Herman Parret

Communication, Manipulation, Seduction. The Pragmatics of Transparency

1   The foundational meaning of the notion of *transparency* is optico-aesthetic. *Transparency* is "translucidity", which is a physico-optical phenomenon, and this is why "transparency" is opposed to "opacity"—it concerns an essential property of light in its relation to the physical and resilient nature of a material. The etymology of the term *transparency* is more instructive, I would argue, because it adds an important definitional component: *trans-* means "beyond", "through", and *parere*, to appear, seem, and exhibit. This etymology reflects an ontological orientation: transparency leads through the *veil* of appearances towards the real, from seeming to being. We will see how this kind of transparency becomes the target of a ferocious critique by Nietzsche. And yet, in classical aesthetic theories, we find nothing but an apology of transparency: according to the common view, the *Felix aestheticus* is fascinated by the "transparent" and ideal forms through and beyond the obstruction of materials, and by translucid and sparkling colors, which are infinite in depth. Proust writes in *A la recherche du temps perdu* in his portrayal of Albertine: "On certain days, thin, with a grey complexion, a sullen air, a violet transparency slanting across her eyes such as we notice sometimes on the sea "[1]. Disseminating, flowing through, absorbing, the force of transparency transforms the pigment layers into surface passages; transparency cleaves the solid, renders materials vulnerable, and establishes the "real" in its virginal splendor. The whole history of literature and of the arts is filled with such poetry praising the gift of light, and the incalculable powers of the eye, vision, and visibility, attributing these magnificent plastic privileges to transparency.

        However, in the margin of this oculocentrism and notwithstanding these odes to translucidity, one can discover small signs of an aesthetics of the *veil*, of veiling and unveiling, the veil that covers the clear and translucid route to the essence, the so-called "real" so powerfully unmasked by transparency. We find examples of the veil obstructing the space between source and target, between the eye and its correlate in matter, even where we do not expect them, for instance, in the *Quattrocento* where Leon Battista Alberti glorifies *vaghezza* in his *De Pictura*

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[1] M. Proust, .In Search of Lost Time, vol. 2, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), 1009.

(1435). Alberti, a geometer, Renaissance theoretician of perspective and hero of plastic rationality, exploits the idea of *vaghezza* in order to neutralize the hypostasis of transparency. *Vaghezza*—from the Latin *vagus*, "vague", "imprecise", a term that in Albertian aesthetics denotes an *indeterminate charm*, something like a "grace"—veils the force of transparency.[2] *Vaghezza* has to be distinguished from *bellezza*, the beauty that is in essence optical and founded on the impact of light, the solidity of the real, and the glory of the visible. *Vaghezza*, by contrast with *bellezza*, suggests fluid transactions, the confusion of colors, and the incantation of smooth movement and continuous metamorphosis. This subtle haziness, this *sfumato*, which we know well from Florentine painting, creates the charm of grace, and this "charm of grace" is exactly what Alberti suggests with the idea that *vaghezza* undermines all transparency. *Vaghezza seduces*; in the following pages, I will try to grasp the anthropo-aesthetic nature of seduction, of the wandering of the soul seduced by the object of desire. In fact, Alberti writes, *vaghezza* is the attractive grace moving the *vagabondo*, the subject that is moved, lightly, from one place to the other, seduced by seduction. Transparency always invites to *finalize* and paralyze definitively all wandering; *vaghezza*, on the other hand, invites to eternal movement, to fluidity and confusion, to metamorphosis, to the lightness of tones, and to undecided and vaporizing forms. Only a radical questioning of transparency, which stiffens and paralyzes, can protect the significance of *vaghezza* as a veil. This is why I place my criticism of transparency under the patronage of Alberti…

…And of Nietzsche, the defender of the veil of Maya[3], and the great enemy of the impulse for transparency. This drive for transparency cultivates the will to cross appearances in search of the essence, the origin, the truth-with-a-capital-T. Thus, the whole history of metaphysics, according to Nietzsche, is a route towards *coincidence* with the field of the origin, where the essential displays itself in full transparency. François Jullien recently published a brilliant essay entitled *Dé-coïncidence. D'où viennent l'art et l'existence*[4], where he proclaims the "tomb of coincidence", the radical accusation of this drive for transparency pushing towards

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[2] L.A. Alberti, *De Pictura*, 1435, in French translation *De la Peinture,* Paris, Macula Dédale, 1992, p. 201, where Jean Louis Schefer translates *vaghezza* as *grâce*.

[3] See my article, "Histoires et images du voile de Maya", in *Lexio. Il sistema del velo/Système du voile* (dir. Massimo Leone), 19, 2016, 309-334.

[4] François Jullien*, De-coïncidence. D'où viennent l'art et l'existence,* Paris, Grasset, 2017.

the triumph of coincidence with the ungraspable origin dissimulated behind appearances. However, writes Jullien, it is de-coincidence that makes art, as well as existence in all its negativity and obscurity, possible. De-coincidence liberates *vaghezza*, this lightness and indecision, this grace that makes the subject a *vagabondo*, and the subject's life an *existence*. With this idea of *de-coincidence* we are obviously close to Nietzsche's thinking. And Nietzsche expresses sarcasm vis-à-vis the monstrous drive for ontological transparency.

In the present article, I would like to develop this Nietzschean strategy with respect to a specific domain—namely, communication and discursive interaction. Here too one can note a constant temptation to break through language in its textuality, and a belief that the original significance of language fragments stands to be discovered *behind* textual appearance, somewhere behind and beyond the flesh of the words and the concreteness of communicative sequences. This "fundamentalist" belief disapproves of the materiality of the words and the mundanity of discourse in its sensible presence. I quote a phrase from Nietzsche's *Philosopher's Book*: "What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically […] truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that is what they are, metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power. […] We still do not know where the urge for truth comes from"[5]. As François Jullien suggests, art, and indeed human existence, is only possible when we promote de-coincidence with regard to the phantasm of the transparency of the flesh of the discursive universe. We as humans are conceited with pride, Nietzsche affirms, and we forget that we are tied to a human, an all too human, perspective, which is a perspective oriented by words and by the significance of the discursive universe. Only Hegel's Absolute Spirit is perfectly transparent, and this is why we, like Nietzsche, will always clash so violently with Hegel. Psycho-anthropological subjects manage to understand the meaning of discursive sequences under certain constraints. These constraints are fruitful and semantic *opacity* even creates an important intersubjective value and quality. Texts impose themselves *a priori* on our minds; we are not the masters of our words. Moreover, notwithstanding this *vaghezza* and this veil of Maya, we are still aggregated like a herd of humans, and we can still live peacefully in

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[5] F. Nietzsche, in Walter Kaufman, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche* (New-York, Viking Press, 1954), 46-47.

community. We have to admit and assimilate the fact that the semantics of our words is not transparent, and our communication is conducted essentially by rhetorical strategies of dissimulation. Indeed, our words are mobile appearances veiled like Maya and marked by *vaghezza*. We never touch the absolute by means of language, and this is why we should distrust the drive for transparency so greatly. Thus, Alberti and Nietzsche—a strange pairing, indeed…— bring us to the threshold of the analysis that I wish to develop in this article—namely, a "pragmatics of transparency".

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As with so many idealistic and naïve anthropologies, canonical theories of communication, in philosophy of language and linguistics, are truly euphoric about the *transparency* of the communicative process. They look at communication as an open interaction between sender and receiver, as a process of sending and receiving a message, with the message being semantically untouched in all its transparency. Communication then is seen as a bilateral transfer of information, and no obstacle of any kind, whether psychological or sociological, can function as a shield or filter by deforming the original informative intention of the speaker. Fortunately, pragmatics has tarnished this kind of naiveté, precisely by exploiting exactly the methodological notion of *strategy*. Sender and receiver have a *polemological* relationship, and "strategic rationality" is actually what defines a "reasonable" community. Some consider the strategies of reason to be calculations; others consider them to be manipulations and maneuvers. These two determinative variants reappear in the classical definitions of "game" in game theory, where games are viewed as sets of strategies by their very nature. The conversational partner, as a *strategist-player,* plays a societal game. The polemological horizon explains why it is indeed possible for a conflict to be resolved in the same way as a societal game. Hence, we could elaborate a "logic of strategies" that respects essential *fuzziness* and leaves room for indeterminism. In this sense, discursive interactions are strategic games with uncertain and ambiguous interpretable semantic messages.

Conversational logic, as a branch of pragmatics, has been of great importance as an analytic pattern for these conversational games by formulating so-called "conversational maxims" or *a priori* principles that make understanding

possible in a linguistic community, even when the semantics of the transferred message is fundamentally fuzzy and non-transparent. Let us consider Grice's *Cooperative Principle,* Davidson's *Principle of Charity*, and Quine's *Principle of Humanity.* According to the *Principle of Cooperation*, we have to presuppose that the player has the will to collaborate with the partner; according to the *Principle of Charity*, the player must accept and assume that the "move" of the dialogic partner is valid; according to the *Principle of Humanity*, the player must accept or assume that player and partner have some values in common, and that the partner is conscious of this fact. Without the acceptance of these principles, there is no "reasonable" being-together. Habermas has shown that these principles do not require empirical demonstration but can be presupposed in a Kantian categorical and transcendental manner, in order to establish an ethics of reasonableness within a discursive community. In a sense one could say that these conversational principles *force* the speaking subjects to *transcend* the non-transparency of the semantics of their utterances by installing a quasi-ethical attitude within the interacting community.

There is a local and empirical approach to way of analyzing the workings of another "transcendental" conversational principle—namely, the *Principle of Sincerity.* Ever since Austin, speech act theory has taken great interest in a whole range of so-called *indirect* speech acts and in *indirect* communication more generally[6]. Austin and John Searle's analysis of communicative indirection is based on the centrality of the *sincerity condition* and its possible violations. In a sense, an analysis in Austinian terms is disarmingly simple. Austin's question is always the same: is it possible to add a *performative prefix* to a proposition claiming to be a speech act? Let us take a closer look at speech acts such as *to hint*, *to suggest*, and *to insinuate.*

To HINT is to display, overtly, speaker A's intention to let hearer B know that the expressed proposition contains information by means of which B will be able to find an answer to the problem that B is facing, assuming that B has access to additional information. Such is the case for riddles, where a question or utterance by speaker A gives an indication concerning the relevance of a piece of information

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[6] The contents of sections 2 and 3 reiterate some elements of my paper "Indirection, Manipulation and Seduction in Discourse", in H. Parret (ed.), *Pretending to Communicate,* Berlin, Walter de Gruyter (Coll. Foundations of Communication and Cognition), 1994, 223-238.

for solving a problem. No intention is concealed here, and the informational asymmetry between A and B is only temporary. B should always reasonably be expected to come to a full understanding of what is meant. Moreover, the act of *hinting* uses conventional means, which are accepted by all language users and ensure that the act is easily detectable and clearly recognizable as being different from a simple act of assertion, as well as from acts of suggestion and insinuation.

There is therefore a difference, albeit a minimal one, between the act of hinting and that of SUGGESTING. The person who hints is unconditionally bound to the truth of his or her utterance; the person who suggests is only bound to the *likely truth* of his or her utterance. In the first case, there is a considerable chance that B will recover the final (true) proposition, whereas in the case of a suggestion, whatever is suggested is no more than probable in relation to what is being said, and the inference can reasonably be expected not to hold true.

At any rate, there is a considerable gap between hinting/suggesting, on the one hand, and INSINUATING, on the other. Insinuation, like manipulation, cannot come about *openly* and *explicitly*: speaker A cannot reveal his or her intentions by adding, for instance, the performative prefix "I insinuate that". To be sure, it is incorrect to say that what is being insinuated is always (morally?) reprehensible and that the reprehensible nature of the insinuated proposition is the actual cause of the impossibility of performative prefixation (for instance, a doctor can try to insinuate to a patient that it would be advisable to go on a diet). The fact remains that insinuation is an attempt by A to *make something understood* by B, even if covertly so. The act of insinuation seems to take place when A wants B to know p *without A wanting B to judge* that A wants him or her to know p.

The idea of the discursive act of MANIPULATING moves even more to the extreme end of the scale of unavowability. I am inclined to say that insinuation is already a type of manipulation, but other types of manipulation surpass insinuation in that other sub-intentions, or constellations of sub-intentions, remain covert. Austin and most post-Austinian philosophers continue to insist on the fact that the meaning of a discursive sequence depends on two conditions: its *truth-conditionality* and the *sincerity* of the intentions on which the "felicitous" production of the sequence is based. Intentions are *sincere* when they can be conventionally expressed, for instance, by means of the performative formula.

Hence, *insincerity* concerns a conflict between the speaker's state of mind (psychological state) and the conventionalized discursive action. The *infelicities* of discourse always depend on the insincerity of the speaker's alleged intentions, beliefs, and emotions.

However, Austin and speech act theory have never been able to define SEDUCING in its relation to *manipulating, suggesting, insinuating*, and *hinting*, and this is what I will try to do next. What is *seduction* in communicative interactions, and how should seduction be understood in its relation to the ideal of transparency? A *seducer* is neither a *liar* nor a *manipulator.* Let me try to sketch these truly subtle and delicate definitional distinctions. *The seducer is no liar.* While seduction may be *deceptive*—in that it *deflects, enraptures, and calculates*— it does not deceive in the same way that *mendacity* does. *Lying* is defined as "a conscious modification of the truth" (*Grand Larousse*), and "a false statement made with the intent to deceive" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). We know the logical problem: is the intention to deceive covertly necessary for something to be a lie? Certainly not: a joke can be a "lie", as can irony. A lie is a lie even when the speaker does not know that it is. Moreover, one can lie by force of habit, without having the particular personal intention to deceive anyone. Thus, we arrive at a more adequate definition in terms of a *discursive mask*: one is lying when one *believes* one thing and (consciously) expresses something else. This is the classical definition, given by Augustine and Aquinas: there is no lie without a discursive sequence *contra mentem.* In this definition, the falsity of the expressed proposition is not presupposed— it is only presupposed that the proposition of belief (the "epistemic" proposition) and the proposition expressed on the basis of the communicative intention are not in accordance. However, the *seducer* is not a liar in this sense. This is even an intuitive truth, and we can now see why. We cannot adapt the definitional components of a lie to the phenomenology of seduction. Seduction does not function on the basis of a substantial belief, nor is there any communicative intention in seduction. If there is any intentionality involved, it is not the intention to communicate propositionally.

The seducer is neither a *liar*, nor a *manipulator*. It is a lot more difficult to argue convincingly for the radical conceptual distinction between seduction and manipulation. And yet, it is common to define seduction as a subtype of manipulation. We should note at the outset that manipulative action does not

constitute a unit of *interaction.* Manipulation transforms the receiving agent, though no reciprocity is possible because the receiving agent does not occasion any transformation in the speaking agent *as a result* of the former's transformation. Indubitably, manipulative action is *unilateral* action. And manipulation is an *intentional act par excellence.* The central problem concerns the *unavowability* of the manipulative act. Its intentionality cannot be exposed or admitted. The peculiar structure of *being/appearing* of the act of manipulation can be explained by the fact that a manipulative intention is not *entirely* different from a communicative intention but is, quite on the contrary, a semi-failed communication, a *truncated communicative action.* The specific manipulative intention clearly takes the form of a *route* or a narrative *plan.* The intention of manipulation is not constituted by the specificity of mental contents (which would be grounds for a purely psychological definition of manipulation) but an intersubjectivizing action in the world, identifiable as a chain of events. Manipulation can be characterized as an agent's acting upon other agents, in view of their execution of a given plan. It seems that manipulation is an essential property of the *contractual* structure that is never absent from intersubjective relations. If *polemos*, polemics, is at its origin, contractual pacification is a necessity. Manipulation questions this contractuality: manipulation puts the initial contract at risk and elicits a return to an uncontrollable polemics. This is how manipulation, unlike mendacity, (partially) neutralizes communicative intention, as we have just seen. Manipulation mutilates communication: it cannot be avowed, for, once avowed, it ceases to function. Modally speaking, the manipulator's instigation to action presupposes some cognitive and pragmatic competence—that is, a well-defined will grounded in knowledge and ability; on the other hand, the manipulating party exhibits the ability to act, which is stimulated by the manipulator's impetus to action.

Seduction does not possess any of the prominent characteristics of manipulation listed here. First, it does not imply *jeopardizing a contract* or returning to an original polemics: the *seductive* imposition does not contain any *polemos*, nor does it involve the betrayal of any contract. Second, seduction can for the most part be *avowed* and this avowability in no way affects its intensity. The seductive *secret* and its visibility are intrinsically linked. Seduction presupposes the staging and dramatization of the secret. Ultimately, seduction is not *performative.* One can never be competent at seduction; there are no *expert* seducers. One could

of course object by qualifying Don Juan as the Great Performer, the Expert *par excellence*. This would be to trivialize seduction. The seducer is essentially seduced by seduction and has no internal psychology or real motivation. I argue that neither speech act theory nor modal semiotics has any theoretical relevance for seduction. But what about the *rhetoric* of persuasion and argumentation? Aristotle, for instance, in his conception of rhetoric, hypostatizes rational *persuasion* through the *repression* of seduction. If seduction has to be placed within discursivity, it is based in neither dialectics nor demonstration. Among the three kinds of argumentation discussed in Aristotle's rhetoric, we might at first glance find room for seduction in the *epideictic* genre. *Epideictics* concerns the expression of praise and blame, and according to Aristotle, those who do the praising or blaming aim for beauty, not for utility or justice. And the epideictic genre primarily encompasses the *present*: what the orator praises or condemns is the result of current events. This is why epideictic speech could in principle contain strategies of seduction. Aristotle claims that epideictic rhetoric functions by way of approximations and paralogisms. However, these epideictic attitudes are not based on passions but on *virtues* and virtues are *habits,* characterized by the reasoned choice of the happy middle ground between excess and deficiency. Nothing is less seductive than the habitus of virtue, which is totally apathic and devoid of seductive potential. It seems that the Aristotelian conception of persuasion and argumentation does not allow for any sensitivity to the specific features of seductive imposition. The case is totally different for Plato, and thus I will now say something about Platonic *psychagogia*.

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So far, I have sketched a *pragmatics of transparency*. I have used the tools of speech act theory and conversational logic in order to show that "transparent" communication is a utopian ideal that is never realized in communicative interactions. Discursive intersubjectivity is marked by hints, suggestions, insinuations, manipulations, and on its most subversive level, seduction. The focus on seduction is the cornerstone of a radical criticism of the myth of transparency. Alberti and Nietzsche, *vaghezza* and de-coincidence, show us how the charm and grace of seduction veil any drive for transparency. This is how seduction has been seen since the time of Plato. Seduction is strongly present in Plato's work under several guises and I will only mention two of them: *psychagogia* and *paramuthion.* Strange indeed is my attempt to associate Plato with Nietzsche! Nevertheless, the

Phaedrus we find passages where the art of speech is called *psychagogia*, a way of "capturing the mind" (261a and 271c). Still in the *Phaedrus*, the infatuated man is said to enjoy "his rigid subjection at the service of his beloved" (*paramuthion,* 240d). In this way, two aspects of the relation of seduction are suggested: to seduce is to "capture the soul"; to be seduced is the pleasure that accompanies rigid subjection. We find similar viewpoints in the *Timaeus* about the seduction of food and drink, and in the *Laws* about the bewitchment of the Gods. Plato recalls the Sirens' song in the *Cratylus* (403d) and the *Symposium* (216d). He refers to their magic charm and even praises them in the *Republic*, where a Siren is said to sit atop each planetary circle singing its own note, so as to compose the music of the Spheres. It is striking that, in Plato, seduction can be understood through *melomania*, the love of song, and this is why the Sirens and the Muses can be superimposed.

One could claim that, from an ethical-theological point of view, seduction should be perceived as evil and the seducer should be seen as a corruptor. This is primarily a criticism of the libertine conception of seduction: seduction is thought to be the expression of the will of a subject who manages to master the will of a co-subject through deceit. Subjective desire is said to impose its sovereignty through maneuvers. As Baudrillard reminds us, to "seduce" derives from *se-ducere*, where *se* means "apart", "away from", and has the sense of *separation.* One could say: to seduce is to conduct, to lead aside. Because of the removal, the abduction, the secrecy of what takes place underneath, because of its subterranean efficiency; *subduction* also means *calculation*, as in Cicero. Obviously, the act of leading aside evokes the sharing of a *secret.* Whenever, in its relation to the *aside*, a secret is being shared, the act of subtraction, which is at once an act of salvation, is accomplished as well. *To separate, to divide, to remove* are all meanings of the verb *seducere.* From a psychological standpoint, the seducer is thought of as exerting a kind of fascination over the co-subject, who is to be the "object" of the seducer's action. *Removing* the co-subject from a given place, deflecting it from a given route, the seducer is seduced by seduction, attracts the co-subject, and seduces it. The seducer thus becomes an agent of evil and intrigues; he or she seduces the innocent victim.

By invoking a "logic of seduction", I mean that seduction imposes itself on both parties, the seducing along with the seduced: it is independent of both and

opposed to their intentional and subjective wills. The Sophists make the case that the seducer takes advantage of *kairos*, the "instant". The fascinating charm of seduction emanates from the fact that *kairos* does not contain any universal law, that it does not obey the logic of identity but perpetually contradicts itself. The seducer's charm ought to be wholly indeterminate; it is a charm that results from this openness, this freedom, this emptiness, this submission to *kairos*, the "occasion". I would like to suggest that seduction functions as *derealization* and as *desubjectivation*. *Nothing* is happening because *no one* is acting. The "presence" of *nothing* and *no one* can easily take the form of a *simulacrum*, a *simulation* or *an appearance*. And a phenomenology of appearance—transcending truth and falsehood—naturally brings us to *secrecy* and aesthetics. The seductive space is *paratopical* and *parodic*— as in *parodos,* the trajectory within a paradoxical space. Baudrillard[7] shows very aptly that the strategies of seduction cannot be voiced or revealed because seduction is paratopical, and the illusion that it creates arouses the feeling of being confronted with nothingness. It does so by engaging in a theatrical objective, a *mise en scène,* amplifying simulacra and stratagems. This is how the seducer embodies the charmer, the villain, or even Evil. Ontologically speaking, we are dealing with the *mise en scène* of the battle between being and nothingness.

But I will end my modest phenomenology of seduction here. The Sirens, Scheherazade, Don Juan, Valmont, Lovelace, Johannes, Julien Sorel, the Serpent, and even Christ himself are all seducers who introduce the same paradox, the same paratopics, the same alliance with secrecy… All great cultures, and not only those that pay tribute to the Platonic *psychagogia*, produce seduction. It suffices to think of the Hebrew *jadah*, taken up by Spinoza. And we certainly find seduction among the great oriental and ancient cultures. But I return to Plato and the *Phaedrus*. Socrates and Phaedrus come to the conclusion, during a noon break, that the song-tale is a gift of the gods. Socrates relates the myth of the crickets to the Sirens and their seductive charm. As in the *Cratylus* and the *Republic*, he recalls the *Odyssey*, where it is said that "the Sirens will sing one's mind away on their sweet meadow lolling" (XII, 37-39). And yet, as we read further ahead in the *Odyssey*, the Sirens' clear voices—icons of femininity—are devastating. Seduction is the devastating margin that "captures the soul"—*psychagogia*—and makes it lose all its dialectics,

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[7] Jean Baudrillard, *Les stratégies fatales,* Paris, Grasset, 1983.

all its rhetoric. The seducer, this devastating melomaniac, seduced by seduction, by the seductive object, holds no claims, at least not anymore.

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Why undertake this broad phenomenological analysis of *seduction*? Because seduction is omnipresent not only in literature and in the arts but also, I would argue, in many situations in daily life, even in standard communicative interactions. From the most intimate to the most socialized types of intersubjectivity, seduction is deeply rooted in a qualitative mode of being together. The acceptance of the almost invisible power of seduction offers the best means of tearing down the dangerous myth of transparency. The *pragmatics of transparency*, with the aid of speech act theory and conversational logic, questions the concept of transparent directness in discourse and the possibility of open semantic transmission. Seduction, more than and differently from hinting, suggesting, insinuating, and manipulating, colors discourse with Albertian *vaghezza*, with the Nietzschean veil of Maya, and with Platonic *psychagogia*. Indeed, Alberti and Nietzsche—and Plato as an unexpected accomplice—provided three inspirational means of deconstructing the utopic ideal of transparency in communication.

In conclusion, I could summarize our argument as follows. We started by noting that the foundational meaning of *transparency* is optico-aesthetic: transparency is *translucidity*. The power of the idea of transparency is essentially linked to the privilege of the *eye* and the prestige of the *visibility* paradigm. The deconstruction of the idea of transparency moves us from optico-aesthetics towards a *haptic aesthetics*, where the directness of the light is blocked by Maya's veil, and where the sensible is no longer the correlate of a piercing eye but operates rather as a fuzzy and vague appearance, as haptic flesh. "Touching the real" (as the philosopher and scientist do) then is blind, and this is why *transparency* can pose a methodological and epistemological threat to an adequate analysis of what really takes place in communicative interactions.