

Rossi-Landi between *Ideologie* and *Scienze Umane*

The quarterly journal *Ideologie* was founded in the spring of 1967 by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, the director, and Mario Sabbatini, Giuseppe Di Siena, Augusto Illuminati, Romano Luperini, and Antonio Melis were some of the collaborators. The original editorial offices were located in Rome and Padua, first, and then in Florence. Responsibility for administration and distribution lay with the publisher, La Nuova Italia. Later on, in the Rome office, the journal gave life to a small editorial activity, that took the form of a book series linked to the journal by a common theoretical and ideological perspective. The general policy was "non academic and antispecialist". The journal and the collateral activities ended in 1972.

In the spring of 1979, the first number of another quarterly journal *Scienze umane* appeared. Also founded and directed by Rossi-Landi, it was published in Bari by Dedalo Editrice. The scientific committee consisted of Gaetano Kanisza, Enzo Morpurgo, Emanuele Rivero, Mario Sabbatini, Tullio Tentori and Paolo Valesio. The editorial offices were located in Bari under the direction of Augusto Ponzio. The sixth issue, distributed in December 1980, was its last, even though the journal had aroused considerable interest, had met with the approval of critics and had attracted new collaborators (such as Sergio Moravia, who would have been part of the scientific committee had an attempt to continue publishing the magazine with an editor in Florence, Le Monnier, also not failed).

The first number of *Ideologie* did not include a presentation or an editorial. Editorials and introductions to monographic issues or to sections of issues began to appear with the third issue, in 1968. They were later assembled together in the volume *Edizioni di Ideologie* under the title *Scritti Programmatici di Ideologie* (1972). This volume also contained some of the "Forewords" to the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" published in *Ideologie* starting with the twelfth issue (1970). The goal was to examine, demystify and redefine some of the concepts that are at the basis of the humanities or that are used in political circles and in related theoretical debates. Such topics as "Calcolatori e cervelli", "Corpo", "Progresso tecnologico", "Rivoluzione culturale", "Semiotica", "Razzismo" were among the entries debated.

The first editorial, "Per un rinnovamento della elaborazione ideologica", had already been printed in the journal "Il sedicesimo", 13, in the spring of 1968. On one hand, this editorial reiterated the list of subjects that the journal aimed to cover, and which was published in the first issue of *Ideologie*. On the other hand, it echoed the concept of "ideology" as it was analyzed and defined in the paper by Rossi-Landi entitled "Ideologia come progettazione sociale" with which the first issue had opened.

This is the third notebook of *Ideologie* and it is the first of 1968. As we have begun to show, the journal intends to study contemporary ideologies. This will be done both by analyzing systematic and recurring aspects of ideology in general, starting with its nature and structure, and focusing the attention on several topics which require updating: communist polycentrism and the revisionist trends of Marxism in socialist and capitalist countries; populist and/or trade unionist or corporativistic ideologies (fascism, nationalism, some tendencies of political catholicism); the ideologies of capitalism and economic development; the foundations of Marxian doctrine with respect to the new sciences of man and the ideological character of these sciences, discernible in the manifestation of their "objectivity" and "neutrality" (and it remains to be seen if this obtains only with neo capitalist manifestations or if it is inevitable even at a deeper level). "Ideologie" puts forth a concept of ideology as false thought and false praxis necessarily embodied by some social programming or project. With the latter I mean a design, proposed or only just experienced (knowingly or not), of a historicaly grounded construction of society ("Editoriale", *Ideologie* 3, 1968, p. 1).

In his paper "Ideologia come progettazione sociale" Rossi-Landi brought to completion an important operation: he had managed to go beyond the pseudo-definition of ideology as *false conscience* that, in effect, is a negative evaluation of ideology (the definition is due to an

extrapolation from the particular sense Marx and Engels had given to the concept, going still further back it is due to the pejorative connotation attached to the term coined by the "Ideologues").

Rossi Landi's overcoming rested on the interpretation of ideology as *social programming*. Such an interpretation permitted the preservation and even the theoretical justification of the meaning of ideology as false consciousness. It placed it, however, in a wider horizon that, albeit referring to ideology in general, did not give a merely descriptive or relativistic interpretation. Thus, ideology was characterized (negatively) as "false thought and false praxis" while it was examined as "social programming". This, in turn, made it possible to address the issues in a manner that acknowledged the inevitable historical conditioning of all ideological discourses. At the same time Rossi-Landi's approach was undertaking a project leading to the critique and the dialectic overcoming of false consciousness and false praxis, and, hence, toward the recuperation of a positive evaluation of ideology as *revolutionary* thought.

Ideology was placed by Rossi-Landi within the framework of the totality most relevant to it, i.e. the alienated human condition. It was a move entirely in synchrony with the logical-historical method adopted by *Ideologie*, in opposition to specialistic separatism and the tendency to abstract the object of study from the totality to which it belongs. And it is the method used in the collection of essays Rossi-Landi published in 1968 under the title of *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (now 1992) in his earlier (1967) volume on ideology, and in a subsequent volume of 1972, *Semiotica e ideologia* (now 1994), that expanded his study of ideology by considering it in necessary relation with sign systems. Indeed a doctrine of ideologies can only become reality through the mediation of semiotics, since ideologies transmit themselves by signs that are then scrutinized and demystified through the study of sign systems. By the same token, Rossi-Landi in the foreword (1971) to *Semiotica e ideologia* stated that

a semiotics unsupported by a doctrine of ideologies remains a specialized science, detached from praxis, despite the fact that it presents itself as a general science of signs. [...]

According to Rossi-Landi, the discourse that has ideology as its object fits within a general semiotics understood as a Hegelo-Marxian science, based on the logical-historical method, on the use of abstractions which isolate historically real totalities but also join them to larger totalities, thereby determining the specific structures. Against specialism, the separatism of the various disciplines studying sign systems, semiotics must fulfill itself, Rossi-Landi believed, as a global science that situates the objects of research resulting from necessary, solitary and abstracting operations, in the totality of which they partake. Semiotics takes a stand against the social system of which ideologies and the object of study are a part, thus rendering explicit the social programming that presides over the system. Said differently, semiotics does not only foreground the programs that sustain, even unconsciously, human behavior, but precisely because of its totalizing perspective, because it brings to awareness the place of the programs in the social system—thus making evident their historical and social specification, their political function—affirms itself as a critique of sign systems, as the formulation of new and more human projects.

In this sense, the semiotic study of ideologies transcends the limit usually found in research on social communication (Rossi-Landi in those years had in mind positions such as those of the psychiatrist Schefflen and the semiotician Hall). It is a prime requirement of the semiotic study of the programs of social communication—a study which assumes each sign system as a totality whose functioning does not only depend on "the play of its parts, but on the play of the totality as a part", so that each program would result controlled by a higher social level—it is important, for such a study, to pose the problem of the interests governing the integration of sign systems in a given social organization, the problem of the conditions of power. That is, the problem of ideologies that, in so far as they are ideologies of the dominant class, signify and organize behavior in a certain

manner. In the light of this premise, Rossi-Landi defined the dominant class ("Programmi della comunicazione", an entry in the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico", *Ideologie* 16-17, p. 34, now in Rossi-Landi 1994: 203-204) as the class that owns the control of the emission and circulation of verbal and nonverbal messages constituting a given community.

Semiotics—as it was conceived by Rossi-Landi starting with the 1965 essay "Il linguaggio come lavoro e mercato", which appeared in *Nuova Corrente* and was later republished as a book with the same title in 1968—recognizes the existence of non-ideological spaces of social reality. By unmasking the ideology that underlies—both in the realm of common behavior and in the scientific or literary realm—what is presented as "natural", "spontaneous", as "a given", as "realistic", semiotics shows the inescapable placement of every behavior either in the program of the maintenance and reproduction of the class society, or in the program of its critique and of its undoing. And thus it becomes dealienating, revolutionary praxis.

An illegitimate use of abstraction and the relation between "abstract object" and "totality" consists in believing that an abstract object carries and exhausts the characteristics of a totality otherwise ignored or left in the dark. As Rossi-Landi shows in "Note di semiotica", originally published in 1967 in *Nuova Corrente* and later in the 1972 book *Semiotica e Ideologia*, a fallacy of this type occurs when one does not distinguish between semiology and semiotics. The choice of "semiotics" to indicate the general science of signs in the place of "semiology" does not depend purely on terminological preferences. Semiology as a study of sign systems—post and translinguistic—cannot be confused with semiotics as a general science of all types of signs. By avoiding the identification of semiotics with semiology so defined, the study of signs frees itself from semiological glottocentrism. For its own part, linguistics remains a separate glottological science up to and until its connection with the general science of signs reveals itself to be in fact extrinsic as to the specification of its object and the determination of its method of analysis. To semiotics Rossi-Landi also devoted an entry in the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" (n. 12, pp. 38-44.)

Within a perspective according to which semiotics is the theoretical site where the specialization of the separate sciences is overcome, Rossi-Landi proposed to take in consideration the relations between production and verbal exchange and material and production exchange:

My attempt aimed at bringing together two totalities, that of linguistic production and that of material production in a greater totality, so as to disclose some of the structures of this - greater totality. (Rossi-Landi 1994: 288).

Thus, it is in this direction that Rossi-Landi's research proceeds from *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, 1968—the title already shows the intent to consider together the two characteristics of human being as *loquens* and *laborans*—to *Linguistics and Economics* of 1975 and the essays of his last book, *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*, published in 1985. His plan was, in one sense, to develop the Marxian approach to commodities as a communicative fact and not as a relation between things. But to the extent that this approach enabled him to consider political economy as a part of semiotics, Rossi-Landi was also able to study linguistic phenomena in accordance with the categories of the science of economics in its Ricardian-Marxian phase. Unlike marginalistic economy, this allowed him to take reflexion on the exchange and linguistic use (the level of linguistic market) one step further and to focus on the social relations of linguistic production (the social relations of linguistic work).

Continuing in this vein, Rossi-Landi devoted an important and lengthy essay which appeared in *Ideologie* 16-17 in 1972 (pp. 43-103) to the study of the relation between material work and linguistic work. The essay was later republished in *Linguistics and Economics*, and is now also available in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*. More specifically, Rossi-Landi's goal was to

study the relation between material artifacts and linguistic artefacts by way of a method of analysis that he referred to as "homologic method".

This method consists not in identifying immediate and superficial relations of resemblance, as is done in analogy, but in identifying homologies, that is, resemblances of a structural and genetic order between objects considered as separate and associated with different fields of knowledge. Material and linguistic artefacts, despite their apparent separation and different disciplinary provenance, can be considered as parts of the same totality because they are the result of human work. Thus, the homologic method contributed to the critique of the hypostatization of different parts existing separately from the totality to which they constitutively belong. In so doing it also aided and abetted the discussion about the surpassing of separatism in the sciences.

The homological element breaks with specialization: it obliges one to keep in mind different things at the same time, it disturbs the independent play of separate sub-totalities, and calls for a vaster totality, whose laws are not those of its parts. In other words, the homological method is an antiseparatist and reconstructive method, and, as such, unwelcomed by the specialists (*Ideologie* 16-17, 1971: 62; now Rossi-Landi 1985: 53).

The homology between material productions and linguistic production which Rossi-Landi discovered and attentively analyzed can today be confirmed by the more recent developments in cybernetics. As Rossi-Landi himself observed in a seminar which took place in Bari in April 1985:

One can ascend along what I called the homological scheme of production up to a certain point, where an incredible thing happens, which is that the two productions merge one into the other. This is a thing of the last few decades, because in the production of the computer, a hardware, in the technical language, that is a material body whose elaborated matter is constitutive of the computer, combines with a software, that is, a program, an ensemble of logically expressible linguistic relations merge. Therefore the non-linguistic, the objectual and the linguistic of a high definition of elaboration have merged one into the other almost under our very eyes." (Rossi-Landi 1985b: 171)

In the 1967 essay that opened the first issue of *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi placed ideology within its appropriate totality—the alienated human situation—and examined it with respect to two other components of the same totality: false conscience and false praxis. Ideology, Rossi-Landi maintained, thought of in reference to the two latter objects could be described as social programming.

Starting with the specification that the reality of alienation is socio-historical, Rossi-Landi considered ideology on the basis of the following hypothesis:

In the complex exchange there is between nature and man and between man and man, during which man has slowly become something other than nature and is conscious of such differentiation, some real fundamental operations must have become lost or confused and some fictitious fundamental operations must have been introduced: as a result of which the course of civilization, including the theories that man himself started to form in the so-called historical period, in the strict sense of the word, has not been what it could have been without those losses, those confusions and those intrusions. That is, as they say, the course of civilization has falsified itself. [...] Alienation is a falsification, a general malfunction in the formation and the unfolding of history (*Ideologie* 1: 3)

As I have mentioned, Rossi-Landi's merit on the question of the specification of the concept of "ideology" consists in having shown that, although one may say that ideology is false consciousness, it does not exhaust itself in the latter. The two concepts do not coincide. Rossi-Landi identifies two types of differences between them: a *difference of degree* and a *qualitative difference*.

The first consists of the fact that false consciousness is a less developed and determined ideology, ideology is the more developed and determined consciousness. From this viewpoint, the relationship between false conscience and ideology corresponds to the relationship between consciousness and thought: there is false conscience at a low level of conceptual elaboration while

ideology occurs at a higher level. More exactly, ideology is a discursive rationalization, that is, a theoretic reordering of an attitude or state of false consciousness.

The second difference, the qualitative one, concerns the relationship between ideology and signs, and, in particular, the use of verbal language: ideology is false consciousness that uses sign elaboration and verbal forms in a specific language. Both differences may be summarized by stating that ideology differs from false consciousness in so far as it is false thought. Rossi-Landi observes:

this corresponds to the fundamental intuition of Hegel, that puts the entire elaboration of the "theoretical" spirit somewhere between consciousness and thought, that is, between intuition and representation. It is in the second phase of representation, the imagination, that the sign surfaces and it is in its third phase, memory, that language is formed.

And in parenthesis he adds:

(In Hegelian terms, it is possible, therefore, to have a phenomenology of false consciousness; of ideology, a psychology—and perhaps today one could say, a semiotics; phenomenology may only concern itself with that which precedes language).

But ideology, according to Rossi-Landi is not only explained in terms of false consciousness and false thought. It is also false praxis. In the case of both false consciousness and false thought one is dealing with a separation of the praxis and vice-versa. Therefore, ideology is false thought and false praxis. The dialectic between false consciousness, false thought or ideology, on one hand, and false praxis, on the other, is connected to the fact that ideology manifests itself as social programming. In order to understand ideology, once again it becomes necessary to consider it in the totality to which it belongs. According to Rossi-Landi,

One is always truly dealing with a separation of the parts—and in this case originally two parts—of a totality. The totality is grasped in two different phases of its complications, at the consciousness level and then at the level of thought. Reflecting on its immediate past of false consciousness (and false praxis of that consciousness) and finding itself placed against a false praxis or even under the urgency of these factors, thought tries to save itself by rationalizing procedures that at least give it the illusion that it is a member, an active member, of a less lacerated family. The definition I am elaborating, therefore, is not in any way that of a thought which would be false because separated from praxis, and that is all. It is also, ipso jure, the definition of false praxis, because it is separated from thought. [...] There is no thought that would take pleasure on being on its own, independently of its relationships with praxis, in the property of not being false: so that on itself, and only on itself alone, it would be possible to measure and denounce false thought. (*Ideologie* 1: 7)

Every ideology is social programming and the consideration of the dialectic between conscience and praxis allows Rossi-Landi to specify the difference between an innovative or revolutionary planning and a conservative or reactionary planning. Thought, action and the social programs that tend to draw together consciousness and praxis are revolutionary; the social programming that tends to create obstacles to this is conservative.

The editorial in the third issue, "Per un rinnovamento dell'elaborazione ideologica", rehearses once again the concept of ideology as false thought and false praxis necessarily realizing themselves in some social programming, or in short, in a design proposed or suffered, consciously or not, having as its goal the historical construction of society. The doctrine of ideologies is presented as a general science of the socio-historical domain. And this is expressed by the very subtitle of the journal - "Quaderni di storia contemporanea"—that appeared in the inaugurating issues. In the editorial, Rossi-Landi confirmed the ideological character of the journal, which he saw as working toward an innovative, revolutionary, disalienating programming. In his text he, then, revisits Marxian critique, inserting it within the dialectic of its particular totality, i.e. capitalist society in the phase of high industrial development, and enlarges on it, developing it as critique of the superstructure and complementing the critique of the economic structure. In his analysis, Marxian thought is, therefore,

an exhaustive critique of the techniques of the economic, social, psychological and linguistic integration elaborated by the system. In this fashion, ideological demystification becomes closely linked not only with the realistic description of the totality of the neocapitalist system, but also with the conscious work of ideological elaboration. To summarize all of this, the editorial of the third issue of *Ideologie* suggested one phrase: critique of the humanities. In hindsight the choice underscores the continuity, despite the many differences, between *Ideologie* and the other journal Rossi-Landi would later also found, which was called *Scienze umane*.

The editorial of issue 9-10, entitled "Rivoluzione e studio", describes in 1970 several tendencies of Western Europe's neo-capitalist society, locating them in the total setting of the world political situation. Those tendencies today seem fairly evident given their stage of development. They are: the increase in capitalistic stability, the progressive extension of social democracy, the eclipse of communism, the internal subdivisions of the working class with respect to new types of work, a greater separation between producer and product.

On the latter score, particularly insightful are the observations on the progressive softening of the direct finalization of individual activity toward production, leading to the phase in which activity appears to be detached from production. This is imputed to organizational and technological developments of the supra-individual production in neo-capitalist society that not only frees individuals from the daily necessity of production, but increases, amplifies and makes even more mystifying the obligation to be productive. So much so that it creates the illusion that it might be possible to live without having to work, without being immediately productive, without being forced to work by an identifiable owner on whom one directly depends.

In relation to such aspects—made blatant today by the growth of the service sector and, especially, by developments in communication and automatization—it is worth recalling that in those years Rossi-Landi was giving prominence in his essays to the labor dimension implicit in language and to the study of the relationships between signs and social reproduction. Human beings also work linguistically, and the work does not always unfold in a known and intentional manner.

In various entries of the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" ("Lavoro e attività", "Ominazione", "Scambio non-mercantile", "Strutture del lavoro"), reprinted in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985), Rossi-Landi had analyzed the concept of work, examined the very important role of work in the process of hominization, and dwelt on the difference between work and activity. He had pointed out that if the distinction between work and activity has to do with the fact that the former, unlike the latter, is planned, intentional and inscribed into a program, one must however not believe that there cannot be work without awareness, without an understanding of the goals and the programs. Work is the execution of programs, and this is what makes it different from activity: but these programs may be conscious or unconscious. This has obvious implications for the notion of "alienating work" and for that of "linguistic alienation" ("alienated linguistic work"), and it sends back to the Marxian analysis of work in capitalist society. But it also concerns the possibility of speaking, as Freud did, of "dream work". Admitting the possibility of a labor whose program is unknown allows one, according to Rossi-Landi, to envisage "a zone of special contact for the Marxian use of Freud or the Freudian use of Marx" (Rossi-landi, "Lavoro e attività" *Ideologie* 15 (1971): 22).

During the time he worked for *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi wrote his most important texts, which he rewrote and enlarged in subsequent works. A long essay on the conception of language according to Sapir and Whorf, with direct reference to the study of native Amerindian languages (Navajo, Hopi, Wintu), "Teorie della relatività linguistica" (*Ideologie* 4: 3-69), was later republished in his 1972

volume, *Semiotica e ideologia*, and in English, as a book entitled *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity* in 1973.

His interest in the theory of ideology resulted in the book *Ideologia*, published in 1978 and expanded in 1982. Of particular value in this book is the section on "Sign Systems, Ideologies and the Production of Consensus", because of the connection it establishes between Rossi-Landi's concept of ideology and Gramsci's thought. According to Rossi-Landi, Gramsci, although in pre-semiotic terms, had already identified the role that sign systems play in social reproduction and in the relationship between "structure" and "superstructure". It may be said that Rossi-Landi's meditation on ideology represents the development of Gramscian intuitions (on the relation Rossi-Landi/Gramsci, cf. Ponzio 1991: 205-291). Placing the Gramscian concept of The New Prince in semiotic terms Rossi-Landi wrote in *Ideologia*:

The fundamental structure of the New Prince is that of the co-present verbal and nonverbal sign systems, reorganized among themselves by the force of social programming. Thus, and in the manner indicated, a social practice maintained by political power may promote and carry out a new ideology. (1982: 76-77)

The phase subsequent to *Ideologie* in the career of Rossi-Landi is marked, as indicated, by his involvement with *Scienze umane* (which lasted two years). The text entitled "Ai lettori" which opened the first number of *Scienze umane* (April 1979), after having pointed out that in Italy there still was no journal that focused on the human sciences interdisciplinarily, emphasized the ideal continuities between this magazine and the work undertaken between 1967 and 1972 by *Ideologie*. Rossi-Landi promised to succeed in carrying out, even in this new magazine, the type of interdisciplinary probing that had formed, under the aspect of a critique of the social sciences, the most significant and lasting aspect of *Ideologie*. The end of the publication of *Ideologie* was thus related to the end of the historical moment in which it was created and to the cessation (and in some cases the perversion) of near and distant ideological models which, during the years of *Ideologie*, had seemed reasonable to let oneself be inspired by or, at least, be able to refer to.

Today *Ideologie* would have to be re-examined in the light of the historical climate the beginning of the 1990s represent. By comparing these two journals, both no longer existing, it could perhaps be the case that, more than the "scientific and concentrated formulation" of *Scienze umane*, one will end up missing the theoretical-ideological commitment that animated *Ideologie*.