

# Interview with Paolo Fabri

## Xavier Ruiz Collantes

**Paolo Fabri** (Rimini, 1939) is one of the leading Italian and European figures in the field of semiotics. A professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Bologna, he has also taught at the universities of Florence, Urbino, Palermo, Paris (University of Paris V) and California (UC San Diego). He has developed an intensive schedule of national and international activity in publications (magazines, recompilations) and research work on language and communication. In Spanish, his work includes *Táctica de los signos. Ensayos de Semiótica*. (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1995) and *El giro semiótico*. (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2000.)

**Xavier Ruiz Collantes (X.R.C.)**. Semiotics is a discipline that experienced extraordinary growth in the 1970s, during the golden age of structuralism. I have the feeling it has since paled somewhat and is currently in search of an identity. So my first question is to focus the subject: what is the identity of semiotics, or what do you believe is its specific object of study?

**Paolo Fabri (P.F.)**. I think it is the idea of meaning. Semiotics is interested in communication, like other disciplines are, but semiotics is interested in how meaning is constructed and deconstructed, transmitted or not transmitted, how it is represented, interpreted, confused and the effectiveness of discourses. So I think the most important thing for semiotics is how meaning is treated. The problem is that it has to say things that have a meaning on top of the meaning. That is very different from talking about reality. What is real is an effect of meaning and reality transforms meaning itself. But there are two schools of semiotics: one holds that meaning is what is real, that the

**Xavier Ruiz Collantes** (Cantabria, 1957) is a professor in Audiovisual Communication and Publicity at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. He specialises in the analysis of persuasive discourse transmitted through the social communication media. His theoretical and methodological sources are basically semiotics, rhetoric and textual theory. He has published numerous books, articles and reports on these subjects, including *Retórica Creativa. Programas de ideación publicitaria* (Barcelona: Aldea Global, 2001) and *La imatge de Catalunya a les televisions d'àmbit estatal* (Barcelona: CAC, 2000).

symbol refers to the reality, while the other says we can study both sides of the symbol, that they are two sides of the same coin and that one side is the meaning. The work of semiotics is how meaning is constructed, transmitted, destructed, interpreted or confused and its specific effectiveness. There are people like Umberto Eco, for example, who think that semiotics is a philosophy about language, a general theory that allows philosophic questioning about what language is, what the act of speaking is, what the reference to reality are, what the Kantian relationship between thinking man and reality are, and that what semiotics has to do today are applications of this very abstract, very pure, very philosophical theory.

I hold to the opinion of Greimas, among others, that semiotics is a discipline proposed as a general methodology of the meaning disciplines, which all humane disciplines are. This is very ambitious but at the same time very precise. Because we don't have to argue about what is real, we don't argue about the essence of subjects or things. We look at

the forms of expression and content that make it possible to articulate experience in significant ways.

**X.R.C.** This type of semiotics has been assigned a certain idealist tendency because it leaves reality aside. Where should semiotics be located in this dichotomy between realism and idealism?

**P.F.** The idea, the thought, the realisation of a concept is reality. There is no difference between fiction and the faithful description of reality. A synthesised image is just as real as a photograph. I believe the difference between the old idea of there being a subject that thinks ideally, that there are ideas, and that outside there is what is real, is absurd. Humankind modifies the planet, we produce realities. Meaning produces reality. One way of seeing things is a production of reality. For example, the neutrino is a small particle in the theory of physics. Is the neutrino real? Yes, it is. But it wouldn't be if it weren't for all the theories that make it possible to think it exists. Without all the instruments that make it possible to verify its existence we cannot say it is real. Another thing is that idealists always think about the opposition between ideas and reality. Meaning is an intersubjective fact and intersubjectivity is a form of reality. They say that discourse is not practical, but I don't think that's true, because if what I say can transform your opinion and then your actions, it is an action of reality. Opposition between subjects, ideas and world is an opposition that does not take into account that men and relationships among men are a world, a social world.

**X.R.C.** Let's look now at a particular subject, i.e., the media. What can semiotics say about the media, i.e., television, radio, etc., that cannot be said by, say, psychology, anthropology, sociology or other near disciplines?

**P.F.** I don't think semiotics disqualifies or discredits other disciplines, quite the opposite. But I think there is a quality in the semiotic explanation, i.e., its demands about the organisation of meaning, which could be interesting to sociologists and psychologists, although psychologists can also look at questions that semiotics cannot consider. There isn't any opposition, I believe. It is an ecology of practices. I believe it is like an ecological relationship.

**X.R.C.** But what is semiotics' specific contribution to the

study of the media?

**P.F.** Until the 1970s, with structuralism, sociologists and psychologists, i.e., the humane sciences, didn't take into account that language had its own structure and that it was a very important filter for the construction of meaning. They didn't have a discursive theory. Rhetoric appeared to be more undervalued. I believe that semiotics today poses the problem of constructing meaning as a central question. Other disciplines now take this problem increasingly into account. The problem now is the possibility of the specific construction of meaning, i.e., its definition of symbols. For semiologists, symbols are a form of expression, of organising expression, and a form of organised content that transforms significance into meaning. Meaning is a form of significance. Significance exists, but we have to give shape to this significance to transmit and understand it. In this case, form permits the presence of different, expressive substances, such as images, music and words. What is interesting to semiologists is thinking multimedially. Their thinking is necessarily multimedial because they think there are structures that underlie meaning that are common to the various media. The movies, for example. Until the 1950s there was the big issue of specificity, i.e., film had its own specificity, its own language that could not be translated into any other medium, and painting had its own language and music had its own one, etc. Today, multimediality is imposed as a commonplace and daily reality. Semiotics is a discipline that thinks multimedially, not like a set of different and untranslatable languages, but rather as the possibility of translating between languages with forms of meaning and expressive forms and substances of expression that are different. I think that is very important today and I believe we have to offer models for understanding and analysing it. I think they exist.

**X.R.C.** Can semiotics be understood as a metamodel of meaning?

**P.F.** Yes, the idea is that it must produce quite abstract models for descriptive local interventions to be effective. Because the problem is not whether they are true, but whether they are effective. Truth is one possible effectiveness. We can look at an interesting example with regard to the media, i.e., the problem of violence. Everybody says there are violent images, but there are also violent

discourses, violent music, etc. There is a spontaneous sociology, a spontaneous psychology, which says that the effects of violence are produced when you see one person kill another. And if you see four murders take place on TV every hour, by the end of the day there are four per hour, that's 40, 50 deaths – that is violent. But if there are 20 it is not. We watch an hour of television and discover, for example, that there has been a murder in Girona and then we see a murder that has taken place in Mali. You know that 200 deaths in Girona are a tragedy and 200 in Mali aren't so much. This is a problem: violence is different. And, afterwards, you watch a film and there is a murder - but it's just a film, we all know that. There is a frame that makes it possible to say 'this is fiction and this is not'. The effect is very different. The same film, or news story, can show things in a nearer or more distant way, in an allusive, unfocussed manner without movement. The difference is extreme. The effect of violence has a formal intercession that is the determining factor. That is why we have pornography and eroticism. The difference is not in what they show.

**X.R.C.** We could say there is another type of social science discipline which in some way in its analysis directly refers to the most immediate content, while semiotics is able to interpose the assessment of enunciative, narrative and discursive structures, etc. I mean that in some way it comes close to the enormous complexity of organising different types of messages.

**P.F.** Semiotics looks at the meaning of the image while the other disciplines look at it, I would say, in a diaphanous manner. The image is like a piece of transparent paper that is wrapped around something. I say (I don't know but it could be) that this paper is not transparent, rather it is the discourse that constructs the significance. The fact that I have been trained in law may have something to do with that. For somebody who studied four years of law, it is very clear that if there is a fact, e.g., one person has swindled another, the same fact can have such different considerations that you could give the perpetrator a number of years in prison or not. Reality exists but the effectiveness of the interpretation that allows action to be taken on this reality and its effects on people is very different according to the way the fact is defined or constructed. Without this

intercession, all discourses on violence are ridiculous. When American sociologists say that poor American children watch 44 murders, they are forgetting that 30 of them are on *Roadrunner* and *Coyote* cartoons. The coyote gets killed and then a second later he's up and running again. The most interesting thing comes when there are problems of enunciation, or what is known as 'frame'. Frames define explicit or non-explicit ways of providing information with a particular point of view at a particular level. For example, there might be a thousand murders on television as part of a detective or police show. In this case, I think the violence is not the same. It is a very interesting problem. I think there is a problem with violence, the problem is that children's education should not focus on not watching murders but on discursive forms that make it possible to understand whether the murders are ironic, true, etc. This is how children should be educated. Education about discourse as a form.

**X.R.C.** Another matter that strikes me as interesting with regard to the semiotic study of discourses in general, of meaning in general and the media in particular, is narrativity. From a theoretical point of view, the structure of narrativity has become the central basis of the semiotic model. There are discourses with argumentative, descriptive, taxonomic structures, etc. but semiotics generally applies a narrative model on top of all other types of discourse. What does this narrative model have that is, let's say, analytically more operative than any other type of model?

**P.F.** That is a very complex issue from the theoretical point of view, but very simple from the point of view of reality. The traditional rhetorical model that people have in their minds, that intellectuals have, is that there are inferential proofs (arguments) and tropes (metaphors and other things). That there are tropic colours (metaphors, metonymies) and, on the other hand, logical movements. For example, Umberto Eco, who is a master, says the movement of one symbol towards another is necessarily a logical/inferential movement. This movement of one symbol towards another is always considered an action between a symbol and a logical action. Logical movement. But there is another model, which is a narrative model that is an act of configuration of actions and passions. There are different actions and the way in which actions are configured could

be the following, for example: one action presupposes another, which is logical; one action produces another, an action produces a passion, one passion produces another, a passion produces action. The act of configuring actions and passions is the basis of the discourse. From this point of view, the strength of the model is that the fundamental basis of all narrative action is that there is a transformation of meaning. This transformation of meaning can be expressed as a process. This process is very variable and has a specific temporality. Not all passions have the same temporality. Being surprised is not the same as being anxious. There is a different temporality. That could explain many transformations of content, such as actions and passions. Narrative, in this case, is a general concept that has nothing to do with the narration, with the stories. Stories are another typical case. For example, a political demonstration could be described as a story. The people at the demonstration don't feel they are forming part of a story, but you could say, "they started there and ended there", and there is a narrativity in the very actions and later there a *mise en forme* that could be very different. The narrativity of the police and the narrativity of the unions is never the same, but they are the same things. One lot says there were 100,000 demonstrators, while the others say there were 20,000, one group says they did this, the other says they didn't, etc. But it is the same reality. From that point of view, if there is a transformation of meaning, I don't see why the story cannot be described as a transformation of meaning. Let me give you a simple example: if we have this, we will later have that. That is a story.

**X.R.C.** I agree with that in theory but I have one small doubt. Let's look at the two models you mentioned, narrativity and inferential/logical movements that can later lead to the argumentative model, etc. My question is whether they can be translated, in the sense of whether a text, an apparently argumentative discourse, can be studied from the concept of narrativity or if a directly narrative text can be studied from the argumentative model.

**P.F.** Yes, yes.

**X.R.C.** So my question is whether, when it comes down to it, the two models are in some way translatable and if so can we talk about the pre-eminence of one over the other?

**P.F.** I don't think it's a problem of pre-eminence – one is inferential and occupies the purely cognitive level and the other is susceptible to occupying all levels, i.e., it is broader, but not in the sense that it is an alternative. Let's take a very simple example from physics: you have a sheet and you throw it in the air. If there is resistance to the air the sheet will fall, but if there is no resistance it will not. What is this idea of "if there is no resistance to the air"? It is a story, isn't it? It's a little story that produces the conceptual theoretical possibility of saying "if there isn't". In this case there is a very clear inference. The history of science is full of small stories. Look at Einstein, who says there is a skyscraper and you fall off it and your key falls too. It falls from you, who are falling, at the relative speed of both. They are small stories. A man called Thomas Kuhn says that these small stories have the same ability to explain the world as a real experience does in a laboratory. I think that's true. But there is a special strength in narrativity that inference has not had until now, because inference is always based on 'if...then...'. However, we also have 'if...but...'. There is no development of an 'if...but...' logic, instead there is always a development of an 'if...then...' logic. Narrativity includes the 'if...but...'.

**X.R.C.** Let's focus a bit on the issue of narration. In the dichotomy between logical/argumentative reasoning and narrative I have the feeling that the big mass media, especially television, have abandoned the discursive field of argumentation and currently focus on the field of narration at all levels, even in programmes that are theoretically "argumentative", such as discussion programmes.

**P.F.** That's a situation I find hard to recognise, because in Italy there are so many discussion programmes people never stop discussing things.

**X.R.C.** But, strangely enough, I have the feeling that in these discussions, where the most direct structure seems to be argumentative or dialectic, there is an increasing emphasis on a narrative nature, in the sense of the nature of the confrontation, the duel, where the fundamental thing is not the argument so much as the staging of the duel, the passionate confrontation between two or more subjects, where the discussion topic is a pretext for staging the conflict.

**P.F.** In that case, yes. We have to distinguish between two

levels of abstraction. One is the idea that there is a narration in the sense of transforming situations. In this case, it could be the transformation of logical situations, passional situations, physical, cognitive situations, whatever. From this point of view, the things that are a narrative are a logic common to everybody. Then there is the discursive level, where you can use arguments or metaphors. I think it is important to emphasise this, that narration serves the 'then' and particularly the 'but'. That is because the minimum definition of narration is that there are two action programmes. If two behaviour programmes cross in some way or another, we have narration. This idea is somewhat ideological. I think it is an idea founded on Western practice. But I believe it is important to think that what counts in a narration is that there are articulations, configurations of programmes, which can be about collaboration or conflict, contractual or controversial. From this point of view there are consensual shows or controversial shows. But you know that the controversy may well be superficial and that there is fundamentally a basis of agreement. To fight, we need to agree to fight, otherwise people go off in different directions. The opposite is also possible, there are consensual shows that present many conflicts. I believe this is the strength of the model, that it allows different expressive manners. For example, science is always presenting results as a result of the application of a programme. When you enter a laboratory, you discover that laboratories compete against each other and may have been battling for 10 years to demonstrate something, with one lot saying the other lot are idiots, they don't understand anything, they're thieves, etc. And then, after all that, there is a representation that has nothing at all to do with conflict. It is the idea that the whole scientific community agrees that a neutrino exists. It has been shown to exist. This is very odd and, in fact, the representation of some social practices can be more consensual or more conflictive. Politicians always represent conflict, but only because the agreements are not revealed.

**X.R.C.** Earlier you spoke about narrativity as the articulation of action and passion. For many years, semiotics was fundamentally devoted to action and I would say that over recent years – not decades, but nearly that long – there has been a change in terms of the matter of passion. I think this has a positive side, which is that generally in our culture

there is a rational/emotional dichotomy and so establishing an action/passion dichotomy, I think, is one way to go beyond the slightly more sterile dichotomy between reason and emotion. What is semiotics' specific perspective on passion compared to, for example, psychological approaches?

**P.F.** I think semiotics takes passions into account as situated among narrativity, among actions, and it defines passional statuses, which are statuses defined for different actions rather than attributing a passional essence. Nobody says 'fury' because there are different languages and different forms of expression within a same language, e.g., 'ire', which is a type of fury, also 'rage'. There are 20 words related to it. Passional essences cannot be constructed. You cannot know what love is, or what hatred is. Not long ago, Baudrillard wrote an article about the idea that hatred exists today but it is a cold hatred. What is cold hatred? It's interesting, isn't it? The aesthesia of hatred is changing the perceptive dimension. I believe this is important, it is a different definition. The other thing that permits the definition of passions is that in narrative development there are passional moments, in the sense of the effect of the action of one over the other, etc. Another thing is about what is passional. We can try to explain that there are different components in what is passional that allow differences. For example, there is a specific temporality, as I said before, an aesthesia-based perceptive that is characteristic to some passions: cold, hot, bitter, sweet, there are many perceptive elements that characterise some passions and not others. The aspectual dimension that defines passion as a process is another thing. Love is a process, not a state. Hatred the same. Vengeance is a passion, a cold passion that has a very long life and which needs an interior tension. We never think, "Oh, I forgot to take revenge" - it is tense, continual and long lasting, from the aspectual point of view. It has a long life and a cold perception: it is a dish best served cold. And then there are modalities, which are general positions. There are passions of probability, necessity, duty, desire, power, etc.

**X.R.C.** Let's look at the media in this articulation of actions and passions in relation to the public. We can think of television as something that produces passions among viewers. Could we establish an action-passion-action link

between television content and viewers?

**P.F.** Yes, it depends on the case. In the case of violence, everybody says there has to be an action afterwards. A great many people say it is very difficult to explain the effects of the media. This is incredible because we have been studying it for a century, or half a century, and the results on effects are very difficult to establish. It is a bit like meteorology: we have all the parameters and in the end there are so many parameters that a modification of the integration of the parameters produces different results. So a semiologist or sociologist might say, "We find ourselves facing a very complex situation". The viewer is not alone in front of the television, because the television itself has two things: there is the point of view, or enunciation, as we call it, which is very influential because it is the director's way of looking at things. His or her way of looking is a frame proposition for the viewer. This is the way you should look. From this point of view, I am not alone in front of the television, I am in front of a way of looking, which is a proposal to look at things as truths, falsehoods, ironies, etc. That is very important. On the other hand, television and radio broadcasts are full of deictic acts that offer viewers information on information, in other words, they focus on what is the most important thing in the information. That is very important because it is a supplementary proposition. Music broadcasts on Italian television are increasingly populated with public representatives in the form of people paid to applaud, who are living propositions of contracts on how to read a show and react with passion. They applaud because it is an instruction for the people at home to do. They say, "Look what fun we're having", "now it's time to clap", etc. The thing that produces a specific rhythm of a story at the same time produces communication and interpretation propositions for viewers. That is why I say there is no screen or viewer but rather a complex intercession of communicative instances and propositions for the viewer to watch, to know, to become impassioned or disgusted, which are written in the very form of the text.

**X.R.C.** As we said before, I think it is up to semiotics to explain this complex intercession. I think it is one of the most important specific purposes of semiotics. In any case, I now have the idea and hypothesis that television actions, deployed through all these types of intercessions, are

designed to generate passions amongst viewers, the reaction to which, i.e., the reactive effect of which, is to keep watching the TV.

**P.F.** Yes, yes, first comes the contract: "Please don't turn off...don't change the channel".

**X.R.C.** I would like to pick up on another concept I know you are very interested in, which is the issue of conflict: communicative interaction as conflict. I think that historically there have been two traditions: the study of communication as cooperation –from Grice to Sperber and Wilson or from Pierce to Umberto Eco – and the idea of communication as conflict. We could think there are communicative interactions that are cooperative and there are communicative interactions that are controversial. Cooperation or conflict. In any case, I have the feeling there is an underlying level, a basic level which is necessarily cooperative, which is the level of the cultural premises on which we base all possibility of communication, from which we can produce any other type of interaction.

**P.F.** Yes. We share the meaning of being men, having the same culture, etc. But I think the controversy model is more effective for a different reason. For example, let's take the case of something very important, i.e., premises, or allusions, or what communication transmits which is not transmitted empirically: premises, implications and allusions. What we don't say is the fact that communication says what is unsaid, that they are not empty spaces, like silence, that it is an absence, not of communication but an absence of expressive manifestation because its place is significant. I believe it can only be understood as a strategy. I think it is interesting to talk in terms of conflict, not in the dramatic sense of people killing each other, but that there are difficulties that are made explicit and aspirations to explain something. There are other cases where there are mistakes, but the mistakes might be non-intentional. I think that communication can be defined as contractual and controversial. And I believe we have to adopt the point of view of controversy so it can reveal things that consensual communication does not reveal. This is not an idea that men are each other's enemies. For example, a physicist who sets out to show that another person is not right, and a physicist who constructs a concept and takes into account that there are other colleagues whose programmes will be

to say he is an idiot or stupid. And his action programme includes an argumentative anticipation of the critical action of the other. This is resistance to an imaginary attack from the other. That is obvious to people of science.

**X.R.C.** That is very interesting in the case of the media because surely the media, to the public at large, are subjects under suspicion. For example, with regard to the news, they say, "I know not everything they are telling me is true", "I know they are lying". Or advertising: "I know they want to convince me, but they're not going to". It is clear, in this sense, that the discourses of the media introduce strategies for overcoming resistance. I think this is related to the idea of the physicist who is always thinking about the discourse he will construct by taking his opponent into account.

**P.F.** Yes, absolutely. In Italy, when someone says, "Who told you that?" and you say, "I read it in the newspaper", the other person says, "Oh, the newspaper, then it can't be true". There is complete trust in complete distrust. That is why the question of truth as such is not very interesting. The problem is the effects truth can produce. The effect of truth produces truth, in the sense you want. They might say, "There's a strike today". The success or failure of the strike is caused by the fact that there are some workers who do not believe the strike will work, who say it is no good. And, in the end, there is no strike or a watered-down strike. I think these are the conditions. There is a very good example, a very elegant philosophical analysis by Lyotard. It's about revolution and the effectiveness of passions and says, "The French revolution produced great enthusiasm across Europe". In other words, there was an action that produced a passion. Lyotard says, "No, in fact it was the opposite: enthusiasm provoked the revolution".

**X.R.C.** One question about the media seems suggestive to me: you have spoken quite a lot about the secret as one of the fundamental elements in power strategies within discourses. Where is the secret in the media? I ask because there are two issues that seem important to me. First, the public tends to view the media as an apparatus of power. In other words, as a nucleus of power. And, at the same time, the media tends to create the illusion of absolute visibility, both in new bulletins and particularly now in what is known

as reality shows, like *Big Brother*, etc. Viewers have the illusion that it can include everything, can see everything and so on. So, clearly there is a dialectic between the idea of power as "the dominating media" which is also a strong common discourse within society ("the dominating media") and yet at the same time, we can dominate everything that appears in the media. So in this idea of secret power, my question is, where does the figure of the secret appear here?

**P.F.** Baudrillard's idea is 'there are no more secrets; everything is visible'. In fact, there is the opposite, i.e., the obscene, the excess of visibility. Secrets are effects of visibility, they are folds of what is visible, yes, but the problem is always the problem of level. There are modalities other than secrets. Microsoft revealed the secret for manufacturing its programming language a couple of days ago because it had got so much money from it that Internet users, governments, were buying Linux, which is public. But for a long time it kept the secret. We don't know it but the people with power do. This is the very abstract level. There is something else. There is the idea that television people often say, "it is not known", "there is something we have to know", "one day we will discover why", etc. The other case is there are a great number of allusions in television. There are circular illusions that are true and not true at all times. I think the idea of a secret as a reality that cannot be seen is the classic idea of old that the symbol is diaphanous. No, the symbol is not diaphanous. It has folds and the folds are different. I think that, and this is very important, there is no ontological secret - "the Secret" does not exist, all secrets are effects of strategies. That is why I think scientific secrets are so important. Everybody says there are no secrets. When do scientists reveal information? After they have made the discovery. When they are doing their research and are worried another lab might be working on the same thing and there is competition to be the first, then they don't give anything away to the media.

**X.R.C.** Earlier I mentioned the type of passionate effect television has on viewers, whose reaction is to keep on watching it. So, in this type of strategy, the secret, for example, is closely linked to intrigue. In other words, there is no intrigue when you don't know something and that's it, but there is when you know that there is something you don't

know and the other person shows you something because he knows you don't know it. It could be that the media's strategy with regard to the secret is this creation of intrigue which is self-referential. Television programmes create intrigue, expectations and ways of seducing and provoking in subtle and complex manners, based around themselves and their content. In other words, they are constantly creating self-referential passions to keep viewers hooked.

**P.F.** Yes, but it goes further than that. There is the idea of verification, in the old-fashioned sense of the word with regard to education. Education is when you learn something: in fact, you learn what it is you need to know to know there are more things to know. That is what a good education is about. Science itself, science is what you know about something and this implies many other things. For example, "the sun is fixed (which it isn't in reality) and the earth moves". I think it is important to know that from the moment it was discovered that the sun didn't go around the earth but the other way round, for us nothing changed, but other questions that multiplied appeared. The San Remo Festival is celebrated every year, that is not news. Who will present the Festival? A man and a young woman. Let's see if it's this couple or that one. All information demands specification of future information. That is why we don't stop watching. There are news flows. There are natural news flows that close, but when they close there are others that open.

**X.R.C.** One last question, with regard to the question of power, taking advantage of the fact you are Italian. What is your opinion of the current structure of the media in Italy? The public media, the private media and Berlusconi at the centre of this structure.

**P.F.** It is hard to explain. I have the idea that for a democracy, the media is fundamental. It constitutes a collective memory. The Italians don't remember Garibaldi, he doesn't exist. There was a sixty-year gap between when Carlo Collodi wrote Pinocchio and Disney did its version of Pinocchio and another sixty years have now gone by since the Disney film. It seems absurd. It is absurd because Disney is "now" and the man who wrote Pinocchio at the end of the 19th century is so far away that he doesn't form part of the collective memory. How can we fix this problem? There is a very simple way that consists of generalising

what is private. Maintaining one or two things of the real public service, limited to very few people. It could be done, couldn't it? Like Canal *Cinq*, like *Arte* in France. The other idea is that there is something important in Italy which is the multiplication of radio stations: very efficient local stations that don't cause problems. The national radio station is much smaller than many Italian radio stations which are listened to by more people than the national station. First comes television, as always, because it costs more money. Television is considered a didactic and social action that can unify the country in a very traditional manner, a bit like school. There are people who currently consider television to be like school, which strikes me as ridiculous. I remember a very interesting episode: a group of Democrats of the Left in the Chamber rang me in July to talk about image. Then a very interesting journalist called Gar Lerner, very well known in Italy and who everybody thinks of as a consummate professional, gave a very ambiguous speech and I asked him outright, "Are you in favour of the public service or private industry?". This is a question that a leftwing man should tackle. His response: "I believe we need Murdoch in Viale Manzini", which is where the Italian public television is located. I didn't say anything and just looked at the left-wing members of parliament and there was no reaction. There is not the conviction of the Gaullists, of the French right, who believe that public service exists, even if you then watch French television and discover it is no better than any other. They maintain an ideology of the public service, they in fact think that if we pay for television we have to have a service. I believe it. I think it is important. I believe it is necessary to draw a distinction, i.e. I believe in the idea of a fundamental distinction between information and transmission. School has transmission. You cannot inform at school, we have to control what is said, which is why exams are so important. To me, exams are the last moment of the year and not just a place for carrying out classification work. That is why there is a verification, which I believe is important, even crucial. That is the difference. Television does not demand transmission, it is not concerned with establishing its memory. It talks about collective memory in a very interesting way but it talks about memory with an informative modality. It doesn't talk about memory with a transmitter modality that allows the construction of memory. That is the problem.