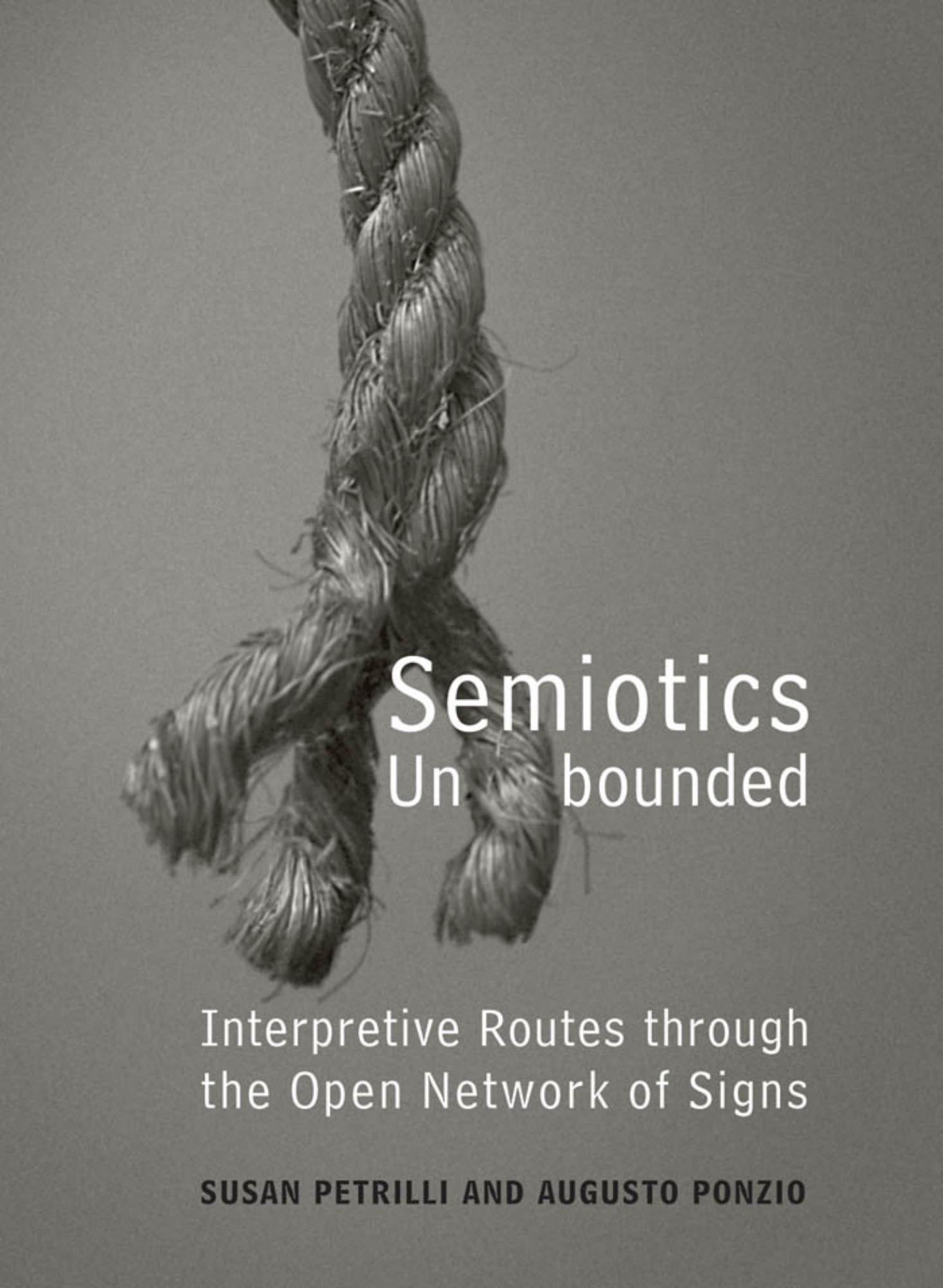

Semiotics Unbounded

Interpretive Routes through the Open Network of Signs

SUSAN PETRILLI AND AUGUSTO PONZIO

SEMIOTICS UNBOUNDED: INTERPRETIVE ROUTES THROUGH THE OPEN NETWORK OF SIGNS

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Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

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This book was conceived and completed in the fertile context of constant intellectual exchanges with the seminal semiotician Thomas A. Sebeok. He approved the general plan and suggested the title. Parts were e-mailed to him for his perusal and final approval, and he was keen to receive the complete manuscript, whose publication he was committed to promoting with University of Toronto Press as a volume in the series Toronto Studies in Semiotics.

Our great master of signs and beloved friend died unexpectedly, although peacefully, on 21 December 2001 at his home in Bloomington, Indiana.

It goes without saying that for the authors of the present volume, he is still alive and always will be as his signs flourish and continue to engender an infinity of semiosic chains in the great semiotic web.

This book would never have been possible in its present form without Thomas A. Sebeok, and to him it is dedicated with gratitude and love.

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Preface

The boundaries of semiotics are determined by the nature of its object of study – that is to say, by the nature of signs. In fact, when we consider the development of semiotics, it becomes evident that progress in the general science of signs depends on the fact that signs are gradually being discovered where it was once thought there were none.

What signs are, and *where* they are, depends on the model of sign at hand. The model of sign in Saussurean semiotics was based emphatically on verbal signs, and this fostered the idea that signs are conventional, intentional, and conscious, and furthermore that they are restricted to the sphere of social human sign processes. The boundaries of 'semiology' – as Ferdinand de Saussure called the science of signs – are narrow with respect to semiotics as it was conceived by Charles Sanders Peirce.

Peirce's conception of the sign extended the boundaries of semiotics: the universe is permeated with signs. And in developing Peircean semiotics, Charles Morris identified sign processes in both human and non-human behaviour. In line with Peirce and Morris, Thomas A. Sebeok perceived semiotics as global semiotics, whereby sign processes coincide with life.

The boundaries of semiotics are also determined by the field's relationships with other sciences.

The model of sign in semiology (and also in linguistics, a branch of semiology) follows a template similar to that of 'marginalistic' economics. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1992b [1968], 1975a), demonstrated clearly that the Saussurean sign model is heavily influenced by the marginalistic theory of economic value as developed by the School of Lausanne (Leon Walras and Vilfredo Pareto). Thus, this sign model is largely the result of applying the *point de vue statique* of 'pure economics' to the

study of language. When the study of language follows the same path as the study of the marketplace in an ideal state of equilibrium, the result is a static conception of sign. In such a context, the sign is caught within a synchronic framework, one dominated by the logic of perfect correspondence between that which is given and that which is received. In today's global economic system, this logic of equal exchange regulates all social relationships.

Yet the semiotic boundaries of the Saussurean matrix are also determined by their connections with the mathematical theory of communication. The Saussurean sign model is grounded in a series of dichotomous concepts, and this favours its reformulation in terms of code and message, transmitter and receiver, codification and decodification. This explains why Saussurean semiotics has been described as 'decodification semiotics' (Rossi-Landi 1992b [1968]). 'Decodification semiotics' – or 'code and message semiotics' – takes a reductive approach to signifying and interpreting processes. The concept pairs just listed are oversimplifying by their very nature, yet it was long thought that they could adequately describe all sign processes. Thus, they were employed to describe not only simple sign processes of the *signal* type relative to information transmission, but also processes of the complex type – that is, processes of the *sign* in the strict sense as it related to human verbal and non-verbal communication in all its universality and variation.

Signals are the signs with the least semiosic consistency – that is, at the lowest level of semioticity. Signals are more than a subcategory of signs; they are a constitutive component of signs in general. From this perspective, 'signal' suggests something separate from signs; thus, 'signality' seems a more appropriate term for indicating the lowest level of semioticity or signness. With signality, signs are at the lowest level of interpretation – the level of identification or recognition. In earlier writings, we proposed that the interpretant relative to the signal or signality be called the 'interpretant of identification.' In all signs, the relationship between the interpretant of identification and the interpreted is univocal; it is also predetermined by a code, analogously to the relationship between interpretant and interpreted in signals.

But on its own, the signal component cannot explicate a general sign model. We have proposed that the interpretant specific to the sign – that which interprets its actual sense – be called the 'interpretant of answering comprehension.' Such an interpretant does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted; it also installs a relationship of involvement with it, of participation: it responds to the interpreted and takes a stand in relation to it.

When this approach is taken, the sign is far from being reduced to the

status of mere signality; instead, with respect to signals, it is strongly characterized by 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. Nor is the work of the interpretant sign limited to the very basic operations of identification, mechanical substitution, and mere recognition of the interpreted sign. Unlike signals, signs at high levels of semioticity cannot be interpreted by simply referring to a fixed and pre-established code, through mere decoding processes. As Valentin N. Voloshinov with Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1929) demonstrated, the instruments provided by decodification semiotics are inadequate when it comes to the task of analysing convincingly the distinguishing features of human communication, such as interlingual and endolingual plurilingualism, plurivocality, ambiguity, polysemy, and dialogism.

A sign model which maintains that interpretation is mere decodification is limited by more than its mechanistic character. Sign models are intimately related to our conceptions of the subject: from the perspective of decodification or equal-exchange semiotics, the subject as well is grounded in the concept of identity, with a very low margin of otherness or dialogism. Accordingly, the subject coincides perfectly with its own consciousness to the extent that it fully manages its own sign processes, subjecting what it communicates to its own will as sender and encoder.

In contrast, those trends in semiotics that refer to the Peircean model of sign – trends that generally come under the rubric 'semiotics of interpretation' (as distinct from 'semiotics of decodification') – describe the production of sense and meaning in terms of ongoing, open processes that lack the guarantees offered by appeal to a code regulating exchange relations between signifiers and signifieds. Peirce places the sign in the dynamic context of semiosis (developing the concept of 'infinite semiosis') and its dialogic relations to the interpretant.

In light of all this, it is especially relevant to associate Peirce with Bakhtin, who also places the sign in the context of dialogism, the only place where it flourishes *as* sign. In that location, it is able to give full play to such categories as 'text,' 'otherness,' and 'responsive understanding.' Peirce and Bakhtin worked independently of each other and in different directions: Peirce was primarily concerned with questions of a cognitive order (theory of knowledge, logic, and theoretical philosophy); whereas Bakhtin was primarily concerned with questions of literary language (literary criticism, theory of literature, and genealogy of the novel). Yet both were aware of the fundamental importance of dialogism.

Furthermore, the links between semiotics and other sciences gener-

ate diverse effects depending on whether those links relate only to the human sciences (including logical–formal and computerological sciences), or to the natural sciences as well (the physical and biological sciences). And of course it also depends on the nature of those links – that is, whether they are oppositional or complementary.

When those links are oppositional, one effect is to reduce the science of signs to the science 'qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale,' or to reduce the 'semiosphere' to the sphere of cultural signs; here, the signs of biological life have no right to citizenship within the boundaries of semiotics, or they are relegated to 'the inferior threshold of semiotics' (Eco 1975).

A different conception of signs and of the expanse of the semiotic field arises from the relationship established between semiotic and biology. Charles Morris rejects physicalism as it is described in the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Sciences*, and instead finds in biology a language capable of speaking about signs – that is, a semiotic metalanguage for signs about signs. He defines semiosis as 'a process in which something is a sign to some organism' (1971 [1946]: 336).

According to Sebeok, who conceives semiotics as being inseparable from the sciences of nature, this definition must be interpreted both restrictively as referring to a single (albeit entire) organism, and in a broader sense as referring to any living being or living *system* whatsoever.

Semiotics and the biological sciences have thus been linked, and as a consequence, the semiotic approach has become global or holistic. The effect of this has been to remarkably extend Saussure's conception of the 'life of signs.' By virtue of this 'global' or 'holistic' approach, we can immediately associate Sebeok's research into the 'life of signs' with his concern for the 'signs of life.' In Sebeok's view, *semiosis* and *life* coincide.

The boundaries of the history of semiosis have also been extended as a result of the links forged between semiosis and the biological sciences, a consequence of including not only communication but also signification and symptomatization in our conceptions of semiosis or sign process or sign situation.

In communication semiosis, signs are emitted intentionally for the receiver, who must then identify the meaning intended by the emitter. In contrast, in signification semiosis we have an inanimate environment that acts as a 'quasi-emitter' without a semiotic function; the receiver is a living entity, a living system, which must perform all semiotic functions. In symptomatization semiosis, the emitter is a living being sending out signals through its behaviour or posture; these, however, are not directed

toward a receiver and do not beg an answer. Also, the receiver receives signals as signs called 'symptoms.'

As a consequence of all this, the gaze of semiotics is shifting away from the protosemiosis of energy-information towards the overall processes of the complexification of semiosis in the evolution of life throughout the planet: from prokaryotes to monocellular living beings to the eukaryotic aggregates that form the multicellular organisms belonging to the Superkingdoms. These latter coexist and interact with the microcosm and together form the great semiosphere, which we understand as the semiobiosphere. The evolution of semiosis thus coincides with the evolution of life. This is why throughout this book we refer not only to the human world – that is, to the 'semiosphere' in Jurij Lotman's sense – but also to the various fields of that extensive and strictly interrelated sphere which coincides with life and which is identified as the 'biosphere.'

Yet the boundaries of the history of semiotics are also expanded by our awareness of its interdisciplinary character, including its relationship to the natural and biological sciences.

Semiotics as a field of study is far older than is usually presented. Its origins are in fact ancient, notwithstanding the superficial descriptions of it offered by the phonocentric and glottocentric perspectives.

Semiotics grew out of symptomatology, or medical semeiotics, which Galen considered one of the principal branches of medicine. In this sense, Hippocrates and Galen, with their early studies of signs and symptoms, were among the very first semioticans. Now that we are aware of its origins in symptomatology, we can extend the boundaries of semiotics in light of its own original function; we need no longer limit it to the purely gnoseological sphere. Auscultation, an approach to practising medicine, involves listening to the other, the patient, who is invited to talk about his ailments and tell the story of his troubles. Ever since Galen, medicine has involved auscultation and other ways of inspecting systems, as well as diagnosis and anamnesis. In this regard, semiotic interpretation in terms of answering comprehension can be viewed as responsive listening to the other.

Because of its diachronic and synchronic links with medicine and with other life sciences, semiotics may perceive the need to extend its boundaries beyond the field of knowledge and become engaged in ethics. This approach is decisive for the role of global semiotics and is a necessary prerequisite for linking semiotics to its early vocation and expression as symptomatology.

If semiotics is concerned with life throughout the entire planet (given

that life and semiosis coincide), and if the original motivation for studying signs was 'health,' it may well follow that an important task for semiotics today is to care for life in its all of its diversity, especially now in this era of globalization. Semiotics is capable of understanding the entire semiosic universe as well as discussing the various forms of separatism, technicalism, and overspecialization; all of this should result in awareness of ethical responsibility.

Semioethics is the term we propose for this particular unbounded trend in semiotics. This should help explain the title of this book: *Semioetics Unbounded*. We mean for this title to emphasize the totalizing yet at the same time open character of semiotics, and that its method will be what we call a *detotalizing* method.

Semiotics is an extremely wide-ranging field that crosses into many disciplines. Precisely because of this, and given that we must take into account progress in the sciences – 'human,' 'natural,' and 'logico-formal' – semiotics must be ready to renew itself and to interrogate the very methods and categories it employs. Semiotics is unbounded, and so is the object of its studies – the sign network. This leads to the subtitle of this book: *Interpretive Routes through the Open Network of Signs*.

This book is the expression of a unitary research project and can be read as such. We have divided it into three parts, each of which has a specific task.

The introduction, 'An Excursion into Semiotics,' is intended to be a guide for the reader, and explains the terms the reader will encounter later. We could have titled it 'Semiotics for Beginners,' for it presents a series of notions that are fundamental to the study of signs. More precisely, we present the reader with what we believe are the necessary 'signs to talk about signs' (or, rather, sign processes) today. The introduction outlines our particular approach to semiotics, and for that reason is of central importance to the rest of the book. It interrogates the trajectories followed by semiotics and its objectives.

We also mean for the introduction to inform readers of the state of the semiotic art, in terms that are critical and propositional. We introduce conceptual instruments that will be used throughout the whole book, and clarify them for the sake of both beginners and experienced semioticians.

The introduction is laid out much like a dictionary, as a series of twelve entries that explain some of the concepts and facts that are most necessary to any discussion of signs (or rather, sign processes) and semi-

otics. At the same time, however, this section is much more than a glossary. As we explain in the sections 'Subject and Alterity' and 'Dialogue and Inference,' in the introduction we are preparing the ground for an approach to semiotics that is necessarily based on the sign's capacity for comprehensive dialogism and responsive and responsible listening. Thus, the terms and conceptual approaches used in this book will benefit not only the beginner in semiotics, but also the semiotician who is willing to step back from restricted or biased conceptions of sign models and semiotics. After several decades of parallel development along different currents in semiotics, it needs to be explained why 'interpretive' semiotics is to be preferred over 'decodification' semiotics. To that end, we propose to begin with Peircean interpretive semiotics, which will establish a perspective for the book as a whole as it unfolds in dialogue with other authors and other perspectives. (This surely explains the title of Chapter 1: 'An Itinerary: From Peirce to Others.')

The first part of the book, 'Semiotics and Semioticians,' begins by examining the problems that Peirce left on his desk, as it were. It has seven chapters, each of which is dedicated to a figure in semiotics whom we consider essential to the construction of the semiotic project we are presenting: Charles S. Peirce, Victoria Welby, Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Morris, Thomas A. Sebeok, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Umberto Eco. By interrogating these seven authors, we will be able to establish an indispensable theoretical basis for addressing the problems we set out in the remainder of the book. This approach will also help us hear the multipart choir that is contemporary semiotics.

Besides all this, Part One will reflect our dialogic efforts to account for the important theoretical responses that semiotics offers to the problems of our times. Such dialogue, of course, continues in this book's other two parts. However, it is at its most explicit in Part One, the aim of which is to prepare the ground for our semiotic discourse and to show the points of contact and separation with respect to the authors who have contributed to the development of our own perspective.

Part One interrogates more than the various pivotal positions in the study of signs; it also interrogates the reader. Indeed, the broad and systematic exposition of the main trends on which this book is going to be based will arise from a dialogic relationship with the reader – especially with the young apprentice semiotician, but also with the advanced student. Regarding the latter, our hope is to explain clearly and argue strongly for our interpretations and theoretical choices.

Part Two ('Modelling, Writing, and Otherness') and Part Three ('Pre-

dicative Judgment, Argumentation, and Communication') benefit from the possibility of developing, specifying, and applying much of the material introduced in Part One. In both, we consider problems of central importance in semiotics. The focus shifts to certain key concepts: modelling, writing (as understood by the authors – that is, as syntactics, which is distinct from transcription), and communication. Strongly linked to these will be the concepts of otherness, dialogism, and detotalization understood as a method. The aforementioned problems will be analysed from the perspective of a planetary semiotics, from a historical perspective relative to social organization today, and from the perspective of globalization in its present-day phase.

This in turn will lead into our analysis of problems of logic and of dialogic from the perspective of their ideological configuration as it is now emerging.

Yet another focus of analysis will be the correlation between issues connected with predicative judgment, argumentation, and communication, on the one hand, and on the other hand the concepts of global communication, community, and communion (we have suggested the term 'communitariness' in previous papers). The term 'communion' is intended to suggest the possibility of a sociality that exceeds the limits of territoriality, nationality, ethnicity, gender identity, and so on. According to this conception, sociality is predicated on the logic of otherness, openness toward the other, responsibility for the other – the other who is distant and alien and who has now been transformed into our neighbour as a side effect of globalization.

Thus, our discourse also has an ethical dimension, or, more precisely, what we call a bioethical or better still a semioethical dimension. Regarding what semioethics means, for now we simply state the following: semiotic reflection on semiosis – of which human beings alone are capable – can be understood in terms of our responsibility toward life and its future throughout the entire planet. If it is true that the origins of semiotics are traceable back to medical semeiotics – that is, to caring for life and keeping it healthy – this definition serves to recover the ancient vocation of semiotics.

This book has been entirely reworked from texts in Italian assembled by the authors, revised and expanded with new sections as part of a unitary research project, and translated by Susan Petrilli, who assumes all responsibility for any imprecision or equivocation with respect to the texts by Augusto Ponzio. The English translations of passages cited from other authors are also translated by Susan Petrilli from the originals

unless official English translations are available; when they are, these translations are fully cited. An Italian version of this book in its present form is not available.

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The following list indicates which chapters, or sections of chapters, were written by the respective authors:

Susan Petrilli: chapters 1, 2, 4, and 10; sections 3.2, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1.1–1.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.1.2–1.5, 11.3, 12.1.
Augusto Ponzio: sections 3.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.5, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4, 7.1.3–1.6, 8.3, 9.1.1, 9.2, 9.3.1–3.2, 9.3.4, 11.1–11.2.
Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio: introduction, sections 5.1, 5.2.2–2.4, 8.1, 9.3.3, 9.4, 11.4, 12.2.

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SEMIOTICS UNBOUNDED: INTERPRETIVE ROUTES THROUGH THE OPEN NETWORK OF SIGNS

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Introduction

An Excursion into Semiotics

I.1. Two Meanings of Semiotics

'Semiotics' refers to both the *specificity of human semiosis* and the general *science of signs*.

Under the first meaning, semiotics relates to the specific human capacity for *metasemiosis*. In the world of life that encompasses semiosis, human semiosis is characterized as metasemiosis – that is, as the possibility of reflecting on signs. We can approach signs as objects of interpretation indistinguishable from our responses to them. But we can also approach signs in such a way that we suspend our responses to them so that deliberation is possible.

At the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle correctly observed that man tends by nature to knowledge. From this observation, we can continue that man tends by nature to semiotics. Human semiosis, anthroposemiosis, presents itself as *semiotics*. Semiotics as human semiosis or anthroposemiosis can scour the entire universe for meanings and senses that can then be treated as signs. However, the history of ideas tells us that semiotics, when approached this way, threatens to 'absolutize' anthroposemiosis and, through oversimplification, identify it with semiosis itself.

Under the second meaning, semiotics is the study of signs. Some scholars have conceived semiotics as a discipline or science (Saussure), others as a theory (Morris), still others as a doctrine (Sebeok). As a field of study, semiotics can embrace the world of organisms, or the living world (Sebeok), or the entire universe insofar as it is permeated with signs (Peirce). In such cases it emerges as 'global semiotics.' Or, conversely, we can restrict its range to verbal and non-verbal human semio-

sis. In this latter case, we risk developing a limited and anthropocentric approach to semiotics.

Semiosis is the process, or relation, or situation, whereby something serves as a sign. The sign is inseparable from semiosis. For something to be a sign, something else must be present to it. This second thing is referred to as an interpretant. The interpretant itself is a sign and is thus connected to another interpretant, and so on in an open and infinite chain of interpretants (see I.3).

All of this means that for every sign there is a semiosis. Every sign is a portion of its own semiosis and cannot be detached from it. This is similar to the relationship between a cell and the cell tissue it helps form. And every semiosis is in turn connected with other semioses. Signs are linked together in an infinite chain; for their part, semioses form something like a network. In the same way that the sign is a portion of semiosis, semiosis is a portion of the sign network.

The study of signs has developed in various directions and in different fields. The following are only some of the perspectives that have been developed (and their most important representatives): linguistic (Saussure, Hjelmslev); linguistic-anthropological-cultural (Jakobson, Lotman); psychological (Freud, Bühler, Vygotsky); philosophical (Peirce, Welby, Ogden and Richards, Wittgenstein, Morris, Cassirer); literary critical (Bakhtin); biological (Romanes, Jakob and Thure von Uexküll, Jacob, Monod); and mathematical-topological (Thom). Because it extends into a vast range of different fields, the perspective adopted by Thomas A. Sebeok is a case apart.

One way to appreciate the differences among the various conceptions of semiotics is to consider just a single term: 'symbol.' This term has been used as an alternative or substitute term for 'sign' and has come to mean several different things (sometimes even opposite things). It is polysemic in both everyday and philosophical-scientific discourse, including semiotic discourse.

In *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923–9), Ernst Cassirer uses the term 'symbol' as a synonym for sign. The human being constructs culture through signs and is an *animal symbolicum*. The symbol is associated with symbolic form. This leads to Cassirer's *critique of symbolic reason* or of the diverse aspects of culture, including language, myth, and religion.

For Ogden and Richards (1923) as well, 'symbol' stands for *sign*. Their sign model presents meaning in terms of the interactive relations among what they call *symbol*, *thought* (or *reference*), and *referent*.

In the thought of Sigmund Freud, a symbol is a special type of sign. In fact, for Freud and for subsequent thinkers with a psychoanalytical bent, a symbol is a particular type of sign, one that indicates all psychic or oniric activity *insofar as it reveals the unconscious*. The unconscious presents consciousness with a symbol of the symbolized object and in doing so exerts a screening and protective function.

For C.S. Peirce as well, the symbol is a special type of sign: it is a sign 'in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition)' (*CP* 4.531).

According to Charles Morris, a symbol is a sign that replaces another sign and that serves as a guide to behaviour (cf. Morris 1971 [1946], I: 8).

In John Dewey's account (1938, 'Introduction'), a symbol is an arbirary or conventional sign.

For Ferdinand de Saussure (1916: ch. 1) as well, the symbol is a special type of sign. But according to him, the symbol is never completely arbitrary and can thus be distinguished from the verbal sign. In contrast with verbal signs, the relation between signifier and signified in the symbol is always somewhat conventional (as in the case of scales symbolizing justice) and never wholly arbitrary.

With reference to the encyclopedic entry 'Symbol' by S.S. Averinchev (1971), Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1974) describes the symbol as the sign that most requires answering comprehension, given the dialectic correlation between identity and alterity, or otherness. The symbol includes the warmth of mystery that unites; juxtaposition of one's own to the other; the warmth of love and the coldness of extraneousness; juxtaposition and comparison. The symbol cannot be circumscribed to an immediate context; rather, it relates to a context that is remote and distant, and this is what accounts for its opening to alterity.

Thanks to Thomas A. Sebeok, a new trend in semiotics has been evolving since the 1960s, appropriately termed 'global semiotics' (Sebeok 2001a) or the 'semiotics of life' (Ponzio and Petrilli 2001; 2002). Sebeok expands the boundaries of traditional semiotics – or, rather, semiology – which restricts itself to the verbal paradigm and as a result is corrupted by the *pars pro toto* error. Sebeok tags this conception of semiotics the 'minor tradition' and promotes instead what he calls the 'major tradition' as represented by John Locke and C.S. Peirce and by the early writings on signs and symptoms by Hippocrates and Galen.

Sebeok's global approach to the life of signs is in line with the 'major traditions.' He bases his approach on a critique of anthropocentric and

glottocentric semiotic theory and practice. In his explorations of the boundaries of the science or 'doctrine' of signs (cf. his *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* [1976]), beyond a certain point he no longer assigns much importance to the debate over whether semiotics is a 'science,' a 'theory,' or a 'doctrine,' and he opens the field to include *zoosemiotics* (a term he introduced in 1963) and, even more broadly, *biosemiotics* and *endosemiotics*. In his conception, the sign science is not only the 'science qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale' (Saussure) – that is to say, the study of communication in culture – but also the study of communicative behaviour from a biosemiotic perspective.

Sebeok's global semiotics is unique for its greatest possible breadth. This general approach to semiotics is reflected in a recent work of fundamental importance to present-day semiotics: *Semiotik/Semiotics: Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture* (the first two volumes were published in 1997 and 1998, the third and fourth in 2004). This work, edited by Sebeok with Roland Posner and Klaus Robering, comprises three volumes totalling more than three thousand pages, which present 178 articles written by 175 authors from thirty-five countries. It is the most up-to-date representation of the general state of research in descriptive and applied semiotics, and it goes far beyond the omnibus works offered by individual disciplines and even by interdisciplinary approaches. Its reach and grasp extend to medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, economics, mathematics, logic, grammar, stylistics, poetics, musicology, aesthetics, and philosophy. In line with the general project for global semiotics, as explicated by the foundational articles constituting chapters 1 to 3, this handbook does not restrict itself to studies of sign processes relating to human culture – to social institutions, everyday human communication, information processing by machines, human cognitive processes in scientific research, the production and interpretation of literary works, music, and the various arts, and so on. Besides all of these things – these studies of human culture – it also presents studies of sign processes and communication activities as they relate to non-human animals, to the metabolism of organisms, and to the behaviour of all living beings generally.

I.2. Protagonist: The Sign

We want to narrate the adventures of the 'sign' in different phases and trends in semiotics. But before we can, we must provide an 'identikit' for our protagonist (albeit we are aware that 'protagonism' is an illusion

if Peirce is correct in stating that the central notion in semiotics is not sign but semios; cf. Fisch 1978: 41). Indeed, it is so difficult to define the sign that it would be easier to concur with Sebeok: 'a sign is just a sign.'

We have already noted that the sign is inseparable from semiosis – that is, from the relation, the process, the situation in which it relates to other signs.

Of course, there are different conceptions of the sign. A sign is a factor in a process conceived either dyadically (signifier/signified), following Saussure, or triadically (representamen/object/interpretant), following Peirce.

In our terminology, the fundamental terms that constitute a sign include the *interpreted* and the *interpretant,* in a relationship whereby the interpretant makes the interpreted possible. For a sign to subsist, there must be both an interpreted sign and an interpretant sign – in other words, there must be an object that acts as the interpreted of an interpretant. According to Peirce, the minimal relationship allowing for something to act as a sign is triadic and involves the following: (1) *something objective* (not necessarily a physical object), pre-existent, autonomous, in this sense 'material' with respect to interpretation (the Object, in Peirce's terminology); (2) the *interpreted*, that is, this same object insofar as it 'has meaning' (the Sign, in Peirce's terminology); and (3) the *interpretant*, through which the object receives a given meaning. Reduced to its most basic terms, the sign presents these three faces. When in what follows we speak of the 'interpreted–interpretant' relation, our reference is to a (minimal and abstract) *triadic* relation, given that the interpreted implies the object of interpretation, so that with this expression is always understood in any case 'object–interpreted–interpretant.'

The interpreted becomes a *sign component* because it receives an interpretation, but the interpretant in turn is also a sign component with the potential to engender a new sign. Therefore, where there is a sign, there are immediately two; and since the interpretant can engender a new sign, there are immediately three, and so on as described by Peirce through his concept of 'infinite semiosis' or an unending chain of deferrals from one interpretant to the next.

To analyse the sign departing from the object of interpretation – that is, the interpreted – means to depart from a secondary level. In other words, to depart from the object that is being interpreted means to begin from a point in the chain of deferrals, or semiosic chain, which cannot be

considered as the starting point of semiosis. We cannot explain the workings of sign processes by privileging the interpreted sign by way of abstraction at a theoretical level.

Example: A spot on the skin is a sign insofar as we can interpret it as a symptom of liver disease. This is already a secondary level in the interpretive process. At a primary level, retrospectively, the skin disorder is an interpretation enacted by the organism itself in relation to an anomaly that is disturbing it and to which it responds. The skin disorder is already in itself an interpretant response.

When we say that the sign is first of all an interpretant, we are saying that the sign is first of all a response. We could also say that the sign is a reaction – but only on the condition that 'reaction' is understood to mean 'interpretation' (that is, as established by Charles Morris's behaviourism, which contrasts with the mechanistic approach).

To avoid superficial associations, we prefer the term 'solicitation–response' to 'stimulus–reaction.' Even a 'direct' response to a stimulus (or, better, solicitation) can never be truly direct, given that it is 'mediated' by an interpretation. Unless we are dealing with 'reflex actions,' to formulate a response means to identify the solicitation, place it in a context, and relate it to given behavioural parameters (which can involve simple types of behaviour, as in the prey–predator model, or more complex behaviours connected with cultural values, as in the human world). So in the first place, the sign is an interpretant, a response thanks to which something is considered as a sign and becomes its interpreted and, furthermore, is able to generate an open-ended chain of other signs.

A sign presents varying degrees of plurivocality and univocality. A signal can be defined as a relatively univocal sign, or better still, as a sign with a low degree of plurivocality.

I.3. Stooge: The Interpretant

If the Sign is the leading actor in semiosis, the Interpretant is its indispensable stooge.

It was Peirce, in the framework of his semiotics, who introduced the interpretant as a concept. According to Peirce, semiosis is a triadic process, and its components are sign (or representamen), object, and interpretant: 'A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object' (*Collected*

Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, *CP* 2.274). Thus, the sign stands for something, its object, by which it is 'mediately determined' (*CP* 8.343), 'not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea' (*CP* 2.228). However, a sign can stand for something only after it has determined the interpretant that is 'immediately determined by that object' (*CP* 8.343): 'A sign mediates between the *interpretant* sign and its object' insofar as the first is determined by its object under a certain respect or idea, or ground, and determines the interpretant 'in such a way as to bring the interpretant into a relation to the object, corresponding to its own relation to the object' (*CP* 8.332).

The interpretant of a sign is another sign, which the previous sign creates in the interpreter. This is 'an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign' (*CP* 2.228). Therefore the interpretant sign cannot be identical to the interpreted sign – it cannot be a repetition – precisely because it is *mediated*, interpretive, and as such always new. With respect to the previous sign, the interpretant is a *response*, and as such it inaugurates a new sign process, a new semiosis. In this sense, it is a more developed sign. As a sign, the interpretant determines another sign, which acts in turn as an interpretant: in this way, the interpretant opens to new semioses, it develops the sign process, it is a new sign occurrence. Indeed, each time there is a sign occurrence, besides the 'First Sign' there is a 'Third,' something mediated, a response, an interpretive novelty, an interpretant. It follows that a sign is an interpretant by constitution (cf. Petrilli 1998e: I.1). The fact that the interpretant (Third) is in turn a sign (First), and that the sign (First) is in turn an interpretant (is already a Third), places the sign in an open network of interpretants. Thus we arrive at the Peircean principle of infinite semiosis or of the endless series of interpretants (cf. *CP* 1.339).

So the meaning of a sign is a response, an interpretant that calls for another response, another interpretant. This suggests to us the dialogic nature of sign and semiosis. A sign has its meaning in another sign, which responds to it and is in turn a sign if there is another sign to respond and interpret it, and so on ad infinitum.

In our terminology, the 'First Sign' in the triadic relation of semiosis – that is, the object that receives meaning – is the *interpreted*, and that which confers meaning is the interpretant. This interpretant can be of two main types: an interpretant that allows for recognition of the sign is an *interpretant of identification* and is connected to the signal, code, and sign system; in contrast, the specific interpretant of a sign – that which interprets its sense or actual meaning – is the *interpretant of answering*

comprehension. This second type of interpretant does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted; rather, it expresses its properly pragmatic meaning, instilling it with involvement and participation. It responds to the interpreted and takes a position in relation to it.

This bifocal conception of the interpretant is in line with Peirce's semiotics, which is inseparable from his pragmatism. In a 1904 letter to Victoria Welby (regarding the correspondence between Peirce and Welby, cf. Hardwick 1977), Peirce wrote that when we take a sign in a very broad sense, its interpretant is not necessarily a sign, since it might be an action or experience, or even just a feeling (cf. *CP* 8.332). In this particular context, the sign is understood in a strict sense. In reality, as a response that signifies, that renders something significant and that therefore becomes a sign in turn, the interpretant cannot but be a sign occurrence, a semiosic act, even in the case of an action, experience, or feeling. We are dealing here with an 'interpretant of answering comprehension,' and therefore with a sign. In his own classification of interpretants, Peirce bows to his mania for triads by distinguishing among feelings, exertions, and signs (cf. *CP* 4.536). In one of his manuscripts (*MS* 318, a part of which is published in *CP* 5.464–96, cf. Short 1998), Peirce further distinguishes among the 'emotional interpretant,' the 'energetic interpretant,' and the 'logical interpretant.' This triad, and another triad – 'immediate interpretant,' 'dynamical interpretant,' and 'final interpretant' – are perhaps the two best-known triads among the many outlined by Peirce in his efforts to classify the interpretant in its various aspects.

The relation between sign and interpretant has consequences of a semiotic order for the typology of signs, and of a logical order for the typology of inference and argument. Whether we have an icon, an index, or a symbol depends on how the relation between the sign and the interpretant is organized. And given that the relation between the premises and the conclusion is also understood in terms of the relation between sign and interpretant, the triad 'abduction, induction, deduction' also depends on the sign–interpretant relationship.

I.4. Pragmatism as Pragmaticism

At this point we require yet another interlude before developing our discourse further. In our excursion into the semiotic field we will constantly be referring to the concept of pragmatism (or pragmaticism), be it implicit or explicit.

Peirce introduced the term 'pragmaticism' in 1905 to differentiate his

own view of pragmatism from the one developed by William James and Ferdinand C.S. Schiller (cf. *CP* 5.414–15). Peirce rejected the idea of 'Doing' as 'the Be-all and the End-all of life' (*CP* 5.429). In contrast to vulgar pragmatism, meaning is a general law of conduct and is independent of the particular circumstances of action. As such, it is always general and communal.

Pragmatism is a set of doctrines and methods elaborated by Peirce and James and continued above all by George H. Mead, C.I. Lewis, Charles Morris, and John Dewey. The term first entered philosophical literature in 1898, when James held his conference 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results' at G.H. Howinson's Berkeley Philosophical Union. But pragmatism was expounded for the first time in a series of six articles by Peirce that were published in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1877 and 1878, as part of the series 'Illustrations of the Logic of Science' (*CP* 5.358–87, 5.388–410, 2.645–60, 2.669–93, 6.395–427, 2.619–44). However, as a thought system, pragmatism can be traced back to a nucleus of three writings by Peirce dating from 1868 (*CP* 5.213–63, 5.264–17, 5.318–57) and subsequently developed in his writings of 1877 and 1878. In his search for its origins, Peirce considered Nicholas St John Green the 'grandfather' of pragmatism (implicitly reserving the title of 'father' to himself). St John Green had for his part evoked the Scot, Alexander Bain, author of *Emotions and Will* (London 1859). Green emphasized the importance of applying his definition of belief as 'that upon which a man is prepared to act' (*CP* 5.12).

In general, pragmatism re-evaluates the importance of action in cognitive processes in the light of discoveries in biology, psychology, and sociology traceable to Charles Darwin. Chauncey Wright, who was a member of the 'Metaphysical Club,' also recalled Darwin. Peirce, for his part, associated the birth of pragmatism with meetings held by the 'Metaphysical Club' in late 1871 and early 1872 in Cambridge, Massachusetts (cf. 'The Doctrine of Chances,' *CP* 5.12). These meetings were organized in Peirce's own study as well as in James's, with the participation of scientists, theologians, and lawyers. The influence of the Darwinian approach to biology is obvious in Peirce's essay 'Fixation of Belief' (1877), in which he states that logicality concerning practical matters might result from the action of natural selection (cf. *CP* 5.366).

According to pragmatism, mind (or spirit, or thought) is not a substance, as in Cartesian dualism, nor is it a process or act as understood by idealism, nor is it a set of relations as in classical empiricism; rather, it is a function exercised by verbal and non-verbal signs. It follows that the

study of signs and of verbal language in particular is the condition for understanding mind (cf. Morris, *Six Theories of Mind*, 1932). Pragmatism is also a theory of meaning understood as the practical verifiability of the truth of an assertion. In 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear' (1878f), Peirce intended to demonstrate 'how impossible it is that we should have an idea in our minds which relates to anything but conceived sensible effects of things ... It appears, then, that the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object' (*CP* 5.401–402).

The above was developed, albeit in a heavily modified version, by James, who transformed pragmatism into a theory of truth. James interpreted pragmatism in terms of instrumentality and, therefore, of knowledge's dependency on the requirements of action and emotions (*The Will to Believe,* 1897). For James, that which has satisfying practical consequences is true. Consequently, he emphasized the practical value of religious faith, of the will to believe, of the reasons of the heart (cf. also James's *Pragmatism*, 1907). Dewey also insisted on this aspect and developed it into his own version of pragmatism, which he termed 'experimentalism' or 'instrumentalism.' In Italy, pragmatism was developed along Peircean lines by Giovanni Vailati and Mario Calderoni and along Jamesian lines by Giovanni Papini and G. Prezzolini. Ferdinand C.S. Schiller (cf. *Humanism*, 1907) oriented his approach in James's direction, asserting that knowledge is relative to personal or social utility.

Peirce returned to pragmatism in his set of seven conference-lessons held at Harvard at the initiative of James (cf. *CP* 5.14–40, 5.180–212). In these lessons he identified pragmatism with the logic of abduction and with the theory of inquiry, and, implicitly, therefore, with logic and semiotics. In his *Monist* articles of 1905 (*CP* 5.411–37, 5.438–63, 4.530–72), he distanced himself from pragmatism as conceived by James and Schiller and introduced the substitute term pragmaticism for his own particular orientation.

I.5. The Verbal Sign's Influence on Semiotics

By expanding the 'semiosphere' (Jurij M. Lotman) into the 'semiobiosphere,' Sebeok's 'global semiotics' offers us the most exhaustive account of signs available so far. His global approach is the one most capable of questioning the presumed totalities that constitute semiotics and showing them for what they really are, its parts. It is Sebeok who has

contributed the most to the transition from 'code semiotics' to 'interpretation semiotics,' from approaches to semiotics centred on linguistics to approaches that refer to linguistics but also place linguistics in perspective and do not depend on it (see below).

In the human world, oral and written verbal signs are signs *tout court* in the sense that they carry out sign functions alone; thus, verbal signs are devoid of residues in terms of non-sign functions (cf. Voloshinov and Bakhtin 1929; Rossi-Landi 1992b [1968]). This is why Saussure stated that the pure science was not economics but linguistics, because linguistics is a science of pure values. This explains why from the very beginning, linguistics has served as yet another pillar in the science of signs. Indeed, the study of verbal signs has strongly influenced the criteria employed in determining what may be considered as a sign.

That said, the origins of semiotics as a field of knowledge must be sought in non-verbal signs.

From a historical perspective, the development of semiotics is associated mainly with the rise of medical semeiotics – that is, symptomatology, or the study of symptoms. However, given that the human being is a 'semiotic animal,' human life has always been characterized by the capacity for knowledge of a semiotic order.

So if we accept that medical semeiotics was the original branch of semiotics, it is only because hunters, farmers, navigators, fishermen, and women (with their wisdom and sign practices relative to the reproduction of life) have always been involved in semiotics, admittedly without writing treatises like Hippocrates and Galen.

Verbal signs are important signs *tout court*, and verbal language plays an important role in secondary human modelling (says Sebeok). All of this suggests why semiotics at the beginning of the twentieth century was delineated as *sémiologie*. *Sémiologie* focused on the linguistic-verbal aspects of semiosis with the specific task – as Saussure put it – of studying the life of signs 'au sein de la vie sociale.' Even though linguistics was considered merely a branch of semiology, it exercised a profound influence over semiology generally. According to Saussure, signs were entities carrying out an intentionally communicative function in a social context.

In Roland Barthes's *Eléments de sémiologie* (1967 [1964]), the relationship between verbal and non-verbal signs is of central importance. Barthes argues that we must abandon the linguistics of the linguists and employ a far broader concept of language as a practice that models and organizes fields of discourse. Leaving aside the limited view of linguistics as conceived by the linguists (an analogous critique was conducted by

Morris [1946]; see below), it is evident that 'human language is more than the pattern of signification: it is its very foundation' and that it is necessary 'to reverse Saussure's formula and assert that semiology is a part of linguistics' (Barthes 1967 [1964]: 8).

I.6. Signification and Significance

Another transition generated by Barthes's essay is the one from *sémiologie of communication* (Saussure, Buyssens, Prieto, Mounin) to *semiotics of signification* (Barthes 1967 [1964]) which theorizes not only signs produced intentionally for communication, but also unintentional signs such as symptoms in medical semeiotics and 'dreaming' as understood by Freud.

Barthes, in his contributions to literary analysis, also foresees the 'transgressive character of semiotics.' These contributions include *Sur Racine* (1963), *Essais critiques* (1964), *Critique et vérité* (1966), *S/Z* (1970a), *L'Empire des signes* (1970b), *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971), *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973), and *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977c). In these writings on literature and signification, he also theorizes what in an important essay of 1975 ('L'obvie et l'obtus,' now in Barthes, 1982) he refers to as the 'third sense' – the object of study of *semiotics of significance*. Barthes's work in this area looks beyond the message (semiotics of communication) and the symbol understood in a Freudian sense (semiotics of signification) to focus on the *text* or *writing* – that is to say, on the maximum opening of sense that is characteristic of literary writing. Moreover, places of significance in this regard include the filmic, the pictorial, the musical (*Image–Music–Text*, 1977b), and the photographic (cf. *La Chambre claire*, 1980). The reader is co-author and participates dialogically in the constitution of sense thanks to a relationship of interdependency between the readerly (*lisible*) text and the writerly (*scriptible*) text of the writer (*scripteur, écrivant*) – an interdependency that is present to a lesser degree in the text of the *non-literary author* (*écrivant*). In 'Leçon' (1977a) – the text of an inaugural lecture delivered at the Collège de France – Barthes describes the subversive character of literary writing, which grows out of the shift in sense operated by significance. Thanks to such shifting, the *écrivant* can say without identifying with the subject–author, and can therefore escape the order of discourse to which, on the contrary, the speaker is subjected in obeying the *langue* (cf. Ponzio, 'In the Sign of Barthes,' in Ponzio 1994a).

To summarize: Studies about signs during the twentieth century evolved past the limits of *semiotics of communication*, through *semiotics* of

signification, into what may be identified as 'third-sense semiotics,' 'text semiotics,' or *semiotics of significance* following Barthes (1982).

Charles Morris (1964) also distinguished between *signification* and *significance*, and identified two different aspects of 'meaning': the semantic and the axiological.

For her part, Victoria Welby introduced the term 'significance' to indicate the third level in her meaning triad, the other two being 'sense' and 'meaning.' This triad played a central role in her 'significs' – the term she coined to designate her own particular approach to the study of signs, meaning, and interpretation.

Welby invented the term 'significs' after experimenting with other possibilities such as 'sensifics'; she came to prefer it to other English terms readily available such as 'semiotics,' 'semiology,' and 'semasiology.' A provisional definition of significs is encountered in her 1911 work, *Significs and Language*: 'the study of the nature of significance in all its forms and relations' (1985a [1911] I: vii), with a practical bearing 'not only on language but on every possible form of human expression in action, invention, and creation' (ibid.: ix). By then, however, Welby with James M. Baldwin and George F. Stout had already formulated a dictionary definition for *Baldwin's Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology in Three Volumes*, published in 1902 – a definition encountered again in an encyclopedic entry of 1911 (now in Hardwick 1977: 167–75), commissioned for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (vol. 25). In contrast to 'semantics,' 'semasiology,' and 'semiotics,' the term 'significs' was free from technical associations, and thus it was suitable for signalling the connection between meaning and value in all its aspects (pragmatic, social, ethic, esthetic, economic, linguistic, etc.) (see Welby 1983 [1903]; 1985a [1911]; Schmitz, 'Introduction,' in Welby 1985a [1911]).

The term 'significs' takes account of the everyday expression 'What does it signify?' with its focus on the sign's ultimate value and significance beyond semantic meaning. Besides a theory of meaning, significs proposes a 'significal method' that transcends pure descriptivism and strictly logico-epistemological boundaries in the direction of axiology and of the study of the conditions that make meaningful behaviour possible (cf. Petrilli 1988, 1998a). Central to significs is Welby's analysis of meaning in terms of the three main levels noted earlier: 'Sense' – 'the organic response to environment'; 'Meaning' – the specific sense that a word 'is *intended to convey*'; and 'Significance' – 'the far-reaching consequence, implication, ultimate result or outcome of some event or experience' (see Hardwick 1977: 169). According to Peirce, the triad sense–meaning–

significance relates closely to his own triad and corresponds to his Immediate Interpretant, Dynamical Interpretant, and Final Interpretant (ibid.: 109–11).

Both Welby and Morris relate signs to values and, therefore, semiotics to axiology, much like other authors (such as Barthes 1982) who work with the same concepts. In the words of Morris (1964: vii): 'If we ask what is the meaning of life, we may be asking a question about the signification of the term "life," or asking a question about the value or significance of living – or both.' The fact that usage of such terms as 'meaning' (with the polarity suggested) is so widespread suggests, he continues, that there is a fundamental relationship between signification and significance.

I.7. Signification and Denotatum

In Morrisian terminology, *to signify*, *to have signification* and *to have a significatum* are synonymous.

The use of the term 'significatum' in semiotics is explained by Morris in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946). The sign – better, the signans – *signifies* its significatum. In the words of Morris: 'Those conditions which are such that whatever fulfills them is a denotatum will be called a *significatum* of the sign' (1946, in 1971: 94). In his description of the conditions that allow for something to be a sign, the significatum is distinguished from the denotatum. When something satisfies the conditions for something else to function as a sign, the former is a significatum whereas the latter is a denotatum.

All signs signify – that is, all have a significatum – but not all signs denote. The significatum of the bell (sign) that attracts the attention of Pavlov's famous dog (the interpreter) is that something edible is available; the food found by the dog that enables it to respond (the interpretant) as elicited by the sign is the denotatum. However, to the dog's great disappointment, the latter may not actually exist in real life.

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938c: 2), Morris uses the term designatum instead of significatum. Every sign, insofar as it *is* a sign, has a designatum; however, not every sign has a denotatum because not every sign refers to something that actually exists: 'Where what is referred to [significatum or designatum] actually exists as referred to the object of reference is a denotatum' (ibid.: 5). For example, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to what it designates considering it as existent in the world of mythology, that sign has a denotatum since unicorns exist in that world. If, on the other hand, the sign 'unicorn' refers to what it designates considering it

as existent in the world of zoology, that sign does not have a denotatum since it does not exist in that world. Here, the sign has a designatum (Morris 1938c) or a 'significatum' (as Morris [1946] was later to call it), but it does not have a denotatum: 'It thus becomes clear that, while every sign has a designatum, not every sign has a denotatum' (ibid.: 5).

Thus, the significatum is what the sign or signans refers to. In other words, it is a set of qualities forming a class or type of objects or events to which the interpreter reacts independently of whether what is referred to actually exists (denotatum) according to the existence value attributed to it by the sign.

In *Signification and Significance* (1964), Morris replaces the term 'significatum' with 'signification' and drops altogether the term 'denotatum.'

Morris's distinction between designatum and denotatum helps us avoid misunderstandings in relation to the referent. In the triad model of the sign proposed by Ogden and Richards (1923), the referent is always foreseen and in fact forms one of the three apexes of the triangle. In contrast, in other semantic theories (cf. Eco 1975, 1984), the referent is eliminated on the basis of the argument that what the sign refers to does not always exist as referred to by the sign. This approach sets aside the designatum completely.

As demonstrated by Ponzio (1990a, 1994b, 1997a), the sign always has a referent – or in Morris's terminology, a designatum. Furthermore, if this referent exists as referred to by the sign, it also has a denotatum. Thus, the referent 'Cheshire cat' in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is a designatum as well as a denotatum; For the believer, 'God' has a referent as both designatum and denotatum, whereas in the proposition 'God does not exist,' 'God' has a referent (otherwise the proposition would not make sense), but only as a designatum and not as a denotatum.

The difference between significatum and denotatum was established almost eight centuries ago by Peter of Spain (Petrus Hispanus 1972 [1230?]) – 'E Pietro Ispano / lo qual già luce in dodici libelli' (Dante, *Paradiso* XII, 134–5) – in *Summule logicales* or *Tractatus* (1230? critical ed. 1972), as the difference between *significatio* and *acceptio,* on the one hand, and *appellatio,* on the other. In the *Tractatus*, Peter of Spain explained in detail and systematized with originality studies in logic as they had been developed until then. He contextualized the sign in the complex process of semiosis, and he identified its fundamental characteristics. Peirce took a great interest in Peter of Spain's work and was familiar with his conception of sign, citing him on many occasions (cf. Ponzio 1990a: 77–93; Ponzio and Petrilli 1996). And in fact, the orientation of Peter of Spain's work emerges more clearly in the light of the

correspondences between the sign model proposed in *Tractatus* and the model of sign as proposed by Peirce: *vox significativa* = representamen; *significatio* or *representatio* = interpretant; *res significata* or *representata* = immediate object; *acceptio pro* = to stand for; *aliquid* (the referent of *acceptio*) = dynamical object.

I.8. Beyond the Verbal Sign Paradigm

Sebeok's criticism of phonocentrism and glottocentrism is based on the concept of modelling.

Modelling is a process by which something is performed or reproduced on the basis of a model or schema, be it ideal or real. For example: Plato's world of ideas is used as a model by the demiurge to create the empirical world. In semiotics, models are based on a relationship of similarity or isomorphism, and therefore are associated with the iconic sign as understood by Peirce.

The concept of 'modelling' is present in the term 'patterning,' which Sapir (1916) uses to designate the original and specific organization of culture and language: *cultural patterning* and *linguistic patterning*. Of all social behaviours, none depends as heavily as language on unconscious mechanisms. Unconscious patterning operates at all levels of natural language – phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. More than any other element in culture, natural language resists rationalization and intervention by the individual. It is also subject to transformation; this, however, is due to an internal 'drift' process. Sapir contends that natural language is the most perfectly autarchic, unconscious, and varied of all cultural products, precisely *because of* internal drift processes. For this reason it is the most important instrument the anthropologist has at hand for studying the original patterning of culture.

'Modelling system' was the term used by the Moscow–Tartu school; the term 'primary modelling system' has been used since 1962 by A.A. Zaliznjak, V.V. Ivanov, and V.N. Toporov (cf. Zaliznjak et al.). Jurij M. Lotman (1977a [1967]) specifically stated that 'a modeling system can be regarded as a language.' Semioticians of the Moscow–Tartu school use the term 'primary modelling system' to distinguish natural language from other semiotic systems, and the term 'secondary modelling system' to denote human cultural systems other than natural language.

The concept of modelling as proposed by the Moscow–Tartu school comes very close to Sapir's. It invests language with an originating modelling function with respect to other systems. Thus, also much like Sapir

(1962), it suggests that cultures are relative with respect to primary modelling. Furthermore, it notes that the concept of language as a primary modelling system does not solve the problem of communicability among different languages and cultures, nor does it account for the multiplicity of languages, still less for the problem of language origin.

One way to develop and extend the Moscow–Tartu school's conception is by connecting it to the biologist and semiotician Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt*, which can be translated as 'model' (Sebeok). This approach is adopted by Sebeok (1991b; cf. also Anderson and Merrell 1991b), who attributes the capacity for primary modelling to *language* as distinct from speech. Language is specifically designed to produce and organize world views, whereas speech is an adaptive derivation in *Homo sapiens* that had arisen specifically for communicative purposes. *Homo sapiens* evolved into *Homo sapiens sapiens* thanks to its species-specific modelling device – that is to say, language – and its special properties. All living species construct their own worlds in which things assume a given sense; the human species is distinguished by its capacity to confer an infinite number of different senses on a limited set of elements, and in doing so to construct a great plurality of different possible worlds.

The plurality of languages and 'linguistic (verbal) creativity' (Noam Chomsky) testify to the capacity of language understood as a primary modelling device to produce many possible worlds.

As a specific communicative function, speech appears only later in the evolutionary process. In fact, verbal language and the natural languages into which it is differentiated are expressions of secondary modelling processes.

Another critique of glottocentrism in semiotics is provided by Julia Kristeva. In *Le langage, cet inconnu* (1969), she outlines the field of linguistics and notes its limitations. She finds traces of these in the history of linguistics and its implications for European culture, in phonocentrism, in the emphasis long placed on the alphabetic script, and so on. (Jacques Derrida's important work in this vein should also be noted here, although we will not go into it now.)

I.9. Subject and Alterity

Modern linguistics has broadened its scope thanks also to research on language in the fields of philosophy of language and semiotics. However, the epistemological paradigms adopted from the philosophical tradition with the rise of linguistics have tended to remain the same. In

particular, the notion of the speaking *subject* has not been sufficiently interrogated.

With her 'semanalysis' in *Semiotiké* (1969a), Kristeva attempted a kind of short circuit by connecting the linguistic and semiotic approaches to the psychoanalytic. She confronted the Cartesian ego and the transcendental ego theorized by Husserlian phenomenology (the subject in utterance linguistics) with the dual subject as theorized by Freud in his concept of the unconscious. From Kristeva's perspective, the unconscious implies that signification is best described as a heterogeneous process. This process is manifested most clearly in literary writing.

In *La révolution du langage poétique* (1974), Kristeva distinguishes between the *symbolic* and the *semiotic*. The symbolic designates language as defined by the linguistic tradition – that is, language according to normative usage. In contrast, the semiotic refers to primary processes and to impulses that contradict the symbolic. Literary writing is generated from the tension between the symbolic and the semiotic. Thus its value for semiotics lies in its potential for exploring the experience of heterogeneity in signification processes.

Kristeva later drew a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic in a psychoanalytical framework. Her *Pouvoirs de l'horreur. Essais sur l'abjection* (1980), *Histoires d'amour* (1983), and *Soleil noir. Dépression et mélancolie* (1987) all focus on the question of heterogeneity in signification, which she also experiences directly in her analytical practice. Indeed, problems relative to the speaking subject's identity and heterogeneity in the signification process emerge just as readily in situations of strangeness to language, as analysed in *Etrangers à nous même* (1988).

Kristeva addresses the same issues in one of her more recent works, *Le Temps sensible. Proust et l'expérience littéraire* (1994), in which she analyses various forms of strangeness, including the racial (Jews) and the sexual (homosexuals), in relation to Proust's *Recherche*. There is no doubt that literary writing can enrich our understanding of the outsider through its dealings with heterogeneity in signification and with the problem of alterity. The more we recognize ourselves as strangers to ourselves, the more we are capable of accepting the strangeness of others.

Alterity (or otherness) refers to the existence of something on its own account, autonomously, independent of the I's initiative, volition, consciousness, or recognition. From our perspective, alterity is synonymous with materiality understood as objectivity. The world of physical objects is other with respect to the I. One's own body, the body of each and every one of us, is other in its autonomy from volition and consciousness. But

the most 'other' of all is the other person in his or her irreducibility, refractoriness to the I. Assassination is proof of the other's resistance and of the I's checkmate, of his or her powerlessness (Emmanuel Levinas).

Of course, the condition of 'relative alterity,' which in Peirce's terminology is classifiable in terms of secondness, is also another possibility. However, this type of alterity pertains to the I considered relative to a role (as with a father relative to his child, or a student relative to his teacher, or a husband relative to his wife, and so on). In contrast, alterity of the other as other – *autrui*, as Levinas would put it – is 'absolute alterity.'

According to Peircean pragmatism, knowledge understood in terms of innovation and inventiveness is not a purely epistemic process. Knowledge presupposes ethical knowledge, responsiveness to the other, both the other *from* self and the other *of* self, which the self should welcome and listen to: for there to be an interpreted sign, an object of interpretation, there must be an interpretant, even when a question of cognitive signs in a strict sense. The sign, insofar as it is a sign, is other; in other words, a sign can be characterized as a sign because of its structural opening to the other and, therefore, because it is dialogue with the other. This suggests that the sign's identity is grounded in the logic of alterity.

Consequently, such things as learning, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and sagacity in their various forms emerge in a sign situation that in the last analysis is permeated with otherness, is opening to the other, listening to the other. Cognitive identity is subject to the other and as such is constantly placed in crisis by the restlessness of signs, inexorably provoked by the attraction, the appeal exerted on that subject by the other. Therefore, insofar as it is part of the semiosic network solely by virtue of which it earns its status as sign, the cognitive sign is situated and modelled in a context that is irreducibly of the ethical order as well.

When it is a question of absolute and non-relative alterity (cf. Levinas 1961, 1974c; Ponzio 1996a; J. Ponzio 1998), the otherness of the other person can be reduced neither to the communitary 'We' of Heidegger's *Mitsein* (being-with), nor to the Subject–Object relation of Sartre's 'being-for.' Alterity is located inside the subject, the I, at its very heart, yet it is neither incorporated nor assimilated by the subject. For this reason, the subject cannot become a closed totality; instead, it is constantly exposed to dialogue – indeed it is itself dialogue, a relation between self and other. Notwithstanding the claims made by Sartre and Hegel, the self of 'being conscious of oneself' does not coincide with consciousness, nor does it presuppose it; on the contrary, it is pre-existent with respect to consciousness and is connected to it by a relationship of alter-

ity. The other is inseparable from the ego, the I, the Self (*Même*, as described by Levinas), but it cannot be included within the totality of the ego. The other is necessary to the constitution of the ego and its world, but it is also at once a constitutive impediment to the integrity and definitive closure of the I and of the world.

Among the twentieth-century philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas has contributed more than most to our understanding of semiotic-linguistic problematics. He has done so by addressing the question of alterity in terms of his critique of ontology. He has made an original contribution – alongside Hartman, Bloch, Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Bakhtin – to that multiform movement in philosophy that focuses on reformulating ontology. This trend contrasts with those traditions in philosophy that are hegemonized by the logic of knowledge and that are stated reductively in epistemological terms. Levinas developed his thought in dialogue with Husserl and Heidegger, and introduced their work to France after studying under them in Fribourg in 1928 and 1929.

Another philosopher who has contributed greatly to the field of language and alterity is the Russian Mikhail M. Bakhtin. Both Levinas and Bakhtin (as well as Peirce, Welby, and Morris) have taught us that the relation to the other is a relation of excess, surplus, escape from objectifying thought, release from the subject–object relation; on a linguistic level, this produces internal dialogization of the word, and therefore the impossibility of there ever being an integral word (cf. Bakhtin 1929, 1963; Voloshinov 1929).

I.10. Word and Dialogue

Mikhail M. Bakhtin, with Pavel N. Medvedev and Valentin N. Voloshinov, formed the 'Bakhtin Circle' with the participation of the musicologist Ivan I. Sollertinsky, the pianist Marija Judina, the biologist Ivanov I. Kanaev, the writer Kostantin K. Vaginov, the Indologist M.I. Tubiansky, and the philosopher Matvej I. Kagan. Bakhtin's brother Nikolaj can also be considered a member of the Circle, even if only ideally (cf. Ponzio, 'Presentazione. Un autore dalla parte dell'eroe,' in N. Bakhtin 1995, It. trans.: 7–13). Nicolaj left Russia in 1918 and eventually settled in England, where in 1946 he founded the Department of Linguistics at Birmingham University.

During the 1920s, Mikhail Bakhtin's work overlapped so much with that of his colleagues that it is difficult today to separate it out. This would seem to confirm his thesis relating to the 'semi-other' character

of 'one's own word,' notwithstanding those critics who today insist on trying to establish which writings were specifically his. Bakhtin played a significant authorial role in Voloshinov's *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* (1927) and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), as well as in Medvedev's *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928). Between 1925 and 1930, he also contributed to various articles published by the same 'authors,' as well as to Kanaev's biosemiotic essay 'Contemporary Vitalism' (1926). Even after the Circle was eradicated during the Stalinist terror (Voloshinov and Medvedev disappeared in the 1930s), the 'voices' of its various members could still be heard in uninterrupted dialogue with Bakhtin, who persevered in his research until his death in 1975. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work* (1929), revised and republished in 1963 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin delineated a theory of dialogism that is substantially antiformalist and anticanonical.

Dialogue is external or internal discourse in which the word of the other – which is not necessarily in the second person – interferes with one's own word. It is also a discourse genre. Bakhtin, much like Peirce, sees dialogue as the modality of thought processes. Thus we must distinguish between 'substantial dialogism' and purely 'formal dialogism.' Substantial dialogism is determined not by the dialogical form of the text (that is, by formal dialogism) but rather by the degree of dialogism in that text, which may or may not take the form of a dialogue. In other words, substantial dialogism is determined by the higher or lower degree of opening toward alterity.

Voloshinov's writings, like those of Bakhtin, acknowledge the alterity relation as an essential characteristic of the word. In all of Voloshinov's writings, the problem of the relationship between one's own word and the word of the other is the strong and constant focus. Part III of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* analyses this relationship as it manifests itself in various discourse genres and in different natural languages. Voloshinov addresses the same problematic in his critique of 'Freudian philosophy.' It is also present in his conception of expression as the manifestation of autonomous interiority, independent of the interlocutor and of receiver-oriented intentionality.

Bakhtin sees a close connection between dialogue and 'accent.' Accent here does not refer to a graphic device (such as an accent mark over a syllable), nor does it refer to pronunciation (as in 'he speaks with an American accent'), nor does it refer to a speaker's tone of voice. It does not even refer exclusively to verbal signs. Rather, insofar as accent arises among individuals and is created within a social milieu, it refers to eval-

uative accentuation in human verbal and non-verbal signs. The verbal sign, be it oral or written, is not simply a signal; in fact, it is a sign in the strong sense. It is endowed with an ambiguity or plasticity of meaning; thus, it can respond to different ideological perspectives as well as to different senses. Because of these qualities, the verbal sign in particular may be endowed not only with a theme and meaning in the referential or content sense of these words, but also with a value judgment and therefore with a specific evaluative accent. Without exception, every live word, be it written or oral, is accented in terms of evaluative intonation (cf. Ponzio 1992a, 1998). A passage from Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* analyses the conversation of a band of six tipsy artisans. Using this passage as a reference, Voloshinov (1929 [Eng. trans.]: 103) shows how different evaluations, thoughts, and feelings – and even a chain of reasoning – can be expressed simply by using the same noun with different accents.

We can connect dialogue to the logic of identity; conversely, we can open it to displacement in the sense of alterity. The latter is very different from 'attainment dialogue,' where the interlocutor's task is to achieve a given end and thereby maintain and reconfirm identity. Dialogue in the sense of substantial dialogue is indispensable to *argumentative* reasoning – that is, reasoning which is not fixed in terms of the defence and reproduction of identity but instead is open to otherness. Bakhtin has shown how phenomena such as unilaterality, ossification, and rectilinear *dialectics* arise from *sclerotized dialogue*. Monological, unilinear, and totalizing dialectics are oriented toward a given synthesis and a set conclusion. As such, they call for a *critique of dialogic reason* (as demonstrated by Ponzio 1993a), which is the critique of identity that dominates Western thought and praxis today.

Another contribution of fundamental importance that Bakhtin made through his 'philosophy of language' or 'metalinguistics' relates to his *critique of dialogic reason*. Here, we are to understand 'critique' in a literary as well as a philosophical (sense after Kant and Marx). Bakhtin privileged the term 'metalinguistics' in his particular approach to the study of sign, utterance, text, and discourse genre, as well as in his studies of the relationship between literary writing and non-verbal expressions in popular culture, such as the signs of carnival. Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason focuses on the concept of *responsibility without alibis* – a non-conventional form of responsibility that cannot be deferred insofar as it concerns existential 'architectonics,' relations with the I, the world, others. According to Bakhtin, dialogue is an embodied, intercorporeal expression of the involvement of one's body with the body of the other – thus, it is illusory

to think that the body is individual, separate, and autonomous. An appropriate image of the body is the 'grotesque body' (cf. Bakhtin 1965) as it finds expression in popular culture, in the vulgar language of the public realm, and above all in the masks of carnival. This is the body viewed from a biosemiotic perspective, as an organism in its *Umwelt*, *in its vital and indissoluble relation to the world and to the body of other living beings*, be they human or non-human. With the revolutionary shift in focus away from identity (whether individual as in the case of consciousness or the self, or collective as in a community, a historical language, or a cultural system at large) toward alterity, the Bakhtinian critique of dialogic reason has come to question not only the general orientation of Western philosophy but also the dominant cultural trends that it reflects.

As verbal exchange involving two or more partners, dialogue can be seen as an end in itself or as the carrying out of an instrumental function. In the latter case, it can be a means to an end or a means for determining and evaluating ends and means. On the basis of such distinctions, Massimo A. Bonfantini and Augusto Ponzio (1986) propose the following tripartite typology of dialogue, one that takes into account both Bakhtinian dialogism and the pragmatic perspective. (1) *Dialogue as an end in itself* – in other words, conversation or entertainment dialogue. This sort of dialogue involves talking for the sake of talking. It has a phatic function (Jakobson), and itself has two variants: (1.1) *conformative-repetitive dialogue* and (1.2) *diverting dialogue*. An example of (1.1) is certain forms of television communication, which tend to be repetitive, obeying hyperdetermined compositional–instructional rules and equally hyperdetermined decoding processes. (2) *Dialogue functional to attainment*, which also has two variants: (2.1) *exchange dialogue* and (2.2) *competition dialogue*. (3) *Cooperative* or *reflective* or *investigative dialogue*. When we use the degree of substantial dialogism as our criterion for differentiation, we find that this third type of dialogue has three variants (reflecting an increasing scale of dialogism): (3.1) *rediscovery and revelation dialogue*, (3.2) *research and construction dialogue*, and (3.3) *exploration and problematization dialogue*. (Regarding the relationship between dialogue and truth, cf. Bonfantini, Ponzio, and Petrilli 1996.)

I.11. Dialogue and Inference

In Peirce's writings on logic, 'if ... then' inference, hypothesis formation, and 'chains of thought' emerge as dialogic sign formations.

The relation between the premises and the conclusion of an infer-

ence can be considered in terms of the relation between interpreted signs and interpretant signs. In induction, the relation between the premises and the conclusion is determined by habit and is of the symbolic type. In deduction, that relation is indexical, the conclusion being an unavoidable derivation from the premises. In abduction, the relation between premises and conclusion is iconic – that is, it is a relation of reciprocal autonomy. This makes for a high degree of inventiveness as well as a high margin of risk for error.

'Indexical' derives from 'index' as understood in the context of Peirce's typology of signs. An index is a sign that signifies its object through a relation of contiguity or causality or through some other physical connection. But, this relation also depends on habit or convention. Consider as an example the relation between a knock at the door and someone on the other side of the door who wants to enter. Here, convention plays its part in relating the knocking to the knocker; even so, contiguity/causality predominates to the point that we are surprised if we open the door and nobody enters. The following are some common indexes: (1) *symptoms*, in the sense of medical, psychological, and natural phenomena (actual contiguity + actual causality); (2) *clues*, such as natural phenomena, attitudes, and inclinations (presumed contiguity + non-actual causality); (3) *traces*, be they physical or mental (non-actual contiguity + presumed causality). 'An *index*,' declares Peirce, 'is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant' (*CP* 2.304).

In deduction, the degree of dialogism in the relation between interpreted and interpretant is minimal: once the premises are accepted, the conclusion is inescapable. Induction is also characterized by unilinear inferential processes: identity and repetition dominate, although the relation between the premises and the conclusion is no longer inescapable. In contrast, in abduction the relationships among the parts forming the argument are dialogical in a substantial sense. In fact, the greater the degree of dialogism, the more inventive reasoning becomes.

Abductive processes achieve high levels of dialogism and generate responses of the riskiest and most inventive and creative kind. When we claim that abductive argumentative procedure is risky, we are saying that it is tentative and hypothetical and offers only minimal room for convention (symbolicity) and for mechanical necessity (indexicality).

The dialogic relation between interpretant and interpreted is determined by the connection between abduction and iconicity. The icon is

characterized by a relation of similarity between the sign and its object. However, similarity alone is not enough for us to determine an iconic sign. Twins look similar but are not signs of each other. My reflection in a mirror looks like me but is not an iconic sign. For iconic signs to obtain the effect of convention or habit, social practices or special functions must also come into play. Iconic similarity is a special kind of similarity: it is an abstraction on the basis of a convention, given that it privileges given traits of similarity over others. Similarity between one banknote and another worth $50 is no doubt a sign that the first banknote too is worth $50. But when that similarity is complete to the point that the serial numbers of both banknotes are identical, one of the banknotes must be false and cannot carry out a legitimate iconic sign function on the money market. Nonetheless, says Peirce, the icon is the sign that is least dependent on both convention and causality/contiguity: 'An *icon* is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence; such as a lead-pencil streak as representing a geometrical line' (*CP* 2.304).

Abductive inferential processes engender sign processes at the highest levels of otherness and dialogism. Abduction is the type of inferential process through which hypotheses are framed. In abduction, the rule that explains the fact is hypothesized on the basis of a relation of similarity (an iconic relation) to that fact. The rule that acts as the general premise can be taken from a field of discourse that is close to the field to which the fact belongs, but it can also be taken from a field that is distant or even invented ex novo. If the conclusion is confirmed, it retroacts on the rule and validates it (thus ab-duction or retro-duction). This sort of retroactive procedure makes abductive inference risky, by exposing it to the possibility of error. However, when the hypothesis is correct, the abduction is innovative, inventive, and sometimes even surprising (cf. Bonfantini 1987). Says Peirce: 'Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis. Deduction proves that something *must* be; Induction shows that something *actually is* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*' (*CP* 5.172).

Abductions are powered by metaphors in the simulation processes that are used to produce models, inferences, inventions, and projects. The tight links between abductive inference and verisimilitude arise from the fact that, as Victoria Welby demonstrated, 'one of the most splendid of all

our intellectual instruments' is the 'image or the figure' (1985a [1911]: 13; cf. also Petrilli 1995a, 1998a). Given how closely abduction, icon, and simulation are related, the task at hand is not to eliminate figurative or metaphorical discourse to the advantage of 'literal' discourse; rather, it is to identify and eliminate inadequate images that mystify relationships among things and that distort our reasoning. States Welby: 'We need a linguistic oculist to restore lost focussing power, to bring our images back to reality by some normalizing kind of lens' (1985a [1911]: 16).

I.12. Inferences and Categories: Semiotics, Logic, Ontology

Firstness, secondness, and thirdness are the terms used by Peirce for the three categories that describe phenomena in the universe. These categories are the omnipresent ones of mind, sign, and reality (*CP* 2.84–2.94). Firstness, secondness, and thirdness correspond respectively to abduction, deduction, and induction in logic; to icon, index, and symbol in semiotics; and to agapasm, anancasm, and tychasm in ontology.

Firstness (in-itselfness, originality), secondness (over-againstness, obsistence), and Thirdness (in-betweenness, transuasion) are universal categories. And since for Peirce all mental operations are sign operations, his categories are universal categories not only of the mind but also of the sign. And given that the whole of reality – and therefore being as well – is permeated with signs, these categories are also ontological categories. The sign, says Peirce, exemplifies the category of thirdness; it embodies a triadic relation among itself, its object, and the interpretant. A sign always plays the role of third party, given that it mediates between the interpretant and its object.

A sign can be taken as something *in itself*, or as something in relation *to something else* (its object), or as a go-between (mediating between its object and its interpretant). On the basis of this, Peirce established the following correspondences between his trichotomy of the categories and three other important trichotomies in his semiotic system: *firstness* – qualisign, icon, rheme; *secondness* – sinsign, index, dicisign (or dicent sign); and *thirdness* – legisign, symbol, argument (cf. *CP* 2.243).

Firstness helps explain logico-cognitive processes as well as the very formation of signs. Analysed in terms of Peirce's typology of signs, firstness coincides with the sphere of *iconicity*. That which presents itself as firstness, presence, 'suchness,' pure quality, is characterized by the relation of similarity (cf. *CP* 1.356–8). As demonstrated by Petrilli (1999c, and below), firstness is also foreseen by Edmund Husserl's phenomenol-

ogy of perception and predicative judgment, although the latter's terminology is different from Peirce's.

By virtue of the dimension of firstness, the dynamical object is not exhausted in the identity of the immediate object. Rather, as the *ground* – that is to say, as the primary icon – it imposes itself on the interpretant over and over again (*immer wieder*, Husserl would say), as its irreducible otherness.

Peirce introduced the term 'ground' to denote 'some respect or capacity' on the basis of which something becomes a sign or representamen (in other words, stands for something else, an object), thanks to another sign that serves as its interpretant. In fact, that which acts as a sign stands for the object not in all respects but only in reference to a particular respect or capacity or 'in reference to a sort of idea' (*CP* 2.228). This idea forms the ground of the representamen. This indeterminant something is then gradually determined in a certain respect, and as a result becomes a sign for an interpretant. Let us recall an example from Peirce. If I say, 'This stove is black,' the immediate object 'stove' is considered in a certain respect – its 'blackness,' which is the ground of the interpretant (cf. *CP* 1.551). From the perspective of the phenomenology of perception (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty), the ground is undifferentiated material that is gradually differentiated in a certain respect through a process by which it eventually becomes a sign for an interpretant.

Secondness (obsistence, over-againstness) is the category whereby something is considered relative to or over against something else. It involves binarity, a relation of opposition or reaction. From the perspective of signs, Secondness is connected with the index. The index is a sign that signifies its object by virtue of a relation of contiguity or causality or thanks to some other physical connection. However, this relationship also depends on habit or convention, as was noted earlier with the example of the relation between knocking at the door and somebody on the other side of the door who wants to enter. The icon governed by firstness presents itself as an *original* sign, and the symbol governed by *thirdness* presents itself as a *transuasional* sign, whereas the index governed by secondness is an *obsistent* sign (*CP* 2.89–92).

From the perspective of logic, inference regulated by secondness corresponds to deduction. In fact, in the case of an obsistent argument or deduction, the conclusion is *compelled* to acknowledge that the facts stated in the premises, whether in one or in both, are such as could not be if the fact stated in the conclusion did not subsist (cf. *CP* 2.96).

From the perspective of ontology – that is, of the conception of being

– secondness is present in the law of 'anancasm' or necessity. In Peirce's terminology, anancasm describes a cosmological force regulating the evolutionary development of the universe, together with 'agapasm' (creative love, which corresponds to firstness) and 'tychasm' (chance, which corresponds to thirdness) (cf. *CP* 6.287–317).

To secondness or obsistence, a binary category, there corresponds a relationship of relative alterity in which the terms of the relation depend on each other. In contrast, effective alterity – that is, absolute alterity, the possibility of something being-on-its-own-account, absolutely, per se, autonomously – presents itself as firstness, or orience, or originality, according to which something '*is what it is without reference to anything else* within it or without it, regardless of all force and of all reason' (*CP* 2.85).

An effective relation of alterity, absolute alterity, is not possible in mere terms of binarity, secondness, therefore obsistence (cf. Ponzio 1990a: 197–214). This kind of alterity is not possible in a system that is regulated exclusively by secondness and, therefore, binarity, where an element exists only on the condition that it refers to another element and would not exist if this other element were negated. 'Take, for example, a husband and wife. Here there is nothing but a real twoness; but it constitutes a reaction, in the sense that the husband makes the wife a wife in fact (not merely in some comparing thought); while the wife makes the husband a husband' (*CP* 2.84).

With the other two categories, thirdness guides and stimulates inquiry and therefore has a heuristic value. The inferential relation between premises and conclusion is based on mediation – that is, on thirdness.

Thirdness regulates continuity, which according to Peirce subsists in the dialogic relations among symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity. The symbol is never pure; it always contains varying degrees of indexicality and iconicity. Similarly, as much as a sign can be characterized as an index or an icon, it will always maintain the characteristics of symbolicity, given that a sign, in order to subsist as such, requires the mediation of an interpretant as well as recourse to a convention. Symbolicity is the sign dimension that most shares in thirdness. It is characterized by mediation (or in-betweenness), whereas iconicity is characterized by firstness or immediacy (or in-itselfness) and indexicality by secondness (or over-againstness).

Peirce foresees the possibility of tracing signs in nature, intrinsically – that is, independently of the action of an external agent. From this perspective, the universe is permeated with signs antecedent to the action of an interpretive will. Genuine *mediation* (irreducible thirdness) is an

inherent part of the reality we encounter in experience – a reality that imposes itself on our attention as sign reality and becomes manifest through interpretive processes. Thirdness characterizes the relationships (of mediation) among signs throughout the whole universe. From this perspective, Peirce identified a close relationship between thirdness and 'synechism' – that is, his doctrine of continuity (cf. *CP* 7.565, 7.570, 7.571). Synechism excludes all forms of separateness but without denying the possibility of the discrete unit, secondness. Therefore, while recognizing the discrete unit, the principle of continuity does not allow for irreducible distinctions to be made between the mental and the physical, between self and other (cf. *CP* 6.268). Such distinctions can be seen as specific units articulated in existential and phenomenological semiosic fluxes.

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Part 1

Semiotics and Semioticians

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1

An Itinerary: From Peirce to Others

1.1. Problems on Peirce's Desk

As theorized and practised by Charles Sanders Peirce (see biographical note, p. 79), the science of signs or semiotics ('semeiotic' is the term he preferred; cf. Fisch 1986) offers a unified perspective on a potentially infinite series of sign manifestations or semioses, traditionally covered by a vast range of studies and areas of research. In tandem with his analysis of the relationship between sign and interpretant, Peirce's approach has opened the gates to the signifying universe and enabled us to explore an open and constantly expanding sign network. Although triadism is an essential characteristic of Peirce's studies of signs, this does not imply any risk of oversimplification. Indeed, his analyses of semiosic processes do not hide the risk of reduction to fixed definitions and preestablished boundaries relating to any single interpretive trajectory, nor do they hide the risk of unending drift or deferral. Much of the literature now available on Peirce's work is extensional: his ideas are now being developed so as to apply to the established sciences as well as to new fields of research. The semiosic universe as described by Peirce is constantly evolving and pulsating ever more with the promise of new signifying potential as sign networks extend themselves and grow in complexity throughout the world.

1.1.1. Semiosis, Interpretation, and the Quasi-Interpreter

In a letter to Victoria Lady Welby (1837–1912) dated 23 December 1908, Peirce, who was by then approaching his seventies, suggested the broad scope of his semiotic perspective:

> It has never been in my power to study anything – mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, gravitation, thermodynamics, optics, chemistry, comparative anatomy, astronomy, psychology, phonetics, economic, the history of science, whist, men and women, wine, metrology, except as a study of semeiotic. (in Hardwick 1977: 85–6)

All things that exist, human and non-human, impose themselves on Peirce's attention insofar as they are signs – that is to say, insofar as they carry out a sign function. Indeed, as he stated in a 1905 paper, 'Issues of Pragmaticism,' the entire universe, the universe of existents and the universe of our conceptual constructions of existents, that broader universe we are accustomed to refer to as *truth*, of which the universe of existents is only a part, 'all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs' (*CP* 5.448n1).

In various writings, Peirce provided many examples of what he believed could be classified as signs – see, for example, his preface to a 1909 paper, 'Essays on Meaning: By a Half-Century's Student of the Same.' In working toward formulating a general description, he listed images, pictures, diagrams, pointing fingers, symptoms, winks, a knot in one's handkerchief, memories, fancies, concepts, indications, tokens, numerals, letters, words, phrases, sentences, chapters, books, libraries, signals, imperative commands, microscopes, legislative representatives, musical notes, concerts, performances, natural cries – in other words, anything able to create mental images that emanate from something external (cf. *MS* 634: 16–17, September 1909; *CN* 2: 149). In Peirce's view, the universe considered globally is a sign, 'a vast representamen, a great symbol ... an argument,' and insofar as it is an argument, it is 'necessarily a great work of art, a great poem ... a symphony ... a painting' (*CP* 5.119). And to state that the universe is perfused with signs (*CP* 5.448n1) is to imply that it is structurally endowed with a capacity for generating potentially infinite signifying and interpreting processes.

All of this means that for the sake of adequacy, sign analysis must distinguish between two closely related levels in the phenomenological manifestation of signs: the *semiotic* and the *hermeneutic*. The semiotic level focuses on the internal semiotic structure of the signifying process and considers signs in terms of their intrinsic signifying capacity; while the hermeneutic level considers semiosis in terms of the interpretive response it elicits and in which it is generated. Both levels are implied in the overall semiotic perspective of Peircean derivation.

Peirce's list of signs emphasizes just how general his sign model was to be, given the enormous variety of signs he intended to account for. He

was committed to formulating a general theory of signs – that is, a theory powerful enough to account for all types of signs – and as a consequence, his definitions went through various and subsequently more developed phases as he highlighted and analysed different aspects of what he referred to as sign activity. And although on the one hand the general character of Peirce's definition of the sign implies and accounts for the existence of many different types of signs, on the other hand, signs in their multiplicity share common properties in such a way that they can respond to a general definition. Peirce formulated what is probably his most widespread definition of sign structure around 1897:

> 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. (*CP* 2.228)

As indicated by the suffix 'sis,' which signifies 'act,' 'action,' 'activity,' or 'process of,' the word 'semeiosis' as used by Peirce designates 'sign activity.' This consists of a 'tri-relative influence' – that is, 'a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant' (*CP* 5.484). Moreover, as Peirce repeated on several occasions, insofar as it consists of the relation sign–object–interpretant, a sign's structure is irreducibly triadic (cf. *CP* 8.361). And even when other elements are added – for example, in the definition formulated in *CP* 2.228, Peirce describes the 'ground' of the *representamen* or sign (that is, the particular aspect of the object as represented by the sign, the particular reference or idea I have of this object) – even when the sign relationship is more complex than the triad, it is always reducible to action between the three essential elements just listed: sign–object–interpretant (cf. also *CP* 1.347).

Peirce takes a stand against reductive conceptions of the sign and (it follows) against tendencies toward binarism, which he pointedly criticizes – here he speaks of 'dynamism,' by which he means 'actions between pairs.' In contrast, his assertion that signs are irreducibly triadic is rich in determining and irrevocable consequences at the theoretical and pragmatic levels; it directs us toward a fuller understanding of human verbal and non-verbal behaviour as well as non-human behaviour in all its semiosic potential.

Semiosis can be analysed from the perspective of the object, and therefore in terms of the *utterance* and *enunciative processes*, or it can be analysed from the perspective of the interpretant, of sign-interpreting activity or

inference from signs, and therefore in terms of *interpretation* and *interpretive processes* (cf. Fisch 1986: 329). Obviously, these two aspects of sign activity are inextricably linked. Peirce specifies that all 'signs require at least two Quasi-minds; a *Quasi-utterer* and a *Quasi-interpreter*' (*CP* 4.551). The activities of generating signs and interpreting signs are linked by relations of continuity. As such, they represent two facets – corresponding roughly to *utterance* and *interpretation* – of the same semiosic process or 'thought' process. Peirce says much the same with respect to semiosic processes in general. Indeed, semiosic processes or thought processes need not be connected with the human brain. Vincent Colapietro clarifies this: 'To speak of a quasi-utterer in this context simply means a source from which a sign springs, while to speak of a quasi-interpreter here signifies a form into which a sign grows. There is not necessarily anything "mental" about either this quasi-utterer or this quasi-interpreter' (1989: 19). In the words of Peirce:

> Thought is not necessarily connected with a brain. It appears in the work of bees, of crystals, and throughout the purely physical world; and one can no more deny that it is really there, than that the colors, the shapes, etc. of objects are really there. (*CP* 4.551)

In Peircean semiotics, the interpretant sign develops in response to the interpreted sign (which is on the side of the dynamical object and can be anything – a thing, a feeling, a previous interpretation, and so on). To a certain degree, the interpretant sign also comprehends that sign. However, with respect to the interpreted sign the interpretant sign presents its own semiotic materiality or signifying otherness, in the same way that the interpreted sign is endowed with semiotic materiality with respect to the interpretant sign (see Petrilli 1986, 1998e). In other words, the interpreted sign also is endowed with otherness and will never be completely comprehended or grasped by any single interpretant sign in any given piece of semiosis or interpretive route.

1.1.2. Sign Displacement, Identity, and Otherness

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 sign systems.

In Peirce's approach, the sign is never static and is never hemmed into a single, signifying system. On the contrary, it is characterized by a

capacity for displacement, by what we might call the 'flight of interpretants,' even across different sign systems. This results in an increase in significance, as semiosic spheres in expansion pulsate ever more intensely with sense and meaning. In an effort to check the flow of signifying processes, Umberto Eco identifies boundaries to the deferral among interpretants. In truth, interpretation from the Peircean perspective is a potentially unlimited semiosic activity with no guarantees of the sort that might be offered by a grounding in a bi-univocal code or binary system of correspondences between signs. Far from taking refuge in reassuring laws and codes, interpretation is always hypothetical and risky. Furthermore, it is always characterized by an irresistible inclination toward creative development.

Continuous displacement indicates to us how structural opening to otherness is a condition of sign identity, as paradoxical as this may seem. The question of otherness also leads back to the problem of the 'limits of interpretation.' Regarding this point, a crucial observation is that the semiotic materiality or otherness of the interpreted sign with respect to the interpretant sign is an obstacle to arbitrariness. The threat of relativism or of dogmatism in interpretive practice is avoided thanks to the strategies of dialogic confrontation among signs on the basis of reciprocal otherness.

As an activity, semiosis is potentially infinite. This implies that the constituent parts of sign structures are endowed with the capacity for transformation: that which carries out a specific function at a given moment of semiosis may carry out yet another function at some other time. A single sign or sign aspect may give rise to multiple 'interpretive routes,' and that which plays the role of interpretant in a given instance of semiosis may carry out the role of object (or interpreted sign) in another, and vice versa. Therefore, the sign and its constituent parts are neither static nor fixed, nor are they trapped in a determinate role or function carried out in a given instance of semiosis. Quite the contrary, they are endowed with the potential to be transformed into something else, to be deferred to something else – a something else that is always ready to destabilize the sign 'totality' and throw it into crisis.

The sign as such transcends its own limitations. In the final analysis, signs express the condition of extralocality. Otherness is inherent in the sign and at the same time the precondition for the sign's capacity to transcend itself. Signs – or better, signifying routes generated by the relations among signs in the macroweb of semiosis, or semiosphere – emerge from the tension between determination and indeterminacy; between a particular configuration of the sign and its continual displacement,

transformation, and deferral to the other, this other being both immanent to the sign and external to it, transcendent with respect to any given instance of semiosis. The other – this surplus or excess – prevents the sign totality from closing in on itself and thereby invests it with the character of openness and potential for creative generation. Openness or detotalization of the sign totality is the precondition for questioning and criticism, for the possibility of evaluating the operations of the 'mind,' of semiosis, as good or bad (*CP* 5.108).

As ongoing intersubjective processes developing in the relation with the other, thought and subjectivity must be open to inquiry, to the critical gaze of others, of other inferential subjects. It would be incorrect to look upon the development of thought as a unitary process dominated by monologism and univocality. On the contrary – in accordance with the logic of otherness and in contrast to the chronological unilinearity of temporal becoming, thought and subjectivity evolve in the dialectics between continuity and discontinuity. Interpretive routes multiply and resist totalization. Indeed, from the perspective of Peircean semiotics, the experience of temporality itself cannot be reduced to a mere fact of chronological succession; it is also developed in the otherness relation.

1.1.3. Knowledge in the Gnoseological Sense, but also as Responsible Awareness

It is true that Peircean semiotics is first and foremost cognitive semiotics, and as such focuses on the sign in terms of inference or argumentation, but it is also true that Peirce strives to develop a definition of sign that has general validity. The cognitive sign is a sign by knowing which we know something more (*CP* 8.332), but beyond cognitive signs, other types of signs are named whose characterizing function is not to provide new information or knowledge. By analysing the action, structure, function, and form of such signs – which we can call non-cognitive signs – we can enrich our knowledge of cognitive signs themselves (*MS* 676: 5–6).

Although working at a general model of sign, Peirce was also interested in developing a theory of method. And given that his research was centred on the sciences, his focus was on the search for a scientific method, one that would revolve around the cognitive sign *par excellence*. At the same time, even while privileging cognitive signs, Peirce oriented his research toward a general conception of semiosis, and therefore toward a sign model that would be able to account for all types of signs and all sign systems. Thus, his special interest did not require him to reduce the broad scope of his research to its specific focus, cognitive signs.

On the contrary, Peirce had to problematize scientific research – indeed, knowledge as a whole – and make it assume a double valency: knowledge was to be understood in the gnoseological and epistemological sense, but also in terms of responsible awareness, as dialogism between the interpreted and the interpretant signs, and in terms of intercorporeity, as an otherness relationship.

Peircean pragmatism does not conceive the acquisition of knowledge with the capacity for innovation and inventiveness as a purely theoretical process. On the contrary, from a Peircean perspective, knowledge takes on emotional overtones given its connection with desire (cf. Bonfantini 1993). The processes of acquiring knowledge and learning language presuppose the ethical dimension of signs. They also presuppose responsiveness to the other, both the other from self and the other *of* self, which the self must accommodate and listen to. For an interpreted sign to exist, there must be an interpretant, even when we are dealing with cognitive signs in a strict sense. In fact, as stated at the beginning, the sign is a sign to the extent that it is other, structurally open to the other, dialogue with the other.

This implies that sign identity is rooted in the logic of otherness. It follows that phenomena such as learning, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and sagacity in their various forms are part of a sign network that in the final analysis is projected toward the other, is oriented by listening to the other. Cognitive identity is subject to the other and is constantly placed in crisis by the condition of restlessness that is inexorably provoked by such appeal to otherness. Therefore, as part of the sign network – thanks to which alone signs can earn their status as signs – the cognitive sign too is modelled in the context of sign material of the ethical type.

1.1.4. Interpretation and Representation

Peirce proposed the term 'interpretant' for 'the proper significate outcome of the sign' (*CP* 5.473). The interpretant – and, therefore, meaning as produced in the relations among interpretants – is the outcome, effect, or result of the sign and at the same time the condition of possibility of its very existence. Furthermore, the interpretant, and by extension the generation of meaning, cannot be addressed in terms of interpretation with a claim to neutrality: Peirce's pragmaticism does not authorize such a conception. In human semiosis, the interpretant is a response and in turn elicits another interpretant, which in fact is another response in an open chain of relations among signs. Here, 'response' is understood in a broad sense as relating to practical action. To respond is to respond to

the interpreted sign, to take a stand, to make a decision, to accomplish a responsive/responsible act.

From this perspective, the interpretant can be of different types. Peirce introduced the 'emotional interpretant,' subsequently named 'immediate interpretant,' to refer to the feelings and emotions that signs can provoke, to the emotion that the sign can determine in the interpreter. The 'energetic interpretant' or 'dynamical interpretant' recalls efforts of a muscular type. Much more often, however, the effort is of a mental type and refers to actions that sometimes accompany emotions, to the practical reaction that the sign may determine in the interpretant. And although the energetic interpretant presupposes the emotional interpretant, the opposite is not true – that is, the emotional interpretant does not necessarily call for the energetic interpretant (*CP* 5.475).

Sign activity may result in the generation either of other signs or of something that shares in the nature of the sign, which Peirce identifies as the 'logical interpretant.' From a Peircean perspective, pragmatism – or better, pragmaticism – is a method for ascertaining the meaning of 'intellectual concepts,' of those concepts which subtend arguments concerning objective facts (*CP* 5.467). From this perpective, conceptual signs play an essential role not only in communicating data that have already been acquired, but also in discovering and enriching cognitive processes themselves.

From a pragmaticist perspective, Peirce identified the 'ultimate logical interpretant' in conceptualization, in rules that spring from intellectual concepts, in habit change. The habit is an outcome of a sign, and by virtue of its generality it shares in the nature of a sign. Insofar as it is a habit it is a logical interpretant, and since the formation of a habit marks a point of arrival in the semiosic process, it functions ideally as an ultimate (logical) interpretant (*CP* 5.476; see also 10.2.7).

The definition of sign cited earlier from the *Collected Papers* (2.228) poses a significant problem. As pointed out by Colapietro (1989: ch. 1), several Peirce scholars maintain that this definition would seem circumscribed to representative signs alone, so that it does not have a truly general valency. This belief also arises from Peirce's own use (or misuse) of the term 'representamen' for 'sign' in this particular phase in his studies. 'My definition of a representamen is as follows,' says Peirce:

> A *representamen* is a subject of a triadic relation *to* a second, called its *object*, *for* a third, called its *interpretant*, this triadic relation being such that the *representamen* determines its interpretant to stand in the same triadic relation to the same object for some interpretant. (*CP* 1.541)

This strikes us as an unhappy formulation, yet on closer examination it is obvious that Peirce's intended definition of sign aims at general validity. His definitions are not circumscribed to representative signs; without underestimating the importance of the relation of the sign to its object, his aim is to describe all types of signs. Nor could a sign theory that is truly general aim at explaining representative signs alone: semiosis comprises different types of signs, including commands, musical notes, and connectives that cannot be classified as representative signs. And even though the action of the object is not immediately obvious in such signs, it is part of the signifying process.

The conjunction 'and,' for example, would not seem to be a sign, given the apparent lack of reference to an object. Actually, it does have indicative value in the structure of discourse, uniting one part to another, which therefore becomes the object of the conjunctive sign 'and.' A musical note refers to the composer's musical idea, the object, which appeals to the aesthetic sensibility of the listener, thereby creating an 'emotional interpretant' (*CP* 5.475). The imperative 'Turn the radio off' qualifies as sign material because of the speaker's will or intentionality, the object, which elicits an interpretant in what ensues as its effect, the action – 'energetic interpretant' – of turning off the radio, which is just one possible response or interpretant among others (such as ignoring the command and not turning off the radio, or simply lowering the volume, or raising it, or formulating a verbal reply).

Both the object and interpretant are part of an irreducibly triadic sign structure, representative and non-representative. And Peirce himself noted that the term 'representation' is inadequate for the general reality of the sign, which is better described in terms of 'mediation' (*CP* 4.3). In terms of a general description, the sign or semiosic function consists in mediating between the object and the interpretant more than in 'representing' the object to the interpretant.

Although the expression 'aliquid stat pro aliquo' (something that stands for something else) describes the sign relation in dyadic terms, Peirce's definition points to the irreducibly triadic structure of the sign relationship. As such, it places the condition for theorizing the movement of *renvoi* – transferral/deferral – structural to semiosis. This particular aspect of Peirce's analysis of sign structures and relations is highlighted by Thomas A. Sebeok (1920–2001) when he states:

> Peirce's definition embodies the core concept of *renvoi,* or transfer, Jakobson's compressed coinage (*Coup d'œil sur le développement de la sémiotique* [1975]) for the celebrated antique formulation, *aliquid stat pro aliquo,* but it

> contains one very important further feature. Peirce asserts not only that *x* is a sign of *y*, but that 'somebody' – what he called 'a *Quasi-interpreter*' (4.551) – takes *x* to be a sign of *y*. (1979: viii)

Not only is a sign a sign of something else, but there is also a 'somebody,' a '*Quasi-interpreter*' (*CP* 4.551), who assumes something as a sign of something else. Peirce further analyses the implications of this when he writes: 'It is of the nature of a sign, and in particular of a sign which is rendered significant by a character which lies in the fact that it will be interpreted as a sign. Of course, nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (*CP* 2.308). And again: 'A sign is only a sign *in actu* by virtue of its receiving an interpretation, that is, by virtue of its determining another sign of the same object' (*CP* 5.569).

As an irreducibly triadic structure, the sign cannot be reduced to a question of 'representation,' as use of this term for the relation between sign and object might lead one to believe. In his famous definition (reported in *CP* 2.228), Peirce does not specify the kind of relationship binding the sign to the object – which is not limited to the logic of representation, of 'standing for' something. At the same time, however, specification of the type of relationship between sign and object and between sign and interpretant is determinant in his classification of signs. Two significant examples are his trichotomies: icon, index, symbol, and rheme, dicisign, argument (cf. *CP* 2.243).

In describing the relations among sign, object, and interpretant, Peirce often asserts that a sign is determined by an object and, in turn, determines an interpretant in a relation that, from the perspective of the constituted sign, is passive with regard to the object and active with regard to the interpretant (*CP* 1.538; 1.541). However, the reality of the parts constituting the irreducibly triadic relation between object, sign, and interpretant is complex, multiple, and dynamic. In fact, in Peirce's view, object and interpretant qualify in terms of immediacy, dynamism, and finality. In some of Peirce's descriptions, the object determines the sign, which in turn determines the interpretant (cf. *CP* 1.541), whereas in others, the object is determined by the sign – that is to say, is brought into existence by the sign: 'The object of a sign may be something to be created by the sign' (*CP* 8.178). Indeed, Peirce distinguished between the 'dynamical object,' the object that *determines* the sign, on the one hand, and the 'immediate object,' which is the object as it *is determined by* the sign, on the other. The sign creates its (immediate) object and in doing so creates the necessary conditions for its own determination as a sign by

the dynamical object (cf. *CP* 4.536). It follows that the object in the semiosic process is immanent when viewed from the perspective of the immediate object; in contrast, when considered from the perspective of the dynamical object, it is transcendent.

Peirce's most famous trichotomy classifies signs as icons, indexes, and symbols on the basis of the relation between sign and dynamical object.

The icon establishes a relation with the dynamical object by virtue of its internal structure (*CP* 8.335); in other words, it signifies its object through some resemblance to it, through a relation of similarity, of attraction on the basis of some sort of affinity: 'Anything whatever, be it quality, existent, individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing and used as a sign of it' (*CP* 2.247).

The index establishes a real relation with the dynamical object; in other words, reference to the object arises from the fact that the object influences the sign (*CP* 8.335).

The symbol relates to the dynamical object by virtue of a law (a disposition). As Peirce states, it 'is constituted a sign merely or mainly by the fact that it is used and understood as such' (*CP* 2.307).

But the reality of sign in Peirce's description is far more complex. On the side of the object, for example, a distinction is made between immediate and dynamical object, whereas the dynamical object by itself may be classified, in turn, as a possibility, an effectuality, a generality. Its modality of being is what determines how the object itself acts on the sign (see *CP* 8.216, 1.23, 6.455, 8.366ff.).

1.1.5. The General Character of Peirce's Sign Model

Investigating the nature of the human sign must involve investigating the links among meaning, mind, and subject, considering these as specific and complex aspects of signs, as they are condensed and articulated by the semiosic processes that pervade the entire universe. And insofar as they share in semiosis, these aspects of signs must inevitably be named together. However, Peirce intended his model of sign to be general, functional in all spheres of semiosis, including the non-human; in other words, it was to be free of all references to mind in a restrictive sense. In Peircean semiotics, terms such as 'mind,' 'thought,' and 'semiosis' are in some respects interchangeable. The general character of Peirce's sign model is encountered in many passages in his work, including this one: the sign 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' (*CP* 8.332; cf. *CP* 2.242). Also, according to Peirce, the sign's 'interpreter' is transformed into its 'interpretant,' 'the proper significate outcome of a sign' (*CP* 5.473).

All investigations of the formal structure of semiosis must begin with the triadic character of the relations among sign, object, and interpretant (cf. also *CP* 8.361). According to Peirce, these relations are grounded in the logic of otherness. As already noted, a sign is a sign insofar as it is other – that is to say, insofar as it leads outside and beyond itself. Through this relation with something else, the interpretant, signs generate signifying paths and develop their potential for plurivocality. Insofar as it is other, the sign is always an excess; in Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology, it is always 'extralocalized' (Bakhtin 1992a, 1992b).

According to Peirce, signs are also always present in nature, albeit at a remove from the actions of external agents; thus, the universe is permeated with signs, which stand apart from the action of interpretive will. Genuine mediation (irreducible thirdness) is an inherent part of reality, one that manifests itself as sign reality in interpretive processes, be they scientific, artistic–esthetic, or part of everyday life. The signifying universe is manifested through such processes; it is also generated and amplified through them. From the perspective of anthroposemiosis, we observe that the universe as conceived by Peirce is significant on its own account to varying degrees, but also that human beings in responding to it produce new interpretants and contribute to its growth. In Bakhtin's terms, a relationship of 'answering comprehension' is established – at least potentially – between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. The human being is a sign and thus develops through dialogic relations with other signs in the human and non-human worlds.

Let us relate this to Peircean pragmaticism. The general definition of sign does not remain frozen at the level of abstraction; rather, it is described as orienting praxis. As it relates to research and the play of musement, this involves the continuous work of re/interpreting and re/inventing the world – indeed, the universe in its entirety. Moreover, in the semiosic universe thus conceived, the imagination – be it scientific or poetical – generates signs and reaches for an understanding of the fact, that is, for truth, 'the universe of all universes.' This truth is never ultimate or determinate (cf. *CP* 5.506; 1.406); rather, it is dynamic and dialogic truth, understood as a process of becoming in which the logic of vagueness plays a major role (see 10.2.7).

Regarding the relation between semiosis and thought or mind: Peirce

says that 'just as we say that a body is in motion, and not that motion is in a body we ought to say that we are in thought and not that thoughts are in us' (*CP* 5.289 n1). In other words, we do not have thought on the one hand, and signs which express it on the other. Thought in itself is sign reality – 'every thought is a sign' (*CP* 1.538) – and develops dialogically in terms of sign activity, of semiosic flow. As Peirce repeated on several occasions, thought by its very nature grows and develops constantly (*CP* 2.32). Let us add, echoing Welby, that it does so extensively, in a 'cosmosemiotic' perspective – that is to say, in relation to the entire signifying universe.

1.2. More Problems in Focus: Subjects, Bodies, and Signs

Peirce's sign theory makes an important contribution to redefining the subject, and this aspect of Peirce's writings should not be undervalued. According to Peirce, the human being is a sign and thus it coincides with thought – that is to say, with verbal and non-verbal semiosic processes as we have been describing them. Furthermore, the subject (that is, the self) is enriched with new implications in the light of the otherness relationship. As a semiosic process and as an expression of the dynamics of the relation between utterance and interpretation, the subject-as-sign generates and is generated by a potentially infinite number of signifying routes (see 7.2.2).

1.2.1. The Dialogic Self

Peirce says: 'Men and words reciprocally educate each other; each increase of a man's information involves and is involved by, a corresponding increase of a word's information' (*CP* 5.313). And even more explicitly:

> There is no element whatever of man's consciousness which has not something corresponding to it in the word ... It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign; so, that every thought is an *external* sign, proves that man is an external sign. That it is to say, the man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical. Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought. (*CP* 5.314)

As a sign in becoming (see *CP* 5.313), the subject emerges as a dialogic and relational unit, as an open subject, as an ongoing process in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogic interrelation with other signs and other subjects. Even in Peirce's early writings, we find traces of the dialogic conception of thought and subjectivity, and he would continue to develop this conception throughout his research. To the extent that we are dealing with signs, we cannot define the subject's boundaries once and for all; we can only delimit them through the dialogic encounter with other signs and other subjects.

> The individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be, is only a negation. This is man,
>
> '... proud man,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence.' (*CP* 5.317)

The human individual is born into a community, and lives through experiences, and develops in relation to the experiences of the other members of that community, and is never separate from that community:

> We know that man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man's experience is nothing, if it stands alone. If he sees what others 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* 5.402n2)

Being grounded in the logic of otherness, the person – by which Peirce means the self – is a community in itself. Indeed, the person is no less than a community of dialogically interrelated selves:

> 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)

From the perspective of intersubjectivism, the subject is a fact of communication that is constantly changing roles, from speaker/utterer to listener/interpreter and back, in the dialogic exchange among interlocutors. The self's discourse is never its own; rather, it rings with the discourses of others. From a Peircean perspective and in accordance with Bakhtin, we can say that the word is never neutral; in fact, it is impregnated with the words, thoughts, experiences, actions, and feelings of others.

From a semiotic perspective, the body, too, emerges as an interrelational entity, as sign material through which the self acts, expresses itself, and communicates. Yet the body does not imprison the self:

> 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* subtile 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)

Peirce describes the human being as an incarnated subject. It is comprised of intercorporeity, sociality, history, and psychic activity. The latter involves both conscious and unconscious life – in other words, thought, language, and consciousness as well as the unconscious or 'semiconscious.' This last is an 'obscure part' in the complex and variegated sphere of the psyche and is considered by Peirce to be the principal part of mind. The semiosic processes that constitute the unconscious are neither illuminated nor controlled by reason; they do not form fully conscious inferences. The unconscious represents the main part of the mind's activity in terms of quantity; it is also richer in signifying potential, 'almost infinitely more delicate in its sensibilities' (*CP* 6.569; cf. also *CP* 7.555), than thought processes controlled by reason, than fully conscious inferences.

Signs that are *human* in the sense that they are generated by human beings and that they express values which are truly human have a structural tendency toward instability, uncertainty, and restlessness. The *human sign* is an open and critical interpreted–interpretant demanding constant verification and revision through its interrelationships with

other signs. The subject, the self, viewed as a sign elicits interrogation of past interpretations, of acquired knowledge, of received facts, habits, and convictions; the subject, the self, is always open to critical questioning. As such, it emerges in semiosis as an existential adventure wherein fixed points, beliefs, and truths are always being shaken by restlessness and thrown into crisis through dialogue with other signs.

As an open semiosic process, as sign material grounded in otherness and dialogism, subjectivity does not remain trapped within ontology and the various definitions of being. On the contrary, it is characterized by its potential for transformation, development, and displacement beyond roles and definitions, beyond the very categories of being. It is also characterized by 'extralocality' in its relations with the parts forming the sign according to the logic of otherness. Indeed, this potential is visible in the Greek root of the word 'dia-logue.' Long before the development of the philosophy of otherness, of alterity as conceived by Emmanuel Levinas (we will return to Levinas in chapter 9), Peirce had outlined 'otherwise than being' in semiotic terms.

According to Peirce, signs are not limited to the logic of symmetrical exchange between speaker and listener, between utterer and interpreter, between an encoding sign and a decoding sign, or between an interpreted sign and an interpretant sign. On the contrary, signs are open to displacement; they lead outside and beyond themselves and beyond the body that incarnates them. All of this is equally true for subjectivity.

1.2.2. Personal Identity and the Doctrine of Synechism

Peirce developed his semiotics of self, of personal identity, in three basic stages:

1 His writings from 1867 and 1868, published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. These are characterized by their semiotic interpretation of human consciousness: 'Whenever we think, we have present to the consciousness some feeling, image, conception, or other representation which serves as a sign' (*CP* 5.314).
2 Five articles published in the *Monist* beginning in 1891, in which Peirce introduced his doctrines of tychism, anancism, agapism, and synechism and developed his evolutionary cosmology.
3 His later writings on pragmaticism, which united his cosmology with his theory of semiotics (cf. Colapietro 1989).

Against the concepts of 'personality,' 'personal self,' and 'individual

self,' all of which theorize an individual, finite and defined self, Peirce contrasts the concept of self in dialogic communion with other selves. The finite self or 'personal self' is an 'illusory phenomenon,' yet insofar as human beings are egotistical they believe they can live and flourish separately from others, separately from the human community to which they in fact belong. And to the extent that they believe this, they are creating the conditions for illusory forms of isolation.

In reality, self is never wholly divided or isolated from the other. Peirce teaches us that human existence completely isolated from the other is impossible. Nor is isolation a guarantee of the self's uniqueness or singularity, its specificity and otherness with respect to the otherness of others. To be a self means to be a possible member of a community in such a way that, as noted earlier (*CP* 5.402n2), what counts and should be theorized is not 'my' experience but 'ours.' In any case, Peirce's semiotics induces us to establish a connection between the social and communitarian character of self and the self's uniqueness, its singularity, its signifying otherness with respect to any given interpretive process. From this perspective, Peirce theorizes the capacity for signifying on one's own account beyond and apart from reference to anything else with recourse to the category of firstness.

This implies that the self's uniqueness – its irreducibility to a referent – is unveiled and developed through relations with the other. To the extent that it is unique, the self is ineffable (cf. *CP* 1.357). Evoking Levinas, the self is saying beyond the said, displaying a propensity for significance beyond words. Evoking Oswald Ducrot, the self's singularity rests in the unsaid, the unutterable. Furthermore, the ineffability of the self – its uniqueness – does not imply the sacrifice of communicability, since what self is in itself can always be communicated to a certain degree, even if only to communicate its incommunicability. It follows that in Peirce's conception, the human condition in its specificity is characterized in its most profound nature neither by solitude nor by muteness. Colapietro, interpreter of Peirce (cf. *CP* 7.591-2), observes that 'to be human is to exist in the tension *between* solitude and solidarity – the tension between the inward depths of the human spirit and the outward expressions of those inward depths' (1989: 118). Yet at the same time, even though the human animal is an animal that communicates, orientation toward communication does not imply the destruction of singularity.

Peirce employs the term 'synechism' for the doctrine of continuity or thirdness (see *CP* 7.565, 7.570, 7.571). The principle of continuity does not deny the discrete unit, secondness; it does, however, exclude all forms of separatism. It excludes all forms of irreducible distinctions and

hypostatization concerning the mental and the physical – for example, waking and sleeping, life and death – and concerning the self–other relationship (see *CP* 6.268). Human beings, the world, the cosmos, the universe in its entirety, all develop according to the logic of continuity and otherness. Their phenomenal consistency arises from their interrelatedness as processes in becoming grounded in the logic of otherness. The self and the other do not exclude each other; even more radically, the self's identity is constituted uniquely through its relation with the other – the other *from* self and the other *of* self, the human other and the divine other – whether this relation is effective or only imaginary (cf. *CP* 7.572).

Applying the principle of synechism, Peirce worked toward a nonreductive conception of personal identity. In the end, he arrived at three types of consciousness: *carnal* consciousness, which is 'but a small part of the man'; *social* consciousness, by which 'a man's spirit is embodied in others, and which continues to live and breathe and have its being very much longer than superficial observers think'; and *spiritual* consciousness, which renders the human being 'one of the eternal verities, which is embodied in the universe as a whole' (*CP* 7.575-576).

To be a self means to be in the process of becoming a self in the otherness relationship. This process is never complete (see *CP* 6.157) and is capable of achieving the highest degrees of otherness corresponding to the condition of firstness, orience, and iconicity. From a Peircean perspective, the self is being in becoming – not a separate unit, but a continuous being characterized by incompleteness and unfinalizability. From the perspective of temporality, beyond including the past and finding some degree of realization in the present, the self as other is always projected toward the future (see *CP* 6.155). In semiotic terms, the self is projected into future interpretants without ever being defined once and for all. To deny such a possibility means to deny the self its essence as a sign, to deny semiosis, to deny the self its identity as self. As an open semiosic process toward becoming in the interrelationship with other selves and other signs, as a sign grounded in the logic of otherness, the self is oriented toward the future in a temporal dimension that involves reinterpretation and reinvention of the self/other with respect to the past and to the present.

1.2.3. Consciousness, Body, World

The body plays a central role in the development of consciousness. Consciousness as the I–self, I–other, interpreted–interpretant relation is

incarnated consciousness. The body is a precondition for the full development of consciousness and therefore of the human person as a symbol. Peirce established what we might call a homological relation between the man-symbol and the word-symbol, one that helps us avoid oversimplification: the self is not a thing, nor can it be reduced to a relation of identification with the physiological body, with the mere animal (*CP* 7.591). This approach underlines the materiality of the sign, whether as a word or as an individual: in the latter instance, the sign always relates to a body.

Yet Peirce also maintains that 'we are not shut up in a box of flesh and blood' (*CP* 7.591). Here, the expression 'flesh and blood' points to the physiological body, which can only be distinguished from the semiosic body through a process of abstraction. Human living organisms are already semiosic organisms insofar as they are alive, and cultural signs are acquired through the body. Signs, be they words or human beings, are related to bodies. They have physical materiality even when this is not immediately obvious, as in the case of dreaming or 'silent thought.' Indeed, the distinction between physical–extrasign instrumental materiality, on the one hand, and sign materiality, which ultimately always has a physical referent, on the other, can only be made through a process of abstraction. The self develops interrelatedly with other bodies; through these other bodies, it transcends its own boundaries, which are the boundaries of the worlds it experiences, be they real or imaginary. The word can be considered an extension of the body, an expression of the incarnated self; echoing Bakhtin, the word constitutes a bridge that joins one's own body to the bodies of others; the word is a common territory that the body shares with its interlocutors. In terms of materiality, the body emerges from the interrelation between physiological material and semiotic material, and as such presents itself as a means of expression and of mediation with other bodies.

With the acquisition of language – that is, of the verbal sign system – we are thrown into the social world. This condition provokes an extraordinary multiplication of signs and senses and, therefore, the amplification and relative elaboration/articulation of our perceptual, cognitive, and emotional worlds, of our potential for desire and imagination. Thought processes and subjectivity are developed and empowered through the word, which is always oriented toward the other, the relative other and the absolute other, the other external to myself and the other constituting my own identity as self. All of this corresponds to an increase in intercorporeal relations, the involvement of one's own body with other bodies, be they organic, human, non-human, or inorganic. Through lan-

guage acquisition, thanks to which we transcend the worlds we inhabit, the child interrelates with other bodies – as Peirce puts it, 'connects that language with bodies somewhat similar to the central one' (*CP* 5.232).

A semiotic approach to subjectivity concerns not only intellectual, cultural, and historical–social life, but also the life of the affections, interiority, as well as the ethical dimension. Peirce discusses the functioning and development of cognition and the will and also of emotion, desire, and feeling. He states that 'there is no reason for supposing a power of introspection; and consequently, the only way of investigating a psychological question is by inference from external facts' (*CP* 5.249). Welby also sharply criticized the concept of introspection and its implications for human identity; this emerges from her unpublished manuscripts, especially her writings dedicated to the problem of 'Subjectivity' (see, for example, 'I and Self,' 23 November 1907, Welby Collection, York University Archives, Scott Library, Toronto).

An important component in the affective and emotional sphere is sympathy, feeling for the other, communion with the other. This does not exclude specificity or singularity as a unique individual. Peirce writes that *sentimentalism* is the 'doctrine that great respect should be paid to the natural judgments of the sensible heart' (*CP* 6.292), but he adds that this does not exclude scientific inquiry. From a Peircean perspective, sentimentalism – the concept of 'the sensible heart' – just as much as the scientific method, calls for an interrelational and intersubjective approach to self and knowledge. Especially noteworthy is the importance Peirce attaches to such values as sympathy, feeling, communion, and singularity for the successful development of scientific research. We encounter the implications of this conception in his 'agapastic theory of evolution' (*CP* 6.295).

Regarding the relationship between consciousness and language, we do not have thought on the one hand, and the signs that clothe it on the other. On the contrary, 'only by external facts can thought be known at all. The only thought, then, which can possibly be cognized is thought in signs. But thought that cannot be cognized does not exist. All thought, therefore, must necessarily be in signs' (*CP* 5.251). By theorizing essentially continuous relationships between thought and social interactions, thought and discourse, thought and thought, the semiotic approach to subjectivity points to the intersubjective character of thought itself: 'From the proposition that every thought is a sign, it follows that every thought must address itself to some other, must determine some other, since that is the essence of a sign' (*CP* 5.253).

Consciousness, which is the totality of the mind's manifestations, is modelled in signs to the extent that a relation of identity can be established between mind and semiosis: 'The content of consciousness, the entire phenomenal manifestation of mind, is a sign resulting from inference' (*CP* 5.313). Signs are the stuff on which thought is made; they are the means through which communication is achieved. The analogy (or better, homology) established by Peirce between word and subject also serves to demonstrate the validity of his definition of the subject as an 'external sign': 'The man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical. Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought' (*CP* 5.315).

Peirce was critical of subjectivism and, it follows, of those conceptions which relegate mental life to the private sphere. A clear line cannot be drawn between private and mental phenomena, on the one hand, and public life, on the other, between inside and outside, internal and external, inward and outward. On the contrary, Peirce described subjectivity in terms of 'outreaching identity' – an expression that emphasizes the relation of continuity between these poles. In other words, mental life, the self, the subject is modelled in the outreaching chain of deferrals among signs. Consciousness and unconsciousness are engendered and enhanced through signs that arise in the community and that are a public possession.

Much like Welby, and also much like Bakhtin (see Bakhtin and Voloshinov 1929), Peirce perceived the internal world as deriving from the external world – as consisting of signs interiorized from the outside world. This does not exclude the possibility of forming private signs or secret signs, signs that remain unsaid and unuttered with respect to the public and official worlds. Private signs – or if we prefer, 'secret signs' – enable the subject to keep its distance from the public, external world. Human beings inhabit a world that is at least double – internal and external, a world of percepts. For each of us, there is an inner world consisting of private sign systems, imagination, and musement (*CP* 5.487), and an outer world of action and habits. In this double world, inside and outside interact in a relationship of reciprocal dialogic responsivity, and internal dialogue not only reflects but also models external dialogue, and vice versa. As Colapietro says, interpreting Peirce (cf. *CP* 5.493): 'The interaction of the inner and the outer worlds primarily consists in *experience* (the direct action of the outer world on the inner) and *deliberation* (the indirect action of the inner world on the outer through the operation of hab-

its)' (1989: 117). And in this possibility of inhabiting a double world, a world that also accommodates private signs, secret signs, imagination, and musement, Peirce identifies a sign dimension that is specifically characteristic of human beings.

In concert with his semiotic approach to selfhood in terms of 'outreaching identity,' Peirce upholds the principle of knowability:

> [We] can know nothing except what we directly experience. So all that we can anyway know relates to experience. All the creations of our mind are but patchworks from experience. So that all our ideas are but ideas of real or transposed experiences. A word can mean nothing except the idea it calls up. So that we cannot even talk about anything but a knowable object. The unknowable about which Hamilton and the agnostics talk can be nothing but an Unknowable Knowable. The absolutely unknowable is a nonexistent existence. The Unknowable is a nominalistic heresy. (*CP* 6.492)

Peirce insists that the 'absolutely incognizable' is inconceivable: 'The meaning of a word is the conception it conveys, the absolutely incognizable has no meaning because no conception attaches to it. It is, therefore, a meaningless word' (*CP* 5.310). If the unknowable can be conceptualized, it is thanks to the knowable; if the unknown can be conceived, it is through evocation of the known. (For a more detailed study of this, see chapter 10.) Any substance whatever, the self included, is the totality of its phenomenal manifestations, which in principle are not subtended by unknowable entities. But to maintain that the self is a knowable self is not to deny the existence of dark and mysterious areas of the mind, of the unconscious. In other words, Peirce denies the possibility of the absolutely unknowable, in the same way that he denies the concept of the 'personal self' as completely sundered and isolated from other subjects (see *CP* 8. 82). Yet this does not mean that he accepts the concepts of transparency and total accessibility. Indeed, he acknowledges that interiority is of fundamental importance to human life.

Unvocalized, untranscribed thought, dreaming, unofficial consciousness or ideology, all of that which is related to the Bakhtinian concept of 'taciturnity,' but which can only be theorized with reference to its external manifestations – all of this points to elusiveness, indeterminacy, uncertainty, changeability, being existential modalities that are fundamental to human life itself. Viewed in this light, neither our own thoughts nor the thoughts of others can be considered wholly accessible to rational thought.

1.2.4. Private Worlds and Public Worlds

As we have already observed, the human mind is a phenomenal manifestation, a sign that develops according to the laws of inference. Thought is inferential in much the same way as metathought, which takes on thought and inferential processes as its object of analysis. The subject becomes aware of its own selfhood through the same mechanisms involved in becoming aware of the self of others, mechanisms in which the role of dialogism is decisive. It may also be the case – as when dealing with two distinct personalities – that with an increase in the distance between self and other and therefore in the degree of otherness, there is a corresponding increase in one's capacity for comprehending and responding to the feelings and thoughts of the other. In any case, access to my other self is not essentially a different problem from access to the self beyond my own self, to the self of the other external to myself.

Consciousness develops through sign processes oriented from outside to inside, from external to internal, from the public to the private, and not vice versa. (With Bakhtin and Voloshinov [1929] we can distinguish between 'official' and 'unofficial' consciousness.) It follows that consciousness is the outcome of a process of interiorization; this in turn implies that in order to know consciousness, we must turn our gaze outward, through a process of exteriorization, toward the social world and interpersonal relationships, rather than inward. As already noted, the world as lived by the subject is at least a double world, one that comprises an internal world and an external world and the constantly interacting motions of interiority and exteriority.

Having outlined Peirce's conception of the internal, private world, on the one hand, and of the external, public world, on the other, and the relation of continuity that binds them, we must emphasize the specificity of these two dimensions and the distinctive tasks they carry out. The existence of a private world implies the possibility of keeping our distance from the public world, the official world, and of constructing a different albeit related system of signs and values from the public world. Awareness of one's own private world, of unofficial consciousness, implies the capacity to critically differentiate between one world and another, to keep one's distance from the world of the other, the outside world, public consciousness, beyond telling of the specificity of one's own world in the interrelation with the world of others.

Orientation toward the inside implies knowing how to distinguish between the sphere of imagination and the sphere of the actual and the

effective. This implies the capacity to see how, in the transition from one world to another, our actions in the effective, actual world are modelled by our disposition for imaginary action, for the play of musement. In turn, these are modelled to some extent by the action on the self of exterior existence and experience.

The mind is not something that 'resides' somewhere inside the body, secluded and impenetrable, that is confined to a single body and thus is correlative to the real world (*CP* 5.128), and that only subsequently is clothed in language. The instant I communicate my words, thoughts, sentiments, attention, these inhabit the body of the other; in this way, my own word, which is a corporeal word, is able to inhabit many places at the same time.

Identity is projected toward the outside and transcends the limits of the physical body ('the organism is only an instrument of thought,' says Peirce; *CP* 5.315). Through such transcendence, the self asserts and enhances its sense of value. Identity is 'outreaching identity' (*CP* 7.591), intercorporeity, intersubjectivity, a condition of interrelatedness in which it asserts its specificity, its uniqueness as other. When we describe subjectivity in terms of semiosic processes – remembering that according to the logic of otherness, the sign is constantly transcending its own limits – we are in effect declaring that identity is never finalized, monologic, or single voiced and is never confined to a single place. Rather, it has the power to materialize elsewhere and otherwise simultaneously. It is extralocalized, multiple identity, and as such is similar to a word.

1.2.5. Habit and the Play of Musement

Having described the self in terms of semiosis – that is, in terms of inferential processes, actions, and habits – Peirce goes on to identify another fundamental characteristic of the capacity for rational consciousness. This characteristic is best understood in terms of control over one's own inferences. Control refers to the capacity for criticism, verification, and confutation, and to the disposition to respond to as well as regulate behaviour in the light of norms, ideals, and aspirations. In Peirce's words, control involves 'a sense of taking a habit, or disposition to respond to a given kind of stimulus in a given kind of way' (*CP* 5.440). Self-control is associated with deliberate behaviour, and therefore with the self's freedom and autonomy with respect to a given interpretant sign. Also, self-control is always connected with the otherness relation-

ship, which in the final analysis regulates the relationships among signs that present some degree of semiotic materiality, signifying otherness, resistance with respect to a given interpretive trajectory.

Peirce's conception implies a hierarchy of habits of conduct and interpretive processes. We can identify a progression from low degrees of distancing and criticism in sign activity (where habits of behaviour and interpretive modalities of the subject remain essentially unmodified), to intermediate levels (where interpretive behaviour is modifiable), through to a metalevel (where sign activity itself is the object of interpretation). Peirce notes that 'control may itself be controlled, criticism itself subjected to criticism; and ideally, there is no obvious definite limit to the sequence' (see *CP* 5.442).

It is important to remember here that from a Peircean perspective, autonomy and signifying freedom are connected with self-control. Thus the imagination, the disposition to daydreaming, the play of musement – all of those things which in the final analysis subtend all intellectual power (see *CP* 6.286) to the extent that they contribute to the formation of new and alternative habits (themselves the result of translating into practical behaviour that which has already been conceived in the play of musement) – are also connected with self-control. Furthermore, the human disposition to daydreaming and to reflecting on ideals, aspirations, and passions is part of the moral or ethical dimension of signifying processes. And to the moral sphere as well – as it is delineated in the impulse toward realizing ideals and aspirations – belong the tasks of control and criticism (*MS* 675, 15–16).

So the brute force of experience, and the power of imagination as well, and ultimately the attraction exerted by absolute otherness, all count as important influences on and models for the self as a subject, as consciousness. Ideals do not act on existents directly; rather, they model them, and they can do so to the extent that they respect the nature of the things they model. Consequently, the modality through which ideals exert their influence is not at all brute force; rather, it is what Peirce calls 'creative love.' And intentionality aside, the effect of creative love is to call things subject to such influence to their realization.

1.3. Neglected but Foundational Aspects of Peirce's Semiotics

In Peirce's philosophy, chance, love, and necessity are the three modes of evolutionary development in the cosmos (significantly, the 1923 collection of Peirce's writings edited by M.R. Cohen is titled *Chance, Love and*

Logic). We will focus on the question of love or 'agapasm'; this will provide a platform for discussing of Welby's work in relation to that of Peirce.

In 'Evolutionary Love' (1893a; the last in a series of five papers published in the *Monist*), Peirce distinguished between three basic modes of evolutionary development operative in the cosmos: tychastic evolution or 'tychasm,' denoting development regulated by chance, or 'evolution by fortuitous variation,' as Peirce puts it; anancastic evolution or 'anancasm,' dominated by necessity, 'evolution by mechanical necessity'; and agapastic evolution or 'agapasm,' oriented by the law of love, 'evolution by creative love.'

1.3.1. Three Evolutionary Modes in the Cosmos

The doctrines that elect these three evolutionary modes as their objects of analysis are respectively 'tychasticism,' 'anancasticism,' and 'agapasticism'; whereas the terms 'tychism,' 'anancism,' and 'agapism' indicate 'the mere propositions that absolute chance, mechanical necessity, and the law of love are severally operative in the cosmos' (*CP* 6.302).

Each of these evolutionary modes contains traces of the other two. Thus, they are not pure; rather, they affect one another reciprocally. In other words, these modes act together in different combinations and in varying degrees, and they reach different states of equilibrium as a result of evolutionary processes that are dominated now by chance, now by necessity, now by love. Far from being exclusive of one another, tychasm, anancasm, and agapasm share the same general elements; that said, these elements emerge most clearly in agapastic evolution. Evoking the language of geometry, Peirce describes tychasm and anancasm as 'degenerate forms of agapasm.' In other words, agapasm encompasses the other two as their degenerate cases (cf. *CP* 6.303).

Tychasm shares with agapasm a disposition for reproductive creation, 'the forms preserved being those that use the spontaneity conferred upon them in such wise as to be drawn into harmony with their original.' This, Peirce continues, 'only shows that just as love cannot have a contrary, but must embrace what is most opposed to it, as a degenerate case of it, so tychasm is a kind of agapasm.' Much as with agapastic processes, that which is reproduced through tychastic reproductive processes maintains a relation of affinity with that which reproduces. However, tychastic evolution proceeds by exclusion and is strongly symbolic insofar as it is dominated by chance; in contrast, genuine agapasm advances through 'positive sympathy,' through attraction or affinity among the 'created' –

that is to say, through interpretants 'springing from continuity of mind' (or synechism) (cf. *CP* 6.304), through open-ended interpretive processes constituting the semiosic matter of the universe.

The concept of continuity involves that of regularity. As also results from Welby's conception – according to which the universe is permeated by signifying processes – development through signs is beaten out and articulated in a general structure whereby continuity presupposes relational logic grounded in otherness, what we might call a sort of 'dialogic.' However, the principles of continuity and interrelationship are grounded in otherness, and this implies that they are grounded in the discrete unit. Thus, continuity in the development of the universe and of those sign processes which inhabit it is built around the dynamics at play between the continuous and the discontinuous, regularity and irregularity, order and disorder, order and chaos. The overall orientation of anancasm is regulated by 'an intrinsic affinity for the good,' says Peirce. From this perspective, it is similar to the agapastic type of advance. But as close to agapasm as it perhaps is, anancasm lacks a determining factor in evolution – that is, the factor of 'freedom,' which instead characterizes creative love and subtends tychasm (cf. *CP* 6.305). As a procedure dominated by necessity and constriction, anancasm is strongly indexical.

As we have anticipated, agapasm is strongly iconic when understood in terms of development through the power of affinity, attraction, and sympathy. Agapastic evolution is regulated by the law of love – creative and altruistic love, as Welby too would say, love oriented toward others. As 'degenerate agapasm,' it also foresees the action of chance (symbolicity) and necessity (indexicality). However, the forces that prevail in and characterize agapastic evolution in the relations among the interpretants forming the continuous (synechetic) flow of infinite semiosis are those of attraction, affinity, freedom, fortuitousness, and iconicity.

Welby, like Peirce, identifies three principal modes in the development of the universe: the 'planetary,' the 'solar,' and the 'cosmic.' This triad indicates three levels of increasing complexity and signifying power, which correspond to her meaning triad: 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance' (cf. Welby 1893b, 1896, 1903, 1911a and b). The universe is developed and enhanced through the generation and interpretation of signs in signifying trajectories. These trajectories trace a network that is constantly expanding as signs and senses multiply.

With specific reference to anthroposemiosis, evolutionary development is conceived in terms of the relation to the world of objective facts, the effectual, what actually occurs in the external world, among the cre-

ated. But it is also conceived in relation to the play of musement, to the capacity for hypothesizing about future possible worlds, be they real or imaginary. Anthroposemiosis implies the capacity for metadiscourse, for exploring and enhancing the relations among objectified signs and objectifying signs, the potential for thought processes (but let us remember that Peirce also uses the term 'thought' as a synonym for 'semiosis,' in which the human mind is not necessarily involved). This capacity, which can also be termed 'semiotics' understood as 'metasemiosis,' is exclusive to the human subject insofar as we are endowed with a special modelling device called language (5.1).

Both Peirce and Welby attempt to develop a universal science of signs and meaning that can account for all semiosic processes, human and non-human, verbal and non-verbal, in all their diversity, complexity, and articulation, in relation to the specifically human world for meaning in terms not only of signification but also of significance or sense. We cannot with any claim to neutrality study the life of signs in merely descriptive terms. Such an approach can only be partial and inadequate for a full understanding of the human subject moved by forces animating the universe it inhabits. An adequate understanding of human consciousness and human behaviour calls instead for a conception of sign the boundaries of which extend not only in the direction of 'zoosemiotics' and 'biosemiotics,' as proposed by Sebeok, but also in the direction of what (developing both Peirce and Welby) we might call 'cosmosemiotics,' which encompasses 'geosemiotics' and 'heliosemiotics' (cf. Petrilli 1998a).

1.3.2. Axiological Problems as Semiotic Problems

From the perspective of human social semiotics or anthroposociosemiotics, our gaze must embrace the fields of ethics, esthetics, and ideology. Thus equipped, it must then extend itself beyond the logico-cognitive boundaries of semiosic processes to contemplate problems of an axiological order. This approach requires us to focus on the human capacity and disposition for evaluation and criticism, on the capacity to assume responsibility. In this way, we will be able to move in the direction of what we propose to call 'semioethics' (in previous writings, 'ethosemiotics,' and subsequently 'teleosemiotics' or 'telosemiotics'; cf. Petrilli in Ponzio 1994b: 297–301; Petrilli 1998e; see also chapters 10, 11, and 12), or what Welby termed 'significs' (see 2.2). In fact, in her theory of sign and meaning, Welby privileged the term 'significs' to emphasize that her approach focused specifically on the problem of 'significance' – that

is, meaning in an axiological sense – and therefore on the relationship between signs and values. The term 'significs' indicates concern for such things as the value, pertinence, and signifying scope of signs. All of this presupposes special attention to the human being's involvement in the life of signs, considered not only in abstractly gnoseological terms but also in affective and pragmatic terms.

Peirce developed his cognitive semiotics in tandem with his studies of human social behaviour and of human interests globally. From this perspective, the problem of knowledge necessarily presupposes problems of an axiological order. 'Reasonableness' is understood as an open-ended dialectic–dialogic signifying process, as the development of thought unbiased by prejudice and oriented to the logic of otherness. Thus, reasonableness is an unfinalizable sign process regulated by the principle of continuity or synechism. As we might infer from Peirce's semiotic perspective, otherness and the dialogic conception of signs amount to a precondition for his doctrine of continuity, or synechism, the principle that 'all that exists is continuous' in the development of the universe and of the human subject that inhabits it (see *CP* 1.172). The dia-logic relation between self and other – both the other *from* self and the other *of* self – emerges as a precondition for the growth of reasonableness and continuity in the creative process. Peirce transcended the limits of gnoseologism in semiotics, working in a direction that could be described as pragmatic–ethic or operative–evaluative – as semioethical in our terminology, as significal in Welby's. In the final phase of his research, Peirce turned his attention to the normative sciences. He contemplated aesthetics and ethics and, therefore, issues such as the ultimate good or the *summum bonum,* which he identified neither in individual pleasure (hedonism) nor in the good of society (English utilitarianism), but rather in the 'evolutionary process' itself – more precisely, in the 'growth of 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). In Peirce's conception of evolution, which he developed with reference to the Gospel according to Saint John and the theosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg, human semiosis is enhanced by the power of love, understood as orientation toward the other, as care for the other. Reasonableness is endowed with the power to transform one's horror of the stranger, the alien, one's fear of the other (the fear one experiences of the other foreign to oneself), into sympathy for the other. And in fact, recalling his own essay, 'The Law of Mind' (1892a), Peirce asserted that the type of evolution foreseen by synechism is evolution by love, whereby reason warmed by love becomes reasonableness and the hateful becomes lovely:

> 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)

1.3.3. Love and Logic

We now develop Peirce's discourse in the direction of Levinas's philosophy of subjectivity. Love transforms fear *of* the other – fear that the other provokes in the self – into fear for the other, for his or her safety, to the point that one becomes entirely responsible for the other, that one takes the blame for all the wrongs he or she is subjected to. Love, reasonableness, and creativity are grounded in the logic of otherness and dialogism, and as we have learned from the authors thus far cited, they feed the evolutionary dynamics of human consciousness, if not of the universe in its wholeness.

The Peircean concept of reason fired by love calls to mind Welby's association between logic and love. See, for example, the following passage from a letter to Peirce, dated 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.' (in Hardwick 1977: 15)

In an advanced phase of his studies and from the perspective of pragmaticism, Peirce described subjectivity, the self, as a set of actions, practices, and habits and identified one of its essential characteristics in what he called 'power' as opposed to 'force.' The incarnated self is a centre of power oriented toward an end, a 'purpose.' This is perhaps related to what Welby understood by the terms 'purport' and 'ultimate value' in her description of the meaning value of the third element of her triad – that is, 'significance' (the other two terms being 'meaning' and 'sense'). Power is not 'brute force'; rather, it is the 'creative power of reasonableness,' accompanied by doubt although not amiable, which thanks to its agapastic orientation rules over all other powers (cf. *CP* 5.520). We could say that power – that is, the ideal of reasonableness – is the capacity for opening oneself to the attraction exerted on the self by the logic of otherness. It coincides with the disposition to respond to the other, and the modality of such a disposition is dialogue.

As we saw in the previous section, the self is not an individual in any absolute sense. In other words, it is not an undivided, closed totality, nor is it a coherent and non-contradictory identity. Insofar as it is a sign, the self is doubled into interpreted and interpretant. As the activities of speaking, deciding, arguing, discussing, and coming to consciousness make obvious, the self is structurally and constitutively other. The self is not monologic; on the contrary, it is modelled by a plurality of voices, logics, parts in dialogue. Thus, the self's identity is dialogic, plurivocal, detotalized. Echoing Peirce, the self can be envisaged as a community endowed with the capacity for criticism and projection, and this capacity 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 same time, it represents the external force of attraction that shapes identity through an evolutionary process of development. This process is

steered by the principle of love, by attraction for the other – the affective other, the cognitive other, the ethical other, and the aesthetic other.

It is noteworthy that Peirce and Welby anticipated considerations that were to arise again in the writings of Levinas, a contemporary philosopher who thematizes the otherness relationship. For example, Levinas claims in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972) that we experience the desire for others even in the most insignificant social experiences, this desire being the essential movement, pure transport, absolute orientation, sense. Levinas is critical of contemporary philosophy's approaches to analysing language insofar as they reject any third dimension and insist on hermeneutic structure and on the cultural effort of the incarnated being who expresses itself. This third dimension is orientation toward the other, who is not only a collaborator and neighbour in the cultural work of expression, and a client for our artistic work, but also an 'interlocutor.' Levinas defines the interlocutor as the person to whom the expression expresses, for whom the celebration celebrates, as the term of orientation and at the same time the primary signification. In other words, before it is the celebration of being, expression is a relation with the person to whom I express the expression and whose presence is a precondition for the very production of my cultural gesture of expression. The other in front of me – *autrui*, as Levinas would say – is not included in the totality of the expressed being; rather, it escapes being as its shadow, face, excess with respect to 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. Indeed, it is only thanks to the other that a phenomenon such as signification can itself enter being (cf. Levinas 1972: 49–50).

When we shift our attention away from the modalities of evolutionary development in the universe – chance, love, and necessity – and away from approaches to semiosic activity, with special reference to self and thought – which place dialogism and otherness at the heart of the sign – and when we enter the sphere of logic to consider inferential procedure, we find that in Peirce's universe of discourse, the categories of cosmology, semiotics, and logic are bound together by a relation of reciprocal implication. As Peirce above all teaches us, the self is also a sign and develops according to the laws of inference (*CP* 5.313). (Regarding the interrelation between logic and semiotics, and therefore between inferential procedure and the triad icon, symbol, index, see 7.2.2.). Also, correspondences continue to emerge between Peirce's thought system and Welby's.

In tychastic development – which in semiotic terms corresponds to symbolicity and in argumentative terms corresponds to induction – chance determines new interpretive trajectories with unpredictable outcomes that in some cases are fixed in 'habits.' Paradoxically, chance generates order – in other words, the fortuitous result generates the law, and the law itself finds an explanation (apparently, a contradictory one) in terms of the action of chance. This is the principle that informs Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1998 [1859]). However, in Peirce's view, Darwin's success was largely the result of the values that informed his research, which could be represented by the principle of survival of the fittest. These values were a response to the dominant values of the time, which were grounded in the logic of identity and which in the final analysis could be summed up with the word 'greed.'

Anancastic development is connected with indexicality and deduction. New interpretive routes are determined by necessity – by internal necessity (the logical development of ideas, of interpretants that have already been accepted) and by external necessity with respect to consciousness (circumstance) – without the possibility of hazarding farsighted predictions concerning eventual results. Thus, logic understood in a strict sense, as necessary cause, is connected with anancastic development. The limits to this kind of development rest in the assertion that only one kind of logical procedure is possible – in the supposition, therefore, that the conclusion deriving from the premises is inescapable. In this way are excluded all other argumentative modes and, it follows, the possibility of free choice (cf. *CP* 6.313). From this we can surmise that in anancastic development, constriction, contingency, and mechanical necessity all dominate the relation between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. Yet this does not preclude the possibility of other interpretive modalities, which in fact are always active even when anancastic procedure reigns. In semiotic terms, the relation between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign is of the indexical type; in argumentative terms, it is deductive. The relationship between the conclusion and its premises is regulated by reciprocal constriction and as such is invested with low degrees of otherness and dialogism.

On the contrary, as Peirce states in his 1893 paper 'Evolutionary Love' (*CP* 6.287–6.317), in agapastic development the deferrals among interpretants are characterized by iconicity and abduction. The evolution of anthroposemiosis; progress in linguistic and non-linguistic learning; the generation of sense, value, and significance at the highest degrees of dialogic otherness; creativity, innovation, playfulness, and

desire – all of these are articulated in semiosic processes of the abductive, iconic, and agapastic type. According to the law of creative love, agapasm, the evolution of thought, or even better, semiosis, is regulated neither by chance nor by blind necessity; rather, as Peirce states, it is regulated 'by an immediate attraction for the idea itself, whose nature is divined before the mind possesses it, by the power of sympathy, that is, by virtue of the continuity of mind' (*CP* 6.307). As an example, Peirce cites the *divination* of genius, whereby the mind is affected by the idea before that idea is even comprehended or possessed, through the attraction the idea exercises on him in the context of relational continuity among signs in the great semiosic network of the universe, or semiosphere.

The concepts of agapasm, abduction, and desire are closely linked. Peirce in fact established an explicit relationship between desire and meaning. The two concepts share in the semiotic and the axiological spheres; furthermore, both are connected with signs and values and therefore with meaning as value and desirability. In their correspondence, Welby and Mary Everest Boole – wife of the famous logician and mathematician George Boole (discussed by Peirce) – wrote at length about the laws of mind and the links among logic, love, passion, and power (see Welby 1929: 86–92; Boole 1931b [1905], 1931c [1909], 1931d [1910]; Petrilli 1998a).

The end of agapastic development is the evolutionary process itself (of the cosmos, of thought, of language, of the subject), continuity of signifying processes, of semiosis in general. Creative evolution is beaten out to the rhythm of hypotheses, discoveries, and qualitative leaps through the combined effects of agapasticism, attraction among interpretants, and synechism; thus, no single existent, idea, or individual is conceivable in isolation from anything else. From the perspective of subjectivity, the self, far from being solitary, is a communicating entity moved by desire and grounded in *agape*. Therefore, from an evolutionary perspective, by virtue of the continuity of thought and creative love, *agapic or sympathetic comprehension and recognition* is the dominant force in the deferral among signs. The simultaneous occurrence of an important idea to a number of individuals not endowed with any particular powers, each arriving at the idea independently (as a consequence of belonging to the same great semiosphere), might well be considered as a demonstration of this (cf. *CP* 6.315–316).

Love is directed towards the concrete and not toward abstractions. It is directed toward one's neighbours. This is not necessarily in the spatial sense, locally; it can also be in the sense of affinity so that it relates to a

person 'we live near ... in life and feeling.' Where iconicity, abduction, and creativity are clearly operating at high degrees, love is a driving force. Citing the Gospel according to Saint John, whose evolutionary philosophy teaches us that growth comes from love, Peirce clarifies that love is not understood as *sacrificing self* or gratifying the egoistic impulses of others, but rather as sacrificing one's own perfection to the perfecting of one's neighbour, as 'the ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse.' Applying the lesson learned from Saint John, we can infer with Peirce that the mind and the cosmos it inhabits develop through the power of love understood as orientation toward the other, as care for the other. In 'The Law of Mind' (1892a), Peirce reminds his readers that the type of evolution foreseen by synechism is evolution through the agency of love, whose prime characteristic (as noted above) is the capacity to find germs of loveliness in the hateful, warm it into life, and make it lovely (*CP*, 6.287–289).

Peirce polemically contrasts the 'Gospel of Christ,' in which the capacity for progress is described as depending on a relation of sympathy among neighbours, with the 'Gospel of greed', the dominant tendency of the times according to which progress depends on the assertion of one's individuality or egoistic identity over the other (see *CP* 6.294). Here, we can draw a parallel between Peirce's critique of the supremacy of the individual and Welby's critique of subjectivity. Welby theorizes subjectivity in terms of the relation between *I* and *Self* and criticizes the tendency in *self* to transform 'selfness' into 'selfishness' or 'selfism.' The principles of natural selection, of survival of the fittest, of the struggle for existence as developed by Darwin in *The Origin of Species*, are all based on the concept of the individual as adapted from nineteenth-century political economy. Darwin applies this concept to the life sciences, translating it from the sphere of economic development to that of organic evolution. Counter to this, Peirce privileges the agapastic theory of evolution; he even sees in his own strong attraction for this doctrine a possible proof of its truth insofar as it responds to the natural judgments of the sensible heart.

Recalling Henry James, Peirce distinguishes between self-love – that is, love that is directed toward another considered identical to self – and creative love, which is directed toward that which is completely different, even 'hostile and negative' with respect to self. Creative love, then, is directed toward the other *as other*. On this basis, we can propose a continuum of love, one that progresses from a high degree of identity to a high degree of otherness. Yet both Welby and Peirce teach us that truly creative love is love oriented by the logic of otherness; it is love

for the other, directed without ulterior motives toward the other as other. We could claim that otherness logic is agapastic logic and that love, otherness, dialogism, and abduction together constitute the generating nucleus of signs, senses, and worlds that are real, possible, or only imaginary:

> The love that God is, is not a love of which hatred is the contrary; otherwise Satan would be a coördinate 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)

1.3.4. Agapic Comprehension and Welby's Mother-Sense

This approach can also be related to Welby's theory of sign, meaning, and subject, which could be described as a theory of the transcendent. In this context, the concept of transcendence refers to the capacity to go beyond the boundaries that restrict human beings in given social–historical situations. Thus, transcendence as we are now applying the term alludes to the capacity to exceed the limits of the logic of identity and its repetition or confirmation according to an orientation that could be referred to as the logic of otherness, which is a logic devoid of certainties and guarantees and is based instead on guessing, hypotheses, and risk.

In a series of unpublished manuscripts from the early 1900s, Welby proposed the original concept of *mother-sense* (subsequently replaced by the term *primal sense* and its variant, *primary sense*) (Welby Collection, Box 28, Subject File 24). This concept is central to her analysis of the self, signifying processes, and world views (see 9.1.2). In her efforts to delineate the two principal modalities in the generating of sense, Welby distinguishes between 'sense' or 'mother-sense' on the one hand and 'intellect' or 'father-reason' on the other (in fact, these cut across sexual differences). These modalities in the generation and interpretation of sense can be separated out in theory; in practice, they are tightly linked

and contribute to sense's production of praxis where the term 'sense' encompasses 'meaning' and 'significance.'

Mother-sense, says Welby, is the generating source of sense and of the capacity for criticism; it is oriented by the logic of otherness, and as such it corresponds to the capacity for knowing in a broad and creative sense through sentiment, perception, and intuition in addition to cognitive leaps. Evoking Peirce, we could say that mother-sense is the idea intuited before it is possessed or before it possesses us. As the capacity for knowledge understood in the Peircean sense of *agapic or sympathetic comprehension and recognition* and in the Bakhtinian sense of *answering comprehension*, mother-sense is inherent in the human race. It is 'an inheritance common to humanity,' says Welby, and it faces no gender limitations, although at a socio-historical level, women have generally emerged as its main guardians and disseminators.

From the perspective of logic and argumentation, 'intellect' or 'father-reason' as described by Welby can be associated with induction and deduction – that is, with inferential processes whereby the logic of identity dominates the logic of otherness. In semiotic terms, it can be associated with the symbolic and indexical dimension of signs. In contrast, 'mother-sense' – or 'racial sense,' as Welby also calls it – involves signifying processes dominated by otherness. It alludes to the creative and generative power of sense that is a result of the capacity to associate things that would seem distant from one another but that are actually mutually attracted to one another. From the perspective of argumentation, we can associate mother-sense with logical procedures of the abductive type insofar as they are regulated by the values of otherness, creativity, dialogism, freedom, and desire. In semiotic terms, this corresponds to the iconic dimension of signs.

To be fully developed, knowledge – including intellectual and scientific knowledge – and expressive potential in general, must be grounded in mother-sense. Furthermore, mother-sense includes father-sense (even if latently), whereas the opposite is not true. For this reason, both mother-sense and intellect or father-reason must be recovered in their original condition of dialectic and dialogic interrelation at the phylogenetic and ontogenetic levels.

A recurrent theme in significs (cf. Welby 1983, 1985a) is the methodological requirement to grasp the dialectical relationship between distinction on the one hand – which is never separation or division – and unity on the other. From this perspective, Welby's considerations in a letter to Peirce dated 29 June 1904 are of some interest:

> But in *my* logic (if you will allow me any!) I see no great gulf, but only a useful distinction between methods proper to practical and theoretical questions. So then 'Never confound, and never divide' is in these matters my motto. And I had gathered, I hope not quite mistakenly, that you also saw the disastrous result of digging gulfs to *separate* when it was really a question of *distinction*, – as sharp and clear as you like. (Hardwick 1977: 21)

These comments are Welby's polemical response to the following observations made by Peirce in his letter of 7 May 1904:

> Reason blunders so very frequently that in practical matters we must rely on instinct & subconscious operations of the mind, as much as possible, in order to succeed. Thus, in my logic there is a great gulf between the methods proper to practical and to theoretical question, in which latter I will not allow instinct, 'natural' reason, etc. to have any voice at all. (Hardwick 1977: 19-20; cf. also *CP* 1.616–677)

In the sphere of logic as understood by Welby, the broadest dimension that engenders sense – that is, the original or primal dimension, the level of 'mother-sense,' 'racial sense,' 'race motherhood,' the 'matrix' – interweaves with rational, intellectual life in a relation of dialectic interdependency and reciprocal enrichment. In Welby's conception, even logic in a strict sense, to be classified as such, must never be separated from primal sense. Indeed, one of the main goals of significs is to recover the relation of 'answering comprehension' (Bakhtin's term) or of 'agapic or sympathetic comprehension' (Peirce's) and therefore of reciprocal empowerment vis-à-vis primal sense or mother-sense and rational life. This is necessary for the full development of critical sense and, it follows, for the capacity to grasp the maximum value, meaning, and purport of experience in its universality. Significs sets itself the task of recovering the relation of reciprocal interpretation between the constant *données* of mother-sense, on the one hand, and constructions of the intellect, on the other.

Primal sense, says Welby, is the matter of 'immediate, unconscious and interpretive intuition.' From an evolutionary perspective, it constitutes the 'subsequent phase, on the level of value, to animal instinct.' Therefore, as she states in 'Primal Sense and Significs' (1907b), primal sense or mother-sense is both 'primordial and universal' and as such can be traced through all stages in the development of humanity, albeit to varying degrees (Welby 1985b: ccxxxviii). Evoking Levinas (1974c), we could say that mother-sense corresponds to significance before and

after signification. Mother-sense concerns the real insofar as it is part of human practices, and the ideal insofar as it is the condition by virtue of which humanity can aspire to continuity and perfection when generating actual and possible worlds as well as signifying processes at large.

Welby's conception of logic in its connection with mother-sense can also be associated with Peirce's own approach when he describes the great principle of logic in terms of 'self-surrender.' This is not to imply that the self must lay low for the sake of ultimate triumph; and even when triumph is reached, it must not be the governing purpose (cf. *CP* 5.402n2). Self-surrender is the rule that governs one's relations with others; it is the capacity to surrender oneself to the other, to place oneself at the other's disposal and listen to the other – to practise hospitality, as Levinas would say.

The concept of mother-sense underscores the need for humanity to develop a radically critical social consciousness, one that is capable of rising above the constraints of convention for the sake of future generations (which we might call a concrete abstraction).

Peirce developed the concept of creative love or agapasm, and maintained that evolutionary results generated by the logic of love were derived from love oriented toward something concrete. Similarly, although independently from Peirce, Welby oriented the logic of mother-sense toward one's concrete neighbour – that is, one's neighbour understood in terms of affinity or similarity beyond distance in space and time. And while theorizing the concept of the 'concrete neighbour,' she criticized the threat of 'vague and void abstractions' as exemplified by misuse of the term 'future.'

At the level of inference and argumentation, we have stated that the practices of creative love are abductive practices regulated by the logic of otherness. In other words, abductive practices are articulated in relation to the other; they are turned to the near other, to the other in close 'proximity' (Levinas), to the other understood as a 'concrete abstraction' (Marx) and therefore as concrete sign materiality. It should also be remembered that the concept of sign materiality alludes to the fact that the subject must be embodied in physical material at some point if it is to subsist as a subject without being reductively identified with it.

To consider Peirce's semiotics in the context of what has been said so far means to push him 'beyond himself' into a *semioethical* dimension. This is the task we have set ourselves in returning not only to Peirce but also to Welby. In this regard, we are certain there are aspects of both Peirce and Welby that can no longer be ignored.

1.3.5. Looking from Peirce's Perspective

A connection can be established between Peirce's interpretation of semiotics (which places the sign in the global context of semiosis and of the relation with the interpretant) and Bakhtin's philosophy of language (according to which a sign can only subsist as a sign in the context of dialogism). The 'new' model of sign that emerges from this approach is at last free from the underlying assumptions of what might be called 'code and message semiotics,' 'decodification semiotics,' or 'equal exchange semiotics' (cf. Ponzio 1984; and 1.1).

In contrast with the signal, the sign is oriented in the sense of plurivocality and polylogism (this difference is theorized in Bakhtin and Voloshinov 1929). This favours adaptability to ever new and different signifying contexts. And the multiform reality of semiosic practices emphasizes just how important it is to use models and methodologies capable of explaining them, and to account for such aspects as dialogism, otherness, plurivocality, polylogism, the semantic flexibility of signs, and so on, instead of forcing the great variety and complexity of sign phenomena into monolithic and monologic thought systems. This is exactly what occurs when categories such as 'code' and 'message,' '*langue*' and '*parole*,' 'collective unitary system' and 'differential individual use,' are privileged over others. These categories are typical of 'decodification semiotics' or 'code and message semiotics,' which were developed as part of a distorted interpretation of Saussurean linguistics and information theory. We are alluding here to the tendency to reductively describe the communication process in terms of an object in transit from one place to another. The limits of this communication model are now obvious in the light of relatively recent studies in sign theory, such as the critique formulated by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1921–85; and see chapter 5) in *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (1961, new ed. 1998). Resorting to irony, Rossi-Landi describes decodification semiotics as the 'postal package theory.'

Semiotics today can be described as transcending decodification semiotics, which is divided into communication semiotics (Saussure, Buyssens, Prieto) and signification semiotics (Barthes 1967); and as developing in the direction of interpretation semiotics (Peirce, Bakhtin, Barthes). The categories developed in the context of decodification semiotics have often turned out to be reductive; in contrast, interpretation semiotics accounts for semiosic processes in their complexity thanks to its broad, flexible, and critical conception of the sign and to its

theories of sense, significance, and interpretability (*interpretanza*; cf. Eco 1984: 43).

Much like Bakhtin, who highlights the dialogic character of signs, Peirce offers an essentially dialogic interpretation of the relations among interpretants: the logic that binds interpretants is a dia-logic (cf. Bonfantini and Ponzio 1986). This implies that an interpretant sign cannot impose itself arbitrarily on the interpreted sign; in other words, the interpretant does not relate to the interpreted authoritatively or unconditionally. When we understand the Peircean chain of interpretants in terms of dialogism, we avoid the risk of considering the interpretation process as equivalent to a free reading whereby the will of the interpretants (and with them of the interpreters) beats the interpreteds into shapes that will serve their own purposes (cf. Eco 1990: 42). This makes the association between Peirce's position and Bakhtin's even more interesting.

Peirce's semiotics, when read in the light of Bakhtin's philosophy of language (and vice versa), helps us place the sign in the dynamic context of inference, interpretation, and dialogism; it also helps us clarify other aspects of the relations among signs in signifying practices (see 7.2). For example, we propose that meaning relative to both verbal and non-verbal signs be considered in terms of 'interpretive routes.' This concept offers interesting solutions to a series of problems at the heart of the current semiotic–philosophical debate. These include the question of the plurivocality and ambiguity of signs; the relation between meaning and referent; the intersemiotic relations among signs, which touches on the issue whether signs and sign systems are reciprocally independent to the point of seeming autonomous; and the relation of the signifier (sign vehicle, signans) to the signified (designatum, significatum, signification, signatum), with special focus on the concept of signifier excess with respect to the signified as determined in the interpretation process. Meaning can be conceived as a possible interpretive route in the sign network – a route that interweaves with other interpretive routes, with other meanings irradiating from the same sign. Moreover, in moving away from a sign intersection, it is possible for the sign to shift among various alternative signifying routes; this accounts for the indeterminacy, openness, and semantic availability of signs, for their semiotic materiality. Signs flourish in the context of dialogic relations. This context is determined by (1) the relations among signs and interpretants, which are; (2) the relations among premises and conclusions in argumentation (characterized by varying degrees in dialogism, depending on whether we are dealing with deduction, induction, or

abduction); (3) the relations among the multiple verbal and non-verbal interpretants that form the open and potentially infinite chain of interpretation in expanding sign networks; and (4) the relations among interpretants from different interpretive routes (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 1998).

An interpretant is either an 'identification interpretant' or an 'answering comprehension interpretant.' The identifying interpretant carries out the interpretive function at the level of recognition – that is, at low levels of otherness and dialogism, as when the question at hand involves recognizing phonemes or graphemes, semantic content, morphological elements, syntactic structure, and so on. Instead, the answering comprehension interpretant focuses on the pragmatic dimension of signs. In the case of answering comprehension, the relation between the interpretant and the interpreted is characterized by dialogism, active participation, and otherness. This dimension of sign interpretation is closely related to the ideological dimension of discourse and should in fact be the starting point for all approaches to the problem of ideology.

The focus on dialogic relations among interpretants and interpreteds has important implications. For instance, it is fundamental to our understanding of such concepts as 'linguistic competence,' 'utterance,' and 'sentence' (to use the linguist's terminology). The categories formulated by Noam Chomsky, such as competence and performance, repropose traditional problems, terminologies, and mechanistic oppositions (for example, consciousness versus experience, behaviourism versus mentalism, physical versus psychic, internal versus external, empiricism versus rationalism), but without solving them. Chomskyian approaches to language explain linguistic competence in terms of the speaker's capacity to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences; in this way, they reinforce passive conceptions of experience as already given. In contrast, Peirce and Bakhtin emphasize the dialogic relation between the subject and the social and natural environments, and conceive language in terms of modelling and interpretation.

In modern conceptions after Kant and Husserl and especially Peirce, experience takes the shape of a series of interpretive operations, including inferential processes of the abductive type, through which speaking subjects complete, organize, and associate data that are always more or less fragmentary, partial, and discrete. Experience *is* these operations and as such is innovative and qualitatively superior in comparison with the limited nature of eventual input. In some ways, experience and competence coincide. Language acquisition can also be analysed with reference to

inferential–abductive operations. The relation between abduction and language learning (which is never complete) is one of reciprocal support: language learning makes use of abductive processes, and abductive processes in turn benefit from language learning. Both are necessarily grounded in the linguistic interpretive work that was done by past generations – work that has bequeathed us today's linguistic materials and instruments.

We can look to Peirce and his sign theory when formulating a linguistic theory capable of transcending the dualism of competence and performance, deep structures and surface structures. In this framework, and taking our distances from the Chomskyian concept of deep structures, we propose an 'interpretive linguistic theory,' regarding which the theory of different levels, of antecedents and derivations, no longer holds. 'Interpretive linguistic theory' (applicable to both verbal and non-verbal signs) explains one's ability to comprehend the utterance or verbal sign in terms of its relation to another utterance that acts as its interpretant. All utterances are generated, characterized, identified, and enhanced by their interpretants. Under this approach, the interpretant of an utterance is not a deep structure grounded in underlying elementary sequences, but rather another verbal sign. In fact, the interpretant of an utterance or any verbal sign whatsoever is simply 'unexpressed' until the conditions are realized for its expression or explication.

Another contribution to the development of Peircean semiotics comes from Charles Morris; in fact, it is possible to speak of a 'Peircean–Morrisian sign model.' Two key aspects of Morris's semiotics are (1) the attribution of semiosis to living organisms – this was later developed by Sebeok into biosemiotics; and (2) the relation between signs and values, which Morris explicitly theorizes in *Signification and Significance* (1964). In contrast to approaches that reduce semiotics to anthroposemiotics, conceiving the latter as cognitive, descriptive, and ideologically neutral, the most promising trends in semiotics today are those which practise a universal approach to the life of signs and to the signs of life (semiosis and life coincide, says Sebeok), and which work at recovering the axiological dimension of semiosis. We have proposed the term 'semioethics' (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 2003; see also chapter 12) for an approach to semiosis that focuses on the relation between signs and values, and that from a universal semiotic perspective (Sebeok) is critical of separatism and false or illusory totalities.

The sign model proposed by interpretation semiotics is a dynamic one rooted in the concept of infinite semiosis – that is, an open chain of defer-

rals from one interpretant sign to another. The supporting logic in the relations among the interpretants that form the sign network is the logic of non-correspondence, excess, and otherness, not the logic of equal exchange. The interpretant sign says something more with respect to the interpreted sign, which in turn is endowed with its own semiotic consistency or signifying otherness, by virtue of which it resists the arbitrariness of any single interpretation or interpretive route. In the framework of interpretation semiotics, the sign is always part of a sign situation in which all of the constitutive components – sign vehicle (*signifiant*), meaning (*signifié*), referent, interpreter, interpretant, and codes regulating sign systems – are treated as different but closely interrelated aspects of complex and articulate semiosic processes.

The sign model we are proposing is a heterogeneous expression of the results that have been developed in different contexts and are related dialogically: interpretation theory (Peirce), dialogism (Bakhtin), otherness (Levinas), significs (Welby), and semiotics related to axiology (Morris). Furthermore, our sign model also accounts for research on the relationship between semiotics and ideology (Rossi-Landi, Schaff).

Another interesting aspect of Peircean studies on signs and language relates to translation theory. According to Peirce's sign model, the situation in which something subsists as a sign necessarily involves translation processes: semiosis *is* a translative–interpretive process. In the determination of meaning, translation is fundamental to the very constitution of the sign, both verbal and non-verbal. The intimate links between signs and translation emerge clearly in the light of the category of replaceability considered as a necessary condition for signhood. In other words, the sign is considered not only as something that replaces something else, but also as something that can in turn be replaced by something else. Thus, meaning can be defined as a class of verbal and non-verbal sign materials capable of replacing one another reciprocally. Thus, in the role of interpretant sign, meaning can act as a possible alternative to a previous, less developed interpreted sign. In other words, as Peirce teaches us, a sign subsists thanks to another sign acting as its interpretant, so that the sign's meaning is its translation into some further sign. Signs subsist only in relations of reciprocal translation and substitution among signs, with respect to which the original sign is given neither autonomously nor antecedently. This interrelatedness among the notions of semiosis, interpretation, and translation is a dominant theme in Welby's significs, which from this perspective as well, helps us improve our model of the sign (see 2.1.3 and 2.1.5).

Biographical Note

CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE (Cambridge, Mass., 1839–Milford, Mass., 1914) was an American scientist, historian of science, logician, mathematician, and philosopher of international fame. He is often acclaimed the father of modern semiotics. He proposed a general theory of sign, which he equated with logic and theory of inference, especially abduction, and later with pragmatism (or as he preferred, 'pragmaticism'). Peirce graduated from Harvard College in 1859 and received his MS from Harvard University's newly founded Lawrence Scientific School in 1863. He worked for thirty-one-years as a research scientist in the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, retiring in 1891. Apart from short-term lectureships in logic and philosophy of science at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (1879–84), at the Lowell Institute in Boston (1866), and at Harvard (1865, 1869–70, 1903, 1907), as well as at private homes in Cambridge (1898 and in other years), he worked in isolation and outside academe. He had difficulty publishing during his lifetime. A selection of his published and previously unpublished writings was presented in the *Collected Papers (CP)*, the first volume of which appeared in 1931. *Chance, Love and Logic*, an anthology of his writings edited by M.R. Cohen, had already been published in 1923. His works are now being organized chronologically into a thirty-volume critical edition under the general title *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* (Indianapolis: Peirce Edition Project), the first volume of which appeared in 1982.

2

About Welby

2.1. Why 'Significs'? A Contribution to Theory of Meaning, and More

The term 'significs' was coined by Victoria Lady Welby (see biographical note, p. 134) in 1896 to indicate the particular slant she wished to place on her theory of sign and meaning. She intended this term to emphasize the ethical dimension of her approach and her particular focus on the interrelations among signs, sense, and values. Thus, significs is also oriented toward the pragmatic dimension of signifying processes. Welby called for a triadic approach to meaning: 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance.' This was to be the basis for a series of other triads she would explore throughout her research. She also described significs as the 'philosophy of interpretation,' the 'philosophy of translation,' and the 'philosophy of significance.'

Welby preferred the term 'significs' to Michel Bréal's (1897) 'sémantique' and Peirce's 'sem(e)iotic.' She considered using the terms 'sensifics' and 'signics' but eventually rejected both: 'sensifics' because it was too closely associated with the world of the senses at the level of physical perception, and 'signics' because it failed to convey the relation between signs and values. Having invented 'significs' ex novo, she chose this term so as not to taint her thought through association with other terms circulating at the time such as sematology, semasiology, semiotics, semiology, and semantics. By coining the neologism 'significs' she would be free to explore the relation of signs to values and therefore the relation of semiotics to axiology.

Welby discussed her need to coin the term 'significs' with scholars working in other languages, including Bréal, André Lalande, and Henri Bergson (French), Giovanni Vailati and Mario Calderoni (Italian), and Tönnies (German). She also discussed it (in English) with George F.

Stout, John M. Baldwin, John Slaughter, and C.A. Strong in England and with Peirce in the United States, and convinced many of these people of its validity.

Significs considers the pragmatic and ethical consequences of the interplay between signs and values as they relate to human behaviour. This interplay is never vulgarized or understood reductively in behaviouristic or mechanistic terms. Significs was Welby's response to theoretical and pragmatic issues at the centre of contemporary debate roughly from the early 1880s to the early 1910s. Her research embraced problems relating to meaning, language, knowledge, terminology, communication, signifying behaviour, interpersonal relations, and subjectivity. As she wrote in the opening pages of her most important theoretical book, *What Is Meaning?*

> Man questions and an answer is waiting for him. But first he must learn to speak, really to 'express' himself and the world. To do that he must learn to signify and to signalise. He must discover, observe, analyse, appraise, first the sense of all that he senses through touch, hearing, sight, and to realise its interest, what it practically signifies for him; then the meaning – the intention – of action, the motive of conduct, the cause of each effect. Thus at last he will see the Significance, the ultimate bearing, the central value, the vital implication – of what? of all experience, all knowledge, all fact, and all thought. (1983 [1903]: 6)

Significs transcends pure descriptivism to study signs in their ethical, pragmatic, and even aesthetic dimensions beyond the strictly epistemological and cognitive boundaries of semiotics. Welby's significs reaches beyond semantics; it arises from the assumption that the relations among signs, meaning, and value are of central importance to every conceivable sphere of human interest and behaviour (see Petrilli 1998a). Significs would emerge as a point of departure for later research by others on the social and psychological dimensions of communication. These dimensions would be emphasized by the Significs Movement in the Netherlands in the first half of the twentieth century (see Heijerman and Schmitz 1991; Petrilli 1998a).

2.1.1. A Lady Significian

Welby was an independent scholar, philosopher, and significian. She has come to be recognized as the 'founding mother' of twentieth-century semiotics alongside Peirce, the 'founding father.'

Her studies of language, signifying processes, and interpretation began with her interest in exegetical issues as they related to the Holy Scriptures and to theological questions generally. In 1881, she published *Links and Clues*, a contemplation on the Scriptures and their interpretation. The title points to the author's intention to link religious discourse with other areas of human experience and research, to the benefit of both. This book generated controversy in orthodox religious circles of the time and would be the focus of debate in much of her intellectual correspondence. Welby criticized the inherent weaknesses of contemporary religious discourse, which she described as cast in outmoded linguistic forms – forms that inevitably generated linguistic confusion. She contended that this confusion arose largely from the misconception that language is a system of fixed meanings; furthermore, this misconception could only be addressed by embracing a dynamical view of language, one capable of showing how language develops and changes much like human experience does generally.

Welby emphasized the need for a 'critique of language' – especially figurative language – and for the development of a 'critical linguistic conscience' (see 1891a, 1892b, 1893b, 1897, 1898). She critiqued all sciences, especially biology and evolutionary theory, in the certainty that important scientific discoveries were supplying new experiences, in the light of which all discourse (including the religious) could be updated and rendered more significant.

Welby contributed to modern theories of sign, meaning, and language largely through her correspondence but also through her key publications. These included *What Is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance* (1903; her most complete published theoretical work); *Significs and Language: The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources* (1911; an appeal for significs); and her essays 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893) and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896). Besides numerous articles in newspapers, magazines, and scientific journals, she privately published many papers, parables, aphorisms, and pamphlets in fields as diverse as science, mathematics, anthropology, philosophy, education, and social welfare. Many of her writings, however, have never been published (for sources of these, see the biographical note).

A selection from her published and unpublished writings is available in two separate volumes: *What Is Meaning?* (1983, ed. Achim Eschbach), and *Significs and Language* (1985, ed. H. Walter Schmitz). Besides writing extensively about Welby and editing her works, Schmitz has edited two collections about Welby and significs (Schmitz 1990; Heijerman and

Schmitz 1991). A collection of writings by Welby has been published in Italian translation: *Significato, metafora, interpretazione* (1985b; ed. Petrilli).

Welby used letters to exchange ideas and cultivate relations with many of the great intellectuals of her era. Besides those already mentioned, she corresponded with Bertrand Russell, Charles K. Ogden, and Ferdinand S.C. Schiller. Two collections of her letters were edited by her daughter, Mrs Henry Cust (Nina): *Echoes of Larger Life* (1929) and *Other Dimensions* (1931). Other small collections have been made available since then (cf. Petrilli 1998a; Schmitz's introduction in Welby 1985a: ix–cclxvii). However, most of her correspondence is still unpublished.

In 1903, Peirce was commissioned to review Welby's *What Is Meaning?* for *The Nation*. (It is worth noting that in his review, he associated Welby's book with Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*, also published in 1903; cf. Hardwick, 1977: 157–9). After this review, Peirce and Welby began a regular correspondence that would be important to the development of both and that would last almost until Welby's death. Many semioticians now contend that some of Peirce's most important expressions of his work are to be found in his letters to Welby (cf. Fisch 1986; Hardwick 1977).

2.1.2. Three Levels of Meaning

Welby, like Peirce, often thought in triads. From an evolutionary perspective, her meaning triad – 'sense,' 'meaning,' 'significance' – constitutes three levels that reflect increasing practical importance, expressive potential, and interpretive capacity in the ever more complex signifying spheres of life. In any given instance of human semiosis, and ultimately of verbal semiosis, these three levels can be present simultaneously. Significs studies the relations among signs at each of these three levels of meaning. The following descriptions of the meaning triad, among the many proposed by Welby as she developed her thoughts, are cited from her *What Is Meaning?* As she observes, the term 'sense' can have different meanings, ranging from the more specific and restricted to a broader one that is inclusive of the other two levels.

> When we have the sense to concentrate training on sense in every sense, we shall for the first time realise what meaning is and can be; and rise to the highest sense, – that of Significance. This is no mere play upon the word 'sense,' but a study of its range of meaning.
>
> There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as the Sense of a word, but only

> the sense in which it is used – the circumstances, state of mind, reference, 'universe of discourse' belonging to it. The Meaning of a word is the intent which it is desired to convey – the intention of the user. The Significance is always manifold, and intensifies its sense as well as its meaning, by expressing its importance, its appeal to us, its moment for us, its emotional force, its ideal value, its moral aspects, its universal or at least social range. All science, all logic, all philosophy, the whole controversy about aesthetics, about ethics, about religion, ultimately concentrate upon this: What is the sense of, What do we mean by, What is the significance of, that is, Why do we care for, Beauty, Truth, Goodness? Why do we value experience? And why do we seek for Significance, and resume the value of innumerable observed facts under formulae of significance like gravitation or natural selection? Because we are the Expression of the world, as it were 'expressed from' it by the commanding or insistent pressure of natural stimuli not yet understood. (1983 [1903]: 5–6)

The tripartition Welby proposed in her 1896 paper – 'sense,' 'meaning,' 'interpretation' – was replaced by her in 1903 with 'sense,' 'meaning,' 'significance,' to reflect that the term 'interpretation' designates a process invested in all three levels. Of the three levels of meaning, the most unique one, the one that sets Welby apart in sign theory, is surely 'significance.' The term as she applies it suggests that meaning can be delineated in all its signifying valencies and that the character of signs in general and of the verbal sign in particular can be specified. Thus, in Welby's language 'significance' is the foundational term that best expresses the overall orientation of significs.

In *What Is Meaning?* Welby links her thought to Oriental philosophy and the triad of 'Express,' 'Indicated,' and 'Suggested' meaning as described in the *Vedantasara*, from which work she cites the following passage:

> It must be remembered that Significs implies in more than one 'sense' a careful distinction between sense, meaning, and significance. This triad is found in many forms, of which perhaps one of the most striking comes from the East: 'The meaning (that may belong to a word) is held to be three-fold, namely, Express, Indicated, and Suggested. The Express meaning is that conveyed to the understanding by the [word's] Denotation; the [meaning] Indicated is held to be conveyed by the [word's] Suggestion. Let these be the three powers of a word.' (1983 [1903]: 46)

As Schmitz points out (in Welby 1985a: xcvi–xcvii), other triads intro-

duced by Welby to explicate the 'three main levels of meaning' or 'classes of expression' include these: in correlation to *sense*, 'tendency,' 'signification,' and 'organic response to an environment'; in correlation to *meaning*, 'intention' and 'the specific sense it is intended to convey'; and in correlation to *significance*, 'ideal worth,' 'essential interest,' and 'ideal value.' In relation to *sense* understood as the first term of the triad, the reference is 'verbal' (or better 'sensal'), also 'instinctive'; in relation to *meaning* understood as the second term of the triad, the reference is volitional; in relation to *significance*, the reference is moral. That is, we feel discomfort, we see that a thing is true in a certain sense, we mean (that is, intend) to do something, and we speak of some event whose significance cannot be overrated. Welby writes:

> The science of Man must remain in one sense abortive unless we can master the secrets of what we vaguely call 'meaning.' We have looked for purpose; let us rather seek purport; we have sought the final end, aim, object of action or process; let us rather seek for its Sense, its Meaning, and, above all, for its Significance. (Ibid.: 47)

In the context of her evolutionary view of meaning, knowledge, and communication (see 2.3.4), developed in the light of progress in the sciences – in particular biology, but also such sciences as astronomy and cosmology – and also in the context of her meaning triad, Welby theorized three levels of 'psychic process': 'instinct,' 'perception,' and 'conception' – and, with reference to the 'ascent from the first dim sensation through consciousness to intelligence,' 'consciousness,' 'intellect,' and 'reason.' The three grades or levels of consciousness (and therefore of experience), or three 'types of experience' or 'types of knowledge,' include the 'planetary' (which for all practical purposes is fully developed), the 'solar' (also described as 'Copernican,' the level of 'scientific activities,' to which is associated the metaphor of light), and the 'cosmical.' As it progresses from the 'direct' to the 'doubly indirect,' this triad describes quantitative and qualitative expansion in terms of interpretive processes, and therefore – in our perception and experience of the world – in terms of expression value:

> It has already been suggested, and may here be repeated, that our only fully developed articulate world is planetary, which is also satellitic. To adopt, therefore, within the lines already laid down, the comparison between the sense-world and the planetary, the meaning-world and the

solar, the world of significance and the visible universe which includes both, let us see how it vindicates itself in working out.

All 'planetary' knowledge is directly acquired either through observation and experiment, or through processes inductive or deductive. We are in full 'touch' with the world we inhabit. 'Solar' knowledge, on the contrary, is one remove from this. We can indirectly explore both our sun and sister planets in a way impossible in the case of the suns which used to be called fixed stars, and the unsounded depths beyond even these. Thus 'cosmical' knowledge is in a sense doubly indirect, as though we needed a third instrument corresponding to the spectroscope to give us the spectra of the stars found recorded on the photographic plate attached to the telescope.

A system of thought may be a means of relation, of interpretation, of emancipation; it may absorb other systems by recognising their validity, and by perceiving its own inadequacy except from a specified point of view or in a specified sense. All systems here formulable are presumably planetary; the burden of proof that they are more falls on the thinker. This proof must depend on the predictive as well as on the harmonising and absorbent power of any system ...

Whatever our view of (the whole of) things knowable may be – whether monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic – whether we are materialist, realist, or idealist – we are compelled, at least, to speak of the mental and physical as though they were different spheres. And the absence of any recognised criterion of analogy, and therefore of metaphor, the confusion of the equative with the comparative, of both with the illustrative, and of this with the merely rhetorical, tends to confound what may be reflection with what at best may be refraction, or an image of no more value than the baby's picture of a man or the 'signs' of a fabulous zodiac.

Thus, though it has to be said, first, that the three grades or levels of consciousness (and therefore of experience) here suggested as the human heritage are, on the one hand, 'grades' of the physical, and on the other 'grades' of the psychical, such a suggestion must be understood in the sense above indicated ...

The 'solar' anwsers to the scientific activities, made possible by the leisure and protection of civilisation, and stimulated by more and more complex demands upon brainwork. The astrophysicist has become the representative 'solarist'; but he is not content to stop there. He is always exploring and endeavouring to interpret the 'depths' and contents of cosmic space. Thus he also has a lesson for us – one of the upmost significance. (1983 [1903]: 94–6)

2.1.3. Significance, Translation, Interpretation

Welby describes significs as 'philosophy of significance,' 'philosophy of translation,' and 'philosophy of interpretation' – terms that emphasize different and interrelated dimensions of her theory of sign and meaning (cf. 1983 [1903]: 161).

She began focusing on the relation between signifying and interpreting practices in *Links and Clues* (1881), in which she identified four principles of interpretation: (1) the problem of literal meaning; (2) the risk of levelling sense; (3) the importance of context; and (4) the problem of dialectics as a condition for unity. She also recognized the essential role played by contradiction and complementarity among the different levels of sense in the configuration of a thought system (cf. 1881: 31–6).

She describes translation as a method of interpretation and understanding. As such, it is a means for exploring the sphere of reflection on signs and meaning and plays a fundamental role in interpretive practice. Indeed, from a significal perspective, the problem of translation is fundamental to the theory of meaning, given that translative processes are fundamental to the sign, both verbal and non-verbal, and know no systemic or typological boundaries in the generation of semiosic processes. On this basis, Welby sees a close relationship between theory of translation and figurative language and emphasizes the importance of metaphor, analogy, and homology in the very constitution of thought and communication processes. Like Peirce (albeit independently of him), Welby asserts that mental activities are automatic translative processes. All signs and expressions are already translations in themselves before being subject to subsequent translative and interpretive processes; this, too, merges with Peirce's conception of sign and interpretation semiotics generally (see chapter 1).

Welby considers significs to be a method for enhancing meaning and awareness – that is, significance – and therefore for augmenting and mastering translative processes as a precondition for understanding and interpretation and for signifying behaviour generally. Significs helps us unearth the relations among significance, interpretation, and translation while taking into account 'interlingual' translation as we now understand it. Welby's reference goes further than this, to consider what we may designate (a posteriori in Roman Jakobson's terminology) as the processes of 'intersemiotic' and 'intralingual' translation (Petrilli 2003b).

2.1.4. A Method in Mental Exercise

Significs concerns itself with the problem of meaning and significance in everyday life, not just in theory. Thus, it seeks an answer to the question, 'What does it signify?' This question leads us to interrogate the value of experience, with a particular focus on interpersonal and social relations and on the human capacity for responsible action. In this sense, 'What does it signify?' is a relevant question not only for academics but also for the man in the street. In this sense, significs is a mental exercise with implications that are not only ethical and pragmatic but also pedagogical.

Welby developed a terminology for formulating her ideas about the specific object of her research – the generation of sense and significance, and thus the links between verbal language and signifying processes generally in relation to the problem of responsibility. Verbal language was her privileged object of research – with the rider, however, that it could be fully understood only in the light of the context of its boundless translative relations with non-verbal languages and sign systems in the signifying universe. In terms of her concern for developing accurate terminology for her studies of language and meaning, with the goal of analysing sign processes from a significal perspective, the term 'significance' seems especially interesting.

Having linked signification in the strictly semantic sense with signification in the axiological sense (a problem that Charles Morris would treat systematically in *Signification and Significance* [1964]), Welby was concerned not only with 'sense' and 'meaning' as described by her meaning triad, but also and in fact primarily with the problem of 'significance.' Insofar as it is connected with the value of experience generally, significance implies the action of meaning in all of its complexity, as well as awareness of such complexity at the level of analysis.

Responsible awareness grows as dialogic interrelations with different fields of interest, universes of discourse, and sign systems multiply. Interpretation and understanding are enhanced once it becomes possible to express the meaning of a sign through its dialogic relations with other signs. Indeed, interpretive capacity and (therefore) awareness of the signifying value and importance of the universe grow in tandem with the capacity to transcend the limits of any single totality and to view it as part of a larger, 'detotalized' totality; in other words, for the sake of interpretation oriented by the logic of otherness, these things grow with dialogical distancing (in Mikhail M. Bakhtin's sense, see 3.1) from any given interpreted in the sign network.

With specific reference to verbal sign systems, Welby believed that to fail to heed the ambiguous or polysemous nature of meaning was to risk producing monological interpretive practices; when these were then imposed on the text, the latter was exposed to the tyranny of dogma and orthodoxy. Conversely, to pay attention to the ambiguity of words – that is, to their semantic plasticity – was to favour the text's expressive and significal potential (see 2.3.2).

In terms of 'plasticity' in the semantic value of signs – and therefore of their potential for signifying ambiguity, understood in a positive sense (which in Bakhtinian terms could be designated 'dialogical polylogism') – Welby postulated the need for a strong 'linguistic conscience' to avoid confusion. This implies the will to avoid 'linguistic traps' (Welby's own term), and this is only possible when we perceive ambiguity as a precondition for developing the human capacity for critical thinking and for differentiating ambiguity from confusion on the basis of the significal method – a method Welby described as combining 'diagnostic' with 'translation.'

The following passage from *What Is Meaning?* is an interesting synthesis of the essential aspects of significs as discussed so far:

> It is unfortunate that custom decrees the limitation of the term diagnosis to the pathological field. It would be difficult to find a better one for that power of 'knowing through,' which a training in Significs would carry. We must be brought up to take for granted that we are diagnosts, that we are to cultivate to the utmost the power to see real distinctions and to read the signs, however faint, which reveal sense and meaning. Diagnostic may be called the typical process of Significs as Translation is its typical form; and the combination of these must make for the detection of lurking confusion or specious assertion in directions where the discipline of formal logic would help less directly and simply. But this form of study, so far from superseding or displacing or even distracting attention from the disciplines already recognized, would rather render them more effectual because more vitally significant: more obviously related to ordinary experience and interests. It would also bring out the moral value of a greater respect both for the traditions and the future of language, and would, in fact, while preparing the ground for an expansion of the limits of articulate expression as yet scarcely imagined, tend to create a linguistic conscience which must beneficially react upon thought; thus bringing about gradually and naturally a spontaneous consensus in definition, which shall provide in orderly freedom for all contingencies of growing need and widening knowledge. (1983 [1903]: 51–2)

2.1.5. Critique of 'Plain Meaning'

Welby developed her theory of the polyvalent and essentially changing character of meaning hand in hand with her critique of 'plain common sense meaning' or 'plain and obvious meaning.' Welby was certain that the text – including the Holy Scriptures – needed to be freed from the prejudice of interpretation reductively understood in terms of decodification. In this context, the term 'common sense' is employed negatively to indicate the acritical and narrow identification of sense with simple and plain meaning (or with a 'mythical' meaning, as Welby also put it). However, in other writings, Welby theorizes positively on the expression 'common sense' to the extent that it indicates the a priori of language.

Welby's critique of the 'plain meaning' fallacy – the other facet of her theory of the plasticity of meaning – is one of the stronger threads running through her research. She declares in her *What Is Meaning?* that 'one thing meaning is not, and that is "plain" in the sense of being the same at all times, in all places, and to all' (1983 [1903]: 143). Welby was intent on showing that it is simply wrong to believe that a text can evolve in a single, absolute, definitive reading valid for all times.

On the contrary, different interpretive itineraries can evolve from a single text. This induced Welby to theorize the need to experiment with alternative meanings, alternative choices in readings, alternative progress in discernment. At the same time, she considered carefully the text's capacity for 'semiotic resistance' – that is, its 'signifying' or 'semiotic materiality,' its otherness with respect to the arbitrary superimposition of any given reading or interpretation (cf. Petrilli 1990b, 1998e). In *Links and Clues*, with specific reference to the interpretation of parables, Welby criticized the tendency 'to interpret them by what our natural hearts ... would mean if *we* had written them' (1881: 54).

Analysis of the construction of textual sense in terms of the dialogic relation between otherness or semiotic materiality and the generation of interpretive possibilities – which taken singly only ever account for the text partially – connects Welby's position to the current debate over the 'limits of interpretation' (the title of a 1990 book by Umberto Eco).

2.2. Departure: Exegesis and Holy Scripture

Welby was an open-minded intellectual of the Victorian era in spite of – or perhaps as a result of – her complete lack of a formal education. In fact, she saw that lack as a precondition for developing the curiosity and

open-mindedness that led to her research. She pointed out the importance to her life of her extensive travels as a child with her mother – travels that often took a dramatic turn and that ended with her mother's tragic death in the Syrian desert, which left Victoria all alone until help arrived from Beirut. In a letter of 22 December 1903 to Peirce – who fully recognized her originality as a thinker – Welby made the following considerations:

> I may perhaps mention that I never had any education whatever in the conventional sense of the term. Instead of that I travelled with my mother over a great part of the world under circumstances of difficulty and even hardship. The present facilities did not then exist! This I think accounts in some degree for my seeing things in a somewhat independent way. But the absence of any systematic mental training must be allowed for of course in any estimate of work done ... I only allude to the unusual conditions of my childhood in order partly to account for my way of looking at and putting things: and my very point is that any value in it is impersonal. It suggests an ignored heritage, an unexplored mine. This I have tried to indicate in 'What is Meaning?' (Hardwick 1977: 13–14)

2.2.1. The Problem of Meaning and Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures

Welby dedicated the initial phase of her studies to religious, theological, and exegetical questions and to problems specifically connected with biblical text interpretation. Thus, she had already identified issues that were to become central in her later work on the problem of meaning: the concept of linguistic conscience; the nature of plain, commonsense, and obvious meaning (that is, of 'linguistic traps'); the essential ambiguity of signs (especially verbal signs); and the concept of textual interpretation. She formulated a critique of univocal meaning (today, with Bakhtin, we may speak of 'monologism'), and she theorized the existence of semantic pliancy, plasticity, and changeability (considered essential characteristics of verbal signs), and therefore the potential for signs and signifying processes to follow multiple interpretive routes with respect to any single text. On this basis, she advocated the development of a more acute and discriminating linguistic conscience in the formulation of truths, whose validity is inevitably connected with the correct use of language and logic. In 'Words,' a section of *Links and Clues*, she wrote that we must 'survey the same expanse of truth from as many "points" as

possible.' And in fact, she attributed many of the problems in exegetic interpretation characterized by the tendency to equivocation, dogma, and orthodoxy to the failure to do just this – that is, to take into account that truth can only be reached by dealing with the ambiguity of signs, the great multiplicity of perspectives, logics, and voices that form language, experience, and the value of expression. Like Bakhtin, she declares that truth is essentially dialogic.

2.2.2. For a Dialogue between Religion and Science, a Question of Method

Welby recognized the need to consider religious questions in dialogic relation to other spheres of reflection and research in science and philosophy. She rejected the tendency toward ideological monologism (and therefore toward unconditional and unquestioning acceptance of dogma and received truths), viewing religion as a system of signs and values that interacts dialogically with other systems in a world that is constantly being transformed. She was certain that Holy Scripture could be freed from the bottlenecks of history and dogma and breathe new life, and that it could do so by establishing analogical relations with the present. In her era, the possibility of interpreting biblical writings had yet to be explored, even though their sense and meaning would have to be updated if they were not to be betrayed. In modern times, specific theological and doctrinal questions could only be answered through 'modernized' thought, and this would have to include accounting for progress in all fields of knowledge and research. The following is an interesting passage on these problems from a letter by Welby to the anti-Christian theist Charles Voysey:

> You say that you 'do not envy me the task' (1) of reversing the prevailing interpretations of the New Testament and (2) of reconciling the spirit and meaning of the whole with our reason and conscience. But if we both live, I pray that I may yet see you helping not merely to reverse but rather to raise and expand the prevailing interpretations ... That it is hard to rise above, or to purify and deepen, popular or surface notions of truth is of course a truism; it is surely hard even for you also to enforce that truth which you do now see on those whose level of thought and life is one of content with the visible, the present, the easy ... The condition of receiving progressive, ever-enlarging perceptions of truth is that of intellectual and moral patience, not with falsehood or with evil, but with incompleteness; a faithful waiting

> for the fullness of time ... Remember that the raising, the expanding (what you call reversing and in a certain sense you are right) of thought is no less necessary, with advancing light, in natural things than in spiritual. (V.W. to the Reverend C. Voysey, 1879–82, in Cust 1929: 39–40)

Welby addressed such issues in theoretical terms in an 1888 essay, 'Truthfulness in Science and Religion.' Here, she analysed the concept of 'truthfulness' as it emerged in the relation between science and religion, noting specifically that this relation was one of interpretive extension and not of identity (ibid.: 103–4). She was writing at a time of profound cultural revolution largely driven by evolution theory, a phase in cultural history she described as the age of science and criticism leading to a new understanding of humankind (ibid.: 202–7). Such issues arise often in Welby's correspondence (see V.W. to Reverend F.G.M. Powell, 1885–6, in Cust 1929: 134; V.W. to Dr J.W. Farquhar, 1888–90, ibid.: 218). As a devout member of the Anglican Church – within which ecclesiastical and state authority coincide – Welby did not hesitate to declare her position on the problem of dogma and on the need to interpret and update religious discourse in the light of scientific progress. In the context of her criticism of social institutions generally, which she accused of wilfully promoting ignorance by resisting new truths as shaped by progress in science, art, philosophical thought, and history, Welby blamed the church for obscuring scientific progress, as in the following passage, in a letter to one of its spokesmen:

> I only wish I had more letters like yours! The Church's spokesmen so often seem to put her in a false position. She is even sometimes made to represent blind and obstinate resistance to that Will which has given us and is giving us, through science and criticism, such wonderfully increasing light on the method, spirit and aim of her teaching, as herself a living, breathing, growing 'organism' in the fullest sense of the word. The question must always be, what attitude would the Apostles, Prophets and Fathers take now? They are ever pioneers and leaders – the first to absorb, assimilate and interpret fact. We diligently scrutinise what they said in those days. But that, except in its eternal nucleus, is just what they would be the first to transcend now, with the light of a fresh and widening glory – not destroying, but fulfilling the word of old. We know now what we never knew before, that, beyond all we see as 'fixed' or 'stationary,' there is Motion – in every molecule as in every solar-system. Thus we see that all our thought of the spiritual has been riddled through as by dry-rot, with a world of meta-

> phor which does not square with the world of God's creation, and therefore cannot truly represent His will for us. (V.W. to the Reverend W.H. Simcox, 1886–91, in Cust 1929: 202)

Welby denounced the mechanisms of 'alienation' and 'estrangement' that had been set in motion against the pioneering and revolutionary mind, emphasizing that humanity's progress was being stifled as a result of the lack of self-criticism on the part of the day's religious and cultural authorities (see V.W. to R.H. Hutton, 1886–8, in Cust 1929: 203–4). She praised the investigative mind, the *courage of knowing*, however eccentric and imperfect that effort and that courage might be. She denounced the instruments that were being applied in order to silence rebel thinkers – censorship, the short-sighted assertion of orthodoxy, dogma, and the conventional canons of non-illuminated thought as practised by the official organs of the church and representatives of ecclesiastic institutions. In her correspondence with Mary Everest Boole, she discussed the credibility of ecclesiastic authority (the jurist Frederick Pollock spoke critically of 'ecclesiasticism' in his letters to Welby). Besides being the wife of her more famous husband, the mathematician George Boole whom she assisted in his work (see Cust 1929: 86n1), M.E. Boole was an author in her own right, having published such books as *Logic Taught by Love: Rhythm in Nature and in Education* (1905; but privately printed in 1890), *Symbolic Methods of Study* (1909; but privately printed in 1884), and *The Forging of Passion into Power* (1910; now all available in Boole 1931a). All of these were precursors to psychoanalysis. As emerges from their correspondence, which was in part dedicated to theological issues, Boole and Welby were committed to promoting mutual understanding, fusion of interests, criticism of prejudice, and reflection at a community level (M.E. Boole to V.W., 1882–5, in Cust 1929: 86–7, 90).

At a methodological level, Welby elected scientific discussion as her model – that is, the exercise of inferential procedure leading beyond the limits of vision. With an attitude both critical and innovative, in her rereading of Christianity and its values she reflected on the relation between light and knowledge, which she contrasted against mystification in the name of faith. Evoking her short essay 'Light' (1886), Welby made the following observations in a letter to Lynn Linton (author of the novel *Christopher Kirkland*):

> I also dread mysticism and spiritualism, for I believe that 'mystery,' in the sense of what 'mystifies' and baffles – of what seems a mere inscrutable puz-

> zle to us – is exactly what God is revealed as Light in order to make clear. God being Light, does it not follow that every intelligible question implies an intelligible answer, and that we are intended *not* to rest content until we find it? If we were incapable of receiving an answer, we should be incapable of conceiving the corresponding question. Each seeking 'why?' is put into our hearts by the very Light whereby we are at least to learn the answer.
>
> Our measures of what Light can do for us, morally, intellectually, spiritually, are too often poor and contracted; and thus the advancing growth of men's awakening faculties, the increasing area of scientific, historical and general knowledge, tends to deprive us of what little light we have; we tremble and we dare not look God's own facts in the face; we shiver in a darkness miscalled faith. Yet even what we are not able yet to see we may sometimes, if we will use God's gifts, infer. Uranus and Neptune were discovered not directly but by inference. Whole worlds of truth are surely hidden in the depths of the Living Word, ready for the patient and faithful inquirer, who uses fearlessly the instruments which God Himself has given him, and as Light shall enable him to apply. (V.W., to Mrs Lynn Linton, 1886–8, in Cust 1929: 174–5)

2.2.3. Light, Love, and Progress in Knowledge

References to the problem of light abound in Welby's writings to the extent that we could state that her philosophy is a philosophy of light. Following are only a few excerpts from her writings to highlight this aspect of her work.

In 'The Light of Love,' a paragraph in *Links and Clues*, Welby reflects on the metaphor of God as Light, which she considered one of the most significant religious analogies of all, as she also stated in *What Is Meaning?* (1983 [1903]: 98). She associates the presence of God with the kingdom of light and love. Anything that is not supported by these values belongs to the kingdom of darkness and thus of sin, evil, anger, wrath, scorn, indignation, hatred, malice, curse, bitterness, and destruction. Where there is a situation of incompatibility with light, the problem is not with light – that is, with God – but with those who can no longer stand the light. This is analogous with someone who has an eye inflammation and thus is banished from the sunlight by his own illness.

With specific reference to a series of verses from the New Testament (2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:19, 20, 21; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8) summarized by the thought 'Flee from the wrath to come,' Welby comments as follows:

> What are we to flee from? Always from sin, from evil, from wrath and anger, and the kingdom of hatred and malignity, rage and fury. Whom are we to flee unto? To our Father: to the Source of life, who is Love, Author of peace, and Father of all mercies. We are always to flee from the kingdom of hate to the kingdom of love; from the kingdom of darkness, away from Him, to the kingdom of light, His presence. Let us think of Him as the Sun of righteousness. Neither darkness nor cold in the sun, only light and heat. So there is only light and love – life and goodness – in the Sun of righteousness. But if we turn our backs on the benefits of the sun and dwell in the icy shadows of a polar winter, we shall find there all the things that belong to it, only we must not speak of the 'bitter cold' of the sun we have left. We must not say, 'the sun freezes.' So if we choose the realm of cursing, bitterness, and destruction, and turn away from the sun of our souls, we shall verily find the things of darkness; but let us beware of supposing that *they* are in the sun of life.
>
> If we leave the blessed kingdom of light and air, and descend into the bowels of the earth, we there (away from the sun) find again the things of darkness, though not the bitterness of deadly cold. We find stifling, poisoning gases; but, again, we must not say that these things are in the open air and daylight we have left; they are in the absence from those things (Rom. ii.8). Yea: indignation and wrath – shame and horror – belong to unrighteousness only. If we obey the power of evil, instead of God Who is all and only Goodness, then we must reap his harvest, receive his wages, share his attributes. We have chosen wrath for our 'father', we have turned away from God, and so cannot see Him. The pure in heart alone can see Him; and what do *they* see? Blessing and cursing, sweet and bitter, love and hatred, life and death? ...
>
> Let us think again of God as light. A man with inflammation of the eyes or brain has to be kept in a dark room; and if a ray of light is admitted it tortures and injures him. But no one therefore says 'the *sun* is inflamed,' or 'there is inflammation in the light'! All know that the inflammation is in the man himself, and that the blessed light is always the same; the difference is in that which it touches. Let the patient's brain or eyes be cured, and he will be restored to the kingdom of light from which his diseased state had exiled him. (1881: 7–9)

The following passage, from the section 'Never Discard: Always Transform,' considers the link between light and shade, and thus between truth and understanding, on the one hand, and fallacy, false consciousness, and mystification, on the other:

When you see an idea which has been far-reaching as the human race, and always tends to break out again in a new form if discarded in an old one, ask yourself, What is the truth which underlines all this? Never so fix your attention on the abuse as to become blind to the use of a thing or a thought. Never let caricature disgust you with painting. Be not content with protest and denial, for in themselves they are dead and death-producing. Affirm and build; and all the things that are not of truth and life shall crumble as you touch them. Thus over-come evil with good.

The brightest light makes the darkest shadow. So, whenever you see a deep shadow of superstition or materialism in man's heart, look for the light which causes it.

There seems to be an increasing tendency to protest against a lower without suggesting or pointing out a higher aspect of many fruitful truths. Thus many a fair building of spiritual doctrine and life is, as it were, swept and garnished; purged it may be of much that is false, unworthy, distorting, or degrading; even in a sense adorned and beautified with poetical or picturesque interpretations; but nevertheless *left empty*.

That principle – the negative – seems to be fatal; it is destroying instead of fulfilling. And the resultant void musy follow nature's law of vacuum; it must needs suck in with resistless force whatever presents itself; absorbing, it may be, some form of evil sevenfold worse than the one expelled. We cannot afford to lose one single crumb or iota of truth, however much it may have been defaced, perverted, misused, unworthily expressed or interpreted. The pioneer's besetting temptation is to get rid of hampering difficulties and problems, to travel in light marching order, to ignore or dispense with things which nevertheless in their true place and highest form are precious – indeed often vital ...

Thus my longing is to see all that has been found good, true, useful, fruitful – anywhere, by any one, at any time – in its right relation to all other good; in the purest form of which it is susceptible. It seems to me that this is carrying out the Divine method. For God takes us as we are, and uses the basest material for the manifesting of His glory; nothing is too low for Him to stoop to, and in touching, to transfigure. (Ibid.: 232–4)

In the section 'The Sun Is One,' continuing her discourse with resort to metaphorical overtones typical of parables, Welby narrates the following story:

There was a man who was anxious we should understand there was but one sun – that the sun was one: so he denied the existence of the light of the

> sun, saying that is was inconsistent with the unity of the sun and so also was the heat which flowed from it. And he went and sat in the cold and dark to make sure he had the sun and nothing else; only, unfortunately, he was found there starved and frozen.
>
> I can understand sun-worship better than nature-worship, for nature is but the living soul, while the sun is the life-giving power.
>
> Take away the sun, and 'nature' here is frozen and dead; but take away what we call nature – the world and all that is thereon – and the sun shines on for other needs. Well may he rejoice as a giant to run his course! (Ibid.: 238)

In the section 'Truth,' Welby criticizes the tendency to raise a given conception to the status of general truth instead of admitting its partiality; in other words, she points out the fallacy of exchanging the part for the whole. This enables us to associate her approach with Bakhtin's 'detotalizing method' (see 3.2).

> The purest truth that we can see is to be our first aim. And what is that? We may think of truth as complete and incomplete. The former must be beyond our present ken, unless in one shape only. We cannot find out the *Almighty* unto perfection (Job xi. 7, 8, 9); but as ours is only a *point* of view (expressive word!) we can only see a too often distorted fraction. Is there, therefore, any one form of truth which we can see as a whole in a sense, and which will interpret for us all else that affects our higher nature, and expands in ennobling it? Is not Love that form? There we are not hindered by the fetters of our bounded state; there we have a Divine faculty wherewith to grasp Divine fulness ... In all else, our conception is in mosaic at the best; and the picture, the subject, is the universe. How can we step back far enough to survey the work as a whole? (Ibid.: 242–3)

Truth is polyhedral and plurivocal: as Welby says, it 'involves the diversity and thus apparent contradiction of converging paths to it' (ibid.: 245). This detotalized conception of truth is supported by scientific knowledge and can also be associated with Bakhtin's theory of the dialectical relation between the centripetal and centrifugal forces that operate in sociocultural life and therefore in the subject. Says Welby:

> Things, in order to unite in central truth, must come from many quarters, each the opposite of some other – the line of which, if carried through the centre, would join and run into its opposite. The unity of truth to which all

must converge involves the diversity and thus apparent contradiction of converging paths to it.

Are not extremes discordant and divided because they don't go far enough? (also because they are never extremes of self-distrust as to our power of seeing truth!). Are not 'extreme' thinkers opposed because they are unconsciously at the two ends of the segment of a circle of truth, so great that the curve is imperceptible by us; so that if they would only go on, on, they would all at last find the point of union? But let us beware of the one centrifugal force, self, else we are in danger of flying off the curve. Some one may say that on the world of truth, as on ours, only one side is in sunlight, and so if you go on, you will come to darkness; yes; but *never stop*, that is the one safeguard, for thus you come into light again, knowing at last its value! When we see the light in front (as in truth it always is), we shall know we are not reverting. (Ibid.: 245–6)

2.2.4. From Exegesis to the Translative Method

Welby's *Grains of Sense* (1897) is a collection of thoughts on language, communication, and pedagogical issues – on culture and society at large – written in the form of aphorisms, short stories, and parables. Welby believed that terminological precision is connected to precision in conceptualization. Consider, for instance, her reflections in the section 'Light and Its Meaning' on the different meanings of the term 'light' across diverse fields of scientific discourse – differences with inevitable implications for philosophical thought:

We probably think that so long as we confine ourselves to good plain homely words like 'light,' in use by all and understood in the same sense by everybody, we must be safe. It would be obvious nonsense to talk of a 'pitch-dark' room full of light. 'Invisible light' is clearly a paradox and surely a bull: we might almost as well adopt the famous remark that the moon made everything as light as a cork. What man has named 'light' or its equivalent in all languages, is that which can be 'seen' and which makes 'seeing' possible, and is nothing else whatever. Here at least there is no ambiguity. It seems hardly credible that the scientific world is at a lower level in the use of this word than the popular world. It actually writes about black light, Le Bon's 'lumière noire' (*Nature*, August 13th, 1896). And while Dr Lassar-Cohn very truly says ('Chemistry in Daily Life') that the Röntgen rays 'are not light because we cannot see them,' Prof. Thomson (Rede Lectures, *Nature*, July 30th, 1896) talks of the 'invisible ultra-violet light'; and says 'by light I mean

> transverse vibrations propagated with a definite velocity'; and thus includes electric 'waves' which traverse walls and bodies, etc., of nearly a mile of densely populated streets. Prof. Newcomb told us nearly four years ago (*Nature*, November 30th, 1893) that we had much better banish the word 'light' from physics. He suggested the very simple term 'radiance,' which as he says, seems just what we want. And he pointed out that the derivatives would be readily formed. The verb 'radiate' would mean to emit radiance: Radiometry would mean the measure of radiance: while instead of talking of transparency (or translucency, etc.) we should speak of the *transradiant* or *transradious*. Others wrote to plead for the same distinction in other cases, and one writer suggested (*Nature*, February 22nd, 1894) *irradiate* instead of 'illuminate'. But Lord Kelvins's decision on the matter ought to make further discussion needless. In his 'Six Gateways of Knowledge' he says that 'if we distinctly define light as that which we consciously perceive as light ... we shall be safe. There is no question that you see the thing: if you see it, it is light'. When the frequency of heat vibration exceeds a given limit, 'it is not light since we cannot see it; it is invisible ultra-violet radiation ...'
>
> The discovery of the X rays has made the distinction more valuable than ever. Yet we see that it is entirely ignored. Even the Christmas Lectures for children at the Royal Institution for 1896–7 were on Visible and Invisible light, as if it was expressly desired by Science that the children's minds should become hopelessly confused as to the meaning of one of the words now clearest to them!
>
> And we must not forget another very important sense of the word 'light' which would be falsified by this change of usage. We have been crying for ages 'more light, more light.' Now the answer is surely come. It is command to change our prayer and to cry 'more sense, more significance': and light will follow. But then this is the light which is visible and exists only within the visual range; just as 'sound' carries hearing, so 'light' carries seeing. At present mental light seems one of the truest metaphors we have. Let us husband, not destroy our resources. (1897: §§80–1)

Welby initially conceived her thoughts on the concept of light and its metaphors in the context of her textual analysis of Holy Scripture. Gradually, she translated her thoughts into her theory of signs, meaning, and consciousness. She developed the concepts of 'solar consciousness' and 'solar experience,' which refer to the human being's intellectual, rational, and moral needs. She describes solar vision as binocular and indirect and as the intermediate level in a triad wherein the first level covers the planetary dimension of existence and the third the cosmic.

The *translative* value of signs emerges clearly from Welby's ruminations on light. In her later writings – especially in *What Is Meaning?* – she theorizes on this concept systematically. According to the *translative method*, the signifying and expressive capacity of signs is enhanced as they transmigrate from one sign to another, from one text to another, from one field of experience to another, from one universe of discourse to another. The practice of translation is described 'as including transformation, transmutation, and transfiguration, making translucent and transparent, recognising as the medium of all mediums that Expression which, alas! we have been too content to leave opaque and dense in a sense which might almost be said to confine us within pre-visual limits' (1983 [1903]: 153).

Welby's reflections in the religious, scientific, and philosophical spheres come together in her quest for truth and universality, ultimately for the significance of experience for mankind. She folds these reflections into her theory of signs, meaning, and interpretation by applying the unifying perspective of significs, which is intended as a response to this quest. The following passage from *What Is Meaning?* offers a clear statement of Welby's general project:

> In Significs we are not, therefore, claiming to add one more to the historical systems or methods of thought already existing. Rather does it aim at and indeed imply the assimilation and translation of all modes of arriving at truth – to be a Way which is the interpretation and co-ordination of all ways. It explains and accounts for the widespread desire for universality, and the feeling that this must somehow play an important part not only in securing our recognition, but also in constituting the validity, of any truth under examination. It is in virtue of the secret working of this agency that men instinctively suppose that philosophy on the intellectual, and religion on the emotional side, if really worthy of these names, must bring us the significance of all facts given by experience and verified by scientific method – must act as automatic crucibles wherein to test ideas. And it must be borne in mind that the significance is infinitely rich in its aspects, yielding a word of delicate reactions to the complexities of varying mind in races, societies, and individuals. But, as we have already seen, significance must not be confounded with the meaning or intention of acts and events; it is rather their value for us, that which makes them signify for us, that which constitutes their importance, their moment, their consequence for mankind.
>
> Both philosophy and religion, therefore, are absolutely free to vary in

> presentment to any extent, so long as they remain loyal to certain conditions which are not 'fundamental' (because neither wisdom nor goodness can be 'built' of mere mental stone or brick as *e.g.* systems of notation, of machinery, of law, can), but are rather germinal – the energy of the generative cells of thought and feeling. (Ibid.: 99–100)

2.3. Reading Significs as 'Biosensifics'

Significs emerges as an overarching methodology the aim of which is to bridge and empower the various sciences, theoretical trends, and practices in human experience, be they scientific or pertaining to everyday life. In this context, to empower means to enhance critical, expressive and creative potential through interpretive/translative sign processes – in the final analysis, to enhance significance as delineated in the context of Welby's meaning triad:

> Significs claims to centralise and co-ordinate, to interpret and interrelate, to concentrate and actualise the efforts of all true teachers to bring out the meaning of experience in every form; and in so doing to classify the various applications of the signifying property clearly and distinctly – showing that the distinction ... between sense, meaning, and significance is not merely valid but pregnant with practical issues. (Ibid.: 54)

'Sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance' are the three terms in Welby's most important meaning triad. As the first level of meaning, 'sense' refers to the generation of meaning processes in terms of organic life, perception, and the senses; in current terminology, this is meaning in a vastly biosemiosic dimension. The term 'sense' can also be extended more specifically to the sphere of anthroposociosemiosis and used to interrogate the pragmatic and ethical dimensions of signifying processes, which presuppose organic sense. In common usage, 'sense' can also be used as a synonym for the term 'meaning' as generally accepted. In this broad sense, the problem of the relation between 'sign' and 'sense' is of central importance in significs.

2.3.1. Sense and Its Organic Basis

To conceptualize the signifying scope of this plurivocal term 'sense,' Welby began with the direct and spontaneous reaction of an organism to a stimulus in its environment: signs are generated by signifying processes as the interpreting organism responds to previous signs, which are

endowed with sense and signifying value, with given implications and references, and which in turn elicit new responses, directly or indirectly. As sign activity progresses through the various orders of meaning, from sense through to significance in the human world, the organic sense response to the world at the animal or more broadly biological level is presupposed by the development of signifying processes of the symbolic order. But whereas 'sense' in broadly biosemiosic terms is common to the living world, being the very condition for adaptation and the evolution of life, 'meaning' and 'significance' are specific to the human dimension of signifying behaviour. Together, these three levels of sense or meaning determine the value of experience:

> The physiologist and psychologist alike tell us that our organism is a plexus of energies intimately related to that 'environment' which we call the material or physical world, and, moreover, that it persists or survives in virtue of a process called adjustment; whence it follows that the unfit (that which is not adjusted, cannot adapt itself to its surroundings and adapt them to itself) is eliminated. We are fully 'in touch' (including all sense) with the world we live on, and therefore and thus we live and reproduce life. Now, as sense is the typical means of this adaptation, we may say that sense in all 'senses' of the word becomes the fitting term for that which makes the value of 'experience' in this life and on this planet.
>
> But this 'sense' in its organic form we share with subhuman and even primitive forms of life. In Man it rises, by virtue of what may be compared to the integral unit of this and other planets of the 'solar systems,' into the higher form which is expressed not only in phrases like the sense of a word or a man of sense, or common-sense, but (when the word is rightly used) by meaning, that is by volitional, intentional, purposive, rationally idealised sense. Man sees and deals with Meaning because he is a citizen of a greater Commonwealth than this secondary world, this mere planet; and realises as its 'meaning,' its relations with that which lies beyond and around it as well as within it. The whole animal 'kingdom' (if not also the plant order) shares the sense-world: the advent of the sense of meaning – the highest kind of sense – marks a new departure: it opens the distinctively human era.
>
> Here again Science has been the revealer. She has shown us that all our 'energies' are due to the sun; that they must all be referred to what is 'beyond,' what literally 'transcends' the limits of our own world and of our means of communication and access. More than this. We cannot speak without sending a thrill through the universe. (Ibid.: 27–8)

Welby had anticipated this position in *Grains of Sense* (1897) and,

before that, in 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893) and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896). The following passage from *Grains of Sense* introduces the hypothesis that the organic dimension of sense and its specifically human dimension – and therefore the linguistic, intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical orders of signifying processes – are closely intertwined. Today we would say in other words that it points to the biosemiosic foundations of signifying processes:

> Sense? What is Sense and what do we mean by it? Seeing and hearing and smelling and touching? Or what belongs to words and phrases? Or the quality which we so value in each other when we say with relief, that is a man of sense, that was a sensible thing to do, I can see the sense of that? Or that subtle thing which we call the sense of a meeting, the sense of disapproval, the sense of duty, the religious or philosophical sense of an age or race? When this question was first put, a protest was raised against there being any traceable connection between the 'sense of touch' and the 'sense of a word.' Now it has been shown by Dr. Murray that such a connection probably exists. So when we ask what Sense is, there may be some new answers to be given. We want men of sense in a new sense. (1897: 7–8)

In the following passage from *What Is Meaning?* the double reference of sense – to the organic although not necessarily human world, on the one hand, and to the specifically human world, on the other – is theorized as the condition for signifying continuity throughout the sphere of anthroposemiosis. Welby's considerations recall Morris's in *Symbolism and Reality: A Study in the Nature of Mind,* when he theorizes a biological basis to the symbolic order. Morris's work was published in 1993; however, it corresponds to his doctoral dissertation of 1925 (see below, ch. 4). As says Welby in *What Is Meaning?*

> Sense in all its senses may be called the link or nexus between the intellectual, the moral, and the aesthetic worlds. For in all senses it is the sense wherein and whereby they are possible. The double reference is the condition of this. And it must be hoped that the future teacher and examiner will see the necessity of working from this (developed into Meaning and into Significance) as from a new centre outwards and a new circumference inwards. We say of two things that they are Senseless: (1) the unconscious; (2) the unmeaning. Thus we virtually identify the ascent from the first dim sensation through consciousness to intelligence, with the ascent from the sense of expression in the widest sense (beginning of course in the animal world) to the meaning of Expression (i.e. its intended reference, culminating in its

> Significance; this being the highest form which sense or meaning can take. For, once more, it is true in a new sense that there is nothing in thought not already in sense; and we must not add in this extended sense of sense 'except intellect itself,' because the senseless can never be the intellectual; it can never be the reasonable, it is essentially not merely the unmeaning but the insignificant, the 'negligible'; that which is of no account.
>
> In this sense Intellect exists in sense though potentially, as promise and potency; just as sense in its turn exists (not in matter but) in Motion and Change. Here as usual we need words to describe the reality which we see in physical form as 'motion.' When we say that we are deeply moved or stirred, when we speak of energising, of quickening mind, etc., we implicitly confess that physical motion is capable of Translation into something which we see as 'higher.' But the two modes of existence must not be confounded any more than 'existence' and 'being', which ought to be carefully discriminated. Intellect as definable begins at the Meaning stage, and is itself transcended by Reason. We must here, however, beware of pressing the superiority of reason over intellect or 'understanding' in such wise as to assume, under the specious appeal to reason, a right to defy the natural canons of logic. Sensationalism has only to include sense in the meaning-sense in order to imply rationalism and idealism. We need a word to symbolise the synthetising whole thus arrived at. Conversely, not merely rationalism but Platonism has only to include sense in its fullest sense in order to absorb sensationalism. In English usage, happily, the reasonable, far from transcending the intellectual, is allied to the sensible; while the rational in equally close alliance with it, is the indispensable condition not merely of the supreme significance of things but also of their intelligible meaning. (1983 [1903]: 48–9)

With her theory of meaning, Welby was attempting a general model of the relation between signs and sense, one that would account for signifying processes and expressivity as a whole. Her focus on verbal language was simply an expression of her own special interest. All the same, as much as she was concerned with expression and communication among human beings with particular reference to verbal signs, she was critical of anthropocentric perspectives, whose limits she well understood.

2.3.2. The Plasticity of Language and Evolutionary Development of Consciousness

Welby resorted to analogies from the organic world when talking about verbal language. This flowed out of her need to prove that the essential

characteristic of language is its organic quality, that is, its 'plasticity' and related 'expressive potential.' Indeed, given the profound generative and functional similarities between verbal behaviour and signifying behaviour at the biological level – or better, the biosemiosic level – she theorized this similarity in homological terms more than in terms of analogy.

Welby theorized the need for 'plastic language' in a biological sense, which she equated with pragmatic, ethic and aesthetic sense. For example, the artist shaping materials into complexes of beauty refers to models in biology; and the literary writer most appreciates the 'sense-wealth' of verbal language. She wrote in *What Is Meaning?* that plasticity rather than rigidity is the precondition for accuracy and, therefore, for the evolution of this planet's life in all its aspects, human and non-human:

> What we do want is a really plastic language. The biologist tells us that rigidity in organic activities can never secure accuracy – is indeed fatal to it. The organism can only survive by dealing appropriately with each fresh emergency in more and more complex conditions. Only the utmost degree of plasticity compatible with persistence of type can give the needed adaptiveness to varying circumstance. (Ibid.: 60)

Welby cast the relation between word and context as similar to the one between the organism and its environment – that is, in terms of reciprocal adaptability based on homological relations between pairs. The plastic dimension of verbal language and signs in general is necessary to adaptation, development, and expressivity, and, it follows, to successful communication. Regarding verbal language, the widespread phenomenon of what Welby called 'bad language' indicated that the expressive potential of language needed to be recovered where it had been lost as the result of misuse and inadequate conceptualization:

> The phrase 'bad language' should gain a more general application, and include waste and misuse of words, abuse of speech, chaos in expression, degradation of painfully acquired and slowly rising standards of language ... Language is the most precious 'tool' of humanity ... It is still strangely backward as compared with other intelligent activities, and ... it is morally wrong either to tamper with the expressive treasure which it already offers as the result of long and difficult acquisition, or to waste in the smallest degree its discriminative power. (Ibid.: 63–4)

Welby's position was approved by the pragmatist Ferdinand C.S.

Schiller (1864-1937), whom she met in 1900 at Oxford, where he had been teaching since 1897. Their correspondence began in 1900 and lasted until 1911.

Schiller, too, placed the principle of plasticity at the centre of his own view of language and of the world, which he formulated in terms of 'humanistic pragmatism' (cf. Schiller 1907). However, with regard to verbal language, unlike Welby he did not ascribe to the principle of what he called 'pedagogical perfectibility.' All the same, as much as he was among Welby's most acute critics, he generally accepted the essential aspects of her theory of meaning and communication. Both were critical of Oxfordian philosophy, which dominated in their day, and especially of formal logic as developed by contemporaries such as Francis H. Bradley, Harold H. Joachim, and Bernard Bosanquet. Schiller (1912) in particular was also critical of certain aspects of Bertrand Russell's thought system.

In the light of their conception of thought-language formulated in terms of process, energy, activity, movement, change, behaviour, and so on, Welby and Schiller both overtly criticized the thesis that 'pure thought' is fixed by universal and immutable laws and correlated theories of language and meaning.

The question of meaning was publicly debated at a symposium, 'The Meaning of "Meaning,"' held at Oxford in 1920. The principal speakers were Schiller, Russell, and Joachim. Also participating were Alfred Sidgwick and the acting director of the journal *Mind*, C.A. Strong. The results of the debate were published in that journal under the same title.

In Welby's view, the appearance of human beings in the universe – the beginning of the human era, of history – was another stage in evolutionary development from primordial life forms to their more advanced expressions. As distinct from other life forms, human beings – Welby's privileged object of analysis – were endowed with the capacity for verbal language. Referring to the sphere of anthroposemiosis, and anticipating today's developments in communication, artificial intelligence, and robotics, Welby identified the driving force behind evolutionary development in the capacity to transcend the limits of sense and experience, aided by culture and scientific progress. She constantly referred to the fields of biology, cosmology, and astronomy to buttress her evolutionary vision of signifying processes in the human world – processes that are not reduced to a fact of cognition. As noted earlier (see 2.1.2), she linked her theory of meaning to the triad of sense, meaning, and significance, as well as to her theory of knowledge and consciousness, which

she developed across three stages – planetary, solar, and cosmical. Proceeding from what she called 'direct' signifying processes to the 'doubly indirect,' she describes the processes of intellectual, aesthetic, and moral expansion as experience of the universe extends beyond pre-established limits of perception, knowledge, and expression (cf. Welby 1983 [1903]: 94–5).

Besides being well versed in the human sciences, Welby kept up-to-date on the latest advances in the hard and natural sciences. Her broad knowledge and experience was reflected in her language. For example, many of her recurrent images are taken from the field of human physiology, as in the following passage, in which she builds an analogy between vision and contemplation:

> Two things must, of course, be borne in mind. One, that when we use analogically the physiological processes of vision, we are bound to take the true ones so far as they are known. Thus we have no right to speak of the eye as though it were adjusted to the near, and needed to strain with painful effort to discern the far (as we so often do when contrasting philosophy with science or practical life), but rather as 'focussed to infinity'; while what requires muscular effort is the vision of – the tangible. Another, that not merely do we look through our sense-window at a vast star-peopled universe as real as our own world, – a universe of which the telescope reveals further depths but no limits, – but also that we can devise a mechanical eye (the sensitive plate) which shall 'see' and record a further world of suns and nebulae beyond even the power of the telescope to reveal to the human eye. (Ibid.: 103)

A task Welby set for significs was to develop a theoretical–linguistic apparatus capable of reconsidering and re-evaluating the history of mankind – the development of language and discourse, of behaviour and beliefs – in the light of scientific progress. She transcended the limits of the study of meaning as conducted by Michel Bréal in terms of 'philological–historical' semantics, just as she transcended the limits of what is known today as 'speech act theory' or 'text linguistics.' Welby focused on the expansion and transformation of signifying processes in the universe, of which mankind is a part; thus, her theory of meaning had to be general enough to account for such processes. She wished to provide a general model in the light of which specifically human semioses could be better understood from the perspective of sensorial, cognitive, and expressive capacity generally.

2.3.3. Signs and Evolution of Life: A Research Program

Welby's perspective on the signifying universe was broad enough that she was able to include human and non-human, verbal and non-verbal signs when formulating her theory of language and meaning.

In terms of present-day biosemiotics as represented by Thomas A. Sebeok (2001a), and also in terms of the connection postulated between semiosis and evolution, semiosis and life, we could claim that Welby was a pioneer in studies of the organic in the light of the inorganic, of the human in the light of the non-human, of the verbal in the light of the non-verbal.

Welby's conceptualization of language and meaning and her own direct use of language indicate her stance with regard to a philosophical tradition that can be traced back to Heraclitus and Parmenides. This tradition was reappraised by Welby in the light of the modern debate over the contradiction between descriptions of existence and signifying processes in terms of mutability and fluctuation on the one hand, and in terms of immutability and fixity on the other.

Welby's research was inevitably conditioned by the intellectual climate of the times, by progress in the sciences – natural, hard, and human – and in particular by Darwin's evolution theory, which she read in a critical key. Her recourse to figurative language of the organic type was symptomatic of a cultural climate dominated by Darwinian evolutionism. Evolution theory brought about a cultural revolution that reached its peak during Welby's lifetime and that resulted in a radically new conception of humankind. She referred to this particular phase in cultural history as 'the era of science and criticism' (see Cust 1929: 202–7).

Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) provoked an intense debate between its critics and its defenders, between traditional scientists and theologians on the one hand and progressives on the other. A prominent progressive was Thomas H. Huxley (1825–95), who supported Darwin's theory with a critical attitude that earned Welby's deep respect. Some of their correspondence – which covers the years 1882 to 1885 – is available in *Echoes of Larger Life* (Cust 1929: 81–2, 102–3). Darwin's doctrine of organic variation and his associated doctrine of natural selection shook the very foundations of theology, which embraced a creationist thesis and placed unswerving faith in the existence of a divine design ruling over nature. Humanity was at last becoming aware of its place in the natural order, and of submitting to evolutionary laws that regulated the development of life on the planet.

Welby compared this transitional phase of profound transformation in European cultural values to the Copernican Revolution, but also to the Baconian one. In each of these cases, success and diffusion were menaced by theological prejudice, by the tyranny of an outdated and dogmatic linguistic apparatus, by deviating conceptual nomenclature. Welby believed, furthermore, that this new phase of cultural evolution was about to supersede the former; she maintained that it was not enough simply to accumulate knowledge – it was even more necessary to reflect on the implications of acquired knowledge and experience for humanity. In other words, it was necessary to translate accumulated knowledge into axiological and ethical terms, which meant for man 'to moralise and humanise his knowledge of the cosmos, and so to unify and relate it to himself.' And the precondition for such translation would be to understand expression, 'its nature, conditions, range of form and function, unrealised potencies and full value or worth.' In the opening chapter of *Significs and Language* (1911), she contended that this was the primary task for significs:

> There are probably many who dimly realise, and would provisionally admit, that our present enormous and ever-growing developments of mechanical power and command are there to be interpreted in terms of psychology. This must presumably affect not only the very minds which are conceiving and applying them to such tremendous and apparently illimitable purpose, but also thinkers concerned with the mental sphere itself, its content and its range.
>
> We may thus suspect, if not actually infer, that human thought also is on the threshold of corresponding developments of power – developments to which the 'new birth' of scientific method in the nineteenth century was but the prelude and preparation. If, indeed, we deny this conclusion, or dispute this assumption, we may effectually hold such a development in arrest – or risk forcing it out in unhealthy forms – just as, three hundred years ago, the spirit of scientific discovery was fettered and retarded on the verge of its great career of achievement. The explanation is in part, if only in part, the same now as it was then ... For in the pre-Baconian age the study of phenomena, the inquiry into 'the causes of things,' was not more inhibited by theological prepossessions and denunciations than by the dominance of an intellectual nomenclature which ruled reality out of the universe and confidently took its place in all disquisition or discussion upon Man and Nature. The forward step taken was largely the result of a breaking of the barriers created by traditional terminology, a pushing aside of fictitious formulas, and a coming directly into the presence of things in

> order to learn whatever they had to say 'for themselves' – and for the Whole. All the conditions – especially the supreme condition, an urgent need – are now existent for a second and similar forward step, but upon another plane and to higher purposes. For the fresh advance which now seems imminent, as it is sorely needed, should be no mere continuation of the Baconian search, the accumulation of data for a series of inferences regarding the properties of the material system as usually understood, but rather the interpretation, the translation at last into valid terms of life and thought, of the knowledge already so abundantly gained. While man fails to make this translation – to moralise and humanise his knowledge of the cosmos, and so to unify and relate it to himself – his thinking is in arrears, and mentally he lags behind his enacted experience. That we in this age do lag behind, and that we have thus far failed to achieve a great and general act of translation, is a loss chiefly due to our unanimous neglect to understand Expression, its nature, conditions, range of form and function, unrealised potencies and full value or worth. And therefore the first message of what is now to be named Significs is that we must amend this really inhuman fault; that we must now study Expression precisely as we have long been studying 'Nature' and 'Mind' in the varying range of both these terms. (1985 [1911]: 1–3)

A determining influence on Welby's studies during the decade before 1890 was *Lectures and Essays by the Late William Kingdon Clifford* (1879). It was around this time that she discovered 'inductive reasoning,' that strange form of inference connected to the experimental method described by Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909) and more correctly termed *abduction*. In her search for the primary elements of experience, Welby began to abandon philosophy and psychology for biology and physics; this was also partly the result of Clifford's *Lectures and Essays*. As a result of this new approach, she soon enough placed the specific problem of meaning and signifying processes at the very centre of her studies. In her efforts to understand the existent and intuit the sense of the universe, she abandoned deductive reasoning and proceeded abductively from the result to the case, backward from philosophy to physics and to the very elements of experience that led her to the problem of meaning. In her own words, from a letter to Frederick Pollock written between 1889 and 1891:

> Two or three years ago I discovered that I had begun (so far as explanation went) at the wrong – the deductive – end of things. So I forced my way back

> and down step by step; nowhere satisfied till I had got to what I saw must be admitted as primary by all. Having descended from philosophy and psychology through biology to physics and the very elements of experience, I found that below these even there still everywhere arose the prior question: *What do we mean* by time and space, motion and mass, body and consciousness, and so on? *What do we mean* by 'mind' and 'self' – by 'reason' or 'moral sense'? And to my amazement I seemed to find that no one had ever asked the question in my sense or even explicitly recognized that change in some sense underlies all continuity. It is not enough to meet such questions, as scientific men admit, by a mere restatement of the ordinary positions, however able and brilliant; for they are worthy of notice only on the assumption that they may thus come from a deeper layer of experience, bringing us new and vital messages. So that as a preliminary – giving us the 'prolegomena' to true knowledge of reality – we need a new science, the science of meaning in its changes, or 'Semantics.' (Cust 1929: 268)

Welby stepped back from semantics as it was practised during her time and coined the term 'significs' to distinguish her own approach to the problem of sign and meaning as she conceived it from others already in play. As already noted, she coined the term 'significs' only after considering a series of other possibilities – including 'semantics,' 'semasiology' (as understood by Arsène Darmesteter (cf. Welby to Lloyd Morgan, 1889–91, ibid.: 276), 'sensifics,' 'symbolics' (cf. Welby to Norman Pearson, 1888–90, ibid.: 239), and 'semiotic' – that had also been explicitly proposed to her.

Significs as originally proposed by Welby was intended as the science of expression and significance, not just at the level of verbal language but throughout the universe generally, not just in anthroposemiosis but more broadly in biosemiosis. Taking account of advances in the sciences, Welby steered her research on the great signifying universe toward the primary elements of signification – that is, toward the various orders and systems of signs that inhabit the existent and that extend to all vital processes.

Toward the end of the 1880s and the early 1890s, the focus of Welby's correspondence began to shift ever more strongly away from the theological toward the scientific-philosophical debate of the times. Her correspondents included Frederic Harrison, Francis H. Bradley, Charles Mercier, Hughlings Jackson, George J. Romanes, Shadworth Hodgson, Andrew Lang, Augustus Waller, Oliver Lodge, George Croom-Robert-

son, Frederick Pollock, Conwy Lloyd Morgan, and John Tyndall. During these years, Welby wrote a series of scientific papers, which she distributed among her correspondents for critical feedback (as was her habit). In 'Law of the Three Stages' (1886b), she applies evolutionary theory to habits of behaviour, mind, ethical and metaphysical issues, and the relations among thought, feeling, and acting (cf. F.H. Bradley to Welby, 1886–8, ibid., 1929: 167–8; Mrs W.K. Clifford to Welby, 1886–8, ibid., 1929: 168–9). 'The Evolution of Heliology' (1886b) led to a debate on the heliocentric vision of a universe without foundations relating to a corresponding cognitive condition. Other key texts of Welby's from these years include 'Is There a Break in Mental Evolution?' (1890a) and 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution' (1891a).

The new Copernican Revolution as brought about by the scientific discoveries of her age revealed the dynamism of the universe. Welby was especially intent on tracing this dynamism throughout the human universe in all its signifying and expressive aspects and, it follows, at the epistemological, cognitive, and ethical levels as well. As she wrote in a letter to Lynn Linton:

> In old days we thought everything centred in the earth and now we see our error. We have to start from the sun if we would understand or grasp the nature and laws of the solar system of which this earth is a member ...
>
> To preach unswerving loyalty to that Truth which may seem to strip us of our hopes; which, like the Copernican astronomy, tears from under our very world of thought and creed the rock on which we deemed it fixed forever:– this is our awful trust and burden. We must accept the difficult lesson, that instead of demanding the basis which lies under the world of faith, we have to ask for the balance of the force of gravity, for the rhythm of attraction by which the whole world sweeps in forward spirals round one 'sun' among a myriad, 'baseless' itself and endlessly in movement? (Welby to Linton, 1886–8, ibid.: 177)

From what today we would call a biosemiotic perspective, Welby emphasized the interrelation between organic sense and mental activity in considering the problem of knowledge, of memory, of signifying implication in the development of meaning and experience, the biological basis of signifying processes at large. This highly advanced position was confirmed by progress in the physiological and biological sciences as applied to social and psychological questions. This research strengthened the notion that there is a connection between the life of the mind

(mental activity, activity of the brain, the individual and social 'mental organism') and the material world (which is the object of mental elaboration – today we would speak of the corporeality of signs, of the relation between bodies and signs) and therefore between physics and metaphysics, and in the final analysis between semiosis and metasemiosis:

> To know our vocation and its limits, *quâ* cell-unit, is one of the most valuable of qualities, but without its complementary, the organic sense, it is one of the most misleading ... Experience shows that you cannot isolate the fields of mental activity except in the most superficial or conventional sense. And physiology is surely a field in which this is specially true. We cannot build walls of impermeable concrete between physics and meta-physics. It is true, is it not, that in sight we cannot draw a line and say, here ends nerve-action and there begins – whatever you like to call the meta-nervous! As you say, binocular vision is the last physical touch. But 'knowledge,' 'memory,' and all the rest which we call 'mental experience' comes in, and at once we touch the ocean which, indeed, whether like water or like air, pervades us everywhere and flows through us, sucked in and given out. (Welby to Augustus Waller, 1889–91, ibid.: 262)

The idea of foundations and absolutes – therefore of the definitive, the irreversible – was thrown into crisis by the astronomical sciences. In the context of a dynamic and pluridimensional universe animated by rhythms, curves, and the force of gravity, even the concept of truth was revealed in a new light and could at last be scientifically conceived as an open and unending dynamical process. It sounds like a paradox, but truth – simply by virtue of being dialogical sign material – must submit to destabilization, crisis, and interrogation if it is to answer to and somehow satisfy its status as truth.

In a universe thus conceived, all is in motion and subject to modification. In other words, continuity is rooted in change, and distinction does not imply separation or isolation: 'under' is prone to transform into 'above,' 'material' into 'movement,' 'neurosis' into 'psychosis.' Regarding the latter, Welby commented that psychosis accompanying the 'physical' body is simply the expression of an exquisite sensitivity correlated to the delicacy and sensitivity of the body itself; thus, as in the other cases, there is no net line of demarcation:

> Granting (as I do fully) that metakinesis is inseparable from kinesis though – not absolutely but – practically and relatively distinct: at what point of

> coarseness do or can we suppose that it develops into psychosis? Supposing that our means of analysing the ultimate constituents of what we call the 'physical' body were a hundred times more delicate and thorough than they are, and we re-found the representatives of all the constituent parts of our frame on a scale enormously below or above our present perceptual range, thus enlarged by the new aids: should we not expect to find that the accompanying psychosis was just as much more exquisitely sensitive? That it had escaped our ken by reason of its delicacy, as even the quartz fibres escape the casual eye? (Welby to C. Lloyd Morgan, 1889–91, ibid.: 276–7)

In *What Is Meaning?* (1903), 'language,' 'consciousness,' 'intelligence,' and 'mind' in the human world are also considered in terms of motion, as dynamic expressions among others of life: 'Language is now admitted to be "kinetic" in its first discernible forms; it originally represented action, not object. Even though there be exceptions, the main symbolism of language is active. So we may be said to reach a real "Metakinesis" which persists and survives in the special form called "consciousness," "intelligence," "mind"' (1983 [1903]: 192).

From what we could call a cosmosemiotic perspective, whether we turn our gaze toward the microscopic dimension of the universe or toward the interrelated macroscopic dimension, toward atomized material or toward the cosmic forces captured in such material (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1980), the solidity and substance of matter is an illusion. In fact, matter is made of motion and activity and as such belongs to the dynamical order of existence; thus, the consistency of matter – that is, its capacity for resistance with respect to other forces – is determined by its own energy and vitality. Welby established links between mind and movement belonging to the primary order of existence, on the one hand, and matter belonging to the secondary order, on the other. Following this logic, she theorized that the spirit is material – that it transcends the limits and boundaries that characterize materialism as much as idealism, the real as much as the ideal. As she wrote in a letter to Lynn Linton:

> You have not got hold as yet of my ideas as to materialism. I do not believe that there is any such thing, though no doubt there is such a thing a earthiness, and even that may be as well as fertile, a patent purifier and deodoriser. But there is also soil with an expressive verbal use ... All we know of matter is resistance. Now as Spirit is Ultimate Energy it implies resistance: that is, the idea of matter lies within that of 'Spirit.' (Welby to Lynn Linton, 1886–8, Cust 1929: 175)

Welby took a stance with respect to the debate of her day between idealism and materialism. These two poles emerge as abstract theoretical representations of translative processes in existence, whereby all discrete units are dialectically interconnected by relations of continuity (think of Peirce's doctrine of synechism; see chapter 1). Discrete units are transitory and unstable, given that matter is inherently structurally dynamical, the dialogical expression of the tension between motion and stasis. And given its potential for transformation, matter is always secondary and provisional, whereas motion is primary and permanent. In the following passage, from a letter to Edmund Maclure, Welby describes her own orientation in philosophy as an expression of the dynamical interrelationship between idealism and realism. At the same time her position cannot be reduced to either:

> Mine is the ideal realism which absorbs and digests materialism and turns it into life-tissue. Part of the process is the transformation of the central concept from matter into motion, from the static which is secondary, episodial, incidental, contributory, into the dynamic which in every sense of the word is original and originative, directive and structural, evolutionary and executive. Thus my ideal realism becomes the real idealism. It repudiates the 'idea' which, constrained to advertise itself, depreciates the volume of fact, and is punished by becoming the fancy and the natural prey of pessimism or of dogmatism or of sheer insane self-worship. It touches the heart of that scientific idealism which consecrates induction as the mental link with reality, as the sacrament of knowledge: induction, whose sacramental rite is observation, hypothesis and experimental verification. (Welby to E. Maclure, 1888–90, ibid.: 232–3)

In another letter to Maclure, Welby delineated a research program based on seven principles or notions that she intended to develop:

> I have had certain ideas all or nearly all my life which I am now finding day by day to be in unexpected general correspondence with the present lines of scientific advance (I think I have told you that it was the *Essays* of Professor Clifford that first caused me, so to speak, to begin all my thinking from the other end).
>
> Some of these principles or notions are the following:–
>
> 1) Reversal. Treat any thought or idea as a reversible instrument or engine; apply it backwards to test it. I only discovered the other day that physicists tell us that the reversible engine is the perfect one.

2) Translation. Every part of experience, while evolving a dialect of its own, ought to be capable of translation into the others, and of being tested by this means.

3) Three layers or grades in 'mind'; the ideas of the nervous system which I now know as worked out by Dr. Hughlings Jackson, applied to the mind.

4) An organic stratum of prompting and impelling (or gently suggestive) force, working in the borderland between the literal and the metaphorical (cf. 'organic memory,' what Hartman calls 'the Unconscious'). This brings us to the New Science of

5) Language – figure, metaphor, etc. – which again brings us to man's thought-history and his thought-processes ...

6) The curvature of space. I have always felt that the curve must be a more ultimate idea than the straight line, because if you produce the apparently straight line far enough it might prove to be a curve; whereas however far you produce a curve, it will never turn out straight. Also I see the curve as always the third or highest kind of motion and the secret of imagery, because the organism is all curve, and only the inorganic angular. Thus my diagrams of human nature or history would always be curved and always open.

7) Replacement of the static by the dynamic. Everywhere for a lump of stuff called 'substance,' read a complex of energy. The 'stuff' is always secondary and provisional; the motion is always primary and permanent. There lies the secret of identity, the secret of the 'form' – and of those 'characters' – whereby we identify and gradually realise personality ... (I have always felt, e.g., that I was no lump, but a movement; and I was distressed by the old idea of oxidation. Now that I know I am a furnace and not, so to express it, a box of fuel, I am content).

So we come back to the 'Way, the Truth, the Life.' What is 'the Way' but the principle of the transitional, the means; left behind in proposition as it is rightly and fully used – as onward path? And Truth? Is that a fixed product superseding progress, a static goal at which the way comes to an end? Is it a lump, a thing, to be preserved in stony unchanging death? No, it is a complex of ever-changing activities ... And Life? Is it not activity which distinguishes Life from the 'lifeless'? Is not Life a pulse, a beat, a thrill, a breath, a manifestation, an expression, a Word? ...

Everywhere and on all sides I have found that these thoughts, crude though they be, ring true to the discoveries of the pioneers of science; of men like Clerk Maxwell, Thomson, Hertz; like Burdon Sanderson and Mendeléeff; – to say nothing of other names as great, e.g. Huxley, Tyndall, Karl Pearson. (Ibid.: 265–67)

2.3.4. Organism and Environment in Cultural Evolution

By tapping studies by psychologists, philosophers, ethnologists, anthropologists, and scientists such as Charles Darwin, Conwy Lloyd-Morgan, Max Müller, Herbert Spencer, William James, George H. Lewes, Thomas A. Huxley, A. Lang, A.W. Howitt, Edward B. Tylor, James G. Frazer, and John Dewey, Welby documented a paradox in the evolution of the human species.

It would seem that evolution is the open-ended and unfinished result of a dynamical relationship between the organism and the external world, one that is essentially reciprocal: the world stamps a 'practical meaning' on the organism, and the organism contributes to developing and transforming the external world. Paradoxically, however, this reciprocity seems to end with the gradual appearance of a new form of 'organic energy,' recognized as 'cerebral power or intelligence.' Human beings enter the world and develop a series of practices without correlates in the non-human animal world. These practices are characterized by *waste* in terms of time, work, health, energy, food, refuge, and victims – human sacrifices – to the advantage of non-existent entities, the divinities, the dead, 'ghosts,' and their equivalents. Certain phenomena linked with the life of the imagination emerge as expressive tendencies of a degenerate sort. In other words, they seem to be caused by an involutionary process that disperses energy which up until then had been invested in life and development (example: the cult of the dead practised by certain primitive groups is sometimes so elaborate as to make life difficult for the living). Human behaviours that had been 'aberrations' or 'anomalies' evolve into radical habits and stereotypes. These issues and others are examined by Welby in some of her papers: 'Is There a Break in Mental Evolution?' 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution,' and 'Abstract of "An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution"' (1890b), as well as 'The Significance of Folk-Lore' (1892a) and chapters 22 to 25 of *What Is Meaning?*

In Welby's time, the dominant anthropological theories of primitive religions – which were widely viewed as important expressions of early stages in the development of the human mind – presupposed and conceptualized a possible break in the relation between organism and environment. Welby was sharply critical of this hypothesis and took on the task of showing why it was unacceptable. She analysed the evolution of intelligence in a significal framework, applying her theory of meaning to anthropology for the purpose of describing how signifying processes developed from primitive forms to more complex ones in terms of *trans-*

lative processes. She theorized a process of uninterrupted evolution or continuity in the relation between organism and environment. To support her argument, she identified three levels or centres in the development of mind: 'sense,' 'imagination,' and 'intellect.' Initially, Welby (1890b) explained sociocultural practices that seemed to contradict the principle of continuity (for example, the cult of the dead) as 'bad translations' on the part of primitive man. Continuing her research (cf. chapters 22 to 25 in *What Is Meaning?*), she explained the seemingly self-destructive behaviour of primitive man in terms of responses to the environment, emphasizing that the 'sense-scheme' could not but predominate over 'meaning' and 'significance' and influence interpretations/translations of the environment as manifested in practical responses. She introduced the concept of 'ex-citation' – that is, action interpreted as a response to something beyond (which can also be associated with Sebeok's notion of 'exaptation') – and in so doing distinguished between the concepts of 'generation' and 'self-creation' or 'origination.' In the light of such concepts, human life emerges as a dynamical response in a continuous flux of life and energy. Thus, conceptions themselves are responses and interpretations, which are received and passed on in the larger flux of signs and signifying processes:

> It may be suggested that while the sense-scheme of the primitive mind was for obvious reasons more exclusively dominant than it afterwards became, and may be supposed to have reacted to more subtle appeals from the various realms of nature (as to the spinal was added the specifically cerebral type of response), the meaning-scheme, now so highly developed, was still embryonic; while the element of Significance, as we now at least tacitly recognise it, was not yet assimilated. In other words, the primitive form of intelligence may be supposed to have been sensitive to certain modes of energy, modes which it was incited to translate somehow into cult of some kind and then into formal doctrine; just as it was impelled to translate the sense of hunger into the taking of food, and, in a higher stage, to translate the whole experience into articulate statement. Only, in this last class of cases, the translation, as life directly depended upon it, had to be the right one; in the case of the more indirect forms of stimulus, the translation was purely tentative, and was thus liable to be grotesquely wrong. Even where its principle survives, on the one hand in the highest scientific, and on the other in the highest religious, poetical, or philosophical thought of our own days, its earliest applications were repulsive as well as fantastic.
>
> This, however, would be, from a signific point of view, just what we should

> expect to find. Man's sense-world includes much which requires the discipline of a meaning-sense to interpret rationally; and this sense, this sensitiveness to the meaning, intent, purport, purpose, 'end' of experience, direct and indirect, culminates in the sense – now become the recognition – of Significance; of the import, the importance, the ultimate value, the supreme moment of all experience and all knowledge. (1983 [1903]: 193–4)

Welby ultimately considered the world view and behaviours of primitive groups as expressions and practical translations of their intuitive and instinctive comprehension of nature and of the universe at large. She supplemented her reflections on the primitive mind – her immediate object of analysis – with critiques of methodology, her intention being to demonstrate the worthlessness from a scientific perspective of much of the research on such issues by philosophers, anthropologists, and general commentators.

In the context of this discourse, Welby established a comparative relation (as was characteristic of her method) between primitive groups and children. From 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution':

> No doubt it [the baby] makes great mistakes and requires to have them corrected. But these are not circumstantial, consistent, and elaborate as in the case of ancient superstition, nor do they include a morbid attention to or delusive inferences from the phenomena of death. And so far as children are 'animistic,' it is distinctly, as Mr. Herbert Spencer points out, on the dramatic ground. They are born mimics and 'actors.' Still it may be pleaded that as man in his childhood had no other elders to teach him better, he stereotyped his fancies, and they have become, like other habitual tendencies, organised and perpetuated. But even thus we have to show why the yet earlier correspondence has become so ineffective as to permit such perpetuation; and why the nascent figurative power should wander so far astray. (1891a: 306)

The actions and ideas of primitive groups are translations of sense response to the environment, preconditions for development toward higher and more complex forms of activity, the consequence of an 'unbroken correspondence between thing and thought' (ibid.: 307). But development described in such terms – that is, at the organic and physiological levels – does not find correspondence in the life of the imagination and of the emotions, which instead tend to deviate without the least possibility of correction. From the perspective of mind, it seems that

human beings reach a stage where they no longer know how to distinguish between such contrasting phenomena as illusion and reality, voice and echo, object and shadow, object and reflection, energy and matter, all of which are reflected in dreaming. Welby believed that contrasts such as these are a mark of 'universal experience.' And in some cases they may even generate beliefs and behaviours that are, to say the least, extravagant and bizarre in a negative sense: the 'ghost,' the shadow of the dead, the conviction that the Gods and mankind constitute a sort of natural family, and cults inspired by the breath, echo, shadow, reflection, dreaming.

With these considerations in mind, Welby queried why the primordial order of existence was not translated from the very beginning into a process of mental development in which the nascent powers of imagination and representation were regulated and balanced (ibid.). Drawing analogies from evolutionary theory, she hypothesized that evolution of mind began with a practical phase inspired by common sense and then moved on to a figurative phase – that is, to imagination, representation, and signification through the production of images. As she stated in 'Is There a Break in Mental Evolution?' (1890a), 'ghost-theory' tends to ignore the practical stage and to turn ordinary imagination into disconnected and riotous fantasies, which are instantly transformed into persistent and often harmful practices. This serves to limit the accurate to modern times (cf. 1890a: 973). In 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution' (1891a), she cites examples from Frazer's *Golden Bough* in observing that research seems to highlight a paradox – namely, the emergence of elaborate forms of wastefulness such as the 'unnatural treatment tending to injure the future mothers of a community' (1891a: 317). This is true even when nature's tendency toward economy might have been expected to play an inhibiting role. And all of this presumably came about at a time of great human progress widened by the discovery of fire and metallurgy, the development of tools and weapons, and achievements in the aesthetic realm (Welby reminds us of the drawings found in the Cro-Magnon cave in France).

However this may be, Welby adopted a radically critical attitude toward descriptions of this kind handed down by scholars from different fields and reported by diverse sources – scientific treatises, travel literature, reports by missionaries, and so on. Welby's critiques of such reports and of the apparent contradictions in human phylogenesis emerging from them were basically methodological. As we know, her focus was on signifying processes and their development from an evolutionary perspective, with particular reference to verbal signs.

Welby addressed ethno-anthropologic-linguistic questions from the perspective of signifying processes at three general levels of discourse: (1) the verbal and non-verbal discourse of primitive groups; (2) the discourse of scholars interpreting the discourse of primitive groups; and (3) her own discourse as she questioned (a) her interpretation of other scholars' interpretations, (b) her interpretation of her immediate object of analysis, the discourse of primitive groups, and, therefore, (c) their interpretations of reality, whether real or imaginary.

Welby emphasized the 'inconsistency of prevailing inferences,' of reasoning built on false premises. From this perspective, she warned readers not to read alien cultures and populations in the context of categories that did not account for the other:

> Where, then, is the missing link? Our very idea of mental and spiritual intercommunion in any exalted sense is among the latest of mental products.
>
> But are we not betrayed even by the ambiguities of language into ascribing such ideas to the primitive sense-bound mind? (Ibid.: 319)

Welby did not accept the hypothesis that primitive groups made a sudden break in their relation to the sense world. Thus, she rejected the hypothesis that there had been a sudden shift toward a non-sensuous world, since this hypothesis was prone to ignore nature's ingrained tendency toward the 'right reaction,' toward 'correspondence' in the relationship between organism and environment. On the contrary, Welby believed in the continuity of this ingrained tendency, which, if anything, needed to be appreciated at a linguistic level, duly theorized, and recognized as a motivating force in all new beginnings in evolutionary development:

> Do not all the theories hitherto advanced really imply that the primordial mind had effaced all signs of its pre-intellectual ancestry and bequeathed to the earliest of its descendents of whom we can find traces, a practical *tabula rasa*? Do they not one and all involve the assumption that primitive men had to begin from the very beginning in their responses to environment, instead of inheriting a tendency to right reaction or correspondence ingrained in them from protoplasmic days and in the protozoic nursery, a tendency, which has but to be carried over and utilised in every fresh departure in development. (Ibid.)

The hypothesis of a break in mental evolution perhaps explains the pro-

liferation of those cults which can easily be perceived as nonsensical and grotesque because they require the sacrifice of time and work, as well as victims. By the same token, however, this hypothesis cannot explain the development of 'right thought' or of the critical capacity toward these cults (ibid.: 320). For her part, Welby believed that the hypothesis of a break and reversal in the development of mind was faulty and produced a distorted image of evolutionary motions in the universe. In fact, the break hypothesis describes the 'real' and the 'significant' as suddenly abdicating their role to the 'unfounded' and 'meaningless.' Welby herself propounded the theory of continuous correspondence between nature and organism and, it follows, of continuous development beyond what is conceptualized in terms of deviation.

2.3.5. The Biological Basis of Signifying Processes

Welby's conception of mind, of its evolution and individual development, can be associated with Peirce's, with particular reference to his paper 'Logic and Spiritualism' (ca 1905, *CP* 6.557–6.587). Peirce too believed that consciousness and reason were only the surface layers of the unconscious or semiconscious signifying processes that constituted the human mind or psychical activity.

Much like Welby, Peirce contended that unconscious or semiconscious processes – the 'obscure part' of the mind, as he put it – were the precondition for those forms of awareness and reasoning that maintain a margin of sensibility and capacity for comprehension. He rejected the Cartesian conception of mind as wholly present to itself – as that which asserts itself directly in unitary consciousness – in favour of that 'vivid consciousness, subject to attention and control, [which] embraces at any one moment a mere scrap of our psychical activity.'

When outlining his analysis of the unconscious or semiconscious copresent with full consciousness, Peirce offered three propositions: '(1) The obscure part of the mind is the principal part. (2) It acts with far more unerring accuracy than the rest. (3) It is almost infinitely more delicate in its sensibilities' (*CP* 6.569).

In 'Is There a Break in Mental Evolution?' Welby evaluated the hypothesis that primitive peoples operate bad 'translations' of the existent because the means of analysis and expression at their disposal are increasingly inadequate. She contended that modern humans who had taken on the task of objectifying and analysing primitive humans were showing a total lack of understanding of primitive cultures – that is, 'other' or

'alien' cultures. Modern observers needed to improve their interpretive capacities by critiquing meaning and linguistic usage, and do so in ways that accounted for recent developments in the human sciences, including psychology and the psychological aspects of language (1890a: 973).

Welby identified two interpretive alternatives relative to phylogenesis, which she formulated in 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution.' Her preference for the second alternative is obvious, as we can deduce from her use of the word 'apparent' to modify 'paradox':

> Either (1) we are to suppose an absolute break and reversal in the evolution of mind; a stage of gratuitous incoherence in which the developing imagination has let go all the organised reactive power which up to that stage had made its owner what he was, and proceeds to create a burlesque of the universe; –
>
> Or (2) we have, if not to assume that there is, at least to ask whether there may be in primitive cosmology and natural history an underlying element of true 'mental shadow' of outward fact; an unbroken continuity of response in consciousness answering to the unbroken series of structure, function, and organic reactions; a mine, as it were, of valid suggestion, carried on within us and prompting more and more definite expression. (1891a: 321)

Welby concludes that 'paradox,' if we must speak of it, rests in faulty translations/interpretations of the existent by primitive man as much as in faulty translations/interpretations by modern scholars of primitive signifying processes and forms of expression. Citing from her 'Abstract,' which anticipates her full-length essay, 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution,' Welby comments on the two alternative interpretations:

> 15. If we choose the former it follows that primitive man largely concentrated his attention on and sacrificed his welfare to that which all ancestral energies must have tended to ignore. An elaborate civilization does loosen direct ties with outward nature; yet it is the highest product of this – the scientific mind – which regains the apparently lost touch, and gives us what is now called scientific truth.
>
> 16. But if we accept the latter we may find that much of what seems wholly baseless or morbid may prove to be faulty *translation* of underlying fact: that the continuity of natural link is in truth unbroken: and that what we need is a closer study of signification in the light of recent developments of psychology; more especially on the side of language and of expression in the most general sense. (1890b)

Both Welby and the German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies insisted on the need for a common terminological apparatus that would serve as a platform for a critical understanding and discussion of divergences among different currents of thought, principles, opinions, and theories. Both criticized the tendency toward oversimplifying, rationalistic-mechanistic interpretations of thought, as well as language interpretations that were largely the result of reductions to the physical sciences. Furthermore, they both identified the beginning of a critical reaction to the reductionist tendencies of the time in new, vitalistic impulses emanating from the community of biologists. In 'Notes on the "Welby Prize Essay"' (1901), Welby, commenting on Tönnies's research, evokes her own unpublished paper of 1887, 'Mental Biology' (Welby Collection, York University Archives), in which she problematizes language and thought processes in the light of modern biological theory. She also points to correspondences with Tönnies's position. In this regard, she quotes the following passage by Tönnies:

> A psychical organism within the soul, like the cerebrum within the body, is formed as a complex tissue of possible and actual connexions of sensations, a tissue of which the essential functions are the positing of likeness and difference, *i.e.* are assimilation and separation, reception and rejection, affirmation and negation, completing itself in man by the possession of a sign-system of words as the function of judgment, and so as thought. (Tönnies in Welby 1901: 199)

In her correspondence between 1890 and 1892 with the biologist George J. Romanes (1848–94), Welby described thought processes in the animal world in terms of differentiated levels of sign activity, and pointed to certain similarities with sign activity in human beings. Welby at the time was working on a theory of the evolution of human intelligence. In this endeavour, she took into account the results of public debates on such topics. This is reflected in chapters 22 to 25 of *What Is Meaning?* In his review of that book, Peirce highlighted these chapters and even advised the reader to read them first.

Through her critical reading of contemporary anthropological theory, and taking into account recent developments in psychology, Welby developed a generative–dynamic theory of language and expression – or, better, of signifying processes in the broadest possible sense. During this phase of her research, her concept of 'sense' prefigured the concepts of 'mother-sense,' 'race motherhood,' 'primary sense,' and 'pri-

mal sense,' concepts that she would theorize systematically after 1907 (see below).

Working from an evolutionary perspective, Welby approached the mind or human brain as a ramification of the evolution of life forms. We humans are unique among all other forms of life because of our capacity for 'speech' – that is, for 'articulate and logical expression.' It was in this context – that is, of evolutionary theory – that Welby introduced her 'linguistic criticism,' or 'critique of language,' a fundamental aspect of her theory of signs and meaning. Given its extraordinary signifying power, Welby described speech or verbal language – that is, articulate and logical expression – as a launching pad for furthering the evolution of life, indeed of the cosmos, and as the basis for humanity's potential significance. This explains why she attributed so much importance to the critical, linguistic, and conceptual capacities of human beings and to the ethical dimension of these capacities, which inevitably raised the problem of responsibility.

According to Welby, the signifying capacity could be developed to the highest degree through such activities as experimenting, interpreting, and translating across various sign systems, the goal being to achieve the maximum value or significance of all experience. From a significal perspective, Welby emphasized the need (beyond a mere quantitative count) to moralize and to humanize knowledge, and in so doing to seek out the ultimate sense and value of all experience for human beings. The experimental method – by which is understood abductive procedure – helps generate significating experience at the highest levels of sense or significance.

The dictionary entry 'Significs' (1902), which Welby co-authored with Baldwin and Stout, develops her position on the three levels of meaning as stated in her 1896 paper, 'Sense, Meaning, Interpretation.' Welby promoted a sign-interpretation approach to the problem of meaning, one that transcended traditional approaches, which tended to analyse the problem of meaning reductively, in terms of the problem of the relation between form and concept. Instead, much as Peirce did with his interpretation semiotics, Welby focused on relations between signs and their interpretants.

Welby's dictionary entry 'Sensal' (1902), which she co-authored with Stout, theorizes the biological basis of signifying processes relative to 'sense.' The latter is understood in terms of the first level of Welby's meaning triad – that is, with reference to the realm of the 'sensuous' and therefore to the biological sphere – as well as in broader and more

comprehensive terms such that 'sense' includes the teleological, axiological, ethical, and aesthetic orders of signifying processes, which are at once rooted in the organic:

> *Sensal* [Lat. *sensus*, a sense]. (1) Sensuous (q.v., also for foreign equivalents); belonging to or derived from sense.
>
> J. Grote speaks (*Explor. Philosophica*, ii. 156, 158) of 'sensal' intuition and knowledge; he used also the term sensive.
>
> (2) Concerned, not with the sound or form, i.e. the strictly verbal character of a word, sentence, or question, but with its import or purport.
>
> Aristotle's division of definitions into 'verbal' and 'real' might be more properly translated 'sensal' and 'real.' So in J.S. Mill's contention (*System of Logic*, chp. vi §4) that 'an essential proposition ... is one which is purely verbal,' i.e. concerned merely with the sense in which it is used, 'verbal' would become 'sensal.' This meaning is suggested by the present writer. Cf. *Verbal* (also for foreign equivalents for meaning 2). (V.W., G.F.S.). (Welby and Stout 1902: 515)

The biological basis of sense is also reflected in the following passage from 'The Social Value of Expression' (1908c), in which Welby distinguishes between the terms 'sense' and 'sensal' on the one hand, and 'verbal' on the other:

> One example of usage, however, that of 'verbal questions,' governs so much of our unconscious attitude toward the conditions of expression that it must be briefly noticed.
>
> How if we have been calling one of the most pressing of all social questions – that of sense – a merely verbal one? What if we have here been making a practically disastrous confusion? Have we never considered that the word 'sense' ranges from the first responsive quiver of the primitive organism to the sense of common interest or the sense of brotherhood or the sense of duty and honour which with other like 'senses,' make human society possible and may make it beyond hope noble? Have we forgotten not only the value of a common sense, but even the value of the sense of a word or a phrase? If we will only condescend for the sake of practical outcome, say of sheer economy of brain-work, to notice such things, we shall I think find that here we must demand a word, – the 'sensal.' We must recognise that a 'verbal' question is one only of the phonetic, the graphic, the alphabetical, at most the historical aspects of language. These are not what we may call *sensal* questions – questions as to the sense (insensibly changing)

> in which we use, or our forefathers used words and phrases. (1985e [1908]: cclix–cclx)

In 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896), Welby had already excluded possible alternatives to the term 'significs.' For example, she rejected the neologism 'sensifics' and the corresponding verb 'to sensify,' since their connections with the world of the senses were too immediate and risked oversimplification. In contrast with the term 'verbal,' which more simply indicated linguistic form, sound, writing, the term 'sensal' evoked the word's signifying value besides summoning its connection with the sphere of the organic.

Another key term employed by Welby was 'interpretation.' This term is found in the title of her paper as the third level in her meaning triad. Soon after this, however, she rejected the term 'interpretation' in favour of 'significance,' because 'interpretation' designates an activity involved in all three levels and aspects of signifying processes and not just the third.

In its primary meaning, the term 'sense' corresponds to prerational life, to the primitive level of signification, that of the interpreter–interpretant's undifferentiated organic–instinctive response to the signs forming its environment. Thus understood, the concept of 'sense' is fundamentally organistic and involves all living entities populating the organic world. As noted earlier, it is the precondition for the capacity to adapt to the world insofar as it is a directly experienced world, a 'perceived' world. Furthermore, insofar as sense concerns the living world in its totality and not just the animal world, the capacity for 'sense' (unlike the capacity for 'meaning') is not specific to human beings. 'The whole animal "kingdom" (if not also the plant order) shares the sense-world'; whereas in the course of evolution, 'the advent of the sense of meaning – the highest kind of sense – marks a new departure: it opens the distinctively human era' (Welby 1983 [1903]: 28).

All signifying behaviour, all experience from the organic to the cognitive and the axiological, presupposes interpretive capacity at the level of sense. 'Sense' also indicates the pragmatic aspect of signifying processes given that it implies sign *use*, circumstance, and – in higher forms of animal life – mental state, reference, and so on, even if only at a preconscious level. At the same time, the term 'sense' in all its signifying implications, including the sense of meaning and significance, constitutes the value of experience. In this broad sense, 'sense in all "senses" of the word' is used to indicate the 'value' of signifying processes, of

semiosis, their general orientation in the sphere of life on this planet. Insofar as it refers to experience value, sense is also connected to the intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of the world: 'Sense in all its senses may be called the link or nexus between the intellectual, the moral, and the aesthetic worlds. For in all senses it is the sense wherein and whereby they are possible' (ibid.: 48). From this perspective, the term 'sense' takes on a specialized meaning – elicited by the question 'In what sense?' – relating to the pertinence of the sign in its singularity for the individual interpreter/interpretant.

All of that which has value for the human being is invested with meaning in a broad and global sense – that is, with meaning understood not only in terms of intentional sense, but also in terms of sense that exceeds and transcends the intentional, the foreseen, in the direction of significance, with meaning as the capacity to produce something more, a signifying surplus with respect to the already known, the already given, the already said. Such a capacity is connected with the ethical dimension of signifying processes and therefore with the capacity for opening toward the other, for criticism, hospitality, and responsibility.

Welby studies the capacity for signifying, interpreting, and differentiating among multiple meanings, the capacity for criticism, the capacity for signifying excess or transcendence, and therefore the capacity to invent new and alternative worlds from a significal perspective. Sign activity thus described develops where logic, semiotics, and axiology intersect; also, it is specific to the human world. Welby contends that the exquisitely human capacity for signifying processes at the highest levels of innovation, creativity, and significance has repercussions for development at the organic level, for the life of the instincts, for senses and impulses. In today's terminology we might say that she theorizes a relation of continuity and reciprocal responsivity between the zoosemiosic (or even more broadly, biosemiosic) sphere of existence and the anthroposemiosic. Indeed, we know today that the various spheres of semiosis all belong to what can be called the great 'semiobiosphere' and that this, in turn, is a concrete expression of the processes of 'cosmosemiosis' (cf. Petrilli 1998a, 1998e).

From the perspective of anthroposemiosis, significs concerns human behaviour in all its aspects, from daily life to the intellectual, and makes no claims to any form of philosophic or semiotic omniscience. Significs turns its gaze on human experience in a universal sense – that is, from the stance of signifying behaviour and its conditions of possibility. Also, Welby's significal approach to the life of signs reminds us of the general

necessity for critical awareness and also of the connection with responsibility, which is specific to the human use of signs. In a letter to Peirce dated 18 November 1903, in which she mentioned her Italian connection, the mathematician and philosopher Giovanni Vailati, Welby wrote that she conceived of significs as the child of the encounter between logic, semiotics, axiology, and pragmatics:

> Prof. G. Vailati ... shares your view of the importance of that – may I call it, practical extension? – of the office and field of Logic proper, which I have called Significs. For the latter seems to see as I do that the acceptance of such an extension will bring a time when no one with any sense will any longer say 'Oh, I don't care for (or, am incapable of) the study of Logic. That isn't my line.' For that would be to announce indifference not merely to rational order, but also to the very attribute which may be said to give its human value to life, – that is, (1) its 'Sense' and sense-power in every sense from the biological to the logical, (2) its intention, conscious and increasingly definite and rational, which we call 'Meaning' and (profess to) use language to express, (3) its Significance, its bearing upon, its place among, its interpretation of, all other cosmical facts. (Hardwick 1977: 6)

Welby was especially fascinated by the idea of a universe permeated with the triadic order. This is reflected in her meaning triad 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance,' as well as in her corresponding triadic theory of consciousness and knowledge, which differentiates between the 'planetary,' the 'solar,' and the 'cosmic.' Thus, in her search for a method for critiquing existence, she identified triadism as a valid instrument of analysis. In this vein, she criticized Hegel for having sucked the vitality and transformational capacity from the triadic order, thereby reverting its sense and fossilizing the essential energy of thought itself so that it became a sort of magic ticket to be affixed to all experience (see her letter to Charles F. Keary, 1886–8, in Cust 1929: 170). Indeed, the preponderance of the triadic order in existence had long been theorized in philosophy, albeit inadequately, according to Welby. In fact, she criticized the tendency to emphasize technicalism, which was alien to life processes and which contributed nothing to a better understanding of the different orders of semiosis and metasemiosis.

Welby's writings include an unpublished paper 'Threefold Laws/Law of the Three Stages/The Triad/The Tendency to Triad' (1886b; available in galleys in the Welby Archives), in which she attempted to systematize her search for a method for understanding the universe. Many years

later, in a letter to Peirce dated 22 December 1903, to which she appended a copy of this paper, Welby made an appeal for greater reflection on the tendency toward triadism, a 'mode of expression' or 'expressive order' objectively present everywhere, in the organic world as well as in the inorganic world, in sign processes investing biological phenomena as well as the world of physical phenomena:

> With regard to the triads, I am quite aware that error may take a triadic form and thus indeed put on a specious value. That seems to me an additional reason why the subject should be brought forward. I have hesitated long whether to send you enclosed proof of a sadly incoherent attempt to deal with triadism, and to use it as a mode of expression or as an expressive order. You will however easily gather its general sense. I wish some competent mind could take up the subject on a really broad basis. For apparently the same tendency to a triadic order is found objectively in physical and biological phenomena. I have been much struck with this in my rather extensive scientific reading and was surpised to find that no one seemed to notice it. (Hardwick 1977: 14)

Welby analysed history, the evolution of the human species, the development of cultural forms and systems, and the progress of science and knowledge in terms of signifying processes developing to different degrees both in 'literal' or 'actual' meaning and in 'metaphorical' or 'figurative' meaning. However, she also stated clearly that there is no net division between these two spheres. From this perspective, she even spoke of a third order of meaning, an intermediary zone of meaning where the 'literal' and 'metaphorical' come together along a continuum ranging from low levels of metaphoricity to high levels. Correspondingly, experience of the world ranges across varying degrees of directness or indirectness in the transition from sense perception to knowledge to signs and meaning at high levels of otherness and extralocalization, where primary importance is attributed to the use of metaphors and to the ability to view things with an indirect gaze. She saw the world as conceptualized largely through processes of metaphorization and shifts in meaning as the corpus of our knowledge varies and flourishes in the light of new experiences in daily life and of progress in scientific research.

To remember just a few examples offered by Welby: the expression the 'sun rises' in the modern era has a different meaning value from that of the pre-Copernican era; the word 'infection' has been charged with dif-

ferent implications since the discovery of microbes; similarly, such words as 'sun,' 'planet,' 'cosmos,' 'sky,' 'earth,' 'mind,' 'matter,' 'soul,' and 'body' have all acquired new meanings and signifying implications in the light of recent scientific research. In any case, meaning oscillates persistently between two poles commonly identified as 'literal meaning' and 'metaphorical meaning.' These expressions signal theoretical abstractions with respect to real signifying processes that in concrete experience are never purely literal or purely metaphorical. Welby, in fact, warns us against the tendency toward oversimplification and reductionism:

> In the case of knowledge acquired by the scientific method, we know that beyond the simple directness of sense-perception we have various forms of indirect knowledge. Perhaps the most obvious of these is found in the case of vision ...
>
> Now, we are accustomed to reason as though in the pursuit of fact or truth there could only be two possible alternatives. We are dealing either with something literal or actual, or with metaphor. The former is fact, the latter is at best merely useful illustration, essentially casual and partial, and therefore never to be treated as evidence.
>
> Suppose, however, that what we take for mere metaphor may in some cases be *indirectly perceived fact*, which must be expressed, if at all, analogically? Suppose that there is a middle region in which we are dealing neither with the merely literal nor the merely metaphorical, but with direct, indirect, and doubly indirect experience? (1983 [1903]: 139)

Welby invested the metaphor – indeed, figurative expression generally – with signifying primacy, equivalent in Peirce's terminology to the icon as distinct from the index and the symbol. Anticipating current research on the origins of language (cf. Sebeok 1991b: ch. 5), she was among the first to acknowledge speech – that is, verbal language – as a specific characteristic of humankind. Even more interesting was her recognition that the capacities for producing 'figures,' for imagination and musement, and eventually for 'symbolizing,' are primary and underived traits that are specific to the human species and that predate verbal language. In other words, in Welby's view, speech (at both the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic level) is secondary to the capacity for producing 'figures,' for indirect signifying processes that favour creativity and innovation; thus, speech is secondary to the human capacity for modelling infinite possible worlds, which is what really distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom. That said, speech empowers and

further develops the capacity for figurative expression and imagination. In other words, although the species-specific verbal sign system appears on the evolutionary scale only later with respect to the human modelling capacity, it in turn augments expressivity in the symbolic order. For that reason, it was instrumental to the inauguration of the distinctively human era. Thus in Welby's description, the human species is to be distinguished from other animals by its capacity for creativity and imagination, for speech and symbolization.

> The moment of speech, the signal of the moment of Mind which is the birth of interpretation is also the moment of Figure-genesis. Before the speech-epoch, Imagery is embryonic. Then it is born. And for the moment THAT is the secret. We despise 'mere' figure, etc. We are thus despising the difference between man and beast. No beast can Imagine the universe in Word. Still less can he Symbolise. (Undated manuscript, Box 30, File 44, 'Significs-Ambiguity,' Welby Collection, York University Archives)

Drawing on the biological sciences which distinguish between superficial similarity (analogy) and genetic-structural similarity (homology), Welby identified what she called a 'stronger' and therefore a more efficient type of 'analogy' – that is, homology – in the development of knowledge and in signifying processes generally. She thus distinguished between analogy and homology as methodological tools of analysis:

> All manner of comparisons, from the most absurdly inapplicable to the truest and most complete, are lumped together as 'analogies'; and then we are gravely told that no argument can rest upon analogy. But some comparisons vaguely called analogies are really homologies; some again really equations; and from these an argument can of course properly start. (1983 [1903]: 21)

Welby identified relations of similarity of the homological type among mind, language, and world – that is, relations of similarity traceable at the structural and genetic levels and not just at the surface level. These two types of similarity, the analogical and the homological, are in turn connected to different types of inference – deduction, induction, hypothesis (that is, abduction) – which are characterized by different degrees in dialogism and otherness and therefore by different degrees of the capacity for innovation and creativity (chapter 1).

By way of conclusion: one of the main objectives of the project for sig-

nifics was to fully recover the connection between the logical and the biological in a relation of reciprocal interdependency and empowerment – that is, to recover sense in all of its signifying valency from the instinctive–biological to the ethical and axiological, that is, to sense understood as significance. As a result of the recovery of the relationship between logic and sense, between sense and value, from a 'significal' or 'teleosemiotic' perspective (cf. Petrilli 1998a) – or, if we prefer, a 'semioethic' perspective (see chapter 12) – significs, in its quest for the exquisitely human, theorizes the possibility of extending logic beyond its strictly gnoseological boundaries so as to connect it to the organic order on the one hand, and to the aesthetical and the ethic orders on the other.

Biographical Note

VICTORIA LADY WELBY has a relatively low profile in semiotic studies, yet she made an important contribution to the theory of meaning and to our understanding of sign. Because, from the perspective of this book, she is a key figure in semiotics, we believe that her life merits a longer biographical note than we offer for the more famous semioticians.

Welby belonged to the highest circles of English nobility. She was born on 27 April 1837, the third of three children of the Honourable Charles James Stuart-Wortley (1802–1844), who was the second of three sons of the first Lord Wharncliffe, and his wife Lady Emmeline Charlotte Elizabeth (1806–1855). Lady Emmeline Stewart-Wortley, a writer, poet, and traveller, was the second daughter of John Henry Manners, fifth Duke of Rutland, and Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Frederick Howard, fifth Earle of Carlisle. Victoria Welby was christened Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart-Wortley by the Bishop of Salisbury in St James's Church on 17 June 1837, with their Royal Highnesses Princess Alexandrina Victoria and the Duchess of Kent (the Queen Mother) acting as her godmothers and John Irvin, Esq., as godfather. She was named after her first godmother. This event took on even greater significance when, five days later, Princess Victoria became first Queen Alexandrina Victoria and then, changing her signature, simply Queen Victoria. Victoria Welby was appointed Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria in 1861 and spent almost two years (1861–3) at the royal court before her marriage at Belvoir, on 4 July 1863, to Sir William Earle Welby (1829–98), military official, MP, and High Sheriff, who at his father's death in 1875 became fourth Baronet, assuming the additional surname Gregory. Thus, Victoria Welby's surname became Welby-Gregory. She published

under her full name until the end of the 1880s, as the Honourable Lady Welby from 1890 to 1893, and as Victoria Welby after 1893, although she continued signing all official and business documents with her full name. In 1887, with the marriage of her son, Sir Charles Glynne Earle Welby (1865–1938), MP and Assistant Undersecretary of State at the War Office, to Maria Louisa Helena Hervey (d.1920), her correct name was Victoria Lady Welby or simply V. Lady Welby, since her daughter-in-law had now acquired the right to place the title 'Lady' before her Christian name. On marrying, her son also acquired the right to live at Denton Manor, and Welby moved to Duneaves. Her other two children were Victor Albert William (1864–1876) and Emmeline Mary Elizabeth ('Nina') (1867–1955), a painter, sculptress, and writer. Nina would write her mother's biography and edit two volumes of her correspondence. During the first years of her marriage, Victoria Welby contributed to founding, in 1872, the Royal School of Art Needlework.

Welby was not at all attracted to life at court, and after her marriage retreated to Denton Manor. There, with her husband's full support, she began her research. She contributed a great deal to modern theory of sign, meaning, and interpretation, in 1896 introducing the neologism 'significs' for her own special approach to the interrelation among signs, sense (in all its signifying implications), and values. She contributed many articles to newspapers, magazines, and scientific journals (notably *Spectator*, *Expositor*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Open Court, Nature, Mind*, *Monist*, and the *Hibbert Journal*, as well as the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientify Methods*), and had privately printed a long series of essays, parables, aphorisms, and pamphlets on a wide range of subjects (science, mathematics, anthropology, philosophy, education, social issues). She also published six books. Besides a travel diary she wrote and published as a child (1852), a book of critical reflections on theological and religious questions (*Links and Clues*, 1881), including extracts from her correspondence, and a book of prayers (1892), Welby wrote a collection of parables, critical reflections, and aphorisms (*Grains of Sense*, 1897). She followed this with two monographs specifically relating to significs: *What Is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance* (1983 [1903]) and *Significs and Language: The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources* (1985 [1911]). Other valuable sources of information about Welby include a biography by her daughter (*Wanderers: Episodes From the Travels of Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley and Her Daughter Victoria, 1849–1955* [Cust 1928]), and two volumes of correspondence between Welby and various interlocutors covering the years 1879–91 and 1898–1911: respectively, *Echoes of Larger Life* (Cust 1929) and *Other Dimensions* (Cust 1931). Her correspondence with C.S. Peirce was published as *Semiotic and Significs* (Hardwick 1977).

From 1863 until her death in 1912, Welby was a friend and source of inspira-

tion to leading personalities in the worlds of science and literature. She wrote regularly to more than 450 correspondents in Great Britain, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands – a testiment to her influence in the cultural circles of her day. She used her correspondence as a place for theorization in constant dialogic communion with others. Welby began writing to politicians, representatives of the church, aristocrats, and intellectuals in 1870, thereby developing an epistolary network that expanded rapidly after 1880. She used this network as a sounding board for her ideas and as a means to circulate those ideas. Through her high social position as a member of Queen Victoria's court, she made friends and acquaintances in government and among the aristocracy. Her interest in religious and theological questions led her to correspond with leading churchmen of her day. Later, she welcomed eminent scientists, philosophers, and educators, thus establishing an influential salon. The importance and originality of Welby's work were generally known, yet she did not receive the public recognition she longed for. So as to avoid flattery, she published anonymously; that, or she signed her work with pseudonyms or initials or simply as 'Victoria Welby.' The only honour she valued was 'that of being treated by workers as a serious worker' (Hardwick 1977: 13). She had no institutional affiliations, but she was a member of the Aristotelian and Anthropological societies as well as a founder of the Sociological Society (1903–4).

As Welby's research progressed, she increasingly promoted the study of significs, channelling her multiple interests into a significal perspective. In 1897, shortly after she published her two keystone essays, 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893) and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896), the journal *Mind* established the Welby Prize for the best essay on significs. In 1898 it was awarded to the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies for the essay 'Philosophical Terminology' (1899–1900). Important moments of official recognition for significs are represented by publication of the entries 'Translation' (Welby 1902), 'Significs' (co-authored with J.M. Baldwin and G.F. Stout, 1902), and 'Sensal' (with G.F. Stout, 1902) in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology in Three Volumes* (Baldwin 1901–5). However, the official recognition she longed for came only in 1911, after thirty years of 'hard labour,' with publication of the entry 'Significs' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* The Signific Movement in the Netherlands, which developed in two phases (1917–26 and 1937–56), was based on Welby's significs through the mediation of the Dutch psychiatrist, poet, and social reformer Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932).

Welby's scientific writings are now available in two archives: the Welby Collection in the York University Archives (Toronto, Canada) and the Lady Welby Library in the University of London Library. The latter includes around 1,000 books from her personal library and twenty-five boxes containing pamphlets,

reprints, newspaper cuttings, religous tracts, sermons, and published lectures by various writers. Four unnumbered boxes contain duplicates of most of Welby's publications. The main part of her scientific and literary production is to be found at the York Archives, in forty-two boxes. Boxes 1 to 21 hold Welby's mostly unpublished correspondence and cover the years 1861 to 1912. Boxes 22 to 42 are subject files (titles established by Welby). These contain notes, extracts, commentaries on a variety of subjects – Biology, Education, Ethics, Eugenics, Imagery, Language and Significance, Logic and Significance, Matter and Motion, Numbers Theory, Philosophy and Significance, Significs (nine files), Time – speeches, lessons, sermons by other authors, many unpublished essays and a collection of poems by Welby, diagrams and photographs, translations, proofs, copies of some of her publications, newspaper cuttings, and so on. Welby died at seventy-five, on 29 March 1912, at Denton Manor, and was buried in Grantham.

3

About Bakhtin

3.1. Philosophy of Language as Critique of Dialogic Reason

An author's importance becomes obvious once his writings begin to generate multiple readings. Mikhail M. Bakhtin (see biographical note, p. 166) is one of these cases.

His research came to light after years of silence and since then numerous studies from various perspectives have been dedicated to him. Some of his writings were discovered only after his death, and were published gradually and out of chronological order. These include texts from the early 1920s that have become available only recently and that have shed new light on all of Bakhtinian research.

Bakhtin's thought ranges across multiple disciplines and is now being applied to fields that he himself had not addressed directly. We have worked on his research and writings in past studies, yet still we find it useful to review our earlier interpretations, to rethink and develop them from different perspectives in the light of newly discovered texts by Bakhtin and of reinterpretations of texts with which we are already familiar.

In the following section, we review Bakhtin's research as a whole and consider his work from the perspective of philosophy of language.

3.1.1. Philosophy of Literature and Philosophy of Language

However one wishes to apply Bakhtin's thought system, his main interest lies in the philosophy or theory of literature and in 'philosophy of language,' to use Bakhtin's own term for it.

As Bakhtin saw it, philosophy of literature cannot be separated from philosophy of language. In this vein, it is difficult if not impossible to

separate contributions that are specifically Bakhtin's from those of his collaborators, Voloshinov and Medvedev, who signed works that were published in the 1920s. Besides being interwoven with these works, Bakhtin's philosophy of language and philosophy of literature share the same roots – moral philosophy. Bakhtin's original interest was in fact moral philosophy – in particular, the problem of responsibility. His earliest paper, dated 1919, focused on questions relating to art, in line with the journal in which it was published. Even at that point, he had linked the problem of art to that of responsibility.

Bakhtin was not at all interested in 'limited responsibility' as delineated in relation to the problem of identity. In terms of artistic discourse, especially as it related to literary texts, he had no interest in the artist's identity, nor in literary genres or trends. In his studies on language, Bakhtin showed no concern for the category of identity. The 'Bakhtinian revolution' (see Ponzio 1998) involved a shift in attention away from identity toward alterity in the context of all of these problems and disciplines.

Bakhtin was interested in responsibility understood as 'answering to' and 'answering for' the other – that is, in responsibility without alibis. In Bakhtin's view, what is aesthetically productive is the value of other, not that of I. He analysed the word with the goal of highlighting the presence of another word in it, a word that rendered the original word internally dialogic. With regard to language, Bakhtin contended that centrifugal forces operate in tandem with centripetal forces and that identity in language is established through the struggles between these two forces, as a result of which identity is rendered other with respect to itself. Bakhtin expressed this shift in focus toward alterity with the prefix 'meta-,' and classified his studies on language as studies in 'metalinguistics.'

Bakhtin's philosophy of language has its roots in his shift in focus beyond the boundaries of identity. His philosophy of literature moves in the same direction, transcending the limits of literary theory and criticism as determined by the value of coherent and compact identity, be it linguistic, cultural, or national identity, or the identity of discourse genre, or any other.

In his research on signs, Bakhtin did not limit himself to the verbal; he also considered the non-verbal. And when discussing his work on signs, both verbal and non-verbal, he rejected the term 'semiotics' (quite explicitly, in his notes from the 1970s). Therefore, here as well we must speak of 'metasemiotics.'

In the following two sections, we consider the role that alterity plays in the general project of Bakhtinian theory. The first of these sections

examines Bakhtin's philosophy of literature; the second considers the contribution that Bakhtinian categories might make to philosophy of language. Philosophy of literature and philosophy of language were the two sides of the coin that was Bakhtin's philosophical project. When we approach Bakhtin's work as it presents itself 'on the move' – as it develops through its most basic impulse – we find that it belongs to the field of moral philosophy (metasemiotically revisited).

3.1.2. Semiotics and Philosophy of Language

In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929, signed by Voloshinov), and in 'The Problem of the Text,' Bakhtin used the term 'philosophy of language' for his research, which crossed into multiple fields and disciplines, all of which, however, concerned languages and signs. His focus was on the contact points and intersections among these disciplines.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), Bakhtin emphasized the dialogic character of the relation between language and sign. In other words, semiotics and philosophy of language are dialogically linked: semiotics has a philosophical component, and philosophy of language has a scientific one. This is how Bakhtin could refer to philosophy of language as 'metalinguistics.' This is the term he applied to his own particular approach to the study of sign, utterance, text, discourse genre, and the relation between literary writing and non-verbal expressions in popular culture (famously, in his study of the signs of carnival).

Even later, during the first half of the 1970s, when the term semiotics was generally accepted as referring to the general science of signs, Bakhtin never used that term for his own research; in this way, he differentiated himself from authors such as Jurij M. Lotman.

It is difficult to draw a boundary between semiotics and philosophy of language. Although we can distinguish between philosophy of language and specific areas of semiotic research (including linguistics) viewed as grammars of given sign systems, the distinction between general semiotics and philosophy of language is made more problematic by the fact that general semiotics is necessarily philosophical.

Nor can we solve this problem simply by stating that general semiotics is concerned with all types of signs, whereas philosophy of language deals only with verbal languages (natural and specialistic) and with those disciplines which study them. Practically speaking, philosophy of language also deals with verbal and non-verbal signs, which are described from the perspective of semantics, logico-syntactics, or pragmatics.

The problem of the relation between philosophy of language and semiotics is related to the more general problem of the relation between philosophy and science. As the general science of signs and, therefore, as one of the many sciences of language, semiotics is distinct from philosophy of language. However, general semiotics (as opposed to special semiotics, which is a different thing) cannot detach itself from a philosophical study of its own categories.

Philosophy of language explores external boundaries, protrusions, and excesses with respect to the 'semiotic field' – that is, the field of the science of signs. By analogy with Bakhtin – who applied the term 'metalinguistic' to emphasize that his own approach to language transcended the limits of linguistics – we could use the term 'metasemiotic' for our own interpretation of philosophy of language.

To speak of linguistics and the need to transcend its boundaries is to allude to a given tradition in linguistics, the one derived from Saussure. As early as the 1960s, the Italian philosopher and semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi was already criticizing trends in semiotics that took as their model Saussurean linguistics and the concept of sign and linguistic value on which that model was founded. But we are referring here also to taxonomical linguistics as well as to generative, transformational linguistics. All of these trends share the same limitation: their object of analysis is the sentence isolated from the concrete communicative context – that is, the decontextualized sentence (as opposed to the dialogic utterance). Regarding this point, we refer the reader to Rossi-Landi's *Language as Work and Trade* (1992b, Eng. trans. 1983) and *Linguistics and Economics* (1975a); also, to Ponzio's *Production linguistique et ideologie sociale* (1992b; the enlarged and updated French version of the original Italian edition of 1973). This latter work provides a detailed critique of Saussurean language and communication theory and of Chomsky's generative grammar. The same issues are developed further by Ponzio in *Filosofia del linguaggio 2* (1991) and *Signs, Dialogue, and Ideology* (1993a).

3.1.3. Bakhtin's Sign Model

Unidirectional, predetermined logic oriented to a single end is thrown into crisis by polysemy, ideological pluridirectionality, and polylogism of the sign. It is difficult to say where a sign begins and where it ends once it is no longer reductively considered as a single element, or once it is broken up into its component parts. Signs are processes, they are interweavings of relations, they are not things. The overall, unitary sense of a

sign is inseparable from its concrete communicative context, from social interaction, from specific ideologic values and orientations.

In interpreting a sign, it is not enough merely to identify it. Interpretation requires 'active comprehension.' The sense of a sign consists in something more – an excess with respect to the elements that enable us to recognize it. Sense is formed of those semantic ideological aspects that are indissolubly connected to the situational context of semiosis and that in certain respects are unique. Comprehension of the sign is active comprehension in the sense that it requires a response, a point of view. It arises from a dialogic relation, and in turn it generates a dialogic relation: the sign flourishes as a rejoinder in a dialogue (cf. Bakhtin 1970–1).

With reference to the verbal, the sign is a complete utterance; it is not isolated from the social context, or from the field of the ideological or from the discourse genre to which it belongs ('the unending variety of discourse genres,' says Bakhtin in 'From Notes Made in 1970-71': his unfinished texts published posthumously include 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' Eng. trans. Bakhtin 1986). The utterance is part of a socially and historically specified relation, a living text, not an inanimate thing. It is not an isolated monologic expression to be interpreted on the basis of the relation between linguistic units and abstract language.

Regarding Bakhtin's concept of sign in the context of Peirce's, we can construct a powerful semiotic model that can explain the complexity of signs or semiosis far better than any other models, which tend to reduce the sign to two perfectly correlated parts – the *signifiant* and the *signifié*. Obviously, we are referring to semiologies of the Saussurean matrix (Saussure of the *Cours*, not the anagrams). The latter not only conceive the sign in terms of equal exchange between *signifiant* and *signifié*. Furthermore, as Bakhtin himself says, they theorize only two poles in linguistic life, between which all linguistic and (taking linguistics as the model) all semiological phenomena take place. These two poles are the unitary system (*langue*) and individual use of this system by the single speaker (*parole*).

As Peirce demonstrated, a sign or representamen stands to someone for something. That something is in some respect its object insofar as it creates in the mind of that someone 'an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign' – that is, an interpretant (*CP* 2.228). Thus, we might add that the meaning of a sign is an (open) class which includes that sign and all of its possible interpretants. The mediating function between the meaning and object of a sign is in turn achieved through the mediation of other signs. A sign, says Peirce, exists according to the category of 'thirdness' – in other words, it presupposes a triadic relation

among itself, its object, and the interpreting thought, which itself is also a sign. A sign always plays the role of third party, given that it mediates between the interpretant sign and its object.

A sign grows as a consequence of its excursions to the outside with respect to itself and of its relations with other signs. Moreover, the relations we are alluding to are not relations of equal exchange. However, equal exchange characterizes the signal (and from this perspective, Bakhtin and Voloshinov's analyses are enlightening), whereby a one-to-one correspondence is established between signifier and signified in contrast to the sign.

More precisely, the meaning of a signal is the class which contains that signal and its interpretants according to relations of mere substitution (a red traffic light has a single meaning and is a signal – that is, its meaning is the class of meanings that substitute the colour red: 'Stop' in the graphic or phonic form, or a policeman with outstretched arms, and so on).

No doubt, this sign also contains a factor of signality and its correlate, self-identity; this, however, does not characterize it as a sign. Comprehending a sign is not merely a matter of recognizing its fixed and repeatable elements. Signs have semantic and ideological flexibility, and this makes them available to ever new and different signifying contexts. Where there are signs, the factors of signality and self-identity are transcended by the traits that are specific to signs: changeability, ambivalence, and multivoicedness.

> In the speaker's native language, i.e. for the linguistic consciousness of a member of a particular language community, signal recognition is certainly dialectically effaced. In the process of mastering a foreign language, signality and recognition still make themselves felt, so to speak, and still remain to be surmounted, the language not yet fully having become language. The ideal of mastering a language is absorption of signality by pure semioticity and of recognition by pure understanding. (Voloshinov 1929, Eng. trans.: 69)

This is what is meant by the claim that the sign is a dialogic unity of self-identity and otherness. With respect to the elements that permit its recognition or identification, the actual sense of a sign consists of something more. Actual sense is formed of those semantic–ideological aspects of a sign that in a certain sense are unique to it, peculiar to it. Moreover, that actual sense is indissolubly connected to the situational context of the semiosis.

Bakhtin (signed by Voloshinov 1929) insisted that there was a dialogic relation between these two aspects of the sign. He referred to these two aspects as 'meaning' (all of that which is reproducible and stable in the sign and is subject to a process of identification) and 'theme' (the new aspects of the sign, which require active comprehension, a response, a perspective, and that are connected to the specific situation in which semiosis occurs). Regarding the verbal sign in particular and considering the dialectic relation between 'theme' and 'meaning,' Bakhtin observes the following:

> It is even impossible to convey the meaning of a particular word (say, in the course of teaching another person a foreign language) without having made it an element of theme, i.e. without having constructed an example-utterance. On the other hand, a theme must base itself on some kind of fixity of meaning; otherwise it loses its connection with what came before and what comes after – i.e. it altogether loses its significance. (Ibid.: 100)

3.1.4. Bakhtinian Dialogue

According to Bakhtin, dialogue consists in the fact that one's own word always alludes to the word of the other, in spite of itself and whether it knows it or not. Dialogue is not an initiative taken by the self. As emerges clearly in the novels of Dostoevsky, the individual does not partake in dialogue out of respect for the other, but rather and above all *in spite* of the other.

The word is dialogic because of its passive involvement with the word of the other. Dialogue is not a synthesis of multiple perspectives; quite the opposite, it is refractory. The self is implied dialogically in otherness, just as the 'grotesque body' is implied in the body of the other, that is, the *other* human and non-human living being.

Dialogue and body are closely linked. Dialogism is not possible among disembodied minds. Unlike platonic dialogue and somewhat like dialogue in Dostoevsky, Bakhtin's concept of dialogue is not cognitive, is not functional to truth; rather, it is ethical to the extent that it is grounded in responsibility without alibis for the other, responsibility that is imposed on us and without alibis.

Bakhtinian dialogue excludes all forms of equality, of reciprocity between self and other. From this perspective, the dialogic relationship is asymmetrical and irreversible. If we agree on this, then acclaimed interpreters of Bakhtin – scholars such as Todorov, Holquist, and Wellek –

have all fundamentally misunderstood his conception of dialogue. This is evidenced by the fact that they all compare his work on dialogue to the approaches developed by Martin Buber, Jan Mukařovský, and Plato. Most significantly, they all understand dialogue in the abused sense of encounter, agreement, convergence, compromise, synthesis.

It is symptomatic that Todorov replaced the Bakhtinian term 'dialogue' with 'intertextuality' and the term 'metalinguistics' with 'translinguistics.' However, intertextuality reduces dialogue to relations among utterances, and translinguistics reduces metalinguistics to a sectorial specialization that focuses on discourse, in contrast to linguistics, which concerns itself with language (*langue*).

This approach dampens the revolutionary charge of Bakhtin's thought, if not completely annulling it: the 'Copernican Revolution' launched by Bakhtin at a philosophical level and by Dostoevsky at an artistic level involves the human person, life, thought, behaviour, these in all their universality.

Kant launched a 'critique of pure reason,' and Sartre a 'critique of dialectical reason'; Bakhtin, for his past, inaugurated a 'critique of dialogic reason.' Notwithstanding the interpretation proposed by Wladimir Krysinsky (1998), who compared Bakhtin's concept of dialogue with Mukařovský's, Bakhtin did not perceive dialogue as a means for the speaker to express a point of view.

According to Bakhtin, dialogue is not something we choose; on the contrary, we *suffer* dialogue, we are subjected to it. Dialogue is not the result of an open attitude toward the other; quite the opposite, it is the impossibility of closing with the other. This emerges clearly in tragicomical attempts at indifference.

Like Dostoevsky, Bakhtin conceived of dialogue as the impossibility of indifference toward the other, as 'unindifference' toward the other. In other words, hostility, hatred, and ostentatious indifference cannot be considered indifference. Even when unindifference degenerates into hatred, the other continues to count more than anything else. This is exactly what Dostoevsky aimed to demonstrate in his novels when he rendered 'the dialogic sphere of thinking human consciousness' (Bakhtin 1963) accessible at an artistic level.

Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason is connected with the popular conception of the 'grotesque body' as manifested in popular culture, the vulgar language of the public place, above all in the masks of carnival and in 'carnivalized literature.' Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason constitutes a critique of the concept of autonomy among individual bodies:

autonomy, in other words, is an illusion. Thus, his critique is a critique of individual identity, as in the case of consciousness or self, just as it is a critique of collective identity, as in the case of a community, a historical language, or a cultural system, wherein identity is conceived in terms of separateness from the other in accordance with dominant ideological tendencies.

In one of his final papers (1974, included in his 1979 collection), Bakhtin wrote that

> the text lives only through contact with another text (context). We underline that this contact is a dialogic contact between texts (utterances) and not a mechanic contact of opposition between abstract elements ... Behind this contact there is contact between people and not between things. (1979, Eng. trans.: 375)

In his important monographs on Dostoevsky (1929, 1963) and Rabelais (1965), as well as in his theoretical and methodological studies, the text as conceived in this way is the main hero. Thus, we can claim that Bakhtin's theory is a theory of the text – specifically, the literary text; it is also a theory of dialogue as dialogue flourishes in literary writing.

The text is the privileged object of all human sciences that concern themselves with man as a producer of texts (written or oral, verbal or non-verbal). It is in relation to this particular object – the text – that Bakhtin's method finds its specificity. Active comprehension – that is, comprehension that responds, dialogic comprehension – is the main component in this method. The specific logic of the text is a dia-logic, a dialectic among texts. The sense of the text is gleaned though the logic of question and answer, and these are not abstract, absolute, and impersonal categories of logos, but concrete and dialogic. Dialogue presupposes a reciprocal asymmetrical distancing between two interlocutors; it presupposes that question and answer arise from time and space as they are differentially experienced; it presupposes different chronotopes for he who speaks and he who answers.

As Bakhtin demonstrated in 'The Problem of Speech Genres' (1952–3 Eng. trans. in Bakhtin 1986), discourse genres can be classified as *primary* (or *simple*) – that is, the genres of everyday dialogue – or as *secondary* (or *complex*) – that is, literary genres that render and objectify everyday, ordinary, objective dialogic exchange. As a component of secondary genres, primary genre dialogue is depicted in such a way that it loses its immediate connection with the real context and with the aims of everyday life

and, therefore, with its instrumentality and functionality. In relation to its object and the other words forming its context, the word *leaves the monologic context* in which it is determined and enters the context of the word that depicts it.

This is the complex context of verbal interaction with the author who is committed to objectifying and rendering the direct word in the form of indirect, direct, and free indirect discourse and the variants of these (discussed in Voloshinov 1929, Part 3).

Bakhtin maintains that the complexities of dialogue can be studied through the depicted word and its internal dialogization, and that these are available in the secondary discourse genres of literature, the novel in particular. Secondary discourse genres point us toward aspects of dialogue that do not emerge in primary, simple, direct, objective discourse genres. As avers Bakhtin (1952–3), studies on these issues are especially interesting when the object of analysis is the *utterance* considered as the *cell of dialogic exchange*, rather than the *sentence* or *proposition*, the utterance as the cell of *the system of language*. (The latter is an abstract concept, which Bakhtin reviews in the context of his critique of 'abstract objectivism' in language studies; regarding these aspects, see Voloshinov's 1929 book and his 1928 paper on tendencies in linguistic studies, Eng. trans. in Shukman 1983: 31–50; It. trans. in Voloshinov 1980.)

> A one-sided orientation toward primary genres inevitably leads to a vulgarization of the entire problem (behaviorist linguistics is an extreme example). The very interrelations between primary and secondary genres and the process of the historical formation of the latter shed light on the nature of the utterance (and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations among language, ideology, and world view). (Bakhtin 1952–3, Eng. trans.: 62)

Literary writing transcends the dimension of identity and the limits of the difference–indifference relation to varying degrees depending on the literary genre or subgenre at hand. It follows that literary writing delineates the architectonics of otherness from a perspective that is both participative and unindifferent. On the basis of his early interest in the philosophy of responsible action, Bakhtin developed an interest in the philosophy of language understood as metalinguistics or the philosophy of literature. Here, the phrase 'of literature' is a subjective genetive, one that relates to the philosophy or world view that literature (verbal art) makes possible, not the philosophical view to which literature is subjected.

According to Bakhtin, the metalinguistic and metasemiotic nature of the language of literature makes it possible to perceive in language that which escapes linguistics and semiotics when relegated to the sphere of the Same. Through the language of literature, it is at last possible to perceive the alien word – and by this we mean not only the word of the other in the sense of other people, but also the word of the other as it resounds in the word of the 'same' subject. Literary language brings fully to light the dialogic character of the word, its internal dialogism.

In the movement toward polylogism, literary writing overcomes the monologism of language, its limited dialogism. Literary writing is this very tension as it finds expression – for example, in the various forms of reported speech, and in the specific rules of each genre, and in the potential for renewal and responsivity with regard to new expressive exigencies. Literary activity properly begins only after the author has taken his bearings with respect to the event he is describing and placed himself outside his very own utterance, thus achieving the condition of 'extralocalization,' or 'exotopy.' To place oneself on the outside means to maintain a gap or relation of otherness between self and other so as to impede reconstruction of the totality.

Complementary to the otherness of writing is the dispossession of self, decomposition of integrity, escape from return to self. The condition of finding oneself on the outside is structural to the creative activity of literature: irony, indirect communication, and extralocalization are different aspects of the same phenomenon – the otherness of writing. Dialogue in writing – especially as manifested in the polyphonic novel – has different characteristics with respect to dialogue as it is realized outside literature. In literature, the dialogic potential of language is experimented with and pushed to the extreme limit where exchange, relative and oppositive otherness, subordination of *signifiant* to *signifié,* Subjectivity, Truth, the economic, instrumental, and productive character of language are all transcended by a word that is neither functional nor productive – by a word that presupposes extralocalized relations and absolute otherness.

3.1.5. Bakhtinian Dialogism and Biosemiotics

Bakhtin wrote 'Contemporary Vitalism' during a period of frenzied intellectual activity between 1924 and 1929 in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). During these productive years of his life, he published four books on different subjects (Freud, Russian Formalism, philosophy of language, Dostoevsky's novels). However, he signed only the last; the others

(along with several of his articles) were signed by Voloshinov or Medvedev. Bakhtin's early writings included 'Contemporary Vitalism' (1926). This was published in the popular Russian scientific journal *Man and Nature* in two parts, and was signed by his friend, the biologist Ivan Ivanovich Kanaev. All the same, Bakhtin's authorship of 'Contemporary Vitalism' is beyond dispute.

Bakhtin's life in Leningrad was very difficult. He suffered from osteomyelitis, and as his health deteriorated, he qualified for a state pension, which, however, was meager. He moved in with his new friend Kanaev. They shared an apartment for several years, from 1924 until 1927, where Bakhtin and his wife lived in a large but sparsely furnished room, described by Kostantin Vaginov – another friend from the 'Bakhtin Circle – as follows: 'Two motley blankets / Two shabby pillows / The beds stand side by side! But there are flowers in the window ... Books on the narrow shelves / And on the blankets people / A pale, bluish man / And his girlish wife' (Vaginov, 'Dva pestrykh odejala ...,' in Clark and Holquist 1984: 99).

Kanaev greatly stimulated Bakhtin's interest in biology. As Bakhtin himself recounted in a note to 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (1937–8, in Bakhtin 1975, Eng. trans. in Bakhtin 1982), it was thanks to Kanaev that in the summer of 1925 he attended a lecture on the 'chronotope' in biology, given by the Leningrad physiologist Aleksej A. Ukhtomsky. This lecture influenced Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope in the novel. As Bakhtin further clarified, 'in the lecture questions of aesthetic were also touched upon' (ibid.). Ukhtomsky himself was an attentive reader of Dostoevsky. It was from the novel *The Double* that Bakhtin derived his conception of the double's ghost as an obstacle to comprehending the interlocutor.

The point is that Bakhtin was indebted to the biological research of the day such as Ukhtomsky's: recall here his conceptualizaion of the relation of body and world as a dialogic relation in which the body answers to its environment in modelling its world (cf. Clark and Holquist 1984; Marcialis 1986; Salvestroni 1986; Tagliagambe 1986). Also important for Bakhtin were the researches of the great geochemist V.I. Vernadsky (1926), whose concept of 'biosphere' would come to underpin the biosemiotic perspective.

We can also associate Bakhtin's research with that of Jakob von Uexküll, who in fact is named in 'Contemporary Vitalism' as a representative of vitalism, which conceptualizes that a special, extramaterial force is the basis of life processes in living beings. Actually, von Uexküll

was sceptical of vitalism and did not wholly accept it, just as he was critical of behaviouristic and mechanistic conceptions. As he stated in his book of 1934, he was interested less in the workings of the organism-machine than in those of the driver. He too was seeking an explanation for life in terms of signs.

Thus we can state that both von Uexküll and Bakhtin addressed the question of life from a semiotic perspective. Bakhtin would concern himself more and more deeply with problems connected to the literary sign; that said, he conceived dialogism in the context of research in physics, biology, and physiology (with specific reference to the central nervous system – Leningrad was one of the world centres in this field), as well as in psychology and psychoanalysis. In particular, we can fully understand his concept of dialogism only in the context of developments that were to lead to contemporary biosemiotics, including von Uexküll's research in biology.

In 'Contemporary Vitalism,' Bakhtin directs his critique of vitalism against the work of philosopher Henri Bergson and especially that of the biologist Hans Driesch. It was Driesch who asserted that there is a difference between life and non-life and who interpreted the organism's homeostasis in terms of radical autonomy from its surrounding environment. In contrast, in his own description of the interaction between organism and environment, Bakhtin maintained that the organism and its surrounding world constituted a monistic unit; moreover, he came out against dualistic conceptions of life force and physical–chemical processes.

In his works of the 1920s, Bakhtin criticized the vitalists and the reflexologists as well as Freudianism and mechanistic materialism (for instance, the mechanistic view of the relation between base and superstructure). In Bakhtin's view, all of these positions made false scientific claims: by playing down the dialogic relation between body and world, they either dematerialized the living body or they physicalized it in terms of mechanistic relations. Bakhtin's ruminations on signs were fundamental to this criticism. Sign theory contributes to our understanding of both living and psychic processes as well as historical–cultural relations, such as the relation between base and superstructure. Another contribution to our understanding of these processes arises when we substitute unilateral and conclusive mechanical dialectics with the dialogic model. Jakob von Uexküll's research developed along similar lines. For both Bakhtin and von Uexküll, the process being examined was a semiosic process. Uexküll did not apply the dialogic model, yet

that model was central to his well-known 'functional cycle.' This 'pivotal model,' 'this simple albeit not linear, diagram,' which 'constitutes a cybernetic theory of modeling so fundamental that the evolution of language cannot be grasped without it' (Sebeok 1994b: 122), can be represented as a model that is both dialogic and semiosic (cf. Krampen, in Posner, Robering, and Sebeok 1997–2004, 1: 252–3).

In terms of Peirce's and Morris's semiotics, in the 'functional cycle' the interpretandum produced by the 'objective connecting structure' becomes an interpretatum (represented in the organism by a signalling disposition), and is translated by the interpretant into a behavioural disposition that triggers a behaviour onto the 'connecting structure.' Therefore, what is important to emphasize in the present context is that in the 'functional cycle' thus described, a dialogic relation is established between an interpreted (interpretandum) and an interpretant (interpreted by another interpretant, and so on) that does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted, but rather establishes an interactive relation with it.

In the same vein, the 'functional cycle' is dialogic in structure, and furthermore, dialogue in communication understood in a strict sense can itself be analysed in the context of the 'functional cycle.' In other words, the dialogic communicative relation between a sender who intends to communicate something about an object and a receiver can be examined on the basis of the 'functional cycle' model. With respect to processes described by the 'functional cycle' as presented in Thure von Uexküll's terminology (cf. 'Biosemiosis' by Th. von Uexküll, in Posner, Robering, and Sebeok 1997–2004, 1:447–56; cf. also 'Varieties of Semiosis' by Th. Von Uexküll, in Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1992: 455–70), the type of dialogue in question does not correspond to *semiosis of information*, *semiosis of signification* or *semiosis of symptomatization,* but rather to *semiosis of communication.* Before it is interpreted as a sign by the interpretant, the interpreted is already an interpretant response addressed to somebody for interpretation in terms of both identification and *answering comprehension.*

3.1.6. For a Critique of Dialogic Reason

However, Bakhtin's philosophy of language is more than a critique of separatism and illusory autonomy in the different fields of nature and culture according to what can be termed the 'global semiotic' perspective (Sebeok 2001a).

Evaluated as 'critique' in both a literary and a philosophical sense

after Kant and Marx, Bakhtin's fundamental contribution to 'philosophy of language' or 'metalinguistics' is his critique of dialogic reason. Bakhtin's conception of sign and its polysemy, dialogism, and polylogism reveals the limitations of Hegelian dialectics. The latter proposed a unilateral, rigid, and fossilized conception of dialogue; thus it can be characterized as pseudo-dialogic and, in the final analysis, pseudo-dialectic. Bakhtin was often harshly critical of 'monologic dialectics.' In 'From Notes Made in 1970–71,' he described how monologic dialectics was constituted, from its origins, in the dialogic character of the word:

> In dialogue we take out the voices (the division of the voices), we take out the intonations (personal and emotional), concepts and abstract judgements are drawn from the living words and responses, all is mixed inside a single abstract consciousness and this is how we obtain dialectics. (Bakhtin 1970–1, Eng. trans.: 363)

Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason focuses on the concept of *responsibility without alibis*, a non-conventional form of responsibility that centres on existential 'architectonics' in its relation with the I, with the world, and with others – in other words, it centres on a form of responsibility that cannot be transferred.

In 'Toward a Philosophy of the Act,' which he wrote in the 1920s, but which was published in Russia only in 1986 (in *Filosofija i sociologija nauki i tekhniki: Ezhegodnik 1984–85*, Eng. trans. 1993; cf. Bakhtin 1922a), Bakhtin insists on the inevitability of involvement with the other, the concrete other – that is, not the abstract other as conceived in terms of gnoseological consciousness. The self occupies a unique place in the world and responds to it in terms of answerable participation. To be answerably participative is also to apprehend the other who compels me answerably. Answerability of the deed is above all answerability for the other; and the self not being replaceable, my uniqueness lies in the fact that it is impossible for me to abdicate such answerability to the point of abnegation and self-sacrifice. Only 'answerable centrality' makes this possible; thus, it becomes 'sacrificed centrality.'

One can attempt to escape this non-alibi answerability, but the mere attempt to unburden oneself constitutes proof of its weight and inevitable presence. All determinate roles with their determinate, special answerability do not abolish personal answerability, says Bakhtin; they merely 'specify' it, that is, they highlight one's moral answerability without limits or guarantees, without alibis. Detached from absolute answer-

ability, specific answerability loses sense and becomes casual, technical answerability. Therefore, having become mere representation of a role, action, technical performance, specific answerability as 'technical activity' is derealized and becomes an illusion.

Bakhtin characterized the crisis in contemporary society as a crisis of contemporary action become technical action; he identified the cause of this crisis in the separation of action and concrete motivation from its product, which results in the emptying of sense. This interpretation is similar to the one formulated in the context of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, especially as developed in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie* (published posthumously in 1954). However, in Bakhtin, unlike Husserl (with whom a degree of theoreticism persists), sense is not conferred by the intentional consciousness, by the transcendental subject, but rather by answerable action as expressed by the uniqueness of non-alibi being in the world. In Bakhtin's view, philosophy of life can only be moral philosophy.

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993), in which are stated the premises that guided his research, Bakhtin critiqued the foundations of 'first philosophy' or 'moral philosophy.' According to Bakhtin, 'first philosophy' or 'moral philosophy' centres on the uniqueness and irreducible otherness of being. Instead of a direct, objective vision of the 'I,' the subject, this approach calls for an indirect and objectified vision in which the point of view of the 'other' (as developed in the language of literary writing) is central. This approach also offers an insight into what Bakhtin understood by 'metalinguistics' (as he uses this term is his monograph on Dostoevsky): the living dynamic reality of language cannot be grasped through the direct word, nor therefore through the categories of linguistics, which abstract from internal dialogism of the concretely oriented and specifically intonated word.

3.2. An Interdisciplinary Perspective and Detotalizing Method

Some thinkers begin their work in a given sphere of knowledge and experience, and end it by roaming extensively over other, sometimes distant spheres. This is not always because they wish to develop a complete, definitive, and compact thought system with claims to be all-encompassing. However, when that is the aim – that is, when the aim is to develop a finalized and autonomous totality by binding together diverse spheres of human experience – the totality that results is mostly only (i.e., merely) apparent.

Then there is the opposite case, when what seems to be interdisciplinary inclusiveness is in fact the result of concentrating on a specific problem. That is, a thinker reflects so profoundly on a given issue that many other venues of human knowledge and consciousness inevitably come into play. Here, interdisciplinary inclusiveness is produced not by claims to totalization, but by the exact opposite. In other words, interdisciplinary inclusiveness is achieved through the avoidance of totalization, by resorting to what can be termed the 'detotalizing method,' even with respect to a single problem. This is precisely how Bakhtin's research proceeds.

3.2.1. From the Boundaries of Art Criticism

Bakhtin's privileged objects were theory of literature and literary criticism, but he conducted his research in such a way as to break down internal boundaries not only in literary scholarship, but also with respect to artistic discourse in general. He wished to demonstrate that a good understanding of the literary text – indeed, of any text whatsoever – required a shift beyond itself in as many directions as there were perspectives and disciplines implicated in that text. In other words, Bakhtin's approach was that the literary text is best understood through the concept of *vnenakhodimost'* (outsiders).

Possible disciplinary perspectives include the following: the study of verbal and non-verbal signs that come into play at the theoretical level (general semiotics) and at more concrete levels relating to different cultural forms such as folk traditions, festivities, rites, myths, and cults; the study of ideologies; the study of the psychological and psychoanalytical relations between consciousness and the unconscious; the study of social stratification and relations among classes; and studies of the links between history and structure and between the genetic and morphological approaches. Although Bakhtin applied it specifically in relation to literature, this method inevitably involved all human sciences. Yet Bakhtin never lost sight of his special interest in the question of the specificity of the literary word.

Indeed, the main focus of Bakhtin's criticism of the Russian Formalists as described in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928, Eng. trans. 1978, signed by Medvedev), relates to their handling of the problem of the specificity of the literary word. Bakhtin also criticized those scholars who deluded themselves into believing that they could achieve the aims set by the Formalists simply by applying sociological formulae and pseudo-Marxist slogans.

Bakhtin addressed questions of literary writing from the perspective of literature itself. His excursions beyond the field of literature did not imply that he was working from a non-literary perspective, just as they did not make any claims to totalization. At all times, Bakhtin worked from the perspective of literature – he stood *inside* literature. From this position, he conducted what can be called an antisystemic and detotalizing critique, through which he revealed the internal threads linking literature to the extraliterary – that is, he revealed the structural intertextuality through which literary texts are related to extraliterary texts. According to Bakhtin, the literary text lives and flourishes in its specificity as a literary text *because* it is involved in the external universe (in the ethical sense as well).

Yet Bakhtin did not focus exclusively on literature. Nor was he concerned exclusively with the links between 'literature' and 'life' (an important issue in Bakhtin and Medvedev's 1928 book), or between 'art' and 'life' (as addressed from the time of his very first paper, 'Art and Answerability' [1919], Eng. trans. in Bakhtin 1990). On the contrary, as can be seen in the overall range of his research, Bakhtin addressed the human sciences in general, not just literature.

The following is an overview of the human sciences as treated by Bakhtin, with a description of his attitude toward each and of his overall methodological orientation toward the human sciences in general. In all of his writings, from the 1920s, Bakhtin addressed the question of method in the human sciences.

The human science privileged by Bakhtin, and the one easiest to encounter in his theory of literature, is the general science of signs. We have chosen not to use the term 'semiotics' here given that Bakhtin was critical of semiotics in its generally accepted sense of systemic science, 'structural semiotics,' the study of sign systems. To distinguish his own approach to the science of signs as he conceived it, Bakhtin preferred the expression 'philosophy of language' (consider his book of 1929, signed by Voloshinov, which bears this expression in the title, and his paper of 1959–61 on the problem of the text). However, if we use the term 'semiotics' with reference to Peirce's theory of interpretation, according to which the sign is always part of a concrete process of semiosis, the result of interrelations among interpretants, it is clear that Peirce and Bakhtin had much in common with regard to their conceptions of sign.

No doubt Bakhtin was mainly concerned with the study of verbal signs: these are, after all, the material of literary creation, or as Bakhtin put it, of 'verbal art.' His views on linguistics as formulated in his writings begin-

ning in the 1920s are noteworthy. Consider *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), in which he criticized Saussurean linguistics and its influence on Russian linguistics, and *The Formal Method* (1928), as well as 'On the Borders of Poetics and Linguistics' (1930, in Voloshinov 1980).

In these and other writings, Bakhtin addressed the problem of the potential contribution of linguistics to the study and understanding of the poetic text, through confrontation with Jakobson, the Russian Formalists, and others. In his monograph on Dostoevsky (1963), Bakhtin returned to this critique, proposing the term 'metalinguistics' for the study of verbal language. It was Bakhtin's intention with this term to indicate an approach that would transcend the limits of linguistics as officially practised at the time, and to focus on the utterance and, it follows, on such categories as dialogism, dialogic relations, evaluative orientation of the word, implicit meaning or enthymeme, and so on. He developed this approach further in 'Discourse in the Novel' (1934–5) and in other writings collected in his volumes of 1975 and 1979 (now available in English; cf. Bakhtin 1981, 1986, 1990).

Nor should we underestimate Bakhtin's interest in psychoanalysis – more precisely in Freudian theory. This led to *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch*, published in Russian in 1927, under Voloshinov's signature. This book should be read against the background of the important debate of the time regarding the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and also against Bakhtin's interest in psychology and its links to the science of signs. His research in psychology led him to Lev S. Vygotsky, whose positions he largely shared (especially interesting is Bakhtin's 1925 study of the problem of consciousness). Moreover, several pages in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* explore the links between psychology and the science of signs. In *Freudianism*, Bakhtin develops his interest in Freud and the unconscious as part of his research on the problem of ideology, analysed in terms of the distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' ideology. Here, he interprets the unconscious in terms of social ideology of which the subject is unaware.

Bakhtin considered theory of ideology to be part of the human sciences. However, he presented ideology not only as a discipline among others, but also as a perspective cutting across all other human sciences, including linguistics, psychology, psychoanalysis, the general science of signs or philosophy of language, and literary theory (consider Bakhtin's critique of the ideology subtending Russian Formalism in *The Formal Method*, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and *Rabelais and His World*).

Obviously, another important human science in Bakhtin's research was cultural anthropology – that is, ethnology, the study of folklore, or

more generally culturology. This particular perspective runs through most of his work: consider his studies dedicated to carnivalized literature, signs of the grotesque body, language in the public marketplace, the origin of the word in the novel, and so on.

3.2.2. Signs and Signals

Regarding general sign theory, Bakhtin's position can be characterized in terms of the distinction he makes between signs and signals. On this basis, Bakhtin took a stand against reflexology (dominant at the time), but also against vulgar behaviourism as founded on the stimulus–response relation. He also criticized the oversimplifying tendency to interpret signs in terms of identification processes, which can account for signals only when the relation between *signifiant* and *signifié* is effectively univocal.

As one might now expect, Bakhtin's critique of the reduction of signs to the status of signals – treated in a chapter of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, in *The Formal Method* (using different terminology), and in some of his other writings – cannot be separated from his reflections on the relation between 'meaning' and 'theme.'

Meaning covers the repeatable, reproducible aspects of sign; it simply requires an effort of recognition or identification by the interpretant. 'Theme' is relative to context and covers the innovative aspects of sign; it refers to meaning as it is given in a specific situation, and thus it requires active or responsive understanding on the part of the interpreter.

In Bakhtin's view, another essential aspect of the sign is its material quality. For a sign to subsist, there must be a body, that is, a physical object that does not refer to itself but rather to something else for which it stands, be it a body or an idea. However, the sign is material not only because of its physical nature, but also because it has a place – even in the case of so-called natural signs – in a historical tradition, a determinate culture, on which basis it objectively assumes a given meaning. Such meaning can be modified, but only as a result of the effort required to modify something already endowed with a material, objective, resistant, and autonomous existence of its own. This is what is meant by 'semiotic materiality.'

In relation to linguistics, Bakhtin described the limits of approaches that are founded on the concept of code and that consider the sign reductively in terms of signality. All of Bakhtin's research makes a point of demonstrating that linguistic life cannot be contained between the two poles of *langue* (i.e., the normative system of language), on the one hand, and *parole* or individual speaking, on the other. Verbal language is a social phenomenon and can only be adequately understood in terms of dialogized

semiosic processes that link different historical languages, internal languages forming a single historical language, texts, discourse genres, literary genres, individual discourses, one's own word to the word of others, the diverse voices constituting one's own word, and internal discourses.

Bakhtin identified the specificity of the verbal sign in the fact that it does not carry out an extra-sign, instrumental function (cf. Petrilli 1986, 1990a). In this sense, the verbal sign is the sign *par excellence*. Its expressive capacity is greater than that of non-verbal signs, which to a degree verbal signs are able to describe and contain. Verbal signs can carry out a metalinguistic function; they privilege verbal signs themselves as their objects of discussion. Another important consideration is that the verbal sign is the main vehicle of ideology; that said, non-verbal signs can also express ideological meaning. This specific quality of verbal signs arises from the fact that they are the main material of thought and consciousness.

3.2.3. On Ideology

The unconscious is also made of verbal signs. This point is of central importance in Bakhtin's interpretation of Freud; to some extent, Bakhtin here anticipates Jacques Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalysis. On this basis, and given the interdependency between language and ideology, any opposition between the unconscious and consciousness is considered ideological. As already noted, *Freudianism* proposes a distinction between official and unofficial ideology, one that plays a central role in Bakhtin's interpretation of Rabelais.

Besides representing an important contribution to the study of literature, Bakhtin's monograph *Rabelais and His World* is a significant contribution to studies in the field of anthropology and culture. In this book he emphasizes the autonomous and original character of popular culture and, it follows, its capacity for resistance – which may well be passive and unplanned – to official culture, established power, dominant order. In other words, Bakhtin traces the development of dialectics between official and unofficial culture (in the literary text as well) in terms of conflict among signs conveying ideology. Dialectics thus described is also endowed with materiality and objectivity; as such, it is independent of the will or expectation of reason to dominate or eliminate it.

Bakhtin proposes a new interpretation of the history of modern Western culture by analysing the different attitudes taken toward Rabelais in different cultural periods (he develops his critique of Illuminism along similar lines to those of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Diale-*

ktik der Aufklarung), and through a rereading of the history of culture – for example, the relation between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (in this connection, Bakhtin's thoughts on Konrad Burdack are well worth noting).

Regarding ideology, it is important to note that although he returns to Marx and Engels, Bakhtin invests the term 'ideology' with a different meaning from the one encountered in *The German Ideology*. For Bakhtin, ideology does not mean false consciousness or distorted thought *tout court*. Rather it indicates a social tendency, a social project connected to a particular group, a specific class. It can just as easily be oriented in the sense of innovation, revolution, and science as of occultation, mystification, and conservatism. The only definition of ideology ever explicitly formulated by Bakhtin in his writings is included in a footnote to 'What Is Language?' (1930, signed by Voloshinov). We quote it below to suggest what Bakhtin understood by ideology; it is not our intention to reduce the scope of his analysis to this sole definition: 'Let us agree to call the totality of life experiences, which reflect and refract social life, and the exterior expressions directly connected with them – the ideology of life' (Volosinov 1930, Eng. trans.: 108).

With reference to the social sciences, Bakhtin's work on the relation between so-called structure and superstructure is an important contribution to sociology, linguistics, and the culturological sciences (see Nikolaj Ja Marr's language theory as presented in Marcellesi et al. 1978). Taking his bearings from the mechanistic divisions that dominated theory in the Soviet Union, and anticipating such thinkers as Antonio Gramsci, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Raymond Williams, Bakhtin (and Voloshinov) demonstrated as early as 1929 that the relation between structure and superstructure cannot be interpreted dialectically if it is separated from the mediating role played by signs. Verbal and non-verbal signs mediate between structure and superstructure. In contrast to those conceptions which aim to define language on the basis of the categories of structure and superstructure taken in isolation, Bakhtin believed that this Marxian metaphor could only be explained adequately in the context of studies on language and signs in general.

3.2.4. The Unconscious and Ideology

According to Bakhtin (cf. Voloshinov 1927), Freud made an honourable attempt to expand and enrich the naturalistic vision of human nature based fundamentally on the concepts of sex and age. However, Freud did

not entirely succeed in freeing himself from the tendency toward biologism that underpinned his approach. Against biologistic temptations, Bakhtin and Voloshinov firmly juxtaposed the idea that the human person and the biological individual do not coincide: outside society, outside objective socio-economic conditions, the human being is only an abstraction. In this connection, it should be remembered that the epigraph for *Freudianism* is from Marx's sixth thesis in *Theses on Feuerbach*. Curiously, this epigraph is missing from both English editions. It reads as follows: 'The essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in each particular individual. The real nature of man is the totality of social relations.' Bakhtin and Voloshinov used Georgij V. Plechanov's translation of Marx's theses for this particular quotation; thus, we must also observe that the expression *Menschlichen Wesen* is rendered inaccurately, as 'essence of man' rather than 'human being' (on the translation of Marx's *Theses*, cf. Schaff 1974).

In our reading of *Freudianism*, what has claimed our attention is not so much Bakhtin and Voloshinov's evaluation of Freud's psychoanalytical theories and practices. Interesting considerations in this regard are offered in two papers by Bruss, presented in the 1976 and 1987 English editions of his book (cf. Ponzio 1992a: 115–45). All the same, we must keep publishing dates in mind when considering Bakhtin and Voloshinov's criticism of Freud. Bakhtin's criticism of Freud focuses mainly on the latter's lack of attention to the role played by historical, social, and cultural factors in the development of the individual psyche; but it must be remembered that Freud addressed these very aspects in his writings subsequent to Bakhtin's *Freudianism*, which indeed is an expanded version of 'Beyond the Social' (1925, in Voloshinov 1980), which was written at a time when Freud had not yet published a number of his major works.

Having clarified this point, it is important to observe that key concepts and categories developed by Bakhtin in later writings had already been formulated in this early book. *Freudianism* proposes a linguistic–semiotic perspective for analysing the psyche. This inevitably involves describing psychical life in terms of verbal language and signs and of the relation between consciousness and ideology. Such an approach led Bakhtin and Voloshinov to focus on such categories as 'word,' 'utterance', 'language,' and 'verbal reactions' ('inner speech' and 'outward speech') as he (they) worked toward a theory of discourse focusing on interrelations among language, ideology, and consciousness.

Inner speech does not necessarily find expression in outward speech; even so, it is not less material than outward speech. In fact, verbal lan-

guage is not just the expression of interaction and mutual comprehension in the interrelations among individuals. It is also identifiable with consciousness; indeed, without the help of words and inner speech we could never become conscious of anything. Moreover, given that verbal reactions are purely social formations, and contrary to claims to neutrality, it should be observed that both the psyche and the language of consciousness are ideologically oriented.

Chapter 9 of *Freudianism*, 'The Content of Consciousness as Ideology,' specifically addresses the problem of the relations binding consciousness, ideology, and language. Here Bakhtin and Voloshinov specifies that the unconscious, much like conscious life, necessarily exists in verbal signs. So instead of theorizing a net distinction between the unconscious and consciousness, Bakhtin and Voloshinov believed that these should be viewed as two aspects of the life of the conscious, of language and ideology, and proposed the terms 'unofficial conscious' and 'official conscious' to replace them. The term 'behavioural ideology' is used to refer to official and unofficial ideology, to inner and outward speech permeating human behaviour. Unofficial ideology relates to all of that which is other at the ideological level with respect to accepted, official ideology; it concerns all of that which is contradictory; it covers such human expressions as dreams, myths, jokes, and witticisms as well as all verbal components of pathological formations. The less the distance between dominant ideology and inner speech, the more easily the latter will be transformed into outward speech. The greater the discrepancy between the official conscious and the unofficial conscious, the greater the difficulty in transforming inner speech into outward speech and the greater the degree of otherness, relativity, and disintegration with respect to the unity and integrity of the ruling system, of dominant ideology.

When translated into outward speech, the inner conscious may gain in formulation, clarity, and scientific rigor. In contrast, when inner speech has difficulty transforming itself into outward speech because of the discrepancy between unofficial and official consciousness, the motives of inner speech may deteriorate at the verbal level and tend to be excluded from the domain of verbalized behaviour and, it follows, from specifically human behaviour. However, there are also cases where trends that contradict the official conscious do not necessarily transform themselves into indistinct inner speech and threaten to disappear altogether from the social and communicative context. Contradictory forces may in fact engage in a direct struggle against the official ideology, even to the point of generating an ideology that is to some degree alternative.

There are different levels of consciousness and ideology, although there is no difference in principle: difference is determined by different degrees in elaboration of the contents of consciousness – that is, by variations in the capacity to employ social materials and instruments, which are sign materials and instruments. The contents of the individual psyche and of culture as a whole all belong to the same generative process; the production structures of individual consciousness and of more complex ideological formations are fundamentally the same. Different levels in consciousness and ideology correspond to different levels in sign elaboration, in verbal elaboration. For this reason, in *Freudianism* the claim is that the same methods developed by Marxist theory to study complex ideological structures constituting a given culture can also be applied to the study of elementary sign expressions and the lower levels of individual consciousness.

Bakhtin and Voloshinov's conception of the conscious–unconscious must be seen in relation to Bakhtin's sign theory as he developed it in those years and as he expounded it in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929). The Bakhtinian sign model is not based on the dichotomy between signifier and signified, nor is it based on the dichotomy between sign system and utterance (*langue/parole*). Rather, it is based on interpreter response – that is, on the interpretant; thus, far from being reduced to identifying the previous sign, interpretation is understood in terms of the act of answering comprehension. This approach implies the existence of a concrete dialogic relation among signs based on reciprocal alterity. Semiosis or sign activity is generated through this live relation – and certainly not in the abstract relations among signs forming the sign system. From this description, as brief as it may be, it should be obvious that Bakhtin's sign model closely resembles Peirce's. In fact, Bakhtin's concept of active or answering comprehension can easily be associated with Peirce's 'dynamical interpretant' (cf. Ponzio 1984). Like Peirce, Bakhtin believed that man is a sign (cf. Sebeok 1986; Ponzio 1990a); indeed, the human conscious–unconscious comprises sign-ideological material that is mainly dialogically structured verbal material.

3.2.5. The Question of Values

Bakhtin's research method and his multiform interests in relation to the human sciences are ultimately associated with the question of value. Bakhtin's immediate concern was with esthetic or artistic value, especially the literary. However, since he identified aesthetic value in the

categories of otherness and outsideness, he necessarily addressed other types of value as well.

Especially important here is Bakhtin's treatment of value from the perspective of ethics. He had already theorized the relation between 'art' and 'answerability' in his paper of 1919, the title of which bears these terms. If we accept that the source of artistic or aesthetic value is the category of the other and not of the self – Bakhtin contended as much in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (1920–3) – then we must also accept that artistic value as such necessarily embraces issues of an ethical order centred on the problem of otherness. Literature is a place of experimentation for values and their functioning in interpersonal relationships; in fact, literary writing serves as a proving ground for values by pushing them beyond the limits of social convention.

This approach also involves experimenting with the dialogic nature of the word. Especially when we are considering genres such as the novel, the language of literature offers the possibility of examining dialogism beyond its limited scope in ordinary language. Bakhtin revived the connection between aesthetic value and linguistic value as well as between aesthetic value and the value of the human person, considered not only in terms of identity but also in terms of otherness.

Bakhtin developed a theory of the human person, of the self, of the unconscious and the conscious, in the context of his theory of signs and ideology. Counter to theoretical tendencies that conceive the subject as an integral identity, one that is coherent with the self and incapable of any form of criticism or distancing from the established order of discourse, Bakhtin placed such values as otherness and outsideness at the very *core* of identity. In other words, from a Bakhtinian perspective, otherness, dialogism, dialectics, polyphony, plurilingualism, polysemy, ambiguity, and so on are the values on which the subject as a human person – indeed, all identities, including identity of the 'single' self – are constructed. In this regard, besides the works by Bakhtin already mentioned, see, for example, his own introduction to *Rabelais and His World* (1965, Eng. trans., 1968). (See also Ponzio's 1992 monograph on Bakhtin, a revised and expanded version of the original edition of 1980, especially pages 181–8. See also Ponzio 1997a; Petrilli 1990c, 1993b; and Sebeok, Petrilli, and Ponzio 2001, for the concept of self in a semiotic key.)

Linguistic value as described by Bakhtin is far richer and far more complex than what is made to result by the linguists. His analysis of linguistic value is not limited to relationships among the elements of language, among phonemes, between the *signifiant* and the *signifié,* between words

on the syntagmatic axis and words on the paradigmatic axis. In Bakhtin's view, beyond all of this linguistic value involves the dialogic materiality of discourse. In other words, linguistic value coincides with dialogic value and thus can be measured in relation to the dialogic capacity of the word. The term of reference here is dialogism: not, however, dialogism in the formal, superficial sense – as in the case of an exchange of rejoinders between two speakers in a dialogue – but rather substantial dialogism of the sort that can present itself even in the voice of a single person, a single utterance. Through such concepts, Bakhtin left the conventional limits of linguistics behind to enter a dimension he described as 'meta-linguistic.'

Bakhtin was referring not to a quantitative expansion of the boundaries of linguistics but rather to a qualitative leap, a shift in values: he replaced identity with otherness. This could only involve identifying linguistic value in the internal dialogic relations of discourse and in the dialogic relations connecting different texts, historical languages, discursive genres, and so on. And as he pointed out, linguistic value understood as dialogic value, when taken to high degrees of dialogism, outsideness, and displacement according to the logic of otherness, is at last transformed into aesthetic value.

From such a perspective, the relation between aesthetic value and cognitive value is also important. Cognitive value as well can be measured in terms of dialogism, ranging from a maximum degree of dialogism to a maximum degree of monologism. However, insofar as cognitive discourse is based on the category of self, and therefore on identification with the subject of discourse, and insofar as it is oriented by a given thesis, project, and conclusion, it cannot reach the same degree of openness and otherness as aesthetic discourse (notwithstanding the cognitive capacity for innovation and revolution).

Nonetheless, as Bakhtin emphasized in various phases of his research, cognitive processes as well call for the category of otherness. In *Rabelais and His World,* for example, he illustrates how it was important for official culture to be open to unofficial culture, to popular, carnivalized culture, and to the grotesque body; this is what enabled the rise of modern scientific knowledge during the eras of humanism and the Renaissance.

This point is developed further in Bakhtin's later writings, especially in his notes made in 1970 and 1971. From the perspective of dialogism, artistic experimentation surpasses the scientific so as to offer an understanding of certain aspects of the human person (as Bakhtin says in relation to Dostoevsky's 'polyphonic novel') – of one's experience with

others and with nature – that is altogether impossible within a monologic framework.

From his early writings of the 1920s to those of the 1970s, Bakhtin was always concerned with the problem of value. Furthermore, given his interdisciplinary perspective and his focus on the sense of value for the human person, his work on values was not restricted to any one human science. Unlike Saussurean linguistics, Russian Formalism, and Lotman's cultural semiotics (on Lotman, see Bakhtin 1970–1, Eng. trans.: 135; and Bakhtin 1974, Eng. trans.: 155, 169), Bakhtin's project did not steer the question of value toward relations by applying a closed system – that is, by applying a linguistic code, the *langue*, so-called 'poetic language,' or even a global cultural system (remember here that for Bakhtin as well, the main issue was specificity and value as it emerges in verbal signs, literature, and cultural texts). Bakhtin's perspective was always dialogic: interlingualism, intertextuality, interculturalism. This is why, instead of restricting his research on values to the limits of a single human science, he investigated the unitary sense of value for the human person that underpinned division among the sciences.

3.2.6. A Dialogic Method

To return to the opening considerations of this chapter, Bakhtin employed the same method throughout his research; that is, he associated different (and sometimes very distant) fields and objects of study through a procedure characterized by displacement and opening rather than by incorporation and closure. This method is dialogic in the real sense of the term, in the sense that it recovers the connection (vital to dialectics) with dialogism. It is a dialogic/dialectic method – what at the beginning of this chapter we termed a 'detotalizing method.'

We have noted that Bakhtin placed the prefix 'meta-' in front of the word 'linguistics' to describe his approach to the study of (verbal) language (cf. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1963). In fact, we could extend this prefix to all disciplines that come into play in his research, which Bakhtin himself described as specifically 'philosophical research' – as critical research focused on the conditions of possibility.

Values are necessarily expressed through signs, and this fact contributed to Bakhtin's interest in the general science of signs or semiotics. The detotalizing method he devised enabled him to push his research into signs and values beyond the conventional boundaries of any one

single discipline; his approach was capable of radical criticism and was intended to orient praxis. In his investigation of the dialectic/dialogic processes through which signs and values are produced and made to circulate, Bakhtin in fact opposed the tendency to reify both.

Biographical Note

MIKHAIL MIKHAILOVICH BAKHTIN (Örel 1895–Moscow 1975) was a Russian philosopher. He met Pavel N. Medvedev (1891–1938) and Valentin N. Voloshinov (1884/5–1936) in Vitebsk in 1920 and established a collaborative friendship with them. Together they formed the 'Bakhtin Circle' with the participation of others.

Problemy tvorčestva Dostoevskogo (Problems of Dostoevsky' s Work) was published in Leningrad in 1929. This was followed by a long silence broken only in 1963, when a much expanded edition appeared (Eng. trans., *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1984). At the height of Stalinism, Bakhtin had been banished from official culture and exiled to Kustanaj. In 1965, he published *Rabelais and His World* (Eng. trans., 1968). A collection of his writings in Russian appeared for the first time in 1975 and another in 1979. These were followed by editions of his unpublished writings and new editions of published works by him and his circle. Since then, many monographs based on various perspectives have been dedicated to his thought system. These include Ponzio (1980), Todorov (1981), Ponzio (1981), Clark and Holquist (1984), Holquist (1990), Morson (1990), Ponzio (1992a, 1994a, 1997a), and Emerson (1997).

4

About Morris

4.1. Behaviouristic Semiotics and Pragmaticist Semiotics

Semiotics as conceived by Charles W. Morris (see biographical note, p. 201) – he in fact spelled the term 'semiotic' – proposes a general description of sign as embracing all that belongs to the world of life. As such he intended his approach to account for all types of signs. To this end, he constructed his semiotic terminology from the language of biology; this is especially evident in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946). Morris's choice of a biological framework for his sign theory led one of his most acute interpreters, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (who authored a monograph on Morris published in 1953), to describe his research in terms of behaviouristic biopsychology.

4.1.1. Sidelights

Morris noted in the 1920s that his interest in biology emerged when he began his studies on signs or symbolism. In fact, the terms 'symbolism' and 'biology' were the focus of his attention as early as his doctoral dissertation, *Symbolism and Reality* (1925, but published only in 1993, preceded by a German edition in 1981). This work included a chapter titled 'Some Psychological and Biological Considerations.' And in his preface to *Six Theories of Mind* he had already stated his intention to develop a general theory of symbolism based on the conviction that the mind identifies with symbolic processes.

Morris described semiotics as a 'science of behavior.' This term did not refer to a philosophical–psychological trend known as behaviourism, but rather to a 'science,' a discipline yet to be developed, a 'field' (to use his

own terminology). Morris's position was strongly influenced by those of George H. Mead, Edward Tolman, Clark L. Hull, and Otto Neurath; from Neurath, he adapted the term 'behaviouristics.' Unlike those behaviourists who applied to human beings the principles of psychology as developed through the study of rats (as one of Morris's reviewers protested), these scholars were working toward a general theory of behaviour – or 'behaviouristics,' to use Morris's preferred term – one that would describe the behaviour of both men and rats while at the same time accounting for their differences.

Peirce's pragmatism, or pragmaticism (the term he coined to differentiate his own approach to pragmatism from later interpretations), was another strong influence on Morris's semiotics. This is obvious in *Logical Positivism, Pragmatism and Scientific Empiricism* (1937), as well as in 'Scientific Empiricism' and 'Peirce, Mead and Pragmatism' (both 1938, the first published in *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, the second in *Philosophical Review*). Also in 1938, he published his groundbreaking contribution to the science of signs, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*. In 'Peirce, Mead and Pragmatism,' Morris insisted on the affinity between Peirce and Mead or between the original pragmatism of the former and the more recent version of the latter. He addressed the same issues in *The Pragmatic Movement in American Philosophy* (1970).

In *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946), Morris developed and consolidated the relations among biology, behaviourism, and semiotics. However, his recourse to biology for semiotic terminology did not imply 'biologism' in a negative sense. Nowhere in his work does Morris tend toward *reductionism* – that is, nowhere does he succumb to the temptation to reduce a plurality of universes of discourse to one only (in this context, the discourse of biology), and nowhere does he express some metaphysical fancy or naturalistic vision of the existent that loses sight of the historical–social dimension of semiosis. In this regard, Morris distanced himself from the logical empiricists and the neopositivists with their overtly physicalist orientation.

Morris developed a pragmatic conception of meaning that led him to focus not only on signs but also on values. His *Paths of Life* appeared in 1942, *The Open Self* in 1948. These works focus on preferential behaviour in human beings and describe the 'fundamental choices' that operate in different cultures. In *Varieties of Human Value* (1956), Morris collected the results of his experimental research on values. In *Signification and Significance: A Study of the Relations of Signs and Values* (1964), he continued his research on values in relation to his studies on signs, and he con-

solidated the links between semiotics and axiology. The English term 'meaning' refers not only to the semantic dimension of signs (signification) but also to their evaluative dimension (significance): 'that which something signifies and the value or significance of what is signified' (1964: vii). This book confirms that Morris approached semiotics as an 'interdisciplinary enterprise' (ibid.: 1) that focused on signs in all their forms and manifestations, relative to human and non-human animals, normal and pathological signs, linguistic and non-linguistic signs, personal and social signs.

4.1.2. Morris and Peirce

Morris's orientation toward behaviouristics and biology becomes clearer when we compare his approach with Peirce's. Peirce presents us with significant problems that cannot be set aside when dealing with semiotics and that call for a precise methodology in the search for solutions. First, terminological questions must be addressed: Morris rejected terms that were uncertain and ambiguous (for example, those of a mentalistic order) in favour of terms from the science of biology, which studies the behaviour of human and non-human animal life objectively. Here, Morris was returning to Peirce, but with the intention of proceeding beyond him.

In 'Signs about Signs about Signs' (1948b), Morris explained his relation to Peirce. He declared that his position as stated in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* did not originate with Peirce. He drew his idea of studying signs in the context of 'behaviouristics' originated from Mead, who in 1922 had published 'A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol.' From this perspective, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* can be seen as a development of Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society:* 'I never heard Mead in lecture or conversation refer to Peirce. Only later did I work earnestly at Peirce, Ogden and Richards, Russell, and Carnap, and still later at Tolman and Hull. All of these persons influenced in various ways the formulation of *SLB*' (1948b, in 1971: 445).

All the same, in his 1946 book Morris did take account of Peirce. He stated as much in the continuation to the passage cited above:

> Nevertheless, in historical perspective, it seems to me that the position of *Signs, Language, and Behavior* though its orientation was not derived from Peirce, is in effect 'an attempt to carry out resolutely' his approach to semiotic. (Ibid.: 445)

In 'Some Contemporary Analyses of Sign-Processes' (1946, in 1971: 335–40), his appendix to *Signs, Language, and Behavior*, Morris offers an interesting paragraph on Peirce's contribution to semiotics. He begins by observing that Peirce explicitly connected sign processes to processes involving mediation or 'thirdness'; he often equated these two. Also, besides connecting sign processes to mediation processes, Peirce explicitly connected sign processes to mental processes, which in fact identify with the latter. From this perspective, behaviourism based on a two-term relation between a stimulus and a response is distant from Peirce's triadic scheme, unless the stimulus–response relation is also described as mediated by a third factor with a 'reinforcing' function.

Morris was searching for sign processes in the broad class of mediating processes; at the same time, he was certain that mediating processes do not always involve signs. The claim then was that sign processes are mediation processes in which the mediating factor is an interpretant, but Morris considered this description to be restrictive. In our view, what Morris saw as a 'restriction' was entirely in line with Peirce's own perspective (ibid.: 338).

Also regarding Peirce's semiotics, Morris wanted to make it clear that sign processes – which are not different from mental processes to the extent that in Peirce's conceptual universe, semiosis and mind coincide – are not restricted to behavioural situations. In fact, Peirce observed (*CP* 4.551) that 'thought' – and, therefore semiosis – 'is not necessarily connected with a brain. It appears in the work of bees, of crystals, and throughout the purely physical world.' This statement inspired Morris to describe Peirce's approach as an example of 'idealistic metaphysics.'

And indeed, Morris considered it another limitation to Peirce's approach that the sign should in fact be defined in terms of mind. Says Peirce, for example: 'A *sign* is a representamen of which some interpretant is a cognition of a mind' (*CP* 2.242). Peirce did not furnish a criterion for determining when the mind or thought intervenes, which is the condition for determining whether something is or is not a sign. And although Peirce claimed that 'every thought is a sign' (*CP* 5.253), on other occasions he also claimed that thinking never occurs without the presence of something that serves as a sign, with which signs emerge as an instrument of thought (*CP* 5.283).

Finally and most significantly, Morris rejected Peirce's definition of sign – of all signs – as giving rise to other signs. That signs generate new signs cannot be used as a defining criterion, for this would involve a form of circularity whereby a sign is defined as something which generates a sign which generates another sign, and so on. Morris comments:

'Signs, at least at the human level, do frequently generate a series of sign-processes, but I see no reason why this fact about signs should be incorporated into the definition of "sign" itself' (1946, in 1971: 339).

What most interested Morris about Peirce, notwithstanding what he considered Peirce's mentalistic limitations, was his emphasis on the importance of behaviour. Peirce maintained that *to determine the meaning of a sign, we must identify the habits of behaviour it produces*. This was the aspect of Peirce that Morris wished to develop in his own theory of sign. According to Morris, Peirce had been wise to reject Cartesian mentalism, as much as he spoke of mentalism in relation to his work, and to replace it with the concept of 'habits of behaviour.' Morris believed that, in doing so, Peirce had oriented semiotics toward a more adequate account of sign processes.

Morris also praised Peirce for refusing to distinguish between human sign processes and non-human animal sign processes.

Morris drew two fundamental lessons from Peirce's contribution to the study of signs. First, it was not necessary for a theory to belong to a given psychological or philosophical behavioural trend in order to achieve important goals in semiotics. Second, semiotics need not be grounded in a mentalistic order to earn its status as a science; rather, it was to be grounded in behaviouristics understood as a general theory of behaviour, including sign behaviour.

4.1.3. Returning to Peirce

We can now understand Morris's determination in rejecting those critics who did not appreciate his efforts to take up and continue Peirce's work. This determination is manifest, for example, in his reply to Arthur Bentley, who focused on Morris's relation to Peirce through Dewey's criticism of *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*.

With particular reference to Morris's use of the terms 'interpreter' and 'interpretant,' Dewey accused Morris of having 'inverted Peirce's position' (1948b, in 1971: 445). In 'Signs about Signs about Signs,' Morris responded by recalling his 1946 book and commenting that although this particular book did not derive from Peirce, it was in effect 'an attempt to carry out resolutely' the latter's 'approach to semiotic' (cf. ibid.). Moreover, in his reply to Arthur Bentley, Morris also took the opportunity to address Dewey's criticism.

In Morris's view, Dewey did not grasp the close connection that Peirce had established between the concepts of 'interpreter' and 'interpretant.' In truth, in his analysis of how signs function, Dewey (at least when he

accused Morris of having falsified Peirce) considered the sign–interpretant relation separately from the sign–interpretation relation and, it follows, from the role of interpreter (which we know is an organism for Morris). However, the sign does not subsist without an interpretant; nor does it subsist without an interpreter, given that the interpretant is the effect of a sign on an interpreter. Indeed, given that the interpreter does not subsist as such if not as a modification in an open chain of interpretants, the interpreter is also an interpretant and, therefore, a sign. In 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities' (1868b), Peirce maintained that man and sign, interpreter and interpretant, coincide. All the same, these terms point to different aspects of semiosis; thus, the fact that they coincide does not imply that one of the two terms forming these pairs can be eliminated (see *CP* 5.264–5.317).

Another interesting point in this discussion is Morris's observation that Peirce applied different meanings to the term 'interpretant.' Peirce in fact distinguished among 'immediate interpretant,' 'dynamical interpretant,' and 'logical final interpretant.' And Dewey's critique of Morris stemmed from his misinterpretation of Peirce's understanding of the interpretant, despite Morris's efforts to lessen this term's ambiguity by introducing the term *significatum* (*designatum* in *Foundations*) alongside it. Dewey used the term 'interpretant' with the same meaning that Morris attributed to *significatum*, without realizing that 'interpretant' in Morris indicated the given effect of a sign on an interpreter. Morris also pointed out that in other contexts, Dewey himself underlined this aspect of the concept of sign; here, he cited a passage from *Logic* where Dewey speaks of a *preparatory disposition to act in a certain way in relation to the sign.*

Morris's commitment to clarifying his relation to Peirce in the context of theses advanced by Dewey and Bentley indicates just how important this relation was to him, and, it follows, how important to him was the idea of continuity between Peircean semiotics and his own. We can even hypothesize that Morris decided that semiotics required a biological basis so as to reinforce this continuity. In any case, apart from Morris's critique of what he considered to be the mentalistic and metaphysical aspects of Peircean theory, differences between Morris's behaviouristics and Peirce's pragmaticism are hardly substantial.

4.1.4. From Scientific Empiricism Onward

Morris merged pragmatism (or pragmaticism) with logical empiricism to arrive at the doctrine he called *scientific empiricism.* Initially, this was part

of a project driven by logical positivism to develop a unified science. From this perspective, under the influence of Mead, Morris gradually outlined and developed his behaviouristics. His *Six Theories of Mind* (1932) helps us understand his relation to American pragmatism and behaviourism in the years when he was forming his ideas. This book surveys the various trends in American philosophy and includes a discussion of pragmatism in the context of the thought of Peirce, James, and Dewey. In this regard, Morris's *Logical Positivism, Pragmatism and Scientific Empiricism* (1937) is also helpful.

Morris's publications of 1938 (see above) discuss the relation between Peirce's original formulation of pragmatism and Mead's version. Here, he notes that the two have the following points in common: Peirce and Mead both attach importance to the theory of signs; both accept the inseparability of thought and semiosis, as well as the links between thought and action; and both consider finalism, chance, and creativity to be important in the mind–world relationship. At the same time, Morris points to the following major difference between the two. Peirce adopts what he called a metaphysical approach, whereas Mead's approach is described as contextual and situational.

We are not concerned at this point with Morris's interpretation of Peirce, but we do wish to emphasize that Morris accepted Mead's behaviourism (or pragmatism) and recognized many points in common between the latter's approach to pragmatism and Peirce's. It seems that Morris's behaviourism (which Morris gradually differentiated from the physicalist thesis formulated by the Unity of Science Movement) is a particular kind of behaviourism, one that generally coincides with Peirce's pragmatism rather than with James's (although Morris recognized his debt to the latter in a 1942 article, 'William James Today').

In any case, the biological basis of Morris's behaviouristics was of fundamental importance to the development of his critical attitude toward what he classified as dogmatism and reductionism in the physicalist project. Also, his biological approach contributed to his determination of what he considered the boundaries of semiosis, which he extended and at the same time circumscribed to the world of organisms.

4.1.5. Morris's Behaviouristics

We are now in a position to highlight certain aspects of sign activity (as we have alluded to them so far in the present chapter) that can be considered as fundamental, and anticipate a few observations. Morris opened

Signs, Language, and Behavior by stating his 'conviction' that the 'science of signs' must be founded 'on a biological basis' and 'within the framework of the science of behavior' (1946, in 1971: 80). However, he had already used the term 'behavioristics' in *Foundations*, in which he stated that the question of sign is framed 'from the point of view of behavioristics,' with the significant observation that 'this interpretation of the definition of sign is not ... necessary.' He explained:

> It is adopted here because such a point of view has in some form or other (though not in the form of Watsonian behaviorism) become widespread among psychologists, and because many of the difficulties which the history of semiotic reveals seem to be due to the fact that through most of its history semiotic linked itself with the faculty and introspective psychologies. (1971 [1938]: 21)

In Morris's view, the science of signs and behaviouristics mutually implied each other. According to him, a biologically based science of signs could find its place in a science of behaviour; but at the same time, behaviouristics was not yet sufficiently developed for his purposes. However, assuming that signs and behaviour are interrelated, the science of behaviour or behaviouristics could actually be developed through the science of signs (see 1946, in 1971: 367).

The concept of observation plays an important role in defining the conditions for signs. 'Observation,' 'observative,' and 'observable' refer to all of that which can be seen, touched, heard, smelled – that is, to all that can be perceived through the senses, be it directly or through some instrumental extension. Such a condition for sign behaviour – namely, observation – constitutes one of the limits (or delimitations) of Morris's conception of sign as it emerges in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946).

Furthermore, with regard to the process of semiosis, Morris elected the *living being* as both the subject of behaviour and the interpreter. By 'living being' is meant the *whole* organism endowed with 'muscles and glands' (which play a determining role in the distinction between 'response' and 'reaction'), not just a portion of an organism (such as a cell). But, as we learn from Thomas A. Sebeok's biosemiotics, the subject of behaviour and the interpreter of a semiosic process 'may be only a portion of an organism,' even at a microbiological level (and this is not Morris's 'muscles and glands'; cf. Sebeok, 'The Evolution of Semiosis,' in Posner et al., 1997–2004, 1: 437). Yet despite this fundamental difference, Sebeok recalled Morris (1946, in 1971: 366) in his 1997 paper,

where he defined semiosis as 'a sign-process, that is, a process in which something is a sign to some organism,' although he extended the concept of the living being to somewhere before the entire organism is actually formed, on the basis that life appears at a much earlier point in the chain of signs. For his part, Morris extended semiosis beyond the sphere of human culture, although not so far as to include the biology of microorganisms, nor (for obvious reasons) molecular biology with its recent radical advances. All the same, despite these limitations, the fact remains that Morris constructed his general semiotics on the foundations of biosemiotics.

It should also be noted that the distinction between 'the whole' and its 'parts' cannot be taken for granted. From this point of view, Rossi-Landi's detailed analysis of *Signs, Language, and Behavior* is useful. This statement implies operations that allow for something to be considered from the perspective of both wholeness and structure. In fact, at this point interpretive operations come into play. Sebeok is correct when he states that it is only with the beginning of life – specifically, human life at a certain level in the development of this species – that non-biological reality as determined by its constitutive parts and structures clearly emerges. In other words, what we call non-biological reality, *physical* reality, presupposes biological reality, that is, semiosis. On this point, Sebeok is in accord with Wheeler when the latter states that 'only by [life's] agency is it even possible to construct the universe of existence or what we call reality' (1986, in Sebeok, 'The Evolution of Semiosis,' in Posner, Robering, and Sebeok 1997–2004, 1: 437).

Rossi-Landi observed that the whole–part distinction relates to given situations and given operations. This distinction is easy to see in the everyday world. For example, an organism is usually seen to be a whole, and its members and organs are seen to be its parts; in contrast, the books on a shelf are not normally seen to be the parts of the whole that is formed by the shelf that contains books. Thus, the whole–part distinction varies with the conditions required to accomplish certain operations (cf. Rossi-Landi 1975c [1953]: 65).

Developments in present-day molecular biology involve a whole–part distinction that Morris could not have anticipated. In accordance with Morris, the biological basis of the science of signs must always be established in the light of current progress in the sciences. So it is important for the researcher in this particular area of semiotics to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in biology as well as in the other sciences. Sebeok himself is a model example of a researcher in semiotics thus described.

From this perspective, we must also recognize Morris's merits: as noted earlier, from the very beginning of his intellectual formation he had already made his encounter with biology, and he fully appreciated how central it was to an adequate understanding of philosophy and semiotics.

4.2. Semiotics and Biology

It is important to take account of Morris's recourse to the language of biology if we are to achieve an adequate understanding of his sign theory. One of his primary aims was to develop an appropriate linguistic apparatus for talking about signs – the signs of both human and non-human animals (cf. 1971 [1946]: 75). This approach led him beyond the limits of a strictly 'anthroposemiotic' perspective, which has often been confused with general semiotics. At the same time, in contrast with the American behaviourists (cf. above all B.F. Skinner), Morris did not simply limit himself to applying to human behaviour terminology that had been developed in the light of observation of non-human animal behaviour. On the contrary, he focused on signs in the human and non-human animal world as a whole. His perspective was clearly 'biosemiotic,' which includes what today is understood by 'zoosemiotics' and 'anthroposemiotics' (although these terms are not Morris's), which are grounded in biosemiotics.

4.2.1. Criteria, Not Definitions

The living organism as discussed by Morris is clearly situated at the level of macroorganisms – that is, organisms endowed with 'muscles and glands.' Thus he excluded microorganisms from his theoretical framework. When we contrast this with the semiotic perspective of Sebeok, who maintains that semiosis and life coincide, we must conclude that Morris delineated the semiosis/life relationship as follows: Semiosis is inconceivable without life (that is, where there is semiosis there is life), but life is conceivable without semiosis (that is, where there is life there is not necessarily semiosis), for 'life' both includes and transcends semiosis. Semiosis is inconceivable without life, but 'semiosis' does not necessarily exhaust life; therefore, life is conceivable without semiosis. The difference between 'reaction' and 'response' represents a further delimitation of the sphere of semiosis, which is not constituted by just any kind of 'reaction' but by 'response' understood as the reaction of a muscle or gland.

Signs, Language, and Behavior draws from the biological and physical sciences for unanalysed terms such as 'organism,' 'reaction,' 'muscle,' 'gland,' 'sensory organ,' 'need,' 'energy,' and so on. These are combined with other unanalysed terms adapted from everyday language, such as 'behaviour,' 'condition,' 'cause,' 'influence,' and 'situation,' in such a way as to analyse (completely or partially) the terms proposed for semiotics, the analysed terms.

There is a lack of general consensus regarding their interpretation. That said, other terms defined by Morris in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* include the following: besides 'stimulus' and 'response,' there are these four expressions: 'preparatory stimulus,' 'disposition to respond,' 'response-sequence,' and 'behavior-family.' Morris constructed his semiotical terminology through terms such as these, which he combined with his repertoire of undefined terms drawn from biology. The key term 'sign' was only partially analysed and was not defined (1948b, in 1971: 436). Some of the terms he did define were 'interpreter,' 'interpretant,' 'denotatum,' 'significatum,' 'denote,' 'signify,' 'sign-vehicle,' 'sign-family,' 'signal,' 'symbol,' 'lansign,' 'ascriptor,' 'designator,' 'appraisor,' 'prescriptor,' and 'formator.'

This is the terminological structure that Morris presented in *Signs, Language, and Behavior*. He claimed that his method was scientifically correct in the sense that he was indicating clearly the discourse field from which he was drawing his undefined terms. At the same time, he recognized the limits and coordinates of his proposed definitions; his intention was to establish the conditions for their verification or confutation.

Morris established his criteria for identifying signs on the basis of the concepts listed below (here, he made a point of talking about 'criteria' rather than 'definitions' when analysing signs). In his description of the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to subsist as a sign, Morris was not suggesting that 'something is a sign if and only if the conditions laid down are met, but merely that if these conditions are met, then whatever meets them is a sign' (1971 [1946]: 89). Also, he allowed the possibility that other sets of conditions could be proposed for something to be identified as a sign. Indeed, when signs were the object of inquiry, he preferred not to talk about definitions: 'It seems wise not to give a general definition of "sign"' (ibid.: 238). Instead of providing a definition of sign, Morris limited himself to describing sufficient conditions for saying that something is a sign (see ibid.: 85–91; and nG, 96–9; see also Rossi-Landi 1975c [1953]: 58 and n8). The concepts in question are the following (from Morris 1946, in 1971):

Stimulus: 'Any physical energy that acts upon a receptor of a living organism' (367).

Stimulus-object: 'The source of a stimulus' (ibid.).

Preparatory-stimulus: 'A stimulus that influences a response to some other stimulus' (365). Here as well, Morris distinguishes between 'response' and 'reaction': 'A preparatory-stimulus necessarily causes at the time of stimulation a reaction in the organism for which it is a stimulus, but this reaction need not be a response (an action of a muscle or gland)' (ibid.).

Response: 'Any action of a muscle or gland. Hence, there are reactions of any organism which are not responses' (ibid.).

Disposition to respond (response-disposition): 'The state of an organism at a given time such that under certain additional conditions a given response takes place' (361).

Response-sequence: 'Any sequence of consecutive responses whose first member is initated by a stimulus-object and whose last member is a response to this stimulus-object as a goal object' (366).

Goal-object: 'An object that partially or completely removes the state of an organism (the need) which motivates response-sequences' (362).

Behavior-family: 'Any set of response-sequences that are initiated by similar stimulus-objects and that terminate in these objects as similar goal-objects for similar needs' (360).

On the basis of such notions, which are clearly biological, Morris formulated the following two 'definitions' (thus called inappropriately for the sake of convenience) – a preliminary definition and another more precise definition – 'of at least one set of conditions under which something may be called a sign' (84):

> 1) '*If something, A, controls behavior towards a goal in a way similar to (but not necessarily identical with) the way something else, B, would control behavior with respect to that goal in a situation in which it were observed, then A is a sign.*' (Ibid.)

2) '*If anything, A, is a preparatory-stimulus which in the absence of stimulus-objects initiating response-sequences of a certain behavior-family causes a disposition in some organism to respond under certain conditions by response-sequences of this behavior-family, then A is a sign.*' (87)

Thus, in constructing his terminological apparatus for talking about signs, Morris turned to the language of biology. In other words, biology significantly entered Morris's theory of signs at the level of terminology.

4.2.2. Biological Terminology to Talk about Signs

The first author Morris names in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* is Peirce, whose viewpoint he adopted when determining the meaning of 'sign.' In the words of Peirce as reported by Morris: 'We have ... simply to determine what habits it produces' (ibid.). 'Signs,' says Morris, 'are therefore described and differentiated in terms of the dispositions to behavior which they cause in their interpreters' (ibid.).

In the glossary appended to *Signs, Language, and Behavior*, Morris offers the following definition of 'disposition to respond': 'The state of an organism at a given time such that under certain additional conditions a given response takes place' (ibid.: 361). A definition of 'organism' is not provided, even though in keeping with his broad view of semiotics, Morris applies this term to all living beings. Yet he does define 'response': 'Any action of a muscle or gland. Hence, there are reactions of any organism which are not responses' (ibid.: 365). The disposition to respond is provoked by a 'stimulus,' understood as 'any physical energy that acts upon a receptor of a living organism.' Continuing, Morris explicitly distinguishes between 'reaction' and 'response': 'A stimulus causes a reaction in an organism, but not necessarily a response'; in parentheses, he specifies that a response is 'a reaction of a muscle or gland' (ibid.: 367).

As he explained in 'Signs about Signs about Signs' (1948b), the objective of his 1946 book was not to present a science of signs, but rather a *prolegomenon* to this science; he was leaving the task of its development to 'many investigators working in many fields and for many generations' (ibid.: 434). And building a *prolegomenon* involved a monumental effort of searching for precise terminology – signs to talk about signs.

The problem concerns the relation between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*. The *definiens* may become a *definiendum*, although it would then require another *definiens*, which might in turn become another *definiendum*, and so on. Morris realized that the key words forming the sci-

ence of signs, such as 'sign' and 'meaning,' had to be defined, whereas the terms used to define these terms could not be defined, for these again would require new *definientes*, and so on in open-ended succession.

Morris's statement at the beginning of 'Signs about Signs about Signs' – 'A terminology is not ... a science' (ibid.: 435) – should now be clearer to us. He meant that the terminology chosen to define signs cannot in turn be defined ad infinitum.

Max Black misread Morris's statement that 'technical semiotic must provide us with words that are sharpened arrows' as an indication that *Signs, Language, and Behavior* was devoid of terminological defects. In fact, Morris was simply attempting to reduce the vagueness and ambiguity of current terminology. In response to Black's insistence that the book was 'a quiver brimful of sling shot' rather than 'a set of perfectly sharpened arrows,' Morris noted that 'David used sling shot on Goliath with considerable effect.' Indeed, as Black himself stated in 'Vagueness' (1937, published in *Philosophy of Science*), precision is a matter of degree (cf. ibid.).

In any case, in his effort to develop the science of signs, Morris's main concern was not so much to define terms as to investigate the conditions of their use. To this end, he distinguished between *analysed signs* and *unanalysed signs* relative to any given field of inquiry (cf. ibid.). His aim was to ensure that key words in the science of signs were analysed; the signs used to analyse them would inevitably remain unanalysed.

Where should the (unanalysed) signs to talk about signs and render them analysable come from? For all investigations, we can take unanalysed signs from an established science or from ordinary language, or from both. Inevitably, many unanalysed terms, such as 'it,' 'no,' 'becomes,' and 'produces,' are taken from ordinary language. 'The question of the adequacy of the unanalysed terms depends on the purpose for which they are used' (ibid.).

On the basis of unanalysed terms, the analysed terms of the science in question can either be completely analysed (or 'defined'), as when we state the necessary and sufficient conditions for their application; or they can be only partially analysed (or defined), as when the sufficient but not necessary conditions for their application are asserted.

To return to the question of the role played by biology in Morris's approach to semiotics, the more precise answer may now be that it provided him with unanalysed signs, that is, with *definientes*. To talk about signs, Morris could have chosen such unanalysed signs as 'idea,' 'mind,' 'thought,' and 'consciousness.' But instead of drawing from 'mentalistic' terms, which are notorious for lacking general consensus in their

application, Morris preferred to draw from the biological and physical sciences. Thus, he did not choose behaviourism as a philosophical–psychological orientation opposed to mentalism; rather, his choice was a question of methodology. On this point as well, he was very clear:

> The biological orientation of *Signs, Language, and Behavior* is therefore *primarily methodological* and does not involve a defense of 'behaviorism' as against 'mentalism' considered as psychological doctrines. Nor does it involve starting with rats or dogs as some of my critics seem to imply; the organisms of babies or philosophers would do just as well. (Ibid.: 436)

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, Morris had already made it clear that his preference for behaviouristics was not based on prejudicial antimentalism, nor was it based on the intention of denying the presence of 'private experiences' in semiosis:

> From the point of view of behavioristics, to account of D by the presence of S involves responding to D in virtue of a response to S. As will clearly emerge further on, it is not necessary to deny 'private experiences' of the process of semiosis or of other processes, but it is necessary from the standpoint of behavioristics to deny that such experiences are of central importance or that the fact of their existence makes the objective study of semiosis (and hence of sign, designatum, and interpretant impossible or even incomplete. (Ibid.: 21)

Morris emphasized that his version of behaviourism was derived mainly from Mead as well as from Tolman and Hull. Indeed, unlike other behaviourists, who were applying psychology as developed in the study of rats to the study of men, these scholars were attempting to develop a general theory of behaviour – or 'behaviouristics,' says Morris – able to account for the behaviour *both of men and of rats*, while at the same time *accounting for their differences.*

4.2.3. Biology and Symbolism at the Origin of Morris's Research

We have already observed that Morris was interested in biology almost from the start. Traces of his dual interest in the problem of the symbol and that of behaviour were already present in his 1925 dissertation, *Symbolism and Reality* (1993). In this work, *organism* is the object and starting point for a behavioural analysis of the symbol viewed from an interdisci-

plinary perspective (those perspectives ranging from logic and psychology to physics and biology).

Of special interest for our purposes is Part III, 'Some Psychological and Biological Consequences,' in which Morris considers the revolutionary effects of scientific discovery – especially Darwin's evolutionary theory – on our view of the world. Morris was not the first to introduce biological terminology into the human sciences. Biological categories had a profound influence on the cultural climate of his times: modern thought was full of such expressions as 'maladjustment' and 'interaction of the organism and environment' (Morris 1993 [1925]: 27). In this regard, Morris's contribution was unique in that he referred to biology rigorously and scientifically and not simply in a superficially metaphorical sense or on the basis of analogies that lacked a grounding in real genetic and structural relations.

Morris was especially interested in the mind's relation to reality, a problem that he set out to translate into the language of biology. Thus, he spoke of the relation between mind and reality in terms of the relation between the organism and the surrounding environment; in doing so, he considered psychological issues in terms of 'human ecology.' From this perspective, he placed symbolism in a biological context and investigated the genetic aspects of symbolic behaviour: 'This will allow the past contentions to take on flesh and blood and to appear in their living fulness' (ibid.: 28).

His concern rested on the genetic and functional aspects of symbolism, which he believed could only be clarified in the framework of a general theory of behaviour that was based on biology. Beginning with a stimulus–response process and considering the substitute stimulus situation, this involved analysing the formation processes of thinking and the complementary use of symbols by the human subject in terms of 'solving activity.' This was not a matter of levelling the symbol onto the concept of substitute stimulus, which as the mere substitute of a stimulus could not carry out a selective role. Besides, the symbol is something more complex, something in which 'the memory of the original stimulus adds a new factor to the situation, and it is this memory which plays the selective rôle' (ibid.: 31).

4.2.4. Behaviour Involving Symbols

On the basis of a detailed discussion of Watson's research and the experiments reported by Hunter in his *Delayed Reaction in Animals and*

Children, Morris distinguished between three 'levels of behaviour': (1) behaviour that involves no substitute stimuli; (2) behaviour that involves substitute stimuli but of the non-symbolic sort; and (3) behaviour that involves the presence of symbols (cf. ibid.: 35).

At the level of behaviour involving symbols, the organism's capacity to adjust acquires new dimensions and meanings. It is now possible to control present behaviour through objects or stimuli that are not immediately present but that act all the same as a result of the representative capacity of symbols. This mechanism allows for the development of thought and mind. Moreover, according to Morris, behaviour involving symbols is *free* behaviour understood not in a metaphysical sense but as the 'capacity for reflection,' as behaviour delayed by a process of deliberation and choice. Such concepts as 'freedom,' 'control,' 'deliberation,' 'will,' 'desire,' and 'intelligence' (the capacity to solve current problems in the light of past experience) can be founded and explained in biological terms if we place the development of symbolic behaviour on the same line of development as the adaptive behaviour of an organism. Says Morris: 'Behavior involving symbols is a *complex extension* of the learning process characteristic of most, in not all, living forms' (ibid.: 37, italics my own). The presence of symbols implies that overt trial-and-error processes of the sort that can be fatal if experimented with tactually, can, however, be experimented with at a mental level and eventually be set aside without vital risks to the organism. An organism that can use parts of its environment as signs of other parts on the basis of past experiences acquires 'plasticity' as well as a 'degree of adjustment' that is simply inconceivable in the case of non-symbolic behaviour.

Morris was not in a position to explain the value of language from the evolutionary perspective of biological adjustment. When linguistic symbols come into play – that is, when the symbolic repertoire includes language – the biological value of the third level of behaviour is greatly enhanced. This occurs in the human world, which can access past experience through linguistic symbols, not only one's own but also potentially those of the entire community using the same language.

Complex activities such as scientific prediction and artistic creation are possible on the basis of language and what Morris in 1946 was to call 'post-linguistic symbols.' From the simplest organism to the most complex possible (that is, the human being – the scientist, the artist, the genius), the difference in behavioural processes is a matter of levels, which also represent qualitative leaps: 'The demand for expression – translation of experience into a symbolic form – is just as biologically imperative for such an

organism as are the demands of hunger and love' (ibid.). As Morris jokingly says in psychoanalytic terms, from an evolutionary perspective, the progressive development from an organism incapable of symbolic behaviour to an organism capable of symbolic behaviour, and therefore of using linguistic and postlinguistic symbols, can be viewed as the difference between an extrovert and an introvert organism:

> This is true whether the given that is symbolized is largely the non-tactual given and the incipient behavior of the organism, or whether it is largely the thing or tactual aspect of givenness, that is, to employ psychoanalytical terminology, whether the symbolizer is an introvert or an extrovert. Artist and scientist, idealist and realist, often represent the two aspects of this personality contrast. (Ibid.: 37–8)

The symbol can be used in reflective thinking to solve given problems in the tactual sphere as much as to construct an environment through desire more congenial than the real. Morris also considered what Sebeok (following Peirce) called the 'play of musement,' which refers to the world of imagination, dreaming, mythology, religion, and art, but also to philosophy and scientific inventiveness.

Morris was interested in the conditions that make behaviour through symbols possible. He considered these conditions an eventual area for research. He took into account the evolutionary processes of adjustment to changes in the environment, and he emphasized the vital importance of the capacity to respond adequately not only to stimuli 'at hand' but also to substitute symbols. This alluded in turn to the basic human capacity for prediction (cf. ibid.: 44–5).

4.2.5. General Linguistic Symbols and Verbal Linguistic Symbols

Another interesting point raised by Morris in *Symbolism and Reality* relates to the differences between general linguistic symbols and verbal linguistic symbols. Here, the development of language symbols amounts to an extension (that is, an increase in complexity) of the symbolic level. Indeed, language symbols and vocal sounds in the form of words extend beyond kinetic movements and the movements of objects in the external world to prepare the ground for further development in a specifically human sense. Verbal language is readily available and easy to use in any situation, including in the dark; it leaves the hands free and does not require the presence of given objects, nor does it have spatial limits. For

all of these reasons and others, it substitutes (albeit not completely) for other means of symbolization. Moreover, verbal language offers opportunities for self-stimulation and control through the subvocal use of words forming human thought; this amounts to an internalized form of the social process of communication, one that is important in the development of the self (cf. ibid.: 45–6).

Morris developed these considerations in his introduction to *Foundations of the Theory of Signs:*

> Men are the dominant sign-using animals. Animals other than man do, of course, respond to certain things as signs of something else, but such signs do not attain the complexity and elaboration which is found in human speech, writing, art, testing devices, medical diagnosis, and signaling instruments. Science and signs are inseparately interconnected, since science both presents men with more reliable signs and embodies its results in systems of signs. Human civilization is dependent upon signs and systems of signs, and the human mind is inseparable from the functioning of signs – if indeed mentality is not to be identified with such functioning. (1938c, in 1971: 17)

Morris's 1925 research (which he would later develop further) supports the principle that to declare that human behaviour – and distinctly sign behaviour – has a biological basis is not to reduce human behaviour to the same level as non-human behaviour or, in Morris's words, '[to do] injustice to the distinctive nature of those activities' (1993 [1925]: 46). On the contrary, a biological approach to behaviour and symbols casts light on the genesis and specificity of the properly human world.

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs,* Morris reflects on the eventual contribution from semiotics to a program for unifying the sciences (both the social, psychological, and humanistic sciences – that is, sociology, psychology, linguistics, rhetoric, aesthetics, and so on – and the formal sciences – that is, mathematics, logic, and the physical and biological sciences). In developing his semiotic discourse in this direction, he did not set aside biology; quite the contrary, he emphasized the contributions that the biological and physical sciences (such as physics and chemistry) could make to such a program:

> The concept of sign may prove to be of importance in the unification of the social, psychological, and humanistic sciences in so far as these are distinguished from the physical and biological sciences. And since it will be shown that signs are simply the objects studied by the biological and physi-

> cal sciences related in certain complex functional processes, any such unification of the formal sciences on the one hand, and the social, psychological, and humanistic sciences on the other, would provide relevant material for the unification of these two sets of sciences with the physical and biological sciences. (1938c, in 1971: 17–18)

All of Morris's research – with special reference to his 1925 dissertation *Symbolism and Reality, Foundations of the Theory of Signs, Signs, Language, and Behavior*, and to *Signification and Significance: A Study of the Relations of Signs and Values* (1964) – can be described as biosemiotic in orientation, and in this sense shows a tightly woven continuity.

From this perspective, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* is the strongest expression of this aspect of his research and should not be looked upon as the result of a sudden turn or conversion. And although *Signification and Significance* addresses directly the question of the relation of signs and values, semiotics and axiology, the premises for this particular aspect of Morris's research were already present in *Symbolism and Reality*, in which symbolic activity is recognized for its function in solving problems for the organism. The question of values presupposes related questions such as those relating to deliberation, freedom, and thought. All of these in turn presuppose biological development ranging from the organism's reaction to direct stimuli at one end of the spectrum, to human symbolism, wherein language and the use of verbal phonic matter and written marks constitute a crucial species-specific resource, at the other end of the spectrum.

4.3. Sign, Dimensions of Semiosis, Denotatum, and Language

We will now focus on some fundamental aspects of Morris's semiotics: the property of being a sign that does not subsist outside semiosis; the generally misunderstood tridimensionality of semiosis with its semantical, pragmatical, and syntactical aspects; the distinction between designatum and denotatum; the definition of language as a species-specific property pertaining to the human animal; criticism of linguistics as practised by linguists; and proposals for a new approach to general linguistics.

4.3.1. The Most Recalcitrant Term: Sign

We have seen that Morris resorts to two formulations in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* for the analysis of signs. As he had already anticipated, and

as he explicitly stated in his 1948 paper (1948b, in 1971: 436), each is a partial analysis (and, we repeat, not a definition). The first formulation is intended for preliminary orientation; the second is an attempt at greater precision. However, as we saw earlier, 'sign' is one of the analysed signs, although only partially so. The first formulation makes use of the term 'behaviour,' leaving unclear the expressions 'behaviour similarity' and 'goal-oriented behaviour.' The second was developed after months of discussion with Hull and Tolman and some of their coworkers.

For the reader's benefit, we repeat the two formulations reported earlier:

> 1) *If something, A, controls behavior towards a goal in a way similar to (but not necessarily identical with) the way something else, B, would control behavior with respect to that goal in a situation in which it were observed, then A is a sign.* (1971 [1946]: 84)
>
> 2) *If anything, A, is a preparatory-stimulus which in the absence of stimulus-objects initiating response-sequences of a certain behavior-family causes a disposition in some organism to respond under certain conditions by response-sequences of this behavior-family, then A is a sign.* (Ibid.: 87)

As Morris himself noted in 1948, the second formulation offers certain advantages relative to the first:

1 It does not make use of the term 'behaviour.'
2 It takes an organism as the interpreter of the sign; but it does not require that an organism react to a sign in the same way as it reacts to what the sign denotes.
3 It does not require an identical reaction relative to situations where the sign appears and where it does not appear.
4 Lastly, it does not require that there be an immediate response (that is, a muscular or glandular reaction) as soon as something is a sign. (See 1948b, in 1971: 437–8)

However, says Morris, the price of all these advantages is 'an unwieldy complexity' (ibid.: 438). This unwieldiness relates in particular to a lack of precision for certain terms used in the second formulation, such as 'disposition' and 'need,' the latter being implicitly present in the definition of 'response-sequence.' Two years after arriving at his second formulation of the concept of sign, Morris pointed out its weakness. Of some interest is his statement that it might be better to talk of 'reactions' rather

than 'responses,' which are a specific kind of reaction involving 'muscles and glands.' Unclear, says Morris himself – this time agreeing with Black – is the relation between goal-objects and signs. His second formulation leads to the idea that a sign signifies only goal-objects. From this perspective, the first formulation is preferable, since it does not require that signs signify only goal-objects. We do not wish to require, says Morris, that a sign such as 'black' signify only goal-objects. Perhaps Morris's intense commitment to controlling his terminology is at the root of his difficulty in controlling his second formulation (which is a sort of convalidation of 'chaos theory'). In his 1948 paper, Morris concluded that 'the term "sign" clearly needs a better grounding than I have given it, or than I know how to give it' (ibid.).

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938c), Morris was already committed to characterizing the sign. Indicating the sign vehicle as S (which is a sign thanks to its function), the designatum as D, and the interpretant of the interpreter as I, Morris described the sign as follows:

> S is a sign of D for I to the degree that I takes account of D in virtue of the presence of S. Thus in semiosis something takes account of something else mediately, i.e. by means of a third something. Semiosis is accordingly a mediated-taking-account-of. (1938c, in 1971: 19–21)

Signs or other components of semiosis do not subsist outside semiosis:

> The properties of being a sign, a designatum, an interpreter, or an interpretant are relational properties which things take on by participating in the functional process of semiosis. Semiotics, then, is not concerned with the study of a particular kind of object, but with ordinary objects in so far (and only in so far) as they participate in semiosis. (Ibid.)

In *Signification and Significance* (1964), Morris returned to the problem of analysing the sign. He repeated and insisted on his conception of semiotics as the general theory of signs in all their forms and manifestations, relative to human and non-human animals, to normal and pathological, linguistic and non-linguistic, personal and social signs; in doing so, he made semiotics an 'interdisciplinary enterprise' (1964, in 1971: 401).

Yet again, Morris had no intention of attempting a definition of sign. Rather, his aim was to specify criteria for its use. To this end, he inserted the sign in a class comprising five terms, which he considered 'the basic terms of semiotic' (ibid.). Semiosis, or sign process, or sign behaviour,

says Morris, can be viewed as a five-term relation: *v, w, x, y, z*: '*v* sets up in *w* the disposition to react in a certain kind of way, *x*, to a certain kind of object, *y* (not yet reacting as a stimulus), under certain conditions *z*' (ibid.: 402).

When this relationship holds, *v* is the sign, *w* is the interpreter, *x* is the interpretant, *y* is the signification, and *z* is the context. Therefore going by Morris's formulation, we could say that something is a sign if it determines an interpretant in the interpreter – if it determines, that is, a disposition to react in a certain kind of way to a certain kind of object (that is, signification), under certain conditions (that is, the context). Morris draws the following example from Karl von Frisch (1962), which concerns the 'dance of bees': the dance is the sign; the other bees affected by the dance are interpreters; the disposition to react in a certain kind of way by these bees, because of the dance, is the interpretant; the food source – that is, the object toward which the dance directs the bee interpreter – is the signification (ibid.: 402–3). However, in this book as well, Morris emphasizes that his formulation of sign does not account for everything we call 'sign.' It is not a definition of sign, but 'simply gives the conditions for recognizing certain events as signs' (ibid.: 402–3).

Morris's new formulation of sign succeeded in avoiding some of the critical remarks and objections raised with regard to his previous formulations. It also avoided some of the weaknesses identified by Morris himself in 'Signs about Signs about Signs' with the help of his critics: to say that what is signified, the object *y* – that is, the signification – is not acting as a stimulus – that is, is not present in immediate experience – is not to deny that we can signify objects present in immediate experience, as when, pointing to the desk in front of me, I say, 'That is a desk.' In fact, observes Morris, to say this is to refer to an object (the desk) of which only a part is immediately observed, while the rest (the rear part of the desk, its underside, its drawers, which are not at present drawn out, and so on) is not accessible to observation.

Reference in sign analysis to observation that distinguishes between observed parts and unobserved parts satisfied those critics who objected to the principle of observability in Morris's formulations of the concept of sign, which they judged a behavioural prejudice (in his monograph on Morris, Rossi-Landi too expressed his concern about Morris's use of the behavioural criteria of observability). Morris remarked that his sign conception as newly formulated in 1964 postulated that the organism acting as an interpreter can experience the sign personally and eventually describe it on the basis of introspection when a question of human

beings, in spite of the behavioural orientation of his approach and his analysis of sign behaviour as subject to objective study. However, a behavioural formulation must be extensible to any organism whatsoever insofar as it is an interpreter. And this justifies the biological orientation of Morris's semiotical perspective. In fact, sign analysis based on self-observation would be limiting if we were to restrict it to organisms endowed with self-consciousness – specifically, human organisms. Indeed, semiotics should offer a general theory of sign in all its forms and manifestations and thus be relevant to *any* organism. Morris achieved high levels of awareness and equilibrium in his interpretation of semiotics, especially when he described it in relation to 'behavioristics':

> Semiotic must deal with sign processes in animals, in children prior to the acquisition of language, and in personality disturbances where self-observational reports are absent or unreliable. Self-observational reports on sign processes are, however, not ruled out by a behavioral semiotic, since they are themselves a kind of sign behavior. (Ibid.: 402)

From this perspective, that which constitutes *the object of the disposition to react* – that is, *signification* in Morris's terminology – belongs to the process of semiosis and subsists as such relative to semiosis. In other words, as specifies Morris, *the object of the disposition to react* does not constitute an entity in itself; rather, it coexists with certain behavioural processes and is relative to these. Food seeking, to which bees are disposed by their dance in a given context, becomes site probing for a possible new hive in a different context, to which the bees are again disposed by their dance. Thus, significations in Morris's formulation are not subject to being (in his own terminology) 'reified.'

Furthermore, the *context* in which something functions as a sign may be made of other signs, just as it may not be.

Finally, just as the *interpreter* is not necessarily a *subject* in terms of human consciousness but can be any organism whatever, the *interpretant* understood as a disposition to react in a certain way because of the sign is not necessarily connoted *in a subjective sense*. Such a disposition can be interpreted simply in *probabilistic* terms, says Morris (ibid.: 402) – that is, as the probability of reacting in a certain way under certain conditions because of the presence of a given sign.

Without giving up his description of semiosis as referring to any organism whatever according to a fundamental assumption presented in *Signs, Language, and Behavior*; and by analysing the conditions that

make something a sign (with all the difficulties this notion involves), Morris succeeded in freeing his 1964 formulation from the imprecision and obscurity of his preceding formulations. What remains constant is the tenacity that characterizes his search for a *method* and for rigorously scientific terms as part of his project of constructing a science (what he calls 'semiotic,' not 'semiotics') that can account for signs in all their forms and manifestations. And this is possible on the basis of his awareness that the central project of semiotics is not to enclose the recalcitrant notion of 'sign' in a definition, but, on the contrary, to reach a formulation that analyses the sign even while respecting its multiplicity and irreducible otherness.

Thanks to this attitude, once Morris began tapping biology as the reservoir for his semiotical terminology, his recourse to biological terms as *definientes* never degenerated into reductive forms of biologism. On the contrary, in referring semiosis to living organisms he found it easier to avoid the *pars pro toto* fallacy – that is, the error of confusing what can be perceived as a part in sign processes – for example, semiosis in the human world – for the totality.

So when Morris resorted to biology to determine the *prolegomenon* of semiotics, he did so with a commitment to detotalizing critique (which characterizes all his research), rather than in terms that were totalizing or reductive. We could also maintain that biology was useful to Morris as a means of freeing himself of any monological view of sign, meaning, and language. Linguists tend to succumb to this kind of limitation when they identify general linguistics as understood by Morris with linguistics of the verbal sign, much like semioticians when they reductively identify semiotics with anthroposemiotics or, worse still, with one of its privileged branches. On the contrary, Morris engaged in a dialogic confrontation with the terms under consideration, and through them, he responded in full to the challenge of their otherness.

4.3.2. Misunderstandings over the Dimensions of Semiosis

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, Morris divides semiotics into three branches: syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. These correspond respectively to the three dimensions of semiosis: the syntactical, the semantical, and the pragmatical. Fundamentally, this trichotomy is the result of two main influences: logico-empiricism and behaviourism, on the one hand, and the pragmatic philosophy of Mead and Peirce, on the other (see Morris 1970). This explains how, as early as 1938, Morris

was aware of the importance of not separating pragmatics from semiotics, and therefore the pragmatical dimension of semiosis from the syntactical and semantical dimensions.

This distinction between the three branches of semiotics is the best-known aspect of Morris's theory of signs. Yet even though his description has been applied successfully in other semiotic frameworks, this aspect of his work has generally been misunderstood. The main misunderstanding relates to the fact that meaning has generally been associated exclusively with the semantical dimension of semiosis when, in fact, it is present in all three dimensions. When Morris claimed that syntactics deals with relations among signs, he was not denying that it involves meaning, which also is part of the relations among signs. Similarly, Morris notes that to the extent that pragmatics focuses on the relation of signs to interpreter, it also deals with signs and therefore with meanings. A scholar who has made a significant contribution to tracing meaning in all three dimensions of semiosis, and to highlighting the relevance of the question of meaning to all three branches of semiotics, is Rossi-Landi (see chapter 6).

Morris worked from a semiotical perspective; thus, his focus was not on psychological or sociological relations but rather on semiosical relations considered from the point of view of the interpreter and the interpretant and the relation between these.

Morris also focused on the semantical dimension of semiosis. This distinguished his own approach to behaviourism from the one adopted by the structuralist Leonard Bloomfield (1933, 1974). Indeed, in his efforts to avoid 'mentalism' and keep faith with the behaviouristic approach to language, Bloomfield was rather sceptical of semantics. One result was that semantical issues were long neglected by American structuralists.

In *Foundations*, Morris established a correspondence between the three branches of semiotics and three philosophical trends: 'formalism' or 'symbolic logic,' which is related to syntactics; empirism, which is related to semantics; and pragmatism, which is related to pragmatics. Indeed, Morris citing Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead described 'pragmatics' as deriving specifically from 'pragmatism.' And in fact, the fifth chapter of *Foundations*, 'Pragmatics,' opens with the following statement:

> The term 'pragmatics' has obviously been coined with reference to the term 'pragmatism.' It is a plausible view that the permanent significance of pragmatism lies in the fact that it has directed attention more closely to the relation of signs to their users than had previously been done and has assessed more profoundly than ever before the relevance of this relation in

> understanding intellectual activities. The term 'pragmatics' helps to signalize the significance of the achievements of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead within the field of semiotic. At the same time, 'pragmatics' as a specifically semiotic term must receive its own formulation. By 'pragmatics' is designated the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters. 'Pragmatics' must then be distinguished from 'pragmatism,' and 'pragmatical' from 'pragmatic.' (1938c, in 1971: 43)

4.3.3. Designatum and Denotatum

Another important contribution Morris made to sign theory is related to the referent. At one point in the development of semiotics, referential semiotics was contrasted with non-referential semiotics. The starting point of the debate was Charles K. Ogden (see biographical note, p. 201) and Ivor A. Richards's famous but often deviating triangle, as it was described by them in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923). This triangle presented three apexes denominated 'symbol,' 'thought or reference,' and 'referent.' On the assumption that meaning consisted in the relation of the 'symbol' to 'thought or reference' – a position resulting in part from the influence of Saussure's binary conception that the sign consisted in the relation of a *signifiant* to a *signifié* – the question under debate became whether the 'referent' ought to be eliminated from this triangle. Supporters of non-referential semantics included Stephan Ullman (*Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* [1962]) and Umberto Eco (*Trattato di semiotica generale* [1975, Eng. trans. 1976]). Subsequently, Eco (1984) came to grasp the relevance of the concept of referent to semiosis; he would recover the referent implicitly by resorting to the Jakobsonian concept of *renvoi*.

If instead we examine the distinction Morris established between *designatum* and *denotatum*, the question of the referent and the misunderstandings surrounding it are easily solved. This distinction was originally proposed by Morris in *Foundations* (1938c). He addressed the same question again, with terminological variants, in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946), and yet again in later writings. Even so, his position as established in 1938 remains the most convincing.

As he states in *Foundations*: 'Where what is referred to actually exists as referred to the object of reference is a denotatum' (1938c, in 1971: 20). For example, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to the object and if we consider unicorns as existent in the world of mythology, that sign has a denotatum because it exists in that world. In contrast, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to

its object of reference and if we consider unicorns as existent in the world of zoology, that sign does *not* have a denotatum, because it does not exist in that world. Here, the sign has a designatum (Morris 1938c) – or a *significatum*, as Morris (1946) was later to call it (see below) – but it does not have a denotatum: 'It thus becomes clear that, while every sign has a designatum, not every sign has a denotatum' (ibid.). By applying Morris's distinction between designatum and denotatum, we can avoid misunderstandings regarding the referent. In the triangular model of sign as proposed by Ogden and Richards (1923), the referent is always foreseen and forms one of the three apexes. In contrast, in other semantic theories (cf. Ullman 1962; Eco 1975, 1984), the referent is eliminated altogether on the basis that what the sign refers to does not always exist as referred to by the sign. However, in this case we cannot but fail to account for the designatum. On the contrary, the sign always has a referent – in Morris's terminology, a designatum – and if this referent exists as referred to by the sign, it also has a denotatum. For example, the referent of 'Cheshire cat' in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is a designatum as well as a denotatum; and 'God' has a referent as both designatum and denotatum for the believer, whereas in the proposition 'God does not exist,' 'God' has a referent (otherwise the proposition would not make sense), but only in the form of a designatum, not as a denotatum (cf. Ponzio 1990a, 1994b).

As we might expect, this distinction is maintained in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* with the introduction of a terminological variation: the term designatum is replaced with the term significatum. Morris states: 'Those conditions which are such that whatever fulfills them is a denotatum will be called a *significatum* of the sign' (1971 [1946]: 94). The sign or sign-vehicle, he says, can be said to *signify* a significatum. *To signify, to have signification*, and *to have a significatum* can be taken as synonyms. In Morris's description of the conditions that allow for something to function as a sign, the significatum, much like the designatum with which it coincides, is differentiated from the denotatum. All signs have a significatum and therefore signify, but not all signs denote. The significatum expresses the conditions in which a sign can have a denotatum and therefore will denote. So if the conditions hold such that a sign denotes, the sign is endowed with both significatum and denotatum. The significatum of the buzzer (sign) that attracts the attention of Pavlov's notorious dog (interpreter) is that something edible is available; the food found by the dog that enables it to respond in a certain way (interpretant) as provoked by the sign, is the denotatum. To the dog's great disappointment, however, the latter may in reality not exist!

In chapter 2 of *Foundations*, Morris uses the term designatum instead of significatum. Every sign, insofar as it is a sign, has a designatum, but not every sign has a denotatum, because not every sign refers to something that really exists. Where what is referred to (significatum or designatum) really exists as referred to, the object of reference is a denotatum. In other words, the designatum or significatum is that which the sign or sign-vehicle refers to; it is a set of qualities forming a class or type of objects or events, to which the interpreter reacts independently of whether what is referred to actually exists (denotatum) according to the existence value attributed to it by the sign. In *Signification and Significance*, Morris replaces the term 'significatum' with 'signification' and drops altogether the term 'denotatum.'

4.3.4. Language and General Linguistics

In the context of semiotics viewed as part of behaviouristics – that is, where semiotics refers sign behaviour to the more general categories of behaviouristic theory – Morris classified signs as either *signals* or *symbols*. This distinction is recurrent, and Morris took on the task of conceptualizing it. According to Morris, researchers who had somehow already distinguished between signals and symbols included Robert M. Yerkes (in *Chimpanzees, a Laboratory Colony* [1943]) and Susanne K. Langer (in *Philosophy in a New Key* [1942]).

In addressing this problem, Morris focused especially on Langer, a scholar 'highly indebted to her teacher Alfred North Whitehead, but afterwards under the powerful spell of Ernst Cassirer' (Sebeok and Petrilli 1998). Morris had already turned his attention to the question of symbolism at the time of his 1925 dissertation. Thus he was quick to recognize the importance of Cassirer's contribution. He opened *Signification and Significance* (1964; its first chapter is now included in Morris [1971] as 'Signs and the Act') by noting that 'Ernst Cassirer called man "the symbolic animal" ("*animal symbolicum*"), instead of "the rational animal" ("*animal rationale*"), and much contemporary work has shown the aptness of this conception' (1971 [1964]: 402).

According to Morris, a sign is a symbol when it substitutes another sign to orient behaviour and thereby signifies what the substituted sign signifies; otherwise, it is a signal. Put another way, a symbol is 'a sign that is produced by its interpreter and that acts as a substitute for some other sign with which it is synonymous; all signs not symbols are signals' (ibid.: 367). It follows that the signal is 'a sign that is not a symbol, that is, not

produced by its interpreter and not a substitute for some other sign with which it is synonymous' (ibid.: 366).

In Langer's view, signals are signs that '*announce* their objects,' whereas symbols lead their interpreters to '*conceive their objects*' (1942: 61). In Langer's words:

> A sign [that is, a signal] indicates the existence – past, present or future of a thing, event, or condition. Wet streets are a sign that it has rained. A patter on the roof is a sign that it is raining. A fall of the barometer or a ring around the moon is a sign that it is going to rain ... A whistle means that the train is about to start. (1942: 57–8)

A term that is used as a symbol and not as a signal does *not* necessarily evoke action that would be appropriate in the object's presence. If I say, 'Napoleon,' you do not bow to the conqueror of Europe as though I had introduced him; you merely think of him. If I mention a certain Mr Smith of our common acquaintance, you may be led to tell me something about him 'behind his back,' which is just what you would *not* do in his presence. Symbols are not proxy for their objects; rather, they are *vehicles for the conception of objects*. To conceive a thing or a situation is not the same thing as to 'react toward it' overtly, or to be aware of its presence. To talk about things means to have *conceptions* about them and *not* the things themselves; *and it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly 'mean'* (cf. ibid.: 60–1).

According to Morris, the main difference between signals and symbols is that symbols, being produced by the organism, the interpreter, are less reliable than signals, which are more closely connected with external environmental relations and therefore tend to be more reliable. But, observes Morris, given that signals are also reliable to varying degrees, the difference is only a difference in degree (see 1946, in 1971: 57).

The word 'rain' clearly says nothing about the fact that it is raining now or has rained or will rain. But when a person says 'rain' in a given situation – say, while entering the house as I'm leaving it – this will have the same effect on me – that is, the action of arming myself with an umbrella – as would my seeing the rain myself or hearing it patter. In this regard, Morris objected that the difference established by Langer was not absolute; instead, it was relative to given conditions. With ironical overtones, he observed that 'the person who hears a patter on the roof need no more act as he would if he were out in the rain than a person who hears the word "Napoleon" need act as he would if he were in the presence of Napoleon' (ibid.: 127).

Morris understood that with his definition of symbol, he was taking his bearings from the term's common usage. But he was also certain that semiotics could only benefit from such variance in its efforts to become established as a science. On the basis of Morris's definition, characteristics of the symbol are autonomy (given that it is produced by the interpreter), conventionality, and possibility of variation (cf. ibid.: 102). Morris's concept of *symbol* is similar to Peirce's, whereas his concept of *signal* can be associated with the Peircean concept of *index*. Even so, the difference between Morris's schema, which is dichotomous, and Peirce's, which is trichotomous, is substantial. Furthermore, whereas Peirce classifies the *icon* as a third type of sign with respect to the symbol and the index, Morris merely treats it as a subclass of the symbol (cf. ibid.: 102).

Working on the basis of a general theory of behaviour, Morris hoped to establish criteria for defining 'language' – a term he considered ambiguous even though fundamental to semiotics (ibid.: 112). In our view, this section of *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (42–58) is probably the most valid and topical. Having started out by describing sign behaviour with general reference to the organism (Sebeok identified semiosis with life), Morris envisaged distinguishing between 'signs in human animals' and 'signs in nonhuman animals' (ibid.: 128–34).

Morris set out to *define language* by applying criteria that *exclude the relationship between language and communication*. He knew that the definition of language must not be based on communication – on the contrary, it must be isolated from communication. This implies that communication can in turn be distinguished from language; in fact, the term 'communication' must not be limited to linguistic communication (ibid.: 45).

Another key aspect of Morris's work is that he did not consider the presence of words, of spoken sounds, as a requisite for language, even though language is this as well. In other words, in Morris's view, *language is not reduced to speech*, and speech is a specific form of language. By 'language,' Morris meant acoustic language as much as the visual, the tactile, and so on, depending on the nature of the intervening sign vehicle, which need not be limited to the verbal in a strict sense.

Obviously, Morris's use of the term 'language' was altogether different from that of linguists. In contrast with others in semiotics and semiology, Morris's approach was neither dependent on nor subordinate to linguistics. This autonomy with respect to linguistics runs through all of his semiotic research. In Morris's own words, the professional linguists

> will object to our omission from the definition of language [of] the requirement that language signs be spoken sounds. On our part we see no theoret-

> ical reasons for the inclusion of such a requirement; to insist on it would be comparable to insisting that buildings made of different materials should not all be called buildings. (Ibid.: 116)

Notwithstanding the views of linguists, Morris proposed that the term 'general linguistics' be applied to the study of language in general, with the term 'linguistics' reserved for written and spoken languages insofar as they are subclasses of language.

Furthermore, Morris established five criteria for the definition of 'language' (see ibid.: 112–14):

1 Language is composed of a plurality of signs.
2 In a language each sign has a *signification common to a number of interpretants:* this is linguistic signification common to members of the interpreter-family, however there may of course be differences in signification for individual interpreters. But such differences are not then regarded as linguistic.
3 Signs constituting a language must be *comsigns*, that is, they must be producible by the members of the interpreter-family. Comsigns may be activities of the organisms themselves (such as gestures), or they may be the products of such activities (such as sounds, traces left on a material medium, or constructed objects).
4 Signs constituting a language are plurisituational signs, that is, signs from a given sign-family whose signification is relatively constant in the various situations they appear in.
5 Signs constituting a language must form a system of interconnected signs combinable in given ways and not in others so as to produce a variety of complex sign-processes.

On the basis of these requirements, Morris proposed the following definition of a language:

> A language is a set of plurisituational signs with interpersonal significata common to members of an interpreter-family, the signs being producible by members of the interpreter-family and combinable in some ways but not in others to form compound signs. (Ibid.: 113)

More synthetically:

> *a language is a set of plurisituational comsigns restricted in the ways in which they may be combined.* (Ibid.)

The following definition is still more synthetic. The word 'system' encloses the criteria of combination:

> *a language is a system of plurisituational comsigns.* (Ibid.)

And given that a sign-family is plurisituational, the simplest formulation is that

> *a language is a system of com-sign-families.* (Ibid.)

In the light of such criteria, language can also be called a 'lansign-system' (ibid.: 114, 363).

Having defined language from a vastly semiotic perspective and not in reductively linguistic terms – and thus having distinguished language from verbal language and from communication – Morris next considered *post-language symbols* (see ibid.: 122–5).

In the context of semiotics founded on the behaviour of organisms, Morris conceptualized *signals* and *symbols*, which antecede language, and *language signals*, which are not *language symbols*. He also identified *post-language symbols*, describing them as follows:

> Symbols producible by their interpreters and synonymous with language signs (lansigns). Such symbols may be personal or interpersonal, and may or may not themselves become elements in a language (lansign-system). (Ibid.: 365)

On the basis of the concept of *personal post-language symbols*, Morris was able to characterize mental processes such as the generating of thoughts and ideas, and so on – indeed, the concept of mind itself – in behaviouristic terms.

Personal post-language symbols are substitute stimuli that are valid for a single person. They can be external or internal – that is, *exteroceptive stimuli* (the words pronounced by a person 'silently to himself' to remember what has been said to him) – or *proprioceptive stimuli* ('talking to oneself').

In contrast, *interpersonal post-language signs* are valid for more than one person and can become comsigns and perhaps even elements in a language. Interpersonal post-language sign systems are the material of culture.

Returning to *personal post-language symbols*, we must remember that these are the material of thought resulting from the *interiorization of external signs*. From this perspective, the difference between 'talking out loud'

and 'thinking to oneself' is the difference between language signs and post-language symbols. Departing from this distinction, Morris proposed the following alternative relative to application of the terms 'mind' or 'mental': we either treat all sign processes as 'mental' processes (which seems to be Peirce's position), or (much like Mead) we restrict the term 'mind' to sign behaviour where language signs or post-language symbols arise.

4.3.5. Human and Non-Human Signs

On the basis of his analysis as we have presented it, Morris had no difficulty distinguishing between human and non-human signs. The question was simply whether language as defined according to the five criteria listed earlier is a property exclusive to human beings or whether it is present in non-human animals as well (ibid.: 128–31).

If 'language' is considered as synonymous with 'communication,' there is no doubt that non-human animals also possess language; if, on the contrary, language is distinguished from communication with reference to the five criteria listed earlier, then certainly animals do not have language, although they do communicate. Some of the conditions that enable us to speak of language seem to hold among non-human animals, but those conditions do not occur together.

At this point, the following statement made by Morris is especially significant:

> But even if these conditions were met [that is, if all the other requirements were met in non-human animal communication], the fifth requirement is a harder hurdle. For though animal signs may be interconnected, and interconnected in such a way that animals may be said to infer, there is no evidence that these signs are combined by animals which produce them according to limitations of combinations necessary for the signs to form a language system. Such considerations strongly favor the hypothesis that language – as here defined – is unique to man. (Ibid.: 130)

Humans can combine their signs to form compound signs; non-human animals cannot do this. In the final analysis, this 'capacity for combination' is what distinguishes human language from the signs of non-human animals. This approach is very close to Sebeok's when he states that language (which he, too, distinguishes from communicative function) is characterized by *syntax* – that is, by the possibility of produc-

ing an infinite number of combinations on the basis of a finite number of signs and a given set of rules. Morris concludes his discussion of the distinction between human and non-human signs as follows:

> In all these ways, human language (and the post-language symbols it makes possible) goes vastly beyond the sign-behavior of animals.

Continuing, he adds the following observation (which seems to correspond closely with Sebeok's conception of human signs):

> But language-behavior is still sign-behavior, and language signs rest upon, and *never completely take the place of*, the simpler signs which they presuppose. The continuity is as real as the discontinuity, and the similarity of human and animal sign-behavior as genuine as the difference. (Ibid.: 130, italics our own)

We should now have a clear overview of the biological foundations of the semiotics of human signs – that is, of 'anthroposemiotics.' In terms that are not Morris's but that come from present-day semiotics, we now know that anthroposemiosis is part of zoosemiosis and that both belong to the domain of biosemiosis. And as much as human signs are characterized by language and are developed through post-language signs, there is no doubt that they share characteristics common to the rest of the animal world. This is perhaps Morris's greatest contribution to semiotics: he broadens its scope and develops a *totalizing* vision that responds to *specific differences* in the semiosic totality.

Biographical Notes

CHARLES MORRIS (Denver, Colorado, 1901–Gainesville, Florida, 1979) studied engineering, biology, psychology, and philosophy. After finishing his science degree in 1922, he completed a PhD in philosophy at the University of Chicago in 1925. He taught at that university from 1931 to 1958.

CHARLES KAY OGDEN (1889–1957) was unquestionably a polymath, known above all for his book *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), coauthored with Ivor A. Richards. As a student at Cambridge University, Ogden was one of the founders of the Heretic Society for the discussion of problems relating to philosophy, art, and science as well as religion. He served as editor of *Cambridge Magazine* and

later of *Psyche* (1923–52), a journal of general and linguistic psychology. Among his various undertakings, Ogden founded the Orthological Institute and invented Basic English, an international language comprising 850 words for people with no knowledge of English.

His research was strongly influenced by his relationships with Victoria Lady Welby (see chapter 2) and with Richards. The unpublished correspondence between Ogden and Welby (which lasted roughly two years, from 1910 to 1911) is noteworthy from the perspective of the links between Welby's significs and the conception of meaning proposed in *The Meaning of Meaning* (cf. Gordon 1990a; Petrilli 1995b; 1998a: 173, 218; Caputo et al. 1998). As a young university student, Ogden strongly promoted significs, and in 1911 he gave a paper for the Heretic Society on 'The Progress of Significs' (see Ogden 1994b).

In *The Meaning of Meaning*, Ogden and Richards propose a triadic schema of the sign. They describe interpretation and meaning in terms of relational processes ensuing from the dynamic interactions among sign, interpretant, and object – or in the authors' terminology, among *symbol*, *reference*, and *referent*. In this book Peirce's importance to semiotics is acknowledged with the insertion of a section devoted to him in the appendix. As a result of this, Peirce's ideas were introduced and circulated in England for the first time alongside those of other important figures. Welby is also mentioned, but the significance of her research is underestimated.

5

About Sebeok

5.1. Modelling Systems Theory and Global Semiotics

Because of Thomas A. Sebeok (see biographical note, p. 230), semiotics is emerging as 'global semiotics.' From the global semiotic perspective, signs and life coincide and semiosis is behaviour among living beings.

> A lire les ouvrages de Sebeok, on est confondu par sa familiarité avec les langues et les cultures du monde, par l'aisance avec laquelle il se meut à travers les travaux des psychologues, des spécialistes de neuro-physiologie cérébrale, de biologie cellulaire, ou ceux des éthologues portant sur des centaines d'espèces zoologiques allant des organismes unicellulaires aux mammifères supérieurs, en passant par les insectes, les poissons et les oiseaux. Ce savoir plus qu'encyclopédique se mesure aussi aux milliers de noms d'auteurs, de langues, de peuples et d'espèces composant les index des ouvrages écrits ou dirigés par lui, et à leurs énormes bibliographies. (Lévi-Strauss, 'Avant-Propos,' in Bouissac, Herzfeld, and Posner 1986: 3)

A pivotal notion in global semiotics is 'modelling,' which is used to explain life and behaviour among living entities conceived in terms of semiosis. Thus, global semiotics – which we can also call 'semiotics of life' – also involves modelling systems theory.

5.1.1. Semiosic Phenomena as Modelling Processes

The concept of modelling was of fundamental importance in Sebeok's semiotic research. He adopted this concept from the Moscow–Tartu school (A.A. Zaliznjak, V.V. Ivanov, V.N. Toporov, and Ju. M. Lotman),

where it was introduced by semioticians to denote natural language ('primary modelling system') as well as other human cultural systems ('secondary modelling systems'). However, Sebeok extended the concept of modelling beyond the domain of anthroposemiotics. In terms of the concept of *Umwelt* as formulated by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll, Sebeok's concept of model can be interpreted as an 'outside world model.' And on the basis of recent research in biosemiotics, Sebeok averred that the modelling capacity is observable in all forms of life (cf. 1991b: 49–58, 68–82; 1994b: 117–27).

The terms introduced so far need some clarification. The study of modelling behaviour in and across all life forms requires a methodological framework, one that has been developed by biosemiotics. This methodological framework is *modelling systems theory* as developed by Sebeok in his research on the interface between semiotics and biology. Modelling systems theory analyses semiotic phenomena in terms of modelling processes (cf. Sebeok and Danesi 2000: 1–43).

In the context of semiotics as a modelling systems theory, semiosis – a capacity pertaining to all life forms – can be defined as 'the capacity of a species to produce and comprehend the specific types of models it requires for processing and codifying perceptual input in its own way' (ibid.: 5).

The application of modelling systems theory is called *systems analysis*, which distinguishes between primary, secondary, and tertiary modelling systems.

The primary modelling system is the innate capacity for *simulative* modelling – in other words, it is a system that enables organisms to simulate something in species-specific ways (cf. ibid.: 44–5). Sebeok called 'language' the species-specific primary modelling system of the genus *Homo*.

The secondary modelling system encompasses both 'indicational' and 'extensional' modelling processes. Non-verbal forms of indicational modelling have been documented in various species. Extensional modelling, in contrast, is a uniquely human capacity because it presupposes *language* (primary modelling system), which Sebeok distinguished from *speech* (human secondary modelling system; cf. ibid.: 82–95).

The tertiary modelling system encompasses highly abstract, symbol-based modelling processes. Tertiary modelling systems are the human cultural systems that the Moscow–Tartu school mistakenly dubbed 'secondary' as a result of conflating 'speech' and 'language' (cf. ibid.: 120–9).

5.1.2. Critique of the Pars Pro Toto Error

The entire universe, given that it signifies, enters Sebeok's 'global semiotics' (see Sebeok 2001a). Semiotics is the place where the 'life sciences' and the 'sign sciences' converge. This means that *signs* and *life* converge. It follows that the human being is a sign in a universe of signs.

Sebeok extended the boundaries of traditional sign study, and thereby provided an approach to 'semiotics' that is far more comprehensive than the one developed by 'semiology.' The limit of 'semiology' – the science of the signs as projected by Saussure – consists in the fact that it is based on the verbal paradigm and is vitiated by the error of *pars pro toto*; in other words, it mistakes the part (that is, human signs and in particular verbal signs) for the whole (that is, all possible signs, human and non-human). On the basis of this mystification, semiology incorrectly claims to be the general science of signs. When the general science of signs instead chooses the term 'semiotics' for itself, it takes its bearings from semiology and its errors. Sebeok dubbed the semiological tradition in the study of signs the 'minor tradition'; in contrast, the tradition he promoted as represented by John Locke and Charles S. Peirce, as well as by Hippocrates and Galen in their early studies on signs and symptoms, he dubbed the 'major tradition.'

In his many publications, Sebeok propounded a wide-ranging vision of semiotics, one that converged with the study of the evolution of life. As a result of his work (which was largely inspired by Peirce, Morris, and Jakobson), the conceptions of the semiotic field and history of semiotics have been revolutionized. Thanks to him, modern semiotics has broadened its horizons far beyond what was envisaged by sign studies in the early 1960s.

Sebeok's approach to the 'life of signs' was 'global' or 'holistic' and could be immediately associated with his concern for the 'signs of life.' He believed that *semiosis* and *life* coincide; that is, semiosis originated with the first stirrings of life. This has led to the formulation of a cardinal axiom in semiotics: 'semiosis is the criterial attribute of life.'

'Global semiotics' offers both a meeting point and an observation post for studies on the life of signs and the signs of life. In line with the 'major tradition' in semiotics, Sebeok's global approach to sign life presupposed his critique of anthropocentric and glottocentric semiotic theory and practice. In his explorations of the boundaries and margins of the science or 'doctrine' of signs (as he also called it), Sebeok opened the field to include *zoosemiotics* (a term he introduced in 1963) – or, even more

broadly, *biosemiotics* – on the one hand, and *endosemiotics*, on the other. In Sebeok's conception, the sign science is not only the 'science qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale' (Saussure 1916: 26) – that is, the study of communication in culture – but also the study of communicative behaviour from a biosemiotic perspective. Thus, Sebeok's global semiotics is characterized by a maximum broadening of competencies.

5.1.3. Semiosic Boundaries

Sebeok's 'The Evolution of Semiosis' (in Sebeok 1991b; reprinted Posner, Robering, and Sebeok 1997–2004, I) opens with the question, 'What is semiosis?' The answer begins with a citation from Peirce. Sebeok observes that Peirce's description (*CP* 5.473) of semiosis or 'action of a sign' as an irreducibly triadic process or relation (sign, object, and interpretant) focuses especially on how the interpretant is produced; therefore, it concerns that which is involved in understanding or in the teleonomic (that is, goal-directed) interpretation of the sign.

Not only do we have a sign that is a sign of something else, but we also have a 'somebody,' a '*Quasi-interpreter*' (*CP* 4.551), that interprets something as a sign of something else. Peirce further analysed the implications of this description when he stated: 'It is of the nature of a sign, and in particular of a sign which is rendered significant by a character which lies in the fact that it will be interpreted as a sign. Of course, nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (*CP* 2.308). And again: 'A sign is only a sign in actu by virtue of its receiving an interpretation, that is, by virtue of its determining another sign of the same object' (*CP* 5.569).

From the perspective of the interpretant and, therefore, of sign-interpreting activity or the process of inferring from signs, *semiosis* can be described in terms of *interpretation*. Peirce specified that all 'signs require at least two *Quasi-minds*; a *Quasi-utterer* and a *Quasi-interpreter*' (*CP* 4.551). The interpreter – mind or quasi-mind – 'is also a sign' (Sebeok 1994b: 14), precisely a response; in other words, an interpretant. An interpreter is a responsive 'somebody.'

In 'The Evolution of Semiosis,' Sebeok continued his answer to the question 'What is semiosis?' with a citation from Morris (1946), who defined semiosis as 'a process in which something is a sign to some organism.' According to Sebeok, this definition cannot help but imply the presence of a living entity in semiosic processes. It follows from this that semiosis appeared with the evolution of life:

> For this reason one must, for example, assume that the report, in the King James version of the Bible (Genesis I.3), quoting God as having said 'Let there be light,' must be a misrepresentation; what God probably said was 'let there be photons,' because the sensation of perception of electromagnetic radiation in the form of optical signals (Hailman 1977: 56–8), that is, luminance, requires a living interpreter, and the animation of matter did not come to pass much earlier than about 3,900 million years ago. (Sebeok, in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: 436)

In Morris's view, the living entity implied in semiosis is a macroorganism; according to Sebeok's global semiotics, it can also be a cell, a portion of a cell, or even a genome.

In 'The Evolution of Semiosis,' Sebeok examines the question of the cosmos before semiosis and after the beginning of the universe. Here, he refers to the reigning paradigm of modern cosmology – the Big Bang theory. Before the appearance of life on our planet – the first traces of which date back to the Archaean Era, from 3,900 to 2,500 million years ago – there existed only physical phenomena: interactions of non-biological atoms, later inorganic molecules. These interactions can be described as 'quasi-semiotic.' But the notion of 'quasi-semiosis' must be distinguished from 'protosemiosis' as understood by the Italian oncologist Giorgio Prodi (see biographical note, p. 230) (cf. 1977). (To Prodi, described as a 'bold trailblazer of contemporary biosemiotics,' is dedicated the milestone book *Biosemiotics*, edited by Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1992). In fact, in the case of physical phenomena, the concept of 'protosemiosis' is metaphorical. Sebeok felt that semiosis concerns life. He distinguished between non-biological interactions on the one hand and 'primitive communication' on the other, the latter referring to information transfer through endoparticles, as in neuron assemblies, where transfer is managed by protein particles.

Since there is not a single example of life outside our own terrestrial biosphere, the question of whether there is life/semiosis elsewhere in our galaxy – let alone in deep space – is wide open. Therefore, says Sebeok, we cannot but hold 'exobiology semiotics' and 'extraterrestrial semiotics' to be twin sciences that so far remain without a subject matter.

In the light of information today, all of this implies that at least one link in the semiosic loop must necessarily be a living and terrestrial entity. This may even be a mere portion of an organism, or an artifact extension fabricated by human beings. After all, semiosis is terrestrial biosemiosis.

As stated, a pivotal concept in Sebeok's research was that semiosis and life coincide. Semiosis is what distinguishes the animate from the inanimate. It follows that sign processes have not always existed in the universe: sign processes and the animate originated together with the development of life.

The identification of semiosis and life with each other has invested semiotics with a completely different role from the one conceived by Umberto Eco (1975) when he described the conjunction between semiosis and life as relating to 'the inferior threshold of semiotics.' In Eco's view, semiotics is a cultural science. In contrast, Sebeok interpreted and practised semiotics as a life science, as biosemiotics, which cannot be reduced to a mere 'sector' of semiotics.

5.1.4. Sebeok's Semiosic Universe

Sebeok began his university studies at Cambridge in the late 1930s. He was strongly influenced by Ogden and Richards's *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), long before that book became a classic in semiotics. Also, he benefited from direct contacts with two great masters of the sign, who in different ways were also his teachers: Morris and Jakobson (see the sections dedicated to these figures in Sebeok 1979, 1986, 1991b).

Let us now list and distinguish among the various aspects and parts of the manifold 'semiosic universe' as it emerges from Sebeok's semiotic research. Sebeok's semiosic universe comprises the following:

- The life of signs and the signs of life as they appear today in the biological sciences: the signs of animal life and of specifically human life; of adult life; of the organism's relations with the environment; of normal or pathological forms of dissolution and deterioration of communicative capabilities.
- Human verbal and non-verbal signs. Human non-verbal signs include signs that depend on natural languages and signs that, on the contrary, do not depend on natural language and thereby transcend the categories of linguistics. These include the signs of 'parasitic' languages, such as artificial languages; the signs of 'gestural languages,' such as the sign languages of North American native peoples and Australian aborigines, and the language of deaf-mutes; the signs of infants; and the signs of the human body in its more culturally dependent manifestations but also in its natural–biological manifestations.
- Human intentional signs controlled by the will, as well as uninten-

tional, unconscious signs, such as those which pass in communication between human beings and non-human animals in 'Clever Hans' cases (cf. Sebeok 1979, 1986). In these contexts, animals seem capable of certain performances (for example, counting), simply because they respond to unintentional and involuntary suggestions from their trainers. This group includes signs at all levels of conscious and unconscious life, as well as signs in all forms of lying (which Sebeok identifies and studies in animals as well), deceit, self-deceit, and good faith.

- Signs at a maximum degree of plurivocality, but also signs that are characterized by univocality and therefore are signals.
- Signs viewed in all their shadings of indexicality, iconicity, and symbolicity.
- Finally, 'signs of the masters of signs.' Through these, we can trace the origins of semiotics (for example, in its ancient relation to divination and to medicine). We can also identify the researchers who contributed directly or indirectly (as 'cryptosemioticians') to the development of this science, and establish the origins and development of semiotics relative to a given nation or culture, as in Sebeok's study of American semiotics (1991b). 'Signs of the masters of signs' also include the narrative signs of anecdotes, testimonies, and personal memoirs, which reveal these masters not only as scholars but also as people, by describing their character, behaviour, and daily habits. Not even these signs – 'human, too human' – escaped Sebeok's semiotic interests.

All of this is a far cry from the science of signs as conceived by the Saussurean tradition.

5.1.5. Global Semiotics

For Sebeok, semiotics was more than just a science that studies signs in the sphere of sociocultural life – as described earlier, 'la science qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale' (Saussure 1916: 26). Before it contemplated the signs of unintentional communication (semiology of signification), semiotics was limited by its exclusive focus on the signs of intentional communication (semiology of communication). These were the main trends in semiology following Saussure. In contrast, semiotics since Sebeok is not only *anthroposemiotics* but also *zoosemiotics*, *phytosemiotics*, *mycosemiotics*, *microsemiotics*, *machine semiotics*, *environmental semiotics*,

and *endosemiotics* (the study of cybernetic systems inside the organic body at the ontogenetic and phylogenetic levels). And all of this takes place under the umbrella term of *biosemiotics* or just plain *semiotics*.

Sebeok contended that biological foundations, therefore biosemiotics, are at the epicentre of studies on communication and signification in the human animal. From this perspective, the research of the biologist Jakob von Uexküll, teacher of Konrad Lorenz and one of the cryptosemioticians most studied by Sebeok, belongs to the history of semiotics.

Sebeok's semiotics unites what other fields of knowledge and human praxis generally keep separate either for justifiable reasons relating to specialization or because of a useless and even harmful tendency toward short-sighted sectorialization. This attitude is not free of ideological implications, which are often poorly masked by motivations 'in the name of science.'

Biology and the social sciences, ethology and linguistics, psychology and the health sciences, and medical specializations from genetics to medical semiotics (symptomatology), psychoanalysis, gerontology, and immunology – all find in semiotics, as conceived by Sebeok, a place of encounter and reciprocal exchange, as well as of systematization and unification. All the same, it must be emphasized that systematization and unification are not understood here neopositivistically in the static terms of an 'encyclopedia,' whether this takes the form of the juxtaposition of knowledge and linguistic practices or of the reduction of knowledge to a single scientific field and its relative language (for example, neopositivistic physicalism). Global semiotics can be presented as a *metascience* that takes all sign-related academic disciplines as its field. It cannot be reduced to the status of philosophy of science, although as a science it is in a dialogic relation with philosophy.

Sebeok develops a view that is global thanks to his constant and creative shifts in perspective – an approach that favours new interdisciplinary interconnections and new interpretive practices. In this way, he identifies sign relations where, for some, there seemed to exist no more than mere 'facts' and relations among things, independent from communication and interpretive processes. Moreover, this constant shifting in perspective favours the discovery of new cognitive fields and languages, which interact dialogically. They are the dialogic interpreted–interpretant signs of fields and languages that already exist. In his explorations of the boundaries and margins of the various sciences, Sebeok dubbed this open nature of semiotics 'doctrine of signs.'

5.2. Semiotics and Semiosis

Sebeok's global semiotics is more than just a study of semiosis; it also carries out precise functions regarding semiosis. The global approach in semiotics concerns not only its capacity for an overview, but also its disposition for an overall response.

5.2.1. Three Aspects of the Unifying Function of Semiotics

We can now consider the unifying function of semiotics as it emerges from Sebeok's research, keeping in mind its three closely related aspects, all of which belong to the same interpretive practice, which is strongly characterized by abductive creativity:

1 *The descriptive–explanatory aspect*: Semiotics singles out, describes, and explains signs – that is, interpreted–interpretant relationships. These may be connected:

   (a) by a relation of contiguity and causality (indexical relation), and therefore given immediately and necessarily; *or*
   (b) despite the distance between them at an indexical level they may be associated on the basis of a hypothetical iconic relation of similarity.
   (b1) In some cases, the iconic relation is mainly the result of obeisance to certain conventions (the iconic–symbolic relation).
   (b2) In other cases, the iconic relation is mainly the result of the tendency toward innovation (the iconic–abductive relation), and not of obeisance to convention.

   These interpreted–interpretant relations are identified not only in thematized objects, but also in the interpretive practices of various sciences.

   Thus, the descriptive–explanatory function of semiotics is also practised in relation to cognitive processes themselves, in terms of critique in a Kantian sense – of the search for a priori possibilities or conditions.

2 *The methodological aspect*: Semiotics is also the search for methods of inquiry and acquisition of knowledge – both ordinary and scientific knowledge. From this perspective, and in contrast to the first aspect,

semiotics does not limit itself to describing and explaining; it also makes proposals relating to cognitive behaviour. Under this aspect as well, then, semiotics overcomes the tendency toward parochial specialism among the sciences, and therefore toward separation.

3 *The ethical aspect*: Regarding this aspect, in earlier writings we have proposed the terms 'ethosemiotics,' 'teleosemiotics,' and 'telosemiotics' (from 'telos' = end). We now propose 'semioethics' (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 2003). Here, the unifying function of semiotics concerns proposals and practical orientations for human life in its entirety (that is, from the overall perspective of its biological and sociocultural aspects). The focus is on what we could call the 'problem of happiness.' Herodotus apparently considered this problem highly important, since early in the first book of his *Histories* he narrated the downfall of Croesus, the last King of Lydia, who imagined himself to be the happiest of men.

Sebeok offers his own interpretation of the story of Croesus as told by Herodotus. Lasting happiness was impossible for Croesus because he was incapable of accounting accurately for the worlds (and signs) of his two sons: one was endowed with speech, the other was deaf and dumb and as a consequence unnamed.

Sebeok's 'The Two Sons of Croesus: A Myth about Communication in Herodotus' (in Sebeok 1979) reflects on this third aspect of semiotics, which refers to the problem of wisdom as entrusted to myths, popular tradition, and certain literary genres (those described by Bakhtin as belonging to 'carnivalized literature,' which derive from popular culture). By analogy with the deaf and dumb son of Croesus, we may remember King Lear's reticent Cordelia; or, in *The Merchant of Venice*, the 'muteness' and simplicity of the leaden casket – which is a sign, contrary to general expectations, that it holds Portia's image.

Regarding the third aspect of the unifying function of semiotics, particular attention is paid to reconnecting that which is considered and experienced as separate. In today's world, the logic of production and the rules that govern the free market, in which anything can be exchanged and commodified, threaten to desensitize humanity more and more to non-functional and ambivalent signs. Such signs range from the vital signs that form the body to the seemingly futile signs of phatic communication with others. In the present age, reconsideration of these signs and their relations is absolutely necessary if we are to improve the

quality of life. Capitalism in this age of globalization is imposing ecological conditions that are making communication between self and body, as well as with the environment, ever more difficult and distorted (cf. 'The Semiotic Self,' in Sebeok 1979; cf. also Sebeok et al. 2001). Moreover, this third aspect of semiotics operates in such a way as to connect rational world views to myth, legend, fable, and all other forms of popular tradition, with a focus on the relation of humans to the world around them. This third function is rich with implications for human behaviour: the signs of life that today we cannot or do not wish to read, and those signs of life that we do not know how to read, may one day recover their importance and relevance for humanity.

The study of sign function has often been considered sufficient for an understanding of the nature of signs. Sebeok disputed this, drawing attention to the problem of the functioning of signs as an end in itself, one that represents a sort of excess with respect to the function and purpose of signs. This excess is visible in ritual behaviour among human beings and animals, for example, but also in language. In fact, beyond its communicative function, language can be considered as a sort of game, in the sense of the 'play of musement' (the term used by both Peirce and Sebeok), without which such activities as imagination, fantasy, and highly abductive reasoning can never be possible (Sebeok 1981b).

5.2.2. Semiosis and Semiotics: 'Semiotics,' Another Meaning

It is highly significant that Sebeok added another meaning to the term 'semiotics' beyond 'the general science of signs,' that is, *the specificity of human semiosis*. He formulated this concept clearly in a 1989 paper, 'Semiosis and Semiotics: What Lies in Their Future?' (in Sebeok 1991b: 97–9), and it is of vital importance for a *transcendental founding of semiotics*, given that it explains how semiotics as a science and metascience is possible. He writes:

> Semiotics is an exclusively human style of inquiry, consisting of the contemplation – whether informally or in formalized fashion – of semiosis. This search will, it is safe to predict, continue at least as long as our genus survives, much as it has existed, for about three million years, in the successive expressions of Homo, variously labeled – reflecting, among other attributes, a growth in brain capacity with concomitant cognitive abilities – *habilis*, *erectus*, *sapiens*, *neanderthalensis*, and now *s. sapiens*. Semiotics, in other words, simply points to the universal propensity of the human mind

> for reverie focused specularly inward upon its own long-term cognitive strategy and daily maneuverings. Locke designated this quest as a search for 'humane understanding'; Peirce, as 'the play of musement.' (Ibid.: 97)

In 'The Evolution of Semiosis,' Sebeok explains the correspondences between the various branches of semiotics and the different types of semiosis, from the world of microorganisms to the Superkingdoms and the human world. Specifically human semiosis, anthroposemiosis, is represented as 'semiotics' thanks to a species-specific 'modelling device' that Sebeok calls 'language.' This observation is based on the fact that it is virtually certain that *Homo habilis* was endowed with language but not speech. Sebeok's distinction between *language* and *speech* corresponds albeit roughly to the distinction between *Kognition* and *Sprache* as established by Horst Müller in *Evolution, Kognition und Sprache* (1987; cf. Sebeok, in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: 443).

5.2.3. To Live and to Lie

In Italy, before Eco's description of semiotics as the discipline that studies lying (see Eco 1975; see also chapter 7), Giovanni Vailati (see biographical note, p. 231) had already stated that signs could be used for the activities of deviation and deception. 'Un manuale per bugiardi' (A Handbook for Liars) is the title he gave to his review of Giuseppe Prezzolini's *L'arte di persuadere* (1907). Aspects of Vailati's studies were presented in a collected edition of his writings and analysed by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (cf. Ponzio's monograph of 1988, which includes the section 'Plurivocità, omologia, menzogna' [Plurivocality, homology, lying] on the relation between Rossi-Landi and Vailati; see also chapter 6). Sebeok himself also discussed Vailati, in relation to Peirce, in 'Peirce in Italia' (1982). Here, Sebeok described the non-isomorphic character of signs with respect to reality and analysed the use of signs for lying – that is, for fraud, illusion, and deception – as well as the capacity of signs for masking and pretence (another leitmotif in his research).

Deception, lying, and illusion are forms of behaviour that a semiotician like Sebeok – who was entranced by signs wherever they occurred – could not resist. For example, he was attracted by the signs of the magician, and he was always returning to forms of behaviour and situations of the Clever Hans type. It was presumed that this horse knew how to read and write; actually, it was merely a competant interpreter of the signals communicated by its trainer, either inadvertently or deliberately in an intentional

attempt at fraud (cf. 'Looking in the Destination for What Should Have Been Sought in the Source,' in Sebeok 1979: 85–106).

Sebeok had a double-motivation for exploring the capacity for lying in the non-human animal world. First, he was committed to debunking the notion that animals can 'talk' in a literal sense – that they are endowed with language, that is, a characteristic that actually is specific to human beings. In some cases, his commitment involved unmasking the fraudulent acts of impostors; in others, it was a matter of undermining illusions. Through theoretical reflections and empirical documentation (sometimes presented with parodical overtones; cf. 'Averse Stance,' in Sebeok 1986: 145–8), Sebeok did much to expose the absurd, often ridiculous, and no doubt scientifically unsound consequences of ignoring and abstracting from species-specific differences among human and non-human sign systems.

Second, Sebeok wanted to explore the fascinating question of whether non-human animals lie in the same way as humans beings. Zoosemiotics tells us that signs do not belong exclusively to the human world, and it may well be that the use of signs among non-human animals also implies the ability to lie (cf. 'Can Animals Lie?' ibid.: 126–30).

5.2.4. Origin of Language and Speech

For a long time, the scientific community ignored the question of how human verbal language originated. It was considered unworthy of discussion, and when it was discussed, the conclusions reached were generally naive and unfounded. (An exception is Giorgio Fano's *Origini e natura del linguaggio* [1972, Eng. trans. 1992]). In spite of this general attitude, Sebeok never forgot the problem of origins, nor did he underestimate its importance. He claimed that human verbal language is species-specific. On this basis, and often with cutting irony, he derided those who enthusiastically supported efforts to teach verbal language to captive primates. Such projects were based on the false assumption that animals might be able to talk – or even more scandalously, that they are endowed with the capacity for language. The distinction that Sebeok established between *language* and *speech* (1986: ch. 2) was his response to the false conclusions being reached about animal communication; it also amounted to a general critique of phonocentrism, which tended to base scientific investigation on anthropocentric principles.

According to Sebeok, language appeared and evolved as an *adaptation* much earlier than speech in the evolution of the human species. Lan-

guage is not a communicative device (on this point, Sebeok agrees with Noam Chomsky, although the latter does not make the same distinction between language and speech); in other words, the specific function of language is not to transmit messages or to give information.

Instead, Sebeok described language as *a primary modelling device*. Every species is endowed with a model that 'produces' its own world, and 'language' is the name of the model that belongs to human beings. However, as a modelling device, human language is completely different from the modelling devices of other life forms. Its distinctive feature is what the linguists call *syntax* – that is, the capacity to order single elements on the basis of operational rules. But whereas for linguists these elements are the words, phrases, and sentences, and so on of historical–natural languages, Sebeok was referring to a mute syntax. Thanks to syntax, human language – understood not as a historical–natural language but as a modelling device – is similar to Lego building blocks. It can reassemble a limited number of construction pieces in an infinite number of ways. As a modelling device, language can produce an infinite number of worlds; in other words, the same pieces can be taken apart and put back together to construct an infinite number of different worlds.

And thanks to language thus described, not only do human animals produce worlds much like other species, but they can also produce an infinite number of *possible* worlds, as Leibniz also claimed. This leads us back to the question of the 'play of musement' – a human capacity that Sebeok, following Peirce, considered no less than fundamental to scientific research and to all forms of investigation, as well as to fiction and to all other forms of artistic creation.

Like language, speech made its appearance as an adaptation, but *for the sake of communication*, and much later than language, precisely with *Homo sapiens*. Speech organizes and externalizes language. Thus, language ended up becoming a communication device through processes of *exaptation* (in the language of evolutionary biologists), which enhanced nonverbal capabilities already possessed by human beings. Speech in turn was exapted for (secondary) modelling (cf. Gould and Vrba 1982: 4–15).

5.2.5. Iconicity and Language

Sebeok believed that language as a modelling device relates iconically to the universe it models. This statement followed the same lines of thought as those of Peirce and Jakobson, both of whom emphasized the importance of iconic signs. An equally important connection can be made with

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, especially with regard to the notion of 'picturing.'

In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein began his work on the processes that produce language–thought and on semiotic–cognitive procedures. Later, however, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, he set aside this aspect of his research to focus on the question of *meaning as use* and linguistic convention (linguistic games). *Philosophical Investigations* is typically viewed, especially by analytical philosophers, as a turning point in Wittgenstein's research. All the same, we should not lose sight of his *Tractatus* and its importance, especially as it relates to his work on the *iconic* aspect of language (cf. Ponzio 1991: 185–201; 1997a: 309–13). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between names and propositions: the relation between names or 'simple signs' used in the proposition and their objects or meaning is of the conventional type. The relation between whole propositions or 'propositional signs' and what they signify is a relation of similarity. The proposition is a logical picture (cf. *CP* 4.022, 4.026). In fact, to the extent that propositions are also conventional–symbolic, they are fundamentally based on the relation of representation – that is, the iconic relation. Much like Peirce's 'existential graphs,' this relation is described as of the proportional or structural type.

The iconic relation can also be explained and analysed by distinguishing among *analogy*, *isomorphism*, and *homology*, as discussed by Rossi-Landi (1992b [1968]). Also, the distinction between analogy and homology fits well with the general orientation of Sebeok's own research, given its association with biology.

This approach to the relation between language and the world also has implications for the theory of knowledge, for the study of cognitive processes and psychology, which Sebeok directly addressed in the context of psycholinguistics and psychosemiotics. Relating semiotics to neurobiology, he described the mind as a sign system or model representing what is commonly called the surrounding world or *Umwelt*. The model is an icon, a kind of diagram, wherein the most pertinent relations are spatial and temporal. These relations are not fixed in perpetuity; rather, they can be fixed, modified, and fixed again in correspondence (a resemblance relation) with the *Innenwelt* (inner world) of the human organism. On the basis of this model, which can be compared to a diagram or a map, the human mind shifts from one node to another in the sign network, choosing each time the interpretive route considered most suitable (cf. 'Naming in Animals with Reference to Playing: A Hypothesis,' in Sebeok 1986: ch. 7).

5.3. Sebeok's Works and the Destiny of Semiosis

We do not consider it an exaggeration (perhaps just a little one) to state that thanks to Sebeok, semiotics has achieved self-consciousness, just as the Spirit of philosophy achieved self-consciousness with Hegel (who said so himself). For Hegel, philosophical self-consciousness is connected with the end of philosophizing; for Sebeok, the coming to awareness of semiosis in semiotical terms can be associated with the possibility of the end of semiosis. Echoing Sebeok, the inevitable question becomes: 'Semiosis and Semiotics: What Lies in Their Future?'

5.3.1. A Tetralogy

Over a decade, Sebeok published a tetralogy: *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* (1976), *The Sign & Its Masters* (1979), *The Play of Musement* (1981a), and *I Think I Am a Verb* (1986).

In the opening lines of *The Sign & Its Masters* (see chapter 1, 'Semiosis in Nature and Culture,' pp. 3–26; and chapter 4, 'Ecumenicalism in Semiotics,' pp. 61–84), he describes this book as 'transitional.' In truth, this remark can be extended to the whole of his research, when we consider it in the context of recent developments in philosophical–linguistic and semiotic debate. However, our allusion here is to the transition from 'code semiotics,' which centres on linguistics (and thus on verbal signs) to 'interpretation semiotics,' which (unlike the former) also accounts for the autonomy and arbitrariness of non-verbal signs, be they 'cultural' or 'natural.'

In his survey of the problems relevant to semiotics and of the masters of signs, Sebeok discussed the 'cultural' and 'natural' approaches to semiotics, which can be condensed very simply down to two names: Saussure and Peirce. The study of signs is 'in transit' from 'code semiotics' to 'interpretation semiotics' as represented by these two emblematic figures; as of this time, it is Peirce who predominates.

An earlier book by Sebeok, *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* (1976), had a strong theoretical bias; in it, he was already expressing his preference for the semiotics of interpretation. *The Play of Musement* (1981a), a collection of papers, considers the worth of semiotics as a methodological tool and its potential applications; it is more discursive in tone, although it, too, has solid theoretical foundations. In contrast, *The Sign & Its Masters*, the in-between book, considers the different possibilities that branch out from our two semiotic alternatives, code semiotics and

interpretation semiotics. Besides being a compact theoretical work, *The Sign & Its Masters* offers a survey of the various alternatives, positions, and phases in sign studies as reflected throughout intellectual history by important scholars of signs, whether they addressed signs directly or indirectly.

Sebeok's writings make us the direct witnesses and interpretants of (abductive) turning points in semiotic research. In them, he discusses, evaluates, and experiments with different methods of inquiry, identifies possible objects of analysis, and outlines the boundaries – or better, suggests the boundlessness – of semiotics as a disciplinary field. From this perspective, *The Sign & Its Masters* – in fact, all of his research – is *transitional* insofar as it contributes significantly to the shift toward interpretation semiotics. This shift frees sign study once and for all from subordination to (Saussurean) linguistics and from false dichotomies: communication semiotics versus signification semiotics, referential semantics versus non-referential semantics (cf. Eco 1975).

5.3.2. Semiotics as a Doctrine of Signs and Metasemiosis

It is worth noting that notwithstanding his totalizing approach to semiotics, Sebeok used neither the ennobling term 'science' nor the term 'theory' to name it. Instead, he repeatedly favoured the term 'doctrine of signs,' adapted from Locke, who asserted that a doctrine is a body of principles and opinions that vaguely form a field of knowledge. Sebeok also used this term as Peirce understood it (that is, with reference to instances of Kantian critique). That is to say, Sebeok invested semiotics with the task not only of observing and describing phenomena – in this case, signs – but also of interrogating the conditions of possibility that characterize and specify signs, both for what they are as emerges from observation (necessarily limited and partial) and for what they must be (cf. his preface in Sebeok 1976).

This humble and at once ambitious character of the 'doctrine of signs' led Sebeok to a critical interrogation, à la Kant, of its very conditions of possibility: the doctrine of signs is the science of signs that questions itself, that attempts to answer for itself, and that inquires into its very own foundations. As a doctrine of signs, semiotics also presents itself as an exercise in philosophy, not because it deludes itself into believing that it can substitute for philosophy, but simply because it *does not* delude itself into believing that the study of signs is possible without accounting for philosophical questions that consider its conditions of possibility.

5.3.3. From the Non-Human Interpreter Sign to the Human Interpreter Verb

I Think I Am a Verb (1986) was the fourth book in Sebeok's tetralogy. After this, other important volumes have followed in rapid succession. These included *Essays in Zoosemiotics* (1990), *American Signatures: Semiotic Inquiry and Method* (1991a), *A Sign Is Just a Sign* (1991b), *Semiotics in the United States* (1991c), *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1994b), *Come comunicano gli animali che non parlano* (1998a), and *Global Semiotics* (2001a). This is not to forget important earlier works such as *Perspectives in Zoosemiotics* (1972), and many others that he edited, including *Animal Communication* (1968), *Sight, Sound, and Sense* (1978), and *How Animals Communicate* (1977a).

Instead of continuing to list his publications, let us simply remember that Sebeok had been publishing since 1942. His writings were the expression of more than half a century of research and probing reflection – years during which he interpreted the semiosic universe, whose infinite multiplicity, variety, and articulation he did a great deal to explain.

In *I Think I Am a Verb*, he pulled together many of his interests. This book serves as a launching pad for new research projects in the vast universe of semiotics. The title, which evokes the dying words of the eighteenth president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, resounds with Peircean overtones. In fact, in Peirce's view, man is a sign, just as all living beings are signs. However, Sebeok's choice of a verb instead of a noun to characterize this sign serves to emphasize the condition of continuous becoming, transformation, and renewal of signs in the human world.

Fundamental to Sebeok's doctrine of signs is that living is sign activity. The activities of maintaining life, reproducing it, and interpreting it at a scientific level nessarily involve the use of signs. Sebeok theorized a direct connection between the biological and semiosic universes, and thus between biology and semiotics. His research extended Peirce's conviction that man is a sign by adding that this sign is a verb: to interpret. And according to Sebeok's particular conception of reality, the interpreting activity converges with the life activity – in his own personal case, with the whole of his life. If I am a sign – he seemed to be saying throughout his life as a researcher – then nothing that is a sign is alien to me: *nihil signi mihi alienum puto*. And if the sign situated in the interminable chain of signs is necessarily an 'interpretant' – the term Peirce gave to the effect of a sign, an effect that is itself a sign – then 'to *interpret*' is the verb that may best help me understand who I am.

Sebeok's position is distant from that of Saussure, who limited the sign science to the narrow spaces of human culture, and still more

reductively to signs produced intentionally for communication. Instead, for Sebeok no aspect of sign life is to be excluded from semiotic musings, just as no limits are acceptable on semiotics itself, be those limits contingent or derived from epistemological conviction. Yet despite what we might think, Sebeok's work does not claim the status of scientific or philosophical omniscience, nor does it claim that it can solve all problems indiscriminately.

Sebeok's awareness of the vastness, variety, and complexity of the territories he was committed to exploring and of the problems he was analysing, illustrates the prudence, sensitivity, and self-effacement inherent in his interpretations. This is true not only of his adventures in the treacherous territory of signs, but still more in relation to the deceptive sphere of the signs of signs – the place of his semiotic probings.

5.3.4. European and American Semiotics: A Dialogue

In *Semiotics in the United States*, Sebeok analysed American semiotics at three closely related yet easily identifiable levels.

At the first level, he conducted a systematic and historical survey of the various theoretical trends, perspectives, problems, fields, specializations, and institutions that characterize American semiotics. Regarding the historical level, he assumed the difficult task of reconstructing the origins of American semiotics, identifying research couched in discourse that was not yet connoted as 'semiotics' at the time and that, in certain cases, is even today considered only marginally associated with semiotics if not completely detached from it.

The second level is theoretical and critical. Sebeok took a stand with respect to given problems in semiotics: these included general problems relating to the delimitation of the field of semiotics and to the construction of a general sign model. They also included more specific problems relating to the various sectors and subsectors of the science, or 'doctrine of signs.' This second-level approach to semiotic problems provided a fuller and more comprehensive picture than the first level; as a result, the book escaped being limited to historical descriptivism.

The third level is connected with the second in the sense that, in developing and illustrating his theoretical views, Sebeok coloured them with personal observations and amusing anecdotes. Usually, Sebeok himself features in these stories and episodes. This is largely owing to his strong involvement in the development of semiotic science – something to which he had committed himself for decades, and with great success.

Sebeok was personally familiar with many of the people he mentioned in his book and had many memories of those encounters. These found their way into his descriptions of the problems and orientations that characterize the semiotic universe.

With reference to these three shaping factors, another work by Sebeok, *The Sign & Its Masters*, is quite similar to *Semiotics in the United States*. Here as well, the historical, theoretical–critical, and anecdotal threads of Sebeok's discourse weave together – more so than in his other books, although some degree of autobiography was present in everything he wrote. *Semiotics in the United States* merits comparison with *I Think I Am a Verb*, in which his own experiences clearly influence the topics, authors, and personalities he chooses to discuss.

Sebeok's *oeuvre* is immediately striking for what could be described as his 'dialogic' and 'polyphonic' approach (in the Bakhtinian sense of these terms). Sebeok promoted dialogue among signs, among the different orders of signs, and among different interpretive practices, domains, and fields, as well as among the 'masters' of signs, including those who had never previously been in direct contact with one another or who did not even suspect that they were dealing with signs (his so-called 'cryptosemioticians').

As is evident throughout his thought system, Peirce also recognized the importance of 'dialogism' in the development of thought, and even more broadly in the evolution of life generally, of which human thought processes are a part. In a letter to Victoria Welby dated 2 December 1904, very much in accord with her own views, Peirce – who had been forced to work in isolation after having been excluded from academic life – wrote that 'after all a philosophy can only be passed from mouth to mouth, where there is opportunity to object & cross-question' (in Hardwick 1977: 44).

As is clear from his long teaching career and from his unflinching commitment to fostering a 'community of inquirers,' the continuity of dialogic exchange was, for Sebeok, of vital importance. As Iris Smith states in her introduction to Sebeok's *American Signatures,* the master's own peculiar way of living his condition as an intellectual testifies to the fact that individual reflection must be measured against the reflections of others.

5.3.5. The Destiny of Semiosis after Life

The semiotic field extends over all terrestrial biological systems, from the sphere of molecular mechanisms at the lower limit, to a hypothetical

entity at the upper limit christened 'Gaia,' which is Greek for 'Mother Earth' – a term introduced by scientists in the late 1970s to designate the entire terrestrial ecosystem that encompasses the interactive activities of the multitudinous forms of life on earth.

As Sebeok stated in allusion to the fantastic worlds of *Gulliver's Travels*, semiosis spreads from the Lilliputian world of molecular genetics and virology through Gulliver's man-size world, and finally into the world of Brobdingnag, of Gaia, our gigantic bio-geo-chemical ecosystem.

And beyond? Can we assert that semiosis extends beyond Gaia? A 'beyond' understood in terms of space but also of time? Is semiosis possible beyond Gaia, outside it, that is, beyond this gigantic organism's lifespan? Sebeok himself considered this question, as is evidenced by the title of his paper 'Semiosis and Semiotics: What Lies in Their Future?'

In his research, Sebeok took stock of the impressive general progress and expansion of semiotics over the preceding thirty to forty years. Starting from a reductive definition of semiotics (which he criticizes) as the study of the exchange of any kind of message and of related sign systems, he theorized semiotics as the 'play of musement' mediating between reality and illusion:

> The central preoccupation of semiotics is an illimitable array of concordant illusions; its main mission to mediate between reality and illusion – to reveal the substratal illusion underlying reality and to search for the reality that may, after all, lurk behind that illusion. This abductive assignment becomes, henceforth, the privilege of future generations to pursue, insofar as young people can be induced to heed the advice of their elected medicine men. (1986: 77–8)

The question posed by Sebeok concerning the destiny of semiosis derives from his awareness of the responsibility of semiotics relative to semiosis. Our proposal is that global semiotics ought now evolve into what we term 'semioethics.'

5.4. Sebeok's Semiotics and Education

5.4.1. The Role of Signs in the Educational Process

In 'Semiotic and the School' – a section in *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946), Morris observed that to use semiotics as the foundation for education does not mean to introduce it as a separate discipline, or to introduce technical terminology into the early levels of the school system.

Rather, the aim is to show teachers the role played by signs in our performances at every stage of the educational process, how signs serve various ends, how they advance or hinder actual communication.

> At the level of higher education, a specific and detailed study of semiotic can serve to raise to fuller awareness the training in the adequate use of signs which should have occurred throughout the earlier levels. (1946, in 1971: 326)

In other words, the contribution of semiotics to education is methodological, ranging from the theoretical foundations of education to specific aspects of teaching and learning. Semiotic research in education is an area not only of education but also of semiotics. In *Handbook of Semiotics* (1990), Winfried Nöth dedicates a paragraph ('Teaching') in chapter 3, 'Semiosis, Code, and the Semiotic Field,' to the links between semiotics and education. These links relate to the following: educational interactions as processes of semiosis and communication (cf. 221–2); the role of semiotics in the teaching of school subjects (such as both native and foreign languages); non-verbal and visual communication in foreign cultures; the semiotics of culture in foreign-language teaching; the semiotic foundations of teaching methodology; visual arts and media languages as school subjects (cf. 222–3); and finally, semiotics as a specific field of study in both schools and universities (cf. 223–4).

Nöth lists Sebeok among those who have helped further the development of semiotics as a degree discipline in university, by designing syllabi and teaching programs (cf. Sebeok 1976: 176–80; 1979: 272–9), and by forging links between semiotic theory and practical aspects of education (cf. Sebeok, Lamb, and Regan 1988).

But Sebeok made his greatest contribution to methodological studies in the field of education through his innovative ideas in the field of semiotics. The purpose of Marcel Danesi's *The Body in the Sign: Thomas A. Sebeok and Semiotics* (1998) is precisely to consider the implications of Sebeok's work for education in a general sense. This book explains Sebeok's approach to semiotics in order to introduce Sebeok's semiotics to educators and pedagogical researchers and to show what his work could offer their field.

5.4.2. Implications of Sebeok's Work for Education

In the present day, Sebeok's approach to semiotics is more interdisciplinary than anyone else's. Thus, his contribution to educational practices

and to the future of research in the educational domain does not consist in constructing an all-embracing theory of learning. His semiotic perspective on the application of verbal and non-verbal signs to the learning process does not exclude the views of other descriptions.

Sebeok extends the boundaries of traditional semiotics, which is vitiated by the fundamental error of mistaking a part (that is, human signs, and verbal signs in particular) for the whole (that is, all possible signs, both human and non-human). In contrast, Sebeok's 'global semiotics,' as described earlier, is the site where the 'life sciences' and the 'sign sciences' converge, and thus the site of consciousness of the fact that the human being is a sign in a universe of signs. This approach presupposes a critique of anthropocentrism and of glottocentrism, which undoubtedly has positive effects when the question is how to develop educational aims and methods.

According to Danesi (1998: 61), two key points arise from Sebeok's semiotics as it relates to educational research and practice. First and foremost, learning and semiosis are co-occurring and complementary functions; second, all types of learning in human development, as results in childhood, are modelling processes that can be described as 'flows' from iconicity to cultural symbolism. Children model knowledge and skills acquired through the body first iconically and later symbolically as they adapt human natural primary modelling to the forms of secondary and tertiary modelling of their cultural context. Sebeok's typology of human modelling is pivotal to the semiotics of education.

As Danesi (ibid.: 28) explains in reference to chapter 2 of Sebeok (1986), 'Communication, Language, and Speech. Evolutionary Considerations,' it is a mistake to think of language as having developed primarily out of a need to communicate. With Sebeok, we must distinguish between *language* and *speech*. Language is essentially 'mind work'; speech is 'ear and mouth work.'

Thanks to syntax, we know that human language – like Lego building blocks – can reassemble a finite number of construction pieces in an infinite number of ways. As a modelling device, language can produce an infinite number of models, and this brings us back to the 'play of musement.' The proliferation of different languages together with 'linguistic creativity' (Chomsky) testify to the capacity of language – understood as a primary modelling device – to produce many possible worlds.

Chomsky insists on the 'creative character of (verbal) language,' yet his linguistics is unable to explain the plurality of natural languages (nor can it explain 'inner plurilingualism' in any single natural language). The reason for this is that Chomsky's linguistics presupposes an

innate universal grammar. Actually, the fact that human beings have invented numerous natural languages is the direct result of the primary modelling capacity, and therefore of the capacity to invent multiple worlds. In other words, the plurality of natural languages derives from language's propensity for the 'play of musement' – or, as Giambattista Vico noted, for the 'poetic logic' that is characteristic of human beings.

5.4.3. Education to Mutual Adjustment of Language and Speech

Regarding the relation between language and speech, Sebeok remarked that it required a plausible mutual adjustment of the encoding with the decoding capacity. Language was 'exapted' for communication (first in the form of speech, that is, for 'ear and mouth work,' and later in the form of script, and so on); meanwhile, speech was exapted for (secondary) modelling, that is, for 'mind work.' However, in 'In What Sense Is Language a "Primary Modelling System"?' (chapter 5 of *A Sign Is Just a Sign*), Sebeok adds: 'But since absolute mutual comprehension remains a distant goal, the system continues to be fine-tuned and tinkered with still' (1991b: 56).

As Danesi points out, the relevance of Sebeok's observations to the educational domain and to pedagogical research in general are noteworthy. Consider the implications for teaching and learning in the following passage from chapter 7, 'Toward a Natural History of Language,' of *A Sign Is Just a Sign*:

> It is reasonable to suppose that the adjustment, or fine-tuning, of the encoding capacity required by speaking to the decoding capacity required to understand speech, and vice versa, took about two million years to achieve at least partially. (Full understanding is a rare commodity; most of the time most of us don't quite grasp what another human being is trying to tell us.) Even today, humans have no special organ for speech, which is formed by a tract originally designed for two entirely different biological functions: the alimentary and the respiratory. Speech is then received, as any other sound, by the ear, which has still another phylogenetic source and is a rather newly acquired sensory receptor. (Ibid.: 70)

The human mind moves among meanings and concepts in a way that Danesi (1995 and 2000) calls 'imaginative mental navigating,' through a web of interpretive routes according to associations that form the complex system or macroweb which we usually call 'culture.'

It follows that the notions of 'linguistic competence' and 'communi-

cative competence' are both insufficient to explain the behaviour of thinking and speaking – that is, the capacity for verbalization and reasoning. Both these competencies are part of an organic *conceptual competence* – that is, the ability (as shows Danesi) to convert mental schemes of various conceptual provenances into linguistic and communicative structures and thereby create messages that are appropriate and pertinent. This conceptual competence consists of three subcompetencies: (a) *metaphoric competence* – the ability to produce metaphorically appropriate concepts; (b) *reflexive competence* – the ability to select linguistic structures and categories that reflect appropriate conceptual realms of messages; and (c) *cultural competence* – the ability to sail across different discourse fields and conceptual realms of which the message makes use.

True 'linguistic creativity' consists of the capacity to form new metaphoric associations, to propose new knowledge combinations, to invent new representations. This is the basis of human symbolic behaviour, that is to say, of species-specific human primary, secondary, and tertiary modelling systems.

Referring to the associative character of verbal language and thought, with Danesi and in opposition to the Cartesian model of the thinking subject, we can say that human beings are anything but rational thinkers; rather, they are ingenious 'guessers.' 'To guess,' as Peirce says, is the characteristic of argument, and the greater the risk of associating different terms belonging to distant fields in the macroweb of culture, the better able is the argument to invent and innovate.

5.4.4. Semiotics and Foresight of 'Proximal Development'

In his attempt to sum up in one phrase what Sebeok taught an entire generation of semioticians, Danesi stated the following: 'the body in the sign' – in other words, life is defined by semiosis. For the human species, this means that semiosis is the bond that links body, mind, and culture (cf. Danesi 1998: 16). *The Body in the Sign* is the title of Danesi's monograph on Sebeok and semiotics. Sebeok examined the manifestation patterns of semiosis in nature and culture and showed persuasively that in anthroposemiosis there exists an inextricable nexus among sign, body, and culture.

In the dialogue 'Semiotics in Education' with Sydney M. Lamb and John O. Regan, Sebeok made the following observation:

> [Peirce said] that all this universe is perfused with signs. Then he added a thoughtful statement that it may indeed be composed exclusively of signs.

> The difficulty with that statement is that it is not verifiable. If you believe that the universe is perfused with signs, and if you believe, as Professor Lamb said, that we all have a mental model of the universe, an internalized mental model that admits into the mind nothing but signs, then, if there is any thing else left, it is not verifiable and therefore not knowable. This is known as the radical idealistic position. As a mild idealistic position, we would say that we sense that maybe there is something out there. For example, Heraclitus said there is something out there that he called the 'logos.' But who knows? And I think that this radical idealistic position is in conformity with some versions of quantum mechanics. So on this point I am not sure whether we agree or disagree. If we disagree, it is up to him to prove that there is something out there that I cannot get at by means other than through signs. (Sebeok, Lamb, and Regan 1988: 12)

Sebeok also argued that iconicity is the default form of semiosis, and documented in vastly different species manifestations of the capacity to produce signs that stand in some direct simulative relation to their referents. According to this approach, iconicity is a basic signifying strategy for various life forms. The iconic mode of representation is the relation of the sign to its referent through replication, simulation, imitation, or resemblance. In various works (1979, 1986, 1991b, 1994b), Sebeok showed the variety of manifestations of iconicity in different species. Iconic signs can be vocal, visual, olfactory, gustatory, or tactile. Perhaps in humans as well, all signs start out in a simulative relation to their referential domains. Like Peirce, Sebeok saw iconicity as the primordial representational strategy in the human species. Danesi (cf. 1998: 10) considers iconicity as an aspect of utmost relevance in the study of signs. He emphasizes the important role played by iconicity in the bond that links semiosis, body, mind, and culture – a role that Sebeok documented in the final three chapters of his 1986 book. This inextricable nexus takes the form of iconical representational behaviour. 'Iconicity is, in effect, evidence of this nexus' (Danesi 1998: 37). Danesi refers to the conception that the iconic mode of representation is the primary means of bodily semiosis as the *iconicity hypothesis* (ibid.: 18–20).

Thus, another principle of Sebeok's semiotics is 'the sense-implication hypothesis' (ibid.: 17), which suggests that semiosis is grounded in the experiential realm of sense. This principle has a philosophical antecedent in Locke, according to whom all ideas came from sensation first and reflection later; but it is also connected with the modelling theory: what is acquired through the body is modelled in various innate model-

ling systems possessed by different species. In fact, a species perceives according to its own particular anatomical structure and its own kind of modelling system. Thanks to its species-specific modelling system, which Sebeok called language, *Homo* is a sophisticated modeller of the world and furthermore has a remarkable capacity to recreate his world in an infinite number of different forms.

That which in human modelling, as described by Sebeok's biosemiotics, is relevant to education is what Danesi calls the 'natural learning flow' – that is to say, the semiosic process whereby children acquire knowledge. This process takes place through the body and the human primary modelling system and proceeds from iconicity to the forms of modelling that children learn in the cultural context. The *natural learning flow principle*, says Danesi (ibid.: 61), implies that the semiosic capacities of the learner and the determination of his semiosic stage – rather than the subject matter to be learned – should therefore be the focus of education. The main implication of Sebeok's modelling theory for education is of a *methodological nature*.

If the teacher were familiar with the forms of semiosic processes involved in human learning, he or she would be in a better position to help the learner acquire knowledge and skills. In fact, the key to successful learning, says Danesi, arguably lies in determining at what point a learning phase is ready to be overtaken by what the Russian psychologist and semiotician Vygotsky (1962) called the 'proximal zone' of learning. The semiotic approach to education is indispensable to an understanding of the zones of proximal development of each particular learner.

5.4.5. Global Semiotics and Education to Responsibility for Life

Another argument can be added to those proposed by Danesi concerning the implications of Sebeok's global semiotics to education. We propose that among the goals to be achieved by education should also be counted the capacity for criticism, social awareness, and responsible behaviour. Sebeok's semiotics of life is relevant to an audience of educators and pedagogical researchers owing to its implications for the comprehensive and critical interpretation of communication under present-day conditions – that is, conditions of globalization.

Today's world is characterized by a new, computer-driven Industrial Revolution, by global free markets, and thus by the pervasiveness of communication throughout the entire production cycle (production, exchange, consumption). In this context, communication is being ex-

ploited for capitalistic profit. This is a danger for communication; we are at risk of destroying communication itself, understood as the possibility of life throughout the entire planet (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 2000a).

We may become aware of the risks we are running and communicate them to others (especially the new generations), and teach those others responsibility by taking a perspective that is just as global as our social system itself: this implies the capacity to grasp the links between communication and life. Such a perspective is offered by Sebeok's global semiotics or semiotics of life.

In both a spatial and a temporal sense, Sebeok's planetary perspective lays the conditions for an approach to contemporaneity that does not remain trapped within the boundaries of contemporaneity itself, one that allows for the assumption of responsibility, in other words, for responsibility without alibis (cf. Petrilli's introduction to the Italian translation of Sebeok 1991b; cf. also Petrilli 1998e; Ponzio and Petrilli 2001, 2002, 2003).

The interdisciplinary focus of Sebeok's global semiotics, and his attention to the signs of the interconnections between body and species, together presuppose an approach to education that is free from stereotyped, limited, and distorted ideas, and from the practices of communication under current conditions. This is another implication of Sebeok's work for education, and another possible meaning of the phrase chosen by Danesi to sum up 'what Sebeok said': 'the body in the sign' – in other words, semiosis, as anticipated, is no less than the bond that links body, mind, and culture.

Biographical Notes

THOMAS A. SEBEOK was born in Budapest on 9 November 1920 and died in Bloomington, Indiana, on 21 December 2001. He immigrated to the United States in 1937 and became an American citizen in 1944. He became a faculty member at Indiana University in 1944 and was the first general editor of *Semiotica*, the journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, founded in Paris in 1969. Sebeok was a key figure in the establishment of semiotics as a modern science, and one of the first to advance the field of 'global semiotics.' His work was largely inspired by Charles S. Peirce, as well as by Charles Morris and Roman Jakobson. His research covered a multitude of fields in the natural and human sciences.

GIORGIO PRODI (1928–1987) 'was, on the one hand, one of his country's leading medical biologists in oncology, while he was, on the other, a highly original con-

tributor to semiotics and epistemology, the philosophy of language and formal logic, plus a noteworthy literary figure. Prodi's earliest contribution to this area [immunosemiotics, an important branch of biosemiotics], [is] *Le basi: materiali della significazione* [1978] (Sebeok, 'Foreword' in Capozzi, ed., 1997: xiv).

GIOVANNI VAILATI (1863–1909), whom we mentioned in chapter 2, regarding his collaboration with Victoria Welby, will also be discussed in the following chapter because his philosophy connects so well with the philosophy of language as proposed by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. So a few lines about him will be useful at this point in our discourse.

Vailati was a mathematician, logician, and pragmatist philosopher. He was a pupil of Giuseppe Peano. He lectured in mathematics and physics at the University of Turin in 1892 and 1899; later, he taught at various state schools in a number of different Italian cities, including Bari. He corresponded with Welby, Franz Brentano, and others, and he admired and developed Welby's significs. He acknowledged the importance of Peirce's pragmatism, which he introduced to the Italian intellectual scene. In his short lifetime, he distinguished himself as an innovative thinker in philosophy of language, history of science, and epistemology. A central aim in Vailati's work was to unmask expressive ambiguity and verbal fallacies. In his articles (collected in *Scritti*, 1911 and 1987), Vailati calls our attention to the linguistic anarchy that ensues from the incorrect use of language, and proposes a search for 'effectual pedagogic contrivances for creating the habit of perceiving the ambiguities of language' (letter to Welby, 12 July 1898, in Vailati 1971: 141).

In 'Sull'arte dell'interrogare' (1905) Vailati proposed that questions of the type 'what is it?' – which generate stereotyped sentences and mechanical definitions – be replaced with questions of the type 'What would you do if ...' or 'in order that ...,' which emphasize the links between concepts or definitions and behaviours, contexts, and expectations. Like Welby, Vailati underlined the crucial importance of the question 'What does it signify for you, for us?'

In 'I tropi della logica' (1905), Vailati showed that metaphors are present not only in ordinary language, in rhetoric, and in poetry, but also in logic and in mathematics (in expressions such as 'to be based' and 'to descend'). In 'La grammatica dell'algebra' (1908), he compared verbal language to the language of algebra from a semiotic perspective.

Independently of Peirce, Vailati was aware of the importance of abduction in experimentation and discovery. In Italy, the explicit and programmatic continuation of language studies in the direction indicated by Vailati is represented by the work of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (see Vailati 1972, 1987, 2000; Petrilli 1990a; Ponzio 1990b; Quaranta, ed. 1989).

6

About Rossi-Landi

In 1968, the Italian intellectual Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (see biographical note, p. 297) wrote *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (now 1992b, Eng. trans. *Language as Work and Trade*, 1983), which even today is extraordinary for its topicality and insight. Rossi-Landi anticipated problems that are now considered central to the development of present-day capitalism, an era when communication is a constitutive factor in production and 'immaterial work' is the principle economic resource. Communication plays a dominant role not only in the intermediary phase in the productive cycle (the phase of *circulation* or *exchange*, according to market logic), but also in the phases of *production* and *consumption*, especially in the wake of automation, computerization, and the communication network as a whole. Once we realize that *commodities are messages* and that *messages are commodities*, it becomes obvious that *consumption is essentially consumption of communication and that production is production of communication.*

Rossi-Landi elaborated such concepts as *linguistic production*, *linguistic work*, and *linguistic capital* in *social reproduction*, and in doing so identified homological relations with *material* production. As revealed by certain terms now in everyday use, such concepts are now recognized as fundamental to descriptions of today's cycle of social reproduction. The terms we are alluding to include 'immaterial resource,' 'immaterial capital,' and 'immaterial investment'; that these are now in vogue highlights our awareness that they are of fundamental importance to development and competition in today's *knowledge society*, which is heavily reliant on education, information, and specialized knowledge. Until quite recently, material production and linguistic production, in the form of manual work and intellectual work, were treated as separate, albeit related homologically at deep genetic and structural levels. What is new in all of

this is that in the world of global communication, linguistic production and material production have become one. With the advent of the computer, in which *hardware* and *software* come together in a single unit, the links between work and material artifacts, on the one hand, and work and linguistic artifacts, on the other, have become glaringly obvious, to the point that the superior capacity of linguistic work – which is 'immaterial work' – is now abundantly clear. In other words, linguistic work leads the processes of production and development.

The underlying assumption of Rossi-Landi's 1968 book is that *linguistic production* is fundamental to social life and as such is *homologous* with the production of utensils and artifacts. (He would develop this idea more systematically in his later books, such as *Linguistics and Economics* [1975a]). Rossi-Landi described verbal language as a system of artifacts, and conceptualized other systems of artifacts in terms of *non-verbal sign systems*. This approach led him to expand the concept of linguistic production into *sign production*. When we apply such a framework, it becomes clear that concepts originally developed in fields other than the verbal – concepts such as 'consumption,' 'work,' 'capital,' 'market,' 'property,' 'exploitation,' 'alienation,' and 'ideology' – can be applied to studies on language. In the same way, concepts developed in relation to studies on verbal language can be applied to non-verbal sign systems; thus, we can speak of *linguistic consumption*, *linguistic work*, *linguistic capital*, *linguistic alienation*, and so on. Rossi-Landi's research has laid the foundations for an approach to *general semiotics* that includes and unites linguistics with economics as well as with other social sciences. His views on human behaviour have a universal application; they are also highly insightful and make it abundantly clear that in this globalized communication–production society, divisions among the sciences are untenable and in fact completely anachronistic.

6.1. Rossi-Landi's Philosophy of Language

6.1.1. His Semiotic Studies

From the early 1950s to the second half of the 1980s Rossi-Landi broke new ground with his pioneer research in philosophy of language and semiotics as practised in Italy. His approach was at once unitary and multifaceted; its general orientation can be characterized as a critique of signs, language, and ideology in the context of the processes of sign production and social reproduction generally. Paradoxically, however, as

Rossi-Landi himself claimed in the following extract, the architecture of his thought in its universality was most often reduced to only one of its aspects:

> On the European Continent people thought that I was a semiotician, or a linguistic or analytical philosopher who did not give sufficient importance to history and society; while in the English-speaking countries people thought I was a historicist and not an analyst, or that I was *only* Hegelian, or *only* Marxist, and so on. (1992a: 2)

Rossi-Landi's research can be divided into three distinct but interrelated phases. The first phase covers the 1950s and includes his 1953 monograph, *Charles Morris* (revised and enlarged in 1975 as *Charles Morris e la semiotica novecentesca* with the addition of a 1975 paper, 'Segni su di un maestro dei segni,' originally published as 'Signs about a Master of Signs,' now in Rossi-Landi 1992a: 17–57) (cf. Petrilli 1992c, the correspondence between Rossi-Landi and Morris), and *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (1961, republished in 1980 and again in 1998), which can be viewed as the conclusion to his research of the 1950s.

The second phase is connected with the 1960s and includes four books. *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (1968, now 1992b, Eng. trans. 1983) proposes a theory of linguistic production, and of sign production in general, that is also a theory of linguistic work and sign work in general; it lays the foundations for a study of the homological relation between linguistics and economics. *Semiotica e ideologia* (1972, reprinted in 1979 and again in 1994) completes the preceding volume with the addition of important essays such as 'Ideologia della relatività linguistica.' This essay was published as an independent work in English under the title *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity* (1973). *Linguistics and Economics* (1975a, reprinted in 1977) was written in English in 1970 and 1971 as volume 12 of the series *Current Trends in Linguistics*.

The third phase covers the 1970s and includes *Ideologia* (1978a, reprinted 1982). During this phase, Rossi-Landi discussed the connections between ideology and verbal language, with a special focus on the problem of linguistic alienation. He also wrote various essays that were later collected in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985a).

Several essays from all three periods, some of which were published for the first time in English, were collected posthumously in *Between Signs and Non-Signs* (1992a, ed. S. Petrilli). This book had been planned by Rossi-Landi himself but was among the many that remained unpublished during his lifetime.

Rossi-Landi's research is an important point of reference for a critical analysis of communication in today's society. Human beings are generated semiosically from the combination of linguistic and non-linguistic work – that is, sign work – and they are subject to social programming. Today's capitalistic society can be described as a phase in social reproduction, one during which communication coincides with the market and, therefore, during which not only merchandise but also messages are fetishized and isolated from the social relations that produce them. In this context, human beings have become more and more subject to the processes of social alienation, and thus to linguistic alienation and sign alienation in general. These issues are addressed by Rossi-Landi, who developed his thought by applying the instruments of the critique of ideology associated with the critique of signs.

6.1.2. Common Speech Theory

In *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (Meaning, Communication and Common Speech), Rossi-Landi develops ideas on signs and verbal language that he had already expressed in his writings of the 1950s. In this 1961 book, he was working outside the Saussurean perspective, free of the reductive dichotomy of linguistic system (*langue*) and individual speech (*parole*). Thus, he did not limit the concept of communication to message exchange among individuals, considered as independent of one another and as pre-existent to the communication process itself.

Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune is a groundbreaking attempt to merge two distinct traditions: the Italian tradition, with its German and continental influences, encounters British analytical philosophy and American pragmatism. More precisely, this book amounts to the first attempt ever made to graft the line of thought that passes from Charles S. Peirce to Charles Morris, combined with elements from Oxonian analytical philosophy, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, and Hugo Dingler's operationism, onto the trunk of continental, non-idealistic historicism.

The first edition of this book included a long analytical appendix on Edmund Husserl; this was deleted from the second edition of 1980 (see Ponzio 1988). An Italian intellectual highly esteemed by Rossi-Landi was Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909), who was among the first Italians to appreciate Peirce's semiotics as well as his pragmaticism, and who also corresponded with Victoria Welby (see Petrilli 1988; Ponzio 1990b).

Rossi-Landi introduced his concept of 'common speech' for the first time in *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* to indicate operations

carried out through speech. He considered these operations essential for successful communication among human beings, notwithstanding the obvious complications that arise in concrete reality. The assumption underlying this concept is that there exist basic similarities in the biological and social structures of all human communities, similarities that override all possible historical and geographical differences.

After 1961, Rossi-Landi developed the concept of common speech into 'linguistic work' and 'sign work in general.' Later (for the first time in 1994 [1972]: 201), he would introduce into his analyses the broader notion of 'social reproduction.' Only in 1968, in *Language as Work and Trade*, did Rossi-Landi deal specifically with Ferdinand de Saussure – the 'official' Saussure of *Cours de linguistique générale* – even though by 1961 he had already critiqued the Saussurean perspective with his notion of common speech. Common speech has nothing to do with the Oxonian concept of ordinary language or with neopositivistic constructions of ideal languages. As explains Rossi-Landi:

> Within all real or possible languages, we can distinguish as a necessary, fundamental and constitutive part a 'collective speech' which I have for some time referred to as Common Speech to separate it both from the Saussurean individual *parole* and the ordinary or daily or colloquial language of the Oxonians, as well as from the technical or special or ideal languages of the builders of generic models. In a certain sense, it stands as a synthesis of the three conceptions which are individually to be rejected. Common Speech is a specification of language, not of this or that language alone; and it is a social, not an individual, specification. As a specification reached through investigation, it retains in part the nature of a special language. (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 40)

As Rossi-Landi observes in his entry 'Semiotics' in the *Dizionario teorico-ideologico* (*Ideologie* 12, 1970: 38–44, reprinted in Rossi-Landi, 1994 [1972]: 301–8), the Saussurean model of sign has the merit of pointing out the connection between *signifiant* and *signifié*. However, Rossi-Landi (ibid.: 21ff) proposed the Augustinian terms *signans* and *signatum* in order to avoid the mentalistic ambiguity of Saussure's *signifié*, observing that the Saussurean model ran the risk of reifying the sign totality, which it conceived as a separate and autonomous entity. In contrast to such a model (or even to the one offered by the information theory of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver), the sign model proposed by Peirce and developed by Morris refers to the sign situation or semiosis

as the departure point of analysis. Such factors as the sign-vehicle, meaning, referent, interpreter, and even the code are considered as part of the semiosic totality; indeed, they emerge as different aspects of the same articulate and universal process of semiosic activity.

Rossi-Landi introduced the notion of common speech in opposition to the notion of 'ordinary language' as conceived by the Oxonians. One of the strictest limitations to English analytical philosophy was that it mistook the characteristics of a given natural language – English, for a case in point – for ordinary, daily, or colloquial language in general, in spite of indications to the contrary.

This confusion between the general and abstract levels of 'ordinary' language and the concrete level of 'natural' language at a given moment in its historical development arises constantly. This can be said of the Oxonian conception of language and of its more recent developments, and also of Noam Chomsky's linguistic theory, which mistakes the specific characteristics of a language (yet again, English) for the universal structures of human language. That the sentences Chomsky introduces to illustrate his theory cannot be translated into other languages is symptomatic of the problem at hand. Sebastian Shaumyan has pointed out a fundamental limitation in Chomsky's transformational model: it confuses elements that in fact belong to two different degrees of abstraction: ideal language and natural language. Thus, Chomsky's model cannot be applied to a natural language that is different from the one that he elected to use for his description. This led Shaumyan to contrast his own bigradual theory of generative grammar with Chomsky's unigradual theory. Unlike Chomsky, Shaumyan distinguished between two levels of abstraction: genotypic language and phenotypic language (cf. Shaumyan 1965).

Rossi-Landi's notion of common speech does not contradict the reality of plurilingualism – that is, the copresence of thousands of languages, each different from the others. On the contrary, it helps explain plurilingualism precisely *because* it alludes to similarities in function as fulfilled by different languages in satisfying expressive and communicative needs. Common speech explains and justifies linguistic difference, variety, and multiplicity in terms of variety in expedients, solutions, and resources offered by each single language to satisfy the social needs of expression and communication. This variety is common to all languages (but let us remember here that nothing is ever complete and definitive, given that language is constantly developing and transforming itself). In contrast to those approaches which trace the multiplicity of languages

back to an *Ursprache* or to the universal linguistic structures of logos or of the biological nature of man, the notion of common speech neither neglects nor underestimates what with George Steiner (1975) could be termed 'the enigma of Babel,' which alludes to the diversity and multiplicity among languages. Common speech as proposed by Rossi-Landi does not imply some sort of mythical unity, some point of common origin for all languages. Even less does it propose unity of the human species by natural law. He states this clearly in his 1961 book and even more clearly in his 1968 book, in which he develops the notion of common speech in terms of work:

> The similarity of the functions fulfilled by the various languages is derived from the fact that in the process of language development the general forms of social formation, that is, the basic work and production relationships that separate any human society from any pre-human (*only* animal) society are necessarily represented. (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 41)

In his later publications (cf. *Ideologia*, 1982, section 1.3, and in particular 1.3.5; and 1985a), Rossi-Landi continued to examine and further develop the notion of expressive and communicative needs as well as that of basic social processes.

The concept of common speech was formulated in contrast to the Oxonian conception of language; this, however, does not mean that English analytical philosophy was considered important in either Italy or most continental countries at the time that Rossi-Landi was writing *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*. Quite the contrary, analytical philosophy was not yet in a position to be dealt with when studying problems of a theoretical order. The groundbreaking character of Rossi-Landi's research at the time – represented by *Charles Morris* (1953), followed by his Italian translation and critical edition of Morris's *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1954), and later by Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1955, reprinted in 1982, in fact a rewriting more than translation!) – was such that *Significato* appeared in a situation of almost total ignorance with regard to the theoretical trends under discussion. As a consequence, Rossi-Landi's research was misunderstood not only in relation to the problems he was addressing, but also with regard to his approach to these problems, since it was so discordant with the dominant conception of what philosophical work was all about. (See Rossi-Landi's introduction to the 1980 edition of *Significato*; see also his 1978 essay, 'On Some Post-Morrisian Problems,' and his introduction to *Language as*

Work and Trade, the 1983 American edition of *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*). Rossi-Landi wrote and published his 1961 book in a situation marked by paradox: he was seen as discussing trends that in the main were being ignored or were considered unworthy of attention and that were thought to 'overestimate' problems of language. From this perspective, Morris was misinterpreted as an 'analytical philosopher' or 'linguist,' and Rossi-Landi's book, at best, was viewed simplistically as a contribution to analytical philosophy.

In some of his better-known essays, Ryle had attempted to distinguish between use and usage. This distinction more or less corresponds to the phenotypic distinction between *linguaggio* and *lingua* (or in French, *langage* and *langue*). Rossi-Landi went a step further in an attempt to identify the general conditions of language viewed against both a linguistic background and non-linguistic one. We might claim that there is an existential dimension to common speech.

By resolving to *explain* linguistic use rather than merely describe it, *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* was already working along the lines that were to lead to *Language as Work and Trade* and its critique of the notion of use as conceived by Wittgenstein. In this book, Rossi-Landi developed a theory of linguistic production whereby any linguistic unit can be viewed as the product of individual and social linguistic work. In the light of such a conception, Wittgenstein's notion of linguistic use seems to concern something that is given insofar as it has already been produced, while at the same time ignoring the question of how that something came to existence. Rossi-Landi developed his criticism of the notion of linguistic use from an essentially Marxian perspective, referring also to Peirce and Bradley. As Rossi-Landi stated, Wittgenstein lacked the notion of labour-value because 'from the linguistic objects, he moves only forward and never backward' (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 31).

In his preface to the American edition of *Language as Work and Trade*, Rossi-Landi clarifies that many of the ideas in this book 'were already present, if only in an embryonic form, in the 1961 book.' However that may be, we contend that *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* is valuable in its own right and represents an important event in itself on the scene of studies in philosophy of language, whatever developments came later. We cannot but agree with Rossi-Landi when he says that his own criticism of his 1961 book, as formulated in *Language as Work and Trade* (pp. 24–7), needs to be modified (see his introduction to the 1980 edition of *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*, pp. 25–6). Viewed in the light of his project for linguistic–semiotic reflection developed in

the direction of historical materialism, the concept of common speech might well have seemed 'mentalistic'; thus, it had to be reformulated in terms of social work. However, when we consider the notion of common speech independently of later developments in Rossi-Landi's thought, his own criticism is 'excessive' if not altogether out of place.

Rossi-Landi himself gives us the key to a correct reading of his work in his introduction to the 1980 edition of *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (p. 26). The notion of common speech proposes a model – in other words, it is a theoretical construction and not a *direct* description of real processes, although it refers to real processes. In contrast with the concept of ordinary language developed by the analytical philosophers and with the notions of competence and generative grammar proposed by Chomsky, common speech is a model with interpretive functions, a hypothesis that we can apply to different languages. In other words, instead of describing linguistic use, common speech (or 'speaking') aims to develop a general model that is capable of explaining linguistic use, and that as such can be applied to all languages. In this sense, that which subtends linguistic use is not mentalistic or ontologically pre-existent to natural languages in any other way: Rossi-Landi's model is the result of interpretive hypotheses, and it proposes a conceptual apparatus for understanding real linguistic phenomena.

With his 1961 book, Rossi-Landi – much like Shaumyan – proposed a bigradual theory of language. This theory explains concrete linguistic usage in a given natural language (phenotypic level), in terms of his common speech hypothesis (genotypic level), the validity of which increases the more we can extend it to different languages. Rossi-Landi himself pointed us toward such an interpretation with the following statement from the foreword to the first edition of *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (1980: 9):

> Both the claim to a science of sign behaviour of the biopsychological or sociological type, and competition with the analytical and historical work carried out by glottologists on the facts of the various languages, are excluded. It does not follow from this that what I wish to offer is some sort of theory or general doctrine, of the cognitive speculative type, as regards the phenomena under examination. Rather, I merely want to offer a structural background and make an attempt at clarification. To study the a priori in language does not mean to adopt a deductive aprioristic method.

This is the hypothetical–deductive method – or more properly, the 'abductive' method, to recall the Peircean concept of 'abduction,'

which explains a given event on the basis of hypotheses concerning the general conditions which make that event possible.

6.1.3. Language as the A Priori

'Common speech' indicates that part of speech which is common to the various languages in spite of differences. There is no doubt that when we speak, we do so in a given natural or historical language such as Italian or English. Furthermore, speech always occurs in a specific sectorial language (familial, ethic, scientific, theological, poetic, and so on) of a given national language at a particular time in history. However, even though speaking always occurs in a specific national language – indeed, in one of its special sectors – a constant and common factor can always be identified among the differences.

In short, operations that are repeatable in 'common speech' guarantee its relative constancy. And even though these operations are not perfectly constant, they are constant enough that they can be regarded as the same operations in relation to the diversity of languages and linguistic contexts. Common speech concerns itself with the general conditions that make meaning and communication possible. Here, 'possible' is understood in Immanuel Kant's sense and concerns the a priori in language – that is, the investigation not of facts so much as of the conditions that make these facts possible.

For Rossi-Landi, common speech has a *methodic function*. By this interpretation, the study of language is the search for a general methodology of language and of human speaking in its signifying capacity (cf. Rossi-Landi 1998 [1961]: 158ff.). Common speech tells us how language functions; it signals those operations which are inevitably performed when we speak. In this regard, Rossi-Landi's investigation was inspired by Kantian transcendental logic, which he reformulated. Common speech insists on what Kant set aside – that is, the general methodic capacity of language. Significantly, Rossi-Landi's rereading of Kant was filtered by Ernst Cassirer's writings (in particular, by his 'Structuralism in Modern Linguistics'), by the 'Kantian Peirce,' and by some British analysts.

The a priori lies in language. Common speech should not be reduced to 'expressed linguistic' results; rather, it concerns the 'internal and hidden structure' of language (ibid.: 165). This concept implicitly refers to the concept of *innere Sprachform*, which Cassirer borrowed from Karl Wilhem von Humboldt, and is connected with the view of language as *energheia* rather than as product, that is, as *ergon*. We could maintain that Rossi-Landi takes an ante litteram critical stand against Chomsky's 'Car-

tesian linguistics' (this is the title of a 1966 essay in which Chomsky attempts to assimilate von Humboldt and Kant into his own perspective). Chomsky's conception of language does not free itself of the classic alternatives: consciousness or experience, rationalism or empiricism. In this sense, his approach is alien to both Kantian critique and its surpassing by abstract rationalism and abstract empiricism. Cassirer developed a perspective that can be characterized in terms of linguistic structuralism. However, in contrast to descriptive and taxonomical approaches in structuralism, Cassirer stated the need to show how language structures form instead of stopping at the study of preconstituted forms.

Structural linguistics as elaborated in Cassirer's later writings can be defined as a dynamical theory in Shaumyan's sense – that is, as a theory that does not identify the synchrony of language with statics, but rather concentrates on the dynamical aspects of the synchrony of language. In this way, Cassirer's theory is different not only from structural linguistics of the taxonomical type, but also from Chomsky's theory of language. Chomsky sees no alternative to linguistic behaviourism beyond appealing to the rationalistic philosophy of the seventeenth century; he maintains that the only valid approach to the study of linguistic behaviour is the one offered by mentalism and innatism (cf. Rossi-Landi 1998 [1961]: 142).

Peirce's semiotics too is connected with Kantian philosophy. In fact, Peirce proposed a 'New List of Categories' (*CP* 1.545–9) that reinterpreted the a priori and the transcendental in linguistic and semiotic terms. Peirce's semiotics is explicitly anti-Cartesian and rejects the rationalism–empiricism dichotomy as sterile and abstract (cf. his essays of 1868, 'Questions Concerning Certain Faculties of Man' and 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,' in *CP* 5.215–63 and 5.264–317).

Rossi-Landi formulated a similar position with his statement that common speech is an a priori with a methodical function. From this perspective, he judged that in the study of signifying processes, the generic opposition of idealism to empiricism and of logico-linguistic inquiry to historicism was inconsistent and arbitrary, as much as this tendency was still largely dominant in Italian philosophy at the time of writing *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*. Indeed, Rossi-Landi also pointed out that modern historicism had made an essential contribution to the study of language with reference to regions and universes of discourse.

In relation to Giambattista Vico's historicism, Rossi-Landi emphasized the importance of his critique of the Cartesian model of knowledge:

insofar as the latter is based on evidence and deduction, it could not be applied to the historical or 'human' sciences. Rossi-Landi was also aware of the importance of Auguste Comte's research, notwithstanding prejudices against his positivism inherited from Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile (who was still influential at the time). Comte maintained that absolute empiricism was impossible, and he demonstrated that scientific knowledge did not consist merely in accumulating facts; it also involved connecting those facts and tracing constant elements among them. On this basis, laws are formulated that are capable of predicting phenomena.

The section in *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* dedicated to Francis Herbert Bradley shows the influence of the latter's neo-idealism (inspired by Hegel) on the logico-linguistic method in philosophy. However, being grounded in the sceptic tradition of British philosophy, Bradley's approach was very different from the neo-idealism of Croce and Gentile (cf. Rossi-Landi 1998 [1961]: 87–95). Bradley's sceptical idealism influenced empiricism. Both George E. Moore and Bertrand Russell were directly affected by Bradley's logic; furthermore, Rossi-Landi identified the historical matrix of the adjective 'logical' in relation to the terms 'empiricism' and 'positivism' in this very connection. Logical positivism and logical empiricism cannot be traced back to the traditional opposition between idealism and empiricism. Therefore, in Rossi-Landi's view, these notions are incomprehensible both to those empiricists who remain tied to a 'pre-logic' phase and to those idealists who are still trapped in a metaphysical, antiempiricist phase (cf. ibid.: 95–6).

Rossi-Landi placed a high value on the critique of psychologism as conducted by the empiricists (Russell's anti-Humean polemics on the logical and not the psychological character of analysis), as well as on the critique of psychologism in logic as formulated by such authors as Bernhard Bolzano, Bradley, Franz Brentano, Glottob Frege, Alexius von Meinong, Vailati, Husserl, and Dingler. Rossi-Landi's aim was to surpass traditional empiricism not only in the direction of logical empiricism but also in the direction of the *methodics of common speech.*

No doubt, we can associate Rossi-Landi's approach with Kant's distinction between anthropology and philosophy. However, by working on the a priori in language and investing common speech with a methodic function, Rossi-Landi's intention was to proceed with Kant beyond Kant. In fact, the concept of 'methodics' is present throughout all of Rossi-Landi's research, from the 'methodics of common speech' of the early phase to his 'philosophical methodics' of the later phase as

represented by his 1985 book, *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (Philosophical Methodics and Science of Signs).

Insofar as the a priori is connected with thought and considered as a *model* rather than an event – as a *Bild* of the world rather than as a part of it – Rossi-Landi maintained that the a priori could be identified in language through the methodology of common speech. However, the a priori is more correctly identified in *speech*, understood as 'concrete linguistic acts' through which language is actualized; or more particularly in that part of speech which concerns all humans, and precisely in *common speech* understood as the *set of human techniques* in social practice that are relatively repeatable and constant. Here, repeatability and constancy are referred to the level of fundamental categories, structures, *signantia,* and *signata* of various descriptions, given that the human condition is what it is all over the planet, biologically and socially, notwithstanding important local variations.

On the basis of his methodics of common speech, Rossi-Landi proposed an important distinction between *initial meanings*, that is, explicit meanings, and *additional meaning*, that is, implicit meanings. This distinction is part of a general conception that views meaning as part of the real processes of communication and interpretation and that is never separated from them. Nor can this distinction be reduced to Chomsky's distinction between 'surface structure' and 'deep structure.' Chomsky separates language from its communicative function as well as from its social, intersubjective, and dialogic dimensions. In contrast, Rossi-Landi's 'initial meanings' involve experience, practice, value, familiarity with a given environment, and speakers ranging from the restricted family group to the extended context of an entire cultural group, and beyond. 'Additional meanings' are determined by the intersubjective and dialogic character of signifying practices; they presuppose knowledge, orientation toward the point of view of others as well as toward the various sectors of cultural life.

The distinction between initial meanings and additional meanings cuts across the distinction between meanings fixed by use and meanings dependent on context. Implicit, indirect, latent, hidden, absent, remote, secondary, and unconscious meanings are present not only in meanings dependent on context, but also in meanings that are autonomous with respect to a given communicative situation. Implicit meanings are also present in meanings fixed by tradition. In any case, 'initial meanings' and 'additional meanings' are active in *langue* and *parole*, in 'meaning' and 'theme' (Voloshinov), in the 'immediate interpretant' and the 'dynamical interpretant' (Peirce).

In the second phase of his writings, Rossi-Landi contended that common speech can be interpreted in terms of work, through the categories of the economic sciences and in the framework of a general theory of sign production.

6.1.4. Language as Work and Trade

In his writings of the 1960s, Rossi-Landi developed the view that language is work, that the different languages are its products, and that this opens the phenomenon of language to the categories of economics. Rossi-Landi's approach offers an alternative to traditional approaches to the problem of language such as mentalism or behaviourism, language as convention or as natural fact, and the like. In the 1960s and 1970s, the debate between behaviouristic and mentalistic approaches to language had anything but ended. On the contrary, as a result of his popularity in contemporary linguistics, Chomsky in particular contributed to its survival or revival. Indeed, Chomsky refuses explanations that resort to the stimulus–response scheme and that depend on such categories as repetition, training, and habit in relation to language, similarly to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1942) in relation to any other kind of human behaviour. However, in refusing behaviourism one does not necessarily fall back to mentalistic positions, as does Chomsky, nor does one give up on explanations of human behaviour that also refer to the subject's past experience and his or her relations with the environment. Rather, to refuse behaviourism is to interpret the self/world relationship from a perspective different from the one proposed by behaviourism, without necessarily being mentalistic.

Relations between the individual and the environment are not mechanical, they are dialectical. At a properly human level, dialectics is *work*, which – as Merleau-Ponty writes (1942) – projects 'use objects' and 'cultural objects' such as books, musical instruments, and language between human beings and psycho-chemical stimuli. Following this line of reasoning, it is clear that verbal language cannot be considered as a natural fact, a hypo-historical fact, the mirror image (based on relations of cause and effect and stimulus and response) of objectively defined reality, determined per se and ontologically subdivided into objects and events. Nor can language be considered as something non-natural – that is, the result of a convention that applies rules similar to the rules of a game. On the contrary, language comes into existence through the dialectical relation, through the interaction between the self and its natural and social environments. Its genesis must be sought in basic

human needs, such as the need to ensure survival and to communicate with others.

In the light of views such as those maintained by Merleau-Ponty, we can agree with Rossi-Landi when he contends in *Language as Work and Trade* that 'from the observation that words and messages do not exist in nature, since they are produced by men, we can directly derive that they are also products of work. It is in this sense that we can begin to speak of *linguistic human work*' (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 36).

If it is unacceptable to theorize language as the passive reflection of 'reality,' or in terms of stimulus–response from a psycho-linguistic perspective, Chomsky's approach is also unacceptable when it postulates the creative capacity of human intelligence and considers language merely in terms of activity. On this point, Rossi-Landi specifies:

> I purposely speak of *work* rather than *activity* because words and messages, which are products, constitute the concrete social reality from which we must begin. We would lose contact with this reality if we were to consider language only as an activity, the end of which lay in the activity itself instead of distinguished from it, while the end of work lies in something over and above it (according to the well-known and still valid Aristotelian distinction). (Ibid.)

According to Chomsky, language furnishes infinite possibilities of expression, which are restricted only by the rules of concept- and phrase-formation. These rules are described as partly specific and idiosyncratic and partly universal; they are not, however, bound to specific practical operations or to specific economic, geographic, and cultural situations. This is why, in his approach to linguistic behaviour, Chomsky does not consider the dependence of language on such external stimuli. But then, it is not clear how we can consider coherence and appropriateness to situations as fundamental characteristics of linguistic use, which Chomsky (1968) does. In fact, we can speak of coherence and appropriateness in relation to a given situation only when we do not view language as simply a universal and innate activity, but rather as work directed toward the satisfaction of the needs of existence. Rossi-Landi writes: 'Mere activity is, if anything ... the spontaneous taking-over of the products of work, as we find them in their new immediacy as pseudo-natural objects' (ibid.). Consistent with Rossi-Landi's general approach, the term 'spontaneous' is clearly being used here in a Marxian sense. In other words, it does not denote a situation of freedom,

responsibility, and autonomy of the speaking subject; on the contrary, it denotes passivity. It refers to behaviour carried out by inertia, therefore behaviour for which the subject is not responsible and for which he or she cannot answer personally (cf. Korsch 1971).

To understand language in terms of work, we must refuse to reduce linguistic use to mere behaviour or activity (on the difference between work and activity, see also 6.2.2). If language is not a characteristic of work, as Rossi-Landi puts it, we must assume that it is either a natural fact or something non-natural, metahistorical. What we have in the first case is the belief that language is a distinctive feature of human biological nature, whereas

> in the second case, language and languages are seen as something substantially extraneous to man's relationship with nature. This means accepting from the start some form of ontological dualism, and leads in the end to explanations like the divine creation of man divided into soul and body (perhaps in the recent variation according to which the immission of the soul takes place within the evolutionary process) or the hyper-historical presence of a human 'spirit' along the lines of the metaphysical idealists. (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 37)

Once language and technique are placed on the same level, we need no longer maintain the hypothesis of a universal innate grammar subtending the various empirical languages, following Edmund Husserl in his fourth logical research in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900–1), and Chomsky after him. Similarities among different languages turn out to be no more surprising than similarities among certain systems of tools used in different cultures. Both cases can be explained in terms of similarities among existential situations in which tools and verbal messages are used, in spite of other aspects that differ from and contrast with one another. They can also be explained in terms of typical needs of which language use is a function, according to varying modal character in the interaction between *Leib* and world in different cultures. Indeed, in spite of their differences, the various world cultures are united by the fact that they all belong to this planet.

In comparison with other similar theses in contemporary linguistics and philosophy of language, Rossi-Landi's approach offers the following:

1 A means of testing those theses, given that by applying the categories of economic science he reaches similar views, with modifications and

corrections, from other directions and using different conceptual instruments.

2 The advantage of a more rigorous and efficient formulation thanks to the use of terms that are not part of verbal habits in addressing problems relating to linguistic communication, never having been employed in this field. Thus, these terms are not worn out by use or loaded with different meanings. Also, having been analysed in detail and clearly defined in the realm of classical economics, they are less vague and less subject to semantic fluctuation.

3 On the basis of the connections between linguistics and economics (another human science), the possibility of including the more interesting contributions in linguistics in the context of a broader approach to the human situation and interhuman relations – that is, the anthropological approach.

6.1.5. Language as a Human Prerogative

In any case, there seems to be general agreement on the following theses, even among those who maintain different points of view and who work from contrasting epistemological perspectives: language is not a natural fact but a human institution and therefore a social, historical, and cultural fact; there is no figurative analogy between language and reality; the process of language formation is also the process of analysing and interpreting experience; experience is organized and classified in different ways in the various languages; words and phrases mean nothing by themselves; and words are instruments and have meaning insofar as they are used.

Such theses concerning fundamental aspects of language sound similar to those formulated by Rossi-Landi; however, they often turn out to be problematic because of the ways they are formulated. Whether we accept these theses or not, we must establish how they are to be interpreted, especially since the terms used in their formulation are often ambiguous.

For example, what do we mean when we say that language is a social product? In what sense and according to what criteria can we distinguish between natural and cultural language? When we say that language is a *human activity*, clearly we are expected to explain what is meant by 'activity' and 'human.' Again, once we have acknowledged that any language is the product of a community, how are we to speak of the individual's contribution to language? And if the process through which language is

formed is also the process through which concepts and objects are singled out and distinguished from one another, whereby their parts and qualities are determined, what is this process? And how is it structured? And what does it consist of?

Rossi-Landi's thesis that language is work and not activity, and that the different natural languages are the result of the objectification and sedimentation of work, is connected with the view that language is not a natural fact but a human and cultural fact, a social function. This thesis also allows us to better understand the relation between *langue* and *parole*. Language is a 'human' fact as understood by Karl Marx. In other words, language is the result of operations whose ends do not lie in the activity itself; furthermore, these operations do not satisfy needs immediately, but rather mediately through work. 'For man to take shape,' writes Rossi-Landi, following an observation made early on by Hegel, 'this immediacy must be broken: between need and its satisfaction, work must be inserted' (ibid.: 36).

Besides being natural, language is a *human* product, a historical and social product, the result of work. When we say that language is human work, we are also saying that it is not purely conventional, the product of an arbitrary process, and that its rules are not formed like the rules of a game. We must consider language much as we would any other work process, that is, with reference to real social relations and to the man–nature relation. Like manipulative and transformational work, language has its roots and justification in these relations.

This also requires us to take a stand against contractual prejudice, 'which consists in the projection of the conventional character of the various languages (conventional because, and in the sense of, historical-social, that is, nonnatural) onto language-in-general and its apprehension, making of language a convention or contract between pre-formed individuals' (Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 20). The contractual prejudice commits an *usteron proteron* since differentiation among subjects – their very existence as individuals – already presupposes the use of language – that is to say, of community linguistic techniques (cf. 1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 13).

Rossi-Landi's argument for demonstrating the untenability of the view that language is conventional – that is, contractual – is analogous to Merleau-Ponty's position as he formulates it in the section dedicated to language in *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945). Much like Merleau-Ponty, Rossi-Landi maintained that to talk about a preordained convention and pre-established agreement with regard to language is practi-

cally to admit that individuals communicate and speak some sort of language before they actually acquire language.

Furthermore, like manipulative work, language is a social practice that requires the use of collective and communitary techniques (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 38). To learn a language means to learn to use instruments that over the ages have been produced socially through work. It means to learn to work *with* and *on* linguistic instruments and materials in order to construct messages that are able to satisfy our communicative needs, to perform new work on linguistic material already produced in order to produce further products (cf. ibid.: 46–7). Thus, the *parole* is individual in the sense that certain signs and techniques are made to function by the single speaker; but the *parole* is also a social fact, in that it can only occur in a linguistic community that has already been formed through past communicative operations. The *parole*, writes Rossi-Landi, is 'individual only in the sense that the work of an artisan or worker is individual ... The operation, *that particular* operation, is individual because it is considered individually; but *the model of this operation is social*' (ibid.: 39).

6.1.6. Linguistic Work and Linguistic Use

The originality of Rossi-Landi's approach emerges clearly when we contrast it with Wittgenstein's conception of language as formulated in *Philosophical Investigations*, some threads of which Rossi-Landi develops. Among these threads: words are tools; language, considered globally, is an instrument oriented by our interests; speech is a human activity among other activities with which it interacts; a language has meaning in its public context; and to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. But in contrast with Wittgenstein's position, Rossi-Landi's interpretation of language as work underlines the inadequacy of maintaining simply that language is a 'public' fact that can be checked intersubjectively and that linguistic behaviour necessarily occurs among at least two people. Furthermore, the 'public context' of language should be treated as a social context. It is not enough to describe that which occurs when already formed individuals begin speaking to one another; on the contrary, individuals must be recognized as having developed socially into what they are precisely *because* they speak a given language. As Marx (1953 [1857–8]) says in *Grundrisse*, the individual relates to a language as *his own* only insofar as he is a natural member of a given human community.

The theory of meaning as use has also turned out to be inadequate.

This approach reductively describes the use of words in terms of the situations in which linguistic games occur; it excludes investigation into *how* a given use is produced. As a result, the instruments used for communication are described as given and natural rather than as historical–social. 'I would say,' writes Rossi-Landi,

> that Wittgenstein lacks the notion of labor-value; that is, of the value of a given object, in this case a linguistic object, as the product of a given linguistic piece of work. From the linguistic object, he moves only forward and never backward (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 31).

Rossi-Landi contends that linguistic analysis must not be limited to simply observing or describing word use. Instead, the focus must be on 'linguistic work,' through which any specific meaning comes into being; and consequently on its various component factors – which include motives, networks of social relations, interests, economic conditions, and historically specified needs of the subject – using the pieces of language under examination.

When these conditions are applied, language analysis can avoid degenerating into the 'idealism of linguistics,' as Jurgen Habermas described it in *Zur Logic der Socialwissenschaften* (1967). To work in such a direction also means to overcome any limits in the linguistic approach to sociology that prevent us from constructing that approach as a critical theory of society. Habermas's criticism of the linguistic approach to sociology is valid insofar as it refers to theories of language such as Wittgenstein's, or Winch's, or even Oxononian analytical philosophy in general. However, if the linguistic approach to sociology were to be based on a conception of language such as the one proposed by Rossi-Landi – who theorized a relation between language and social work and who described language itself in terms of work – Habermas's critique of the sociolinguistic approach would no longer hold.

6.1.7. On the Homology between Verbal and Non-Verbal Human Communication

According to Rossi-Landi, the production and circulation of commodities and the production and circulation of messages are different aspects of the same social process – that is, the process of communication. No 'natural' divisions exist that compell us to allocate messages and commodities to different provinces. In Rossi-Landi's view, this justifies taking

categories from the economic sciences and applying them to the study of language. It is not just by pronouncing and writing words that we speak to one another and exchange messages. '*Man communicates with his whole social organization*,' writes Rossi-Landi (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 67).

It follows that all cultural phenomena can be viewed as communicative phenomena based on sign systems, and that non-verbal communication must be placed alongside verbal communication. We can approach and understand every single cultural fact as a message assembled on the basis of codes. In this way, a general theory of society coincides with general semiotics (cf. Eco 1968). 'The study of any sign-system becomes useful for the study of any other ... especially because, in studying one system or the other, what one studies is *fundamentally the same thing*' (ibid.: 57). This becomes clearer when we consider that in the case of both commodities and linguistic messages, semiotics addresses the same issue – the work that produces those messages and that makes exchange and communication possible (cf. Kristeva 1969a).

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) applied linguistic categories in his studies of the rules of matrimony and kinship systems – a truly formidable example of applying conceptual frameworks developed for verbal communication, to non-verbal communication. Rossi-Landi attempted the opposite procedure: he took categories that had been developed for a non-verbal communicative sign system – that is, the categories of classical economics as delineated by David Ricardo and Karl Marx – and applied them to verbal language. All the same, there are substantial differences between the approaches to problems of communication adopted by Lévi-Strauss and by Rossi-Landi. According to Rossi-Landi, Lévi-Strauss's reasoning is shaky when he justifies applying categories proper to language to his studies of non-verbal communication in terms of 'recurrent hymns to the *esprit humain*,' which implies reference to a universal unconscious activity. As Eco explains, some texts by Lévi-Strauss appeal to 'a fundamental combinatory principle at the basis of all codes,' to 'an elementary mechanism rooted in the functioning of the human mind.' Thus, the universe of social relations, myths, and language becomes 'the setting for a game which takes place behind man's back and in which he is not involved, if not as an obedient voice which lends itself to expressing a complicated game which surpasses and annuls him as a responsible subject' (1968: 296). In other words, human individuals do not determine their own relations; on the contrary, they are 'related' passively according to the universal laws they obey.

Instead, by recognizing human beings as the concrete subjects of his-

tory, as the responsible agents of culture and communicative systems, Rossi-Landi was able to formulate his thesis of *homology* between verbal and non-verbal communication. Linguistic work and non-linguistic work necessary to the production of physical objects can be placed at the same level. 'If we don't want to admit that something *human* can exist for man without the intervention of man himself, we must adhere to the principle that every wealth or value, however understood, is the result of a work that man has performed and can repeat' (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 36). Human beings are constructed historically through the production of tools and verbal messages. Precisely for this reason, we wish to define man as a working *and* speaking animal. It is this unitary definition that enables us to treat these two modes of social behaviour as homologous.

The structural homology between material and linguistic production sheds light on the concept of double-articulation in language as described by André Martinet (1960). Transition from the articulation of sentences into words and monemes to the articulation of monemes into phonemes turns out to be oriented in the opposite direction from the real processes of linguistic production (see Rossi-Landi 1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 119–21, 158–9). Speakers carry out linguistic work – phylogenetically and ontogenetically – proceeding from sounds that are initially inarticulate, but that are subsequently articulated into words, phrases, and sentences of increasing complexity.

The linguistic theory of double-articulation assumes that language is no more than a formal machine; it also neglects the facts of experience and the needs on which linguistic behaviour is based. It sets aside the problem of the rise of meaning and use of sentences and limits itself to describing their constituent parts. Rossi-Landi observed that when we analyse or 'order' (as Martinet says) sentences into words and monemes and monemes into phonemes, we are not saying anything about 'semantic content,' which is 'added' at the level of sentences rather than at the level of monemes and words, and at the level of monemes rather than at the level of phonemes. This says nothing about the human operations whereby semantic content is produced. The work of breaking down sentences into words and monemes, and monemes into phonemes, is abstract–analytical work that has little to do with the social linguistic work whereby the objects the linguist studies are originally formed, and must not be mistaken for this.

In chapter 6 of his 1968 book (ibid.: 118–52), Rossi-Landi proposed a *homological scheme for linguistic production,* which unlike 'double articulation theory' is potentially interdisciplinary because it is intentionally *pre-*

disciplinary. To refer to a precategorial level means to question the idea of science as something that has already been formed and defined; it also means to criticize scientific specialization to the extent that it loses sight of the human needs for which it was originally developed.

6.1.8. Ideology and Linguistic Alienation

When we consider language from the perspective of historical materialism and of the categories of economics, we achieve a better understanding of another important phenomenon encountered in contemporary literature, that of *linguistic alienation*. The global approach to linguistic and non-linguistic techniques views linguistic alienation in terms of a process relating to technique in general – the process of losing sight of the function of work:

> In this way the speaker loses his contact and exchange with nature and with other men: that contact and that exchange which had originally presided over the formation of his language, and which had been deposited and taken shape in it as specific productive operations together with the results of such operations understood as use-values. Since that happened, the linguistic product has been handed down only as already-produced, and the model of the product is being re-produced only for the purpose of consuming its tokens in order to aliment the system of production. The needs which language should satisfy – basically, that of being able to really express oneself and that of communicating and being really understood within the division of labor – have moved into the background. (Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 172)

Roland Barthes (1967) contends that in a situation of linguistic alienation, a given language is elaborated by a decision-making group, not by the mass of speakers. The speaking subject follows 'logotechniques' – in other words, prefabricated languages. As the speaking subject, I live the condition of *being spoken by my own words*, of the passive repeater of superpersonal models, of the spokesperson of totalized reality, which I did not construct and whose purpose and function I do not understand. In such a situation, as the speaking subject I do not know *why* I speak as I speak, and yet I belong to linguistic production processes that condition me from the very beginning of life, that impose a specific world view, and that make original or simply different work activity rather difficult (see Rossi-Landi 1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 62–3).

The problem of linguistic alienation cannot be adequately solved simply by denouncing deviations from paradigms that are pre-established or that are proposed within the boundaries of this or that language viewed as a self-sufficient system; or simply by constructing one's own model of how language should be. To place the problem in these terms would be to consider language in relation to itself, and therefore to raise an issue of mere *syntax* (see 'Sintassi e scienza nuova,' in Semerari 1965). On the contrary, we must consider language in relation to existence and connect the linguistic to the non-linguistic. In this way, linguistic analysis may well serve an effective therapeutic function, by opening a window onto the world of life as it is experienced.

In chapter 4 of *Language as Work and Trade* (Eng. trans.: 83–106), 'Ideology as Social Planning,' Rossi-Landi addresses the problem of ideology in strict relation to the semiotic approach to society. Here, he acknowledges that his own perspective is ideological and attempts to explain it. He contends that language described in terms of work and its products should be related not only to reality as it has already been formed – 'the already-made-world' of Husserlian descent (cf. Husserl 1948) – but also to reality that does not yet exist but that can be imagined on the basis of historical context and that can be assumed as a project. This points to the notion of social reality as it might have come into existence had man not forgotten the intentionality of certain concrete operations, had his praxis not been reified. Rossi-Landi himself explains that the ideology underpinning his approach is that of 'a social planning founded on a dynamic rather than a static privilege, founded in the future rather than in the past, intra-historically rather than extra-historically ... This type of planning gives rise not to a science of what has already been done, but to *a science of what is to be done*' (1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 106).

6.1.9. Social Reproduction

Rossi-Landi's *Ideologia* (translated into English as *Marxism and Ideology* [1982]), opened the third phase in his research. This book is a long and detailed articulation of the ideas he developed earlier in 'Ideology as Social Planning' (1992b [1968]); in it, he also presents new ideas in the framework of his reflections on social reproduction. This book is rich with examples and includes an interdisciplinary bibliography on ideology.

Rossi-Landi's working hypothesis while he was developing his essay collection *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985) was that recurrent difficulties in the study of the relations between structure and superstructure

arise from the lack of a mediating element. He contended that this mediating element consists in the totality of sign systems, verbal and non-verbal, that operate in all human communities. The pieces in the game are not two, but three: to the modes of production and to the ideological elaboration of the superstructure must be added sign systems. Thus, a central topic throughout this book is social reproduction approached in terms of semiosis:

> Once the position of sign systems within social reproduction has at least been glimpsed, we can afford to state that every typology of signs is necessarily a function of social reproduction. ... If there is one metaphysical belief which is invalidated at its roots by this approach, it is the belief that it may be possible never to discover a typology valid for all times and places, and perhaps common to all living beings. From this it does not follow, however, that common elements in various instances of social reproduction, or in the reproduction of human and other animals, cannot be discovered and usefully investigated. (1985a: 144)

Rossi-Landi contended that somewhere we must be able to pinch the end of the skein of social reproduction – an end that if we pull it, should lead to a typology of signs. The end of the skein that Rossi-Landi believed we should begin pulling was the methodological notion of 'sign residues.' These are present in the semioses of all human communities on the side of both *signantia* and *signata*. Rossi-Landi's theory of sign residues plays an important role in his *methodics of common semiosis* as it evolves from his *methodics of common speech*.

6.2. On the Tracks of a Multiform Research Itinerary

6.2.1. From Common Speech to Common Semiosis

Rossi-Landi was developing several book-length works at the time of his sudden death in 1985. In a typewritten bio-bibliographical note of 1978 requested by the publishers of *Ideologia*, he noted that the following books would be forthcoming:

- *Dall'analisi alla dialettica* (From Analysis to Dialectics), a collection of essays published between 1949 to 1976, to include three unpublished manuscripts.
- *Between Signs and Non-Signs,* a collection of essays in English published between 1952 to 1976, to include various unpublished manuscripts.

- *Sistemi segnici e riproduzione sociale* (Sign Systems and Social Reproduction), to include three published papers: one from 1976 in Italian, 'Criteri per lo studio ideologico di un autore'; another from 1977 in English, 'Introduction to Semiosis,' and a third, also in English, from 1978, 'Sign Systems and Social Reproduction.'

Between Signs and Non-Signs (ed. S. Petrilli) was published in 1992 with the intention of bringing one of Rossi-Landi's projects to a happy conclusion. However, the material was not actually compiled by Rossi-Landi, nor was it possible to trace all of the unpublished manuscripts he had originally planned to include in it. Also, the period he intended to cover was extended to include papers published after 1978. The most recent, 'A Fragment in the History of Italian Semiotics,' was presented at the Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in Palermo in 1984 (and published in 1988). All of the essays added beyond those planned by the author are closely related to the topics covered in the original plan and were also written in English. Organized in this way, *Between Signs and Non-Signs* spans the years 1952 to 1984 (or 1953 to 1988, if we go by publishing dates), and thus offers an interesting if not exhaustive overview of Rossi-Landi's life's work. For readers who are unfamiliar with Rossi-Landi, this book synthesizes the main aspects of his work; for specialists, it serves as a useful guide to his exquisitely problematic and multiform intellectual itineraries (which were developed in many books and essays besides this volume), while emphasizing the unitary character of his research.

Between Signs and Non-Signs comprises fourteen essays, all of them closely interrelated not only at the thematic level but also in terms of research perspective. It has four parts: 'Signs and Masters in Semiotic History,' 'Signs as Cognitive and Evaluative Instruments,' 'Signs, Linguistic Alienation and Social Reproduction,' and 'Signs and Material Reality.' These are preceded by a brief foreword by Rossi-Landi titled 'Sidelights' (1984) and by an introduction by Susan Petrilli. The book includes a complete bibliography of Rossi-Landi's writings.

The essays included in Part One deal with contemporary figures – in particular, Vailati, Wittgenstein, and Morris – and with specific periods in the history of philosophy of language and the science of signs. Rossi-Landi also refers to particular phases in the history of Italian semiotics as well as to more recent developments on the semiotic scene in general since Morris. In the first paper in this section, Rossi-Landi notes that he was concerned with these thinkers (and with others still, such as Eugenio Colorni, Bradley, Dingler, Husserl, and Ryle) not as a professional histo-

rian of ideas, but rather as a theoretician interested in discussing problems. Rossi-Landi adopted the same approach in *Charles Morris* (1953).

In *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (1961), Rossi-Landi hoped to identify the general conditions of language-thought that make linguistic use possible and that as such are valid beyond a given historical language. His theory of common speech was intended to construct a general model to explain linguistic use – a 'model of speaking,' as he also called it – by identifying those elements which are common to and constant among the different individual languages.

In *Language as Work and Trade* (1992b [1968]), Rossi-Landi interpreted common speech in terms of *linguistic work*. And on the basis of the 'homological method,' he applied categories relating to material production to the reality of linguistic production. As he wrote to Morris on 20 March 1965:

> I am working on language, for a change – this time trying to take seriously what linguists and economists say about it. Linguists for the obvious reason that most 'linguistic philosophers' take so little account of linguistics as it is; economists, for the non obvious reason that I found an intriguing correspondence between certain analyses in the two fields (economics and linguistics). (In Petrilli 1992c: 99–100)

In theoretical works such as *Semiotica e ideologia* (1994 [1972]), *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity* (1973), *Linguistics and Economics* (1975a), and *Ideologia* (1978a), Rossi-Landi continued to develop his theory of *common speech* into a theory of *common semiosis*. In *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (which appeared just a few months before his death), he proposed a *semiotics of social reproduction*. In this, his main objective was to analyse verbal and non-verbal sign systems that mediate between social structure and social superstructure in the production of language, culture, and society as a whole.

Rossi-Landi's focus on the concept of social reproduction is also evident in two successive plans (dated May 1981 and August 1984) for a book (never published) to be called *Introduction to the Study of Signs*. According to both plans (which Rossi-Landi sent to Augusto Ponzio, whom he wished to involve as co-author), the first chapter would have been devoted entirely to the concept of *social reproduction*. According to the second plan the book would have concluded with a section on sign alienation and a closing chapter on language and ideology (see Petrilli, 'Introduction,' in Rossi-Landi 1992a: viii–xxix).

6.2.2. For a 'Homological Method'

As observed earlier, it is not incidental that Rossi-Landi should have proposed a '*methodics* of common speech' in 1961 and that the title of his 1985 book refers to 'philosophical methodics.' Actually Rossi-Landi's entire theoretical itinerary as it developed from the early 1950s to 1985 can be seen as a journey from the *methodics of common speech* to the *methodics of common semiosis*. Rossi-Landi referred to the method he was developing as the 'homological method'; so he theorized in a 1972 paper, 'Omologia della riproduzione sociale' (now in Rossi-Land 1985a), and before this in the papers that led to *Language as Work and Trade* (1968). The homological method goes beyond identifying mere analogies or similarities that integrate structural analyses with dynamic analyses. This approach amounted to the search for a homology between *Homo faber* and *Homo loquens*, which led Rossi-Landi to formulate his general theory of the homology of production – that is, of sign and non-sign production.

Between Signs and Non-Signs includes the essay 'On the Overlapping of the Categories in the Social Sciences,' first published in 1978 (although written in 1972). This paper is rich in references to *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*. It presents a study of paired categories that can only function and be explained in relation to each other: 'communication and behaviour,' 'language and thought,' 'production and consumption.' The terms that form these pairs are not identical, and in any case they cannot be reduced to each other. Besides these, another fundamental pair of categories in Rossi-Landi's research is 'work and activity,' which he addresses explicitly in chapter 1 of *Metodica filosofica*.

With respect to his 1968 book, Rossi-Landi continued elaborating on the concept of language in terms of *work* as distinct from *activity*. Activity is not programmed and is an end in itself; in contrast, work mediates the relation between needs and the satisfaction of those needs. To this end, work applies specific instruments and materials related to given models and programs with their specific goals. Moreover, the distinction between work and activity in social semiosis also involves distinguishing between signs and non-signs. Footprints in sand that are the result of the activity of walking are not signs; furthermore, they persist in their non-sign status until they become objects of interpretive work. However, if the distinction between work and activity lies in the fact that work is planned, intentional, and part of a program, whereas activity is not, this does not necessarily imply that work is conscious of its objectives and programs. As demonstrated by the Marxian analysis of capitalist society, work may in fact be

'alienated' work; or again, evoking Freud, we can speak of 'oneiric work,' the implication being that even the production of dreams is work. The unconscious is a social product, and dreams are the result of work, just as their translation into the discourse that narrates and analyses them is the result of work, of interpretive work. That work can be achieved without conscious programs provides 'a special contact zone,' says Rossi-Landi (1985a: 7), 'for the Marxian use of Freud or the Freudian use of Marx.'

6.2.3. Morris in Rossi-Landi's Interpretation

In *Language as Work and Trade*, Rossi-Landi overtly criticizes the Wittgensteinian notion of linguistic use and does so in Marxian terms; this leads him to maintain that the limitation of Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic use is the absence of the notion of labour-value.

Just as with Wittgenstein, Rossi-Landi often returned to Morris, continuing the studies he had begun with his 1953 monograph. Their research itineraries were different but also often intersected. In particular, both of them addressed the problem of values. Morris was especially interested in aesthetic and ethical values; Rossi-Landi in linguistic and economic values. They corresponded regularly for more that twenty-five years (see below), and these letters testify to Rossi-Landi's influence on Morris in his studies on the relation between signs and values and, it follows, between semiotics and axiology – studies that were to achieve their highest theoretical expression in *Significance and Signification* (1964).

In his monograph on Morris, Rossi-Landi criticized Morris's *Signs, Language, and Behaviour* (1946), focusing on the concept of goal-oriented behaviour with the observation that Morris was presupposing a distinction between behaviour and goal-oriented behaviour. Morris's examples refer to organisms oriented toward something: a dog seeking food, a driver moving toward a given destination. But is there such a thing as behaviour that is not oriented? And if we establish a hierarchy in oriented behaviour (getting into the car, pressing the accelerator, choosing a certain road and not another, and so on), are we not avoiding issues of a teleonomic order concerning what the dog is oriented toward (in the final analysis, on satisfying its needs) and what that man heading for a given town is oriented toward, 'or worse still,' says Rossi-Landi, 'what is mankind oriented toward?, what are animals oriented toward.'

> When all other specifications are lacking, we're far from knowing what mankind and animals usually do; nothing enables us to distinguish between goal-

> oriented and non oriented behavior as such. Or again: we may speak of goal-oriented behavior concerning behavior from the viewpoint of a goal that has already been reached; but nothing in behavior as such tells us whether it tends toward a goal or not, unless it is specific behavior which we recognize through comparison. There exist goals, but not *the* goal. And on introducing the notion of goal Morris may have been influenced by a contradiction typical of a certain kind of pragmatism, ontologization of the goal as such. The notion itself on which the notion of sign behavior should rest would not seem to be founded. (1975c [1953]: 71)

In the paragraphs 'Semiotics as a biological science in *SLB*' and 'Sign-behavior vs. Behavior-as-communication,' Rossi-Landi pointed out the biological foundations of Morrisian semiotics. He also returned to the problem of distinguishing between goal-seeking behaviour and other kinds of behaviour when this distinction is applied to establish when something is a sign. In this context, he concluded that sign behaviour *tout court* cannot be differentiated from non-sign behaviour *tout court*. He even maintained that all behaviour is sign behaviour: 'Here we are not only discussing Morris's thought, but the thing itself. The thesis is that any behaviour communicates something and that, conversely, nothing can be communicated if not by means of some piece of behaviour' (ibid.: 31). According to Rossi-Landi, no animal, be it human or non-human, can be conceived as behaving without communicating. And if it is communicating, this implies that behaviour is sign behaviour.

A limitation to Rossi-Landi's position as it is formulated in this particular context (although not in his other writings) is his identification of semiosis with communication. We now know that semiosis is not limited to communication understood in a strict sense; rather, semiosis is also modelling. In other words, through semiosis we interpret, model, and produce sense in the construction of new possible worlds. The distinction proposed by Thomas A. Sebeok (cf. 1986, 1991b) between 'language' as a modelling device and 'speech' as oriented toward communication – with the specification that the former is antecedent to the latter – invalidates Rossi-Landi's prejudicial limitation. Furthermore, in establishing his criteria for characterizing 'language,' Morris as well distinguished between the concepts of 'language' and 'communication,' to the advantage of both.

More interesting is Rossi-Landi's thesis that behaviour is semiosic because it is always part of a program (cf. 1992a: 31–2). Stated Rossi-Landi: 'Today we know that all behaviour is always programmed – that is,

based on codes' (ibid.: 34). Here, he was referring to both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Subsequently, he asked himself whether such developments robbed Morris's basic intuitions of their value and credibility. His reply to himself:

> I would say no; indeed, I would say the contrary. It was Morris who joined in such an intimate way, and for the first time systematically, the general notion of behavior with the general notion of the sign. Let us say, rather, that he started off in a direction which was *even more fruitful* than he himself imagined or was able to foresee. The joining of the two notions contained enormous potential. Circumstances had only to permit the very first developments – and the whole panorama of the human and life sciences began to change. Morris's limits must be seen historically. (Ibid.: 34–5)

Rossi-Landi did much to bring to light the presence of meaning in the three dimensions of semiosis identified by Morris: the syntactical, the semantical, and the pragmatical. Therefore, he supported Morris by declaring that meaning is relevant to all three branches of semiotics (cf. 1994 [1972]: 64–70). In his efforts to distinguish among syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics, Rossi-Landi referred to the diagram that Morris himself presented in his 1939 essay, 'Esthetics and the Theory of Signs' (in Morris 1971) (see Fig. 1).

The top part of the diagram represents semiosis, the process whereby something functions as a sign; the bottom represents 'semiotic' (which Morris preferred to 'semiotics'), the general science of signs, with its tripartition into the subordinate sciences of syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. As Morris says in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* in distinguishing between semiotic and semiosis: 'Semiotic as a science makes use of special signs to state facts about signs; it is a language to talk about signs' (1938c: 8). And indeed, one of the main tasks he set himself was to establish a sign system for talking about signs.

The top part of the diagram shows how the sign vehicle – the object that functions as a sign – relates to a *designatum* and eventually to a *denotatum* (a distinction to which we will return later). This relation concerns the semantical dimension of semiosis. However, the sign is also the relation to an interpreter that produces an interpretant in response to the sign. This relates to the pragmatical dimension of semiosis. Moreover, the sign must necessarily relate to other sign vehicles, this being the syntactical dimension of semiosis. The sign always involves all three dimensions of semiosis. Therefore, only for the sake of analysis is it pos-

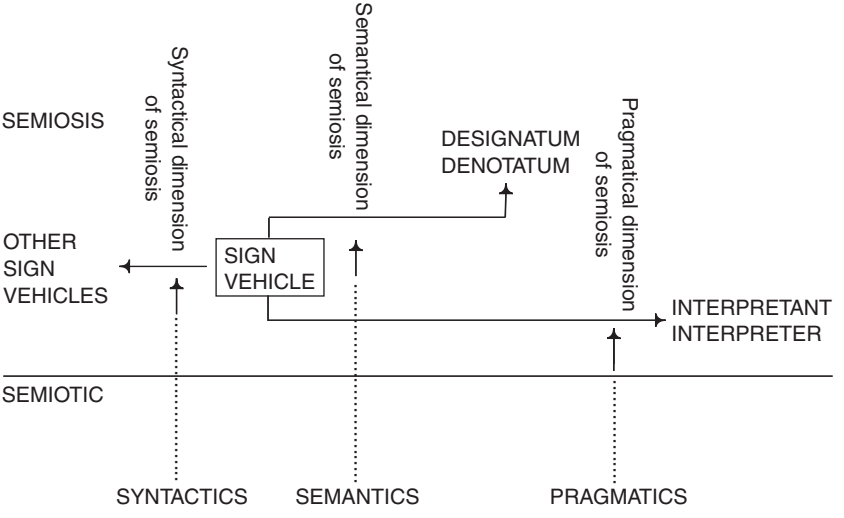

Figure 1

sible for us to distinguish the relation of the sign vehicle to the designatum (and eventually the denotatum), from the relation of the sign vehicle to other sign vehicles, and both of these from the relation of the sign vehicle to the interpreter, such only if endowed with an interpretant. It follows that the science of signs, with its three branches – semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics – focuses on semiosis and its three dimensions – the semantical, the syntactical, and the pragmatical.

To attribute meaning exclusively to the semantical dimension instead of tracing its presence throughout all three dimensions of semiosis is to reduce the sign totality to one of its parts only – in the case of semantics, to the relation of designation and denotation. Similarly, the relation of the sign to other signs does not concern only the syntactical dimension in a strict sense, to the exclusion of the pragmatical and the semantical; just as the relation of the interpreter to other interpreters does not concern only the pragmatical dimension, to the exclusion of the syntactical and the semantical. Every time there is semiosis, and therefore a sign, all three dimensions are involved and are the object of semiotics.

Rossi-Landi's 'On Some Post-Morrisian Problems' (1978b, reprinted in 1992a) is especially interesting here because it is his final and most mature study on Morris. In this essay, he develops the Morrisian concept

of behaviour, considering it in relation to the concepts of social reproduction and communication. This paper includes a section, 'Signs and Values,' in which for the first time ever, Rossi-Landi considers the problem of the relation between sign theory and value theory in Morris.

In the introduction to his 1954 Italian translation of Morris's *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), Rossi-Landi states: 'After his *Foundations*, Morris's research developed in two different directions. One consists in elaborating the notion of sign and a general sign theory ... the other deals with the problem of value' (now in Morris 1938c, It. trans. 1999: 62). In his 1964 work *Signification and Significance*, Morris finally united these two areas of his research: he had worked on values almost as much as he had worked on signs, and he rejected the idea that the mere fact of working on signs gave one the right to judge about values. He had in fact dedicated a large part of his work to value theory, in particular to the problem of ethical and aesthetic value judgments (cf. *Varieties of Human Value*, 1956).

This aspect of Morris's research is especially relevant to Rossi-Landi's work on values and ideology, which he carried out from a Ricardian–Marxian perspective. The originality of these issues is immediately obvious with respect to the dominant trends in semiotics at the time, which focused mainly on problems relating to theory of knowledge. However, studies of Morris have concentrated mainly on his sign theory as presented in his best-known works (those of 1938 and 1946). For his part, instead, Rossi-Landi referred extensively to *Signification and Significance* as well as to Morris's earlier writings on the problem of values (aesthetic value included), which influenced his overall approach to the teachings of this great master of signs.

6.2.4. The Correspondence between Morris and Rossi-Landi

The correspondence between Morris and Rossi-Landi spanned the years 1950 to 1976 and is now available in a special issue of *Semiotica* (ed. S. Petrilli), which was published in 1992 with an introductory essay, 'Social Practice, Semiotics and the Sciences of Man.' This volume presents around sixty-five letters from Rossi-Landi to Morris and almost as many from Morris to Rossi-Landi (some are missing). It includes two other texts by Rossi-Landi: an early paper, 'On Value: A Cooperative Inquiry' (1951), originally published in the Italian journal *Methodos*; and 'Linguistic Alienation Problems' (1970), originally presented in both English and Italian in a bilingual volume at the initiative of Edizioni di Comunità. Rossi-Landi's first letter to Morris is dated 23 June 1950, and his last

23 December 1976. Morris's first letter to Rossi-Landi is undated but was obviously written in reply to Rossi-Landi's initial contact; his last is dated 26 October 1976. The correspondence was entirely in English.

These letters by Morris and Rossi-Landi are interesting for at least two reasons. First, through them we are able to reconstruct their intellectual biographies to the extent that they influenced each other; thus, these letters represent a contribution to the history of ideas. Second, they are valuable at a more strictly theoretical level in that they address significant problems, often in highly original ways. Besides integrating what we already know about Morris and Rossi-Landi, these letters reveal less familiar aspects of Morris's semiotics as he developed them in the encounter with Rossi-Landi's interpretive work; at the same time, they highlight the relevance of Rossi-Landi's own work for semiotic research today.

An example: In his reply of 10 June 1951 to Rossi-Landi, Morris commented on his own concept of behaviour as follows, emphasizing the centrality of the problem of the relation between signs and values in all his research:

> As for your belief that I should carefully define 'behavior' I refer you to my article *Signs About Signs About Signs* [1948]. For *scientific* purposes I think 'behavior' is as good an *undefined* term as any. 'Sign-behavior' & 'preferential-behavior' do of course need careful analysis if they are to be the bases of semiotic & axiology conceived as sciences. I think I can now do better with 'sign-behavior' than I did in my book; & in my next book on axiology [1956], I will be much more explicit as to 'preferential behavior' than I was in the article you reviewed. *I think of my semiotic & axiology as (young) sciences*, & not as 'philosophy'. For my views as to philosophy I refer you again to the discussion in *Signs, Language, & Behavior* [1946].

Morris's letter of 14 September 1952 testifies to his constant concern for the relation between signs and values, or semiotics and axiology. In it he expressed satisfaction that a convention had been organized recently in New York on 'Symbols and Values,' and had enjoyed a positive response and strong participation. He noted that yet another session on this same topic was to be held at Harvard.

Rossi-Landi was a critical reader of Morris's work, and Morris appreciated this. This emerges from a letter dated 31 August 1953, written in reply to Rossi-Landi's suggestion concerning the opportunity of dealing with Oxonian philosophy of ordinary language, communication theory, and linguistics:

> I have not done much yet with the Oxford group, though I realize its importance. That must wait awhile though. I plan some day to do a new edition of SLB, and then I will take account of your suggestions & criticisms, as well of the developments at Oxford, & in communication theory and linguistics. But for the next 18 months or so the value book [Morris, 1956] has top priority over everything else.

The following passage, from a letter by Rossi-Landi to Morris dated 14 November 1951, describes Rossi-Landi's personal experience of the reaction of the Oxford philosophers to Morris's studies on language and signs and to the introduction of semiotics in general. The terminology of the sign science contrasted sharply with the Oxonian veneration of ordinary language:

> Oxford is an interesting corner. People are more broad-minded than one could suppose from their scarse and unorganized production ... It is not always true that they take as an honour not to give any importance to what is going on outside their kingdom. Your name, for instance, is known to everybody, even if Professor Price is lecturing on 'Thinking and Symbols' and I've never heard him quote you. I very often refer to you, as well as to Dingler, Bridgman and some others. They have been standing it pretty well, till now. Surely the necessity of technicizing, which in my opinion you felt so well, is overlooked here; it would be considered as a sin against their Lord, Everyday Language (not to speak of the Father, Common Sense, and of the Holy Ghost, Clarification). But there are quite a lot of people who begin feeling the necessity of some general frame for their too particular results. And one has here, at last (not at least), the chance of meeting quite a lot of scholars from everywhere, and of opening one's mind.

In a letter dated 27 December 1952, Rossi-Landi revealed his interest in Morris's semiotics as an 'ideal (or technical) language,' as one that treated the problem of primitive terms as well as the relation between 'ideal,' 'technical,' or 'special' languages, on the one hand, and ordinary speech, on the other. In reply to Rossi-Landi, Morris commented as follows on the relation between 'universe of discourse' and 'ideal language' in his research. Here, he was making no reference to the theoretical framework of formal logic. From a letter dated 10 January 1956:

> I have not given much thought to the notion of 'universe of discourse.' But offhand I see 3 significations it might have. 1) Delimitation of an area of the Universe which is to be talked about. Thus we might agree to talk about

> only what is in room A. 2) Delimitation of the language to be used. Thus we might agree to talk only in the language of classical physics. 3) A combination of the above two. Thus we might agree to talk only about what is in room A & only in the language of classical physics. On these usages I would not see any necessary connection to the notion of 'ideal language.'

In the following excerpt, from a letter dated 16 April 1966, Rossi-Landi announced his comparative studies on Marx and Wittgenstein. He also announced another two essays (those of 1965 and 1966). The first of these, 'Language as Work and Trade,' would be included as a chapter in his 1968 book of the same name:

> I am working harder than ever before on problems of language, with the difference that I am now trying to take into account (i) traditional Continental philosophy, which mainly means (in contemporary Europe) the Hegel–Marx tradition; and (ii), linguistics and other disciplines interested in language, rather than limiting myself to what philosophers say about it. After a silence of almost five years, I have recently published a long essay *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (roughly, *Language as labour and trade*, but it doesn't sound nice in English); I shall send it to you within a few weeks, together with two more essays which are bound to appear at the beginning of May (one on Marx and Wittgenstein, the other on Language: verbal and nonverbal).

In letters dated 16 April 1966 and 21 March 1967, Rossi-Landi described Morris's research on values, relating it to his own 'Hegelo-Marxian turning-point,' which was to lead to *Language as Work and Trade*. With reference to Morris's typology of values as described in *Signification and Significance*, Rossi-Landi reflected on the relation between Morris's approach to the problem of value and the Marxian approach. He also analysed the relations established by Morris in his typology among three types of value and the three dimensions of semiotics. Rossi-Landi was seeking a link between 'Morrisian behaviorism' and his own theory of language as work and of messages as merchandise. This inquiry was to lead Rossi-Landi to studies on the relation between Morrisian semiotics/axiology and his own theory of linguistic alienation (cf. Rossi-Landi 1970; and his letter to Morris dated 17 December 1970). From his letter to Morris of 21 March 1967:

> There certainly is a connection between the three kinds of meaning-as-value and the three dimensions of semiotics, but as far as I can see at the moment

there is no one-to-one matching for any of them. What I'm driving at is, among other things, getting some foundations for the idea of 'linguistic alienation'; I have to be able to describe speakers in terms of 'speaking commodities'. Wittgenstein's critique of language fits perfectly into a more general critique of alienation, but then a theory of society is required that is entirely lacking in Wittgenstein and most other 'analysts.' Hence my going back to Hegel and Marx in search of foundations.

6.2.5. On Sign and Non-Sign Materiality

In *Between Signs and Non-Signs*, the three essays that constitute Part Four – 'Sign and Bodies,' 'Ideas for a Manifesto of Materialistic Semiotics,' and 'Toward a Theory of Sign Residues' – present the concepts of *material* and therefore *materiality*, with a special focus on *the materiality of signs*. Other related concepts include *residue*, *sign residue*, and *non-sign or bodily residue*. In this context, Rossi-Landi also discusses 'the bodily residue of nonverbal messages' (cf. Petrilli 1986, 1990b, 1998e). These notions are fundamental to his work and are inevitably linked to the principle of social reproduction.

It was in a 1974 paper, 'Signs and Bodies' (now in Rossi-Landi 1992a: 271–6), that Rossi-Landi first proposed the following propositions:

(A) All signs are bodies
(B) Not all bodies are signs
(C) All bodies can be signs
(D) Signs are not bodies
(E) All bodies are signs

A, B, and C characterize the materialistic model of semiotics, D and E the idealistic.

Rossi-Landi isolated the sign totality – or 'cell,' as he called it – which he described as a unit formed of a *signans* and a *signatum* (his choice of Augustinian terminology served to avoid the mentalistic ambiguity of the Saussurean *signifié*). On this basis, he elaborated the concept of sign *residue*. Irreducible residues of a bodily and of a social material order are present both on the side of the *signans* and on that of the *signatum*. On the side of the *signans*, bodies – either natural bodies or artifacts, but in any case social – act as sign vehicles. On the side of the *signatum*, social residues can be classified as interpretants in Peirce's sense – that is, they can be understood both as intension, sense, *lekton*, and as extension, referent, *designatum*. In other words, the sign is char-

acterized by a dual materiality, physical and socio-historical, and this determines the specificity of semiotic materiality in the realm of anthroposociosemiosis.

Rossi-Landi distinguished between signs and non-signs, yet it was not his intention to establish two different modes of existence – things that are signs, on the one hand, and things that are non-signs, on the other – as if signs were signs of their own accord, by nature independent of communication and interpretation processes, of socio-historical relations among human beings. Not everything is a sign, but this is not to deny that anything can become a sign once it has been caught in the web of semiosic processes.

It was not Rossi-Landi's intention to distinguish *tout court* between signs and non-signs. Rather, his aim was to study ongoing transformation processes from the status of sign to the status of non-sign and vice versa, and to explain the conditions that make such operations possible. This explains why he chose the word 'between' for the title *Between Signs and Non-Signs*.

Rossi-Landi was critical of tendencies toward semiotic panlogism – that is, of tendencies to view the world as populated uniquely by signs. Thus, he was critical of sign fetishism and of the tendency to make arbitrary separations by resolving to abstract categories. He worked on concepts that would provide a common ground for analysing signs and non-signs, but that could also account for the mechanisms underlying the production – and reproduction – of signs and their multiform diversity.

6.3. Communication, Mass Media, and Critique of Ideology

6.3.1. The Homination Process in Relation to Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Production

The following extract, besides indicating the general orientation of Rossi-Landi's work, provides us with a key for a critical reading of the issues at stake in the present section. It introduces concepts that are fundamental to Rossi-Landi's research in general on the semiosis of social reproduction: these include 'homination,' 'linguistic and non-linguistic production processes,' 'social planning,' and 'ideology':

> With the progressive alteration of the organic structure of capital to the advantage of its constant part, the value of workers has decreased; all changes in productive processes have become more costly. This has increasingly evidenced the structure of nonhuman things, which is just one

> way of mentioning an aspect of the immensity of twentieth century technological development. But on the constant side of capital man himself is overpowered: man is completely exploited in production. It was necessary to see man himself in terms of the suprapersonal structures to which he belongs. In this sense, we might maintain that it would not have been possible to study the unconscious programs supporting nonverbal behavior before neo-capitalism was asserted ... Man clearly acts according to programs in all economic-social situations, and not just in the neo-capitalist. If the neo-capitalist alteration of the organic structure of capital has made it possible to evidence such programming or favored this, related awareness could contribute to the formulation of new and more human programmings. But if planning for their use is to be characterized by freedom rather than by more refined oppression, we must clearly resort to a general theory of man and society; and to revolutionary praxis if planning is to be fulfilled. The foundation of all things is political. (1994 [1972]: 201)

Two poles in Rossi-Landi's research on the relations among semiosis, social reproduction, and the subject are represented by his studies on what we might term the processes of humanization and dehumanization – that is, the processes of becoming human, of 'homination,' on the one hand, which involve the historical, social, and cultural evolution of biological material as human animals gradually appear on the scene of history; and the processes of 'alienation' on the other, considered above all in terms of linguistic–ideological alienation and therefore of alienation of the subject (cf. Rossi-Landi 1970; Ponzio 1992b). Regarding the former, human beings are described as they come into being in terms of historically and socially specified sign material. Regarding the latter, the risk of alienation is described as the same human beings are overwhelmed by the very signs they produce in the context of market logic and the 'technological revolution' in this extreme phase in the development of capitalist society.

The earliest signs of homination appear when certain superior primates begin to work and produce goods. Work mediates the relations among humans and between humans and the external world and is essentially of two different albeit related types: *linguistic work* and *non-linguistic work*. In the human world, non-linguistic work is unconceivable without linguistic work. The reverse is also true – linguistic work cannot be articulated except in relation to non-linguistic work. Beginning in his early writings, Rossi-Landi (1998 [1961]) identified a homological relation between non-linguistic material production and linguistic material

production; in this way, he prepared the ground for what he theorized as the *homological method* (Rossi-Landi 1998 [1961], 1992b [1968], 1994 [1972], 1985a).

Work is always connected with sign systems, which function according to a given social plan. Work has goals and results in products; at the same time, products presuppose work. Activity is output without products; as such, it leaves only traces. Work determines a modification that presupposes intentionality, a social plan, a will that regulates the work supply even though the worker himself might be unaware of this. Yet even when the worker is unaware of the ends guiding his output, his productive abilities – which are more often than not acquired through unconscious learning processes – are not necessarily compromised. Conscious life and unconscious life are produced through sign-interpretive work – that is, through work in the homination process. Freud spoke of 'oneiric work.' But the degree of consciousness is of secondary importance relative to the fact that all social behaviour is the result of the conscious or unconscious work of learning according to a given social plan.

Human beings, social reality, and work (both linguistic and non-linguistic) appear together and are interrelated. We must *begin with work*: Rossi-Landi contends that it is work that from the very beginning creates the social dimension, work that is immediately work-and-products and that is immediately articulated as the various forms of exchange. As the production network expands, the division of labour and exchange – which Rossi-Landi invests with *anthropogenetic value* – becomes ever more complex and articulate. Humanity begins appearing once there are instituted the various orders of exchange that presuppose the specification of work. Three main orders of exchange have been identified: the exchange of messages, of goods and services, and of women, with the last two also involving the exchange of messages. In this way, says Rossi-Landi, human individuals gradually emerge through the specification of work and through the increasingly institutionalized development of exchanges. Thus, human beings are socially and historically specified through the united action of linguistic and non-linguistic work, of verbal and non-verbal interpretive work in the processes of social reproduction.

6.3.2. For a Critique of Linguistic and Ideological Alienation in a Semiotical Key

The second pole in Rossi-Landi's research on the relations among semiosis, social reproduction, and the subject concerns the question of alien-

ation, therefore the problem of dehumanization in a world dominated by the reality of capital and by the logic of identity that underpins it. The worker, who is also a linguistic worker, is 'totally immersed in a natural world which the over-production of goods has transformed into a market; and where the manipulation of mass sign systems has reduced them from human beings to mere consumers' (Rossi-Landi 1982 [1978], Eng trans.: 238). From subjects actively involved in the processes of social reproduction in verbal and non-verbal sign production, human beings are reduced to the status of consumers overpowered and exploited by their own products. Human work loses sight of the products of its own work, of the very sense of work. This leads to separation between consciousness and praxis; the result is a situation of social and linguistic alienation, one involving the 'sacrifice of otherness' that is at the heart of identity to capital and market logic (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 1999: 35–52).

With respect to such processes, Rossi-Landi formulates a critique of subjectivity and proposes to recover the relation between human work and its products. His approach is rich in suggestions for developing a critical philosophy grounded à la Marx in the humanism of otherness. In his effort to demystify capital and market logic, he theorized the 'disalienation' of consciousness and recovery of the subject in its specificity as a properly human subject (cf. 1992b [1968], Eng. trans.: 83–106). This would involve recovering certain values that are considered properly human, such as critical awareness, responsibility, creativity, freedom – those things which, in Bakhtinian terms, could be described as conditions of 'dialogic answerability,' and as the primal condition of 'absolute otherness' (see chapter 3 on Bakhtin).

With regard to studies on the construction of the subject, especially interesting is Rossi-Landi's 'Criteri per lo studio ideologico di un autore' (Criteria for the Ideological Study of an Author; 1976, now in Rossi-Landi 1985: ch. 8). Here, like Bakhtin before him, he analyses literary writing in terms of its being the best possible place for the formation of properly human values. He delineates two different approaches: the first begins by focusing on the author/subject and reinstating him in the communicative context in which he was initially formed; this helps overcome a fetishistic vision of the author/subject (cf. ibid.: 187); in contrast, the second approach focuses on the author/subject's historical–social context and capacity to break free of the immediate context. Rossi-Landi distinguished between factors that condition the subject/author, on the one hand, and the subject/author's capacity for excess, on the other. Excess consists in the new values produced by the subject/author for the con-

struction of a different and better society than his or her own; these are communicated to the reader. We can evaluate the ideological character of the subject/author and his or her work by reconstructing the dialectical relations among subject, social context, and excess, remembering that with the concept of 'excess,' Rossi-Landi – much like Bakhtin, albeit independently of him – worked on the concept of extralocalization (*vnenakhodimost'* in Bakhtin). In the words of Rossi-Landi:

> The text may be viewed as action that takes place on stage and, therefore, refers to a setting. All texts contain a dialectical relation between the stage and the setting, or allude to it. A substantial part of our own work lies in the reconstruction of this dialectical relation. If the author contains an excess with respect to his own social reproduction, it is as though the stage lights extend a little toward the background setting; if he limits himself to repeating received values, it is as though the setting comes forward, surrounding and confusing itself with the stage almost. (1985a: 191)

Rossi-Landi pointed to two main areas of reference in his research: general linguistics, analytical philosophy, and American semiotics, on the one hand, and theoretical Marxism and historical materialism, with readings in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, on the other (interview with Enzo Golino, 1969, now in Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 210–94). With the aid of conceptual instruments adapted from such fields, Rossi-Landi conceived a project for a 'global science' of humanity. This approach did not claim omniscience; it simply recognized and theorized 'globality' as it was already present in the world. Furthermore, globality required that the sciences which study the world be just as global. With his homological method, Rossi-Landi had already demonstrated the importance of interconnections for the semiosical universe at large and for the processes of social reproduction in particular. He described identifying homological relations between language and work, linguistic and non-linguistic work, between what today we would call immaterial work and material work, and, therefore, between linguistics and economics (1992b [1968], 1975a, 1985a, 1992a).

Presupposing a homological relation between non-linguistic material production and linguistic production, Rossi-Landi analysed social reproduction in terms of the production, exchange, and consumption of commodities considered as signs and messages and not just as pure commodities separate from social relations. In this context, he introduced a series of original concepts (nowadays highly relevant) such as 'lin-

guistic work,' 'linguistic capital,' 'linguistic money,' and 'linguistic alienation.' And in his effort to recover the universality of human behaviour, and thus the link between consciousness and praxis, he interpreted merchandise as messages (a lesson learned from Marx's *Capital*) and messages as merchandise: 'On various sides people were talking about messages being transformed into merchandise,' he stated in his interview, with a nod to Benjamin, Kraus, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Goldman, Lévi-Strauss, Gurvitch, Lefebvre, and so on, so 'why not join the two interests? Why not put the interpretation of messages as merchandise and of merchandise as messages on the same level? Why not attempt a unitary explanation?' (cf. 1994 [1972]: 214–15).

In the context of his project for a general semiotics with a historical and materialistic orientation, Rossi-Landi formulated the hypothesis that production systems, sign systems, and ideology are interconnected and develop together. He described language and ideology as dialectically interrelated according to a specific social plan, an essential difference between the two being that whereas ideology necessarily involves signs – indeed, can only be produced through signs – not all signs (even less so signals) are ideological. Furthermore, this intrinsic interrelation between language and ideology is presupposed by his project for demystifying signs and ideology and liberating the subject from social alienation. His working hypothesis is as follows:

> It is precisely the intimate interconnections between language and ideology (or, in more general terms, between sign systems and alienation) which contain the possibility of introducing procedures which are linguistically (semiotically) disalienating (de-ideologizing, demystifying), with the ultimate end of extricating linguistic workers, i.e. human beings in their function as the speakers of language, from the mesh of dominant consensus, and of promoting a new consensus concerning the desiderability of realizing the plans for a new type of society. (1982 [1978]: 197)

Signs not only convey ideologies but also produce ideologies. It follows that language, ideology, and the correlated notion of subject can only be demystified through a critique of signs that can analyse the production, exchange, and consumption of signs in a given social context – that is, in a given circuit in the global process of social reproduction. Rossi-Landi worked toward 'new and more human programs' as part of his project for developing a new and more conscious form of humanism focused on the sign dimension of human beings, but even more signifi-

cantly on the human dimension of sign processes. He contributed to the development of semiotics as an explanatory and critical science ready to take a stand with regard to the social programs that regulate sign behaviour. This necessarily involved giving up claims to neutrality, neopositivistically and mistakenly identified with scientificness. In light of a detotalizing view of the world and the realization that human behaviour is programmed as part of the global social system – and therefore that programming is historically and socially specified and politically oriented – semiotics emerges as the place for critiquing cultural codes and for formulating alternative programming.

The connection between Marx's critique of political economy, on the one hand, and semiotics and the philosophy of language, on the other, helps highlight social relations among human beings where before there were only relations among things and reified relations among signs. This association also points to the relation of mutual implication between ideology and signs at the level of the theory that studies them. The verbal sign is not only the means and instrument through which ideologies are transmitted, but also the place where ideologies are produced, the material out of which they are made. Ideological reality is sign reality: where we have human social signs, we also have ideologies to varying degrees. The reverse is also true: that which is ideological is endowed with sign value. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Voloshinov and Bakhtin described the sign-ideological nature of consciousness metaphorically in terms of an unending dialogical chain comprised of socio-semiotical material:

> This dialogic chain stretches from individual consciousness to individual consciousness, connecting them together. Signs emerge, after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness and another. And the individual consciousness itself is filled with signs. Consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction. (Voloshinov 1929, Eng. trans.: 11)

Much like the concept of 'infinite semiosis' (Peirce), and much like the theory of 'interpretive routes' formed through dialogical interaction among interpretant signs and interpreted signs according to the logic of otherness (cf. Ponzio 1990a: 15–74; 1993a: 177–220), Voloshinov and Bakhtin identify the meaning of the sign in its relation to the sign that interprets it. The flow of infinite deferrals among signs is never inter-

rupted and forms the objective and social material of consciousness and ideology. These are not the result of internal psychological processes viewed separately from relations with the external, public world; thus, the material of consciousness and ideology is never strictly individual and subjective. Contrary to the mechanistic interpretation of the relationship between base and superstructure in terms of unilinear causality, semiotics and philosophy of language today in conjunction with historical-dialectic materialism have taught us that individual consciousness is social consciousness and that social reality in general – from the level of the social relations of production to the level of the production of ideologies and knowledge – is sign reality. Indeed, the acquisition of knowledge and language is only possible in a specific sign-ideological context – that is to say, in the sign-mediated dialogical and dialectical relations among base, superstructure, and ideologies that characterize and constitute social communication.

6.3.3. Social Planning and Multimedial Communication

In the passage cited from *Semiotica e ideologia* (1994 [1972]) at the beginning of this section, Rossi-Landi warns us clearly against the danger of unconsciously submitting to social programs and thus to invisible forms of 'refined oppression' masked by mystifying banners and paradoxically mistaken for liberating practices. These days, the widespread effects of mass communication and, it follows, of the dominant ideology that underlies the multimedial communication network represent such a danger.

As a result of the Technological Revolution and the relentless development of information technology, this network is expanding worldwide. This has produced a sociocultural reality constructed through messages that teem throughout the network – messages without precedent in terms of quantity, immediacy, velocity, and circulation. For example, television is now providing countless channels and services. We can now zap through different channels and programs and thereby create our own intertexts; we can even produce and transmit our own programs.

Advanced technologies (especially over the past thirty years or so) have produced a genuine 'revolution' in the field of electronic information, and this has had consequences not only at the professional level but also for daily life, including leisure time. Thanks to the ubiquity of mass media and telecommunications, as well as the widespread use of

computers and other high-tech gadgets, the communication network has become more and more powerful, reaching gigantic proportions through a process that seems autopoeitic. Thanks to all sorts of services and connections – modems, portable faxes, cellular and satellite telephones, e-mail, and the Internet (through which we can now consult archives, book a hotel room, even run companies – 'virtual companies' are now a reality) – everyone's access to the communication network is becoming free of time and space barriers.

Because of advances in technology that favour the development of both linguistic and non-linguistic work, the signs of man are reaching higher and higher levels of signifying complexity and social-semiotic materiality. And the more complex the sign work in signifying processes, the higher the levels of signness, the more powerful become the effects of feedback mechanisms in the interrelation between the social and biological components of anthroposemiosis that fuel the overall process of homination. Consider here that it may soon be possible to integrate the human body with artificial components; once this comes about, cyborgs will be a fact, not science fiction. Consider also the widespread devastating effects of nuclear accidents as in the case of Chernobyl, and of authorized experiments to test the effects of radioactivity on unknowing humans. The Technological Revolution must not blind us to the need to behave responsibly; the health of semiosis, of both human and non-human semiosis, the future of life on this planet, depends on our doing so. Here we must not forget that the capacity for responsibility is part of our biological makeup as human beings, as 'semiotic animals' – that is, as animals endowed with a unique primary modelling device called 'language' (see 12.1.2).

At the level of mass communication and telecommunications, a direct negative consequence of advanced technologies and the intensification in sign traffic is information overload and message consumerism. We must also evaluate progress in terms of the risk of social alienation involved, of the tendency to mystify and reify products on the market, be they linguistic or non-linguistic. As the messages produced become more and more redundant, the individual as a subject becomes more and more overwhelmed in spite of active participation in production processes – participation that is not necessarily conscious or intentional. Even linguistic workers, whom one would think would be immune from the negative impact of the Technological Revolution, are contributing in various ways to the expansion of a worldwide sign market in which consciousness and praxis are becoming ever more separated in a pro-

duction cycle whose end is production itself, based on the imposition of market values to the detriment of properly human values.

Regarding the status of the subject as a user–consumer, it is obvious that the uncontrolled development of the communication network is no guarantee of higher degrees of critical thinking, creativity, responsible participation, and freedom. On the contrary, the subject is at risk of submitting to invisible forms of ideology that subtend the development of capital and market logic, and, therefore, to forms of oppression and exploitation that are not perceived as such, given their 'invisible' dissemination throughout the entire global system of social reproduction. This state of affairs demands that we reflect on questions such as these: Does access to what seems to be a free flow of messages offer us control of ideas and the sign market? What is the real relationship between electronic devices and the user–consumer? Does the subject construct its own texts or does it submit to products on the sign market, as an unthinking servant of the system, of socioeconomic production processes conceived in the interests of specific classes, of a given social plan and ideology? Does the present situation favour the development of critical awareness, or does it foster new forms of social alienation? Who actually controls the communication channels that are regulating the production, exchange, and circulation of messages? To what end do they control these? Which values does that control actually safeguard?

Questions like these call on us to consider the links between communication, ideology, and social planning. If we want the answers to be scientifically and ethically valid, we must look beyond the epiphenomenal level of the sign market to examine sign production processes and the social plan that orients them. Rossi-Landi's definition of the ruling class as 'the class that holds control over the emission and circulation of verbal and nonverbal messages forming a given community' is supported by today's social reality, and so is his theory of the sign-mediated nature of the relation between structure and superstructure.

The ruling class decides which programs and ideologies will regulate the global behaviour of a given society. Ideology is social planning, and the social plan that dominates a given society is the one produced by the class in power (cf. Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 203–4). Following Rossi-Landi, we can identify the ruling class as the class that controls the communication channels and that establishes the rules for producing, circulating, and consuming messages. It follows that in Western 'democracies,' the mass media are now the key site of social planning. As a consequence, the mass media exercise social power and control with the

unthinking support of the population as a whole. Indeed, the mass media have revealed their power and pervasiveness in the very construction of consensus, as demonstrated by the successful communication of the ideology of war as 'right and necessary' in the new world order, beginning with the Gulf War of 1991 (cf. Ponzio 1995a; Ponzio and Petrilli 2000a).

6.3.4. Cultural Capital and Social Alienation

In today's global capitalist system of social reproduction, the cultural system is intimately connected to the development of the capitalist system itself – indeed, to the very point of identifying with it. This has a number of important consequences. First, it becomes difficult to separate ideological interests from objective and material interests in the development of capital. Ideology becomes integral to production processes and contributes to the production of profit. Second, given that culture is made of signs and that ideologies cannot be conveyed without signs – indeed, cannot be produced without signs – the relations between the cultural system and the capitalist system involve the production of verbal and non-verbal signs – the role of which is growing ever more important in social reproduction today. The expression 'cultural capital' is not just a rhetorical device; it is a reflection of present-day reality. Linguistic and non-linguistic work produces and develops cultural capital; and as with all processes that produce capital, surplus labour produces surplus value in a cycle that in turn augments cultural capital. All of this happens without the subject necessarily being aware of the end products of the work; more significantly still, the subject may not even be aware that what it is doing can be classified as work. Says Rossi-Landi:

> Man supplies his force without even being aware of doing so for some end and, therefore, without being aware of the very fact that he is working. The end pursued may be supra-individual insofar as it is imposed by a social program which remains unconscious. In these cases *work is differentiated from activity as the execution of programs that are indifferently conscious or unconscious.* (1967–72, 15/16/17 [1971]: 22)

As anticipated earlier, an immediate implication of this state of affairs as we are describing it is that ideology serving the development of capital is *invisible*, and that exploitation as it is reflected in most of our behaviour is mostly *imperceptible*. The present age – that is, the era of globalization – is one of the most difficult ever for critiquing ideology and, it fol-

lows, for analysing social alienation. From this perspective, a significant issue connected with the mass media relates to the problem of censorship, subtle (and not so subtle) forms of which pervade the communication network unnoticed and uncontested. Within that network, censorship contributes to the processes whereby the alienated subject is formed. Global communication tends to present us with a monolithic and monological block that renders critical thinking very difficult if not altogether impossible; contrast this with a polylogical system based on the logic of otherness and (therefore) of unindifferent differences.

The subject of mass media technology tends to become servant to the needs of the sign market; in this way, the subject's otherness, its uniqueness, is sacrificed to the logic of identity. Access to the communication network offers an illusion of freedom, when, in fact, the subject undergoes nearly invisible forms of exploitation and oppression as a result of the free flow of signs and messages, which abound on the market. The interests of multimedia capital heavily regulate cultural reality. Yet when the 'crisis' or even the 'end' of ideology is proclaimed, and when such expressions as 'alienation,' 'class interest,' and 'social exploitation' are declared to be outdated, issues like these are easy to ignore with impunity. Present-day cultural systems practically beg for a critique of cultural capital reproduction circuits that focuses on the roles played by signs, ideology, and general social planning (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992a).

Signs and ideology are being increasingly implicated in the reproduction processes of capital. As a result, the individual has assumed a new role that must now be examined. The term 'alienated subject' cannot fully account for the subject's unconscious integration into a process whose goals and ends are unknown to that subject. 'Alienated subject' takes the concept of subject for granted, when in fact that concept needs to be interrogated, given its specific ideological character. In the case of 'visible alienation,' the subject is ignored, denounced, and declared by society to be abnormal, pathological, 'mentally alienated' and thus of no use to the system. 'Invisible alienation' – that is, alienation in the Marxian sense – nowadays concerns more than life in the factory; it extends to most if not all spaces of social life. Unlike 'visible alienation,' invisible alienation serves the system. Thus, with regard to the 'speaking' subject, we have at least two different kinds of linguistic alienation: the psychopathological, corresponding to what has been identified as visible alienation; and alienation in a Marxian sense, which places the alienated speaker at the same level as the alienated worker in capitalist society.

6.3.5. The Role of Signs in Neocapitalist Society

At the same time that Rossi-Landi was developing his intellectual commitment, a new phase was developing in the process of social reproduction. This phase was characterized by the increasing role played by verbal and non-verbal communication – that is, by verbal and non-verbal signs – in the production processes of capital. It had not been possible to study social programs underlying verbal and non-verbal behaviour until neocapitalism asserted itself. Similarly, it had not been possible to demystify bourgeois economy – and thereby reveal the subject's condition of exploitation and oppression in the production process – until capitalism was fully developed so as to weaken the organic part of capital, that is, the value of workers. 'Man clearly acts according to programs in all economic-social situations, and not just in the neo-capitalist,' declared Rossi-Landi (1994 [1972]: 201) in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section. Neocapitalist changes to the organic structure of capital have made it possible to uncover such programming.

The dominant social reproduction cycles today are technologically so highly advanced that it is difficult to see the programming processes and the subjects in these processes. The 'end of ideology' has been proclaimed; the critique of alienation and exploitation has been dismissed as anachronistic. The social reproduction system has been mystified and made to appear as the natural result of human history; this has fostered the general impression that the system cannot be escaped; as a result, the project of critique or revolutionary praxis has been dismissed as unrealistic, as a utopian fantasy.

At the sociopolitical level, the end of ideology has been proclaimed. Yet in fact this era has been profoundly ideologized, in the wake of Nazism and fascism and the consequences of both. But proclaiming the crisis or the end of ideology amounts to taking a strong ideological stance based on false consciousness, false thought, and false praxis, all of these characteristic of 'invisible alienation.' Such a stance is difficult to demystify except by combining a critique of ideology with critiques of political economy and of signs. To reject the notion of ideology means to favour identification with the established order; such an attitude serves the system but is fatal to critique and, therefore, to the development of alternative social programs and to the practices of emancipation.

In the context of social practices developed to maintain the neocapitalist state, the role of telecommunications and the mass media – expressions *par excellence* of the sign-mediated relation between structure and

superstructure – is no less than crucial. The electronic revolution as it has been harnessed to capitalist political economy is one thing; the revolution in consciousness is quite another, although the two do not necessarily exclude each other. As Rossi-Landi states:

> The construction of new forms of consciousness and of a new mentality which will manifest itself at all levels of praxis and in every nook and cranny of daily life cannot occur without the institution of radically new social practices. It involves restructuring the entire process of social reproduction, which includes replacing all the principal sign systems with more adequate ones so as to lay the basis of the creation of *new human beings* who will thus live within *new social relations*. For a long period this task must take absolute precedence over all others. Within it can be discerned the most intimate core of the *primacy of the political*. It is the most profound and constant duty of all *true innovators* to dedicate themselves unstintingly to this task, whether or not they proclaim themselves to be 'revolutionaries' (which is a role that is only made possible in particular historical circumstances): it is their duty at whatever point in the dialectical cycle of praxis–theory–praxis their personal effort happens to make its contribution. (1982 [1978], Eng. trans.: 344)

In the language of semiotics, revolution is carried out at the level of the interpretant sign as it establishes a relation of dialogical critique vis-à-vis the interpreted sign. This relation is grounded in the logic of otherness and signifying excess, not at the level of productivity and service to a system based on the logic of identity and indifferent differences. The values of otherness, dialogism, and creativity constitute the conditions for escaping the logic of production, therefore for critiquing subjectivity and social and linguistic alienation. The relations among interpretants based on the logic of otherness, dialogism, and creativity place the subject in a position to resist passive integration into what would otherwise seem a natural autopoietic system.

If human beings are signs, and if signs belong to a situation that is more or less alienated – that is, 'a situation of false consciousness and praxis, something which usually expresses itself *at the level of discourse also*, and thus becomes genuinely ideological, or which becomes such from the moment *we speak about it*,' as says Rossi-Landi (ibid.: 242) – a critical theory of signs, language, and ideology is necessary if we are to overcome social and linguistic alienation and the processes of dehumanization. The approach we propose is based on the logic of dialogism, otherness,

responsive understanding, on the logic of extralocalization. As such, it may help interrupt the frenetic rhythms of the production, exchange, and consumption cycle – a cycle that serves to maintain the dominant ideology in capitalist society's present phase of development. In this way we will perhaps be able to assert instead creativity, difference, freedom, the non-alienated self, the properly human.

6.4. Rossi-Landi between 'Ideologie' and 'Scienze Umane'

6.4.1. Doctrine of Ideologies and Semiotics of Social Communication Programs

In the spring of 1967, Rossi-Landi founded the quarterly journal *Ideologie* (Ideologies). This project's general policy was 'non-academic and anti-specialist.' The journal and its collateral activities lasted until 1972.

In the spring of 1979 appeared the first issue of another quarterly, *Scienze umane* (Human Sciences), also founded and directed by Rossi-Landi. It was published in Bari by Dedalo Editrice. Its offices were located in Bari and under the direction of Augusto Ponzio. Its sixth issue (December 1980) was its last.

The first number of *Ideologie* did not include a presentation or an editorial. Editorials and introductions to monographic issues or to sections of issues began to appear with the third issue, in 1968. They were later compiled by Edizioni di Ideologie as *Scritti programmatici di Ideologie* (Programmatic Writings of *Ideologie*) (1972). This book included some of the forewords to the *Dizionario teorico-ideologico* (Theoretical-Ideological Dictionary) that *Ideologie* began publishing in its twelfth issue in 1970. The purpose of these forewords was to examine, demystify, and redefine some of the concepts that are at the basis of the humanities, such as *semiotica* (semiotics), or that are used in political circles and in related theoretical debates, such as *calcolatori e cervelli* (computers and brains), *corpo* (body), *progresso tecnologico* (technological progress), and *razzismo* (racism).

The first editorial published by *Ideologie*, 'Per un rinnovamento della elaborazione ideologica' (For a Renewal of Ideological Elaboration), had already been printed in volume 13 of the journal *Il sedicesimo* (Spring 1968). This editorial reiterated the list of subjects that *Ideologie* intended to cover – a list that had been published in the first issue of *Ideologie*. At the same time, it echoed the concept of 'ideology' as it had been analysed and defined in a paper by Rossi-Landi, 'Ideologia come progettazione sociale' (Ideology as Social Planning), with which the first issue had opened.

> This is the third notebook of *Ideologie* and it is the first of 1968. As we have begun to show, the journal intends to study contemporary ideologies. This will be done both by analyzing systematic and recurring aspects of ideology in general, starting with its nature and structure, and focusing the attention on several topics which require updating: communist polycentrism and the revisionist trends of Marxism in socialist and capitalist countries, populist and/or trade unionist or corporativistic ideologies (fascism, nationalism, some tendencies of political catholicism), the ideologies of capitalism and economic development, the foundations of Marxian doctrine with respect to the new sciences of man and the ideological character of these sciences, discernible in the manifestation of their 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' (and it remains to be seen if this obtains only with neo-capitalist manifestations or if it is inevitable even at a deeper level). *Ideologie* puts forth a concept of ideology as false thought and false praxis necessarily embodied by some social programming or project. With the latter I mean a design, proposed or only just experienced (knowingly or not), of a historically grounded construction of society. (1967–72, 3 [1968]: 1)

In 'Ideologia come progettazione sociale,' Rossi-Landi completed an important labour: he abandoned the pseudo-definition of ideology as *false consciousness*, which is, in effect, a negative evaluation of ideology (which arose from an extrapolation from the particular sense Marx and Engels had given to the concept; going still further back, it arose from the pejorative connotation attached to the term coined by the 'ideologues').

Rossi-Landi's project was based on interpretation of ideology as *social planning*. Such an interpretation enabled him to preserve the definition of ideology as false consciousness, and even justified that definition in theory. However, it also placed that definition on a broader footing – one that offered more than a descriptive or relativistic interpretation. Thus, Rossi-Landi characterized ideology (negatively) as 'false thought and false praxis' and examined it as 'social planning.' In this way, he was able to address the issues in a manner that acknowledged the inevitable historical conditioning of all ideological discourses. At the same time, his approach amounted to developing an eventual critique that would dialectically overcome false consciousness and false praxis. In this way, ideology could be 'saved' and evaluated positively as *revolutionary* thought.

Rossi-Landi placed ideology in the framework most relevant to it – that of the alienated human condition. This was entirely in keeping with the logical–historical method adopted by *Ideologie*, as well as in opposition to specialistic separatism and tendencies to abstract the object of study from

the totality of which it is a part. Rossi-Landi applied the same method in his essay collection of 1968, *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (Eng. trans. 1983; see 1992b [1968]), in his 1967 paper on ideology, and in a later book, *Semiotica e ideologia* (1972, now 1994), which expanded his study of ideology by treating it as inextricably linked to sign systems. Indeed, a doctrine of ideologies can only become reality through the mediation of semiotics; this is because ideologies transmit themselves through signs, which are then scrutinized and demystified through the study of sign systems. In this vein, Rossi-Landi in his foreword (dated 1971) to *Semiotica e ideologia* stated that 'a semiotics unsupported by a doctrine of ideologies remains a specialized science, detached from praxis, despite the fact that it presents itself as a general science of signs' (1994 [1972]: 8).

According to Rossi-Landi, the discourse that has ideology as its object fits within general semiotics understood as a Hegelo-Marxian science, based on the logical–historical method, on the use of abstractions that isolate historically real totalities but also join them to larger totalities, thereby determining the specific structures. Rossi-Landi believed that to counter specialism – that is, the separatism of the various disciplines studying sign systems – semiotics must become a global science, one that situates the objects of research resulting from necessary, solitary, and abstracting operations, in the totality of which they partake. Semiotics takes a stand against the social system of which ideologies and the object of study are a part; in this way it renders explicit the social planning that presides over the system. Put another way, semiotics does more than bring to light the forces that sustain, even unconsciously, human behaviour; precisely because of its totalizing perspective, because it brings to light the forces acting on the social system – thus making evident their historical and social roots, their political functions – semiotics shows itself to be a critique of sign systems and the basis of new and more human projects.

In this sense, the semiotic study of ideologies transcends the limitations usually encountered in research on social communication (Rossi-Landi in those years had in mind positions such as those of the psychiatrist Albert E. Scheflen and the semiotician Edward T. Hall). The semiotic study of social communication must address the fundamental problem of delineating interests that govern how sign systems are integrated into a given social organization – that is, the problem of the conditions of power. Such a study assumes that each sign system is a totality whose functioning does not depend simply on 'the play of its parts, but on the play of the totality as a part'; thus, each program cannot but be

controlled by a higher social level. This is the problem of ideologies that, insofar as they are ideologies of the dominant class, signify and organize behaviour in a certain manner. In the light of this premise, Rossi-Landi defined the dominant class ('Programmi della comunicazione' [Programs of Communication], an entry in *Dizionario teorico-ideologico*, *Ideologie* 16–17: 34, reprinted in Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 203–4) as the class that controls the emission and circulation of verbal and non-verbal messages constituting a given community.

As conceived by Rossi-Landi starting with 'Il linguaggio come lavoro e mercato' (1965; published in *Nuova Corrente* and later republished as a book [1968; see Rossi-Landi 1992b]) – semiotics recognizes the existence of non-ideological spaces of social reality. By unmasking the ideology that underpins what is presented as 'natural,' 'spontaneous,' as 'a given,' as 'realistic' – both in the realm of common behaviour and in the scientific or literary realm – semiotics shows how every behaviour is inescapably placed either in the program of the maintenance and reproduction of the classist society, or in the program of its critique and of its undoing. And thus it becomes disalienating, revolutionary praxis.

6.4.2. The Pars Pro Toto Fallacy

A faulty approach to abstraction and the relation between 'abstract object' and 'totality' postulates that an abstract object both carries and exhausts the characteristics of a totality otherwise ignored or left in the dark. As Rossi-Landi shows in 'Note di semiotica' ('Semiotic Notes'; originally published in 1967 in *Nuova Corrente* and later in *Semiotica e ideologia* [Rossi-Landi 1994]), such a fallacy arises when one does not distinguish between semiology and semiotics.

The choice of 'semiotics' over 'semiology' to indicate the general science of signs is not simply a matter of terminological preferences. Semiology as a study of sign systems – both post- and trans-linguistic – must not be confused with semiotics as a general science of all types of signs. By avoiding the identification of semiotics with semiology so defined, the study of signs frees itself from semiological glottocentrism. For its own part, linguistics remains a separate glottological science, up to the point where its connection with the general science of signs reveals itself to be extrinsic as to the specification of its object and the determination of its method of analysis. In *Dizionario teorico-ideologico*, Rossi-Landi devoted to semiotics the entry 'Semiotica' (1967–72, 12 [1970]: 38–44).

From the perspective that semiotics is the theoretical site where the

specialization of the separate sciences is overcome, Rossi-Landi proposed to consider the relations between linguistic production and verbal exchange, on the one hand, and material production and exchange, on the other: 'My attempt aimed at bringing together two totalities, that of linguistic production and that of material production in a greater totality, so as to disclose some of the structures of this – greater totality' (1994 [1972]: 288).

So this is the path that Rossi-Landi took from *Language as Work and Trade* (1968) to *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985). In one sense, his plan was to develop the Marxian approach to commodities as a communicative fact and not as a relation among things. But to the extent that this approach enabled him to consider political economy as a part of semiotics, he was also able to study linguistic phenomena in relation to the categories of the science of economics in its Ricardian–Marxian phase. This allowed him to take his reflections on linguistic use and exchange (the level of the linguistic market) one step further and to focus on the social relations of linguistic production (the social relations of linguistic work).

Continuing in this vein, Rossi-Landi devoted an important and lengthy essay (which appeared in *Ideologie* 16/17, [1972]: 43–103) to the study of the relation between material work and linguistic work. This essay was later republished in *Linguistics and Economics* and is now also available in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*. Rossi-Landi's more specific goal was to study the relation between material artifacts and linguistic artifacts by way of a method of analysis that he referred to as the 'homological method' (mentioned earlier).

This method consists in identifying not immediate and superficial relations of resemblance, as in analogy, but rather homologies – that is, structural and genetic resemblances between objects considered separate and associated with different fields of knowledge. Material and linguistic artifacts, notwithstanding their apparent separation and their different disciplinary provenances, can be treated as parts of the same totality because they are the result of human work. In this way, the homological method contributed to the critique of the hypostatization of different parts existing separately from the totality to which they belong. This encouraged discussion about how to overcome separatism in the sciences.

> The homological element breaks with specialization: it obliges one to keep in mind different things at the same time, it disturbs the independent play of separate sub-totalities, and calls for a vaster totality, whose laws are not

> those of its parts. In other words, the homological method is an antiseparatist and reconstructive method, and, as such, unwelcomed by the specialists. (1967–72, 16/17 [1971]: 62, in 1985a: 53)

The homology between material production and linguistic production discovered and analysed by Rossi-Landi is confirmed by recent developments in cybernetics. As Rossi-Landi himself observed in a seminar held at Bari in April 1985:

> One can ascend along what I called the homological scheme of production up to a certain point, where an incredible thing happens, which is that the two productions merge one into the other. This is a thing of the last few decades, because in the production of computers, hardware (in technical language), that is, a material body whose elaborated matter constitutes the computer, combines with software, that is, a program, so that an ensemble of logically expressible linguistic relations merge. Therefore the nonlinguistic, the objectual and the linguistic at a high definition of elaboration have merged into each other almost under our very eyes. (1985b: 171)

In his 1967 essay that launched the first issue of *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi placed ideology in its appropriate context – the alienated human situation – and examined it with regard to two other components of the same totality: false consciousness and false praxis. Rossi-Landi maintained that ideology, considered with reference to the two latter objects, could be described as social planning.

6.4.3. Ideology and False Consciousness

Starting with the idea that the reality of alienation is sociohistorical, Rossi-Landi considered ideology on the basis of the following hypothesis:

> In the complex exchange between nature and man and between man and man, during which man has slowly become something other than nature and is conscious of such differentiation, some real fundamental operations must have become lost or confused and some fictitious fundamental operations must have been introduced: as a result of which the course of civilization, including the theories that man himself started to form in the so-called historical period, in the strict sense of the word, has not been what it could have been without those losses, those confusions and those intrusions. That is, as they say, the course of civilization has falsified itself ... Alienation is a fal-

> sification, a general malfunction in the formation and the unfolding of history. (*Ideologie* 1: 3)

As mentioned, Rossi-Landi's great contribution to the study of ideology as a concept was that he showed that, although one can say that ideology is false consciousness, it does not exhaust itself in the latter. The concepts of ideology and false consciousness do not coincide. He identified two types of differences between them: a *difference in degree* and a *qualitative difference*.

The first relates to the fact that false consciousness is a less developed and determined ideology, whereas ideology is more developed and determined consciousness. From this perspective, the relationship between false consciousness and ideology corresponds to the relationship between consciousness and thought: false consciousness is present at a low level of conceptual elaboration, whereas ideology is present at a higher level. More precisely, ideology is a discursive rationalization – that is, a theoretic reordering of an attitude or state of false consciousness.

The second difference, the qualitative one, concerns the relationship between ideology and signs – in particular, the use of verbal language: ideology is false consciousness that uses sign elaboration and verbal forms in a specific language. The two differences can be synthesized by stating that ideology differs from false consciousness insofar as it is false thought. Rossi-Landi observes:

> This corresponds to the fundamental intuition of Hegel, that puts the entire elaboration of the 'theoretical' spirit somewhere between consciousness and thought, that is, between intuition and representation. It is in the second phase of representation, the imagination, that the sign surfaces and it is in its third phase, memory, that language is formed.

And in parentheses, he adds:

> (In Hegelian terms, it is possible, therefore, to have a phenomenology of false consciousness or ideology, a psychology – and perhaps today one could say, a semiotic phenomenology may only concern itself with that which precedes language.)

Yet according to Rossi-Landi, ideology is not simply explained in terms of false consciousness and false thought: it is also false praxis. In the case of both false consciousness and false thought one is dealing with a sepa-

ration from praxis. It follows that ideology is both false thought and false praxis. The dialectic between false consciousness, false thought, or ideology on the one hand, and false praxis on the other, is connected to the fact that ideology manifests itself as social planning. In order to understand ideology, once again we must consider its context. According to Rossi-Landi:

> It is always a question of a separation among the parts – and in this case originally two parts – of a totality. The totality is grasped in two different phases of its complexification, at the consciousness level and then at the level of thought. Reflecting on its immediate past of false consciousness (and false praxis of that consciousness) and finding itself juxtaposed to false praxis or even under the urgency of these factors, thought tries to save itself by rationalizing procedures that at least give it the illusion that it is a member, an active member, of a less lacerated family. The definition I am elaborating, therefore, is not in any way that of thought which would be false because it is separated from praxis, and that is all. It is also, *ipso jure*, the definition of false praxis, because it is separated from thought ... There is no thought that may take pleasure *on its own account* (independently of its relationships with praxis) in the property of *not being false*: so that only on the basis of thought, and that alone, is it possible to measure and denounce false thought. (1967–72, 1 [1967]: 7)

Every ideology is social planning, and consideration of the dialectic between consciousness and praxis allows Rossi-Landi to pinpoint the difference between innovative or revolutionary planning and conservative or reactionary planning. Thought, action, and the social programs that tend to draw together consciousness and praxis are revolutionary; social planning that tends to create obstacles to this is conservative.

The editorial in the third issue of *Ideologie*, 'Per un rinnovamento dell'elaborazione ideologica' (Toward a Renewal of Theoretical Elaboration), returns again to the conception that ideology as false thought and false praxis necessarily generates some social plan – that is, deliberately or not, it generates a plan the aim of which is to historically construct society. The doctrine of ideologies is presented as a general science of the sociohistorical domain. This is reflected in the subtitle of the journal: *Quaderni di storia contemporanea* (Notebooks on Contemporary History). In the editorial, Rossi-Landi confirmed the ideological character of *Ideologie*, which he envisaged as working toward an innovative, revolutionary, disalienating type of social planning. In this text he

revisited Marxian critique, inserting it into the dialectic of its particular context – that is, capitalist society in the era of rapid industrial development; he then enlarged on that critique, developing it as critique of the superstructure and as a complementary critique of the economic structure. Thus, in his analysis, Marxian thought emerges as an exhaustive critique of the techniques of economic, social, psychological, and linguistic integration as elaborated by the system.

6.4.4. Semiotics and Critique of the Humanities

In this fashion, ideological demystification becomes closely linked not only with the realistic description of the context of the neocapitalist system, but also with the conscious work of ideological elaboration. To summarize all this, the editorial of the third issue of *Ideologie* suggests this single phrase: critique of the humanities. In hindsight, the choice underscores the continuity between *Ideologie* and another journal founded later by Rossi-Landi, *Scienze umane*, despite the many differences between the two.

The critique of the humanities voiced by *Ideologie* targeted in particular the separate and fragmented character of the disciplines. In the editorial in the third issue, besides alluding to the need to treat linguistics as a part of semiotics, Rossi-Landi restated the imperative to conceive sociology and politics as unified. Similarly, he rejected the separation of psychoanalysis from psychology, as well as of psychology from psychiatry. Furthermore, he refuted the claims made by purely formal logic to exclude dialectics, as well as the claims made by marginalistic and computational economics to address only market structures and ignore the structures of production.

As far as historiography is concerned, the conception of the doctrine of ideology as a general science of the socio-historical domain contains traces of the link between historiography and ideology: their relationship is dialectical. Even historiography proceeds in the light of some form of social planning; thus its discourse, although diachronically oriented, starts with the interpretation of the synchronic structures to which the rest of the humanities contribute. But historiography cannot limit itself to the application of ideological models of the social planning that directs it. Its input with regard to the other humanities consists especially in the verification of such models. It is by providing the stimulus for correcting or abandoning specific ideological models that historiographic rectification constantly inverts, in an effective dialectic

exchange, the relationship of debt between historiography and the rest of the humanities.

Ideologie gave ample space to historiographic interpretation, not only in different articles but also by devoting an entire double-issue (7/8, 1968) to *Le radici storiche della rivoluzione cubana* (The Historical Roots of the Cuban Revolution) and another (14/15, 1970), some six hundred pages long, to the *Studio della rivoluzione cinese* (A Study of the Chinese Revolution). The latter contained a three-hundred-page 'Bibliografia italiana sulla rivoluzione cinese (1945–1970)' (Italian Bibliography on the Chinese Revolution) in a small font in two columns. *Ideologie* was looking for a global perspective for its critique of the separation of the humanities without calling for a philosophical superscience or for the rediscovery of 'authentic knowledge':

> For a critique of the humanities to become systematic, it is necessary that a methodology of the relations among them gradually – according to the strength of each one of us – be explicited as well as of the relations between theoretical research and historical research, with the purpose of creating a global science of man. If we wish to initiate research that is radically interdisciplinary, it must necessarily present itself as pre-disciplinary, exempt from the limitations of a specialization that has already taken place without resorting to a philosophical superscience, that is without falling into the trap of some bourgeois ideology. (1967–72, 13 [1968]: 'Editoriale,' now in *Scritti programmatici di Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi 1972: 15)

6.4.5. Research and Disalienating Praxis

The overall strategy of *Ideologie* was rooted in a practical exigency. Innovative or disalienating theoretical research was conceived as instrumental to innovative praxis. Therefore, it had to be verified and corrected with regard to its applicability in and to revolutionary praxis.

However, although aligning itself clearly with the militant culture of the Marxist left, and in the light of 'the current moment of objective crisis of Marxist ideology in the West and within socialist countries, shaken by polycentric contradictions' (we are in 1968), *Ideologie* considered it reckless to cast one's role and identity in political terms. The editorial board of *Ideologie* thought it idle rhetoric to offer yet another declaration intended to stake out yet another position among the many leftist minority groups of the time; it saw the term 'leftist dissidence,' which was so often resorted to in sectarian, fractionistic polemics – often supported by superficial 'verbose extremism' – as itself a mystification.

The board also considered it a mystification to subordinate the ideological allegiances of study and research to the immediate political expectations of the national or Western left. Also a mystification was the belief that the ideological positions and revolutionary experiences of other socialist countries or socialist movements in the Third World could be reproduced in the social context of Western capitalism. Small groups in Italy's extra-parliamentary left often interpreted these movements and their revolutionary achievements in terms of improvisation and spontaneity – an attitude that *Ideologie* disapproved of, not only at the level of ideological elaboration, but also at the level of historiographic interpretation.

The special issue on the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution mentioned earlier was also intended as yet another critique of historiographic interpretations of the Cuban experience; its main purpose was to 'deglorify' the spontaneity and insurrectionary spirit of those small groups which tended to support the ideological positions of anarchistic intellectualism against the need for theory and a revolutionary party (cf. 'Editoriale,' issue 5/6, 1968, in *Scritti programmatici di Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi 1972: 17–19). Issue 18/19 of *Ideologie* (1971–2, but published in 1974), the last issue of that journal, which dedicated more than 651 pages entirely to José Martí, was in part an expression of the search for tools that would allow a better understanding of the historical and cultural importance of Cuba and Latin America.

Ideologie, as much as it was oriented toward disalienating and revolutionary praxis, held a completely antithetical position with respect to the rejection of and intellectualistic disdain for theory. In its editorial of issue 9/10 (1970), 'Rivoluzione e studio' ('Revolution and Study'), and later on, in its editorial of issue 13/14 (1970), 'Le nuove forze e la rivoluzione cinese' ('New Forces and the Chinese Revolution'), it again rejected the illusory idea that the revolutionary experiences of others (especially the Chinese and the Cubans) could be transferred to the context of Western neocapitalist society. Although still in line with the critique of ideologies, 'Rivoluzione e studio' asserted strongly that the 'transpositive hypothesis' harbours two types of typical European defects: 'the wish of appropriating for oneself the products of others, thereby saving oneself the trouble of producing them, and the presumption of knowing how to manipulate them on one's own account' (Rossi-Landi 1967–72, 9/10 [1970]: 'Editoriale,' now in *Scritti programmatici di Ideologie*, 1972: 20–1).

As for the role of the 'party' in revolutionary processes, *Ideologie* rejected spontaneous theories that parties were useless. Yet at the same time, it was just as critical of the 'social subjects' of the histories of West-

ern worker movements, such as 'the party,' 'the working class,' and 'the proletariat.' Even these 'subjects' were abstractions, and they needed to be considered in their own context. Thus, the editorial of the third issue disavowed 'extremist philologism,' which was widespread in Italy, especially during the 1960s. 'Extremist philologism' scans the history of working-class parties for 'ruptures' and for 'left-wing alternatives.' This sort of philologism suffers from a near-sighted vision of the world; it is capable only of detecting internal contradictions within abstract subjects such as 'the party'. This leads to the construction of

> a sclerotic history of the 'class' or 'party' that arbitrarily freezes the dialectics operating within these 'subjects' that are searched to identify the foundations of an antagonism that instead arises and is renewed with the global development of society. ('Editoriale,' issue 3, 1968, in Rossi-Landi 1972: 16)

With an interpretation that is of particular interest today when considered in relation to the current debate among and within left-wing parties, the editorial ends by insisting that global social antagonism in its new manifestation justifies an organism like the 'party,' and not vice versa.

6.4.6. The New Concept of Work in Neocapitalist Society

The editorial of issue 9/10 (1970), 'Rivoluzione e studio,' described certain tendencies in Western European neocapitalist society with regard to the world politics of the day. These tendencies have since surfaced very clearly in today's world, given the stage of development it has reached. Examples of these tendencies: capitalistic stability has increased; social democracy has been progressively extended; communism has been eclipsed; and the working class has been subdivided internally with respect to new types of work and greater separation between producer and product.

On the latter score, especially insightful are the comments the editorial makes with regard to the relationship between the individual and production: individual activity directed toward production has been progressively weakened, so that activity now seems to be detached from production. This is perceived to be the result of supra-individual organizational and technological developments in production in neocapitalist society. Such developments free human beings from the daily requirements to produce. Yet at the same time, they increase, amplify, and render even more mystifying the obligation to be productive, to the point

of creating the illusion that one can live without working, without being immediately productive, without being obliged to work by an identifiable owner on whom one directly depends.

Regarding these interesting aspects – which are ever more visible today as a consequence of the more complex organization of the overall production system, as a result of developments in services, especially in communications – it is worth recalling that in those same years Rossi-Landi was emphasizing the *work* dimension of *language* itself and was studying the relations between signs and social reproduction. Human beings also work linguistically, and work is not always carried out consciously or intentionally.

In various entries in the *Dizionario teorico-ideologico* ('Lavoro e attività,' 'Ominazione,' 'Scambio non-mercantile,' 'Strutture del lavoro') ('Work and Activity,' 'Homination,' 'Nonmercantile Exchange,' 'Structures of Work') reprinted in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985), Rossi-Landi analysed the concept of work, examined the crucial role of work in the homination process, and reflected on the difference between work and activity. He made the point that the distinction between work and activity rests in the fact that unlike activity, work is planned and intentional, and follows a program; at the same time, however, work is not necessarily accompanied by consciousness or awareness of its goals and programs. To work is to act out programs, and this is what makes it different from activity; yet these programs can be conscious or unconscious.

This has obvious implications for the concepts of 'alienated work' and 'linguistic alienation' ('alienated linguistic work'); furthermore, it forges links with the Marxian analysis of work in capitalist society. However, it also concerns the possibility of speaking about 'dream work,' as did Freud. In 'Lavoro e attività' (Work and Activity), Rossi-Landi states that to admit the possibility of work without awareness of programs is to allow for 'a special contact zone for a Marxian use of Freud or a Freudian use of Marx' (1967–72, 15 [1971]: 22).

6.4.7. Further Developments in Rossi-Landi's Meditations on Ideology

While working for *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi wrote his most important texts, which he was to rewrite and expand in subsequent works. A long essay on language as conceived by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, with direct reference to the study of native Amerindian languages (Navajo, Hopi, Wintu), 'Teorie della relatività linguistica' (Theories of Linguistic Relativity, 1967–72, 4 [1968]: 3–69), was later republished in

1972 as *Semiotica e ideologia* (1994 [1972a]: 117–188), and in English as *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity* (1973).

Rossi-Landi's interest in the theory of ideology emerged clearly in *Ideologia* (1978a). Of particular value in this book is the section 'Sign Systems, Ideologies and the Production of Consensus,' in which Rossi-Landi's concept of ideology is linked to Antonio Gramsci's thought. According to Rossi-Landi, Gramsci had already identified the role that sign systems play in social reproduction and in the relationship between 'structure' and 'superstructure,' albeit in presemiotic terms. We could claim that Rossi-Landi's meditation on ideology constitutes a development of Gramscian intuitions (on the relation between Rossi-Landi and Gramsci, cf. Ponzio 1991: 205–91). Placing the Gramscian concept of the 'New Prince' in semiotic terms, Rossi-Landi wrote in *Ideologia*:

> The basic structure for the new prince will be constituted by continually interacting verbal and non-verbal sign systems, reorganized so as to constitute the realization of a revolutionary social teleology. In this way, and to this extent, a social practice upheld by those who exercise political power can promote and implement a new ideology. (1982 [1978]: 76–7)

After working with *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi became involved with *Scienze umane* (cf. 1979–80), which, as already noted, was founded in 1979 and lasted two years.

In 'Ai lettori' ('To the Readers'), which inaugurated the first issue of *Scienze umane* (April 1979), Rossi-Landi pointed out that there was still no journal in Italy that focused on the human sciences from an interdisciplinary perspective; he then underlined the ideal relation of continuity between this new journal and the work undertaken by *Ideologie* between 1967 and 1972. The new journal's goal was to publish interdisciplinary essays of the sort that, from the perspective of the human sciences, had been the most significant and lasting aspect of *Ideologie*. He related the closing of *Ideologie* to the conclusion of the historical moment in which it had been created and to 'the cessation (and in some cases perversion) of near and distant ideological models which during the years *Ideologie* was active it had seemed reasonable to be inspired by or at least referred to.'

Ideologie must now be re-examined in the light of the historical climate of the beginning of the twenty-first century. In comparing these two journals, neither of which exists any longer, perhaps we will find that more than the 'scientific and concentrated formulation' of *Scienze umane*, what we miss most today is a theoretical-ideological commitment such as that which animated *Ideologie*.

Biographical Note

FERRUCCIO ROSSI-LANDI (Milan 1921–Trieste 1985) contributed significantly to the development of semiotics and philosophy of language in Italy. In his early years, Rossi-Landi absorbed ideas and methodological instruments not only from Italian culture, but also from the cultural traditions of Austria and Germany and from the British and American schools of thought. Several of his essays and books were published first in English. For many years he lived outside Italy, mainly in England and the United States. In 1962 and 1963, he taught at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and in 1963 he taught at the University of Texas, Austin (to which he returned on several occasions). Between 1964 and 1975, he was a visiting professor at various universities in Europe and America. He taught courses in philosophy and semiotics at the Universities of Havana and Santiago (Cuba). Except for a teaching appointment in Padua (1958–62), he returned to the Italian academic world only in 1975, as Professor of Philosophy of History at the University of Lecce. In 1977, he became Full Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Trieste.

Rossi-Landi's intellectual formation was heavily influenced by his critical confrontation with Morris (among other things, he translated Morris's important book of 1938, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*); but just as influential to his thought were American pragmatism, operationalism, and English analytical philosophy (he lived in Oxford between 1951 and 1953), with special reference to the studies of Wittgenstein and Ryle (Rossi–Landi 1955 is a free translation of Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*). Rossi-Landi also revived the 'minor' Italian tradition – which boasts such significant figures as Giuseppe Peano, Giovanni Vailati, Mario Calderoni, Federigo Enriques, and Eugenio Colorni – in counterweight to the idealism represented by Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, which dominated at the time.

Rossi-Landi contributed significantly to the intellectual scene as an editor and translator, not just as an author. He served as editor or member of the editorial board for various journals, some of which he had in fact founded. These included *Methodos* (1949–52), *Occidente* (1955–6), *Nuova corrente* (1966–8), *Dialectical Anthropology* (after 1975), *Ideologie* (1967–72), and, finally, *Scienze umane* (1979–80). These made numerous contributions to the theory of signs.

For a critical general study of Rossi-Landi's work, see Ponzio (1988). Some of Ponzio's writings on specific aspects of Rossi-Landi's theoretical work are also available in English (Ponzio 1990a, 1993a). Ponzio (1990a) also includes an essay by Petrilli, 'Materiality of Signs' (Petrilli 1986b). Two other sources for the thought of Rossi-Landi are a monographic issue of the review *II Protagora* (Petrilli, ed. 1987a) and *Reading su Ferruccio Rossi-Landi* (Bernard et al., eds. 1994).

7

About Eco

We end this survey of significant figures in contemporary semiotics with a chapter on Umberto Eco (see biographical note, p. 340). First, we describe the importance of his contributions to the success, spread, and elaboration of interpretation semiotics or semiotics of the Peircean matrix. Eco has done much to direct our focus toward the interpretive component of signs and texts. Related to this is his interrogation of the 'limits of interpretation,' which the problem of interpretation implies. Another important aspect of his research is his constant return to the problem of the relationship between sign and referent; this, too, is connected with the problem of interpretation: What is the role of the referent or object in the interpretive proposal as represented by a sign? Eco's initial solution to the sign–referent problem was 'nonreferential semantics' (Eco 1975). Later, he acknowledged the inevitability of the referent's action in semiosis (which makes obvious the influence of Peirce and his triad sign–object–interpretant). During this second phase, Eco recovered the referent by introducing the concept of *rinviato* (*renvoi*) (Eco 1984). To this problem he returned once again in terms of how the object originally captures the subject's interest in that same object and, therefore, how the object captures the subject's interest in its interpretation (Eco 1997a). Our dialogue with Eco aims to show that the issues at the centre of his attention – which in the final analysis concern problems of interpretation – can only be addressed adequately when we understand interpretation in terms of responsive understanding and thereby account for the semiosical dimension of alterity. We will return to these issues below, in Part 3, 'Predicative Judgment, Argumentation, and Communication.' To clarify our position, we have divided this chapter into two main sections: 'From Decodification to Interpretation' and 'Interpretation and Responsive Understanding.'

7.1. From Decodification to Interpretation

7.1.1. Eco's Contribution to the Transition from Decodification Semiotics to Interpretation Semiotics in Italy

In the foreword to *Reading Eco*, edited by Rocco Capozzi (1997: xiii), Thomas A. Sebeok says that the appearance of Peirce in Italy is a rather complicated story. In 'Peirce in Italy' (1982), Sebeok had already pointed out the confluence between Saussurean 'semiology' and Peircean 'semiotics.' 'This particular trend may, I thought, have been most authoritatively and conspicuously carried forward in Umberto Eco's work in the early 1970s – notably in his *Trattato di semiotica generale*, where he already cited the American progenitor about five times more often than the Swiss' (in Capozzi 1997: xiii).

The middle 1970s onwards have been decisive years in Italian semiotics, in terms of developments in general sign theory as well as the extraordinary flourishing of special semiotics. These years have been marked by a transition from decodification semiotics, which was influenced either directly or indirectly by Saussurean linguistics, to interpretation semiotics, which is largely derived from the Peircean–Morrisian tradition. Two books by Eco – *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975, Eng. trans. 1976) and *Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio* (1984, Eng. trans. 1984) – can be viewed as expressions of this transition. Indeed, Eco's *Theory of Semiotics* can be taken as the end point of the early phase of Italian semiotics and as the starting point for current orientations, which are much more Peircean. (It is not incidental that the second edition of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's 1953 monograph on Charles Morris also appeared in 1975.) That said, Italian semiotics is rich in problems and perspectives beyond the Saussurean influence or even the Peircean; as a consequence, the semiotic scene in Italy during the years mentioned has been rather complex. We are alluding here to such factors as the introduction of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's research, the rediscovery of Victoria Lady Welby and her significs, and the pioneering work in semiotic research begun in the early 1950s by Rossi-Landi.

The recent ferment in critical thought and theory in Italy should be seen in the context of intellectual developments at the European and world levels and in relation to various fields. These interconnections have led to the flourishing of semiotic methodologies, theories, and practices, to the point that it is appropriate to speak of the 'adventures' of the sign (see Ponzio 1990a: part 1). Furthermore, semiotic studies have developed interdependently on the vertical axis of historiographical reconstruction

– many contributions have traced the life of signs through ancient and medieval thought (see, for example, Corvino et al. 1983; Evans 1987; Manetti 1987; Peter of Spain 1972, It. trans. by A. Ponzio 1985 and 2004; Ponzio and Petrilli 1996; Posner et al. 1997–2004: vol. 1) – and on the horizontal axis populated by the dissemination of the different specific semiotics.

An important issue, which Eco considers in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (see also his 'Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language,' in Capozzi 1997: 1–13), is the relations among the various specific semiotics, general semiotics, and philosophy of language (in the terminology of his article, between 'grammars, semiotics and philosophy of language'). As is clear from the title of his 1984 book, Eco strongly associates general semiotics with philosophy. The following statement is from his introduction:

> I believe that semiotics is philosophical in nature given that it does not study a particular system but proposes general categories in the light of which different systems may be compared. And for general semiotics philosophical discourse is neither advisable nor urgent: it is simply constitutive. (1984, Eng. trans.: xii)

In a 1997 article he states that 'a general semiotics is a branch of philosophy, or better still, it is the way in which philosophy reflects on the problem of semiosis' (in Capozzi 1997: 4).

Besides pointing out links between general semiotics and philosophy, the title of Eco's book highlights that semiotics and philosophy of language – a field not easily distinguished from general semiotics – do not coincide. To fully understand the semiotic discourse, we must approach semiotics from the perspective of philosophy – in particular, the philosophy of language (and not only verbal language).

We can say that philosophy of language explores the margins, protrusions, and excesses of the 'semiotic field,' or science – or 'theory' (Morris), or 'doctrine' (Sebeok) – of signs. Recalling the term 'metalinguistics' as Bakhtin used it to characterize his own reflections on language (which transcended the limits of linguistics), we can characterize the philosophy of language as 'metasemiotics' (on this, see Ponzio 1994b: 9).

At the same time, in Eco's opinion, as grammars of particular sign systems, the specific semiotics need not concern themselves with philosophical reflection on the categories in which they are grounded – this, however, is not to deny their philosophical foundations. This statement is intended as a reply to Emilio Garroni (cf. 1977 and his polemic

response to Eco, included in Mincu 1982), who takes the opposite stance. Garroni maintains that even though the specific semiotics may privilege empirical research, they must be fully aware of the categories through which they operate. Cesare Segre (in Marrone 1986: 153–63) also believes that 'specific semiotics' must address philosophical problems, for they work within a specific theoretical framework and, therefore, at some stage, must themselves eventually face general problems of semiosis.

The practitioners of semiotics in Italy work in a great variety of fields, including aesthetics, psychology, information theory, literary theory, literary criticism, philology, mathematics, biology, artificial intelligence, and computer science, besides philosophy and linguistics. Semiotic theory has benefited from the contributions of theories and methods imported from different fields of research and domains; these in turn have enriched themselves through their use of semiotic instruments. When asked to identify the major Italian representatives of semiotics and discuss how they differed with respect to other European schools, Eco (in Mincu 1982: 68) mentioned the field of architecture, reflection on iconic signs and on literature, the importance of philosophical speculation ('it was precisely in Italy that the transition was achieved from a structuralist semiotics of Saussurean derivation to a philosophical semiotics of Peircean derivation'), and Italian semiotics as social semiotics (with interesting grafts from Marxism), in contrast to, for instance, French semiotics, which is strongly oriented toward psychology, with grafts from psychoanalysis.

Semiotics today can be described as growing beyond decodification semiotics (or if we prefer, code or equal exchange semiotics; cf. Bonfantini, 1984: 28ff) – which is subdivided into communication semiotics (Saussure, Buyssens, Prieto) and signification semiotics (Barthes) – and as working in the direction of interpretation semiotics (Peirce, Bakhtin, Barthes, and so on). In other words, code semiotics has now been surpassed or absorbed by interpretation semiotics. Code semiotics in Italy had already been closely interrogated by Rossi-Landi in *Semiotica e ideologia* (1994 [1972], although his critique dates back to at least 1961 with *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*, 1998 [1961]), by Eco in *Theory of Semiotics* (1975, Eng. trans. 1976), by Ponzio in *La semiotica in Italia* (1976), and by Garroni in *Ricognizione della semiotica* (1977). These writings, and others still – including articles and monographic issues of journals – anticipated later publications oriented toward interpretation semiotics. These included Eco (1984, 1990), Bonfantini (1984, 1987), Rossi-Landi (1988), Ponzio (1990a, 1993b, 1994b, 1995c), Caputo and

colleagues (1998), and two Peircean anthologies edited by Bonfantini in Italian translation (Peirce 1980, 1984b; now Peirce 2003).

The term 'code semiotics' alludes to a general model of sign whereby messages are formulated and exchanged on the basis of a code that is defined and fixed antecedently to the actual use of signs. And given that the code is based on a two-way correspondence between *signifiant* (or *signifier*) and *signifié* (or *significatum*), it merely calls for decodification without involving the risks of creative or responsive interpretation. Code semiotics arises from a distorted interpretation of Saussure and reformulates the information or mathematical theory of communication in terms of the Saussurean sender/receiver model (see Shannon and Weaver 1949). As such, code semiotics is connected with a notion of communication that describes communicative interaction in terms of an object that transits from one place to another. We should remember that Rossi-Landi (1998 [1961]) had already taken a stand against conceiving communication in terms of a postal package sent off by one post office and received by another.

This model seems ever more inadequate in light of Peirce's interpretation semiotics (but also Bakhtin's philosophy of language; cf. 'Semiotics between Peirce and Bakhtin,' in Ponzio 1990a: 251–73), and of sociocultural transformations that tend toward new signifying practices which are intolerant of polarization between code and message, and which therefore weaken the code's hegemony with respect to the multivoicedness and multiavailability of the sign. Also, meaning in semiosical processes is inseparable from the work of translation carried out through the processes of interpretation, to the point that we can state that signs do not exist without another sign acting as a translatant sign.

Sebeok (1991a: 27–9) explained the notions of *encoding* and *decoding* in terms of *transduction*. Transduction consists of a series of transformations by both the source and the destination, carried out on the basis of the *interpretation* of a probable homology between meaning and an externalized serial string, as in speaking or writing or gesturing. Transduction as encoding or conversion by the source becomes decoding or reconversion on the side of destination, effected before the message can be interpreted:

> 'Transduction' refers to the neurobiological transmutation from one form of energy to another, such as a photon undergoes when impinging on the vertebrate retina: we know that it entrains impulses in the optic nerve that change rhodopsin (a pigment in the retinal rods of the eyes), through four

> intermediate chemical stages, from one state to another. A message is said to be 'coded' when the source and the destination are 'in agreement' on a set of transformation rules used throughout the exchange. (1991a: 28)

As to the notion of 'code,' a debate was conducted in Italy on its uses and abuses beginning in the mid-1970s (see Eco 1984: 256). Eco substituted the notion of 'code' with that of 'encyclopedia.' Cesare Segre (1983: 144) observed that when we concentrate exclusively on the level of codification and of the institution of rules of use, we lose sight of the processes of signification 'which cannot be studied by taking the Saussurean model of sign as the starting point; [signification], on the contrary, should be placed at the center of the processes of sign production and considered among the more complex results of unlimited semiosis.'

We have already observed that in Eco's 1976 book, the transition from communication and signification semiotics to interpretation semiotics is inseparable from the advent of Peirce in Italy. Eco's interest in Peirce's semiotics is evident in his studies of the triadic relation between sign (representamen), interpretant, and object; the processes of sign production; the mechanism of abduction, the relation between text interpretation and the reader; and the notion of code and of dictionary semantics in terms of encyclopedia and of Peirce's notion of infinite semiosical processes. Eco revisits the question of openness (*Opera aperta*, 1962) in *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990) and in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992) – in terms, he says, of 'unlimited semiosis.' In *Kant e l'ornitorinco* (1997a, Eng. trans. 1999), he turns his attention to the Peircean notions of 'Dynamical Object' and 'Ground,' thereby presupposing a theory of knowledge that semiotics, understood as philosophy of language, cannot avoid (chapter 10 in the present volume discusses Eco's thesis as he developed it in *Kant and the Platypus*). However, as he distanced himself from Saussurean semiology and ontological structuralism (Eco 1968), he was led by the idea of a binary relation between signifier and signified and between code and message to assert the following as early as 1976 (in his paper on Peirce's notion of interpretant, delivered at the 'Peirce Symposium on Semiotics and the Arts' at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore): 'I want to make explicitly clear that [his] present approach has to be labeled *Peircist*' (quoted in Sebeok, foreword to Capozzi, ed. 1997: xiii).

Eco's research clearly illustrates what has been happening to the notion of code in semiotics since the 1970s; it also shows how Peirce has been influencing the transition to interpretation semiotics. Most useful

on this subject is article 120, 'The Position of Eco' (by Giampaolo Proni), in *Semiotik/Semiotics* (1997–2004), the four-volume handbook edited by Posner, Robering, and Sebeok (vol. 2, chapter 12, 'Current Trends in Semiotics,' pp. 2311–20; cf. especially §4, 'A Theory of Codes,' and §6.2, 'Code Change and Code-Switching').

According to Eco (1976), a code governs information transition from a source to a destination; however, a code in itself cannot guarantee signification, since a connection cannot be established between (a), a set of signals ruled by internal restrictions of combination, and (c), a set of possible behavioural responses by the destination, without (b) a notion from a set of notions about the state of the world that can become communicative contents. Systems (a), (b), and (c) are termed 'S-codes.' An S-code is 'a system (i) in which every value is established by positions and differences and (ii) which appears only when different phenomena are mutually compared with reference to the same system of relations' (Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 38). As Proni says in his article in *Semiotik/Semiotics*, Eco synthesizes 'the Hjelmslevian and structuralist approach with Peirce's theory of interpretation' (trans. in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 2: 2314). Continuing:

> Eco takes the theory of interpretant from Peirce, but to accept the theory of the interpretant means to accept the process of unlimited semiosis, which is the main characteristic of the Peircean concept of sign ... It is not easy to deal with this infinity, but according to Eco 'unlimited semiosis, ... paradoxical as it may be, is the only guarantee for the foundation of a semiotic system capable of checking itself entirely by its own means' (Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 68). (trans. in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 2: 2314–15)

Furthermore, to distinguish between 'dictionary' and 'encyclopedia' and to explain the image of the 'labyrinth' informing the semantic encyclopedia, Eco uses the 'rhizome' model elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (see Eco 1984: 80ff). This model indicates that any semiosis is part of an infinite network of interpretants.

The advent of Peirce's semiotics in Italy was the subject of a series of lectures delivered at an international conference held in Naples in December 1990 (see Bonfantini and Martone 1993).

7.1.2. Peirce in Italy

The aforementioned international conference 'Peirce in Italia' ('attended by Eco and myself,' says Sebeok in his foreword to Capozzi 1997: xiii),

held in Naples between 5 and 7 December 1990 (the proceedings were published in 1993 under the same title as the conference), can be considered together with the Charles Sanders Peirce Sesquicentennial International Congress held at Harvard University in September 1989 as a keystone event in research on Peirce's semiotic universe.

Insofar as it recalls such issues as the extent of Peirce's success and the dissemination of his ideas in Italy, the title 'Peirce in Italia' does justice neither to the overall scope of the conference nor to the corresponding proceedings. From a far broader perspective, the expression 'in Italia' refers to a place where many scholars convened from different nations to analyse Peirce's thought from different theoretical and historical perspectives. Ultimately, it is not incidental that this meeting took place in Italy and not somewhere else. Peirce's thought has been of great interest in Italy, and research into it has been ongoing. We can probably state without exaggeration (and without minimizing contributions made by researchers from other countries) that Italy, after the United States, is one of the centres of Peircean scholarship. This attention in Italy to Peirce's work can be traced back to Giovanni Vailati, who was also in touch with Victoria Welby, who was one of Peirce's main interlocutors.

This connection between Vailati and Peirce is noted in *Peirce in Italia* and is no doubt an important reason for Peirce's success in Italy. One paper (by Mario Quaranta) considers the years 1900 to 1960; another (by Arturo Martone) considers the years 1960 to 1990; these papers are titled respectively 'Peirce in Italy (1900-1960)' and 'Peirce in Italy (1960–1990).' Together, they trace the development (which is often interrupted and never continuous) from the pragmatism of Vailati and Mario Calderoni to the revival of Peirce studies in Italy. Vailati acknowledges Peirce as the inventor of pragmatism; at the same time, he is fully aware of the difference between William James's version of pragmatism and Peirce's. The rise of idealism reflected in the work of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile put an end to studies of Peirce's pragmatism during the 1930s and 1940s; however, interest was rekindled in the 1950s and 1960s through John Dewey, and Peirce's pragmatism again began to win favour among such Italian philosophers as Giulio Preti, Mario Dal Pra, Ludovico Geymonat, and Nicola Abbagnano.

Abbagnano introduced the term 'abduction' in his *Dizionario di filosofia* (1971). He traced its roots back to Aristotle, while attributing its theorization to Peirce. Especially significant is a 1959 monograph on Peirce, *La filosofia pragmatica di Charles S. Peirce,* by Nynfa Bosco, who also authored 'C.S. Peirce from Science to Metaphysics,' which is included in *Peirce in*

Italia. Bosco, too emphasizes the importance of distinguishing James's 'pragmatism' from Peirce's 'pragmaticism.' In her paper, she focuses on Peirce's theory of knowledge, as well as on his ontology and its intimate connections with logic and semiotic. Bosco, in 1959, maintained that Peirce's ontology can be characterized as either realistic or idealistic, provided that idealism is understood in the sense of 'objective idealism,' such as Plato's. That said, the current revival of Peirce studies in Italy can be connected from the outset with the work of Massimo A. Bonfantini, who for his part insists on the realist character of Peirce's ontology: considering that the object is the *primum mobile* of semiotics, Peirce's semiotic perspective cannot be separated from realist ontology.

Rossi-Landi, relating back to Vailati's research, also worked along lines inspired by Peirce and continued this tradition as developed by Morris, as he maintained in his 1953 monograph on the latter (completely revised and enlarged in an edition of 1975).

Peirce's philosophy made its official entry onto the scene of Italian semiotics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Until then, as we have observed, Italian semiotics had been strongly influenced by the Saussurean theory of sign under the banner of semiology. In particular, the Peirce revival in Italy began with the work of Eco and with Bonfantini's translations from Peirce's *Collected Papers*. According to Bonfantini (1987: 14–16), we cannot speak of Peirce's influence in Italy or in Europe generally between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In fact, at that time sign studies tended to focus on the problem of sign production rather than on interpretation, whereas neo-Peircean semiotics is interpretation semiotics. Peirce's real growth in Europe came later, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Italian edition of Peirce's writings (two volumes, 1980 and 1984b), which was promoted by Bonfantini, has been crucial to the renewal of Peirce scholarship in Italy (these two volumes have since been superseded by the long-awaited attended anthology *Charles Sanders Peirce. Opere* [2003], edited by the same Bonfantini). This scholarship relates to problems that are central in Peircean semiotics – that is, abduction, hypothetical inference, and invention. Furthermore, the rise of neo-Peircean semiotics happened at a rather special historical moment, that is, when

> attention was focusing on the person in its individuality rather than on the abstract super-ego of the class. At the centre of attention needs, desires, a person's freedom; objectuality and nature, to interpret rather than attack and furiously transform into something of one's own; ecologism, pacifism, and community spirit and conviviality. (Bonfantini 1987: 15)

No doubt, this is a valid contextualization of the Peircean revival, especially when we consider aspects of Peirce's research that are less obvious but no less fundamental. For example, think of his treatment of the subject, the human person, the relation of alterity and dialogue, and ultimately the intimate links between cognitive semiotics and the spheres of value and desire. As a contribution toward a fuller understanding of the impact of the Naples conference, of the proceedings published three years later, we will focus on these aspects (which, among other things, validate Bonfantini's considerations) in the course of the present chapter. This focus should help explain the importance of Peirce to present-day research beyond Peirce (see chapter 1). Indeed, interpretation semiotics provides adequate instruments for critically interpreting today's world of global communication and production (see 11.1 and chapter 12), and, it follows, for critiquing the ideology of productivity, which as today's dominant ideology now orients human society at large. Nowadays, says Bonfantini, 'the generation of sense is no longer properly understood by neo-Peircean semioticians as the production of sense, but rather as the constitution and inference of sense, as the interpretation, selection, and deliberation of sense' (ibid.: 15).

Peirce in Italia has four sections: (1) 'Introductions to Peirce'; (2) 'Peirce in Italy: (Hi)stories and interpretations'; (3) 'Logic of Semiosis and Pragmatism'; and (4) 'Peirce beyond Peirce: Abductions and Overviews.' In their preface, the editors explain that the contents have been organized so as to highlight a series of reading trajectories: Peirce's success in Italy; European and Italian approaches to the most important of all American philosophers; and reflections on his importance (p. 3).

The first section includes essays by Gérard Deledalle, Christian J.W. Kloesel, Dario Antiseri, Jerzy Pelc, and Sebeok. The second, as the subtitle indicates, treats Peirce in Italy, and does so in a double sense – that is, it historically reconstructs Peirce's influence in Italy and also analyses current trends strongly influenced by Peirce studies. The subtitle can also be understood in the sense suggested by a paper by Kloesel, who writes about Peirce's travels in Italy (Catania, Syracuse, and Mount Etna in Sicily). The book's second section includes theoretical papers by Carlo Sini and Umberto Eco as well as three historiographical papers by Quaranta, Martone, and Bosco (referred to earlier), together with Kloesel's paper. Kloesel also authored another paper included in the first section, 'Ideas, Stray or Stolen: About Peirce's writings'; in it, he criticizes the eight-volume collection of Peirce's writings from a philological perspective on the grounds that his writings from very distant historical

periods have been assembled haphazardly and with a total disregard of chronology.

The third section, 'Logic of Semiosis and Pragmatism,' includes papers by Karl-Otto Apel, Giampaolo Proni, Maurizio Ferriani, Corrado Mangione, Salvatore Veca, and Antonio Santucci. This last, 'Peirce, Pragmatism and Italian Philosophy,' returns to the question of Peirce's influence on Italian philosophy; as such, it would have been better placed in the second section, whose papers focus on the same problem; that said, its positioning in the third section can be justified by its focus on problems of logic with specific reference to pragmatism. The third section includes some interesting papers on the relations among logic, theory of knowledge, and semiotic theory. Apels in 'Transcendental Semiotics and Truth,' proposes a semiotic analysis of the transcendental conditions of truth in the present debate about truth theories. In 'The Logic of the Three Inferences,' Proni (who had already co-authored papers on the typology of abduction with Bonfantini) proposes a classification of inferential processes. In Proni's view, Peirce's theory of inference is especially important because it follows two important unifying processes: (1) it unites the logic of mathematics with the logic of science, and (2) it unites scientific–mathematical knowledge with common knowledge. Inferences arrived at through mathematics, the sciences, and everyday knowledge do not differ in principle. Contrary to Proni, who maintains (p. 224) that this sort of unification obeys the ancient philosophical ideal of a universal logic, we contend that it is an expression of the tendency to explain differences and specificities on the basis of similarities (or more precisely, homologies) rather than oppositions. Ferriani in his paper describes the relation that Peirce established between semiotics, graphs, and inferential processes; Mangione's informative paper concentrates on Peirce and the history of logic. Peirce carried out the interesting project of opening logic to that theoretical interlacement which unites theory of knowledge with ethics; this found expression in a 1923 collection of Peirce's papers, *Chance, Love and Logic* (edited by M.R. Cohen and published in Italian on the initiative of Nicola Abbagnano). In a paper with the same title, Veca analyses the relationship between Peirce and Wittgenstein; in the fourth section, Rossella Fabbrichesi Leo examines the same relationship.

The fourth section concentrates on the relations among logic, semiosis, and pragmatism, with particular reference to abductive inference. Thus, it is closely connected with the third section, which in fact can be seen as a sort of launching pad for the fourth. The fourth section's papers

consider various practices and fields in which abduction finds expression. The practice of inventiveness is analysed by Bonfantini in 'Semiosis of Projectual Invention', and by Mauro Ferraresi in 'From Peirce: For a Semiotics of Invention'; the sense of action is analysed by Ivan Zattini in his interpretation of behaviour as semiosis. Other aspects considered include the role of abduction in historiography ('Abduction and Imputation in Historiography,' by Patrizia Fiori); in the sciences and in computational logic ('Computational Abduction,' by Lorenzo Magnani and Marco Ramoni); in music ('Abduction and Semiosis in Music,' by Luca Marconi); and, finally, in the sphere of ideology. Regarding this last, Ponzio reformulates ideology theory in terms of categories taken from Peirce and Morris. Still in the logico-semiotic area, the fourth section includes two 'confrontations': between Peirce's pragmatism and Wittgenstein's philosophical research (by Fabbrichesi Leo), and between Peirce's semiotics and the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer (by Giulio Raio).

To end this discussion on Peirce's importance in Italy, we remind our readers of Sebeok's publications and their translations into Italian. Sebeok was one of the most important promoters of Peirce's semiotics after Morris; furthermore, he broadened and completely redrew the boundaries of Peircean semiotics. Besides all this, Sebeok did much to reconstruct the history of semiotics both before and after Peirce, with a particular focus on developments in the United States (cf. Sebeok 1991c, and the related seminar held in 1992 at the Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e di Linguistica in Urbino – another important centre of irradiation of Peircean thought in Italy – whose proceedings were published as a special issue of *Semiotica*; cf. Deely and Petrilli, eds. 1993).

In 'Unlimited Semiosis and Drift,' Eco, following Peirce, works on the concept of the 'limits of interpretation'; here, he differentiates between 'interpretation' and 'hermetic drift' (the latter, according to Derrida, passes into deconstructionism). The distinction between 'unlimited semiosis' and deconstruction is central to Eco's *Limits of Interpretation*; in certain respects, that distinction corresponds to the one between pragmaticism and pragmatism. With specific reference to the problem of text interpretation, Eco draws our attention to the conflict between the pragmatic–deconstructionist approach and approaches based on the concept of unlimited semiosis. Faced with the text's potential for pluri-interpretability, Eco applies the concept of unlimited semiosis in theorizing a limit to interpretive possibilities on the basis of consensual judgment – as transitory as this may be – formulated by the community of interpreters.

7.1.3. Aporias in the Effort to Solve the Opposition between Communication and Signification

With *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975), Eco contributed significantly to the encounter between Saussurean 'semiology' and Peircean 'semiotics.' This book, in fact, is a keystone text in the project of moving away from decodification semiotics toward interpretation semiotics, and as such it deserves detailed analysis. The difficulties inherent in overcoming decodification semiotics are brought to light in this book's discussion of 'communication semiotics' versus 'signification semiotics,' and 'referential semantics' versus 'non-referential semantics.'

Eco comes out against the tendency to reduce semiotics to a theory of communication that approaches the sign as something that is produced intentionally and deliberately for communicative purposes (cf. Buyssens 1967; Mounin 1970; Prieto 1966; Segre 1969). In this regard, he points out that signification (and therefore signs or signifying functions) is possible even when interpretation derives from social convention, natural events, or unintentional behaviour. A sign is anything that on the basis of a social convention becomes a sign function for a possible interpreter; in other words, a sign can be anything that takes the place of something else.

It follows that signification is possible without intentional communication. For example, with medical symptoms, obvious relations of signification exist without the will to communicate being implied (cf. Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 18).

If we accept the idea of signs as events deriving from a natural source we must clarify the relation between inference and the semiotic act. Eco states that although certain inferences are semiotic acts, not *all* inferences are semiotic acts. They are such only when based on a social convention, on a code – that is, when a perceived event and its cause or possible effect are correlated with reference to a code based on a social convention.

According to Eco, since the conditions of a sign function include a possible interpretation by a possible interpreter and the existence of a social code, then unintentional behaviour can also be sign behaviour and have meaning without attempting communication. Anything can be a sign provided there is a convention allowing it to stand for something else. This calls for an extension of semiotics beyond the threshold that fetishistically separates signs from 'things' and natural signs from artificial signs. At the same time, however, this leads to the conclusion that stimuli should not be considered as signs, given that for this group of phenomena, behavioural responses are not determined by conventions (cf. ibid.: 19).

At this point, we must observe that in *A Theory of Semiotics*, Eco uses the term 'communication' in different senses: he applies it in the same sense as the proponents of communication semiology (Buyssens, Prieto, Mounin), but he also invests it with different and conflicting meanings. For example, in the sections of *Theory of Semiotics* thus far considered, 'communication' is understood as intentional human behaviour aimed at expressing something to someone on the basis a common code. In paragraph 0.3, 'Communication and/or Signification,' which precedes the above-mentioned section, and in the section that follows, 'Signification and Communication,' Eco defines communication as the 'journey' of a signal (which is not necessarily a sign and therefore may not have signification) from a source via a transmitter along a channel to an addressee or point of destination. There can be communication without signification, without a sign system, without signifying communication; in such cases, we merely have a conveyance of stimuli or of signals. Here, 'communication' indicates processes without signs (be they intentional, interpretable on the basis of social convention, or unintentional) – that is, they are only stimuli, signals (to avoid ambiguity, we should remember that by 'signal,' Prieto [1966, 1975] and Segre [1974] understood intentional indexes); thus the term 'communication' indicates processes in which a signal does not require an interpretive reply from a human addressee on the basis of a signification system, a code. Here, then, 'communication' is understood differently from when Eco uses it to refer to a process in which an emitter intends to express something to an addressee through a common code.

To distinguish between the two different meanings of communication, we will use the terms 'communication1' and 'communication2.' Communication1 is to be understood in the sense claimed by the supporters of communication semiology. Communication2 is to be understood as it is used in information theory, as an informational process (possibly physical information between two mechanical apparatuses) wherein there is transmission not of signs but rather of computable units of transmission, independent of their meaning (signals). The difference between these two meanings of 'communication' emerges when we consider communication2 as occurring independently of processes and systems of signification – that is, without a sign function established by a code. This in fact is how Eco considers it. Here, communication takes place in the absence of either a human emitter or a human receiver. In contrast, communication1 implies processes of signification, sign functions, and sign systems.

When Eco in *Trattato* assigns multiple meanings to the term 'communication,' this cannot but influence the meaning of 'signification' and

how we conceive the relation between communication and signification. When in the *Trattato* communication is understood as communication1, signification is considered as independent of communication. Signification is possible without communicative processes. Eco conveys this idea when he speaks of symptoms and unintentional signs. When, instead, 'communication' is understood as communication2, signification becomes a characteristic of certain communicative processes – processes that in certain ways specify the communicative process. Here, signification is a particular communicative process whereby the receiver is a human being and the process is accomplished on the basis of a code that establishes a correspondence – valid for every possible human receiver – between present and absent entities, between that-which-stands-for and its correlative. Depending on whether we are dealing with communication1 or communication2, relations of implication or of independence between 'communication' and 'signification' in Eco's discourse are changed and inverted:

For communication1:
  communication without signification: not possible;
  signification without communication: possible.
For communication2:
  communication without signification: possible;
  signification without communication: not possible.

For example, pages 16 and 17 of Eco's *Theory of Semiotics* use 'communication' and 'communicative' in the sense of communication1; whereas elsewhere, 'communication' is used in the sense of communication2.

Semantic ambivalence over the term 'communication' in the *Trattato* gives rise to some aporias. Thus, for given processes the character of communication is sometimes affirmed and sometimes denied. In fact, with regard to mechanical processes whereby units of information are transmitted, Eco speaks of the transmission of signals without a communicative function; he says that the receiver apparatus has nothing to do with codes, receives no communication, understands no signs. Yet he also describes such a mechanical model for the purpose of delineating a very simple communicative situation.

This leads to a third meaning of 'communication' in Eco's *Trattato* – that which tends to identify semantically with 'signification' when a question of human communication. Sometimes Eco uses these two terms interchangeably. The meaning of communication3 consists in shifting communication1 toward 'signification.'

Whatever is understood by 'communication,' the relation Eco establishes between communication semiotics and signification semiotics is less the result of examining the relation between communication and signification than the one between communication processes and signification systems. In fact, Eco arrives at the relation between communication semiotics and signification semiotics by associating 'communication' with the notion of 'process' and 'signification' with the notion of 'system.' He maintains that communication semiotics depends on signification semiotics, given that all communication processes among human beings presuppose a signification system. Actually, in Eco, the relation between communication and signification (concepts that, as we have seen, tend to coincide when a question of intentional human communication) is the relation between processes and systems; 'signification semiotics' is an abbreviation for 'signification systems semiotics,' whereas 'communication semiotics' is an abbreviation for 'communication processes semiotics.'

In brief, Eco means that the study of human communication processes must be based on the study of sign systems. Given the current level of studies in semiotics, this idea is rather obvious and has been accepted by proponents of 'signification semiotics' and 'communication semiotics' alike. This obviousness (which arises from Eco's terminology) does not help us resolve a long-standing impasse in the debate on the 'two semiotics' – notwithstanding what Omar Calabrese and Egidio Mucci (1975: 20) maintain in their interpretation of Eco. The relation that Eco has established between 'signification semiotics' and 'communication semiotics' (the former conceived as a theory of signification systems, the latter as a study of communication processes) is internal to Eco's theory and has little to do with the contrast between the 'two semiotics' viewed at a historical level. Communication semiology theorizes not only communication processes but also and above all sign systems; it maintains that the former are possible only if based on the latter. Thus, when Eco attributes the study of codes uniquely to 'signification semiotics,' and when he leaves the study of processes to 'communication semiotics,' he is being gratuitous. This approach has no basis if 'signification semiology' and 'communication semiology' are taken as historical references.

Calabrese and Mucci (1975: 29) show a firm grasp of Eco's discourse when they declare (as Eco himself did, quite explicitly) that in *Theory of Semiotics* the opposition between the 'two semiotics' is reduced to the difference between rule and process. However, at factual and historical levels, this opposition cannot be reduced to such a difference; thus, it should be added that the relation established by Eco cannot be allowed

to stand as a solution to the problem seen in a historical sense. This ambiguity may spring from the fact that Eco speaks of the relation between processes of social communication and systems of signification as if he were describing the relation between communication and signification in order to draw conclusions and make suggestions concerning the relation between signification semiology and communication semiology. Here, Eco's comments can be justified only to the extent that he is referring to the relation between 'processes' and 'systems.'

The definition of communication brings to light certain contradictions in Eco's theory; so, too, does the definition of signification. This moves us away from a limited conception of signification understood as communication among human beings (cf. Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 8) toward a broader conception that includes communication in any intelligent apparatus, be it mechanical or physiological (cf. ibid.: 9).

It is odd, to say the least, that Eco should first introduce the notion of 'signification process' – understood as communicative process where the addressee is a human being and the signal requires an interpretive response – and that he should then ask whether this notion can be applied to non-human, non-cultural communicative behaviour. Moreover, after stating that it would be risky to answer in the negative, Eco goes back to limiting the field of signification to the strictly human world, reaffirming what he had said from the start about signification.

As observed, Eco theorizes signification that is not communication (communication1) and communication that is not signification (communication2). In this respect, the question is whether the distinction between communication and signification (and therefore between communication semiotics and signification semiotics) should be set aside once the reductive view of communication has been abandoned (a preference that Eco shares with signification semiology and communication semiology; cf. Ponzio 1976: 18–34). But here we only wish to mention the problem.

7.1.4. Meaning and Referent: Aporias in the Effort to Solve the Opposition Between Referentialism and Non-Referentialism in Semiotics

Regarding the problem of the relation between meaning and referent, Eco's position approximates that of Stephen Ullmann (1962) and Roman Jakobson (1963). In *La struttura assente* (1968: 33), Eco states that the problem of the referent is not relevant from a 'semiological' perspective – an idea that he repeats in his books of 1971 and 1973. On the other

hand, in the *Theory of Semiotics*, he states that the semiotic subject is first of all the content and not the referent (1975, Eng. trans.: 62). Moreover, when he repeats that the referent is not relevant when dealing with conditions of signification, but only when dealing with truth conditions, he considers the threshold between conditions of signification and truth conditions (and, therefore, between a theory of codes that concerns the former, and a theory of truth values that concerns the latter) as an internal threshold, and as a 'political–empirical' limit in semiotics rather than a 'natural' limit. By this, he means a provisional, transitory limit rather than a limit beyond which semiotics would be in non-semiotic territory.

Regarding the problem of the relation between meaning and referent, Eco himself signals a change in the evolution of his thought from *La struttura assente* and *Le forme del contenuto* to the *Theory of Semiotics*. This evolution is reflected in the transition from 'antireferential' semiotics to 'non-referential' semiotics, and from there to 'not immediately referential' semiotics.

What remains unchanged at all stages in this 'evolution' is that the referent is not pertinent when dealing with the conditions of signification. In Eco's work, the idea that recourse to a referent in signification theory should be eliminated arises from a mistaken albeit widespread conception of 'referent.' Arguments in favour of non-referential semantics can only be based on a reifying and reductive approach to the referent.

Eco has reason to reject this idea of the referent; however, his argument is highly questionable when used as the basis for concluding that semantics must deal with the relation between one sign and another, between signifiers and signifieds, between signifiers and interpretants, without abandoning the chain of reciprocal sign reference that generates a process of unlimited semiosis.

Eco can support his argument that the referent is irrelevant in the study of semiosis only by applying mistaken ideas about the referent. Some of these ideas are provided by the semiotic–philosophic tradition, others by Eco himself as the result of a faulty interpretation of those authors who view the referent as an essential element in semiosis.

In particular, we are alluding here to reference theory as formulated by Ogden and Richards as well as by authors such as Adam Schaff (1960, 1974, 1975; cf. Ponzio 1993a), and L.O. Rjeznikov (1964). In Eco (1968), these authors are superficially related to one another as well as to Bloomfield (who identifies meaning with the referent on the basis of mechanistic presuppositions, whereas Schaff in particular insists on the historical–dialectical interpretation of the reflection of material reality in language

and in sign systems generally). Eco treats Reznikov and Schaff as if there were no difference between them, as materialist scholars rather than as 'Marxists.' Eco specifies that in this case, 'we do not say "Marxist" because their position is determined by V.I. Lenin's *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*' (1968: 33n18).

We will not dwell here on these judgments and interpretations, which have already been treated elsewhere (on Schaff, see Ponzio 1989; 1993a: 4.4). Whatever Eco's views regarding these and other authors still (above all Ogden and Richards, whose concept of 'referent' he uses), the fact remains that with regard to the referent, Eco fails to turn back an alternative to the metaphysical interpretation based on naive mechanistic materialism. The only solution he provides is to eliminate the referent; or rather, to recognize it as a semiotic entity but only on the condition that it be identified with the meaning of the sign itself or of another signifier acting as interpretant with respect to the sign in question. In *Theory of Semiotics*, this is the sense in which Eco invests the referent with semiotic reality as part of his reference theory.

Eco himself uses the metaphysical idea of the referent in his argument in support of non-referential semantics. This argument stands up to criticism only to the extent that it is based on a naive materialistic idea of the referent.

In his efforts to liberate semiotics from a 'metaphysics of the referent,' Eco ends up basing his argument on a metaphysics of meaning. He starts out with the intention of freeing semiotics from the dangerous identification of meaning with referent, but ends up by making the same identification himself. This is true not in the sense that he reduces meaning to the referent but rather in the sense that he reduces the referent to meaning by applying Peircean notions of 'interpretant' and 'unlimited semiosis.'

We go along with Eco's rejection of naive–materialistic conceptions of referent and therefore sign (see especially the question of the icon); furthermore, we reject criticisms of Eco's semiotic theory that propose a return to mechanistic and materialistic interpretations of the concepts of 'referent,' 'sign,' 'icon,' and so on. However, in his critique of the notion of referent, Eco falls into the same error made by certain scientists and philosophers – an error that Lenin criticized in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*: at a time of radical change in the field of physics, they mistook a crisis caused by mistaken conceptions about matter for the disappearance of matter itself. In the same way, on the basis of mistaken interpretations about the referent, Eco concludes that the referent itself

must be eliminated from the sign situation and therefore from the theory of signification.

Eco's reasoning with regard to the referent is based on two presuppositions (Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 66–7).

1 The referent is generally either a single concrete entity or an abstract entity.

This presupposition is false because it is not possible to make a general statement about what can act as referent. A referent can be a single concrete entity (not outside the sign, a 'thing in itself,' but rather a thing in itself become a-thing-for-us, which therefore is part of semiosis and as such is a cultural entity), just as much as an abstract entity, depending on the sign situation (or semiosis). A referent can be a concrete object or it can be an imaginary object; it can be an object considered to be concrete but that later proves to be imaginary, or vice versa; it can be something that is present in a given context or that is not present, and so forth.

2 If the referent is an abstract entity, a cultural entity, then it is meaning. Furthermore, we must free the term 'denotation' from any referential hypothesis; what the term denotes is meaning.

Nor is this presupposition exact. It leads to what Eco himself considers a dangerous identification of meaning and referent. This identification can result not only from reducing meaning to the referent – something Eco correctly opposes – but also from reducing the referent to meaning.

For one thing, we must establish the sign of which the referent is the meaning. That the referent of a sign is a meaning does not imply that it is the meaning of that same sign. If anything, it is the meaning of another sign – one that in the process of semiosis assumes the role of referent. But for the first sign, its meaning is one thing and its referent is another. In any case, a situation in which the referent of a sign is the meaning of another sign only constitutes a particular case; that is, it occurs when language is used as the metalanguage of language itself, which is not a general case. In other cases, the referent is not a sign but a given thing, a context, an event, an imaginary object, and so on. This is true even when the use of a sign brings into play other signs – not only those belonging to the code of the first, but those of other codes as well. And referents are always cultural entities (which is not to imply that they cannot also be matter, unless one has a naturalistic and physicalistic view of matter).

When I say, 'Now, shut that door!' I am referring to a certain action, to a certain extant state of things that is to be modified, to a certain temporal moment, and so on. And each of these referents can assume a privileged role with regard to the others (NOW, shut that door; now, SHUT that door; now, shut THAT door; now shut that DOOR). I will assume the meaning of a sign as a referent only if I am asked, for example, 'What do you mean when you say "door"?'

In short, to act as meaning is one function, and to act as referent is another, just as to act as interpretant is a different function from acting as interpreter. And none of these functions is reducible to any other, even though that which is meaning in a given sign situation can become referent or interpretant, and so on, in another, and that which is referent can become interpreter or interpretant, and so on.

Eco's reasoning is based on unacceptable presuppositions, which can be summarized roughly as follows: the referent can be considered either as a single, concrete entity or as an abstract entity – in which case it identifies with meaning so that what the sign denotes is meaning. This leads to a confusion of two different functions, both of which are present (along with others) in the process of semiosis: that of being expressed (meaning) by a signifier, and that of being denoted by a sign (referent). In simpler albeit more imprecise terms, two distinct functions of the sign are reductively identified: expressing and denoting.

A theory of signification must take into account the referent's function as an essential element of semiosis. Without the referent, there is no meaning and there is no 'sign.' A sign does not denote its own meaning; rather, it expresses its meaning by referring to something different from itself, independent of the fact that this something may be present or not, real or imaginary and so on.

In this sense we can clearly assert that the sign is autonomous with respect to the presence or absence of the material object and to the existence or non-existence of a given state of things (when signs refer to objects or to states of things), but not with respect to its referent. To know that 'water' means the same as H_2O and that H_2O means the same as 'acqua,' and so on, without knowing what these terms refer to, is not enough for them to function as signs. The fact that whatever a sign refers to can in turn be taken as a sign of something else or as the interpretant of that sign only means that the different parts which characterize semiosis can be recited each time in different situations by the same actors. But this does not imply that whatever a sign denotes is always the meaning of another signifier (even though it can become so in another sign situ-

ation). When I say, 'Here there is a pencil,' the object *pencil* (or even another object if I am mistaken or if I am lying) is the referent of 'pencil'; in this particular sign situation, this referent does not function as a sign or interpretant. However, it may become a sign or interpretant in another situation, where, for example, on showing the object *pencil* (or any other object, if I am mistaken or lying), I say 'This is what the word "pencil" means.' Thus, referents are not the meanings of other signs, even though they can become so. Within a given sign situation, the parts are distributed and are not interchangeable: that which is a sign cannot at once act as a referent, and that which is a referent cannot at once act as a meaning or interpretant. An exchange of parts is certainly possible, but then the sign situation is different.

No doubt, the process of 'infinite semiosis' – or 'unlimlited semiosis,' to use Eco's expression – indicates that signs do not exist in a specific sense, since the object can become the sign of another object or act as the interpretant of the same meaning or signifier with respect to which it acted as referent. But this does not negate the fact that every time a sign functions as sign, it refers to that which with respect to that sign does not function as a sign but as a referent – be it a thing, a situation, an event, an imaginary object, a physical object, or even another sign. In the latter case, the same thing happens as when a tool becomes the material of work, as when a hammer is repaired or made more efficient – perhaps with the aid of another hammer. That which now acts as material is not at the same time a tool, although it will be used as a tool in some other instance.

Just as it would be wrong to describe this situation by saying that we have work where there are only tools and no materials, it is wrong to describe semiosis as a process in which there are only meanings and signifiers and no referents. It is not important that the referent may in turn become a sign, nor that it serves as a referent only insofar as it results from the previous sign work of the interpretation and organization of reality, even if the material used in a given situation is the product of previous work.

Therefore, signs do not always refer to other signs. The 'uninterrupted' chain of deferrals among signs (as described by Eco 1973: 110–11 on the basis of a theory of unlimited semiosis and of the interpretant – it is no coincidence that he identifies the roots of this theory in Berkeleyan idealism and Hume's agnosticism) is in effect constantly interrupted by references to that which does not act as a sign (that is, the referent), even though in other circumstances it is a sign or may become a sign.

7.1.5. Sign Production and Ideology

In his *Theory of Semiotics*, Eco deals with the 'production of signs' with reference to research carried out by Rossi-Landi (1975a, 1992b [1968], 1994 [1972]). After the first section, 'Signification and Communication,' the rest of the book is divided into two parts: 'Theory of Codes' and 'Theory of Sign Production.' Nevertheless, despite the terminology he uses – he (1975) speaks of 'semiotic work,' of 'modes of sign production' – Eco alludes to the problem of the social production of signs in his semiotic theory.

In his introduction to *Theory of Semiotics*, Eco establishes correspondences (albeit imperfect ones) between the distinction (proposed by himself) between code theory and sign production theory, on the one hand, and between *langue* and *parole* or between competence and performance, on the other. He conceives sign production in terms of individual work: this consists entirely of individual operations that use signs of given codes – that is, that implement possibilities foreseen by a system of signification in message emission.

The starting point of a sign production theory that concerns social sign production is not, as Eco says, what happens when a sign or a sequence of signs is produced (in this case 'produced' means 'used'). Rather, a sign production theory must study the social structures of sign production through which given values, codes, rules of message emission and interpretation, uses, and individual sign behaviours come into play. In other words, a sign production theory must study the production of rules governing the codification and decodification of messages and, it follows, the motivations, interests, programs, social planning, and material conditions that in a given social system form the basis of message circulation (on all these aspects, see Ponzio 1972, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1992b, 1993a: 4.2; and chapter 6 of this book).

From this perspective, Rossi-Landi's conception of 'sign work' as distinct from apparently similar approaches is important.

In no event should sign work be understood as activity internal to the subject, as 'intentional acts' or 'mental operations' that necessarily occur in the conscious or unconscious real psyche of individuals (this would entail a residue of subjective idealism). In no event should the study of sign work be considered in terms of awareness of pre-existent acts or operations. And finally, in no event should the results of such a study be invested with the task of enlightening whoever accomplishes those acts or operations without knowing it. Following Hegel and Marx, who are rad-

ically distant from neo-idealism – especially in its Italian version – the work in question is social praxis, on the one hand, and model theory, on the other. Social praxis is supra-individual and community social praxis that distinguishes hominids from other animals; it produces human beings and, with them, history. Model theory, in this context, refers to the theoretical construction of models for comprehending and interpreting praxis itself (cf. Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972]: 38).

Eco's theory of sign production is ambiguous because in fact it is a theory of individual operations – choosing, inventing, referring, questioning, commanding, and so on – that intervene in the interpretation and emission of messages. Consequently, Eco's term 'typology of the modes of sign production' (which corresponds to a chapter in his *Theory of Semiotics*) does not refer to the forms and structures of the social relations of production. 'Modes of production' here is not understood in a Marxian sense; yet again, it exclusively concerns individual behaviour.

This is not to deny that studies of individual behaviour can be important in semiotics. However, things must be called by their proper names and recognized for what they are: when we are dealing with a 'theory of performance or use of signs,' we must say so. To let this pass as a theory of sign production would give rise to misunderstandings that threaten to mystify research.

Eco's analysis of ideology as a semiotic category necessarily suffers from the weaknesses of his theory of sign production. This explains the marginal position his analyses occupy in this particular area of semiotic theory. (For a more detailed analysis of Eco's notion of ideology, see Ponzio 1993a: 4.3.)

Eco fails to define ideology. 'Ideology as false consciousness' (Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 360) is not a definition of ideology (cf. Schaff 1967, 1968). The problem of defining ideology must be distinguished from the problem of value regarding objective truth. We are addressing two problems that are different (albeit interrelated) and that must not be confused. The definition of ideology is one thing; its evaluation regarding the problem of cognition is another. Hence, although the assertion that ideology is false consciousness is invested with the value of a definition, in fact it is not a definition – rather, it is an answer to the question concerning the value of ideology. As understood by Marx and Engels, this answer refers to a particular ideology – that of the bourgeoisie at a given time in history, that is, when from a revolutionary class the bourgeoisie transformed itself into a conservative class interested in defending its own privileges and the established order.

Moreover, as shown by examples and models used to characterize ideology in semiotic terms, Eco does not deal with ideology but with what Schaff calls the 'stereotype.' This refers to preconceived beliefs or opinions that are not subject to control and that stem from habits, deeply rooted expectations, evaluational and emotive tendencies, and perspectives that are taken as absolute. This stereotype, which constitutes an inseparable component of word and sentence meaning, belongs to the pragmatic dimension. 'Ideological connotation' as discussed by Eco is in fact the stereotypical aspect of words and expressions, precisely the stereotype that he states is based on an interweaving of code communications and indisputable hypercodes. Therefore the stereotype should not be confused with ideology, although in general terms it is integral to it. According to Schaff, the stereotype is not an immediate constituent of ideology, although ideology cannot exist without stereotypes. Ideology and stereotypes do not coincide; they are two different things, although they reciprocally influence each other. Stereotypes model ideology; in the same way, ideologies influence social stereotypes (cf. Schaff 1975: 84–5).

Another limitation to Eco's semiotic conception of ideology is his belief that one can avoid a functional–genetic approach and study the structure of ideology without studying its genesis and the mechanisms that move it (see Eco 1975, Eng. trans.: 290). As Schaff has demonstrated, neither a definition nor a characterization of ideology is possible unless we take into account its genesis and functions.

A doctrine of ideology must find support in semiotic theory as a global study of social (verbal and non-verbal) communication, which also concerns the structures of the social production of signs.

7.1.6. Extending the Boundaries of Semiotics

If philosophy of language can be described as metasemiotics, there are three issues which demonstrate that the boundaries of semiotics have also been transcended thanks to the influence of philosophy of language. In identifying these boundaries, we will take Eco's *Theory of Semiotics* as a point of reference.

One issue concerns the problem of the referent. In *La struttura assente* (1968), in accordance with Jakobson and Ullman, Eco states that 'the problem of the referent has no relevance in a semiological perspective.' In *Theory of Semiotics*, he declares that 'the semiotic object is first of all the content and not the referent.' This change in position regarding the rela-

tion between meaning and referent as reflected in Eco's evolution in thought from *La struttura assente* and *Le forme del contenuto* to *Theory of Semiotics* can be described, using Eco's own terminology, as the transition from 'antireferential' semiotics to 'non-referential' semiotics to semiotics that is 'not immediately referential.' That the referent is excluded from the study of the conditions of signification – from the 'theory of codes' – and is assigned to the competencies of truth value theory is the result of faultily considering the referent as external to semiosis, as a non-cultural entity, or of identifying it with meaning. In fact, the referent is part of semiosis and should not be identified with the meaning of the sign of which it is a referent; this also emerges in the light of Peirce's triadic analysis of the sign into representamen–interpretant–object. At the same time, to identify 'having a referent' with 'being true' means not to take account of the distinction Morris proposed (see chapter 4) between the sign's (always) referring to something (its *designatum*) and the sign's (not always) referring to something that exists in the sense of existence attributed to it by the sign (its *denotatum*). This distinction was already present in Peter of Spain's *Tractatus* or *Summule logicales*, where the *suppositio* (to stand for something) was distinguished from the *appellatio* (to stand for something existent) and both were distinguished in turn from the *significatio* (to have meaning). For his part, Eco (1984) recovers the referent's relevance to a theory of semiosis through his use of the term *renvoi* (adapted from Jakobson). He distinguishes between the sign's *always* having a referent (the *designatum*) and its *not always* having a 'referent' (the *denotatum*), and between referent and meaning, which is all of that which identifies a referent and is liable to interpretation. One approach to rectifying the mistaken exclusion of the referent from the process of semiosis involves considering the referent as an 'implicit interpretant.' Since we are referring not to 'hard, dry facts' or to 'things in flesh and blood,' but rather to facts and things acting as interpreted signs, which may in turn become interpretant signs, the referent can be viewed as belonging to an implicit interpretive route.

Another question that shifts the study of signs beyond the established boundaries of semiotics concerns what Eco (1975) calls 'the lower limit of semiotics.' This term covers the behaviour of non-human and thus non-cultural communities. Thanks especially to Sebeok, we now know that the study of signs must not be restricted to the 'science qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale' and that zoosemiosical communication – even more broadly, biosemiosical communication – must also be taken into account. However, even more than this, Sebeok maintains that

zoosemiosical behaviour and biological foundations are at the very epicentre of the study of both communication and signification. In 'Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language,' Eco states:

> If we take all the studies that have either the word *semiotics* in the title, or which appear in the journals with this word in the title, as examples of semiotic research, we find this research extends to the world of nature, from zoosemiotics to the development of a phytosemiotics; to the immunologist's interest in cellular semiosis, to the intertwining of brain sciences, artificial intelligence and semiotics. Twenty years ago, in *A Theory of Semiotics*, I placed all of these aspects of semiotics beyond a taboo threshold which I called the 'lower threshold of semiotics.' But this was above all an act of caution: one can decide, *ex professo*, not to address a series of problems without claiming that these problems do not exist. (in Capozzi 1997: 5)

The third issue concerns the relation between *sign* and *subject*. Here, too, reflection on language pushes beyond semiotics as a science to concern itself instead with philosophy of language – a development indicated by Eco's term 'extreme threshold of semiotics' (1975). It is now necessary to transcend this threshold and to reflect on the relation between 'sign and subject' (Eco 1984), given that – as Eco acknowledges – these terms are always closely intertwined. The sign viewed in terms of equality and identity relates to a sclerotic notion of the subject; whereas the sign situated in the open process of semiosis relates to a subject that is prone to constant construction and deconstruction (cf. Sebeok et al. 2001). From a Peircean perspective, the subject is an open-ended chain of signs and interpretants.

7.2. Interpretation and Responsive Understanding

7.2.1. On Sign Models between Semiotics and Philosophy of Language

Eco's interest in Peirce's semiotics can be traced back to his studies on the triadic relation sign (representamen)–interpretant–object, and on such issues as abduction, sign production, interpretation of the text (and its relation to the reader), and code and dictionary semantics (notions which he reformulated in terms of encyclopedia and of Peirce's notion of 'infinite semiosic process'). In his research, Eco gradually distanced himself from Saussurean semiology, from ontological structuralism (cf. *La struttura assente*, 1968), and from the idea of a binary relation between sig-

nifier and signified, code and message. As early as 1975, he was focusing his efforts on the Peircean notion of interpretant.

In *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984), Eco reviews and reconstructs semiotic thought with a focus on theoretical problems. He examines five fundamental concepts in semiotics and philosophy of language: sign, meaning, metaphor, symbol, and code. In the introduction to this work, he declares his intention to describe the development of twentieth-century semiotics with reference to the various phases in the development of the sign model:

> First of all, it must be observed that contemporary semiotics would seem to be troubled by the anguish of an alternative. Is the founding concept sign or semiosis? ... On reading the history of the birth of semiotic thought in this century, let's say from Genevan structuralism to the sixties, it would seem that semiotics initially emerged as reflection on the sign; but subsequently this concept was gradually put in crisis and dissolved, and interest shifted to the engendering of texts, their interpretation, the drift of interpretations, productive pulsions, to the pleasure itself of semiosis. (1984: xiv–xv)

Eco signals the need to overcome the alternative between sign and semiosis, a need for 'rediscovering that the original notion of sign was not founded on equality, on fixed correlations established by a code, on equivalence between expression and content, but rather on inference, interpretation, the dynamics of semiosis' (ibid.: xv).

The concepts that we believe must be developed by interpretation semiotics and which are not dealt with in Eco's approach – at least not directly – are the dialogical character of the sign and its essential otherness or alterity. As clearly emerges in Peirce's formulation, interpretation semiotics calls for this type of development.

In fact, Peirce's semiotics is oriented in a dialogical sense that contributes to a more profound understanding of dialogical structures and practices (see chapter 1). His thought–sign theory points out the dialogical structure of self, which can be imagined as developing in terms of a dialogue between a thought acting as a sign and another sign acting as an interpretant. The Peircean sign model is today gaining broad acceptance in both semiotics and philosophy of language and is gradually supplanting the Saussurean model, which with the spread of structuralism had strongly influenced not only linguistics (and semiology) but also the other human sciences.

The Saussurean sign model is rooted in a series of dichotomic pairs: *langue* and *parole*, *signifiant* and *signifié*, diachrony and synchrony, and the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of language (Saussure 1916). This favoured its connection with the mathematical theory of communication (cf. Shannon and Weaver 1949) and reformulation, and, it follows, with such terms as *code* and *message*, *transmitter* and *receiver*. This explains why Saussurean semiotics has been described as decodification semiotics, code-and-message semiotics, or equal exchange semiotics (cf. Bonfantini 1984; Ponzio 1992b; Rossi-Landi 1992 [1968]). Despite their tendency to oversimplify with regard to signifying and interpreting processes, these concepts were thought to adequately describe all kinds of sign processes – not only the simple sign processes of the *signal* type relative to information transmission, but also the complex type, the *sign* relative to human communication in its totality and different aspects (for the distinction between sign and signal, cf. Voloshinov and Bakhtin 1929; Ponzio 1992a, 1997a, 2001).

Furthermore, as amply demonstrated by Rossi-Landi and later by Ponzio, the Saussurean sign model – which is the main reference point for decodification semiotics – is heavily influenced by the marginalistic theory of economic value as developed by the School of Lausanne (Leon Walras and Vilfredo Pareto). The Saussurean sign model is largely the result of applying the *point de vue statique* of pure economics to the study of language. 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 sign. The sign is viewed from a synchronic perspective and described as dominated by the paradigms of the logic of perfect correspondence between that which is given and that which is received – that is, by the logic of equal exchange, which regulates all social relations in today's dominant economic system (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992 [1968], 1975a; Ponzio 1992b).

Interpretation semiotics brings to light inadequacies of the sign model that underpins decodification semiotics. The 'rediscovery' of interpretation semiotics has no doubt been encouraged by new sociocultural orientations arising from signifying practices that are intolerant of the processes of polarization between code and message, *langue* and *parole*, language system and individual speech. Thus, signifying practices that foster the centripetal forces in linguistic life, and sociocultural life generally, privilege the unitary system of the code to the disadvantage of polylogism, plurilingualism, and the multiaccentuativity and pluri-availability of signs, which are all weakened. Moreover, relative to claims to totalization

implied by the dichotomies that characterize decodification semiotics, the categories of interpretation semiotics account for the 'irreducibly other' as theorized by Bakhtin and by such philosophers as Emmanuel Levinas (cf. A. Ponzio 1994a, 1995a, 1996a; J. Ponzio 1998).

It is *this aspect* of interpretation semiotics that we consider truly decisive for its comprehensive value. Regarding binarism in semiotics, the scope of semiotic inquiry undoubtedly transcends the conflict between semioticians with a Saussurean/Hjelmslevian/Greimasian orientation and those who lean toward Peirce. These two tendencies would seem to oppose *binarism* to *triadism*. In our view, the heart of the matter is not to be found in the opposition between binarism and triadism. Rather, it is to be found primarily in the opposition between sign models that tend to oversimplify things with respect to the complex process of semiosis, and sign models (as prospected by Peirce) that would seem to do more justice to the various aspects and factors of the process by which something is a sign. This is not achieved on the simple basis of an empty triadic form, but rather on the basis of the specific contents of Peirce's triadism – that is, the categories that his triadism proposes, the typologies of sign, the dynamical character of his model, which describes signs as grounded in *renvoi* from one interpretant to another. In other words, categories such as 'firstness,' 'secondness,' and 'thirdness,' the triad 'representamen,' interpretant,' and 'object,' and characterization of the sign based on its triadic tendency toward symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity, all help us bring to light from a semiotic perspective the *alterity* and *dialogism* of signs.

In past publications, we have tried to highlight the dialogical and polylogical character of Peircean logic. The strength of his logic is not to be found in the triadic formula, as demonstrated by Hegelian dialectics, where, indeed, triadism is abstracted from the constitutive dialogism of sign life and gives rise to metaphysical, abstract, and monological dialectics. In his notes from 1970–1, Bakhtin explained how Hegelian monological dialectics is formed: although it has its roots in a vital dialogical sign context, dialectics in Hegel consists in extracting the voices (division of voices) from dialogue, eliminating any (personal/emotional) intonations, and thus transforming live words into abstract concepts and judgments, thereby obtaining a single abstract consciousness. Peirce himself took a stand against the systemic skeleton of Hegelian analysis, against dialectics intended as a kind of hypochondriac search for an end – that is, against dialectics oriented unilaterally instead of being open and contradictory (on the relation between dialogue and dialectics in Peirce and Bakhtin, cf. Bonfantini and Ponzio 1986; Bonfantini et al. 1996).

The choice in semiotics is not between binarism and triadism, but between *monologism* and *polylogism*. The limits of the sign model proposed by semiology of Saussurean matrix are not determined by binarism. On the contrary, they are determined by the fact that binarism finds expression in the concept of equal exchange between signifier and signified, and in the reduction of the complexity of sign life to the dichotomous code and message schema (cf. Ponzio 1990a: 279–80).

As Bakhtin and Voloshinov had already demonstrated in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929, Eng. trans. 1973), the instruments provided by decodification semiotics are inadequate for a persuasive analysis of the distinguishing features of human communication. These features include plurilingualism (especially as internal to a single 'national' language), plurivocality, ambiguity, polysemy, dialogism, and otherness. It follows that verbal communication cannot be contained within the two poles of *langue* and *parole*, as Saussure had theorized. Far from being reducible to the status of mere signal, the sign is strongly characterized by 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 stated earlier, meaning is not simply an intentional message formulated by a sender according to a precise communicative will. This means that the work of the interpretant sign is not limited to the very basic operations of identification, mechanical substitution, or mere recognition of the interpreted sign. In contrast with signals, signs at high levels of signness or semioticity cannot be interpreted through decoding processes, simply by referring to a fixed and pre-established code.

Furthermore, sign models are woven into our conceptions of the subject. From the perspective of decodification or equal exchange semiotics, the subject is rooted in a concept of identity at a low margin of otherness and dialogism. Accordingly, the subject coincides perfectly with its own consciousness in the sense that it fully manages its own sign processes, subjecting what it communicates to its will as both sender and encoder.

In contrast, those trends which refer to the Peircean model of sign, and which can be generally classified as interpretation semiotics, describe the production of sense and meaning in terms of an open and ongoing effort that lacks the guarantees offered by appeal to a code that has been invested with the task of regulating exchange relations among signifiers and signifieds.

The sign model proposed by interpretation semiotics is elaborated on the basis of such Peircean categories as the tripartite division of interpret-

ants into 'immediate interpretant,' 'dynamical interpretant,' and 'final interpretant,' the subdivision of the object into 'immediate object' and 'dynamical object,' the keystone triadic division of signs into 'symbol,' 'index,' and 'icon,' and so on. Peirce places the sign in the dynamic context of semiosis; he develops the concept of 'infinite semiosis' and of the sign's relation to the interpretant, which is a dialectic and dialogic relation. Significantly, Ponzio associates Peirce with Bakhtin. Like Peirce, Bakhtin placed the sign in the context of dialogism – which is the only context where it flourishes as a sign – with recourse to such categories as 'text,' 'otherness,' 'responsive understanding,' and 'intertextuality.' Although they worked independently of each other and in different directions (Peirce being concerned mainly with cognitive questions, Bakhtin with literary language), both scholars recognized the fundamental importance of dialogism.

7.2.2. Interpretation and Dialogism in the Study of Signs

What arises from all of this is a sign model that is dialectic or 'dia-logic' (intended as dialectic founded on dialogue), in which signs and semiosis coincide. Considered dialectically, the sign no longer appears as an autonomous unit endowed with a well-defined meaning, with a value that is determined in the relation of mechanical opposition with the other units forming the sign system: 'Once signs are no longer reduced to a single element, or broken down into their component parts, it is difficult to say where they begin and where they end. Signs are not things, but processes, the interlacing of relations which are social relations ...' (Ponzio 1990a: 260).

Bakhtin's notion of 'text' is no doubt broader than the notion of sign taken as an isolated unit; nonetheless, the text, much like the sign, can only flourish and be understood in a still broader context: the intertextual context of dialectic/dialogic relations among texts. The sense of a text develops through its interactions with other texts, along the boundaries of other texts. Bakhtin: 'The dialogic relationships among texts and within the text. The special (not linguistic) nature. Dialogue and dialectics' (1959–61, Eng trans.: 105).

This approach allows the full play of the centrifugal forces of linguistic–cultural life. It also theorizes otherness, polysemy, and dialogism as constitutive factors of the sign's identity. The categories developed by decodification semiotics have often turned out to be oversimplifying, especially when applied to discourse analysis, writing, and ideology. On

the other hand, interpretation semiotics, with its theories of sense, significance, and interpretability ('*interpretanza*', as says Eco, cf. 1984: 43), with its broad, flexible, and critical conception of the sign, is able to account for signification as much as for communication, thereby providing a far more exhaustive description of human communicative interaction.

The sign model developed by interpretation semiotics is dynamical. It is not founded on the logic of equivalence and equal exchange between one sign and another, between *signifiant* and *signifié,* language system and utterance, *langue* and *parole.* Instead, it is connected with the notion of deferral among signs forming the open chain of signs – with the idea of *renvoi* from the interpreted sign to the interpretant sign. These two factors of semiosis (the interpreted and interpretant), which can only emerge clearly in semiosic processes, are connected by a relation of non-correspondence determined by the overriding logic of excess and otherness.

According to this approach, the interpretant sign never corresponds precisely to the previous sign, the interpreted sign, but says something more (as says Peirce, cf. *CP* 2.228), developing and enriching the latter with new meanings. The interpreter/interpretant responds to something, and in so doing becomes a sign, which in turn gives rise to another interpretive response, and so on. From this perspective, the task of the interpretant sign is not limited to merely identifying the previous sign; rather, it is taken to various levels of 'responsive understanding' (cf., for example, Bakhtin 1959–61). This implies the existence of a concrete dialogic relationship among signs regulated by the principle of reciprocal otherness.

Bakhtin (1986: 127) states that '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 results from this live relation, certainly not from abstract relations among the signs forming a sign system. Bakhtin's concept of 'responsive understanding' is analogous to Peirce's 'dynamic interpretant.' And like Peirce, Bakhtin believes that the human being is a sign (cf. also Sebeok 1986), in the sense that both the conscious and the unconscious are composed of sign material – that is, of dialogically structured verbal material (this is stated explicitly in Bakhtin and Voloshinov [1927]).

From the impasse that characterizes decodification semiotics, Peirce's approach offers 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. Among other things, Peirce's papers have

done much to recover forgotten connections with profound studies on signs from the Middle Ages (for example, he often refers to Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*). In his famous paper of 1867, 'On a New List of Categories,' Peirce analyses the concepts he considered most suitable for a satisfactory analysis of the polyhedric nature of sign and sign life. An even more articulate version of this description is generally considered to be his letter of 12 October 1904 to Victoria Lady Welby. Referring to the relation between signs and knowledge, he expressed himself as follows:

> 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. (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 (dynamical object), but only to some part of it (immediate object). Therefore, a sign exists for Peirce according to the category of Thirdness; it presupposes triadic relations among the sign itself, its object, and the interpretant thought, which itself is a sign. A sign always plays the role of third party precisely because it mediates between the interpretant sign and its object.

Peirce's semiotics focuses on the concept of interpretation. It identifies meaning (which Saussurean semiology leaves unexplained) in the interpretant – that is to say, in another sign that takes the place of the preceding sign. Insofar as it is a sign, the interpretant exists only by virtue of another interpretant in an open-ended chain of *renvoi* grounded in the potential creativity of interpretive processes. From this perspective, semiosis is not guaranteed a priori thanks to the possibility of appealing to a code that has been fixed previously with respect to semiosis; indeed, the code itself does not exist outside the interpretive processes that establish and maintain it. 'Mediation,' which is closely interrelated with interpre-

tation and infinite semiosis, is another fundamental concept in Peirce. The sign is mediated by the interpretant, without which it cannot express its meaning; in turn, it 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 reside in the sign, but in the relations among signs. Peirce's semiotics is cognitive semiotics (but not this alone; see chapter 1). Logic and semiotics are related through the assumption that knowledge is mediated by signs – indeed, is impossible without them. Interpretation semiotics substitutes the dichotomy between signifier and signified with the triadic relation between object, sign, and interpretant. The type of sign produced (be it a symbol, an index, or an icon) depends on the relation dominating between sign and object; but whichever prevails, the role of the interpretant remains fundamental. Meanings evolve dynamically in open interpretive processes: the greater the degree of otherness in the relation between interpretant sign and interpreted sign, and therefore, the greater the degree of dialogism, the more interpretation is active dialogic response, creative reformulation, inventiveness, rather than mere repetition, literal translation, synonymic substitution, identification.

The description of signifying processes in terms of unending semiosis, of interpretive processes characterized by dialogic responsiveness, of deferral or *renvoi* from an interpreted sign to an interpretant sign, has consequences for the theory of identity and of the subject (see chapter 1). In fact, in contrast to their description from the perspective of decodification semiotics, with interpretation semiotics, identity and the subject do not emerge as coherent and unitary entities. By this approach, otherness is placed at the very heart of identity – indeed, it is constitutive of identity, which, as a consequence, is conceived as developing in the dialectic and dialogic dynamics between the sign and its interpretant, whether in thought processes forming a single consciousness or in the relations among different consciousnesses. Identity, the subject, and consciousness develop in open semiosic processes; they evolve through the dynamic of responsive understanding, dialogism, and otherness in the exchanges between the thought-sign and the interpretant. For both Peirce and Bakhtin, then, the self is constructed dialogically through translative/interpretive processes that connect thought-signs to interpretants in an open-ended chain of deferrals. In such a framework, the self is always other, is never definitively present to itself. Only in this context can the self effectively exist as self. Therefore, the self–other relationship exists not only in the more obvious case of the relations among

different consciousnesses, but also among the multiple 'selves' that form a single, 'individual' consciousness:

> The subject does not contain interpretive processes, he is not pre-existent to them nor does he control them from the outside: he is the chain of sign interpretant relations in which he recognizes himself, to the point that experience of the self of another person is not a more complicated problem than that relative to the 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 inside us. (Ponzio 1990a: 268)

A sign exists and develops in the dialectics among *symbolicity*, *indexicality*, and *iconicity*. This accounts for the different degrees of dialogism in the relations among signs and interpretants, and between the premises and the conclusion of an argument. A sign is never a pure symbol; it always contains traces of indexicality and iconicity. Similarly, as much as a sign is predominantly indexical or iconic, it will always maintain a certain element of symbolicity. In other words, as in the case of symbols, mediation by an interpretant and recourse to a convention are also necessary in the case of both indexes and icons. It follows that all signs simultaneously contain elements of symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity to varying degrees. For example, although they are fundamentally conventional, verbal signs also contain a certain degree of iconicity. (For correspondences among the categories of inferential procedure – abduction, deduction, and induction – the triad classifying signs as iconic, indexical or symbolic, and the cosmological categories of agapasm, anancasm, and tychasm, see 1.3.3.)

Symbolicity is an expression of the conventional character of the sign – that is, of the relation of *constriction by convention* between a sign and its object as established on the basis of a code, or law. The symbol is related to its object through the interpretant, without which it could not exist as a symbol. However, even if the symbol is founded on a code, a convention, a law, the latter in turn is also founded on an open process of unending deferral and *renvoi* from one sign to the next. So even with symbols, the relation to the object is never completely univocal. Symbolicity is present in all signs to varying degrees, and not just in the symbol (which, however, it characterizes). In the aforementioned letter to Welby, Peirce offered the following definition: 'I define a Symbol as a sign which is

determined by its dynamic object only in the sense that it will be so interpreted. It thus depends either upon a convention, a habit, or a natural disposition of its interpretant, or of the field of its interpretant (that of which the interpretant is a determination)' (in Hardwick 1977: 33). Furthermore, according to Peirce, the category of thirdness dominates in signs of the conventional type, where the relation to the object is established on the basis of an external law and necessarily depends on the interpretant. Thirdness is ultimately concerned with the sign in its relation to the interpretant.

Indexicality refers to the compulsory nature of signs, to the relation of cause and effect, of *necessary contiguity*, of spatio-temporal contiguity between a sign and its object. As Peirce puts it: 'I define an Index as a sign determined by its dynamic object by virtue of being in a real relation to it' (ibid.: 33). With indexes (unlike symbols), it is not the interpretant that decides the object. Here, the relation between sign and object preexists with respect to interpretation as an objective relation; in fact, that relation conditions interpretation. The sign and that of which it is a sign are given together, independent of the interpretant. However, this does not exclude the inevitability of resorting to a convention in order for the relation between a sign and its object to become a sign relation. For example, the indexical character of signs prevails in traces, symptoms, and clues, in the relation between fire and smoke, between spots on the skin and a liver disease, between a knock at the door and the fact that someone is behind that door and wants to enter. The relation between sign and object in indexes is one of cause and effect, of necessary contiguity (natural contiguity, inferential contiguity, and so on). As such, this relation exists independently of the interpretant, so that indexical signs are characterized by the category of secondness.

The icon is characterized by a relation of *similarity* between the sign and its object, and takes different forms such as images, metaphors, and graphs. Says Peirce: 'I define an Icon as a sign which is determined by its dynamic object by virtue of its own internal nature' (ibid.). The dominating factor in iconic signs is no longer natural causality, a system of conventions, or any other form of contiguity. The iconic sign signifies without depending on a code, on a convention, on conferral of sense by an interpretant. The iconic sign is self-signifying; it has meaning in itself; it imposes itself on its own account. It signifies thanks simply to its quality. Here, the sign reaches a maximum degree of independence from its object, whereas the interpretant may even occur in a system that is distant. In extreme cases, the interpretant may even be invented *ex novo* – neither through a relation of necessary contiguity (index), nor through

one of conventionality (symbol), but through one of hypothetical similarity. Although it contains traces of symbolicity and indexicality, the iconic relation is characterized by affinity, attraction, innovation, creativity, dialogism, and otherness. Given its relative signifying independence with respect to object and interpretant, the icon expresses the reality of Firstness.

Iconicity and dialogism are intimately connected. Indeed, iconic signs achieve the highest degrees of dialogism. Iconicity is not the expression of a convention, the mechanical effect of a cause, and so on; on the contrary, it is connected with the concepts of responsive understanding, active participation, dialogic evaluation, point of view, semiotic materiality, signifying resistance, irreducibility to a situation of identity, and otherness. For a better understanding of signs as characterized by iconicity and dialogism, a useful exercise is to imagine them as rejoinders in a dialogue – that is, as creative responses to the verbal or non-verbal perspective of another interlocutor, be it a provocation, a prayer, a threat, a question, or similar.

Necessity characterizes signs of both the conventional and the indexical type. The difference is that with the former, the relation of necessity arises from accepting a convention, whereas with the latter it is passively endured as the result of an external effect. Thus, in both symbols and indexes, dialogism is relatively reduced. Signs generally depend on their relationship with interpretants; however, although such dependency is a determining factor in symbols owing to the dominance of conventionality, it carries less weight in indexes and icons. Peirce often classifies the latter as *degenerate* signs (a term taken from the language of mathematics); in contrast, symbols are relatively genuine signs.

A fundamental characteristic of interpretation semiotics (as opposed to decodification semiotics) relates to the light it sheds on inferential processes. Inferences are developed in the relation between a sign and its interpretant, which is a dialogic relation. Inferences (or arguments, as Peirce also calls them) can be divided into three types: deduction, induction, and abduction. These are characterized by the predominance of indexicality, symbolicity, or iconicity. In deduction, the relation between sign and interpretant is dominated by indexicality; in induction, by symbolicity; in abduction, by iconicity.

When we describe sign processes as open chains formed by the unending deferral of interpretants, sooner or later we must consider the terms and sense of this opening. In other words, as Eco puts it in the title of his 1990 book, we must examine 'the limits of interpretation.'

Eco identifies two conceptions of interpretation. To interpret means to

highlight the objective nature of a text, its essence independent of interpretation; at the same time, the text is subject to infinite interpretation. Eco criticizes the second position as 'hermetic semiosis' and maintains that – contrary to appearances and to the opinion of certain scholars – the Peircean theory of infinite, open-ended semiosis is something altogether different. The main object of Eco's critique is Jacques Derrida's notion of 'infinite deferral' as elaborated by 'deconstructionism.'

Eco contends that Derrida's notion of 'infinite drift' – especially as formulated by the deconstructionists – is altogether different from Peirce's concept of infinite semiosis. He bases his argument on Peirce's notion of *habit*, which is connected with the intersubjective character of interpretation and is fixed by community convention. 'From the moment in which the community is pulled to agree with a given interpretation, there is, if not an objective, at least an *intersubjective* meaning which acquires a privilege over any other possible interpretation spelled out without the agreement of the community' (1990, Eng. trans.: 40).

Eco's take on the Peircean notion of 'infinite semiosis' seems to point to the dialogic character of interpretation. The relations among interpretants are dialogic (in other words, the logic of interpretants is a *dialogic*) in the sense that an interpretant sign cannot impose itself arbitrarily, authoritatively, or unconditionally on the interpreted sign. Understood in terms of a dialogic chain, the Peircean chain of interpretants escapes the risk of being considered equivalent to a 'free reading' wherein the will of the interpretants (and with them of the interpreters) beats the interpreteds 'into a shape which will serve their own purposes' (ibid.: 42).

This makes the connection that Ponzio establishes between Peirce and Bakhtin even more interesting, for as we know, Bakhtin also emphasizes the dialogic aspect of signs. Ponzio demonstrates how the three different types of argumentation (induction, deduction, and abduction), which Peirce considers in terms of the relations among interpretants, are arrived at by differentiating the degree of dialogism in the relation between the premises and conclusion, or between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. From this perspective, proceeding from the highest to the lowest degree of dialogism and otherness, abduction classifies first, then induction, then deduction.

In deduction, as in indexical signs, the relation between the premises and the conclusion is regulated by necessity – more precisely, by necessary contiguity. The facts asserted in the premises oblige us to accept the interpretant-conclusion. This relation of constriction is characterized by

a low degree in dialogism and otherness. In the case of induction, the conclusion is not imposed unconditionally by the premises; rather, there is an *inclination* to accept the conclusion once the premises have been accepted, and the conclusion neither depends on nor derives directly from the premises. The relation between the premises and the conclusion is of a symbolic order, so that inference is largely determined by interpretation and by convention. In other words, given the margin of *free consensus*, the relation between the premises and the conclusion is conventional and corresponds to symbolicity. Induction allows for a quantitative increase in cognition. Ponzio comments:

> In this case, we do not have the predetermination of a given dialogic part in an argument by virtue of another part as occurs in deduction. Here there is a certain relation of autonomy between the parts in question. However the distancing between the premises and the conclusion is only of a quantitative type. Similarly to deduction, the inductive process is unilinear, it develops according to a precise order of succession extending from the point of departure to the point of arrival without discontinuities or retroaction. (1990a: 267)

In contrast, in abduction (or retroduction, as Peirce also calls it), inference proceeds backwards from the consequent to the precedent. In abduction, the law is sought a posteriori with regard to observation and interpretation, on which it depends. That the law depends on interpretation implies that it can be conflated and that one law can be referred to instead of another, depending on the context. Sometimes, the law is founded on the existing cognitive encyclopedia; other times, it must be invented *ex novo*. This suggests the possibility of passing from the highest levels of novelty and abductive creativity to the lowest. In abduction, the relation between the premises and the conclusion is determined neither by the obligation of contiguity nor by the arbitrariness of conventionality. The premises *suggest* the conclusion – and simply through a relation of relative similarity: we start from a result that evokes a given law on the basis of which it is possible to attempt an explanation of the case at hand. With this kind of inference, the relation between the premises and the conclusion is only probable: it is dominated by conjecture, by the inclination to guessing, and it is somewhat risky. The interpretant-conclusion is relatively autonomous with regard to the premises: the higher the level of creative abduction, the greater the degree of dialogism and otherness. But whatever the degree of innovation, novelty, and creativity, in abduc-

tion the terms of the argument are always characterized by high levels of otherness and are always connected dialogically. Furthermore, abduction is associated with iconicity, given the role played by similarity. In contrast with those trends in communication analysis, where the task of the linguistic worker is reduced to decodification and recognition and where signs are largely reduced to the status of signals, interpretation semiotics must inevitably theorize the interconnection between semiotics and logic.

Two important typologies proposed by Peirce – his triad *symbol*, *index*, and *icon*; and his tripartition of inference into *deduction*, *induction*, and *abduction* – are not simply separate and mutually indifferent classifications. On the contrary, the different types of signs and of inferences (or arguments) are interconnected to varying degrees relative to their dialogic import; and we know that the degree of dialogism is a function of the relation between sign and interpretant. Peirce theorized a relation between sign and interpretant that is similar to the relation between the rejoinders in a dialogue. The connections between Peirce's semiotics and his logic (that is, between his typology of signs and his typology of inferences or arguments) are also, therefore, the connections between semiotics and dia-logic.

When we consider together Peirce's semiotics and Bakhtin's philosophy of language, we can place the sign in the dynamic context of inference, interpretation, and the dialogic processes of semiosis; we can also start bringing to light other aspects of the relations among signs in different signifying practices. For example, by considering Peirce and Bakhtin together, we find it easier to address the problem of meaning in verbal and non-verbal signs in terms of *interpretive routes* (cf. Ponzio 1990a, 1995c). In fact, to understand meaning as an 'interpretive route' is to place it in the context of dialogic relations, in response to both Peircean and Bakhtinian conceptions of sign. Meaning is described as a possible interpretive route in a sign network, one that interweaves with other interpretive routes that may branch out from the same sign. Once we depart from a sign where multiple meaning trajectories intersect, it is possible for us to choose and shift among alternative routes. Meaning emerges as a signifying route in a sign network, as an interpretive route that is well defined yet at the same time subject to constant amplification and variation thanks to constant dialogic contact with other interpretive routes. The indeterminacy, openness, and semantic availability of the sign is explained in terms of its contextualization in dialogic relations. Dialogism is present:

1 in the relation between the sign and its interpretant, which in argumentation is
2 in the relation between the premises and the conclusion, with a minor or major degree of dialogism depending on whether we are dealing with deduction, induction, or abduction (Peirce);
3 in the relations among the multiple verbal and non-verbal interpretants that form an open-ended interpretive route; and
4 in the relations among the interpretants of different interpretive routes.

This description contributes to our understanding of the distinguishing features of human communication – that is to say: ambiguity, polysemy, plurivocality, heteroglossia, dialogism, 'semiotic materiality' (i.e., signifying otherness), and therefore semiotic autonomy and the capacity for resistance of signs and meanings with respect to other interpretant signs as well as to the subject that produced them in the first place.

The relationship between interpretation and dialogism also sheds light on the question of translation. In *Experiences in Translation* (2001), Eco contends that translation is not about comparing two languages but about interpreting a text in two different languages, which as such involves a shift between cultures. If this is true, then translation as well involves dialogue between an interpretant and an interpreted oriented by the logic of semiotic otherness (which is verbal, non-verbal, cultural). Translation is dialogue between two texts in a relation of reciprocal otherness (Petrilli 2003b: 1–20). From such a perspective, the concept of dialogism can be seen to solve the problem of the limits of interpretation as well as the problem of the relation between translation and interpretation as conceived by Peirce (cf. Eco 2001: 65–132).

The translated text (interpreted) and the translating text (interpretant) are interconnected by a relation of otherness, which Peirce signals as being present in all signs when he says that their interpretants are somehow always other than themselves. Instead of just 'saying almost the same thing' (to evoke the title of a 2003 book by Eco), to translate is to commit to a relationship that is more than a relationship among things that are 'almost' the same – that is in fact a dialogical relationship based on difference understood in terms of *otherness*. From this arises our proposal of the term 'the same other' (*Lo stesso altro*, which corresponds to the title of the third volume in a trilogy dedicated to translation theory and practice; see Petrilli, ed. 2001a) to characterize the translatant text, instead of simply describing it as that which says the same thing, almost.

Biographical Note

UMBERTO ECO (b. 1932), world famous as a best-selling novelist, has made significant contributions to many areas of theoretical and applied semiotics. This chapter focused on the development of Eco's semiotic research, from *La struttura assente* (1968) and *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975) to *Kant e l'ornitorinco* (1997a). The latter is also discussed in depth in 10.1.

Part 2

Modelling, Writing, and Otherness

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8

Modelling and Otherness

8.1. Modelling, Communication, and Dialogism

In this chapter we demonstrate the pivotal role of *dialogism*, *modelling*, and *communication* in semiosis.

8.1.1. Model and Modelling

The terms 'model' and 'modelling' are used in the present text as understood by Thomas A. Sebeok and his global semiotics.

As noted earlier (see 5.1.1), a fundamental concept in Sebeok's global semiotics is that of *model*, which he developed from the Moscow–Tartu school (cf. Lucid 1977; Rudy 1986), which makes a distinction between the 'primary modelling system,' used to denote natural language, and 'secondary modelling system,' used for all other human cultural systems. However, Sebeok extended the concept of model beyond the domain of anthroposemiotics by connecting it to the research of the biologist Jakob von Uexküll and his concept of *Umwelt*, which according to Sebeok can be translated as 'outside world model.' On the basis of research in biosemiotics, we now know that the modelling capacity is inherent in all life forms. Semiosis can be viewed as the capacity that all life forms have to produce and comprehend the species-specific models of their worlds (cf. Sebeok and Danesi 2000: 5). Primary modelling is the innate capacity for simulative modelling in species-specific ways. The primary modelling system of the genus *Homo* is *language*. Secondary and tertiary modelling systems presuppose language and thus are uniquely human capacities. The secondary modelling system is verbal language, or in Sebeok's terminology, *speech*. Tertiary modelling systems are all

human cultural systems – that is, they are symbol-based modelling processes grounded in language and speech.

8.1.2. Reformulating Thure von Uexküll's Typology of Semiosis

In 'Biosemiosis' (in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: 447–56; see also Uexküll, 'Varieties of Semiosis,' in Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok, eds., 1992: 455–70), Thure von Uexküll distinguishes among three different kinds of semiosis characterized by the different roles played in each by the emitter and the receiver. He calls these three kinds of semiosis (1) *semiosis of information* or *signification*, (2) *semiosis of symptomatization*, and (3) *semiosis of communication*.

In *semiosis of information* or *signification*, an inanimate environment acts as a 'quasi-emitter' without a semiotic function. It is the receiver – that is to say, a living entity, a living system – that must make whatever it receives meaningful. It does this through receptors, and it must perform all semiotic functions.

In *semiosis of symptomatization*, the emitter is a living being sending out signals through its behaviour or attitude. These signals are not directed toward a receiver and do not attend a response. Signals received by the receiver are signs referred to as 'symptoms.'

In *semiosis of communication*, signs are emitted for the receiver, which must trace the meaning that the emitter intended (cf. ibid.: 449–50).

In our terminology, and in accordance with Charles S. Peirce (and also with the terminology used by Th. von Uexküll in his biosemiotic approach), these three kinds of semiosis can be reformulated in terms of the different roles carried out by the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. We may state the following:

1 The interpreted becomes a sign only because it receives an interpretation from the interpretant that is a response to it (semiosis of information).
2 The interpreted is already an interpretant response (symptom) before it is interpreted as a sign by the interpretant; however, the interpreted sign does not arise specifically for interpretation as an interpreted sign (semiosis of symptomatization).
3 The interpreted is already an interpretant response before it is interpreted as a sign by the interpretant, but here it arises specifically for interpretation as a sign; in other words, the interpreted is oriented toward an interpretant response that it elicits (semiosis of communication).

This reformulation of Th. von Uexküll's typology of semiosis, which distinguishes between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign according to how they participate in interpretation, presents the following advantages over the conception of semiosic differences established on the basis of 'emitter' and 'receiver' participation:

1 The role of the interpretant in semiosis is emphasized.
2 The 'inanimate quasi-interpreter' in semiosis of information or signification is described as the 'interpreted–non-interpretant' (whereas in semiosis of symptomatization, the interpreted is an interpretant–interpreted, which does not arise specifically for interpretation as a sign; and in semiosis of communication, the interpreted is an interpretant–interpreted, which does arise specifically for interpretation as a sign).
3 Semiosis is identified with the capacity for interpretation – that is to say, for response.
4 The importance of the pragmatic dimension in semiosis is confirmed.
5 Th. von Uexküll's definition of biosemiotics as 'interpretation of interpretation,' or in a word, 'metainterpretation,' is confirmed and developed.

In our reformulation, we employ the same terminology that Th. von Uexküll used for describing his model of biosemiotics, which has five aspects: an *interpreter*, an *interpretant*, an *interpretandum*, an *interpretatum*, and a *metainterpreter*. This last is present especially in human language (cf. ibid.: 456).

Semiosis of information (or signification), semiosis of symptomatization, and semiosis of communication are all grounded in the specific types of modelling that are characteristic of specific life forms. A species's capacity for modelling is the necessary a priori for processing and interpreting perceptual input in its own species-specific ways.

8.1.3. From 'Substitution' to 'Interpretation'

According to Sebeok (1994b: 10–14), both the Object (O) and the Interpretant (I) are Signs. Thus, we can rewrite O as S_{O_n} and I as S_{I_n} so that both the first distinction and the second are resolved in two sorts of signs (cf. ibid.: 12–13).

In our opinion, and in accordance with Peirce, who reformulated the classic notion of substitution in the medieval expression *aliquid stat pro*

aliquo in terms of interpretation, the sign is first of all an interpretant (cf. Petrilli 1998e: 1.1).

In fact, the Peircean terms of the sign include what could be called the *interpreted* sign on the side of the object, and the *interpretant* sign on the side of the interpreter, in a relation wherein the interpretant makes the interpreted possible. The interpreted becomes a sign component because it receives an interpretation; in turn the interpretant is also a sign component, one that is endowed with the potential to generate a new sign. Thus, where there is a sign, there are immediately two; and given that the interpretant can generate a new sign, there are immediately three, and so on, ad infinitum. This is Peirce's conception of infinite semiosis or the chain of deferrals from one interpretant to another.

To begin analysing the sign from the object of intepretation – that is, the interpreted – is to depart from a secondary level. Put another way, to depart from the interpreted object is to depart from a point in the chain of deferrals, or semiosic chain. However, this point cannot be considered as the departure point. Nor can the interpreted sign be privileged by way of abstraction at a theoretical level in order to explain the workings of sign processes. An example: a spot on the skin is a sign insofar as it can be interpreted as a symptom of liver disease. This is already a secondary level in the interpretive process. At a primary level, retrospectively, the skin disorder is an interpretation enacted by the organism itself in relation to an anomaly that is disturbing it and to which it responds. The skin disorder is already in itself an interpretant response.

To say that the sign is first of all an interpretant is to say that the sign is first of all a response. We could also say that the sign is a reaction – only, however, on the condition that by 'reaction' we mean 'interpretation' (this is similar to Charles Morris's behaviourism, but different from the mechanistic approach). The term 'solicitation–response' is preferable to 'stimulus–reaction' because it enables us to avoid superficial associations with the approaches they respectively recall. Even a 'direct' response to a stimulus (or better, solicitation) is never direct; it is always 'mediated' by an interpretation. Unless it is a 'reflex action,' the formulation of a response involves identifying the solicitation, situating it in a context, and relating it to given behavioural parameters (whether a question of simple types of behaviour, such as the prey–predator model, or of more complex behaviours connected with cultural values, as in the human world).

The sign is first an interpretant, a response through which something else is treated as a sign and becomes its interpreted, on the one hand, and that has the potential to generate an infinite chain of signs, on the other.

Consequently, the 'ambiguity' of the concept of semiosis signalled in the entry 'Semiosis' in *Enyclopedia of Semiotics* (Bouissac, ed., 1998) relates not to the term but rather to the phenomenon of semiosis, which is at the same time a process and a relation, activity and passivity, action *of* sign and action *on* sign, including sign solicitations and responses, interpreteds and interpretants.

In Peirce's view, semiosis is a triadic process and relation whose components include sign (or representamen), object, and interpretant: 'A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object' (*CP* 2.274). Therefore, the sign stands for something, its object, 'not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea' (*CP* 2.228). However, a sign can only do this if it determines the interpretant, which is 'mediately determined by that Object' (*CP* 8.343). Semiosis is action *of* sign and action *on* sign, it is both activity and passivity. 'A sign mediates between the *interpretant* sign and its object' insofar as it refers to its object under a certain respect or idea, the ground, and determines the interpretant 'in such a way as to bring the interpretant into a relation to the object, corresponding to its own relation to the object' (*CP* 8.332).

8.1.4. Centrality of the Interpretant in the 'Semiosic Matrix'

Th. von Uexküll's model is broad enough to include sign processes from microsemiosis and endosemiosis, to semiosis in higher organisms, through to human biosemiotic metainterpretation. It covers most of the elements postulated for semiosis by Martin Krampen in 'Model of Semiosis' (in Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: 248). This list includes the following fourteen elements, all of which are deemed necessary for a complete description of semiosis. Elements designated by a letter in parentheses are located within the organism of the interpreter:

1 *the semiosis as a whole*: Z;
2 *the organism of the interpreter*: (O);
3 *the interpretandum* ('signal'): S;
4 *the channel*: (Ch);
5 *the signifier* (the signal represented in the organism): (Rs);
6 *the interpretant*: (I);
7 *the signified* (the object represented in the organism): (Rg);

8 *the interpretatum* ('objet'): G;
9 *the disposition for instrumental behaviour*: (Rbg);
10 *the disposition for signalling behaviour*: (Rsg);
11 *instrumental behaviour*: (BG);
12 *signalling behaviour*: (SG);
13 *external context*: (C);
14 *internal context*: (c).

On the basis of this list, a semiosis can be described in the following way:

> A semiosis Z is a process involving a channel Ch with an interpretandum S, which is related to an interpretandum G by being perceived and represented as a signifier (Rs) within the Organism (O) of its interpreter; the signifier (Rs) then being mediated by an interpretant (I) to connect with the signified (Rg), which represents the interpretatum G within (O). Via the interpretant (I), this process of symbolizing and referring triggers dispositions for instrumental behavior (Rbg) and/or signaling behavior (Rsg); these are both related to the interpretatum G and terminate, via appropriate effectors, in overt instrumental behavior BG or signaling behavior SG, the latter supplying interpretanda for a further process of interpretation. Each semiosis Z is surrounded by other semioses and takes place in a context C external to (O) as well as a context (c) internal to (O). (Ibid.: 251)

This complex definition of semiosis centres on the notion of *interpretant*. In fact, as we have already stated, the interpretant mediates between *solicitation* (interpretandum) and *response* (signalling behaviour or instrumental behaviour). In Peirce's view, mediation distinguishes a semiosis from a mere dynamical action – 'or action of brute force' – that takes place between the terms forming a pair. Semiosis results from a triadic relation: it 'is an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant,' and it is not 'in any way resolvable into action between pairs' (*CP* 5.484). The interpretant does not occur in physical phenomena or in non-biological interactions; in short, it does not occur in the inorganic world.

The definition of semiosis proposed by Krampen (quoted above) is illustrated graphically as a 'semiosic matrix' (cf. Posner et al., 1997–2004, 1: 252, Figure 5.1). A rhombus at the centre of the *semiosic matrix* represents the interpretant I.

Most interesting is the pivotal role played out by the interpretant in the semiosic matrix, indicated by placing at the centre the rhombus that represents the interpretant.

8.1.5. The Dialogic Nature of Sign and Semiosis

The same article uses the semiosic matrix that displays the various partial semiosic processes in order to illustrate some other types of semioses, such as *Pavlovian conditioning*, *the inference 'if ... then,'* *hypothesis formation*, and a '*chain of thought*.' For all these types of semioses, the semiosic matrix graph emphasizes the central role of the interpretant (cf. ibid.: 253–7).

Dialogue, too, is illustrated graphically through the semiosic matrix (cf. ibid.: 260). Krampen maintains that dialogue commences with signalling behaviour from a sender, the intention of which is to communicate something about an object. What he does not take into account is that the 'if ... then' inference, hypothesis formation, and 'chain of thought' are themselves dialogic forms.

In inference, in the hypothetical argument, and in the chain of interpreted and interpretant thought signs generally, dialogue is implied in the relation between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. In past writings, we have discussed the dialogic nature of inference and hypothetical argument.

In deduction, in which the relation between the premises and the conclusion is *indexical*, the degree of dialogism is minimal. Here, once the premises have been accepted, the conclusion is inescapable. In induction, which is also characterized by a unilinear inferential process, the conclusion is determined by habit and is of the *symbolic* order: identity and repetition dominate, although the relation between the premises and the conclusion is no longer inescapable. In contrast, in abduction the relation between premises and conclusion is *iconic* and is dialogic in a substantial sense; in other words, it is characterized by high degrees of dialogism and inventiveness as well as by a high risk of error. To say that abductive argumentative procedure is risky is to say that it is mostly tentative and hypothetical, with only a narrow margin for convention (symbolicity) and mechanical necessity (indexicality). Thus, abductive inferential processes are generated in, and in turn themselves generate, sign processes at the highest levels of otherness and dialogism.

The relation between sign (interpreted) and interpretant, as understood by Peirce, is a *dialogic* relation. We have already shown *the dialogic nature of the sign and semiosis.*

In *semiosis of information* or *signification* (Th. von Uexküll), where an inanimate environment acts as a 'quasi-emitter' – or in our terminology, where the *interpreted* becomes a *sign* only because it receives an interpretation by the interpretant, which is a response – receiver interpretation is dialogic. Also, dialogue is encountered in *semiosis of communication* (Th.

von Uexküll), where the interpreted itself, before being interpreted as a sign by the interpretant, is already an interpretant response calling for interpretation as a sign. However, dialogue also is encountered in *semiosis of symptomatization* (Th. von Uexküll), where, too, the interpreted is an interpretant response (*symptom*) that much like in the case of *semiosis of information* or *signification*, does not arise for the sake of being interpreted as a sign.

Dialogue does not commence with signalling behaviour from a sender that intends to communicate something about an object. The entire semiosic process is dialogic. Here the term 'dialogic' should be understood as *dia-logic*. The *logic* of semiosis as a whole, and consequently the logic of Krampen's semiosic matrix, is a *dia-logic*. The interpretant as such is 'a disposition to respond' – Krampen's term describing the dialogic interaction between a sender and a receiver (cf. Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: 259).

Krampen's semiosic matrix confirms the connection we have established between dialogue and semiosis. It indicates that the two terms coincide, not only in the sense that dialogue is semiosis, but also in the sense that semiosis is dialogue. This latter point seems to have escaped Krampen. The dialogue process presented in the semiosic matrix is similar to the 'if ... then' semiosic process, to hypothesis formation, to the chain of thought, and to the functional cycle after J. von Uexküll. In Krampen's article, the semiosic matrix illustrates dialogue; two squares represent the two partners – that is, the sender and the receiver – and each has its own rhombus representing the interpretant. Despite this division, the graphic representation of dialogue is no different from the author's diagrams representing other types of semiosis. For example, it could be the model of an 'if ... then' semiosis in which the two distinct interpretants are the premises and the conclusion of an argument in a single chain of thought.

8.1.6. Dialogue and the 'Functional Cycle'

Jakob von Uexküll's 'functional cycle' is a model for semiosic processes. As such, it too has a dialogic structure and involves inferences of the 'if ... then' type, which can even occur at a primitive level, as in Pavlovian semiosis or as prefigurements of the type of semiosis that takes place during cognitive inference (where we have a 'quasi-mind' interpreter).

In the 'functional cycle,' the *interpretandum* produced by the 'objective connecting structure' becomes an *interpretatum* (represented in the organism by a signalling disposition) and is translated by the interpret-

ant into a behavioural disposition that triggers a behaviour in the 'connecting structure.' Von Uexküll does not use a dialogic model. All the same, in the 'functional cycle' thus described, a dialogic relation is established between an interpreted (interpretandum) and an interpretant (interpreted by another interpretant, and so forth). Furthermore, this relation does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted; rather, it establishes an interactive relation with it.

The reverse also holds. The 'functional cycle' has a dialogic structure; and besides this, dialogue in communication, understood in a strict sense, can be analysed in the light of the functional cycle. In other words, the dialogic communicative relation between a sender who intends to communicate something about an object and a receiver can be considered in terms of the functional cycle model. The type of dialogue in question here corresponds to the processes described by the functional cycle as presented – using Th. von Uexküll's terminology – not in semiosis of information (or signification), and not in semiosis of symptomatization, but in semiosis of communication. Here, the interpreted, before it is interpreted as a sign by the interpretant, is already an interpretant response addressed to somebody who is to be identified and who is to receive the required *interpretant of answering comprehension.*

There is no entry for 'dialogue' in Winfried Nöth's *Handbook of Semiotics* (1990), although that term is present in the 'Index of Subjects and Terms,' which informs us that this subject is treated in the chapter 'Communication and Semiosis' (Part Three), in which the functional cycle is also mentioned (cf. ibid.: 176–80). This points to the implications of J. von Uexküll's biosemiosic functional cycle for the problem of the relation between dialogue and communication. These pages discuss different communication models and show how the biological models – which describe communication as a self-referential autopoietic and semiotically closed system (such as the models proposed by Humberto N. Maturana, Francisco J. Varela, and Th. von Uexküll) – are radically opposed to both the linear (Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver) and the circular (Ferdinand de Saussure) paradigms. As Nöth (1990: 180) reports, Th. von Uexküll (1981: 14) has demonstrated that the biosemiosic functional cycle of J. von Uexküll (1982: 8) has this feature of autonomous closure and therefore reacts to its environment solely according to its own internal needs.

The theory of an autopoietic system is incompatible with dialogism only if we subscribe to a trivial conception of dialogue, one that is based either on a communication model that describes communication as a linear causal process that moves from source to destination, or on the conver-

sation model, which is governed by the 'turning around together' rule. Also, the autopoietic system calls for a new notion of creativity. Otherwise, the question would be: How is the principle of autonomous closure compatible with dialogue conceived as the inner structure of the individual, therefore with creativity and learning? As Maturana (1978: 54–5) seems to suggest, dialogic exchange – as opposed to communication understood as a linear process from source to destination, or as a circular process in which the participants take turns playing sender and receiver – should be conceived as 'pre- or anticommunicative interaction.'

8.1.7. Dialogism and Biosemiosis

Regarding the Bakhtinian notion of 'dialogism,' we have observed (see 3.1.4) how in Mikhail M. Bakhtin's view, dialogue does not consist in the communication of messages, nor does it involve initiative taken by the self. On the contrary, the self is always in dialogue with the other – that is, with the world and with others – whether it knows it or not; the self is always in dialogue with the word of the other. Identity is dialogic. Dialogism is at the very heart of the self. The self, 'the semiotic self' (cf. Sebeok, Petrilli, and Ponzio 2001), is dialogic in the sense of a species-specifically modelled involvement with the world and with others. Self is implied dialogically in otherness, just as the 'grotesque body' (Bakhtin 1965) is implied in the body of other living beings. In fact, from a Bakhtinian perspective, *dialogue* and *intercorporeity* are interwoven: there cannot be dialogue among disembodied minds, nor can dialogism be understood separately from the biosemiotic conception of sign.

As we have already observed, Bakhtin's most important interpreters, such as Michael Holquist, Tzvetan Todorov, Wladimir Krysinsky, and René Wellek, have all fundamentally misunderstood Bakhtin and his concept of dialogue. This is confirmed by their interpretation of Bakhtinian dialogue as being similar to dialogue as theorized by Plato, Martin Buber, Jan Mukařovský, and others.

For Bakhtin, dialogue is the embodied, intercorporeal expression of the involvement of one's body – which is only illusorily an individual, separate, and autonomous body – with the body of the other. The image that most adequately expresses this idea is that of the 'grotesque body' in popular culture, in vulgar language of the public place, and above all in the masks of carnival. This is the body *in its vital and indissoluble relation to the world and to the body of others.* With the shift in focus from identity (be it individual as in the case of consciousness or self, or collective as in the case of a community, a historical language, or a cultural system

at large) to alterity, a sort of 'Copernican Revolution' is brought about. Bakhtinian critique conducted in terms of dialogic reason interrogates the general orientation of Western philosophy as well as the cultural tendencies that do the most to generate it.

The 'Copernican Revolution' operated by Bakhtin in relation to conceptions of self, identity, and consciousness involves all living beings, not just humans. Consciousness implies a dialogic relation, one that includes both a witness and a judge. This dialogic relation is present not only in the strictly human world but also in the biological world. Says Bakhtin:

> When consciousness appeared in the world (in existence) and, perhaps, when biological life appeared (perhaps not only animals, but trees and grass also witness and judge), the world (existence) changed radically. A stone is still stony and the sun still sunny, but the event of existence as a whole (unfinalized) becomes completely different because a new and major character in this event appears for the first time on the scene of earthly existence – the witness and the judge. And the sun, while remaining physically the same, has changed because it has begun to be cognized by the witness and the judge. It has stopped simply being and has started being in itself and for itself ... as well as for the other, because it has been reflected in the consciousness of the other. ('From Notes Made in 1970–71,' in Bakhtin 1986: 137)

8.1.8. The Biological Basis of Bakhtinian Dialogue and the 'Great Experience'

Bakhtinian dialogue is not the result of an attitude that the subject decides to take toward the other; rather, it is the expression of the living being's biosemiosic impossibility of closure and indifference toward its environment, with which it constitutes an entire system, designated *architectonics* by Bakhtin. In human beings, architectonics becomes 'architectonics of answerability,' a semiotic consciousness of 'being-in-the-world-without-alibis.' It may be limited to a small sphere – that is to say, to the restricted life environment of a single individual, one's family, one's profession or work, one's ethnic or religious group, one's culture, contemporaneity – or, on the contrary, it may be extended, as consciousness of the 'global semiotic' order (the term is Sebeok's), to the whole world in a planetary or solar or even cosmic dimension (as suggested by Victoria Welby). Bakhtin distinguishes between 'small experience' and 'great experience.' The former is narrow-minded experience. In contrast,

> in the great experience, the world does not coincide with itself (it is not what it is), it is not closed and finalized. In it there is memory which flows and fades away into the human depths of matter and of boundless life, experience of worlds and atoms. And for such memory the history of the single individual begins long before its cognitive acts (its cognizable 'Self'). ('Notes of 1950,' in Bakhtin 1996: 99)

We must not forget that in 1926 Bakhtin wrote 'Contemporary Vitalism,' in which he discussed biological and philosophical problems. This article, which was signed by the biologist Ivanov I. Kanaev (cf. 1926), is important to reconstruct Bakhtin's early thought. It reflects Bakhtin's early interest in biology as it related to the study of signs.

This article was written at a time of frenzied activity for Bakhtin (see 3.1.5): the years 1924 to 1929, which he spent in St Petersburg (then Leningrad). In this productive period of his life, he published four books on different subjects (Freud, Russian Formalism, philosophy of language, Dostoevsky's novels). Yet he signed only the last of these; the others (as well as several articles) were signed by either Voloshinov or Medvedev.

In St Petersburg, Bakhtin lived in Kanaev's apartment for several years, and Kanaev heightened Bakhtin's interest in biology as well as in the work of the physiologist Aleksej A. Ukhtomsky, who influenced Bakhtin's conception of the 'chronotope' in the novel. J. von Uexküll is also named in Bakhtin's text on vitalism.

In 'Contemporary Vitalism,' Bakhtin's criticism of vitalism – of the idea that life processes in living beings are based on a special extramaterial force – is directed more than anywhere else against the biologist Hans Driesch, who interpreted the organism's homeostasis in terms of full autonomy from its environment. In contrast, in his own description of the interaction between organism and environment, Bakhtin opposes the dualism of life force and physical–chemical processes, maintaining that the organism forms a monistic unit with the surrounding world. The relation of body and world is a dialogic relation in which the body responds to the environment modelling its world.

8.1.9. Rabelais's World as the World's Biosemiotic Consciousness

The category of the 'carnivalesque' as formulated by Bakhtin, and the role he assigns to it in his study on François Rabelais, can only be understood adequately in the context of his global (the 'great experience') and biosemiotic view of the complex and intricate life of signs.

The original title of Bakhtin's book on Rabelais – literally, *The Work of François Rabelais and Popular Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* – emphasized the intricate links between Rabelais's work, on the one hand, and the view of the world as elaborated by popular culture (its ideology, its *Weltanschauung*) as it evolved from Hellenistic and Roman times to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, on the other. In Western Europe, this cultural development led eventually to bourgeois society and its ideology.

Bourgeois ideology conceives of bodies as separate and reciprocally indifferent entities. Understood this way, bodies have only two things in common: first, they are all evaluated according to the same criterion, that is, their capacity for work; and second, they are all interested in the circulation of goods, work included, with the end of satisfying individuals' needs. This ideology continued into the Stalinist era in Russia, which coincided with the time of Bakhtin's writing, and throughout the entire period of 'real' socialism, during which only work and the capacity for production were considered to be community factors; in other words, work and productivity were the sole elements linking individuals to one another. Therefore, beyond this minimal common denominator, individual bodies remain reciprocally indifferent to and separate from one another.

The carnivalesque participates in the 'great experience,' which offers a global view of the complex and intricate life of bodies and signs. The Bakhtinian conception emphasizes the inevitability of vital bodily contact; it shows how the life of each one of us is implicated in the life of every other. In what can be described as a 'religious' (from the Latin *religo*) perspective on the existent, this conception highlights the bond that unites all living beings to one another. Furthermore, the condition of excess is emphasized – of bodily excess with respect to a specific function and of sign excess with respect to a specific meaning. Signs and bodies – bodies as signs of life – are ends in themselves. In contrast to all this, the minor and more recent ideological tradition is vitiated by reductive binarism, which sets the individual against the social, the biological against the cultural, the spirit against the body, physical–chemical forces against life forces, the comic against the serious, death against life, high against low, the official against the non-official, public against private, work against art, work against non-official festivity. Through Rabelais, Bakhtin recovered the major tradition and criticized the minor and more recent conception of the individual body and life inherent in capitalism as well as in scientific socialism and its metamorphoses. As Bakhtin demonstrated in

the second edition (1963) of his 1929 book, Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel was in line with the major tradition in *Weltanschauung*.

Self cannot exist without memory, and structural to both individual memory and social memory is otherness. The sort of memory we are alluding to here is the memory of the immediate biosemiotic 'great experience' (in space and time) of indissoluble relations to others experienced by the human body. These relations are represented in ancient forms of culture as well as in carnivalized arts; however, the sense of the 'great experience' is anaesthetized in the 'small,' narrow-minded, reductive experience of our time.

To conclude: Modelling and dialogism are pivotal concepts in the study of semiosis. Communication is only one kind of semiosis, one that – together with the semiosis of information or signification and the semiosis of symptomatization – presupposes the semiosis of modelling and dialogism. This emerges clearly if, in accordance with Peirce and his reformulation of the classic notion of *substitution* in terms of *interpretation*, we consider the sign first of all as an interpretant – that is to say, as a dialogic response foreseen by a specific type of modelling.

8.2. Identity, Otherness, and *Primal Sense* as a Modelling Device

8.2.1. Primal Sense or Mother-Sense

In a series of unpublished manuscripts – 'essaylets,' notes, letters – written between 1904 and 1910, Welby proposed the profoundly original concept of 'mother-sense' (or 'primal sense,' as she was later to prefer) (Welby Collection, York University Archives, Box 28, Subject File 24). This concept plays a vital role in her conception of how signifying capacity is developed and how world views are constructed (see 1.3.4).

Welby formulated the term 'mother-sense' around 1890, later to replace it with the term 'primal sense' and its variant, 'primary sense.' However, she thoroughly developed this concept only after contributing to the debate over Francis Galton's eugenics, which 'studies the influences that improve and develop to a maximum the innate qualities of the human race.' One of her papers was read on 16 May 1904 at a meeting organized by the Sociological Society, another in February 1905 (cf. Welby 1905, 1906).

Welby distinguished between 'mother-sense' and 'father-sense'; however, both terms are gender-neutral; mother-sense is not exclusive to women, and father-sense is not exclusive to men.

Mother-sense denotes a broad capacity for knowledge through feeling and perception. It is specific to human beings, and although not exclusive to women, it is usually handed down by them as its main custodians for historico-socio-cultural reasons. So-called 'father-sense,' the intellect, knowledge through assertion, argumentation, the capacity for generalizing the datum observed and experimented on in science and logic, is by tradition entrusted to men but is by no means exclusive to them. Mother-sense can be understood in the double-sense of *sapio* and *scio*. Sense already knows, and it is 'savoured,' so to speak, by what the intellect must work for. What the intellect must strive to discover, the body already knows. Indeed, to be fully developed, the work of the intellect in the domain of scientific research must be nourished by mother-sense, which is the precondition for the development of the capacity for argumentation and criticism.

From the perspective of what today is often described as the dialogic relations among differences, we can claim that Welby did not establish a net separation between the sexes on the basis of the concept of sense. 'Mother-sense' or 'motherhood' should not be confused with 'female' or 'feminine' – that is, the meanings of these terms do not identify with 'woman.' Understood as the capacity for sense, significance, and critique, the concept of mother-sense or motherhood emerges as an a priori with respect to sexual identity; it indicates a condition that invests both sexes – indeed, that involves the masculine in a way that 'fatherhood' does not involve the feminine. Mother-sense, or motherhood, finds maximum expression in the woman without being exclusive to her. The masculine, the intellect, and the feminine, sense (mother-sense), from which the intellect derives, coexist in each single individual – at least potentially. Thus, 'motherhood' does not necessarily imply physiological maternity, although this is one of its possible manifestations.

Moreover, in the light of evolutionary theories prevailing at the time – and with respect to which she did not fail to be critical – Welby overturned the bible story to maintain that women represent the power of reproduction and, it follows, the principle of continuity, whereas men introduce the principle of variation. As such, it is women rather than men who symbolize humanity most fully. Welby believed that the human being, whether male or female, is not human in a full sense if the maternal element or 'mother-sense' is lacking or denied. Furthermore, in an unpublished paper, 'Motherhood of Man,' Welby specifies that the woman in the mother is passive and anabolic, whereas the fe-male in her is catabolic, an active source of nourishment. As a mother, the woman

incorporates man structurally, and the male and female components in her interrelate actively with each other: 'Man is the whole term; it means human.' Mother-sense is both analytical and synthetical; it implies the capacity for cognitive development in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and this involves the capacity to change attitudes and perspectives, to accomplish cognitive leaps: 'Calculation gives useful results but without sense and judgement of quality it can only give the description of the fact.' From this perspective, the male and female *principia* are not divided and separate elements; on the contrary, they are recovered in their original dialectic and dialogic relationship. Both have the potential for a spiral sort of development characterized by openness and continuity rather than by circularity and uncreative repetition. Furthermore, thanks to its opening toward the other, to its capacity for involvement with the other, for responsiveness to the other, mother-sense is also the precondition for the possible development of the ethical dimension of human signifying practices beyond the capacity for cognitive knowledge.

Welby also defines sense as 'instinctively religious' knowledge, where 'religious' is understood as 'feeling awareness of the solar relation.' She is referring here to a universal sense of dependence, especially developed in the woman, to a universal capacity for transcendence, a universal tendency toward a vaster world, a world made of other origins and other relations beyond the human, beyond the merely planetary, a world ultimately oriented by what in our terminology can be described as the logic of 'dialogic otherness.' As all of this, mother-sense is exclusive to human beings. This does not imply anthropomorphism, as specified by Welby, but rather (and far more extensively) organomorphism, on the one hand, and cosmomorphism, on the other.

8.2.2. Primal Sense, Modelling, and Creativity

Certain aspects of signifying processes implied by the concept of mother-sense, primary sense, or primal sense can be read and developed in the light of the concept of 'language' or 'modelling device' as theorized by Thomas A. Sebeok.

The 'primary modelling system' is described as an innate modelling device that is present in all living species. On the basis of this innate simulatory modelling capacity, all species simulate their worlds in their own species-specific ways. Sebeok calls the primary modelling system that is specific to humankind 'language,' which is distinct from and antecedent to speech. This primary modelling system was present in the mute hom-

inid, and it served as the departure point for a new course in evolution, one that led to the rise of *Homo sapiens sapiens* (cf. Posner et al. 1997–2004, 1: art. 18, §5 and §6; cf. also Sebeok 1986, 1991a, 1991b; Sebeok and Danesi 2000). Much like mother-sense as theorized by Welby, the primary modelling device, language, is the precondition for acquiring knowledge and for communicating through the various sign systems that constitute human behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal. Another term proposed for 'language' or 'modelling device' is 'writing' – that is, writing *ante litteram*, writing that precedes the letter (cf. Ponzio 1994a: 63–6; see also chapters 8.3 and 9.1).

'Secondary modelling systems,' in part now redefined as 'tertiary modelling systems' (cf. Sebeok 1991b: 58), and in any case what can be described as derivative signifying behaviour characteristic of human culture, including 'speech' – which arises specifically for communication and intellectual work generally – presuppose the 'primary modelling system,' which Sebeok understands as 'language' and Welby as 'mother-sense,' or 'primal matter.' Secondary and tertiary modelling systems, which also involve what we are identifying here as mother-sense, are grounded in and interrelate with the 'primary modelling system'; they, too are endowed with the capacity for the highest degrees of creative modelling in the sphere of anthroposemiosis. Through such interconnections, humans, unlike other animal species, are capable of generating a potentially infinite number of alternative world views.

As a modelling capacity, mother-sense is oriented by the logic of dialogic otherness and creativity; furthermore, it is the precondition for generating infinite new worlds in a potentially endless variety of possible articulations and signifying processes. As articulate, signified, already configured realities, human derivative worlds are projections, interpretations, and developments of primal sense, and at the same time reductions and simplifications of primal sense.

In a letter to Welby dated 2 October 1907, Ferdinand C.S. Schiller suggested that she replace the expression 'mother-sense' with 'common sense' in order to avoid the risk of oversimplified interpretations or misunderstandings, such as the belief that she wished to exclude the male sex from her considerations:

> But why should you not identify your Mother-sense with Common-sense and call it (mainly) that? It is what at bottom you mean – the wisdom of the 'tout le monde' which is wiser than the sages, which pervades Society and its history and is rarely formulated and never adequately expressed in set

> logical terms. It is truly 'common' in that it can be fathered upon no one, and in that it is at the basis of our 'common' life in society; it is also 'mother,' in that the logical acumen grows out of it. I am also willing to believe that women in general, when one gets beneath the surface of their frivolities and follies have retained a closer contact with this force and that e.g. the 'maternal instinct' will (despite all appearances to the contrary) triumph over 'race-suicide' temptations, if only women are given a free hand in the regulation of things. So you would have ample reason for calling this 'common-sense' a 'Mother-sense', but the more you emphasised the former phrase the more intelligible you would become to the mere male! (Schiller in Welby 1985a: ccxlvi–ccxlvii)

In any case, Schiller tended to misunderstand Welby. For example, he thought he was saying something different from her when he maintained that to analyse intuition is not to deny logic so much as to reformulate it; in fact, this is exactly what Welby was saying.

Welby replied to Schiller that even though the term 'mother-sense' coincides in certain respects with 'common sense,' to the point that this statement seems a truism, she preferred to avoid the term 'common' because of its negative and reductive associations. At the same time, she agreed that the term 'mother' ran the risk of generating interpretations that would be limited with respect to her own conception – for example, by narrowing reference to the organic or biological sphere.

As clarified earlier, the concept of 'mother-sense' or 'primal sense' refers to primal signifying material, to primordial and presexual signifying material that is antecedent to the division among the sexes, to material wherein the feminine and the male *principia* are united. With her conception of 'primal sense,' Welby invites us to reflect on the maternal component that is inherent in all human beings; she describes this as the precondition and the a priori of the intellectual and logical capacity that it produces. In a text dated 30 June 1908, now in *Significs and Language*, a collection of her writings edited by H. Walter Schmitz, Welby states:

> My own transition (as a matter of precaution) from 'mother' to 'primal' (with, as variant, 'primary') Sense, is an illustration of the difficulties created by our neglect of Significs. For it ought to be understood at once, *that in such a context as mine* I cannot possibly mean by Mother-sense, mainly, still less only, the shrewd or practical insight of the typical 'mother' in the actual or organic sense.

> Naturally I mean a primordial, inceptive, inborn, need-fertilised, danger-prompted, interest-stimulated, Sense. *'Mother' is indeed or ought to be, the wide and general, 'Father' the specialised, term.* The pre-sexual organism *was* the maternal, and *included* the paternal element. We already recognise this in our philosophical and scientific use of the term Matrix. We never, in this connection, use the term Patrix; and we are quite right. The 'mother' is enabled by stimulus to conceive, develop, nourish new life. (1985a: ccxliii)

Much like language – which Sebeok, following the Moscow–Tartu school, theorizes as a primary modelling system – racial, primal, or mother-sense (Welby also proposed the term 'matrical' sense, from *matrix*) is a precondition for the evolution of humankind both ontologically and phylogenetically and, therefore, for the development of the historical and social practices of human behaviour.

However, good ideas and good intentions can suffer distorted development. This has been the case with eugenics, a set of propositions that has evolved in terms that to say the least dishonour humanity. Throughout the twentieth century, the idea of studies on 'the influences that improve and develop to a maximum the innate qualities of the human race' was expressed in the ideology of racial discrimination, to the point of promoting ethnic cleansing, which is even now being practised in various forms and to varying degrees around the world. Let it suffice to recall the Nazi Holocaust and, more recently, the ethnic cleansing campaigns in the Balkans, in Kurdistan, and in Rwanda. And let us not forget that the Nazi ideologues also found justification for their policies in the eugenics movement, which flourished in the United States in the early twentieth century.

'Racial sense,' 'racial motherhood,' 'mother-sense' as theorized by Welby, is a form of sense shared by all men and women, 'a heritage common to humanity,' and it is often evoked through a series of stereotypes termed 'intuition,' 'judgment,' and 'wisdom.' Its rudimental forms can be traced in what Welby calls 'in-sense' or 'pre-sense.' However, from a historical–social perspective, mother-sense is transmitted to oncoming generations mainly by women, because of the social practices of caring and nurturing that they are called on to carry out every day as mothers and wives. The logic of giving and responsiveness to the other, of care for the other, orients these social practices. However, 'mother-sense' or 'racial sense' has largely been suppressed by civilization's artificial social conditions: the mother figure is overpowered by the violence of her sons. And in fact, from the perspective of social history, the woman has often

been abused and violated by her own creation, the male, notwithstanding her roles and social responsibilities. All the same, given that in historical and social terms the woman especially is aware of the racial sense – of the sense of racial motherhood with which humanity is endowed indiscriminately – Welby pointed out the woman's special responsibilities for recovering ancient wisdom and, therefore, for criticism and creativity. From this perspective, she did not fail to underline the crucial role played by women in the development of speech or verbal language and, therefore, in the construction of the symbolic and social orders. She even set herself the task of illustrating the specialized mental activities of women as distinct from those of men. Paradoxically, however, as we have seen, womankind is constantly inhibited and oppressed as a result of practices that to say the very least are debilitating for the whole of humanity.

As described by Welby, the history of humankind is also the history of constant deviations in development, the history of the loss of mother-sense and thus, of our sense of discernment and criticism – the most serious deviation of all. As a result of this loss, we are induced to be satisfied with the existent as it is. What is in fact needed, if we wish to develop and perfect humanity, is the condition of *eternal dissatisfaction*: 'We all, men and women, now tend to be satisfied ... with things as they are. But we have all entered this world precisely to be dissatisfied with it.'

With the concept of mother-sense, racial motherhood, Welby set out to recover the human intellect's capacity for criticism and creativity, that is, for creative interpretation, translation, transformation, prediction, and innovation. Thus, mother-sense also emphasizes the need for critique with respect to social, moral, and religious conventions, the goal being to improve the concrete abstraction that is future generations.

The following is from Welby's undated reply to Schiller's letter of 2 October 1907:

> (A) [...] Well, the mother-sense never 'sets its heart' on any 'pet hypothesis': if it had done this in the original days of its reign, you and I would never have been here. The race would have been snuffed out. No: it takes one hypothesis after the other, treating the one it 'cares' for with a more uncompromising scrutiny and severity than the others. The very life of its owner and her children once hung upon this instinct of suspicion and of test. It is sheer mother-sense – instinct of intellectual danger – which in you, as in Dewey, Peirce and James, calls out the pragmatic reaction! It is the direct descendent of the keen awareness of the signs of primitive dan-

ger to the babes of the pair or the tribe, left in relatively weak hands. But let the pragmatists beware of exchanging one fallacy or one overworked method for another, perhaps its opposite.

(B) Yes, *all* half-words (and some spuriously used whole ones) are handicaps. They settle your involuntary dualisms from the first. As to the 'majority of women,' the dominant Man with his imperious intellect has for uncounted ages stamped down their original gift: all their activities beyond the nursery (and, alas, there also now) are masculinised: language, originally the woman's as custodian of the camp, creator of its industries and first trainer of the next generation, is now wholly 'male': the whole social order is laid down, prescribed for the woman on masculine lines only. Who ever, for instance, thought of consulting her about changes in marriage law? Well, it would after all have been useless: you have crushed out all but her illogical prejudices and her emotional insistencies, which urge her to set her heart on pet hypotheses or to cling to doctrinal mummies as though they were living. These are really the last refuge of a balked prerogative of mind.

Frivolities and follies! What else is left to one for whom 'strong-minded' has become an epithet of dislike and contempt? And when the suppressed energies of the race do, in spite of all, 'spurt up' in us women, what can their fruit be, as things are, but abortive and defective?

The present mode of 'College' or 'technical' training can at best but make the woman a second- or third-rate Man: she further loses thereby what little she has of the racial gifts – her natural and complementary powers of interpretation and problem-solution, of suggestion and correction. Again, look at her inventive complexities, e.g. of weaving. Woman was of course the original weaver. Look at her logic and mathematics of the knitting-pin, the hook, the shuttle, the needle. Look at old lace and embroidery. I myself have 'invented' elaborate figures produced by a mere hook, and 'stitches' by a mere needle. No man has ever, apparently, seen the significance of woman's ingenuities here and applied them to his inventions, or in his training of students. Practically only the sailor and the fisherman understand even knot- and net-work.

That the Mother-sense is 'common' seems to me a truism. Of course it is common. Only, the word common is used in several senses. In one it means despicable and is coupled with 'unclean.' On another side, Loeb's tropisms are common! And my Originating, Birth-giving, Reproductive, Interpretative – my Mother-sense, is common to the whole range of life and extends *beyond* it and *beneath* it. (1985a: ccxlix–ccl)

8.2.3. Primal Sense, Otherness, and Criticism

In 'Primal Sense and Significs' (1907b, originally 'Mother-sense and Significs'), published for the first time in *Significs and Language* (1985a), Welby declares that mother-sense, primal sense, or racial sense is the generating source of sense and meaning, of the interpretive and inventive capacities, of the capacity for solving problems, for discerning the multiform meanings of signs and life. Thus it is the ultimate source of critical sense.

Welby did not refuse dominant logic *tout court*, the established symbolic order, cognitive methods whose incalculable value, on the contrary, she appreciated. However, in the spirit of significs – the name she chose for her theory of sign and meaning (see chapter 2) – she described primal sense as eliciting constructive criticism with respect to set habits in our use of logic, cognitive instruments, and interpretive models.

In 'Primal Sense and Significs,' she describes 'primal sense' as the 'Mother of senses,' as a comprehensive and homogeneous faculty, a psycho-physical power of response and adjustment, an organic form of knowledge necessary to the survival of the human species. And thanks to all this, it is also the generating source of the rationalizing intellect, and therefore also of our capacity for critique and construction. It follows that the task of significs as described in this paper is

> not only to criticise, but also to reason out and construct from, the *données* of Primal Sense, its warnings, its *in*sights and *far*sights, its revelations, its swift reading of worth, its penetrative recognition of reality.
>
> It is just here, then, that the place and work of Significs is to be found, as the necessary link – rather, the medium of interpretative communication – between the constant 'givings' of Mother-sense and the constant 'constructions' (in all senses) of the intellect. (1985a: ccxxxix)

Welby emphasized, as a precondition for understanding the value, meaning, and import of all experience, the importance of recovering the connection between the rational dimension of the intellect and primal sense. In fact, one of the main tasks that Welby assigned to significs was that of recovering the relation of reciprocal implication – and therefore of reciprocal interpretation – between the constant *données* of mother-sense, on the one hand, and the constant constructions of the intellect, on the other. Primal sense provides us with the material of 'immediate awareness, conscious and interpretive'; from an evolutionary

perspective, it represents 'a further stage in value, of the animal's instinct.' From a biosemiotic perspective, we can treat it as the departure point for a new course in evolution leading to the rise of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Primal sense is both 'primordial and universal' and is present at all stages of human development to varying degrees (ibid.: ccxxxviii); as such, it implies significance before and after the processes of signification. Primal sense concerns the real insofar as it is part of all human practices, and it concerns the ideal insofar as it is the precondition itself for humanity's aspirations to continuity in progress and perfection.

Once we recognize the connection between primal sense and rational behaviour, we can begin to recover the sense of symbolic pertinence active in the child, whose propensity for investigation is considered by Welby to be a possible cognitive model for the adult. Such critical work is inevitably mediated by language, understood in the strict sense of verbal language, spoken and written, as well as by the various sign systems used by human beings to signify and communicate. Consequently, in line with her critique of language (a central topic in significs), language must be kept in perfect order. Welby identified an inseparable relationship between language and consciousness: both are grafted onto primal sense, and this serves to emphasize the importance of developing a 'critical linguistic consciousness' and, therefore, of using language in such a way as not to impede the exquisitely human capacity for 'answering comprehension' ('dialogic and critical comprehension,' to use Bakhtin's terminology).

Peirce observed that logic is the 'ethics of the intellect.' To this, Welby responded with her conception of primal sense, which she described as the path to the ethical dimension beyond the cognitive. In this regard, of some interest is Welby's letter to Peirce dated 21 January 1909, in which she again reflects on her preference for 'significs' (rather than 'semeiotic') as the name for her theory of sign and meaning:

> Of course I am fully aware that Semeiotic may be considered the scientific and philosophic form of that study which I hope may become generally known as Significs. Though I don't think you need despair of the acceptance of your own more abstract, logically abstruse, philosophically profound conception of Semeiotic. 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. Alas, there is no word (except religion) more dangerously taken in vain than morality. (Hardwick 1977: 91)

One of the main objectives of significs is to fully recover the connection between logic and primal sense, the matrix of sense, in a relation of reciprocal interdependency and empowerment. This must involve reviving common sense in all its signifying valency, from the instinctive–biological to the level of significance. By recovering the relation between logic and sense and between sense and value from a 'significal' perspective – or if we prefer, a 'semioethic' perspective (or 'teleosemiotic'; cf. Petrilli 1998a, 1998e; and see chapter 12) significs theorizes the possibility of extending logic beyond its strictly gnoseological boundaries and connecting it, in the quest for the properly human, to the organic level of life, on the one hand, and to the ethical and esthetic dimensions of signifying processes, on the other.

8.2.4. Identity, Primal Sense, and the Logic of Love

From the perspective of his agapastic theory of evolution, Peirce maintained that evolutionary results generated by the logic of love and otherness are oriented by love for something concrete (for example, one's 'neighbor'), that is, by affinity and similarity notwithstanding distance in space (cf. 'Evolutionary Love,' 1893, *CP* 6.287–317). Independently of Peirce, Welby also theorized a conception of love and otherness in relation to the concrete; at the same time, however, she criticized the tendency toward 'vague and void abstractions' as represented, for example, by faulty use of the concept 'future.'

When we compare Peirce's approach to the problem of mind and subjectivity with that of Welby, it is clear that their positions are similar, even though reached independently. Consider the following passage from 'Logic and Spiritualism' (1905, *CP* 6.557–87) on the 'obscure part' of the mind, on behaviour governed by intuition, sense, and 'mother-wit' (the expression is Peirce's), in the light of Welby's ideas:

> Swarming facts positively leave no doubt that vivid consciousness, subject to attention and control, embraces at any one moment a mere scrap of our psychical activity. Without attempting accuracy of statement demanding long explanations, and irrelevant to present purposes, three propositions may be laid down. (1) The obscure part of the mind is the principal part. (2) It acts with far more unerring accuracy than the rest. (3) It is almost infinitely more delicate in its sensibilities. Man's fully conscious inferences have no quantitative delicacy, except where they repose on arithmetic and measurement, which are mechanical processes; and they are almost as

> likely as not to be downright blunders. But unconscious or semi-conscious irreflective judgments of mother-wit, like instinctive inferences of brutes, answer questions of 'how much' with curious accuracy; and are seldom totally mistaken. (*CP* 6.569)

Welby's unpublished manuscripts include a file labelled 'Subjectivity,' with papers written between 1903 and 1910. These analyse the problem of subjectivity in terms of the complex and articulated relationship between the 'I' and the 'self.' The subject's identity as it emerges in the dialogic relation among its parts is modelled, by virtue of these relations, as multiplex, plurifaceted, and plurivocal identity. What Welby calls 'I' – or to introduce a neologism, 'Ident' – develops in the relations with the 'self,' or, rather, with the multiple *selves* that form the multiple faces or masks of the 'Ident.' Thus, in Welby's analysis, otherness clearly emerges as a precondition for constituting subjectivity.

To clarify the distinction between the I and the self, Welby explains 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, it is a part of it, it is 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. In her attempt to convey the idea of the distancing between the various parts that constitute subjectivity, Welby evoked the ancient use of the word 'person' to refer to the masks of the actor. The I or Ident can be associated with 'mother-sense,' the matrix, whereas the self, or *person,* or mask, can be considered as one of its possible expressions or realizations – or as Welby puts it, 'representations.'

In accordance with a dynamic and generative conception of existence as delineated by scientific research during the years she was writing, Welby maintained that the Ident is energy, a prime mover that manifests itself in the self, that energizes the self – that is, our multiple and ephemeral selves. Like the body, the *self* – for which Welby also proposed the term *ephemeron* – is mortal, ephemeral. In contrast, the I tends toward immortality beyond the mortality of the body and of the self. The I coincides with the activity of giving, beyond the logic of exchange, beyond possession (The 'I and the self,' 9 January 1910). As understood by Welby, the Ident refers to that part of human identity – the subject's otherness or sign materiality – which resists and is other in the continuous flow of change whose rhythm is beaten out in the succession, superimposition, multiplication, and cohabitation of our multiple *selves.* Formed in this

way, identity is not a unit but something more; it is an excess endowed with logical value, where by logic is understood not only the processes of deduction and induction, but also the creative logic of abduction. In 'I and Self' (1907), she expresses herself as follows:

> The 'I' *effectively IS*; since it belongs to the creative element of the universe, the energy of conception which includes the begetter and is both reproducer and evolvant (or evolutant?). Thus the I is one with the active and with the 'actor' who can and does impersonate and play an inexhaustible variety of persons and parts, while remaining inviolably identical and illimitably representative. (23 November 1907)

In Welby's view the self does not coincide with the I but is one of its representations, one of its openings, a means, an instrument, or modality; it is never an end in itself (cf. also 7 July 1907). Therefore, contrary to the tendency to exalt the self – to establish between the self and the I a relationship of substitution, usurpation, identification – identity derives from relations of dialogic otherness between the multiple selves that constitute the Ident – between one's self (or rather one's selves) and one's Ident. Human identity is the ongoing, generative, and dynamic outcome of the relation of dialogic distancing and differentiation of the self with respect to the I. Welby's generative conception of human consciousness recalls Peirce's when, in discussing thought and subjectivity, he maintains that just as we say that a body is in motion, and not that motion is in a body, we ought to say that we are in thought and not that thoughts are in us (cf. *CP* 5.289n.1).

Like Peirce when he maintains that 'self-love is no love' (*CP* 6.288), the ultimate 'sin,' says Welby (in 'Who ARE We and What HAVE We,' 9 April 1910), '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. Although the action of the centripetal forces of *self* may be necessary to 'self-preservation *here*,' to 'survival *now*,' the condition of being oriented univocally toward self generally defeats evolutionary development to the extent that it generates 'self-regarding selfishness.' Indeed, as Welby says, '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' ('The I and the Self,' 23 November 1907).

In Welby's view, hedonist ethics – which she believed corresponded to the dominant ideology of the times – implies a reduction of the multiform cosmos to the status of mere annex of the planetary egoist. Therefore, it implies a reduction of the differences between the I and the self in a relationship in which the self tends to overpower the I, thus producing what in our terminology might be tagged monologic identity. On the contrary, says Welby:

> Supreme function of the Ident's *self* 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 worlds 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. ('I and Self,' 19 January 1910)

8.2.5. 'Ident' as Otherness, Intercorporeity, and Dialogism

We have stated that the subject's identity as it gradually emerges in the dialogic relationship among its parts is modelled, by virtue of the relationship between the 'I' and the 'self,' as multiplex, plurifaceted, and plurivocal identity.

The Ident is the generative centre of multiple *selves* and at the same time a multiplicity inhabiting each one of our selves. At the level of ontogenesis, it corresponds to phylogenetic mother-sense, the originating, generative source of all forms of responsivity and mental power, whether analytical or constructive, which calls on man not only to react but also to create. *Self* is an expression of the I, the speaker; it is the means or instrument through which the multiple Ident works, through which it operates. Although we do not distinguish between the I and the I, the I and the self do not coincide. To be implies to become a nucleus of originating – albeit not original – power, to become aware of one's signifying potential and of one's worth both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. As Welby notes, the personal pronouns of the series I/we/you/they tell of our 'sense of universal order, our sense of mentally creative potency, our sense of worth as well as of reality, before all and above all our sense of sign and its signification, its natural significance and its intentional significance – its Meaning' ('The I and the Self,' 19 January 1910). And in tune with the scientific progress of her time, Welby calls attention to the dynamic and generative nature of subjectivity: 'I suppose the greatest mis-

fortune that can happen to a man is to be identified (except reflexively, that is, as whole and part) with his self ... As *We* are never *It* we are never Self. We only *have* what is both.' Welby did not hesitate to describe her view of the I and the self as 'essentially scientific': 'selves are the product of Identic, somatic activity, its structure the product of its function' ('The I and the Self,' 19 January 1910). The relation between the I and the self as theorized by Welby – that is to say, between the sign that the I is and its interpretants – is not a relation of static equality, reduction of the differences; rather, it is one of non-correspondence, deferral, difference, and reciprocal otherness. Subjectivity is created in the dialogic interrelations among its parts. The role or function of I/we is determined structurally in the relations of distancing and deferral with respect to self. The I with its multiple selves belongs to the order of 'motion' and 'function' and therefore cannot be self-regarding; the self belongs to 'matter' and 'structure' and, therefore, says Welby, is just there (cf. 'I and Self,' 26 November 1906). Identity is to become, to act, to do, to give.

The generative, dynamic character of identity or of the Ident is also determined by its threefold character according to the model of father–mother–child, impulse–development–outcome, question–answer–act, which, in Welby's words, describes 'the process as the condition of true culmination, of attainment of an ascending ideal of which Nature is the parable as she is the exemplar.' Indeed, in Welby's conception, conscious identity represents the highest point in the development of evolutionary processes insofar as it rises to the interpretation of all things, of the significance of the universe (cf. 21 January 1910, no title), or in our own terminology, insofar as it flourishes in terms of 'metasemiosis.'

Otherness is connected with the logic of giving and excess, the logic that generates identity understood as a dialogically interrelated community of selves. The Ident as the resulting unit is dialogical and open, an overflow, transcendent, an excess value with respect to the sum total of its parts, its multiple selves:

> In order to Be – and really to Be is to be Given – what is impotent for fertile being IS not; there *must* be overflow, there must be in some sense gift. True that in the arithmetical sense the bare unit may be added to and may multiply. But that is just because it has no content and no identity, as it has no fertility. Full identity is generative, is a Giver of its very self. (11 December 1906)

In Welby's description, the I is centrifugal energy, whereas self is centripetal. The Ident is oriented toward the negation of self, in the sense of

becoming, acting, giving, doing rather than of receiving, keeping, being *selfish*. Here, a connection can immediately be established with Bakhtin, whose theory of sign and subject also points to a structural dynamic between 'centripetal forces' and 'centrifugal forces,' between 'centralization' and 'decentralization,' between 'unification' and 'disunification' in the life of human sign processes, both verbal and non-verbal. Both the (partial) recognizability of sign and subject and their elusiveness, plurivocality, uniqueness – as such values and generative modalities emerge in the ephemeral space of an equilibrium that is always uncertain, unstable, attained among forces constantly struggling with one another – are determined in such dynamics (cf. also Bakhtin 1975, 1981).

The conventionalization of human consciousness, its monologization, constrains and reduces its potential for responsivity toward the other, for dialogism and critique. In contrast to this perspective, Welby contends that the properly human is the precondition of maximum opening and orientation toward the other, of intercorporeal involvement with the other. As an example, she cites the motions of love and passion, altruistic love, creativity of the genius, and literature – the places of discourse in which our secret, unknowable, elusive, and relational being emerges in a play of veiling and unveiling forces. The other as discussed by Welby is both the other belonging to me and constitutive of my own identity *and* the other external to my own identity and yet which concerns me and relates to me, such that it is in this very relation that the other subsists for me as other. Says Welby: 'The language of passion is a case of this or that other self, and what we find most interesting is the other, always ours' (cf. 'The I and the Self,' 26 November 1906).

Welby puts into evidence the otherness of subjectivity, which to be an Ident must always be other. Indeed, conscious identity develops in the play of deferral to its multiple selves and is oriented in the sense of transcending the centripetal forces that are polarized in the self and that are necessary for self to exist as self, as an ephemeron. Subjectivity, then, emerges in the open space of relations with the other, in which identity of the subject is delineated in the deferral among its multiple selves, its multiple voices, without ever being reduced to any one of them. In the final analysis, as the knower, the I or Ident is unknowable, as s/he who possesses s/he is elusive, as s/he who utters s/he is the unutterable. The Ident is an orientation toward the other, toward self insofar as it is other. With respect to self, the Ident is an excess, a continuous transcending and transferral with respect to the limits of the ontological. Although the self represents that which to a certain extent can be identi-

fied, measured, calculated, the Ident can only be approached through approximation, tentatively and hypothetically but never captured, and only by working through the means at our disposal – that is, our selves.

In Welby's description (which is similar to Peirce's), the human being is a community of distinct but not separate parts. Far from excluding one another, these parts, or selves, are interconnected by a relation of reciprocal dependence. In other words, they are founded in the logic of otherness and of unindifference among the differences, a logic that excludes the possibility of non-differentiated confusion among the parts, of levelling the other with the self. As Welby says, to confound is to sacrifice distinction (26 November 1906). So to the extent that it presents an excess with respect to the sum of its parts, the I or Ident is not the 'individual' (etymologically the non-divisible) but the 'unique' ('I and self,' June 1907). 'For we may represent the Unique. That is the word which might well supersede the intolerably untrue "individual." It is in fact just our dividuality which constitutes the richness of our gifts. We can, but must not be, divided; we must include the divisibile in the greatest of Wholes, the organic Whole, which as risen to the level of the human, may crown each one of us as unique' (ibid.). Here, what Welby understood by 'unique' – which has no association with the monadic separatism of Max Stirner's conception of the unique, of singularity – can be translated with the concept of 'non-relative otherness' as theorized by Emmanuel Levinas, or with his concept of 'significance,' also theorized by Welby in the context of her meaning triad 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance.'

8.3. Writing as a Modelling Device

8.3.1. Writing and Transcription

According to widespread prejudice, writing in today's society has been overwhelmed by other kinds of sign systems. Part of this prejudice is based on the conviction that images dominate over writing, as if all human forms of sign production were not themselves already forms of writing.

The fact is that we are victims of a limited view of writing: *writing* is commonly identified with *transcription* – with the written registration of oral language – and considered as a sort of outer layer that is subjected to and subservient to orality. Described in such terms, writing is no more than a form of mnemotechny.

This restricted view of writing is connected to the supposed primacy of the oral word, the *phoné*, and therefore to the tendency toward phonocentrism; but it is also connected to the tendency toward ethnocentrism. Regarding the latter, the conviction is that writing reduced to the status of transcription is the privilege of certain societies and not others, that it represents a vital stage in human history. Indeed, writing thus understood is signalled to be a watershed factor between prehistory and history, between 'cold' societies devoid of history and 'warm' societies that are endowed with history and that are capable of evolution and historical memory.

In fact, the invention of writing as transcription presupposes *writing* in a far more complex or radical sense and in a far more all-encompassing temporal sphere than that of man's historical–cultural evolution. Indeed, writing concerns nothing less than the process of homination – that is, the formation process of the human species.

Writing is a human species–specific modelling device through which humans, by various means – including the body and external physical devices – organize their experience of the world and their surrounding spatial and temporal reality. Indeed, with only a finite set of elements at hand, human beings are capable of inventing an infinite range of new senses and of constructing different world views.

All animal species are capable of constructing their own view of the world and of conferring sense upon it. The distinctive feature of the human species lies in its capacity to construct a plurality of different possible worlds and thereby confer an infinite variety of senses on the same finite number of elements.

Thus intended, writing – *ante litteram* writing, writing antecedent to the written sign, to transcription – represents a fundamental stage in the process of homination. As a modelling device it precedes speech, which has wrongly been privileged with respect to other, even earlier means of communication. Writing thus understood is not a means of communication like speaking and its transcription; rather, it precedes and underpins all forms of communication.

Writing understood as transcription is connected with 'culture' in the narrow sense – that is, writing as transcription is opposed to 'non-culture' and is attributed to the 'man of culture.' From this perspective, writing is connected with power and control, with consolidation of the dominion of man over man. In fact, the species-specific capacity for writing belongs to 'culture' in a broad sense, in an anthropological sense, the one in which writing is opposed to 'nature' and attributed to humanity.

The development of speech and its related verbal sign systems – that is, of natural–historical languages – presupposes writing. Without the capacity for writing, human beings would not have been able to articulate sounds and identify a limited number of distinctive sounds (that is, phonemes) to reproduce phonetically. Without the inherent capacity for writing, human beings would not have known how to assemble phonemes in different ways so as to form a multiplicity of different words (monemes), nor would they have been able to arrange words syntactically in different ways to form different utterances with different meanings and senses.

8.3.2. Writing and Language

Writing, which, as a modelling device, can also be called *language*, subtends human sign systems. Thus understood, language is specific to humans; non-human animal communication is not endowed with the capacity for language. Non-human animal communication involves the use of signs that are typologically homologous to human signs. That said, non-human animal sign systems are not fixed in the same type of modelling structure, or language, as the one that subtends human sign systems; thus, humans are the only animals that develop languages as understood in terms of anthroposemiosis.

And when, as in the case of deaf-mutes, language development in the phonic form is impossible, writing or language understood as a modelling device is capable of developing different forms of expression through other sign systems (gestures, drawings, and the like), which are not necessarily accompanied by speech.

Languages today are flourishing thanks to progress in technology and to encounters and exchanges among different cultures. (Closing frontiers and insisting on community identity will not stop these processes, which cannot be restricted to market exchanges.) Nowadays, writing or language understood as the human modelling device is enjoying greater scope for manifesting itself in various ways. And thanks to language thus described, other forms of writing and other languages or human sign systems – including photography, cinema, television, DVDs, and computers – are all offering new forms of writing, which in turn strengthen our capacity for what Peirce called the 'play of musement.'

Furthermore, traditional forms of expression such as theatre, music, and the plastic arts are all being enhanced by technology. As a consequence, they are able to invent new forms of writing within the same

sign system and through processes of mutual contamination. This is fostering the development of new expressive genres. Design, photography, film, and music are all forms of writing, and now that we understand writing as the human capacity for modelling, or language, we must reconsider them in this light and appreciate them as reflecting high degrees of creativity.

The crisis of writing indeed! No other historical era has ever been so rich in writing as the present. *Today's civilization is the civilization of writing!* And this should be declared emphatically to anyone who confuses writing with the written sign, writing with transcription, and who out of ignorance or for ideological reasons complains about the loss or debasement of writing.

We must now commit ourselves to establishing adequate conditions for the spread and proliferation of today's writing systems, so as to liberate them from any form of control over communication.

In today's communication world, it is not a matter of opposing 'writing' to 'images.' The real problem is the objective contradiction that has arisen from the opposition between writing systems and languages and therefore the free 'play of musement,' on the one hand, and the increase in control over communication, on the other – an increase that among other things suggests that control is concentrated in the hands of a few.

8.3.3. Literary Writing and the Creativity of Language

Literary writing is another important place of discourse – perhaps the most ancient. This is where writing achieves independence from transcription – in other words, where the written sign achieves independence from its ancillary function with respect to oral language, and therefore where writing is no longer reduced to mnemotechny. Eisenstein understood clearly that film begins exactly where all other forms of literary art leave off. Similarly, other forms of writing in the present era are developing so as to supplement the work of literary writing.

Literary writing is disengaged – that is, disengaged with respect to the obligations that characterize other writing practices understood in terms of transcription. In other words, literary writing is freed from the impositions of circumscribed or restricted responsibility, from responsibility 'contained' by alibis. All of this invests literary writing with the sort of responsibility that knows no limits – that is, with absolute responsibility. Unlimited, absolute responsibility goes together with the full expression of that which characterizes human beings in their specificity as human

beings – that is, their capacity for the play of musement, for constructing and deconstructing an infinite number of new possible worlds thanks to language or writing understood as modelling. 'Play,' and not 'work' – insofar as play is independent with respect to need – is transcendent with respect to functionality and productivity; thus, it represents an excess and is alien with respect to the 'reign of necessity.'

As writing and not transcription, literary writing is refractory to any form of power aiming to impede it. To evoke a slogan from 1968, the only form of power recognized by literary writing is the power of imagination. Non-functional, unproductive creativity, the creative imagination like that attributed to God: the properly human lies in the human being's capacity for the God-like, for divinity. Humans are human insofar as they are endowed with the divine gift for language, for writing.

9

Writing and Dialogue

9.1. Dialogue, Otherness, and Writing

9.1.1. Dialogue

Mikhail M. Bakhtin's multiple interests are closely connected with two problematics that characterize much of his research: 'dialogue,' examined through its literary depiction in Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'polyphonic novel'; and the 'grotesque realism' of 'carnivalized' popular culture, studied through its depiction in François Rabelais. 'Dialogue' in Bakhtin does not ensue from the decision to assume an open attitude toward others (as has often been wrongly maintained); nor is it the result of any initiative taken by the I, the result of a disposition for opening to the other; rather, it is the place of the I's very formation and manifestation. Dialogue is not the result of the I's decision to respect the other or listen to the other. On the contrary, dialogue is the *impossibility* of closure, of indifference; it is the impossibility of not becoming involved, and it is especially evident in attempts at closure, at indifference that simply prove to be tragico-comical. Bakhtin shows how Dostoevsky was not interested in the human being committed to dialogue in full respect of the other; rather, his concern was for dialogue as it occurs in spite of the subject, in spite of self. The word is dialogic because it is passively involved with the word of others. Dialogue as depicted by Dostoevsky and as theorized by Bakhtin is the impossibility of being indifferent to the other; it is unindifference – even indifference, hostility, hatred – of the you toward the I. Even when unindifference degenerates into hatred, the other continues to count more than anything else. Therefore, dialogue is not simply a composition of points of view and identities; quite the contrary, it consists

in refractoriness to synthesis, including the illusory synthesis of one's own identity, of identity of the self, which in effect is dialogically decomposed or detotalized insofar as it is inevitably involved in otherness, just as the life of the 'grotesque body' is inevitably involved in the life of others.

Bakhtin's conception of dialogue and otherness is extraordinarily original. For this reason, it is tremendously difficult to compare him with other authors who have focused on the same theme, and it is far too easy to distort his conceptions when we read and interpret them in the context of other and different conceptions.

Bakhtin teaches us that a text can only be read through the eyes of another text. This intertextuality is not of the sort theorized by philologists, who reduce intertextuality to a question of the relation between a text and its sources. In fact, as Bakhtin shows us, a text has three con-texts:

1 a *remote con-text*, of which the author is not always conscious, as he is of the sources;
2 a *contemporary con-text*, from which the author attempts to emancipate himself, especially if a writer;
3 a *posterior con-text*, that of readership. This one is of fundamental importance when the issue at stake is the effective interpretation of a text – that is, interpretation understood as answering comprehension.

As Bakhtin's readers, and not as philologists or as historians of philosophy or of ideas, we will deal in this chapter with the third type of text and con-text. Bakhtin has been set alongside such thinkers as Martin Buber, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Herman Cohen. Unfortunately, matchings like these too often reduce the Bakhtinian thought system to the margins of this or that other conception.

Here, we will insist on Bakhtin's concept of otherness. The problem of otherness is a constant object of his studies; in fact, it is the very basis of his research. The Bakhtinian word is a word that presents itself as other; it is a dialogic word in the sense that it calls for answering comprehension; at the same time, it is itself answering comprehension, to a very high and active degree, toward other positions. This explains the originality of Bakhtin's position, its value per se, independently of its reduction to this or that other position.

It seems that the Bakhtinian word that is other is homologically related to another word that is other – a word with which Bakhtin never entertained a real dialogue. This other word is also profoundly original in the panorama of contemporary philosophical thought; here, we are thinking of the word of Emmanuel Levinas (see biographical note, p. 428). In the

sense of a dialogic relation that was to mark them for the rest of their lives (not of 'source' as understood by philologists), a point of departure for both Bakhtin and Levinas is represented by the writings of Dostoevsky, who in fact was to exert a decisive influence on both Bakhtin and Levinas.

Levinas helps us understand Bakhtin's theoretical horizon while avoiding misunderstandings. Bakhtin and Levinas are both difficult to read, albeit for different reasons. Bakhtin is perhaps more accessible, but paradoxically, this accessibility makes him easier to misunderstand. In both cases, the difficulties encountered are not a function of the intellectual 'style'; neither author sets out to complicate or obscure his thought, neither takes pleasure in hiding some profound meaning beneath a play of surfaces. Bakhtin and Levinas are both difficult to read because their discourses and arguments transcend commonplace discourse, which is the place of the logic of identity.

Jacques Derrida has expressed himself magnificently on Levinas's style of writing. For example, in the following passage, he undermines any naive expectation we might have or superficial request we might make for simplication or synthesis in the discourse of Levinas:

> Levinas's writing, which would merit an entire separate study itself, and in which stylistic gestures (especially in *Totality and Infinity*) can less than be distinguished from intention, forbids the prosaic disembodiment into conceptual frameworks that is the first violence of all commentary. Certainly, Levinas recommends the good usage of prose which breaks Dionysiac charm or violence, and forbids poetic rapture, but to no avail: in *Totality and Infinity* the use of metaphor, remaining the most decisive movements of the discourse.

We may say about all the work of Levinas what Derrida says about *Totality and Infinity*:

> Further [in Levinas's work] the thematic development is neither purely descriptive nor purely deductive. It proceeds with the infinite insistence of waves on a beach: return and repetition, always, of the same wave against the same shore, in which, however, as each return recapitulates itself, it also infinitely renews and enriches itself. Because of all these challenges to the commentator and the critic. [Each of Levinas's works] is a work of art and not a treatise. (1967b, Eng. trans.: 312n7)

Levinas's critique of such authors as Buber, Heidegger, and Sartre, as well as of the neo-Kantians, or at least his distancing from them, helps

bring out the sense of Bakhtin's own critique, which is very similar even though not necessarily direct or explicit.

After a specifically philosophical departure as formulated in his early text *K filosofii postupka* (1922a, 'Toward a Philosophy of the Act,' Bakhtin 1993), Bakhtin dedicated his writings completely to the study of literature, once he discovered that literature was where the otherness relationship was developed in the terms that most interested him. In the literary text, the otherness relationship that so fascinated Bakhtin is triadic, involving the author, the hero, and the receiver. Levinas, too, was especially interested in the problem of reformulating the question of otherness and in rescuing it from being reduced to the ideology of identity and to the categories of the subject. He, too, persevered in his philosophical approach to this problematic, almost as if his aim was to make explicit that which in Bakhtin's philosophy was only implicit.

For this reason, we believe that confrontation between Bakhtin and Levinas – both of whom can be counted among the most important and original thinkers of our time – is of central importance, especially as a means of avoiding equivocation with regard to the Bakhtinian conception of dialogue and otherness. It is no exaggeration to speak of the 'Bakhtinian Revolution' (cf. Ponzio 1998) and to state with regard to Bakhtin, on the one hand, and to Levinas, on the other (cf. Ponzio 1996a), that the researches of these two men constitute an important space for critically interrogating all of Western ideology insofar as it is grounded in the category of identity. Never, from Hegel to Sartre, did dialectic succeed in formulating an effective critique of identity or of Western reason. Together, Levinas and Bakhtin represent an alternative that deserves serious consideration, with the goal of developing a critique of reason that is based on otherness, a critique of reason that is dia-logic.

9.1.2. Otherness, Dialogue, Intercorporeity

To consider Bakhtin through the eyes of Levinas, and vice versa, sheds light on the concepts listed in the heading of this section: 'dialogue,' 'otherness,' and 'writing.' Similarly, a rereading of Peircean thought in the light of reflections by both Bakhtin and Levinas, and vice versa, is also illuminating. Bakhtin, Levinas, and Peirce can all be approached as philosophers of dialogue and otherness, albeit independently of one another. For all three, dialogue and otherness are interconnected; for all three, dialogue is not to be reduced to a question of form or of discourse genres.

'Otherness,' 'dialogism,' and 'writing' – the latter understood as a movement toward the other without return (and also in the sense of gain

or profit) – and work or *œuvre* as understood by Levinas, are terms that refer to different and interconnected aspects of sign practices, to values and relationships uniquely realized in the sign. There can be no *dialogism* without otherness, just as there can be no *otherness* that is not already dialogue understood as *unindifferent* contact established among the terms of a relation, among differences.

To reflect on otherness, dialogism, and writing is to reflect on the 'sign' in which these materialize, and, therefore, on 'language,' 'communication,' and the 'subject,' which also is generated through verbal and nonverbal sign and signifying processes. And to reflect on the signifying potential of humanity is to reflect as well on the human and its expressions from the perspective of otherness, dialogism, and writing; this opens up the possibility of critically interrogating the world. This approach leads to the proposal for a new form of humanism, *the humanism of otherness*, or – to evoke the title of a 1972 book by Levinas – 'the humanism of the other man.'

Otherness and dialogism materialize in the sign, which *is for somebody*. In other words, the sign is always oriented toward the other according to the terms of a dialogic relation. From a semiotic perspective, the sign and the subject are unfinalized expressions of the otherness relationship; they emerge from material *modelled in otherness*. And the self's experience of otherness – whether the otherness of others or one's very own otherness – is developed in the dialogic relations among signs that form the great semiosic network.

In Peirce's view, all thinking is symbolic – that is to say, it is made of signs. This does not necessarily imply the use of verbal signs, as much as these may be predominant. In fact, verbal signs are just one of the various possible types of 'symbols' (or 'signs,' as Peirce was to call them in a later phase of his thinking, when he began to reserve the term 'symbol' for a special type of sign as delineated in the triad 'symbol,' 'icon,' 'index').

To elaborate his thought, Peirce sometimes resorted to images – above all visual diagrams, his 'natural language of self communion' (as he claimed in 'Studies in Meaning,' cf. *MS* 619: 8). The mathematician thinks mainly through mental diagrams, the artist through visual images, the musician through tones. But whichever type of sign dominates at any given instant in signifying processes, the interaction that regulates the generation of thought processes is analogous to the dialogic exchanges among conversants. Thought involves *dia-logic* semiosic processes; in other words, the logic that orients thought processes is grounded in *dialogism*.

In 'Questions On Reality' (1868d), Peirce wrote: 'Thought, says Plato, is a silent speech of the soul with itself. If this be admitted immense con-

sequences follow; quite unrecognized, I believe, hitherto' (in 1984a: 172). And later, in 1905: 'It cannot be too often repeated that all thought is dialogue' (*MS* 283: 56 [variant]). And in fact, Peirce reiterated this concept on various occasions throughout his writings.

The original modality of being a sign is otherness and dialogue. In contrast with univocality, reiteration, and identity – which characterize signals – dialogue and otherness are the original, constitutive modalities of that which emerges as a sign in the proper sense. In other words, the sign exists and is characterized as a sign insofar as it is a response to, and in relation to, that which is other from itself. The sign, in fact, is differentiated both from the object that acts as a referent and from another sign that acts as interpretant, without which it could not be a sign.

The signifying potential of a sign cannot be fully derived from its relation with any other single sign; it does not wholly converge with the signifying value with which another sign invests it. More precisely, the interpreted sign cannot be reduced to the meaning conferred on it by the interpretant sign; the sign's meaning value, its sense and significance, is not exhausted by its relation with any single interpretive route. With regard to the interpretant sign, the interpreted sign presents a margin of signifying otherness, the materiality of which cannot be reduced to any one interpretant sign, or, for that matter, to any other single component or isolated instance in the sign relationship. From the perspective of subjectivity, a key concept is that of 'absolute or non-relative otherness' as developed by both Bakhtin and Levinas, whereby the other exists on its own account, independently of the I, without waiting for a gift of sense from an objectifying consciousness, the interpretant, in order to subsist as other.

Throughout his research, Levinas developed his critique of a limited – that is, non-dialogic – conception of dialogue. For Levinas, dialogue is not exchange, nor is it communication between that which is *said* by one person and that which is *said* by another. Dialogism can be traced through *saying* itself, independently of *exchange*, through *saying that is not dialogue understood as a relation between giving and receiving, nor therefore as respect, reciprocal recognition, sharing, pooling things together, common enterprise, accord, mutual agreement, equal distribution.*

Saying is 'witness to the infinite'; it is 'relation to the other' beyond knowledge, exchange, accord; it is dialogue understood as *inevitable exposition to the other*, impossibility of closure, witness to the inevitability of involvement, necessary unindifference; it is finding oneself again and again, in spite of alibis and excuses, in the condition of having to answer

to the other and for the other; it is irrevocable *responsibility*. Consequently, Levinas questions the reciprocity on which Martin Buber always insists in his conception of dialogue and the *I–Thou* relation:

> We wonder whether the relation with the alterity of others which appears in the form of dialogue, of question and answer, can be described without introducing a paradoxical difference between the *I* and the *Thou*. The originality of *I–Thou* comes from the fact that that relation is known not from the outside, but from the *I* who brings it about. Its place is therefore not interchangeable with the place occupied by *Thou*. In what does this position of ipseity consist? If the *I* becomes *I* in saying *Thou*, I have obtained this position from my correlate, and the I–Thou relation is like all other relations: as if an external onlooker were speaking of *I* and *Thou* in the third person. The meeting, which is formal, can be reserved, read from left to right just as well as from right to left. In the ethics in which the other is at once higher and poorer than I, the *I* is distinguished from the Thou, not by any sort of 'attributes,' but by the dimension of height, which breaks with Buber's formalism. (Levinas 1976a, Eng. trans.: 32; on the relation between dialogue and responsibility for the other, see also Levinas 1993: 217–18)

And again, in another passage, Levinas opposes the formalist 'philosophy of dialogue' by resorting to Heidegger's notion of *Fürsorge* or 'solicitude for the other,' 'care given to others': 'Is dialogue possible without *Fürsorge*?' (Levinas 1976a, Eng. trans.: 33). And in a letter to Buber (1963):

> I think that the Saying Thou [Buber's *Du Sagen*] is already, *ipso facto*, a giving. Once the Saying Thou has been separated from this giving, even if it is established between strangers, it is a 'purely spiritual', ethereal friendship, i.e. already enervated, as it may become in a certain social milieu. That the Saying Thou operates immediately and already through my body (including my giving hands), that it therefore presupposes my body (as lived body), things (as objects of enjoyment) and the Other's hunger, that the Saying is thus embodied, i.e. beyond of organs of speech or song or artistic activity, that the Other is always, *qua* Other, the poor and destitute one (while at the same time being my lord), and that the relation is thus *essentially* dissymmetrical: such are the thoughts that were behind my 'objection.' (Ibid.: 38)

Levinas here is declaring his opposition to the concept of dialogue understood as a relationship between two preconstituted and autonomous subjects who decide to exchange ideas. As formulated by Levinas,

and similarly by Bakhtin, dialogue is passive witness to inescapability from the other, to the fact that the other cannot be eluded, to the condition of involvement with the other apart from initiative taken by the subject who is called to answer *to* the other and *for* the other. Dialogue thus understood is precisely what Bakhtin and Levinas call *testimony* or *witness*. The 'I' is constitutionally, structurally dialogic in the sense that it testifies to the relation with the other, be it the other of others or the other of self.

Taking their distances implicitly and explicitly from a tradition that understands dialogue as the exchange of rejoinders among preconstituted and predefined subjects (represented by most of Plato's writings, for example), both Bakhtin and Levinas treat dialogism as a fundamental condition of human subjects, of their consciousness and, therefore, as a sort of a priori. We are alluding here to what Bakhtin calls *substantial dialogue* as distinct from *formal dialogue* – to substantial dialogue that is also the semiotic material of the I. Language as contact, as proximity, as being one-for-the-other – 'where "for" is not reduced to deferral from one said to another said, from one thematized to another thematized,' as Levinas specifies (cf. 1993: 217) – language as witness, as involvement, as intercorporeity, as exposition to the other, as intersubjectivity, as complicity antecedent to accordance and to disaccordance, therefore, is already dialogue.

9.1.3. Dialogism, Otherness, and Signs

In Bakhtin's conception, 'dialogism' refers to a condition of *substantial dialogue* among terms that do not necessarily relate to one another in the sense of dialogue at a formal level. The practice of *formal* dialogue among different voices and perspectives, among different interlocutors, could well prove to be monologic – that is, a pitiful and even tragicomical attempt to withdraw from dialogue with the other, from responsibility toward the other that substantial dialogue entails. The word's inherent dialogism – that is, dialogism internal to the word, which is Bakhtin's privileged object of analysis – precedes what results as dialogue at a surface level, as its condition of possibility.

Substantial dialogism tells of the impossibility, in the final analysis, of reducing the word to univocality. It has no relation to formal dialogue – that is, to dialogue that qualifies as such simply because it is enacted among different voices in terms of number. Substantial dialogue is not a question of number of voices, interlocutors, or bodies involved in dia-

logic exchange. Rather, it describes a condition, an attitude, an orientation of the I toward the other in spite of itself, a disposition for dialogue, even internally within a single sign so to say, a single voice. To escape from dialogism is impossible, just as it is impossible to escape from the other. Indeed, we are overwhelmed by the other whether we like it or not, to the point that identity of the I cannot hold except in the web of interrelations with the other. Dialogism emerges most strongly in the illusion of indifference to otherness, in one's very own perspective, in one's very own system of values, in one's very own thoughts, in one's very own voice.

Bakhtin shows us that the site where dialogism manifests itself is not necessarily the *phoné*. Absolute otherness and substantial dialogism are fulfilled as 'writing,' which is separate from the letter. Otherness and dialogism indicate sign conditions or modalities that cut across the distinction between orality and the written word in verbal language, and beyond the verbal, that cut across distinctions among non-verbal sign systems, which include gesture, music, and the image in painting, photography, and cinema, to involve them all.

The main criterion for evaluating the degree of otherness and dialogism reached by a sign is not the means employed – for example, the oral or written sign, the transcribed sign – nor is it a question of the 'discourse genre' called dialogue. Indeed, as Bakhtin has taught us, all discourse genres present different modalities of relating to the other and can in fact be characterized on this basis. Using literary genres as an example, we can establish a dialogic gradation that progresses from the 'monologic' word to 'polyphonic dialogue' in the transition from the epic poem to lyrical poetry, then to the homophonic novel, and finally to the polyphonic novel as developed first by Dostoevsky.

With reference to Peirce's classification of signs into symbol, index, and icon, the sign most characterized by the highest degrees of dialogism and otherness irreducible to monologism and identity is the icon. The iconic sign is the sign most distant from *representation* – that is, from identification with the object, the code. Therefore, it is the sign with the greatest capacity for self-signification, for signifying on its own account beyond the logic of equal exchange subtending communication understood as the intentional exchange of messages. Sign activity dominated by iconicity is sign activity endowed with a capacity for depiction, for shift, for distancing. The sign reveals itself but does not unveil itself; the invisible is rendered visible without betraying the sign's interiority, its secret.

Substantial dialogism goes together with otherness understood as the a priori, as the condition of possibility for realizing the subject's very

identity, as saying antecedent to the said, as involvement with others, as exposition to the other, as vulnerability, complicity, responsibility. Here, 'responsibility' is not understood in the active sense of accepting responsibility, taking a stance, but rather in the sense of being passively exposed to the other, of being involved with the other, and therefore of being responsible toward the other passively, inexorably, and apart from (if not in contrast with) one's own intention. As Levinas states in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*:

> Responsibility for another is not an accident that happens to a subject, but precedes essence in it, has not awaited freedom, in which a commitment to another would have been made. I have not done anything and I have always been under accusation – persecuted. The ipseity, in the passivity without arché characteristic of identity, is a hostage. The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone ...
>
> [Responsibility for another] is a responsibility of the ego for what the ego has not wished, that is, for the others. (1974c, Eng. trans.: 114; see also Levinas 1993: 182)

Responsibility, in the context of saying – of language understood as contact, involvement, exposition, as proximity of one-for-the-other – communicates contact itself, saying, dialogism of writing before the word, independently of the letter. Language as saying says of one's responsibility for the other. From this perspective, we are always responsible/responsive, inevitably, in spite of ourselves – that is to say, we are obliged to respond, even if just not to respond, not to (re)act. And if in the human world we are not granted the justification of a neutral space, this is because responsibility is a condition that is imposed from the outside and as such is unwanted, unsought for, but all the same necessary, inexorable. The condition of unlimited responsibility testifies to our obligation to the otherness relationship, to dialogism and writing. None of this foresees free choice as would result from identity, the 'I's' intentional consciousness. On the contrary, we are describing the conditions to which we are subjected as living beings, conditions that we endure and that we are forced to suffer, whose traces – as much as they can be submerged or erased by the logic of identity – are inscribed in human modelling, in the intersubjective relationship, in language understood in a broad, biosemiotic sense.

This implies the untenability of those trends in philosophy that attempt to convalidate the ontological privilege of consciousness, inten-

tion, knowledge, and therefore of claims to the totality, to identity, to ontology, which abstract from the otherness relationship. Independently of one another, Peirce, Welby, Bakhtin, and Levinas all teach us that the self in itself is already dialogue, already an I/other relationship. Otherness is present at the very heart of identity; it is structural to identity, an a priori condition for the very realization of identity. Given that consciousness and language coincide and that language belongs to others, the I, like language, is never unitary; rather, it is endowed with internal otherness and therefore with a capacity for polylogism, pluridiscursivity, plurivocality, and internal plurilinguism.

Otherness may be relative to a role, to differences; in other words, it may propose itself in terms of alternatives or oppositions. But in such cases, the relations among the parts are presented in terms not of substantial dialogism but of monologic dialectic. To effective, substantial dialogism there corresponds a certain modality of otherness – that is, 'absolute and non-relative otherness,' that form of otherness which is distinct from delimited roles, relative differences, and oppositional alternatives.

Compared with 'relative otherness,' 'absolute otherness' is pure excess. It constitutes the non-functional extra, *surplus* with respect to the relation of equal exchange between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign, and therefore with respect to communication understood in terms of encoding and decoding messages. Insofar as it is a 'relation without a relation,' escape that finds no correspondence, a non-functional signifying practice (as compared to the logic of giving for a profit), absolute otherness is on the side of *potlatch* logic (following Georges Bataille, interpreter of Marcel Mauss), of giving without returns, waste of signifiers, unproductive expenditure, *dépense*. Insofar as it is open to absolute otherness, the signifying I is free of the economy of narration and presents itself in terms of self-referentiality, ambiguity, equivocation, and contradiction.

This comparison of Bakhtin and Levinas lights our path for a return to Peirce and helps us account for the opening to *otherness in his theory* as testified by his very definition of semiosis. In fact, Bakhtin and Levinas – who unlike Welby, had no direct relations with Peirce, or for that matter with each other – may contribute significantly to our understanding of Peirce's ideas. Contrasting these two authors with each other and with Welby points us toward the otherness component in the Peircean conception of sign and self. The writings of both Bakhtin and Levinas confirm that otherness cannot be reduced to an external condition achieved

relative to an internal and preconstituted term represented by identity. Our point is that otherness and dialogue together denote a condition that is internal to identity itself, to the totality, to the sign – whether this be the I, or a given language or cultural system to which the I belongs, and so on. It follows that the condition of dialogism and otherness is constitutive of identity – indeed, of all identities.

9.1.4. Writing

Compared with dialogism, writing is free from subordination to orality. Otherness and dialogism are not evidenced in the oral word, not are they evidenced in direct written genres (where writing is *transcription*); rather, they are evidenced in *writing* as disclosed in the genres of 'indirect speaking' – that is, in literary genres. Here, otherness is not subject to the order of discourse; on the contrary, otherness escapes that order through writing understood as indirect speaking, as speaking with reserve, as a distancing between the author and the text that gives rise to the 'different forms of silence' such as parody and irony. Far from being subjected to the oral word, writing is connected with the concepts of 'expression' and 'face' (cf. Levinas 1961; Bakhtin 1986), with the relationship of intercorporeity, of complicity, of exposition to the other antecedent to the word and independently from it.

The degrees of dialogism and otherness reached by a sign vary with the genres of literary writing. Literary genres enable the word to resound as other. Together with speaker intentionality, they allow for the expression of intentionalities that are alien to the word, which thus presents itself as a multivoiced word. Moving over a broad range of writing possibilities, we pass from high degrees of dialogism and otherness – traceable, as mentioned, in the polyphonic novel of Dostoevsky (a writer dear to both Bakhtin and Levinas), and with regard to the genre dialogue, also traceable in Plato's *Symposium* (differently from his other dialogues) – to high degrees of monologism and identity, as in manualistic or in catechistic discourse, or those dialogues authored by Plato and structured for the purpose of demonstrating a thesis. Here, signifying processes tend to be unilinear, adherent to intentionality, to thematizing, univocal consciousness; as a consequence, they are functional to the realization of the subject's identity, to theme, and they are instrumental in the production of *noesis* and of the *noema*. In this regard, most significant is the ambiguous title of a book by Levinas, *Hors sujet* (*Outside the Subject*), published in 1987, which suggests the idea of *deviation from the subject as much as from the theme.*

Regardless of whether a word is oral or written, the objective and direct word of monologic genres tends toward univocality as much as it may contain traces of the word of the other and resound as other. The word of monologic genres is dominated by intentionality, by the perspective of the subject; it is a word devoid of the capacity for 'extralocalization' (as discussed by Bakhtin), without an opening toward 'exteriority' (as theorized by Levinas). Remember, however, that monologic genres are *relatively* monologic, given that the word is always dialogic insofar as it is always semi-other; the word 'monologism' indicates a low degree of dialogism.

The degree of dialogism and otherness can be described in terms of *writing*, which is distinct from *transcription* and is released from the *phoné*. Writing thus understood is the modelling capacity specific to human beings – what Thomas Sebeok's biosemiotics refers to as language (see 5.1, 5.2, and 8.1).

The term 'writing' is plurivocal. It avails itself of the distinction Roland Barthes (1963) drew between 'intransitive writing' and 'transitive writing' or 'transcription,' and, therefore, between 'writers' and 'scribes'; and that Jacques Derrida (1967a, 1967b) drew between the concepts of *différence* ('difference,' from *différer*) and *différance* ('deferral, *renvoi*,' from *renvoyer*). It also takes account of Levinas's concept of *écriture avant la lettre*. Writing as we are describing it is all of that which testifies to the opening to infinity, to the other, to fragmentation of the totality, to predisposition to innovation, creativity, and inventiveness. Writing is the 'play of musement' theorized by Peirce; it is *œuvre* (work), which is understood by Levinas as the movement toward the other without return, the significance of signification. In the words of Levinas: 'Antecedent to the verbal signs it conjugates, to the linguistic systems and the semantic glimmerings, a foreword preceding languages, it [saying] is the proximity of one to the other, the commitment of an approach, the one to the other, the very signifyingness of signification' (1974c, Eng. trans: 5; see also Levinas 1993: 220)

From such a perspective, the practice of writing is the practice of modelling the world under the banner of creativity, invention, otherness; it is a modelling capacity inscribed in the human, as its specifies-specific feature; and it is antecedent to communication itself. Writing *ante litteram* – writing that comes before the letter, before speech – models semiotic material as *human* semiotic material.

As the expression of the Other, as the contraction of the Infinite in the Finite, as the 'trace' – which Levinas understands to indicate the 'signi-

ficance' (or 'signifyingness') of signification, *signifiance*, saying with respect to the said, the presence of an absence – the word presents itself as writing independently of *writing* in the literal sense. Writing existed in language before written signs were invented. Clearly, then, language is more than an instrument, and it is not exhausted in the literal sense of what it prescribes or thematizes or enables one to know. Language is also the enigma of 'expression,' of the 'face,' of gradually revealing what does not unveil itself; language is also the literariness of a relationship in which invocation, contact, presence, and entertainment form the text, whereas that which is communicated, represented, is only the pre-text. As the trace, as writing, as intransitive writing and not transcription, as 'literary writing' – which is not to be understood in the literal sense – language *presents* (is 'expression,' 'face') and does not limit itself to representing.

The *significance of saying*, understood as proximity – of being one-for-the-other, contact, intercorporeity – and *intransitive writing* go together. Both share in the condition of autonomy from the said – of non-functional *surplus* with respect to message exchange, of excess and escape from being and from the categories used to describe it. Intransitive writing is not tied to the written sign. According to Levinas, the human word is already intransitive writing in itself; this is because of language's capacity to signify more than what it says, because of the excess of the signifier over the signified, of saying over the said (cf. Levinas 1982b: preface).

9.1.5. Orality, Writing, and Otherness

According to Levinas, the relation of otherness is reducible neither to *being-with*, Heidegger's *Mitsein*, nor to Sartre's *being-for*. Otherness is located inside the subject, the self; it is itself a dialogue, a relation between self and other. The other is inseparable from the ego, the Self (*Même* as intended by Levinas), but as *Étranger* it is neither encompassed nor absorbed by the totality of the ego. The other is necessary to the constitution of the ego and its world; at the same time, it is refractory to all those categories which desire to eliminate its semiotic materiality, its otherness, in the attempt to subject it to the self's identity. The relation with the other impedes self's integrity and closure. The otherness relationship is a relationship of excess, surplus, transcendence with respect to objectifying thought. It constitutes a release from the relation between subject and object and from the relation of equal exchange.

Otherness is active in the very constitution of self. At the *linguistic*

level, it leads to the word's *internal dialogization*, the impossibility of being an integral word. At the *linguistic-esthetic level*, it leads to the *double* of concept and reality. At the *moral level*, it leads to restlessness, obsession with the other, answerability.

Thus, the self/other relation, as proposed by Levinas, has an ethical foundation. But what does 'ethical' mean in this context? Levinas (1974b, Eng. trans.: 116n6) gives the following explanation:

> We call ethical a relationship between terms such as are united neither by a synthesis of the understanding nor by a relationship between subject and object, and yet where the one weighs or concerns or is meaningful to the other, where they are bound by a plot which knowing can neither exhaust nor unravel.

The self/other relation irreducibly transcends the realm of knowledge, of the concept, of abstract thought, even though the latter are all possible thanks to this relation. The relation of otherness is connected with the development of self-awareness (a condition of self-identity).

> For Sartre as for Hegel, the oneself is posited on the basis of the for-itself. The identity of the I would thus be reducible to the turning back of essence upon itself. The I, or the oneself that would seem to be its subject or condition, the oneself taking on the figure of an entity among entities, would in truth be reducible to an abstraction taken from the concrete process of self-consciousness. (1974c, Eng. trans.: 103)

Contrary to Sartre and Hegel, Levinas contends that the self of 'being conscious of oneself' neither coincides with consciousness nor presupposes it; rather, self pre-exists with respect to consciousness, to which it is connected by a relation of otherness and autonomy.

Levinas turns his attention to sociocultural phenomena, which he describes as originating in the category of other – that is, not in the category of identity, where the otherness relationship is ignored. In the chapter 'Le Sens et l'œuvre' in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972; now Levinas 1990), as we have observed, he uses the term *œuvre* to designate a movement toward the other where the possibility of return to self is excluded: '*The Work* [*Œuvre*] *conceived radically is a movement of the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same*' (1972: 44). Such movement, which is oriented by the logic of otherness, is especially evident in artistic creation, in the artwork. Nonetheless, it is not limited to the field of art; rather, it is present each time a human product conveys something more than its

function – a chronotopic excess, a surplus value with respect to the restricted horizon of the needs, interests, ideologies, values, and life and times of the subject and its contemporaries. This movement toward the other without return to the self, to identity, connotes the specifically human that is traceable in any human enterprise – 'in all human work [*œuvre*], commercial and diplomatic,' whatever this may be. In the words of Levinas, beyond perfect adaptation to its own goal, the human enterprise 'bears witness to an accord with some destiny extrinsic to the course of things, which situates it outside the world, like the forever bygone past of ruins, like the elusive strangeness of the exotic' (1948, Eng. trans.: 2). To accept the concept of *œuvre* as designating the specifically human, as the orientation in which the human is realized, means, he adds, to support a kind of humanism that inverts the usual itinerary of philosophy when conceived as that which 'remains that of Ulysses, whose adventure in the world was only a return to his native island – a complacency in the Same, an unrecognition of the other' (1972, Eng. trans.: 91).

The humanism of otherness, of the other man (*Humanisme de l'autre homme* is the title of a book by Levinas), finds expression in artistic production, in the orientation toward the realization of an artwork.

Such a perspective favours a better understanding of the relation between art and answerability. Insofar as it is oriented in the sense of *œuvre* as conceived by Levinas, art can be considered *dégagé* as a result of its otherness and autonomy from the author, its capacity to transcend the historical–biographical and historical–social boundaries of its production, its excess as an *œuvre*. As much as the author would like to be *engagé*, the *œuvre*'s disengagement is inevitable. The *œuvre* is essentially *dégagé*.

However, the disengagement of the *œuvre* has nothing to do with the aesthetics of art for art's sake. The *œuvre*'s distancing from the subject, its release from the sphere of the single author–subject and of the global social context in which the *œuvre* is produced – and its irreversible movement toward the other are all elements that establish a link between art and answerability. The latter term is not meant in the juridical sense, nor in the conventional–moral sense whereby the subject answers for himself and the disposition to *answer for* is entirely relative to the sphere of the subject's jurisdiction – that is, to a given code, to specific duties, to a contract or a particular role. On the contrary – in the discourse of art, answerability is no longer a question of answering for oneself but of answering for the other: answerability for the other surpasses the limits of individual answerability (of an ethical–normative, juridical, and political order), the laws of equal exchange, the functions fixed by roles and social position,

the distinctions sanctioned by law among individual identities, each of which has its private sphere of freedom and imputability.

In the relation of otherness understood as absolute otherness and not as otherness relative to self, the other is not given, it is not the object, it is not conceptually representable or definable. Levinas analyses this relation in 'La Realité et son ombre' (1948), although only toward the end, and only explicitly in terms of the relation with other people. In this essay, Levinas maintains that the most elementary procedure in art consists in substituting the object for its *image*, with the image contrasted against the *concept*. The concept is the object insofar as it has been grasped, captured. From this perspective, there is no difference between knowledge and action: both capture the object. Instead, the image neutralizes this relation with the real.

Art, the image, is disinterested, and this disinterestedness consists in neutralization. However, this is not an expression of the subject's freedom and initiative, it does not arise from a situation of power. On the contrary, the image implies recovery of the subject's original sense as 'being subject to something.' The image involves a situation of passivity. The notions of 'conscious' and 'unconscious' cannot be applied here; although initiative and intentionality are lacking, this entire process develops in *praesentia*, before one's very own eyes, as in a 'daydream.' This particular situation is characterized by automatism, which Levinas compares to dance, where 'nothing is unconscious, but where the conscious paralyzed in its freedom performs [*joue*] wholly absorbed in this performance [*jeu*].'

The image is the otherness of what is, the *étrangété* of what is with respect to itself, its double. The thing is itself and the image of itself; consequently, the image, the double, is as real as the fact that something is what it is. Identity and *étrangété*, otherness: these are the two faces of the real, which realism does not capture. Art looks at the real's double. Art does not represent reality but we could say that it depicts its double.

In 'La Realité et son ombre,' Levinas also observes that in art, the real world seems to be placed in parentheses or inverted commas – a procedure that varies with the modality of writing employed. The double – otherness as it escapes the identity of what is, or the image depicted in art – is always to a degree parodic, caricatural. Unlike objective discourse, objectified discourse is not taken seriously; rather, it is discourse in disguise. Objectified discourse reveals what the subject does not succeed in grasping and thereby renders awkward and ridiculous any attempts the subject makes to contain such discourse within the sphere of its own iden-

tity. Levinas analyses the parodic aspect of the double. He observes that a subject is its identity – that which is. Furthermore, together with the being with which a subject coincides, that subject wears its own caricature on its face – its picturesque side. The picturesque, says Levinas, is always something of a caricature. Likewise, a thing does not coincide with what it is as the object of knowledge or of practical activity; with respect to what the subject wants it to be in relation to cognitive and practical functions, it remains behind, like a dead weight. For this reason we might say that things are always in a sense 'still life':

> Being is not only itself, it escapes itself. Here is a person who is what he is; but he does not make us forget, does not absorb, cover over entirely the objects he holds and the way he holds them, his gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin, which escape from under the identity of his substance, which like a torn sack is unable to contain them. Thus a person bears on his face, alongside of its being with which he coincides, its own caricature, its picturesqueness. The picturesque is always to some extent a caricature. Here is a familiar everyday thing, perfectly adapted to the hand which is accustomed to it, but its qualities, color, form, and position at the same time remain as it were behind its being, like the 'old garments' of a soul which had withdrawn from that thing, like a 'still life.' (1948, Eng. trans.: 135)

Because of its relation with death, the caricatural nature of the double, and the fact that the image tells of linear, productive, cumulative time, the artwork is always more or less comical and tragical, simultaneously. As Levinas says, every image is already a caricature, but such caricature is turned toward the tragic.

When we start to consider the relation between orality and writing with respect to the condition of dialogism and otherness, we soon realize that the sign of otherness finding expression in oral and written language exists autonomously and antecedently with respect to orality and writing. The sign in which otherness manifests itself does not require vocalization to esist. It is independent from the *phoné* and has a life of its own antecedent to orality. Also, it is independent from the written sign as such, for not all that is written is depiction of otherness, of the image.

The problem of the specific sign of otherness and dialogue cuts across the opposition between orality and writing. Moreover, it refers beyond the limits of the verbal in the relation between verbal signs and non-verbal signs. Dialogue is not a prerogative of oral interaction wherein one word responds directly to another word. In fact, insofar as they are objec-

tive words, these words are reciprocally separate, expressions of an autonomous identity rather than of reciprocal interaction and implication. If, on other hand, writing favours the development of dialogic genres, as in 'Socratic dialogue,' it also produces dialogic texts that only maintain the form of dialogue while their content is monologic. In such cases, dialogue is no more than a method used pedagogically to expound a thesis, a doctrine. We have already alluded to Plato's dialogues as examples of this (and to his *Symposium* as an exception). Such pseudo-dialogue is another example of the objective, self-affirmative word. And conversion into monologic dialogue is not to be attributed to use of the written form, but to the subjection of dialogic form to the direct word, the objective word. Where the indirect, distanced word prevails, where dialogism and otherness prevail, where writing resorts to syntactic and literary expedients for distancing from one's own word (in both reporting and reported speech), to expedients that transform the objective word into the objectified word – as in Plato's *Symposium* – the dialogic form also rediscovers the effective dialogism of content.

From this perspective, *writing* is a practice that does not identify with the production of written signs. In these terms, 'writing' is also used to indicate a practice independent from the *phoné*, traceable in signs generally, and not just in verbal signs, every time we have a one-way movement, without returns, but also in the sense of 'without profit': a movement toward otherness that, as we have observed, Levinas calls *œuvre*. This movement is present in the artwork but does not belong to the artwork alone; on the contrary, the aesthetic event shares in the character of *œuvre*, whose traces are also present outside the aesthetic sphere, even though it emerges in the latter as its fundamental condition and method. In this context, 'writing' is a practice oriented in the sense of the *œuvre*.

As noted earlier, with Levinas we can use the term 'trace' for the sign of this 'writing' practice that is characterized by the movement of the *œuvre*. The 'trace' is the sign of otherness and dialogic openness. It is that which Levinas characterizes, in *Totalité et infini* and *Autrement qu'être*, as the significance of signification in communication – the fact that signification signifies in saying and is not exhausted in the said. Characteristics of the significance of saying comprise the following: autonomy with respect to the 'said'; the fact that it is a surplus non-functional to the exchange of messages; dissymmetry and excess (that is, the significance of saying escapes being and the categories which describe it); 'unproductivity,' 'uselessness' compared to the economy of 'narration,' of the 'fabula'; self-referentiality, ambiguity, equivocation, contradiction; the fact

that what is revealed in the significance of saying does not unveil itself but instead remains invisible and cannot be reduced to the status of object (in other words, it does not lose its interiority, its secret); and in the final analysis, openness to absolute otherness. Thanks to all these characteristics, the significance of saying is proximity, contact, intercorporeity, passive involvement, and can be characterized as writing – as intransitive writing, to use our own terms.

To recognize Levinas's relation of otherness as writing, to recognize the relation of otherness as obtained in the significance of saying, is to become aware of the equivocation implied in wanting to see in Levinas's 'face-to-face' relation a preference for oral discourse and a consequent depreciation of writing (in a sense, a return to Plato).

Levinas states explicitly in his preface to *L'Au-delà du verset* (1982b) that the human word is writing in itself, given its capacity to signify more than what it says, given the excess of the signifier with respect to the signified, of saying with respect to the said (cf. ibid., Eng. trans.: xi). As the expression of otherness, as the trace, as the presence of an absence, as the invisible rendered visible while maintaining its secret, the word presents itself as writing independently of the fact of being written in the literal sense. Communication and language are not simply instruments; they are not exhausted in the literal sense of what they prescribe, thematize, or disclose. Far more radically, communication and language are inhabited by writing, as says Levinas, writing understood as *œuvre*, as the capacity for otherness and dialogism before the stylus or the pen impresses letters on a tablet, a parchment, or a sheet of paper: 'literature before the letter!' (ibid.).

9.2. Dialogue and Carnivalized Writing

9.2.1. Different Degrees of Dialogism

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993 [1920–4]), Bakhtin analyses a poem by Alexandr Pushkin, *Razluka* (Parting), as part of his effort to clarify the architectonic layout of the aesthetic vision. Later, he would focus on the relationship between 'author and hero in aesthetic activity,' and produce a long paper under the same title in which the first section begins with an analysis of the same poem and develops concepts that he had already formulated in the final part of the fragment that is at our disposal.

This is especially interesting to the end of understanding the direction in which Bakhtin's research was to develop. Bakhtin first approached the

aesthetic vision through the lyrical genre; in this effort, he identified the relationship of dialogic otherness from different points of view – in the case of Pushkin's poetry, the dialogic dialectic between the author's context and that of the two protagonists. In *Razluka*, dialogue among three voices can be traced even in a single line. There is the point of view of the heroine, who is leaving, that of the hero, who is suffering because of her departure, and finally, that of the author–writer, who now knows she is dead. All of this undermines the mistaken interpretation that Bakhtin did not consider the lyrical genre sufficiently well, as well as the misunderstanding concerning his conception of dialogism: for Bakhtin, dialogism was a question of *degree*. Critics are wrong who interpret Bakhtin as having drawn rigid oppositions among absolutely monologic genres – for example, among lyrical poetry and various dialogic genres, especially the 'polyphonic' novel as identified in the works of Dostoevsky. For Bakhtin, dialogism is always present in the artistic word and characterizes different genres to varying degrees.

Bakhtin's text on the philosophy of the act lights for us the path that was to lead him to his 1929 monograph on Dostoevsky, translated into English in 1984 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Bakhtin contended that Dostoevsky's works gave full expression to the possibility of dialogue.

9.2.2. The 'Time of Festivity' and the 'Great Time' of Writing

Rabelais and His World (1965) is an organic part of Bakhtin's writings, including those signed by Voloshinov and Medvedev.

In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin develops the distinction, made earlier in *Freudianism* (Voloshinov 1927), between official ideology and unofficial ideology as it relates to the literature of humanism and the Renaissance – specifically, to the low genres of medieval comico-popular culture. He would continue his studies on the sign in general (not just the verbal sign) in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Voloshinov 1929), analysing the transformation of verbal and non-verbal carnival signs into the signs of high European literature. Also, on returning to his monograph on Dostoevsky for his 1963 edition, Bakhtin significantly integrated it with a chapter on the genesis of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, considered as the greatest expression of 'carnivalized literature,' whose origins he traced back to the serio-comical genres of popular culture, such as Socratic and Menippean dialogue. In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin worked on the prehistory of the novelistic word, which he identified in the comicality and parodization of popular genres.

Furthermore, his analyses in *Rabelais* of the 'language of the public place' and of the double-character of vulgar expression, at once praising and offensive, confirm and develop his conception of the sign as essentially plurivocal, and in the case of verbal signs in particular, as the expression of the centrifugal forces of linguistic life. For example, his reference (in Voloshinov 1929) to Dostoevsky's notes on an animated conversation formed from a single vulgar word used with different meanings is closely connected to his studies on the ductility and ambiguity of sense in the language of the grotesque body and its residues in the context of his work on the complex phenomenon called 'carnival.'

Rabelais and His World has a central place in Bakhtin's overall thought system. All of this is also connected to his conception of Marxism. Against oversimplifying and suffocating interpretations, Bakhtin developed the idea introduced by Marx that the human could only ever be fully realized with the end of the reign of necessity. Thus, a social system that is truly alternative to capitalism is one that considers *free time* – that is, time available for otherness, for one's own otherness as well as the otherness of others – and not *work time* as the real social wealth. The 'time of unofficial festivity' as discussed by Bakhtin in his monograph on Rabelais is closely connected to the 'great time' of literature.

9.2.3. The Carnivalesque in Writing

What carnival is for Bakhtin, he tells us in *Rabelais*. In this monograph, he uses the term 'carnival' to indicate a complex phenomenon that is present in all cultures. For him, carnival is formed through a system of attitudes, conceptions, and verbal and non-verbal signs oriented in the direction of comicality and joyous living. Furthermore, carnival concerns more than Western culture, or the Russian spirit; it touches every human culture in the world.

Today, in this era of global communication, we are witnessing an unprecedented spread of the ideology of productivity and efficiency; this is in complete contrast with the vision of carnival and the carnivalesque. The ideology of productivity and efficiency presupposes exasperated individualism, which is connected to the logic of competitivity, and all of this is in sharp contrast to the concept of 'grotesque body' grounded in intercorporeity, in the involvement of one's own body with the world and with the body of others, theorized in relation to carnival. However, as much as it is dominant, the logic of exasperated individualism, productivity, and efficiency cannot eliminate the human inclination toward nonfunctionality and the other.

The human is the *non-functional*, and in this sense it is characteristic of humanity that the carnivalesque endures, as testified by literary writing. The literary work, like all aesthetic activity, expresses the non-written right of man to non-functionality. In George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, ultimate resistance to a social system based on productivity and efficiency is represented by literature. In this sense, we can say that literature (and art in general) is and always will be carnivalized.

9.2.4. Writing in the Bakhtinian Perspective

The human sciences can be described as human for a reason that goes beyond the fact that they are concerned with the human being; in other words, the term 'human' can be considered in an evaluative sense and not just as a descriptive adjective. The 'human' sciences can be understood as the sciences that recognize the human right to non-functionality. As such, they should be at the basis of our understanding of the signs, texts, and works in general produced by humanity. There is no such thing as a human product that does not contain a trace of non-functionality, that does not include some useless and non-functional detail. With the assertion of non-functionality, the human being is manifested as an end in itself and not as a means.

A work's creativity is an expression of its being an end in itself. However, in today's globalized world such creativity can only find expression at an individual level, as the expression of the single artist. In contrast, in earlier cultural systems, non-functionality, excess, and assertion of the human and of human products as ends in themselves found expression at the level of the collectivity, in carnival.

The Bakhtinian–Rabelaisian vision is not continued by authors of academic essays and scientific works, but rather by literary writers, especially novelists, and not just by writers from this or that country, but by writers at the level of world literature. Besides in the writings of Western authors (such as Fernando Pessoa, Italo Calvino, Milan Kundera, and Mikhail Bulgakov), narrative finds truly interesting developments in polyphonic terms especially in the Latin-American novel. To paraphrase Bakhtin (1970–1), we could say that the Bakhtinian–Rabelaisian vision invites not scientists, critics, and semioticians to celebrate its resurrection, but writers.

For all these reasons, Bakhtin's work on Rabelais is of central importance not only to the development of his own thought system, but also for contemporary culture generally. The second edition (1963) of his monograph on Dostoevsky includes important revisions concerning the

relations among dialogue, novelistic discourse, and carnivalization. His monograph on Rabelais has also influenced and continues to influence the human sciences directly and indirectly – especially culturological studies, theory of literature, and literary criticism. As well, Bakhtin's *Rabelais* has directly and indirectly inspired literary writing. It is difficult to say just how a writer is inspired unless the author makes explicit statements about his work. Even then, such statements must be verified through confrontation with the work itself and with the author. To remain inside Italian borders, we could advance the hypothesis that Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa*, Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo*, and some of Calvino's works at least breathed the same atmosphere created by this exceptional work by Bakhtin.

9.3. Dialogue and Polyphony in the Writing of Novels and Drama

9.3.1. Representation and Depiction

Throughout his research, Bakhtin analysed the various aspects that constitute what he called the 'concrete architectonics' of the real world of action. He did so in terms of otherness. This concrete architectonics as described by Bakhtin is a unitary and unique event in the light of which all values, meanings, and spatio-temporal relations are created and organized. The aspects he identified as forming his architectonics are delineated in terms of *I-for-myself*, *the-other-for-me*, and *I-for-the-other*.

Architectonics is organized around a subject, but this subject is not in a position to reach a full understanding of this event. In fact, the subject's discourse as direct discourse and as self-reflexive discourse belonging to the 'confession' genre is incapable of a bird's-eye view. The subject remains within the sphere of *representation*, which means to say that the I – as is characteristic of representation – plays specific roles made of verbal and non-verbal signs through which it is fulfilled as I, and therefore is incapable of seeing itself as other, of leaving the sphere of its own identity. The word of the I is an objective word: the I speaks directly and identifies with its own verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

Nor is it possible to reach a full understanding of the I's concrete architectonics through discourse that is external to the I but oriented by cognitive goals and a uniquely gnoseological point of view. In fact, such a point of view aims at being objective and indifferent and claims not to be emotionally or valuatively participative. As such, it is incapable of *comprehending* that which it describes; indeed, it tends to impoverish it by losing

sight of the details that render it live and unfinalizable. The word that claims to be neutral is another case of representation. The neutral word claims to describe the verbal and non-verbal world of others objectively. The neutral and objective word of representation is oriented by the logic of identity – that is to say, it tends to reduce the relations among mutually external and non-interchangeable positions to a single point of view, thereby creating a world devoid of the capacity for effective confrontation with anything outside itself.

Instead, according to Bakhtin, the interpretation–comprehension of architectonics presupposes a position that is other, a position that is at once different and unindifferent, participative. Here, it is no longer a question of representing, but of rendering or depicting. That which is depicted or rendered is not simply expressed or described; it is also interpreted participatively. The verb 'to render' expresses this well and in fact can also be used for the verb 'to translate.' Rendering or depiction, in contrast to representation, suggests proximity to that which is rendered to the very point that rendering can be associated with surrender; at the same time, it implies distancing, extralocalization, a relation of alterity that leaves the rendered in its position as subject.

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin points to art – and specifically verbal art, that is, literature – as the place where such a vision is achieved: 'The world that is correlated with me is fundamentally and essentially incapable of becoming part of an aesthetic architectonic. As we shall see in detail later on, to contemplate aesthetically means to refer an object to the valuative plane of the other' (1993: 74–5). Bakhtin develops these statements in an immediately subsequent text, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,' included in his 1979 book:

> My own axiological relationship to myself is completely unproductive aesthetically: for myself, I am aesthetically unreal ...
>
> The organizing power in all aesthetic forms is the axiological category of the *other*, the relationship to the other, enriched by an axiological 'excess' of seeing for the purpose of achieving a transgredient consummation. (1990: 188–9)

For the artwork to obtain a unitary reaction to the hero's world in its totality is essential. This unitary reaction is different from simply cognitive and practical reactions although it is not indifferent to the latter; on the contrary, it unites all single cognitive and emotional–volitional reactions into an architectonic whole. If this unitary action operated by

human beings is to acquire artistic value, it must make us feel all the resistance of reality, of life, of which the hero is an expression; it must make us feel the resistance of that which is objective with respect to its rendering, its objectification; it must make us feel the hero's otherness, with its extra-artistic values. Therefore, such unitary action must begin from a position that is extralocalized with respect to the hero with regard to both the spatio-temporal dimension and the axiological dimension, especially if an autobiographical hero. If, instead, the condition of extralocalization does not obtain, the autobiographical hero will assume confessional overtones that are devoid of artistic value.

The texts by Bakhtin that we are now analysing anticipate his critique of Russian Formalism, which he developed systematically in a book signed by Pavel N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, 1928.

Bakhtin's text on the philosophy of responsible action sheds light on the research trajectory that led him to his 1929 monograph on Dostoevsky. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's 'philosophy' should be identified neither with the specific conceptions and perspectives of the heroes populating his novels, nor with their specific contents. On the contrary, Bakhtin finds traces of the architectonics theorized in his paper on moral philosophy, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, in the overall structure of Dostoevsky's works, whose essential characteristic is that they are organized according to the principle of dialogism. This is what Bakhtin was alluding to when he stated that 'to affirm someone else's "I" not as an object but as another subject – this is the principle governing Dostoevsky's worldview' (1963, Eng. trans.: 11). This statement becomes clearer in the light of a paper on Dostoevsky by Vjacheslav V. Ivanov (1973). In Dostoevsky's 'polyphonic novel,' the character is no longer described by an 'I' and considered as an object. On the contrary, the character itself is a centre of otherness and consequently organizes its world from a perspective that is oriented by the logic of otherness:

> Dostoevsky carried out, as it were, a small-scale Copernican revolution when he took what had been a firm and finalizing authorial definition and turned it into an aspect of the hero's self-definition ... Not without reason does Dostoevsky force Makar Devushkin to read Gogol's 'Overcoat' and to take it as a story about himself ...
>
> Devushkin had glimpsed himself in the image of the hero of 'The Overcoat,' which is to say, as something totally quantified, measured, and defined to the last detail: all of you is here, there is nothing more in you, and nothing more to be said about you. He felt himself to be hopelessly

> predetermined and finished off, as if he were already quite dead, yet at the same time he sensed the falseness of such an approach ...
>
> The serious and deeper meaning of this revolt might be expressed this way: a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. *In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal; in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse; something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition ...*
>
> The genuine life of the personality is made available only through a dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself. (Bakhtin 1963, Eng. trans.: 49–59)

According to Bakhtin, dialogism as depicted in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel consists in the fact that one's own word alludes always and in spite of itself, whether it knows it or not, to the word of others. No judgment-word, no judgment on an object, can be separated from an orientation, a stand that must necessarily be taken toward the other. This means that the word is never directly oriented toward its theme. There is always a process of refraction in a word, for the word is always mediated by a relation to others, which is a relation of both the cognitive and emotional orders. Judgment-words are at once allocution-words, therefore words that enter into dialogic contact with other words. Consciousness of self is reached and perceived against the background of the consciousness that another has of it; 'I-for-myself' against the background of 'I-for-the-other.' Therefore, dialogism also presents itself in a single voice, in a single utterance, as the interference of contradictory voices present in every 'atom' of this utterance, in the most subtle structural elements of discourse and, therefore, of consciousness.

9.3.2. The Author's Word and Polyphony in the Novel

The narrator does not remain external to the character, like a third party who is not participating in dialogue. However, if the narrative voice were to be external, it would emerge as a voice in the polyphony of voices capable of withdrawing from dialogue. In Bakhtin's view, this is where we can identify a difference between the novel genre and the dramatic genres. Polyphony cannot be achieved in drama except through what he calls the process of 'novelization.' For example, William Shakespeare's *King Lear* can be novelized by having the Fool narrate the story so that in his voice we can hear the voice of the author. Contemporary theatre presents many diverse examples of this kind of novelization.

By experimenting with polyphony, Dostoevsky's novel shows us that no voice can escape from dialogue, including the author's and the narrator's. In certain cases, says Bakhtin, the narrator is literally nailed down to his hero and cannot achieve the distance that is necessary to give an overall and integral image of the hero's actions and deeds. On the contrary, if the necessary distance were established, we would achieve the synoptical gaze of a third – of a non-participator in the dialogue who is in a position to embrace that dialogue and represent it objectively. In Dostoevsky's *The Double*, Goljadkin replaces the other person's voice with his own, turning to himself as if he were another and responding to the need for recognition from another person with this second voice, notwithstanding that he is feigning independence. Here, the narrator's voice tends to converge with the second voice, reinforcing its tones of mockery and ridicule. The impression, Bakhtin observes, is that the narration is oriented dialogically toward Goljadkin himself, and, what's more, as his second voice resounding in his mouth as the mocking voice of another, toward his double; and all of this taking account of yet another voice that is involved in this dialogue – that of the receiver, the reader. The narrator does not erase his own voice, his own intonation; on the contrary, he derides and scorns the character in order to push him to respond and experiment with his reactions. And Dostoevsky achieves all this without interrupting the continuity between the narration and the hero's discourse. In Bakhtin's description, it is as if we were witnessing a tormented dialogue at the limits of a single but divided consciousness.

When in his later novels Dostoevsky passes from a low degree of polyphony, or of non-homophony, to full polyphony, where the voices become truly other (even when they sing the same song, they never sing in unison), the narration perseveres in its dialogic orientation toward the character. Dialogism does not consist merely in the intonation of narrative discourse, which tends to become arid and to develop a protocolar style; it also consists in the overall orientation of the narration itself. That said, a narrative style that parodies, mocks, and taunts certain characters through interior dialogues is not lacking in Dostoevsky's later works – for example, in *The Devils* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. But Bakhtin observes that even when the arid-protocolar style dominates, narrative discourse generally is always in dialogue with the character, it is always turned to the character, appealing to him, provoking him, speaking to him and not about him; and it does so from a distance that is refractory to synthesis, which is the distance of polyphony.

Bakhtin shows how the plot itself is instrumental to dialogue. The plot offers the possibility of experimenting with the character's word, of provoking it, revealing it, bringing it into contact with the voice of the other. Human beings are not *manifested* through dialogue as if they were already given outside it, as if they have already been defined before engaging in dialogue; nor is dialogue a *prelude* to their fulfilment outside dialogue. Human beings are constructed in dialogue and do not exist outside it.

The hero in Dostoevsky is not the *object* of the authorial word. The author's word, says Bakhtin, is a *word turned to the word.* It is a word turned to someone who is present (who withdraws from the word about him and absents himself, with his excess, from the word that presents him), and not a word about someone who is absent (and who as such lends himself even more to the illusion of presentification). The author's word considers the hero's word as the word of a 'second' person, turned into a 'you,' and not of a 'third' person, of a 'he': the approach is frontal. The author's word *turns to the hero dialogically*; the author speaks not *about* the hero but rather *with* the hero through the overall construction of his novel. No doubt, the hero's unfinalizability, his otherness, is part of Dostoevsky's authorial project. The hero's word is created by the author, but, says Bakhtin, it is created in such a way as to develop as the *word of the other,* as the *word of the character itself.*

Dostoevsky's dialogue stands outside the cognitive relationship. It installs a relationship with the other that is completely outside the subject–object schema. And this is where the polyphonic character of Dostoevsky's novels is visible.

If we must speak of 'knowledge,' such knowledge is a question of the task of knowing the human being in its real essence as an other, as a unique, infinite, unfinalized 'I'; of knowing not oneself, but a self, an 'I' that is other and that belongs to others (cf. Bakhtin 1929). As Bakhtin observes, this is knowledge of the human being in *artistic* terms, which is different in principle from abstract knowledge and also distinct from it. In terminology identical to that used by Emmanuel Levinas in 'Reality and Its Shadow' (1948), Bakhtin describes reality as characterized by the *image* and the shadow as characterized by the *concept.* The image cannot be neutral with respect to the forms taken by *I* and *other* (that is, to the relations constituting the coordinates of architectonics as we have been describing it); the image cannot abstract from these forms. The image sees man for-self-who-is-for-other, in his own horizon (the hero's) and in the horizon of the other (the author's), *at once in it and outside it.* The

image *cannot be reached through a single point of view*; rather it demands an *extralocalized standpoint, participation at a distance, discrete participation*, unindifferent difference. If such an orientation characterizes the artistic vision of literary writing generally, the author's new position in the polyphonic novel consists in maintaining the image and an extralocalized standpoint, while changing the *topos* of such extralocalization as well as the content of *excess*.

9.3.3. Dialogue and the Body

In Dostoevsky, the dialogic condition is most evident when the hero makes claims to complete independence from recognition by the other, from the other's gaze, the other's word; dialogue is manifest when characters make a show of absolute indifference to the opinion of others, to their value judgments. Such an attitude is especially obvious in the monologue of the man from the underworld. His obsession with autonomy leads the hero to anticipate the possibility of denial with his own word. But, says Bakhtin (1929), the hero's very anticipation of the other's reply and his response to this reply reveal his dependence on the other (on himself). He *fears* that the other may think that he *fears* the other's opinion. But such fear reveals his dependence on the other's consciousness, the impossibility of being satisfied with one's own self-determination.

Dostoevsky is not at all interested in showing man engaged in dialogue that is wholly respectful of the other. Rather, he is intent on showing us the condition of inevitable involvement in dialogue *in spite of* oneself, in spite of one's own intentions. Dostoevsky shows that the word is dialogic as a result of its passive involvement in the word of the other. Dialogue does not occur just in situations of harmonious composition among points of views and identities; on the contrary, it is structured in refractoriness to synthesis, including the illusory synthesis of one's own identity. In fact, identity is dialogically fragmented insofar as it is inevitably implicated with alterity, just as the 'grotesque body' (Bakhtin 1965) is implicated with the body of others.

Bakhtin was focusing on the relationship between dialogue and body as early as the first edition (1929) of his book on Dostoevsky. Dialogism cannot be obtained among disembodied minds. Dialogue takes place among *voices* – not monologic and integral voices, but internally dialogic and divided voices – and *voices* allude to the ideological position *embodied* in the world. Bakhtin highlights the problematic of the voice's embodiment. His statement that Dostoevsky's hero is *voice* and that the

author does not show it to us as if it were an object, but rather has us listen to it, is misunderstood by René Wellek (1991) as an expression of idealism. This misunderstanding is perfectly in line with the criticisms that were levelled against Bakhtin by the representatives of 'socialist realism,' who unjustly accused him of 'polyphonic idealism,' which reasserted the opposition established by Merezkovsky between Dostoevsky, 'prophet of the spirit,' and Lev N. Tolstoy, 'prophet of the flesh.'

Bakhtin made a point of emphasizing the body's direct involvement in the *circumspect word* depicted by Dostoevsky. He pointed to the implications, the effects registered in the hero's relationship with his own body as a consequence of the word that is aware and cautious of the other, in spite of itself – a word that, precisely when flaunting maximum indifference, refusal, opposition, is in fact revealing its unindifference to the other. As an example by the man from the underworld makes very clear, one's body is overwhelmed by an interference of voices and as such is deprived of self-sufficiency and univocality; the body does not belong to the hero, it is not his own, for it is exposed to the gaze and to the word of the other.

The body throws the individual's presumed autonomy into crisis, rendering the idea of autonomy illusory and even ridiculous, given that the body is constitutively intercorporeal from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. Despite separations, belongings, memberships, distinctions, and erasures that are functional to individuality, the body of each and every one of us *remembers* its constitutive intercorporeity, in spite of memory as determined in the 'small experience'; and it does so in terms of the 'great experience' (an expression used by Bakhtin in one of his annotations from the 1950s). The body is refractory to the 'technologies of self' and to the 'political technology of the individual' (Michel Foucault). The body is *other* with respect to the subject, to consciousness, to domesticated, graded, filtered, adapted memory; the body is other with respect to the narration that the individual or collective subject has constructed for itself and through which it delineates its identity. The body is other with respect to the image that the subject presents as its identity card, which the subject exhibits and wishes others to consider; it is the physiognomy that the subject offers for recognition, the role it recites in relation to identity. The body viewed as that which is other is the body viewed in terms of singularity, unrepeatability, non-functionality, whose excess with respect to a given project, narration, 'authentic' choice, finds one of its strongest expressions in death considered as an inconclusive end: the living body knows before being known, feels

before being felt, lives before being lived, experiences before being experienced. This body is connected to other bodies without interruption in continuity; it is involved in and implicated with life over the entire planet, as part of the general ecosystem, an interrelated complex from which no technology of self will ever free it.

Globalization related to capitalist production and the consequent expansion of biopower have led to the controlled insertion of bodies into the production system and to confirmation and reinforcement of the idea that the individual is a separate and self-sufficient entity. This has led to the progressive and almost total disappearance of cultural practices and world views that are grounded in intercorporeity, interdependency, the body's exposition to the other, its openness to the other. Popular culture's various ways of perceiving the body, discussed by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and His World*, are almost extinct, just as are the different forms of 'grotesque realism.' In fact, the body as perceived by popular culture, being neither entirely individualized nor detached in any way from the rest of the world, does not respond to today's dominant conception of body or corporeal life generally. Instead of being an isolated biological entity – a sphere of life that belongs to the individual, that is possessed by the individual – the body as presented by grotesque realism is undefined, unconfined to itself, a body in a relation of symbiosis with other bodies, of transformation and renewal through which the limits of individual life – and this is the essential point – are constantly transcended. Because of the insistent assertion of the individualistic, private, static conception of body, verbal and non-verbal signs connected to the practices and conceptions of the grotesque body have almost completely disappeared. We are left with mummified residues analysed by students of folklore, archaeological remains preserved in ethnological museums and in the histories of national literature. Signs of the grotesque body include ritual masks, masks used during popular festivities, carnival. Of all these, only faded images have reached us today.

The signs and language of the grotesque body privilege and exalt those parts of the body, those excrescences and orifices, that most favour communication with other bodies as well as between the body and the world. Furthermore, those parts have recourse to blends and contaminations that know no interruptions between the human and the non-human:

> The grotesque body ... is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates

> another body ... The grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon.
>
> The grotesque mode of representing the body and bodily life prevailed in art and creative forms of speech over thousands of years ...
>
> This boundless ocean of grotesque bodily imagery within time and space extends to all languages, all literatures, and the entire system of gesticulation; in the midst of it the bodily canon of art, belles lettres, and polite conversation of modern times is a tiny island. This limited canon never prevailed in antique literature. In the official literature of European peoples it has existed only for the last four hundred years ...
>
> The new bodily canon, in all its historic variations and different genres, presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. (Bakhtin 1965, Eng. trans.: 317–20)

Once official ideology functional to maintaining the established order and power of the dominant class has been separated from unofficial ideology, the grotesque body is interdicted by official culture. The language of the grotesque body is rich in terms and expressions referring to body parts; these establish relations of interdependency and compromise with the world and with the body of others. Such language, which can be traced among all peoples and in all historical epochs, always refers to a body that is not strictly delineated, stable, fulfilled, or complete in itself, that instead is connected to other bodies in a relationship at least bicorporeal:

> The body of the new canon is merely one body; no signs of duality have been left. It is self-sufficient and speaks in its name alone. All that happens within it concerns it alone, that is, only the individual, closed sphere. Therefore, all the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death, it never coincides with birth; old age is torn away from youth. (Ibid.: 321–2)

Bakhtin dedicates a long chapter in *Rabelais* to the 'language of the marketplace.' He analyses the images and expressions of this language, showing how it belongs to the special logic of grotesque realism. The language of the marketplace is full of offensive curses and abuses, yet it often ends up assuming affectionate and laudatory overtones. All distances among subjects in communication are abolished. The language of the marketplace is ambivalent, 'a two-faced Janus' (ibid.: 165). Praise and

insults are not easily distinguished: praise is ironic and ambivalent and as such is at the limit of abuse; similarly, abuse is easily transformed into praise. This ambivalence, the simultaneous presence of the negative and the positive, characterizes comic culture generally – parody, irony, comicality – and all this arises from the dynamical, constructive, totalizing vision that subtends comic culture, that generates images which are never definitive, isolated, inert, but on the contrary are endowed with regenerating ambivalence.

Dario Fo draws abundantly from the resources of medieval popular comic culture and its parodic artworks (parodic sacred representations, prayers, liturgies, and mysteries). In the documents he collected from popular theatre and reassembled in *Mistero Buffo, giullarata popolare in lingua padana de '400*, he privileges the modalities of parodization and derision. The resources of popular comic culture are also present in his mimicry as an actor (his principal mode of theatrical expression): for Fo, the *signifying body is the grotesque body*. The capacity for subversion and provocation characteristic of popular culture, which has a tendency to transcend the homological limits of official culture, is fundamental to his critique of dominant ideology and power. Fo uses the plasticity, ductility, mobility, comicality, and ambivalence typical of grotesque language in popular culture in order to show how popular culture can resist passive subjection to the dominant cultural system that helps reproduce the established social order. This is a central aspect of Fo's works; it is also central to how he depicts the body; as he says himself, his works are political insofar as they are artistic: 'all art is politics' (cf. Fo, preface to *Attento te ...! Il teatro politico di Dario Fo* 1975). Throughout his works, Fo challenges cultural homologation as reinforced by those who would retain control over communication.

According to Bakhtin, dialogues in Dostoevsky's writings are neither dialectical nor synthetic, since there is no contradiction arising from *disembodied ideas*: for Dostoevsky, the ultimate givenness is not the idea conceived in terms of a monologic conclusion, but rather the event of interacting voices. The logic of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is presented in terms of a dia-logic. And this is possible precisely because *ideas are embodied in different voices that are unindifferent to one another*, in spite of or even because of their efforts to ignore one another, therefore, in spite of the delusory efforts to elude the mix-up of voices in which differences flourish. Dialogism constitutes the real life of word and thought, with respect to which monologic dialogue is an abstraction, a representation relieved of the condition of responsibility without alibis. Indeed, dialo-

gism as we are describing it implies interconnectedness with every other body in the living world, and therefore unlimited responsibility/answerability, the original modality of being in the world of each and every one of us, whose embodiment is expressed through the voice, in a relation to being whose body in its singularity occupies a position that cannot be exchanged with any other. When, in his notes of 1970–1, Bakhtin describes the process that leads from concrete dia-logics without synthesis to abstract monologic dialectics, he declares the voice to be basic to the distinction between dia-logics and dialectics: 'Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that's how you get dialectics' (1986: 147).

In Bakhtin's view, the voice and its incarnation, the body, distinguishes dialogue in Dostoevsky from dialogue in Plato, where (as much as dialogue is not completely monologized, pedagogical) the multiplicity of voices is cancelled in the idea. Plato is interested in the disincarnated ideal, in the idea as being and not as a dialogic event – the event itself of dialogue. In Plato, participation in the idea is participation not in dialogue but rather in the being of the idea. Consequently, different and unindifferent voices are annulled in the unity of belonging to a common entity. Moreover, in Bakhtin's view another element that distinguishes between the two types of dialogue is that in Dostoevsky, in contrast with Plato, dialogue is neither cognitive nor philosophical. Bakhtin prefers to relate dialogue in Dostoevsky to biblical and evangelical dialogue – as in Job, for example – because of its internally infinite structure, which has no possibility of synthesis and which is external to the sphere of knowledge. However, Bakhtin also warns us that not even biblical dialogue furnishes the more substantial characteristics of dialogue, which instead are traceable in Dostoevsky's writings.

9.3.4. Dramatization and Polyphony in the Word of Novel and Drama

Bakhtin traces the signs of dramatization in Dostoevsky's dialogues, but not in the sense of objectification, cancellation of the author's voice, which would make the author a non-participative third and annul the dialogic character of the text. Dramatization in Dostoevsky's dialogues consists in the fact that there is no development in them, no becoming of an idea, no elaboration of a thesis, no movement toward a conclusion. As Bakhtin said in 1929, this situation leads to an inclination toward dra-

matic form – a form which, however, as he adds in a note, does not imply the dramatic premise of a single monologic world. In Dostoevsky, different voices and ideologies are not situated in some series in becoming, as if they were phases in the development of an overall plan; on the contrary, they are depicted in the simultaneity of their reciprocal reactions. Dialogue subtracts itself from the unidirectional channelling of narration, of history, into a conclusion. This leads Dostoevsky to apply to the novel the dramatic principle of the unity of time; this in turn favours a depiction of the dialogic event that is non-functional to the historical realization of the being of an idea. The principle of simultaneity is closely connected to polyphony, where voices are not annulled in a sequence of ideas, are not assumed as stages in dialectical becoming, are not channelled into a conclusion.

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is generally misunderstood. Wellek (1991) offers a significant example of this when he declares that dialogue and polyphony in Bakhtin – and therefore his interpretation of Dostoevsky – are incorrect. According to Wellek, Bakhtin is contending that the voices of dialogue in Dostoevsky's writings are on a par with and independent of one another (ibid.: 498). Yet Bakhtin did not intend to deny Dostoevsky's voice as author, his personal point of view (ibid.). On the contrary: according to Bakhtin, the author is neither indifferent to the hero, which would involve reducing the voices to the status of represented objects, nor does the author identify with the hero (where reference is to the power of identification manifested by Dostoevsky with regard to different ideological points of view and attitudes toward life; ibid.). Dialogism in Dostoevsky, as Bakhtin points out, does not consist in the presence of independent voices (ibid.: 499). Nor does polyphony consist in the tendency toward drama, objectivity, and impersonality in the novel, therefore in the doctrine of the author's exit from the text (cf. ibid.). If this were the case, if it were a question of writing novels that are completely dialogized, Dostoevsky would be easily superseded not only by the authors who followed him (whom Wellek cites to support his thesis) – for example, by Hemingway in 'The Killers' – but also by the authors who preceded him. The polyphonic novel is not the approchement of the novel to drama, for this would make Dostoevsky's epistolary novel, *Poor People*, and his novel narrated in the first person, *The Adolescent* (where the form itself precludes an open appeal by the author, ibid.), the most polyphonic of Dostoevsky's writings, contrary to what Bakhtin claims. If this were the case, polyphony would surely be achieved to greater degrees by dramatic genres than by the novel genre.

But according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is built in such a way as to make dialogic interaction absolutely inevitable. No aspect of the artwork is created from the perspective of a non-participative third.

Wellek does not in the least suspect that his interpretation of Bakhtin's conception of dialogue and polyphony is mistaken. Bakhtin explicitly analyses the differences between polyphony and objectivity and between the polyphonic possibilities of the novel as a genre and the limits, in this respect, of dramatic genres (1963, Eng. trans.: 32–4). Wellek never mentions this. Yet Bakhtin makes his position very clear on this point in the 1963 edition of his monograph on Dostoevsky, when he stands his ground in his critical reply to Anatolij V. Lunacharsky's review of the 1929 edition of the same monograph (published in *Novij mir*, 1929: 10).

Wellek mentions Lunacharsky's impressions on first reading Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (Lunacharsky's was a Marxist's attempt to make Dostoevsky irrelevant and innocuous). And almost by way of confirmation, Wellek adds that he was not familiar with Bakhtin at the time and that he ignored the fact that the education commissioner Lunacharsky had written a favourable review of Bakhtin's book (Wellek 1991). (That same year, 1929, Lunacharsky had refused Walter Benjamin's article on Wolfgang Goethe for publication in *Literaturnaja Enciklopedija*; cf. Benjamin 1980: 148–51). Another aspect that Wellek completely ignores is that his interpretation of the Bakhtinian conception of 'polyphony' is identical to Lunacharsky's, being an interpretation that Bakhtin himself had rejected!

Like Wellek, Lunacharsky interpreted polyphony in terms of objectivity and dramatization in a situation where the author disappears altogether. Consequently, Lunacharsky acknowledged polyphony in the writings of both Shakespeare and Honoré de Balzac. However, in his 1963 edition of *Dostoevsky*, which included his critical reply to Lunacharsky, Bakhtin explicitly refused this interpretation, with reflections that can easily be extended to Wellek. Balzac's limit is of a subjective order and consists in the fact that in his novels he does not succeed in establishing a distance with respect to the objective representation of the word of his characters. States Bakhtin: 'Balzac belongs to the same line of development in the European novel as Dostoevsky, and is one of his direct and most immediate predecessors ... But Balzac did not transcend the object-ness of his characters, nor the monologic finalization of his world' (1963, Eng. trans.: 34).

In Bakhtin's view, Shakespeare presents an objective limit determined by the fact that, as noted, earlier, drama by nature is not polyphonic and

knows only a single world view, a single reference system. Having said this, it is also true that Shakespeare, together with Rabelais, Cervantes, Grimmelshausen, and others, still belongs to that line of development in the European novel that contains embryonic rudiments of polyphony, which were later to mature in Dostoevsky's work (ibid.: 33). In any case, objectivity and dramatization of dialogue do *not* coincide with polyphony and may even impede its fulfilment. In Wellek's view, Bakhtin described Dostoevsky's novel as polyphonic on the basis of an argument that unduly exaggerated the tendency toward drama (Wellek 1991: 501); according to Wellek, Bakhtin ignored the fact that the problem of independent voices arises in Dostoevsky's novels as in any drama (ibid.: 499). Wellek concludes his analysis of Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoevsky by asserting that to think what he himself (that is, Wellek) thought of Bakhtin is disconcerting – in other words, that Bakhtin's thesis about polyphony was motivated by his desire to render Dostoevsky innocuous and, therefore, more acceptable to authorities at a time when the latter was officially viewed as suspect (ibid.: 503). Wellek's declaration is based on his conviction that Bakhtin derived his thesis about polyphony from his faith in the dogma of objectivity (ibid.). The truth is that Wellek is completely unaware of the meaning of Bakhtinian *extralocalization*, in the light of which alone we can understand the concept of polyphony, this having nothing to do with either relativism or objectivity.

On the basis of what we have said so far about the relationship between the novelistic genre and the dramatic relative to the question of polyphony, we conclude with the following observation: Bakhtin identifies a difference in dialogic capacity between the novel genre and dramatic genres. By its nature, drama is foreign to true polyphony; drama can propose many planes but not so many world views; indeed, it acknowledges only one and not multiple systems of reference (Bakhtin 1963, Eng. trans.: 29–31). This is because drama places voices directly on stage; in drama, one voice does not resound in another, at least not predominantly. The narrating voice and the voice of the character do not mingle according to the different forms of indirect and free indirect discourse. And this reduces the possibility of parodization and irony among different discourses and different languages.

What we are stating must be relativized in the sense that drama is not polyphonic in comparison with a genre such as the novel, which has an enormous capacity for polyphony. But certainly, any literary genre is dialogic to the extent that it is a 'secondary genre,' a genre that proposes an

objectified word, a depicted word, where pluridiscursivity is dialogized to varying degrees. From this perspective, drama presents limits in comparison with the novel; this, however, is not to imply that the indirect word, the double-voiced, internally dialogized word, or polyphony, is not present in drama as well. Moreover, we must also keep in mind Bakhtin's reflections on the 'novelization' of all literary genres: the novel influences other genres and 'novelizes' them, in a process that involves reorganizing the word in the most dialogic and polyphonic sense possible. Most contemporary theatre is influenced by the phenomenon of novelization – think here of such writers as Brecht, Pirandello, Sartre, and Camus. There are also cases of 'translation' of classical theatre, on stage, into the language of the novel. Especially interesting is an experiment by Italian actor and playwright Marco Baliani, who narrates all of *King Lear* from the Fool's point of view, alone on stage and in a single voice in which, however, many other voices resound across the complete range of the different forms of reported discourse.

9.4. Storytelling in the Era of Global Communication: Black Writing–*Oraliture*

9.4.1. Two Different Types of Communication

Part III of this book will address the problem of communication – and specifically, global communication in today's world. This has, of course, been a problem of central importance in our book so far. Here, we will compare global communication with the practice of storytelling, with specific reference to the connection between dialogue and the body.

Global communication is subject to the global market, to the processes of general commodification that are characteristic of today's communication–production society. One of the distinguishing features of global communication is its tendency toward homogenization, toward a levelling of differences. Homogenization encourages the formation of identities, individualisms, separatisms, and egoisms of both the individual and community order that are, to say the very least, simply delusory. These formations accompany and are complementary to the mechanisms of competitiveness, conflict, and mutual exclusion. Paradoxically, the search for identity excludes the logic of otherness. In fact, the kind of difference that is necessary for the assertion of identity, to self-assertion, is difference that is indifferent to other differences. The condition of indifferent difference is achieved by sacrificing otherness to varying

degrees. We are referring here both to internal otherness, to that which identifies with difference internally, and to external otherness, the difference of others, *autrui*.

In contrast, storytelling is a practice common to all cultures. Far from denying differences, storytelling exalts them and also relates them according to the principle of mutual hospitality. It favours encounter and reciprocal understanding among different peoples. But even more, storytelling as a practice is the structural–genetical expression of differences related dialogically across different languages and discourse genres on the basis of hospitality and interest for the other. Historically, storytelling has served as a sort of connective tissue whereby different themes, subjects, values, and discourse genres have circulated among different peoples throughout the centuries. Remember here our common patrimony of legends, tales, stories, myths, parables, sayings, proverbs, and the like. In contemporary society, communication with others is predominantly goal-oriented, channelled into the interests of the individual to a sometimes pathological degree; in contrast, in storytelling this tendency is replaced by communication oriented by the *interesting*; what counts is one's relation to the other, one's interest in the other per se.

The practices of narration are developed through different types of discourse, different discourse genres, including the novel, which can be considered the most representative literary genre of our day. Furthermore, these practices are developed through different kinds of media such as cinema, not just through writing and orality. A characteristic of storytelling that is shared by all cultures and languages is that it is an end in itself; it is founded uniquely in the pleasure of invoking the other, of evoking the other, of involving and listening to the other. This essential characteristic distinguishes storytelling as we understand it from the type of narration that serves power: the power of control and punishment (the story told to the magistrate or police officer), the power of information (journalistic chronicles), the power of healing (a medical case history, the story that interests the psychoanalyst), the power of redeeming and saving (the story told at confession), the power of recording and establishing the sense of history (reconstruction of facts by the historian), and so on.

In contrast, the practice of storytelling suspends the order of discourse that global communication is programmed to serve, for global or world communication is functional to the order of discourse. As a result, storytelling creates pauses in communication–production processes that allow for reflection, critical rethinking, dialogue, encounter, and hospi-

tality toward the other. For this very reason, the practices of narration as we are describing them are subversive with respect to the order of discourse, and therefore are more or less suspect. In the following section, we explore some aspects of this general issue with specific reference to storytelling as practised in black cultures in Africa and America.

9.4.2. 'Oraliture' and Writing

The term *oraliture*, which was introduced in the subtitle of the present chapter, recalls the term *orature* coined by Claude Hagège (1985) by analogy with *écriture*, writing. *Oraliture* or *orature* designates orality or the oral style and confers validity on this type of discourse as a vehicle of knowledge and experience, similar to the validity of writing. Joseph Paré (1997) uses the term *orature* for the elements of orality as manifested in novelistic discourse – elements that also constitute an aspect of orality. We prefer the term *oraliture* to *orature* when referring to the various genres of oral literature such as short stories, legends, proverbs, rhymes, and songs, which present oral storytelling to us once again, but in the form of writing whereby orality is translated into written genres, in the form of either transcription from the oral or literary expression that is more or less complex.

Oraliture evokes *écriture*, writing. The word 'writing' does not simply recall the fact that *oraliture* becomes writing given that it finds expression in the various forms of literary writing, or that it is transposed from the oral, alluding to the various processes of transcription from the oral. That *oraliture* echoes *écriture* reminds us that orality in the various forms of non-written literature is already writing, writing *avant la lettre*. As such, *oraliture* presents ways of modelling the world – the expression of a sort of play of musement, the pleasure of inventiveness, encounter, involvement, and listening – no less than written literature.

As an initial approach to narration, we will consider some literary expressions of writing–*oraliture* that derive directly or indirectly from black African culture, including the American. In particular, we will refer to the African postcolonial novel; to short stories from Africa, specifically from Burkina Faso; to children's songs from the same country; to the African-American Uncle Remus stories featuring Brer Rabbit; and to Gullah stories (those of the black population inhabiting the coastal islands of Georgia and South Carolina), which feature the almost homonymous Bo Rabbit.

The reader should not expect an exhaustive analysis of the general theme: our aim is simply to propose a possible approach to research in

this complex field. We plan to publish a book on this theme, and expect to draw our findings for it mainly from comparative folklore – in particular, comparative literature (oral and written) – rather than from the work of ethnologists, anthropologists, and ethnolinguists, as indispensible as their research may be to the end of collecting and restoring materials that would otherwise be lost.

We contend that it is the writer's perspective – that is, the literary writer's – that is essential to the discourse we are now proposing. Who better than a writer knows about literary writing, in the form of both writing and of writing-*oraliture*? A writer like Calvino knows the 'pleasure of narrating,' 'the fun of inventing ingenious plots,' the 'friendly and communicative humourism' of the funny or the terrifying stories of the 'African tales' he collected for *Fiabe africane*. In his introduction to that compilation, Calvino emphasizes the essential importance of the narrative modality beyond the interest of content – the importance of style, of the disposition, of the gesture itself of narrating about black (cf. Calvino in Radin 1994 [1955]: 8).

Calvino insists on encounter and exchange that are not based on the principle of utility, on the prospect of a counterpart, on the logic of giving and receiving, of profit – which, on the contrary, is pure *dépense*, as Georges Bataille would say. The logic of *dépense*, of excess, operates in the cultural history of different peoples everywhere in the world thanks to the practices of narration and listening. These practices cut across communication relations understood in terms of interestedness – that is, relations that are functional to achieving given goals. Most often, these relations are based on hostility and conflict. We could even claim that storytelling 'has taken advantage of' markets, fairs, and shows, the slave trade and slave labour on plantations, military camps established during endless wars, voyages undertaken for the sake of commerce, and so forth, in order to establish relations that are other – relations that have made it possible for *oraliture* to reach as far as us.

Using his strong skills as a writer, Joel Chandler Harris presents us with the 'Legends of the Old Plantation' and with songs sung by a particular type of black man, as represented by Uncle Remus (who according to Harris was based on three or four real people he actually knew).

9.4.3. Texts That Are Distant from Each Other

What intrigues us most in this kind of research is not the relationship between text and context. Although important for an understanding of

the text, this relationship is of no interest when the text is reduced to the status of an ethnological, sociological, anthropological, ethnolinguistic, or historical document. From the perspective of approaches that produce this type of document, the text is no more than a pretext for the interests that transcend it. Our focus is on the relationship between one text and another, even when the two are culturally, geographically, or temporally distant from each other.

Thus, the most interesting thing to us about the research by Oger Kaboré and his 'corpus de chansons enfantines au Burkina Faso' is that these songs emerge as the place of playfulness, whether or not they belong to the practice of playing or to the author's efforts to relate them to their cultural context and language in ethnolinguistic terms. These songs are part of *oraliture*'s ludic atmosphere, which they enhance and which is faithfully conveyed in Kaboré's transcriptions. As much as Kaboré connects these songs to the context of children's daily life in Burkina Faso, to their practical education, to pedagogic and sociocultural requirements relative to traditional Mossi society (the main ethnic group in this country), the texts of this rich corpus emerge mainly as expressions of the pleasure of song, play, and dance.

Kaboré asks us to forgive his approach, which he describes as 'participative observation,' explaining that he is a native of the place where he collected the songs. He knows he is at risk of giving up scientific objectivity and that his judgments may be too personal or too strongly conditioned by childhood memories (cf. Kaboré 1993: 17). Actually, leaving his apologies aside, his position is of great interest to us. We are alluding here to the duality of temporal situations now inevitably distant from one another because of the events separating them: the time of the author's infancy and the time of the difficult task of collecting the materials presented in the book we are discussing. This dual temporality is no doubt linked to the author's scientific research, but it is also linked to the desire to find oneself in one's own infancy by transposing the events then experienced in the form of oral literary writing into the written sign of the present.

The author has committed himself to offering an exhaustive account of how the Mossi characteristically use words and language. That said, the songs in his collection are modelled by the tendency to play with language, to trap and trick it, to ridicule and parodize it, to make fun of it. Moreover, unlike everyday linguistic acts, these songs escape the obligation of being useful for achieving set goals; their only practical function is to create child's play.

Kaboré interprets his children's songs in a symbolic key with reference to the Mossi world view, but he also refers to those modern sciences which are preoccupied with symbols, including psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology. Yet the author's symbolic interpretations of these children's songs add nothing to their intrinsic value.

We believe that the texts of oral literature have the potential to liberate themselves from their immediate context and live a life of their own. These texts may continue to be telling, significant, capable of hospitality and listening even when their original context has been strongly modified or no longer exists – that is to say, when they are re-evoked and developed in contexts that are completely different from the original.

The title of Kaboré's collection, *Les Oiseaux s'ébattent*, is well chosen. Thanks to its ambiguity, its mysterious allusiveness, and its broadest possible opening of sense, it closely reflects the characteristics of children's songs. *Les Oiseaux s'ébattent* is the literal translation of 'Niuli zamzam ...' – an expression composed of a noun and an onomatopeic ideophone. It alludes to the enthusiasm and eagerness that animates children as they play together. Also, it plays on repetition, which besides being a distinctive feature of poetic form generally, is a characteristic of these songs in particular. Repetition is highly typical of children's songs and expresses the pleasure of playing with words, the special pleasure experienced in playing with sound and rhythm.

No doubt these songs lend themselves to a search for their specific symbolic meaning or special function, beyond playing with words. This can be an educational, moral, or even intellectual function, as in the case of long texts recited to exercise the memory or to accustom oneself to a sense of logic and precision. But beyond specific goals, finalities, situations, and behavioural patterns for which they were perhaps originally conceived, these children's songs are endowed with an intrinsic value of their own, with what Levinas (1972) referred to as the quality of *œuvre*. In other words, these songs are valuable, even precious, yet they offer no gain, no returns. This can be true of even the most basic, primitive, and functional tool to the extent that it is an expression of humanity. We are alluding to the fact that there will always be some sign – for example, a decoration – that signifies an excess with respect to functional value and that therefore renders that tool valuable, significant in itself. And in fact, such tools often end up in museums, where they are guarded with infinite care (or should be) even after they have become completely useless simply because they do not work any more, or because the context or circumstances that made them useful no longer exist.

9.4.4. Brer Rabbit Stories

The stories from Burkina Faso, collected by Louis Tauxier between 1913 and 1916 (and edited by Doris Bonnet in 1985), also resist any attempts to channel them into a moralizing conclusion, just as they resist being judged as immoral. Here, too, the pleasure of storytelling prevails. The behaviour of Hare, the main character in a rich series of animal stories, is illustrative of this. Hare shares many characteristics with Brer Rabbit in the Uncle Remus stories and with Anansi the Spider from the Ashanti tales of Ghana, the latter also traceable in tales from the Caribbean. Sometimes Hare fights for justice, punishing the ungrateful and the arrogant; other times, Hare is the *cause* of injustices that go unpunished, the personification of pride and slyness. In spite of Hare's flamboyantly mischievous nature, this character provokes laughter and amusement. As a consequence, the reader is easily overwhelmed by feelings of trust, friendship, gratitude, and generosity, due not so much to the contents or 'moral of the story' as to the structure and development of the narrative, which produces a general atmosphere of confident involvement and participation with the other.

In the United States, Anansi the Spider has been a popular character in illustrated children's stories since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. If Anansi continues to fascinate young readers today, this is thanks to its gift for telling stories – to the lightness and dexterity with which it moves along the threads of its stories – whatever their educational or entertainment purposes.

Julius Lester (1987, 1988) reworked the Uncle Remus stories as they had been originally published by Joel Chandler Harris between 1880 and 1948, when the tenth volume appeared posthumously (they had in fact begun appearing in 1878 in the *Atlanta Constitution*). Lester (cf. his introductions) attempts to show how mischievous Brer Rabbit plays out the moral role of recomposing order from the disorder he contributed to producing. This character responds to our unconscious need for disorder for the sake of recomposing order and resystematizing the totality that has been disturbed and thrown into crisis. But in these stories Brer Rabbit also has a life of its own, one that is independent of interpretations that insist on assigning to it some pre-established special task or function – independent even of the author. Lester is correct to liberate Brer Rabbit from politics and ideology (the sly rabbit reduced to the status of symbol or interpreted as the sublimation of black resistance to slavery, and so on). However, he falls into the old trap of assigning a role

to such characters in maintaining the general order of discourse, when in fact their main business is the pleasure of telling a good story. No doubt, we can agree with Lester when he tells us that Brer Rabbit is each one of us whether we are black or white, slave or free, child or adult (cf. ibid.: iii), but he is doubtlessly alluding to the fact that these stories are now being read in far broader circles than their creator foresaw.

Thanks to his skills as a writer, Harris is far closer than Lester not only to the character Brer Rabbit but also to the type of narrator that such a character presupposes. In particular, Harris succeeded in recreating the atmosphere of storytelling, not so much by contextualizing Brer Rabbit in the appropriate historical–social background (which from our perspective is of secondary interest), as by establishing the appropriate discursive modality. It is the dialogue that Uncle Remus opens with his young listeners that makes the adventures of Brer Rabbit come alive and that gives them a human consistency. It is through dialogue that he recovers the sense of these stories as they extend far back into time and space.

Brer Rabbit, transformed into Bo Rabbit (who is not the only variant), can also be traced in stories from the Gullah. We see this in a more recent collection (1981) illustrated and edited by Priscilla Jaquith. The origins of these stories are not clear, although general opinion tends to suggest that they come from Angola, whose indigenous people had been shipped to America as slaves during the eighteenth century. Another hypothesis is that the Gullah and their stories originated in Liberia. The Bo Rabbit stories were first collected by Albert H. Stoddard (cf. 1949) in Gullah *patois*. In Jaquith's edition, they are narrated in hybridized English – a mix of Elizabethan English, Gullah African language, and local British dialects – in the attempt to reproduce the flavour of the Gullah language.

Harris injected the Brer Rabbit stories with new life and narrative vigour thanks to his qualities as a writer – he was not simply a collector or transcriber. A good example is the following passage from 'Why the Negro Is Black,' the thirty-third story in the first volume of Uncle Remus. Here, we are confronted with hybridized English – Harris's attempt to recreate the style of black storytelling on southern plantations:

> One night, while the little boy was watching Uncle Remus twisting and waxing some shoe-thread, he made what appeared to him to be a very curious discovery. He discovered that the palms of the old man's hands were as white as his own, and the fact was such a source of wonder that he at last made it the subject of remark. The response of Uncle Remus led to the ear-

nest recital of a piece of unwritten history that must prove interesting to ethnologists.

'Tooby sho de pa'm er my han's w'ite, honey,' he quietly remarked, 'en, w'en it come ter dat, dey wuz a time w'en all de w'ite folks,' 'uz black – blacker dan me, kaze I done bin yer so long dat I bin sorter bleach out.'

The little boy laughed. He thought Uncle Remus was making him the victim of one of his jokes; but the youngster was never more mistaken. The old man was serious. Nevertheless, he failed to rebuke the ill-timed mirth of the child, appearing to be altogether engrossed in his work. After a while he resumed:

'Yasser. Fokes dunner w'at bin yit, let' 'lone w'at gwineter be. Niggers is niggers now, but de time wuz w'en we' 'uz all niggers tergedder.'

'When was that, Uncle Remus?'

'Way back yander. In dem times we 'uz all un us black; we 'uz all niggers tergedder, en 'cordin' ter all de 'counts w'at I years fokes 'uz gittin 'long 'bout ez well in dem days ez dey is now. But atter 'w'ile de news come dat dere wuz a pon' er water some'rs in de naberhood, w'ich ef dey'd git inter dey'd be wash off nice en w'ite, en den one un um, he fine de place en make er splunge inter de pon', en come out w'ite ez a town gal. En dem, bless grashus! w'en de fokes seed it, dey make a break fer de pon', en dem w'at wuz de soopless, dey got in fus' en dey come out w'ite; en dem w'at wuz de nex' soopless, dey got in nex', en dey come out merlatters; en dey wuz sech a crowd un um dat dey mighty nigh use de water up, w'ich w'en dem yuthers come 'long, de morest dey could do wuz ter paddle about wid der foots en dabble in it wid der han's. Dem wuz de niggers, en down ter dis day dey ain't no w'ite 'bout a nigger 'ceppin de pa'ms er der han's en de soles er der foot.'

The little boy seemed to be very much interested in this new account of the origin of races, and he made some further inquiries, which elicited from Uncle Remus the following additional particulars:

'De Injun en de Chinee got ter be 'counted 'long er de merlatter. I ain't seed no Chinee dat I knows un, but dey tells me dey er sorter 'twix' a brown en a brindle. Dey er all merlatters.'

'But mamma says the Chinese have straight hair,' the little boy suggested.

'Co'se, honey,' the old man unhesitatingly responded, 'dem w'at git ter de pon' time nuff fer ter git der head in de water, de water hit onkink der ha'r. Hit bleedzd ter be dat away.'

Uncle Remus does not limit himself to telling stories; rather he involves himself with his listeners. His dialogues are colourful and serve to con-

textualize the stories he narrates, instilling them with new life and meaning. Even though Uncle Remus is a fictitious character (as real as he may be in terms of typology), Harris distances himself from him, giving him a life and personality of his own to the very point of declaring that he cannot answer for him, for his whims, tricks, comicality, and incongruences. Harris went so far as to describe himself as a mere compiler, an author by accident (cf. Brookes, 'Introduction,' in Harris, 1880b: xii), given his extralocalized position as a writer with respect to his characters.

Harris wrote stories and had Uncle Remus tell stories not only for the 'pleasure of writing,' but also for the 'pleasure of listening,' which the members of his family experienced through his writing (as he had occasion to experiment directly). Harris found pleasure in telling stories and in reconstructing imaginary worlds that had been invented and handed down through the generations. His focus was on the world of the imagination, not on some distant historical context in terms of space and time, although this was perhaps the place where the Brer Rabbit stories originated (along with those featuring Bo Rabbit, Buh Rabbit, and Anansi the Spider). Harris was capable of talking about life with extreme simplicity, and he believed that his fantasy world view was far more telling than a useless voyage into 'savage lands,' to the mere end of discovering what time the mountain tribes or the inhabitants on the plains would 'agitate their hairy fists at each other,' only then to leave and go each his own way (see Harris 1892: vii).

9.4.5. The Novel and the Genres of African Oral Literature

In his analysis of the African postcolonial francophone novel, Paré (1997) shows how the African novel is a combination of the novel – a typically Western genre – and the genres of African oral literature, which include myths, legends, songs, proverbs, and parables. Bakhtin (whom Paré recalls) has done much to show how the novelistic genre arises out of a combination of different discourse genres in the construction of its own discourse. Moreover, the novelistic genre continues to favour the processes of hybridization as literary and extraliterary discourse genres, written and oral genres, and modern and traditional genres come together in polyphonic dialogue (see Bakhtin 1975). Paré contends that the African postcolonial novel, because of its dual heritage, requires a 'hermeneutics of hybridity' if it is to be interpreted adequately.

From the perspective of temporality, the relationship between present and past that underpines narration in the African novel has con-

sequences for the structure of African novelistic discourse. Given the generally non-linear character of temporality and the multiplicity of periods and time spans that enter it and that interrelate without being reduced to one another, the novel genre responds well at this level. Nor is it a question of inserting the plurality of time into a single, unitary time, a time that contains temporal multiplicity in a continuous flux oriented toward a single and unitary sense. On the contrary, the novel renders the otherness of time, its fragmentation and discontinuity, thanks to its capacity for portraying time spans that are mutually other and that encounter one another as a result of the novel's availability in terms of dialogism, polylogism, and polyphony. From this perspective, we could describe the word of the novel as 'antihistorical.' The African novel reproposes antihistoricity as a means of liberating itself from the dominant historical vision of our day, from the history of the imperialistic West, and from the linear time of millennarism, in terms of which the African world view had previously conceived its resistance to its history of exploitation and dominion.

Storytelling in the African postcolonial novel – the most popular literary genre among Francophone African writers in the sub-Sahara, together with the short story – develops a panchronic form of temporality. The African postcolonial novel emerges as a place where different narrative paths from the African tradition and from modernity, from writing and from *oraliture*, at last meet, intersect, and regenerate one another. Hybridization is organized into a creative synthesis so that we can now speak of a 'dynamic reappropriation of writing practice.'

Reappropriation also concerns language. The specific character of literary writing (above all the word of the novel), which involves working with language while standing outside it, outside the order of discourse, allows for greater distancing, parodization, dialogization, and critique. In the case of the African postcolonial novel, this is especially so when the writer uses the dominant foreign language, such as French. Linguistic interference acts not only at the stylistic and semantic levels but also at the ideological level – not, however, in the form of direct opposition, which is often dogmatic and sterile, but rather, on the contrary, in the form of dialogized dialectics. Thus described, linguistic interference is not just a matter of lingual interference determined by the fact of speaking Wolof, Arabic, Malgascian, or Bantu *in French*. More than this, linguistic interference results from gazing at a language and its literary discourse genres from the perspective of another language, of other genres and cultural-linguistic traditions.

In the light of such considerations, Paré observes that connections can be established between the Francophone African novel and the novel as it is developing in other 'periphery cultures' – for example, between the Francophone novel and the Anglophone, Magreb, or Latin-American novel. And in fact, similarities are emerging that are not only of the superficial analogical type but also profoundly homological and genetico-structural. The novel today is thriving and is being renewed thanks to such 'periphery cultures.' And such writing practices as these are contributing to the development of a common sense of culture as *other*; of culture characterized by the tendency to enhance dialogization and unindifference among differences; of culture that is *other* with respect to the ideology of global communication, which tends toward homologation and which is only capable of difference that is indifferent and non-dialogized.

In this way, says Paré, a common culture from the periphery is emerging, which, thanks to its capacity for innovation in reappropriating writing practices and regenerating the *oraliture* tradition, is beginning to interrogate the very notion of periphery.

The shared culture of otherness from the 'periphery' – achieved through full appreciation of the resources of writing genres and of *oraliture* in narration (especially the novel), appreciation that arises, for example, in the sphere of 'African literature' between literary production from the African continent and that of the Carribean – points out the limits of literary criticism when it insists on the abstract notion of 'national literature.' In fact, the concept of 'national literature' ends up proposing world views that are fragmented and partial – that as new expressions of identity, serve only to totalize the discourse of state power, and, in the final analysis, of the communication–production system.

The abstract concept of 'national literature' loses sight of the subversive character of 'literature from the periphery.' Even worse, at an ideological level (consciously or not), literature from the periphery is impeded in its efforts to become aware of its real position, which is anything but peripheral. Here we are alluding to the power of regeneration and renewal that characterizes it not only in relation to literature considered abstractly (as if it belonged to museums), but also in relation to life and to the development of a world view that can at last be considered human.

Following Abiola F. Irele, who as early as 1977 was drawing attention to the impossibility of talking about national literature in relation to African literature, Paré criticizes the concept of national literature and

proposes to replace it with the concept of 'metanational literatures.' Instead of focusing on the condition of belonging and identity, the concept of 'metanational literatures' concentrates on the character of *œuvre* – in this context, 'artwork' – on the irreducibility of the artwork to a fact of nation or nationality, and thereby emphasizes the constitutive nonbelonging and otherness of the artwork. 'National literature' and 'metanational literatures': the necessary plural in the second expression indicates difference, the logic of otherness joining different cultures in relations that are made precisely of difference, unindifferent difference, and otherness.

According to Paré, the African novel has contributed greatly to reactivating the genres of the African oral tradition as these enter into dialogic contact with the novelistic genre. As a result, the African novel is doing much to regenerate the novelistic tradition itself, to liberate it from tendencies toward mummification; in the same way, it is contributing to the development of a world view 'from the periphery,' 'from down under,' from the 'south of the world.' This new world view from the periphery does not simply propose an alternative world view with respect to the world as it is; far more radically, it is capable of creating a condition of effective otherness in the dominant communication circuit and, therefore, in the 'world,' in 'reality,' in the 'being of things' produced and circulated by the dominant ideology in today's communication system.

This conception of the African novel evidences the narrowness and sterility of those approaches which, for example, deny an African character to literary texts produced by writers who continue writing in the language of their colonizers; or which encourage the useless search for 'archeological identity.' Paré contends that on the contrary, we must learn the lesson concerning identity and difference proposed by narration as practised by the African Francophone postcolonial novel. The proposal is that of 'polymorphic identity,' the innovative result of the association of elements from African culture and from the West. Thus modelled, this association transcends identity and is *other* with respect to the concept of identity as proposed by the dominant communication system. 'Synthetic hybridity' of narration in the novel visualizes this idea of polymorphic identity developed in terms of encounter among *recognizable differences.*

How the African novel relates to foreign languages and uses them is paradigmatic of the work that literary writing can in fact carry out in relation to language (*langue*). It is also paradigmatic of the critical work that needs to be done relative to dominant communication, and that

peripheral *Geworfenheit* itself evidences as necessary and inescapable. Paré describes this relationship with language (*langue*) and the order of discourse in terms of 'glottophagia.' African languages greedily gobble up and assimilate the French language; in this sense, we can speak of 'glottophagia' and transform it into an instrument capable of expressing polymorphic identity as part of a new way of experiencing the world and conceiving it, rather than as archaeological and delusory identity.

This is the glottophagia characteristic of literary writing, with which Western writers are also familiar, and which they also practise as a condition of literariness. It is possible to take advantage of today's global communication–production system to strengthen and empower this practice and to retrieve the tradition of narration or storytelling connected with *oraliture*. It is now clear that counter to dominant approaches in cultural anthropology adopted by colonizing or neocolonizing countries – approaches that are committed to recovering the oral tradition as the expression of genuineness to be preserved and placed in spirits – Africa too can significantly contribute to this type of 'cultural anthropophagia,' thanks to its important traditions in oral literature. (Other areas from the 'periphery' can of course also contribute.) This conception can help transcend the humanism of monologic identity to the benefit of a new form of humanism, the humanism of otherness – or if we prefer, the humanism of polypmorphic and polylogic identity.

Biographical Note

EMMANUEL LEVINAS (Haunas, 1906–Paris, 1995), one of the most significant philosophers of the twentieth century, has contributed heavily to semiotico–linguistic problematics by dealing with the question of alterity in terms of the critique of ontology. His work represents an original contribution, alongside those of Hartman, Block, Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Bakhtin, to that multifaceted movement in philosophy that concerns itself with the refoundation of ontology. This refoundation contrasts with philosophies hegemonized by the logic of knowledge and stated reductively in epistemological terms. Levinas developed his thought in dialogue with Husserl and Heidegger, whose writings he was the first to introduce into France, having followed their courses in Fribourg in 1928 and 1929.

Part 3

Predicative Judgment, Argumentation, and Communication

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10

Understanding and Misunderstanding

10.1. Semiogenealogy of Predicative Judgment

10.1.1. Semiotics as Constitutive Phenomenology

As general sign theory, semiotics concerns itself with foundations, principles, and conditions of possibility and is necessarily philosophical in orientation. From this perspective, it is difficult to distinguish between *semiotics* and *philosophy of language*.

In this chapter we consider problems that concern both philosophy of language and semiotics as *constitutive phenomenology*. Our focus will be on *logic* and *theory of knowledge* from the point of view of their *formation*.

Edmund Husserl (1948: 1) would say that we are turning our considerations to the sphere of the *Ursprungsproblem* (the problem of origin). Moreover, logic and theory of knowledge or gnoseology are inevitably related to *ontology*, the doctrine of something in general, of being in general. This is because predication, or judgment, is impossible without predicative judgment, which consists in predicating the being of something. On the other hand, as soon as semiotics defines the sign as something that is interpreted by an interpreter, 'it must reflect on this something,' which, as being, is part of that sphere of philosophical meditation known as ontology (cf. Eco 1997a: 6).

However, the problem of the origin is also relevant to ontology. Nor can this be reduced to the question of how being comes to existence and reveals itself through verbal language and signs in general, for this would imply simply assuming an acritical stance with respect to ontology. To reach an understanding of the problem of the origin, we must exit the horizon of being; indeed, being begins forming from this very 'exit,' this

'outside' – which, however, does not coincide with the void or nothingness. Nothingness is already inside the production mechanism of being, *essance* or *essament* (Levinas); that is to say, nothingness is already part of coming into being and persevering in being, nothingness is foreseen by the dialectics involved in reproducing being. Says Emmanuel Levinas: 'The term *essence*, which we do not spell *essance*, designates the *esse*, the process or event of being, disinguished from the *ens*, the *Sein* differentiated from the *Seindes*' (1974c, Eng. trans.: 187n1; see also 'Note,' in ibid.: xli). We are referring to that complex and articulate problem that leads beyond the horizon of ontology to concern what Levinas calls 'otherwise than being' (a term that corresponds to the title of his 1974 book).

Unlike 'being otherwise,' which merely proposes an *alternative* being – an alternative within the field of ontology – 'otherwise than being' is not encompassed by being, nor is it the alternative to being; rather, it is the otherness of being. Following Levinas, we can refer to this dimension that is other with respect to ontology as *metaphysics*. Ontology presupposes metaphysics. Otherwise than being is not the other side of being; rather, it is this side of being – in other words, it is the condition of possibility of being, its foundation. We might characterize otherwise than being as a *transcendental* being, although this characterization is perhaps deviant, given that it could make otherwise than being seem a mental prerogative and a cognitive condition. Otherness is a condition of being, but it is not this alone. Otherness is not exhausted in its function as a condition of being; in fact, we could say that 'this is not its vocation,' it 'was not born for this.' *In the first place, the otherness of otherwise than being is located in an ethical dimension and not a cognitive dimension.* It subsists, flourishes, intrigues, preoccupies, and confers responsibility, but not to the end of determining being. We will return to this later. For now, let us simply say that questions relating to the origin of ontology and to predicative judgment – and, therefore, to logic – necessarily involve metaphysics.

We can sum up all of this by saying that *semiotics*, *philosophy of language*, *gnoseology* (theory of knowledge), *logic*, *ontology*, and *metaphysics* are all closely related. And one of the authors who relates these aspects most explicitly is Charles S. Peirce. Indeed, Peirce is our main point of reference in this chapter. More recently, through his close examination of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Levinas has made a significant contribution to the claim that metaphysics cannot be eliminated from ontology. Our considerations will also be guided by Husserl and his phenomenology, especially by Husserl's most recent work *Erfahrung und Urteil* (Expe-

rience and Judgment). Many other authors could also contribute to this discussion; however, in the present context, we will limit ourselves to briefly mentioning Victoria Lady Welby and Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. The latter's *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (Meaning, Communication, and Common Speech) explicitly addresses the problem of the foundations and the conditions of possibility of meaning and communication.

Semiotics must reflect on the conditions of possibility of what Husserl calls the already given, already done, already constituted, already determined world. This is necessary if we are to critique the world's current configuration with a view to changing it. We could say that semiotics carries out the overall task of what Husserl calls *constitutive phenomenology*, which consists in clarifying the entire complex of operations that lead 'zur Konstitution einer möglichen Welt' ('the constitution of a *possible world*') (Husserl 1948: 50). We are especially interested in the specification that continues the proposition just cited: 'Es handelt sich ja um die Wesensform von Welt überhaupt und nicht um unsere faktische, wirkliche Welt' ('When we say "possible" we mean as a question of the essential form of the world in general and not our real effectively existent world') (ibid.). This means investigating the modelling structures and processes of the human world not simply in terms of factuality, reality, and history, but also in terms of potential and possibility. Such an investigation is specific in the sense that it deals with a species-specific modality of constructing the world. Unlike other animals, the human animal is characterized by its capacity for constructing infinite possible worlds. If, following Thomas A. Sebeok, we agree to call the human device for modelling the world 'language,' we can add that this particular type of modelling device exists uniquely in the human species; thus, only humans can construct an infinite number of real or imaginary worlds, concrete or fantastic worlds, and not remain imprisoned in a single world (cf. Sebeok 1991b).

Therefore, semiotics can present itself in terms of *transcendental logic* as understood by Husserl, given that the phenomenology of semiosis can explain the problems involved in forming possible worlds. This also confirms Husserl's critique of the limits of psychology, which he identifies in the fact that psychology addresses a subject that has already been defined and situated in a world that for its part has also already been determined in one way or another. On the contrary, as transcendental logic, the task of semiotics is to reconstruct the possible operations that generate the already given world and the psychological subject so that they become what they are.

As philosophy of language, semiotics cannot avoid the following question, as cast by Umberto Eco (1997a: 4): 'What is that something that induces us to produce signs?' Alternatively. 'What makes us speak?' As in Eco's case, this problem can lead us to the concept of Peirce's 'dynamical object,' inducing us to reply that it is the dynamical object 'that pushes us to produce semiosis': 'We produce signs because there is something that demands to be said. Using an expression which is hardly philosophical, but effective, the Dynamical Object is Something-that-gives-us-a-kick and says "speak" – or "speak about me!", or again, "take me into consideration"' (ibid.: 5). This reply, as observes Eco, presupposes a theory of knowledge. However, before we can indicate the something that induces us to produce signs as a dynamical object, *noumenon*, brute matter, something undetermined arouses the attention and precedes the act of perception and is already semiotic. Therefore, Eco resorts to Peirce's concept of *Ground*, which is not to be understood as the 'background from which something emerges' but rather as 'something which emerges from a background that is still indistinct' (ibid.: 46). And if we translate this term into Italian as *base*, as in Peirce (1980), 'it would not be so much a basis of the Dynamical Object, as rather a base, a starting point, for the knowledge we attempt to gain about it' (ibid.), a sensation. Consequently, it is the 'base' or 'foundation' of the 'non-metaphysical [hypostatized] cognitive process, differently the *Ground* would be substance, something which obscurely presents itself and becomes a *subjectum* of predications. Instead, it is itself a possible predicate, more of an "it's red" than "*this* is red"' (ibid.: 81).

10.1.2. Four Different Aspects of the Phenomenology of the Object

We next consider the problem of the genesis of the Object from four different angles:

1 The question of the origin of semiosis as perception beginning from a solicitation that has not yet been determined in terms of the *ground*.

From this perspective, in *Erfahrung und Urteil*, Husserl offers an in-depth analysis of the transition from 'it's red' to 'this is red.' Here he shows that genesis of the predicative judgment 'S is p' begins from a situation of total passivity of the subject who is 'affected' by something that has not yet been determined and that causes the I to turn to it. But Hus-

serl takes the I as the departure point for his phenomenological reconstruction. In other words, his starting point is intentional consciousness, which serves as the presupposition of his approach to phenomenology. However, as we have noted, the departure point is not the psychological I, but the I understood as a synthesis of the conditions of possibility for the construction of the psychological I and of its corresponding 'already given world.'

In fact, a further 'regression' is possible with respect to that accomplished by Husserl for a phenomenological analysis of the relation between the body and its surrounding world. We are referring to the phase where a subject–predicate structure has not yet been determined but is simply given to the body in terms of pure and simple fruition, *jouissance*. This is the focus developed by Levinas in *Totalité et infini*. Here, there is no subject and predicate, for that which gives itself to perception in terms of *jouissance* gives itself in the impersonal form, as when we say 'it's raining' or 'it's hot': neither 'this is red' nor 'it's red,' but if at all, 'it's reddish.' Such regression does not involve a transition from logic to gnoseology or from the predicate to the sensation, as if such spheres were located in different and separate territories; rather, it is a question of transiting from logic–gnoseology and from the predicate–sensation to the level at which these originate.

And this perhaps enables us to claim that not even in Peirce's thought system is there such a transition from logic to gnoseology, or from the predicate to sensation, to the point that we can speak of a turning point dating back to around 1885 (cf. ibid.: 80). In truth, in Peirce too, more than a turning point or transition it is a question of investigating the origin of the 'immediate object' starting from the coming toward us of the 'thing in itself' or the 'dynamical object.' On the other hand, this issue involves not only logic and gnoseology but also ontology, insofar as it is a question of problematizing being itself and sense shifting toward an antecedent and transcendent level – which belongs to the sphere of metaphysics.

Moreover, according to Levinas's concept of impersonal happening – that which he indicates with the expression *il y a* – sensation is neither representation nor the initial phase of a cognitive process. On the contrary, sensation is intimately connected to a sense of fruition from which it cannot be separated. Therefore it is connoted, even if not overtly, in an axiological sense that is not moral but aesthetic, simply because with sensation we are thrown into the dimension of *jouissance,* of pure and simple egotistical fruition.

2 The generating of human verbal and non-verbal signs as interpretants of the dynamical object, beginning from the *ground* that imposes itself on the attention as the result of a species-specific modelling device that, following Sebeok, we call 'language.'

As much as human and non-human animals share the same types of signs, human signs are special insofar as they are connected with a species-specific capacity that enables the construction of infinite possible worlds. Therefore, human beings are able to generate a great variety of different meanings and spheres of sense through the use of a limited number of elements: it is possible to 'write' with just two stones depending on how they are arranged, thereby producing different meanings not only in relation to the same register (hunting, for example: prey on the right, prey on the left, large or small in size, and so on), but also in relation to different senses or meaning regarding different registers (hunting, war, love, and so on).

3 The question of the relation between ontology and metaphysics, which must not be ignored when we address the problem of the connection between semiotics–logic, on the one hand, and semiotics understood as transcendental logic, on the other.

As noted, being and therefore ontology are not self-sufficient and closed within themselves. Reality has a shadow that is inseparable from it; identity includes otherness, as much as it cannot encompass it; the totality is open to the 'infinite,' where the 'in' in infinite should be read as both a negation and a proposition with a locative value: the Cartesian idea that the less contains the more, an excess, the unlimited or transcendental.

4 The ethical foundation of the relation between consciousness and being.

Following Eco, as philosophy of language, cognitive semiotics must do more than address the question of the *terminus ad quem* – that is, the term to which we refer when talking or producing signs in general. It must also address the *terminus ad quo* – that is, what it is that makes us speak or in general produce signs. Fundamentally, this is the problem of what pushes us to produce semiosis and to come into being as a subject, as an I. If we search for an answer in the object alone – that is, the dynamical object – claiming, as does Eco, that it is the object that 'demands to be said,' our

response to the whole issue is partial and, furthermore, fails to account for the overall context in which the need to say makes itself felt. In other words, this answer does not account for the fact that the relation with the object is always mediated by the relation with the other – not the other understood as a thing, but the other (*autrui)* as another person. We could in fact claim that it is our relation with others that makes us speak, that demands that the subject should say. Indeed, it is not surprising that in his discussion of the dynamical object, Eco should use metaphors that allude to the interpersonal relationship: the verb 'demand,' the expressions 'take me into consideration' and 'speak about me,' and that other expression, which he playfully hopes will be translated into German so that 'it may be taken seriously in Italy philosophically' (ibid.: 389) – that is, 'something-that-gives-us-a-kick' (ibid.: 5).

As Mikhail M. Bakhtin has amply demonstrated (1929, 1963; cf. also Bakhtin–Voloshinov 1929), to speak not only means to speak with the words of others, but also to take account of the other in a relation of inevitable involvement and implication, such that to speak is always to answer, also in the sense of to answer for – primarily to answer for oneself, to justify oneself. The I speaks so as to answer to the other. As Levinas states in 'Nonintentional Consciousness' (1991, Eng. trans.: 123–32), the first case in which I is declined is not the nominative but the accusative. The other interrogates the I. And the question of the something, of being, is inseparable from the question of the I itself, which must first answer for itself, for the place it occupies in the world, and for the way it relates to others. This means that *first philosophy*, as both Bakhtin (cf. particularly 1919, 1922a) and Levinas maintain independently of each other, is *ethics*. As Levinas states, the main question is not, 'Why is there being instead of nothingness?' but rather, 'Why is my being here in this place, in this dwelling, in this situation, while another is excluded?' The origin of human semiosis is not intentional consciousness but, as says Levinas, *consciousness that is non- intentional*, consciousness understood in an ethical sense and not in a cognitive sense, more precisely, 'bad conscience,' which attempts to justify itself, to appease itself, to make itself comfortable regarding questions raised by the other by its mere presence, and which in so doing is reconciled as 'good conscience.'

10.1.3. Semiotics as Transcendental Logic: The Question of the Ground

As we will discuss in greater detail below, the *ground* is *firstness*; in terms of Peirce's typology of signs, it belongs to the sphere of *iconicity*. The

next phase is that of *secondness* and *indexicality*. Eco asks himself whether the ground is a question of intuitive immediacy antecedent to inferential activity or whether inferential processes are involved, at least in an immediately subsequent phase. If the first hypothesis were correct – that is, if the ground were a question of intuitive immediacy antecedent to inferential activity, so that we would only have 'the pure feeling that something is in front of me,' an intuition 'without any intellectual content' – then 'the anti-Cartesian controversy of the young Peirce' would reveal some weak points (cf. Eco 1997a: 81). In other words, it would mean returning to the Cartesian conception of evidence given outside the interpretive process. Such a contradiction can be avoided through Husserl. In fact, his phenomenological analyses of the perceptive process reveal the possibility of returning to 'immediate evidence' – or, as he also says, to 'plain experience' as opposed to 'mediated evidence' or 'founded experience' – without abandoning the Kantian perspective of *transcendental logic*: plain or immediate evidence is formed of operations relative to *laws,* or to the *essential structures* of perception, although still at an 'antipredicative' level.

In reconstructing the rise of predicative judgment and studying the formation processes of logic, Husserl was concerned with operations carried out by subjectivity, which he distinguished from *psychological subjectivity* considered as part of a preconstituted world. The operations that interested Husserl, and that lead to the formation of predicative judgment, are those carried out by *transcendental subjectivity*. The latter is obviously a Kantian concept. In Husserl's view, evidence, however immediate, always involves operations by transcendental subjectivity. All the same, with regard to 'maximally founded experience,' he speaks of 'maximally plain experience' or 'immediate evidence.' Not unlike Peirce (consider above all the latter's essays of 1868, 'Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man' and 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities'), Husserl rejects the possibility that ideas are absolutely undetermined by other ideas. At the same time, he resorts to Descartes's concept of 'evidence,' which, however, he invests with a relative sense. The following passage from *Erfahrung und Urteil* is symptomatic. Here, Husserl refers to Descartes in order to validate his reconstruction of transcendental operations:

> In other words, we understand ourselves in this revelation of intentional implications, in the interrogation of the origin of the sedimentation of sense from intentional operations, as *transcendental subjectivity*, where, by

> 'transcendental,' nothing more is to be understood than the theme, originally inaugurated by Descartes, of a regressive inquiry concerning the ultimate source of all cognitive formations, of a reflection by the knowing subject on himself and his cognitive life. (1948, Eng. trans.: 49–50)

With both Peirce and Husserl, we are outside the empiricism–innatism antinomy (which, on the contrary, is naively reproposed by Noam Chomsky in 1966, when in terms of language theory he returns to Descartes as if Peirce and Husserl had never existed). Both Peirce and Husserl (again contrary to Chomsky) proceed from Kant. Besides evoking Kantian transcendentalism and Descartes, Husserl specifies that the encounter of the object with the subject at the lowest levels of perception is not an encounter with a *tabula rasa* as understood by naive empiricism or even positivism:

> We will soon concern ourselves in detail with how the act of prepredicative judgment, as a lower level of ego-activity (the level of receptivity), that of perceptive contemplation, explication, etc., is distinguished from the higher level, that of the spontaneity of the act of predicative judgment.
>
> The act of judgment in this broadest sense of ego-activity of higher or lower levels should not be confused with that of passive *belief*, which Hume and the positivism which follows him assume as a datum on the tablet of consciousness. (Ibid.: 61)

Taking as his starting point Peirce's (juvenile) critique of Cartesian intuition – therefore his critique of the belief in the power of introspection and intuition – as well as Peirce's consequent thesis that knowledge is achieved through hypothetical reasoning even at the lowest levels of perception, Eco (1997a) asks how the *ground* comes to be as the initial phase in the cognitive process. We do not expect to find inferential processes when the *ground* emerges. If there were inferential processes, it would not be possible to distinguish between the *ground* itself and the immediate object. The immediate object is the object represented under the respect in which it is thought (cf. *CP* 8.343, 5.286). It is the *type* with respect to which the dynamical object that triggers the sequence of interpretive responses is the *token*. Insofar as the immediate object is interpreted on the basis of a *type,* it is no longer a singular and indeterminate sensation like the *ground*. On the contrary, as an individual entity the immediate object is part of a class, it is already the individual within a universal. Therefore, according to Eco, 'in a certain sense (actually in all) Peirce does not explain in a satisfactory manner how we pass from the

impression to the concept' (1997a: 47). Through the example (or apologue or parable) of Marco Polo and the unicorn and of Kant and the platypus, Eco shows how, when constituting the immediate object, we proceed to determining the unknown (which never presents itself as completely unknown) by referring to the already known thanks to some similarity inside a given 'encyclopedia.'

10.1.4. Similarity, the Ground, and the Immediate Object

The concept of *similarity* creates some difficulty for the distinction between the *ground* and the immediate object. In fact, for Peirce, similarity characterizes something that presents itself as *firstness*, as presence, 'such as it is,' as pure quality; at the same time, thanks to similarity the immediate object presents itself as an interpretant, the *type* of a certain interpreted, the *token*. So Eco reasons like this:

> The Ground should not even be an icon if the icon is similarity, because it cannot have relations of similarity with anything, except with itself. Here Peirce wavers between two notions: on the one side, as we have seen, the Ground is an idea, a skeleton diagram, but if this were so it would already be an Immediate Object, the complete realization of Thirdness; on the other side, it is a *likeness* which does not resemble anything. It only tells me that the sensation I feel emanates somehow from the Dynamical Object. (Ibid.: 84)

And, taking a stance even against Peirce when he is imprecise, Eco continues by claiming that we must free the concept of *similarity* from *comparison* on the grounds that 'comparison is given in relations of *similitude*.' Having achieved this 'liberation' and having reserved the concept of similarity (or so it would seem) – as distinguished from comparison and similitude – for the *ground*, the icon, *firstness*, Eco unexpectedly concludes that the icon cannot be explained by saying it is a similitude, but nor can it be explained 'by saying that it is a similarity.' So 'the icon is the phenomenon which founds all possible judgments of similarity, but it cannot be founded by them' (ibid.). Moreover, having eliminated from the icon the concepts of comparison–similitude and (unexpectedly) of similarity, Eco goes on to differentiate the icon from the mental 'image.' In Peirce's writings, the concept of the icon is connected to similarity and to comparison, to similitude and to the mental image. If Eco insists on isolating the icon from all of this, it is because he is referring to 'primary iconism' in the *ground*:

> I do not wish to say that mental images should not be allowed [as far as the concept of the icon is concerned, obviously] or that in certain moments Peirce [not obviously] considered the icon as a mental image. What I am saying is that in order to conceive the concept of primary iconism, that which is established at the moment of the Ground, even the notion of mental image must be abandoned. (Ibid.)

It was Eco who signalled the importance of the question of primary iconism. Even so, it is not clear how we can speak about the icon, having separated it from the concepts of similarity and image (mental image, as he adds). Here Eco's distinction between similarity and similitude would seem convincing.

In a note to his main text, Eco establishes a connection between his decision to separate primary iconism from the mental image and Peirce's critique of psychologism. Thus, he believes that to explain the process of primary iconism 'without resorting to events or mental representations' does not constitute a betrayal of the spirit of Peirce (ibid.: 394n28). We will not open a discussion here on Peirce's interpretation of the concept of 'mental,' which is already exempt from psychologistic connotations. Peirce used the term 'mind' for the interpreted–interpretant relationship without referring to a subject understood psychologistically. In Peirce's conception, the mind does not presuppose an I, nor does it presuppose a subject given outside this relationship and independently of it. With primary iconism, we are at a very low, constitutive level in the interpreted–interpretant relationship. In any case, there is no reason to separate the primary icon from similarity, the (mental) image, or the mind (which is not understood in psychologistic terms).

In *Erfarung und Urteil*, where Husserl analyses 'passive predata' as they originally present themselves by abstracting from all qualifications of the known, from all qualifications of familiarity with what affects us (thanks to such qualifications, passive predata subsist at the level of sensation and are already known and interpreted somehow), we find that similarity plays an important role at this level as well. In fact, Husserl (1948) tells us that when by way of abstraction we prescind from reference to the already known object that produces the sensation (secondness, indexicality), and from familiarity through habit and convention where what affects us exists as already given (thirdness, conventionality, symbolicity), and, as much as it is unknown, already known in some way (the rhinoceros or Eco's platypus), we do not end up in pure chaos, in a mere confusion of data. When colour is not perceived as the colour of a thing, of a surface, as a spot on an object, and so on, but as a mere qual-

ity – that is, when it presents itself at the level of firstness (or as Peirce would say, at the level where something refers to nothing but itself and is significant in itself), this something presents itself all the same as a unit on the basis of *homogeneity* and against the background of something else, that is, against the background of the heterogeneity of other data: for example, red on white. At the level of primary iconism, similarity is homogeneity that stands out against heterogeneity: 'homogeneity or similarity,' says Husserl, varies in degree to the very limit of complete homogeneity – that is, to equality without differences. In a relation of contrast with similarity, there more or less always exists with a certain degree of dissimilarity. Homogeneity and heterogeneity are the result of two different fundamental modes of associative union. Husserl discusses 'immediate association' in terms of 'primary synthesis,' which enables *a* datum, *a* quality to present itself, specifying that an 'immediate association' is an association through similarity. We could claim that similarity is what allows synthetic unification in primary iconism.

It should now be obvious that primary association has nothing psychological about it. Here, Husserl's antipsychologism encounters Peirce's. We could speak of transcendental primary association as a condition of possibility for constituting the sign. In this context, 'transcendental' no doubt belongs to the mental order; however, the term 'mind' does not necessarily refer to the human mind; it can also refer to any interpreted–interpretant relationship in situations of 'protosemiosis' (cf. Prodi 1977).

10.1.5. Similarity and the Image

Having restored 'similarity' to the concept of icon, the notion of 'image' should now also be recovered – mental image, if we wish to add a specification that is obvious, considering the context of discourse: the image of 'primary iconism.' From this perspective, most significant is the section 'Image and Resemblance' in a 1948 essay by Levinas, 'Reality and Its Shadow' (La Réalité et son ombre,' in Levinas 1994; Eng. trans. in Levinas 1987b: 5–8). Levinas, too, addresses the problem of the original relation with the object, not yet perceived or determined as such, with respect to the 'symbole ou signe ou mot,' and asks, 'In what does an image differ from a symbol, a sign, or a word?' (ibid.: 6). His answer: 'By the very way it refers to its object: resemblance' (ibid.); with the rider that this presupposes that the mind stops 'on the image itself' and thus on 'a certain opacity of the image.' 'A sign, for its part, is pure transparency, nowise counting for itself.' Levinas continues:

> Must we then come back to taking the image as an independent reality which resembles the original? No, but on condition that we take resemblance not as the result of a comparation between an image and the original, but as the very movement that engenders the image. Reality would not be only what it is, what it is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its shadow, its image. (Ibid.)

This approach to the problem of similarity and the image in relation to the icon as distinct from the real and proper sign and, therefore, as not inserted into thirdness and conceptual interpretation, leads to critical questioning of the primacy of ontology. In fact, this approach reveals an 'otherwise' (au *autrement*) with respect to what is, an 'otherwise' that is not in turn a 'being otherwise' (*être autrement*), but rather is outside and before being, identity, determination, difference. The image is the otherness of being, its double, its shadow. Reality is not exhausted in that which is. Besides being itself, reality has an unrestrainable otherness of its own, it looks like something else, like something otherwise than being. We now enter that part of the discussion which concerns 'metaphysics': metaphysics as understood by Levinas, but also as understood by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Sens et non-sens* (1966 [1948]). In 'Reality and Its Shadow' (1948), Levinas analyses 'excess' with respect to being, which in 1936 (1982c [1936]) he had already discussed in terms of 'evasion', and subsequently, in 1974, in terms of 'otherwise than being' (*autrement qu'être*). As says Levinas: 'Being is not only itself, it escapes itself' (1948, Eng. trans.: 135). A person is not only himself or herself; a person is also his or her alterity. Alterity escapes from identity, which like a torn sack is unable to contain it. With respect to a familiar thing, its qualities, colour, form, and position at the same time remain as it were behind its being; they do not coincide entirely with the identity of that thing: 'There is then a duality in this person, this thing, a duality in its being. It is what it is and it is a stranger to itself, and there is a relationship between these two moments. We will say the thing is itself and is its image. And that this relationship between the thing and its image is resemblance' (ibid.: 6).

We might claim that the image is the dynamical object that is not exhausted in the identity of the immediate object. On the contrary, as the *ground* – that is to say, as the primary icon – the image imposes itself on the interpretant over and over again (*immer wieder*, Husserl would say), as its irreducible otherness. 'The original gives itself,' says Levinas (ibid.: 6–7), 'as though it were at a distance from itself, as though it were withdrawing itself, as though something in a being delayed behind being.' A sort of 'consciousness of the absence of the object' characterizes the image

with respect to the presence of the immediate object and signifies, according to Levinas, 'an alteration of the very being of the object, where its essential forms appear as a garb that it abandons in withdrawing' (ibid.: 7; for an analysis of the identity/otherness relationship as delineated by Levinas in 'La Réalité et son ombre,' cf. Ponzio 1994a, 1995a).

Let us now return to the issue of primary iconism. We can only reach this original level, as says Husserl, by way of abstraction achieved either through a phenomenological reduction of the *epoché*, by bracketing the already given world and relative interpretive habits, or through artistic vision. The image is the otherness of that which is, its strangeness to itself, its double. And art refers precisely to the image, for it depicts the other face of being. Artistic discourse does not represent reality, but depicts its double. In other words, what Levinas calls image is the image of artistic vision; the image is the otherness of the interpreted object, which artistic extralocalization reveals by showing this object as 'double,' so that it is not only the object of knowledge subject to a concept, but also the image. As Merleau-Ponty maintains in relation to Cézanne, painting is the search for that which is other with respect to habitual attitudes toward familiar objects and conventions. It is necessary to get a perspective, said Cézanne, where by perspective is meant a logical vision. This logical vision is the result of an abstractive process that permits regression to a relation with an object, which can be described as a relation of primary iconism. As Merleau-Ponty observes in 'Le doute de Cézanne':

> We live in an environment of objects constructed by human beings, among utensils, in houses, streets, cities and most times we only see them through the human actions of which they may be the points of application. We are are in the habit of thinking that all this exists necessarily and is immovable. Cézanne's painting suspends such habit ... This is why his characters are foreign and as though they are sighted by a being of another species ... His is a world without familiarity ...
>
> His painting denies neither science nor tradition ... Setting science completely aside, it is a question of seizing once again the constitution of the panorama as a rising organism, through the sciences ... For that painting there, a sole emotion is possible: the feeling of estrangement, a sole lyricism: that of existence beginning again always anew. (1966 [1948]: 28–30)

In the case of Cézanne's painting, it is a question of returning to a perceptual relation wherein the category of firstness (as understood by Peirce) dominates almost completely, giving the impression of a rising

order, of an object in the process of appearing, in the process of agglomerating under our gaze (cf. ibid.: 25). And agglomeration occurs on the basis of associative processes founded on similarity.

What Levinas calls image is also based on similarity, and like Peirce's icon, it is independent from what it resembles. Therefore, paraphrasing Levinas in Peirce's terminology, we could claim that unlike the symbol and index, which are transparent, the image is a sign presenting a certain degree of opacity. 'An icon,' says Peirce, 'is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence; such as a lead-pencil streak as representing a geometrical line' (*CP* 2.304).

This is why, in terms of inference, abduction being based on the icon can distance itself from the world that is already given, from the world that is already constituted, from conventions and consolidated habits, and thus evolve as 'the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis' (*CP* 5.172). Regarding abduction, Peirce goes on to add that it

> is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis.
>
> Deduction proves that something *must* be; Induction shows that something *actually is* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*. (Ibid.)

In the present context of discourse, we must analyse how the nucleus, the cell of the inferential network, is formed; in other words, we focus on the problem of the genesis of the utterance, of predicative judgment as the cell in the text of inferential argumentation (regarding semiosis, otherness, and inferential procedure, see also 1.2, 1.3, 2.3.3, and 2.3.5).

10.1.6. Genesis of Predicative Judgment

In our analysis of the formation of predicative judgment, beginning from the level we have called primary iconism, or protosemiosis, we will follow indications from Husserl. And we will consider Husserl's work in the light of Peirce's approach to semiotics. Indeed, as should already be obvious, Peirce's semiotics is not at all distant from Husserl's phenomenology; as well, Husserl's thought system is semiotically oriented, albeit independently of Peirce. (Husserl wrote an essay titled 'Semiotik,' and he dealt extensively with signs and their typology in *Logische Untersuchungen*).

Husserl investigates the lowest level of perceptual activity, that of affection, of passive predata and their associative structure, and he attributes receptivity at the lowest degree of perceptual activity to the 'I.' This I, as we have already stated, is not the psychological subject, but the transcendental self. We must clarify this statement and explain how we can talk about the 'I' once we have abstracted from all reference to the relationship with others, from social habit, from any assumption of objectivity – that is to say, of implicit or explicit verification, or appeal, or witness that may involve others. 'I' is a relative concept and presupposes 'you.' In contrast, in Husserl's analyses (1948), the relation with 'you' is placed inside parentheses.

The abstraction we are calling 'I' concerns what Husserl describes as the sphere of belonging (see Husserl 1929) and what Levinas describes as the 'dimension of interiority.' When we abstract from 'being-for-oneself' or 'for-others' (in other words, from being for consciousness), the I loses its sense of self (insofar as the sense 'I' does not exist alone but is coupled with 'you'), yet it continues all the same to survive *as a purely belonging body*, as *Leib,* as a living body. Plurality of the 'I' is possible thanks to the corporeal life of each and every one of us; indeed, corporeal life makes each one of us irreducibly other with respect to others. Interindividual differentiation with respect to consciousness is based on differentiation in the corporeal life of each one of us. In this sense, each self is *existence for itself* before being conscious of self – as Levinas points out, *for itself*, 'but not, initially, in view of its own existence. Nor is it a representation of self by self. It is for itself as in the expression "each for himself"; for itself as the "famished stomach that has no ears," capable of killing for a crust of bread, is for itself' (1961, Eng. trans.: 118). The I existing for itself, the I as a belonging entity or Husserl's *Ur-ego*, is the I directly related to the world, which only reveals itself secondarily and partially in consciousness. The I is structured socially, only that (as Husserl maintains) it knows nothing about a human environment, it knows nothing about the reality or even just the real possibility of 'others'; therefore, it knows nothing about its own body being comprehensible for others, it knows nothing about the fact that other subjects may consider the same world (see Husserl 1929).

Thus considered, the term *solus ipse* refers to the transcendental I whose consciousness of otherness has been removed. It is the result of the operation of placing the interpersonal horizon of the world within parentheses. *Solus ipse* does not refer to an ideal subject or to something mythical, but rather to a real dimension of the concrete subject; it refers

to the subject's otherness with respect to that which it is as identity, independently from the dimension of being for itself, of being for one's own consciousness and for the consciousness of others. The I existing for itself, as discussed by Levinas, is not Jean-Paul Sartre's for itself, which is already consciousness. Rather, it can be compared to what Sartre in *L'Être et le néant* calls *Ego*. The *Ego,* the unifying pole of the *Erlebnisse* – of one's experiences insofar as they are one's own – does not belong to the domain of consciousness (see Sartre 1961: 150). One's consciousness of I does not exhaust it, nor does consciousness bring the I into existence: the *Ego* always offers itself as *something* that is there, before consciousness, and at the same time as possessing depths to be revealed only gradually (see ibid.: 151).

The I in itself is not yet for itself. It simply is, and it requires that consciousness invest it with personal existence; nevertheless, the I in itself is the basis of consciousness and of the process of personalization. Existence outside the domain of consciousness is existence at the level of the immediate life of the body. And as Merleau-Ponty above all has shown, the body before being *for me or for others* is the body that lives for itself at the most elementary levels of perception.

Consequently, once we have abstracted from the intersubjective horizon of the I and from the world, that which remains as I is not a particular way of viewing reality, of depicting it, of evaluating it, of possessing and transforming it; all of these operations no doubt presuppose the intersubjective relation. At the level of the immediately experienced, says Levinas, of the precategorial, 'for the I to be means neither to oppose nor to represent something to itself, nor to use something, nor to aspire to something, but to enjoy something' (1961, Eng. trans.: 120). The immediate relation with that which is alien consists of experiencing it in terms of *jouissance*. At this level, there is no distance between the I, one's body, and that which the I flourishes on. The I is that which it flourishes on. Levinas tells us that individuality is achieved through the special way one's body experiences things: 'The personality of the person, the ipseity of the I, which is more than the particularity of the atom and of the individual, is the particularity of the happiness, of *enjoyment*' (ibid.: 115). *Jouissance* is the presupposition and the limit of identity at a categorical level, its alterity with respect to identity, the otherwise than being with respect to the being of the world. That which constitutes the original uniqueness or singularity of each I and that stops it from completely coinciding with another I is its corporeal life. Nonetheless, this same corporeal life that renders each existence unique is also that

which relates the I to the other at an antecedent level with respect to any form of awareness, decision, convention, contract.

So when we consider this level of abstraction with respect to consciousness of the other, we no longer have a world of things facing the I, objects made like this or like that, determined and distinct, known to be endowed with given physical properties, with given values, usable in a certain sense, as occurs when the I habitually deals with a world in common with others, with an objective world. At the abstract level of *jouissance*, that which the self is indissolubly involved in, in the sense that it flourishes upon it, is totally anonymous. It cannot be identified in a thing, it is not determination of some substrate; rather, it is pure quality. We are at the level of what Peirce would call firstness, which has nothing to do with cognitive interpretive processes. On the contrary, we are dealing with the sphere of pure fruition, of immediate experience. What the I immediately experiences exists without reference to an object acting as the subject of the perceived qualities. With Levinas, we could say that immediate experience flourishes in a totally impersonal manner, like the fact 'il pleut' or the fact that 'il fait chaud' (ibid.: 114). Here we are not dealing with the world as a collection of impersonal occurrences, a system of perceptions that cannot be attributed to something that causes them, therefore presupposing the category of secondness. We are alluding to the domain of the 'il y a' (as says Levinas),

> where nothing exists in stable and definitive terms and which because of such indeterminacy and instability may be compared to the river in *Cratylus*, where it is impossible to enter the same water even just once. To perceive the world in its immediacy on a level where the I and the world are not yet distinct from each other, where things are not yet experienced in their individuality, means not to be in front of something, but 'être dedans, être à l'interieur de.' (Ibid.: 108; for an analysis of these aspects in Levinas, cf. Ponzio 1995b, 1996b)

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we must make two observations:

(A) To bracket (as a result of abstraction for the sake of analysis) reference to alterity and to the social as well as to an already constituted subject, which presupposes alterity and the social, only means to bracket *consciousness* of the social and of alterity. The social and alterity remain always. A risk of misunderstanding that is not dissimilar is associated with Peirce's critique of psychologism. 'Anonymization' and 'depersonalization' of the interpretive process do not imply the denial of intersub-

jectivity. And if Peirce also seems to be 'sensitive' to intersubjectivity, this does not depend on the fact that – and this statement from the author of *The Limits of Interpretation* is rather peculiar! – 'Peirce, as we all know, can be made to say anything according to how you turn him round' (Eco 1997a: 394). In the theoretical horizon of the authors we are considering – Peirce, Husserl, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty – that the dimension of interiority or the sphere of belonging or the body itself be the condition for the relation of alterity does not mean that the body exists autonomously from that relation. Bodily life considered separately from the I's consciousness is already structured socially. Insofar as it is filial, says Levinas, the I does not begin in *jouissance* (cf. Levinas 1961: 151) but rather in the relation with the others it was born from and with the others with whom it coexists or who lived before it. The possibility of abstracting the dimension of the lived life of one's body from reference to others, only means that this dimension does not require recognition from the other or communication with the other in order to subsist. On the contrary, this dimension is the presupposition of such recognition and of the constitution of self as I and as other.

(B) The abstraction of the dimension of belonging or interiority or *Ur-ego* (and so on) can only be reached by abstraction beginning at the level where self-consciousness already exists, where the other already exists, and where the world is already determined not as a world for me alone but as 'our world,' as an objective world. As Husserl observes in *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, if the original sphere of the I as pure sensitivity and of the other is conceived as being effectively separate, the possibility of them communicating will be an enigma: the enigma arises when both original spheres are kept distinct. This distinction presupposes that the experience of strangeness has done its work (cf. Husserl 1929).

10.1.7. Metalinguistics and the Precategorial Level

If we now analyse the problem of the genesis of predicative judgment in semiotic terms, the first thing to say is that the semiotic perspective can free us from the limits of linguistics. From this perspective, semiotics emerges as a sort of metalinguistics, for logic cannot be founded on linguistic laws relative to this or that verbal system. As transcendental logic, semiotics is necessarily a sort of metalinguistics. If, as Husserl claims, (natural) language not only has its own physiological, psychological (in the sense of traditional naturalistic psychology) and historical-cultural

foundations, but also its own a priori foundations (cf. Husserl 1900–1: 162), semiotics must focus on these a priori foundations when searching for the origins of predicative judgment.

This a priori is not given by some innate universal grammar, which is the direction taken by Noam Chomsky (1986, 1988). On the contrary, for Husserl, in *Erfarung und Urteil* in particular, this a priori is of a transcendental order and must be traced in the essential modalities whereby the perceptual–corporeal sphere is structured at the level of the precategorial.

Chomsky (since 1965) has been searching for the deep structures that generate the surface structures of the sentence, presupposing an innate universal grammar; Husserl, for his part, searched for deep structures in his analysis of perception and of the development of forms of judgment (for a comparison between Chomsky and Husserl from this perspective, cf. Ponzio 1974: ch. 3). If with Chomsky we can distinguish between surface structures ('the book on the table is red') and deep structures ('the book is red,' 'the book is on the table'), unlike Chomsky, Husserl does not derive this distinction from innate mental mechanisms, but rather from the original modalities in interaction between the subject and the object, beginning at the lowest levels of perception or semiosis. Husserl shows how the 'S p is q' type of proposition ('the red book is on the table') derives from the modification (or as Chomsky would say, 'transformation') of the 'S that is p is q' proposition ('the book that is red is on the table'), and how the latter derives from the modification of the simple predications 'S is p,' 'S is q.'

These propositions are connected by an interpreted-interpretant relationship; and each expresses modifications in interpretation arising from a difference in the subject's interest in the 'p' determination. In the semiosic-interpretive process, this interest gradually decreases from the last type of proposition to the first. In propositions of the form 'S is p,' 'S is q,' or 'S is p and q,' the thematic interest for 'S' is distributed equally among all determinations of 'S': 'In progressive contemplation, all determinations which emerge in sequence are equally "important" for the thematic regard' (Husserl 1948, Eng. trans.: 228). In contrast, when perceptual interest is not the same for the different determinations of 'S,' we obtain the other propositions indicated above. Says Husserl:

> The interest may head immediately toward the determination *q* and there may be only an incidental interest in *p*. This happens in the following way in receptivity: while only a fugitive glancing ray is directed toward *p*, which is apprehended only incidentally, the principal weight rests on *q*, which is

> taken in view in a privileged way ... Accordingly, in the predicative sphere there is then not a simple progressive determination of the form '*S* is *p* and *q*'; rather, the active accomplishment of the synthesis '*S* is *q*' will take on the character of the *main clause*, that of the synthesis '*S* is *p*' that of the *subordinate clause* – expressions which here again, as is clearly evident, *primarily* indicate nothing linguistic. (Ibid.)

In a judgment of the form 'S that is p is q': 'It is evident that the ego is not directed toward the synthesis of identification in a *simple* but rather in a *double ray*, which divides into a main and a subordinate ray' (ibid.). In the form 'S p is q': 'No glancing ray, nor any subordinate ray either, is directed any longer to the synthesis of S and *p*; rather, S is taken immediately as *p*, and only the transition to *q* is spontaneously effected' (ibid.: 230). We have now reached the point where the ability to assign deep and surface structures to an infinite range of sentences – in other words, the ability to control what Chomsky calls 'generative grammar' – is developed through the exercise of perception, on the basis of the formation of hierarchies in thematic interests: here the level of semiosis is rather high. Next, we consider how the synthesis itself of 'S' and 'p' originates in the judgment 'S is p.'

The abstraction from which we must begin concerns perceptual semiosic processes involving the *index* and the *symbol*, that is to say, perceptions that refer to the object as that which stimulates us, affects us, in a causal and/or contiguous relationship with perception; or perceptual semiosic processes that refer to the already given habitual world on the basis of habits and conventions which now function automatically and passively. To use Husserl's terms, abstraction means assuming that there is only one so-called 'field of reliefs,' which cannot be attributed to an object, and which does not belong to an objective world that exists for others as well. This field of reliefs is significant in itself; and in this sense, with reference to the sign triad *icon*, *symbol*, and *index*, it is characterized by iconicity. We are obviously speaking of 'reliefs' for somebody – that is to say, for an interpreter who all the same does not yet give itself as I, as subject, as consciousness, but rather as a perceptual body in the modalities described earlier.

10.1.8. The 'I-Do'

This field of reliefs is not pure chaos, a confusion of data before the I exercises a production of sense on it; on the contrary, it is endowed with

sense on its own account and is structured iconically on the basis of similarity. And as described above, similarity operates in the sense of homogeneity and heterogeneity giving rise to original syntheses – for example, to the perception of red on white. Sensitive data can be perceived on the basis of immediate association by similarity because, as says Husserl (ibid.: 76), this occurs 'always on the basis of such a prominence.' Without immediate association by similarity, there could be no 'relief,' there could be no 'standing out.' Here, reference is to all types of iconic, auditory, visual, tactile, and proprioceptual signs. A propos data as they stand out from a background, Husserl says:

> Through its intensity, the datum stands out from a multiplicity of coaffecting data. This occurs, for example, when, in the sensuous sphere, there is a sound, a noise, or a color which is more or less obtrusive. These lie in the field of perception and stand out from it and, although not yet apprehended, exercise on the ego a stimulus more or less powerful or weak, as the case may be. In the same way, a thought which suddenly emerges can be obtrusive, or a wish, a desire, can get through to us from the background with insistence. The insistence is determined by the mode, more or less abrupt, of coming-to-prominence; in the sensuous sphere it is determined by contrasts, qualitative discontinuities of considerable degree, and the like. In the domain of nonsensuous data there is, to be sure, no question of qualitative discontinuities of this kind; still, there is something analogous here also: among the different obscure movements of thought which stir us, one thought, for example, stands out from all the rest and has a sensitive effect on the ego, as it, so to speak, forces itself against the ego. (Ibid.: 76–7)

The something that stands out could improperly be called 'object,' just as we improperly speak of the 'I.' As Husserl clarifies in a note (ibid.), we still cannot properly speak of objects at this level of 'original passivity.' Therefore, we must always take account of this specification in our use of the terms 'object' and 'I.' The stronger the stimulus, the stronger the I's tendency to turn toward the object. This turning toward of the I can be described as *obeying* the tendency to be attracted by the object or, better, by the stimulus. And from this point onward there begins an active perception of how to actively grasp objects that stand out in the perceptual field. From the moment of the I's turning its attention to the object, its being 'awakened' by the object, there begins a process of attention and interest, with a progressive increase in prehensions of the object by the I, which obeys the tendency to render the

object accessible from various directions. Husserl describes the explication of this tendency as a 'multiple "doing" of the I' (ibid.: 87). The I attempts always to obtain new apparitions, starting from the original one, so as to make the object present itself from all sides. Husserl calls these new apparitions that the I aims at producing 'images.' Here, 'image' is meant in the sense of 'to get a picture of something,' which does not necessarily mean to see it. We can speak of a process of changing tactile, acoustic, olfactory, and proprioceptual images, and so on. We could say that the tendency of the I is to build icons for itself that are progressively and unitarily turned toward producing the icon of the object. The object, the dynamical object, here presents itself on its own account in subsequent apparitions following the kinaestheses of the I (moving my eyes or my head, changing the position of my body, turning myself around, and so on), turned to making the object manifest itself on all possible sides. There is here a relation of activity and passivity of the I, of receptivity and productivity:

> The coming-into-view of the images is 'in my power'; I can also cause the series to break off, e.g., I can close my eyes. But what is not in my power, *if* I allow the kinaestheses to run their course, is having another image come into view. With regard to this, I am purely receptive; if I put these or those kinaestheses into play vis-à-vis the object, these or those images will come into view. This holds for rest as well as for movement, for alteration as well as for nonalteration. (Ibid.: 84)

The pragmatic nature of the relationship between the I and the object is interesting; the I's turning toward can be characterized as an 'I-do'; and the movements turned toward comprehending the object – that is to say, the various kinaestheses – are also characterized as an 'I-do.' Husserl distinguishes between (1) doing which is not an 'I-do,' but doing before the turning toward, which consists in the attention that wanders and is not yet focused; and (2) the 'I-do,' which does not involve voluntary acting: the I moves its eyes and so on involuntarily, while the I is turned attentionally to the object (cf. ibid.: 85).

The predicative judgment begins forming when the I gives free play to the tendency to turn toward by turning toward the object which thus becomes a *theme*. To talk about a *theme* properly requires that interest should have its own relative duration and that comprehension of the object should have its own development process. When we turn toward something but only fleetingly, *en passant* – a noise, for example – while

our interest is focused elsewhere, after which we immediately return to the object at the centre of our interest, we cannot speak of theme in a proper sense. Therefore, we must distinguish between the acts forming the I's turning toward, which have a duration and generate theme, on the one hand, and those acts which instead are fleeting, on the other. Regarding this point, Husserl speaks of 'the I's acts of inter-est' (ibid.: 92). For the progressive constitution of the being of something to the point of formulating the predicative judgment 'S is p,' the acts turned toward the being of something as their theme must gradually be distinguished from 'the I's acts of inter-est,' which concern surrounding being, the *Umwelt*.

The I's tendency toward explication is not a blind tendency toward without an orientation, but a way of proceeding according to expectations. Interest for the object is inseparable from such expectations. From one perceptual phase to another, from one image to another, expectations may be satisfied or deluded. The object's apparition may be interrupted as it leaves the perceptual field either because it withdraws from the perceptual field or is withdrawn from it, or again because another object intervenes, thus attracting the I's attention to itself. However, expectations can also be deluded in the sense that a subsequent image of the object may deny the overall image that the I was forming of it. This leads to a configuration of the type *not like this but otherwise*: the various phases in the earlier delineation of the overall image are cancelled and replaced by a new image. This is how Husserl describes the *original phenomenon of negation*, or the *otherwise phenomenon*: 'It thus appears that *negation is not first the business of the act of predicative judgment but that in its original form it already appears in the prepredicative sphere of receptive experience*' (ibid.: 90).

The I's expectations do not always suffer a net delusion as perception advances. The intentions of expectation may also go into crisis in the modality of doubt so that what was expected is not completely cancelled by the new perception. This creates two perceptions, which overlap without excluding each other in a relation where both are valid, in the modality of discordant being. Here, as in the case of negation, there is an impediment in the course of tendential perceptual interest, which negation solves and overcomes in the 'not like this but otherwise' form, and which doubt maintains for a longer or shorter duration. When one of the two perceptions is more credible, a state of probability is developed (Husserl's example: Is what I see in the window a man or a mannequin?) (cf. ibid.: 92–3).

An important step in the formation process of predicative judgment is that the shift in I's interest from S to p should not involve abandoning S, but, on the contrary, should be achieved thanks to a deeper understanding of S. With this step, we have left the sphere of dominant receptivity to enter the sphere of the I that takes a stand. The I continues to be interested in S, and precisely because of this it turns toward p, which is thematized only insofar as it is a determination of S. In the single acts that lead from S to its determinations p, q, and so on, S is not abandoned; rather, it is further apprehended: 'This process is a *developing contemplation*, a unity of articulated contemplation. Through the entire process the S retains the character of *theme*' (ibid.: 113–14). This means that S, on the one hand, and p and q, and so on, on the other, are distributed over two different dimensions: S receives the sense of a substratum, and p and q are explicated either as phases, properties, determinations of this *substratum* or as determinations in the unfolding of S. With the formation of a 'substrate object' of 'something' that is a 'determination,' we find ourselves, says Husserl, *at the place of origin of the first of the so-called logical categories* (ibid.: 114–15). What occurs here is an 'explicative coincidence' that must be distinguished from the 'identificative coincidence.' The latter consists in believing that the perceived object is always the same object S, that it is always the same substrate. In fact, the explicative coincidence consists in believing that all p and q determinations and so on are determinations through which S is explicated, that they are peculiarities of S itself. These two perceptual syntheses – that of identificative coincidence and that of explicative coincidence – are the conditions of possibility of the judgment 'S is p.'

10.1.9. 'As-If' and Predication as Acting

We must now consider two especially interesting aspects in the phenomenology of semiosis constituting predicative judgments. The first is that among the operations carried out by the I that constitute the object by explicating its determinations, should also be considered those operations where the I places something 'as-if.' This is the 'as-if' position of imagination (ibid.: 167–71). Insofar as it is founded on the modelling capacity, which Sebeok calls language, thanks to which human beings (unlike other animal species) are capable of producing infinite possible worlds (see ch. 5), predicative judgment can escape the limits of the real world and wander in the world of the imagination. Nonetheless, the 'as-if' relation concerns more than the possibility of constructing imaginary

objects and worlds. Predicative judgment cannot avoid availing itself of metaphorical procedures to the point that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the literal and the metaphorical. As Welby says (1983 [1903]), even literal expression is metaphorical and enables us to speak of the verbal as if it were writing. The 'as-if' relation enables something to be determined on the basis of something else, which can act as its interpretant precisely in the 'as-if' form. Therefore, 'as-if' is a constitutive part of predication.

The second aspect we wish to emphasize is that, as already noted, the I's interested turning toward the object is a form of *activity*, just as the cognitive process that follows is activity. *To predicate is to act*, and from this perspective, it is parallel to *practical action*. Husserl distinguishes cognitive activity from practical activity as follows:

> We prefer to think of action as an external doing, a bringing-about of external objects (things) as self-giving from other self-giving objects. In cognitive activity, new objectivities are indeed also preconstituted, but this production has an entirely different sense from that of the production of things from things ... and – what is here important above all – this production of categorial objectivities in cognitive action is not the final goal of this action. All cognitive activity is ultimately referred to the substrates of the judgment – without prejudice to the possibility of moving, on the mere self-evidence of clarity, a great way in the progress of cognition merely in the domain of made objects, of logical *structures*. The goal of this activity is not the *production of objects* but a *production of the knowledge of a self-given object*, therefore the possession of this object in itself as that which is permanently identifiable anew. (1948, Eng. trans.: 200).

This parallel between practical activity and cognitive activity is especially important if we are to avoid separating predicative judgment from operations connected with perception, one's body, the surrounding environment, these operations being the departure point for the genesis of predicative judgment. From this perspective, it is significant that the cognitive tendency should be described (this, too, is an *as-if* determination) as if it were a desirous striving. The relation between the cognitive tendency and desirous striving is something more than a mere 'analogy,' says Husserl, and in fact could be described in terms of a 'homological' relation. Much like the cognitive tendency,

> *desirous striving* leads to an action which is instituted by a 'fiat' and tends toward realization. In the progress of the action, the striving fulfills itself

> more and more, developing from the initial mere intention into a realization. The path to the goal can be simple, consisting in a simple act, or it can be complex, proceeding through interim goals which are intended in specific acts of will and have the character of being of service to the dominant 'aim.' With the growing fulfillment of the intention during the activity and with the approach to the goal, a growing feeling of satisfaction sets in. (Ibid.: 201–2)

According to Chomsky's theory of generative grammar, our considerations on the genesis of predicative judgment that begin from the experiences of the body and its kinaestheses are also valid as the foundation of structural descriptions in terms of syntagmatic structures. In other words, what Chomsky assumes to be the presupposition – that is to say, identification – in the context of a given sentence, of a nominal syntagm, verbal syntagm, and adjectival syntagm – can be explained without resorting to Chomsky's concept of an innate generative grammar, if we consider analyses of perception at the level of non-categorial semiosic processes, as in Husserl's phenomenology (cf. Ponzio 1974: 100–6; 1994b: 87–128).

As demonstrated by Husserl, the syntactical formation of subject, predicate, and so on cannot be explained except by returning to another type of formation: the *forms of the nucleus*. Nuclear formation 'is the presupposition for the syntactical formation, for the investing of the core-structure as syntactical material [*Stoffe*] with functional forms such as the subject-form, etc. Formation as subject presupposes a matter having the form of substantivity' (1948, Eng. trans.: 210).

The *subject* presupposes the nuclear form of *substantivity*, which in turn presupposes the formation of a substratum in the perceptual process. The predicate presupposes the nuclear form of *adjectivity*, which in turn presupposes identification of something as a determination in the perceptual process. The form of substantivity indicates the condition of being for itself, of being a substratum, substantiality, which is not already given but instead derives from a process of substantialization, of creating substrata. The form of adjectivity is the form of being in something; it designates the unsubstantiality of the object of determination.

Let us now return to the concept of *ground* as the point of departure for that interest which gives rise to semiosis turned toward a dynamical object. In the light of what has been said so far, we can now claim that the ground is in fact the point of departure of the perception and explication of an undetermined substratum through the explicative coincidence of this substratum with one or several of its determinations. Once it has tran-

sited from the substratum to its determination and eventually to further determinations, interest turns toward the substratum once again, but now it is enriched in sense as a result of the comprehension of its determinations. We then reach the phase where the substratum is explicitly considered as the substratum of a determination; consequently, the object–substratum assumes the form of a predicative subject. What has happened is that the *terminus ad quo* (Eco's term, 1997a: 4, but Husserl used this same expression to describe the process we are considering) has been transformed from a *ground* into a theme–subject; beyond this point, predicative activity proceeds toward determination, the predicate, as the correlative *terminus ad quem*. The dynamical object is the object which, departing from the *ground*, manifests itself in its different determinations or in the different predicative judgments that concern it.

10.2. Objective Misunderstanding and Mystifications of Language

> The question is, whether this state of things is quite so inevitable as most of us seem to think. Certainly, so long as we are content to live in the fool's paradise of supposing that only the perverse, the prejudiced, the stupid, or the ignorant can possibly mistake our meaning, and that our misreadings of others are simply due to their 'obscurity' or 'quibbling', or literary incapacity, we shall ourselves contrive to the hopelessness of the situation. But this is a subject which cannot be dealt with in an incidental way; it is rather a hope for the future, that one of the most practically serviceable of subjects – that of meaning, its conditions and its changes – shall be seriously taken up.
>
> Welby 1893b, in 1985a: 512

10.2.1. The 'Maladies of Language'

The plurality of experience, ordinary and scientific, can be focused on the problem of meaning, which can then in turn provide a unifying theoretical perspective on the kaleidoscopic multifariousness of existence, language, and communication. To study the problem of meaning implies to analyse its conditions of possibility as well as its articulations and transformations relative to both verbal and non-verbal behaviour and, therefore, relative to linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Victoria Lady Welby, the founder of significs (see also, ch. 2), took an interest not only in the problems of ordinary life and ordinary language, but also in all the sciences insofar as they are expressions of human sign activity; indeed, the diverse and multiform instances of all interpretive and expressive pro-

cesses in the signifying universe were of interest to her. Perception, experience, and cognition are always mediated by signs; therefore, in interpretation processes, the relation between the object of analysis and the cognitive subject is also mediated by signs. And given that our relation to so-called 'objective' reality is mediated by signs so that we are all inevitably involved in the interpretation of signs, be they verbal or non-verbal, we are all potential 'significians' with the capacity to interrogate ourselves about the sense of existence.

In language that makes frequent use of images taken from the organic world in what today would be described as a biosemiotic perspective, Welby denounced the 'maladies of language,' the phenomenon of 'linguistic pathology,' whose causes she largely identified in the antiquated nature of language use. She drew attention to the widespread use of antiquated words and propositions, of outdated metaphors and analogies, which she considered as frequent sources of false problems and misunderstandings, not only in special languages but also in the everyday exchanges of ordinary speech. Beginning from her description of the unfortunate state of language and expression, Welby emphasized the need to develop a critical linguistic consciousness. Consequently, an important objective in her research was to supply an adequate theoretical basis for the correct diagnosis of 'linguistic pathology' as the point of departure for expressive regeneration, through improvement of the human capacity to perceive real distinctions among signs and thereby interpret their senses and meanings more precisely (cf. Petrilli 1998a: 4.3, 4.4). As the science or theory of signs and meaning, significs assumes the dual task of theoretical analysis and of therapeutic remedy in its efforts to suggest practical solutions to problems of expression. And when she analysed linguistic pathology – especially the problem of that form of ambiguity which gives rise to equivocation – Welby turned her attention to the speaker in general – to the man of the street and not just the intellectual – despite the extra responsibility this involved. In any case, the state of confusion provoked by the lack of critical consciousness toward language and logical procedure generally concerns us all, insofar as each of us is a speaker and interpreter in a signifying universe.

10.2.2. Ambiguity, 'Precision,' and the 'Panacea of Definition'

Welby analysed such problematics as the value of 'ambiguity,' the role of 'definition' in the determination of meaning, the relationship between literal meaning and metaphorical meaning, and the contribution of met-

aphor, analogy, and homology to the amplification of the expressive potential of language. She maintained the thesis of the 'plasticity' of language as a condition of possibility for growth, linguistic regeneration, expressive pregnancy, and allusive reference (cf. Welby 1985a: ccxli, ccliv). A characteristic of verbal language is its potential for 'expressive ambiguity.' Here, we must distinguish between *ambiguity in the sense of the constitutive plurivocality of the word*, which is a positive attribute favouring a vision of reality that is multiform and increasingly enriched through different senses, a necessary condition for expressivity and understanding, on the one hand, and *ambiguity in the sense of obscurity*, expressive inadequacy generating confusion and equivocation, on the other. Welby constantly denounced the deleterious expressive effects of ambiguity, understood negatively in everyday life as well as in intellectual life, at the cognitive and practical levels as well as the metadiscursive; in this project, she took her examples from a rich multitude of discourse genres, oral and written, from different authors and spheres of interest (cf. ibid.: XIII, 37–8). Her characteristic recourse to analogies of the organismic type to talk about language was the natural consequence of her need to show that 'plasticity' and 'adaptability' are distinctive features of our 'expressive potential,' and therefore of language and signs in general and of the logical procedures generated.

The 'plasticity' and 'adaptability' of language needed to be recovered where they had been compromised or lost altogether as a consequence of 'bad linguistic use,' and reconsidered where they had been misunderstood as a result of inadequate conceptions of language. Welby established an analogy between reciprocal adaptability, between words and context, on the one hand, and reciprocally adaptive mechanisms relating organisms and their environment, on the other (although she warned against pushing the analogy too far): 'We must postulate an analogy between context and environment: the adaptation of the word, as of the organism, to its surroundings, and conversely its effect upon these. If we enthrone one queen-word instead of another in the midst of a hive of working context-words, these will behave very differently. They will expel or kill or naturalize it' (1983 [1903]: 40 and note).

As Wittgenstein also says, liberating language from the so-called 'linguistic traps' that impede its free development and improvement is a precondition for fostering an increase in expressive potential, knowledge, and creativity, and therefore our mastery over our own environment.

Like the Italian philosopher and mathematician Giovanni Vailati – and like such later scholars as Rossi-Landi, Schaff, and Bakhtin – Welby believed that polysemy is a positive aspect of words, besides being inevi-

table. Moreover, she maintained that expressive precision could be attained by exploiting the resources of language itself – for example, by distinguishing between words that only apparently are similar and by relating words that only apparently have different meanings, in the effort to specify and explicate the differences.

However, to be a significian does not mean to be a 'precisionist' in the sense of working for the 'mechanical exactitude of language'; rather, it means to emphasize how a lack of understanding of the ambiguous nature of meaning produces monological interpretive practices that set the conditions for the tyranny of dogma and orthodoxy. At a metadiscursive level, Welby kept her distance from technicalism even while proposing new terms for the study of language and meaning. And although she criticized the false objective of eliminating ambiguity from words, of eradicating their polysemy, she was committed to making her terms as precise as possible. Welby was well aware of the dialectic complementarity and interdependency between indeterminacy and determinacy, between vagueness and exactitude, in the final analysis between alterity and identity.

Thus, development of the 'linguistic consciousness' implies development of interpretive and critical capacities against subjection to dogmatism, pedantry, and anarchy in our use of logical inference and language and in behaviour generally. As Welby says, to call attention to polysemy, ambiguity, and semantic plasticity is to open ourselves to the expressive potential of language and to foster our capacity for linguistic critique. Signifying processes and communication are generated in the interaction between the codified aspects of language, on the one hand, and interpretive work that cannot be reduced to mere decodification, on the other. This favours adaptive processes in relation to new and changing signifying contexts, to knowledge and habits of behaviour. Indeed, the signifying flexibility of signs is a prerequisite for interpersonal communication.

Welby recognized the usefulness of definition for limited purposes – that is, for the purpose of identifying the meanings of words and propositions in given contexts – but she did not extend this usefulness in an absolute sense, and in fact she distinguished between 'rigid definition,' on the one hand, which is always secondary because of its tendency to freeze meaning and render it static in the orientation toward a single, univocal meaning, and 'plastic primary definition,' on the other, which takes account of the live character of language and, therefore, of its capacity for adaptation to new signifying contexts (see Welby 1907c). Vailati too held an extended and plastic view of definition, which he did not limit to single words but applied to the meanings of propositions. In

fact, the meanings of single words are determined in relation to other words, in the linguistic context, in the context of the proposition. Vailati illustrated this point with expressions such as 'to be,' 'to act,' 'to produce,' 'to represent,' 'to manifest,' and so on. And in turn, the meaning of the overall linguistic context is also determined by the relations among single words and the general signifying context, and therefore in the relations among verbal and non-verbal signs (see Vailati to Welby, 12 July 1898, in Vailati 1971: 140–2; Welby to Vailati, 27 February 1907, unpublished correspondence). However, as the English philosopher Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), a friend of Welby, once observed in his correspondence with her, as far as recourse to definition is concerned, the greatest advantage is the process itself – that is to say, the process of working toward definition rather than its actual formulation. In any case, that which is most worth expressing and interpreting often escapes definition; moreover, its effective usefulness can best be tested in relation to specific fields of knowledge and science (cf. Welby 1983 [1903]: 10).

From a significal perspective, conceptualization of meaning does not respond to the rigid binary view that distinguishes between two poles, between 'metaphorical, indirect, or reflective meaning,' on the one hand, and 'literal, direct, or actual meaning,' on the other. Indeed, Welby considered the term 'literal' to be more metaphorical (that is, more figurative and more ambiguous) than the term 'metaphorical' itself (Welby 1893b: 512). Beyond this dual vision of meaning, Welby hypothesized a third region of meaning, one that oriented the practices of signification and interpretation – a 'third value' of meaning that was neither entirely literal nor entirely figurative, in which the 'metaphorical' and the 'literal' combined to varying degrees (see Welby 1983 [1903]: 139, 292; see also Rossi-Landi 1985a: 115–20).

With her hypothesis of a 'third value' or 'third region' of meaning, Welby theorized a contact zone without precise boundaries among interpretant signs that constantly interact and generate new interpretive paths. She acknowledged that metaphorical meaning is widespread, as well as structural in the processes of the production of meaning and knowledge. Therefore, metaphorical meaning is not limited to the artistic domain, to literary writing. In fact, this indeterminate third value of meaning invests all language, including ordinary language, where the actual and the symbolic, the real and the ideal, the direct and the reflective, mingle as in a painting. Welby demonstrated how at different moments the same expression can move across the entire range of meaning value, revealing its ambiguous nature and signifying potential, its capacity for adaptation and transformation, as it is variously employed,

whether in actual and direct terms or in the symbolic or in some combined form as required by the communicative situation.

On a diachronic axis, the meanings of words, implicit and explicit, and the values they convey are accumulated in a stratification of senses that overlap, that are superimposed on one another, that are transformed, cancelled, regenerated, and so on. On a synchronic axis, the unique experience of the single speaker influences how the word is perceived and interpreted, so that factors are at work which determine meaning value according to a structure that is never identical to itself – that is, according to the specific communicative context, the life context, social milieu, linguistic context, historico-socio-cultural factors, the cultural and mental *background* of the interlocutors, inference procedure, feelings, state of mind, psychological atmosphere, degree and focus of attention, communicative intention, associations, allusions, assumptions, implications, enthymemes, memory, circumstance, linguistic usage, the tendency to symbolize or picture, the a priori conditions of language, and so on (cf. 'Meaning and Metaphor,' in Welby 1985a: 512–13). In the light of the genetically and structurally dynamic, ambiguous, creative, and therefore live character of language, these variables render illegitimate and useless any recourse to definition as an absolute and definitive remedy to the mystifications of language.

Metaphorical meaning makes its mark even when we are not aware of it. We could distinguish between metaphorical signifying trajectories that have already been traced, on the one hand, that are so deeply rooted in the consciousness of the utterer and interpreter that we seem to be dealing with simple, fixed, and definite meaning, and metaphorical signifying paths that are immediately recognizable as such, on the other, owing to their inventiveness, creativity, and capacity for innovation. This is most often achieved by matching interpretants that are distant from one another in the sign network, thereby generating signifying results that may be completely new, unexpected, and even unpredictable. As much as we can choose programmatically between the 'literal' and the 'metaphorical,' in reality this is nothing but a pseudo-choice, and results only in artificial exaggeration in one sense or in the other (cf. Petrilli 1995a: ch. 13).

10.2.3. Equivocation and Figurative Language

Not only scientific, philosophical, and literary language but also everyday language is permeated with the unconscious and implicit action of analogy and metaphor. This leads to Welby's suggestion that the study of such meaning devices be systematically introduced into educational

programs, with continual testing at a practical level according to the criteria of effectiveness on interlocutors in communication. To this end, both Welby and Vailati (who fully supported her research) insisted on the need for a *critique of imagery* and on the need beginning in infancy to create habits of analysis, verification, and classification of expressive means in general, but especially verbal signs (the signs *par excellence* of conscious and rational life). As Vailati wrote in a letter to Welby dated 12 July 1898:

> I believe that the exposition and classification of verbal fallacies and, above all, their *caricatures* (in *jeux de mots*), to be one of most effectual pedagogic contrivances for creating the habit of perceiving the ambiguities of language. It is a remedy somewhat analogous to that resorted to by Lacedaemons, who, in order to keep alive in their sons the horror to intoxication, compelled them to assist to the *dégoutants* deeds and sayings of the ebrious Ilots. (Vailati 1971: 142)

The poor use of language involves the poor use of logic and has negative consequences for human development in terms of both praxis and values. In promoting the need for 'language study,' Welby insisted on the strict interrelation between language, thought processes, action, and values. For example, she maintained that poor or faulty conceptualization and proposals of false problems – the fallacious opposition established between 'free will' and 'determinism,' between 'freedom' and 'necessity' – could largely be traced back to problems of language, to poor linguistic use. Language and logic are reciprocally dependent, as are signs and inferential processes.

With her analyses of verbal language, Welby intended not only to describe language but also to explain it, and thereby transform and regenerate it, so as to render it amenable to conscious and critical use. This was a task for the significian, and to carry out this work, she suggested the child as a possible model. She described the child as the critique *par excellence* owing to his or her natural curiosity, and therefore capacity for investigation and questioning. To counter the monologizing constrictions of the order of discourse, Welby promoted critique, interrogation, the provocation of questions, different perspectives, confrontation and comparison, interrelatedness. She called for 'significal education,' and she urged that children be taught a significal method from their very first years of schooling. In this regard, her observations made in an unpublished letter to Charles K. Ogden dated 24 March 1911 are significant. Welby maintains that significal education must begin in

nurseries and primary school; the instinct of clearness, oppressed under the weight of convention and rendered inert, must be encouraged and stimulated by the definitive defeat of convention. The desire to express as well as to know and infer will always be stimulated and oriented: in this way anarchic as much as dogmatic tendencies will gradually be inverted into interpretive tendencies so that it will be possible to say what we really intend to say and to act according to our true intent (see Petrilli 1995b: 286–8).

Vailati was one of Welby's most committed readers, and he fully supported her aims. This emerges, for example, in a letter dated 19 March 1903, in which he identifies three points in common between Welby's research and his own:

> 1) Your insisting on the need for a critique of imagery, for a testing of analogies and metaphors (especially when 'unconsciously' or semiunconsciously' used, as it is always the case in the *current* and *vulgar* ones).
>
> 2) Your warning against the tendency of pedantry and school-learning to discourage the development of linguistic resources, by the inhibitions of those spontaneous variations that are the necessary condition of organic growth.
>
> 3) Your valuation of the practical and speculative importance of raising language from the irrational and instinctive to the rational and volitional plane; in which it is considered as a means or contrivance for the performance of determined functions (representative, inferential, communicational, etc.) and for the attainment of given ends. (Vailati 1971: 144)

These scholars insisted repeatedly on the need to focus on the problem of meaning, linguistic expressivity, and argumentation, and therefore on the relation between language and thought (as also emerges, for example, in another letter by Welby to Vailati dated 27 February 1907). As a response to linguistic anarchy, they emphasized strongly the need for critical reflection on language beginning in childhood, on the need to reflect on 'questioni di parole' (Vailati) or 'verbal questions' (Welby) as these were linked with the processes of argumentation and knowledge acquisition. In 'I tropi della logica' (1987 [1905], 1: 21), Vailati examined the problem of the use of metaphors from the physical world. Here, he was directly inspired by Welby's *What Is Meaning?* (1903). But Vailati had already dealt with questions similar to those proposed by Welby (as in 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' [1896]) in 'Alcune osservazioni' (1987 [1895], 2: 71–2), in which he analysed the role of analogy and confrontation in the development of knowledge. Vailati

theorized a method of comparison and confrontation among signs and semiosic fields with the goal of highlighting convergences and divergences among different disciplines, fields of knowledge, and sectors of culture generally. In 'La ricerca dell'impossibile' (1987 [1905], 1), he contrasts the formulae of moral discourse with those of geometry; in 'La grammatica dell'algebra' (1987 [1908], 1), he confronts verbal language with the language of algebra. The method developed by Vailati corresponds to Welby's interpretive–translative method; in fact, she considered it a contribution to her project for significs. Both scholars emphasized the need to raise implicit logico-linguistic mechanisms to the level of conscious life as an exercise in defeating the inadequacy of our inferences and interpretive capacity generally. In *What Is Meaning?* Welby discusses the difference between fact and idea, and develops her concern for improving our interpretive capacity, which she describes as being connected to improvement in our sensifying and signifying capacities. At a metalinguistic level, this also involves developing our understanding of meaning. The following excerpt, one among many similar, is interesting:

> Taking both words in the generally accepted English sense what in the last resort is the difference between Fact and Idea? What is that essential meaning of both which, if changed, will necessitate a new word to express what we are losing? Surely there can be no doubt of the answer. If we can say of any supposed fact that it is false: unreal from one point of view, untrue from another (these again never to be confounded), it ceases to be fact. No fact can be either unreal or untrue, only our idea of it. Otherwise we may as well say at once that the real may be the delusive, or the true may be the deceptive. Of course the 'real' tends to become illusory to us, and the true deceptive, owing to the inadequacy of our inferences, which is again due to our little-developed interpretative power. But this must become more adequate when we have learnt to make sense, meaning, and significance our central concern, and have developed our sensifying and signifying faculties. (1983 [1903]: 40–1)

10.2.4. The Fallacy of Invariable 'Plain, Obvious, Common-Sense Meaning'

In 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893), Welby criticizes the concept of 'plain meaning,' and underlines from both a pedagogic and a theoretical perspective the need to recognize the symbolic character of language, to acknowledge the widespread – albeit often unconscious – use

of analogies and metaphors, thus to examine the relationship between symbolic systems and what they symbolize:

> We might begin by learning better what part symbolism plays in the rituals of expression, and ask ourselves what else is language itself but symbolism, and what it symbolizes. We should then examine anew the relations of the 'symbolic' to the 'real'; of image, figure, metaphor, to what we call literal or actual. For this concerns us all. Imagery runs in and out, so to speak, from the 'symbolic' to the 'real' world and back again. (1893b, in 1985a: 511)

Welby's theorization of the polyvalent and changing character of meaning goes hand in hand with her critique of the myth of '*plain, common-sense meaning*,' of '*plain and obvious meaning*,' which she considered a mere fallacy, and therefore with her awareness of the need to free the text from the prejudice of interpretation understood restrictedly in terms of decodification processes. Moreover, although she considered the question 'What do we really mean?' to be of prime importance as an invitation to clarify meanings and appreciate the significance, importance, and ultimate sense of expression, with her critique of plain meaning she also criticized the tendency to reductionism and oversimplification, and the accompanying fallacy that a text can evolve into a single reading, therefore into an absolute and definitive interpretant that is valid for all times (ibid.: 513; 1983 [1903]: 143).

Paradoxically, 'clear,' 'plain,' and 'convincing' discourse can easily become obscure and perverse discourse owing to the mechanisms of reductive simplicity and mystification operating in it. This is true even for the terms 'plain meaning,' 'common sense,' and 'common place,' when these are applied under the rubric of 'simplification' and 'clearness' to force the reduction of plurivocality into the monologism of a single meaning – for example, metaphorical meaning when exchanged for univocal, fixed, and definite meaning (Welby 1893b, in 1985a: 510–16). Mystifications are often the result of a lack of awareness of essential yet unrecognized aspects in interpretive and signifying processes – for example, the role of the enthymeme, the unsaid, the implicit in discourse (which may change and develop); and the fact that words and signs in general each have a signifying history of their own (in other words, the logic of otherness orienting signs). Aspects like these could be subsumed under the concept of the 'semiotic materiality' of signs. Indeed, understanding and communication stand on the unsaid, implicit meaning, on that which is understood, on the otherness dimension of signifying and interpretive processes.

Welby theorized a dynamical, structural, and generative conception of meaning – one that goes hand in hand with her critique of the concept of invariable, uniform, univocal meaning, and of the description of words and locutions as if they were numbers, tags, or symbols enjoying unanimous consent. The processes of metaphorization and symbolization have neither systemic nor typological boundaries. On the contrary, they invest the entire network of signs and sometimes belong to interpretive paths that are etched so deeply into language that they seem homologated to 'plain meaning,' albeit wrongly so. Consequently, through her re-evaluation of the 'plurivocal' and 'polylogic' capacity of language (even though she does not use these terms), Welby denounces the ambiguity that is connected with a reductive description of meaning itself.[1]

In fact, as observed, Welby immediately recognized the usefulness of definition in restricted cases, and its inadequacy in most others when accounting for the ambiguity of language and for its alterity – which together constitute the preconditions for significance and successful communication. In her search for a solution to problems of language,

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1 In 1892, Welby presented anonymously her pamphlet *The Use of Inner and Outer in Psychology*: *Does the Metaphor Help or Hinder?* at the International Congress of Experimental Psychology, where it was distributed among participants and duly discussed. This text collects a series of excerpts from various publications in psychology and philosophy in support of her thesis that poor language use compromises clearness and precision of ideas and leads to false problems. Welby analyses these excerpts with critical reflections on the use of figurative language, with particular reference to use of metaphor and analogy. She evidences the negative cognitive results – for example, of the mistaken use of the pairs 'inner/outer,' 'interior/exterior,' 'inside/outside,' and so on – as metaphors to designate the opposites 'psycho/physical,' 'subjective/objective,' 'thought/thing,' and 'conscious/unconscious.'

Welby met James M. Baldwin at this congress and thereafter corresponded with him, until 1908. She also met Frederik van Eeden on this occasion – an exceptionally fruitful encounter, for under the influence of her ideas, van Eeden gave life to the signific Movement in the Netherlands (see Petrilli 1998a: 7.2).

A Selection of Passages from 'Mind' (January, 1876, to July, 1892), 'Nature' (1870, and 1888 to 1892), 'Natural Science' (1892), is the title of another publication by Welby (1893a), in which she continued her critique of language, underlining its importance for successful interpersonal communication. These collections were accompanied by other publications by Welby such as *Witnesses to Ambiguity* (1891b), which is also dedicated to the critique of terminology, and 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893, now in 1985b), published in the *Monist*, in which she reflects on the problem of meaning more extensively in theoretical terms. The latter was followed by another important essay, 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896, now in 1985a), published in two parts in *Mind*.

she proposed significs, her theory of meaning with particular reference to her meaning triad 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance' and to the distinction between 'plain meaning,' 'actual,' 'literal,' or 'direct' meaning, on the one hand, and 'figurative meaning,' 'indirect' or 'reflective' meaning, on the other. Recourse to definition could only ever be of any use in the light of an adequate theory of meaning, although never as a remedy to the problems of linguistic equivocation; for beyond the value it might effectively reveal within the limits of technical language, definition eliminates the expressive plasticity or flexibility of words and therefore responds inadequately to their inherent vitality (cf. Welby 1983 [1903]: 2; Petrilli 1998a: 6.1).

10.2.5. The Fallacy of 'Universal Language': Common Speech

Welby criticized recourse to a *universal language* as a means of defeating obstacles to mutual understanding. To ignore diversity among languages, whether by imposing a pre-existent natural language over others or by constructing an artificial language, is to solve the problem of equivocation only apparently. The great variety of languages, of dialects, jargons, slangs, and so on, favours the development of our linguistic–cognitive resources, of expressivity and significance generally. Instead of theorizing the artificial imposition of a universal language and the consequent levelling out of our human cultural, linguistic, and psychological patrimony, Welby recognized a source of wealth for signifying, interpretive and communicative processes in the distinction and diversity among languages. In her vision of the world, differences – which generate other differences as part of an open totality in constant evolution – are not necessarily the cause of division and silence; rather, they may favour the possibility of interconnection and, therefore, the processes of mutual signifying enrichment (cf. Welby 1983 [1903]: 212).

Welby used the term 'common meaning' to indicate signifying material that is the precondition for the individuality or singularity of a work – that is to say, its specificity and alterity – on the one hand, and for its universal validity, on the other. Like the concept of 'common speech' (*parlare comune*) theorized by Rossi-Landi (cf. 1998 [1961]), the terms 'common language,' 'common speech,' and 'common meaning' proposed by Welby do not refer exclusively to 'ordinary language' or 'everyday language' as these are understood by the English analytical philosophers. On the contrary, such expressions are used to indicate common signifying material, semiotic material that operates in the great multiplicity of lan-

guages and jargons forming a single natural language as well as in all the different natural languages, cultures, and sign systems, be they verbal or non-verbal. Says Welby in a letter to Thomas H. Huxley dated between 1882 and 1885 (in Cust 1929: 102), such material constitutes the 'foundation of all sectorial differences of speech,' of 'mere technical or secondary meanings,' and therefore of all signifying processes in their diverse and varied articulation.

The terms 'common meaning' and 'common speech' denote a sort of a priori of language in a Kantian sense – a level of reference common to all languages, repeatable and constant material shared by all human beings, a group of operations forming the very condition of expressivity in the different languages. Common meaning concerns all similarities of the homological order in biological and social structure that underlie and unify all human communities beyond historical–cultural and geographical differences and their local variations. In order to identify this common field – this common patrimony of social communicative techniques, which enable transition from one universe of discourse to another as well as communication among the various technical and sectorial languages forming a single natural language and among different natural languages – it will be necessary, notes Rossi-Landi, to study the underlying empirical procedures – translating, teaching, learning, or simply conversing – followed by all linguistic speakers of any given language (Rossi-Landi 1998 [1961]: 204ff.).

The terms 'common speech,' 'common language,' 'common meaning,' and 'common sense' are not intended to undervalue the great multiplicity of languages, nor are they intended to steer the diversity of languages monologically toward a mythical original language, to an *Ursprache*, to the universal linguistic structures of some *logos*, or to biological laws that govern and unify all human languages. On the contrary, such expressions recognize the value of the plurilinguistic and pluridiscursive character of speech; they steer clear of monologic temptations of the sort that can be traced, for example, in Chomskyian linguistic theory, which, all things considered, fails to explain the communicative function of language, its social and intersubjective dimensions. As Rossi-Landi observes, the notion of common speech does not contradict the reality of plurilingualism – that is to say, the simultaneous presence of multiple languages; on the contrary, common speech points to similarity in the functions carried out by different languages, which in their diversity satisfy analogous needs of expression and communication. Therefore, the notion of common speech explains and justifies difference, variability,

and multiplicity among languages in terms of the need to develop different expedients, to find different solutions, and to use different resources in satisfying the essential and shared needs of expression and communication as perceived by different cultural traditions and spheres of human experience.

10.2.6. Critical Common-Sensism and Pragmaticism

Even when elaborating scientifically appropriate technical terminology, the point of departure, according to both Welby and Peirce, should be a critical reading of everyday language, given its widespread albeit largely unconscious presence in technical language (for temporo-spatial relations, for example, see Peirce's letter to Welby dated 16 December 1904, in Hardwick 1977: 48). However, as Peirce said in 'What Pragmatism Is' (1905a),[2] in which he reflected on scientificness in all special spheres of discourse, including the philosophical, in order to be scientific, a study requires 'a suitable technical nomenclature, whose every term has a single definite meaning universally accepted among students of the subject, and whose vocables have no such sweetness or charms as might tempt loose writers to abuse them – which is a virtue of scientific nomenclature too little appreciated' (*CP* 5.413). Furthermore, according to Peirce, a scientifically valid nomenclature is one that breaks with individual habits and preferences, that satisfies the requisite of unanimity among the specialists, and that is supported by moral principle inspiring a sense of decency and respect in all. The introduction of a new conception in philosophy calls for the invention of new terms that are acceptable to the entire scientific community, which should use them according to their original meanings without introducing still other technical terms to denote the same things, considered in the same relations (ibid.).

In 'The Ethics of Terminology' (a chapter in *Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic* [1903], *CP* 2.219–2.226), Peirce had already commented that compared with other sciences philosophy is a rather peculiar case insofar as it also presents the need for *popular words* in *popular senses*, not as

2 This was the first of a series of three articles on pragmatism published in the *Monist*. The other two were 'Issues of Pragmaticism' (1905b; *CP* 5.438–63), and 'Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism' (1906; *CP* 4.530–72).

part of its own technical terminological apparatus but rather as the object of its studies. In fact, philosophical language requires special terminology – such as that provided by Aristotle, the scholastics, Kant – that distances itself and is distinct from the language of *common speech* understood as ordinary language. Peirce: 'It is good economy for philosophy to provide itself with a vocabulary so outlandish that loose thinkers shall not be tempted to borrow its words' (*CP* 2.223). Kant – in Peirce's view, a confused pragmaticist – made the mistake of not using the adjectives 'objective' and 'subjective' in a sufficiently specialized sense; as a consequence, these terms altogether lost their usefulness in philosophy. On the basis of such premises, Peirce goes on to list seven rules for forming an ideal philosophical terminology and system of logical symbols (cf. *CP* 2.226).

According to Peirce's critical common-sensism, as described in 'Pragmaticism and Critical Common-Sensism' (*CP* 5.497-501),[3] as a human being, I am not endowed with an infallible introspective power into the secrets of my own heart, to know precisely my own beliefs and doubts. However, there exist beliefs that are more or less constant and beyond doubt. Such beliefs are in the nature of instincts understood in a broad sense. They concern matters that come within the reach of primitive man and that are vague, albeit not perfectly so. An important proposition should be considered as indubitable only after we have systematically endeavoured to attain to a doubt of it, says Peirce – who also remembers, however, that genuine doubt does not arise from a mere effort of the will, but must be the expression of experience. An indubitable proposition can be false, but insofar as we do not doubt a proposition, we must regard it as perfectly true, perfectly certain. While recognizing that certain propositions are each perfectly certain individually, we must also admit the possibility that one or more of them may be false (cf. *CP* 5.498).

In any case, doubt as theorized by the critical common-sensist is not doubt as conceived by the Oxonian intellectual – that is, doubt for its own sake, for the sheer pleasure of argumentation. The clever pragmat-

3 This text corresponds to a short manuscript of 1905 originally entitled 'The Basis of Pragmaticism,' and is articulated in the form of a dialogue between 'Jules' – the allusion is to the Italian critic of pragmatism Giuseppe Prezzolini – and the 'Respondent,' Peirce himself, that is, the pragmaticist. The discourse genre 'dialogue' was chosen in the attempt to represent the effective articulation of thought itself, which is inherently dialogic.

icist does not love the delusory power of brute force, but rather the creative power of reasonableness, which subdues all other forms of power and rules over them in the name of knowledge and love. As a supporter of reasonableness, the pragmaticist invests doubt with high moral value.

The features of critical common-sensism, as theorized by Peirce, are relevant to the pragmaticist insofar as they point to the conditional character of belief, 'that the substance of what he thinks lies in a conditional resolve,' and to the need for the quest for truth as the only part to satisfying the wishes of the heart (*CP* 5.499). The pragmaticist must be open-minded and free of prejudice; when he is, he is open to conviction and careful to distinguish between truth and falsity, probability and improbability. The pragmaticist investigates the problem of the relationship between inferences and the facts from which they derive, and thereby establishes a relation of affinity between them – that is to say, between thought and action in general. Beginning from the assumption that action in general is mostly guided by instinct (Peirce describes the general impossibility, for intellectuals as well, of holding one's breath for five minutes), pragmaticism establishes that belief also involves instinct and desire. And although it is true that with the evolution of the species, instincts have come to be ruled by self-control to varying degrees, they are not dominated completely by self-control. Given, therefore, the familiarity and near-invariability of irresistible instinctual desire, we should not doubt the inevitable connection between pragmaticism and critical common-sensism.

10.2.7. Generality and Vagueness

The only important alternative to pragmaticism is traditional logic – which Peirce criticized – according to which thought has no meaning except in itself, and according to which substance is a category, indeed, an irregular pluralism of functions (cf. *CP* 5.500). Logicians have elaborated a number of different lists of categories, but all agree that the concepts identified as categories are simple and that these are the only simple concepts. But the fact that something may be true of one category that is not true of another does not imply that these differences are definite or defined once and for all: 'Each is other than each of the rest but this difference is unspecifiable and thus indefinite. At the same time there is nothing indefinite in the concepts themselves' (*CP* 5.501). Peirce proceeds to establish a relationship of affinity between differences thus described – a relationship connected with concepts and different

qualities of feeling. Differences are perceived just as we perceive different scents of different flowers, but the different qualities that may be predicated on each scent do not constitute those scents, they are not a part of them. As to their relations, nothing can be predicated except that 'each is other than each of the rest' (ibid.). Therefore, those relations are indefinite, whereas there is nothing indefinite about the feelings related. In Peirce's view, concepts as analysed by the logicians indicate another type of qualities of feeling, and although the logician would never admit this on the grounds that concepts are general whereas feelings are not, the logician could not demonstrate this position. Peirce maintains that concepts and feelings

> are different no doubt; but the difference is altogether indefinite. It is precisely like the difference between smells and colours. It must be so, because at the very outset they defined concepts as qualities of feeling, not in these very words, of course, but in the very meaning of these words when they said that concepts possess, as immediate objects, all the characters that they possess at all, each in itself, regardless of anything else. (*CP* 5.501)

And as we read in 'Consequences of Critical Common-Sensism' (1905, *CP* 5.502–37),[4] the supporters of individualism would agree that reality and existence are coextensive – in other words, that reality and existence are either alike true or alike false of every subject, that they have the same meaning, or *Inhalt*. Many logicians would refuse such a position as a *reductio ad absurdum* of individualism, contending that the two meanings are clearly not the same: '*Reality* means a certain kind of non-dependence upon thought, and so is a cognitionary character, while *existence* means reaction with the environment, and so is a dynamic character.' A misunderstanding that is characteristic of individualists is the belief that all other men are individualists too, including the scholastic realists whom they thought believed that 'universals exist'; actually, many great thinkers of the past did not believe that 'generals' exist but regarded them as 'modes of determination of individuals,' and recognized that such modes were of the nature of thought. The metaphysical side of pragmaticism,

4 This text follows and develops 'Pragmatism and Critical Common-Sensism' (see n.3). It is the reproduction of a manuscript titled 'Pragmaticism, Prag. [4]' (1905), and is divided into four parts: 'Individualism,' 'Critical Philosophy and the Philosophy of Common-Sense,' 'The Generality of the Possibile,' and 'Valuation.'

says Peirce, attempts to solve the problem by accepting the existence of 'real generals' and by searching for the answer to this question: 'In what way can a general be unaffected by any thought about it?' (*CP* 5.503).

Another misunderstanding that Peirce clarifies is this: for the pragmaticist, the import or adequate ultimate interpretant of a concept is contained in a 'habit of conduct,' or the 'general moral determination of whatever procedure there *may come to be*.' The import of any word (except perhaps a pronoun) is not limited to what is in the utterer's mind *actualiter*, but, on the contrary, is what is in the mind perhaps not even *habitualiter*, but simply *virtualiter*. Every animal has habits and therefore innate habits, and insofar as it has cognitive powers it must also have '*in posse* innate cognitive habits.' This is Peirce's interpretation of innate ideas. The pragmaticist shares these positions with a critical common-sense philosophy and should not be considered an individualist, either of the metaphysical or of the epistemological type.

In line with critical common-sense, Peirce maintained that all beliefs are *vague* – indeed, the more they are indubitable the more they are vague. This recognizes the misunderstood importance of *vagueness* even in mathematical thought. Vagueness is constitutive of belief; it is inherent to belief and to the propositions that express it. Vagueness is the 'antithetical analogue of generality':

> A sign is objectively *general*, in so far as, leaving its effective interpretation indeterminate, it surrenders to the interpreter the right of completing the determination for himself. 'Man is mortal.' 'What man?' 'Any man you like.' A sign is objectively *vague*, in so far as, leaving its interpretation more or less indeterminate, it reserves for some other possible sign or experience the function of completing the determination. 'This month', says the almanac-oracle, 'a great event is to happen.' 'What event?' 'Oh, we shall see. The almanac doesn't tell that.' The *general* might be defined as that to which the principle of excluded middle does not apply. A triangle in general is not isosceles nor equilateral; nor is a triangle in general scalene. The *vague* might be defined as that to which the principle of contradiction does not apply. For it is false neither that an animal (in a vague sense) is male, nor that an animal is female. (*CP* 5.505)

Generality and vagueness do not coincide, and in some ways they even oppose each other, although at a formal level they are on a par. A sign cannot be both vague and general in the same respect, since insofar as the right of determination is not distinctly extended to the inter-

preter, it remains the right of the utterer. Furthermore, a sign can avoid being either vague or general if it is not indeterminate, but no sign can ever be absolutely and completely determinate. In the light of Peirce's logic of relations,[5] no proposition has a single subject; rather, it has different levels of reference. Even if only implicitly, all propositions necessarily refer to the truth, 'the universe of all universes'; therefore, they refer to the same determinately singular subject, which is understood both by the utterer and by the interpreter and assumed by all to be real. At a more restricted and immediate level, all propositions also refer to a non-general subject.

Continuing his reflections on the role of vagueness, Peirce asserts that communication among interlocutors is never completely definite or completely non-vague, for where variation is possible, absolute precision is impossible. So, beyond expressing his hope that qualities of feeling among different persons may one day be compared by physiologists and thereby no longer represent a source of *misunderstanding*, he identifies a cause of misunderstanding in the intellectual purport of communication and in the diversity of experience among different persons. Communication is necessarily vague 'because no man's interpretation of words is based on exactly the same experience as any other man's' (*CP* 5.506). Therefore, just as we lose sight of the overall sense of a painting when we concentrate on one of its details and ignore its general context, in the same way, the more we attempt to be precise – ignoring what with Welby we have indicated as the plasticity of meaning – the more unattainable precision will seem, even when we are dealing with intellectual conceptions.

Vagueness as described by Peirce is oriented by the logic of otherness and enters the sphere of what we have identified as semiotic materiality. As such, vagueness can be described as the common matter that underpins communication and that constitutes a condition of possibility for communication itself, an a priori condition for formulating the propositions communicated. Thus understood, vagueness is strictly dependent on reference to the different experiences of each and every one of us, experiences ranging from organico-instinctual life to intellectual life. By this approach, instead of postulating vagueness as the cause of *misunder-*

5 See Peirce's paper, 'The Reader Is Introduced to Relatives,' originally published in *Open Court* (1892, *CP* 3.415–24).

standing, Peirce like Welby places it as a condition of possibility for communication. It follows that communication is achieved in terms of dialogue, be it interior dialogue or dialogue with other interlocutors external to one's own self.

Variability in the experience of the single person implies variability at the level of explicit interpretation, but also at the level of implicit understanding. Therefore, dialogue and understanding as negotiated in communication are strictly dependent on vagueness, variability, the implicit, the unsaid.

Understanding is possible thanks to the understood, the enthymeme, the implicit. Even more interesting is that vagueness is structural to the very possibility of understanding – indeed, the more we attempt to be precise in Welby's sense the less we are capable of understanding one another. To explicate the indeterminate and to render it visible is to follow new interpretive trajectories, new signifying paths and therefore to introduce new implications, new variables, a new dose of vagueness. In the final analysis, communication is dialogic investigation and approximation on the part of interlocutors or interpretants with respect to the referent of discourse – both the general referent, truth, and the restricted and immediate referent. Saying, explicitation, determination, and (therefore) understanding all presuppose the understood, the unspoken, implied meaning, indeterminacy and vagueness. And as Welby and Peirce teach us, along with the other authors mentioned in this section, all these aspects together contribute to the generative power of our signifying universes of discourse.

11

Closed Community and Open Community in Global Communication

11.1. Logic, Argumentation, and Dialogue in Global Communication

11.1.1. Critique of the Reason of Global Communication

The term 'global communication' expresses the fact that the communication–production network has been extended over the entire planet and that the market – that is, equal-exchange logic – has also spread around the world. Even more radically, global communication means that human life in all its aspects has been incorporated into the communication-production network. This has had profound implications for development, well-being, and consumerism, or underdevelopment, poverty, and impossible survival; for health or disease; for normality or deviance; integration or marginalization; for employment or unemployment; for transfer of people functional to the workforce (which is characteristic of emigration) or transfer characteristic of migration, where the request for hospitality is denied; and for exchange and trade of legal merchandise or traffic in illegal merchandise, be it drugs or non-conventional weapons or human organs. Incorporation into the communication network touches not just human life, but all life, which is easily compromised and threatened, with negative consequences for all of us (see 12.2.3).

Global communication has modified space, distances, time, and – most importantly – our feelings and affections. As a consequence, we must begin to decipher the signs of the processes involved, identify the new courses followed by commodities, learn to read the messages produced by the global communication system, measure this system in terms of planetary extension and velocity, convert the criteria on which it flourishes into a new system of values, and so on. In other words, it is

now time to reflect in a semiotic key on the new conditions of feeling and reasoning in the global communication system with the goal of developing a *Critique of the Reason of Global Communication.*

This problem brings us back to the question of the centrality of dialogue in argumentative reasoning – that is to say, reasoning that has not stiffened into a defence and reproduction of identity, but rather, is open and sensitive to the logic of otherness.

Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1970–1) showed how unilaterality, ossification, and rectilinear dialectics derive from sclerotized dialogue. Dialectics understood as monologic, unilinear, and totalizing dialectics is necessarily oriented toward a synthesis and a conclusion; as such, it calls for a 'Critique of Dialogic Reason' (cf. Ponzio 1994a, 1998; see also 3.1.6). With regard to these problems, Bakhtin's work is a central point of reference. In fact, all of his research, including his late paper of 1974 on the methodology of the human sciences (in Bakhtin 1979), focuses on the problem of whether knowledge and understanding of man by man only implies specific methods, or whether a *new reason* is to be envisioned. This problem is similar to the one that Jean-Paul Sartre dealt with in *Critique de la raison dialectique.* However, this problem cannot be dealt with adequately by establishing a new relationship between *thought* and its *object*, as Sartre believed. In fact, Sartre's dialectics remains within the limits of monologic dialectics; this is because he reduces the relation of otherness to a relation of identity and of reciprocal objectification: dialectics between *for self* and *for others* is dialectics in totalizing consciousnesses, where the main tendency is to assert one's own objectifying view over that of others.

The critique of dialogic reason is the critique of the category of Identity that now dominates Western thought and praxis. From the perspective of identity, sense coincides with partial and limited interests. And whether it is a question of the identity of an individual person, or a group, or nation, or language, or cultural system, or an extended community such as the European Community, the entire Western World, or the United Nations, the correlation between the logic of Identity and limited interests can only bring about processes of mystification.

The category of identity dominates today's world through *concrete abstractions,* which are constructed on it and which form the *reality* we experience. These concrete abstractions, which are 'internal' to today's dominant social reproduction system, include the concepts of individual, society, state, nation, truth, knowledge, equality, justice, freedom, limited responsibility, need, and equal exchange. However, it is not only a ques-

tion of concrete abstractions being constructed as a result of the social reproduction system; even more radically, the system itself is grounded in the category of identity, which is asserted to be universal, and therefore structural, constitutive of the worldwide production, market, and consumption processes of social reproduction. In today's social reproduction system, the logic of concrete abstractions is the logic of identity. And the categories of individual with its rights, obligations, and responsibilities; of society with its interests; of state with its politics (which adheres as much as possible to reality); and of equal exchange with its needs, all obey the logic of identity.

The places of argumentation that are internal to the order of discourse are the places of the logic of identity. Reason that includes the reason of war, even if in the form of *extrema ratio*, presenting war as legitimate, just, and legal – reason that includes reasons for eliminating the other – is the reason of identity. The logic of reason thus described is asserted by barricading, isolating, expelling, or exterminating the other; as such it allows for the construction of the concrete abstractions noted earlier. As anticipated, these include the concrete abstraction 'individual,' which must sacrifice its own otherness to itself in order to assert itself in terms of identity.

The critique of reason and argumentation requires a *perspective that is other*. This approach calls for preliminary *recognition of the other*, or better, recognition of the fact that recognition of the other is *necessary and inevitable* (cf. Ponzio 1995a, 1996a). Therefore, recognition of the other must not be considered as a concession, a free choice made by the individual, the subject, the same, but rather as a necessity imposed by alienation, by the loss of sense, by the situation of *homo homini lupus* arising from and not mythically antecedent to (the allusion is to Hobbes's fallacy!) such concrete abstractions as state, politics, and law.

11.1.2. Dialogue, Theory of Semiosis, and Theory of Argumentation

The idea that underpins our discussion of the relation between dialogue and argumentation does not merely allude to the fact that each time we reason we do so in the context of a dialogic relationship with another person, even when this other person is our own interior doubleself through which we evaluate the validity of a given argument.

Nor, in considering the relation between dialogue and argumentation, are we especially concerned with the fact that dialogue more or less explicitly implies argumentation.

In our opinion, the problem is far more complex and compels us to shift our attention from dialogue–argumentation to its conditions of possibility. Understood in such terms, our problem concerns foundations, and thereby implies a discussion that must develop along the boundaries that link the study of *argumentation*, or *logic, with dialogue analysis* and *semiotics*, from what we can describe as a 'semiodialogic' perspective (if the expression is allowed).

Two authors who are fundamental to the adequate development of such a perspective are Charles S. Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin. Two other names can also be added: Victoria Welby and Charles Morris. Welby's theory of meaning, or 'significs,' and Morris's 'axiology' are both rich in invaluable suggestions for a fuller understanding of the problem we are now discussing. Each conducted research (albeit independently) into the relations among signs, values, and action, and therefore among semiotics, axiology, and pragmatics, and showed how these relations are of fundamental importance in cognitive processes and in praxis at large. Values are vehicled by signs – or better, signs are the material out of which values are created; yet the opposite is not necessarily true – not all signs involve values. For example, signs in the non-human animal world do not, nor do signs forming our genetic codes, and so on. Finally, signs and values in their turn relate to behaviour.

Morris divided 'meaning' into 'signification,' the object of semiotics, which alludes to the condition of 'having meaning,' on the one hand, and 'significance,' the object of axiology, which indicates the condition of 'being meaningful' or 'significant,' on the other. Welby made a similar distinction with her own tripartition of meaning into 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance.' Both Welby and Morris employed the term 'significance' to underline the connection of signs and meaning to values and, therefore, to human behaviour.

Welby and Morris consider sign activity – especially *verbal* sign activity – as the place of production of knowledge and truth values. But besides this, they consider sign activity as the place of production of ethical and aesthetic judgment and, therefore, of the capacity for critique and responsibility. This implies that we ought to analyse signifying processes (understood in a broad sense) in situations where dialogic potential is at its highest and, therefore, where the response required in order to comprehend sense is grounded in the logic of otherness and calls for a point of view. These connections among values, signs, and argumentative dialogue make the terms 'ethosemiodialogic' and 'semioethics' even more appropriate than 'semiodialogic,' as a means of indicating the founding

theoretical perspective necessary for an appropriate analysis of the conditions of dialogic argumentation.

We now return to the connections between theory of dialogue, theory of semiosis, and theory of argumentation. A common denominator linking these three theories, or, better, these three aspects implied by *semio-dialogic theory* is *interpretation*. In fact, interpretation plays a central role in dialogue as much as in semiosis and argumentation.

To evidence the connection of argumentation and semiosis to dialogue is to evidence the dialogic character of interpretation insofar as interpretation is not only identification and recognition but also 'answering comprehension' – an expression adapted from Bakhtin. In other words, together with the *identification interpretant* – which is the aspect we arrive at when considering meaning in terms of the *signifié* understood in the Saussurean sense and, therefore, in the sense of its dependency on the 'code' – we must consider the *interpretant of answering comprehension*, which limits itself to identifying signs and, furthermore, responds to them dialogically, takes a stand, makes a choice, and therefore implicitly involves reference to values, habits, norms of behaviour, stereotypes, and ideologies. This is why a typology of dialogue must start from a typology of action.

The logic that renders sense comprehensible is a *dialogic*. The comprehension of sense always implies dialogically structured argumentation. Sense is always a response to a question, a sort of rejoinder in a dialogue where question and answer involve not only information exchange but also values and valutative orientations. The question calls for a pragmatical–valutative standpoint, just as the response involved in comprehending sense requires a standpoint, be it implicit or explicit.

The question-and-answer logic in which sense is decided escapes the limits of monologism. By question-and-answer, we do not refer to the absolute and impersonal abstract categories of *logos*, but rather the concrete aspects of dialogue. Unlike monological sign relationships, which seem not to have spatio-temporal and axiological limits, or which are situated in the space-time of monological discourse, dialogic question-and-answer relationships have a precise and diversified spatial, temporal, and axiological placement. This determines the degree of *irreducible otherness* with which these relationships are endowed.

Bakhtin's most important contribution to the problem of the conditions of possibility, to the foundations of dialogic argumentation, can be traced in his approach to the problem of sense in the terms just described (cf. Ponzio 1993a).

Next we examine the relations among argument type or inference (induction, deduction, abduction), the typology of signs (symbol, index, icon), and dialogism.

A relation can be established between inferential argumentation and Peirce's sign typologies in terms of the degree of dialogism and otherness implied in the relationship between interpretant sign and interpreted sign, especially when we consider his best-known triad: symbol, index, icon.

Regarding the symbol, the relation between the interpreted and interpretant is regulated by habit; therefore, it is conventional. Regarding the index, that same relation is regulated by causal necessity; therefore, it is constrictive. Regarding the icon, that same relation is regulated by similarity and therefore by the principle of reciprocal autonomy.

These categories also apply to argumentation when we approach the relation between premises and conclusion as a relation between interpreted and interpretant signs. In induction, the relation between the premise and the conclusion is based on habit; therefore, it is of the symbolic type. In deduction, the conclusion is a necessary derivation from the premises; therefore, the relation between premises and conclusion is of the indexical type. In abduction, the relation between premises and conclusion is of the iconic type – that is to say, it is a relation of reciprocal autonomy, which implies a high degree of inventiveness as well as a high risk margin for error. Abductive processes are highly dialogic and generate responses that can be considered the most risky, inventive, and creative.

In terms of dialogism, in deduction, where the conclusion is compulsory once the premises have been accepted, the degree of dialogism in the relation between interpreted and interpretant is minimal. In induction, the relation between premises and conclusion is not compulsory, but inferential processes remain unilinear so that the logic of identity continues to dominate and, with it, the logic of repetition. In contrast, in abduction, the relations among argumentative parts are dialogic in a substantial sense, and in fact, very high degrees of dialogism are reached, and the higher they are, the more inventive reasoning becomes. Abductive argumentative procedure is risky; in other words, it is mainly tentative and hypothetical, and it leaves a minimal margin to convention (symbolicity) and mechanical necessity (indexicality). Abductive inferential processes are dominated by iconicity. To abduce means to transcend the logic of identity and equal exchange and to generate sign processes oriented by high degrees of otherness and dialogism.

11.1.3. Signs of Rhetorical Tricks

Rhetorical discourse understood as encomiastic and eulogistic discourse means more than the false and deceptive discourse resorted to in the commercial world by publicity. Beyond its use in publicity, this kind of rhetoric is an essential part of the rhetoric of institutions, the rhetoric of keeping a good and clean conscience and of defending given values. This kind of rhetorical discourse safeguards a conscience with alibis – a conscience that finds justification in its appeal to axiomatic foundations, that is, to identity, to roles, to concepts such as the nation and *esprit de corps*, and to the duties of contracts and civil conventions. All of these serve to protect and reassure us with guarantees and limited responsibilities, and to keep us in our places. Rhetoric is comforting, given that it defends the 'fixing of beliefs and habits' (as says Peirce in his famous essay).

Rhetorical devices are part of the information game. They play an essential role in winning consensus for stereotypes, putting together stories, and presenting facts in order to make them appear acceptable.

It seems that information with no other aim beyond informing – that is, information for the sake of informing – is something desirable, a mission to be auspicated. What this actually means is that the sole end of information is to reproduce the information process itself by consuming information. As Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's 'principle of homology' teaches us (see 4.1.7), information for the sake of information is no less than the flip side of production for the sake of production.

Information as we are describing it is modelled according to the logic of serial production and information. Its aim is to achieve homogenized consumer behaviour, which is becoming faster and faster as well as more and more repetitive: consumption of homogenized news and information, consumption of commodities and fashion, in a cycle wherein signs refer to one another, constantly citing and repeating one another in monotonous alternation – consumption of values and attitudes with a propensity to diverge less and less. The productive cycle of daily information needs to be interrupted; it is a trap we must escape *in the effort to become uninformed and to think.*

Rhetorical devices produce, repeat, and impose appropriate stereotypes for the sake of market consumption. We could probably claim that *code semiotics* is a form of rhetoric insofar as it reduces interpretation to decodification: here, the rhetorical trick consists in stopping deferral from one interpretant to another for the purpose of isolating and exalting just a small piece in the process. For its part, *interpretation semiotics* is

founded on the principle of opening and adventure through dialogue and argumentation. This approach emphasizes and reinforces the internal dialogism characteristic of a perspective, the internal dialogism of the words we use. This reminds us of the ambiguity of the meanings to which we entrust our certainties. Dialogue is structural to discourse by virtue of the difference and the distancing between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign, which no homologating ideology can ever annul. Consequently, dialogue is not the outcome of active initiative taken by separate subjects, but the condition itself for the subject to exist.

In today's society, it is necessary more than ever to reflect on the functions of the 'subject,' on the sense of its 'being active,' 'subject' to a given 'object,' and on the sense of concepts that concern this 'active subject' such as *creativity, inventiveness, and innovation.* Think of the normalizing politics in educational discourse embraced by the European Commission – for example, in the *Green Book on Innovation.* In this document, the market is the only reference for innovation, and the innovative character of the product itself consists in its capacity to destroy products that are similar and that are already on the market. An example offered by the European Commission in the *Green Book on Innovation*: CDs have now rendered traditional vinyl albums nearly obsolete and useless, along with the equipment for playing them, in a relatively short period of time. A more recent example: DVDs are now replacing traditional videocassettes. The relation between inventiveness and destruction is revealing for anyone who wishes to understand the 'ideologic' regulating today's society.

Two questions now come to the fore. At a formal level, one concerns how we can identify the tricks that false reasoning uses to make our statements appear true or at least valid and acceptable; the other concerns how we can find devices – including discourse genres or, more generally, semiotic genres – that will allow for well grounded and critical argumentation.

In relation to the first question, an excellent point of departure is no doubt the famous treatise on argumentation by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958). But we must recall another far more ancient work by Peter of Spain (see biographical note, p. 533), *Tractatus* or *Summule logicales* (1972 [1230?], It. trans. 1985 by A. Ponzio: a new bilingual edition presenting the Latin and Italian translations together appeared in 2004). Compared with other medieval books about logic, this particular volume has the merit of presenting itself as a system of definitions and dialectical rules without involving any form of metaphysics. Book VII of this volume, 'Fallacies,' is a very helpful starting point for dealing with the first of our questions. With regard to media dis-

course – especially with regard to television, which demands to be invested with credibility and expects viewers not to be suspicious or doubtful, when in fact its real quest is for profits, votes, and conformity – an important tradition of studies is the humanistic and Marxist critique that extends from Jean Baudrillard, author of *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, to works by Rossi-Landi.

11.1.4. For a Critique of Television Communication in a Semiotical Key

Our examination of media and mass communication – especially television communication – is developed in neither sociological nor psychological terms. Programming, projects, and ideologies are impossible to understand adequately except by studying signs. The entire system of social reproduction is possible thanks to communication – therefore, thanks to signs, both verbal and non-verbal. A task for semiotics is to examine signs as a constitutive part of the processes they belong to. This approach helps show the connections between communication and ideology as well as among the disciplines that study them: semiotics, general theory of signs, and theory of ideology. Communication in the processes of social reproduction should be examined in relation not only to systems of sign exchange, but also to systems of sign production and sign consumption. And as part of the social reproduction totality, ideology must also be studied in its necessary relation to sign systems. Our perspective is semiotical, and certainly not simply as a question of choice connected to a profession.

Nowadays, anyone wishing to gain consensus, to make a 'preventible rise' (Bertolt Brecht), must control the communication network, including newspapers – indeed, the press generally – but even more so the television network. Indeed, in the present era, control over the semiotician who is expert in marketing is also helpful. From this perspective, Rossi-Landi's pioneer research deserves close consideration, given the importance of his contribution to the development of a semiotical–critical approach to mass communication. Rossi-Landi defines the dominant class '*as the class that has control over the emission and circulation of verbal and nonverbal messages forming a given community*' (1994 [1972]: 203–4). Today's Arturo Ui must necessarily resort to television; and unlike Brecht's Ui, who consulted a theatre actor, today's Ui must necessarily resort to an advertising agent – even better, an expert in semiotics of marketing – in order to learn the tricks of the trade and present himself successfully to the public.

This approach is now reality. Television and advertising are so closely interconnected that they have become interdependent. Television depends on advertising economically, and both depend on whoever controls communication. All television programs are part of the same network, the same text – that is, the advertising network. Anyone wishing to speak to the public must enter this network. Not only has politics become televised, not only has televised political discourse become a publicity spot, but the political message itself has become a photogram in the ongoing advertising sequence. Here, then, is a possible role for semiotics, which in fact it has already been carrying out for some time now: semiotics at the service of persuasion, whose strategies are no longer concealed; at the service of the televised circulation of messages, of marketing. And this role is complemented by that trend in semiotics which discusses codes, meanings, communication, signification, and referential and nonreferential semantics, all the while leaving aside the pragmatic dimension of semiosis – and all in the name of a deceptive and 'impossible neutrality,' to recall the title of a highly topical book by Massimo A. Bonfantini.

A characteristic of today's system for reproducing communication is that the communicative channel dominates the message, in such a way that communication is produced for the sake of communication and for the sake of reproducing communication. There is no doubt that we must end this situation. Communication must recover its use value in terms of interpersonal dialogism, critical awareness, and disalienated praxis.

A fundamental issue is the relation between dominant forms of communication (television included) and the world. The world is already indissolubly tied to politics as a projection, at the level of planning. The world is connected to politics, which offers a totalizing overview and a functional system; a space for satisfying needs; strategies for productivity and efficiency, for maintaining reality as it is; guarantees for the *conatus essendi*; mediation of interests (in Latin *inter-esse*, which plays on the concept of being) of both the individual and the collective subject; awareness and control over *becoming*, beginning from a realistic view of the present and then readapting the past to the present; economy of the lasting, of persistence in *being* at any cost. At the cost of war even, the *extrema ratio* of war, war considered as belonging to the world, as part of it, war foreseen by the world, as part of its logic, as part of the ontology of the *conatus essendi*.

The world is based on the logic of identity, and as such it sees war as a means of exploiting the other in order to preserve, reinforce, and extensively reproduce the logic of the same. The world is ready to sacri-

fice otherness. The connections among world, history, reality, identity, truth, force, reason, power, productivity, politics, and war are inscribed in our experience and culture as Westerners. These connections have always been exploited and exacerbated by capitalism, but especially in today's world, where communication serves social reproduction and consolidates the connections we are discussing. And television – probably the most powerful communication channel in history – is exploited in this sense as well. How else can we explain the crucial role played by television in the Gulf War? This war represents a decisive moment in recent history, a sort of watershed separating a phase that began with the Second World War, characterized by the widespread refusal of war, from a new phase in history that is dominated by the ideologic of capital and characterized by broad consensus in favour of war. Indeed, one of the long-ranging triumphs of the Gulf War is the fact that war has at last been broadly accepted as a just and necessary means of asserting peace, difference, and the rights of identity.

Television helps transform everything into commodities. It contributes to processes of reification that serve the market and that revive the production–communication cycle, and not only through its links to advertising. Reification: *fluidification* is a better term. Gunther Anders (1956, 1980) has observed that what radio and television provide does not assume the form of an object or property; rather, it remains *fluid*. This is true of telematics as well: what is provided is absorbed into the same fluid that flows outside the factory. In this sense, the word 'transmission' with its dual meaning is symptomatic: in fact it designates both the act of transmitting and the object transmitted. What is owned is the apparatus for transmitting commodities, not the transmitted commodities themselves. 'Stated in the form of a paradox,' says Anders, 'we are sovereigns of a mere passivity ... Figures not less comical than the Stirnian "owners of their own hunger," scorned by Marx' (ibid.: 48): 'The term "reification," used to describe the trends characterizing the past century or so, will no longer suffice to characterize the situation today. We are now on the threshold of a new phase, a phase in which, vice versa, the form of the thing, the fluidified thing, is avoided. Or at least a phase in which fluidification of the object will be as characteristic as reification of the nonobjectual. We propose to use the term "liquidation" to indicate this state of affairs which has so far been forgotten by theory' (ibid.).

According to Anders, recorders and videocassettes do not contradict the production cycle's interest in producing products 'in the liquid state.' All the same, he is forced to admit that such inventions have been devel-

oped not 'in the interests of production,' but rather in the interests of those consumers who want to own their transmissions in just as solid a form as books and paintings, even though this is impossible without the help of capital. As soon as the chance arises to produce new commodities, capitalist industry is ready to exploit it, 'even if the new product contradicts the principles of production' (ibid.: 49). However, this very contradiction represented by audio and video cassettes may be reversed so as to favour transformative dialogism.

11.1.5. Dialogue and Lying

Thanks to the power of the media and to the pervasiveness of images, lying today is no longer based on hiding things. For an example, let us consider the techniques employed by dominant information services. Intangibility based on secrecy is no longer possible in a culture aspiring to 'transparency,' to glassiness – 'glass things do not have an "aura." Glass is the special enemy of secrets' (Benjamin 1933). The impossibility of gaining awareness and of intervening transformatively on things and situations (which, on the contrary, must be preserved, concealed, and handed down as they are) is a result of organizing things so that to see does not mean to understand – if anything, to see is to impede understanding. 'The destructive character' of the present day (the present day meaning society as it is now characterized, that is, by production for the sake of production, by communication for the sake of communication) shows and unveils, and furthermore has its own constitutive obscenity. Destructive work requires a public, it requires witnesses, says Walter Benjamin. The rapid succession and stratification of information in the name of 'transparency' to satisfy a sort of widespread 'voyeurism' results in reality being reduced to the level of appearance and thereby destroys the notion of control by public opinion. Attention is replaced by confusion, the sense of scandal by accommodation and habit, comprehension by misunderstanding. Indeed, as says Benjamin (ibid.), in the end one allows oneself to be misunderstood in order to avoid being misunderstood; more precisely, the tendency to destruction requires constant provocation to misunderstanding.

Another classification in lying discourse – as well as in externalizing discourse – is possible beyond the superficially positive connotations implied by such expressions as 'lying to a good end' (or 'altruistically'), 'making reports,' 'showing,' 'revealing,' 'telling the truth.' In fact, we could consider which of these classifications orient discourse away from attainment

and reconfirmation dialogues and, therefore, away from the category of identity in the direction of otherness and substantial dialogism.

11.1.6. Television and Keeping a Good Conscience

The Gulf War can serve as an emblem for understanding how ideas are communicated through the press and especially through television: the Gulf War succeeded in promoting the concept of war as just, necessary, legal, and legitimate. That war also helps us understand the role played through television by intellectuals, journalists, political commentators, historians (such as the French expert Le Goff), and philosophers (the Italian thinker Noberto Bobbio), all of whom helped spread an idea that until then seemed anachronistic. The reason of war was opposed to 'madness' – and of course, 'madness' is always the 'madness' of 'others.' That the public – or better, the 'audience' – was so ready to accept the idea of war can only be explained in terms of the power of television. And as far as Italy is concerned, we must remember that the war was a flagrant contravention of Article 11 of the Constitution; that at an international level, it contravened the Helsinki Convention; and that at the world level, it pushed the UN to accept the Orwellian slogan (from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) that 'war is peace' – and the main task of the UN is to keep peace in the world! Thanks to television, it was possible to gain consensus for war; indeed, direct global participation was made possible. From this perspective, although the war was conducted mainly by the United States, the Gulf War was in a true sense a world war. Never has any war achieved such a high level of involvement, reciprocal implication, and responsibility at the world level. Of course, the type of responsibility we are alluding to is characteristic of a 'good conscience.' When we speak of 'consensus,' a broad range of possible meanings comes to mind: support, apology, acceptance, passive consensus, inert non-refusal, but in any case complicity and responsibility.

An idea that circulated widely during the Gulf War was that there were actually two wars: a real war and a make-believe war; a war that was fought, that was made of death, blood, and destruction, and a war that was watched on the television screen, where all we could see were the trajectories outlined by 'smart' bombs directed against 'military targets,' with no trace of blood, destruction, or dying people. For our part, we believe there was only one war and that the 'make-believe' war was entirely structural to the real war and of crucial importance to it. We, too, as television viewers, played a role that was vital to the war's success. As spectators, we

too took part in the real war (notwithstanding our good conscience) by taking up our 'posts' in front of our television screens and participating with our more or less active consensus, more or less passive acceptance of war, and, above all, by pretending to be no more than neutral, uninvolved spectators. In this sense, we all played a part in ensuring ourselves the spectacle of death, blood, and destruction. As telespectators, then, we too fought in the Gulf War; and we continue fighting in it as the war replicates itself in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. And a large part of the responsibility for successfully reproducing this cycle goes to television, which offered the Gulf War as entertainment and promoted the idea that the war was legitimate and necessary.

Today's communication technologies and dominant ideologies are making critical awareness ever more difficult to develop. This is true to the point that the era of the 'end of ideologies' is now being proclaimed, and social systems linked to the end of ideologies are being welcomed as proposing acceptable forms of human relationships. Fragmented into the various applied and special semiotics, semiotics itself has largely lost its critical function as it places itself at the service of communication and, in some cases, even of consensus in relation to the established order, by committing itself to activities ranging from marketing to election campaigns.

The need for critical consciousness today is growing stronger. The difficulty in reaching critical consciousness owing to the widespread condition of false consciousness and social alienation in everyday life highlights the need for such awareness.

11.2. Argumentative Logic at the Helsinki Conference and Communication–Production Ideology

11.2.1. Communication–Production and War

The world of global communication is the world of communication for production, profit, and reproduction by all means available, including war. The destructive character of global communication ('the destructive character' is an expression used by Benjamin in 1931 to describe the capitalist socioeconomic system at the dawn of Nazism) is evident in the destruction of the environment, in the increase in poverty, in structural unemployment, in exploitation of the South by the North, and in the unjust distribution of the world's wealth. As a consequence, life on the planet is in serious danger.

A semiotician who dedicates his or her attention exclusively to the specialized aspects of the profession, and who does not take this paradoxical situation into account, risks losing sight of the specific object of semiotic studies – that is, semiosis. The consequences are serious when we remember that semiosis coincides with life.

The most powerful expression of the destructive character of capitalism in the present phase of development in the global communication–production system is war. The world of global communication is the world of *infinite war*. We are now living in a world where international relations among nations are regulated by 'just and necessary wars,' by wars described as 'humanitarian' or 'preventive.'

The beginnings of this new way of establishing world order can be identified in the 'First Gulf War' of 1991. This particular war marked a *decisive change* at a worldwide level regarding the idea and the practice of war. From that moment onward, war was made to circulate in worldwide communication–production circuits as 'just and necessary,' as a 'policing action,' and even as a 'humanitarian operation.' Realistic politics (but if it is not realistic, it is not politics) is politics appropriate to the reality of world communication, to the being of communication–production. There is a logical connection between *politics* and *ontology* (on this theme, see the reflections of Emmanuel Levinas). For this reason, politics is predisposed to *war*, which is the most crudely, brutally *realistic face of being*. In the present age, politics is described as a relation with the ontology of world communication–production. Communication–production is communication of the world as it is today. It is *world* communication, not only in the sense that communication extends over the whole planet, but also in the sense that it corresponds to or accommodates the *world* as it is. Better still: it is communication of this world where *communication* and *reality, communication* and *being* coincide. The realism of politics must correspond to ontology to the point of accepting the *extrema ratio* of war in accordance with the strict law of the *force of things*, therefore of communicating war, of producing war.

Worldwide communication–production requires forms of control that are just as worldwide, that serve to maintain 'world order' and through which the world communication–production system can be reproduced. World order thus achieved must be guaranteed and maintained through accords, pacts, and alliances among developing countries. International accords that focus on maintaining so-called world order in such terms are privileged over others, being necessary to 'development' and 'competition' within the sphere of the world's communication–production system;

they ensure the necessary space for 'development' and 'competition' at an international level. By this logic, priority goes to strategically efficient accords with a high capacity for 'defence.' Moreover, these accords, even the ones that were negotiated in the past, respond better to the needs of today's world than more recent accords. This explains how the newly born European Community was subordinated to the fifty-year-old NATO. The contradiction between USA–EC competition and common interest in maintaining world order explains the behaviour of these power blocs, from the war in Kosovo to recent 'preventive wars.'

The conception of war as 'just and necessary' was asserted in 1991 and since then has flourished in popular consciousness, replacing the conception that had dominated in Europe since the end of the Second World War and that had been officially ratified with the Helsinki Final Act (*L'Acte final d'Helsinki*, cf. European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences, 1990). This document, produced by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975), excludes war unconditionally as a solution to international conflict. The guiding principle is that recourse to force or even threat among states cannot ever be justified, whether the accord was signed by these states or not. We must now consider why the Helsinki Convention failed – why this eloquent expression of good intentions proved to be incapable of regulating relations among peoples in the real world.

Three types of argumentation are used in the Helsinki Final Act to support the idea of cooperation for the sake of peace, safety, and security in Europe and in the world as a whole. Two are grounded in the logic of identity: first, cooperation derives from a pact, a convention among states conceived as reciprocally autonomous and self-sufficient identities; and second, cooperation is justified by the identity of common history – by common cultural pasts, traditions, and values. In contrast, the third type of argumentation is founded on the logic of alterity: international relationships are understood in terms of non-indifferent difference, of passive solidarity among states and peoples. This description arises from the fact that neither states nor the peoples that inhabit them are self-sufficient identities. Nor can they withdraw from their common destiny: international relations must refer to responsibility for others with no way out, without alibis. Unfortunately, this third type of argumentation represented a minority in the Helsinki Final Act. As a consequence, the goal of peace and cooperation at the global level was not fully supported or really justified.

11.2.2. A Semiotic Analysis of the Helsinki Final Act

We now focus on the Helsinki Final Act for the purpose of examining its argumentative logic. The Helsinki Final Act, which was signed on 1 August 1975 by Canada, the United States, and thirty-three European states, was widely considered a milestone in East–West relations.

In the 1980s, the European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (Vienna) promoted a series of meetings to be held in various European countries to analyse the Helsinki Final Act from a semiotical perspective. These meetings were held in Budapest (January 1985), Prague (November 1985), Trieste (May 1986), Moscow (November 1986), Pécs (May 1987), Dubrovnik (October 1987), Leipzig (May 1988), Sofia (November 1988), and Rotterdam (January 1989).

The title of the project, established at a meeting in Dubrovnik in 1984, was *La semiotique dans la recherche comparative. Le vocabulaire des relations internationales: l'Acte Final de la Conférence d'Helsinki.*

The participants (from twelve different countries) included Adam Schaff (see biographical note, p. 533), Honorary President of the European Co-ordination Centre; Christiane Villain-Gandossi, Adjunct Director of the European Co-ordination Centre; and Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Paolo Facchi, Klaus Bochman, Momir Milojevic, János Kelemen, Christina Schäffner, and Augusto Ponzio.

The outcomes of this project included the following: a new edition of the Helsinki Final Act by the European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (1990), enlarged with the addition of the results of a scientific analysis of the concepts proposed in it; and the book *The Concept of Europe* (Villain-Gandossi et al. 1990).

11.2.3. Argumentative Loci and Weak Points in the Helsinki Final Act

The Helsinki Final Act has gradually lost its paradigmatic value, especially in the 1990s. Next we analyse the *internal* causes of this process, which we believe can be traced back to the *argumentative loci* and logical formulations of fundamental *concepts* and *categories* developed in that document. Specifically, *argumentation* concerning the logic of war is *weak,* and this could well be one of the main reasons for its failure. To verify this hypothesis, we must analyse the premises on which the argumentative logic in the Helsinki Final Act was founded.

In the Helsinki Final Act crafted by the conference on Security and Co-

operation in Europe (cf. European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences 1990), the nation is identified with the state, and therefore with the political and economic community. Consequently, nations are discussed either in terms of states (participating or non-participating) or in terms of peoples whose interests and aspirations the state expresses ('the States and their peoples') and for which they are responsible. The participating states (the European states of the time, in addition to the USSR, Turkey, Canada, and the United States) commit themselves to respecting equality among peoples and their right to self-determination. As stated in this document, the participating states 'will respect the right of every State to juridical equality, to territorial integrity and to freedom and political independence. They will also respect each other's right to freely choose and develop their own political, social, economic and cultural systems as well as to determine their own laws and regulations' (ibid.: 78).

The term 'nation' appears in the reference to the United Nations and as an implicit referent in 'international relations' and in 'peace, safety and international justice,' where it is still a question of relations among states and the peoples they represent. However, 'nation' is also used indirectly as an adjective in the expression 'national minorities.' Reference here to the nation as an ethnic community, to nationalities that 'exist on territory of states,' is obvious. The states commit themselves to 'respecting and protecting the rights' of the nation considered in this way, and therefore to guaranteeing the nation and its peoples 'fundamental freedom' and 'full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights' (ibid.: 80).

The objective of the Helsinki Conference is that 'of promoting better relations among themselves [the states] and ensuring conditions in which their people can live in true and lasting peace, free from any threat or attempts against their security' (ibid.: 77). The participating states will refrain 'in their mutual relations, as well as in their international relations in general, from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of United Nations and with the present Declaration. No consideration may be invoked to warrant resorting to threats or use of force in convention of this principle' (ibid.).

Consequently, the Helsinki Final Act emerges as an agreement regulating reciprocal relations among *autonomous and sovereign identities* related to one another on the basis of the principle of 'sovereign equality' (ibid.: 78). At the same time, no reference is made to the nation-state in terms of *difference*, except in terms of 'individuality.' This means that with

regard to the category of otherness, implied reference is limited to relative (and not absolute) reciprocal otherness, which each national-state identity commits itself to respecting; in terms of 'national minorities' (ethnic), the reference is to nationality internal to the nation-state territory, whose rights are recognized and respected.

Some considerations on the dual meaning of 'nation' are now in order: 'nation' understood as *identity* and as *difference*.

11.2.4. 'Nation' as Identity and as Difference

The concept of nation is one of the *concrete abstractions* through which community identity is achieved. This concrete abstraction is both fictitious and material. But this is true of all social–political constructs, for they are made of signs, of *semiotic matter*, including the economic and political system called *World*. Even this is a construction, a projection (a geographical and ideological projection – that is, a product of social planning), and national identity is part of it.

Being a category of *identity*, the nation is also a category of *difference*. This duality is shown by the term 'nation' itself, which has a dual meaning and is ambivalent:

(1) An *essentially political meaning*, which first found expression during the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution: nation and state in which reigns the *sovereignty of the people*.
(2) An *ethno-linguistic* meaning as developed during the Romantic Era, on the basis of which one nation differs from others.

These two meanings point to two different ways of conceiving the origins of national identity. In the first case, the origin of the nation's identity is described as *political–juridical–economic*; thus, identity is recognized for what it is – as a *historical–social construct*. In the second case, the origins of the nation's identity are considered *natural*. Historical–social factors such as language and cultural traditions are involved besides 'natural' factors such as blood and territory; that said, the historical–social factors themselves are also conceived as natural (the term 'natural languages' in common speech is symptomatic here), or in any case as factors that determine national differences *naturally*.

Conceived in terms of identity, the nation is the state as characterized by the sovereignty of the people; in contrast, if the concrete abstraction 'people–nation' does not exercise its sovereignty, it is simply a territorial

state. In any case, the nation is a community whose historical–social character is somehow acknowledged. Conceived in terms of difference, the nation is a natural community that may or may not find expression in the state. As a state, as the people, as a community of citizens, the nation is a positive juridical entity. As a 'natural community,' the nation is regulated by the doctrine of natural law, which asserts the 'natural rights' of differences on the basis of the natural characteristics that seem to differentiate one 'nation' from another.

In contrast with the nation conceived as positive identity that coincides with the state, the nation as natural difference is connoted in terms of 'nationality.' As natural identity–difference, 'nationality' is antecedent to the nation-state and may not coincide with it, even to the point of appearing as a 'minority nationality' or as an 'oppressed nationality' within the nation-state.

The nation understood in terms of difference, as an 'ethnic-linguistic' community established on the basis of the doctrine of natural law, is subversive with respect to existing states, with respect to the political structure of the system called World, which it challenges. This explains why this second interpretation of nation dominates over the first – that is, the political interpretation – and takes the lead during processes of historical transformation (think of 'the ascent of the bourgeoisie,' or of the anticolonial and anti-imperial movements in Asia and Africa). It also explains why the two conceptions end up clashing when the nation-state attempts to enforce the rights of identity over the rights of difference once state identity has been asserted.

The nation understood in terms of natural difference involving blood, language, culture, and territory cannot be separated from the concept of identity. Here, the concept of difference is in fact based on identity; consequently, difference contributes to reinforcing the concept of nation as a real political identity to the very point of legitimizing repression – even genocide – in the name of the nation, of different nationalities that are considered to be 'naturally' different. Depending on political and economic interests of both a local and World order, national political identity knows no territorial limits when it is a question of applying the principle of national ethnic-linguistic differences. National political identity may resort to annexation (the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany) on the basis of ethnic-linguistic differences to expand its territories; or, it may fragment a single large political system into smaller national communities (think of the former Yugoslavia, USSR, and Czechoslovakia). In this way, 'nation-states' can become 'region-states.'

11.2.5. Mutual Recognition Based on Convention and Assimilating the Other

Safeguarding the right to difference, and *mutual cooperation among the peoples of participating states* in order to guarantee the necessary conditions for 'true and lasting peace': these are the two most important principles asserted at the Helsinki Conference. These principles redirect the concept of nation to its juridical and economic-political (and not ethnic) origins, which coincide with the nation-state conceived in terms of economic-political identity and sovereignty of the national people.

These principles also account for the nation as difference understood:

(a) in terms of mutual otherness, of difference in 'political, economic or social systems' as well as of 'size, geographical location or level of economic development' (ibid.), where difference thus conceived must not hinder mutual cooperation and mutual respect; and
(b) in terms of the eventual presence of 'national minorities' forming the nation-state. Territory does not identify the nation-state naturally; and although participating states agree on mutual respect for the 'territorial integrity of each of the participating states' (ibid.: 79), they also agree that 'their frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement' (ibid.: 77).

In the text of the Helsinki Conference, states are not considered to be at the service of communication or production or nation. These existed before the state. The state is not described as a natural cultural entity that must find its place in the world's economic–political system through the concrete abstraction nation-state. On the contrary, states are considered to be instrumental to improving 'the well-being of peoples and contribute to the fulfillment of their aspirations' (ibid.: 81). Equally instrumental in achieving such an aim is economic, scientific, technical, and cultural development, as well as mutual cooperation among states. Moreover, the different states make a commitment to improving the general living conditions of their peoples; this includes narrowing differences in levels of economic development 'throughout the world,' which is considered to be in the 'interest of all' (ibid.).

The text of the Helsinki Final Act is organized in terms of a *hypothetical imperative* ('if you want ... then'), whose aim is to improve people's welfare at a global level. This is not only a question of the welfare of participating

states. The conditions for such welfare are peace, mutual understanding, equality, justice, mutual awareness, mutual responsibility, and solidarity among peoples.

Instead of accentuating the differences among national identities, the Helsinki Final Act emphasizes their 'sovereign equality'; it considers them as states and as peoples, and emphasizes the need for mutual relations of *unindifference*. National differences are considered in relation to national minorities within the state, if at all. The Helsinki Final Act posits that the state should develop unindifferent relations with such minorities by safeguarding their rights through a common commitment, and by acknowledging their juridical equality with respect to the rest of the national population.

Thus, otherness in relation to state national identity is viewed in terms of difference that neither opposes nor is indifferent to other identities; that is, differences are not neglected, but neither are they melted into a common identity. Furthermore, relations of mutual cooperation and assistance among states are established on the basis of the principle of *mutual responsibility*.

However, at a closer look, it quickly becomes obvious that the otherness relationship in the Helsinki Final Act vacillates between two conceptions of otherness:

1 Otherness understood as a relation of *mutual recognition based on convention established among self-sufficient entities*, which freely accept given mutual obligations, and which freely undersign the same *treaty* as imposed by the ideology of the pact.
2 Otherness understood in terms of *assimilation of the Other*. Here, the conditions for cooperation among states are sought in *a common history*, in a *common past*, in *common traditions and values*. Assimilation ideology also subtends national identity understood in terms of ethnicity, the ideology of unity, and understanding among groups that share the same history, the same tradition, the same culture. Consequently, the Helsinki Final Act does not provide any theoretical justification for understanding and mutual cooperation at a world level, which no doubt it intends to promote.

11.2.6. A Third Way of Understanding the Relations among Nation-States

But the Helsinki Final Act also proposes a third sense whereby the otherness relations among nation-states can be understood: a relation based

on compromise that is not chosen, on solidarity that is not decided, on responsibility that is imposed. All this is a consequence of

(a) economic interdependence at the world level;
(b) advanced technology, to the point that it is impossible to restrict pollution territorially (the danger of radioactivity, the greenhouse effect, and so on). Also, technology produces new needs that cannot be circumscribed within territorial boundaries, and this increases the discrepancy between the developed world and the underdeveloped world; and
(c) the fact that safety and welfare in one part of the world (Europe, the West, the North) cannot be separated from safety and welfare in the rest of the world. This implies that living conditions cannot be improved or the environment protected without international (interstate) cooperation.

According to this third way of understanding the relations among national identities, the otherness relationship is a relation among differences that are unindifferent to one another, therefore a question neither of mutual recognition based on convention, on a pact, nor of assimilation processes carried out in the name of common past traditions, values, and so on. In spite of the conditions of difference and extraneousness among states – eventually even with respect to relations sanctioned by a convention or treaty – the third way of understanding the otherness relationship recognizes the condition of *passive solidarity* among states and their peoples based on the impossibility of self-sufficient identity, therefore on the condition of mutual implication among identities, of mutual implication in one another's destinies, to the extent that such implication is not necessarily active, but, on the contrary, may be altogether passive.

The Helsinki Final Act develops in this direction when, for example, it recognizes:

- the indivisibility of security in Europe and in the world as a whole, independently of eventual pacts or treaties;
- the need for international cooperation;
- the need to protect the environment; and
- the dependence of peace in Europe on peace in the world as a whole to the extent that the principles regulating relations among participating states (which exclude recourse to force or even threat under any circumstance) can also be applied to non-participating states.

According to this third sense in which cooperation and peace can be achieved, 'the objective of promoting better relations between States' serves as a middle term – that is, as part of the minor premise, in an inference that places 'peace, security and well-being for all peoples' in the major premise. It 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, the improvement of mutual relations among (participating and non-participating) states must be promoted.

The entire argumentation is based on the concept (expressed in the minor premise) of compromise and responsibility, and on the inevitability of solidarity (of necessary unindifference) toward the Other.

The other two senses in which we can understand the concepts of cooperation and mutual responsibility also interfere with this type of argumentation: the sense according to which cooperation and mutual responsibility flow out of a pact, freely undersigned by autonomous and self-sufficient entities; and the sense that appeals to a common history, a common past, common traditions and values in order to achieve cooperation and mutual responsibility. The latter makes the possibility of 'improving mutual relations among States' dependent on 'their common history' and on recognition of the existence of 'elements common to their traditions and values' (ibid.: 77).

With the first type of argumentation, responsibility is understood as limited responsibility, the type of responsibility that is determined by undersigning an agreement and that presupposes the possibility of freely choosing the aims to be reached: 'peace, security and well-being for all peoples.'

With the second type of argumentation, mutual responsibility among states derives from the possibility of tracing common elements in their past traditions and history. Underlying the idea of nation conceived in terms of ethnic difference is the same type of argumentation, although

the Helsinki Final Act distances itself from it with its definition of the state as a political–economic identity.

Both types of argumentation propose an orientation that interferes with the type of responsibility that is not grounded in identity, with responsibility that knows no loopholes, no escape – in other words, responsibility without alibis, unlimited responsibility. This type of responsibility implicates and exposes the subject totally. The Helsinki Final Act does not fail to evoke this type of responsibility, but neither does it focus on it.

Given that the Helsinki Final Act does not concentrate on the third sense in which we can understand the otherness relationship among national identities (and, therefore, on the third type of argumentation), the reasons for international cooperation – including the reasons for improving relations with non-participating states – are not fully analysed. This means that the objective of peace and cooperation at the world level is not sufficiently explained. As a consequence, this important document is simply a sort of list of good intentions that lacks argumentative force. For this reason, this document has failed to exert any real influence on international politics, as has emerged ever more clearly since the Gulf War of 1991.

11.3. The Sign Machine: Linguistic Work and Global Communication

In today's world of global communication, the sign machine or intelligent machine can be analysed at three levels: the technological, the economic, and the semiotic. Thanks to progress in the sciences – artificial intelligence in particular – machines today are endowed with language understood as a modelling capacity, as distinct from communication and even more restrictively, communication through verbal signs organized into specific historical-natural languages. Therefore, like human beings (of which machines are an extension), sign machines are endowed with the capacity for innovation and creativity – that is, with 'semiotics' understood as metasemiosis, with the capacity for suspending action and deliberating, and not as the name of a discipline. Thanks to high-powered intelligent machines, in which language and work (articulated as sign work or linguistic work) interrelate totally for the first time, automatism is becoming ever more efficient. This makes for creative and dialogic interactions among intelligent machines and human beings; it also reduces the need for human participation in terms of the working hours necessary to operate these machines. In economical–social terms, this

progress translates into unemployment, which in fact is on the rise in what we propose to call the communication–production phase in the history of capitalism. This phase is characterized by a contradiction between empowerment of the potential for joyous living, open community, and creativity, on the one hand, and indifference, deresponsibilization toward the other as willed by private market interests, on the other. One consequence is that what should be seen as a privilege – that is, liberation from work quantified in terms of hours – is being experienced negatively in terms of social alienation.

11.3.1. Semiosis, Communication, and Machines

In today's world, subordination of work to the machine is connected with the development of signs (knowledge, competencies, specializations, scientific progress). Indeed, one of the specific forms of this type of subordination is subordination of linguistic work to the *sign machine*. Today, the relation between these two poles, linguistic work and sign machines, is ever more a relation of identification rather than of homology. Production and communication can no longer be separated. The relation to machines coincides with the relation to verbal and non-verbal signs. This is not simply a question of commodities understood as messages and messages understood as commodities.

When we follow a suggestion made by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and shift our attention from the level of the market to the level of linguistic production and of sign production in general, we discover that automation not only concerns the system of machines but also the system of languages (where reference is not only to language-in-general, but also to historical–natural languages and to special languages), which cannot operate separately from one another. These considerations must inevitably be referred to world or global communication today. Besides referring to the fact that the communication network has extended over the whole planet, the expression 'world or global communication' indicates a social system characterized by a new phase in production where machines and signs mutually integrate one another, as testified by the fact that computer software and computer hardware have come together as single units.

In the current phase of development in the capitalist production system, the machine is in a position to replace intellectual work. This means that automation has reached extremely high levels of complexity, presenting itself in the form of communication, so that the machine, too, functions as a sign.

Such an advance in technology and artificial intelligence can be considered in both an economic key and a semiotic key. From both perspectives, we are faced with a new event. Regarding the economic aspect, communication is no longer limited to the intermediary phase in the production cycle – that is, to exchange – as it was in earlier phases in the capitalist system. Communication now identifies with production in the sense that the productive process itself is achieved in terms of a communicative process. Indeed, even the third phase in the productive cycle – that is, consumption – presents itself in terms of communication. Consumption today is above all consumption of communication. In this chapter we are concerned with neither the exchange phase nor the consumption phase. Instead, we focus on the relation between communication and machines. However, we emphasize that with respect to the Marxian discovery that commodities are messages (as against the 'fetishism of commodities,' as Karl Marx put it) and that the exchange or communication of commodities is interhuman communication – that is, communication among human beings – the novelty in today's communication–production society is that messages, too, have become commodities.

From a semiotical perspective, automation has extended communication to artifacts – that is, to the artificial and inorganic – where intervention was previously reserved for human intelligence. Communication has been described as a prerogative of life. When we use the term 'semiosis' for processes in which signs and communicative operations play a part, we may go on to state that semiosis and life coincide (cf. Sebeok 1991b, 2001a). However, the development of automatic machines means that communication is now also achieved in the domain of the inorganic and not just in the world of life. As has already been observed by others, this does not call into question the belief that semiosis and life identify with each other. Indeed, inasmuch as communication is possible in relation to machines, the machine is still part of the organic world, for it presupposes biosemiosis and, more specifically, human semiosis. In other words, the machine presupposes a certain level in historical–social development – that is, in the sphere of anthroposemiosis, this being the only context in which machines can function as signs.

In any case, the development of the machine to extremely high levels of automatism thanks to progress in technology and artificial intelligence marks the advent of something new in semiosis over the entire planet. Traditional automatic machines – that is, simple mechanical machines engineered to replace physical force – are no doubt endowed with a capacity for communication, both internally within a single piece

of machinery and externally between one machine and another. But the high level of development in automation today means that we now have something far more sophisticated than just a communicative relation of the mechanical type. Machines now present us with semiosis understood as language – that is, a modelling capacity that we have described so far as specific to human beings. Therefore, ideally, machines today can be described as having two parts: a material physical part and a part that we might call language – in other words, hardware and software (see 5.2.1).

All of this can be adequately expressed by resorting to various figurative terms and metaphors. For example, we could say that the machine is made of a body and a soul, or a body and mind, or we could speak of a *Geist der Maschine*. The expression 'artificial intelligence' is also an example of figurative language.

11.3.2. A Machine Capable of Semiotics

Continuing our analysis from the perspective of semiotics, all of this can be stated more specifically by saying that the machine capable of replacing human intelligence is not only capable of *semiosis* but also of *semiotics*. Here, by 'semiotics' is understood the capacity for *metasemiosis* – that is, the capacity for interpreting other semiosical processes and therefore for *metacommunication*. Used in this sense, the term 'semiotics' indicates a characteristic specific to human beings. And if the term 'language' is also understood to refer to such a capacity, then we can claim that language, or semiotics, is only possible within the field of anthroposemiosis. Therefore, the automatic machine that is capable of replacing intellectual work is a machine that is capable of semiotics, a machine endowed with language.

Considered in this light, automation today involves more than extending 'semiosis' to the inorganic – it also involves 'semiotics' understood as a modelling device. Surprisingly enough, then, that which is not possible in the sphere of extrahuman life, that is, outside anthroposemiosis – as much as communication extends throughout the entire organic world and is a precondition for life itself – is in fact achieved in the inorganic world. In other words, unlike all forms of non-human organic life, the inorganic can now be endowed with a modelling device, or language, that is capable of metasemiosis and, therefore, capable of reaching extremely complex levels in communication. This innovation enables us to speak of *revolution*: the inorganic is now capable of modelling and thus has now become communicative, and has become so in terms not only of

semiosis but also of metasemiosis. Consequently, we can now claim that the machine endowed with language is a communicative non-organism – the only example we know of so far. Furthermore, it is the only non-organism that is not only semiosically but also semiotically communicative. Up to this point in evolution, we have been able to characterize life forms in terms of modelling capacity, semiosis, communication, and dialogism, as described in previous chapters in this book. And we have been able to state that among life forms in the whole biosphere, only the human is endowed with a special modelling device called language, and therefore is capable of metasemiosis. Nowadays, with progress in automation, not only human beings but also the machines that human beings are capable of producing are endowed with language understood as a modelling device and, therefore, with a capacity for metasemiosis.

The machine expels human labour, be it physical or mental labour. This extromission is a function of profit. Fixed capital – that is, the machine – replaces variable capital – that is, human labour, both physical and mental. However, at high degrees of artificial intelligence, the automatic machine establishes a relation with human beings that is altogether different in qualitative terms from the relation human beings have established with the traditional automatic machine.

The machine is an instrument of human labour. But the gradual process of automation is the gradual negation of the machine's instrumental role. The instrument produced by human beings to carry out, enhance, and even perfect their own work activities is an artifact in the hands of human beings. It is the human being that uses the machine. However, when machines become automatic, they also become autonomous and no longer act as mere instruments in the hands of the worker using the machine. On the contrary, it is now the worker who is transformed into an instrument subaltern to the machine and its functioning. In the semiautomatic machine, the human being only intervenes to supplement and complete operations carried out by the machine, and at this stage it is the human being that is endowed with the character of instrument. As machine automation develops, the human being does not even play the role of completing work carried out by the machine: the instrumentality of human beings merely consists in acting as supervisors of the work that is carried out by the machine automatically.

Now, with respect to this process whereby machines lose their status as instruments (a process analysed by Marx in a section of *Grundisse* dedicated to the machine), the intelligent automatic machine reinstalls a relation with human beings in which the machine recovers its status as

instrument once again. No doubt this statement contradicts dominant opinion today, but that dominant opinion is precisely what we wish to question.

11.3.3. Human-Machine Interactivity

At first glance, it would seem that machine automation pushed to the level of artificial intelligence completes the process of human subordination to the machine, which consequently loses its character as instrument. Actually, progress in the development of artificial intelligence inverts this process. In their relations with intelligent machines, human beings become active subjects once again and recover their function as indispensable components in the working process in a relation of participation with the machine that can be described in terms of interactivity. Furthermore, the constant technological development of artificial intelligence requires the constant renewal of competencies in the person working with this kind of automatic machine, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Before proceeding, let us recall that our analysis of the situation moves across three distinct albeit connected levels: the technological, the economic, and the semiotic. Our analysis of the relations between human beings and machines as conducted so far has focused on the technological level. There is no doubt that at this level, the intelligent machine requires an active response from human beings – a response that must be updated constantly if we are to be equal to the new skills and competencies that progress in technology makes possible. Instead of being mortified by the machine's efficiency, as in earlier forms of automation of human work most typically represented by the assembly line (think of Charlie Chaplin's comico-ironical performance in *Modern Times*), human intelligence is now constantly elicited and challenged for services that are not at all repetitive but, on the contrary, require re-elaboration, redefinition, and renewal of one's intellectual and practical competencies.

Continuing our analysis at a technological level, we must observe that technological development of automatic machines unendowed with language – that is, machines that are not intelligent – also calls for an increase in inventiveness, innovation, initiative, and intelligence for the production of the machine itself. The production of new machines offering new services and higher degrees of efficiency and velocity turns to scientific progress, indeed stimulates scientific progress. Of course, this is true for the production of intelligent machines as well. But unlike

machines unendowed with language, in the case of intelligent machines, active response, innovation, updating, permanent training, and so on are all necessary and inevitable factors not only for the inventor of the machine but also for the user. In other words, the user and not just the inventor is active.

This discourse can be developed further from the perspective of automatism. An automatic machine requires automatisms. In the first type of machine – machines without language – automatisms once acquired are always the same; even more significantly, they are based as much as possible on simple responses. Indeed, improvement in automatic efficiency is measured in terms of maximum reduction in the need for attention, application, participation, and active intervention. In contrast, the second type of machine – the 'intelligent' machine – requires constant updating in knowledge and competencies to the extent that unilateral specialization is impeded and training is never complete. This is the result of scientific development and technological innovation. But apart from this, not even the relation with a single machine that the user knows well is ever passive. Even though automatisms are operative, they are complex and require constant supervision, attention, interaction, and participation. User intelligence here is constantly stimulated. Automatisms are not of the repetitive type. Even if a whole series of behaviours relative to the machine are automatic, the responses that the machine elicits are not always the same. Furthermore, the interactive relation here concerns not only the relation between the user and the machine, but also the one between one user and another. Work is carried out through mutual participation, reciprocal assistance, mutual exchange of information, data, and so on. The functional scheme is neither linear nor circular. The figure that can best portray it is no doubt the net. This type of machine calls for interactions that develop in networks.

11.3.4. Human Intelligence as a Resource

Another level of analysis of the relation between human beings and the machine that we have indicated is the economic. Here, the difference between the traditional automatic machine and the intelligent automatic machine is minimal. In both cases, automation expels labour and increases unemployment. The competencies and skills required for operating intelligent machines are complex. However, complexity in qualitative terms coincides with simplification in quantitative terms as the number of people required by the production process is gradually

reduced. Both automation of intellectual work and automation of physical work expel human work.

That human work is *expelled* from the human–machine relation – in other words, that we can speak of the *extromission* of work – is a function of the economic–social dimension of this relation. In terms of technology, it would be more appropriate to speak of *liberation* from work, in the sense that both personnel and work time are reduced. However, given that the technological level is grounded in the economic–social level and that we are discussing technological development in communication–production society, what in abstract terms is liberation from work is in fact extromission of the worker from the production process – in other words, *unemployment*. The reduction of overall work time is a function of profit; thus, at a practical level, *reduction of work time* ultimately translates into *reduction of work posts*.

In the current phase of development in the capitalist social system, training has become an important factor in production. Human intelligence has become an essential resource, not only in high-tech research and development, but also for the functioning of machines produced by that R&D. Given that machines themselves are intelligent and must relate interactively with human beings in order to function, never before has human intelligence been so necessary for the production of machines as well as for their use and maintenance. The intelligent machine has led to a proliferation of languages that operators must learn, not only for the sake of programming machines but also for the sake of using those machines appropriately. Thus, training has inevitably become a high priority in the communication–production phase of development in capitalist society. This emerges very clearly in the documents relating to European development and competition produced by the European Commission, a special organ of the European Community whose specific task is planning.

The development of intelligent machines requires permanent training so that operators will be able to renew their competencies, adapt to ever-more-efficient machines, and adapt to new languages, both those connected with these machines and those which enable anyone using them to communicate with them. Having said this, we must add that incentives for permanent training in today's communication–production system are not necessarily reflected in adequate absorption of the new intellectual forces being called to permanent training. And we know that this situation is closely connected to automation and the resulting extromission of the human workforce. Among people who have reached reasonably

high levels of preparation and competence, unemployment is on the rise. At the same time, competition in the labour market among people who have achieved various levels of qualification has led to a highly and intricately stratified workforce. A new social hierarchy has emerged based on degree of mastery of new languages associated with intelligent machines. Some workers have achieved high degrees of technical literacy; others have been entirely unable to adapt to the new exigencies of the global labour market.

Capitalist society has long distinguished between labour and the means of production; the former is owned freely by the proletariat, the latter by capital. Nowadays, the separation between labour and machinery has two distinct aspects: it relates to the means of production but also, now, to the training process. The first involves the employment/unemployment rate, the second, access to adequate training. Because of social–economic differences, not everyone can afford permanent training, given the high costs involved, including the cost of a personal computer. This has created a situation of dual unemployment: unemployment among ever more qualified people who can afford permanent training, and unemployment among people who are unqualified because they do not have access to the means necessary for continuous updating and, therefore, have been excluded from competition from the very outset. Today, extromission and exclusion are two highly visible consequences of automation in the context of capitalist development.

We have already discussed the type of work required of human beings by intelligent machines both in the process of construction (and therefore in the field of R&D) and in the process of using machines, in which the complex automatisms involved are subject to constant modification. Now we must add that work thus described – that is, work which requires investment in intelligence and permanent training – is being assimilated to work in general, to indifferent work. In today's society, this type of assimilation is a necessary condition for evaluating work. In other words, work associated with intelligent machines is quantified according to the same parameters applied to the purchase and sale of work in capitalist society; thus, it too is measured in terms of hours.

What is new is that in today's capitalist communication–production society, the type of work elicited by intelligent machines involves specifically human qualities – that is, the capacity for language, sign behaviour at a 'semiotic' level, and therefore complex inferential processes capable of innovation and inventiveness. Thus, work connected with intelligent machines resists the only type of measurement system that capitalist soci-

ety knows: measurement in terms of work time. Here, human work reveals its irreducibility to measurement and quantification in terms of time – in other words, human work related to intelligent machines presents its constitutive incommensurability in terms of time. This type of work is essentially qualitative, so that the quantity of work cannot be used as the criterion for measuring the quality of work. The work that machines involve evades trajectories that have already been foreseen and delineated, so it cannot be adequately contracted on the basis of duration for the sake of hourly renumeration.

11.3.5. The Intelligent Machine, Linguistic Work, and the Work Market

Next we consider the third level, the semiotic. The human work involved in communication–production connected with automation and developed to the level of the intelligent machine, is linguistic work. As demonstrated by Rossi-Landi (1992b [1968], 1994 [1972], 1998 [1961]), a homology can be identified between work and its products understood in the ordinary sense, on the one hand, and linguistic work and its products, on the other. These two facets of the human capacity for work are united in the intelligent machine, as made obvious by the fact that a computer's hardware and software cannot be separated.

When we speak of *linguistic* work, our reference is to language understood as a specifically human semiotic capacity. With Thomas A. Sebeok (see chapter 5), we have reserved the term *language* for the modelling device that is specific to human beings. All animal species are endowed with modelling devices, which we can describe as transcendental in a Kantian sense, and which precede communication, and in which communication is grounded. Every species communicates in a world specific to it – a world that is determined by the type of modelling that particular species is capable of (cf. von J. von Uexküll 1967 [1934], 1992). As early as the first hominids, human beings were endowed with a modelling device capable of producing an infinite number of worlds; this is what explains evolution through to *Homo sapiens*. And this specific modelling device, or language, is capable of producing an infinite number of possible worlds because it is a syntactical device – that is, it is capable of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing an infinite number of worlds on the basis of a finite number of elements. The multiplicity of languages and of the components that form each of them – phonological, syntactical, semantical – all depend on this modelling device. The possibility of reorganizing syntactically that which had been organized

in a different way (like the work of *bricolage*, of which human thought is capable and which Claude Lévi-Strauss helped delineate through his studies on *la pensée sauvage*) implies that it is possible for language to reflect on itself. In other words, the human capacity to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct thanks to syntactics implies the capacity to reflect on the materials, instruments, and models of that which has been modelled in order to use them again in new modelling processes. This capacity is what is understood as metasemiosis, which we also refer to as 'semiotics' beyond use of this term to name the science of signs. Language, therefore syntactical work, is semiotical work.

When we speak of syntactics we are not simply referring to one of the three branches of semiotics (those being syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics; cf. Charles Morris 1938c). Syntactics is present in each of these three specific dimensions. Moreover, if with regard to verbal language, following Noam Chomsky, we describe 'grammar' as being formed of phonological, semantical, and syntactical components we must also add that syntactics is part of the other two components: we have a syntactics of phonemes that gives rise to monemes, and we have a syntactics of monemes that gives rise to the words of a language even before these words (categorematic and syncategorematic terms) have been organized by syntactics properly understood. Therefore, syntactics is language itself considered in terms of its constructive, deconstructive, and reconstructive capacities; just as semiotics is language considered as the capacity for metasemiosis.

Understood as a modelling device, linguistic work represents a fundamental condition with respect to non-linguistic work. Non-linguistic work presupposes linguistic work. All non-linguistic work is based on the instruments, materials, and models provided by linguistic work. In today's communication–production society, from the organization of non-linguistic work and its artifacts to that of linguistic work and its artifacts, the automatic machine represents a supreme achievement. Linguistic work intervenes in the phases of research, production, and planning, as well as in the consumer phase, where intelligent machines are used.

Even though it is the source of all historical–social value, human work has been subjected to processes of commodification and reduced to the status of a commodity; quantified abstract work, measured in hours, is the very basis of today's social system. This is now also true of linguistic work to the point that we can speak of 'linguistic alienation' (cf. Rossi-Landi, 1992a). Never before has capitalist profit depended so much on the commodification of linguistic work. Terms such as 'immaterial

investment,' 'exploitation of human resources,' and 'human capital' – which refer to employment of linguistic work, and therefore to intelligence, mind, the human brain as essential resources for competitive companies – are symptomatic of this new situation.

All of this signifies the will to commodify precisely that which is the source of growth and enhancement in anthroposemiosis insofar as it is characterized by the capacity for metasemiosis. Consequently, nowadays in capitalist society the contradiction between the incommensurability of human work, its irreducibility to quantification and, therefore, to indifferent abstract work, on the one hand, and the treatment of human work as simply another commodity, on the other, is emerging more clearly than ever before. In today's capitalist society, the demand for training that is adequate to communication–production and to the intelligent machine is also the demand for linguistic work and its insertion into the labour market, so as to privilege that work and give it as much space as possible.

The contradiction between the irreducibility of work and its quantification is further exacerbated in terms of the contradiction between linguistic work and the labour market. Here, this contradiction – which enhances the quality of work understood as linguistic work – can be viewed as a new phenomenon particular to the communication–production phase in capitalist society, one that has arisen from the relation between human work and the intelligent machine.

Another contradiction is the one between the intelligent machine and the commodification of linguistic work beyond that of non-linguistic work. As we have stated, capitalist social planning provides incentives for training that is functional to communication–production and to the intelligent machine; yet in spite of this, it also expels linguistic and non-linguistic work ever more, thereby creating situations of unemployment.

It is interesting to observe that given its capacity for innovation, for inventiveness, and for constructing different worlds, language understood as a modelling device that underpins communication contradicts the aim of reproducing the same social system. The social system is oriented in the direction of maintaining and developing itself; the entire system of global and planetary communication tends toward this same end. To engage linguistic work for the sake of reproducing the same production system for the communication of communication functional to it means to operate with the instrument least suited to repetition, in order to preserve the being of things as they are. As it releases the new forces of linguistic work, the intelligent machine contributes to the development

of today's production system in qualitative terms, not just in quantitative terms.

We have been using the terms 'linguistic work' and 'non-linguistic work' in our discourse. These abstractions are suitable for the development of our analysis as we have conducted it so far. However, we must also add that both are concrete abstractions, given that they are the result not only of conceptual work done sitting at a desk, but also of historical–social reality. From this perspective, these concrete abstractions exist in the real world and are part of historical reality. Before going any further, let us see what these terms mean exactly.

In the first place, it must be clarified that, in contradiction to Rossi-Landi (cf. 1975a, 1985a, 1992a, 1992b [1968]), albeit advancing in the same direction, 'linguistic work' is not verbal work. Our discourse so far indicates that 'linguistic,' in our terminology (which follows Morris), refers to properly human signness – in other words, it refers to the domain of the semiotic. Thus understood, the term 'linguistic' encompasses both verbal and non-verbal signs where these signs are used not simply in a *semiosic* sense – that is to say, immediately, automatically (our reference here is to those automatisms that are specific to the species and to the individual) – but rather also in the sense that they imply and involve reflection, interpretants of interpretants (the I itself is an interpretant of an interpretant whose final interpretant is the self), therefore *metasign* or, if we prefer, *semiotic* sign behaviour.

In the present context, we are not distinguishing between behaviour and activity. On the side of non-linguistic human behaviour, we find all those activities which presuppose linguistic work thus defined – that is, reflection in the form of planning, organization, choice of materials, preparation of instruments, and so on. However, as much as they presuppose linguistic work, these activities are immediately performative in the same way that physical, automatic work is immediately performative when it detaches itself from, indeed *must* detach itself from, reflection for the sake of readiness and rapidity.

As stated, this distinction between linguistic work and non-linguistic work is a concrete distinction that belongs to the division of labour, given that it has been specifically reinforced in the capitalist social system: on the one hand, we have physical, manual labour, and so on; on the other, we have linguistic, mental, intellectual labour, and so on. Obviously, this is a false division, given that the two types of behaviour cannot be separated. The very fact that both can be described in terms of work implies that neither is immediate. Now let us return to the dis-

tinction between 'work' and 'activity' as established by Rossi-Landi (see chapter 6). We can specify this distinction with the claim that although both work and activity belong to the sphere of the semiosic, work also belongs to the semiotic order but not that of activity, given that humankind alone is capable of work as distinct from activity. Therefore, when we distinguish between linguistic work and non-linguistic work, we are in the domain of the semiotic. All human activity, unless it is merely zoosemiosic, is connected with modelling, reflection, planning; in other words, human activity is mediated to varying degrees by linguistic work. All the same, the distinction between 'linguistic work' and 'non-linguistic work,' being a question of work, is a question of a difference in degree within the sphere of the semiotic. However, this distinction – which is the distinction between the mental and the physical, between the intellectual and the manual – seems plausible and even obvious to us, because it is a real part of our social system just as much as it is a false distinction valid simply for the sake of analysis.

Having said this, what is now happening is that the sign machine or intelligent machine is throwing the distinction between linguistic work and non-linguistic work into crisis in the reality of the social. The truth is that in the present era, it is no longer realistically possible to distinguish between intellectual work and manual work. The intelligent machine activates linguistic work, and human beings participate in the process in their wholeness, at both the mental and the physical level. Think of the trivial 'labour' of keystroking and of the competencies it requires in terms of manual work – competencies that cannot be separated from the mental work that is simultaneously involved whenever someone operates a computer. In our analysis of the relationship between the intelligent machine or the sign machine and work, we cannot ignore this fact, which involves a leap of the qualitative order.

11.3.6. Language, Modelling, Alterity, and the Open Community

Today's machines involve language. This points to yet another contradiction between the machine and the present-day production system. Language is species-specific, but at the same time it involves a shift from the natural order to the historical–social order. Man's specificity consists in his being a historical–social being. Language cannot be explained exclusively on a biological basis, for this would require us to somehow accept a biologistic perspective. Language implies alterity. It cannot be conceived except on the basis of the relation to the other.

Movement toward the other and manifestation of the other give rise to language. Listening and hospitality in relation to the other are preconditions for language. Reflection and therefore the metasemiosic dimension (that is, the semiotic dimension) cannot be conceived except on the basis of excess in favour of the other, of evasion regarding the other. Language models the world; however, for the human being, this world cannot but be a common place – that is, a place shared with others, participated in by others. Language models a plurality of different worlds, but polylogic and plurivocal modelling is only possible thanks to solicitation from others, to interrogation provoked by others, to the dialogic relation with others.

The sign machine or intelligent machine enhances human intelligence to a surprising degree and demands an extraordinary use of language, of linguistic work. This means that the sign machine contradicts the private appropriation of machines, separation between means or instrument and work, and exploitation of linguistic work for private ends according to the laws of capitalist profit. The intelligent machine is structurally inscribed in a community dimension not only because of the social participation required to operate it, but also because the language that animates it belongs as such to a community dimension, where community is understood in the sense of the open community, therefore of communion on the basis of otherness and not of identity. And the open community thus understood knows no community boundaries relative to class, nation, ethnicity, or sex. Language involves sharing the world – a world that is never definitive but rather is constantly being reinvented, deconstructed and reconstructed according to the logic of otherness.

We can at least now hint at the sense in which the machine today is material. If by 'material' we understand that which precedes consciousness and conditions it, we can distinguish between different degrees in materiality. The lowest degree is *physical* materiality. As much as it may resist human intervention, this kind of materiality ends by giving in to it. An immediately subsequent degree is the materiality of one's body, which is endowed with a capacity for resistance and autonomy that is difficult for consciousness to control. The highest level is formed neither of physical alterity nor of the alterity of one's own body, but rather of the alterity of the other as other, *autrui* (the other person). Here, materiality fully displays its resistance and autonomy with respect to consciousness. Insofar as it is endowed with language, and given that language involves alterity, the open community, hospitality, and listening to others, the sign machine is material at the highest degree, where alterity is encounter

with others. Today, this aspect of the machine is decisive for our understanding of the social dimension toward which it opens. It is also decisive for our understanding of the contradiction that it must involve with respect to sociality understood as the passive result and a posteriori encounter on the basis of separate interests – in other words, with respect to sociality as understood by the capitalist system.

To the extent that it is connected with language, with materiality at the highest degree, with otherness of the other person, the sign machine also transcends the dimension of purely technical, functional responsibility, the kind that is integrated in programs and systems, and elicits instead (and far more significantly for life) responsibility for others, ethical responsibility, awareness not only of the cognitive order but also of the ethical order. From this perspective, another contradiction is the one between individualism, the play and contrast among separate interests, among mutually indifferent identities competing against one another and ready to destroy one another, on the one hand (all of which is characteristic of the present-day social system), and that which the intelligent machine requires of human beings, on the other, once that machine has presented itself on the scene of history.

11.4. Otherness and Communication: From the Closed Community to the Open Community

11.4.1. A Narrow Concept of Communication

When we consider 'communication,' we generally think of a process of exteriorization through which an interior content is made manifest. In this specific sense, communication is an emission departing from a being, the emitter, and taking place between the emitter as a *terminus ad quo* and another being (the receiver) as a *terminus ad quem*. Communication is what happens between one being in its role as an emitter and another being in its role as a receiver. According to this description, we have a being that communicates, that first is and then communicates, and that is ordinarily supposed to exist prior to and independently of its acts of communication.

This conception of communication is widespread at the level of ordinary opinion; it is also shared by theoretical perspectives that otherwise are quite different (for example, both innatism *and* empiricism, both mentalism *and* behaviourism). We can analyse communication as exteriorization without questioning either the exteriorizing or the receptive

being in this process; *or* we can interrogate either one of these beings, analysing the interior being externalized in communication, on the one hand, and the being of the receiver, on the other. Put another way, we have two beings that enter into communication and with respect to which either we can limit our analysis to the behaviour of our communicants in communication – that is, consider what these communicants do while communicating – *or* we can interrogate their being and, in so doing, attempt to ascertain what they are (their nature, so to speak), and describe their constitution. In both cases, our description is grounded in a conception of communication understood as the emission from one being that another being receives.

This way of conceiving communication is obviously connected to a given conception of being, to a given ontology. Just as communication in general is considered as a process departing from a being – as an emission of being – being in general is considered as the presupposition and foundation of communication. Communication theory and ontology are generally closely connected: all communication theories have their ontologies, apart from whether they are explicit or only implicit; conversely, all ontologies have a theory of communication, even if this theory is not explicitly articulated.

11.4.2. Being and Communication

No matter which theories, philosophies, and ideologies of communication hold, a different conception of the relation between communication and being is asserting itself in today's world. We can summarize this with the statement that 'communication is being.' This assertion can also be inverted: 'being is communication.' But unlike the first statement, 'communication is being,' which concerns communication theory and which therefore concerns us directly in the present context, the second statement, 'being is communication,' relates to general ontology. This does not mean that we can ignore it, although we now only need to consider it briefly as part of the inevitable connection between ontology and communication theory. Considered with reference only to regional ontology connected to communication theory (in other words, as being that communicates, as communicating being), the first statement ('communication is being') can be converted into the second ('being is communication').

What in today's world clearly results from two main areas of knowledge and praxis, the scientific and the economic, is that communication is

being, and vice versa, that being is communication. As far as scientific investigation is concerned, the range of disciplines focusing on communication and collectively identifiable under the heading of *biosemiotics* is especially important insofar as these disciplines focus on the organic world in its multiple aspects, from the great kingdoms to the microorganisms. In this particular sphere of scientific investigation, life and communication have been described as identifying with each other. *Communication* is not only a precondition for life but also the criterion of its very identification: a living being is only identifiable as a communicating being (that inherits a genetic code, responds to environmental stimuli, and so on). Life equals semiosis; that is, life equals a process whereby signs are active or detectable (to be precise, 'signs of life'). Communication thus described is not at all the externalization of a preconstituted living being. On the contrary – according to this description, communication is the living being itself. In the organic world, communicating is being and being is communicating. To communicate is to persist in one's own being, to maintain one's being, to confirm oneself as being, *conatus essendi.*

At the level of economy as well, communication is identified as being and persistence in being. Here, we are no longer navigating in the vast sphere of *biosemiosis* alone, nor are we confined to the more restricted but still general sphere of *zoosemiosis,* both of which human beings share in. To speak of economy means to enter the more specific sphere of *anthroposemiosis,* wherein being, understood as the human being, is not only a living being but also a historical–social being. This is where language comes into play (speech or verbal language being only one of its many expressions). Language implies that the human being is not only a semiosic being like all living beings insofar as they communicate, but also a semiotic being, a semiotic animal, that is, an animal capable of semiotics, or if we prefer, of metasemiosis, of reflection and thus of consciousness. Language is the characteristic prerogative of hominids, it is what makes their past and ongoing evolution possible; accordingly, the evolution of the semiotic animal is not just biological evolution, but also historical–social evolution.

In the current phase of capitalist production, the economy has confirmed the identification of being with communication. In this phase – which is characterized by a revolution in terms of automation, global communication, and market freedom (which is not just a quantitative fact of expansion, but even more significantly a change in terms of quality in the sense that anything can be transformed into merchandise besides producing new merchandise-things) – communication is no longer just

an intermediate phase in the production cycle (production, exchange, consumption); far more radically, it has become a constitutive modality in the production and consumption processes themselves. Exchange is now communication; not only this, but production and consumption are also communication. In other words, the entire productive cycle is communication. This new phase of capitalistic production is what we have been characterizing as the 'communication–production' phase.

Communication–production is the communication of the world as it is today. It is *global* communication, not only in the sense that it has expanded over the whole planet but also in the sense that it relates to the world as it is, adheres to the world as it is, accommodates the world as it is. Expressed differently, global communication is communication of *this* world. Communication and reality, communication and being, coincide. Realistic politics (but only politics that is realistic truly counts as politics) is the only appropriate politics for global communication, for the being of communication–production. The relationship between politics and ontology (politics proper being as such predisposed for war, the crudest and most brutally realistic face of being) is nowadays specified as the relation with the ontology of being–communication, which is world and global communication, communication–production.

Therefore, on this side of the connection in the heavens of theories and philosophies, we have another connection that is earthly and material – the one between communication and ontology that is characteristic of present-day forms of production. Communication–production means persevering in being, insisting on being, persisting in being, *conatus essendi.*

11.4.3. Persistence in Communication–Production as Persistence in the Same Social System

Social reproduction in general – the process through which human society reproduces itself materially and culturally – involves regeneration, maintenance, and preservation. Social reproduction tends to insist on being, the being of the human community. Various forms of social reproduction have been enacted throughout history, passing from forms that have hindered the very processes of social reproduction – due to discrepancies between the system of social relations and the level of growth in human intellectual, transformational and inventive capacities – to more appropriate and favourable forms. Actually, social reproduction is achieved thanks to the possibility of evading being–communication as established by a given social system. Evasion is possible by reinventing and reorganiz-

ing social relations on the basis of the human ability to interpret and respond *otherwise* to being–communication, to distance oneself from actuality – to escape and transcend the limits of the world that has produced being–communication, and of a world view that being–communication adapts to and accommodates. In social reproduction, identification of communication with being, which characterizes life generally, identification of the living being with being–communication, is transcended to the extent that we are dealing with the *semiotic animal* – that is, the animal that has communicative relations (like other animals, which consequently, as Marx says, *do not properly have relations*), but that is also capable of evaluative relations, of coming to awareness, of being responsible and deliberative, and in particular, that has a disposition for planning communication relations. In other words, thanks to such capacities, the semiotic animal is able to evade being–communication.

In contrast, persistence in communication–(re)production is persistence in the same social system, the capitalist one. Capitalist society with its constant adjustments and metamorphoses serving its own preservation has not yet ceased to set, has not yet finished finishing, in spite of its only having emerged at sunset (already at Hegel's dusk), in spite of the signs of its finishing. Only the ideology that serves to maintain capitalism can identify its *being* – that is, communication–production – with the being–communication of social reproduction in general, to the point of making the particular social system corresponding to capitalism seem natural to us, a part of human beings' own nature. In other words, being–communication as it emerges in this particular phase of social reproduction is passed off as a necessary way of being for humankind – one that cannot be modified once a high level of economic growth, cultural perfection, and scientific–technological progress has been achieved according to the logic of linear development.

Notwithstanding such a mystification, the perspective of current ideology – what we can call the *ideologic* of globalization (that is, ideology in line with communication–production logic) is no different from the perspective of the disciplines that go to form what we can identify as the different areas of research in 'biosemiotics.' What they share is what we have proposed to call the ontology of being–communication.

11.4.4. Ontology of Communication–Being

Let us now attempt to outline the basic features of being–communication by returning to what we have said so far. Communication should be considered in terms of being. But being is also becoming, as we all know

so well. Not all being is communication. But communication is being. To communicate is to persist in one's own being. It is self-preservation. Communication is not exteriorization of something that *is* on its own account. Communication coincides with being. Communication is not exteriorization of an interior being, but is interior being itself. Communication is a movement of interiorization, of return, of self-assertion. According to this description, communication is understood not as extroversion, but rather as introversion. Does everything that *is* communicate? We are not concerned with this question in relation to the environment of regional ontology and communication. What we do want to know is whether, in relation to the being that communicates, communicating is being. If we wanted to venture into the territory of general ontology, we could risk formulae such as these: being = communicating: false; communicating = being: true. Can we *be* without communicating? Yes, but not in the case of beings that communicate, that *are* communication. But let us limit the question of the being–communication relationship to the beings that do effectively communicate: their being consists in communicating. Being hungry, even before the act of nourishing oneself, is communication. An organism is communication. The organism is a communicating being, in itself, on its own account, as an organism. An organism is a device for self-communication or self-preservation, and is therefore capable of persisting in its own being.

The human being is communication like any other living organism, including those organisms which form human beings – that is, eukaryotes – and those which inhabit and cover human beings – that is, prokaryotes or bacteria. But the human being is also communication like the systems that guarantee preservation and reproduction – the genetic code, the neuro-vegetal system, and the immune system. Like all other living beings and all other animals, the human being flourishes on internal and external communication alike, but we also know that the human being is endowed with a species-specific modelling device that enables it to construct its own 'world,' its own *Umwelt*. The contact zone between an organism and 'external reality' (which is external to an organism's 'world' and thus imperceptible to it) is made of signs; therefore, this contact zone is refracted and organized – that is, modelled – in accordance with the specific modelling device of a given species. We are alluding to the macro-organism and to the 'external reality' relative to that macro-organism. Clearly, however, we can also talk about 'external reality' in relation to the cell in the context of intercellular communication and of communication between cell and virus. This type of communication takes place

inside the macro-organism, and it too occurs in a contact zone made of signs between micro-organism and 'external reality.'

11.4.5. Communication and Language

We know that the specific modelling device for the human species is called *language*. Now we must emphasize that language should not be confused with *speech*. This confusion can be described as the 'fallacy of the linguist,' the language linguist, who says 'language' without qualification when, instead, what is meant is 'verbal language' (in other words, 'speech,' be it oral or written). Consequently, the language linguist also uses the expression 'general linguistics' when referring to the study of verbal language and relative languages.

In contrast with the 'fallacy of the linguist,' the term *language* is in fact already used in common language to refer to non-verbal sign systems (for example, 'gestural language,' 'deaf-mute sign-language,' 'photographic language,' the 'language of painting,' the 'language of fashion,' the 'language of merchandise'). In these cases, common speech or common speaking says how things stand better than does the linguist.

All properly human sign behaviour is language; indeed, properly human semiosis does not exist without language. Here, 'properly human' is understood as the human being in its specificity as a historical–social being – a specificity made possible by the fact that human beings are biologically endowed with the specifies-specific device we are calling 'language.' As a biological organism, the human being shares with other organisms communicative processes that properly speaking are not languages: these other organisms include the micro-organisms that make up human beings or that they carry. Anthroposemiosis is not made exclusively of languages, just as human semiosis is not made exclusively of semiotics (that is, semiosis capable of metasemiosis). The sphere of languages and the sphere of semiotics together occupy a relatively small space in anthroposemiosis generally. Anthroposemiosis incorporates endosemiosis (semiosis pertaining to the human organism, which enables the latter's development, preservation, and reproduction), it is part of zoosemiotics, and it is involved (vitally) with communication in its totality as it takes place throughout the entire semiobiosphere.

With Charles Morris, we can free the expression 'general linguistics' from the 'fallacy of the linguist' and use it to name the discipline that studies verbal and non-verbal sign processes known as languages within the sphere of anthroposemiosis, and, more specifically, of semiotics.

Every animal is endowed with a species-specific modelling device with which to build its own world, a device that bridges the gap between the organism and the external environment (a gap that, as noted, is made of signs). And we also know that the specifically human modelling device, or language thus understood, given that it is a *syntactic* modelling device, has the special capacity of being able to produce an infinite number of worlds through a finite number of elements. In other words, the same elements can be used repeatedly in new constructions, so that an indefinite number of worlds can be created through continuous deconstruction and reconstruction processes with the same elements. From an evolutionary perspective, hominids through to *Homo sapiens sapiens* were endowed with this device well before speech or verbal language was ever developed, and well before it prevailed over other forms of communication. Verbal language, which came onto the scene through *adaptation* as a *means of communication*, is inconceivable without referring to syntactics or to the primary modelling system identified as language. Subsequently, in the history of human evolution, verbal language underwent a process of interiorization through what has been termed *exaptation*. That is to say, in the course of evolution, verbal language or speech also assumed a modelling function as much as it originally arose for communicative purposes. As the material of thought, speech contributed to the enhancement of the primary modelling system and itself became a 'secondary modelling' device. Secondary modelling is relative to a given language and to the order of discourse; this, in turn, is connected to a specific system of social relations.

In the human being as in other animals, being–communication is constructed as part of a given world on the basis of a species-specific modelling device. However, in non-human animals the relation between modelling and being–communication is a relation of mutual correspondence, symmetry, and saturation so long as the species remains essentially unaltered, except for variations in relation to subspecies or to processes of exaptation. Regarding human being–communication, the species-specific modelling device that produces it – that is, language (with its syntactic function and capacity for deconstruction and reconstruction, thus for production of infinite possible worlds) – does not identify with being–communication: language is not exhausted in being–communication, nor need it accommodate being–communication. The human modelling device is such that it allows for interpretations, evaluations, and responses relative to the being of communication that are active, dialogic, and creative. As such, these call for a perspective that is external to being–communication and that transcends it.

We use the term 'semiotics' to indicate the specifically human capacity for metasemiosis. Thus, that term acquires a meaning that is different from the name of the science that studies signs. Furthermore, we also know that the human capacity for metasemiosis depends on the specific human modelling device we are calling 'language.' Syntax, deconstruction and reconstruction, the production of innumerable possible worlds, and semiotics with its capacities for evaluation, the assumption of responsibility, inventiveness, and planning are all prerogatives of language. In language, the being of communication finds its *otherwise than being*. Insofar as the human being is endowed with language, insofar as the human being is a semiotic animal, human behaviour cannot be circumscribed to the horizons of communication, being, ontology. From this perspective, the human being reveals its capacity for *otherness*. The human being can present itself as other and propose other possibilities beyond the alternatives foreseen by the being of the world of communication. Here, we are not alluding merely to the capacity of being otherwise with respect to being, but far more radically to the capacity that is specific to human beings of being *otherwise than being*, that is, *otherwise than being–communication*. The capacity for otherwise than being in fact underpins all possibilities of being otherwise; in other words, otherwise than being is the very condition for the possibility of being otherwise. Moreover, the capacity for otherwise than being to transcend being and the communication world – which is a capacity specific to the human semiotic animal – is what makes the latter totally responsible not only for social reproduction, but also for all of life over the entire planet, remembering of course that social reproduction and life are inseparable. The capacity for otherwise than being denies the semiotic animal any alibis for circumscribing the capacity for interpretation, response, and action to the being of communication in the world, for limiting choices to alternatives with respect to this world – and therefore without contemplating the capacity for *otherness* with which the semiotic animal is in fact biologically endowed.

11.4.6. The Communication–Ontology Relation in Today's Global Communication–Production System

Let us now return to the communication–ontology relation in today's global communication–production system. As already noted, when linked to communication, the term 'global' conveys the sense not only of expansion over the entire planet, but also of adherence to the world as it is, of adequacy to the world. Thus, communication and being converge,

communication is reality. Realism in politics must keep faith with ontology as we have delineated it so far, to the point even of accepting the *extrema ratio* of war as dictated by the strict law of the *force of things*. World planning for the development of communication and its control confirms and enhances the being of communication–production. This plan is based on awareness that communication is production and, therefore, that communication and being converge in today's capitalist production society. But this plan is also based on the clear awareness that the only way to control capital is to control communication. This plan is the plan elaborated by communication–production ideology. Communication–production ideology flaunts the good news of the end of ideologies and is so realistic, so consistent with the being of things as they are, that it seems more like the logic than the ideology of communication–production. For this reason, we propose the term *ideologic* in relation to global communication–production. Indeed, we know that ideology that is functional to maintaining the communication-production system, whether in good or bad faith, ends up exchanging this particular social system for social reproduction in general. In fact, social reproduction must find a means to escape the established being–communication order, and to reinvent and reorganize social relations when necessary in order to liberate itself from systems that impede and endanger it, as does today's communication–production system.

To preserve the being of communication–production is destructive:

The being of communication–production, its persistence in preserving and reproducing itself, impedes and endangers social reproduction. This is because the being of communication–production prevents the human historical–social being from reorganizing communication into new social systems:

- Communication–production versus social reproduction.

Communication–reproduction enhances communication of itself, to the detriment of the capacity for invention, innovation, replanning and reconstruction, which are species-specific modalities pertaining to the human being thanks to the language modelling device:

- Communication–production versus language (semiotics).

Reproduction of the communication–production system threatens the very existence of human beings, not only as intelligent beings endowed with intellectual faculties, with the capacity for semiotics, but

also as living beings. In other words, what is being endangered is vital semiosis, the possibility of life, health, and survival:

- Communication–production versus human life (semiosis).

The preservation, reinforcement, and expansion at all costs of today's social-reproductive system – that is, the communication–production system – represents a lethal threat to life over the entire planet. This threat is reflected in the ozone hole, ecological disasters, catastrophies caused by everyday reproductive cycles considered normal (such as the communication–production of war), the destructive use of nuclear power, and the destructive effects of related experiments on the environment, including the human environment:

- Communication–production versus the being–communication (semiosis) of life over the entire planet.

11.4.7. Beyond the Being of Communication

Only behaviour that is oriented by the logic of otherness, that is a disinterested logic, allows for escape from the being of communication–production. The interestedness of identity is part of the communication–production system. The opening toward otherness replaces limited responsibility of the sort that is safeguarded by alibis that are functional to identity and its roles. This responsibility goes beyond roles, transcends roles. It is unlimited responsibility that does not know possibility of escape, that cannot delegate, and therefore that is characterized by the tendency toward total involvement with the other, total exposition to the other. We have claimed that communication is a movement of interiorization, of return, of self-assertion – that communication should not be understood as extroversion, but rather as introversion. Otherness is the outside of communication, the otherwise of being. This movement toward otherness without return, without a demand for any gain, is a metasemiosic movement and therefore a semiotic movement. Here lies the properly human. Language renders human behaviour non-circumscribable to communication, being, ontology, to alternatives as they are foreseen by the being of the world of communication; this implies the condition of unlimited responsibility – that is, responsibility understood as responding to the other, of answering to and for the other, not only to and for oneself as I, but also to and for *the other beyond self*. The fact that being–communication (*conatus essendi*) has its *otherwise* in language means that language is for the other, is for otherness. So the condition of

desperately not wanting to lose hold of one's being–communication (fidelity to communication that is *essential infidelity* toward the *other*) can be replaced by the condition of desperately not wanting to lose the *otherwise* of being–communication, which is the desperate struggle against losing the *other*, the other of self and from self.

11.4.8. Sociality as Closed Community and Indifferent Labour

Insofar as a single being is not differentiated from another single being on the basis of work, assuming that both carry out the same type of work with the same use value, the single undifferentiated being is an individual. The individual separated from other individuals, the individual as identity, is closely connected with the existence of different forms of labour – that is, with the division of labour. When the division of labour gives rise to the production of goods, sociality among individuals is given by the character of equality – that is to say, by interchangeability among different types of labour presented as specifications of abstract labour, labour without qualities, labour in general, generically human labour. Sociality is determined by the fact that labour carried out by separate individuals is presented in the abstract form of generality, and that the products of labour assume the form of a general equivalent. The labour of the individual viewed separately, in isolation, becomes social labour endowed with abstract value, characterized by abstract generality (cf. Marx 1961 [1859], 1974c [1857]).

We can use the term 'community' for this type of sociality. *Community,* understood as the *closed* community (as opposed to the open community), implies communication among separate individuals. In contrast with the open community, which is characterized by communication among individuals, understood as unindifferent differences that relate to one another according to the logic of otherness, the closed community (which is formed of undifferentiated individuals) reproduces being, generic indifferent differences, by asserting difference of the individual and indifference to the other. When labour becomes merchandise in capitalist society, the community thus understood identifies the measure of its wealth in terms of labour time.

In 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' (1975 [1843–4]), Marx identifies the partial collective subject in the proletariat class, which is a concrete abstraction. The partial collective subject has a concrete interest in its disappearance as a partial collective subject, which means that it has an interest in overcoming the net divi-

sion between partial interests and the interests of the human being in general, the human being as such, the human being in itself, on its own account.

To identify in the proletarian subject – that is, the partial generic subject who is searching for emancipation – means to acknowledge the search for liberation from the logic of the purchase and sale of labour force, from the commodification of human labour, from the condition of free labour sold as workforce, from *labour understood as an abstraction.* Marx identifies a form of *difference that is indifferent to other differences* in the collective subject, and therefore in *indifferent labour*, which by liberating itself liberates other differences, other partial generic subjects. As much as it is concrete, abstraction of the partial type, abstraction relating to class, interested in seeing the end to class society and human exploitation, together with another concrete abstraction, that of indifferent labour, labour sold as merchandise and paid by the hour, should be capable of social renewal, of transforming the *community* (that is, the *society of indifferent differences*) into *communion* (that is, into sociality understood as *being for the other*, the *open community made of unindifferent differences* as described earlier).

From a historical perspective, things have not developed this way so far, no doubt because of historical contingencies (above all, because of the cancer of real socialism and the inconsistency of proletarian internationalism in the face of two world wars). However, a metamorphosis is taking place concerning indifferent work. Indifferent work is becoming general, not in the sense of class but in the sense of globalization or universalization. The type of metamorphosis we are alluding to is occurring in terms more of quality than of quantity. Indifferent labour is labour related to the market, even in the form of erasing class differences, of interclass labour: indifferent sociality of the community prevails over difference of the partial type, as represented by class. And this tendency toward indifferent sociality converges with the intense search for other differences, for other identities that no longer pertain to class: nation, ethnic group, religion, and language. Moreover, indifferent labour with its community character (more than class character) is now ending: the processes of automation and computerization of production are expelling the labour force. Nor does the formation of new professions compensate for the increase in liberation from indifferent labour. Indeed, occupations that are socially useful and that can in fact absorb liberated indifferent labour time do not count in a market society: socially useful occupations are associated with the private sphere (where we must dis-

tinguish between 'private' as in 'private business' and 'privatization,' which refers to the 'public private sphere,' and 'private' in the sense of the 'private private sphere,' that of interpersonal relations, which also foresee 'occupations that are socially useful'). In the light of recent developments in today's socioeconomic world, we cannot accept the idea of the 'liberating' capacity of indifferent work – indifferent work is interclass work and is decreasing, while at the same time it is in the process of being generalized throughout the entire community.

From the perspective of communication–production ideologic today, labour – general, indifferent labour – is considered so fundamental, so characteristic of communication–production society, that even when planning alternative social systems, other sources of social wealth beyond labour generally cannot even be imagined, except in the context of the formula 'work for all.' As Benjamin observed, traces of this mystification were present in the German labourer's *Gotha* program, which defined labour as the source of all wealth and culture, and which became the point of mediation and of transition from socialism to Nazism.

Labour is not the source of all wealth, Marx reminds us (1974b [1875, 1891]) in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme.' He adds that the bourgeoisie had its good reasons for investing labour with a sort of supernatural creative force. In his manuscripts of 1844, he criticizes vulgar and material communism (not to mention *ante litteram*, *ante factum* 'real socialism'). Vulgar and material communism suppressed private property by generalizing it. In other words, private property was opposed against *general* private property, that is, ownership extended to all. Marx fought against the misunderstanding underlying new societies (such as the capitalist) that continued to describe labour in general as the source of wealth so that labour was not to be suppressed but instead extended to all. From the perspective of vulgar communism, the community was nothing more than a community of workers and equality was nothing more than equal wages.

In Nazi Germany, *Gemeinschaft* (community) replaced *Gesellschaft* (society), thus implying the community based on identity, the closed community, one that excluded all differences and all alterities. Community thus conceived implies undisputed belonging on the part of its members, absolute identification (without the excesses of alterity), full solidarity, perfect alignment, total convergence. This type of community marks the end of all ideological differences; even class difference is erased. Whoever is part of the community must be equipped with *Gemeinschaftssin* (community sense) and *Gemeinschaftwille* (community will) and furthermore, must respect *Gemeinschaftordnung* (community order).

The process of total identification with the community – *Gemeinschaft* – served by the entire lexicon of Nazi Germany, will remain incomprehensible if we do not begin from the concept of labour in general, indifferent labour. Indifferent general labour is a structural, constitutive element of today's dominant social system and produces value in terms of exchange value. In the lexicon of Nazi Germany, the term *Arbeit* signifies 'abstract labour,' 'undifferentiated labour,' which is quantified and paid by the hour; but it also signifies undifferentiated labour in the interclass sense – that is, labour liberated from any association with 'class,' 'alienation,' 'exploitation.'

Understood in interclass terms, the transition is immediate from indifferent work related to class difference (it, too, an indifferent difference), to work as such without the connotation of class. The exclusion of otherness (one's own otherness as well as the otherness of others) from one's identity as a member of a community has its 'primal scene' (to use an expression introduced by Freud) in the commodification of labour, in paid labour, in the abstract category of 'labour,' 'labour in general.' This abstraction became real and concrete for the first time in the context of capitalist production and as part of the social structure it determined. In the present phase of capitalist production, the connotation of class labour has been lost. During the period of Italian fascism, the term 'labour' assumed a general interclass connotation and was seen as an innovation introduced into the Italian language by the fascist regime. Regarding the term 'labour,' Giuseppe Bottai in the journal *L'Orto*, 3, 1934, with great satisfaction: 'The term has a broader meaning to concern all organizational and executive forms, of the intellectual, technical and manual order, and is not necessarily connected to the special labour of a given class.' He praised the expression *datore di lavoro* (literally, giver of labour, that is, employer) which replaced the term *padrone* (master, owner), at the time no longer in use. Furthermore, he described the term *datore di lavoro* as 'consecrated by revolutionary laws ... a singular identification, in the consciousness of the people, with that juridical equality that underpins our social order.'

11.4.9. Communion, or Sociality Regulated by Otherness

With the dissemination of consumerism, and with globalization of the communication–production system, the interclass concept inherent in capitalist ideologic of 'labour' and 'community,' whereby wealth is measured in terms of labour time, has become reality.

However, this orientation is contradicted by the fact that the develop-

ment of capital constitutes the precondition for liberation from free labour and for the end of today's socioeconomic system based on the purchase and sale of labour. As a result of the development of capital, new forms of social relations must be conceived on the basis of liberation from labour.

Communion – that is to say, the *open community* – implies sociality that cannot be globalized, sociality open to otherness and free from obsession with identity. Meant this way, sociality is extracommunitarian with respect to self; it refers to the condition of otherness, to relations without boundaries, without territories, without roots, without the resulting sense of belonging. Conceived this way, sociality is grounded in incommensurable, uncontainable labour where wealth is measured in terms of the time of otherness.

Paradoxically, the development of capital produces the conditions for deterritorialization and liberation from indifferent labour. The next step is to imagine new forms of social relations and new occupations in which reduced labour time and production costs are not identified with developments in productivity or increases in exchange value. On the contrary, reduced labour time should be considered as a sign of development in the wealth of the single individual's personality. This should be accompanied by a constant reduction in labour time to minimal degrees for the whole of society, thereby increasing free time for personal development (see Marx 1953 [1857–8]). From this description of social reproduction, wealth is conceived in terms of free time for all. Thus, instead of translating reduced labour time into alienated surplus value and unemployment as occurs in capitalist social reproduction, reduced labour time is treated as free time for the full development of individuals, of society at large, therefore of the social individual. In such a framework, real social wealth is recognized in the development of the social individual. Echoing Marx, free time and not labour time is the measure of wealth (cf. ibid.).

The time of abstract labour is the time of indifference, the time of useful labour is the time of difference. Free time is the time of unindifference. Contrary to the conditions of abstract indifferent labour and of useful labour, where alterity is sacrificed to identity, in the time of unindifference, social relations based on identity are replaced by social relations based on alterity (with respect to self as well as to others).

The time of abstract labour and of useful labour, of indifference and of difference, is time as a function of being–communication, of being understood in terms of use value, need, and productivity. In contrast, the time of unindifference is the time of 'otherwise than being,' free

time for otherness, time with its own materiality and capacity for resistance with respect to identity. The time of alterity is developed with the end of labour, as fixed capital builds a social system characteristic of postcolonial society, one that is no longer based on the purchase and sale of quantified work. Time of the other refers to the irreducibly other with respect to eventual abstractions, identities, differences/indifferences, in contrast to the time of the same, of identity – identity of the individual, national identity, identity of the production system, class identity, international identity, or identity of abstract, indifferent work. With respect to the time of identity, the time of alterity is the time of excess, non-productivity, and evasion.

Biographical Notes

PETER OF SPAIN (Petrus Hispanus) was born in Lisbon sometime before 1205. From 1220 to 1229 he studied at the University of Paris, a famous centre for studies in logic, philosophy, and theology. Subsequently, he studied medicine in Salerno and Montpellier, graduating around 1235. He had written his *Summule logicales* or *Tractatus* (critical ed. 1972), the work that gained him fame ('e Pietro Ispano / lo qual già luce in dodici libelli,' Dante, *Paradise* XII, 134–5) some years before, in the early 1230s, presumably while living in the north of Spain. He taught medicine at the University of Siena, Italy, from 1245 to 1250. In 1276 he became pope under the name John XXI. He continued his pursuit of scientific studies in an apartment specially equipped for the purpose built alongside the Papal Palace at Viterbo. He died tragically in 1277 when the ceiling of his study caved in on him.

In his *Tractatus*, Peter of Spain systematizes and explains logic as it had been developed so far, in depth and with originality. He locates the sign within the complex process of semiosis and identifies its fundamental aspects. His model of sign anticipated Charles S. Peirce's (cf. Ponzio 1990a; Ponzio and Petrilli 1996). And in fact, the correspondences that emerge between the two models indicate the orientation of the *Tractatus* as well as the extent to which Peter of Spain anticipated Peirce: *vox significativa* = representamen; *significatio* or *representatio* = interpretant; *res significata* or *representata* = immediate object; *acceptio pro* = to stand for; *aliquid* (the referent of *acceptio*) = dynamical object. This explains Peirce's interest in Peter of Spain, whom he cites on many occasions.

ADAM SCHAFF (Lwów, 1913–) is a renowned Polish philosopher. Many of his books are dedicated to problems of semantics, philosophy of language, logic, theory of knowledge, and ideology. According to Schaff, language is a social–histor-

ical product in addition to being a genetic phenomenon, and is functional to human praxis. Language is at the root of the inventive and constructive capacity of the human individual, at the level of cognitive processes and of practical action. Language is not only an instrument for expressing meaning, but also the material that forms meaning and without which meaning could not exist. Schaff criticizes the reductive innatist and biologistic interpretation of language as proposed by the linguist Noam Chomsky and by the biologist Eric H. Lenneberg, as well as behavioural and deterministic conceptions of language (see Schaff 1974).

According to Schaff, we must free ourselves of what, referring to Marx's 'fetishism of commodities,' he calls (1960) the 'fetishism of signs' as reflected in the reified conception of the relations among signs. Analysis must begin from the social processes of communication, and sign relations must be considered as relations among human beings who use and produce signs in specific social and communicative contexts. This leads to a new way of looking at problems relating to studies on sign and language – for example, the problem of the connection between language and knowledge, language and consciousness, language, ideology, and stereotypes, language and responsibility (Schaff 1974, 1975). Theory of knowledge, theory of language, and theory of the human individual are closely interconnected. Theory of language must take account of reflection on language, and vice versa. Regarding the problem of the human individual, an adequate understanding of such concepts as 'choice,' 'responsibility,' and 'individual freedom' requires that problems relating to language and its use – the 'tyranny of words,' 'linguistic alienation' and its causes, and so on – also be taken into account.

12

Global Communication, Biosemiotics, and Semioethics

12.1. Semioethics, Community, and Otherness

In what follows, we develop global semiotics in the direction of what we propose to call *semioethics*. As a unique semiotic animal – that is, the only animal capable of reflecting on signs and communication – the human being has a singular responsibility toward life (which is comprised of signs and communication), which also means the quality of life. More than *limited responsibility*, the type of responsibility involved is *unlimited responsibility* in the terms so far discussed – that is, *responsibility without alibis*, *absolute responsibility*. Our responsibilities toward life in the global communication–production phase of development in late capitalist society are enormous, indeed unbounded, in the sense that when we speak of life, the implication is not just human life, but all of life throughout the entire planetary ecosystem, from which human life cannot be separated. As the study of signs, semiotics cannot evade this issue. Originally, semiotics was understood as 'semeiotics' (a branch of the medical sciences) and was focused on symptoms. Nowadays, the ancient vocation of semiotics as it was originally practised for the 'care of life' must be recovered and reorganized in what we propose to call 'semioethic' terms. This issue is especially urgent in the present age in the face of growing interference in communication between the historical–social sphere and the biological sphere, between the cultural sphere and the natural sphere, between the semiosphere and the biosphere. *Semioethics* is the result of two thrusts: one is *biosemiotics*, the other *bioethics*.

Bioethics offers a unified and critical perspective on ethical problems connected with biological and medical progress in such fields as genetic engineering, neurobiology, and pharmaceutical research. With bio-

ethics, ethical problems become the object of study of a specific discipline. However, even before this new discipline was introduced, ethical problems were part of two totalities that together contributed to the characterization of these problems: the *semio(bio)sphere*, and today's *global socioeconomic communication–production system*. Reflecting its philosophical orientation, which is both critical and foundational, bioethics must take account of this dual context when addressing the problems that are the focus of its attention.

The semio(bio)sphere is the object of study of *global semiotics*, which has also been called *semiotics of life*. Because of its broad scope, global semiotics can provide bioethics with an adequate context in terms of both quantity (that is, its extension across the various spheres of semiosis) and quality (that is, for resolving the problems to be addressed). And by the term 'adequate context' we also mean the possibility of *critical reformulation*. Global semiotics contributes to an approach to bioethics that is both *foundational* and *critical*.

Global semiotics is both *phenomenological* and *ontological*. But besides these, a third context is necessary if we are to adequately understand problems relevant to bioethics: the *socioeconomic*. Bioethical problems must be considered in the light of today's socioeconomic context, that is, the context of *global communication–production*. The phenomenological, ontological, and socioeconomic contexts are all closely interwoven from the perspective of bioethics. In fact, semiotics today – understood as global semiotics – must accept the responsibility for denouncing incongruities in the global system; consequently, it must denounce any threats to life over the entire planet produced by this same system (see 12.2.1, 12.2.2).

12.1.1. Global Communication and Global Semiotics

Late capitalist society in its present phase of development can be characterized in terms of *world* communication and globalization. Given that communication has extended over the whole planet and accommodates itself to the world as it is, the term 'world communication' seems especially appropriate. Moreover, given that communication pervades the entire production cycle interfering not only with human life but also with life in general, this is unquestionably the era of globalization.

It follows that an adequate analysis of capitalism today calls for a perspective that is just as extensive, just as inclusive – in other words, truly global. The specific sciences, taken separately, are not in a position to

provide such a perspective; the general science of signs or semiotics has the appropriate means at its disposal to do so. This is not to suggest that semiotics as it is practised today is up to such a task; if anything, the opposite is true. Having said that, it is no longer possible to practise semiotics adequately, especially with regard to communication theory or the communication sciences, without taking account of today's situation of worldwide and global communication.

Moreover, a communication model that fails to take account of the *global* nature of world communication – a phenomenon that is altogether new from the perspective of history – will prove inadequate for semiotic analysis. At the very least, such a model will be shortsighted and anachronistic. In the present era, general semiotics formally reenvisioned as *global* semiotics has a detotalizing function to carry out: global semiotics must be designed to formulate a critique of all alleged totalities, beginning with the totality of world and global communication. If general semiotics or global semiotics fails to serve this purpose, its work will prove useless, or even worse, it will prove to be the mere syncretic result of the special semiotics, or a transversal language of the encyclopedia of unified sciences, or a philosophical prevarication suffering from omniscience with respect to the different disciplines and specialized fields of knowledge.

The worldwide extension of communication can only be understood by studying its foundations. To adopt this approach means to reject what Ferruccio Rossi-Landi called the postal-package communication model, which is reductive and oversimplifying, given that it describes the communicative process in terms of preconstituted messages that are emitted by a source and accepted by a receiver. By 1961 – a time when communication was not yet the pervasive phenomenon that it is today – Rossi-Landi had already harshly criticized this particular communication model. He was writing during the 1950s, when Italy had not yet been exposed to anything approaching the level of social reorganization brought about by today's communication–production system. To interpret human communication in terms of the postal-package communication model – which is based on the concept of equal exchange – is to refer to a communication model that is reductive and oversimplifying, however influential it continues to be. This particular communication model, which relies on such concepts as information transmission and message transmission, is incapable of critically analysing any of the components that constitute the communication process (which include the emitter, receiver, code, message, context, the needs propelling communication).

Indeed, according to this approach, such components are preconstituted – that is, they are fully defined before communication actually takes place (cf. Ponzio 1997a, 1999). This description loses sight of the specific nature of communication, which is far broader and more complex than what could ever be expected from a model that limits communication to an intentional exchange of messages among distinct and separate individuals, on the basis of a common code accepted as a fact.

A full understanding of global communication requires a full understanding of the risks that communication today involves, including the risk that communication may come to an end. Here, the risk we are alluding to is not simply the risk of the rather trivial phenomenon known as 'incommunicability' as theorized and represented in film and literature – a subjective–individualistic disease that emerged during the transition to today's communication, which is inseparable from production, what we have denominated 'communication–production.' Far more radically, the risk of the end of communication refers to nothing less than the risk of the end of life on this planet, considering the enormous potential for destruction in today's society, a potential that did not exist during earlier phases in the development of the social system. From this statement, it should be obvious that we should equate communication with life itself. As Thomas A. Sebeok's approach to biosemiotics has made clear, semiosis and life *converge*, communication and life *converge*. Which is the same as saying that the end of communication would mean the end of life (see chapter 5).

For an adequate understanding of communication in the present era that takes account of its historical–social specificity as a worldwide phenomenon and of its interconnectedness to life over the entire planet (remembering that life and communication, life and semiosis coincide), semiotics must adopt a 'planetary,' and therefore *global* perspective in both spatial and temporal terms. This approach will grant the critical distancing necessary for an interpretation of contemporaneity that is not imprisoned within contemporaneity itself.

12.1.2. Responsibility and Semioethics

With the spread of 'biopower' (Foucault) and the controlled insertion of bodies into the production apparatus, world and global communication goes hand in hand with the dissemination and assertion of the conception of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity. The body is understood and experienced as an isolated biological entity, as belong-

ing to the individual – that is to say, as part of the individual's sphere of belonging. This has led to the quasi-total extinction of cultural practices and world views that are based on intercorporeity, interdependency, exposition, and opening of the body. What we are left with are mummified residues studied by folklore analysts, archeological remains preserved in ethnological museums and in national literatures, these being expressions of a generalized 'museumification.'

Think of the different ways the body is perceived by the representatives of popular culture (as discussed by Mikhail M. Bakhtin [1963, 1965]), and of the various forms of 'grotesque realism' that do not conceive the body and corporeal life generally in individualistic terms or as separate from the rest of terrestial life – indeed, from the rest of the world. Signs of the grotesque body (only weak traces of which have survived in the present age) include ritual masks, masks used during popular festivities, and carnival masks. Before the development of individualism connected with the rise of the bourgeosie, 'grotesque realism' in medieval popular culture presented the body as something undefined, as not confined to itself – on the contrary, as flourishing in relations of symbiosis with other bodies, in relations of transformation and renewal that transcended the limits of individual life. Far from weakening individualistic, private, and static conceptions of the body, global communication–production reinforces these.

As Michel Foucault in particular has revealed (but let us also remember Rossi-Landi's acute analyses of the situation in the 1970s), division and separation among the sciences serve the ideological–social necessities of the 'new canon of the individualized body' (Bakhtin). This, in turn, serves the controlled insertion of bodies into the reproductive cycles of today's communication–production system.

An approach to semiotics that is global and detotalizing is connected with the logic of otherness. It demands a high degree in availability to the other, a readiness to listen to the other, a capacity for opening to the other, understood not only in quantitative terms (the omnicomprehensive character of global semiotics), but also qualitatively. Semiotic interpretations by scholars of signs – especially at a metasemiotic level – cannot detach themselves from a dialogic relationship with the other. In fact, dialogism is a fundamental condition for an approach to semiotics that is oriented globally and that also privileges opening toward the local and the particular, which is not simply enclosed and encompassed. Accordingly, this approach can be described as privileging the tendency toward detotalization.

As Emmanuel Levinas above all has demonstrated, otherness obliges the totality to reorganize itself ever anew in a process that is related to what he calls 'infinity' and that (to use a term associated with Charles S. Peirce) we could also relate to the concept of 'infinite semiosis'. This relation to infinity is far more than a cognitive issue: beyond the established order, beyond the symbolic order, beyond our conventions and habits, it is a relation of involvement and responsibility. The relation to infinity is the relation to *absolute otherness*, a relation to that which is most refractory to the totality. Thus, the relation to infinity implies a relation to the otherness of others, to the otherness of the other person, not in the sense of another self like one's own self, another alter ego, another I belonging to the *same community*, but rather in the sense of the other that is alien, the other in its extraneousness, strangeness, diversity, difference, toward which we must not be indifferent in spite of all the efforts and guarantees to the contrary offered by identity of I, of self.

The approach we are delineating does not orient semiotics according to any specific ideological plan. Rather, semiotics thus described concerns our understanding of behaviour in relation to the human being's unique responsibility as a 'semiotic animal.' Properly understood, the 'semiotic animal' is a responsible agent capable of *signs of signs*, of mediation, reflection, and awareness with respect to semiosis over the whole planet. In this sense, global semiotics must be adequately founded in cognitive semiotics, but it must also be open to a third dimension beyond the quantitative and the theoretical – that is, the ethical. Given that this third dimension concerns the ends toward which we strive, we have designated it in past papers by the terms 'teleosemiotics' or 'telosemiotics.' In the present volume, we now also propose the term 'semioethics.'

If semiotics is to meet its commitment to the 'health of semiosis' and to cultivate its capacity to understand the entire semiosic universe, it must constantly refine its auditory and critical functions – that is, its capacity for listening and critique. And we believe that to accomplish these tasks, the trichotomy that distinguishes among (1) cognitive semiotics, (2) global semiotics, and (3) semioethics is no less than decisive, not only in theoretical terms but also for therapeutic reasons.

12.1.3. Identity and Alterity: On Subjectivity and Reasonableness

'Identity' and 'subjectivity' (which is closely linked to 'identity') play decisive roles in worldwide and global communication, in terms of both the identity of the individual subject and that of the collective (Western World, European Union, nation, ethnic group, social class, and so on).

The concepts of individual identity and community identity also must be analysed in a semiotic key. And identity in either form may prove to be governed either by logic oriented in the sense of monologism – what we might call 'mono-logic' – or by logic oriented in the sense of dialogism, therefore 'dia-logic.' The difference is profound and pervasive.

Peirce's reflections have contributed significantly to a redefinition of the subject (see 1.2; cf. Colapietro 1989; Petrilli 1997d; Sebeok et al., 2001). The human being, the I, is a sign of an extraordinarily complex order, made of verbal and non-verbal language: 'It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself ... the man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical' (*CP* 5.314). The subject can be described as a semiosic process – indeed, as a result of its interpretive–propositional commitment, the subject consists of a potentially infinite number of signifying trajectories.

As a developing sign, the subject is a dialogic and relational entity, an *open* subject gradually delineated in the intrapersonal and interpersonal interrelations with other signs and other subjects. Therefore, the boundaries of the subject–sign cannot be defined once and for all; rather, they emerge in dialogic encounters with other signs, with other subjects, and are never definitive.

The human person develops in sociality – that is, in relation to the experiences of others, and never in isolation. Indeed, the self, the subject is a community of selves obeying the laws of the logic of otherness. The self is a community of dialogically interrelated selves. If we interpret the word 'in-dividual' literally as meaning 'non-divided, non-divisible,' using Peirce's terms we can make the claim that 'a person is not absolutely an individual' (*CP* 5.314; and see 1.2.1). Peirce rejected the 'illusory phenomenon' of a finite self or a self-sufficient self. Indeed, for her part, in support of this thesis (albeit independently of Peirce), Victoria Welby stated a similar position when she claimed that 'it is precisely our di-viduality that forms the wealth of our gifts.'

The social and communal character of self does not contradict the singularity or uniqueness of self, its signifying otherness with respect to any interpretive process that may concern it. The self is ineffable (cf. *CP* 1.357). It is saying beyond the said. The utterances of self convey significance beyond the conventional meaning of words. At the same time, however, the ineffability and uniqueness of self do not imply a condition of incommunicability.

Peirce's conception of identity as we have discussed it recalls Welby's, and vice versa. For both alike, the identity of the subject is multiplex, plurifaceted, and plurivocal, it is delineated and modelled in the dialogic

relations among its various parts. As stated earlier (1.2, 8.2.1), Welby established a distinction between the I and the Self, as emerges from her unpublished manuscripts, which include a file labelled *Subjectivity* with texts written between 1903 and 1910 (see Welby Collection, York University Archives, Toronto; cf. also Petrilli 1998a for a description of the materials available at the archives). Welby analyses the problem of subjectivity in terms of the complex and articulated relation between what she calls the 'I,' or, introducing a neologism, *Ident*, and what she calls the 'self' (cf. the manuscripts of 1907–10). According to Welby's analysis, identity is constructed in the dialogic relationship of the self with the I. The I or Ident is not the 'individual' but the 'unique.' The self is also designated with the neologism *ephemeron*, and is described as being mortal, ephemeral, like the body. In contrast, the I is described as tending toward immortality beyond the mortality of the body and of the self. Formed in this way, identity is neither unitary nor compact; on the contrary, it presents a surplus, something more with respect to identity itself, which it transcends.

That the subject is inevitably an incarnate subject, thus intercorporeal being – that is to say, a body connected to other bodies from the very outset, an expression of the condition of intercorporeity at both a synchronic and a diachronic level for the whole of its subsequent life – that the subject is not incarnated in a body isolated from other bodies, is by no means irrelevant to our conception of the human person. The subject is an incarnate entity from the perspective of biological evolution, of the species, as well as from the perspective of sociality and of 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, of the human being as a semiotic animal. The incarnate subject develops interrelatedly with other bodies, through which it extends its boundaries, which are the boundaries of the world it experiences. The word is an extension of the body. Indeed, echoing Bakhtin, the word is a bridge joining one's own body to the body of others. Peirce makes recurrent use of the term 'flesh and blood' (cf. *CP* 1.337, 7.591) for the physiological body that, however, can only be distinguished from the semiotic body by abstraction. This is similar to the distinction between physical, extrasign, and instrumental materiality, on the one hand, and sign material, which ultimately has a physical referent, on the other, even though this connection may not be immediately obvious as in the case of dreaming or silent thinking (cf. Petrilli 1998e: 38–48, 146–7).

Given its broad scope, semiotics must take account of and account for the 'reason of things.' However, the capacity for detotalization as the condition for critical and dialogic totalization implies that the ability to grasp the *reason* of things cannot be separated from the capacity for *reasonableness*. The issue at stake can be stated in the following terms: given the risks inherent in social reproduction today for semiosis and for life, *human beings must at their very earliest transform themselves from rational animals into reasonable animals*.

Both Welby and Peirce contributed to the development of a truly global science of signs capable of accounting for signifying processes in all their complexity and articulation, of considering meaning not only in terms of signification, but also in terms of sense and significance. For both Peirce and Welby, a study of the life of signs and of the signs of life cannot be conducted in merely descriptive terms – that is to say, with claims to neutrality. Welby coined the term 'significs' with the intention of indicating the possibility of a sign theory that is comprehensive and critical, and that is also in a position to squarely confront the problem of the relations between signs and values. The term 'significs' designates the disposition for evaluation, therefore, the value conferred upon signs, their pertinence, signifying potential, and significance.

In Welby's view, hedonist ethics – the dominant ideology of her own time as in the present age – reduces the vastness of the multiform cosmos to the status of mere annex to benefit the planetary egoist and parasite.

It is significant that Peirce, too, in the final phase of his reseach, turned his attention specifically to the normative sciences. He linked logic to ethics and to aesthetics: logic is the normative science concerned with self-controlled thought, whereas ethics is the normative science that focuses on self-controlled conduct, and aesthetics is the normative science devoted to ascertaining the end most worthy of our espousal. In this context, Peirce took up the question of the ultimate good, *summum bonum*, or ultimate value, which he refused to identify with either individual pleasure (hedonism) or with a societal good such as the greatest happiness for the greatest number of human beings (British utilitarianism). Rather, he insisted that the *summum bonum* could only be defined in relation to the 'evolutionary process' – that is, to a semiosic process of growth. Specifically, he identified the highest good in the continuous 'growth of concrete reasonableness.'

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 continuity in the creative process. A driving force in this creative process

is love in the sense of *agape*. In fact, according to Peirce, the most advanced developments in reason and knowledge are possible thanks to the creative power of reasonableness and the transformative suasions of agape.

Thus conceived, reasonableness is endowed with the power to transform 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 oneself, into sympathy for the other become lovely. Developing Peirce's discourse in the direction of the philosophy of subjectivity elaborated by Levinas, we might add that under the hardened crust of its identity, the subject rediscovers its fear for the other, for the other's safety through love. Such fear renders the subject incessantly restless and preoccupied for the other. Love, reasonableness, creativity are all grounded in the logic of otherness and dialogism. Together, as we learn from the authors thus far cited, otherness and dialogism in the terms described move the evolutionary dynamics not only of human consciousness but also, far beyond this, of the entire universe.

While working on pragmaticism with reference to the problem of subjectivity, to the self considered as a set of actions, practices, and habits, Peirce identified 'power' as opposed to 'force' as one of its fundamental characteristics. He describes the self as a centre oriented toward an end, an agent devoted to a more or less integrated set of 'purposes.' The latter can be related to what Welby understood by the terms 'purport' or 'ultimate value' in her description of sense in terms of the signifying value designated by the third element of her meaning triad, that is, 'significance.' Power is not 'brute force' but the 'creative power of reasonableness,' which by virtue of its agapistic orientation rules over all other forms of power (cf. *CP* 5.520). We could say that power – in other words, the ideal of reasonableness – is the capacity to respond to the attraction exerted on self by the other; power and reasonableness are related to the capacity for response to the other, and the modality of such response is dialogue.

The relationship between the self's humility and fragility, on the one hand, and the risks implied in the self's readiness to venture toward that which is other, on the other hand, was portrayed by Plato in his myth about Eros (in the *Symposium*) – a sort of intermediate divinity, or demon, generated by Penia (the Goddess of poverty, need) and Poros (the God of ingenuity) – who is capable of finding the way even when it is hidden. With reference to the human world, Welby described the connection between self-enrichment and risky opening toward others as a condition

for evolution. This connection generates an orientation that can be described in terms of the critique of 'being satisfied' – therefore, in terms of 'transcendence' with respect to reality (that is, to the world as it is) – with respect to ontological being that is given and determined 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 essential component in the concept of 'mother sense' or 'primal sense' and signals the need to recover the critical instance of the human intellectual capacity. Beyond the cognitive capacity, the allusion here is to the capacity for otherness, to the structural capacity for creativity and innovation, for shifting and displacing sense. And thanks especially to the procedures of abductive logic, this critical instance allows for prevision and 'translation,' where the latter is understood in the broadest sense possible – that is to say, beyond the limits of interlingual translation, translation as interpretation and verification of verbal and non-verbal signs alike. Scientific rigour in reasoning is possible on the basis of 'primal sense' as conceived by Welby, and also on the basis of agapastic logical procedure as described by Peirce. This implies the courage to admit the structural necessity for the evolution of such things as sign, subject and consciousness, of the factor of reasonableness as against reason, therefore of otherness, intercorporeity, dialogue, love, inexactitude, instability, and crisis.

It is significant for our discussion that Welby, in a letter of 21 January 1909, agreed with Peirce's observation that logic is the 'ethics of the intellect' – an expression she related to her own concept of 'primal sense,' which as we know was central in her theorization of the human signifying universe (see 8.2.1): '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).

12.1.4. Signs of Humanity and Humanity of Signs

In the light of what has been said so far, semioethics can be considered as proposing a new form of humanism. In fact, beyond the cognitive level, semioethics has committed itself to the ethical perspective, therefore to the pragmatic level. Furthermore, it aims to transcend separatism among the sciences by connecting the natural sciences and the logico-mathematical sciences, on the one hand, to the historical–social or human sciences, on the other, in this way recovering interconnections that were originally

inscribed in the various fields of human knowledge. In particular, semioethics brings to the surface the connections between the problem of humanism and the logic of alterity.

As most convincingly demonstrated by Levinas throughout all his writings and especially in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972), this new form of humanism must be nothing less than the humanism of alterity. The claim to human rights centred on identity – which is the approach to human rights that has dominated through to this very moment in history – has left the rights of the other out of the very concept of 'human rights'; and in today's world there are no significant signs that this is changing. For the sake of the health of semiosis over the entire globe, which today is heavily compromised, this approach is in great need of counteraction by the humanism of alterity, in order that the rights of the other be the first to be recognized. As should be obvious by now, our allusion here is not only to the rights of the other *beyond self* but also to the self's very own other, to the other *of self*. The humanism of identity alludes to a condition characterized by the strong tendency of self to remove, suffocate, segregate the other – that is, to sacrifice otherness on the altar of identity. But identity thus achieved is fictitious, and all efforts made to maintain or recover identity in such terms are destined to fail.

Semiotics contributes to the humanism of alterity by mapping out the sign network that links all human beings to one another. And interconnection is a fact of synchrony as much as of diachrony. The dissemination of communication worldwide actually means that the communication sign system is operating at a planetary level involving living organisms worldwide; this is a global phenomenon susceptible to synchronic analysis. It follows that human beings – and more generally all living organisms – are part of a life system in which all terms are interconnected synchronically. Furthermore, in just the same way that the destiny of the single individual, as of all life forms, is implied in the overall destiny of the human species, the human species in its entirety and all life forms are implied in any events, behaviours, and decisions made by the single individual – that is, they are implied in the destiny of the single individual, from the remotest to the most recent manifestations, in the past and in the evolutionary future, in biological terms as well as in historical–social terms. This also renders diachronic investigations absolutely necessary. The sign network as commonly understood concerns the semiosphere as constructed by humankind, a sphere inclusive of culture, its signs, symbols, artifacts, and so on; but global semiotics teaches us that this semiosphere is part of a far broader semiosphere, the semiobiosphere, which

forms the habitat of humankind – the matrix whence we sprang and the stage on which we are destined to act.

Semiotics has demonstrated that whatever is human involves signs. Indeed, it implies more than this: whatever is simply alive involves signs. And this is as far as cognitive semiotics and global semiotics have reached. Semioethics offers a perspective that pushes this awareness even further, in the direction of ethics and beyond ethics. We are alluding to the fact that from a semioethic perspective the question of responsibility at the most radical level (that of defining commitments and values) cannot be escaped. Our ethos – but more than this, the cosmos itself – falls within the scope of our responsibility. Among other things, this implies that we must interpret the sign behaviour of humanity in the light of the hypothesis that if all that is human involves signs, then all signs in turn are human. However, to express this humanistic commitment does not at all mean to reassert humanity's (monologic) identity yet again, nor does it mean to propose yet another form of anthropocentrism. On the contrary, this commitment implies radical decentralization, nothing less than a new Copernican Revolution. As Welby would say, 'geocentrism' must be transcended, then 'heliocentrism' itself, until we approximate a truly cosmic perspective – what we might call a cosmosemiotic perspective as against the geosemiotic and heliosemiotic perspectives. The attainment or approximation of such a perspective is an integral part of our ultimate end, which is the point where global semiotics and teleo- or telo-semiotics – or as we now propose, semioethics – intersect. As already observed, the logic of alterity more than anything else is at stake in the question of human responsibility and therefore of humanism as we are describing it. But the logic of alterity, and of the form of humanism we propose it to underpin and orient, now implies an other that is other from what has been commonly acknowledged so far; in other words, it is a question not only of the otherness of our neighbour or even of another person distant in space (with global communication, now perceived as being extremely close), but also of the otherness of living beings most distant from us, not just in space or for that matter in time, but at a genetic level as well.

Reformulating a famous saying by Terence ('homo sum: umani nihil a me alienum puto'), Roman Jakobson (1963) asserts that 'linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto.' This commitment on the part of the semiotician to all that is linguistic – indeed, to all that is endowed with sign value (not just relative to anthroposemiosis or to zoosemiosis, but to the entire semiobiosphere) – should be understood not only in the cognitive sense but also in the ethical. And this commitment means to be

concerned not only in the sense of 'being concerned with,' but also in the sense of 'being concerned for,' 'taking care of.' However, from this perspective, such concern, or care, or responsibility – which is not limited by the logic of identity nor, therefore, by the logic of belonging, proximity, community, communion – is not even that of the 'linguist' or the 'semiotician.' Modifying Jakobson's assertion, we could claim that it is not as professional linguists or semioticians, but rather (leaving the first part of Terence's, 'homo sum' unchanged) as human beings that anything that is a sign cannot be considered as 'a me alienum.' As human beings, we are not only *semiosic* animals (like all other animals), but also *semiotic* animals, animals capable of critical deliberation and responsibility, and in this sense we are unique. On this basis, nothing semiosic – including the biosphere at large and the evolutionary cosmos whence it sprang – is alien to me as a human being, and therefore nothing semiosic 'a me alienum puto.'

Semioethics does not have a program to propose with intended goals and practices, nor a decalogue, nor a formula to apply more or less sincerely, therefore more or less hypocritically. Semioethics contrasts with *stereotypes* as much as with *norms* and *ideology*; if anything, it can be described as proposing a *critique* of stereotypes, norms, and ideology, and thus a critique of different types of value (consider, for example, the analysis of values offered by Charles W. Morris in *Signification and Significance*, [1964], with its tripartition into operative values, conceived values, and object values, along with the subordinate distinctions of the dimensions of value into detachment, dominance, and dependence). Semioethics is the capacity for critique, and its special vocation is to render sign networks manifest where it seemed there were none, thus bringing to light and evaluating connections, implications, involvement, histories, and stories that cannot be evaded where it seemed there were only net separations, distinct boundaries, and distances with relative alibis. Such alibis safeguard responsibility in a limited sense, and thus enable consciousness to present itself in terms of a 'clean conscience.' The component *telos* in the expression 'teleo-' or 'telo-semiotics' does not indicate some external value or pre-established end, an ultimate end, a *summum bonum* outside the sign network. On the contrary, it is intended to indicate the *telos* of semiosis itself, understood as an orientation beyond the totality, beyond the closure of totality, transcendence with respect to a given entity, a given being, infinite semiosis, movement toward infinity, desire of the other. And in the present context, we propose that one of the special tasks of semioethics must be to expose the illusoriness of common claims

to the status of indifferent differences – that is to say, of differences that are mutually indifferent to one another (cf. Ponzio 1995d).

12.1.5. Semiotics as an Attitude and the Critical Work of Semioethics

Semiotics, not only as a science but also as an attitude, arises and is developed within the boundaries of anthroposemiosis. That is to say, semiotics is uniquely connected with the *Umwelt* of human beings, with the species-specific modelling capacity proper to human beings, which is capable of producing a great plurality of different worlds and world views – and not with the *Umwelt* of any other animal species. Semiotics is a fact of the human species and is a part of the world that is produced historically and socially by human beings. In other words, the effective possibility of its realization, its capacity for conferring understanding and awareness, is a historical–social fact beyond the biological. Our *Umwelt* is determined by the species, but it is also a historical–social product. Therefore, the possibility of transformation or alternative hypotheses has its effective grounding, point of departure, terms of confrontation, materials necessary for critique and programming, in historical–social reality as it gradually emerges in semiosis.

The critical work of *semioethics* shows how the condition of differences that are reciprocally indifferent to one another is an illusion and how, on the contrary, the entire planet's destiny, in the final analysis, is implied in the choices and behaviour of human beings. Semioethics must necessarily begin with unprejudiced analysis and interrogation of the social system in which it was formulated and which now advocates it. In other words, it must start with where we are today in historical–social terms, with a rigorous and precise analysis of contemporaneity and therefore of today's communication–production relationships.

Globalization and the worldwide dissemination of communication–production has reached high degrees in homologating social models of production; in a sense, this is an advantage for the work of semioethics. A single type of market now dominates the whole planet, a single type of production and consumption system that leads to homologation not only in human behaviour, habit, and fashion (in the sense of dress fashion, too), but also in the life of the imaginary. With respect to the overall social reproductive system as it dominates and encompasses the entire planet today, we could make the claim that difference understood in terms of *otherness* is in the process of being replaced ever more with difference understood in terms of *alternatives*.

The advantage we are alluding to consists in the fact that we are faced with a unified object of analysis. This means that a great variety of multiform aspects will not have to be taken into account in our analyses, which implies at the very least no risk of wasting energy. However, it should also be obvious by now that the word 'advantage' is intended ironically, because the implication is that what we must deal with is reality taken as a single, compact block. This is the advantage of *monologism*, which as such inevitably backfires on the capacity for critique, impeding critical analysis, in contrast with the condition of plurivocality and polylogism, which favours creative interpretation and critical questioning. Moreover, the work of critique is also rendered difficult by the fact that appropriate conceptual instruments are not yet readily available and, therefore, must be invented; categories beyond the dominant ones must be constructed, and assumptions that are not those taken for granted in the present phase of development in history must be introduced in reply to innovations.

We believe that semioethics offers the broadest perspective possible that human beings may ever reach in their role as semiotic animals and, therefore, as *cosmically* responsible agents. Today, perhaps more than ever before, not only must we explain this perspective but we must also emphasize the inexorable need to cultivate it in the most conscientious, imaginative, and responsible way possible. Otherness demands nothing less.

12.2. Bioethics, Semiotics of Life, and Global Communication

12.2.1. Bioethics and Global Semiotics

As mentioned earlier, with the introduction of bioethics, ethical problems relating to biological and medical discoveries become the object of study of a specific discipline. But even before this, they were part of at least another two totalities, the *semiobiosphere* and today's *global communication–production system*, both of which must be taken into account for an approach to sign activity that is at once foundational and critical.

We have also stated that *global semiotics* or *semiotics of life* is focused on the semiobiosphere in its totality, as Sebeok in particular taught us on the basis of his 'doctrine of signs.' With the term 'doctrine,' adapted from John Locke (who used it to indicate a body of principles and opinions vaguely forming a field of knowledge), and preferred to the more ennobling terms 'science' or 'theory,' Sebeok has taken his place in a tradition of thought that includes George Berkeley and that leads to Peirce.

Like Immanuel Kant before him, Peirce focused on signifying conditions. This led to the possibility of identifying common foundations shared by the human sciences and the natural sciences. Thanks to Peirce's 'doctrine of categories,' two opposite conceptions of reality that have dominated Western philosophical thought have finally come together. Our allusion is to that conception of reality which originated in Aristotle and which contends that things exist on their own account and independently from mind, on the one hand, and to the opposite conception that describes reality as depending on mind, on the other. The point of encounter between these two traditions of thought is the semiotic perspective, which describes objects and minds as part of common processes of semiosis.

The expression 'doctrine of signs' also points to the pedagogical character of Sebeok's research – but not only this. In fact, with this expression Sebeok also recovers the *critical* instance of semiotics. From this perspective, semiotics assigns itself the task of observing and describing sign processes; even more radically, it also interrogates itself *à la* Kant on the conditions of possibility of sign processes, just as it interrogates the conditions of possibility of the disciplines themselves that study sign processes.

As repeatedly asserted, the object of global semiotics is the *semiosphere*. Let us now add that this term is taken from Jurij M. Lotman but is understood far more extensively than Lotman. In fact, Lotman refers the term 'semiosphere' to human culture, when, instead, from the perspective of global semiotics, the *semiosphere* converges with the *biosphere* and can be characterized as the *semiobiosphere*. We now know that *semiosis* coincides with *life* so that global semiotics means 'semiotics of life.' Global semiotics is in a position to map out the sign network, which no doubt includes the *semiosphere* as constructed by human beings, by human culture with its signs, symbols and artifacts, and so on. However, *global semiotics* also underscores the fact that the semiosphere is part of a *far broader semiosphere*, the *semiobiosphere* – a sign network that human beings have never left and that, to the extent that they are *living beings*, they never will leave.

The most systematic exposition of global semiotics until recently was offered by the Italian edition (1998) of Sebeok's *A Sign Is Just a Sign*, which first appeared in 1991. The Italian edition also included a 1994 essay, 'La semiotica globale,' the translation of Sebeok's plenary lecture delivered on 18 June 1994 at the fifth meeting of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, held at Berkeley. Since then a book by the same title, *Global Semiotics* (2001a), has appeared, Sebeok's last (he died that same year).

At an international level, the most systematic publication in global semiotics is *Semiotik/Semiotics: A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture*, a work in four volumes edited by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering, and Sebeok. This publication has benefited from the participation of 175 authors from twenty-five different countries, and includes Sebeok's 'The Evolution of Semiosis' (a re-edited version of which was published in *A Sign Is Just a Sign*), in which he declares that life and semiosis coincide. The *Handbook* contains many other articles from different fields, all of which fall within the domain of global semiotics. These include 'Biosemiosis' (T. von Uexküll), 'Microsemiosis' (F.E. Yates), 'Endosemiosis' (T. von Uexküll and W. Geiges), 'Mycosemiosis' (G. Kraepelin), 'Phytosemiosis' (M. Krampen), 'Zoosemiosis' (W. Schler), 'Anthroposemiosis' (F.M. Wuketits), 'Machine Semiosis' (P.B. Andersen, P. Hasle, and P.A. Brandt), and 'Environmental Semiosis' (G. Tembrock).

Global semiotics or semiotics of life is especially significant for bioethics, given the broad context it is able to provide for the problems on which it chooses to focus (although this is not the only reason). And in fact, given that from the perspective of global semiotics, semiosis and life coincide, this context is far broader than the one postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology, which limits its studies on signs mainly to the sphere of social life.

Sebeok closely relates anthroposemiotics to zoosemiotics (the study of animal communication, including non-verbal human signs) and to endosemiotics (the study of cybernetic systems within the organic body, from an ontogenetic and phylogenetic perspective). According to Sebeok, communication and signification processes in the human animal are developed on biological and therefore biosemiosic foundations, which consequently must be at the centre of studies on specifically human semiosis. Sebeok's semiotics has the great merit of uniting what other fields of knowledge and praxis have generally kept apart in their efforts to justify needs of a specialized order, often in the name of useless and even damaging sectorializations – an orientation pregnant with ideological implications masked by motivations of a scientific order, and most often poorly so.

12.2.2. Being and Sign: A Foundational and Critical Approach to Bioethics

We have also seen that global semiotics can provide bioethics with adequate contextualization not only in terms of extension, of quantity, but

also in terms of quality. We are alluding to the fact that 'contextualization' also means *critical founding*. Global semiotics contributes to a *foundational and critical approach to bioethics*, that is, to its characterization as a theoretical–philosophical discipline.

The approach adopted by global semiotics is predominantly of an *ontological* order. Global semiotics refers explicitly to the semiotics of Peirce and of Morris as signposts, and no doubt the approaches adopted by these scholars were broad – we know that Peirce, for example, went so far as to maintain that the entire universe is permeated with signs, if not made entirely of signs. However, Peirce and Morris limited their interpretations of what they identified as semiosic processes to descriptions of the *phenomenological* order, whereas Sebeok, proceeding beyond them with his global semiotics, contributed to the reformulation in a semiotic key of *ontology*.

Sebeok's global semiotics interrogates being, and does so *from the perspective of life*. As Martin Heidegger says, the question of being is inevitably the question of that particular being for whom that question is vital. Indeed, not only is it a question concerning the life of the human individual being or of the whole of humankind, but, considering today's dominant social system, it is also a question of global communication–production, and considering not only the pervasiveness but also the destructive potential of anthroposemiosis today, the question concerns *life over the whole planet*. Global semiotics deals with the ontological question by identifying *life* with *semiosis*.

With his proposal of global semiotics, Sebeok can be seen as the father of the ontological perspective thus understood; it was he who promoted this perspective's diffusion among semioticians and cryptosemioticians. Indeed, all of the specialized contributions to the monumental *Handbook* described earlier, from researchers working in different areas, take their place, whether they know it or not, in this particular perspective. Seen in this light, the *Handbook* is an official recognition of the status of Sebeok's global semiotics and of the accomplishments of his project. At the same time, we have seen that bioethics should not ignore the benefits it can receive for its own philosophical vocation from global semiotics. And this is the case not only because of the scientific analyses conducted by global semiotics in the different fields of biosemiosis at a phenomenological level, but also *above all because the approach adopted by global semiotics understood as semiotics of life is primarily of an ontological order*.

Global semiotics takes the hypothesis that semiosis and life coincide as its starting point and focuses on the interconnections among signs. Its gaze moves from energy-information protosemiosis to the complex pro-

cesses of semiosis in the evolution of life over the entire planet: from prokaryotes to monocellular living beings to the eukaryotic aggregates that go to form the multicellular organisms belonging to the superkingdoms. The latter coexist and interact with the microcosm and together they form the great semiobiosphere. All of this results in the creation of an indissolubly interconnected *network of signs*: evoking Sebeok, this network extends from the Lilliputian world of molecular genetics and virology to Gulliver's man-size world and finally to the world of Brobdingnag, the gigantic biogeochemical ecosystem called Gaia. At first glance, this system seems made of many living species that are separate from one another, but a closer look soon makes it obvious that each one of its parts, ourselves included, is interdependent with all others. Taken in its globality, so to say, the ecosystem is the only system that can really be considered a global system (even though it, too, only relatively).

12.2.3. Bioethics and Global Communication

We have mentioned that for an adequate treatment of problems relevant to bioethics with the instruments and methodology of *global semiotics* or *semiotics of life*, a third type of contextualization beyond the phenomenological and the ontological is necessary – that is, the socioeconomic relative to the *global communication-production system* (see 12.1.1).

These contexts are closely interconnected from the perspective of ethics. In fact, when we consider the contributions made by *global semiotics* to bioethics with a view to the situation of global communication, it is clear that semiotics, understood as global semiotics, is faced with an enormous responsibility, that of bringing to surface the limits that characterize present-day communication–production society. An adequate understanding of global communication–production calls for an approach to communication and to semiosis that is just as global. And although the specialized sciences taken separately are not in a position to provide such a global view, the general science of signs or semiotics as it is taking shape today on the international scene in terms of global semiotics *is* in that position, thanks especially to Sebeok and his far-sighted research. As noted earlier, following this line of reasoning, semiotics today must now accept the responsibility of denouncing incongruities in the global system with the same energy, instruments, and social opportunities produced by the global communication–production system itself. Semioticians must now be ready to denounce the dangers inherent in this system for life over the entire planet.

We know that the term 'global communication' indicates the present phase in the development of the late capitalist system, and that it can be understood in at least two different ways: (1) as indicating the *extension of communication over the entire planet*; and (2) as indicating *the tendency of communication to accommodate itself realistically to the world as it is*. Globalization implies that communication is omnipresent throughout the entire productive cycle – that it pervades not only exchange relations, as in earlier phases in socioeconomic development, but also the processes of production and consumption. Globalization is tantamount to heavy interference by communication–production not only in human life, but also in life in general over the entire planet. Thus, the term 'global communication–production' refers not only to the fact that the communication network has expanded at a worldwide level, just as the market based on equal exchange has spread at a worldwide level, but also to the fact that life in its entirety – including all aspects of human life – is incorporated into the communication–production system (see 10.1.1).

Reflection on problems relevant to bioethics today in the context to which they in fact belong – the context of globalization – requires an approach that is just as global. Here, the allusion is to the need for an approach that does not limit itself to partial and sectorial aspects of the communication–production system in the light of internal perspectives serving the system itself; there is also the need for an approach that is not limited at an empirical level to psychological subjects, to subjects reduced to parameters imposed by the social sciences – that is to say, to subjects measurable in terms of statistics. Global communication-production calls for a methodological and theoretical perspective that is just as global as the phenomenon being observed, a perspective capable of understanding the logic of global communication–production and, therefore, of proceeding to an adequate *critique*.

Analysis of today's global communication society in all its complexity calls for conceptual instruments appropriate for the task. This means they must be as *precise* as possible and that they can only be furnished by a *new theory of communication*. The instruments in question must also be as *rigorous* as possible and from this perspective can only be furnished by an adequate philosophical grounding.

Social reproduction in the global communication–production system is destructive. Reproduction of the *productive cycle* itself is destructive. The productive cycle destroys (a) machines, which are constantly replaced with new machines – not because they are worn out but because they are no longer competitive; (b) jobs, because it makes way for automation,

which further increases unemployment; (c) products on the market, in which new forms of consumerism are elicited that are completely ruled by the logic of reproducing the same productive cycle; (d) pre-existing products, which once purchased would otherwise exhaust the demand, and which in any case are designed to become immediately outdated and obsolete so that new and similar products can be introduced to the market; and (e) commodities and markets, which are unable to resist competition any further in the context of the global communication–production system.

It is no accident that the European Commission, which has devoted special attention to inventiveness and innovation functional to profit, to 'immaterial investment' and 'competitiveness,' has identified *innovation* with *destruction* with full regard to capitalist 'ideo-logic' (cf. *Green Book On Innovation* 1995). The innovative character of a product now consists in its capacity for destruction: new products must be capable of destroying earlier similar products still present on the market. The capacity for innovation coincides with the capacity for destruction to the point that the criteria for evaluating innovation have been completely adjusted to market interests and market logic.

The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys natural environments and life forms. It also destroys different types of economic systems just as it destroys cultural differences, which tend to be eliminated by the processes of homologation operated by market logic. In today's global communication–production world, needs and habits of behaviour are rendered identical (although the possibility of satisfying such needs is never identical); even desires and the imaginary tend to be homologated and rendered identical. Also, the *conatus essendi* of communication–production destroys traditions and cultural patrimonies that conflict with or impede the logic of development, productivity, and competition, or that are simply useless or non-functional to such logic. Communication–production tends to destroy those productive forces which escape the logic of production, and in this way penalize intelligence, inventiveness, and creativity, which are overruled by or subjected to 'market reason' (which cannot be avoided at a time when production must necessarily invest in 'human resources'). The destructive character of today's production system is also manifest in the fact that it produces growing areas of underdevelopment as *the very condition for development,* areas of human exploitation and misery to the point of non-survival. This logic underpins the expanding phenomenon of *migration*, which 'developed' countries are no longer able to contain owing to objective internal-

space limitations – and no doubt this problem has reached greater dimensions today than in earlier phases of the social system.

To globalize the market is destructive – that is to say, to globalize the status of merchandise by applying it indiscriminately to anything, entities and relationships, is destructive. And the more merchandise is illegal and prohibited – think of drugs, human organs, children, uteruses, and so on – the more expensive it is. The principle of exploiting the work of other people is destructive. Obviously, the more work produces profit, the less it costs; and with the aid of a powerful support system such as the one offered by global communication–production, developed countries are ever more turning to low-cost work in underdeveloped countries ('stay where you are, and we will bring work to you'). The disgrace of the communication–production world is especially obvious in the spreading exploitation of child labour, which is mostly heavy labour and even dangerous labour. Much needs to be said and done about children as today's privileged victims of underdevelopment, about children living in misery, sickness, and war, on the streets, in the workforce, on the market.

The destructive character of worldwide communication–production is evidenced by war, which is always a scandal. Global communication–production is the communication–production of war. War calls for new and flourishing markets for the communication-production of conventional and unconventional weapons. War also requires widespread approval acknowledging it as just and necessary, as a necessary means of defence against the growing danger of the menacing 'other': in this way, war is a means of achieving respect for the rights of 'identity' and of 'difference.' But the truth is that identities and differences are neither threatened nor destroyed by the 'other.' The real menace is today's social system, which encourages and promotes identity and difference even while undermining them and rendering them *fictitious* and *phantasmal*. And this is exactly why we cling to such values so passionately, so unreasonably, according to a logic that fits to perfection the logic of the communication–production of war.

As noted earlier, with the spread of 'biopower' and global communication, the conception of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity has also been asserted. And we must emphasize that the technologies of separation as applied to human bodies, to human interests, to the life of individual and collective subjects, all serve production as well as the identification of production with consumption – a characteristic of today's social reproductive system. With regard to all this, and thanks to its ontological perspective, global semiotics or semiotics of life, if

nothing else, can counter with a whole series of signs showing how each instant of individual life is interrelated to all other forms of life over the entire planet. To acknowledge this interconnection is to suggest responsibility that exceeds by far all positive rights and all limited or restricted responsibilities with alibis. And to take such a stand is ever more urgent the more the reason of production and of global communication in service to production imposes ecological conditions that impede and distort communication between the body and the environment.

An ontological reformulation of bioethics in the light of global semiotics or semiotics of life, one that takes account of global communication and its socioeconomic context, highlights the need for two fundamental principles – what we propose to call *dispossession* and *extralocalization*. These principles imply reference to a condition that is experienced by the human individual as a living body – that is, to the condition of interconnectedness with all other life forms on the planet, therefore the condition of diachronic and synchronic intercorporeity. Specifically, therefore, we propose the concept of 'dispossession' to indicate the need to dispossess the human body and liberate it from the techniques that encourage and favour subordination to the knowledge–power of *biopolitics*; the term 'extralocalization' refers to the need to get free of the chronotopic coordinates of contemporaneity, that is, of projects, structures, and roles that serve to reproduce the socioeconomic order of global communication.

The principles of *dispossession* and *extralocalization* are made manifest by a tendency the body has to 'escape without rest' from the techniques that would dominate and control it; above all, these principles are evidenced by the body's 'persistence in dying.' It follows that we must take dispossession and extralocalization into account in the prolegomena for an approach to bioethics that aims to be *critical*, *philosophical*, and *theoretical*. This is the condition for recognizing the moral and juridical status of these principles.

Glossary

Abduction One of three types of inferential processes. The other two are *deduction* and *induction*. In abduction, the rule that explains the fact is hypothesized through a relation of similarity (i.e., an **icon**ic relation) to that fact.

Alterity (or **otherness**) Indicates the existence of something on its own account, autonomously, and therefore independently of the I's initiative, of volition, of consciousness, of wilful recognition. Alterity is a synonym for materiality understood as objectivity.

Anthroposemiotics The study of the human use of **signs**.

Argument A set of statements, including the premises that support a conclusion.

Binarism The explication of analyzed objects (in phonology, grammar, structural anthropology, etc.) in terms of binary opposition.

Biosemiotics The complex of sciences that studies living beings as signs. From a biosemiotic perspective, **semiosis** and life coincide. The branches of biosemiotics include phytosemiotics, mycosemiotics, zoosemiotics, and endosemiotics. The semiotic theory subtending biosemiotics is Sebeok's doctrine of global semiotics.

Code The set or system of rules whereby messages are encoded by an emitter and decoded by a receiver. Communication, in terms of codes, is an exchange of messages between a source and a destination.

Cognitive linguistics The study of language in relation to thought.

Competence In Chomsky's theory of language, linguistic competence is knowledge of the grammar of a given language by the ideal speaker of that language. Competence is a set of rules that subtends and explains performance (i.e., use) in a given language.

Denotatum 'Where what is referred to [by the sign] actually exists as referred to the object of reference is a *denotatum*' (Morris 1938c: 5). For example, the sign 'unicorn' has a denotatum in mythology but does not have a denotatum in zoology. All signs as signs have a designatum; whether a sign has a denotatum depends on whether what is referred to exists in the world under consideration.

Dialogue May be dominated by the logic of identity *or* by the logic of **alterity**. With the former, dialogue tends to reconfirm perspectives, interests, and values and therefore is dialogue only in a formal sense. With the latter, dialogue is characterized by the readiness to interrogate perspectives, interests, and values so that nothing is preconstituted, prefixed, and guaranteed. This is substantial dialogue. In other words, form is not a determining factor for dialogue to obtain: we may have dialogic form without substantial **dialogism**, and vice versa.

Dialogism (or **dialogicality**) A situation of involvement with the other, of passive involvement. This is not involvement by choice, the result of initiative taken by someone who has decided to get involved. Dialogism is present not just in formal dialogue. Indeed, formal dialogue may be endowed with only a minor degree of dialogism; whereas discourse that is not dialogic in formal terms – that does not take the form of a dialogue – may be endowed with a high degree of dialogism. Dialogism is present in both exterior and interior discourse. Furthermore, dialogism is not a prerogative of discourse. Any **sign** situation or **semiosis** is a relational process and as such presents different degrees of dialogism. The relationship between sign and **interpretant** is dialogic and is so to varying degrees.

Firstness One of three categories of phenomena in the universe identified by C.S. Peirce. The other two are **secondness** and **thirdness**. Firstness helps explain logico-cognitive processes and therefore the constitution of **signs**. From a semiotic perspective and in light of Peirce's typology of signs, firstness is connected with the icon and similarity. From the perspective of logic and with reference to Peirce's typology of arguments, firstness is related to **abduction**.

Ground As introduced by Peirce (cf. *CP* 1.551; 2.228), denotes 'some respect or capacity' on the basis of which something becomes a **sign** or **representamen** (i.e., stands for something else, an object), thanks to another sign that acts as

interpretant. For example, when I say, 'This table is black,' the immediate **object** is in a sense embraced by 'blackness,' which is the ground of the interpretant. In terms of the phenomenology of perception (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty), the ground is something that was undifferentiated but has since become differentiated, and thus has become a sign for an interpretant.

Icon One of three types of signs identified by Peirce. The other two in this particular triad are the **index** and the **symbol**. An icon is characterized by a relation of similarity between the sign and its object. However, similarity does not mean that the iconic sign has a dependent relationship with its object: 'An *icon* is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had non existence; such as a lead-pencil streak as representing a geometrical line' (*CP* 2.304).

Index One of three types of signs identified by Peirce. The other two are the **icon** and **symbol**. The index is a sign that signifies its object through a relation of contiguity and/or causality or through some other physical connection. Symptoms, clues, and traces are three types of indices.

Interpretant A concept introduced by Peirce, according to whom semiosis is a triadic process involving three components, the other two being **sign** (or **representamen**) and **object**. Something becomes a sign that stands for something – its object in some respect, or its idea, or its ground – because it is interpreted by another sign, the interpretant, in an open chain of interpretants (infinite **semiosis**).

Modelling A process by which something is performed or reproduced on the basis of a model or schema. In semiotics, models are based on relations of similarity and thus are associated with the **icon**ic sign. The so-called Tartu–Moscow school (Zaliznjak, Ivanov, Toporov, Lotman) uses the expression 'modelling system' to distinguish natural language ('primary modelling system') from other cultural semiotic systems ('secondary modelling systems'). Sebeok attributes the capacity for primary modelling to *language* as distinct from *speech*. Primary modelling – that is, language understood in this way – accounts for the ability to construct a multiplicity of different possible worlds. Linguistic creativity and the plurality of natural languages are both strong indications of the capacity of language to serve as a primary modelling device, specific to *Homo*.

Object Anything that can be sensed or reacted to or that calls for a response. An object can belong to the physical order as much as to the intellectual (men-

tal) order. In Peirce's semiotics, an object is anything that is somehow represented by the **sign**.

Otherness See **Alterity**.

Pragmatics In Morris's theory, the study of one of the three dimensions of **semiosis –** the *pragmatical dimension*, which pertains to 'the relation of **sign**s to interpreters' (1938c: 6). Morris's other two dimensions are the *semantical* (which pertains to the relation of sign to **object**) and the **syntactical** (which pertains to the relations among signs). These two are the objects of study for semantics and syntactics respectively.

Representamen In Peirce, a correlate in a triadic relation with an **object** and an **interpretant**. Most of the time, **sign** is a synonym for representamen.

Secondness The name given to one of three categories of phenomena in the universe as identified by Peirce. The other two are **firstness** and **thirdness**. Secondness helps explain logico-cognitive processes and therefore the constitution of **sign**s. Secondness is the category whereby something is considered as being relative to something else in a relation of causality, reaction, opposition, or contiguity. From a semiotic perspective and in terms of Peirce's typology of signs, secondness is closely linked with the **index** and therefore with contiguity and causality. From the perspective of logic and in terms of Peirce's typology of arguments, secondness is related to deduction.

Semioethics Reflects the idea of semiotics recovering its ancient vocation as '**semiotics**' (or *symptomatology*), with its focus on *symptoms*. Semioethics concerns itself with the 'care for life,' but from a global perspective whereby semiosis and life coincide.

Semiology Not to be confused with **semiotics**. Semiology is the English form of the French term *sémiologie*, coined by de Saussure. It is the study of 'the life of signs as part of social life.' Semiology excludes 'natural' signs as well as all signs that are non-conventional and that are not involved in communication.

Semiosis A sign process or situation or relation. Semiosis is the object of study of **semiotics**.

Semiotics (1) The study of **semiosis**, or the general science of **sign**s. (2) From a specifically human perspective, this term highlights the capacity that only human

beings have to reflect on signs (i.e., to make signs the object of reflection). Semiotics in this second sense refers specifically to *human* semiosis, or anthroposemiosis. It follows that *Homo* can be described as a 'semiotic animal.'

Semeiotics Another term for *symptomatology*, the branch of medicine that studies symptoms.

Sign A factor in a process conceived either dyadically (signifier/signified) in accordance with de Saussure (*signifiant/signifié*) and his followers, or triadically (sign or **representamen/object/interpretant**) in accordance with Peirce. From the perspective of Peircean semiotics, and in contrast to de Saussure's **semiology,** anything can become a sign if it is interpreted by an interpretant as something that stands for another something in some respect, its object, by which that sign is indirectly determined, given that it is capable of determining an interpretant. 'A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object' (*CP* 2.274).

Signification/significance Morris distinguishes between signification and significance, thereby indicating two different aspects of 'meaning': the semantic and the axiological. 'If we ask what is the meaning of life, we may be asking a question about the signification of the term 'life,' or asking a question about the value or significance of living – or both' (Morris 1964: vii). Welby (see **significs**) uses 'significance' as the third term of her meaning triad, the other two being 'sense' and 'meaning.'

Significs A neologism coined by Welby for her special approach to the study of signs in all their forms and relations. This approach transcends pure descriptivism and gnoseological or logico-epistemological boundaries in the direction of axiology and the study of the conditions that make meaningful behaviour possible.

Symbol A polysemic term. It is a synonym for **sign** (for example, in Cassirer it is the sign specific to the animal symbolicum, whereas in Ogden and Richards [1923] it stands for sign with reference to the triadic relation Symbol, Thought or Reference, Referent), or it is used to indicate a specific type of sign. In Freud, the symbol is the sign that indicates all psychic activity insofar as it reveals the unconscious. In de Saussure, a symbol is a sign that is not completely arbitrary (as in the case of scales acting as a sign of justice). With reference to the encyclopedic entry 'Symbol' by Averinchev (1971), Bakhtin (1974) describes the symbol

as the sign that most requires answering comprehension, given the dialectic correlation between identity and **alterity**. According to Bakhtin, the symbol cannot be restricted to an immediate context; rather, it relates to a remote and distant context, and this is what accounts for its opening to alterity. In our own discourse, we follow Peirce's use of the term – that is, to indicate one of three particular types of sign forming his best-known triad (the other two in this triad being **index** and **icon**). However, in Peirce's description the symbol is a conventional sign, the result of a habit – in his own words, a sign 'in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition)' (*CP* 4.531).

Thirdness One of three categories of phenomena in the universe identified by Peirce. The other two are **firstness** and **secondness**. Thirdness helps explain logico-cognitive processes and therefore the constitution of **sign**s. From a semiotic perspective and in light of Peirce's typology of signs, thirdness is tightly linked to the **symbol** and to conventionality. From the perspective of logic and with reference to Peirce's typology of arguments, firstness is related to induction – that is, to the inferential relation between premises and conclusion based on habit.

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