

Being communication. For a critique of ontology

Augusto Ponzio

When we consider the concept of "communication", we are generally led to conceive it as a process of exteriorisation starting from an interior which manifests, reveals, exhibits, exposes its content. On this account, communication is e-mission starting from a being, the e-mitter, and takes place between the e-mitter, as an *a quo* term and another being, the receiver as an *ad quem* term of the process. Communication is what happens between being that acts as the emitter and being that acts as the receiver. There is a being that communicates, that *first is* and *then communicates* and, therefore, that can *be first and independently of its communication*.

This conception of communication is not only widespread at the level of ordinary opinion, but is also shared by different theoretical positions which, instead, contrast each other on other aspects, such as innatism and empiricism, mentalism and behaviourism. We may analyze exteriorisation forming the communicative process without questioning the exteriorising being or the being of the receiver of this exteriorisation process; or we may interrogate this being, analyse the interior externalised in communication as well as the being of the receiver. In other words: there are two beings which enter into communication and we may either limit ourselves to considering communication by looking at what these communicants do, or by interrogating their being and therefore by looking to see what they are like, how they are formed. In any case, the conception of communication as the e-mission of a being which another being receives remains true.

This way of intending communication is obviously connected to a certain conception of being, to a certain ontology. Just as communication in general is considered as a process beginning from being, as its e-mission, being in general is considered as the presupposition and foundation of communication. Communication theory and ontology are in general closely connected: all communication theories have their ontologies, a part from whether they remain implied or explicated; vice versa, all ontologies have a theory of communication, even if it is not explicated.

No matter what the theories, philosophies and ideologies of communication are, today a different conception of the communication/being relationship is asserting itself, we may summarise this with the statement that "communication is being". It can be turned round by saying, on the contrary, that "being is communication". However, unlike the first statement, "communication is being", which concerns communication theory and which therefore concerns us here directly, the second statement, "being is communication", regards general ontology. This does not mean that we can ignore it, even though here we can only briefly mention it as part of the inevitable connection, as anticipated, between communication theory and ontology. From this point of view, that is,

considered limitedly to the regional ontology relative to communication theory, in other words, as being that communicates, as communicating being, the first statement "communication is being" can be converted into the second, "being is communication".

What currently results from the two main sectors of knowledge and praxis, the scientific and the economic, is that communication is being and vice versa that being that communicates is communication.

As far as scientific investigation is concerned, the complex of disciplines concerning communication is particularly important under this regard insofar as they focus on the organic world in its multiple aspects, from the great kingdoms to micro-organisms, collectively identifiable under the heading of *biosemiotics*. In this sphere of scientific investigation life and communication identify with each other. *Communication* is not only the condition of life but also the criteria of its identification: an alive being means a communicating being. Life = semiosis, that is, a process in which there are signs (to be precise "signs of life"). Obviously communication is not at all the externalisation of the living being, from bacteria or prokaryotes to cells with a membrane and nucleus or eukaryotes, from micro-organisms to organisms belonging to the three (or four) great kingdoms, but is the living being itself. In the organic world, communicating is being and vice versa. To communicate is to persist in one's own being, to maintain being, to confirm oneself as being, *conatus essendi*.

As to economy, here too communication is identified as being and persistence in being. We are no longer in the vast sphere of *biosemiosis* alone, nor are we in the more restricted but still general sphere of *zoosemiosis*, both of which man is obviously a part. We are now in the specific sphere of *anthroposemiosis* where being, understood as the human being, is not only a living being, but a *historical-social* being. This is where *language* comes into play (and *speech*, verbal language, is only one of its many expressions). Language implies that the human being is not only a *semiotic* being, like all living beings insofar as they communicate, but also a *semiotic* animal, capable of *semiotics*, that is, of meta-semiosis, of reflection and thus of consciousness. Language is the characteristic prerogative of hominids, it has made their evolution possible through to the present day, the evolution of the semiotic animal, and, therefore, not just biological evolution, but also historical-social evolution.

In the current phase of capitalistic production, economy confirms identification between being and communication. In this phase, characterised by the industrial revolution of automation, by the processes of the globalisation of communication and of the universalisation of the market (which does not simply consist in the quantitative fact of expansion, but also and above all of quality, represented both by the translatability of anything into goods and by the production of new goods-things), communication is no longer just an intermediate phase in the production cycle (production, exchange, consumption) but has become the constitutive modality of production and

consumption processes. Not only is exchange communication, but production and consumption are also communication. So the whole productive cycle is communication. This phase in capitalistic production can be characterised as the "communication-production" phase.

Communication-production is the communication of the world as it is today. It is *global* communication, not only in the sense that it has expanded over the whole planet but also in the sense that it sticks to and relates to the world, it accomodates the world. It may be better to say: it is communication of this world. Communication and reality, communication and being coincide. Realistic politics (and if it is not realistic, it is not politics) is politics which is appropriate for global communication, for the being of communication-production. The relationship between politics and ontology (politics proper which as such is pre-disposed for war, the crudest and most brutally realistic face of being) is nowadays specified as the relation with the ontology of being communication, which is world communication, communication-production.

Therefore, on this side of the connection in the heavens of theories and philosophies, there is another which is earthly and materially given, the connection between *communication and ontology* which characterizes current forms of production.

Communication-production means persevering in being, insisting on being, persisting, *conatus essendi*.

Social reproduction, in general, the process through which human society reproduces itself, is certainly — the expression "reproduction" says it — regeneration, maintenance, conservation. But precisely because of the insistence on the being of the human community, social reproduction assumes, and has historically assumed, different forms of production passing from forms that hindered it — due to the discrepancy between the system of social relationships and the level of growth of human intellectual, transformation and inventive capacities — to more appropriate and favourable ones. Therefore, social reproduction is achieved through the possibility of escaping from being-communication as the latter is established by a given social form. Such escape is possible through the re-invention and reorganisation of social relations thanks to the human ability to interpret and respond *otherwise* to being-communication, to take one's distances, to evade from and go beyond the limits of the world that has produced being-communication and from the vision of the world it fits in with. In social reproduction, identification between communication and being, which characterises life generally, the living being and being communication, is overcome insofar as we are dealing with the *semiotic animal*, that is, the animal that not only has communication relations (like the other animals which, therefore, as Marx says, *do not properly have relations*), but is also capable of evaluation relations, of becoming aware, of responsibility, of planning communication relations, in other words, of escaping being communication.

On the other hand, persistence of communication-reproduction is *persistence of the same social form*, the capitalistic. Capitalist society with its continual adjustments and metamorphoses functional to its maintainance has not yet ceased to set, has not yet finished finishing, in spite of its only having emerged at sunset (Hegel's night owl), in spite of the signs of its finishing. Only ideology that is functional to the maintainance of capitalism will identify *being*, in this case *being communication-production*, with the *being communication* of social reproduction in general. Such identification is so close that the capitalist phase in social reproduction would seem to be natural for the human being, the only possibility, as though it were an inherent part of human nature. In other words, once high levels of economic growth, cultural perfection and scientific-technological progress have been reached according to the processes of linear development, *being communication* is passed off as being a necessary and unchangeable modality of existence for the human species.

Apart from such a mystification, the viewpoint of current ideology, the ideo-logic of globalisation, that is, ideology in line with communication-production logic, is no different from the viewpoint of the disciplines that go to form what may be considered, as said above, sectors of research in "biosemiotics". What they share is what we can call the ontology of being communication.

Let's try to outline its basic features by returning to what we have said so far. Communication should be considered in terms of being. Being which, as we all know so well, is also becoming. Not all being is communication. But communication is being. To communicate is to persist in one's own being. It is self preservation. Communication is not exteriorisation of something that is on its own account. It is this being on its own account. Communication is not exteriorisation of an interior being, but is interior being itself. Communication is a movement of interiorisation, of return, of self assertion. Communication not as extroversion, but as introversion. Does everything which is communicate? We are not concerned with this question in our environment of regional ontology regarding communication. The fact that we are concerned with, for that part of being that communicates, is that communicating is being. If we wished to venture into the territory of general ontology we could risk formulae like: being = communicating: false; communicating = being: true. Can we be without communicating? Yes, but not for those beings that communicate, that *are* communication. But let us limit the question of the being-communication relationship to the latter: their being consists of communicating. Being hungry even before the behaviour of nourishing oneself is communication. An organism is communication. The organism is a communicating being, in itself, as an organism. An organism is a device for self communication or self preservation, capable therefore of persisting in its own being.

The human being is also communication, like any living being, including those which he is made up of, eukaryotes, and those which he is inhabited with and covered with, the prokaryotes or bacteria. But the human being is also communication like the systems which guarantee preservation

and reproduction, the genetic code, the neuro-vegetal system and the immune system. He lives off internal communication and external communication, like the other living beings and like the other animals he is endowed with a species-specific modeling device through which he constructs his own "world", his own *Umwelt*. The meeting zone between "external reality" (external to the "world" and thus not perceptible) and organism is made of signs and, therefore, it is *refracted and organised, formed*, in accordance with the specific modeling device of the species. Our reference here is to the macro-organism and we are talking about "external reality" relatively to this macro-organism. However, it is also clear that we could talk about "external reality" concerning the cell in the context of intercellular communication and between cell and virus. Such communication takes place *inside* the macro-organism and we could claim that this too occurs in the meeting zone made of signs between micro-organism and "external reality".

The specific modeling device for the human species is *language*.

We must immediately point out that language should not be confused with *speech*. This confusion can be described as the "fallacy of the linguist", the language linguist, who says "language" when he means "verbal language", in other words "speech" (oral or written) and who uses the expression "general linguistics" to only refer to the study of verbal language and the relative languages.

Contrasting with the "fallacy of the linguist", in common language we already infact use the term language to refer to what is not verbal too, "gestural language", "sign-language" of deaf-mutes, "photographic language", the "language of painting", the "language of fashion", the "language of merchandise", etc. In this case common speech or common speaking says how things stand better than the linguist.

All properly human sign behaviour is language, properly human semiosis cannot exist without language. Here the properly human is the human being in his specificity as a historical-social being insofar as he is biologically endowed with a species-specific device we are calling "language". As a biological organism, the human being shares communicative processes which are not languages with other organisms including the micro-organisms which he is made of or is the carrier of. Anthroposemiosis is not only made of languages just as human semiosis is not only semiotic, that is, semiosis or semiotics capable of meta-semiosis. The sphere of languages and within this sphere the sphere of semiotics together occupy a very small space in overall anthroposemiosis. This also incorporates part of vital endosemiosis (the part which occurs in the human organism, enabling its development, maintenance and reproduction), it is part of zoosemiotics and is involved — and such involvement is obviously vital — in overall communication as it takes place throughout the whole semiobiosphere.

In accordance with Charles Morris, we could free the expression "general linguistics" from the "fallacy of the linguist" and use it for the discipline within semiotics and anthroposemiotics, which studies verbal and non verbal sign process known as languages.

All animals are endowed with a specific-species modeling device; they build their world with it, which bridges the gap between the organism and the external environment and is made of signs. The specific human device, language, has the peculiarity of being able to produce an undetermined number of worlds because it builds *syntactic* constructions using just a finite number of elements. The same elements can be used again in new constructions, so that an undetermined number of worlds can in fact be created through continual deconstruction and reconstruction processes. On the evolutionary scale, hominids through to homo sapiens sapiens were in fact endowed with this device well before speech or verbal language was developed and prevailed over the other forms of communication. Verbal language came on the scene through *adaptation* as a *means of communication* and is inconceivable except on the basis of the primary modeling of language and its syntactic procedure. Later, by means of *exaptation*, verbal language underwent a process of interiorisation in the history of human evolution. Consequently, speech as the material of thought contributed to facilitating and enhancing primary modeling and collaborated with the latter as a "secondary modeling" device. Secondary modeling is relative to a given language and to the order of discourse which, in turn, is also connected to a given overall organisation of social relations.

In the human being, being communication is achieved, as for other animals, on the basis of the construction of the world through the species-specific modeling device. However, in other animals, as long as the species remains as it is, except for variations of subspecies (insignificant here) and modifications due to exaptation, a relation of reciprocal correspondence, symmetry and saturation is established between modeling and the being of communication. On the contrary, when a question of human being-communication the modeling device that produced it, language — with its syntactic function and its capacity for deconstruction and reconstruction and thus of production of numerous possible worlds — does not identify with being-communication, is not exhausted in it, does not fit it. Here, the particular modeling device allows interpretations, evaluations and responses relatively to the the being of communication, which as such require a point of view that is external to the latter, which goes beyond it.

We have called the specifically human capacity of meta-semiosis "semiotics". We can now add that it depends on the specific human modeling device we have indicated as language. Syntax, deconstruction and reconstruction, production of several possible worlds, semiotics, with the consequent capacities for evaluation, responsabilization, inventiveness, planning are all prerogatives of language. In language the being of communication finds its own *otherwise*. Insofar as man is endowed with language, insofar as he is a semiotic animal, human behaviour cannot be circumscribed within communication, being, ontology. From this point of view man reveals his capacity for *otherness*. He may present himself as other and propose other possibilities beyond the

alternatives foreseen by the being of the world of communication. We are not simply alluding here to the capacity of being otherwise with respect to being, to but to the capacity, specific to man, of *otherwise than being*, that is, *otherwise than being communication*. The capacity for otherwise than being in fact subtends all possibilities of being otherwise. This capacity — which, therefore, characterizes the semiotic animal and which consists in the capacity of transcending being and the communication world — renders him completely responsible not only for social reproduction, but also for life over the whole planet, the two things of course being inseparable. This capacity for otherwise than being denies the semiotic animal all the alibis he may have used had his capacity for interpretation, response, action been limited uniquely to the being of the communication of the world as he has built it, should his choices have remained limited to the alternatives of this world and without the capacity, therefore, for *otherness* with which instead he is endowed.

We shall now return to the communication-ontology relationship in the current form of global communication-production. *Global*, as we mentioned, not only in the sense that it expands over the whole planet, but also in the sense that it fits the world and is adequate for it, for this world, so that communication is reality, so that communication and being coincide. Realism in politics must keep faith to ontology thus described and even goes as far as to accept the *exstremaratio* of war as dictated by the inexorable law of the force of things. World planning for the ongoing development of communication and for its control goes hand in hand with reinforcement and continuing assertion of the being of communication-production. This plan is based on the full awareness of the productive character of communication and of the identification of communication with being as now achieved in the current phase in capitalist communication-production society. But, as hinted above, this plan is also based on the clear awareness that the command of capital can only be achieved by controlling communication. Communication-production ideology, therefore, is the ideology of full control over communication. It is so realistic, so coherent, so consistent with the being of things as they are presented to us without hesitating to flaunt the good news of the end of ideologies that communication-production ideology appears, in fact, more like the logic of communication-production than its ideology. Let us propose then the expression "*ideo-logic*" of *global communication-production* for the phenomenon we are describing. Indeed, as already hinted, the ideology functional to maintaining this particular social form ends by passing it off, in good or bad faith, as corresponding to social reproduction in general. On the contrary, social reproduction must escape from the established order, the being-communication order, to reinvent and reorganise social relations and therefore get free of social systems like the current one which actually obstacle and endanger social reproduction itself.

The preservation of the being of communication-production is destructive in character. Reproduction of the same production cycle is destructive:

- of machines which it replaces with new machines, not because of wear but because of competitive needs;

- of jobs, to make space for automation, with the subsequent increase of unemployment; of products on the market, stimulating forms of consumerism which are wholly at the service of reproduction of the production cycle;

- of previous products, which once already purchased would exhaust the demand, by means of bringing out new similar products which immediately make the former obsolete;

- of goods and markets, which cannot withstand the competitiveness of global communication-production.

The *conatus essendi* of communication-production is destructive of natural environments and life forms. It is also destructive of different economies and cultural differences which the processes of homologation operated by market logic cancel to the point of rendering not only habits of behaviour and needs identical (though the possibility of satisfying such needs is never identical), but also desires and the imaginary. It is also destructive of traditions and cultural patrimonies that contrast with or obstacle or are simply useless to the logic of development, productivity and competition.

The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys those productive forces that tend to escape the limits of the current forms of production. And therefore the forces of intelligence, inventiveness, creativity are all humiliated and mortified by their subjection to market trends, "to market logic".

The destructive character of the current form of production is also made evident by the fact that it produces increasingly large and increasingly widespread areas of underdevelopment as a condition of development, areas of human exploitation and misery to the point of nonsurvival. This causes the spreading phenomena of migration which the "developed" countries are unable to contain due to objective internal space limitations — such limitations being undoubtedly greater than in other forms and phases of social organisation.

Global communication-production is also destructive because it is the communication-production of war. War needs ever new markets for conventional and unconventional weapons. War also needs ever more widespread approval by which it is recognized as just and necessary, as a necessary means of defence against increasing dangers represented by the menacing "other", and as a means of obtaining respect for the rights of one's "own identity", "one's own difference". In fact, the values of identity and difference are not at all threatened or destroyed by the "other". Paradoxically it is this social form itself that is destructive for while on the one hand it encourages and promotes identity and difference, on the other it renders such values totally fictitious and phantasmal. At the same time, this is exactly why they are clung to paroxysmally: and from the viewpoint of the communication-production of war this is no doubt a good thing.

Destructive in character is the universalization of the market, that is, extension of the character of merchandise to everything and to all relationships, and the more illegal and illicit such merchandise is, the more it is expensive: drugs, human organs, children, uteruses, etc. The principle of exploiting other people's work is already destructive in itself. When labour is paid by the hour the less it costs, the more it produces profit: developed countries are increasingly turning to low cost work in underdeveloped areas, with the help of global communication ("stay put and we'll come to you"). Something which evidences the shame of the communication-production world even more clearly is the widespread use of children for heavy and dangerous work (much needs to be said and done about children as today's victims of underdevelopment, misery, war, about children on the streets, in illness, in work, on the market).

The being of communication-production, its persistence in preservation and reproduction puts social reproduction into serious danger and blocks it, stopping communication of the human historical-social being from reorganizing itself into new social forms:

- *communication-production versus social reproduction.*

Communication-reproduction exalts communication, of itself, to the detriment of invention, innovation, re-planning and re-construction which are specific modalities of the human being thanks to the language modeling device:

- *communication-production versus language (versus semiotics).*

Moreover, the reproduction of communication-production endangers the bare existence of man, not only his existence as an intelligent being, the preservation and expansion of his intellectual faculties, his semiotic capability, but also his existence as a living being, vital semiosis, health and survival:

- *communication-production versus human life (semiosis)*

The preservation, reinforcing and expansion of the current social form, that is, communication-production at any cost is a lethal threat for life over the whole planet: ozone hole, ecological disasters caused by normal reproduction cycles and overwhelming disasters (normal disasters include those connected with the communication-production of war); nuclear destruction and relevant experiments, etc.:

communication-production versus being communication (semiosis) of life over the whole planet.

Given its pervasiveness, communication-production almost ends up corresponding to human historical-social communication, or at least containing it. There are small communication isles

which are not submerged by communication-production but are relegated to the "private" sphere, they are part of unofficial ideology and since they are marginal to the order of discourse and to the ideologic of dominant communication, they are not taken into account. Unlike the system imagined by Orwell in *1984* where they are prohibited by the death penalty, here such communication isles continue to exist because today's social form has not yet brought the premises on which they are based to their extreme consequences. By proceeding with flexibility and by trying to soften, round off and dull the reality of the world, communication-production and its ideologic englobe and absorb the marginal and unofficial modalities of communication, "the private sphere". If such modalities are not yet completely functionalised to today's dominant form of social reproduction, they certainly will be neutralised and reduced to silence. One form of neutralisation is that of subjecting the "private" sphere to the mass media's capacity for silencing, thereby making the private sphere public, "condominial": this can be observed in many television programmes, though it is the essence itself of the televisionisation of relationships that goes in this direction. In his *1984* experiment, Orwell had imagined that television was not only for watching, but also to be watched. Under certain aspects communication-production is developing in this direction, certainly not by spying on the private sphere, but simply by encouraging that the private sphere be manifested in public, without reserve or obscenity, thereby entering the official communication circuit.

This almost total correspondence in the human world between communication and communication-production, at least at the level of ideology and planning, means that the *conatus essendi* of the subject, both individual and collective, the assertion and confirmation of identity, both individual and collective, coincide with the *conatus essendi* and with the preservation and reproduction of the advanced phase of capitalist society. They are in fact the subjects and the identities produced by this particular social form. However, we have observed how this phase in socio-economic development contrasts not only with human life but with life in general to the very point of proving fatal to being and therefore to communication.

Only behaviour towards otherness that is dis-interested allows escape from the being of communication-production. On the contrary, the interestedness of identity is part of communication-production. The opening towards otherness replaces limited responsibility, safeguarded by alibis functional to identity and its roles, with responsibility beyond and a part from roles, responsibility without the possibility of escape, non delegable responsibility characterized by the tendency to involve and to expose completely. We have claimed that communication is a movement of interiorisation, of return, of self-assertion, that communication should not be understood as extroversion, but as introversion. Otherness is the outside of communication, the otherwise of being. This movement towards otherness without return, also in the sense of no gains, is a meta-semiotic movement and, therefore, a semiotic movement. And this is the properly human. Language which renders human behaviour non circumscribable within communication, being, ontology, not closed within the context of *alternatives* as they are foreseen in the being of the world of communication, implies responsibility understood as having to respond, to the other, of having

to answer to/for, not only for oneself as I, but also for *the other*. The fact that the being of communication finds its own *otherwise* in language, means that language *is for the other, is for otherness*. So the desperately not wanting to lose the being oneself of communication (*conatus essendi*; faithfulness to communication which is *essential infidelity* towards the *other*) can be replaced by the desperately not wanting to lose the *otherwise* of the being oneself of communication, by the desperately not wanting to lose the *other*, the other of self and from self.

Translation from Italian by Susan Petrilli

Bio-bibliographical note

Augusto Ponzio has directed the Institute of Philosophy of Language since its inauguration in 1980 until its cessation in June 1999. He is now Head of the Department of Linguistic Practices and Text Analysis at Bari University inaugurated in July 1999 and which includes the Institute of Philosophy of Language. He is Full Professor in Philosophy of Language and General Linguistics which he teaches at the same University. He also directs a Phd. programme (Dottorato di Ricerca) in Language Theory and Science of Signs, which has been running since 1988. He is adjunct Professor at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

His editorial activities include direction of the annual series *Athanor. Arte, letteratura, semiotica, filosofia*, which he founded in 1989; as well as directing several book series including: "Segni di segni" (with Maria Solimini), Adriatica, Bari; "Antropologia dell'ascolto" (with Maria Solimini), Edizioni dal Sud, Bari; "Di-segno-in-segno" (with Susan Petrilli and Cosimo Caputo), Manni, Lecce; "Gli strumenti. Serie gialla" (with Patrizia Calefato), Graphis-Laterza, Bari.

His research interests focus on theory of signs and of language, literature theory, theory of ideology, semiotics and communication theory. With reference to his more recent publications he has authored the following volumes: *Man as a Sign*, Mouton de Gruyter, 1990; *Filosofia del linguaggio 2. Segni valori ideologie*, Adriatica, 1991; *Dialogo e narrazione*, Milella, 1991; *Tra semiotica e letteratura. Introduzione a Michail Bachtin*, Bompiani, 1992; *Production linguistique et idéologie sociale*, Cadiac, 1992; *La ricerca semiotica*, Esculapio, 1993; *Signs, Dialogue and Ideology*, Benjamins, 1993; *Scrittura, dialogo e alterità. Tra Bachtin e Lévinas*, La Nuova Italia, 1994; *Fondamenti di filosofia del linguaggio*, Laterza, 1994; *Responsabilità e alterità in Emmanuel Lévinas*, Jaca Book, 1995; *La differenza non-indifferente*, Mimesis, Milano, 1995; *El juego del comunicar. Entre literatura y filosofía*, Episteme, 1995; *Segni per parlare di segni*, Adriatica, 1995; *I segni dell'altro. Eccedenza letteraria e prossimità*, ESI, 1995; *Sujet e alterité. Sur Emmanuel Lévinas*, Harmattan, 1996; *La revolución bajtiniana. El pensamiento de Bajtín y la ideología contemporánea*, trans. & ed. by M. Arriaga, Cátedra, Madrid, 1998; *La coda dell'occhio. Letture del linguaggio letterario*, Graphis, Bari, 1998; (in collab. con M. Lomuto) *Semiotica della musica*, Graphis, Bari, 1998; (in collab. con S. Petrilli) *Signs of Research on Signs, Semiotische Berichte* Jg. 22, 3, 4, 1998; *La comunicazione*, Graphis, Bari, 1999; (in collab. S. Petrilli) *Fuori campo. II segni del corpo tra rappresentazione ed eccedenza*, Mimesis, Milano, 1999; (in collab. with S. Petrilli) *Inoperosità della politica*, Castelvecchi, Roma.

Summary

Communication should be considered in terms of being. Being which, as we all know so well, is also becoming. Not all being is communication. But communication is being. To communicate is to persist in one's own being. It is self preservation. Communication is not exteriorisation of something that is, on its own account. It is this being on its own account. Communication is not

exteriorisation of an interior being, but is interior being itself. Communication is a movement of interiorisation, of return, of self assertion. Communication not as extroversion, but as introversion. Does everything which is communicate? We are not concerned with this question in our environment of regional ontology regarding communication. The fact that we are concerned with, for that part of being that communicates, is that communicating is being. If we wished to venture into the territory of general ontology we could risk formulae like: being = communicating: false; communicating = being: true. Can we be without communicating? Yes, but not for those beings that communicate, that *are* communication. But let us limit the question of the being-communication relationship to the latter: their being consists of communicating.

The question is whether we only have being-communication, whether an outside ontology is possible, an otherwise than being. This means an otherwise with respect to the being of today's system of global communication.