

# **Global communication, proximity and responsibility: beyond the logic of identity\***

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## **Globalization, communication, and life**

Globalization was already a fact of life well before the advent of global communication as understood in today's capitalist, or post-capitalist society, that is, well before the spread of the communication network at a worldwide level thanks to progress in technology, and of the global market which supports this network in socio-economic terms. In other words, globalization may be understood reductively as a corporate-led phenomenon characteristic of modern capitalist society, now investing the entire reproductive system globally in its various phases — production, circulation and consumption — with wide-ranging (often devastating) effects over the entire planet. But globalization may also be understood in biosemiotic terms, that is to say, as a tendency that characterizes the evolution of life from its origins (Ponzio and Petrilli 2001).

In fact, globalization in this second acceptance is the structural condition provided by the processes of evolutionary development for the proliferation of life itself over the planet, in its multifarious and interconnected manifestations, which are sign manifestations. As a specific form of life, the human, we are born into a sign network that is preexistent with respect to specific ontogenetic, even phylogenetic phenomena, presumably as a potential contribution to the further development of this network in evolutionary terms. The sphere of anthroposemiosis appears relatively late on the evolutionary scale and develops interrelatedly with the other spheres of semiosis, which coincide with the superkingdoms – microsemiosis, phytosemiosis, mycosemiosis, zoosemiosis, of which anthroposemiosis is a specification. Together they form the global biosemiosphere. And, of course, in the light of global semiotics, other spheres of semiosis, which range, for example, from endosemiosis to cybersemiosis and are studied by as many branches of semiotics, continue emerging with ongoing progress in the development of life and technology (cf. Posner et al. 1997-1998).

Global communication is a fact of life from which we cannot prescind, if life, including the human, is to continue flourishing globally as foreseen by the nature of sign activity (cf. Ponzio 2002b). On the contrary, globalization, as understood in terms of

today's global socio-economic system, that is to say, as corporate-led globalization, is neither inevitable nor desirable, indeed it even threatens to destroy life on earth as we know it.

Global communication in today's social reproductive system is only one aspect of the great web of communication formed by life over the entire planet Earth. All life forms may be analyzed in terms of dynamic sign systems. In our perspective, human life forms are considered in the fundamental terms of biosemiosis, which evidence the relation of interdependency with all other life forms on Earth, therefore, the condition of global interrelatedness. Also, human life is put into focus in its specificity as human socio-cultural semiosis.

Our emphasis is on this double modality of existing in the world as it characterizes semiosis among human beings. Firstly, as a biological organism flourishing interconnectedly with other organisms populating the great biosphere – which according to recent findings in biological research coincides with the great semiosphere. Secondly, as a specification of this vital sign network, endowed with the capacity to survey and tend to the good functioning of the whole biosemiotic system, differently from other life forms and thanks to the human species-specific capacity for metasemiosis, or semiotics, or so-called language. (As used in the present context, these terms refer to a modeling capacity specific to human beings, therefore the term 'language' does not simply refer to verbal language, or to other human sign systems with communicative and expressive functions, cf. Sebeok 1986, 1991; Petrilli and Ponzio 2002). The metasemiotic or semiotic capacity also implies a third modality of being-in-the-world, which is reserved to human beings, what we propose to call the semioethical modality. This is connected to our capacity for creative awareness of the other, which presupposes the global condition of interrelated and intercorporeal dialogical otherness to which we are all subject as living organisms (see Petrilli ed. 2003b, Chapter Two).

This third modality of being-in-the-world, the semioethical, is the key to a full understanding of the extent of our responsibility as human beings for the health of semiosis over the entire planet. Again for semiosis in all its forms, whether a question of the semioses of other human beings, or of other nonhuman life forms, which flourish interconnectedly with the nonliving forms of existence and together engender the great geobiosystem called Gaia (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 2003).

**Modeling and responsibility.** The human being as a semiotic animal, therefore a semioethical animal

All life forms as such are endowed with a capacity for modeling, communication and dialogism (see Petrilli ed. 2003b, Chapter One). Modeling determines worldview. However, differently from other life forms, human animals are endowed with a special modeling device, which may also be called language, as anticipated, or writing, which is characterized by syntactics (cf. Sebeok and Danesi 2000). (The term 'writing' should not be confused with 'writing' understood as the transcription or translation of oral verbal signs into written verbal signs. With respect to transcription or translation, writing or language as we are now using these terms is an a priori) (cf. Ponzio 1994).

Thanks to syntactics the human being is able to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct an infinite number of worlds and worldviews on the basis of a finite number of elements. This capacity distinguishes human beings from other animals where the relation between modeling and what the biologists call Umwelt is univocal, unidirectional (J. von Uexküll 1909, 1992; Hoffmeyer 1996). Non human animals are born into a world which they are not programmed to modify, if not according to an original bauplan as established by the genetic patrimony of the species they belong to. On the contrary, thanks to syntactics human beings are endowed with a capacity for creativity and metasemiosis, consequently, the human being may be defined as a metasemiotic or semiotic animal.

This entails a capacity for the suspension of action and deliberation, therefore, for critical thinking and conscious awareness. The immediate implication is that by contrast with other animals the human being is invested biosemiosically and phylogenetically with a unique capacity for responsibility, for making choices and taking standpoints, for creative intervention upon the course of semiosis throughout the whole biosphere. In this sense the 'semiotic animal' is also a 'semioethic animal'. Human beings are invested biologically with the capacity for the assumption of responsibility, therefore for caring for semiosis in its joyous and dialogical multiplicity (cf. Petrilli and Ponzio 2001; Ponzio and Petrilli 2002).

In a biosemiotic perspective modeling, communication and dialogism are interconnected and presuppose each other. From this point of view communication is not understood in the oversimplifying terms of message transmission from emitter to receiver (though this of course is one of its possible manifestations). Far more extensively communication coincides with semiosis and therefore with life: sign activity tells of the universal condition of interrelatedness and interdependency, in this sense sign activity is synonymous with communication and as such is dialogical. Here too dialogism does not refer reductively to the exchange of rejoinders among speakers but far more radically and vitally it refers to the permanent condition of intercorporeal involvement and reciprocal implication among bodies and signs throughout the semiotic universe.

**Modeling, communication and dialogue together form the foundation and condition of possibility for the engenderment of life in its multiplicity and its specificities, including human life. As stated, human life is endowed with the species-specific trait called syntactics, therefore with the species-specific capacity for metasemiosis beyond the less complex level of semiosis in its direct and immediate forms.**

**Metasemiosis, or ‘semiotics’, understood as metasemiosis and not simply as the name of the theory, or science, or doctrine, or discipline that studies sign activity, has determined the course of homination through to the present phase of development in evolution. ‘Semiotics’ thus described is the biosemiosical a priori of the anthropological and cultural necessity for responsible and polyphonic living.**

**Responsible and polyphonic living implies the capacity for listening and hospitality toward differences, toward the other in each and every one of us, as well as toward the other beyond self (cf. Sebeok, Petrilli and Ponzio 2001). Otherness is not a condition we concede with an act of generosity toward the world. On the contrary, otherness is structural to life itself, a condition for life to flourish, intercorporeity. Dialogic otherness is connected with the nonfunctional.**

**Signs between functionality and excess: World logic versus the properly human**

**Life is the right to otherness, unindifferent difference, nonfunctionality, excess with respect to a world sanctioned by officialdom and convention (cf. Ponzio 1997).**

**From the point of view of anthroposemiosis the nonfunctional may be juxtaposed to the ideology of functionality, productivity, competition as fostered through social roles and the logic of identity which regulates behavior connected with those roles. The human subject may be connoted as such on the basis of anthropological and cultural nonfunctionality. Even more, the humanity of the human subject can only be evaluated in terms of the time of nonfunctionality, otherness, and excess, giving voice to differences which are not indifferent to each other, but which, on the contrary, interrelate dialogically and are reciprocally responsive to each other. Such qualities, orientations and values cannot be englobed within roles, they cannot be reduced to roles, but, on the contrary, exceed and at once subtend the logic of roles and identities. These no doubt are differentiated on the basis of the otherness relation, but this is a question of relative otherness, a limited form of otherness with boundaries necessary to the delimitation of one’s behavior in relation to a given role and relative responsibilities. Instead, the type of otherness that cannot be restricted to roles and identities may be identified as absolute otherness and is connected with the condition of unlimited responsibility, which does not admit indifference.**

The properly human rests in our capacity for absolute otherness, unlimited responsibility, the relation of dialogical intercorporeity among unindifferent differences, nonfunctionality with respect to the functionality of identity and relative roles. The properly human is the condition of vulnerability and of exposition to the other.

The places that best evidence the properly human are the places where time is beaten out in terms of the relation to the absolute and nonfunctional other; the time of death, aging, disease, of friendship and eroticism, the time of mothering and nurturing, the time of aesthetic discourse – whether a question of literature, figurative arts, music, cinema and their signs, the time of inventiveness and scientific progress, of the play of musement, of the ephemeral. This is the time of excess with respect to closed identity, the time of dialogical detotalization and proliferation of differences that cannot be recruited and put at the service of the World.

By ‘World’ here is understood the most vulgar forms of realism, dominant ideology, identity, being, the order of discourse, the functional subject with a clean conscience, the lying rhetoric of political systems or of mass media, all functional to a global and totalizing world. The flourishing of special semioses, of different languages and cultures represent in their multiplicity the signs of the potential for resistance with respect to the tendency toward globalization reductively understood in terms of homogenization and leveling onto today’s dominant values connected with the global market, power, control. (These places are explored in the various chapters forming the volumes, Linguaggi, cf. Petrilli ed. 2003a, and Communication and Its Semiotic Bases, cf. Petrilli ed. 2003b).

The connection between World, Narration, History, Duration, Identity, Subject, Freedom, Donation of Sense from Intentional Consciousness, Individuality, Difference-Indifference, Interest, Ontology, Truth, Force, Reason, Power, Work, Productivity, Politics, War is inscribed in the worldview of Western culture. Furthermore, this connection has been exploited and exasperated by capitalism from its very beginnings and ever more so in today’s world. The World is connected to a consciousness, a subject, whether individual or collective, experienced as part of the World and at once place of signification of the World as it is. Therefore, the concatenation: Project, Narration, Ontology, Signification, Subject. The World is also indissolubly connected with politics associated with a totalizing outlook and functional system. We are alluding to the realism of politics which implements the strategies of productivity, efficiency, which is faithful to reality, which mediates the interest of subjects, individual and collective, which orients becoming according to a realistic view of the present. This present is defended at all costs, even at the cost of the extrema ratio of war, which belongs to the World, is part of it. Indeed, insofar as the World is constitutively based upon identity, it

is predisposed or programmed for sacrifice of the other, of otherness in the name of identity. In such a perspective, peace is no more than an interval, momentary repose, reintegration of forces, respite, a truce which ensues from war, preparation for war, similarly to rest, free-time, the night functional to the resumption of work, to the ‘madness of the day’ (Blanchot).

Work and war: war as manifest ‘collective work’ (Marx) in the form of precapitalist production. Peace flourishes in and for war, similarly to rest, the night, which flourish in and for work, for the day.

The question we must ask is that to which Emmanuel Levinas dedicated all his research: that is, whether there be no other sense than that of being in the World and for the World? Whether the properly human may exceed the space and time of objects, the space-time of identity? Whether there exist relations that cannot be reduced to the category of identity and that have nothing to do with relations between subject and object, with relations of exchange, equivalence, functionality, interest, productivity? Whether there be interhuman relations that are altogether other, yet all the same material, earthly relations, to which one’s body opens? Whether there be a sense that is other with respect to sense in the world of objects? A form of humanism that is different from the humanism of identity, and which we propose to call the humanism of alterity. This orientation regulated by the logic of otherness, this ‘movement’ without return to the subject, a movement which Levinas calls œuvre, is exposition – at a risk – to alterity, hybridization of identity, rupture of monologism and evasion from the subject-object relation. Hors-sujet is the title of a book by Levinas published in 1987; ‘hors-sujet’ also in the sense of being off the subject, not responding to thematization, representation. This is made possible by the logic of otherness – the condition of possibility for a form of humanism where a good or clean conscience and human rights are interrogated in the light of the rights of others. The logic of otherness implies the capacity for otherness with respect to Western thought which instead incorporates and legitimizes the reasons of identity, which allows for prevarication over the other, even to the extent that it acknowledges the reasons of war.

#### **Human rights and the rights of others: From limited to absolute responsibility**

In front of the face of the other, the I is called into question. Through its nudity, exposition, fragility, the face says that otherness will never be eliminated. The otherness of others resists to the very point of calling for recourse to homicide and war – being the evidence and proof of the other’s irreducibility. Another one, autrui, this other, says Levinas, puts the I into the accusative, summoning it, questioning it, calling it back to the condition of absolute responsibility, outside the I’s initiative. Absolute responsibility

is responsibility for the other, responsibility understood as answering to the other and for the other. This type of responsibility allows for neither rest nor peace. Peace functional to war, peace intrinsic to war, a truce, is fully revealed in its misery and vanity in the light of absolute responsibility.

The relation to the other is asymmetrical, unequal: the other is disproportionate with respect to the power and freedom of the I. Moral consciousness is this very lack of proportion, it interrogates the freedom of self. However, such interrogation is at once constitutive of self and its freedom insofar as it sanctions the passage from spontaneity to consciousness, from freedom as passive jouissance and self's happy spontaneity, to freedom as a right, and speaking that right.

It is before the need to answer to others, it is under the weight of unlimited responsibility for others, that the rights and freedom of the self are instituted. The origin of self, which is an origin without an arché, in this sense anarchical, lies in an uneasy conscience in front of others, in a dirty conscience, therefore, in the need to justify one's presence, in one's responsibility without alibis and without escape from others. In the continued effort to achieve a clean conscience, the self in the nominative, understood as the subject, as intentional consciousness, as speech, derives from interrogating the self and putting it into the accusative. From such interrogation also derive self's freedoms, self's rights – 'human rights', elaborated to defend the self summoned by the face of the other to account for the rights of others, in this sense to defend itself as an 'I'.

It will be necessary to institute a just State with just laws in order to guarantee freedom and avoid the danger of tyranny. Order based on the logic of closed identity, therefore of differences that are indifferent to each other may also backfire against self in the form of fixed and inflexible law, it too tyrannical and violent. This is the case exactly because law thus conceived is based on the I's rights as regulated by the logic of closed identity – in the extreme form by commanding war, considered as an inevitable means of defense, the realistic face of being, of the interests of the individual and of the community. The I is open to blackmail from the impersonal order to the point of accepting without question the extrema ratio of war, in the name of its own freedom. The reasoning being that it is necessary to resort to violence in order to suppress violence.

The being of things as realistically administered by the impersonal discourse of law, in the context of which war is presented as ineluctable violence and self sacrifice, has its otherwise in its very foundation, in the condition of face-to-face with others. This condition is even more realistic, indeed this time truly realistic: the face-to-face condition, as says Levinas, implies a relation of commandment without tyranny, which is

not yet obedience to an impersonal law, but the indispensable condition for the institution of such a law.

The opposition of a nude face, the opposition of disarmed eyes, with absolutely no protection, as from which self is constituted as responsibility, is not the opposition of a force, it is not a relation of hostility. It is a peace-loving opposition, where peace is not understood as suspension of war, violence withheld in order to be used more effectively. On the contrary, the violence perpetuated consists in eliminating this very opposition, in outwitting it, in ignoring the face, in avoiding the gaze. 'No' is written on the face of the other – firstly we find written, 'You shall not kill' – for the very fact of being a face. Having a sense for itself, having been absolved from the relation with an I, the other is such insofar as it may absent itself from the presence of self and its projects, not go along with it. Violence is achieved by converting the no which is inscribed on the face of the other into hostile force or submission. Violence consists in prevailing and prevaricating over the other, to the point even of murder and war, in spite of opposition to violence; opposition that is expressed in the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill', which is inscribed in the face even before it is explicit in a formula.

Some biblical prescriptions: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' and 'The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself' (Leviticus, 19.18, and 19.34). These refer beyond politics, to a form of peace that is antecedent with respect to political relations, a condition of peace that is fundamental and made of the relation with the other insofar as it is other, with the foreigner that every human is for every other. Extrapolitical or prepolitical peace, solicitation for another person (cf. 'Entretiens' in Poirié 1987: 104), precedes rational thought, being as an 'I', statements made by the subject, knowledge and objectifying consciousness. Primordial peace is paradoxical and contradictory, it implies responsibility for peace that is foreign (cf. Levinas 1982, It. trans.: 28-29). It implies the interpersonal relationship where the subject 'reaches the human condition assuming responsibility for the other person in the election that elevates it to this degree' ('Preface' of 1990 to English translation of Levinas 1934).

The situation of peace and responsibility in relation to the other, a situation where individuals give themselves in their singularity, difference, non-interchangeability, unindifference, precedes politics and logic, says Levinas. Politics and logic share the fact that they consider individuals as belonging to a genre, as equals; the relation of alterity is prepolitical and pre-logical. And given my exclusive responsibility towards every other, it is this relation that obliges me to relate to another according to a genre, to the individual of a given system or group, which as such is interchangeable, indifferent. Knowing, judging, doing justice, confronting two individuals in order to establish who is



guilty, all this requires generalization through logic and the State, equalizing singularities with reference to a genre, insofar as they belong to the same State as citizens. The relationship with the other is mediated by institutions and juridical procedure, which generalizes and at once delimits responsibility, responsibility of each one of us for every other. From this type of generalization derives the necessity of the State. The action of the State is added to the work of interpersonal responsibility, responsibility as expected from the individual in its singularity – and in a sense denying it. The work of interpersonal responsibility is the work of the individual in its singularity, the person absolutely responsible: responsible in the sense of a hostage who must answer for something he did not do, for a past which was never his, which was never present to him (cf. ‘Entretiens’, in Poirié 1987: 118).

**Fear of the other: subject genitive / object genitive; fear for the other: ethical genitive**

The Hobbesian concept of homo homini lupus is inverted: the State does not found personal responsibility towards the other but limits and defines it, though it guarantees responsibility through generalization of the law. Instead, responsibility for the other, unconditional, categorical, moral responsibility is not written and is not inscribed in the law. It does not coincide with State justice, which from this point of view is always imperfect with respect to human rights understood as the rights of the other as other, as foreigner. Preoccupation with human rights is not a state function, but rather a non-state institution in the State, it is the call to humanity that is yet to be accomplished in the State (cf. Ibidem: 119).

Fear of the other, the fear we experience of the other, ensues from the constitution of identity. The constitution of identity, whether it be individual or collective identity, requires separation from the other, definition of the interests of identity by which is determined what is part of identity and what is not, what regards identity and what does not – as much as the gaze of the other regards me always. Identity means to determine one’s own responsibility, which is defined and limited. As such, limited responsibility has recourse to alibis which enable the subject to circumscribe and limit not fear of the other, but fear for the other, for its well-being. Identity is delineated on the basis of difference, but difference and identity also require indifference. Difference related to identity also relates to a given genre. Difference thus described requires indifference to the other, lack of interest in the other, disinterestedness, the lack of fear for the other. Difference and identity call for circumscribed, limited responsibility, a type of responsibility that is connected with a genre, that begins and ends in a genre which has the function of guaranteeing identity. From unindifference to the other to difference and relative indifference: this is the trajectory through which identity is constituted and delineated. With the delineation of identity in such terms, that which regards us is

progressively reduced to that which regards the interests of identity, and such reduction finds justification in the condition of limited responsibility sustained by alibis. Moreover, the more we get free of the condition of fear for the other, the more our fear of the other increases to the point of exasperation.

‘Fear of the other’ means fear that the subject experiences ‘of the other’ understood as object genitive (cf. Ponzio 1995a, b): the other constitutes the object of fear. Logic distinguishes the genitive object from the genitive subject, the other subject of fear, the other who fears. Subject and object. However, in order to grasp the third sense we are describing, that is, fear for the other, it will be necessary to abandon this dichotomy or polarization as traditionally established by logic. According to the third sense we are describing, fear of the other means to experience the other’s fear, fear as experienced by the other, therefore, fear for the other. Here, we no longer distinguish between subject and object, we no longer refer to community identification. In other words, the relation among differences no longer implies community identification, indifference among identities and differences, but all on the contrary the relation among differences is based on unindifference among differences, absolute otherness. Following this logic and developing the discourse of Levinas, the expression ‘of the other’ may be designated as an ‘ethical genitive’ (cf. Ibidem). This third case of the genitive should be held into account by logic as the third sense according to which the expression ‘fear of the other’ may be disambiguated, that is, as ‘fear for the other’.

In today’s world, fear of the other understood as fearing the other, fear that the subject experiences of the object, has reached paroxysmal degrees. However, contrary to the Hobbesian principle of ‘homo homini lupus’, such paroxysm is not the starting point but the point of arrival in the constitution of identity. In Western history, identity has always prevailed over otherness, difference and relative indifference has always prevailed over unindifference, relations among individuals belonging to the same genre, with ever more restricted responsibilities, have always prevailed over relations without alibis among singularities outside genres.

Capitalism has constructed its socio-economic reproductive system on identity, to the point of exasperation. This means to say that capitalist ideology has developed the subject’s fear of the other – object -, to paroxysmal degrees, ever more limiting and attenuating the attitude of fear for the other. A paradox connected with globalization today in its current phase of development is that social relations emerge as relations among individuals who are separate from each other, reciprocally indifferent to each other. The relation to the other is suffered as a necessity for the sake of achieving one’s own private interests. And exclusive preoccupation with one’s own identity, with one’s own difference indifferent to the differences of others, increases fear of the other

understood as fearing the other. Following this type of logic, the community is the passive result of the interests of identity that are indifferent to each other. Indeed, the community so construed presents itself as a compact identity only as long as its interests require cohesion and unification.

The egological community, the community of selves forming the identity of each one of us presents the same type of sociality. This is sociality founded upon relations of reciprocal indifference among differences and identities. Such a condition results from and at once is evidenced by separation between public behavior and private behavior in the same individual subject, separation and mutual indifference among roles, competencies, tasks, languages, among responsibilities in the same individual, in the same subject, separation viewed as the 'normal' or 'standard' way of conforming to the social system that subject belongs to.

Limitations on individual responsibility, limitations of an ethical-normative, juridical and political order, behavior regulated by the laws of equal exchange, functions fixed by roles and social position, distinctions among individual identities sanctioned by law, identities and differences whose sphere of freedom and imputability is at once delimited and guaranteed by law: none of this will succeed in undoing the intricate tangle between self and other, in eliminating the inherent asymmetry in the relationship between self and other, in impeding obsession for the other, in ending involvement, in avoiding substitution.

Responsibility for others has a dual orientation: the other is elevated and taken upon one's own shoulders, so to say, producing an asymmetrical situation. As says Levinas, the person I must answer for is also the person I must answer to; I must answer to the person whom I must answer for. Responsibility in the face of the person I am responsible for: responsible for a face that regards me, for a freedom.

What responsibility for international relations?

We are now living in a world where international relations among Nations are regulated by what are described as 'just and necessary' wars, by 'humanitarian' and 'preventive' wars. This new way of establishing world order may be dated back to the Gulf war of 1991. We need to ask ourselves why the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Helsinki, in 1975, failed. Indeed, in spite of good intentions it is now clear that the Helsinki Conference provides an eloquent example of distorted views of relations among peoples and how they operate. It excludes war unconditionally as a solution to international conflict. Indeed, the guiding principle is that recourse to force, even threat, among States can find no justification whatsoever, whether the

Helsinki accord was undersigned by these States or not. Now, we must interrogate ourselves on the reasons for the failure of the Helsinki Conference, which despite good intentions has proven incapable of regulating relations among peoples in the real world.

Close examination of the Helsinki Final Act, the document produced by the Helsinki Conference (L'Acte final d'Helsinki, 1975, cf. European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences, 1990), reveals different ways of conceiving the otherness relationship, and the tendency to oscillate among these different conceptions as they subtend the three main arguments put forward in favor of cooperation among Nations for the sake of peace, safety and security in Europe and in the world at large. Two are grounded in the logic of identity: cooperation derives from a pact, a convention among States conceived as reciprocally autonomous and self-sufficient identities; cooperation is justified by the identity of common history: by common cultural pasts, traditions and values. Instead, the third argument is founded on the logic of alterity: international relationships are understood in terms of nonindifferent difference, of passive solidarity among States and peoples. This description ensues from the fact that neither States nor the peoples that inhabit them are self-sufficient identities. Nor can they withdraw from implication in a common destiny: international relations must refer to responsibility for others with no way out, without alibis. However, the third and most interesting argument was only supported by a minority. Therefore, in relation to the Helsinki Final Act:

1) in the case of the first argument, the otherness relationship is understood in terms of conventional reciprocity established among self-sufficient entities which freely accept mutual obligations as established by a pact, and freely undersign that pact;

2) in the case of the second argument the otherness relationship is understood in terms of assimilating the Other, by searching for the conditions for co-operation in a common history, in a common past, in common traditions and values. The ideology of assimilation subtends the concept of national identity understood in terms of ethnicity, or the idea of unity and mutual understanding among groups that share the same history, tradition, culture. According to this type of logic, or better ideologic, mutual understanding and cooperation at a world level finds no support in argumentative terms and therefore no justification, as much as no doubt it was in the intentions of the Helsinki Conference to promote such values;

3) in the case of the third argument, the Helsinki Final Act proposes the otherness relationship among Nation-States in terms of a relationship based on compromise that is not chosen, on solidarity that is not decided, on responsibility that is imposed. This is a consequence of

a) economic interdependence at a world level;

b) technological development, which makes it impossible to limit pollution territorially, involving such threats as the risk of uncontrolled radioactivity, the greenhouse effect, etc., which endanger life. Also, as new needs arise thanks to technological progress disparity is exasperated between the so-called developed world and the underdeveloped world;

c) the fact that security and well-being in one part of the world (Europe, the West, the North part of the World) cannot be dissociated from security and well-being throughout the rest of the world; and that living conditions cannot be improved, nor the environment protected without international (interstate) co-operation.

**In this third case the otherness relationship is understood in terms of unindifferent difference among national identities, and no longer in terms of relations of reciprocity established by a pact, a convention, nor of assimilation processes in the name of common past traditions, cultures, and values, etc.** A relation of passive solidarity is established among States and their people, which are no longer considered as self-sufficient identities in spite of differences and extraneousness, including extraneousness with respect to a pact sanctioned by a convention or treaty. According to this logic, identity cannot avoid implication in the destiny of others, even though such implication may not be decided.

This is the logic that orients the Helsinki Conference as well as the Helsinki Final Act when they recognize

— that security in Europe cannot be divided from security in the world as a whole, independently of pacts or treaties;

— that it is absolutely necessary to protect the environment and that this is dependent upon international cooperation;

— that peace in Europe depends upon peace in the world, so that the principles that regulate relations among participating States (which exclude recourse to force or even threat under any circumstance) must also be extended to non participating States.

According to this third argument for co-operation and peace, ‘the objective of promoting better relations between States’ works as a medium term, as part of the minor premise in an inference which places ‘peace, security and well-being for all peoples’ in the major premise, and is formed as follows:

- Major premise:** 'Participating states aim at peace, security and well-being for all peoples';
- Minor premise:** But given 'the indivisibility of security in Europe' and considering 'the close link between peace and security in Europe and in the world as a whole', there can be no peace, security and well-being without improving mutual relations among (participating and non participating) States.
- Conclusion:** Therefore, improvement of mutual relations among (participating and non participating) States must be promoted.

The whole argument is based on the concept (expressed in the minor premise) of compromise and responsibility that are not accorded, on the inevitability of solidarity (of necessary unindifference) toward the Other.

However, the logic guiding the first two arguments for co-operation and mutual responsibility interferes with this third type of argumentation: in other words, the argument which refers co-operation and mutual responsibility to a pact, freely undersigned by autonomous and self-sufficient entities; and the argument which refers co-operation and mutual responsibility to a common history, a common past, common traditions and values. In the latter case, the possibility of 'improving mutual relations among States' is made to depend on 'their common history', on recognition of the existence of 'elements common to their traditions and values' (*Ibid.*: 77).

According to the first argument, responsibility is understood as limited responsibility, the type of responsibility which is determined by an accord, a pact, and which presupposes the possibility of freely choosing the goal to be achieved: 'peace, security and well-being for all peoples';

According to the second argument, mutual responsibility among States derives from the possibility of tracing them back to a common past, common traditions, a common history. The same type of logic subtends the idea of Nation conceived in terms of ethnic difference. However, the Helsinki Final Act takes its distances from this conception with its definition of the State as a political-economical identity.

The type of logic that orients the first two arguments is the logic of identity, of identity closed to the other, to the alien, and which only knows responsibility with alibis, limited responsibility. This type of logic interferes with the logic of otherness, therefore with the type of responsibility that is not grounded in closed identity, responsibility without alibis, that knows no loopholes, no escape, that implicates and exposes the

subject totally, unconditionally. This type of responsibility as well is evoked by the document produced by the Helsinki Conference

However, the failure to concentrate on this third way of interpreting the otherness relationship among national identities in the Helsinki Final Act, leads to the failure to explain the reasons for international co-operation, including the reasons for improving relations with non participating States. And given that the reasons for peace and co-operation on a world level are not fully justified, the Helsinki Final Act has ended up becoming a sort of list of good intentions. Consequently, the Helsinki experience has lost in argumentative force and, therefore, in the capacity to influence international politics – a fact that has emerged ever more clearly since the Gulf war in 1991.

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