

I. Authors referred to

1. Problems of Language in Welby's Significs

Introduction

The term "significs" was coined by Victoria Lady Welby (1837-1912) toward the end of the last century to designate the particular bend she wished to confer on her studies on signs and meaning. Significs transcends pure descriptivism and emerges as a method for the analysis of sign activity, beyond logico-gnoseological boundaries, and, therefore, for the evaluation of signs in their ethical, esthetic and pragmatic dimensions.

To carry out her work Welby was convinced that the instrument at her disposal, verbal language, should be in perfect working order. Consequently, the problem of reflecting on language and meaning in general immediately took on a double aspect as it also surfaced in her mind as the problem of the condition of the specific language through which she was thinking.

After her death Welby was very quickly forgotten as an intellectual and until recent times, if she was ever remembered it was as Charles S. Peirce's correspondent and not necessarily in her own right as the ideator of significs. Her influence has gone largely unnoticed having been most often than not unrecognized. In addition to her publications, Welby was in the habit of discussing her ideas in her letters and to this end corresponded with numerous intellectuals, many of whom she knew personally, including a part from Peirce, M. Bréal, B. Russell, H. and W. James, H. Bergson, R. Carnap, A. Lalande, F. Pollock, G.F. Stout, F.C.S. Schiller and C.K. Ogden, G. Vailati, M. Calderoni and many others. Ogden promoted significs as a university student during the years 1910-1911, and contributed to spreading Welby's ideas. Recent research (cf. Gordon 1991; Petrilli) has documented the influence exerted by Welby and her significs on Ogden, and yet the importance of this relationship is not recognized by him in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), where she is very quickly disposed of in a footnote. A part from scattered mention of her name, Welby's ideas in fact gave rise to the Signific Movement in the Netherlands thanks to mediation by the Dutch psychiatrist F. van Eden.

Significs today is a fascinating topic for diverse researchers and is gradually winning the attention it deserves. Significant events in this direction are the re-editions of her main works promoted by A. Eschbach and H.W. Schmitz (cf. Welby 1983, 1985), to which are connected a series of other initiatives including publication of the volume *Essays on Significs* commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Welby's birth (cf. Schmitz 1990), the International Conference of November 1986, *Significs, Mathematics and Semiotics. The Signific Movement in the Netherlands*, which is also the title of the corresponding proceedings (cfr. Heijerman-Schmitz 1991), the publication of an anthology of her writings in Italian translation (cf. Welby 1986), my own monograph on Welby (cf. Petrilli 1998a), papers by different scholars on various aspects of the signific movement considered both in a historical perspective as well as the theoretical, and further work in progress by myself as mentioned by Augusto Ponzio in his introduction to the present issue. Welby's unpublished manuscripts, correspondence included, are available at the York University Archives, Special Collections, in Ontario, Canada.

Language problems in the study of language

Welby discovered the philosophy of language as a consequence of her interest for problems of a moral, religious and theological order. Her first book, *Links and Clues* (1881), focuses on problems of interpretation relatively to the Sacred Scriptures. Her interests in ethico-social and pedagogical issues merged with or developed simultaneously with her philosophico-linguistic concerns (see also the collection of her thoughts, *Grains of Sense*, of 1897). As anticipated, Welby was faced with the problem of constructing a language in which to adequately formulate her ideas.

And, indeed, a fundamental problem in reflexion on language and meaning, on signifying processes at large, as Welby was quick to realize, concerns the language itself in which such reflexion takes place. The very need to coin the term "significs"—difficult to translate into other languages, as discussed in her correspondence with such scholars as Michel Bréal or André Lalande for the French or Giovanni Vailati for the Italian—was a clear indication in itself of the existence of terminological obstacles to development in philosophico-linguistic analysis.

As tackled by Welby, the problem of language immediately took on a double orientation to concern not only the object of research, but also the very possibility of articulating discourse, that is the medium through which reflexion on language was articulated. Welby considered the linguistic apparatus at her disposal as antiquated and rhetorical, subject to those same limits she wished to overcome and to those same defects she intended to correct. Her condition was typical of a thinker living in an era characterized by the transformation and innovation of knowledge: she was faced with the task of communicating new ideas and to achieve this she aimed at renewing the language through which she was communicating.

Welby was particularly sensitive to everyday language and its improvement. Indeed, on proposing the term "significs" she kept account of the everyday expression "What does it signify?", given its focus on the sign's ultimate value and significance beyond semantic meaning. In her commitment to logical, expressive, behavioral, ethical and esthetic regeneration, she advocated the need to develop a "linguistic conscience" against the bad use of language which inevitably involved poor reasoning, the bad use of logic, argumentative incoherence.

Largely under the influence of Darwinism which she read critically, Welby viewed the development of expression and meaning in an evolutionary perspective. For instance her concept of "sense" is fundamentally organismic: beyond her use of the term "sense" to indicate the overall value of experience, the connection between sign and sense is compared to an organism's response to environmental stimuli. Analogies of the organismic type serve to underline the potential in language for expressive plasticity and renewal which goes hand in hand with the development of experience and knowledge.

Welby had already turned her attention to such problems in papers published toward the end of the last century, such as "Meaning and Metaphor" (1893), and "Sense, Meaning, and Interpretation" (1896). This work was developed in a volume of 1903, *What is Meaning?*, and subsequently in another of 1911, *Significs and Lanquage* as well as throughout a great quantity of unpublished papers available at the York Archives (cf. Petrilli 1998a).

Welby's decision to coin a new term "significs" was largely determined by the wish to name the specific bend she conferred on her studies of signs and meaning. And, as already mentioned, the need to coin new terms is already an indication in itself of the terminological obstacles holding up new developments in linguistic analysis. Given that such terms as "semiotics" and "semantics" were already available, Welby's commitment to this new term risked appearing as the expression of a whimsical desire for novelty. Peirce and Vailati may be counted among those who did not initially understand Welby on the belief that new terms could be avoided, however she was quick to convert

them to her own views by showing how terminological availability was in fact only apparent, for none of the words in use adequately accounted for her own special approach to the problem of signs and meaning. Welby intended to describe aspects of the problem of language, expression, and signifying processes at large which had not yet been contemplated, which had largely been left aside by tradition, or, more correctly, she was proposing a reconsideration of the same problems in a completely different light, from a different viewpoint, in a different perspective.

In her effort to invent a new terminological apparatus Welby offered alternatives to terms sanctioned by use. She introduced the term "sensal" for sense in its prevalently instinctive aspect, remembering also its close association with the concept of signifying value, as opposed to the term "verbal" for specifically linguistic, that is, verbal signs, whether oral or written. The term "interpretation" appears in the title of her 1896 essay and is initially used to designate a particular phase in the signifying process. Subsequently, however, on realizing that it designated an activity present in all phases of signifying processes, the term "interpretation" was replaced with "significance", this being another illustration of the fact that Welby's untiring terminological quest was motivated by concrete problems of expression.

Differently from "semantics", "semasiology" and "semiotics" the word "significs" was completely free from technical associations. As such it appeared suitable to Welby as the name of a new science focusing on the connection between meaning and value, pragmatic value, social value, as well as value in the esthetical and the ethical sense. In a letter to the German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, Welby claimed she was searching for a word able to express the link between sign and sense, a word which did not exist and which she thought she could obtain with "significs".

Other neologisms related to "significs" include "significian" for the person who practices significs; the verbs "to signify" (in Italian "*significare*") and "to signalize" ("*segnalare*") which indicate, respectively, maximum signifying value and the act of investing a sign with meaning. In her 1896 essay Welby had proposed the term "sensifics"—with the corresponding verb "to sensify"—which, however, she subsequently abandoned in favor of "significs" because it too closely recalled the world of the senses. But even when Welby used readily available terms including those forming her meaning triad "sense", "meaning" and "significance", she did so in the context of an impressively articulate theoretical apparatus clarifying the sense of her special use of these terms. (For all these aspects with considerations on the correlation between Welby's trichotomy and Peirce's own tripartition of the interpretant into "immediate", "dynamic" and "final" interpretant, cf. Petrilli 1998a).

When Welby turned her attention to problems that are still today animating debate in the linguistic sciences and the philosophy of language, it was because these problems were no doubt the privileged objects of her significs, but also because the conceptual instruments through which she was operating needed improvement. She was concerned with such problems as the value of the "ambiguity" of words; the role of "definition" in the determination of meaning; the relation between literal meaning and metaphorical meaning; the possibility of using metaphor and analogy to the end of augmenting the expressive import of language (cf. Petrilli 1989, 1990a; Ponzio 1990a; Schmitz 1985, 1988). It should be observed that even though Welby proposed new terms for the study of language, she did not fall into the trap of technicalism, that is of making excessive use of technical terms, just as, in spite of her constant efforts to render expression as precise as possible, her aim was not to (fallaciously) eliminate the ambiguity of words, their polysemy, which on the contrary she appreciated.

As to technicalism, Welby was intent on achieving the opposite objective, that is of coming as close as possible to common, everyday expression. As we have already observed, with her proposal of introducing the terms "significs" and "signify" Welby kept account of the expression "What does it signify?" as used by the man in the street, to indicate not only expression meaning, but also its value and significance. From this viewpoint, Welby (like Vailati) was particularly sensitive to what Rossi-Landi called "common speech", that set of expressive modalities, techniques and practices forming mankind's common linguistic patrimony, often unjustifiably neglected where the taste for technicalism prevailed. Moreover, like Vailati Welby did not believe in definition as a panacea for the reduction of linguistic equivocation. In fact, though definition is useful in the field of technical languages, this is so precisely because it eliminates the expressive ductility of words rendering them inert and lifeless, instead of keeping them alive and dynamic (cf. Rossi-Landi 1998).

On the topic of the polysemy and ambiguity of words, Welby was on similar positions to Vailati and Rossi-Landi after him, as well as to Adam Schaff and Mikhail Bakhtin (see below). She too valued plurivocality as a positive aspect of language—apart from the fact that, of course, it cannot be eliminated—and maintained that expressive precision could only be reached by exploiting resources offered by language with the presence of words that in spite of apparent similarity need to be differentiated, and of word meanings which though not clearly differentiated require instead recognition and explicitation.

Welby's language

"Common speech" is not "ordinary language" as described by the British analytical philosophers. So-called "ordinary language" or "everyday speech" regards only one aspect of what is intended by "common speech". Welby was aware of the distinction and not only drew on everyday language (which she gave serious consideration) for her own terminology, but also on the language of different fields of knowledge and human experience—religion, biology, cosmology, ethnology, physiology, musicology, the figurative arts, etc. Her approach was motivated by the intention to overcome the tendency toward technicalism and the division of knowledge into separate compartments by pooling together their linguistic reserves and viewpoints.

Her critique of the bad use of language connected with the bad use of logical processes led Welby not only to describe but to analyze language to the end of transforming, regenerating and converting it to conscious and critical use. In her commitment to this work of logical, expressive, behavioral and therefore also ethical regeneration, Welby often pointed to the behavior of children as a possible model, whom she considered as critics *par excellence* thanks to their freshness, enthusiasm, taste for exploration and experimentation (as revealed by their candid whats?, hows?, and whys?).

In addition to referring to the child's "logic", Welby also underlined the need of recovering what she called "mother-sense" or "primal-sense", the source of the interpretive and signifying capacity, of humanity's propensity for inventiveness, creativity, innovation, for problem solving, critique and discernment among the multiple meanings of the word and sign activity at large:

[...] 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 on this instinct of suspicion and of test. It is sheer mothersense—instinct of intellectual danger—which in you, as in Dewey, Peirce and James, calls out the pragmatic reaction! (from a letter of Oct. 20, 1907 from Welby to F.C.S. Schiller, in Welby 1985:ccxlix)

Welby did not deny the overwhelming importance of logic and of the symbolic order, but while recognizing the immense value of cognitive methods, she urged, in the spirit of signification, that our attitude toward logic be critical, that we use cognitive instruments and interpretive models consciously and, therefore, conscientiously, that we reflect on the feminine component, the very source of our intellectual capacity, present—though not necessarily operative—in the human person, whether male or female, that is, transversally across gender.

Regarding the established order of discourse, Welby emphasized the importance of the provocation of a question, the inclination for critical interrogation, recourse to a plurality of different viewpoints for innovation and creativity and, therefore, for continual revolution or regeneration of the established order. On a more personal stylistic level, while Welby largely formulated her ideas in the form of essays or essaylets, at the same time she made an abundant use of images, metaphors and association with reference to varying fields of human experience, which rendered her language suggestive, highly expressive in the manner of literary language. Not only did she theorize polylogic and plurilinguistic discourse, but she effectively put it into practice through her ongoing dialogue with other fields of discourse, with other discourse genres.

Welby went beyond the limits of the study of meaning in terms of philologico-historical semantics as developed, for example, by her contemporary Bréal, whom she took into direct consideration, to focus not only on what today falls within the domain of speech-act theory or text linguistics, but also with a view to the dynamics of expansion and potential for transformation of the signifying process, being determining conditions for the evolution of the human being's sensorial and cognitive capacities. In this respect, Welby anticipated studies on the relation between semiosis and evolution as developed especially by Thomas A. Sebeok (cfr. 1986, 1991a, 1998) in his own approach to semiotics.

Welby's evolutionary perspective on meaning and the cognitive capacity is closely related to her interest in the cosmological and biological dimension of existence and the sciences that study them. As we have already observed, her concept of "sense" is fundamentally organismic. She identified "sense in all 'senses' of the word" as the appropriate term for what constitutes value in the experience of life on our planet. She associated her definition of the link between sign and sense to an organism's immediate, spontaneous reaction to environmental stimuli: a process leading to the production of signs endowed with a value of their own, with implications and references, which stimulate a reply in their turn, whether direct or indirect. Analogies of the organismic type helped to underline the expressive plasticity and potential of signs and of verbal language in particular as their fundamental characteristics. Welby aimed at recovering such qualities where they had been lost as a consequence of poor expression and the bad use of language, or where such qualities were neglected in language theory. Words and their contexts adapt to each other reciprocally, similarly to the relationship between organisms and their environment. Critical as she was of any tendency toward anthropocentrism or glottocentrism, Welby's perspective on signifying processes was not only organismic and biological but, as stated, cosmological, for she was interested in signifying processes in the universe and, therefore, in the action of cosmological forces on human expressive, interpretive and signifying resources. In order to convey the idea of the expansion of experience and knowledge throughout the universe, paralleled by an increase in expressive value and psychical development in the human being, Welby identified "three levels of consciousness," which she named with terms from cosmological or astronomical language, precisely, "planetary", "solar", and "cosmic". To this division corresponds her triadic division of the signifying process into sense, meaning and significance, so that sense is mainly "planetary", meaning "solar", and significance "cosmic".

A recurrent image in Welby's writings concerns our scrutiny of signifying processes in the universe and comes from the field of physiology and astrology, being associated to vision with reference to our use of such instruments as the telescope:

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. That is a triumph of indirect evidence. And after all, as Professor Tait says, "it is to sight that we are mainly indebted for our knowledge of external things. All our other senses together, except under very special conditions, do not furnish us with a tithe of the information we gain by a single glance". (Welby 1983:103-104)

Analogy is described by Welby as an interpretive method based on the relation of similarity, which she divided into six different types (cf. *ibid.*:19-20): 1) Casual likeness; 2) General likeness of the whole; with unlikeness of constituents; 3) Likeness in all but one point or feature; 4) Valid analogy ringing true in character throughout, bearing pressure to the limit of knowledge, and yet remaining analogy and never becoming equivalence, or identity in varying senses; 5) Equivalence; 6) Correspondence in each point and in mass or whole.

Furthermore, she distinguished between "analogy" and "homology" or what she signaled as a "stronger" type of analogy endowed with more effective signifying valencies, a distinction commonly practised in biology as the distinction between superficial similarity (analogy) and structural-genetic similarity (homology), and associated these concepts with various types of inference—deduction, induction and hypothesis —, characterized on the basis of their role in the development of knowledge, research and inventive potential.

The linguistic-cognitive mechanisms of analogy (and homology) typical of metaphor and association play an important role in translation, the latter being a fundamental aspect of sign activity. In a significant perspective "translation" not only alludes to the passage among languages, fields of experience, sign systems, but is also recognized as "a method turned both to discovering and evaluating, as well as to using analogy (or in some cases homology)".

Homology is constantly dealt with by Rossi-Landi a theorizer of the so called "homological method": the relationship identified by him between language and work, his theory of "linguistic work" is based on similarity of the homological type. His "philosophical methodics" (see Rossi-Landi 1985) largely centres around the concept of homology.

The ongoing work of transference and translation from one sign into another which contains the previous sign, enriching it with new meanings and values, was recognized by Welby as a fundamental mechanism in cognitive development. Her conception of translation is obviously far broader than is ordinarily intended in terms of the passage from one language to another. Going a step further Welby focused on the possibility of interpreting a sign through its encounter with other signs, with different sign systems, verbal and nonverbal:

The more varied and rich our employment of signs (so long as such employment be duly critical securing that we know well what we are doing, also the indispensable condition of humour), the greater our power of inter-relating, inter-translating various phases of thought, and thus of coming closer and closer to the nature of things in the sense of starting-points for the acquisition of fresh knowledge, new truth. (*ibid.*: 150)

These words recall the interpretive-cognitive model theorized by Peirce, founded on the sign-interpretant relationship, that is, on "the translation of signs in another sign system" (CP 4.127). In fact, according to Peirce the determination of linguistic meaning and consequent cognitive development is achieved through an "equivalent" or possibly "more developed" sign (the interpretant). And Welby too views translation above all as an interpretive method which as such invests all semiotic processes.

2. Bakhtin's Semiotics as Philosophy of Language

Alterity of Bakhtin's word

In the preface to the French edition of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (signed by Voloshinov but attributed to Bakhtin), Roman Jakobson (1977: 8) says of Bakhtin what Bakhtin said of Dostoevsky: "rien ne lui semble accompli; tous problèmes restent ouverts, sans fournir la moindre allusion à une solution définitive".

From this viewpoint, Bakhtin's style recalls that of another great master of signs, Charles S. Peirce, who significantly declared that only once as far as he could remember had he experienced the pleasure of being praised, even if it was meant as a reproof in the intention of the author: this happened when a critic accused him of not being absolutely sure of his own conclusions.

Bakhtin's tendency to continually recommence his research is what Todorov calls "repetition": "un ressassement éternellement recommencé" (1981: 25). Bakhtin's work, says Todorov, does not know development in the true sense of the word: the centre of interest and formulation changes, but despite certain changes and shifts (even if they are hardly perceptible), Bakhtin's discourse continually returns on itself. It is as though each part contains the whole, the open totality of which it is a part. For this reason,

entre son premier et son dernier écrit, entre 1922 et 1974, sa pensée reste fondamentalement la même; on trouve aussi des phrases presque identiques, écrites à cinquante ans de distance. (*ibid*)

This lack of development is not dogmatic reiteration of the same thesis. On the contrary, it should be understood as intended by Bakhtin when on discussing Dostoevsky's novels he maintains that the spirit of the author does not evolve, it does not "become". The dialectic development of a single spirit according to the paradigm of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is absent, there is no tension toward a single and definitive conclusion for which all the various parts of the work must be functional. The very object of Bakhtin's research makes the application of dialectic of the Hegelian type inappropriate: this object remains constant throughout his analyzes even though the materials and problems change: the sign in its wholeness and not as a single element, an isolated term endowed with meaning. This conception of sign with its polysemic, dialogic and polylogic character makes Hegelian dialectic figure as a unilateral, rigid, and fossilized conception, in the last analysis as pseudo-dialectic. Bakhtin alludes frequently and polemically to Hegel and the monologic dialectic of his system. As far back as Marx's critique of 1843 of Hegelian philosophy, Hegelian dialectic has been shown to be full of contradictions only fictitiously overcome with the word arrogating an absolute viewpoint. In "From the Notebooks of 1970-71" Bakhtin describes the development of monologic dialectic as it originates from 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 dialectic. (Bakhtin 1970-1971: 363)

Unidirectional logic which looks to a single end is put into crisis by the sign's polysemy, polylogy and ideological pluridirectionality. It is difficult to say where a sign begins and where it ends once it is no longer reduced to the single element or broken up into its various component parts. This is so because it is not a thing, but a process, an interweaving of relations. The overall, unitary sense of the sign is inseparable from the concrete communicative context, social interaction, and relation to specific ideologic values and orientations. The interpretation of a sign cannot be limited to its identification. It requires "active comprehension". The sense of a sign consists in something more with respect to the elements that allow its recognition: it is made of those semantico-ideological aspects which are in a certain sense unique, special and indissolubly connected to the situational context of semiosis. Sign comprehension is active comprehension because it requires a reply, a standpoint, it arises from a dialogic relation and in turn provokes a dialogic relation: the sign flourishes as a rejoinder in a dialogue (see "From the Notebooks 1970-71"). These aspects of the sign are analyzed in the perspective of general semiotics in Voloshinov 1929, but are still more amply studied in two essays, one of 1926 and the other of 1929, also signed by Voloshinov though substantially Bakhtin's.

Referred to the verbal, the sign is a complete utterance, it is not isolated from the social context, ideology or the discourse genre to which it belongs ("the unending variety of discourse genres", says Bakhtin in the "Notebooks": among the titles of his unfinished books, *Discourse Genres*). The utterance is a constitutive part of a socially and historically specified relation, a living text and not an inanimate thing; not an isolated monologic expression to be interpreted on the basis of the relation between linguistic units and language understood as an abstract unit. Writes Bakhtin (1974) in one of his most recent papers included in his 1979 collection of writings:

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. (Bakhtin 1979: 378)

Conceived in this way, the text is the main hero of his two important monographs on Dostoevsky and Rabelais and of his theoretical and methodological studies in general. For this reason we could say that not only is Bakhtin's theory a theory of the text, but more specifically the literary text: a theory of dialogue as dialogue flourishes in literary writing.

The text is the specific object of all human sciences concerned with man as a producer of texts (written or oral, verbal or nonverbal). It is in relation to this particular object—the text—that Bakhtin's method achieves its specificity. Active comprehension, that is, responsive and dialogic comprehension is the main component in this method. The specific logic of the text is a *dia-logic*, a dialectic between texts. The text's sense is decided in the logic of question and answer, not the abstract, absolute and impersonal categories of *logos*, but concrete and dialogic. Dialogue presupposes a reciprocal asymmetrical distance between two interlocutors: it presupposes that question and answer come from time and space differently experienced, different chronotopes for he who speaks and he who answers.

The word's alterity is an essential element in Bakhtin, and this is true not only of the object of his analysis but also of his own word: Bakhtin's word has its own *alterity* relatively to the historical period he belongs to. A word that remains other in the 1920s relatively to the two poles of current literary debate—formalism and sociologism—; opposition between individualistic subjectivism (Humboldt, Vossler, Croce, Potebnja) and abstract objectivism (De Saussure 1916) in studies on language; and opposition between Marrism and Antimarrism; furthermore, with reference to the study of ideology relatively to individualism and mechanistic materialism. Bakhtin's word is also other relatively to contemporary schools of semiotics, including the trend he explicitly refers to, the school of Tartu (Lotman, Ivanov, etc.). The result is that Bakhtin's theory of the social sign, the

ideological sign and in particular the verbal sign represents a term of confrontation rather than of mere confirmation and anticipation regarding official semiotics and its Saussurean, Peircean, Morrisian and Husserlian, etc., matrixes.

On the relation between philosophy of language and semiotics

While it is possible to distinguish between philosophy of language and specific areas of semiotic research (including linguistics) viewed as grammars of particular sign systems, the distinction between general semiotics and philosophy of language is more problematic given that general semiotics is necessarily philosophical. Nor can the problem be solved by simply stating that general semiotics is concerned with all types of signs, while philosophy of language only turns its attention to verbal language (natural and specialized) and to the disciplines that study them. Apart from a few exceptions, owing to the need of a contingent and temporary restriction of the field of research more than to the attempt of defining it, philosophy of language has concentrated on verbal and nonverbal signs in the perspective of semantics, logico-syntactics or pragmatics.

The problem of the relationship 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 among the many sciences of language, semiotics may be distinguished from the philosophy of language, even if general semiotics, as opposed to the various specific semiotics, cannot prescind from a philosophical study of its own categories.

Philosophy of language explores the external boundaries, protrusions, and excesses with respect to the "semiotic field", or science—or "theory" (Morris) or "doctrine" (Sebeok)—of signs. To recall an expression introduced by Bachtin who described his own approach to language analysis as "metalinguistic" (having overcome the limits of linguistics), philosophy of language could be characterized as "metasemiotic". And indeed in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bachtin(-Voloshinov) used the expression "philosophy of language" for his own research as it unfolded in adjacent fields and along the boundaries of disciplines relating to language and signs, concentrating on their points of contact and intersections. And even in more recent times (during the first half of the 1970s), when the term semiotics was generally accepted as indicating the general science of signs, Bachtin never used this term for his own research, thereby distinguishing it, for example, from Ju.M. Lotman's. The dialogic character of the relationship between these two levels of investigation, and, consequently, the scientific commitment of philosophy of language and the philosophical foundation of semiotics, clearly emerges from the connotation of philosophy of language as metasemiotics.

As Peirce demonstrates, a *sign* or *representamen* is such because it stands to somebody for something, its object, in some respect, insofar as it creates in the mind of that person "an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign", i.e. an interpretant (*CP* 2.228). The sign's meaning then is an (open) class which includes that sign and all its possible interpretants. The mediating function between the meaning and object of the sign is in turn obtained through the mediation of other signs. A sign, says Peirce, exists as "thirdness", that is, it presupposes a triadic relationship between itself, its object and the interpreting thought, it too a sign. A sign always plays the role of third party, for it mediates between the interpretant sign and its object.

We mentioned the sign's enrichment as a consequence of its outings to the exterior in search of itself, and of the disguises used to affirm its identity: but a semiotical debasement and devaluation may also be verified. And such enrichment or debasement is always connected to relations with other signs. In any case they are never equal exchange relations typical of the signal (on this aspect Bakhtin-Voloshinov's analyses are elucidating) where, by contrast to the sign, there is a one to one

correspondence between the signifier and the signified. More exactly, the meaning of a signal is the class which contains that signal and its interpretants in relations of mere substitution (the red of a traffic light has a single meaning, is a signal, i.e., its meaning is the class of meanings that limit themselves to substituting the color red: "Stop" in the graphic or phonic form, a policeman with outstretched arms, etc.).

Signs too contain the factor of signality and its correlate, self-identity, but they are not accounted for as signs in terms of such factors alone. To comprehend a sign is not to merely recognize the stable elements constantly repeating themselves. Signs are characterized by their semantic and ideological flexibility which makes them continually available to new and different contexts. Signality and self-identity are overcome by the characteristic features of signs: changeability, ambivalence and multi-voicedness:

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)

It is in this sense that the sign is a dialectic unit of self-identity and otherness. The actual sense of a sign consists in something more which is added to those elements that permit its identification. It is made of those semantico-ideological aspects that in a certain sense are unique, are peculiar to it and indissolubly connected to the situational context of the semiosis in course. Bakhtin (Voloshinov 1929) insists on the dialectic relation between these two aspects of the sign indicated with the terms "meaning" (all 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 requiring active comprehension, a response, a viewpoint and are connected to the specific situation in which semiosis occurs). With reference to the verbal sign in particular and considering the dialectic relation between "theme" and "meaning", observes Bakhtin:

[...] 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)

The distinction between "meaning" and "theme" finds correspondence in Peirce's subdivision of the interpretant into immediate and dynamical interpretant. The immediate interpretant is fixed by use and tradition, it is given by the correct deciphering of the sign, by its recognition, "and is ordinarily called the meaning of the sign" (CP 4. 536). The dynamical interpretant "is the *actual effect* which the Sign, as a Sign, *really determines*" (*ibid.*, italics my own). Considering the relation to both the dynamical interpretant and dynamical object, that is, to "the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign in its Representation" (*ibid.*), the sign is never something repetitive in Peirce's conception either. Each time it appears it takes its place in a new semiosical act. The sign is consequently continually renewed, so that its interpretant is never established once and for all: this is the Peircean principle of unlimited semiosis, of the unending succession of interpretants (connected to Peirce's conception of the hypothetical and approximative nature of knowledge subtending his "cognitive semiotics").

In the light of the Bakhtinian and Peircean conception of sign, we may now construct a far more complex and powerful semiotic model which is consequently far more capable of explaining the complexity of signs, or better of semiosis, than any other model which limits itself to the breakdown of the sign into two perfectly correlated parts, that is, the *signifiant* and the *signifié*. The reference is obviously to the semiologies of Saussurean matrix which not only, as we were saying

above, conceive the sign in terms of equal exchange between the *signifiant* and the *signifié*, but which, as says Bakhtin, are only aware of two poles in linguistic life between which all linguistic and (taking linguistics as the model) all semiological phenomena are expected to be placed: these two poles are the unitary system (*langue*) and the individual realization of that system by the single user (*parole*).

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, even in the case of natural signs, for it is only in a social context that signs exist as signs. A comprehensive and unitary view of signs must keep account of concrete communicative contexts, social interaction, and of the relation to specific values, ideological orientations, etc. In short, signs are inseparable from what, together with Bakhtin, we have called "theme" as distinct from "meaning". Theme is unitary and as such cannot be broken down into its component parts. This is possible, if at all, in the case of "meaning", viewed as the "technical apparatus" for the accomplishment of "theme" .

Often in the study of signs the focus is not on the sign as a whole, but on its constitutive parts as in linguistics which provides categories for the definition of the elements and internal units of an utterance. Even the category of "sentence" refers to an element-unit and not to a whole. As Bakhtin continually reminds us, from 1929 onward, all categories of linguistics fail to account for single words when they coincide with the whole utterance, given that they are only able to define words as sign elements, as potential discourse elements, and not as whole signs. This criticism is not only relevant to taxonomical linguistics, but is extensible to Chomskyan linguistics: the latter works on sentences considered independently of their socio-ideological orientation as well of the heterogeneity of the speaker's linguistic community.

There is a point, however, where Bakhtin's position is different from Peirce's: Peirce's semiotics is closely connected to the theory of knowledge, it is a "cognitive semiotics", while Bakhtin's semiotics—or better, his "philosophy of language" (he prefers the latter expression for his reflexions on the problem of sign, text and intertextuality using it both in his 1929 book as well as in his writings of 1959-1960 on the problem of the text)—is closely connected to literary criticism and could be described as literary semiotics. This description is appropriate not because Bakhtin's semiotics is applied to literature, but because *it uses literature as its viewpoint*. In fact, according to Bakhtin, the kaleidoscopic nature of literary language enables us to perceive in language that which escapes the linguistics of communication which concentrates on the sphere of the Same. Through the language of literature we are finally able to perceive the alien word—not only the word of the other person but also the word of others as it resounds within the word of the "same" subject.

The Centrality of Dialogue in Bakhtin's philosophy of language

The original 1929 version of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (which only earned international fame with the 1963 edition after years of isolation from official culture) has now (1997) been made available in Italian translation in a volume entitled *Problemi dell'opera di Dostoevskij*, being the first translation of Bakhtin's 1929 monograph ever. The appendix includes two brief unpublished writings by Bakhtin relative to the reelaboration of *Dostoevsky* , of particular interest to studies on the transition to the 1963 edition.

This is Bakhtin's first important study where literature emerges as a privileged observatory in his philosophical design, a sort of epicentre from which irradiated all the other directions in which his research was to develop. Bakhtin sees in Dostoevsky's artistic creation the literary embodiment of his philosophico-moral ideal: responsibility as a *participative-responsive attitude* to the truth of

others and also as dialogue with self. To return to this edition which is centred on the notion of "dialogue", means to reconstruct Bakhtin's theoretical development even better, which also means, in the first place, to re-examine the notion of dialogue, which has often been misunderstood even by Bakhtin's most important interpreters (see Ponzio's presentation to the volume).

The aim of questa presentation (entitled "Dialogue and Polyphony in Dostoevsky: How Bakhtin Has Been Misunderstood") is to show that in Bakhtin's view dialogue consists of the fact that one's own word alludes always, despite itself, whether it knows it or not, to the word of the other. Dialogue is not an initiative taken by self. As clearly emerges from the novels of Dostoevsky the human person does not enter dialogue out of respect for the other, but also and above all out of spite for the other.

The word is dialogic because of its *passive involvement* with the word of the other. Dialogue is not a synthesis of multiple viewpoints to which, on the contrary, it is refractory. The self is enmeshed dialogically in otherness as the "grotesque body" is enmeshed in the body of the other. Dialogue and body are closely interconnected. There cannot be dialogicality among disembodied minds. Unlike platonic dialogue and similarly to Dostoevsky for Bakhtin dialogue is not cognitive or functional to truth but ethical insofar as it is grounded in responsibility without alibis for the other.

Furthermore, Bakhtinian dialogue excludes all forms of equality, reciprocity between self and you; the dialogic relationship is asymmetrical, unreversible. If we agree on this, then the main interpreters of Bakhtin–Todorov, Holquist, Wellek, etc.–have all fundamentally misunderstood the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue. This also emerges from the fact that they compare his work to dialogue in Plato, Buber, Mukarovsky. Above all, they understand dialogue in the abused sense of encounter, agreement, convergence, compromise, synthesis.

It is symptomatic that Todorov should have replaced the Bakhtinian term "dialogue" with "intertextuality"; and "metalinguistics" with "translinguistics". *Intertextuality* reduces dialogue to a relationship between utterances, while translinguistics reduces the critical instance of metalinguistics to a sectorial specialization which, contrary to linguistics, focuses on discourse rather than on language (*lingua, langue*). This minimizes–indeed annuls–the revolutionary reach of Bakhtin's thought: Bakhtin's "Copernican revolution" on a philosophical level and Dostoevsky's on an artistic level involve the human person in its wholeness, his/her life, thought, behavior.

By contrast with Kant's "critique of pure reason" and Sartre's "critique of dialectical reason", Bakhtin inaugurates a "critique of dialogical reason". Contrary to what Holquist maintains when he compares Bakhtin's conception of dialogue with Mukarovsky's, dialogue is not a convenient means of evidencing one's own viewpoint.

For Bakhtin dialogue is not the result of an initiative we decide to take, but rather it is imposed, something to which one is subjected. Dialogue is not the result of opening toward the other, but of the impossibility of closing as emerges from tragico-comical attempts at closing, at indifference. Similarly to Dostoevsky, dialogue in Bakhtin is the *impossibility of indifference* toward the other, it is one's unindifference–in ostentatious indifference, hostility, hatred–toward self. Even when unindifference degenerates into hatred, the other continues to count more than anything else. This is exactly what, says Bakhtin, the novel, as conceived by Dostoevsky, intends to demonstrate and make accessible on an artistic level: *the dialogic sphere of thinking human consciousness* .

In each act of "answering comprehension" not only do the surrounding environments of he who expresses himself and he who interprets interact but also their axiological horizons. However, the

dialectic between "self" and "other" does not intervene solely at the level of interpretation: it is active at the level of formulation, thereby conditioning expression form and content.

The more a sign is complex, endowed with tradition and values linking it to the past and opening it to future translations (intended not only in the literal sense but also as interpretation, as dialogic interaction between signs and interpretant), the more difficult it is to establish the boundaries of a sign taken in its wholeness. An example is offered by literary texts whose signifying potential is enhanced by the extra-textual context. The context does not arbitrarily add new senses from the outside, but senses already present in the text are made to emerge with each new temporal and axiological interval thanks to the relation of alterity and extralocality between extra-literary context and literary text. A great literary text does not flourish within the confines of its contemporaneity. In addition to being dialogically enriched in subsequent epochs, it is rooted in the past, in the history of its own genre, in the values and ideologies that it transmits and reorganizes artistically, etc .

Texts, whether written or oral, verbal or nonverbal do not have precise boundaries, they are not defined once and for all. A text's specificity and singularity is not determined by the elements of a system that can be repeated, but by the sequence of texts (those preceding it insofar as they belong to the same discourse genre and those which it encounters once it has been produced). The text is connected to other (unrepeatable) texts by dialogic and dialectic relations. All this is described by Bakhtin (1959-1961) in his writings on the text as the problem of the semantic (dialectic) and dialogic interconnection between texts inside the boundaries of a given sphere, and as the historical interconnection of texts. The text is not given, it is a dialogic relation, a relation between texts which in their turn are many dialogic relations again; its boundaries are evanescent, in each new intertextual relation it is always more or less "other" as regards a previously given "identity". The text is identical to itself only in the case of mechanical reproduction where it is not considered from the viewpoint of its specific sense or signification (the serial reproduction of a text, a reprint, etc.). On the other hand, the reproduction of a text as *text*, that is, a new reading, a performance, a mere quotation, a new form of fruition of the text, transforms it into something individual, unique, non repetitive and unrepeatable.

Literary writing surpasses the monologism of language, its limited dialogism in the direction of polylogism. Literary writing is this tendency toward polylogism. Literary activity can only properly begin once the author distances himself from the event he is describing and takes up his place outside his own utterance, thereby achieving a situation of "extralocality" where the relation of otherness is maintained between self and other impeding recomposition of the totality. Complementary to the otherness of writing is the dispossession of self, its decomposition and escape from return to self. The condition of being on the outside is constitutive of the creative activity of literature: irony, indirect communication, extralocality are different aspects of the same phenomenon: the otherness of writing.

Dialogue in literary writing—especially in the polyphonic novel—has different characteristics compared with dialogue outside literature. In literature the dialogic potential of language is experimented and pushed to the extreme limit where exchange, relative and opposite otherness, subordination of *signifiant* to *signifié*, where the Subject, the Truth, the economic, instrumental and productive character of language are set aside by a word that is not functional and that presupposes relations of extralocality and absolute otherness. The otherness of writing expresses the otherness of that which is not writing, but which, similarly to writing, aims at finding expression in an autonomous, self-signifying and non-functional word. A word that holds good for itself, that is constitutively free, *kath'autò*. Bakhtin (1970-1971) speaks of the "peculiarity of polyphony", of the "unfinalizability of polyphonic dialogue", specifying that it is developed by unfinished personalities

and not by psychological subjects: personalities characterized by their lack of incarnation (by movement in the direction of excess).

The concept of carnival in Bakhtin's work and in contemporary thought

We have just described the importance of dialogue in Bakhtin's thought, but the concept of *carnival* is no less important. *Dialogue* and *carnival* are two categories that characterize Bakhtin's work. Even if "carnival" and its complementary concept "carnivalization" were only to be introduced in the 1963 edition of *Dostoevsky*, they were already present in *Rabelais* (which may at least be traced back to the forties) as well as in Bakhtin's studies on the origin of the novel. On the concept of carnival let us now make the following considerations remembering also current interpretations:

1. The text on Rabelais is an organic part of Bakhtin's work which counts books signed by Voloshinov and Medvedev. The distinction made in *Freudianism* (Voloshinov 1927) between official ideology and non official ideology is developed in *Rabelais* in relation to Humanism and Renaissance literature considered in its vital link with the low genres of Medieval comico-popular culture. The focus in *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* (Voloshinov 1929) on the sign in general and not only the verbal sign is developed in *Rabelais* which analyzes the transformation of verbal and nonverbal-carnival signs in high European literature. Furthermore, it is significant that on returning to his book on Dostoevsky for the 1963 edition, Bakhtin added a chapter on the genesis of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel whose roots are traced back to the serio-comical genres of popular culture. The polyphonic novel is considered as the greatest expression of "carnivalized literature". Relatedly to *Rabelais* Bakhtin works on the prehistory of the novelistic word which he identifies in the comicality and parodization of popular genres. Furthermore, his conception of the sign, particularly verbal signs, as being plurivocal, the expression of centrifugal forces in linguistic life, is confirmed and developed in *Rabelais* where he analyzes the language of the public place and the double character-at one and the same time both praising and offensive-of vulgar expression. There is, for example, a close connection between Bakhtin's reference (cf. Voloshinov 1929) to Dostoevsky's notes on an animated conversation formed of a single vulgar word used with different meanings and his analysis in *Rabelais* of the ductility and ambiguity of sense in the language of the grotesque body and its residues, in the complex phenomenon called carnival. Finally, *Rabelais* is of central importance in the whole of Bakhtin's theorizations. By contrast with oversimplifying and suffocating interpretations of Marxism, Bakhtin develops Marx when he maintains that the human can only be fully realized where the reign of necessity comes to an end. Consequently, an effectively alternative social system to capitalism is one which measures social richness in terms of "free time" for one's otherness and for the otherness of others and not of "work time": the "time of festivity" as discussed by Bakhtin which is closely connected to the "great time" of literature.

2. What carnival is for Bakhtin he tells us himself in *Rabelais*. He uses this term to refer to that complex phenomenon, present in all cultures, formed by the system of attitudes, conceptions and verbal and nonverbal signs oriented in the sense of comicality and joyous living. Carnival does not only concern Western culture, nor the Russian spirit, but any world culture insofar as it is human. Today we are witnessing the spread through world communication of the ideology of production and efficiency which contrasts completely with the carnevalesque vision. This difference also concerns the exasperated individualism of production connected with competitive logic. This is contrasted by the conception of the grotesque body founded on intercorporeity, on the involvement of one's own body with the world and with the body of others. But even though it is dominant, the logic of production, individualism and efficiency has not eliminated man's constitutive inclination for nonfunctionality. The human is the nonfunctional and thanks to such a vocation the carnivalesque endures. That this is the case is testified by literary writing. The literary work like all literary works expresses the man's unwritten right to nonfunctionality. In Orwell's *1984*, ultimate

resistance to a productive and efficient social system is represented by literature. In this sense we may say that literature is and always will be carnivalized.

3) The human sciences may be described as such for a reason that goes beyond the fact that they deal with man. And hopefully "human" may still be considered as an evaluative and not descriptive adjective. The "human" sciences are the sciences that recognize man's right to nonfunctionality which should be at the basis of humanity's understanding of the signs, texts and works it produces. Human products without traces of nonfunctionality, useless details, do not exist. In this assertion of the nonfunctional man manifests his being an end in itself and not a means. A work's creativity expresses the condition of being an end in itself. In today's culture this can only be an individual expression, the expression of the single artist. On the contrary, in past cultural systems the lack of functionality, excess, the assertion of man and his products as an end in themselves found collective expression in carnival. Continuators of the Bakhtinian perspective should not be searched for among the authors of essays and scientific works, but among writers, especially novelists. Nor among the writers of this or this other country, but of world literature. Narrative, for example, is best developed in the direction of polyphony not only in Western authors (Pessoa, Bulgakov, Calvino, Kundera, ecc.), but especially in the Latin-American novel. To paraphrase Bakhtin, he did not invite scientists, critics or semioticians to celebrate his resurrection, but writers.

4. For all these reasons, Bakhtin's work on Rabelais is of central importance in contemporary culture. Even Bakhtin was aware of the development achieved by his thought system with his work on Rabelais. In fact, the second 1963 edition of *Dostoevsky* includes modifications and additions regarding the relationship between dialogue, novel and carnivalization. This book by Bakhtin has influenced and continues to influence developments in the human sciences, especially culturological studies, theory of literature and literary criticism. But works in literary writing have also been directly and indirectly inspired by Bakhtin's *Rabelais*. It is difficult to say where a writer gets his inspiration from, unless the author-man makes explicit statements which nevertheless need verification by confronting such statements with the work author-writer's work. But to stay within Italian borders, *Il nome della rosa* Umberto Eco, *Mistero Buffo* by Dario Fo and perhaps some of Italo Calvino's work's have at least breathed the atmosphere created by Bakhtin's exceptional work.

3. Rossi-Landi between *Ideologie* and *Scienze Umane*

The quarterly journal *Ideologie* was founded in the spring of 1967 by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, the director, and Mario Sabbatini, Giuseppe Di Siena, Augusto Illuminati, Romano Luperini, and Antonio Melis were some of the collaborators. The original editorial offices were located in Rome and Padua, first, and then in Florence. Responsibility for administration and distribution lay with the publisher, La Nuova Italia. Later on, in the Rome office, the journal gave life to a small editorial activity, that took the form of a book series linked to the journal by a common theoretical and ideological perspective. The general policy was "non academic and antispecialist". The journal and the collateral activities ended in 1972.

In the spring of 1979, the first number of another quarterly journal *Scienze umane* appeared. Also founded and directed by Rossi-Landi, it was published in Bari by Dedalo Editrice. The scientific committee consisted of Gaetano Kanisza, Enzo Morpurgo, Emanuele Rivero, Mario Sabbatini, Tullio Tentori and Paolo Valesio. The editorial offices were located in Bari under the direction of Augusto Ponzio. The sixth issue, distributed in December 1980, was its last, even though the journal had aroused considerable interest, had met with the approval of critics and had attracted new collaborators (such as Sergio Moravia, who would have been part of the scientific committee had an

attempt to continue publishing the magazine with an editor in Florence, Le Monnier, also not failed).

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 assembled together in the volume *Edizioni di Ideologie* under the title *Scritti Programmatici di Ideologie* (1972). This volume also contained some of the "Forewords" to the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" published in *Ideologie* starting with the twelfth issue (1970). The goal was to examine, demystify and redefine some of the concepts that are at the basis of the humanities or that are used in political circles and in related theoretical debates. Such topics as "Calcolatori e cervelli", "Corpo", "Progresso tecnologico", "Rivoluzione culturale", "Semiotica", "Razzismo" were among the entries debated.

The first editorial, "Per un rinnovamento della elaborazione ideologica", had already been printed in the journal "Il sedicesimo", 13, in the spring of 1968. On one hand, this editorial reiterated the list of subjects that the journal aimed to cover, and which was published in the first issue of *Ideologie*. On the other hand, it echoed the concept of "ideology" as it was analyzed and defined in the paper by Rossi-Landi entitled "Ideologia come progettazione sociale" 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 ("Editoriale", *Ideologie* 3, 1968, p. 1).

In his paper "Ideologia come progettazione sociale" Rossi-Landi brought to completion an important operation: he had managed to go beyond the pseudo-definition of ideology as *false conscience* that, in effect, is a negative evaluation of ideology (the definition is due to an extrapolation from the particular sense Marx and Engels had given to the concept, going still further back it is due to the pejorative connotation attached to the term coined by the "Ideologues").

Rossi Landi's overcoming rested on the interpretation of ideology as *social programming*. Such an interpretation permitted the preservation and even the theoretical justification of the meaning of ideology as false consciousness. It placed it, however, in a wider horizon that, albeit referring to ideology in general, did not give a merely descriptive or relativistic interpretation. Thus, ideology was characterized (negatively) as "false thought and false praxis" while it was examined as "social programming". This, in turn, made it possible to address the issues in a manner that acknowledged the inevitable historical conditioning of all ideological discourses. At the same time Rossi-Landi's approach was undertaking a project leading to the critique and the dialectic overcoming of false consciousness and false praxis, and, hence, toward the recuperation of a positive evaluation of ideology as *revolutionary* thought.

Ideology was placed by Rossi-Landi within the framework of the totality most relevant to it, i.e the alienated human condition. It was a move entirely in synchrony with the logical-historical method adopted by *Ideologie*, in opposition to specialistic separatism and the tendency to abstract the object of study from the totality to which it belongs. And it is the method used in the collection of essays Rossi-Landi published in 1968 under the title of *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (now

1992) in his earlier (1967) volume on ideology, and in a subsequent volume of 1972, *Semiotica e ideologia* (now 1994), that expanded his study of ideology by considering it in necessary relation with sign systems. Indeed a doctrine of ideologies can only become reality through the mediation of semiotics, since ideologies transmit themselves by signs that are then scrutinized and demystified through the study of sign systems. By the same token, Rossi-Landi in the foreword (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. [...]

According to Rossi-Landi, the discourse that has ideology as its object fits within a general semiotics understood as a Hegelo-Marxian science, based on the logical-historical method, on the use of abstractions which isolate historically real totalities but also join them to larger totalities, thereby determining the specific structures. Against specialism, the separatism of the various disciplines studying sign systems, semiotics must fulfill itself, Rossi-Landi believed, as a global science 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, thus rendering explicit the social programming that presides over the system. Said differently, semiotics does not only foreground the programs that sustain, even unconsciously, human behavior, but precisely because of its totalizing perspective, because it brings to awareness the place of the programs in the social system—thus making evident their historical and social specification, their political function—affirms itself as a critique of sign systems, as the formulation of new and more human projects.

In this sense, the semiotic study of ideologies transcends the limit usually found in research on social communication (Rossi-Landi in those years had in mind positions such as those of the psychiatrist Schefflen and the semiotician Hall). It is a prime requirement of the semiotic study of the programs of social communication—a study which assumes each sign system as a totality whose functioning does not only depend on "the play of its parts, but on the play of the totality as a part", so that each program would result controlled by a higher social level—it is important, for such a study, to pose the problem of the interests governing the integration of sign systems in a given social organization, the problem of the conditions of power. That is, the problem of ideologies that, in so far as they are ideologies of the dominant class, signify and organize behavior in a certain manner. In the light of this premise, Rossi-Landi defined the dominant class ("Programmi della comunicazione", an entry in the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico", *Ideologie* 16-17, p. 34, now in Rossi-Landi 1994: 203-204) as the class that owns the control of the emission and circulation of verbal and nonverbal messages constituting a given community.

Semiotics—as it was conceived by Rossi-Landi starting with the 1965 essay "Il linguaggio come lavoro e mercato", which appeared in *Nuova Corrente* and was later republished as a book with the same title in 1968—recognizes the existence of non-ideological spaces of social reality. By unmasking the ideology that underlies—both in the realm of common behavior and in the scientific or literary realm—what is presented as "natural", "spontaneous", as "a given", as "realistic", semiotics shows the inescapable placement of every behavior either in the program of the maintenance and reproduction of the class society, or in the program of its critique and of its undoing. And thus it becomes dealienating, revolutionary praxis.

An illegitimate use of abstraction and the relation between "abstract object" and "totality" consists in believing that an abstract object carries and exhausts the characteristics of a totality otherwise ignored or left in the dark. As Rossi-Landi shows in "Note di semiotica", originally published in 1967 in *Nuova Corrente* and later in the 1972 book *Semiotica e Ideologia*, a fallacy of this type occurs when one does not distinguish between semiology and semiotics. The choice of "semiotics"

to indicate the general science of signs in the place of "semiology" does not depend purely on terminological preferences. Semiology as a study of sign systems—post and translinguistic—cannot 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 and until its connection with the general science of signs reveals itself to be in fact extrinsic as to the specification of its object and the determination of its method of analysis. To semiotics Rossi-Landi also devoted an entry in the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" (n. 12, pp. 38-44.)

Within a perspective according to which semiotics is the theoretical site where the specialization of the separate sciences is overcome, Rossi-Landi proposed to take in consideration the relations between production and verbal exchange and material and production exchange:

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. (Rossi-Landi 1994: 288).

Thus, it is in this direction that Rossi-Landi's research proceeds from *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, 1968—the title already shows the intent to consider together the two characteristics of human being as *loquens* and *laborans*—to *Linguistics and Economics* of 1975 and the essays of his last book, *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*, published in 1985. His plan was, in one sense, to develop the Marxian approach to commodities as a communicative fact and not as a relation between things. But to the extent that this approach enabled him to consider political economy as a part of semiotics, Rossi-Landi was also able to study linguistic phenomena in accordance with the categories of the science of economics in its Ricardian-Marxian phase. Unlike marginalistic economy, this allowed him to take reflexion on the exchange and linguistic use (the level of 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 in 1972 (pp. 43-103) to the study of the relation between material work and linguistic work. The essay was later republished in *Linguistics and Economics*, and is now also available in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*. More specifically, Rossi-Landi's goal was to study the relation between material artifacts and linguistic artefacts by way of a method of analysis that he referred to as "homologic method".

This method consists not in identifying immediate and superficial relations of resemblance, as is done in analogy, but in identifying homologies, that is, resemblances of a structural and genetic order between objects considered as separate and associated with different fields of knowledge. Material and linguistic artefacts, despite their apparent separation and different disciplinary provenance, can be considered as parts of the same totality because they are the result of human work. Thus, the homologic method contributed to the critique of the hypostatization of different parts existing separately from the totality to which they constitutively belong. In so doing it also aided and abetted the discussion about the surpassing of 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 (*Ideologie* 16-17, 1971: 62; now Rossi-Landi 1985: 53).

The homology between material productions and linguistic production which Rossi-Landi discovered and attentively analyzed can today be confirmed by the more recent developments in cybernetics. As Rossi-Landi himself observed in a seminar which took place in 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 the computer, a hardware, in the technical language, that is a material body whose elaborated matter is constitutive of the computer, combines with a software, that is, a program, an ensemble of logically expressible linguistic relations merge. Therefore the non-linguistic, the objectual and the linguistic of a high definition of elaboration have merged one into the other almost under our very eyes." (Rossi-Landi 1985b: 171)

In the 1967 essay that opened the first issue of *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi placed ideology within its appropriate totality—the alienated human situation—and examined it with respect to two other components of the same totality: false conscience and false praxis. Ideology, Rossi-Landi maintained, thought of in reference to the two latter objects could be described as social programming.

Starting with the specification that the reality of alienation is socio-historical, Rossi-Landi considered ideology on the basis of the following hypothesis:

In the complex exchange there is 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 falsification, a general malfunction in the formation and the unfolding of history (*Ideologie* 1: 3)

As I have mentioned, Rossi-Landi's merit on the question of the specification of the concept of "ideology" consists in having shown that, although one may say that ideology is false consciousness, it does not exhaust itself in the latter. The two concepts do not coincide. Rossi-Landi identifies two types of differences between them: a *difference of degree* and a *qualitative difference*.

The first consists of the fact that false consciousness is a less developed and determined ideology, ideology is the more developed and determined consciousness. From this viewpoint, the relationship between false conscience and ideology corresponds to the relationship between consciousness and thought: there is false conscience at a low level of conceptual elaboration while ideology occurs at a higher level. More exactly, 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, and, in particular, the use of verbal language: ideology is false consciousness that uses sign elaboration and verbal forms in a specific language. Both differences may be summarized by stating that ideology differs from false consciousness in so far 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 parenthesis he adds:

(In Hegelian terms, it is possible, therefore, to have a phenomenology of false consciousness; of ideology, a psychology—and perhaps today one could say, a semiotics; phenomenology may only concern itself with that which precedes language).

But ideology, according to Rossi-Landi is not only 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 separation of the praxis and vice-versa. Therefore, ideology is false thought and false

praxis. The dialectic between false consciousness, false thought or ideology, on one hand, and false praxis, on the other, is connected to the fact that ideology manifests itself as social programming. In order to understand ideology, once again it becomes necessary to consider it in the totality to which it belongs. According to Rossi-Landi,

One is always truly dealing with a separation of the parts—and in this case originally two parts—of a totality. The totality is grasped in two different phases of its complications, 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 placed against a 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 a thought which would be false because 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 would take pleasure on being on its own, independently of its relationships with praxis, in the property of not being false: so that on itself, and only on itself alone, it would be possible to measure and denounce false thought. (*Ideologie* 1: 7)

Every ideology is social programming and the consideration of the dialectic between conscience and praxis allows Rossi-Landi to specify the difference between an innovative or revolutionary planning and a conservative or reactionary planning. Thought, action and the social programs that tend to draw together consciousness and praxis are revolutionary; the social programming that tends to create obstacles to this is conservative.

The editorial in the third issue, "Per un rinnovamento dell'elaborazione ideologica", rehearses once again the concept of ideology as false thought and false praxis necessarily realizing themselves in some social programming, or in short, in a design proposed or suffered, consciously or not, having as its goal the historical construction of society. The doctrine of ideologies is presented as a general science of the socio-historical domain. And this is expressed by the very subtitle of the journal - "Quaderni di storia contemporanea"—that appeared in the inaugurating issues. In the editorial, Rossi-Landi confirmed the ideological character of the journal, which he saw as working toward an innovative, revolutionary, disalienating programming. In his text he, then, revisits Marxian critique, inserting it within the dialectic of its particular totality, i.e. capitalist society in the phase of high industrial development, and enlarges on it, developing it as critique of the superstructure and complementing the critique of the economic structure. In his analysis, Marxian thought is, therefore, an exhaustive critique of the techniques of the economic, social, psychological and linguistic integration elaborated by the system. In this fashion, ideological demystification becomes closely linked not only with the realistic description of the totality of the neocapitalist system, but also with the conscious work of ideological elaboration. To summarize all of this, the editorial of the third issue of *Ideologie* suggested one phrase: critique of the humanities. In hindsight the choice underscores the continuity, despite the many differences, between *Ideologie* and the other journal Rossi-Landi would later also found, which was called *Scienze umane*.

The editorial of issue 9-10, entitled "Rivoluzione e studio", describes in 1970 several tendencies of Western Europe's neo-capitalist society, locating them in the total setting of the world political situation. Those tendencies today seem fairly evident given their stage of development. They are: the increase in capitalistic stability, the progressive extension of social democracy, the eclipse of communism, the internal subdivisions of the working class with respect to new types of work, a greater separation between producer and product.

On the latter score, particularly insightful are the observations on the progressive softening of the direct finalization of individual activity toward production, leading to the phase in which activity appears to be detached from production. This is imputed to organizational and technological developments of the supra-individual production in neo-capitalist society that not only frees individuals from the daily necessity of production, but increases, amplifies and makes even more

mystifying the obligation to be productive. So much so that it creates the illusion that it might be possible to live without having to work, without being immediately productive, without being forced to work by an identifiable owner on whom one directly depends.

In relation to such aspects—made blatant today by the growth of the service sector and, especially, by developments in communication and automatization—it is worth recalling that in those years Rossi-Landi was giving prominence in his essays to the labor dimension implicit in language and to the study of the relationships between signs and social reproduction. Human beings also work linguistically, and the work does not always unfold in a known and intentional manner.

In various entries of the "Dizionario teorico-ideologico" ("Lavoro e attività", "Ominazione", "Scambio non-mercantile", "Strutture del lavoro"), reprinted in *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985), Rossi-Landi had analyzed the concept of work, examined the very important role of work in the process of hominization, and dwelt on the difference between work and activity. He had pointed out that if the distinction between work and activity has to do with the fact that the former, unlike the latter, is planned, intentional and inscribed into a program, one must however not believe that there cannot be work without awareness, without an understanding of the goals and the programs. Work is the execution of programs, and this is what makes it different from activity: but these programs may be conscious or unconscious. This has obvious implications for the notion of "alienating work" and for that of "linguistic alienation" ("alienated linguistic work"), and it sends back to the Marxian analysis of work in capitalist society. But it also concerns the possibility of speaking, as Freud did, of "dream work". Admitting the possibility of a labor whose program is unknown allows one, according to Rossi-Landi, to envisage "a zone of special contact for the Marxian use of Freud or the Freudian use of Marx" (Rossi-landi, "Lavoro e attività" *Ideologie* 15 (1971): 22).

During the time he worked for *Ideologie*, Rossi-Landi wrote his most important texts, which he rewrote and enlarged in subsequent works. A long essay on the conception of language according to Sapir and Whorf, with direct reference to the study of native Amerindian languages (Navajo, Hopi, Wintu), "Teorie della relatività linguistica" (*Ideologie* 4: 3-69), was later republished in his 1972 volume, *Semiotica e ideologia*, and in English, as a book entitled *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity* in 1973.

His interest in the theory of ideology resulted in the book *Ideologia*, published in 1978 and expanded in 1982. Of particular value in this book is the section on "Sign Systems, Ideologies and the Production of Consensus", because of the connection it establishes between Rossi-Landi's concept of ideology and Gramsci's thought. According to Rossi-Landi, Gramsci, although in pre-semiotic terms, had already identified the role that sign systems play in social reproduction and in the relationship between "structure" and "superstructure". It may be said that Rossi-Landi's meditation on ideology represents the development of Gramscian intuitions (on the relation Rossi-Landi/Gramsci, cf. Ponzio 1991: 205-291). Placing the Gramscian concept of The New Prince in semiotic terms Rossi-Landi wrote in *Ideologia*:

The fundamental structure of the New Prince is that of the co-present verbal and nonverbal sign systems, reorganized among themselves by the force of social programming. Thus, and in the manner indicated, a social practice maintained by political power may promote and carry out a new ideology. (1982: 76-77)

The phase subsequent to *Ideologie* in the career of Rossi-Landi is marked, as indicated, by his involvement with *Scienze umane* (which lasted two years). The text entitled "Ai lettori" which opened the first number of *Scienze umane* (April 1979), after having pointed out that in Italy there still was no journal that focused on the human sciences interdisciplinarily, emphasized the ideal continuities between this magazine and the work undertaken between 1967 and 1972 by *Ideologie*.

Rossi-Landi promised to succeed in carrying out, even in this new magazine, the type of interdisciplinary probing that had formed, under the aspect of a critique of the social sciences, the most significant and lasting aspect of *Ideologie*. The end of the publication of *Ideologie* was thus related to the end of the historical moment in which it was created and to the cessation (and in some cases the perversion) of near and distant ideological models which, during the years of *Ideologie*, had seemed reasonable to let oneself be inspired by or, at least, be able to refer to.

Today *Ideologie* would have to be re-examined in the light of the historical climate the beginning of the 1990s represent. By comparing these two journals, both no longer existing, it could perhaps be the case that, more than the "scientific and concentrated formulation" of *Scienze umane*, one will end up missing the theoretical-ideological commitment that animated *Ideologie*.

4. Schaff's Theory of Meaning, Knowledge and Ideology

To free ourselves from what Adam Schaff calls "sign fetishism" (referring to the Marxist notion of the "fetishism of commodities"), we must view signs in connection with the question of the human individual and of social relations. To give up a reified conception of the relations between signs as well as between signifier and signified, it is necessary to consider the sign-relation as a relation among men who use and produce signs in specific social conditions. All analyses should start from the "social condition of the individual" and from the notion of the individual as a social product. This would prevent us from considering communication as a set of relations among originally separate and abstract subjects, while removing idealistic and materialistic-mechanistic explanations of the communication process.

The subjective-idealistic and materialistic-dialectic models differ from each other in their interpretation of the active role, which both (in contrast to mechanistic materialism) assign to the subject and consequently to language in the cognitive process. Schaff believes that, in comparison to naive materialism, materialistic-dialectic theory recognizes the superiority of language theories that stress the active function of language in the cognitive process (even if from an idealistic viewpoint) and the connection between language and *Weltanschauung*, between language and the "image of reality" (think of Humboldt, Sapir, and Whorf). However, in a Marxist perspective, the human being should be considered as the result of social relations and language as the product of social praxis. This interpretation recognizes the active function of the cognitive subject and at the same time maintains that, far from being the starting point of the cognitive process, the subjective element is the result—and a complex one at that—of specific social influences. In a certain sense, the subject may be considered as the resultant construction of cognitive processes.

The connection between language theory and knowledge theory is evident if we acknowledge interaction between language and thought, as well as the indivisibility of meaning and concept. Schaff recalls Lenin's "On dialectic" (in which the latter outlines the program for Marxist gnoseology with reference to the history of language) as sufficient evidence of this, maintaining that

when in accordance with the materialistic analysis of the cognitive process we consider thought and human consciousness as linguistic thought, as thought made of language (Marx maintained that language is "my consciousness and that of others"), it is evident that any analysis of the cognitive process must also be the analysis of the linguistic process, without which thought is simply impossible. (1969: 20-21)

"Pure" thought which subsequently finds expression in a given language does not exist; on the contrary, there exists a language-thought process. Any form of human speech implies the use of a particular language; thinking always takes place in a certain language. By contrast with the school

of Wurzburg, Vygotsky demonstrated the unity of thought and language, and of meaning and concept, through experimental research in the formulation and development of conceptual thought.

Semantics and theory of knowledge are both implied whenever we ask the following questions: "What is meaning?", "What is the relation between meaning and the sign-vehicle?", "What is the relation between meaning and object?", "What kind of existence do we refer to when we say that meaning exists?", and so forth. On the other hand, all the problems dealt with by knowledge theory imply semantics insofar as they are problems concerning language. This does not imply that theory of knowledge should be exclusively a semantic analysis, or that language should be the sole object of philosophical research, as maintained by semantic philosophy. The Marxist theory of reflection clearly evidences all the implications existing between semantics and theory of knowledge, rejecting schematic attitudes typical of conventional and idealistic relativistic standpoints. Certain philosophical trends—Cassirer's neo-Kantism, neopositivism, Russell's logical atomism, the linguistic philosophy of the school of Oxford connected to Wittgenstein's later production, the semantic analysis of the school of Warsaw, etc.—deserve recognition for having maintained and demonstrated that language is not merely the instrument, but also the object of philosophical research.

The theory of knowledge is not the only theory in need of support from studies on language. The philosophy of the human individual—to the extent that it deals with the function of the individual in social relations and with problems of traditional ethics, though rejecting any form of moralism—must inevitably consider that individual behavior is conditioned by society mainly through the influence of language. This leads us to a new vision of issues related to language: the problem of the connection between language and ideology, concept and stereotype, language and social praxis. On considering the concepts of "choice", "responsibility", and "individual freedom", we need to take into account the "tyranny of words", the problem of "linguistic alienation". We should reject the idealistic and conservative viewpoint which refers contradictions and individual alienation to a semantic origin, thus maintaining (like the young Hegelians) that man can be "set free" by simply clarifying the meaning of words and replacing false ideas with true ones.

The relation between Marxist dialectic and formal logic clearly evidences the connection between theory of knowledge and language analysis. Schaff shows how the word "contradiction" has two different meanings, depending on whether it is considered from a Marxist dialectical or formal logical viewpoint; this implies that Marxist dialectic does not exclude the logical principle of non-contradiction. From the viewpoint of formal logic, the term "contradiction" signifies a relation between two sentences or utterances, one of which maintains that something is in a given relation with an object at a given moment, while the other denies the relation. On the contrary, from the viewpoint of Marxist dialectic "contradiction" means "unity of antithesis"—that is, unity of contrasting tendencies, aspects and forces; in this way, dialectic is the constitutive element of every phenomenon.

When Marx maintains that at a certain level of development the productive material forces of society contradict existing relations of production, the word "contradiction" does not express the relation between a positive and negative judgment (as in formal logic); rather, it implies the juxtaposition of opposed and yet complementary tendencies which simultaneously form the unity of a certain system and function as the mainspring of its transformation. In this case, the word "contradiction"—notwithstanding the misunderstandings to which it can give rise—when intended as an objective rejection of the logical principle of non-contradiction, has a specific meaning which justifies its use. In this particular case, the word "contradiction" underlies a contrast characterized by inadequacy and discordance such as to interfere with the functioning of the social mechanism to the point of causing its collapse.

A central point in Schaff's analysis of the relation between dialectic and the principle of non-contradiction is his thesis that to consider movement as a confutation of the logical principle of non-contradiction is unfounded. Engels too falls into this trap. Schaff observes that the following dilemma is a false dilemma: either we acknowledge the existence of the fundamental laws of formal logic and deny movement or we acknowledge movement and deny these laws. This dilemma ensues from interpreting movement as an objective confutation of the logical principle of non-contradiction, as something which is and is not at the same time in the same place. Schaff establishes a connection between the fact that Marx and Engels accepted the Hegelian interpretation of movement (as something which is and is not at the same time in the same place) and the level of development of mathematics, particularly differential calculus. Newton's and Leibniz's conception of the infinitesimal entity, considered to be a quantity equal to and different from zero, strengthened the influence on Marx and Engels of the Eleatic-Hegelian principles concerning movement.

Today we know that the relation between Marx and mathematics in his day was not that described by Schaff in 1955. Thanks to the publication of Marx's *Mathematical Manuscripts* (It. trans. by Ponzio 1975), we are now familiar with Marx's critical analyzes of Newton's and Leibniz's "mystical" differential calculus, of D'Alembert's and Euler's rationalistic method, and of Lagrange's purely algebraic method. On criticizing Newton's and Leibniz's differential calculus, Marx highlights the presence of metaphysical notions in their theory and the use of procedures which oppose the laws of mathematics. Though making use of Lagrange's work, Marx through such criticism reaches positions on his own account attained by such nineteenth-century mathematicians as Cauchy and Weierstrass, who accomplished the transition from a simple to a more profound and scientific stage of calculus.

According to Schaff, concept and meaning are two faces of the same phenomenon: thought and language. There is no meaning outside natural language or independently of linguistic signs. However, the verbal sign is closely connected not only to concept, but also to what Schaff calls the *stereotype*. It is related to beliefs, established opinion, emotional tendencies, group and class interests, and so forth. The stereotype is a specific reflection of reality related to specific linguistic signs; but since it involves emotional, volitive, and valuational elements, it plays a particular role not only in relation to cognitive processes, but also to praxis. The stereotype is not simply a category of logical thought; it is also a pragmatic category. From language we receive concepts from a given society in the course of history; in the same way we receive stereotypes which convey specific tendencies, behavioral patterns, and reactions. This means that speech is always more or less ideological, since it is connected to social praxis.

Schaff maintains that reflexion on the stereotype is characterized by a high degree of "intrusion of the subjective factor" in the form of emotional, volitive, and evaluative elements. This "subjective factor", however, is social and not individual in nature; it is linked to interests of social groups (social classes, ethnic groups which speak the same language, and so forth). Seen in these terms, the "subjective factor" is present in any form of reflexion on reality as well as in scientific knowledge. Schaff writes:

Science and ideology are closely connected to each other, in spite of those pedants who would like to separate them. In any case, since social praxis, which produces and promotes the development of language, is the common basis for both the relatively objective knowledge of the world and for attitudes of evaluation, a genetic link exists. (1969: 127)

Schaff singles out the following relation between stereotypes and ideology: it is not possible to identify stereotypes with ideology directly, but the latter could not subsist without stereotypes.

We may also deal with problems concerning ideology and the "subjective factor" of human knowledge—where the subject, as we have seen, is viewed as a social rather than an individual

product—from the viewpoint of the sociology of knowledge. The latter, in fact, acknowledges the subject as a socially produced and conditioned individual. As Schaff frequently states, the sociology of knowledge derives from Marxism, and particularly from structure and superstructure theory. It is also directly related to gnoseology and theory of knowledge.

Schaff divides definition of the concept of ideology into three groups to avoid ambiguity and equivocation: (a) the genetic definition which examines the conditions of development of ideology; (b) the structural definition which attempts to define the specific character of ideology (and therefore to establish the differences, from the logical viewpoint, between the structure of ideological discourse and the structure of scientific discourse); and (c) the functional definition which underlines the functions fulfilled by ideology in relation to social, group, and class interests, etc.

Furthermore, Schaff believes in the necessity of distinguishing between the problem of the definition of ideology, on one hand, and of the value of ideology in relation to objective truth, on the other. Though related, these problems are different and should not be confused: definition of ideology is one thing, while its value in relation to the question of objective knowledge is another. Therefore, though apparently a definition, the statement "ideology is false consciousness" is not, in fact, a definition; rather, it is an answer to the question of the value of ideology. The main error made by Mannheim in his theory of ideology and his criticism of Marxism lies in his having mistaken the statement "ideology is false consciousness" for a definition of ideology.

We must also distinguish between the meaning Marx and Engels gave to the word "ideology" and the meaning it subsequently acquired in the Marxist tradition (especially from Lenin onward). Such expressions as "bourgeois ideology" and "ideological science" are very much in use; they characterize ideology on the basis of its function. In Schaff's opinion, therefore, we may give the following functional definition of ideology: by ideology we mean a system of opinions related to social development founded on a system of values; these opinions subtend specific attitudes and behavioral patterns in different objective situations.

Marx and Engels employed the word "ideology" in a narrow sense—that is, for bourgeoisie "ideology". Ruling class ideology aims at the preservation of society divided into classes. Consequently, it aims at concealing those contradictions that reveal the need of transformation in the current structures of productive relations. Bourgeois ideology is thus characterized by Marx and Engels as false consciousness with respect to objective consciousness. Marx and Engels consider ideology as false consciousness because they use the word in a narrow sense—that is, for bourgeois ideology—rather than in the broad sense where reference is to "ideology of the proletariat", "scientific ideology", etc. When Mannheim maintains that if ideology is false consciousness, then Marxist ideology is also false, he makes the mistake of identifying ideology in the narrow sense with ideology in the broad sense (cf. Schaff 1970).

We may summarize the above in the following points: (1) the statement "ideology is false consciousness" is not a definition; (2) when we speak of ideology as false consciousness, we are referring to bourgeois ideology which aims at the reproduction of class society and of social inequalities; and (3) use of such expressions as "ideology of the proletariat" and "bourgeois ideology" is now widespread. In Schaff's opinion, to consider these points means to be aware of the need to define the word ideology in such a way as to explain its different meanings, on one hand, and to suit the Marxist perspective, on the other. In this sense, ideology may be defined as either all those opinions formed under the influence of the interests of a specific class (genetic definition, or as those opinions useful to the defense of the interests of a specific class (functional definition).

It is by considering ideology in relation to its genesis and function that we can face the problem of the value of ideology better as related to the objective and scientific knowledge of reality.

We must say immediately that according to Schaff this problem cannot be dealt with on the basis of a linguistic-structural definition. Ideological discourse does not have a specific structure that distinguishes it from scientific discourse; it is an error to maintain that the difference between science and ideology lies in the structure of their propositions. According to this opinion, ideological discourse would mainly consist in evaluative and normative propositions, while scientific discourse would consist in descriptive propositions. Schaff severely criticizes the neopositivist dichotomy between judgments of fact and judgments of value, which appears in Marxism in the form of the division between science and ideology.

The difference between science and ideology is not that the "subjective factor" (which, as seen, is social and not individual) is present in science and absent in ideology; rather it concerns the different role played by the "subjective factor", which is present in both science and ideology.

Scientific analysis and sociology of knowledge have significantly contributed to destroying the myth of the pure objectivity of scientific propositions. Given that both science and ideology are conditioned by society both are in a certain sense subjective (at least because language without which human thought is impossible introduces subjective elements in all forms of human knowledge). Therefore, in Schaff's words,

another thesis is presented here contrasting that which sets science against ideology. It maintains that not only are the propositions of science and ideology linked, in some cases they are even identical. (1967: 51)

This is true even to the point that we may speak of "ideological science" and of "scientific ideologies".

Schaff stresses that to recognize that any discourse is more or less ideological because of social and historical conditioning does not imply that all ideologies are distorted and must therefore be considered in the same terms. A distinction must be made between true ideologies and ideologies as distortions of reality; between scientific ideologies and forms of false consciousness. This distinction is determined by the different genesis and the different function of ideologies.

5. Art, Humanism and Otherness in Lévinas

According to Lévinas the relation of otherness was neither reducible to *being-with*, Heidegger's *Mitsein*, nor to Sartre's *being-for*. Otherness is located inside the subject, the self, itself a dialogue, a relation between self and other. The other, is inseparable from the ego, the Self (*Même* as intended by Lévinas), and as *Etranger* it cannot be included within 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 that wish to eliminate its otherness, thereby subjecting it to identity of self. The relation with the other gives rise to a constitutive impediment to integrity and closing of self, it is intended as a relation of excess, a surplus, the surpassing of objectivating thought, release from the relation between subject and object and from the relation of equal exchange.

Active in the very constitution of self, at the *linguistic level* otherness produces *internal dialogization of the word*, the impossibility of being an integral word; at the *linguistic-esthetic level*,

the *double* of concept and reality; at *the moral level*, restlessness, obsession with the other, answerability.

An ethical foundation, therefore, is proposed by Lévinas for the self/other relation. But what does "ethical" mean in this context? Lévinas (1949:167-169) gives the following explanation:

Nous appelons éthique une relation entre des termes où l'un et l'autre ne sont unis par une synthèse de l'entendement ni par la relation de sujet à l'objet et où cependant l'un pèse ou importe ou est signifiant à l'autre, où il sont liés par une intrigue que le savoir ne saurait ni épuiser ni démêler.

The self/other relation irreducibly supercedes the realm of knowledge, of the concept, of abstract thought, even if the latter are possible thanks to this relation.

The appearance of the relation of otherness with the development of self-awareness (a condition of self-identity), is described by Lévinas as follows:

Quel est le rapport entre le "soi-même" et le pour-soi de la représentation? Le "soi-même" est-il une recurrence du même type que la conscience, le savoir et la représentation et qui se sublimerait seulement dans la conscience conçue comme Esprit? Le "soi-même" est-il conscience à son tour ou tout autre événement qui justifierait l'emploi de termes distincts: Soi, Je, Moi, ame? Les philosophes ont le plus souvent décrit l'identité du soi-même par le retour à soi de la conscience. Pour Sartre, comme pour Hegel le soi-même est posé comme un pour soi. L'identité du Je, se réduirait ainsi au retournement de l'essence sur elle-même, à son retour à elle-même et à l'identification du Même dont elle semblait à un moment être le sujet ou la condition (Lévinas 1968, now reformulated in 1974:131).

Contrary to Sartre and Hegel, for Lévinas the self of "being conscious of oneself" neither coincides with nor presupposes consciousness; rather it pre-exists with respect to consciousness to which it is connected by a relation of otherness and autonomy.

Lévinas turns his attention to socio-cultural phenomena as they originate from the category of other and not of self. In a chapter entitled "Le sens et l'œuvre" in his 1972 book *L'humanisme de l'autre homme* (now in Id. 1990), Lévinas uses the term *Œuvre*, to designate a movement toward the other where the possibility of return to self is excluded:

L'œuvre est une orientation qui va librement du Même à l'autre[...]. L'Œuvre pensée radicalement est un mouvement du Même qui ne retourne jamais au Même (Lévinas 1990: 6).

This movement is especially evident in artistic creation. Nonetheless it is not limited to the field of art but 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, life and time of the subject and its contemporaries. The specifically human present in any human enterprise, whatever it may be. As says Lévinas, beyond perfect adaptation to its own goal, the human enterprise

[...] porte le témoignage de son accord avec un je ne sais quel destin extrinseque au cours des choses, et qui la place en dehors du monde, comme le passe à jamais revolu des ruines, comme l'insaisissable étrangeté de l'exotique. (Lévinas 1948: 106)

To accept the concept of *œuvre* as designating the specifically human, as the movement in which the human is realized, means, says Lévinas, to support a kind of humanism in which the usual itinerary of philosophy is inverted and which

reste celui d'Ulysse dont l'aventure dans le monde n'a été qu'un retour à soi; le natale—une complaisance dans le Même, une méconnaissance de l'Autre. (Lévinas 1972a:5)

Humanism of otherness, of the other man (as already signalled, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* is the title of a book by Lévinas), finds expression in artistic production, in the immediate orientation of the latter toward the realization of an artwork.

Such a perspective favors a better understanding of the relation between art and answerability. Insofar as it is oriented in the sense of the concept of *œuvre*, art may be considered as being *dégagé* thanks to its otherness and autonomy as regards the author, and to its ability to surmount the historico-biographical and historico-social boundaries of its production: thanks to its excess as an *œuvre*. Much as the author would like to be *engagé*, the *œuvre's* disengagement is inevitable. The *œuvre* is essentially *dégagé*.

Disengagement of the *œuvre* has nothing to do with the esthetics of art for art's sake. Distancing from the subject, its release from the sphere of the same—the sphere of the single subject author as well as of the global social context in which the opus is produced—, its irreversible movement toward the other are elements which establish a link between art and answerability. The latter is neither intended in the juridical type, nor in the conventional-moral sense where the subject answers for himself and the disposition to *answer for* is entirely relative to the sphere of the subject's jurisdiction; a given code, specific duties, a contract, a particular role. By contrast, in the discourse of art answerability is no longer a question of answering for oneself but for the other: answerability for the other surpasses the limits of individual answerability (of an ethico-normative, juridical and political order), the laws of equal exchange, the functions fixed by roles and social position, the distinctions sanctioned by law between individual identities each with 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. Lévinas mentions this relation in "La réalité et son ombre", although it is explicitly mentioned in terms of the relation with other people only toward the end. It should now be clear why in this article Lévinas maintains that the most elementary procedure in art consists in substituting the object for its *image*, and why the image is contrasted with the *concept*. The concept is the object insofar as it has been grasped, captured; and from this viewpoint there is no difference between knowledge and action: both capture the object. The image, instead, neutralizes such a relation with the real.

The so-called disinterestedness of art consists in neutralization, but such disinterestedness is not an expression of the subject's freedom and initiative, it does not ensue from a situation of power. On the contrary, the image implies dominion over the subject, recovery of the the subject's original sense as "being subject to something". The image involves a situation of passivity. Neither the notion of "conscious" nor of "unconscious" can be applied here; although initiative and intentionality are lacking, this whole process develops in *praesentia*, before one's very own eyes, as in a "daydream". This particular situation is characterized by automatism, which Lévinas 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 pictures its double.

In "La réalité et son ombre", Lévinas too observes that in art the real world seems to be placed in parentheses or inverted commas, a procedure realized differently according to the various modalities

of writing. The double–otherness as it escapes the identity of what is, or the image pictured 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, thus rendering awkward and ridiculous its attempts at containing such discourse within the sphere of its own identity. The parodic aspect of the double is analyzed by Lévinas. He observes that a person is not only his identity, that which is, but that together with the being he coincides with, he wears his very caricature on his face, his picturesque side. The picturesque, says Lévinas, is always a little caricatural. Likewise, a thing does not coincide with what it is as the object of knowledge or of practical activity; relatively 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 picturesqueness 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" (Lévinas 1948; Eng. trans.:135).

Because of its relation with death, the caricatural nature of the double, the fact that the image tells of linear, productive, cumulative time, the artwork is always more or less comico-tragic, simultaneously. As Lévinas says, every image is already a caricature, but such caricature is turned toward the tragic.

If we now consider the relation between orality and writing with respect to the possibility of dialogism and otherness, we realize that the sign of otherness which finds expression in written and oral language, exists autonomously and antecedently as regards orality and writing. The sign in which otherness manifests itself does not require vocalization to subsist, it is independent from the phoné, and has a life of its own antecedent to orality; just as it is independent from the written sign as such, for not all of what is written is portrayal of otherness, of the image.

The question of the specific sign of otherness and dialogue cuts across the opposition between orality and writing and, moreover, refers beyond the limits of the verbal, calling for consideration of the relation between verbal signs and nonverbal signs. If writing favors the development of Socratic dialogue, at the same time it produces dialogic texts which of original Socratic dialogue maintain only the form: their content is monologic, and dialogue is no more than a method used pedagogically to expound a thesis, a doctrine. As we know, this is what occurs in Plato himself. Such transformation is not caused by use of the written form, but by subjection of the dialogue form to the direct word, the objective word. Where, instead, the indirect, distanced word prevails, where writing resorts to syntactic and literary distancing expedients from one's own word, in both reporting and reported speech, to devices that transform the objective word into the objectified word—regarding Plato, this occurs above all in the *Symposium*—, the dialogic form rediscovers the effective dialogism of content.

According to this acceptation, *writing* is a practice which does not identify with the production of written signs: thus intended, the term "writing" can also be used to indicate a practice independent from the phoné, and traceable outside verbal signs in general every time we have a one-way movement, without returns, also in the sense of "without profit", a movement toward otherness which Lévinas calls *œuvre*. This movement is present in the artwork as such, but does not belong to the artwork alone: on the contrary, the esthetic event shares in the character of *œuvre*. Therefore the *œuvre* can also be traced outside the esthetic sphere, even though it emerges in the latter as a

fundamental condition, as a method. "Writing", therefore, is a practice oriented according to the movement of the *œuvre*..

Together with Lévinas, we may use the term "trace" for the sign of this "writing" practice as it is characterized by the movement of the *œuvre*. The "trace" is the sign of otherness and dialogic openness. It is what in *Totalite' et Infini* and *Autrement qu'être* Lévinas characterizes as the significance of signification in communication: that is, the fact that signification signifies in saying and is not exhausted in the said. Characteristics of the significance of saying comprise: autonomy with respect to the "said"; the fact that it is a surplus nonfunctional to the exchange of messages; disymmetry, excess (that is, the significance of saying escapes being and the categories which describe it), "uselessness" by comparison with the economy of "narration", of the "fabula"; self referentiality, ambiguity, equivocity, contradiction; the fact that what is revealed in the significance of saying does not unveil itself, remains invisible, irreducible to the status of object, does not lose its interiority, its secret; lastly, openness to absolute otherness. Thanks to all these characteristics, the significance of saying as proximity, contact, intercorporeity, involvement, is characterized as writing (intransitive writing as distinguished from transcription by Barthes).

To recognize the Lévinasian relation of otherness as writing, the relation of otherness as obtained in the significance of saying, means to become aware of the equivocation implied in wanting to see in the Lévinasian "face-to-face" relation a preference for oral discourse and consequent depreciation of writing (a sort of return to Plato).

For Lévinas, as he explicitly states in his preface to *L'au-de-là du verset* (1982b) the human word in itself is writing given its ability to constantly signify more than what it says, given the excess of the signifier with respect to the signified, of saying over the said. As the expression of otherness, as the trace, the presence of an absence, the word presents itself as writing independently of the fact of being written in the literal sense. Writing, says Lévinas, exists in language and communication before the stylet and the pen impress letters on tablets, parchment, or paper, "literature before the letter!": communication and language do not merely have the status of instruments, they are not exhausted by the literal sense of what they prescribe, thematize, or disclose.

6. Sebeok's Doctrine of Signs as Global Semiotics

Thomas A. Sebeok may be counted among the figures who have contributed most to the establishment of semiotics, and in particular to its configuration as an interdisciplinary perspective. His work is largely inspired by Charles S. Peirce, but as he declares in an interview released to me in 1987 (now in Sebeok 1991b:95-105), his *maîtres à penser* also include such figures as Charles Morris and Roman Jakobson, of whose work he may be considered a student and continuator. His numerous and diversified research interests cover a broad range of territories, from the natural sciences to the human sciences. He is concerned with theoretical issues and their applications viewed from as many angles as the disciplines that come into play in his research: linguistics, cultural anthropology, psychology, artificial intelligence, zoology, ethology, biology, medicine, robotics, mathematics, philosophy, literature, and narratology, etc. Even though the initial impression might be that Sebeok proceeds rather erratically in his coverage of such a great multiplicity of different fields, which would seem distant from each other as he experiments varying perspectives and embarks on differing research ventures, in reality the broad scope of his research comes together in the focus on his "doctrine of signs", and finds an explanation in a fundamental conviction subtending his general research method: the entire universe is perfused with signs, indeed, as Peirce hazards, is perhaps composed exclusively of signs. In what may be defined as a

"global" or "holistic" approach to sign studies, Sebeok stretches his gaze over the whole universe insofar as it teems with information, messages, signifying processes; a universe which is characterized, as he never tires of repeating, as a fact of signification long before becoming a fact of communication (for one of his most recent statements in this sense, cf. Sebeok 1994). And as he playfully puts it in a text of 1990 "Semiotic and communication" (Sebeok 1990b: 391): "The world is composed entirely of signs, and therefore, I think of the whole world as my oyster; whereas for some people only the human world, and then only a small portion of that, is their oyster".

Sebeok's research into the "life of signs" may be immediately associated with his concern for the "signs of life". Indeed, a fundamental conviction supporting his research runs as follows: given that semiosis or sign behavior involves the whole living universe, a full understanding of the dynamics of semiosis may in the last analysis lead to a definition of life itself. In Sebeok's view semiosis and life coincide. Semiosis originates with the first stirrings of life on the planet, which leads to the formulation of an axiom he believes cardinal to semiotics: "semiosis is the criterial attribute of life" (Sebeok 1991b: 124), that is, "the criterial mark of all life is semiosis", which is accompanied by his second axiom, that is, "semiosis presupposes life" (Sebeok 1994). No wonder all the life sciences find a place in Sebeok's intellectual horizon, estimated in their importance for a full understanding of signs and their workings in the terrestrial "biosphere" (cf. Vernadsky 1926).

In Sebeok's view then, the universe is perfused with signs all interconnected and interdependent in a huge semiotic "network" or "web"—as expressed with an image launched in 1975—while the sign science or semiotics represents the point of confluence and observation for studies on the life of signs and on the signs of life. His abductive approach to the analysis of the signifying material of the biosphere leads him to contemplate the whole universe *à la* Peirce as a sign in its global complexity. Indeed he recalls that for Peirce, the whole universe was itself a comprehensive global sign, "a vast representamen, a great symbol... an argument... necessarily a great work of art, a great poem... a symphony... a painting" (CP 5.119). Sebeok's studies are turned toward signs commonly covered by specialists from a great variety of different fields, viewed at one and the same time both in their specificity and interrelation: signs appertaining to "nature" and to "culture" ranging from human signs to animal signs, from verbal signs to nonverbal signs, from natural languages to artificial languages, from signs at a high level of plurivocality and dialogicality to univocal and monological signs, or better signals, signs in their varying degrees of indexicality, symbolicality and iconicity, signs of conscious life and of the unconscious. As a student of signifying processes, Sebeok's attention is turned toward the whole universe which does not imply a claim to intellectual omnipotence, as some have intimated, but simply his profound awareness that signs are interdependent and relational, so that an understanding of any one particular type of sign—such as the verbal—is only possible in the light of its relation with other signs forming semiotic processes in the great sign network, in which the signs of nature and culture in Sebeok's ecumenical perspective are not considered as divided and separate but as interpretants of each other. As regards this last point, Sebeok explicitly states, polemicizing with major exponents of contemporary currents in semiotics today, that "to me, however, the imperium of Nature, or *Weltbuch*, over Culture, or *Bücherwelt*, has always been unmistakable. Only a patent theoretical basis was veiled to resolve what Blumenberg (1981:17) has called an 'alte Feindschaft' between these two semiotic systems, the latter obviously immersed in the former. This is why my 'rediscovery' of the *Umweltlehre* came as such a personal revelation" (Sebeok 1994).

Sebeok's global approach to sign life presupposes his critique of anthropocentric semiotic theory and practice which, instead, he opens to zoosemiotics or even more broadly to biosemiotics, on one hand, and to endosemiotics, on the other, as he explores the boundaries and margins of this science or, "doctrine" of signs, as he prefers to call it. The latter is at one and the same time recent for what concerns the determination of its status and awareness of its possibilities of extension, but ancient if

we trace its roots, as does Sebeok, back to the theory and practice of Hippocrates and Galen (cf. Sebeok 1979a). The "semiotic doctrine", as conceived by Sebeok, is characterized with respect to other sign theories by a maximum broadening of competencies (it is interesting that with respect to his 1976 book, however, after almost twenty years he no longer considers the debate on whether semiotics is a "science", a "theory" or a "doctrine" of much consequence, as he states in his paper of 1994, *cit.*). The sign science, as Sebeok conceives it, includes not only the "science qui étudie la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale" (Saussure), that is, the study of communication in culture, but also the study of communicative behavior of a biosemiotic order, considered as the wider context, given that "biological foundations lie at the very epicenter of the study of both communication and signification in the human animal" (Sebeok 1976: x), and certainly not as a sphere separate from semiotics reductively identified with anthroposemiotics or semiotics of culture. The orientation of Sebeok's overall semiotic discourse is subtended by his promotion of the critique of anthropocentrism and therefore of glottocentrism, extensible to those trends in semiotics which look to linguistics for their sign model. Indeed, Sebeok's interest in cultural processes at the intersection between nature and culture induces him to take into consideration the research of such scholars as Konrad Lorenz and Jacob von Uexküll.

To free oneself from the anthrocentric perspective as it has characterized semiotics generally, implies taking into account other sign systems beyond those specific to mankind. Such systems are not alien to the human world even though they are not specific to it, and concern the encounter between human communication and the communicative behavior of nonhuman communities within the species and with the environment, in addition to the dominion of endosemiotics, that is, the study of cybernetic systems inside the body both on a ontogenetic and philogenetic level. Sebeok's position succeeds in avoiding both the biologism involved in reducing human culture to communication systems traceable in other species as well as, viceversa, the anthropomorphic reduction of nonhuman animal communication to characteristic features and models specific to mankind. Consequently, Sebeok's doctrine of signs insists particularly on the autonomy of nonverbal sign systems with respect to the verbal, and such autonomy is demonstrated through the study of human sign systems which depend on the verbal only in part, in spite of the predominance of verbal language in the sphere of anthroposemiosis.

Sebeok's opening remarks to his book of 1979, *The Sign & Its Masters*, which he defines as "transitional" may be extended to the whole of his research, if we consider it in the light of the present situation in philosophico-linguistic and semiotic debate characterized by the transition from "code semiotics", that is, semiotics centered on linguistics, to "interpretation semiotics", which differently from the former, accounts for the autonomy and arbitrariness of nonverbal signs whether "cultural" or "natural". Through his panorama of problems and masters of signs, Sebeok evidences aspects that differentiate these two different modalities of practising semiotics, which may be expressed, to simplify, with two names—Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce: the study of signs is in "transit" from the first to the second of these two positions as represented by these two emblematic figures, and indeed may now be said to have largely shifted toward Peirce.

Sebeok's previous book of 1976, *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs*, is strongly theoretical in character and clearly expresses his preference for the semiotics of interpretation, while *The Play of Musement*, a collection of papers published in 1981, explores the efficacy of semiotics as a methodological tool and extensibility in more discursive and applicative terms. In both cases, Sebeok sets his interpreters before a position that is consolidated and rooted in his theoretical formation, while *The Sign & Its Masters* proposes all the diverse possibilities ensuing from one or the other of these two semiotic alternatives. In fact, in addition to being a compact theoretical book, *The Sign & Its Masters* also has the merit of offering a survey of the various alternatives, positions and phases historically incarnated in important scholars directly or indirectly dealing with the

problem of signs. Sebeok's research transforms us into the direct witnesses and interpretants of the (abductive) passages of a discourse that considers, expounds, tests and evaluates different possibilities not only in the choice of an appropriate method for semiotic research but also in identifying one's own object of analysis and specific disciplinary field. In this sense, this particular book, but in reality the overall orientation of Sebeok's research, is transitional given that it significantly contributes to the shift toward interpretation semiotics definitively freed from its subordination to (Saussurean) linguistics. (In Italy, for a sign theory wholly oriented in the direction of "interpretation semiotics" and completely free from false dichotomies, such as communication semiotics vs signification semiotics, referential semantics vs nonreferential semantics, cf. Bonfantini 1981; Ponzio 1985a).

I Think I Am a Verb of 1986 is the fourth book of a tetralogy, the other three being those just mentioned: *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs*, *The Sign & Its Masters*, and *The Play of Musement*. Ever since, other important volumes have followed in rapid succession and include: *Essays in Zoosemiotics*, 1990, *A Sign is Just a Sign*, 1991, *American Signatures*, 1991, *Semiotics in the United States*, 1991, and *Come comunicano gli animali che non parlano*, 1998 (without forgetting important earlier volumes such as *Perspectives in Zoosemiotics*, of 1972, and many others under his editorship including *Animal Communication*, 1968, *Sight, Sound, and Sense*, 1978, and *How Animals Communicate*, 1979). Without continuing this list of publications, it will suffice to remember that Sebeok has been publishing since 1942 so that his writings may be viewed as the expression of his ongoing research and reflexion constantly enriched with new information and documentation, conducted over more than half a century, as the interpreter of a semiotic universe whose variegated and multifaceted consistency he has substantially contributed to manifesting. Furthermore, a part from the fact that almost all Sebeok's books are now available in Italian translation, beyond English and Italian Sebeok may also be read in a surprising range of other languages including German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Norwegian, Hebrew as well as the Asian languages such as Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese.

Given its variety and breadth of interest, *I Think I Am a Verb* acts as a point of confluence and launching pad for the irradiation of new research itineraries in the vast region of semiotics. The title of this particular volume reevokes the dying words of the 18th President of the United States, Ulysses Grant, made to ring with Peircean overtones. In fact, in Peirce's view man is a sign, and Sebeok's choice of a verb instead of a noun to characterize this sign (which is not only each one of us, but the whole universe in its globality) serves to underline the dynamic, processual character of semiosis. A fundamental point in Sebeok's doctrine of signs is that living is sign activity so that to maintain and reproduce life and not only to interpret it at a scientific level necessarily involves the use of signs. Sebeok theorizes an immediate connection between the biological and the semiotic and, therefore, between biology and semiotics. All his research would seem to develop Peirce's conviction that man is a sign: and it would seem that Sebeok is adding that this sign is a verb: to interpret. And in Sebeok's particular conception of reality, the activity of interpreting coincides with the activity of life, and referring to himself, with his own life. If I am a sign, as Sebeok would seem to be saying through 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 as it is in the interminable chain of signs, cannot avoid being an interpretant, then "to interpret" is the verb that can best help me know who I am.

Sebeok is very distant from the narrow spaces to which Saussure wished to confine the sign science by limiting his attention to the signs of human culture, and still more reductively, to signs produced intentionally for communication. He obviously does not wish to leave aside any aspect of sign life, just as he is never content with limits of any sort placed on semiotics, whether contingent or deriving from epistemological conviction. At the same time, contrary to what could be a first

impression, Sebeok's attitude discourages any eventual claim on the part of semiotics to the status of scientific or philosophical omniscience, of exhaustive knowledge with a capacity for solving all problems. My personal conviction is that Sebeok's very awareness of the vastness of the territories to be explored and of the variety and complexity of the questions to be analyzed, confers a sense of prudence, of extreme problematicity and also of humility on all interpretations advanced not only in the treacherous territory of signs, but above all in the still more deceptive sphere of the signs of signs in which semiotic work is immersed.

In Italy long before Umberto Eco defined semiotics as the discipline that studies lying, Giovanni Vailati realized that signs may be used for deviating and deceiving and in fact entitled his review of Prezzolini's *L'arte di persuadere* "Un manuale per bugiardi" (A handbook for liars). This aspect of Vailati's studies is analyzed by Augusto Ponzio in a paragraph entitled "Plurivocità, omologia, menzogna" (Plurivocality, homology, lying), in a chapter of his monograph on Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (cf. Ponzio 1988), centered on the relation between Vailati and Rossi-Landi (cf. also Vailati 1987). Sebeok also evokes Vailati in relation to Peirce in his paper "Peirce in Italia" (1982). He describes the nonisomorphic character of signs with respect to reality, representing another leitmotif in his research: the use of signs for fraud, illusion and deception, their capacity for masking and pretence.

Deception, lying, and illusion are forms of behavior which a semiotician like Sebeok interested in signs wherever they appear cannot resist. He is fascinated by the signs of the magician, for example, and he constantly returns to forms of behavior and situations of the Clever Hans type, the horse which presumably knew how to read and write, but which in reality was an able interpreter of signals communicated to it by its trainer either inadvertently or as an attempt at fraud.

It seems to me that there are two main reasons for Sebeok's focus on the capacity for lying in the animal world. The first concerns his intention of unmasking pretence in certain cases, or of undermining illusions in others, relatively to the possibility of making animals "talk" in the literal sense, that is, in the sense of extending to animals a characteristic that is species-specific to mankind. Sebeok has often contributed to semiotic debate with discussions, documentation and even parody (cf. "Averse Stance," in Sebeok 1986) to demonstrate the impossibility of homologizing human verbal language and animal language. The second reason arises from the fact that if signs do not belong exclusively to the human world, but to nonhuman animals too as evidenced by studies in zoosemiotics, and given that to use signs also means knowing how to lie, then the fascinating problem of whether animal lie as well must necessarily be considered.

The world of signs, however, is not only the world of deception, but also of other practices—no doubt connected with the former—such as playing, using symbols and making gifts. The fact that nonhuman animals use signs implies that all such practices, mostly considered as the prerogative of "culture", may also be traced in the nonhuman animal world. In their studies on signs, researchers often insist too strongly or too exclusively on the functions carried out by signs, Sebeok, on the contrary, highlights the importance of sign activity as an end in itself, as a sort of idle turning of semiotic mechanisms. This aspect of Sebeok's research is not limited to ritual behavior which in both human and nonhuman animals may be considered as excess behaviour as regards specific functions and aims. Verbal language too which is most often than not interpreted in the light of its communicative function, is in fact better understood in terms of play and of the human propensity for fantasizing and daydreaming (examined by Morris, for example, in "Mysticism and Its Language", 1957, being a rather unusual paper for those who identify Morris' work with his books of 1938 and 1946, and which I have included in Italian translation in *Segni e valori*, 1988, a collection of writings by Morris) and, therefore, of such operations as predicting the future or "traveling" through the past, thereby constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing reality,

inventing new worlds and interpretive models. Let us remember that the happy expression, *The Play of Musement.*, is the title of one of Sebeok's books. In an article of 1988 entitled "Semiosis and semiotics: What lies in their future?" (originally written on invitation from Norma Tascia, representing the Associacao Portuguesa de Semiotica, for the Portuguese journal *Cultura e Arte*, now available in *A Sign is Just a Sign* (1991), and published in Italian as a supplement to the 1990 Italian edition of *I Think I Am a Verb*), Sebeok avers that

Semiotics [...] simply points to the universal propensity of the human mind for reverie focused specularly inward on 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'. (1991b: 97)

And indeed, as Peirce had already demonstrated, the inferential mechanism allowing for the qualitative development of knowledge, what Peirce called "abduction", is fundamental to play and fantasy, to the practices of simulation. In the words of Sebeok:

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 (Sebeok 1986:77-78).

And to show how the unconscious aspect of sign behavior exceeds the intentional symbolic order precisely oriented according to functions and ends, Sebeok also refers to the problem of dreaming, to what Freud called "oniric work".

The lack of functionality, forms of unproductive consumption, of dissipation are identified by Sebeok as entropic phases necessary to the development of life on earth: it is as though life is in continual need of—indeed is founded on—death in order to reproduce and maintain itself. The implications of such a statement in the different approaches to the philosophy of history are numerous; for what concerns sign theory, the consequence is that the semiotic chain is subject to loss, to gaps, to the annulment of sense which implies that a sort of anti-material must also be necessarily postulated in relation to sign material.

In *Semiotics in the United States* Sebeok analyzes U.S. semiotics at three different levels which though closely interrelated are easily singled out. At the *first* level he surveys the various theoretical trends, perspectives, problems, fields, specializations and institutions characterizing U.S. semiotics, both in a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. As regards the latter, Sebeok takes on the difficult task of reconstructing the origins of American semiotics, which he seeks in discourse fields that were not yet connoted as semiotics at the time and which in certain cases are still considered as either only marginally associated with semiotics or completely distant from it. The *second* level is theoretico-critical. Sebeok takes a stand with respect to various problems in semiotics: problems of a general order concerning, for instance, the delimitation of the field of semiotics or the construction of a general sign model; and problems of a more specific order concerning the various sectors and subsectors of the science, or "doctrine of signs" (as he also likes to call it). The impression, which Sebeok would seem to confirm here and there, is that this more problematic level sets the perspective for the whole volume completing the first level and stopping it from limiting itself to pure historical description. The *third* level is connected to the second in the sense that while developing and illustrating his theoretical views, Sebeok colors them with more personal overtones, often delightful biographical anecdotes. There are very few pages in *Semiotics in the United States* in which Sebeok does not figure as one of the characters populating the (hi)story, episodes, and enterprises of his narration. This is largely because of his surprising and perhaps unprecedented involvement in the organization and promotion of the semiotic science at a world level, a cause to which he has been committed since the gradual emergence of semiotics as a discipline in its own

right. Sebeok has been in direct contact with many of the authors mentioned in his volume and has many "memories" of his personal experiences with them, which have found their way into his description of the problems and orientations characterizing the semiotic globe.

With reference to these three shaping factors, the other one of Sebeok's books which would seem to come closest to *Semiotics in the United States* is *The Sign & Its Masters*. Here the historical, theoretico-critical and anecdotal threads of Sebeok's discourse come together and interweave even more than in his other books, even though the autobiographical aspect is never lacking. All the same, *Semiotics in the United States* may also be related to *I Think I Am a Verb* where autobiographical motivations are not lacking for his choice of some of the topics, authors and personalities cited, including the eighteenth U. S. President, Ulysses S. Grant, whose words inspired the volume's title.

Something that is immediately noticeable in the work of this great master of signs is his approach, which I would not hesitate to characterize as dialogic and polyphonic in the Bakhtinian sense. Sebeok acts as a promoter of dialogue among signs, among the different orders of signs, that is among the different interpretive practices and discourse fields, and among the "masters" of signs, including those who have never been in any form of direct contact with each other, or who did not even know they were dealing with signs (his "cryptosemioticians"). Even Peirce—who had been forced to work in isolation having been excluded from academic life—, had had occasion to write (in a letter to Victoria Lady Welby of December 2, and very much in accord with her own views) that "after all philosophy can only be passed from mouth to mouth, where there is opportunity to object & cross-question" (cf. Hardwick 1977: 44). And, as his long teaching career and constant involvement in the promotion of the "community of inquirers" would seem to demonstrate, Sebeok too attaches much importance to the continuity of dialogic exchange. Indeed, as says Iris Smith (cfr. Sebeok 1991b: 6) in her introduction to Sebeok's book of 1991, *American Signatures: Semiotic Inquiry and Method*, his 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".

The "play of musement" activating Sebeok's research is so free from common place prejudice that, as mentioned, on reproposing the question whether life and semiosis coincide, he risks the hypothesis that the end of life does not necessarily imply the end of semiosis: with some probability sign processes building unlimited interpretants might continue in machines independently of humans. This Orwellian conclusion—clearly formulated by Sebeok in his aforementioned paper "Semiosis and Semiotics: What Lies in their Future?"—, which plays with the hypothesis of the machine as the unique place for the workings of the "life of signs", however we wish to play on the word "life" and on the word "signs", no doubt proposes a sort of negative utopia which from one viewpoint, however partial and limited considering the limits of the human condition, is surely a form of nonlife and, therefore, of absence of signs. To conclude playfully, we could propose an autobiographical reading of this message and interpret it as the expression of the desire of the "semiotician" as distinct from the man, that semiotics should continue after Sebeok!.