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# Word and communication

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## **Abstract**

*This essay submits the modern communication theory to a critical analysis. This theory constructs an abstract and reductive model which can not give a pertinent account of what emerges in the process of existential communication which is a multilayered structure not only of being together but of becoming together one through the other. This notion of structure should not be confused with that of system. Ontologically speaking beings are structural phenomena which are essentially becoming in time and space in a situation of co-creative exchange amongst them. A becoming is always under way and can therefore also fail. The human self is such a structure in its interpersonal becoming through dialogue in which language has to be reinvented so that the interlocutors can co-create meaning and contribute reciprocally to their own becoming. The term 'word' refers to this co-creative process whereby the mere informational or communicational aspects of language are exceeded in the spoken word so that a true existential communication can become.*

A concrete example of what communication can be will set the tone for this essay. Once upon a time in an international airport in Switzerland a woman of humble and plain origin, finding herself amidst this, for her, totally new, unfamiliar, inhuman and terrifying environment, fell victim of an anxiety crisis. People tried to reason with her, opening up, as one would say, all rational channels of communication, but to no avail. Nobody was able to pacify her. As it happened Jung was also there and he was called upon to help. He immediately realized that reasoning would not do. He took her to a secluded spot somewhere in the airport after having enquired about her origin, about the canton and region where she had come from which, as it happened, Jung knew very well, knowing its folktales and songs. Jung started singing some of these songs to her and the woman calmed down and came back to her senses. When I reflect upon the notion of communication, I would say that this is an instance of real communication, no code and no channels, just being together in time and space through the singing voice. This deep and perhaps irrational level of communication

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constitutes the nine tenths of the iceberg of which communication theory only scratches one tenth on the surface.

The canonical definition of language as 'a system of communication' is reductive and does not do justice to what is really happening when we talk and listen. The 'communicative' usage of language in fact is the most superficial one; it probably is the most profitable in financial terms but the most costly in terms of understanding and truth. In propaganda and publicity 'communication' is realized and has fulfilled its aim when the gullible have been seduced and the order successfully placed, booked and cashed in, or the party elected to power on the premise of false or empty promises. Both the terms 'system' and 'communication' are in fashion and everybody seems to know what they mean. In the human sciences they have the status of sacred cows; nobody bothers to examine their exact meaning nor dares to reflect critically upon their use and pertinence. In schools and departments of languages are included courses in theory of communication for all purposes which all work on the premise that language is a system of signs used for communication. And everybody is blessed with the certainty that a theory of communication is all there is to know when one wants to use a language successfully.

Communication has an iron grip on the social sciences. All communities are supposed to be founded or based on or even in communication; its theory is crystal clear and has an air of scientificity about it since it is based on information theory which itself derives its model from cybernetics. I refer here to *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (1986), a book without which, so says the revered *Economist*, one can not exist. I have a copy on my desk at home therefore I am. Information is presented as a purely technical and mechanical process; the meaning of the message is irrelevant. We know the model very well, there is a sender who has encoded a message which he sends to a receiver who upon receiving proceeds to decode it and then sends his own back to the original sender, who is now at the receiving end. The interlocutors pepper each other with information balls and that is how verbal exchange is defined and theorized, the main concern being to safeguard the unhindered transmission of the messages, to eliminate all interfering noise. When the communicative process is successful there should be no misunderstandings and all problems will have been solved. I do not want to submit this systemic model of language to scrutiny right now and will rather concentrate on the nature of communication itself. In the human sciences most theoreticians are convinced that since a community is based in communication, all conflicts inside a community result from defective communication or lack of it. More than ever before, mankind is blessed with a plethora of communication tools and channels which allow instant communication the whole world over, but

it does not seem that conflicts have become less frequent. It might in fact seem that the more we can communicate and know about somebody else the more difficult it becomes to come to an understanding with him and the more easy it will be to deceive him. It is therefore evident that successful 'communication' in the form of sending and receiving messages is not enough, we do not only have to communicate between us: people have to learn to live with each other and to speak and/or listen is only a way towards coexistence. What different cultures have to learn is not only to communicate but to live with each other in a climate of tolerance which should not be reduced to an attitude of dignified indifference regarding the others' thinking and doing. Communication theory in fact ignores existential communication<sup>1</sup>.

Theories have the knack of simplifying phenomena by pressing them in a rational, definitional straightjacket and this is also the case with communication theory. However, in reality and real life, communication is a very complex phenomenon as is the situation of having to live together, communication is diverse and multilayered as all structures are. By using the term 'structure' I have conjured up another buzz word, a kind of pass-word which gives a serious air to organizations which in fact and most of the time are contingent networks of loose ends whose proper functioning depends on the honesty, good-will and individual competence of its co-workers. It is therefore necessary to be more precise about its meaning and severely critical of its pertinence for real life situations. And here dictionaries are not very helpful since in them a structure is defined as a system and a system as a structure. However, both terms can be dissociated pertinently since they concern states or situations, configurations of complex realities, and the way these hold together, develop or disintegrate. Therefore an ontological digression is necessary in order to differentiate usefully between system and structure. Language is a far too serious business for it to use two different terms for one single state of reality, it can not afford, if one takes its systemic definition at its word, to carry pairs of exact synonyms to state or designate exactly what one being or thing is and to say how we conceive it.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy which asks the question about what being is. In the development of Western thinking on what is, we can distinguish two basic attitudes or two types of ontology, a traditional substantialistic one which historically precedes the modern functionalistic one. This distinction has been introduced and explored in depth by Heinrich Rombach<sup>2</sup>. As the word itself suggests the substantialistic ontology considers beings to be substantial, beings have a substance, a basis which remains unaltered and substantial underneath its appearances which are ever changing, growing and declining on the surface. This substance is supposed to be unaltered since its inception or creation. The appearances or

accidental qualities in beings are contingent whereas the substance would be necessary, the latter would be, in other words, their essence. It is not necessary in this context to dwell on this difference between essence and substance, both terms are translations of the Greek *ousia* which itself is an *onoma* with an enormous semantic and referential potential. However as living beings we have access to reality, or to what is, through our senses first. Only the chosen few seem to be capable of living that level of sensory perception, mystics or favorites of one or other deity such as *Dikè*, for instance, who sent a carriage and horses under the guidance of three beautiful young girls to transport the lucky Parmenides<sup>3</sup> into her domain where all things receive their 'just' portion or proportion. Thus Parmenides, in his poem that is, considers himself as one of those lucky few who have immediate access by illumination to the big single One of Being. But we, normal mortals are forever confronted by an infinite diversity of beings which in fact are often in themselves marked by inner diversity.

To gain a grasp on this diversity we have to abstract qualities or features which would be present in multiple concrete instances despite their apparent diversity. Let us say that all wooden beings exist, in as far as they have in themselves the substance wood. In them their woodenness would make up their essence and make them what they are. But wood itself can not be encountered as such. What we encounter with our senses are wooden things. In them there seem to be features which would be present in all wooden things and they are logically called 'universals' because they can be said about a multiplicity of things, but they are not sensible, we arrive at them by abstraction. Nowadays of course we can submit these wooden things to nuclear-physical and chemical analysis to make sure that we are dealing with real wood and not with one or other plastic surrogate. The wooden thing would disappear into a network of physico-chemical relations which we can only identify with specialized instruments, but we never encounter wood as such. So then what is the ontological status of universals? Ockham<sup>4</sup> for instance denies the possibility for universals to be a substance.

The answer would be, and it is the modern one, they are not part of sensible reality but exist only in our mind, they in fact are figments or constructs of our intellect and the question remains how we establish them and what their reality is in our mind. In fact they seem only to exist because we use terms which differentiate them amongst each other. These terms encapsulate a concept which we can make coherent by applying the basic principles of logic, the rule of non-contradiction and the third excluded being the decisive rationalistic one. But the dynamic act of conceiving must necessarily disappear behind the conceptual result because their validity or objectivity can only be certain if the mind does take a stand opposite what

has to be conceived, otherwise it might confuse aspects of its own inner state with aspects of outside reality. In other words the subject has to be totally disengaged from reality in order to arrive at an objective knowledge. There lies the crux because that is exactly what we are unable to do since we are living beings and part of the living world and the world lives in us. Even a William of Ockham explicitly accepts in his *Summa logicae* that some universals are 'natural' and he defines them as intentions of the soul. The subsumption of sensible qualities into universal characteristics then is a natural process, as he says, 'natura obscure operatur in universalibus' (Jolivet, 1969, p.1498) – in other words, nature is mysteriously at work in the universals.

The limits of this essay do not allow a complete exposition of nominalism, it must be sufficient by saying that nominalism played a decisive role in the transformation of ontology, from a substantialistic into a functionalistic one since it denies to universals the status of substance. Of the individual there can be no knowledge, only the universal is object of knowledge in the mind who determines what is by applying the rationalistic rules of logic, situating all existing things as linked together in a gigantic system of differences which is analogous to the encompassing rational system of concepts, a system which even God had to respect in order to safeguard man's capacity to understand and explain His creation. Beings then only are by the fact that they are each separately or discreetly located somewhere in the system and that they can not occupy the position of another being or be at the same time somewhere where another is. For systematicity it is necessary that the system remains closed and that all beings are function of all the others. Such a well-defined concept of a system is unable to explain its own becoming and can not tolerate nor operate any interior change because it would thereby destroy itself; logically speaking its rules of functioning are necessarily outside the system. In fact a systemic approach to reality is by its own functioning totally arbitrary: any pile of bricks can be analyzed and be represented as a system. If the concept is so pliable it becomes useless. In any case all binary differences are manifestations of an underlying continuity, they are the form in which their participation in a single universe is manifested. Discrete elements isolated by the digitalization result from an arbitrary and artificial analysis of a continuum; the continuity between elements in reality, however, remains and the elements are related interiorly with each other<sup>5</sup>. Let us check if a reality can be systemic in the strict sense of the word.

In looking around how beings are we find that a lot of them function according to inner rules. What is even more, they can change themselves by themselves and adapt and transform in a relation, a structuring relation, with the situation in which they participate. These beings are then not parts

of systems which would be all linked together in one infinite system but their being is a structure, it is dynamic and changes itself, while changing the ways in which it enters into exchange with its outside situation. Such a structure is organic and its configuration is not totally determined, it can change its own determinations and its relation with outside. Freedom is a structural category (Rombach, 1971, p 252).

Systemic functionalism can not give a complete account of all what is. The only possible systems are those defined by the mind but it is not at all sure that these systems correspond to what really is the case in the world. It is true that certain things function systematically, an internal combustion engine for instance, but inside it components can deteriorate and then the engine does not function properly anymore. The same applies to computers and we all know that the famous sentence 'nothing can go wrong' is not a universal truth. Here then the notion of 'structure' comes in. Beings are not just 'partes extra partes' in a gigantic mechanistic system made up of discrete elements, all function one of the other and nothing in themselves, being only by virtue of relations which in themselves are nothing. Living beings are capable of initiative and are the realm of their own activity; they are self-affective while being effective in their environment. They are open and actively engaged in what is around them where they go and look for what they need in order to maintain their own inner being, they are in a situation of exchange with what they are not themselves and this relation is not mechanical nor functional but structural in the dynamic sense of the word, based on the opposite but profoundly inseparable movements of attraction and repulsion. A structure is not just a kind of open system pervious to interference and input from outside, it is itself actively involved in its own transformation, its own majoration and complexification by entering in mutually changing transactions with other structures. A structure is to be understood as a process of formation, transformation and transfiguration, a process which can succeed or fail. The term 'transaction' indicates that structures can act one through the other; they exist or are one through the other. That would be the sense of the adverb 'trans' in this context. A structure does not merely happen, it is not a fact since it is constantly transacting whereby it can succeed or fail since it is a process of configuration of transformable non fixed moments or elements, which are geared in themselves towards growth and decay. Consequently the structure remains fleeting, transitional (on the way or under way) and transitory. Dissolution and decline combine with consolidation and growth. It is multilayered since it co-creates itself by fusing mutable layers of elements from inside and outside. Therefore the strife towards growth and majoration can decrease partly because of insufficient input from outside but also as a consequence of periodically diminished or deficient receptivity. It does not maintain its

coherence by mere self-preservation but by incorporating creative potentialities in and from a given situation. It is disposed then towards self transcendence but this drive towards self realization is co-creative and its achievement or accomplishment remains always situated in the future. If it arrived at a static state of achievement, if it became a fact, then it would cease to become, it would not be co-creative any more, it would dissolve or would fall down to the level of a system, a closed and dead network of relations. This co-creative structuring process is also at work in dialogue and in existential communication where meaning is not merely shared but co-created by the participants.

Communication theory retains the cybernetic model of information which itself stands as the mother of all theory in social sciences. According to this theory, language is a system of signs used for communication. Not only is language conceived as a system but the users themselves are as sender and receiver separate, discreet, different but fixed elements in the communication process. In fact, sender and receiver are subjects in the technical sense of the word, subjects equipped with a consciousness in which they are able to receive the outside world only in the form of representations. So in a communicative process are related two consciousnesses which have only a representation of each other, the process relates two representations and not two realities, not two beings. And they can be substituted for one another in the communicative process. Here of course solipsism rears its ugly head. Or otherwise individuals fall victim of the tragic dialectics of the master and the slave. Communication then becomes a slinging match. This war of words takes also place in the so called psychoanalytical communication where the therapist calls the shots and always enters into the dialogue firmly seated on his own theoretical hobby-horse, understanding his patient better than he would be able to do himself.

At the outset I said that communication is best understood as a structural phenomenon, not of course in the sense of a structured and carefully planned process but as a transaction, in the sense that the participating agents act one through the other, so that a real trans-action takes place through both. In that sense the process is complex and multilayered. The first level is that of signaling and signalization, the use of signs in order to convey or transmit a message. The canonical examples are the road signs or signs in airports and other public places. Its effectiveness is based on the unequivocal connection between signifier and signified. Only knowledge of the code is required and of the rules of combination in order to establish successful, unequivocal communication. However, the better the code is respected the better it can be used to deceive. And it can also be willfully ignored or abused. This level of communication is only effective if the realm in which it is used, or its horizon, has been agreed upon, if we

have come to an agreement about the validity and signification of the signs we are going to use. In other words: the possibility of agreement precedes the establishment of the signs and codes used, the agreement creates its means which do not preexist to the agreement and do thus not constitute its condition of possibility. Here communication is not more than an arrangement or set of arrangements which will be valid inside a specified realm or situation. But a specific situation itself is not, in Wittgensteinian parlance, all that is the case, and we must be able to engage in a debate on the situation or horizon in which a fact or thing becomes relevant or inside which horizon one has to approach a fact or event in order to establish its meaning. Communicating then entails necessarily a feeling for how we are going to deal with a situation or fact or how we are busy dealing with it. Each communication must entail indications on its mode or nature. But all these levels of communication can in some or other way be analyzed and formalized. That's what theoreticians do: they approach the phenomenon of communication from outside and as already there and construct a formal model which would be sufficiently abstract to accommodate all particular instances of communication. Once the constructing job is done the model is then substituted for the particular situations which in fact are always lived or experienced and not always consciously acted out. In other words communication exists, is an existential reality which preexists to the means which existent beings constantly recreate or find to effectuate or enact it.

These ways and means certainly have partly to be learned and are partly conventional but here lies the fundamental problem: once we have learned how to act in the manner society expects us to act as prescribed in such and such a situation we can fake it. All formalization of communication in fact kills it by substituting the model for the reality of communication. This reality can not be taken care of by the cybernetic model and then to base existential real and lived communication on that model is absurd or perverse. Not only is its use to manipulate and seduce immoral but that type of communication is in the process of filling up the public space, to poison the ambiance in which we live, sucking up our private time and filling it with successive bits of emptiness.

The horizon in which the phenomenon of communication is treated here prompts now the question what language as 'word' contributes to the enactment of true communication. This question does not concern the other 'de jure' but considers him as a given reality. Communication is possible but only as an encounter between existing living beings which are there for all to see and to feel and to love and to hate. A transcendental subject does not really exist, it is a logical construct, nor does an impersonal psyche exist but in the mind of a theoretician. The question of the other is relatively young in the history of western thought; it became topical with the formulation of the

cogito as the master of himself as of the world, origin of all evidence and certainty, sole initiator of meaning. But then where are the others? Do they really exist outside the representation we have of them? The answer simply is that we did not make our own consciousness; we are not at the origin of our own consciousness. If we are, then only as a consequence of the encounter between two persons. We are not because we think. In any case what Descartes meant by 'cogitare' is certainly more than the mere 'computare' which any well programmed computer can do. A living being is the realm of its own activity that it is self-affective, and an existent being is always becoming (growing or declining) in exchange with the 'other'. A consciousness does not exist in and by itself, it is inextricably linked to a body, it can not get out of its body. The question concerning the relation between consciousnesses is a logical question 'de jure', but the fact of interpersonal relations does not depend on the 'de jure' answer to the question concerning their theoretical conditions of possibility. The reality of communication is already there in my mind or soul by the mere fact that all thought, all cogitation (Descartes meditations are an interior dialogue) is dialogue, encounter with oneself and on this basis does the encounter with the other become possible. I find myself and therefore I can find the others.

The genesis of communication and ultimately of speaking is situated in the individual body which was for some time part of another body without however living in or with it in total symbiosis. Right from the beginning, our emerging self centers around a permanent core, we are cyclically around ourselves not in symbiosis with the other but in exchange, in an existential exchange or communication. We are neither totally ensnared in a network of relations nor are we completely encapsulated in ourselves and separated from the rest in our own watertight compartment where the rest only penetrates in the form of representations. Moreover our consciousness or our mind are not there only to think: from the outset and first of all we feel and we feel our self feeling or sensing, right from the start we have felt presence in and around us. And this feeling or sense of presence is not something like a 'being-with' which is an impersonal feature of the Da-sein. We are not a transcendental consciousness nor are we a Da-sein which right from the start would be condemned to inauthenticity. We are neither a call centre nor a transmission satellite. What are we? As a structural self we become.

We exist as a structure since our conception and in order to know who we are we must take into account our own becoming inside our interpersonal life world<sup>6</sup>. Several periods can be observed in that becoming. In order to understand the personal and inter-subjective self as structure it is useful to understand the word 'becoming' as a compound of the verbs 'to come' and 'to be'. We come to be continuously in the lived time of our being in a common world with the other. As living we need the other to

come to be our self and we can not be without the other. That basis is there since our conception. Needless to say we not conceive my self. As an embryonic cell we are a centre of experience, of observation, differentiation and action, a centre or an intimacy (in fact one should talk here in terms of 'intimacy') where differentiation and self-establishment takes place during time. This time, as lived, is not merely serial or sequential but is essentially rhythmical therefore the term 'periods' can best characterize our becoming. The word 'rhythm' ought to be understood here in its original sense of the way in which beings become and take form, elaborate their structure amidst or among other structures. All living beings develop and become (or come to be) rhythmically or cyclically. They go through periods of less or more intense receptivity, intensity which has an influence on the importance of outside input to my becoming but all input is essentially contingent. No two existing beings are the same, not even identical twins, since an ambiance is never encountered with same intensity by all those who participate in it. Our emergent self organizes itself rhythmically around and in tension with the initial core which consolidates itself in the experience of being together. This being together is a positive achievement, not a negative or passive failure in differentiating between self and other. From there on the self becomes interpersonal and feels or senses that its own experience is also present in the other, since he reacts accordingly and the self senses that it can 'provoke' the other. The becoming of the self continuously unifies the successive periods of core or nodal self, inter-subjective self and finally the verbal self. The voice is right from the start a decisive factor in this unifying and consolidating process but as soon as we can articulate our becoming our communication with the other becomes more complex. It is important to stress that both process and result of emerging as a self are experienced and that the innate capacity of unifying sensory experience forms the basis for affective experiences and that all these experiences have their own rhythm. Differentiation of sensation comes with the development of the verbal self.

This emergence is the result of self-agency (one is the enactor of one's own acting potentiality), self-coherence and self-affectivity, in the form of a lived story of one's own development which gives a sense of continuity and permanent coherence. But self-expression in the verbal self is also a period where experience and its expression can be dissociated, and then its unity must find confirmation in dialogue. Meaning or sense, then, is not in the self, the single self is not the initiator of language and speech, nor is it to be found only in the other, it becomes amongst both as that about which they can convene, literally come together (*con-venire*), through dialogue. The latter is also a structure and, as all structures do, can succeed or fail. Ambiance and the right intensity of receptivity play a vital role in that regard.

The spoken word opens up the realm where existential communication can become. However the vitality of the spoken word makes language effective but also prone to misunderstanding, especially if we are only satisfied with repeating preexisting phrases and thereby stagnate. Since we are becoming, our spoken word must also become, must be the invention of the right way of encountering the other. We will have to reinvent words and expressions and phrases in the concrete and unique situation where we become together. I do not find words for the other or with him but we both find them one through each other. Our articulated expression is then originary; it is the articulation of insight in our common situation. Here, signification of terms is not enough: tonality of the voice as well as rhythm and figurative use of words go beyond the codified or codifiable aspects of discourse. We have to and can 'find' in the poetic sense of the word the way in which to enter and remain in dialogue. This verb 'to find' in this context corresponds to the 'trobar' of the troubadours, the 'trobar' of the poet who seeks and finds the apt expression. In this case, expression is not merely a statement about one or other feeling but the manifestation of the resonance of the other and the world in the participants. Individual terms in themselves say nothing, they sound and that is all. They become 'word' in the movement, tonality and rhythm of the voice where the possibility of meaning and of understanding becomes reality. Understanding here means to stand under and amidst meaning. So the existential communication emerges in an ambiance through what can be called 're-verbe-ration', the rhythmical articulation of the situation's resonance in the spoken word. In the 'word' there is the possibility to exceed what the language system has to offer by the fact of its institutionalized status. The depth and density and pregnancy (one can understand this word almost literally) of dialogue or poetry goes beyond language which, in the spoken word, undergoes a transfiguration and elevation to the level of existential communication.

The spoken word is also a structure and thus can fail as well as succeed. But in the process itself towards succeeding a true encounter will have taken place. This encounter does not become in a binary relation between two selves but becomes inside an ambiance where the world is not a heap of things anymore but acquires sense or meaning. Space is experienced as vast and time as episodic tension; this is fundamentally an affective experience. Moreover, in the terms and sounds not only does the sense emerge but it becomes visible on the face of the other and there emerges a common intention towards the world. More than the analytical or cognitive content of the words, it is emotivity that structures the dialogue which develops and grows through emotive contagion allowing access and attachment to what is absent, be it events, our past or other selves. Thereby the present becomes profound and in that realm the other helps the self to

become, in searching the other one becomes oneself and this is a reciprocal process. Both selves encourage each other to become more themselves and in doing so become creative or poetic. This does not mean, of course, that we become an instant Sappho or Pindar, an instant Emily Dickinson or Wallace Stevens: we exceed and go beyond the limits of our own verbal potential and invent our own common language in that specific dialogue and situation. Both selves expand in space and time. It is not a mere sharing but a mutual transformation. The emotions and affections precede the words which will be invented to say them according to their rhythm. In such a structural encounter we surmount our fear of the other and transform it in affection. Let's not forget that our relation with the other is paradoxical since it combines attraction and aggression but this dichotomy is surpassed in the succeeding affective ambiance. Something paradoxical ensues since we become more ourselves in giving ourselves up. We become able to give to the other what we do not have ourselves. Another word for this communication would be the word 'love', a stage or episode of ourselves which always exceeds our potential, and in that ambiance the partners really communicate, in that situation communication becomes existential. That potential is the horizon or the depth wherein all the other ways and means of 'communicating' have their roots<sup>7</sup>.

Sense is an encounter between persons who become 'trans' dialogue when they are beyond the representation they have of each other, give up their own central position in the world and allow the other to be in them. This process becomes possible through our voice: we surrender or give ourselves in our voice and the voice penetrates in me and we both reverberate each other not in a mimetic rivalry but in giving ourselves up in the other. This encounter can not be organized, it becomes. However, I know that all this is easier said than done.

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1. The notion of existential communication has been developed by Karl Jaspers (1956). In his philosophy he has attempted to shed light on human existence by exploring those nine tenths of the interpersonal iceberg in which theory is not interested. I find his attempt enlightening and liberating.

2. Rombach has not yet been translated and remains relatively unknown internationally. In contrast to what is being done in the human sciences, where the search has been on for some time now to uncover unconscious and therefore inescapable determinisms he has worked towards a foundation of anthropology for the future, anthropology of co-creativity and freedom. See bibliography.

3. The fragments of Parmenides' poem remain fascinating to say the least; they formulate all the basic questions of western philosophy. In the context of this essay I refer to the injunction that thought must verbalize itself (the text uses the term 'frazein') and one will find thought in a being that formulates his thinking. Being is that towards which thought directs itself. From here the question arises whether the word can lead towards truth and reveal what is.

4. In his *summa* on logic, chapter 14, Ockham discusses universals. He states that the common terms of mental language are universals by nature. In them we find the roots of all universality. Some things are universals by nature but they exist in the mind and they can not be a substance. Every universal is an intention of the soul which is identical with the act of understanding whereby I grasp a universal which is a natural sign, not a conventional one. There are consequently universals by nature. I found the quotation in the history of philosophy published in the *Pléiade*, see bibliography. I was able to consult only the first volume of an English translation of the *Summa logicae*.

5. The paradoxical nature of a system is clearly explained by Barel (1989) and I follow here his line of thought. The idea that all differences are rooted in continuity is not so new at all. In Parmenides' poem, at the end of fragment VIII, Dikè affirms that mortals have misunderstood her sayings by adopting the naming of two figures and separating them. These are on the one hand the ethereal fire of the flame, the favorable fire (faos) and on the other hand, taken for itself, the night (nux) without clarity, thick and opaque. But both are possibilities present in all beings and they do not exist one without the other. The same unity applies to body and mind. Fragment XVI states that the body is a unity of different limbs each with its own movements (krasis meleoon) and in the same manner emerges the mind (noos) in human beings. Thought emerges out of the body, 'phronesis' emerges from 'meleoon fuisis', the 'nature'-fuisis designates the realm out of which all life emerges - of the limbs.

6. This exposition on the emergence of the self and its be-coming are indebted to the psychologist David Stern (1985) and the ethologist Boris Cyrulnick (1995).

7. In philosophical terms one would say that the basis for communication through dialogue can not be situated in an ultimate knowledge which would be anamnesis (Plato), not in common participation in reason (Descartes), not in a preexistent harmony between monads (Leibniz), not in categorical inter-subjective structures (Kant), not in a universality where opposing singularities recognize each other as rationally thinking conscious minds (Hegel), not in belonging to a classless undifferentiated humanity (Marx), not in an intentional but monadic community (Husserl).