

Identity Today and the Critical Task of Semioethics

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Abstract

The critical task of semioethics implies recognition of the common condition of dialogical interrelation and the capacity for listening, where dialogue does not imply a relation we choose to concede thanks to a sense of generosity towards the other, but on the contrary is no less than structural to life itself, a necessary condition for life to flourish, an inevitable imposition. With specific reference to anthroposemiosis, semioethics focuses on the concrete singularity of the human individual and the inevitability of intercorporeal interconnection with others. The singularity, uniqueness of each one of us implies otherness and dialogism. Semioethics assumes that whatever the object of study and however specialized the analysis, human individuals in their concrete singularity cannot ignore the inevitable condition of involvement in the destiny of others, that is, involvement without alibis. From this point of view, the symptoms studied from a semioethical perspective are not only specified in their singularity, on the basis of a unique relationship with the other, the world, self, but are above all social symptoms. Any idea, wish, sentiment, value, interest, need, evil or good examined by semioethics as a symptom is expressed in the word, the unique word, the embodied word, in the voice which arises in the dialectic and dialogical interrelation between singularity and sociality.

1.1. *Responsibility, a Human Prerogative*; 1.2. *Otherness, Dialogism and Intercorporeity: On Sign and Communication Models*; 1.3. *The Dialogic Nature of Signs, Interpretation and Understanding*; 1.4. *Subjectivity and Interpretation*; 1.5. *Otherness between Singularity and Interconnectedness*; 1.6. *The Extracommunitarian Other*; 1.7. *Transcultural Communication, Ideology, and Social Planning*; 1.8. *Signs of Difference*; 1.9. *Global Communication and Subjectivity: The Critical Task of Semioethics*; 1.10. *More Social Symptoms of Globalization: Migration and Unemployment*; 1.11. *“The open society of open selves”*; 1.12. *Listening, Hospitality, and Restitution*; 1.13. *From reason to reasonableness*; 1.14. *Redefining subjectivity*; 1.15. *Mother-sense: an a priori for subjectivity, signification and critique*; 1.16. *Sense and Expression in Sociality*; 1.17. *Semioethics and the Humanism of Otherness*

1.1. Otherness, a Human Prerogative

To develop the general science of signs in the direction of semioethics means to evidence mankind's social, political and ethical responsibilities towards semiosis in all its aspects. In an article of 1949 entitled “Why Socialism?,” originally published in the inaugural issue of the journal *Monthly Review* and repropounded in 2009 to celebrate the journal's sixtieth birthday, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) claims that while science cannot create ends for human beings, it can supply the means by which to attain given ends. The ends themselves are conceived by personalities with high ethical ideals which are carried forward by human beings who, in the main unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society. The same principle may be applied to semiotics as the general science of science, especially when developed in the direction of semioethics. Progress and understanding do not only imply knowledge in a strictly technical or neutral sense, but closely involve values and human relationships. Einstein underlines the problem of responsibility and the need for co-participation in the common quest for progress and well-being of humanity. However, when a question of human problems, we must not overestimate science and scientific methods, nor assume that experts alone have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society. Responsibility is a prerogative of mankind and should be promoted through an educational system that is oriented towards social goals. Rather than promote such values as power, competition and acquisitive success in preparation for a future career,

education should encourage development of the individual's abilities together with a sense of responsibility for the other, whether human or nonhuman, distant or less distant.

In "Why Socialism?" Einstein prefigures the development of presentday globalization when he describes humanity as already constituting "a planetary community of production and consumption": "the time—which looking back seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient" (*Ibid.*: 58). He denounces the evils caused by the "economic anarchy of capitalist society," not least the crippling of individuals, in a system where members of the community strive to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor, not by force but in compliance with the law. In fact, the entire productive capacity may legally be the private property of individuals. In a system where production is carried out for profit and not for use, private capital tends to become concentrated in the hands of few. Moreover, with the alliance between legislative bodies, political parties and private capitalists who provide the necessary financial support, a truly democratic political system cannot be guaranteed, with the consequence that the interests of the exploited and underprivileged sections of the population are not sufficiently protected. Add to this the fact that the capitalist not only owns the means of production, but controls the main sources of information, from the press to the educational system. In the present day and age the ruling class is the class that controls communication, as Ferruccio Rossi-Landi amply demonstrated in the 1960s and 1970s with his acute semiotic analyses of the relation between signs, ideology and social planning. Nor can we ignore that the globalized world enacts a social system that is based on profit, privilege and power and is guaranteed by control over communication (eloquent cases are represented by the media magnates Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi).

Einstein's article was published at a time of crisis and instability, of violence and destruction in the aftermath of the second world war. In the face of offended humanity, of widespread solitude and isolation, he questions social behavior and the possibility of a future, convinced that another world war would mean the end of society. In the face of concern for the well-being of the single individual as much as of society at large (formed of individuals) which, translated into semiotic terms, resounds as concern for the health of semiosis, consequently for life, we must inevitably ask the question, "Is there a way out?". Einstein's answer focuses on the relational and social constitution of the human being in terms that very much recall reflections in a semiotic key by such thinkers as Charles Peirce, Victoria Welby and Charles

Morris, author of the *The Open Self* published in 1948, just a year before publication of Einstein's own article "Why Socialism?" Each of these scholars evidence in their own terms the irrepressible interconnection between identity and otherness, self and other, the human being as a single individual and society, between singularity and sociality:

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of this fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual human being the sum total of this direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotion existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society."

"[...] dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished—just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the last detail by rigid, hereditary instinct, the social pattern and interrelationship of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human being which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organizations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens

that, in a certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.” (Morris 1948: 57-8)

According to Einstein, the essence of the crisis of his own day concerns the nature of the relationship of the individual to society and the dominant tendency in the direction of egotism and isolation. In the capitalist reproduction system, the individual has become more conscious of his dependence on society and this condition is perceived as a threat to one’s natural rights or even to one’s existence in terms of economy. But the truth is that from the point of view of the properly human, the single individual can only find the sense and meaning of life in sociality, that is, by cultivating the otherness dimension:

Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while this social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from the process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naïve, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society. (*Ibid.*: 59)

1.2. Otherness, Dialogism and Intercorporeity: On Sign and Communication Models

The semiotics of Charles S. Peirce covers many aspects that orientate it dialogically, on the one hand, and contribute towards a more profound understanding of dialogic structure and practice, on the other. His thought-sign theory evidences the dialogic structure of the self imagined as developing in terms of dialogue between a thought acting as a sign and another sign acting as an interpretant of the previous sign. The Peircean sign model has now gained wide consensus in the sign sciences, especially general semiotics, philosophy of language and related disciplines. This particular sign model has been gradually supplanting the Saussurean model which because of the general success enjoyed by structuralism has spread from linguistics (and semiology) to other human sciences that refer to linguistics as their model, significantly influencing them, as in the case of structural anthropology in the interpretation of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

We know that the Saussurean sign model is rooted in a series of dichotomies such as *langue* and *parole*, *signifiant* and *signifié*, *diachrony* and *synchrony*, the *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* axes of language (Saussure, 1916). These paradigms have been related to the mathematical theory of communication (Shannon and Weaver, 1949) and reformulated in such terms as *code* and *message*, *transmitter* and *receiver*. This explains why semiotics of Saussurean derivation has been described as “code” or “decodification semiotics” (Rossi-Landi, 1968, 1975), “code and message” semiotics (Bonfantini, 1984, 1987; Eco 1984, 1990), “equal exchange semiotics” (Ponzio, 1973, 1977, 1993). Despite their reductionist approach to expressive and interpretive processes, these concepts were thought to adequately describe all types of sign processes: not just the *signal* type relative to information transmission, but also complex sign processes, therefore the sign in *strictu sensu* relatively to the different aspects of human communication in its globality (for the distinction between sign and signal, see Voloshinov, 1929).

In the framework of “decodification semiotics” the sign is divided into two parts: the *signifier* and the *signified* (respectively, the sign vehicle and its content). These are related on the basis of the principle of *equal exchange* and *equivalence*—that is, of perfect correspondence between communicative intention (which leads to codification) and interpretation (intended as mere decodification). In Italy, this sign model was early criticized by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1961), who described it ironically as a “postal package theory.” As Rossi-Landi pointed out, decodification semiotics proposes an oversimplified analysis of communication in terms of messages (the postal package) complete in themselves, which pass from a sender to a receiver (from one post office to another) ready for registration: all the receiver need do is decipher the content, decode the message.

Furthermore, as amply demonstrated by Rossi-Landi and subsequently by his collaborator, Augusto Ponzio, the Saussurean sign model is based on value theory as conceived by marginalistic economy from the School of Lausanne (Walras and Pareto). Assimilation of the study of language to the study of the marketplace in an ideal state of equilibrium gives rise to a static conception of the sign. In this framework, viewed synchronically the sign is dominated by the logic of perfect correspondence between that which is given and that which is received, that is, by the logic of equal exchange which currently regulates all social relations in today’s dominant economic system.

However, so-called “interpretation semiotics” evidences the inadequacy of the sign model subtending decodification semiotics. “Rediscovery” of interpretation semiotics no doubt has been favored by new orientations of a socio-cultural order which arise from signifying practices intolerant of the polarization between code and message, *langue* and *parole*, language system and individual speech. Detotalizing and decentralized signifying practices tend to flourish as the centripetal forces in linguistic life and socio-cultural life generally tend to weaken. These privilege the unitary system of the code over the effective “polylogism,” “plurilingualism,” “multiaccentuativity” and “pluri-availability” of signs and language. Moreover, by comparison with the claim to totalization implied by the dichotomies elaborated by decodification semiotics, the categories of interpretation semiotics keep account of the “irreducibly other,” as theorized by both Mikhail M. Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas.

That the instruments provided by decodification semiotics are inadequate for a convincing analysis of the distinguishing features of human communication had already been demonstrated by Valentin N. Voloshinov (therefore Bakhtin who spoke through Voloshinov among others) in his monograph of 1929 *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Eng. trans. 1973). Reference is to such features as “plurilingualism” which includes “internal plurilingualism” (when a question of different languages internal to a single so-called “national language”) and “external plurilingualism” (the plurality of different languages beyond the boundaries of any one language), “plurivocality,” “polylogism,” “ambiguity,” “polysemy,” “dialogism,” “otherness.” Even if we limit our attention to the characteristics just listed, it is obvious that verbal communication cannot be contained within the two poles of *langue* and *parole*, as had been theorized instead by Saussure. Signs cannot be reduced to the mere status of signality: that which characterizes the sign in a strong sense by comparison to the signal is the fact that its interpretive potential is not exhausted in a single meaning. In other words, the signifier and the signified do not relate to each other on a one-to-one basis. As mentioned above, meaning cannot be reduced to the status of an intentional message formulated according to a precise communicative will. Consequently, the work of the interpretant sign is not limited to the very basic operations of identification, mechanical substitution, or mere recognition of the object-interpreted sign. By contrast with signals, signs at high levels of semioticity cannot be interpreted simply by referring to a fixed and pre-established code. In other words, to interpret signs does not simply mean to decodify them.

Moreover, sign models are intimately related to our conception of the subject: in the perspective of decodification or equal exchange semiotics, the subject is rooted in the logic of identity at low degree of otherness or dialogism. According to this approach, the subject coincides perfectly with consciousness and has full control over the sign processes that one is concerned with; therefore, the subject is convinced that what a message communicates is completely determined by intentional will as sender and encoder.

On the contrary, those trends in semiotics which somehow refer to “interpretation semiotics” (as distinct from “decodification semiotics”) and to the Peircean sign model describe the generation of meaning as an ongoing, dynamic and open-ended process without the guarantees of a code regulating exchange relations between signifiers and signifieds (see Eco, 1984; Peirce, *CP* 5.284). In “Semiotics between Peirce and Bakhtin,” Ponzio associates categories developed for the study of signs by two epochal thinkers, Charles Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin, and in this light demonstrates how the sign model proposed by decodification or equal exchange semiotics is oversimplifying and naïve (Ponzio, 1990a: 252-73). In fact, according to this model the sign is: 1) at the service of meaning pre-established outside communication and interpretation processes; 2) considered as a pre-constituted and passive instrument in the hands of a subject who is also given and pre-established antecedently to semiotic and communicative processes, therefore capable of controlling and dominating signs and sign processes at will; 3) can be decoded on the basis of a pre-existing code shared by partners in the communicative process.

Instead, the sign model proposed by interpretation semiotics is triadic (at least) and is largely constructed with reference to Peirce’s astounding classification of signs, in particular his tripartite division of the interpretant into “immediate interpretant,” “dynamic interpretant,” and “final interpretant,” and his most renowned triad that distinguishes among “symbol,” “index,” and “icon,” etc. Peirce places the sign in the dynamic context of semiosis, open-ended, infinite semiosis, which also means in the context of the dialectic and dialogic relationship with the interpretant. Keeping account of such aspects, Ponzio’s association of Peirce and Bakhtin is highly relevant: Bakhtin places the sign in the context of dialogism and intercorporeity (in which alone can the sign fully flourish as a sign) and describes signs and sign processes in the dynamic terms of “text,” “otherness,” “dialogism,” “responsive understanding,” “answerability,” “intertextuality,” “polyphony,” “extralocalization,” “multiaccentuativity,” “unfinalizability,” “plurilingualism,” “listening,” etc. (Bakhtin, 1970-

1971; Barthes, 1981, 1982). Though working independently of each other and despite their different focus—Peirce worked mostly on questions of a cognitive order, Bakhtin on literary language which he used as a kaleidoscope for his own philosophical work on signs and language —, both scholars recognize the fundamental importance of the logic of dialogism and otherness for an adequate understanding semiosis and of the ethical and pragmatic dimensions of signifying processes. In fact, both also focus their attention on what we have identified as the “semioethical” dimension of semiosis (see Petrilli and Ponzio, 2003b, 2005; Petrilli, 2010).

1.3. The Dialogic Nature of Signs, Interpretation and Understanding

The word is structurally a dialogic word, a word born in relation to the other, as such the word is a response, an answer, a reply, and a question. The constitutive character of understanding is dialogic. Dialogue is an external or internal discourse where the word of the other, not necessarily of another person, interferes with one’s own word. Reading together Peirce and Bakhtin has led to the elaboration of a sign model that is dialectic or “dialogic” (that is, the result of dialectics grounded in dialogism) according to which the sign and semiosis converge. Considered dialectically or, better, dialogically, the sign does not emerge as an autonomous unit endowed with a pre-constituted and pre-defined meaning, with a value of its own determined in the relationship of mechanical opposition with the other units forming the sign system. Once the sign is no longer viewed as a single element or broken down into its component parts, it is difficult to say where it begins and where it ends. The sign is not a thing, but a process, the intersection of relations which are social relations (Ponzio, 2006a).

Bakhtin works on the concept of text which, like the sign, can only flourish and play the game of understanding and interpretation in the light of a still broader context: the intertextual context of dialectic/dialogic relationships among texts. The sense of a text develops through its interaction with other texts, along the boundaries of another text. Bakhtin’s approach to signs and language gives full play to the centrifugal forces of linguistic-cultural life, theorizing otherness, polysemy, and dialogism as constitutive factors of the sign’s identity. Says Bakhtin in his essay of 1959-1961, “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis”:

The text as utterance included in the speech communication (textual chain) of a given sphere. The text as a unique monad that in itself reflects all texts (within the bounds) of a given sphere. The interconnection of all ideas (since all are realized in utterances). The dialogic relationships among texts and within the text. The special (not linguistic) nature. Dialogue and dialectics. (Bakhtin, 1986: 104-5)

The categories developed by decodification semiotics are oversimplifying especially in their application to discourse analysis, writing, and ideology. On the contrary, interpretation semiotics with its theories of sense, significance, and interpretability (“interpretanza,” Eco, 1984: 43), with its broad, dynamic and critical conception of the sign accounts more adequately for signification and communication, providing a far more comprehensive description of human interaction. As anticipated, the sign model developed by decodification semiotics is founded on the logic of equal exchange, on the notion of equivalence between one sign and another, between the *signifiant* and the *signifié*, the system of language and the utterance (*langue/parole*), etc. Instead, the sign model developed by interpretation semiotics is grounded in the idea of deferral forming the open chain of signs, of *renvoi* among signs in a triadic progression whose minimal factors include the sign, object and interpretant. However, it is important to underline that these factors only effectively emerge in semiotic processes and are connected by a relation of non-correspondence determined by the logic of excess and otherness. According to such logic the interpretant sign never corresponds exactly to the previous sign, but says something more, developing and enriching it with new meanings.

A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen. (CP 2.228)

The interpreter/interpretant responds to something and in so doing becomes a sign which in turn gives rise to another interpretive response, etc. From this perspective, the function of the interpretant sign is not limited to merely identifying the previous sign, but rather is taken to various levels of responsive understanding (or answering comprehension) which implies the existence of a concrete dialogic relationship among signs regulated by the principle of

reciprocal otherness. As Bakhtin says (1986: 127): “Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation. The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth ad infinitum.” Semiosis ensues from this live relation and certainly not from an abstract relation among the signs forming a sign system. Bakhtin’s concept of “responsive understanding” may be associated with Peirce’s “dynamic interpretant.” And like Peirce, Bakhtin believes that the human being is made of sign relations, sign activity. As explicitly analyzed by Voloshinov (1927), both the conscious and the unconscious are made of sign material, that is, dialogically structured verbal and nonverbal sign material.

In the situation of impasse characterizing decodification semiotics, Peirce’s approach represents a means of escape. His *Collected Papers*, which include studies on signs going back to the second half of the nineteenth century, only began appearing in 1931 and have the merit (among others) of recovering the forgotten connection with sign studies from the Middle Ages (for example, Peter of Spain’s *Tractatus*¹ is cited frequently by Peirce). In his famous paper of 1867, “On a New List of Categories,” Peirce describes the concepts he believed most suitable for a satisfactory analysis of the polyhedric nature of the sign. However, an even more articulate version of this description is generally considered to be his letter of 12 October 1904 to his correspondent Victoria Lady Welby, in which, with reference to the relationship between signs and knowledge, he maintains that a sign is something by knowing which we know something more. With the exception of knowledge, in the present instant, of the contents of consciousness in that instant (the existence of which knowledge is open to doubt) all our thought & knowledge is by signs. A sign therefore is an object which is in relation to its object on the one hand and to an interpretant on the other in such a way as to bring the interpretant into a relation to the object corresponding to its own relation to the object. I might say “similar to its own” for a correspondence consists in a similarity; but perhaps correspondence is narrower. (Peirce to Welby, in Hardwick, 1977: 31-2)

According to Peirce, a *sign* stands to someone for something in some respect or capacity. The sign stands to someone in the sense that it creates “an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign” in the *interpreter*; that is, it creates an *interpretant* sign (CP 2.228). Moreover, the sign stands for something in some respect or capacity in the sense that it does not refer to the *object* in its entirety (*dynamic object*), but only to some part of it (*immediate object*). A sign, therefore, subsists for Peirce according to the category of *thirdness*; it presupposes a triadic relation between itself, its object, and the interpretant thought, itself a

sign. Given that it mediates between the interpretant sign and the object, a sign always plays the role of *third party*.

Peirce's semiotics focuses on the concept of interpretation, identifying meaning (which Saussurean semiology leaves unexplained) in the interpretant—that is to say, in another sign which takes the place of the preceding sign. Insofar as it is a sign, the interpretant only subsists by virtue of another interpretant in an open-ended chain of deferrals forming the “semiotic flux” (for this expression, see Merrell, 1996) thanks to the potential creativity of interpretive processes. According to this perspective, semiosis is not guaranteed *a priori* by appealing to a code fixed antecedently to a specific semiosis, for the code itself even does not subsist outside interpretive processes, but rather is established and maintained as a function of semiosis.

“Mediation,” which is closely interrelated with interpretation and infinite semiosis, is another fundamental concept in the architectonics of Peirce's thought system. The sign is mediated by the interpretant, without which it cannot express its meaning and in turn mediates the relationship with the object in any interpretive act whatsoever, from the simplest levels of perception to the most complex levels of knowledge. Meaning does not effectively reside in the sign, but in the relationship among signs.

Peirce's semiotics has been mostly read as cognitive semiotics in which logic and semiotics are related on the basis of the assumption that knowledge is mediated by signs, indeed is impossible without signs. Interpretation semiotics replaces the dichotomy between signifier and signified with the triadic relationship between sign, object and interpretant where the type of sign produced, in particular whether symbol, index, or icon, is a question of which relationship predominates (symbolic, indexical or iconic) in the connection between sign, object and interpretant; but whichever it is, the role of interpretant remains fundamental. Meanings evolve dynamically in open interpretive processes: the greater the degree of otherness in the relationship between interpretant sign and interpreted sign, therefore of dialogism, the more interpretation develops in terms of active dialogic response, creative reformulation, inventiveness and critique rather than mere repetition, literal translation, synonymic substitution, identification.

1.4. Subjectivity and Interpretation

The description of signifying processes in terms of unending semiosis, of interpretive processes characterized by dialogic responsiveness, deferral or *renvoi* among signs, has consequences for a theory of subjectivity. In fact, by contrast to decodification semiotics interpretation semiotics does not frame the concepts of identity and subject as coherent and unitary entities. Otherness is placed at the very heart of identity, is constitutive of identity which is described as developing in the dialectic and dialogic dynamics of the relation between the sign and its interpretants in thought processes forming the single conscious and in the relationship among the conscious of various subjects. Identity, the subject, consciousness develop in open-ended semiotic processes, evolving through the dynamics of responsive understanding, dialogism, and otherness in the interchange between the thought-sign and the interpretant.

For both Peirce and Bakhtin, the self is constructed dialogically in the translative/interpretive processes connecting thought-signs with interpretants in open chains of deferral: in this framework alone, where the self is always other and is never definitively present to itself, can the self effectively subsist as self. Therefore, the self-other relationship not only concerns the more obvious case of the relationship among the “selves” of different subjects, among the conscious of different external selves, but it also applies to the multiple “selves” forming a single, “individual” conscious. The subject does not pre-exist with respect to interpretive processes which supposedly contain it, nor does the subject control these interpretive processes from the outside. From this point of view, the term “subject” is misleading when it implies the concept of identity understood as indicating a monologic and monolithic block, a well-defined and coherent entity. Instead, the self converges with the chain of sign-interpretant relations in which it recognizes itself, to the point that experience of the self of another person is not a more complex problem than recognition of certain sign-interpretant relations as “mine,” those through which “I” become aware of myself. Consequently, says Peirce, just as we say that a body is in movement and not that the movement is in a body, we should say that we are in thought and not that thoughts are in us.

Given that the relation with the other is the condition for the constitution of the “I,” the individual thought, the word, otherness is structural to the constitution of the subject, to identity, to the “I” which in fact is itself a dialogue, a relation between the same and the other. Therefore the “I” is constitutionally, structurally, dialogic and testifies to the relation

with otherness, whether the otherness of others or of self. Otherness is located inside and outside the subject. Philosophers like Peirce and Bakhtin describe dialogue as the modality of thought itself. This *substantial dialogism* of the word is connected with the capacity for otherness and is at the origin of the philosophical word.

An important distinction is that between “substantial dialogism” and “formal dialogism.” Substantial dialogism is not given by the dialogic form of the word or text (for example, Socrates’s dialogues in texts written by Plato), but by the degree of dialogism operating in a word or text whether it takes the form of a dialogue or not. Substantial dialogism is determined by the (higher or lower) degree of otherness. Socratic dialogue as represented by *Menon* is a formal dialogue at low degrees of substantial dialogism (maybe the lowest of all Plato’s dialogues). Here dialogue is inquisitorial examination where the other (the slave boy) is induced to reach a conclusion that is predetermined by the person interrogating him (Socrates), who already knows the correct answers. Whereas Plato’s *Symposium* is an illustration of Socratic dialogue at relatively higher levels of substantial dialogism.

Dialogism as we are describing it implies a vital relation with others in the acquisition of experience and understanding. Human life is dialogic in the sense that human beings are inextricably interconnected with the world and with others, with the body of others in the species-specific terms of culture and civilization. The life of the individual and of the community is implied dialogically in otherness, in the intercorporeal relation, in the relation to the body of other living beings, whether human or nonhuman, as thematized by Bakhtin (1965) with his concept of the “grotesque body.” From a Bakhtinian perspective, dialogism and intercorporeity are closely interconnected. Dialogue is not possible among disembodied minds. In fact dialogism can be more fully understood in the framework of a biosemiotic (though not reductively biologicistic) conception of sign. It is not a coincidence that, according to standard historical reconstruction, Greek philosophy and science began outside Greece proper, in one of its colonies, Ionia, precisely in the city of Miletus, a crossroad of commercial exchanges, a point of encounter among different ideas, traditions, customs and languages from many countries of the East and of the West.

1.5. Otherness between Singularity and Interconnectedness

Viewed in a (bio)semiotic key, the body is sign material structured interconnectedly with other bodies. This is the material through which the self acts, expresses itself and communicates, in which the self is embodied, but not imprisoned:

“When I communicate my thought and my sentiments to a friend with whom I am in full sympathy, so that my feelings pass into him and I am conscious of what he feels, do I not live in his brain as well as in my own—most literally? True, my animal life is not there but my soul, my feeling thought attention are. . . . Each man has an identity which far transcends the mere animal;—an essence, a meaning subtle as it may be. He cannot know his own essential significance; of his eye it is eyebeam. But that he truly has this outreaching identity—such as a word has—is the true and exact expression of the fact of sympathy, fellow feeling—together with all unselfish interests—and all that makes us feel that he has an absolute worth.” (*CP* 7.591)

That identity is embodied subjectivity, intercorporeal semiotic material, that is, incarnated in a body connected to other bodies in open ended semiotic processes from the very outset, an expression of the condition of semiotic intercorporeity on both a synchronic and diachronic level for the whole of life, that subjectivity is not incarnated in a body isolatedly from other bodies and signs, that the body is in the sign is not indifferent to our conception of human subjectivity. The subject is incarnate sign material from the point of view of biological evolution, of the species, as much as from the point of view of sociality and cultural history.

The body plays a fundamental role in the development of awareness or consciousness. Consciousness is incarnate consciousness. The body is a condition for the full development of consciousness and inferential processes, therefore of the human being as a “semiotic animal” (Deely, Petrilli, and Ponzio 2005). The self develops interrelatedly and interdependently with other bodies and other signs through which it extends its boundaries, which are also the boundaries of one’s knowledge and experience of the other, indeed of the world at large. Peirce uses the expression “flesh and blood” to refer to the body (*CP* 7.591), which also serves to highlight the different dimensions of the body—the body within the boundaries of physical-organic material, by contrast to the body understood as semiotic material, sign material, which ultimately has a physical referent always, even though it may not be immediately obvious as in the case of dreaming or of silent thought. The word is an extension

of the body. Echoing Bakhtin through Valentin N. Volosinov author of an essay of 1928 on recent tendencies in Western linguistics, the word forms a bridge joining one's own body to the body of the other; it represents common territory uniting speaker to interlocutor such that to speak means somehow to respond to the interlocutor's expectations, to the other, to the community. Similarly to the word, the self in Peirce's conception is "outreaching identity," inferential and transcendent identity in the ongoing interrelation between physical-organic materiality and sign materiality.

1.6. The Extracommunitarian Other

But in accordance with the logic of binary opposition, all community identities have their own "extracommunitarian" to fear and from which to defend themselves. The extracommunitarian is the other, different from every other belonging to the same community—different not only from each equal other forming the same community, but also from each different and opposite other within that same community. This claim applies to the large collective community as much as to the small community forming personal identity, the individual subject. By contrast with "community" generally understood as indicating a closed community regulated by the logic of identity (Tönnies 1887; in the lexicon of Nazist Germany, *Gesellschaft*, society, was replaced by *Gemeinschaft*, community), this same term may be used (for lack of a better one) to indicate a form of sociality that is open to the logic of otherness, the open community, the "open self," as says Charles Morris (1948). This concept of community that is not based on buying and selling labor-force and is free from obsession with identity, that is, with closed, egocentric and short-sighted identity.

Subjectivity is formed by a community of selves variously interconnected either by relations of coherence, dialogue, peaceful coexistence or, instead, by hierarchical relations based on the logic of power and conflict. In any case these relations concern the same function of self. According to the logic of identity the other appears as a similar other, "other" in a relative sense, one's "alter ego" with respect to self, manifest in a given role carried out by self with respect to another, etc. However, beyond this community of selves based on the logic of identity and "relative otherness" is the open community based on "nonrelative otherness," that is, "absolute otherness."

Absolute otherness is foundational for identity, the condition for its formation but at once irreducible to it, like the self of self-consciousness. Absolute otherness characterizes each one of us in terms of singularity, uniqueness, otherness from self; it precedes roles, choices, standpoints taken by self. Absolute otherness is nonrelative otherness, otherness connected with the body itself: not the individual body, the body as we imagine it to ourselves as self, as subject; but rather the body as the material of intercorporeal interconnection with the world and with others, which precedes the individual body whose level of autonomy, self-sufficiency, independency, freedom, self-belonging is relative to (the imaginary of) the social system it belongs to. The embodied self as it emerges from relations of intercorporeity and interconnectedness with the world, human and nonhuman, with others, is refractory to the tyranny of the subject, to the conscious of egocentric self. The semiotic materiality of subjectivity, the fact that the self's effective "multiplicity" and the "conscious" do not converge indicates the presence of otherness, absolute otherness, excess within the egological community itself.

Singularity, uniqueness, absolute otherness of the single individual cannot be reduced to the identity of genre, an assemblage, a group, or category of any sort—whether sexual gender, race, class, religion, etc. In other words, absolute otherness, singularity, cannot be reduced to the individual's identity determined on the basis of genre (see Petrilli, 2007, 2008b: 33-64; Ponzio, 2007a). Self understood in terms of absolute otherness resists, is not reducible to self understood in terms of relative otherness and identity. Absolute otherness is part of egological identity, it is structural to egological identity, but does not converge with identity, relative otherness, the otherness of any one of the different selves constituting the community identity of each single individual. On the contrary, absolute otherness is the condition for the constitution of relative otherness, an a priori for the constitution of the different I's, the different selves that form community identity. Absolute otherness is before and beyond the constitution of identity, it denotes singularity, the extracommunitarian in each one of us, the each of every one of us.

Thanks to the logic of otherness, absolute otherness which characterizes each one of us in our singularity, the communities we constitute and in which we are constituted are extracommunitarian to themselves. With globalization and global communication the formation of extracommunitarian societies as we are describing them is no less than a necessity worldwide, just as the opposition between West and East has become irrelevant. In

extracommunitarian communities “cultural difference” is best understood in terms of “transculturalism” rather than of “interculturalism” and “pluri- or multiculturalism.” Transculturalism implies the welcome, listening, hospitality towards the other. Instead, interculturalism and pluri- or multiculturalism continue to imply persistence of difference based on the logic of identity, that is, interpersonal relations based on the generic, on indifference and compliant tolerance with respect to the generic other.

On one hand, the subject claims difference relatively to a genre, whether sexual gender, class, race, ethnic group, religion, nation, etc. In this case, difference is connected with identity, identity of the genre, therefore with the rights of identity, of relative otherness. On the other hand, subjectivity claims difference in terms of singularity, the other outside genre, outside an assemblage of any sort. In this case, difference is connected with the absolute otherness of each and every one of us, therefore with the rights of the other, of absolute otherness. Singularity or uniqueness represents an excess with respect to identity and social roles acted out by identity, an excess that persists despite all efforts to absorb it. But these efforts only serve to justify attempts at rejecting and expelling the other, at sacrificing and eliminating the other. Absolute otherness of the single, unique individual implies absolute responsibility towards the other, responsibility without alibis. The absolute other calls for hospitality.

The “extracommunitarian” interrogates community identity and its laws, and demands a response. But a satisfactory response to the request for hospitality made by the extracommunitarian can only come from the condition itself of extracommunitarian, that is, from absolute and nonrelative otherness, from the condition of “otherwise than being” with respect to the closed logic of community identity, the closed community. This response implies critique of the community conceived in terms of closed identity which involves difference-indifference, alibis and limited responsibility, denial of unindifference, for example, on behalf of race, history, ethnicity, nation, region, religion, political party, the individual. Community logic tends to exclude, segregate and sacrifice otherness, absolute otherness, otherness of the single unique individual, but will never succeed in eliminating it completely. The extracommunitarian requests that the community should open to the absolute other, to the request for hospitality, that it should welcome the other.

However, the extracommunitarian's request for an open community is most often registered as a threat to identity and to community assemblages. How many measures and precautions—political, economical, juridical, etc.—are necessary to push away this threat? How many armies, justifications, alibis? But at the same time this request offers an opportunity—the last?—to free our otherness from the chains of closed identity, which means an opportunity to develop as unique single individuals freed from the hard crust of identity, from identification with a genre, from the logic of interchangeability which this type of identification implies; an opportunity to flourish as single individuals, rendered unique by the condition of unindifference, by the other as witness, by the condition of unlimited and unconditional responsibility for the other, that is, responsibility without alibis. The request for hospitality offers an opportunity to transcend the social as the place of mutual indifference, as the place of encounter and clash among private interests; an opportunity to open all community spaces to the extracommunitarian, that is, to create communities that are structurally extracommunitarian, that are oriented by the logic of continuous detotalization of self, by the capacity for listening to the other, outside the logic of closed identity, for a reformulation of the community, collective and individual, founded on the logic of otherness, nonrelative, absolute otherness.

Identity wants to forget the condition of obsession with the other. But such phenomena as migration and unemployment make this impossible, as they remind us, indeed face us with a fact we already know, that the body already knows: that to exclude the other is impossible. Historical languages, cultures, technics, industries, markets all know full well that the other can be repressed, but never eliminated. National, ethnic, religious, ideological identities know this; individual identities, identities connected with class, role, gender, with any type of assemblage or genre, know this, even when they persist in their indifference to the other. But above all “intransitive” forms of writing, verbal and nonverbal, know that the other cannot be excluded or evaded; art forms, all those practices free from the obsession with identity, practices that involve nomadism, migration, shift in structural terms, as part of expressive procedure, know that the other cannot be eliminated.

1.7. Transcultural Communication, Ideology, and Social Planning

Coherently with capitalist ideology the centre of the world detains control over communication circuits and dominates over the periphery. In other words, in the era of global communication the so-called “developed world,” which is ever more degraded and dehumanized, continues to exploit the so-called “underdeveloped world” which is expanding and is ever more proletarianized and pauperized. In a globalizing world change simply means to readjust the parameters of dominion in terms of a “glocalising world.” In spite of multinationals, the amplification of communication scenarios, encounter among different cultures, foreignization, we are faced by the same misery: profit-making by a few at the expense of many—which in “globalization” are on the rise: exploitation is spreading worldwide with the spread of global communication-production imposing itself as the only social reproduction system now possible. This phase in social reproduction is mostly qualified with the prefix “post-.” Another pas-partout expression is “cultural interaction,” which is also applied to translation processes. Other qualifying terms that circulate in global discourse today include “interculturalism,” “multiculturalism,” “hybridization,” “contamination,” in addition to such expressions as “post-capitalism,” “post-colonialism,” “post-apartheid.”

We know that social reproduction today presents itself in terms of globalization, global communication, communication-production. Therefore, intercultural or better, transcultural communication is now communication across languages, cultures and value systems in a globalized world. From a semiotic point of view, to identify the context of communication today in globalization, in global communication-production means to evidence the interconnection between signs, ideology and social programs as thematized by Rossi-Landi. In his monograph *Language as Work and Trade* (1968, Eng. trans. 1968), he analyzes language in terms of the relation between labor, trade and consumption in global communication-production circuits and describes the homology relating the production of artefacts to the production of language.

Sign systems are the material of social reproduction, just as they are the material of human behavior which is social signifying behavior. Behavior, whether conscious or unconscious, is programmed behavior, that is, behavior regulated by social programs. The individual may or may not be aware of the fact that behavior is organized socially, but all the same, as a social being, the individual behaves according to programs. Rossi-Landi distinguishes between

“program” properly understood, “project” and “plan”: a program is part of a project and a project is part of a plan. A plan is what we normally call ideology and ideology can be defined as a social plan with specific social interests, models, goals, and perspectives. A given ideology is always connected with the interests of a given social group or assemblage (for all these aspects, see Rossi-Landi, 1972, 1978, 1992).

That behavior is programmed behavior means that it is part of contexts that are progressively larger, as in a series of concentric circles. Consequently, the idea of spontaneous or natural behavior in the human world is a mystification, for human behavior is always programmed behavior to varying degrees. Moreover, the idea that ideology has come to an end is simply another ideological mystification, the expression of a specific ideology now become dominant. The social sign systems that regulate individual behavior are pseudo-totalities that function as pieces in larger totalities. All social programs are controlled by a higher social level. The social interests of given communities are connected with verbal and nonverbal communication programs which are part of given social projects which, in turn, are part of given social plans.

The problem of ideology as social planning raises the problem of power and of the conditions that make control over human behavior possible in politically defined situations. The production and circulation of signs converges with the production and circulation of ideologies. Progression from smaller pseudo-totalities and their programs to larger totalities and their programs, projects, and plans, in which the former are inserted, affords a general overview of the control mechanisms that social programs exert upon each other concentrically. The processes involved are mostly retroactive and not unidirectional (in other words they are not mechanical cause and effect processes, but dialectical processes, or in the terminology of engineering feedback processes). From a semiotic perspective it is important to underline that this whole system coincides with the general global communication system. Whoever controls the system, or at least consistent parts of it, is in the best position to reach a situation of hegemony and power.

In a world of global markets and global capital, dominant ideology is so pervasive that it converges with the logic of social reality. From this point of view, rather than “logic” the more appropriate expression is “ideo-logic,” therefore “the ideo-logic of social reality” (see Petrilli, 2004a, b). In global communication great ideological narratives are in crisis and have been replaced by dominant communication-production ideology (or ideo-logic). In all

societies power is attained, organized and reproduced through control over the communication network. But only in the present day and age has the extent to which this is true become clear. Hegemony in the communication-production phase is not only the result of owning capital in the form of property and assets, etc., but is now largely, if not mostly, connected with control over the communication network as well as with exchange relations at the level of market and production. The ruling class is the class that controls communication.

Transcultural communication involves intercultural and interlingual translation and can only be adequately understood keeping account of the connection between signs and the ideo-logic of the social reproduction system. The whole system of social reproduction is in communication and, therefore, in signs, verbal and nonverbal signs. Intersemiotic, interlingual and endolingual translations are a constituent part of social structures and production processes. Communication, ideology and production systems are interconnected in today's globalized world more than ever before and inevitably involve cultural interaction among different sign systems accompanied by processes of hybridization, domestication, and contamination among the different "post-" phenomena. To examine ideologic value in translation across different linguistic and cultural systems which are intended to enhance global communication functional to the social reproduction cycle, to the market, means to consider communication as a function of production, exchange and consumption of "signs and bodies" (see Petrilli, 2010: 137-58). Transcultural translative processes are structural to global communication and consequently are influenced by its characteristics and functions. "Real politics," as anticipated, is the only kind of politics recognized by global communication understood as communication-production. This political-ideological dimension of communication is reflected in the function of translation understood as "cultural interaction." And an important aspect of cultural interaction or inter- or transcultural translation is the relation between the centre and the periphery, that is, between target language and culture, on the one hand, and source language and culture, on the other.

Persistence of communication-production, in spite of all posts-, is *persistence of the same social reproduction system* over the planet, with all necessary adjustments for its survival (for example, post-apartheid in South Africa). Translation is an important instrument in reaching this target. World planning today is based on the productive character of communication and on the identification of communication with "being" in social reproduction. But this plan is also based on the fact that control over social reproduction can only be achieved through

control over communication, and transcultural communication is an important part of the game. Critical reflection on translation processes across languages, cultures, and values must address such issues, especially when a question of establishing the tasks and targets of the work of translation. From this point of view, a critique of translation and its functions in the processes of transcultural communication cannot be separated from a critique of the communication-production system and of the reproduction processes of that same system.

As has frequently been the case throughout history, institutions deriving from preceding economic, social and cultural systems with their stereotypes and ideologies coexist as integral parts of the current society. This also applies to such concepts as “identity” and “difference” and to the social rules and conventions that regulate these concepts. Identity and difference imply transcultural communication together with the risk that interlingual translational processes may contribute to the homologation of identities and differences, linguistic and cultural, to their negation, thereby favoring the few and the survival of not many more.

Obsession with identity, with the “closed self,” is incompatible with such concepts as “social democracy” and “human rights.” As Emmanuel Levinas underlines in an essay originally published in the collective volume, *L’indivisibilité des droits de l’homme* (1985) and subsequently included in his monograph, *Hors sujet* (1987), human rights are substantially conceived to be the rights of identity and never the rights of the other. The expression “human rights and the rights of the other” is symptomatic of the contradiction between claiming the rights of identity in the name of *human rights*, on the one hand, and claiming the rights of otherness, that is, the rights of the *other*, on the other hand. In *Voyous* (2003), Jacques Derrida underlines the mystifying nature of the expression “democracy” in such descriptions as “the present democracy,” or “our democracy,” commenting that “*la démocratie [est] à venir: il faut que ça donne le temps qu’il n’y a pas.*” Just as ambiguous is the concept of “freedom” and correlate expressions such as “free enterprise.” On Morris’s account, the *pas-partout* word “democracy” has become so ambiguous that in *The Open Self* he had already chosen to avoid it, observing that all sweet words are soured by misuse:

“Democracy” has become a strongly appraisive term, designatively unclear. To call oneself democratic is now as unrevealing, and as inevitable, as for politicians to be photographed with babies. We have been told by one who ought to know that when fascism conquers America it will do so in the name of democracy. In fact, whatever is now done in America—or elsewhere on the earth—will be done in the name of democracy. So we need to talk

concretely. None of the grandiose labels we bandy about is of much value today. The actual problems of the contemporary world are not helped by invoking such overworked words as “individualism,” “socialism,” “capitalism,” “liberalism,” “communism,” “fascism,” “democracy.” These terms are loaded appraisals. Each culture, and each group, will use them to its own advantage. If we were to use the term “democracy” designatively it would be synonymous with the phrase “open society of open selves.” But since we have this more exact phrase, and since no labels are sacred or indispensable, we can dispense with the word “democracy” (Morris, 1948: 156).

1.8. *Signs of Difference*

Global communication today is subject to the world market and to general commodification as it characterizes global communication-production society. A distinctive feature of global and world communication today is the tendency, as mentioned above, to level differences and exasperate the processes of homogenization. As an attempt to compensate, homogenization based on the sacrifice of otherness leads to the formation of delusory identities, individualisms, separatisms and egoisms, individual and collective, complementary to competitiveness, conflict, and mutual exclusion: the obsessive search for identity excludes the other. Consequently, the type of difference required in order to recognize and assert identity in the world of global communication today, in globalization, is *indifferent difference*, that is, difference grounded in the logic of closed identity, indifferent to the other, to other differences (Ponzio, 1995d). “Indifferent difference” based on the logic of identity is achieved by sacrificing otherness to varying degrees—one’s own otherness as much as the otherness of others.

On the contrary, the essence of the relation with the other, of the logic of otherness, the essence of language is unindifference and responsibility: with Levinas, “friendship and hospitality” (Levinas, 1961: 305). Interrogation of consciousness and its configuration as a bad conscience, a guilty conscience, subtend the I, configuration of identity. This means to say that the I, one’s identity, originates from the accusative, from responsibility without alibis for the other. To be in the first person, myself, “I” means I must answer for my right to be, I must account for myself, that is, for my being in terms of a bad conscience: to be in the first person means to be put into question. To speak, to say ‘I’: this implies justification in regard

of the other. Language, sociality, communication originate from the need to answer for one's right to be, that is, from one's bad conscience, from unindifference and responsibility towards the other. Identity is a combination of justifications. Unindifference towards the other implies a bad conscience, fear for the other: this fear lurks behind a good conscience and in spite of it: fear for the other comes to the I from the face of the other. The rights of identity originate from the need to justify my "being in the world," my "place in the sun," my home. The rights of identity silence a bad conscience, fear for the other who has already been oppressed or starved by the I, by one's usurpation of a place that might belong to the other (Levinas, "Nonintentional consciousness," in Levinas, 1991).

But today's sign universe as characterized by global communication tends to sacrifice the other, difference based on the logic of otherness which ends up leading to a sense of frustration among identities and differences. These become ever more obstinate in the will to assert themselves and prevail over other identities and differences, in the will to assert their separation, their difference-identity that has been denied. Consequently, mutual indifference among differences inevitably translates into hostility and conflict towards that which is different, the stranger, the outsider.

In which signs can differences be traced? considering that signs have now entered the global communication network and circulate on the global world market whose vocation is to eliminate difference. Difference based on the logic of otherness, difference-otherness, can only be traced in the past; the present cancels them. In fact, in the present day and age that which can unite and differentiate and, therefore, identify is a common past: religion, language, territorial distribution, origin, descendency, roots, blood, colour of the skin, etc. Identity searches for the possibility of asserting itself in that which constitutes difference, whether in the name of some "historical" or "natural" trait: traditions, customs, monuments, witnesses to a cultural past, language and dialect, religion, ethnic group. Significantly churches, museums, ruins, the historical parts of a city are the only elements that characterize urban space, therefore the only elements of identification. Apart from such signs urban spaces are anonymous and indistinct with respect to other urban spaces in today's global communication world. Signs of identity are trapped between *indifference* and *mummified difference*. Consequently what in the past could enter national territory, urban spaces, suburbs, neighborhoods, work-places and everyday life can now be kept at a distance at

varying degrees of abjection ranging from hatred to so-called tolerance. The connection with identity is given by religious, ethnic, linguistic differences, cultural past, and so forth.

Signs of the *closed community*, of *community identity*, of the “small experience,” to evoke Bakhtin, can be counteracted by signs of the “great experience,” which flourish in ongoing processes of dialogical deferral from one sign to the next. Such processes subtend the *open community* and its signs and are regulated by the logic of unindifferent difference which is difference based on the logic of otherness, “interconnectedness with the other” (Levinas), planetary interconnection, involvement and irrevocable responsibility for the other. Rather than closed communities, we must work for communities made of signs that are different, but without the signs of difference indifferent to the other; not signs of difference based on the logic of closed identity, but signs of difference based on the logic of otherness, that open to the other without limitations as imposed by the logic of identity, without the limits of property, territory, ownership, without inequality, without roots, outside identity and belonging. This is what the prefix *post-* should really mean.

Each one of us is connected to every other according to the logic of otherness which is the condition for recognizing singularity and uniqueness as essential characteristics of the properly human—but this does not imply the monadic separatism of Max Stirner’s conception of the unique individual. Otherness thus described cannot be reduced to the logic of identity, whether of the individual or of the collectivity, it cannot be reduced to difference connected to a genre of any sort. The condition of otherness implies the condition of mutual estrangement, *étrangété*, extraneity, extralocality which we share with each other and on the basis of which each one of us is interconnected with every other, in a relation of unindifference towards the other. No form of difference grounded in the logic of closed identity with its identity interests can cancel the essential condition of mutual *étrangété*. But the logic of identity and identity interests are indifferent to the difference of individuals viewed in their singularity, as much as to other identity-differences, to the point of overpowering and even repressing them. In fact, another typical form of destruction characteristic of global communication today regards the signs of difference, signs based on the logic of otherness, absolute otherness which are becoming ever more obsolete.

1.9. Global Communication and Subjectivity: The Critical Task of Semioethics

To understand communication today in its historical-social specificity as a global and worldwide phenomenon and in its relation to life over the whole planet (remembering that life and communication, life and semiosis coincide), semiotics must adopt a “planetary” perspective in both a spatial and temporal sense. Such an approach affords the critical distancing necessary for an interpretation of contemporaneity that is not restricted to the limits of contemporaneity itself.

The global and detotalizing approach to the signs of life and to the life of signs is connected with the logic of otherness and requires a high degree of availability towards the other, a disposition to listen to the other, a capacity for hospitality, for opening to the other in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Semiotic interpretation cannot disregard the dialogic relation with the other. Following Mikhail M. Bakhtin, it is now clear that dialogism understood as intercorporeity is a fundamental condition for life and semiosis and must be addressed by an approach to semiotics which is oriented globally and is at once open to the local. This approach privileges the tendency to detotalization on the basis of the logic of otherness, rather than totalization and sacrifice of difference according to the logic of identity, that is, closed identity.

With the spread of “bio-power” (Michel Foucault) and the controlled insertion of bodies into the production system, global communication has conceptualized the individual as a separate and self-sufficient being. The body is perceived as an isolated biological entity belonging to the individual. This has led to the quasi-total extinction of cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency, exposition and opening to the other. What we are left with are mummified remains studied by folklore analysts, archeological residues preserved in ethnological museums and in national literatures—an expression of the general condition of museification.

Instead, Bakhtin analyzes perception of the body in medieval popular culture, therefore the different forms of what he calls “grotesque realism” (see Bakhtin 1963, 1965). According to his approach the body is not conceived in individualistic terms, separately from other life forms on earth—indeed from the rest of the world. Signs of the grotesque body (of which only weak traces have survived in the present day and age) include masks—for example,

those used in rituals, popular festivities, carnival. Before the development of individualism with the rise of the bourgeoisie, grotesque realism presented the body as undefined, that is, not confined to itself, but, on the contrary, as flourishing in relations of symbiosis with other bodies, relations of transformation and renewal that transcend the limits of individual life. The rise of the bourgeoisie is associated with egotistic individualism, short-sighted self interest and a private, static conception of the body. Paradoxically, however, far from weakening this conception, global communication understood as “global communication-production” contributes to its reinforcement.

As Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in particular has revealed (but Rossi-Landi’s critique of the 1970s also deserves attention), division and separatism among the sciences serve the ideologico-social requirements of the “new cannon of the individualized body” (Bakhtin), which, in turn, serves the controlled insertion of bodies into the social reproduction cycle, that is, today’s global communication-production system.

Emmanuel Levinas evidences the creative power of otherness with respect to the totality, illustrating how the logic of otherness obliges the totality to reorganize itself ever anew in a process related to “infinity.” This process can also be related to the concept of infinite semiosis (or sign activity) as described by Charles Sanders Peirce (*Collected Papers*, 1931-1966). Implying more than a cognitive issue, the relation to infinity transcends the cognitive order and denotes the original condition of involvement and co-implication with the other, of responsibility towards the other, beyond the established order, the symbolic order, convention and habit, and beyond the alibis they provide for the sake of keeping a clean conscience. The relation to infinity is the relation to *absolute otherness*, therefore a relation to that most refractory to the totality. The relation to infinity implies a relation to the otherness of others, to the otherness of the other person, *autrui*. The other is not understood here in the sense of another self like one’s own self, another *alter ego*, another self belonging to the *same community*, but rather as the alien other structural to identity, the other in its extraneousness, strangeness, diversity, difference towards which indifference is impossible in spite of all efforts made by identity to the contrary, by self.

The critical task of semioethics implies recognition of the common condition of *dialogical interrelation* and the capacity for *listening*, where dialogue does not imply a relation we choose to concede thanks to a sense of generosity towards the other, but on the contrary is no less than structural to life itself, a necessary condition for life to flourish, an inevitable

imposition. With specific reference to anthroposemiosis, semioethics focuses on the concrete singularity of the human individual and the inevitability of intercorporeal interconnection with others. The singularity, uniqueness of each one of us implies otherness and dialogism. Semioethics assumes that whatever the object of study and however specialized the analysis, human individuals in their concrete singularity cannot ignore the inevitable condition of involvement in the destiny of others, that is, involvement without alibis. From this point of view, the symptoms studied from a semioethical perspective are not only specified in their singularity, on the basis of a unique relationship with the other, the world, self, but are above all social symptoms. Any idea, wish, sentiment, value, interest, need, evil or good examined by semioethics as a symptom is expressed in the word, the unique word, the embodied word, in the voice which arises in the dialectic and dialogical interrelation between singularity and sociality.

An adequate and comprehensive understanding of global communication today requires a full understanding of the risks that communication involves, including the risk of destroying communication itself, the risk that communication itself may come to an end. The risk alluded to is not just the relatively trivial phenomenon known as “incommunicability,” amply thematized and represented in film and literary discourse during the 1960s. This expression alludes to the condition of social and linguistic alienation suffered by the single individual with the transition to the global communication system through to its current phase of development (the “communication-production” phase).

Unlike all other previous phases in social development, today’s communication-production phase is endowed with an unprecedented potential for destruction. In light of today’s enormous potential for destruction (which has never before reached such high degrees in earlier phases of development), the risk of destroying communication, the risk that communication may come to an end is nothing less than the risk that life on this planet may come to an end. In other words, far from reducing the communication phenomenon to the terms foreseen by the “equal exchange model” described above (emitter, receiver, message transmission, etc.), the global approach to semiosis equates communication with life itself. In fact, from a biosemiotic and global semiotic perspective semiosis and life, communication and life converge (see below, Ch. 4). In this statement, therefore, the expression “communication” is not reduced to the equal exchange or “postal package” model, but rather

is equated to life. And according to this description, that communication (+ modeling = *semiosis*) and life converge implies that the end of communication is the end of life.

To maintain today's communication-production system is to maintain a communication-production system that is destructive. To reproduce the reproduction cycle is to reproduce the logic of destruction: machinery is replaced with new machinery not because of wear, but for competition; employment develops into unemployment as a consequence of automation; products circulate on the market and stimulate exasperated forms of consumerism which serve to continue the reproductive cycle; innovation quickly renders products outdated that would otherwise exhaust the demand; commodities and markets that do not meet standards of competitiveness disappear.

Communication-production is communication for the sake of communication, production for the sake of production to the detriment of the capacity for creative invention and re-organization, to the detriment of the right to difference and otherness. The obsessive reproduction of communication-production cycles tends to undermine the human intellectual faculties, the inventive capacity. But human beings are not only threatened as intelligent beings, they are also threatened simply as living beings. In other words, the health of semiosis, the quality of life is constantly under threat. To maintain, reinforce and expand today's socio-economic system at all costs means to endanger life on the planet: from this point of view symptoms of dysfunctioning include the ozone hole, ecological disasters caused by standard reproduction cycles, disasters of the catastrophic order. "Normal" or standard disasters include the communication-production of war and correlated side-effects. From a semiotic perspective, even interlingual translation may become a device that favors catastrophe when it puts itself at the service of belligerency, and translates the language of war, its ideology and argumentations, its rhetoric and justifications across different languages and cultures worldwide.

The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys natural environments and life forms. It destroys differences among economic systems along with differences among cultural and political systems. Consider the presentday trend to export and globalize so-called "democracy," a concept that needs questioning as says the American semiotician Charles Morris in his book of 1948, *The Open Self*. Processes of homogenization regulated by capital market logic tend to eliminate difference to the point even of homogenizing desire and the imaginary across different cultures and value systems and not just habits of behavior or

“needs” (though the possibility of satisfying such needs is never the same). The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys traditions and cultural patrimonies that somehow contradict, or obstacle, or simply do not respond to the logic of development, productivity and competition. The communication-production system destroys productive forces that tend to escape the limits of presentday forms of production, that is, the forces of intelligence, inventiveness and creativity which are otherwise subject to market trends and capital logic.

The destructive character of today’s reproduction system is evidenced by the fact that underdevelopment is a product of development, indeed is a condition of development. In the global capitalist system which thrives on the dynamics between centre and periphery, the condition of dispossession and pauperization is at once both a direct consequence and a condition for affluence and accumulation. Exploitation, discontent and misery to the point of nonsurvival is on the increase worldwide. A glaring symptom is the spreading phenomenon of migration which so-called “developed” countries are no longer able to contain. When national borders are closed, political and ideological issues are no doubt at play, but objective limits on the availability of space and resources are also a problem—more so these days than in earlier phases in the development of social reproduction systems.

To globalize the market is destructive because it implies the will to commodify anything, including interpersonal relations. The more commodities are illegal the more they are valuable and produce profit—signs of this phenomenon include illicit traffic in arms, drugs, sex, human organs, women, children, uteruses, etc. The principle of exploiting other people’s labor is destructive. The less labor costs, the more it produces profit: aided by the global communication network “developed” countries turn ever more to low cost labor in “underdeveloped” countries: “stay where you are, we will bring work to you”. The increase in child labor exploited for tasks that are heavy and dangerous is clear evidence of this infamy, of the disgrace of the communication-production world: much needs to be said and done about children as today’s victims of pauperization and misery—children in illness, children exploited on the streets, children circulating on the global market.

Global communication-production is destructive because it is the communication-production of war. And war is in continuous need of new markets for the consumption and production of weapons, conventional and unconventional. Moreover, real politics is the approach adopted to politics in global communication and is viewed as the only appropriate approach to the

being of communication-production (but only politics that is realistic counts as politics!). Realism in politics accepts the *extrema ratio* of war as dictated by the strict law of the force of things. Western humanism, ontology, reason all acknowledge the realism of war, the necessity of war which is considered as an extreme logical consequence of reality, as part of reality. The logic of war is the realistic logic of being, ontology, politics, history. The face of being that manifests itself in war is the face of Western reason. Reason is based on the logic of identity and in the name of identity is prepared to sacrifice the other.

Communication-production is connected to politics and social planning, it projects a vision of the world: a totalizing and functional system regulated by the strategies of productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and conceived as a space for the satisfaction of needs—that is, of course, the needs of the affluent. The “communication-production” or “global communication” world guarantees the world as it is, its *conatus essendi*, ontological being, the individual and collective subject, economy of the durable, persistence in *being* at all costs. Even at the cost of war, the *extrema ratio* of war which is considered as an expression of the world, as part of the world, of its realistic logic, foreseen by ontology, by its *conatus essendi*. This description of the world is conditioned by the logic of identity, that is, closed identity. In this framework war is a means for exploiting the other and for maintaining, reinforcing and reproducing the logic of the same. The world is ready to sacrifice the other. The interconnection between world, reality, identity, history, truth, force, reason, power, productivity, politics, and war is inscribed in Western culture and has always been exploited by capitalism, today more than ever before with communication at the service of social reproduction. The communication-production of war demands its constant recognition and approval as “just and necessary”—a necessary means of defence from the menacing other, a means of obtaining respect for the rights of individual identity, for individual difference. But the truth is that it is *not* the other that threatens or destroys identity and difference. Paradoxically, today’s social reproduction system itself is destructive. While social policy promotes the logic of identity and difference, these in fact are becoming ever more fictitious and phantasmal. This leads to a condition of obsessive attachment to the signs of identity, that is, closed identity, in a cycle that creates further potential for the communication-production of war (Petrilli 2013).

1.10. More Social Symptoms of Globalization: Migration and Unemployment

In the face of the anachronistic tendency to close borders and defend territory in the name of identity, an opposite phenomenon is also emerging, that of “deterritorialization.” Migratory fluxes are sweeping across the globe and cannot be contained in spite of rules and regulations. In globalization migration is a worldwide and altogether different phenomenon from migratory fluxes as they took place, for example, after World War II; migration today no longer converges with the traditional emigration/immigration phenomenon, historically so important for countries like Australia, USA, and Canada. The difference is both quantitative and qualitative. Migratory fluxes today involve enormous masses of people shifting in numbers that out of control. Moreover, the impact on territory is different from the past and consequently the difficulties involved in coping are different. To understand the new face of migration today we must keep account of the current socio-economic context in which it is staged, that of capitalist globalization. People migrate towards different countries across the world at different levels of capitalist development, with different environmental and demographic conditions, territorial expanse, space availability, etc. All the same migration today is part of the same scenario, that of globalization—a phenomenon that is extraordinarily complex, vast, and difficult to treat comprehensively. The migration phenomenon involves a situation of exposition and opening to the other and however unwanted the other might be, the only acceptable response is hospitality.

That globalized migration cannot be reduced to the traditional emigration/immigration phenomenon means that it cannot be considered in terms of labor-force shifting from one area of the world to another, from one country to another. From this point of view, the capitalist production system in the globalization phase does not have control over migration as in the past. Whether or not migrants can be transformed and reduced to the status of labor-force depends on such factors as level of socio-economic development of the host country, availability of resources, and the political system. But migration is most often perceived as a threat to “lifestyle.” This threat does not emerge in the terms of a violent struggle against the capitalist system, but as a request from the masses for hospitality, a request that is generally perceived as inordinate, immoderate, excessive. As such this request for hospitality is an accusation against identity, community identity, for not satisfying it, for not even acknowledging it. In such a context fear of the other understood in the transitive sense of

fearing the other is exasperated to paroxysmal degrees and translates into the need to defend identity (Petrilli, 2010: 212-7). However, fear is not the starting point in the constitution of identity, Hobbes "*Homo homini lupus*," but rather the point of arrival, a consequence of social practices based on exclusion and sacrifice of the other (Ponzio 2007).

The problem of migration today and the possibility of converting migration into emigration/immigration are expressions of the same problem, of the same capitalist reproduction system. Differently from traditional emigration/immigration, migration does not involve people shifting away from remote areas of the world unaffected by the processes of capitalist development. Unlike emigration/immigration, globalized migration is not about people shifting from one socio-economic system to another—the capitalist in its extreme phase of development. On the contrary, the causes of migration today—backwardness, pauperization, scarce resources, unsustainable life conditions, etc.—as much as the goals, values and fantasies of migrants are all part of the same social reproduction system, late capitalism in the globalization phase. Migration is a product of the same socio-economic system that should absorb it, and not just a passing trend, a cyclical crisis. Paradoxically migration (similarly to unemployment) is structural to globalization and global communication—a new phase in history which more than ever before is planetary history. The problems that migration presents to the capitalist system are the same all over the globe, what varies does not concern the capitalist system in itself but external factors such as those mentioned—demographic density, territorial extension, natural resources, the capacity for building a multicultural and multiethnic society, etc.

To recapitulate: migration is a phenomenon that global communication produces and obstacles at the same time. In other words, migration is part of the global communication system, but it is also an obstacle to global communication, a product that global communication system is unable to absorb: late capitalist globalized social reproduction is unable to absorb the phenomenon it produces. Migration involves masses of people that shift across the globe and cannot be transformed into merchandise and incorporated into the social reproduction cycle. The free circulation of potential migrants is constantly impeded, the "free labor market" and communication circuits shut down in the face of migration. Therefore, while the general tendency in global communication is to open frontiers and favor the circulation of commodities, migrants are excluded from these circuits (apart from that minimal part that can be transformed into the traditional emigration/immigration

phenomenon). In global communication migration does not converge with the circulation of labor-force, migrants cannot be reduced to the status of workers and instead quickly become unwanted residues produced by the capitalist system. As such they contradict the labor market and obstacle its configuration as a worldwide and universal market.

Given that migrants cannot be absorbed by the labor market, they remain individuals in their singularity and uniqueness in spite of themselves, uncommensurable in terms of the abstract category of labor-in-general. In globalization migration evidences the fact that the category of labor-in-general cannot be extended unlimitedly, that people can no longer be transformed into abstract individuals on the basis of the category of labor-force, not even as labor-force unable to sell itself on the market. The upshot is that these single unique individuals cannot be legally admitted to the “developed countries” towards which they are headed from the “underdeveloped” areas of the world: consequently, the right to labor becomes a request for hospitality (Petrilli, 2005b; Petrilli and Ponzio, 2006, 2007a, and “Bodies, Signs, and Values in Global Communication,” in Petrilli 2008a: 113-41).

In terms of official discourse this situation is reflected in language that distinguishes between the person who belongs to a given community, the regular “citizen,” and the person who does not, the unwanted migrant. The latter is variously designated with racist stereotypes of the ethnic, cultural, or religious order, etc. These include such expressions as “alien,” “illegal,” “asylum seeker,” “extracommunitarian,” “sans papier,” “queue jumper.”

While the unemployed person is labor-force that no longer sells on the market, the migrant is not even that. Migrants cannot be qualified in terms of the general category of labor, consequently they cannot even be considered as abstractions relatively to the “search for work, for generic work.” And yet, though they are different phenomena, unemployment (which similarly to migration is growing) and migration tend to converge in the sense that both present residues produced by the global social reproduction system. Progress in technology and automation produces unemployment. This implies that similarly to migration and far from being a passing contingency, unemployment is structural to the capitalist production system in its advanced phase of development. Automation puts the unemployed in the condition of non-labor, of excess with respect to the labor market. Like the migrant and in spite of himself, the unemployed person too represents the absolute other with respect to identity logic in the late capitalist social reproduction system.

From this point of view, both migrants and the unemployed are what we propose to call “extracommunitarians”; both testify to the need for non-identity communities, for communities founded on the logic of absolute otherness. However, despite these similarities, a basic difference distinguishes them: the unemployed are perceived as belonging to the community, migrants are not. The difference is established by the system and belongs to a sphere (“economics,” “reality,” “being”) that resists any claims to “the rights of man” (“equality,” “freedom,” “fraternity”). This difference is striking when expressed in racist terms no less than by the unemployed person against the migrant. Homologation is associated with the idea of equivalence and commensurability and is inherent to the logic of “equal exchange,” the condition for abstraction—but this process finds an obstacle in migration and unemployment. Recent opinion polls in Italy reveal that a high percentage of Italians are favorable to resorting to the armed forces to guarantee security and control over frontiers, therefore over illegal migratory fluxes, thereby indicating a widespread situation of fear of the other. Xenophobia is increasing in Europe as over the globe generally. But fear of the alien is only one aspect of fear of the other. In reality, the object of fear is not the foreigner *tout court*, but the foreigner alien to the identity of a given community—whether the socio-cultural, religious, political, or economic community. “Extracommunitarian” is the expression introduced by the European community for this type of alien and is an expression that can be generalized.

1.11. “The open society of open selves”

In his book *The Open Self*, Charles Morris recognizes a uniting factor that subtends difference, diversity, multiplicity and many-sidedness in human beings, what he identifies as “creativity” which may be related to Sebeok’s conception of the human primary modeling device. Human modeling is syntactical and as such is endowed with a capacity for metasemiosis and creativity, for reflection, a capacity to suspend immediate action and deliberate, to interrogate and take a stand, to recognize the possibility of otherness, that is, absolute otherness beyond mere alternatives. As human animals we are not only semiosical animals but also syntactical, metasemiosical animals. And evoking Peirce, we are not only rational animals, but also reasonable animals.

Human animals are capable of orientations and projects structured according to the logic of otherness and evolutionary love (agapasm) dialectically interrelated with the logic of continuity or synechism. But the continuum of existence is the fragmented time-space of the multiple, a universe of the many. The single, unique individual contains the multiplicity, it proceeds from the multiple, from difference, the other and contains within itself the infinite of a fractioned and discrete continuum to which it contributes with its own creativity and in which it is determined in its singularity and responsible freedom.

Many open selves united around the common ideal of “the open society of open selves” can enhance one’s own uniqueness as much as the uniqueness of others. The unique self is an open self, as Morris says referring to society in the United States of America, but in reality to the whole of humanity:

“The alternative to a paralyzed stalemated America and to a Romanized imperialistic America is an America rededicated to its traditional ideal of an open society of open selves and resolutely at work to reduce the anxieties which if unrelieved tend to the closed society. That, and that alone is our way out. “(Morris, 1948: 168)

Communication in the present day and age is characterized in terms of globalization, but the paradox of globalized communication in today’s social system, the capitalist in its extreme phase of development, is the inadequacy of communication and dialogue, of relations among bodies, therefore the lack of intercorporeity, as described by Bakhtin, which instead is no less than a necessary condition for listening and hospitality towards the other, for the health of semiosis. Thus described the communication system itself risks provoking the end of communication, which also implies the end of life on the planet Earth.

In fact, in the light of what we have said so far, we can now make the claim that, understood as semioethics, semiotics must account for the “reason of things.” However, the capacity for detotalization as the condition for critical and dialogic totalization implies that the *reason* of things cannot be separated from *reasonableness*. Therefore, if the health of semiosis, of life and human relationships is a concern, the problem may be summed up as follows: considering today’s global communication-production system and the risks it entails for semiosis, indeed for life generally, the *human being needs to change at the very earliest from a rational animal into a reasonable animal* (Petrilli, 1998a: 151).

1.12. Listening, Hospitality, and Restitution

In spite of good intentions such expressions as “intercultural” and “multicultural” no less than “hybridization,” “contamination,” “post-capitalism,” “post-colonialism,” “post-apartheid” all remain anchored in the logic of identity and belonging. The logic of power and control persists which means that social practices of exclusion, more or less subtle, more or less manifest, also continue to persevere. When critical consciousness is inadequate, the expressions above resound as mystifications not only in the language of everyday life, but also in intellectual language, in the language of the sciences. The truth is that relations among cultural identities in the globalized world have become so tense that they easily degenerate into relations of mutual violence, even destruction. This is all the more reason why the sign sciences today need to develop a trans-semiotic perspective capable of appreciating the complexity of a semiosphere originally regulated by the logic of dialogism and otherness. With special reference to the cultural semiosphere this means to address the question of difference among signs that are not indifferent to each other, but that instead relate to each other on the basis of the logic of listening and hospitality (Petrilli and Ponzio, 2006).

Language and communication in the human world find their condition of possibility in the logic of otherness. This is to say that they subsist and develop in the relation with the other, where the other is understood as an end in itself, in its uniqueness, outside the logic of identity and social roles, outside the logic of national, ethnic, cultural difference, and so forth. The I-other relation is a face-to-face relation (Levinas), a relation among singularities, between one single unique individual and another. This relation rejects all forms of exclusion of the other, all forms of violence. It is presupposed by all forms of communication and representation, by all forms of objectification and nomination of the other. In this relation the self is responsible towards the other in an absolute sense, which means to say without alibis (Bakhtin), without the possibility of evasion: the self must respond to the other and for the other. All forms of communication presuppose hospitality towards the interlocutor.

The word, whether written or oral, is addressed to the other, to the otherness of the other which is contextualized in the face-to-face relation and as such can neither be represented nor thematized. Listening to the other transcends space and time as these pertain to the world, to the world as it is, to the world of labor and labor-time, all of which pertain to war. In the economy of world logic thus described, peace is no more than momentary repose necessary to gather up strength and continue war, just as free-time and the night serve the day (Maurice

Blanchot). Contrary to labor-time (that is, paid labor-time) and free-time which are based on the logic of equal exchange, (the time of) listening belongs to the order of gift logic. That is to say, listening and listening related practices involve a gift of time to the other. And from the perspective of the properly human, the otherness relationship, time for the other represent the real social wealth.

In such a framework transcultural communication can be conceived as communication for others, reconstruction with others, restitution to others of difference that is unindifferent to the difference of others. Transcultural communication, that is, translation across cultures and languages can contribute to the condition of planetary interconnection without closed communities, without the signs of closed identities, which is what *post-* should really mean. Transculturalism, translinguistics, transgender, transemiosis, etc., are all expressions that contribute to delineating an ideological perspective that is open to the otherness of the other, to encounter among languages and cultures beyond the logic of identity and belonging, beyond stereotypes and mystifications, in the dynamics between continuity and discontinuity, stability and uncertainty, opening and resistance as characterizes signs in transit.

Storytelling is a form of communication—whether through verbal signs (oral or written) or nonverbal signs—that can be traced across the globe historically, a communicative practice based on listening and hospitality involving relations among singularities, the each of every one of us from different cultures and languages worldwide. Instead, global communication as it is understood today in globalization characteristically involves forms of interconnection that are altogether different and by comparison relatively recent. “Global communication” is subject to the world market and to the processes of general commodification that characterize it and as such it is structural to globalization, to what we have designated as “communication-production” society (see above, chapters 1 & 2). A distinctive feature of global communication-production is homologation, the tendency to level differences, which, however, ultimately leads to exasperating identities, individualisms and separatisms of both the individual and community orders, and to reinforcing the mechanisms of competitiveness, conflict, and mutual exclusion. The paroxystic search for identity or difference results in sacrificing the other. Difference functional to self-assertion, that demands recognition, is difference indifferent to other differences, to other identities. The condition of indifferent difference is achieved by repressing and sacrificing otherness in its various forms and to varying degrees – internal otherness and external otherness.

Instead, far from denying differences storytelling exalts and interconnects them on the basis of the logic of mutual hospitality. Not only does storytelling favor encounter, listening and mutual understanding among different peoples, but it flourishes on encounter, listening and understanding. Storytelling consists of sharing and creating dialogic relations among differences across different languages, cultures and discourse genres, relations regulated by the logic of otherness, by the practice of hospitality, interest and care for the other as other, and therefore by the logic of restitution. As testified by a common world patrimony of stories, legends, tales, fables, myths, parables, sayings, proverbs, etc., storytelling throughout the centuries has acted as a common heritage and kind of connective tissue favoring the circulation of common themes, subjects, values and discourse genres and forming a web uniting different peoples across the world. In contemporary society communication is mostly oriented to a pathological degree by self-interest, that is, by the logic of personal advantage, profit and gain. Instead, in storytelling communication is oriented by the *interesting*, where that which counts is one's relation to the other, one's interest in the other *per sé*.

The practice of narrativity is manifest in different types of discourse genres, including the novel, which is the most representative literary genre of our day. It is also manifest in the different kinds of media, from writing to orality, for example, in filmic discourse. The common characteristic of storytelling is that it is an end in itself, uniquely animated by the pleasure of invoking the other, of involving the other, of listening to the other. As such storytelling is distinct from the type of narrativity that serves power: the power to control and punish (stories narrated before a judge or police officer), the power to inform (newspaper chronicles), the power to heal (a medical case history that the physician draws from the patient, the story recounted by a patient during a psychoanalytical session), the power to redeem and save (confession, a discipline of the Roman church), the power to record and establish the Sense of History (as reconstructed by the historian), and so forth. But the practice of storytelling suspends the order of discourse which, instead, global communication is programmed to serve. As such storytelling offers spaces that interrupt the communication-production flow and allow for reflection, critical rethinking, dialogue, encounter, hospitality. For this very reason storytelling is more or less suspect, more or less subversive with respect to the order of discourse.

Recalling the term “*orature*” introduced by Claude Hagège (1985), with co-author Augusto Ponzio we have coined the term “*oraliture*” by analogy with “*écriture*” (writing) to designate orality, or the oral style of discourse, and confer validity upon it as a vehicle of knowledge and experience, similarly to writing. “*Orature*” is used to indicate the elements of orality in novelistic discourse (cf. Paré 1997), whereas the term “*oraliture*” is preferred to “*orature*” by Ponzio and myself for reference to the different genres of literature—short stories, legends, proverbs, rhymes, songs, etc.—that present orality, but in the form of writing, that is, translated into written genres and more or less complex literary expression. The expression “*oraliture*” is not only intended to evidence the fact that orality becomes writing insofar as it is transcribed or finds expression in the different forms of literary writing, but also that orality in itself is already writing, according to different forms of non written literature, writing *avant la lettre*. No less than written literature and beyond its communicative function, “*oraliture*” is a modeling device, in other words, it models worldview and is endowed with a capacity for creativity, innovation and inventiveness, for “the play of musement,” to use an expression introduced by Peirce.

1.13. *From reason to reasonableness*

Following Peirce, but also authors like Ferruccio Rossi-Landi from the perspective of human social semiotics (or anthroposociosemiotics), our gaze on human sign behavior must embrace the fields of ethics, aesthetics and ideology. Thus equipped the logico-cognitive boundaries of semiotic processes are extended to contemplate problems of an axiological order. This approach focuses on the human capacity for values, critique and responsibility in the direction of semioethics, or with Victoria Welby “significs.” Welby privileged the term “significs” for her theory of sign and meaning to underline the scope of her approach and focus on the question of “significance,” that is, on the relation of signs to values, similarly to Charles Morris after her, therefore on the axiological dimension of meaning. The term “significs” designates the disposition for evaluation, calling attention to the problem of value and signifying pertinence, to the significance of signifying processes, their sense for humanity.

Peirce's semiotics describes semiosis in terms of its potential for deferral and *renvoi* among interpretants, whether endosemiosically across interpretants forming the same sign system or intersemiosically across different types of sign systems. According to Peirce's approach, the sign is never static or circumscribed to the limits of a single signifying system. On the contrary, to subsist as a sign the sign must be continuously interpreted by another sign, its interpretant whether from the same sign system or a different one. The sign is characterized by its capacity for displacement and deferral, for shift across sign systems, engendering what we may also designate as the "flight of interpretants," "infinite semiosis." This movement results in enhancing significance as semiotic spheres expand and pulsate ever more with sense and meaning. Continuous displacement indicates that otherness is a condition for the sign's identity, as paradoxical as this may seem. The question of otherness also leads back to the problem of the "limits of interpretation" (Eco, 1990). In regards to this point, it is important to observe that "semiotic materiality" or "otherness" of the "interpreted sign" with respect to the "interpretant sign" is an obstacle to arbitrariness. Furthermore, the threat of relativism or dogmatism in interpretive practice is also averted thanks to the strategies of dialogic confrontation among signs oriented by the logic of otherness.

Otherness and dialogue are in the sign, in the relation between the interpreted and the interpretant structural to the sign, including the subject considered as sign, and constitute the condition for the continuity of sign activity. Otherness and dialogism are in the self, that is to say they are constitutive of subjectivity in the semiotic processes of its actualization. Subjectivity emerges as a continuous responsive process that implies the relation of otherness both internally and externally with respect to the process itself of its actualization as a subject, as a self. In other words, the otherness relation is a dialogic relation and implies interpretation in regards to the internal other (or others) of self, as much as the external other (or others). Nor are there interruptions or natural barriers between the responsive behavior of self, on one hand, and other selves beyond one's own self, on the other.

Coherently with his pragmatism or "pragmaticism," as he preferred in a subsequent phase of his research, Peirce developed his cognitive semiotics in close connection with the study of human social behavior and human interests globally. In this framework, the problem of knowledge necessarily presupposed problems of an axiological order. Peirce introduced the concept of "reasonableness" for inferential processes understood as open-ended dialectic-dialogic signifying processes, oriented by the logic of otherness, operative in the development

of thought unbiased by prejudice, in unfinalizable sign processes regulated by the principle of continuity or synechism. In fact, the dialogic conception of signs and otherness forms a necessary condition for Peirce's doctrine of continuity or synechism, the principle that "all that exists is continuous" in the development of the universe in its globality and of the human subjects that inhabit it (see *CP* 1.172).

The dialogic relation between self and other—the other from self and the other of self—emerges as one of the most important conditions for the growth of reasonableness and continuity in the creative process, in creative argumentation. A driving force within this creative process is love, that is, *agape*. According to Peirce, the most advanced developments in reason and knowledge are based on the creative power of reasonableness and the transformational suasions of *agape*. Love, as Levinas teaches us, is unindifference towards the other, an original pre-categorical condition that precedes the development of cognition and consciousness.

Peirce transcended the limits of theoreticism in semiotics working in a direction that could be described as pragmatic-ethic or operative-valuative, semioethic in our own terminology, significant in Welby's. During the last decade of their lives Welby and Peirce in fact corresponded intensely, discussing and modeling their ideas in constant "dialogue" with each other, mutually influencing each other's research. In the final phase of his research, Peirce significantly turned his attention to the normative sciences. He linked logic to both ethics and aesthetics: while logic is the normative science concerned with self-controlled thought, ethics focuses on self-controlled conduct, and aesthetics ascertains the end most worthy of our espousal. Peirce addressed the question of the ultimate good, the *summum bonum*, or ultimate value which he neither identified in individual pleasure (hedonism) nor in a societal good, such as the greatest happiness for the greatest number of human beings (English utilitarianism), but in the "evolutionary process," that is, a process of growth, and specifically in the continuous "development of concrete reasonableness":

Almost everybody will now agree that the ultimate good lies in the evolutionary process in some way. If so, it is not in individual reactions in their segregation, but in something general or continuous. Synechism is founded on the notion that the coalescence, the becoming continuous, the becoming governed by laws, the becoming instinct with general ideas, are but phases of one and the same process of the growth of reasonableness. This is first shown to be true with mathematical exactitude in the field of logic, and is thence inferred to hold good

metaphysically. It is not opposed to pragmatism in the manner in which C. S. Peirce applied it, but includes that procedure as a step. (CP 5.4)

The most advanced developments in reason and knowledge are achieved through the creative power of reasonableness and are fired by the power of love, agapasm: “the impulse projecting creations into independency and drawing them into harmony” (CP 6.288). Peirce developed his concept of evolution keeping account of the Gospel of St. John (whose evolutionary philosophy predicates that growth comes from love) and the theosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). In this framework human semiosis is enhanced by the power of love understood as orientation towards the other, opening towards the other, response to attraction exerted by the other, in the relation of unindifference and care for the other. Reasonableness is endowed with the power of transforming one’s horror of the stranger, the alien, one’s fear of the other understood as the fear one experiences of the other foreign to self, into sympathy for the other. Recalling his essay of 1892, “The Law of Mind,” Peirce in fact claims that the type of evolution foreseen by synechism is evolution through the agency of love where reason becomes reasonableness and the hateful becomes lovable:

Everybody can see that the statement of St. John is the formula of an evolutionary philosophy, which teaches that growth comes only from love, from I will not say self-*sacrifice*, but from the ardent impulse to fulfill another’s highest impulse. [...] It is not dealing out cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending them as I would the flowers in my garden. The philosophy we draw from John’s gospel is that this is the way mind develops; and as for the cosmos, only so far as it yet is mind, and so has life, is it capable of further evolution. Love, recognizing germs of loveliness in the hateful, gradually warms it into life, and makes it lovely. That is the sort of evolution which every careful student of my essay “The Law of Mind” must see that *synechism* calls for. (CP 6.289)

Love is directed to the concrete and not to abstractions, it is directed to persons, one’s neighbor not necessarily in a spatial sense, locally, as anticipated above, but in the sense of affinity, a person “we live near [...] in life and feeling”: love is a driving force where iconicity, abduction and dialogism are operative at high degrees. Moreover, on Peirce’s account, love should not be understood in terms of sacrifice, whether to self or to the egoistic impulses of others, but as the capacity to respond to the other, creatively and with

generosity—“the ardent impulse to fulfill another’s highest impulse,” as he says in the citation above.

With polemical overtones Peirce contrasts the “Gospel of Christ” which has the capacity for progress depend on a relation of sympathy among neighbors, to the “Gospel of greed” which he believes reflects the dominant trend of his time and has progress depend on assertion of one’s individuality or egotistic identity over the other, at the other’s expense:

The Gospel of Christ says that progress comes from every individual merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbors. On the other side, the conviction of the nineteenth century is that progress takes place by virtue of every individual’s striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbor under foot whenever he gets a chance to do so. This may accurately be called the Gospel of Greed. (*CP* 6.294)

Peirce’s critique of arrogant individuality and self-centredness parallels Welby’s theory of subjectivity when she thematizes the distinction between *I* and *Self*, critiquing the self’s tendency to transform “selfness” into “selfishness” or “selfism” (Petrilli, 2009a: Ch. 6; Petrilli and Ponzio, 2005: Ch. 2). In Peirce’s interpretation, Charles Darwin (1809-1882), author of *The Origin of Species* (1859), grounds the principles of natural selection, the survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence in a concept of individual which he derives from nineteenth century political economy and applies to evolutionary theory, thereby translating from the sphere of political economy to the sphere of the life sciences. On the contrary, Peirce privileges the agapastic theory of evolution and even considered his own strong attraction for this doctrine as possible proof of its validity insofar as it responds to the “normal judgment of the Sensible Heart” (*CP* 6.295).

Recalling Henry James, Peirce distinguished between self-love, that is, love which is directed to another considered identical to self, and creative love which instead is directed to that which is completely different, even “hostile and negative” in regards to self, love directed to the other as other. On this basis, a typology of love can be developed progressing from a high degree in the logic of identity to a high degree in the logic of otherness. But truly creative love, as both Welby and Peirce teach us, is love oriented by the logic of otherness, love for the other, directed without second ends to the other as other. The logic of agapasm converges with the logic of otherness and dialogism which constitutes the generating nucleus of sign and sense in the human world, of the interpersonal relation, of communication:

[...] the love that God is, is not a love of which hatred is the contrary; otherwise Satan would be a coordinate power; but it is a love which embraces hatred as an imperfect stage of it, an Anteros—yea, even needs hatred and hatefulness as its object. For self-love is no love; so if God's self is love, that which he loves must be defect of love; just as a luminary can light up only that which otherwise would be dark. Henry James, the Swedenborgian, says: "It is no doubt very tolerable finite or creaturely love to love one's own in another, to love another for his conformity to one's self: but nothing can be in more flagrant contrast with the creative Love, all whose tenderness *ex vi termini* must be reserved only for what intrinsically is most bitterly hostile and negative to itself." (CP 6.287)

The Peircean concept of reason fired by love may be connected to Welby's own association of love to logic. The excerpt below is from a letter to Peirce of 22 December 1903:

May I say in conclusion that I see strongly how much we have lost and are losing by the barrier which we set up between emotion and intellect, between feeling and reasoning. Distinction must of course remain. I am the last person to wish this blurred. But I should like to put it thus: The difference e.g. between our highest standards of love and the animal's is that they imply knowledge in logical order. We know *that, what, how* and above all, *why* we love. Thus the logic is bound up in that very feeling which we contrast with it. But while in our eyes logic is merely "formal," merely structural, merely question of argument, "cold and hard," we need a word which shall express the combination of "logic and love." And this I have tried to supply in "Significs." (Welby to Peirce, in Hardwick, 1977: 15)

In an advanced phase of his studies and in the framework of his pragmatism, Peirce described subjectivity as a set of actions, practices and habits. Furthermore, he identified "power" as an essential characteristic of the subject as opposed to "force." The incarnate self is a centre of power oriented towards an end, an agent devoted to a more or less integrated set of "purposes." This approach can be related to Welby's "purport" or "ultimate value" which is associated with "significance," the third element of her meaning triad (the other two terms being "meaning" and "sense"). Power is not "brute force" but the "creative power of reasonableness" which by virtue of its agapastic orientation rules over all other forms of power and is accompanied by doubt (see CP 5.520). Power associated with reasonableness is the capacity to respond to the attraction exerted on self by the other; therefore, power and reasonableness denote the capacity to respond to the other, which presupposes relations

regulated by dialogism, by unindifferent difference, the dia-logic of listening and intercorporeality.

In the architectonics of Peirce's thought system the self, subjectivity is not described as an individual in an absolute sense. The self is not an undivided, closed totality or a coherent and non-contradictory identity (Colapietro, 1989; Petrilli and Ponzio, 2005: Ch. 1). Insofar as it is a sign, or better, part of an open-ended semiotic chain of deferrals from one sign to the next, the self doubles into interpreted sign and interpretant sign, so that where there is one sign there are immediately two, and given that the interpretant is also a sign and therefore the interpreted of another interpretant, there are immediately three signs, and so forth according to the principle of infinite semiosis. As evidenced by the activities of speaking, deciding, discussing, coming to consciousness, reasoning, self is structurally, constitutively other. It follows that self is not monologic but quite on the contrary is modeled by a plurality of voices, points of view, parts in dialogue. Therefore self's identity is dialogic, polylogic, plurivocal, detotalized identity.

Echoing Peirce, self may be envisaged as a community of selves, endowed with a capacity for criticism and projectuality, a community that interacts with the social community conceived as a sort of more fluid and less compact person (*CP* 5.421). The other is structural to identity, at the very heart of identity while at once representing the external force of attraction that contributes to shaping identity in an evolutionary process of development oriented by the principle of love, by attraction for the other—the emotional other, the cognitive other, the ethic other and the aesthetic other.

1.14. *Redefining subjectivity*

The concepts of "identity" and "subjectivity" are closely interconnected and play a central role in global and world communication—whether a question of the identity of an individual subject or of a collective subject, a community subject whatever the dimensions (Western world, European Community, nation, ethnic group, social class, etc.). However, the concepts of individual identity and collective or community identity need to be reconsidered in a semiotic key, remembering that in both cases identity is either oriented monologically or dialogically, and which of the two makes a profound difference.

Charles Peirce has contributed to redefining human subjectivity from a semiotic perspective. The human being, the I, the subject is an extremely complex sign made of verbal and nonverbal material, of “language,” of semiotic processes or sign activity. Thanks to the interpretive-propositional vocation of such sign activity, it can potentially generate an infinite number of signifying trajectories. With reference to verbal signs, says Peirce, “men and words educate each other reciprocally; every increase in a man’s information involves and is involved by a corresponding increase in word information” (CP 5.313). Consciousness converges with the word given that “the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself” (CP 5.314; see below, 7.4). As a developing sign, the subject is dialogical and relational, an *open* subject in becoming in the intrapersonal and interpersonal relation with other signs and other subjects. The boundaries of the subject-sign are not defined once and for all, but can only be traced in dialogic encounter with other signs. As Peirce says, when one studies the great principle of continuity, what he calls synechism, and sees that all is fluid, that every being is connected to every other, it will appear that individualism and falsity are one and the same. Human beings are possible members of society and are not whole so long as they are single, that is, stand separately from others. One person’s experience is nothing, if it stands alone. In Peirce’s words: “If he sees what other cannot, we call it hallucination. It is not ‘my’ experience, but ‘our’ experience that has to be thought of; and this ‘us’ has indefinite possibilities” (CP 5.402 n. 2). Individual action is a means and not an end, just as individual pleasure is not our end: “we are all putting our shoulders to the wheel for an end that none of us can catch more than a glimpse at—that which the generations are working out. But we can see that the development of embodied ideas is what it will consist in” (*Ibid.*).

The single individual develops in sociality, in the relation with the experiences of others, and never in isolation. The self is a community in itself, a community of dialogically interrelated selves, subject to the logic of otherness. The word “in-dividual” interpreted literally means “non divided, non divisible.” Again in Peirce’s own words:

Two things here are all-important to assure oneself of and to remember. The first is that a person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is “saying to himself,” that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language. The second thing to remember is that the man’s circle of society (however widely or narrowly this phrase may be understood), is a sort of loosely

compacted person, in some respect of higher rank than the person of an individual organism. (CP 5.421)

Peirce contrasts the concepts of “personality,” “personal self,” “individual self,” which imply a self-sufficient self, or, as he says, a finite self, with the concept of self in communion with other selves. The finite self, the “personal self” is an “illusory phenomenon.” However, the different forms of egotism are not aware of this and the illusion of being able to egotistically isolate oneself ends up creating the very conditions for such isolation.

The social and communal character of self does not contradict its singularity and uniqueness or capacity for otherness with respect to any interpretive process that may concern it. The uniqueness of self, its irreducibility to a single and fixed referent is unveiled and developed in the relationship with the other. Insofar as it is unique, the self is ineffable (CP 1.357).

Echoing Emmanuel Levinas the self is saying beyond the said. The utterances of self convey significance beyond words. And yet the ineffability and uniqueness of self do not imply the sacrifice of communicability, for what the self is in itself (in its firstness) can always be communicated to a degree, even if only to communicate the impossibility of communicating. From a Peircean perspective neither absolute solitude nor muteness characterize the human condition in its specificity, in its most profound nature.

The problem of subjectivity is also at the centre of Victoria Welby’s attention. Her unpublished manuscripts include a file entitled *Subjectivity* which collects a series of original papers by her written between 1903 and 1910 (Welby Collection, York University Archives, Scott Library, Toronto, Canada, now in Petrilli, 2009a: Ch. 6). The subject’s identity is multiplex, plurifaceted and plurivocal. It is delineated and modeled in the dialogical relation among its various parts. Welby analyzes subjectivity in terms of the complex and articulated relation between what she calls the “I,” or, introducing a neologism, *Ident* and the “self” (see the manuscripts of 1907–1910, in Petrilli, 2009: 646-70). The “I” develops in the relation with the “self” or, rather, with the multiple *selves* constituting the different faces of the *Ident*. Here, too, otherness emerges as a necessary condition for the constitution of subjectivity.

On establishing a distinction between I and Self, Welby clarifies that “the Self is included in ‘I,’ but not conversely. ... The race like the individual *has* a Self because it *is* an ‘I’” (“The I and the Self,” undated manuscript). The Self is a representation of the I, a part of it, what we *have* and therefore cannot *be*. The I is what we *are* and therefore alludes to what we

cannot *possess*. My “I” belongs to others just as “mine” belongs to (but does not coincide with) me.

Similarly to the body, the *self*—for which Welby also proposes the term *ephemeron*—is mortal, ephemeral. By contrast, the I tends towards immortality beyond the mortality of the self and the body. The I or Ident coincides with the activity of giftmaking, giving without return, beyond possession. As understood by Welby, it transcends closed identity and converges with the capacity to resist the violence of monologism, univocality, the order of discourse, the said. In other words, the Ident is oriented by the logic of otherness and is characterized by high degree of “semiotic materiality” (see below, 5.9.) in the continuous flow of interpretants whose rhythm is beaten out by the succession, superimposition, multiplication, and cohabitation of one’s multiple *selves*.

Far from being unitary and compact, identity formed in this way presents an excess, something more compared to closed and fixed identity. Self does not coincide with the I but is one of its representations, an opening, a means, an instrument, or modality, but never an end in itself. Therefore, contrary to the tendency to exalt the Self, to establish a relation of substitution, usurpation, identification between self and I, identity develops from the relationship of dialogic otherness between self and I as well as among the multiple selves that constitute the I. Identity is the ongoing, generative and dynamic outcome of the relationship of dialogical distancing and differentiation of Self from Ident. Welby’s generative conception of human consciousness recalls Peirce’s as it emerges from his own writings on the sign.

Peirce maintains that “self-love is no love” (CP 6.288). Along similar lines Welby contends that the ultimate “sin consists in OUR giving our selves leave to demand and secure gratification, pleasure, ease, for their own sake: to be greedy of welfare at some human expense.” In other words, it consists in allowing the *Self* to transform *Selfness* into *Selfishness*. Though the action of the centripetal forces of *Self* may be necessary for “self-preservation *here*,” for “survival *now*,” the condition of being oriented univocally towards one’s own self generally defeats evolutionary development to the extent that it generates “self-regarding *Selfishness*.” Indeed, in reality, “egotism, however, properly speaking, is impossible: I cannot love or centre upon I, for I am essentially that which radiates: that which IS the knowing, living, activity: it is only selfism that we mean; not egoism.”

In Welby's view, hedonist ethics, the dominant ideology of her times (much like our own) implies reducing the vastness of the cosmos to the status of mere annex to the planetary egoist and parasite. Therefore, in the perspective of monological identity, it implies reducing the degree of difference (understood in terms of otherness) in the relation between I and Self to the advantage of Self, or rather one's multiple Selves. On the contrary, the "supreme function of the Ident's *Self*," as Welby says, is to put itself at the service of the Ident and to collaborate in generating, knowing, serving, mastering and transfiguring our actual and possible worlds; the mission of our Selves being "to master the world for Identity in difference The Ident is one in all, but also All in each. The Ident's name is first multiplex—We, Us, then complex, I, Me. That Ident has, possesses, works through—a self, or even many selves." As she writes in her unpublished papers on subjectivity: "It is precisely our di-viduality that forms the wealth of our gifts."

For both Welby and Peirce the subject is a community of distinct but inseparable selves. These parts or selves do not exclude each other, but rather are interconnected by relations of reciprocal dependency regulated by the logic of otherness and unindifference among differences. Such logic resists unindifferentiated confusion among parts, therefore the tendency to level the other onto the monological Self. As Welby says: "to confound is to sacrifice distinction." To the extent that it represents an excess with respect to the sum of its parts, the I or Ident is not the "individual" but the "unique" which may be associated with the concept of "non relative otherness" or "absolute otherness" as thematized by Levinas (1961), and implies an original relation of involvement, compromission and unindifference towards the other and the world in its detotalized totality.

1.15. Mother-sense: an a priori for subjectivity, signification and critique

In another series of unpublished manuscripts written at the beginning of the twentieth century (see Petrilli, 2009a: Ch. 6), Welby proposed the original concept of *mother-sense* (also designated with the expressions *primal sense* and its variant *primary sense*). Mother-sense plays a central role in the generation of sense, meaning and significance, therefore in the construction and interpretation of worldviews. She distinguishes between "sense" and "mother-sense," on the one hand, and "intellect" and "father-reason," on the other. This distinction indicates two fundamental cross-gender modalities in the generation and

interpretation of sense producing processes, where “sense” is broadly understood to include “meaning” and “significance.” Such processes may be isolated by way of abstraction, hypothetically, for the sake of theorization, but on a pragmatic level, in the reality of concrete signifying practice they are strictly interrelated (for all these aspects see Petrilli, 2009a: 573–730, which also includes papers by Welby published for the first time).

On Welby’s account “mother-sense” refers to the generating source of sense together with the capacity for creativity and criticism. Mother-sense is regulated by the logic of dialogic otherness and is the condition for the acquisition of knowledge through feeling, perception, intuition, and creative leaps. Beyond the capacity for the logical processes of the intellect, for reasoning, mother-sense is the condition for sympathetic understanding, to evoke Peirce, for answering comprehension, in the language of Bakhtin, for creativity, intuition and transcendence. Mother-sense, according to Peirce (who introduces the expression “mother-wit”), allows for the idea to be intuited before it is possessed or before it possesses us. It is a capacity specific to humanity, says Welby, “knowledge of the race” which transcends gender, “an inheritance common to humanity,” as much as woman may emerge as its main guardian on a historico-social level.

The intellect engenders *rational* knowledge through processes of reasoning, asserting, generalizing about data observed and experimented in science, logic and everyday life. A limit consists in the tendency to allow for the tyranny of data which we intend to possess, but which instead possesses us. The intellect is a cognitive capacity often ruled by dominant ideology, therefore by the logic of dogma and convention. Moreover, the sphere of intellectual knowledge is mostly entrusted to the jurisdiction of the male, simply for socio-cultural reasons and not because of some special natural propensity for rational reasoning exclusive to masculinity. Healthy intellect derives from mother-sense from which it must never be separated: otherwise, the penalty is loss of sense and significance, of the faculty for creativity and critique, leveling of the capacity for dialogic multivoicedness and polylogism. That which the intellect must exert itself to reach mother-sense already experiences in a broad sense, that is, already knows, intuitively and feels.

Mother-sense (synonyms introduced by Welby include “primal sense,” “primary sense,” “original sense,” “racial sense,” “native sense,” “matrix,” etc.) is connected with signifying processes oriented by the logic of otherness and iconicity; it alludes to the creative and generative forces of sense resulting from the capacity to associate things which seem distant,

but which instead are attracted to each other; from the point of view of argumentation, it allows for logical procedures of the abductive type which are regulated by the logic of otherness, creativity, dialogism, freedom and desire. Peirce explicitly associates desire to meaning understood in both semiotic and axiological terms. Welby's correspondence with Mary Everest Boole (wife of the famous logician and mathematician George Boole and writer in her own right) is largely dedicated to discussing the laws of thought and the connection between logic, love, passion and power (see Cust, 1929: 86-92; and Petrilli, 2009a: Ch. 2).

According to Welby, logic proper is the place where the broader generative dimensions of sense (the original, primal, racial, mother-sense dimension, the "matrix") interweave with reason dialectically, or, better, dialogically. The relation of responsive understanding (or answering comprehension) and reciprocal empowering between primal sense and rational life is necessary to the full development of critical sense and to the attainment of maximum value, meaning and purport as regards experience in its totality. Welby's mother-sense brings into focus the value of significance before and after signification, as Levinas (1978) would say. Mother-sense concerns both the real and the ideal aspects of our signifying practices: the real insofar as it concerns the concrete aspects of praxis and the ideal insofar as it is the condition by virtue of which humanity may aspire to continuity and perfection in the generation of actual and possible worlds and of signifying processes at large.

Welby's conception of logic may also be associated with Peirce's when he claims that the great principle of logic is "self-surrender," which means to regulate inferential processes according to the logic of opening and otherness. Nor does the principle of self-surrender from a pragmatic viewpoint imply that self is to lay low for the sake of an ultimate triumph, which even if attained must not be the governing purpose of any action (*CP* 5.402, note 2). In a letter of 21 January 1909, Welby agrees with Peirce's observation that logic is the "ethics of the intellect," which she relates to her own conception of primal sense: "Of course I assent to your definition of a logical inference, and agree that Logic is in fact an application of morality in the largest and highest sense of the word. That is entirely consonant with the witness of Primal Sense" (in Hardwick, 1977: 91). Scientific rigor in reasoning is founded on mother-sense and is closely interconnected with logical procedure of the agapastic type, therefore with the logic of otherness, inexactitude, instability and crisis, considered to be no less than structural to the evolution of sign, subjectivity and signifying processes. Moreover,

the critical instance of logical procedure, specially when a question of abduction, that is, logical procedure governed by the iconic relation of similarity (abduction is one of three types of inferential processes, the other two are deduction and induction), allows for prevision and is favored by translational processes across languages, that is, by interpretation, verification and development of the signs of one language through the interpretants of other languages, verbal and nonverbal (see below, 8.1, 8.4.). In other words, translational processes amplify critical logical procedure and the amplification of sense through semiotic spheres beyond the limits of verbal sign systems and interlingual translation (Petrilli, 2007c).

The self's vulnerability and readiness to venture towards the other with all the risks implied were portrayed by Plato and the myth featuring Eros (in the *Symposium*), a sort of intermediate divinity or demon generated by Penia (poverty, need) and Poros (the God of ingenuity) who finds his way even when it is hidden. According to Welby, a condition for the evolution of humanity is the connection between self enrichment and risky opening towards the other. With reference to this connection she elaborates a critique of "being satisfied," and theorizes the capacity for "transcendence" with respect to the world as it is, to ontological being given once and for all: "We all tend now, men and women, to be satisfied with things as they are. But we have all entered the world precisely to be dissatisfied with it." "Dissatisfaction" is an important aspect of "mother-sense" and signals the need to recover the critical instance of human intellectual capacities, the propensity for questioning. This implies the human species-specific capacity for otherness and dialogic displacement of sense in the deferral among signs.

1.16. Sense and Expression in Sociality

Both Welby and Peirce have significantly contributed to developing a global science of signs capable of accounting for signifying processes in all their complexity and articulation, of considering meaning in terms of signification, sense and significance. Though never having met personally, they confronted their ideas with each other and corresponded intensely during the last decade of their lives, leaving a rich corpus of letter exchanges of high theoretical value and mutually influencing each other's research itineraries. Following Peirce and Welby, the study of signs and signifying processes cannot make claims to neutrality, therefore cannot be merely descriptive.

The approach to signs adopted by the authors mentioned so far presupposes special attention for the human being's involvement in the life of signs viewed not only from the theoretical-cognitive perspective but also from the ethical-pragmatic. In particular, from the point of view of the present chapter, both Peirce and Welby work towards a general science of signs and meaning able to account for semiotic processes, human and nonhuman, verbal and nonverbal in all their diversity, complexity and articulation; in relation to specifically human semiosis, for meaning not only in terms of signification but also of significance, or sense as understood by Levinas. In fact, both Peirce and Welby knew, as Morris or Levinas after them, that signs are not neutral and cannot be sufficiently analyzed in descriptive terms alone. To study subjectivity and its signs with claims to neutrality is reductive and entirely inadequate for a full understanding of semiosis in the human world. Beyond a strictly cognitive approach, a global understanding of human consciousness and behavior, verbal and nonverbal, requires a special focus on the relation of signs to values and adequate contextualization in terms of biosemiosis and even beyond with cosmo-semiosis.

Most interesting is how Peirce and Welby anticipated considerations that were to re-emerge in the writings of a contemporary philosopher like Emmanuel Levinas who thematizes the otherness relationship throughout all his writings. According to Levinas, desire of the other, attraction to the other, the relation to the other is an original experience, an essential movement conferring sense upon social experience, even the most insignificant.

Developing Peirce's discourse in the direction of the philosophy of subjectivity as elaborated by Levinas, love transforms fear *of* the other—in the double sense of fear provoked in the subject by the other, the subject's fear of the other, on the one hand, and fear provoked in the object, the object's fear, on the other hand—into fear *for* the other. Beyond the "subject genitive" and the "object genitive," foreseen by traditional grammatical categories, fear *for* the other may be described as the "ethic genitive," therefore fear for the other as fear for the other's safety and well-being to the point of becoming responsible for the other and taking the blame even for any injustice endured (see Ponzio, 2006b: 30-2). Therefore, under the hardened crust of identity the subject rediscovers the capacity to fear *for* the other, fear that renders the subject incessantly restless and preoccupied with the other. Love, reasonableness, creativity are all grounded in the logic of otherness and dialogism which together enhance the evolutionary dynamics of human consciousness. The ancient vocation for love and absolute otherness is an-archival, it precedes origins and principles, the

formation of consciousness and subjectivity in terms of identity, and characterizes the properly human.

Levinas critiques approaches to language analysis in contemporary philosophy that focus on hermeneutic structure and on the cultural work of expression by incarnate being while forgetting a third dimension. That is, orientation towards the other, this other that is not only a collaborator and neighbor in the cultural gesture of expression, or a client for our artistic work, but far more significantly, an “interlocutor.” Levinas defines the interlocutor as the person to whom the expression expresses, for whom the celebration celebrates, at once the term of orientation and primary signification. In other words, before being the celebration of being, expression is a relation with the person to whom I express the expression and whose presence is a necessary condition for the very production of my cultural gesture of expression. The other in front of me, *autrui* as Levinas says, is not englobed in the totality of the expressed being, but escapes being, is the shadow of being, its face, excess with respect to being, evasion from being. The other is neither a cultural signification, nor a simple given. Far more radically the other is primordial sense, the possibility of sense for the expression itself. Only thanks to the other can such a phenomenon as signification even enter being (see Levinas, 1972: 49-50).

1.17. *Semioethics and the Humanism of Otherness*

A special task for semioethics is to evidence the biosemiotic condition of dialogic involvement among signs, the condition of intercorporeity, interconnectedness, therefore to unmask the delusory claim to the status of indifferent differences. Semioethics is committed to a new form of humanism based on the logic of otherness, humanism of the other. This also emerges from its commitment to pragmatics and focus on the relation between signs, values and behavior. Moreover, semioethics aims to transcend separatism among the sciences, insisting on the interrelation between the human sciences, the historico-social sciences and the natural, logico-mathematical sciences. This new form of humanism is humanism of the other as thematized by Levinas throughout all his writings, in particular *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972). Humanism of the other involves a “movement” without return to the subject, a movement which Levinas calls *œuvre*, exposition to otherness with all the risks this involves: hybridization of identity, fragmentation, impossibility of reassuring monologism,

evasion from the subject-object relation. *Outside the Subject (Hors Sujet)* is the title of another book by Levinas, published in 1987: “outside the subject” also in the sense of getting off the subject, of irreducibility to theme, to representation.

Human rights as they have so far been practised tend to be oriented by identity logic and to leave aside the rights of the other. Traditionally the expression “human rights” is an interpretant of the humanism of identity, consequently it refers to the rights of identity, of closed identity, of self oriented by the logic of closed identity, to one’s own rights, forgetting the rights of the other. On the contrary, from the perspective of caring for life over the planet, human and nonhuman, for the health of semiosis generally, the development of communication not only in strictly cultural terms but also in broader biosemiosical terms, this tendency must quickly be counteracted by the humanism of otherness, where the rights of the other are the first to be recognized—not only the other *beyond self*, but also the other *of self*. The self characteristically removes, suffocates, and segregates otherness, sacrificing it to the cause of identity. But developed in such terms, identity is fictitious and destined to failure, despite all efforts made to recover identity, to maintain it.

Semiotics contributes to humanism of the other by evidencing the extension and consistency of the sign network which connects each human being to every other on both the synchronic and diachronic levels: the global and worldwide extension of the communication network is spreading at a planetary level and as such is susceptible to analysis in terms of synchrony; and given that the destiny of humanity is interrelated with the destiny of the individual, is conditioned by events, actions and decisions made by the individual, from its remotest to most recent manifestations, involving the past and the evolutionary future on both the biological and historico-social levels, diachronic investigations are also in place. The sign network includes the semiosphere created by humanity, that is, human culture with its signs, symbols, and artifacts, etc.; but as global semiotics teaches us—in particular as interpreted by Thomas A. Sebeok who postulates that semiosis and life converge—the semiosphere is far broader than the sphere of human culture and, in fact, coincides with the biosphere. The semio(bio)sphere is the habitat of humanity, the matrix whence we sprang and the stage on which we are destined to act.

Human sign behavior can be interpreted in light of the hypothesis that if the human involves signs, signs in turn are human. However, far from reasserting monological identity once again or reposing yet another form of anthropocentrism, this humanistic commitment implies radical decentralization provoking nothing less than a Copernican revolution. In Welby's language, "geocentrism" must be superseded, then "heliocentrism" until we approximate a truly cosmic perspective where global semiotics and semioethics intersect. Otherness more than anything else is at stake when a question of responsibility and, therefore, of humanism understood as humanism of the other, oriented by the logic of otherness, remembering that by "otherness" is understood not only the otherness of our neighbor, even if distant spatially—though now relatively so given the worldwide expansion of the communication network—, but also the otherness of living beings distant in genetic terms.

Reformulating Terence's famous saying ("*homo sum: umani nihil a me alienum puto*"), Roman Jakobson asserts that "*linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto.*" The semiotician's commitment to all that is linguistic, indeed, to all that is sign material (not only relatively to anthroposemiosis or more extensively to zoosemiosis, but to the whole semiobiosphere) resounds in both a cognitive and ethical sense. This commitment involves concern for the other, not only in the sense of "to be concerned with..." but also "to be concerned for..." "to care for." In such a framework, concern for the other implies a capacity for responsibility without limitations of belonging, proximity or community, which of course is not exclusive to the "linguist" or "semiotician." Developing Jakobson's view, the claim is that not as professional linguists or semioticians, but more significantly as human beings, no sign is "*a me alienum*"; and leaving the first part of Terence's saying unmodified, "*homo sum,*" we could continue with the statement that as humans we are not only *semiosic* animals (like all other animals), but also *semiotic* animals. From this point of view humans are unique with respect to the rest of the animal kingdom with the consequence that nothing semiosical, including the biosphere and the evolutionary cosmos whence it sprang, "*a me alienum puto.*"

Semioethics does not have a program to propose with intended aims and practices, nor a decalogue or formula to apply more or less sincerely, more or less hypocritically. Rather, semioethics is focused on the human capacity for critique. From this point of view *stereotypes*, *norms* and *ideology* are subject to critical interpretation and with them the different types of value (see, for example, Morris 1964 for the triad "operative value," "conceived value," "object value" and subordinate tripartition "detachment," "dominance,"

and “dependence”). As anticipated above, the vocation of semioethics is to evidence sign networks where it seemed there were none. This means to bring to light and to evaluate connections and implications (which in truth cannot be escaped) where there only seemed to exist net separations and divisions, boundaries and distances, with relative alibis which serve to safeguard responsibility in a limited sense, the individual conscience (which is always ready to present itself in the form of good conscience). Semioethics is not focused on a given value, an ultimate end, the *summum bonum*, but rather on semiosis in its dialogical and detotalized totality: indeed, with semioethics the aim is to transcend the totality, the boundaries of the totality—a being, an entity of some sort—, as foreseen by the reality of infinite semiosis.

Understood not only as a science but also as an attitude (for metasemiosis, that is, for reflection and deliberation), semiotics arises and develops within the field of anthroposemiosis. Therefore, it is connected with the *Umwelt* and species-specific modeling device proper to human beings. This species-specific primary modeling device, also called language, endows humans (differently from other animals) with a special capacity for producing a great plurality of different worlds, real and imaginary, and this means that humans are not condemned to imprisonment in the world as it is, to forms of vulgar realism. Semiotics is a fact of the human species, but the possibility of its effective realization is a fact of the historico-social order. In addition to being a biosemiosical endowment, the human *Umwelt* is a historico-social product, so that any possibility of transformation or alternative hypothesis finds its effective grounding and starting point, its terms of confrontation, its instruments for critique and programming in historico-social reality as distinct from merely biological material.

An important task for “semioethics” today is to interpret the social symptoms of semiosis and its malfunctioning as produced by globalization in today’s global communication-production society. As global semiotics, general semiotics today can carry out a detotalizing function and conduct a critique of all (claims to the status of) totalities, including global communication. Failing the task general semiotics will be no more than a syncretic result of the special semiotics, a transversal language of the encyclopaedia of the unified sciences, prevarication of philosophy suffering from the will to omniscience with respect to the plurality of different disciplines and specialized fields of knowledge. Semioethics can begin from the current phase in historico-social development, contemporaneity, and proceed to a critical and

rigorous analysis of today's society, investigating communication-production social structures and relationships. The critical work of global semiotics and semioethics can contribute to uncovering the delusory condition of mutual indifference among differences, and show instead how the destiny of each one of us is connected to the destiny of every other, in the last analysis how the whole planet's destiny is implied in the destiny of each single individual and vice versa.

Given that social forms of production in today's communication-production system have been mostly homogenized, semioethics is at an advantage. We could even claim that the whole planet is regulated by a single type of social reproduction system, what we have designated as the "communication-production system" (which dominates and englobes the entire planet), by a single type of market. The dominant production, exchange and consumption cycle is so pervasive that it is determining the same type of human behavior globally. Not only have habits, taste and fashion (including "dress fashion") been homologated worldwide; but also the human imaginary, the capacity for the play of amusement. A widespread consequence is that difference understood in terms of *otherness* is replaced ever more by difference understood in terms of mere *alternatives*.

However the "advantage" of this situation as we are describing it is a sad one for, having eliminated diversity and difference and sacrificed otherness, it presents us with just one type of reality. No doubt the task of analysis is simplified given that energy will not be dispersed in the effort to deal with a great multiplicity of different phenomena. But, obviously, the term "advantage" is ironical here for the advantage of a monolithic block implies the condition of monologism, therefore death of the other, suppression of different points of view, of different voices. By contrast with polylogism, monologism is incapable of critical discourse.

Plurivocality and polylogism favor creative interpretation, critical questioning, listening and responsibility for the other, translation across different signs and sign systems, freedom from the bonds of unquestioning univocality. In a world characterized by monologism the critical task of semioethics is rendered extremely difficult, almost impossible given that appropriate conceptual instruments adequate for the work of critique are not readily available. However, semioethics must face the challenge and invent working hypotheses and instruments of analysis that are not homologated to dominant ideology, that do not derive from common sense and cannot be taken for granted.

Semioethics offers the broadest view available to semiotic animals (or human beings) today. As *cosmically* responsible agents we must not only do justice to the human capacity for semioethics on a theoretical level, but also evidence the vital need for it (these days more than ever before), to the end of safeguarding not only human life, but all of life indiscriminately over the planet, humanism of the other requires nothing less: in fact, if the health of semiosis at large, of identity itself are to be safeguarded in the presentday global communication-production system where the logic of short-sighted identity dominates over the rights of the other, not only is it necessary to understand and explain the semioethical capacity, but also to evidence the need for it, the need to cultivate the human propensity for a semioethical approach to life in the most conscientious, imaginative, and responsible terms possible. Semiotics has the merit of demonstrating that whatever is human, indeed, from a global semiotic perspective, whatever is alive involves signs. This is as far as cognitive semiotics and global semiotics reach. But semioethics can push this awareness even further by relating semiosis to values and focusing on the question of responsibility, inescapable responsibility investing human beings as “semiotic animals,” or, if you please, “semioethical animals”, which implies the human capacity to take responsibility for all of life over the planet.

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[This issue includes contributions commenting Ponzio's essay by A. Z Newton, M. B. Smith, R. Bernasconi,

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