THE BIG WORDS:
A PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT. Relating some theories from the philosophy of language, psychanalysis, continental philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of mind, communication studies, sociology and history of philosophy, the paper is an introduction to the research of the "big words", understood as an expression of the incongruence between the senses of the words used within the discourse and the sense of the discourse as such. The discursive practice of the big words is analysed as a public practice. As language-games (with prelocutionary grasping of the falsity), intentions-game, false conscience, related to the unconscious, as jargon and production of a specific truth, the discourse with big words takes part rather from the political domain. In this respect, the insincerity of the big words is showed as the result of communication marked by the power relations. But these ones could be seen too within the incompetent and bureaucratic Stalinist university and "scientific" practice and discourses from the human and social sciences.

Instead of introduction

The big words are leaping to the eyes at the level – that was called (by Husserl) – of naive realism[1]. When we perceive the lack of honesty of a discourse, its hollowness, namely the evidence of the discrepancy

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[1] At this level, the description/rendering of Cațavencu's discourse by Caragiale represents a reference model.

between the phrases used and, on the other hand, the meaning of the entire communication, we exclaim to ourselves: what big words! Immediately some problems emerge which are worth considering.

If the discourse – written or oral – describes a situation, it also provides suggestions about the personality of the speaker. Therefore, we can deduce from the lack of sincerity of the discourse the lack of sincerity of the person delivering the discourse. At the same time, the construction of the entire discourse seems at least a bit ridiculous, if it not fills us with indignation, being denotative of mean and restrictive intentions, and using as mystifying clouds – easy to penetrate, as it can be seen – pompous words or words specific to superior values. On the other hand, we can ask ourselves if the relevant character is or not aware of the vulnerability of his/her discursive supply, as well as if his/her behaviour is or not intentional. As a conclusion here, the first characteristic of the big words being the lack of sincerity – namely the alienation from the goal of authenticity of every discourse –, can we think only about the common manifestations of the discourse, or can we also think about its savant forms? Or is there the same frequency of big words in written texts as there is in oral speech?

Definition: language-game with prelocutionary grasping of the falsity, intentions-game, false conscience

Before anything else, we should define the term/object[2]. The *big words* – not in the singular, because the singular does not render the same meaning as the plural – designate the meaning of certain words or phrases (including proverbs or famous expressions[3]) that, although they

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[2]   Even though a critique of Cartesian epistemology evidences the vicious circle of the primary demand to define a term which, however, may be defined only pursuant to the description of concrete situations which can only conclusively be characterised by that relevant term.

[3]   See the blog http://www.experienceproject.com/groups/Dont-Like-People-Who-Use-Big-Words-To-Appear-Smart/152864. or the blog http://club.cdfreaks.com/f1/do-big-words-impress-you–114089/. Or http://www.harissa.com/fun/auxgrandsmots.htm. Here, *grands mots* represent only the words which clearly have a big meaning, but they are used in inadequate moments. They do not send to the falsity of the speaker, but to his/her cultural awkwardness. But this meaning is also provided in Const. Şăineanu, *Dictionnaire français-roumain* (1897), IV-e édition, Bucarest, Imprimerie Cartea românească, 1921, p. 456: *grands mots*: a) bombastic words, b) snoring words or too high words; c) familiar *grand mot*: big, decisive words.

have formally a rational, therefore, honest meaning, within the discourse as an ensemble they breathe/convey the lack of honesty[4]. The big words reflect the intentions of exaggeration, mystification, bluffing, deceiving, as well as the expressions of these intentions used in order to intimidate and delude[5] the listeners. Of course the use of big words may also represent an established form, a cliché which also means that things are relatively inferred, understood[6], or that the speaker cannot surpass this cliché; as well as this one is too a convenient means of certification and acknowledgement of the membership to the same power space.

As a consequence, the big words occur within specific discourses (as in the political ones and in the Stalinist type social and human "scientific" papers), where the intention of the speaker or writer does not stand in some supposedly unique relationship to the facts described by the text. Even though the words as such could be true, the whole discourse is perceived as insincere, false. Why that?

The words have more senses when they are together in phrases and texts. The big words illustrate Austin[7]'s and Searle[8]'s theory about

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4   "These are, as Leibniz mentioned, deceptive concepts (*notiones deceptrices*)…(which) are such that it seems as if something is being thought by their means, whereas in fact, they represent nothing at all", Immanuel Kant, *An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism by Immanuel Kant, also containing an announcement of his lectures for the coming semester*, 7th October 1759 (*Versuch einiger Betrachtungen über den Optimismus*), Translated by David Walford and Ralf Meerbote as Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 67–83. In Romanian, "Încercare asupra unor considerații privind optimismul" (1759), în Kant, *Opere* ("Spre pacea eternă. Un proiect filosofic", Înștiințare asupra încheierii apropiate a unui tratat în vederea păcii eterne în Filosofie", "Încercare asupra unor considerații privind optimismul"), Traducere, Studiu introductiv, Studiu asupra traducerii, Note, Bibliografie selectivă, Index de concepte de Rodica Croitoru, București, All, 2008, p. 149.

5   One example is that where people use bombastic, precious words in order to impress others with their high level of culture. But the result is actually the opposite. See the blog http://www.neatorama.com/2009/08/02/big-words-make-you-seem-stupider/, of 2 August 2009: the test of a Princeton pshycologist, Daniel Oppenheimer, where the students evaluated simple forms and bombastic forms of the same text: he evidenced that the degree of intelligence is in inverse proportion with the degree of use of precious words.

6   As is the case with metaphors.

7   J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), Second Edition, J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisă editors, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2005.

8   John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay In The Philosophy Of Language*, Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 19, 54–64.

the difference between the *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* meanings – or acts, if we differentiate the levels of intentions and cognitive elements – of a phrase or discourse. Indeed, there are many kinds of expressibility[9]: if a sentence has a surface meaning – that of describing, that of the ostensible meaning (the locutionary, "constative"[10]) – it also has its real, intended meaning, even though the speaker wants to cover or uncover it and although this meaning is true or false (the illocutionary, that many times "masquerades"[11] the speaker's intentions, or uncover them), and it also has the perlocutionary meaning, that which is the (may be unintended) effect on the listener, so external to the performance of an utterance.

In the big words expressions, the potential of the sentence to play the role that the speaker has in mind – the potential of illocutionary meaning[12] – is denied just by the perlocutionary one. This happens because the speaker is not taking responsibility for the holding of the conditions of the clear illocutionary sense: if the perlocutionary sense is that of insincerity, it is for the speaker does not subordinate his sentence to the illocutionary rule[13] of correspondence between the reality he has in view/criticises and his transparent intention to change the reality toward a generally accepted opportune way. If a politician, for example, invite to be voted for he is the only one who could lead the country toward a good evolution, but his entire political activity denies this illocutionary sense, the perlocutionary effect is quite opposite to the illocutionary sense (which is a directive speech act, suggesting and requesting and ordering). In this case, the listener considers this illocutionary sense to be false and exclaims: what a big words discourse!

If the speech acts intend to communicate[14] – and the illocutionary sense performs the speaker's internal intention behind the simple locutionary form – the perlocutionary sense of the big words discourse

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[9] And there is a "difference between saying something and meaning it and saying it without meaning it", Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay In The Philosophy Of Language*, p. 3.

[10] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, p. 3.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

[12] William P. Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2000.

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 58–64.

[14] K. Bach and R. M. Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1979.

arrives to be as opposite to the illocutionary one and multiplying the communicative senses with an involuntary, unintended one and which is the psychological consequence of the discourse as such: the new content given by the listener in front of the incongruence between the illocutionary sense of an utterance and the known reality behind it. Therefore, the content of communication is not identical with the content intended to be communicated.

The big words discourse is a very uncovering one. The listener arrives to better understand the speaker's real intention and his psychological profile and, at the same time, the pre-set conventions concerning the simple locutionary sense: that democracy and the welfare of the country are valuable purposes, that voting is a democratic performance, that politicians are supposed to realise the ends of a prosperous and democratic society. If the illocutionary sense arrives when the speaker suggests that he would be the only one to perform these ends, the perlocutionary sense is a movement of the listener *peri* the above-mentioned sentences, by comparing theirs explicit intentions with the real facts behind the sentences. The speaker constructs his utterances on the pre-set conventions too: but while his expectation (his illocutionary sense) is that the listener never could penetrate behind the given illocutionary sense, by relating the pre-set conventions only with the person of the speaker (politician), the hearer transcends this relation with another one, that between the pre-set conventions and the realm of real facts. Thus, the hearer grasps the direct locutionary sense, as well as the illocutionary one (the indirect sense realised through the locutionary one), and the perlocutionary one (another indirect sense). And this ability of the hearer is due to his common "background"[15] with the speaker: it is a complex cultural one, consisting also in the conscience that the hearer knows and knows to answer to a discourse by saying or doing something.

Therefore, as in the traditional view, the chief business of sentences/texts/discourses is to state facts and, even if the locutionary form is impeccable, and although the speaker induces his own (more or less) clear intention, people consider the truth or falsity of discourses not only following the rationality of the locutionary form, nor only after the

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[15]   John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 141–150.

intention induced by the speaker, but after their own judgment based on the comparison between the discourse and the facts.

To say and to do means to think. But to think means not only expressing what we see, but to re-think (Hegel). It's a production, a transformation within which the concepts and the worldviews work. So, we never have to despise people's ability to observe the falsity.

This understanding of the big words – the "big words" expression itself is significant, a *language-game*, historically determined by the cultural context of the human society where communication occurs through words (Wittgenstein), and thus rationality is manifesting, and, at the same time, the word may do more than to conform to the actual situation (including the intention), it may very well hide it – gives us the possibility to characterise people using these big words as having *mauvaise foi*, bad-faith.

An intention presupposes a conscious representation of things and of one's intention to represented such things, namely to transmit them. But a self-consciousness which refuses itself (refuses consciousness) is one of *mauvaise foi*, consciousness acting in bad-faith. In Sartre (*L'Être et le Néant*) – we can see the primacy of consciousness, the phenomenological analysis allowing the understanding of bad-faith as intention and manifestation; it is a dual game of the consciousness: facticity and transcendence, i.e. power to overcome facticity. However, our orator[16] does not overcome facticity, but he simply hides it in an infantile manner, like an ostrich hiding its head in the sand. Is that true? He asserts values *as if* they would be concrete phenomena which he supports, and he asserts these phenomena *as if* there would be principles.

Consciousness gives the meaning of the things starting from facticity – from it own corporality (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty) – therefore it reduces principles to the meaning given by the narrow concrete

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[16] See Plato about the Sophists – in a bad sense – or the rhetoricians (especially in "Gorgias" (Translation by Alexandru Cizek), in Plato, *Opere*, I, Ediție îngrijită de Petru Creția și Constantin Noica, București, Editura Științifică, 1974; "Phaidros", (Translation by Gabriel Liiceanu), in Plato, *Opere*, IV, Ediție îngrijită de Petru Creția, București, Editura Științifică, 1983; "Sofistul", (Translation by Constantin Noica), in Plato, *Opere*, VI, Ediție îngrijită de Constantin Noica și Petru Creția, București, Editura Științifică, 1989. Also see Ana Bazac, "Critica sofiștilor la Platon", in *Paideia*, 3, 1994, p. 59–61).

interests. But there is also another substitution: that which refers (here) to the substitution of facticity by principles. The big words are generated by this substitution, and it means that the individual arrives to believe his own lie. Therefore, the intentions given by the facticity of the "corporal" interests (Sartre) – let us say, material interests – are covered by the discourse on principles as exceeding, translating facticity.

But only if the individual would remain at facticity – at corporality – he would be honest. In this way, the bad-faith is that consciousness which arrives to live (to believe) the world he had just created through its mystifying discourse[17]: the big words come to reflect "normal" as well as pathological forms of infatuation or megalomania. Mystification builds/delivers an alienated world and an alienated subject: the conscience, the self is mystifying by seeing itself from the outside. It's a slumbering conscience, close to dream and hysteria[18].

The status of conscience, as exceeding – *le pour-soi*/for-the-self – means that we are not the prisoners of a situation, that we can choose, and the desire to evade responsibility in relation to choice/to the conscience of choice (conscience which involves values, criteria, judgements) is *mauvaise foi*: the conscience's attempt to be what it is not/you are not, i.e. despite the fact that it knows/you know that it/you acted in bad-faith, that its(your) motivation was evil.

People always find themselves in the discrepancy given by the awareness of their own intentions and, on the other hand, the awareness of the world/the other's intentions, of their condition, but the solution is the *transparency of elucidations*[19] (which themselves represent gaps) and

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[17] Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 67–83. In Romanian, "Încercare asupra unor considerații privind optimismul" in Kant, *Opere*, quoted edition, p. 146: „Confuziile subtile constituie o atracție pentru amorul propriu, care simte cu plăcere propria-i tărie".

[18] J.-P. Sartre, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions,* Paris, Hermann, [1939] 1960.

[19] It is so although the language presents many obscurities, even at the level of words-elements, but especially at that of the multiple meanings of phrases and the "hidden intentions of language". For this reason, a general method of philosophical speculation is "that of stopping before the usual and dedicated terms and expressions, in order to insistently investigate their notional content, as if the everyday speech of the common man would contain the implication of the clear and essential knowledge which the philosopher seeks". This is because "in the words and contexts of language all the possible experience of man is deposited… such precious knowledge can be found more in the spirit of language rather than in the spiritual actuality of the speaker". The meanings of words may be identified by "following the intention of the

the *discourses on possibilities*. However, big words represent a mask[20], an escape from the consciousness of things, from one's own responsibility. The big words discourse is, thus, before anything else, a lie towards oneself and only then towards the others. If this is the case – lying to oneself – then the person deceiving oneself intentionally knows, very well even, the truth which he tries to hide from himself. He dissimulates himself, but the *mauvaise foi* people are the real "cowards"[21]. Such an individual hides his intentions to the others, his intention to deceive and the intention to dissimulate the intention to deceive. And he is quite aware of this thing. Therefore, the paradox of the liar troubles somehow the conscience of people acting in bad-faith.

But, given the fact that these big words are communicated, they intentionally tend to fool the audience. And given the fact that discourses represent and integral part to an entire system of symbolic domination, the big words may be perceived as being honest, as

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word in all directions". From this perspective, we go beyond the appearances, but the "essence" is not easily noticed: the deep spirit is not always that careful about the similarity of things, hidden by their variety. Sometimes this is precisely the intelligence sensitive to a certain manner of being of things, richer, more coloured and alive than that which their surface allows us to guess." According to Tudor Vianu, „Adâncimea filosofică" (The philosophical depth), *Viața Românească*, 1, ianuarie, 1938, p. 60–70.

[20] This is not equivalent to the use of abstractions in order to better understand concrete words, and not even with the inability to question the truths transmitted through the inadvertence given by the inconsistent levels of the words used.

An example of confusing the mystifying intention within the public discourse with these aspects is the following post on a blog: "It's at least strange the need of people to use absolute truths by trying to express themselves. For common things, people use grand words. For expressing trifling feelings, they use grandiloquent combinations of words. At the same time, they launch themselves within definitive allegations, by the same big words. These ones are too big for the truths expressed. Or they are used just for the end to dissimulate the truth. For tomorrow these words could no more mean nothing. They can be forgotten as if they would never have said. So, big words having behind them little truths? Grandiloquent words hiding untruths? Only the human tendency to adorn a truth?" August 2008, http://rramyi.blogspot.com/.

A clarifying answer on the same blog is this: "I do not consider as strange the use of big words for trifles. It is simply the adapting to the environment (society), the attempt to not remain given the go-by, the simplest solution to come somehow in bold. Even though many of them are aware that the hyperboles used are far away from the truth, they use them without hesitation, and sometimes even involuntarily. The human nature plays pranks on us many times".

[21] J.-P. Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme,* Paris, Les Éditions Nagel, 1946, p. 84.

reflecting the height of the principle level the speaker stands on. But, even if the possibility to not believe the honesty of big words is equivalent to the possibility of believing them, the obstinacy of using big words and the intention behind them result in what Kant referred to as "bad will"[22]: that of not observing the moral law which, in the case of communication, demands full rationality, i.e., among others, the correspondence between the intentions of the locutor and the meanings and form of his discourse (namely the dialogical transparency).

But rationality is not possible when it is equivalent to things of different orders and when one interferes within an order as if being adequate for another. Isaiah Berlin drew attention on the fact that a "false conscience" is the equivalence of the calm individual morals with the social morals: the judgement of final solutions for man is false within the terms of one moral as if these terms were the same with the terms pertaining to the other morals[23].

If we come nearer to the problem under discussion here, then we can say that if the moral principles or values are equalled – and according to Berlin, these principles are plural, and incompatible with one another – and which are waived as a veil over the concrete facts found in the discourses which we discuss, then people are not able to judge rationally, so to choose, for they choose in a realm by thinking at other level of principles, about another field; therefore, the individual legitimating values are not necessarily compatible with the world of practical politics.

Speaking strictly theoretically, the big words characterise types of discourse which brake the doubt, i.e. their rational justification (the

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[22]   Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), Book One, [15] Concerning the indwelling of the evil principle with the good, or, on the radical evil in human nature, III. Man is Evil by Nature, http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/rbbr/ rbbr1.html; in Romanian, "Religia doar în limitele rațiunii", in *Opere*, Traducere, Studiu introductiv, Studiu asupra traducerii, Note, Bibliografie selectivă, Index de concepte german-român, Index de concepte de Rodica Croitoru, București, All, 2007, p. 91.
         But Kant considered that the bad will comes from a "bad heart" (p. 93), namely from the din "perversity of the heart" which is not strong enough to follow "the principles it adopted". Nevertheless, this perversity, this inclination may be overcome with the help of free will, of the "good faith" which exceeds the formal adequacy of actions to the moral laws through an actual adequacy.
[23]   Isaiah Berlin, "The Question of Machiavelli", *The New York Review of Books*, volume 17, number 7, November 4, 1971, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/10391.

rationalism): because, as principles cover the concrete facts[24], if the asserted principles are those justifying the concrete facts, and if it's difficult to question principles, then it results that it is equally difficult to question the concrete facts.

That is why, not only the simple expressing – "small words for big truths" – but especially rationalism in treating problems, arguments and the audience represents the characteristics of the *efficient discourse beyond the restrictive interests* of those using big words. Finally here, the use of big words evidences the lack of humour of the speakers.

The subconscious in background

The Freud-Lacan line of thought warned us that the rational manifestation – or the manifestation deviated from the rational – is nothing more than the tip of the iceberg of human consciousness. The subconscious is not what lies hidden somewhere behind consciousness, but on the contrary, it represents the factor which structures the consciousness. And the subconscious "has the radical structure of language"[25]. Before revealing the consciousness, the language is the manifestation of the subconscious. The subconscious is therefore also a production. The discourse of big words – belonging to the Stalinist dogmatic tradition of social and political sciences, as well as to the political communication – not only does it disclose the psychology of the persons promoting such a discourse but it even creates their psychology: as a denial of the meaning of words considered as such (for example, the acclaimed democratic and moral principles) and as a positioning of the individual before language alternatives.

The big words have double meanings; they are at the same time denials and disclaimers: regarding the fact that reality is never as it seems/as it is described by big words, and that reality, for it is not monochord, requires thoughts, actions, discourses that criticise and compensate for the evidenced weakness (precisely the principles compensate for facts), therefore, that nevertheless big words do not correspond to utopias.

If we refer to the compensation function of big words through the metaphor "the emperor is naked"/"the emperor's new clothes", we can

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[24] "The somersaults of big words: honour, rules, honesty…", *Gândul*, 21 august 2009.
[25] Jacques Lacan, "La direction de la cure" (1961), *Écrits*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1966, p. 594.

understand the fact that the unseen clothes represent the big words, but this does not mean that such clothes are not possible or even necessary: but it depends for whom. The inexistent clothes – for the emperor was naked – were assumed by the ensemble of the power structures, for these structures the clothes were vitally important. People outside these structures saw very well that there are not clothes at all (i.e. there is not a material element, texture, thread etc. on the basis of which one could speak about any "haute couture" creation). But they kept silent. Only the child dared to express the evidence. No: "the emperor's new clothes" do not represent the metaphor for the exuberant imagination, able to pass on the other side of the visible. On the contrary, they represent the caricature of such a metaphor, the negative characterisation of the consequences of alienation.

The distinction between the enouncement and the enunciated is very important. The enouncement refers to the personal act of the speaking subject. The enunciated refers to the forms which the enouncement/act imposes. All takes place as if the subject would illusively believe to be – or it would suffer for not to be – in the state of act really personal of enouncement, and thus at the symbolic level. Actually, he is only playing around. He borrows from culture, from the symbolic order, in order to disguise its imaginary and to make it pass as real. Between the mask – the big words, in this case – and the exact position of the subject there is a slipping away, a moving slit, a dodging movement, while the "re-dodging is a calcification within the mask, it is actually the role"[26].

We derive words – the big ones, or on the contrary, the naturalistic/realistic speech – from reality, namely from different levels of reality: *the realist, the idealist, the ironic level, the level submerged into imaginary*. The imaginary is not, thusly, separated from reality; it is knotting with reality in a way which allows for the "autonomy" of the subject.

This evolution is explained by Lacan as follows: even from the birth, the subject is founding within a state of *absence* (*manque*)… Acceding to the psychic level, it transmutes into *desire*, an unlimited desire. Desire takes the form of unending *demand*, and the demand extracts and at the same time delineates the order of language. In our

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[26]   *Ibidem*, p. 843.

case, the use of big words reflects a double demand – in relation to the symbolic order of the acclaimed principles and in relation to the comprehensibility of concrete facts.

From a point of view different from Lacan's, Derrida reaches the same conclusion about the capacity of discourse – in his case, the written one – of stating "more or less or something else than initially it intended"[27]. We can see here the mobile distances between the formal text, the significance of separate units and the psychology of the subject.

And still, precisely because the *logos* is not only reason, but also language, this one should be understood as an instrument through which man is acknowledged by the others, as interlocutor, and not simply as a passive recipient, or external producer of noises. But acknowledgement means that the language convey rationality: if the language conveys only empty words, "through which the subject seems to speak in vain about somebody who will never come close to his desire"[28], it may very well not take himself seriously. The discourse is transforming the language into an attack, a mockery towards the auditor.

The space of big words

The problem of big words refers to the public discourse, delivered in the public space. Here, the interlocutors are exterior to one another, i.e. they are exclusively connected by *public*, and not private relationships[29] – or what could be referred to as inter-human/inter-subjective relationships. And because the public relations are of the same type to power relations – namely they are subordinated to these ones –, the public discourses are also of the same nature. For this reason, the ideal-type of communication characterised before anything else, by transparency, takes the form of communication controlled by power relations.

Indeed, the big words represent a form of infringement of the assumptions of communication. These assumptions are as follows: A) the capacity of the audience to recognise the intention of the speaker to inform them in some respect, B) for the speaker communicates a double

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[27] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967, p. 226.

[28] Jacques Lacan, "Fonctions et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalise" (1953), in Lacan, *Écrits*, du Seuil, 1966, p. 254.

[29] An example of a special discourse in a private framework is the discourse of "sweet talk". This too can be different from the real state of things and that stated by one collocutor or the other, but usually the intention is not to mystify the relation, but on the contrary, to strengthen it.

intention stimulus: 1) to inform the audience in some respect and 2) to inform the audience about his intention to inform them in some respect. The communicative intention is that under 2). Pursuant to this intention, the audience may decode and infer the message. These assumptions design the ideal pattern of fully transparent communication; the consequence of whom being what was called *common knowledge*. Common/shared knowledge is the truly one (of course in a given cultural-historical context): when the recipients recognise the informative truth as well as the truth of the speaker's intention. But when this latter constructs with the clear intention to mystify the representation of the recipients and their capacity to acknowledge the communicated truth, then there is a deviation (exception) from the *common knowledge*[30], generated by the power relations, which transpose into an intention to render communication opaque and into an opaque communication. And thus uncertainty cancels (imaginarily) the communicated fact.

   In this case, instead of the infinite reflexivity between interlocutors – the speaker knows that the recipient knows, and the recipient knows that the speaker knows etc. – an infinite reciprocal rejection is installed: the recipient knows that the transmitted fact is a lie, or he does not believe it to be true, and the speaker, although he fears the potential discernment of the recipient, nevertheless considers that the facts transmitted would be accepted to be true. Finally here, the collective hypocrisy which could be the object of a long discussion is simply the mark of the (symbolic and real) domination relations: that tend to prolong this one *sine die* and that use it as an integrated element/integrated tool in maintaining these relations.

   The mystifying intention is, therefore, even from the beginning the deforming element of the discourse filled with big words/characterised by big words. These do not represent under any circumstance the "flight of imagination" towards the heights of human desiderata. Yes, "imagination elevates so high the representation of what it expected…"[31], the big words reflect the image of the high level expected and which level is a landmark for man's behaviours/desirable

30 David Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study* /1969), Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 56.
31 Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique* (1798), Traduction, présentation, bibliographie et chronologie par Alain Renaut, Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1993, p. 113.

behaviour: but the big words are not the witnesses of a guiltless imagination of the speaker, but on the contrary, they disclose the speaker's distance to the values described (by words which appear to be big words) within the discourse. *The place of the imaginary in the discourse of big words is at the level of its form, but under no circumstance at the level of its intention.*

This type of discourse deviates from the discourse presupposed in the *status quo* doctrines. It is a discourse which does not aim at persuasion, therefore politics "within the limits of reason alone" (a paraphrase of Kant's well-known work), and it uses reason only for manipulative purposes: concretely, in order to give the impression of "political correctness" and to consider this presumptive impression as a defensive cover of the speaker against the doubt and criticism of the hearers.

The big words tend to cover the actual state of the communicative relations: the power relations between the speaker and the listeners, as well as the intention of the speaker, and the uncertainty and the doubt of the audience. And starting from this point, the actions themselves bear the seal of reduced motivation and bad example: if the discourse of those in t the top mystifies, then the action may take place in the same register. "We pretend to…": the characteristic of the conviction that the development of life in this line of *simili* would be the only productive one is not simply a proof of alienation and social crisis, but also a counter-productive factor for the human action.

The big words do not represent an involuntary mistake of the speaker exclusively psychologically determined: for they basically do not differ from the entire discourse, but they represent a constitutive element thereof. The entire discourse is that one going round the rationalist analysis – therefore, "all the way"[32] – and it transmits the fragmented manner of dealing with things, the fragmented logic: the big words are simply a means of suggesting that such logic would not be involved. But it is.

The big words jargon
If it is so, then the big words represent a style of jargon, especially of political jargon. As everyone knows, the jargon is before anything else,

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[32]   See Ana Bazac, "*Raționalism până la capăt*", in *Logica și provocările sociale. Omagiu profesorului Cornel Popa la 75 de ani*, București, Politehnica Press, 2008, p. 258–288.

an internal language of a professional or social group[33], having an identifying function: only as a second stage it is used to communicate with the world outside the group. As a result, in this communicative relation with the exterior, the jargon manifests obscurity, ambiguity, esoteric formulations. The ideological jargons[34] – the political, the economic, and the juridical – intentionally have as purpose not transparency, but a fake communication: transmission of fragmented information, isolated from context, of messages regarding the superiority of the group using the jargon. In this sense, the big words from the political jargon are similar to the jargon of current day economists [35] or with the juridical jargon[36].

However, the big words are differentiating from these jargons: they are planned *ab initio* to be transmitted outside the group of politicians and, therefore, they do not have the excuse of perfect transparency and honesty having allegedly occurred in the narrow framework of the group of economists for example. Moreover, big words are used only in derision in this framework belonging to

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[33] Albert Dauzat, Les *argots. Caractères. Évolution. Influence.* Paris, Delgrave, 1929, p. 21: argotic language representing means "of cohesion for closed groups, a reaction against external agents, and if necessary, a corpus of protection". The difference between argotic language and jargon seems to be that the latter does not aim from the beginning to be/to seem encrypted for the people outside the group. In fact, the main purpose of argotic language is also that of providing a sense of identity. But in a critical way: avoiding the taboos of society occurs also by naming certain things which "are not spoken of" (naming in the fashion of the "emperor is naked", by using metonymies, metaphors, and synonymies). (The use of metaphors – which act through substitution – and of metonymies – which act through contiguity – is noticed also by Lacan, who took over these two great rhetorical categories from Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, Paris, Minuit, 1963.)

[34] Pierre Bourdieu & Luc Boltanski, *La Production de l'idéologie dominante* (1976), Paris, Raison d'Agir, 2008, p. 15–19, 57–75, 139–144: these jargons transmit common places which together constitute a corpus of social ideas regarding: the condemning of the past, the myth of evolution, the re-conversion of conservatism, the end of ideology; even the issue of social research becomes more important in the light of these ideas.

[35] See the *Corporatese* article, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporatese, and the *Business speak* article, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_speak, where the derogatory character of this language is evidenced, involving the use of obscure words and of complicated phrases, with the frequent purpose of giving a positive image to negative situations. Also see C. J. Fombrun, *Reputation: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 1996 and C. J. Fombrun and C. B. M. van Riel, *Fame and Fortune: How the World's Top Companies Develop Winning Reputations*, New York, Pearson Publishing and the Financial Times, 2004.

[36] See the *Legalese* article, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalese#Legalese.

specialists: they are, on the contrary, destined to give precisely to the external recipients of the political decision-makers, the image of "political correctness"[37] of these ones.

But the big words do not have only a psychological motivation: basically they are a means of *propaganda*, namely a language flow from upwards to downwards for the purpose of shaping the social consciousness of the ruled. Even if the discourse of big words is used in the common language when the collocutors do not have any competence in the domain approached, and try to "substitute" it by way of big words – namely by using common clichés about the topic in question –, this discourse is accidentally used in common language, but permanently/commonly in the political propaganda language. Propaganda is that transmits the stereotypical and euphemistic manner of approaching social issues – by way of the clichés of big words, which do not reflect anything (but on the contrary, they even avoid litigant words), and which involve as a response, the ironic language (including argotic words) in its private and public form[38] –. Propaganda uses and transmits the so-called "wooden language" that was/is not specific only to totalitarian regimes[39].

The big words – among which, each reflects simply and accurately a referential (the country, the people, honesty etc.), but which, in the construction of the ensemble of the discourse provide the meaning of inadvertence between the discourse and its premises related to the speaker and his social position – confer to the spoken words the characteristic of a *double discourse*[40]: not in the sense of subterranean

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[37] This expression is used here not in the sense of the American liberals, but in the sense of correctness from the point of view of the correspondence between the practice and concrete political strategy of politicians and, on the other hand, the democratic and moral principles. Political correctness reflects the intention of politicians to emphasise that they are appropriate (even indispensable) for the leadership position, therefore possessing what Machiavelli called *virtù*.

[38] But the public form of irony towards politics and political language is also a form of propaganda.

[39] See Victor Klemperer, *LTI, la langue du Troisième Reich. Carnets d'un philologue*, Paris, Albin Michel, coll. Bibliothèque Idées, [1947] 1996, and also Éric Hazan, *LQR: la propagande du quotidien*, Paris, Raison d'Agir, 2006.

[40] See Ana Bazac, "Two pages from the culture of the double speech and of tacit suppositions", in Yolanda-Mirela Catelly (coord.), *Limbă, cultură și civilizație în contemporaneitate*, the 2nd conference with international participation, București, Politehnica Press, 2008, p. 53–57.

social critique shrouded in (apparently) conformist forms in order not to alert the ears of the current prince (such as did Erasmus and Mandeville, for example), but, on the contrary, in the sense of social conformism, legitimated by way of reference to *ad usum populi* principles.

As language and the messages going round man shape his ideas and actions, the recipients of big words tend to no more be sensitive to their lie and their ridicule. Just this possibility to influence and manipulate people counts on the bidders of big ideas: if the poems written to the honour of the former leader had the capacity to shake consciences from their numbness, the guises and realities of political fights for power within this current democracy may lead to a certain inertia not only of the trust that precisely these fights would represent the warranty of democracy, but also that of reproducing clichés – filled with big words – by the youth learning the social game. In other words, big words become stereotypes, assumed as a common necessary evil of language, in the school and mass media.

Through the rules which require to the language to refer to principles and values, although the intention and goal is that of controlling power, including the political conscience of the masses, the political language under analysis here in the light of big words reflects the political relations. The double speech – and so the double identity – of the politician by/in language reflects the constitutive power relations: i.e. the fact that politicians are decision-makers depending on the restrictive interests of the dominant groups but, at the same time, they are also the representatives of "general will" (Rousseau), related also to people not making decisions. The rules of political language are, therefore, contradictory: on the one hand, they demand the reference to principles which are closer to the entire population, and on the other hand, they demand a certain truthfulness of the facts reflected, many of them colliding with the interests of those not making decisions.

Consequently, the big words shape a certain kind of *rhetoric* which aims to persuade the audience by way of translating the justice derived from principles over the political players. For justice is the end of the majority of population in social hierarchical societies[41], justice

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[41] See Hesiod, *Works And Days*, Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1914, http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/works.htm: "for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint" (109–120); "let us settle our dispute here with true judgement which is of Zeus and is perfect" (25–41); "And there is

seems to be guaranteed by the assuming, at least in words – because under law –, of the justice principles (which refer including to democracy) by the decision makers.

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virgin Justice, the daughter of Zeus, who is honoured and reverenced among the gods who dwell on Olympus" (248–264); "for Justice beats Outrage when she comes at length to the end of the race" (212–224); "Neither famine nor disaster ever haunt men who do true justice" (225–237); in Romanian, *Munci şi zile* (sec. VIII î.e.n.), Traducere de Ştefan Bezdechi, Studiu introductiv de Ion Banu, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1957: "pământul mănos, fără trudă/Roade le da din belşug, iar dânşii voioşi şi în pace/Îşi împărţeau între sine belşugul" (110–115, p. 51), "noi să curmăm mai pe urmă/Cearta-ntre noi prin dreptate, ce-i darul de frunte-al lui Zeus" (30–35, p. 46), „Ci-i o fecioară Dreptatea, fiica vestit-a lui Zeus/Care cinstită e chiar şi de zei ce-n Olimp şi-au lăcaşul" (245–250, p. 55), "Ci dreptul în cele din urmă biruie sila" (210, p. 54), „Nici nu bântuie foamea în mijlocul drepţilor oameni" (220, p. 54).

Justice seems to be the most important objective of social regulation, while virtue was the quality necessary to men in order to achieve this objective. This supposition is certified by Hesiod himself, quoted work, but also by Theognis of Megara and by Solon. Also see Thomas J. Figuieira, "Khrēmata: Acquisition and Possession in Archaic Greece", in *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, (Edited by K. D. Irani, Morris Silver, Contributor Morris Silver), Contributions in Political Science, Number 354, Global Perspectives in History and Politics, Westport, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995, p. 47: Solon, fr. 13. 7–8: "Wealth I would have, but wealth by wrong procure I would not; justice, e'en if slow, is sure" or "Some wicked men are rich, some good are poor; We will not change our virtue for their store" *ibidem*; or Theognis, justice and reason are the conditions of the wealth admitted by gods, p. 49. (Theognis, verses 27–30, 523–526, 753–756, 1007–1012).

All these illustrate the fact that during periods of social crisis – when new "interpretations" of the social (i.e. power) relations emerge – the issue of justice and injustice is more acutely perceived: for domination is manifesting in new discretionary forms, somehow in contradiction even with the existing domination-subjection structures (which are perceived as unjust).

In this sense, all the philosophical conceptions concentrated on ethics – even if they reflected the intent of their creators to avoid the experience of injustice, or their incapacity to fight injustice, namely to unilaterally quarter themselves in the field of reflection – may be understood as signals, more or less alienated, regarding the concrete social life.

On the other hand, Plato has evidenced the connection between the rational understanding and justice: justice is "*the understanding of what is right*", and this understanding is related to the exercise of the human *logos* in search of the case, the origin, of the engine of existence and good, see "Cratylos", (translated by Simina Noica) in Plato, *Opere*, III, Ediţie îngrijită de Petru Creţia, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică şi enciclopedică, 1978, 412c – 413c, p. 291–292.

By way of this, Plato initiated the great theme of moral philosophy and which deeply differentiated all philosophers: that of the agreement or disagreement, of coincidence or contradiction, between the *structure of reason* and the *structure of reality*.

But big words are not found only in the discourse of politicians as such. Other professionals in fields related to ideologies, namely the shaping of social consciousness – such are teachers and clergymen – use it as well. One of the consequences is – visible in the age of mass communication which we are currently experiencing – the general scepticism towards any message, even if it is remote from the practice of clichés and big words: these clichés and big words turn even the waved principles, and not only the different types of discursive practice, into risible aspects.

Truth and big words

The form of expression using big words if bombastic and therefore, ridiculous, but does it really bring a surplus to knowledge? Indirectly, they can be signals about the personality – intelligence (therefore, the ability to have a sense of humour), culture, the position within power structures –. But, especially because they are issued in the social hierarchical framework already reminded, they can cover the *phenomena* related to a discourse of big words. Therefore, the truth of principles seems not to leave room for any questions about these phenomena. On the other hand, the rejection of big words may lead not only to sterile scepticism, incapable of answering these questions, but even to a barrier facing the principles themselves. And these remain a white stain for the sceptic embittered by the big words.

In this sense, at the level of intellectual dilettantism from a certain Stalinist tradition within social sciences, big words can be used: but the specialists, the researchers try to avoid them. They simply do not need them; on the contrary, the possible utilisation of an inappropriate language cancels their efforts to search out things. On the other hand, the big words become more than clichés – as means of expression – but even downright dogmas (knowledge contents). In this way they present an inertia maintained by referential intellectual practices, and also by the mainstream intellectual atmosphere, i.e. by the trend of dominant ideological devices.

Knowing the truth – namely of the true thing – presupposes an acute sense of the limits: of the object to be researched and of the researcher. Consequently, the means themselves – the type of discourse, in this case – must reflect this sense. Redundancy, the replacement of causal analysis with description, the exclusion of any clarifications

regarding the criteria taken into account within the description and in this replacement, the ignorance of historicism in the name of the refusal of relativism, but on this ground, the failure to understand and to focus on the fine relationship between concrete and abstract, between universal and particular, between continuity and discontinuity, between everlasting and historical, the failure to understand the netting, the overlapping, the intertwining between phenomena – all these are characteristics of the discourse of big words, lacking the sense of limitations.

In this way, such a discourse offers the impression of baroque, of chaos/puzzle which rejects any desire for deciphering. Saying everything about everything, or agglomerating matters without the knowledge to place them in a hierarchical and rational image (perfectible of course, but relatively easily noticeable), represent manifestations of the baroque. Jorge Luis Borges' observation[42] (in the Prologue to the 1954 edition of *A Universal History of Infamy* (1935)) is also perfectly valid for social sciences: "I would say that baroque is that style which deliberately exhausts (or wishes to exhaust) all possibilities, neighbouring its own caricature… I would call baroque the final stage of any art, when art flaunts and squanders its resources. Baroquism is intellectual, and as Bernard Shaw declared, any intellectual activity is humorous."

Consequently, the critique of the big words discourse is "Borgesian" in the sense that it reveals the counterfeit character of discourse – given/transmitted as reflecting reality in the most accurate and serious of ways –, the character of fictitious communication.

This critique itself emerges from the direction of the conscience of limits, and the form of this conscience is the embarrassment which causes laughter[43]. But embarrassment and laughter reflect, first of all, over us. This is the only way in which they can leave a trace on and over the discourse of the others.

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[42] Jorge Luis Borges, in Romanian, "Prolog la ediţia din 1954" la *Istoria universală a infamiei* (1935), in Jorge Luis Borges, *Moartea şi busola. Proză completă*, vol. I, Traducere şi note de: Irina Dogaru, Cristina Hăulică şi Andrei Ionescu, Cuvânt înainte, tabel cronologic, prezentări şi ediţie îngrijită de Andrei Ionescu, Iaşi, Polirom, 2006, p. 158.

[43] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 10: "une gène qui fait rire".

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