

Susan Petrilli
Gift-giving, mother-sense and subjectivity in Victoria Welby. A
study in semioethics

Published in
Il dono/The Gift. A Feminist Analysis.
Athanos. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura, XV, ns. 8, 2004,
pp. 179-198.
ed. Genevieve Vaughan

1. *Welby, Victoria Alexandrina, Lady Welby (1837-1912), who is she?*

Victoria Welby, philosopher of language and ideator of signification, now widely considered as the "founding mother" of semiotics, was born on 27 April 1837, the third of three children of his Grace the Duke of Rutland, Hon. Charles James Stuart-Wortley (1802-1844), second of three sons of the first Lord Wharnccliffe, and his wife Lady Emmeline Charlotte Elizabeth (1806-1855), writer, poetess and traveller, second daughter of John Henry Manners, fifth Duke of Rutland, and Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Frederick Howard, fifth Earle of Carlisle.

Victoria Welby was christened as Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart-Wortley by the Bishop of Salisbury in St. James' Church on 17 June 1837 with their Royal Highnesses Princess Alexandrina Victoria and the Duchess of Kent (the Queen Mother) acting as her godmothers and John Irving, Esq. as god-father. She was named after her first godmother. This event took on even greater significance when five days later Princess Victoria became first Queen Alexandrina Victoria and then, changing her signature, simply Queen Victoria.

Victoria Welby was appointed Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria in 1861 spending almost two years (1861-1863) at the royal court before her marriage at Belvoir, on 4 July 1863, to Sir William Earle Welby (1829-1898), military official, MP and High Sheriff, who with his father's death in 1875 became fourth Baronet assuming the additional surname Gregory. Consequently Victoria Welby's surname became Welby-Gregory.

Alternatively to a series of pseudonyms, she published under her full name until the end of the 1880s, under the name of Hon. Lady Welby from 1890 to 1893 and as Victoria Welby from 1893 onwards, although she continued signing all official and business documents with her full name.

After her husband's death and with the marriage of her son, Sir Charles Glynne Earle Welby (1865-1938), Assistant Undersecretary of State at War Office and MP, in 1887, to Maria Louisa Helena Hervey (d. 1920), her correct name was Victoria Lady Welby or simply Lady Welby since her daughter-in-law had acquired the right to place the title 'Lady' before her Christian name. On marrying, her son also acquired the right to live at Denton Manor. Welby shifted to Duneaves her home at Harrow.

Her other two children were Victor Albert William (1864-1876) and her only daughter Emmeline Mary Elizabeth ("Nina") (1867-1955), painter, sculptress, writer. She also wrote her mother's biography and edited her correspondence in two volumes. Some years after her marriage and following the Royal School of Art Needlework, founded in 1873, Lady Victoria Welby-Gregory also set up and financed the Decorative Needlework Society. She was not at all attracted to life at court and soon after her marriage retreated to Denton Manor where she began her research with her husband's full support.

She contributed significantly to modern theory of signs, meaning and interpretation, introducing the term 'significs', in 1894, to underline her own special focus on the interrelationship between signs, sense - in all its signifying implications – values and behavior. The term 'significs' indicates her special approach to the study of meaning and interpretation, which she developed with reference to her meaning triad, therefore to the distinction between 'sense', 'meaning' and 'significance'. Welby's research is characterized by implications of an axiological order which she evidenced with the distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance'. With the term 'significs' she differentiated her own perspective from others designated as 'semantics', 'semiotics', 'sematology', and 'semasiology'. Welby strongly influenced such personalities as Charles K. Ogden who co-authored with Ivor A. Richards a renowned volume of 1923 entitled *The Meaning of Meaning*. In this volume Ogden mentions Welby and her significs as well as her correspondence with Charles S. Peirce.

Besides numerous articles in newspapers, magazines and scientific journals (notably *The Spectator*, *The Expositor*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Open Court*, *Nature*, *Mind*, *The Monist*, *The Hibbert Journal*, *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*) and a long list of privately printed essays, parables, aphorisms and pamphlets on a large range of subjects in numerous spheres – science, mathematics, anthropology, philosophy, education, social issues –, Welby's publications include six books. Apart from a travel diary (1852), written and published as a child, a book of critical reflections on theological and religious questions consisting mainly of extracts from her correspondence, *Links and Clues* (1881, 18832), and a book of prayers (1892), Welby authored a collection of parables, critical

reflections and aphorisms *Grains of Sense* (1897) and two theoretical monographs specifically relating to signifiics, *What is Meaning?* (1903, 19832), and *Signifiics and Language* (1911, 19852). Other valuable sources include a biography by her daughter, *Wanderers* (Cust 1928), and on a theoretical level two volumes of correspondence between Welby and various interlocutors covering the years 1879-1891 and 1898-1911, respectively, *Echoes of Larger Life* (Welby 1929) and *Other Dimensions* (Welby 1931). Another major editorial event is represented by the publication of Welby's correspondence with Peirce *Semiotic and Signifiics* (Hardwick 1977).

From 1863 until her death in 1912 Welby was a friend and source of inspiration to leading personalities from the world of science and literature. She wrote regularly to over 450 correspondents from diverse countries including Great Britain, United States of America, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, which testifies to her determining presence in the cultural ambiances of her day. She characteristically used her correspondence as a place for theorization in dialogue with others. Welby began writing to politicians, representatives of the Church, aristocrats and intellectuals as early as 1870 creating an epistolary network which expanded rapidly from 1880 onwards, both locally and internationally. She used this network for her own enlightenment, as a sounding board for her own ideas, as a means of circulating ideas – her own ideas and those of others. In addition to such personalities as Peirce in the USA and Giovanni Vailati in Italy, her correspondents include such significant names as Bertrand Russell, Charles K. Ogden, James M. Baldwin, Henry Spencer, Thomas A. Huxley, Max Müller, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, Benjamin Jowett, Frederick Pollock, George F. Stout, Herbert G. Wells, Mary E. Boole, Julia Wedgwood, Henry and William James, Henri L. Bergson, Michel Bréal, André Lalande, J.-H. Poincaré, Ferdinand Tönnies, Rudolph Carnap, Otto Neurath, Harald Höffding, Frederick van Eeden, and many others. Ogden was a young university student when he discovered Welby and her signifiics. He was committed to promoting signifiics and corresponded with Welby regularly between 1910 and 1911. His paper “The Progress of Signifiics” was published in 1994 in one of the four volumes collecting his complete works.

Thanks also to her social position and Court appointment as Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria, she counted friends and acquaintances among the aristocracy and Government officials. Because of her interest in religious and theological questions she corresponded with leading Churchmen of her day and subsequently with eminent scientists, philosophers, educationists whom she welcomed into her home where they met to discuss their ideas.

Nonetheless, in spite of general awareness of the importance and originality of Welby's work, she did not receive the recognition she hoped for, at least not publicly, for many long years. In the attempt to avoid flattery, she either published anonymously or signed her work with pseudonyms, various combinations of initials, or simply as 'Victoria Welby'. The only honour she valued was "that of being treated by workers as a serious worker" (Hardwick 1977: 13). Though she had no institutional affiliations, she was a member of the Aristotelian and Anthropological Societies and one of the original promoters of the Sociological Society between 1903-1904.

Welby was an open-minded female intellectual in the Victorian era despite her complete lack of a formal education which led her to search for the conditions which made her theoretical work possible. She highlighted the importance of her extensive travels as a child with her mother, which often took place in dramatic circumstances and ended with her mother's tragic death in the Sirian desert leaving Victoria all alone until help came from Beirut. In a letter of December 22 1903 to Peirce who fully recognized her genius as testified by their correspondence, Welby made the following considerations:

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

As her research progressed Welby increasingly promoted the study of signifiacs, channelling the great breadth and variety of her interests into a "significal" perspective. Shortly after the publication of two fundamental essays, "Meaning and Metaphor", in 1893 and "Sense, Meaning and Interpretation", in 1896, the Welby Prize for the best essay on signifiacs was announced in the journal *Mind* in 1896 and awarded to Ferdinand Tönnies in 1898 for his essay on "Philosophical Terminology" (1899-1900). Important moments of long attended official recognition for signifiacs are represented by the publication of the entries "Translation" (Welby 1902), "Signifiacs" (co-authored with J. M. Baldwin and G. F. Stout)

(1902), and “Sensal” (with G. F. Stout) (1902) in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (Baldwin 1901-1905). However, the official recognition Welby had so tenaciously hoped for only came after approximately thirty years of “hard labour”, with the publication of the entry “Significs” in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1911. The Signific Movement in the Netherlands, which developed in two phases from 1917 to 1926 and from 1937 to 1956, originated from Welby's significs through the mediation of the Dutch psychiatrist, poet and social reformer Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932).

Welby's scientific remains are now mainly deposited in two different archives: the Welby Collection in the York University Archives (Downsview, Ontario, Canada) and the Lady Welby Library in the University of London Library. The latter includes approximately 1.000 volumes from Victoria Welby's personal library and 25 pamphlet boxes containing pamphlets, reprints and newspaper cuttings, religious tracts, sermons and published lectures by various authors. Four boxes without numbers contain duplicates of most of Welby's own publications. The main part of her scientific and literary production is to be found at the York Archives, divided into 42 boxes. Boxes 1-21, that is, half of the collection, consist of Welby's yet mostly unpublished correspondence covering the years 1861-1912; boxes 22-42 are subject files (titles established by Welby) containing notes, extracts, commentaries on a variety of subjects – Biology, Education, Ethics, Eugenics, Imagery, Language and Significance, Logic and Significance, Matter and Motion, Numbers Theory, Philosophy and Significance, Significs (9 files), Time – speeches, lessons, sermons by other authors, numerous unpublished essays and a collection of poems by Welby, diagrams and photographs, translations, proofs, copies of some of her publications, newspaper cuttings, etc.

Suffering from partial aphasia and paralysis of the right hand due to bad blood circulation caused by flu caught at the end of January 1912, Welby died at the age of 75 at Denton Manor and was buried in Grantham (Lincolnshire), on 29 March 1912.

2. The concept of mother-sense as gift-giving

The generation of sense, value and significance in their most human expressions, that is, at high degrees of creativity, playfulness, openness to the other, excess, dialogism, intercorporeity and capacity for critique, occurs in sign processes of the abductive, iconic and agapastic type. In addition to Peirce and his research, this paradigm for semiosis in the human world also emerges from the theory of sign and meaning elaborated by Welby, her significs. Significs could also be described as a theory of the transcendent given that it conceptualizes signifying continuity throughout the sign universe, “synechism” in Peirce's terminology, therefore the tendency to surpass boundaries and limits – as imposed, in the last analysis, by the logic of identity – across sign systems which, however specific and differentiated, are always interrelated and interdependent, according to the logic of what we may call “dialogic otherness” in the terminology of Mikhail Bakhtin.

In a series of unpublished manuscripts collected under the title *Mother-sense* written at the beginning of the twentieth century (cf. References), Welby proposed the original concept of “mother-sense”, subsequently replaced with the term “primal sense” and its variant “primary sense” (Box 28, Subject File 24). This concept plays a central role in her analysis of the production/interpretation of signifying processes in human signifying spheres and therefore in the construction/interpretation of worlds and worldviews.

Welby distinguished between “sense”, therefore “mother-sense”, on the one hand, and “intellect”, therefore “father-reason”, on the other. With this distinction it was her intention to indicate the general difference between two main modes — that in fact cut across sexual differences — in the generation/interpretation of sense which may be isolated for the sake of analysis but which are strictly interrelated in the reality of human behaviour, therefore in sense producing practices. Mother-sense may be understood in the double sense of the Latin verb *sapere* which means at once to know and to taste of (*scio* and *sapio*), and indicates a peculiar capacity for knowing, understood also as the capacity for transcending the very limits of knowledge itself when oriented by the logic of identity. What the intellect must exert itself to know mother-sense already knows in the double sense of *sapere*, and it is important to underline that such knowledge is related to the body.

Mother-sense, also called “racial motherhood”, is the generating source of sense and the capacity for criticism, says Welby; it is oriented by the logic of otherness and as such corresponds to the capacity for knowing in a broad and creative sense through sentiment, perception, intuition, and cognitive leaps. With reference to Peirce we could say that it is the idea intuited before it is possessed or before it possesses us. As the capacity for knowledge, which we may also intend in the Peircean sense of *agapic or sympathetic comprehension and recognition*, or in the Bakhtinian sense of *answering comprehension*, mother-sense belongs to the human race in its totality, “an inheritance common to humanity”, says Welby, without limitation to a given sexual gender, the female, even though in socio-historical terms the woman emerges as its main guardian and disseminator. Mother-sense, primal sense, racial sense or racial motherhood is also that which is commonly indicated with a series of stereotyped terms including “intuition”, “judgement”, “wisdom”. In any case it is common to both men and women, even though it is particularly alive in women owing to the daily practices they are called to carry out in their roles as mother or wife, which are mostly gift-giving practices oriented by the logic of otherness, of self-donation, giving and responsibility for the other, care for the other. Furthermore, Welby underlines the woman’s influence and

responsibility, as the main repository of mother-sense, in the development of verbal and nonverbal language and therefore in the construction of the symbolic order.

On the other hand, intellect, as understood by Welby, alludes to knowledge and inferential processes oriented by the logic of identity. As rational knowledge the intellect is connected with the processes of asserting, generalizing and reasoning about data as they are observed and experimented in science and logic. The limit of the intellect lies in the tendency to allow for the tyranny of data which we wish to possess but which, on the contrary, end up possessing us. The reign of knowledge covered by the intellect is entrusted fundamentally to the jurisdiction of the male, says Welby, mainly for socio-cultural reasons and certainly not because of some special natural propensity for rational reasoning exclusive to the male. However, the intellect derives from mother-sense and must remain connected to it if we are to avoid the intellect's homologation and levelling onto the logic of identity, emptied of the relation to the other, of the capacity for sense and significance. Consequently, for the full development of its cognitive and expressive potential intellectual knowledge and science must be grounded in mother-sense and must not ignore it. Furthermore, mother-sense includes "father-sense" (even if latently), while the contrary is not true. Therefore mother-sense and the intellect must be recovered in their original condition of dialectic and dialogic interrelation on both a phylogenetic and ontogenetic level.

With the term "intellect", as understood by Welby, we are on the side of inferential processes of the inductive and deductive type, where the logic of identity dominates over the logic of alterity. In terms of Peirce's best known sign triad, induction and deduction may be associated, respectively, to symbolicity and indexicality. Instead, with mother-sense we are on the side of signifying processes oriented by the logic of alterity and by the iconic dimension of signs; mother-sense, or "racial sense", as Welby also calls it, alludes to the creative and generative forces of sense resulting from and in the capacity to associate things which would seem distant from each other while in fact they are mutually attracted to each other. In terms of argumentation mother-sense is associated with logical procedures of the abductive type which are regulated by the logic of otherness, creativity, dialogism, freedom, love and desire.

In this context important to signal is Welby's correspondence with her friend Mary Everest Boole, writer, political activist and wife of the famous logician and mathematician studied by Peirce, George Boole. Among her many merits Mary Boole authored a series of books and articles generally unknown to the reading public, these include such titles as *Logic Taught by Love* and *The Forging of Passion into Power*. And, indeed, in their fascinating

correspondence Welby and Mary Boole discuss the laws that rule over thought in terms of the intimate interconnection between logic and love, passion and power (cf. Welby 1929: 86-92).

Logic as understood by Welby is logic where the broader and generative dimension of sense, the original level, the primal level, mother-sense, racial sense, the “matrix” interweaves with rational, intellectual life in a relationship of dialectic interdependency and reciprocal enrichment. According to Welby, logic to classify as such must always be associated with primal sense. And, indeed, one of the major goals of signification is to recover the relation of “answering comprehension”, in Bakhtin’s terminology, or of “agapic or sympathetic comprehension”, in Peirce’s, and therefore the relation of reciprocal empowering between primal sense and rational life. This relation is necessary for the full development of our capacity for critique and, therefore, of our awareness of the value, meaning and purport of experience in its totality. Signification sets itself the task of recovering the relationship of reciprocal interpretation between the constant *données* of mother-sense, on the one hand, and the constructs of the intellect, on the other. Mother-sense, says Welby, is the material of “immediate, unconscious and interpretive intuition”; from an evolutionary point of view it constitutes the “subsequent phase, on the level of value, to animal instinct”. Therefore, mother-sense is together “primordial and universal” and as such it is present at all stages in the development of humanity, even if to varying degrees (Welby1985a: ccxxxviii); as such, recalling Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), it tells of significance before and after signification (cf. Levinas 1974c). Mother-sense concerns the real insofar as it is part of human practices and the ideal insofar as it is the condition by virtue of which humanity may aspire to continuity and perfection in the generation of actual and possible words and of signifying processes at large.

Furthermore, Welby’s concept of logic may be associated with Peirce’s when he describes the great principle of logic in terms of “self-surrender”. And, as he also clarifies, this does not mean that self is to lay low for the sake of ultimate triumph, which must not be the governing purpose of our behaviour (cf. *CP* 5.402, note 2).

Mother-sense is both analytic and synthetic, it determines a disposition for knowledge with a capacity for growth in both quantitative and qualitative terms, which implies the capacity for changing orientation and perspective, for proceeding by cognitive leaps and entering different cognitive paradigms. “Calculation gives useful results”, says Welby in her unpublished manuscripts, “but without the sense and judgement of quality it can give no more than a description of fact”.

Furthermore, mother-sense is defined by Welby as knowledge that is “instinctively religious”, where “religious” is understood etymologically (*religare* = to unite, to relate, to link) as “feeling consciousness of the solar relationship”; a universal sense of *dependency* particularly developed in women upon something greater than the human (therefore, says Welby, a woman must not submit to her own creation, man); a universal tendency towards religion where by “religion” is understood a world that is other, vaster, more elevated, a world made of other origins and other relationships beyond the merely planetary, a world at the highest degrees of otherness and creativity. In Welby’s description mother-sense is a transcendent sense, in other words it determines our capacity to transcend the limits of sense itself, and as such is the true sense and value of the properly human. As she further specifies, mother-sense does not imply “anthropomorphism”, but far more broadly “organomorphism”, on the one hand, and “cosmomorphism”, on the other.

According to Welby, the history of the human race is also the history of the continual deviations operated by humanity in the social and signifying network, therefore, it is also the history of the loss of the sense of discernment and criticism, being the most serious of deviations. Such loss causes us to be satisfied with existence as it is, when, on the contrary, says Welby, what is needed is a condition of eternal dissatisfaction to the end of increasing our expressive capacity and of developing and improving the human race: “We all tend now, men and women, to be satisfied [...] with things as they are. But we have all entered the world precisely to be dissatisfied with it”. Therefore, with her concept of mother-sense Welby signals the need to recover the critical instance of the intellectual capacity, the gift for unprejudiced thinking based on abductive logic, otherness, and dialogism, for the production of sense, for prevision and anticipation, for translation in the broadest sense possible across the different systems of signs and values.

Mother-sense underlines the need to develop a social consciousness that is radically critical, capable of transcending the limits of convention in the effort to improve what we might call a concrete abstraction, that is, future generations. Similarly to Peirce (ideator of the concept of creative love, *agapasm*) when he maintains that the evolutionary results engendered by the logic of love derive from love oriented towards something concrete, Welby too, though independently from Peirce, orients the logic of mother-sense towards one’s concrete neighbour, that is, one’s neighbour in terms of affinity or similarity, even though s/he may be distant in space and time, while criticizing the threat of “vague and void abstractions”, as might be represented, for example, by the bad use of the concept itself of “future”. On the level of inference the practices of creative love are abductive practices

oriented by the logic of otherness, structured by the relationship with the other, the other in close “proximity” (Levinas), a “concrete abstraction” (Marx), therefore in its concrete “sign materiality” (Rossi-Landi) which also alludes to the subject’s relation with a physical body, which is not a reductive relation of identification, as a condition for subsisting as a sign.

By rediscovering and reasserting the connection between mother-sense and the intellect, between mother-sense and behavior, we may recover the sense of symbolic pertinence present in the child. Critical work is inevitably mediated by language understood as a modeling device specific to the human species (cf. Sebeok 1986, 1994, 2001; Petrilli and Ponzio 2001 and 2002) and as verbal language, spoken and written. And, in fact, another fundamental aim of signification is the “critique of language” (cf. Petrilli 1998b), which presupposes the interrelation between language, consciousness, thought, and the subject, all of which are rooted in and engendered by mother-sense. Welby underlines the importance of developing a “critical linguistic consciousness” and, therefore, critical linguistic practices which when plagued instead by prejudice, ignorance and the lack of critical sense obstacle the exquisitely human propensity for answering comprehension, dialogicality, playfulness and creativity.

Mother-sense opens to the ethical dimension of signs and semiosis beyond the strictly cognitive. According to the project proposed by Welby with signification, logic must fully recover its connection with primal sense, the matrix of sense, in a relationship of reciprocal interdependency and enrichment. Therefore logic must also recover the connection with values and with common sense in all its signifying valencies, from instinctive-biological sense to the sense of significance. The aim is to work for the improvement of human behaviour and therefore for the health and happiness of humanity over the entire planet in a “significant”, or, reinterpreting Welby and her signification in the light of recent trends in semio-philosophical studies, what we now propose to call a “semioethical” perspective (cf. Petrilli and Ponzio 2003).

3. Subjectivity and gift-giving in the interrelationship between Ident and Self

Welby’s unpublished manuscripts include a file entitled *Subjectivity* with texts written between 1903 and 1910 which analyse the problem of subjectivity in terms of the complex and articulated relationship between the “I” and the “self”. The subject’s identity is modelled in the dialogic interrelationship among its parts emerging as multiplex, plurifaceted and

plurivocal identity. The “I”, or what Welby calls “Ident” introducing a neologism, develops relatedly to “self” or the multiple “selves” that form the various faces or masks of the “Ident”. It is clear that in Welby’s description otherness is a necessary condition for the constitution of subjectivity.

Distinguishing between I and self Welby establishes that “self is included in “I”, *but not conversely*. [...] The race like the individual *has* a Self because it *is* an I” (“The I and the Self”, undated manuscript). The self is a representation of the I, a part of it, what we have and therefore cannot be; the I is what we are and therefore alludes to what we cannot possess. My “I” belongs to others just as “mine” belongs to (but does not coincide with) me. In her attempt to convey the idea of the distancing and shift between the various parts constituting subjectivity, Welby evokes the ancient use of the word “person” to refer to the masks of the actor. The I or Ident may be associated with “mother-sense”, the matrix, while the self, or *person*, or mask may be considered as one of its possible expressions or realizations or, as Welby says, “representations”.

In accordance with a dynamic and generative conception of existence as theorized by scientific research at the time of her writing, Welby maintains that the Ident is energy, a prime mover which manifests itself in the self and energizes the self, or better our multiple and ephemeral selves. Similarly to the body, the *self*, for which Welby also proposes the term *ephemeron*, is mortal, ephemeral. The I, instead, tends towards immortality beyond the mortality of the body and of self. The I coincides with the activity of giving, beyond the logic of exchange, beyond possession (“I and self”, 9th January 1910). As understood by Welby, the Ident refers to that part of human identity which resists and is other — the subject’s otherness with respect to itself, its sign materiality — in the continuous flow of change whose rhythm is beaten out in the succession, superimposition, multiplication, and cohabitation of our multiple *selves*. Formed in this way, identity is not a unit but something more, an excess endowed with logical value understood in terms of the creative logic of abduction. In a manuscript of 23rd November 1907, Welby makes the following statements:

The “I” *effectively IS*; since it belongs to the creative element of the universe, the energy of conception which includes the begetter and is both reproducer and evolant (or evolutant?). Thus the I is one with the active and with the “actor” who can and does impersonate and play an inexhaustible variety of persons and parts, while remaining inviolably identical and illimitably representative (“I and self”, 23rd November 1907)

In Welby's thought system self does not coincide with the I but is one of its many representations, one of its openings, a means, an instrument, or modality, but never an end in itself (cf. also 7th July 1907). Therefore, contrary to the tendency to exalt the self, to establish between self and I a relationship of substitution, usurpation, identification, identity derives from the relationship of dialogical otherness between the multiple selves constituting the Ident, between self, rather one's multiple selves, and Ident. Human identity is the ongoing, generative and dynamic outcome ensuing from the intercorporeal relation of dialogical distancing and differentiation of self with respect to I. Welby's generative conception of human consciousness recalls Peirce's when in his discussion of thought and subjectivity he maintains that just as we say that a body is in motion and not that motion is in a body, we ought to say that we are in thought and not that thoughts are in us (cf. *CP* 5.289, n.1).

Similarly to Peirce when he says that "self-love is no love" (*CP* 6.288), the ultimate "sin", says Welby (in "Who ARE we and what HAVE we", 9th April 1910), "consists in OUR giving our selves leave to demand and secure gratification, pleasure, ease, for their own sake: to be greedy of welfare at some human expense", in other words, it consists in allowing the *self* to transform *selfness* into *selfishness*. Though the action of the centripetal forces of *self* may be necessary to "self-preservation *here*", to "survival *now*", the condition of being oriented univocally towards self generally defeats evolutionary development to the extent that it generates "self-regarding selfishness". Indeed, as says Welby, "Egotism, however, properly speaking, is impossible: I cannot love or centre upon I, for I am essentially That which radiates: that which IS the knowing, living, activity: it is only selfism that we mean; not egoism" ("The I and the Self", *ibid.*).

In Welby's view, hedonist ethics – the dominant ideology of the time – implied a reduction of the vastness of the cosmos to the status of mere annex of the planetary egoist, consequently it implied a reduction of the differences in the relationship between I and self to the advantage of a single self thereby reducing identity to the condition of what *à la* Bakhtin we might describe as monologic identity. On the contrary, the "supreme function of the Ident's *self*", as says Welby, is to put itself at the service of the Ident and to collaborate in engendering, knowing, serving, mastering and transfiguring our actual and possible worlds; the mission of our selves being "to master the worlds for Identity in difference [...]. The Ident is one in all, but also All in each. The Ident's name is first multiplex — We, Us, then complex, I, Me. That Ident has, possesses, works through — a self, or even many selves" ("I and Self", 19th January 1910).

The Ident is a centre engendering multiple *selves* and at once a multiplicity inhabiting each one of our selves. The ontogenetic Ident corresponds to phylogenetic mother-sense, the originating, generative source of all forms of responsivity and mental power, whether analytical or constructive, which calls the human being not only to react but also to create. *Self* is an expression of the I, the utterer, it is the means or instrument through which the multiple Ident works, through which it operates. While we do not distinguish between I and I, I and self do not converge. To be implies to become a nucleus of originating – though not original – power, to become aware of one’s signifying potential and of one’s worth both in phylogenetic and ontogenetic terms. The personal pronouns of the series I/we/you/they, as says Welby, tells of our “sense of universal order, our sense of mentally creative potency, our sense of worth as well as of reality, before all and above all our sense of sign and its signification, its natural significance and its intentional significance – its Meaning” (“The I and the Self”, *ibid.*).

In tune with scientific progress of her time Welby calls attention to the dynamic and generative nature of subjectivity: “I suppose the greatest misfortune that can happen to a man is to be identified (except reflexively, that is as whole and part) with his self [...] As *We* are never *It* we are never *Self*. We only *have* what is both”. Indeed, Welby does not hesitate to describe her view of the I and the self as “essentially scientific”: “selves are the product of Identic, somatic activity, its structure the product of its function” (“The I and the Self”, *ibid.*). The relationship between the I and the self as theorized by Welby, between the I and its interpretants, is not of static equality, reduction of the differences, but rather of non correspondence, deferral, shift, difference and reciprocal otherness. Subjectivity is created in the dialogic interrelationship among its parts according to the logic of otherness, and in the interrelationship with the other external to personal identity. The role or function of I/we is determined structurally in the relation of distancing and deferral with respect to self. The I with its multiple selves belongs to the order of “motion” and “function” and, therefore, cannot be self-regarding; the self belongs to “matter” and “structure” and, therefore, is just there (cf. “I and Self”, 26th November 1906). Identity is becoming, acting, doing, giving.

The generative and dynamical character of the *Ident* is also determined by its triadic structure according to the model of father-mother-child, impulse-development-outcome, question-answer-act, which describes, as says Welby, “the process as the condition of true culmination, of attainment of an ascending ideal of which Nature is the parable as she is the exemplar”. In Welby’s conception, conscious identity represents a high degree in the

development of evolutionary processes to the extent that it rises to interpretation of all things, of significance in the universe (cf. 21st January 1910, no title, undated manuscript).

Identity understood as a community of dialogically interrelating selves is engendered by the logic of otherness. The Ident as the resulting unit of signifying processes is dialectical and open with respect to the sum total of its parts, its multiple selves, with respect to which indeed it represents an overflow, excess value, a gift, as says Welby:

In order to Be – and really to Be is to be Given – what is impotent for fertile being IS not; there *must* be overflow, there must be in some sense gift. True that in the arithmetical sense the bare unit may be added to and may multiply. But that is just because it has no content and no identity, as it has no fertility. Full identity is generative, is a Giver of its very self. (11th December 1906)

In Welby's description, the I is centrifugal energy, while self is centripetal. The Ident is oriented towards the negation of self, towards being understood in terms of becoming, acting, giving, doing rather than of receiving, keeping, being *selfish*. The connection with Bakhtin is immediate when he describes the subject and language in terms of the dynamics between "centripetal forces" and "centrifugal forces", the processes of "centralization" and "decentralization", of "unification" and "disunification". Both the (partial) recognizability of the sign and its elusiveness, plurivocality, uniqueness are determined in the ephemeral space of an equilibrium that is always uncertain, unstable, attained among forces continuously struggling with each other (cf. Bakhtin 1975, It. trans.: 80)

The conventionalization and monologization of human consciousness constrain and reduce the potential for responsivity towards the other, for dialogism and critique. Instead, in Welby's view the properly human is the condition of maximum opening and responsivity towards the other. To exemplify this condition she cites the discourse of love and passion, of altruistic love, creativity of the genius, and literature, all considered as places in which our secret, unknowable, elusive and interrelational being is revealed in a play of veiling and unveiling forces. The other discussed by Welby is both the other self constitutive of my own identity as well as the other external to my own identity and which all the same concerns me and relates to me such that it is in this very relation that the other subsists for me as other. As Welby says, "the language of passion is a case of this or that other self, and what we find most interesting is the other, always ours (cf. "The I and the Self", *ibid.*).

Welby evidences the otherness of subjectivity which to be an Ident must always be other in the relation with self, indeed conscious identity develops in the play of deferral to its multiple selves and is always oriented towards surpassing the centripetal forces polarized in the self. Subjectivity emerges in the open space of the relationship with the other – the inner other and the outer other – in which identity of the subject is delineated in the deferral among its multiple parts without ever identifying with any one of them. In the last analysis, as the knower the I or Ident is unknowable, as s/he who possesses s/he is elusive, as s/he who utters s/he is the unutterable. The Ident is an orientation towards the other, towards the self insofar as it is other; a continuous transcending and transferral of the limits, displacement of the real as it is, of the *hic et nunc*. While the self represents that which to an extent can be identified, measured, calculated, the Ident cannot be definitively captured or possessed, but simply approached by approximation, tentatively and hypothetically, and only by working through the means at our disposal, that is, our selves.

In Welby's description and similarly to Peirce, the human being is a community of parts that are distinct but not separate. Far from excluding each other, these parts, or selves, are interconnected by a relation of reciprocal dependence. They are founded in the logic of otherness understood as the logic of unindifference among differences, which excludes the condition of undifferentiated confusion among the parts or of levelling the other onto self. As says Welby, to confound is to sacrifice distinction:

But in *my* logic (if you will allow me any!) I see no great gulf, but only a useful distinction between methods proper to practical and theoretical questions. So then “Never confound, and never divide” is in these matters my motto. And I had gathered, I hope not quite mistakenly, that you also saw the disastrous result of digging gulfs to *separate* when it was really a question of *distinction*, — as sharp and clear as you like. (letter of Welby to Peirce of 29th June 1904, in Hardwick 1977: 21)

To the extent that it represents an excess with respect to the sum of its parts, the I or Ident, says Welby, is not the “individual” but the “unique” (“I and self”, June 1907). Here we may interpret what Welby understands by “unique” — which has nothing to do with the monadic separatism of Stirner's conception of the unique, of singularity — with the concept of “non relative otherness” as understood by Levinas, or with his concept of “significance”. The latter is also theorized by Welby in the context of her theory of meaning and the triad that distinguishes between “sense”, “meaning” and “significance”:

[...] for we may represent the Unique. That is the word which might well supersede the intolerably untrue “individual”. It is in fact just our dividuality which constitutes the richness of our gifts. We can, but must not be, divided; we must include the divisible in the greatest of Wholes, the organic Whole, which as risen to the level of the human, may crown each one of us as unique. (“I and Self”, June 1907)

Up to here

In Welby’s philosophical system, similarly to Peirce’s, love is directed to the concrete and not to abstractions, to persons, one’s neighbour not necessarily in a spatial sense, locally, but in the sense of affinity, a person – to say it with Peirce, “we live near [...] in life and feeling”. Love is a driving force where iconicity, abduction and creativity are clearly operative. Citing St. John’s Gospel, whose evolutionary philosophy teaches us that growth comes from love, Peirce clarifies that love is intended not so much in the sense of *self-sacrifice*, that is, sacrifice of the other to self including one’s own other, or of gratifying the egoistic impulses of others, but in the sense of sacrificing one’s own perfection to the perfectionment of one’s neighbour, “the ardent impulse to fulfill another’s highest impulse”. Applying the lesson learnt from St. John, with Peirce we may infer that the mind and the cosmos develop through the power of love understood as orientation towards the other, as care for the other. And recalling his essay of 1892, “The Law of Mind”, he reminds his readers that the type of evolution foreseen by synechism, the principle of continuity, is evolution through the agency of love whose prime characteristic is that it enables us to recognize the germs of loveliness in the hateful and make it lovely (cf. *CP* 6.287-289).

Peirce polemically contrasts the “gospel of Christ” according to which progress is achieved by virtue of a relationship of sympathy established among neighbours, with the “Gospel of greed” which he describes as the dominant tendency of the time, consisting in the assertion of the individual, therefore, of one’s own individuality or egoistic identity over the other (cf. *CP* 6.294). A parallel may be drawn between Peirce’s critique of the supremacy of the individual and Welby’s which, as we have seen, she develops in terms of her analysis of the dynamics between I and self, and of her critique of the self’s tendency to transform selfness into selfishness or selfism. The principles of natural selection, the survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence as elaborated by Charles Darwin in his *Origin of Species* (1859) are translations of the concept of individual from nineteenth century political economy to the life sciences, from the sphere of economics to the spheres of biology and more specifically

anthropology. On his part, Peirce privileged the agapastic theory of evolution and in fact considered his own strong attraction for this doctrine as possible proof of its truth (cf. *CP* 6.295).

Peirce distinguishes self-love, love directed to another insofar as s/he is exactly like self, self-love which is no love, and creative love directed to what is completely different, even “hostile and negative” with respect to self, love directed to the other insofar as s/he is other (cf. *CP* 6.287). We could propose on this basis a typology of love passing from a high degree of identity to a high degree of alterity. But truly creative love, as both Welby and Peirce teach us, is love ruled by the logic of otherness, love for the other, directed to the other insofar as s/he is other. We could claim that the logic of otherness, altruistic and unindifferent otherness, is agapastic, dialogic, abductive and creative.

4. *A dialogic exchange with Gen*

The following is an extract from an email message to me of 25th November 2002 from Genevieve Vaughan commenting a paper I sent her entitled “Subject, Body and Agape”, of 1997. The article I have presented for this current issue of *Athanor*, edited by Gen and dedicated to the presentation of her ideas about the gift economy, develops some aspects of that paper, in particular the concepts of “mother-sense” and subjectivity analyzed by Welby in terms of the relation between “I” or “Ident” and “Self”, which are the object of Gen’s considerations below:

I just read your paper “Subject, Body and Agape” and found it very exciting. I have not read anything of yours before. One thing I particularly liked was the way mother-sense or signification puts together logic and love. People have been saying to me that I should not use the word ‘logic’ for the interaction of gift giving so it is great to see that Welby did not separate logic from *other* orientation. The continuity between the “other oriented logic” and the “ego oriented logic” is the thread by which we can pull the mother back into philosophy. A challenge I admit but so necessary now with war pending. I think that there is a sort of ethical or even revolutionary basis – social agapism? – for interpreting semiotization in terms of other orientation and of what I think of as gift giving, in that only if you recognize the big picture need for social change can you see needs as the basis of production, including sign production. Needs have been blotted out of our discourse by the market which sees them only in terms of effective demand, instrumentalizing them to make a profit and so colored with selfishness (or less judgementally, and more systemically, ego-orientation). It is great to see how Peirce and Welby and Levinas have this approach towards the other. I am such a naive and uneducated “semiotician” I don't even know who my allies are.

A thought I had about Welby's self, I and Ident, has to do with the legal “I” as owner in mutual exclusion with other owners, a being which or who has things including perhaps a kind of relation of having with a self. Well that might not fit very well with what she says but I

think it is an interesting consideration in that it abstracts the individual and the community, and now even corporations are considered on the same level as individual entities. I am looking forward to reading other things you have written. Thank you for giving them to me.

Welby's thought system may indeed contribute to a semio-philosophical founding of gift theory for a better understanding of today's world and of the subject who inhabits it and, ultimately, for radical social revolution according to the logic of "social agapism" – to use the happy expression proposed by Gen. The bond between logic and love was theorized by Peirce, and quite separately from him by Welby who did her research independently from academic institutions, just like Gen! Despite completely different historical and ideological contexts, to my mind many analogies may be established between Gen and Welby, the scholars and the women, their theory and their practice: both women turn to the community beyond self as a sounding board for their ideas, both women elect the community beyond self as the object of their gift-giving practices, their "disinterested generosity", the urge to "care for the other". Indeed, not only is the gift theorized, explicitly by Gen, but also by Welby with her concepts of mother-sense and Ident, both women dedicate their ideas and their practical resources to gift giving with the same passion and enthusiasm deriving from a common fundamental conviction, that what they are proposing is a new model for radical social change.

Today's world is a world lacerated by war, hatred and the desire for vengeance, where bodies are exploded and torn to pieces, as dictated by the logic of power and dominion for the sake of identity logic and its interests. From their theoretical work and total dedication to care for the people and for life generally, women like Gen and Welby before her teach us that a new worldview is possible through radical social revolution oriented by the logic of love and otherness, that is, disinterested and uncalculating otherness, altruistic otherness.

References

Bakhtin, Mikhail Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1929). *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo* (Problems of Dostoevsky's work), Leningrad, Priboj. It. trans. and Intro. M. De Michiel, *Problemi dell'opera di Dostoevskij*. Intro. A. Ponzio. Bari: Edizioni dal Sud, 1997.

— (1963). *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, Moscow, Sovetskij pisatel'. Eng. trans. and ed.

C. Emerson, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

— (1965). *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable* Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura. Eng. trans. H.

- Iswolsky, ed. K. Pomorska, *Rabelais and His World*, Cambridge, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1968.
- (1975). *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Problems of Literature and of Aesthetics), Moscow, Khudozestvennii literatura. It. trans. *Estetica e romanzo*, Turin, Einaudi, 1979.
- (1979). *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Aesthetics of verbal art). Moscow: Iskusstvo. It. trans. *L'autore e l'eroe. Teoria letteraria e scienze umana*, Turin, Einaudi, 1988.
- (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- (1986) *Speech Genres & Other Late Essay*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- (1990). *Art and Answerability*, ed. M. Holquist and V. Liapunov, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- (1993 [1920-24]). *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Eng. trans. V. Liapunov, ed. M. Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Baldwin, James Mark (ed.) (1901-1905). *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology in Three Volumes*, Macmillan New York, London.
- Boole, Mary Everest (1931a). *Collected Works*, ed. E. M. Cobham, Pref. E. S. Dummer, 4 Vols, The C. W. Daniel Company, London.
- (1931b [1905]). *Logic Taught by Love: Rhythm in Nature and in Education (1890)*, in M. E. Boole 1931a, vol. II, pp. 399-515.
- (1931c [1909]). *Symbolic Methods of Study (1884)*, in M. E. Boole 1931a, vol. I, pp. 239-333.
- (1931d [1910]). *The Forging of Passion into Power*, in M. E. Boole 1931a, vol. IV, pp. 1337-1413.
- Caputo, Cosimo; Susan Petrilli; and Augusto Ponzio (eds.) (1998). *Basi. Significare, inventare, dialogare*, Lecce: Piero Manni.
- Cust, Mrs. Henry (Nina) (ed.) (1928). *Wanderers: Episodes From the Travels of Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley and Her Daughter Victoria, 1849-1955*, pref. Sir R. Storrs, Johanthan Cape, London.
- Darwin, Charles (1998 [1859]). *Origin of Species*, ed., intro., and notes G. Beer, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Gordon, Terrence W. (1990). “Significs and C. K. Ogden: The influence of Lady Welby”. In H. W. Schmitz, ed., 1990, pp. 179-196.
- Hardwick, Charles S. (ed.) (in collab. with J. Cook) (1977). *Semiotic and Significs. The Correspondence Between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, Intro., pp. ix-

xxxiv, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-London.

Levinas, Emmanuel (1961). *Totalité et Infini*, Nijhoff, The Hague; Eng. trans. A. Lingis, *Totality*

and Infinity, intro. J. Wild, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht-Boston-London, 1991.

- (1974a [1949, 1967]). *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Vrin, Paris; Eng. trans. R. A. Cohen and M. B. Smith, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1998.
- (1974b [1967]). “Langage et proximité”, in E. Levinas 1974a, pp. 217-236; Eng. trans. “Language and Proximity”, in E. Levinas 1987b, pp. 109-127.
- (1974c). *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, Nijhoff, The Hague; Eng. trans. A. Lingis, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 2000.
- (1987). *Collected Philosophical Papers*, Eng. trans. and ed. A. Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht.
- Marx, Karl (1857-8). *Grundrisse*, vol. 28 of *The Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Lawrence and Wishart, London (1975-).
- Medvedev, Pavel N. (1978 [1928]). *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, Eng. trans. A. J. Wehrle. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Ogden, Charles K. (1994a). *C. K. Ogden and Linguistics*, 5 Vols., ed. T. W. Gordon. London: Routledge-Thoemmes Press.
- (1994b). The Progress of Linguistics. In Ogden 1994a, Vol. 1, pp.1-47.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders (1892). “The Law of Mind”, *The Monist*, vol. 2, pp. 533-559, in *CP* 6.102-6.163.
- (1923). *Chance, Love and Logic*, ed. Morris R. Cohen, Harcourt, New York.
- (1931-1966). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, eds. C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss, and A. W. Burks, 8 vols., Harvard University Press, The Belknap Press Cambridge (Mass.) (References are to *CP*, followed by volume and paragraph numbers).
- (1984a). *Writings of Charles S. Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, Vol. 2, 1867-1871, Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- (1992). *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Vol. 1., ed. N. Houser and C. J. W. Kloesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- (1998). *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 2., ed. by Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Petrilli, Susan (1990a). "Sign and Meaning in Victoria Lady Welby and Mikhail Bakhtin: A Confrontation", in H. Walter Schmitz (ed. and intro.), *Essays on Significs*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1990, pp. 197-215.
- (1990b). "Dialogue and Chronotopic Otherness: Bakhtin and Welby", *Discours social/ Social Discourse* 3, 1&2, pp. 339-350.
- (1990c). "The Problem of Signifying in Welby, Peirce, Vailati, Bakhtin", in Augusto Ponzio, *Man As a Sign: Essays on the Philosophy of Language*, intro. trans. and ed. by S. Petrilli, Berlin, Mouton De Gruyter, pp. 313-363.
- (1995). "Between Semiotics and Significs. C. K. Ogden and V. Welby", *Semiotica* 105-3/4, pp. 277-309.
- (1997). "Subject, Body and Agape. Toward Teleosemiotics with Peirce and Welby", *Working Papers and pre-publications*, Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e di Linguistica, Università di Urbino, 261-262, febr.-March 1997, serie A, pp. 1-39.
- (1998a). *Teoria dei segni e del linguaggio*, Graphis, Bari, 20012.
- (1998b). *Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Naples.
- (2004). *Percorsi della semiotica*, Graphis, Bari.
- Petrilli, Susan; Ponzio, Augusto (2000). *Il sentire nella comunicazione globale*, Meltemi, Rome.
- (2001). *Sebeok and the Signs of Life*, London, Icon Books.
- (2002). *I segni e la vita. La semiotica globale di Thomas A. Sebeok*, Spirali, Milan.
- (2003). *Semioetica*, Meltemi, Roma.
- Petrilli, Susan; Sebeok, Thomas A.; Ponzio, Augusto (2001). *Semiotica dell'io*, Meltemi, Roma.
- Rossi-Landi, Ferruccio (1973). *Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity*, Mouton, The Hague.
- (1982 [1978]). *Ideologia*, Mondadori, Milan; Eng. trans. R. Griffin, *Marxism and Ideology*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1990.
- (1985). *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*, Bompiani, Milan.
- (1992a). *Between Signs and Non-signs*, ed. and Intro. S. Petrilli, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- (1992b [1968]). *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, ed. A. Ponzio, Bompiani, Milan; Eng. trans. M. Adams et al., *Language as Work and Trade*, Bergin and Garvey, South Hadley (Mass.), 1983.

- Schmitz, Walter H., ed. and Intro., i-ix. (1990). *Essays on Significs. Papers Presented on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Birth of Victoria Lady Welby*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. (1986). *I Think I Am a Verb*, Plenum Press, New York and London; It. trans. and intro. S. Petrilli, *Penso di essere un verbo*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1990.
- (1994). *Signs. An Introduction to Semiotics*. Toronto: Toronto University Press. New ed. 2001; It. trans. and intro. S. Petrilli, *Segni. Introduzione alla semiotica*, Carocci, Roma.
- (2001). *Global Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand (1899-1900). “Philosophical Terminology” (I-III), (Welby Prize Essay, Eng. trans. Mrs. B. Bosanquet). *Mind* 8(31-32), pp. 286-332, pp. 467-491; 9(33), pp. 46-61.
- Vaughan, Genevieve (1978). “Saussure and Vygotsky via Marx”, *Ars Semiotica* 2, pp. 57-83.
- (1980). “Communication and Exchange”, *Semiotica* 29, 1/2, pp. 113-143.
- (1997). *For-Giving. A Feminist Criticism of Exchange*, Foreword by Robin Morigan, Plain View Press, Austin, Texas.
- Voloshinov, Valentin N. (1927). *Frejdzizm*. Moscow-Leningrad. Eng. trans. I. R. Titunik, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch.*, ed. I. R. Titunik with N. H. Bruss. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- (1929). *Marksizm i filosofija jazyca*. Leningrad. Eng. trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1973.
- Welby, Victoria (1881). *Links and Clues*, Macmillan & Co., London, 2nd ed. 18832.
- (1892). *A Week's Morning and Evening Prayers For Families and Institutions*, Menzies & Co., London (Vita).
- (1893). “Meaning and Metaphor“, *The Monist* 3(4), pp. 510-525; now in V. Welby 1985a.
- (1896). “Sense, Meaning and Interpretation”, *Mind*. 5 (17), pp. 24-37; 5 (18), pp. 186-202; now in V. Welby 1985a.
- (1897). *Grains of Sense*, J. M. Dent, London.
- (1902). “Translation”, in J. M. Baldwin 1901-1905, vol. 2, p. 712.
- (1903). *What is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance*, Macmillan, London; new ed., see V. Welby 1983.
- (1929). *Echoes of Larger Life: A Selection from the Early Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, ed. and intro. Mrs. H. Cust, Jonathan Cape, London.

- (1931). *Other Dimensions: A Selection from the Later Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, ed. Mrs. H. Cust, intro. L. P. Jacks, Jonathan Cape, London.
- (1983 [1903]). *What is Meaning? (Studies in the Development of Significance)*, ed. and pref. A. Eschbach, ix-xxxii, Intro. G. Mannoury, pp. xxxiv-xlii, in *Foundations of Semiotics*, vol. 2, John Benjamins, Amsterdam-Philadelphia.
- (1985a [1911]). *Significs and Language*, ed. and intro. H. W. Schmitz, pp. ix-ccxxxvii, in *Foundations of Semiotics*, vol. 5, John Benjamins, Amsterdam-Philadelphia.
- (1985b). *Significato, metafora, interpretazione*, It. trans., ed. and intro., pp. 7-50, by S. Petrilli, Adriatica, Bari.
- Unpublished Manuscripts. Welby Collection, York University Archives, York University, Downsview, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Welby, Victoria; Baldwin, John Mark; Stout, George Frederick (1902). “Significs”, in J. M. Baldwin 1901-1905, vol. 2, p. 529.
- Welby, Victoria; Stout, George Frederick (1902). “Sensal”, in J. M. Baldwin 1901-1905, vol. 2, p. 515.

Susan Petrilli is Associate Professor of Semiotics at the University of Bari, Department of Linguistic Practices and Text Analysis, where she teaches and does research. Her principal areas of study include sign theory, subject theory, theory of meaning and language, communication theory, problems of ideology, translation theory. She has edited three collective volumes of *Athantor* (1999, 2000, 2001) on theory and semiotics of translation, a volume dedicated to *Nero* (2003) and a recent volume entitled *Lavoro immateriale* (2003-2004). Her major publications include: *Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio* (1998); *Teoria dei segni e del linguaggio*, (1999); (with A. Ponzio): *Signs of Research on Signs* (1998), *Fuori campo. I segni del corpo tra rappresentazione ed eccedenza* (1999), *Philosophy of Language, Art and Answerability in Mikhail Bakhtin* (2000), *Il sentire della comunicazione globale* (2000), *Thomas Sebeok and the Signs of Life* (2001), *I segni e la vita. La semiotica globale di Thomas A. Sebeok* (2002), *Semioetica*, (2003); (with T. A. Sebeok and A. Ponzio), *L'io semiotico* (2001); *Translation Translation* (ed. 2003); *Linguaggi* (ed. 2003); *Ideology, Dialogue and Logic in Semioethic Perspective* (ed. 2004); *Percorsi della semiotica* (2004).

* Published in: *Il dono/The Gift. A Feminist Analysis. Athantor. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura*, XV, n. s. n. 8, 2004, pp. 179-198. ed. Genevieve Vaughan.

Charles Kay Ogden (1889-1957) was unquestionably a polymath, known above all for his book *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) coauthored with Ivor A. Richards. As a student at

Cambridge University, Ogden was one of the founders of the Heretic Society for the discussion of problems relating to philosophy, art, and science, as well as religion. He served as editor of the *Cambridge Magazine* and later of *Psyche* (1923-52), a journal of general and linguistic psychology. Among his various undertakings Ogden founded the Orthological Institute and invented Basic English, an international language comprising 850 words for people with no knowledge of English.

His research was strongly influenced by his relationships with Welby and with Richards. The unpublished correspondence between Ogden and Welby (which lasted roughly two years, from 1910 to 1911) is noteworthy from the perspective of the links between Welby's Significs and the conception of meaning proposed in *The Meaning of Meaning* (cf. Gordon 1990; Petrilli 1995, 1998b; Caputo *et alii* 1998). As a young university student, Ogden strongly promoted Significs, and in 1911 he gave a paper for the Heretic Society on 'The Progress of Significs' (cf. Ogden 1994b).

In the *Meaning of Meaning*, Ogden and Richards propose a triadic schema of the sign. They describe interpretation and meaning in terms of relational processes, ensuing from the dynamic interaction among sign, interpretant, and object, or in the authors' terminology, among *symbol*, *reference*, and *referent*. In this book Peirce's importance for semiotics is acknowledged with the insertion of a section devoted to him in the appendix. As a result of this, Peirce's ideas were introduced and circulated in England for the first time alongside those of other important figures. Welby is also mentioned, but the significance of her research is underestimated.

Charles Sanders Peirce (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1839-Milford 1914), an American scientist, historian of science, logician, mathematician and philosopher of international fame. He founded contemporary semiotics, a general theory of sign which he equated with logic and the theory of inference, especially abduction, and later with pragmatism, or as he preferred, pragmaticism. Peirce graduated from Harvard College in 1859 and then received an M.Sc. from Harvard University's newly founded Lawrence Scientific School in 1863. His thirty-one year employment as a research scientist in the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey ended in 1891. Apart from short term lectureships in logic and philosophy of science at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (1879-1884), at the Lowell Institute in Boston (1866), and at Harvard (1865, 1869-1870, 1903, 1907), as well as at private homes in Cambridge (1898 and in other years), Peirce worked in isolation, outside the academic community.

He had difficulty publishing during his lifetime. A selection of published and unpublished writings were eventually prepared in the *Collected Papers*, the first of which appeared in 1931. But an anthology of his writings edited by M. R. Cohen and entitled *Chance, Love and Logic* had already been published in 1923. His works are now being organized chronologically into a thirty volume critical edition under the general title, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Peirce Edition Project), the first volume having appeared in 1982.

In a letter to Welby of December 23, 1908, Peirce, who was nearly seventy, conveys a sense of the inclusive scope of his semiotic perspective when he says: "[...] it has never been in my power to study anything, — mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, gravitation, thermodynamics, optics, chemistry, comparative anatomy, astronomy, psychology, phonetics, economic, the history of science, whist, men and women, wine, metrology, except as a study of semeiotic" (in Hardwick 1977, pp. 85-86).

As anticipated in a paper of 1905, 'Issues of Pragmaticism', in Peirce's conception the entire universe, the universe of existents and the universe of our conceptual constructions about them, that wider universe we are accustomed to refer to as *truth* of which the universe of existents is only a part, "all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs" (CP 5.448, n. 1).

While developing a general model of sign, Peirce was particularly interested in a theory of method. His research focused specifically on the sciences and therefore on the search for a scientific method. However, in the perspective of Peircean pragmatism, knowledge understood in terms of innovation and inventiveness is not conceived as a purely epistemic process. Knowledge presupposes ethical knowledge, responsiveness to the other, which the self listens to both as the other from self and as the other self: for there to be an interpreted sign, an object of interpretation, there must be an interpretant, even when we are dealing with cognitive signs in a strict sense. The sign as a sign is other; in other words it may be characterized as a sign because of its structural opening to the other and therefore as dialogue with the other. This implies that the sign's identity is grounded in the logic of alterity. Consequently, learning, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and sagacity in their various forms are situated in a sign situation which, in the last analysis, is given over to the other, is listening to the other. Cognitive identity is subject to the other and as such is continually put into crisis by the restlessness of signs that the appeal of the other inexorably provokes. Therefore, insofar as it is part of the sign network by virtue of which alone it earns its status as sign, the cognitive sign is placed and modelled in a context that is irreducibly ethical.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (Örel 1895-Moscow 1975), a Russian philosopher. He met Pavel N. Medvedev (1891-1938) and Valentin N. Voloshinov (1884/5-1936) in Vitebsk in 1920 and established relations of friendship and collaboration with them. Together they formed the "Bakhtin Circle" with the participation of the musicologist I. I. Sollertinskij, the biologist I. I. Kanaev, the writers K. K. Vaginov and D. I. Kharms, the Indologist M. I. Tubianskij, and the poet N. A. Kljuev. Even if only on an ideal level, Bakhtin's brother Nikolaj (1894-1950) may also be considered as a member of the "Circle". Having left Russia in 1918 N. Bakhtin eventually settled in Birmingham, England, where at the University he founded the Department of Linguistics in 1946. He died in there four years later.

During the 1920s Bakhtin's work interconnected so closely with that of his collaborators that it is difficult to distinguish between them. This would seem to confirm his thesis of the "semi-other" character of "one's own word", in spite of the critics who insist on establishing ownership and authorship. Bakhtin played a significant role in writing Voloshinov's two books, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* (1927) and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929) as well as *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928), signed by P. N. Medvedev. He also contributed to various articles published by the same "authors" between 1925 and 1930, as well as to Kanaev's article "Contemporary Vitalism" (1926). And even when the "Circle" broke down under Stalinist oppression, with Medvedev's assassination and Voloshinov's death, the "voices" of its various members were still heard in uninterrupted dialogue with Bakhtin who persevered in his research until his death in 1975.

Problems of Dostoevsky's Art was published in 1929, followed by a long silence broken only in 1963 when at last a much expanded edition appeared under the title *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. With Stalinism at its worst, in fact, Bakhtin had been banished from official culture and exiled to Kustanaj. In 1965 he published his monograph *Rabelais and His World*. A collection of his writings in Russian originally appeared in 1975 and another in 1979, followed by editions of his unpublished writings or re-editions of published works by himself and his circle (cf. in English, Bakhtin 1981, 1986, 1990, 1993).

Evaluated as "critique", in a literary as well as philosophical sense after Kant and Marx, Bakhtin's fundamental contribution to "philosophy of language" or "metalinguistics" consists in his *critique of dialogic reason*. He privileged the term "metalinguistics" for his particular approach to the study of sign, utterance, text, discourse genre, and relations between literary writing and nonverbal expressions in popular culture, as in the signs of carnival. Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason focuses on the concept of *responsibility without alibis*, a non conventional responsibility, but which concerns existential "architectonics" in its

relation with the I, with the world and with others and which as such cannot be transferred. Dialogue is for Bakhtin an embodied, intercorporeal, expression of the involvement of one's body, which is only illusorily individual, separate, and autonomous. The adequate image of the body is that of the "grotesque body" (see Bakhtin 1965) which finds expression in popular culture, in the vulgar language of the public place and above all in the masks of carnival. This is the body *in its vital and indissoluble relation with the world and with the body of others*. With the shift in focus from identity (whether individual, as in the case of consciousness or self, or collective, as in a community, historical language, or cultural system at large) to alterity - a sort of *Copernican revolution* - Bakhtinian critique of dialogic reason not only questions the general orientation of Western philosophy, but also the tendencies dominating over the culture engendering it.

Bakhtin and Welby never met in real life nor ever knew of each other, although they are easily related on an ideal level (cf. Petrilli 199a, b, c).

With the term "racial" Welby's reference is to the human race in general, to the genus *Homo* and not to a single race.