, with the Versus separating the two names, is echoed by the staging of the verbal joust: lined up in front of the journalists and the public, they tower, sending each other's arguments back to back, one against the other, in attack and in defence.

Thus we have transited from the case of a debate where the enunciators spoke face to face, with each of them playing by the rules of exchange, in agreement or disagreement, making commitments and leaving room for a margin of indecision or

¹¹ Canal+, Le grand journal, “Polémique sur Freud : Michel Onfray Versus Gerard Miller”, Published on Thursday 22 April 2010. Taken from the website of the political association *Égalité et réconciliation*: <http://www.egaliteetreconciliation.fr/Polemique-sur-Freud-Michel-Onfray-Versus-Gerard-Miller-3119.html>.

¹² Zavatta was a famous French circus clown.

¹³ Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes was a nineteenth century French mystic who claimed to have had visions of the Virgin Mary. She was canonised in 1933.

contestation through modulated assertions, to cases of locutors set side by side, where the tactic is to disparage the discourse and devalue the enunciator, and then to the case of a face-to-face confrontation between locutors, each of whom seeks, on his own account, to make his opponent lose face through the use of wounding words and offending name-calling.

5. To conclude

Although enunciative theory may converge with certain propositions of the pragmatics of communicative interaction, with its philosophical dimension, it differs from these in both its starting and finishing points, which concern speech acts as they are conducted in discourse, anchored in a situation of interlocution. Pragmatics is then embedded in linguistics. Theory has to provide itself with a metalinguistic representational system which allows the motivations and driving forces of this activity to be understood. Theoretical concepts, interlinked with one another, form a coherent conceptual framework for explanation and interpretation; while graphs indicate positions and orientations by means of a dynamic elementary topology, schematizing the operations and representations at play within forms. It is on this basis that we can envisage differently Apel's three validity claims, Jacques' dialogic principle and Ricoeur's dialectic of ipseity and otherness.

In this way the concepts of assertion and adjustment, with the other theoretical concepts implied (value, situational reference, validation and valuation, commitment, assertoric force and intensity, intersubjective relation and co-enunciation), have allowed us to conceive an abstract space that we have called, going back to the primary meanings of the words *discourse*, *discussion* and *dialogue*: *discursive space of discussion in dialogue*. This space "plays" a constitutional role in linguistic activity, in the practise of speech and discourse that, in communication, is performed *about*, *in order to* and for *someone*. Benveniste would underline that the characteristic of enunciation that is "*the accentuation of the discursive relation to the partner*, whether the latter is real or imagined, individual or collective", and that establishes what he called its "*figurative framework*", with the two figures of the source and the goal, correspond to the "*structure of dialogue*" (Benveniste 1974, p. 85).

The "play" in question, which is to be understood according to the both meanings of the word *play*, points, on the one hand, to an action of symbolic exchange between subjects, with a regulatory system that defines successes and failures, depending on the situations of the players present, and on the other hand, to the free space that ensures the functioning of this activity, as one says that a mechanism has play. This requires at least two people, for, to quote Montaigne's (1595) expression, "Speech is half to he who speaks, half to he who listens" (Book III, Chapter 13, my translation)¹⁴, adding that every speaker is at the same time her own listener. "Montaigne, Jean Starobinski comments, imagines speech like the movement of a

¹⁴ "La parole est moitié à celui qui parle, moitié à celui qui l'escoute. Cestuy-cy se doit preparer à la recevoir, selon le branle qu'elle prend. Comme entre ceux qui jöient à la paume, celui qui soustient, se desmarche et s'appreste, selon qu'il voit remuer celui qui luy jette le coup, et selon la forme du coup." (Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* 1595, Livre III, Chapitre 13).

ball that players throw to each other. Speech, in his view, is only fully speech when it has crossed the interval that separates the speaker from the listener, and that an answer has been returned. This presupposes shared obedience to rules: rules of language, rules of exchange between partners”. (Starobinski 2009, p. 9, my translation). And if this literary critic says that in his work, he wished not only to “propose a listening, but to awaken the ability to respond” (p. 9, my translation), he recognizes the constant risk of the “illspoken” (*malparlé*) and of misunderstanding. The ethics of dialogue do not reside in an instance transcendental to the world of language, but in this world itself, in the practice of discourses, with the hazards of a game in which each one is playing her own hand.

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