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Talking about Signs about Signs

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Part I: Signs, Language, Argumentation. Basic Concepts

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Signs, Dialogue and Inference

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1. *Semiotics and Semiosis*

Sign activity, sign process, or semiosis, originates with the first stirrings of life given that signs, communication, interpretation are prerogative characteristics of living beings. Semiosis as such is the object of study of the general theory, or science, or doctrine of signs known as "semiotics" which today is emerging ever more as "global semiotics," where "global" indicates an orientation, a project, a trend. Global semiotics is "unbounded semiotics" (see Petrilli and Ponzio 2005). By virtue of a "global" or "holistic" approach to semiotics, research into the "life of signs" is also immediately associated with concern for the "signs of life." This means that the sign science today is all but limited to the "science qui étude la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale," (as posited by Ferdinand de Saussure) with its anthropocentric, glottocentric, phonocentric, alphabetocentric and, ultimately, ethnocentric bias.

However that may be, "communication" does not come about in terms of the manifestation of an interior content through processes of exteriorisation. On this account, communication is an e-mission from some entity, a living being, the e-mitter, and takes place between the e-mitter considered as a *terminus a quo* and another being (the receiver) considered as a *terminus ad quem*. According to this description, or model, communication occurs *between* a *being* in the role of emitter and another being in the role of receiver, so that there exists a being that communicates, that *first is* and *then communicates*, that *exists prior to and independently of its acts of communication*.

On the contrary, the view maintained by the present authors is that communication is no less than a property inherent to living beings, the condition itself for being, for existing and flourishing, a condition for life.

The general plan of the monumental work in four volumes, *Semiotik/Semiotics. A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture* (edited by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering, and Thomas A. Sebeok, 1997-2004) is no doubt a expression of what semiotics is today: global semiotics, unbounded semiotics, semiotics characterized by an interdisciplinary approach inclusive of medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, economics, mathematics, logic, grammar, stylistics, poetics, musicology, aesthetics, philosophy, etc.

The object of study of "global semiotics," or "semiotics of life," is the *semiosphere*. This term is taken from Jurij M. Lotman (1991) but is understood by Thomas A. Sebeok ('Global semiotics' 1994a, now in Sebeok 2001b) in a far more extended sense than Lotman's. The latter limited the sphere of reference of the term 'semiosphere' to human culture and claimed that communication does not take place outside the semiosphere thus understood (cf. Lotman 1991: 123-124).

On the contrary, from the perspective of global semiotics where *semiosis* is described as coinciding with *life* (in this sense global semiotics is 'semiotics of life'), the *semiosphere* identifies with the *biosphere* – this term was coined in Russian by Vladimir Vernadskij in 1926 – and emerges, therefore, as the *semiobiosphere*. Global semiotics is in a position to evidence the extension and consistency of the sign network which includes the *semiosphere* in Lotman's sense as constructed by human beings, human culture, signs, symbols and artifacts, etc.

But *global semiotics* underlines the fact that the semiosphere is part of a *far broader semiosphere*, the *semiobiosphere*, a sign network human beings have never left, and to the extent that they are *living beings*, never will.

Concerning the human word, semiotics must reflect upon the conditions of possibility of what Edmund Husserl calls the already given, already done, already constituted, already determined world. Critical analysis of the world, with a focus on alternative planning requires this type of reflection.

Our claim is that semiotics today carries out the general task of what Husserl called *constitutive phenomenology*. As he clearly demonstrates in *Erfahrung und Urteil* [*Experience and judgement]*, 1948, the aim of *constitutive phenomenology* is to describe the entire complex of operations that lead to the constitution of a *possible world*. To investigate how the world is constituted means to deal with the essential form of the world in general and not our real actual

existent world. This means to investigate the modeling structures and processes of the human world not simply in terms of factuality, reality and history but also in terms of potential and possibility.

Such an investigation is specific also in the sense that it deals with a species-specific modality of constructing the world. In fact, unlike other animals, the human animal is capable of constructing infinite possible worlds. With Sebeok the human *modeling device* of the world may be denominated with the expression 'language.' Here let us signal the distinction between "modelling" and "communication," therefore between "language as modelling" and "language as communication". Language as modelling is prior to language as communication which, whether verbal or nonverbal, presupposes the former, its condition of possibility.

The capacity for language is specific to the human species. In fact, unlike all other species only humans are in a position to construct innumerable worlds, whether real or imaginary, concrete or fantastic, and not just a single world as in other life-forms (see Sebeok 1991a).

The interpretant of a sign (discussed in detail in what follows) is itself another sign which the first creates in the interpreter. In Charles Sanders Peirce's description the interpretant is "an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign" (Peirce, *CP* 2.228). Therefore, the interpretant sign cannot be identical to the interpreted sign; it cannot be a mere repetition, precisely because it is *mediated*, interpretive and therefore always new.

With respect to the first sign, the interpretant is a *response*. As such, it inaugurates a new sign process, a new semiosis. In this sense, it is a more developed sign. As a sign the interpretant determines another sign which acts, in turn, as an interpretant: therefore, the interpretant opens to new semioses, it develops the sign process, it is a new sign occurrence.

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

In our terminology: the 'First Sign' in the triadic relation of semiosis, the object that receives meaning mediated by the sign is the *interpreted*; what confers meaning is the *interpretant* which may be of two main types.

The interpretant that allows for recognition of the sign is an *identifying interpretant*. As such, it is connected with the signal, code and sign system. The specific interpretant of a sign, that which interprets its actual sense, is indicated with the expression *responsive understanding interpretant* or *responsive understanding interpretant*. This second type of interpretant does not

limit itself to identifying the interpreted, but rather expresses its properly pragmatic meaning, installing with the former a relation of involvement and participation: the interpretant responds to the interpreted and takes a stand toward it.

Jakob von Uexküll's 'functional cycle' is a model for semiosic processes. As such, it too is dialogic in structure and involves inferences of the 'if ... then' type. In the 'functional cycle' the *interpretandum* produced by the 'objective connecting structure' becomes an *interpretatum* and (represented in the organism by a signaling disposition) is translated by the interpretant into a behavioral disposition, which triggers a behavior onto the 'connecting structure.' The point is that in the 'functional cycle' thus described a dialogic relation is established between an interpreted (*interpretandum*) and an interpretant (*interpretatum*), interpreted by another interpretant, and so forth. This interpretant is not limited to identifying the interpreted, but rather establishes an interactive relation with it.

Not only is the 'functional cycle' dialogic, but vice versa communication understood in a strict sense can also be analyzed in light of the 'functional cycle.' In other words, the dialogic communicative relation between a sender (that intends to communicate something about an object) and a receiver may, in turn, be considered on the basis of the 'functional cycle' model.

The autopoietic system theory is incompatible with a trivial conception of dialogue, whether based on the communication model which describes communication as a linear causal process moving from source to destination, or on the conversation model governed by the turning around together rule.

In relation to dialogism, global semiotics understood as unbounded semiotics also develops the sign theory drafted by Mikhail M. Bakhtin and his 'Circle'**.** For Bakhtin dialogue is the embodied, intercorporeal expression of involvement of the body with the body of the other (that the body be an individual, separate, and autonomous body is only an illusion). The condition of interrelatedness among bodies, of interconnectness, intercorporeity is most adequately expressed with the image of the 'grotesque body' (cf. Bakhtin 1965) in popular culture as well as in the vulgar language of the public place, and in the masks of carnival.

By contrast with Kant's 'critique of pure reason' and Sartre's 'critique of dialectic reason,' Bakhtin inaugurates what we may call a 'critique of dialogic reason.' Self is implied dialogically in otherness, just as the 'grotesque body' is implied in the body of the other. In fact, we have stated that dialogue and the body are closely interconnected.

Bakhtin's dialogism cannot be understood separately from his biosemiotic conception of the sign. On this basis he criticizes both subjective individualism and objective abstraction. The dialogic relation is not only present in the strictly human world but also in the biological world

at large. The 'Copernican revolution' operated by Bakhtin on a philosophical level and by Dostoevsky on an artistic level, concerns the human being as he is involved with all his life, needs, thoughts, and behavior in the life of others, human and nonhuman.

This is the body *in its vital and indissoluble relation to the world and to the body of others*. The shift in focus from identity (whether individual, as in the case of self-consciousness, or collective, that is, a community, historical language, or cultural system at large) to alterity, to *otherness,* is a sort of *Copernican revolution* in itself (see Ponzio 1997a). With such a shift, the Bakhtinian critique of dialogic reason not only interrogates the general orientation of Western philosophy, but also the dominant cultural tendencies that engender it.

2. *Sign: The Protagonist*

We will narrate the adventures of the 'sign' in different phases and trends in semiotics. But before we can, we must provide an 'identikit' for our protagonist (albeit we are aware that 'protagonism' is an illusion if Peirce is correct in stating that the central notion in semiotics is not the sign but semiosis; cf. Fisch 1978: 41). Indeed, it is so difficult to define the sign that it would be easier to concur with Sebeok: "a sign is just a sign" (Sebeok 1986).

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

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

In our terminology, the fundamental terms that constitute a sign include the *interpreted* and the *interpretant*, in a relationship whereby the interpretant makes the interpreted possible. For a sign to subsist, there must be both an interpreted sign and an interpretant sign – in other words, there must be an object that acts as the interpreted of an interpretant.

According to Peirce, the minimal relationship allowing for something to act as a sign is triadic and involves the following: (1) *something objective* (not necessarily a physical object), pre-existent, autonomous, in this sense 'material' with respect to interpretation (the Object, in Peirce's terminology); (2) *the interpreted*, that is, this same object insofar as it 'has meaning' (the Sign, in Peirce's terminology); and (3*) the interpretant*, through which the object receives a given meaning. Reduced to its most basic terms, the sign presents these three faces.

When in what follows we speak of the 'interpreted–interpretant' relation, our reference is to a (minimal and abstract) *triadic* relation, given that the interpreted implies the object of

interpretation, so that with this expression is always understood in any case 'object–interpreted–interpretant.'

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

To analyse the sign departing from the object of interpretation – that is, the interpreted – means to depart from a secondary level. In other words, to depart from the object that is being interpreted means to begin from a point in the chain of deferrals, or semiosic chain, which cannot be considered as the starting point of semiosis. We cannot explain the workings of sign processes by privileging the interpreted sign by way of abstraction at a theoretical level.

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

When we say that the sign is first of all an interpretant, we are saying that the sign is first of all a response. We could also say that the sign is a reaction – but only on the condition that 'reaction' is understood to mean 'interpretation' (that is, as established by Charles Morris's behaviourism, which contrasts with the mechanistic approach). To avoid superficial associations, we prefer the expression 'solicitation–response' to 'stimulus–reaction.' Even a 'direct' response to a stimulus (or, better, solicitation) can never be truly direct, given that it is 'mediated' by an interpretation. Unless we are dealing with 'reflex actions,' to formulate a response means to identify the solicitation, place it in a context, and relate it to given behavioural parameters (which can involve simple types of behaviour, as in the prey–predator model, or more complex behaviours connected with cultural values, as in the human world).

So in the first place, the sign is an interpretant, a response thanks to which something is considered as a sign and becomes its interpreted and, furthermore, is able to generate an open-ended chain of other signs.

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

3. *Interpretant: The Stooge*

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

It was Peirce, in the framework of his semiotics, who introduced the interpretant as a concept. According to Peirce, semiosis is a triadic process, and its components are sign (or representamen), object, and interpretant: "A Sign, or Representamen , is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object" (*Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, *CP* 2.274). Thus, the sign stands for something, its object, by which it is 'mediately determined' (*CP* 8.343), "not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea" (*CP* 2.228). However, a sign can stand for something only after it has determined the *interpretant* that is "immediately determined by that object" (*CP* 8.343): "A sign mediates between the interpretant sign and its object" insofar as the first is determined by its object under a certain respect or idea, or ground, and determines the interpretant "in such a way as to bring the interpretant into a relation to the object, corresponding to its own relation to the Object" (*CP* 8.332).

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

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

In our terminology, the 'First Sign' in the triadic relation of semiosis – that is, the object that receives meaning – is the *interpreted*, and that which confers meaning is the *interpretant*. This interpretant can be of two main types: an interpretant that allows for recognition of the sign is an *interpretant of identification* and is connected to the signal, code, and sign system; in contrast, the specific interpretant of a sign – that which interprets its sense or actual meaning – is the interpretant of *responsive understanding* (or *answering comprehension*). This second type of interpretant does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted; rather, it expresses its properly pragmatic meaning, instilling it with involvement and participation. It responds to the interpreted and takes a position in relation to it.

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

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

4. *Pragmatism as Pragmaticism*

A constant reference in our excursion into the semiotic field is the concept of pragmatism (or pragmaticism), be it implicit or explicit. The term 'pragmaticism' was introduced by Peirce in 1905 to differentiate his own view of pragmatism from the one developed by William James and Ferdinand C. S. Schiller (cf. *CP* 5.414-415). Peirce rejected the idea of 'Doing' as "the Be-all and the End-all of life" (*CP* 5. 429). In contrast to vulgar pragmatism, meaning is a general law of conduct and is independent of the particular circumstances of action. As such, it is always general and communal.

Pragmatism is a set of doctrines and methods elaborated by Peirce and James and continued above all by George H. Mead, C. I. Lewis, Charles Morris and John Dewey. The term first entered philosophical literature in 1898, when James held his conference "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" at G. H. Howinson's Berkeley Philosophical Union. But pragmatism was expounded for the first time in a series of six articles by Peirce that were published in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1877 and 1878, as part of the series "Illustrations of the Logic of Science" (*CP* 5.358-387, 5.388-410, 2.645-660, 2. 669-693, 6. 395-427, 2.619-644).

However, as a thought system, pragmatism may be traced back to an original nucleus of three writings by Peirce dating from 1868 (*CP* 5.213-263, 264-317, 318-357) and subsequently developed in his writings of 1877 and 1878. In his search for its origins, Peirce considered Nicholas St. John Green as the 'grandfather' of pragmatism (implicitly reserving the title of 'father' to himself). St. John Green had for his part evoked the Scot, Alexander Bain, author of *Emotions and Will* (London 1859). Green emphasized the importance of applying his definition of belief as "that upon which a man is prepared to act" (*CP* 5.12).

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

According to pragmatism, mind (or spirit or thought) is not a substance, as in Cartesian dualism, nor is it a process or act as understood by idealism, nor is it a set of relations as in

classical empiricism; rather, it is a function exercised by verbal and non-verbal signs. It follows that the study of signs and of verbal language in particular is the condition for understanding mind (cf. Morris, *Six Theories of Mind*, 1932). Pragmatism is also a theory of meaning understood as the practical verifiability of the truth of an assertion. In "How to Make our Ideas Clear" (1878), Peirce intended to demonstrate "how impossible it is that we should have an idea in our minds which relates to anything but conceived sensible effects of things… It appears, then, that the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (*CP* 5. 401-402).

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

Peirce returned to pragmatism in his set of seven conference-lessons held at Harvard at the initiative of James (cf. *CP* 5.14-40, 5.180-212). In these lessons he identified pragmatism with the logic of abduction and with the theory of inquiry, and, implicitly, therefore, with logic and semiotics. In his *Monist* articles of 1905 (*CP* 5.411-437, 5.438-463, 4.530-572), he distanced himself from pragmatism as conceived by James and Schiller and introduced the substitute term pragmaticism for his own particular orientation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Roland Barthes's *Eléments de sémiologie* (1967 [1964]), the relationship between verbal and non-verbal signs is of central importance. Barthes argues that we must abandon the linguistics of the linguists and employ a far broader concept of language as a practice that models and organizes fields of discourse. Leaving aside the limited view of linguistics as conceived by the linguists (an analogous critique was conducted by Morris [1946]; see below), it is evident that 'human language is more than the pattern of signification: it is its very foundation' and that it is necessary "to reverse Saussure's formula and assert that semiology is

a part of linguistics" (Barthes 1967 [1964]: 8).

6. *Signification and Significance*

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

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

To summarize: Studies about signs during the twentieth century evolved past the limits of semiotics of communication , through semiotics of signification, into what may be identified as 'third-sense semiotics,' 'text semiotics,' or semiotics of significance following Barthes (1982).

Charles Morris (1964) also distinguished between signification and significance, and

identified two different aspects of 'meaning': the semantic and the axiological.

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

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

The term 'significs' takes account of the everyday expression 'What does it signify?' with its focus on the sign's ultimate value and significance beyond semantic meaning. Besides a theory of meaning, significs proposes a 'significal method' that transcends pure descriptivism and strictly logico-epistemological boundaries in the direction of axiology and of the study of the conditions that make meaningful behaviour possible (cf. Petrilli 1988, 1998a). Central to significs is Welby's analysis of meaning in terms of the three main levels noted earlier: 'Sense' – 'the organic response to environment'; 'Meaning' – the specific sense that a word 'is intended to convey'; and 'Significance' – 'the far-reaching consequence, implication, ultimate result or outcome of some event or experience' (see Hardwick 1977: 169). According to Peirce, the triad sense–meaning– significance relates closely to his own triad and corresponds to his Immediate Interpretant, Dynamical Interpretant, and Final Interpretant (ibid.: 109–11).

Both Welby and Morris relate signs to values and, therefore, semiotics to axiology, much like other authors (such as Barthes 1982) who work with the same concepts. In the words of Morris (1964: vii): 'If we ask what is the meaning of life, we may be asking a question about the signification of the term "life," or asking a question about the value or significance of living

– or both.' The fact that usage of such terms as 'meaning' (with the polarity suggested) is so widespread suggests, he continues, that there is a fundamental relationship between signification and significance.

7. *Signification and Denotatum*

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

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

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

In *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938c: 2), Morris uses the term designatum instead of significatum. Every sign, insofar as it is a sign, has a designatum; however, not every sign has a denotatum because not every sign refers to something that actually exists: "Where what is referred to [significatum or designatum] actually exists as referred to the object of reference is a denotatum" (Morris *ibid*.: 5). For example, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to what it designates considering it as existent in the world of mythology, that sign has a denotatum since unicorns exist in that world. If, on the contrary, the sign 'unicorn' refers to what it designates considering it as existent in the world of zoology, that sign does not have a denotatum since it does not exist in that world. Here, th sign has a designatum (Morris 1938c) or a 'significatum' (as Morris [1946] was later to call it), but it does not have a denotatum: 'It thus becomes clear that, while every sign has a designatum, not every sign has a denotatum' (*ibid*.: 5).

Thus, the significatum is what the sign or signans refers to. In other words, it is a set of qualities forming a class or type of objects or events to which the interpreter reacts

independently of whether what is referred to actually exists (denotatum) according to the existence value attributed to it by the sign.

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

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

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

The difference between significatum and denotatum was estebalished almost eight centuries ago by Peter of Spain (Petrus Hispanus 1972 [1230?]): – 'e Pietro Ispano / lo qual già luce in dodici libelli' (Dante, *Paradiso* XII, 134-35) – in *Summule logicales* or *Tractatus* (1230?, critical ed. 1972), as the difference between *significatio* and *acceptio,* on the one hand, and *appellatio,* on the other. In the *Tractatus*, Peter of Spain explained in detail and systematized with originality studies in logic as they had been developed until then. He contextualized the sign in the complex process of semiosis, and he identified its fundamental characteristics. Peirce took a great interest in Peter of Spain's work and was familiar with his conception of sign, citing him on many occasions (cf. Ponzio 1990a: 77-93; Ponzio and Petrilli 1996). And in fact, the orientation of Peter of Spain's work emerges more clearly in the light of the correspondences between the sign model proposed in *Tractatus* and the model of sign as proposed by Peirce: *vox significativa* = representamen; *significatio* or *representatio* = interpretant; *res significata* or *representata* = immediate object; *acceptio pro* = to stand for; *aliquid* (the referent of *acceptio*) = dynamic object.

8. *Beyond the Verbal Sign Paradigm*

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

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

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

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

The concept of modelling as proposed by the Moscow–Tartu school comes very close to Sapir's. It invests language with an originating modelling function with respect to other systems. Thus, also much like Sapir (1962), it suggests that cultures are relative with respect to primary modelling. Furthermore, it notes that the concept of language as a primary modelling system does not solve the problem of communicability among different languages and cultures, nor does it account for the multiplicity of languages, still less for the problem of language origin.

One way to develop and extend the Moscow–Tartu school's conception is by connecting it to the biologist and semiotician Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt*, which can be translated as 'model' (Sebeok). This approach is adopted by Sebeok (1991b; cf. also

Anderson and Merrell 1991b), who attributes the capacity for primary modelling to language as distinct from speech. Language is specifically designed to produce and organize world views, whereas speech is an adaptive derivation in *Homo sapiens* that had arisen specifically for communicative purposes. *Homo sapiens* evolved into *Homo sapiens sapiens* thanks to its species specific modelling device – that is to say, language – and its special properties.

All living species construct their own worlds in which things assume a given sense; the human species is distinguished by its capacity to confer an infinite number of different senses on a limited set of elements, and in doing so to construct a great plurality of different possible worlds. The plurality of languages and 'linguistic (verbal) creativity' (Noam Chomsky) testify to the capacity of language understood as a primary modelling device to produce many possible worlds.

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

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

9. *Subject and Alterity*

Modern linguistics has broadened its scope thanks also to research on language in the fields of philosophy of language and semiotics. However, the epistemological paradigms adopted from the philosophical tradition with the rise of linguistics have tended to remain the same. In particular, the notion of the speaking subject has not been sufficiently interrogated.

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

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

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

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

Alterity (or otherness) refers to the existence of something on its own account, autonomously, independent of the I's initiative, volition, consciousness, or recognition. From our perspective, alterity is synonymous with materiality understood as objectivity. The world of physical objects is other with respect to the I. One's own body, the body of each and every one of us , is other in its autonomy from volition and consciousness. But the most 'other' of all is the other person in his or her irreducibility, refractoriness to the I. Assassination is proof of the other's resistance and of the I's checkmate, of his or her powerlessness (Emmanuel Levinas).

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

According to Peircean pragmatism, knowledge understood in terms of innovation and inventiveness is not a purely epistemic process. Knowledge presupposes ethical knowledge,

responsiveness to the other, both the other *from* self and the other *of* self, which the self should welcome and listen to: for there to be an interpreted sign, an object of interpretation, there must be an interpretant, even when a question of cognitive signs in a strict sense. The sign, insofar as it is a sign, is other; in other words, a sign can be characterized as a sign because of its structural opening to the other and, therefore, because it is dialogue with the other. This suggests that the sign's identity is grounded in the logic of alterity.

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

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

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

studying under them in Fribourg in 1928 and 1929.

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

10. *Word and Dialogue*

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

During the 1920s, Mikhail Bakhtin's work overlapped so much with that of his colleagues that it is difficult today to separate it out. This would seem to confirm his thesis relating to the 'semi-other' character of 'one's own word,' notwithstanding those critics who today insist on trying to establish which writings were specifically his. Bakhtin played a significant authorial role in Voloshinov's *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* (1927) and Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (1929), as well as in Medvedev's *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928). Between 1925 and 1930, he also contributed to various articles published by the same 'authors,' as well as to Kanaev's biosemiotic essay 'Contemporary Vitalism' (1926). Even after the Circle was eradicated during the Stalinist terror (Voloshinov and Medvedev disappeared in the 1930s), the 'voices' of its various members could still be heard in uninterrupted dialogue with Bakhtin, who persevered in his research until his death in 1975. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work* (1929), revised and republished in 1963 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin delineated a theory of dialogism that is substantially antiformalist and anticanonical.

Dialogue is external or internal discourse in which the word of the other – which is not necessarily in the second person – interferes with one's own word. It is also a discourse genre.

Bakhtin, much like Peirce, sees dialogue as the modality of thought processes. Thus we must distinguish between 'substantial dialogism' and purely 'formal dialogism.' Substantial dialogism is determined not by the dialogical form of the text (that is, by formal dialogism) but rather by the degree of dialogism in that text, which may or may not take the form of a dialogue. In other words, substantial dialogism is determined by the higher or lower degree of opening toward alterity.

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

Bakhtin sees a close connection between dialogue and 'accent.' Accent here does not refer to a graphic device (such as an accent mark over a syllable), nor does it refer to pronunciation (as in 'he speaks with an American accent'), nor does it refer to a speaker's tone of voice. It does not even refer exclusively to verbal signs. Rather, insofar as accent arises among individuals and is created within a social milieu, it refers to eval uative accentuation in human verbal and non-verbal signs. The verbal sign, be it oral or written, is not simply a signal; in fact, it is a sign in the strong sense. It is endowed with an ambiguity or plasticity of meaning; thus, it can respond to different ideological perspectives as well as to different senses. Because of these qualities, the verbal sign in particular may be endowed not only with a theme and meaning in the referential or content sense of these words, but also with a value judgment and therefore with a specific evaluative accent. Without exception, every live word, be it written or oral, is accented in terms of evaluative intonation (cf. Ponzio 1992a, 1998). A passage from *Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer* analyses the conversation of a band of six tipsy artisans. Using this passage as a reference, Voloshinov (1929 [Eng. trans.]: 103) shows how different evaluations, thoughts, and feelings – and even a chain of reasoning – can be expressed simply by using the same noun with different accents.

We can connect dialogue to the logic of identity; conversely, we can open it to displacement in the sense of alterity. The latter is very different from 'attainment dialogue,' where the interlocutor's task is to achieve a given end and thereby maintain and reconfirm identity. Dialogue in the sense of substantial dialogue is indispensable to argumentative

reasoning – that is, reasoning which is not fixed in terms of the defence and reproduction of identity but instead is open to otherness. Bakhtin has shown how phenomena such as unilaterality, ossification, and rectilinear dialectics arise from sclerotized dialogue. Monological, unilinear, and totalizing dialectics are oriented toward a given synthesis and a set conclusion. As such, they call for a critique of dialogic reason (as demonstrated by Ponzio 1993a), which is the critique of identity that dominates Western thought and praxis today.

Another contribution of fundamental importance that Bakhtin made through his 'philosophy of language' or 'metalinguistics' relates to his *critique of dialogic reason*. Here, we are to understand 'critique' in a literary as well as a philosophical (sense after Kant and Marx). Bakhtin privileged the term 'metalinguistics' in his particular approach to the study of sign, utterance, text, and discourse genre, as well as in his studies of the relationship between literary writing and non-verbal expressions in popular culture, such as the signs of carnival. Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason focuses on the concept of *responsibility without alibis* – a non-conventional form of responsibility that cannot be deferred insofar as it concerns existential 'architectonics,' relations with the I, the world, others. According to Bakhtin, dialogue is an embodied, intercorporeal expression of the involvement of one's body with the body of the other – thus, it is illusory to think that the body is individual, separate, and autonomous. An appropriate image of the body is the 'grotesque body' (cf. Bakhtin 1965) as it finds expression in popular culture, in the vulgar language of the public realm, and above all in the masks of carnival. This is the body viewed from a biosemiotic perspective, as an organism in its *Umwelt*, *in its vital and indissoluble relation to the world and to the body of other living beings*, be they human or non-human. With the revolutionary shift in focus away from identity (whether individual as in the case of consciousness or the self, or collective as in a community, a historical language, or a cultural system at large) toward alterity, the Bakhtinian critique of dialogic reason has come to question not only the general orientation of Western philosophy but also the dominant cultural trends that it reflects.

As verbal exchange involving two or more partners, dialogue can be seen as an end in itself or as the carrying out of an instrumental function. In the latter case, it can be a means to an end or a means for determining and evaluating ends and means. On the basis of such distinctions, Massimo A. Bonfantini and Augusto Ponzio (1986) propose the following tripartite typology of dialogue, one that takes into account both Bakhtinian dialogism and the pragmatic perspective. (1) *Dialogue as an end in itself* – in other words, conversation or entertainment dialogue. This sort of dialogue involves talking for the sake of talking. It has a phatic function (Jakobson), and itself has two variants: (1.1) *conformative-repetitive dialogue*

and (1.2) *diverting dialogue*. An example of (1.1) is certain forms of television communication, which tend to be repetitive, obeying hyperdetermined compositional–instructional rules and equally hyperdetermined decoding processes. (2) *Dialogue functional to attainment*, which also has two variants: (2.1) *exchange dialogue* and (2.2) *competition dialogue*. (3) *Cooperative* or *reflective* or *investigative dialogue*. When we use the degree of substantial dialogism as our criterion for differentiation, we find that this third type of dialogue has three variants (reflecting an increasing scale of dialogism): (3.1) *rediscovery and revelation dialogue*, (3.2) *research and construction dialogue*, and (3.3) *exploration and problematization dialogue*. (Regarding the relationship between dialogue and truth, cf. Bonfantini, Ponzio, and Petrilli 1996.)

11. *Dialogue and Inference*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abductive inferential processes engender sign processes at the highest levels of otherness and dialogism. Abduction is the type of inferential process through which hypotheses are framed. In abduction, the rule that explains the fact is hypothesized on the basis of a relation of similarity (an iconic relation) to that fact. The rule that acts as the general premise can be taken from a field of discourse that is close to the field to which the fact belongs, but it can also be taken from a field that is distant or even invented ex novo. If the conclusion is confirmed, it retroacts on the rule and validates it (thus ab-duction or retro-duction). This sort of retroactive procedure makes abductive inference risky, by exposing it to the possibility of

error. However, when the hypothesis is correct, the abduction is innovative, inventive, and sometimes even surprising (cf. Bonfantini 1987). Says Peirce: 'Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis. Deduction proves that something must be; Induction shows that something actually is operative; Abduction merely suggests that something may be' (*CP* 5.172).

Abductions are powered by metaphors in the simulation processes that are used to produce models, inferences, inventions, and projects. The tight links between abductive inference and verisimilitude arise from the fact that, as Victoria Welby demonstrated, 'one of the most splendid of all our intellectual instruments' is the 'image or the figure' (1985a [1911]: 13; cf. also Petrilli 1995a, 1998a). Given how closely abduction, icon, and simulation are related, the task at hand is not to eliminate figurative or metaphorical discourse to the advantage of 'literal' discourse; rather, it is to identify and eliminate inadequate images that mystify relationships among things and that distort our reasoning. States Welby: 'We need a linguistic oculist to restore lost focussing power, to bring our images back to reality by some normalizing kind of lens' (1985a [1911]: 16).

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

Firstness, secondness, and thirdness are the terms used by Peirce for the three categories that describe phenomena in the universe. These categories are the omnipresent ones of mind, sign, and reality (*CP* 2.84–2.94). Firstness, secondness, and thirdness correspond respectively to abduction, deduction, and induction in logic; to icon, index, and symbol in semiotics; and to agapasm, anancasm, and tychasm in ontology. Firstness (in-itselfness, originality), secondness (over-againstness, obsistence), and Thirdness (in-betweenness, transuasion) are universal categories. And since for Peirce all mental operations are sign operations, his categories are universal categories not only of the mind but also of the sign. And given that the whole of reality – and therefore being as well – is permeated with signs, these categories are also ontological categories. The sign, says Peirce, exemplifies the category of thirdness; it embodies a triadic relation among itself, its object, and the interpretant. A sign always plays the role of third party, given that it mediates between the interpretant and its object.

A sign can be taken as something *in itself*, or as something in relation *to something else* (its object), or as a go-between (mediating between its object and its interpretant). On the basis of this, Peirce established the following correspondences between his trichotomy of the

categories and three other important trichotomies in his semiotic system: *firstness* – qualisign, icon, rheme; *secondness* – sinsign, index, dicisign (or dicent sign); and *thirdness* – legisign, symbol, argument (cf. *CP* 2.243).

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

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

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

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

92).

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

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

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

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

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

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

or immediacy (or in-itselfness) and indexicality by secondness (or overagainstness).

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

2.

Signs to Talk about Signs

by Augusto Ponzio

1. Meaning as an Interpretative Route; 2. The Referent as Implicit Interpretant; 3. Signality and the Interpretant of Identification in Verbal Signs; 4. Signality and the Interpretant of Identification in Nonverbal Signs; 5. Conventionality, Indexicality and Iconicity between Interpreteds and Interpretants; 6. Signs and Responsive Understanding; 7. Enuntiatum, Text and Discourse Genre

1. *Meaning as an Interpretative Route*

Verbal signs (oral or written) and nonverbal signs are connected to each other like the nodes, the intersections in a large, thick network. And like the nodes in a network these signs disappear if we eliminate the pieces uniting them. On departing from a single point, we may choose from different routes so that various routes are connected to each other at the same point.

Similarly to a road network, these routes have already been outlined and are regularly followed, and in some cases they are set: it is also possible, however, to install new connections, to proceed along courses which have never before been mapped out.

Phonic and graphic verbal signs are a stable part of this network, but any material object and any mental image whatsoever may also become a part of it. There is no such thing as a material object that cannot become a sign.

Differently to verbal signs, material objects can move in and out of the sign network. Once the material object acting as a sign disappears, so does a linking point among the signs of the network; but a new link may be set up with the introduction of a new material object which in its turn becomes a sign.

All our thoughts, words, texts, and all behaviour whether intentional (such as the realization of any project at all), or unintentional (such as dreaming), take place within the network of signs; they are caught up in this network and form itineries within it linking intersection points which are more or less close to or more or less distant from each other.

Not even natural behaviour such as breathing and digesting escape the possibility of becoming a sign (breathlessness as a sign that someone has been running, or as a pathological symptom in medical symptomatology).

SEMIOSIS is the process in which something acts as a sign. For there to be a sign,

something must have meaning. This means that this something may be *interpreted as this or that,* i.e., it may be understood as something else.

An object out of place becomes a sign if interpreted as indicating, for example, the intrusion of a stranger. The wet raincoat of a person entering the house becomes a sign if we interpret it as meaning "it's raining outside".

Traces, clues, symptoms are all things which have become signs insofar as they are interpreted as other things.

This is true of verbal signs, also. A vocal sound is a sign if it is interpreted *as the such and such* phonia. The word 'ephipiger' is meaningful if interpreted as something else, i.e., if we can provide another word or phrase, a definition, in Italian or any other language, able to tell its meaning. A text acquires meaning through the reading text (oral or written) which furnishes the preceding text with an interpretation. Therefore, each time something is a sign this is so because we are able to provide it with meaning through something else which is its interpretation. This "something else" is necessarily another sign.

— A noise in the room next door. Interpretation: "someone's there", whispered or thought, or expressed with a gesture, or with a "sssh", etc.

— A gesture of the hand. Interpretation. "Hi!" or "See you later!", or "Come here!", etc.

— The smell of smoke. Interpretation: "Pipe tobacco", etc.

— The written text "Verbal signs (oral or written) and nonverbal signs are connected to each other like the nodes, the intersections in a large, thick network". Interpretation: the same text expressed either orally or mentally, or its paraphrasing, its translation into another language, its graphic representation, or the image it recalls to one's mind, etc.

Depending on the circumstances, the meaning of a word may be formulated either by the same word expressed orally — if dealing with the written word or, vice versa, graphically — if dealing with the oral word; or by another word or sentence that defines that word, or by a photograph or drawing if it is possible to depict its meaning visually, or by its translation into another language.

In all these cases, meaning is expressed by *another sign.* But, we might remark, the meaning of a word can also be expressed by a thing, as when I say 'shears' and show the object to explain what it means.

Indeed, because of the function they carry out, objects used in this way — the shears, or the book I show to explain what the word 'book' means, or the exercise-book to explain what the word 'exercise-book' means — *are signs as well.*

In fact, by showing the shears or the book or the exercise-book, I use a thing as a sign of

what is to be interpreted as “shears”, or as “book”, or as “exercise-book”. The meaning of the word ‘book’ will have been understood if any exercise-book whatsoever, and not only the one I show, is interpreted as an “exercise-book”.

What proved to be difficult to understand for the young savage of Aveyron, despite Itard’s efforts, was that the names of the objects which were taught to him, ‘stick’, ‘bellows’, ‘brush’, ‘glass’, ‘knife’, were not to be applied solely to the objects which had been shown to him, but also to other objects: in other words, he could not understand that the stick shown to him stood for any stick at all. *The stick was not just a thing with a sign applied to it, but instead was itself a sign.*

Once we have understood the *sign function* of the object displayed to express the meaning of a word, the next difficulty consists in distinguishing between those objects which are signed by the displayed object and those which are not.

This difficulty arises because the *sign function* of an object is not merely determined on the basis of a *relation between things, between objects,* by the relation of identity or difference established between them with reference to property or use; instead, sign function depends on the *relation between things (or objects) and the words* that interpret them, and on the *relation among words themselves.*

Itard did his utmost to teach the “young savage” to identify objects by pointing out their uses and properties. But under the name ‘book’, the pupil would indistinctly point to a bundle of sheets, an exercise-book, a newspaper, a register, a pamphlet; every long thin piece of wood was called “stick”; sometimes he would call a broom ‘brush’ and a brush ‘broom’.

The capacity of perceiving identity, analogies and differences among things depends on words — in concomitance with the needs of specific life environments —that interpret things as identical or different.

Eskimos have different words to designate snow which for us is always “the same thing”, just as, on our part, we have different words to distinguish between what to others could seem to be same thing were they not interpreted by different signs: for example, a diary, a pamphlet, an agenda, an address book, an exercise-book, a novel, a magazine, a newspaper, a vocabulary.

Therefore, the objects used to interpret words are also signs and this means that they are interpreted in turn by words and need to be linked to other words for the objects in question to be interpreted as identical or different to each other.

The meaning of a sign is always recounted by another sign. Or, we could say that *a sign has its meaning in another sign.* The latter is such, in turn, if there is another sign to interpret it and so forth.

We call the object that receives meaning INTERPRETED and that which confers meaning INTERPRETANT.

The interpreted and the interpretant may be a word, an utterance, an entire verbal text (oral or written), or a natural phenomenon, or an artifact, such as a piece of clothing, a dish, a painting, a photograph, a musical performance, or a mental image, an attitude, or a person, or a whole cultural system, etc.

Signs which act as interpretants of each other form an INTERPRETATIVE (OR INTERPRETIVE) ROUTE.

Each sign in a specific route may act as either an interpreted or interpretant in other interpretative routes: it is an "intersection", therefore, in the network of signs.

The exercise-book I write on may be employed as either the *interpretant sign* of the phonia 'exercise-book' (for anyone who may not be familiar with the meaning of such a phonia), or as the *interpreted* of the phonia "exercise-book" (e.g. when I say to someone that the object he believes to be a book, an agenda, or an address book, is instead an exercise-book).

This being the case, the exercise-book in question together with any other exercise-book used with the same function enter the interpretative route of which they are all a part: all the phonae 'exercise-book' uttered by any person at all; all the graphae 'exercise-book' in italics or in any other print; all the phonae and graphae that may have "exercise-book" as an interpretant in any language, jargon or secret code; any mental image of 'exercise-book' or of the object exercise-book; any drawing, design or photograph which has "quaderno" as an interpretant; any sentence at all, however it may be produced, acting as a definition of 'exercise-book'.

But the exercise-book itself may also be the interpretant as well as the interpreted sign of the Arabic numeral 1, of the phonia 'one', of the graphic sign 'one' and of all the phonae and graphae which in any language, jargon or secret code have "one" as interpretant.

Thus this exercise-book enters another interpretative route, another series of *renvois* and connections.

Or, as the interpreted and interpretant of 'block of sheets', the same exercise-book can enter another interpretative movement connecting it, for example, to 'address book', 'book', etc.

Or yet again, it may act as the interpreted and the interpretant of 'what is mine', or of what, in relation to myself, is 'this' in contrast to anything else which I may designate as 'that'.

Found in another person's home, this exercise-book could be a sign of the fact that I know that person, that I see him/her, thus becoming part of yet another interpretative route, and so forth. Each of these interpretative routes constitutes one of the several meanings thanks to which something carries out the function of sign.

We may define MEANING, then, as *one of the interpretative routes that links an interpreted to an open series of interpretants.*

Given that a number of interpretative routes branch out from a single interpreted, *every sign is always more or less multi-voiced.*

An interpreted-interpretant that places itself on a *single* route, that is not a crossing point of several interpretations, may instead be called a SIGNAL. The red of a traffic light is a signal, for instance, because it gives rise to a single interpretative route which has the phonia and the graphia "stop" or the policeman with his arms outstretched as interpretant. This does not alter the fact that, in certain special cases, the signal may also be object of various interpretations and present itself as a sign. Double meaning is achieved in one of Chaplin's films by making a red flag — a danger signal — which has fallen down from a cart, take on a different meaning once it comes to find itself in the hands of Chariot who happens to be walking in front of a procession of strikers. In certain situations the signal also may take part, to a greater or lesser extent, in sign multi-voicedness to the point of being considered a sign, even if in other situations it is no more than a signal.

We may consider the signal as an interpreted-interpretant at a low level of signness (or signity). Vice versa, as we shall see, under certain aspects every sign is also a signal: it contains a certain margin of signality.

Multi-voicedness applies equally to words and things. Showing things in the place of words – as suggests the sage of Balnibarbi in *Gulliver's Travels* recommending that we carry with us everything we intend to communicate about –, does not eliminate ambiguity: having become signs, insofar as they act as the interpretants of words, objects are in their turn ambiguous. This gives rise to the inconveniences of obstensive gestures used to explain the meaning of a word: a single object may be indicated as the interpretant of different interpreteds.

As we have seen esarlier, in a previous example, we may point to an exercise-book as the interpretant of 'exercise-book' as well as of 'one', 'this', 'thing', 'mine', 'white', etc.

Meaning must be distinguished from CONCEPT even if the interpretative route making up meaning overlaps in part with the *class forming concept.*

For example, the interpreted-interpretants of the phonia 'tree' in the botanical sense enter the class forming the concept *tree* (taken in the same sense) only partially. In fact, if there are interpretants in this interpretative route that are actual trees (we may indicate an olive tree as interpretant of the sign 'tree' — with all the misunderstandings, as we have seen, that this involves as our interlocutor could well believe that 'tree' has the olive tree as its sole interpretant), there are also interpreted-interpretants that are not trees, beginning with the very

phonia ‘tree’ which through its meaning expresses the *concept tree* but in fact is not a tree itself and consequently *does not belong* to the logical class or set *tree.*

A knock at the door is generally interpreted as “someone is behind the door and wants to enter”, but the two things — the interpreted and the interpretant — and other interpretants in the same interpretative route such as “this must be Mario who always comes at this time” or “who always knocks like that”, or the act itself of opening the door —, *do not by any means enter a single class nor do they form a single concept.*

Nor do Mr. X and the tobacco residues interpreted by the Sherlock Holmes of the moment as “Mr. X was at the scene of the crime”, *enter a single class.*

Smoke means fire, i.e., fire is an interpretant just as the word ‘fire’ is an interpretant, *this however does not mean that smoke and fire belong to the same concept.*

Therefore, if meaning and concept are closely connected and if every meaning expresses a concept and, vice versa, every concept, to exist, requires a meaning, i.e., an interpretative route, the two things must all the same be kept distinct. *A concept is a class of objects.*

These objects may or may not be divisible into subclasses, while the class they belong to may eventually become part of a larger class.

Meaning is an interpretative route and is formed by connections between signs, by *renvois* from interpretant to interpretant. The meaning “tree” and the concept *tree* are two different things even if one implies the other.

We could write *tree* in order to refer to the concept and “tree” to refer to the meaning, to the interpretative route — along which we find things that are trees, but also phonae, written signs, drawings, all in the role of interpretants or interpreteds.

Generally, however, an interpretative route cannot be expressed with one sign only, e.g., by putting the word *tree* in quotation marks, just as we cannot indicate a roadway by simply marking one locality.

We say, “the Brindisi-Bari route”; “the Rome-Naples direction”. In the same way, given that the interpretative routes branching out from a single sign are numerous, we must indicate the direction we intend to proceed along. In fact, being aware of its numerous meanings, we often ask in what sense a particular word or expression is intended.

‘Tree’, in what sense? In the botanical sense, the sailor’s sense, or in the Chomskyian sense?

An interpretative route is more or less defined when we give at least two of its interpretants. But, to paraphrase an axiom of Euclidean geometry, we cannot say that one and only one interpretative route passes between two interpretants. Similarly to two localities, the

trajectories connecting these two interpretants may be numerous. The semantic multi-voicedness of an interpreted obviously reflects on the concept or on the concepts to which this interpreted is connected.

As already suggested concerning the distinction between meaning and concept, we may indicate the function of *interpretant* carried out by a term or expression in the written context (i.e., the fact that that term, or that expression stands for a meaning, an interpretative route) through the use of double quotation marks (“. . .”); and we may indicate the function of interpreted, instead, by placing the term or expression carrying out that function in single quotation marks (‘. . .’). For example, ‘tie’, “strip of material tied around the neck of a shirt in the form of a knot as ornamentation”; ‘cravatta’, “tie”.

Every interpreted or every sign is such in relation to an interpretative route or meaning, but this does not mean that the interpreted in question exhausts itself in that interpretation and in that meaning. We have already evidenced the sign’s multi-voicedness, the fact that a sign is always located at an interpretative route junction. Let us now add that this is what constitutes the SEMIOTIC MATERIALITY of a sign — whether it be a verbal sign, as in the case of an utterance, an oral or written text, or a nonverbal sign, such as a sequence of gestures, a painting, a piece of clothing, a utensil.

In other words, semiotic materiality is the possibility that signs have of entering more than one interpretative route.

Though a sign because it has its meaning in another sign, a given sign retains an *uninterpreted residue* with respect to the other sign, its interpretant, which in turn gives rise to other interpretative routes. These other interpretative possibilities must eventually be confronted with earlier interpretations, especially if a relation of coexistence is not possible and a choice must be made between two or more contrasting interpretations.

In virtue of semiotic materiality, the interpreted has its own consistency, its own resistance which the interpretant will have to take into account and adjust to. What is interpreted and becomes a sign because of this — whether it be an utterance or a whole line of conduct (verbal or nonverbal), or a written text, or a dream – does not lie at the mercy of a single interpretant. This is so precisely because the interpreted is open to several interpretations and consequently is the crossing point of numerous interpretative routes.

We have called this type of materiality *semiotic materiality* because of its total sign nature: it is not an *a priori* property as regards interpretative routes.

Semiotic materiality is *determined and exists in interpretative routes alone,* it is obtained in the network of signs: the uninterpreted residue of an interpretative route exists inside another

interpretative route.

When a sign is produced intentionally, as in the case of a written text or of a gesture signifying something, it already bears an interpretation, that conferred to it by its author. Once it is produced, however, the sign gains autonomy with respect to the author, presenting its own semiotic materiality and objectivity which consists in the capacity to enter yet other interpretative routes different to the one it was originally produced for.

This is what distinguishes a sign from a signal (see above) which, on the contrary, imposes a one-way progression. In the signal, the interpreted and the interpretant are coupled monogamically. We can change the meaning of a signal but then a new monogamie route is installed. An anecdote has it that on being asked by a passport controller why he did not have one wife only, Roman Jakobson answered that he certainly was polygamous, but only in *diachrony,* while in synchrony he was monogamous. In the same way, the signal is polygamous only diachronically and not synchronically.

As regards semiotic material we may say that the signal has less semiotic consistency than the sign, or that it is a sign with a low level of semiotic consistency.

We call the uninterpreted semiotic residue of the sign, SIGNIFIER.

The latter has its own irreducible alterity with respect to the interpretative route "X", for it also occurs in the interpretative route "Y"; but it has an irreducible alterity with respect to the latter route as well, because it also has its place in the interpretative route "Z", and so forth. In other words, the *signifier* is the sign in its autonomy and alterity as regards a specific meaning because it can also have *another* meaning in relation to which, however, it continues to present autonomy and alterity, as it can have still *another* meaning, and so forth.

Understood in this way, the signifier is not in a relation of equal exchange with the signified; on the contrary, it presents an excess — giving without a counterpart — with respect to a specific meaning.

The term SHIFT indicates the more or less wide margin of escape, of distancing of the signifier with respect to a given interpretative route. There are signs with a very small shift margin, insofar as they are channelled into specific interpretative routes, e.g., the signs proper to a profession or kinship role and have a precise goal, such as teaching, persuading, informing, etc. This shift margin is created by that which escapes the author of the signs and is not part of his intentions, it is the *surplus* with respect to the meaning that the sign originally serves. Instead, there are signs with a greater shift margin because they belong to expressive practices in fact characterized by the autonomy and alterity of the signifier. We are referring particularly to *literary texts,* but also to every other signifying practice that will not allow itself to be

reconducted to a specific meaning, that does not fix a sense for itself in a precise end.

A sign may have such a wide shift margin that the interpretative movement appears to drift without a specific direction.

We may say that signs with minimal shift have SIGNIFICATION, and that signs in which shift and therefore the autonomy of the signifier are particularly consistent have SIGNIFICANCE.

Once the sign is considered as a relation between interpreted and interpretant, the conception of sign as being composed of a physical part (the sign vehicle, the *signifiant*) and of a mental part (the *signifié)* no longer holds. The sign is an *interpretative act* consisting in uniting something that plays the role of interpreted (which is not necessarily a physical object) to something that plays the role of interpretant (which is not necessarily something mental). The interpreted may be physical, such as a written text, a phonia, an advertisement poster, as much as it may be a mental image, as when we attempt to interpret our dreams, or transpose into phonae words and expressions that first appeared to us mentally, or attempt to whistle or sing a tune that continually comes to mind. And the interpretant, too, may just as easily be something physical, as when we translate the mental image of an object or event into speech, or the mental image of a word or utterance into a phonic sequence, as much as it may be mental, as when on listening to spoken language we translate phonae into mental images of the words or objects and situations that these phonae refer to as their interpretants.

What acts as an interpreted or interpretant does not necessarily, therefore, have to be an object or physical event, but, on the contrary, there may be signs in which the interpreted as much as the interpretant are mental images: e.g., the mental image of an object interpreted by the mental image of a particuar word. However, if physical materiality can be absent from a sign considered in isolation, *it must of necessity be present in the interpretative route to which the sign belongs.* This is to say that physical objects and events must necessarily be present at some point in the chain of *renvois* from interpretant to interpretant in which alone can something act as a sign: the mental image of an object of the preceding example has as its interpretant not only the mental image of a particular word, but also the physical object of which it is an image; and it also has as interpretant the phonia which is the interpretant-interpreted of the mental image of that word.

Interpreteds and interpretants without physical materiality can exist, but they are necessarily part of an interpretative route in which one or another of the interpreteds-interpretants is a physical object.

For this reason, a sign is always part of a chain of deferrals in which physical materiality

is present.

In contrast to semiotic materiality, we may call the physical materiality of signs EXTRASIGN MATERIALITY. *If not considered in isolation from the interpretative route to which it belongs, the sign always proves to be connected to extrasign materiality.*

In addition to physical materiality, another type of extrasign materiality is given by the fact that physical objects acting as signs, save phonae and graphae, may have extrasign uses and functions.

Verbal signs have no other function beyond that of being a sign. While on the other hand, any object or physical event acting as a nonverbal sign may also have nonsign functions.

My closing the window has an extrasign objective, even if it may be interpreted as a sign and mean, for example, that I'm cold, or that the noises from the road bother me, etc. (unless, owing to an agreement between myself and another person, closing the window is in fact a sign - more exactly a signal - meaning, for example, "the road's clear"). The same is true of clothing, which may give rise to several different interpretative routes, but which all the same has nonsign functions - that of covering, of protecting from the cold, etc.

A pair of shoes on display in a shop window is a sign: not only do they indicate that the shop in question is a shoe shop, but also that a certain type of shoe is on sale in that shop. Of this type of shoe they are the sign. If we say "I would like that pair of shoes" to the shop assistant, we are not at all surprised, nor do we protest if rather than getting the shoes in the shop window (even though they are the colour and size we asked for) the shop assistant gets another pair, in relation to which those on display are the interpretant sign. Once the shoes in the shop window sold as the last pair available are worn, they cease to carry out a sign function (at least their previous sign function even if they can have others) and take on a nonsign function.

In order to distinguish it from physical materiality, we may call this kind of extrasign materiality of nonverbal signs EXTRASIGN INSTRUMENTAL MATERIALITY.

In relation to signs, therefore, we have distinguished between three types of materiality: *semiotic materiality, extrasign physical materiality, extrasign instrumental materiality.*

In all interpretative routes we find signs made of words, images and material objects. We have said that no sign can exist outside of the connection with other signs. We may now add that no sign — whether a verbal sign, mental image, or material object acting as a nonverbal sign — can exist without being connected to verbal signs as much as to mental images and material objects with a sign function.

Whether this connection is made explicit or remains implicit, unsaid, it constitutes the

inexorable condition by which something acts as sign. In other words, *verbal signs, mental images, and material objects are all necessarily part of an interpretative route (implicit or explicit as it may be) whereby something has meaning and is thus a sign.*

Interpretative routes consisting exclusively of verbal signs, or of mental images or of material signs, cannot exist. Thus not only do all signs involve other signs, but, furthermore, these signs mustb*e heterogeneous.*

No type of sign is self-sufficient. And the *renvoi* from interpretant to interpretant cannot limit itself to a single type of sign; and if instead the opposite seems to be true, this is only because the interpretants which are heterogeneous with respect to a certain kind of interpretant, remain unexpressed. If we move along an interpretative route rendering explicit the interpretants of interpretants that cause us to consider something as a sign, we will discover how words as much as images and physical objects acting as nonverbal signs, contribute as signs to the interpretative process. A sequence of oneiric images receives meaning, from the dreamer's point of view also, from the interpretability of those images through words and physical objects. A sequence of words can certainly have another sequence of words as interpretant, and the latter yet another sequence, and so forth; but the meaning of these words does not depend solely on the deferral from one word sequence to the next: both physical objects which are not words and mental images, including the images of words which enable us to recognize these words, necessarily come into play as interpretants.

When we say that physical objects acting as interpretants — though they may be simply implied — must always be present in all interpretative routes, we are also referring to the interpretative routes of signs that relate to something which does not have a physical existence, such as the word "hippogryph", or a whole narrative text of imaginary people, events and places. The physical interpretant — in addition to the phonic material of the graphia 'hippogryph' and vice versa, to the graphic material of the phonia 'hippogryph' – is formed by pictures or sculptures that may be used as interpretants of 'hippogryph', and also by the physical objects acting as the interpretants, even if implied, of the words used as the interpretants of 'hippogryph', e.g., "horse" or "wings", etc.

The meaning of a sign is not, therefore, something we can restrict to a certain *type* of sign, e.g., verbal signs, and even less so to a certain *system* of signs, e.g., a particular natural language or conventional code such as the road code. The interpretative route making upì meaning does not have boundaries of a typological or systemic order. And in this sense it is not exact to speak of the meaning of verbal signs, or of the meaning of nonverbal signs, as though only one type of sign can participate in the constitution of meaning; *in reality, every time*

something has meaning, there is no type of sign that needs to be excluded from the interpretative route in which this something takes its place.

We may say then that meaning is a *semiotic reality* because every time it occurs it involves all types of signs: strictly speaking, we do not have either *verbal meanings,* or *nonverbal* meanings. Nor are there meanings exclusive to a language or to a jargon considered as self-sufficient systems or codes.

Even if the interpretative movement takes place along routes that have already been traced out and are regularly followed and thus repetitious, it is characterized by its stretching forward - in the move from interpreted to interpretant - towards something else, something different. The interpretant, as such, does not repeat the interpreted but adds something new to it: there cannot be a mere relation of equality, of the absence of differences, of total equivalence, of substitution of the identical with the identical between the interpreted and interpretant — not even at the lowest levels of interpretation.

Even when the interpretant limits itself to identification, to recognition of the interpreted (such and such an object is recognized as an exercisebook; such and such a phonia or graphia is identified as the phonia or the graphia "exercise-book") as well as when we are at the lowest levels of interpretation (e.g. reading a written text as a phonic performance or declamation by the reciter), the interpretant diversifies itself from the interpreted, it does not repeat it, but shifts it in one direction or another, it risks an opinion, it offers more than what the interpreted gives (I presume that such and such an object is cubic in form even if I can only see one of its faces), it has, as it were, its own "tendentiousness".

Hence even the interpretation of something according to a habitual interpretative route is based on the hypothesis (allowing for more or less risk depending on the case) that we are dealing with the interpreted of that specific interpretative route.

The relation between the interpreted and the interpretant is not a relation of identity, of equality, of correspondence. On the contrary, it is a RELATION OF ALTERITY: the interpretant is always something else, something different as compared to the interpreted; and the more interpretation goes beyond the mere identification of the interpreted and becomes responsive understanding, the more it requires that a stand be taken, that a choice be made, the more it takes risks as it ventures beyond the interpreted.

Reciprocal alterity between interpreted and interpretant confers the character of a DIALOGIC RELATION upon interpretation. The interprêtant answers a question posed by the interpreted, it takes a stand.

The interpreted and interpretant are the question and answer of a dialogue *internal* to the

sign since the relation interpreted/interpretant is constitutive of signs. All interpretative processes in which something carries out the role of sign can be analysed in terms of the "parts", of the rejoinders in a dialogue of which the speakers are *the datum to be interpreted* and *the interpretant. From interpretation at the level of perception to the critical interpretation of a written text, all signs appear as constitutionally dialogic given that they are obtained in a relation of alterity with the interpretant without which the conferral of sense would be impossible.*

The logic of interpretation is dia-logic. And given that every moment of our psychic life deals with signs, i.e., with dialogic rejoinders between interpreteds/interpretants, dialogue, the relation of alterity, is inherent in subjectivity. Alterity is present in the very process of constitution of subjective identity, it is the internal condition, the very way of being of subjectivity. Thus the relation with the self of another person is by no means different to the relation continually experienced by self with internal alterity; with the multiple others in dialogue within a single person through which the self exists as self. Experience of the other self of another person external to myself does not constitute a more complex problem than that relative to the fact that certain interpretants, which make self-awareness possible and which are in a relation of alterity with the signs they interpret, are recognized as "mine", those through which "I" become aware of myself .

As an interpretative movement, as a sign, thought is constitutionally dialogic. There are different degrees of dialogism which are relative to the degree of differentiation, distancing, and novelty established between the parts in dialogue in the interpretative process. And this is so wholly independently of whether the selves reasoning among themselves as interpreteds/interpretants are external to each other or belong to the same person. There may be a situation of purely formal dialogism obtained through the presence of two or more interlocutors between whom, however, there is no effective relation of alterity, or there may be a situation of substantial dialogism which may even be achieved among the selves of one and the same person.

The dialogism of interpretation develops according to *different types of inference.* We may distinguish between three, separable only for the purpose of analysis. If we make all the parts of an interpretative route explicit, we will observe the presence of all three types of inference. Proceeding from the minor to the major degree of alterity and dialogism between interpreted and interpretant, they are: DEDUCTION, INDUCTION, ABDUCTION.

In *deduction,* the relation of alterity between interpreted and interpretant, i.e., between the premisses and the conclusion is of a minimal degree. Here, in fact, the premisses determine the

conclusion and, vice versa, the conclusion imposes itself upon the premisses once the premisses have been accepted. The parts in dialogue in an interpretation of the deductive type are in a relation of reciprocal dependence and constriction. Between the interpreted and interpretant (premiss and conclusion) of deductive interpretation, there is a relation of determination between the antecedent and consequent characterized by the same constrictive force with which the past imposes itself upon the present. Interpretation ensues passively, it finds its premisses ready, like a *fait accompli.*

In the case of *induction,* the conclusion is not imposed by the premisses and is susceptible of revision. Here, we do not have the predetermination of one dialogue part in virtue of the other, as occurs in deduction where the premisses could not exist if the fact asserted in the conclusion did not exist. In induction, given that the consequent is not determined by the antecedent, memory and the past do not weigh on interpretation as much as predication, expectation and orientation towards the future. The premiss predisposes the interpretant, it gives the cue to, and "backs" the conclusion. There is an adjustment to the future in the sense that the formulation of the premisses in a certain way and the very assertion of the facts are in function of the conclusion. Given the opening towards the future, the importance of deferral to the interpretant and the absence of a relation of mechanical dependence of the conclusion upon the premisses, induction gives us the possibility of increasing our beliefs.

However, such increase is only quantitative given that the sphere of validity of induction remains that of fact, i.e., that group of facts on the basis of which alone can induction push itself to infer the future. The inductive process, similarly to the deductive, is a unilinear process with a precise order of succession moving from the point of departure to the point of arrival without discontinuities, returns, retroactions, by contrast, as we will see, to abduction where the movement is from the consequent to the antecedent. In *abduction,* inference of case occurs through the interpretation of a fact or result on the basis of a rule. The rule is not given prior to and outside of the process of interpretation. The conclusion is the interpretant of the assertion and describes a certain fact or result: and it is from the assertion that the general law or principle (the major premiss) ensues. The interpreted forming the minor premiss and the interpretant, the conclusion, are in a dialogic relation which is not predetermined by the choice of a law. The possibility of retroaction of the interpretant on the premiss, to the point that interpretation determines the major premiss (a determination in which the conclusion is decided), is precisely what makes us indicate this type of reasoning as *retroduction* or *abduction.*

There are various types of abduction, from those with a low degree of novelty and excess

of the interpretant in relation to the interpreted, to creative and audacious abductions where the interpretant dares and risks as it evaluates the fact in the light of a law which is not automatically recalled by that fact or which, in certain cases, is not even foreseen by the semantic universe of the encyclopaedia available, but is rather constituted ***ex novo,*** invented.

2. *The Referent as Implicit Interpretant*

If in a book on astronomy we find "the planet Venus" written alongside a certain illustration, we consider such a caption as an explicit interpretant (or as an interpreted, depending on what the object of interpretation is) of the photograph or design it accompanies. The same function of explicit interpretant-interpreted is accomplished by "the planet Venus" in "the luminous point we see shining in the sky is the planet Venus".

We may call the employment of signs to establish a direct relation between an interpreted and an interpretant, EXPLICATIVE. Explication may be of the following types:

— *definitional* in such utterances as "A planet is a cold and opaque heavenly body which receives light and heat from the closest star"; "A straight line is the shortest line between two points".

— *didactic,* as in the case of the above-mentioned caption "The planet Venus" accompanying the illustration; or the expression "Iranian war prisoners in Iraq" accompanying a photograph published together with a newspaper report on Iraq.

— *argumentative* or demonstrative or inferential if the interpreted and interpretant are connected to each other through reasoning or demonstration.

— *resolutional* as in "So and so is the assassin of the such and such thriller"; or "This is the pen I'd lost and was looking for"; or "This is the ten letter word required by the 5th horizontal" (crossword puzzles are largely based on the direct link between interpreted and interpretant).

— *previsionai:* "A red sky at sunset means that the weather will be fine tomorrow".

— *perceptive*: "The vehicle that we can just catch sight of in the distance through the fog is a trailertruck"; "The aroma you can smell is pipe tobacco".

However, the interpretative route of a sign is not always made explicit through the direct correspondence between a sign and one or more of the interpretants determining its meaning. For example, in

1) "As compared to Mercury, Venus is closer to the Earth and more distant from the Sun", the meaning of 'Venus' is not made explicit, i.e., no link is established

with any of its possible interpretants as occurs instead in

2) “Venus is a planet”, or as in

3) “Venus is the planet that in comparison to Mercury is closer to the Earth and more distant from the Sun”, or

4) “Venus is the luminous point we first see shining in the evening sky”.

Any sign at all, however explicative it may be, leaves certain parts of its interpretative route unsaid. For example in (2) the interpretative route of “planet” which makes it the interpretant of ‘Venus’, is implicit. If utterance (3) is explicative due to the different way in which it is formulated with respect to (1), similarly to (1) it contains parts that are not explicative, the meanings of which are taken for granted: ‘Mercury’, ‘closer to the Earth’, ‘more distant from the Sun’ (think of the completely different meaning of ‘closer’ in “I’m closer to you now than I used to be”, or in “Vailati is closer to Peirce than to Morris”.

That which belongs to an implicit explicative route thus enabling us to understand utterances of the type, “The President of the Cabinet has gone on holiday to Cortina”; “Reagan announced the beginning of a war with the USSR as a joke”; “The are nine planets in the solar system”; “Mario did not go to school this morning”; “The author of the *Sepolcri* also wrote many love letters”, is called REFERENT.

Therefore, the referent of a sign is another sign to which the former refers implicitly. Once it has been made explicit, that which *was* a referent changes function and becomes an *interpretant* with an explicative function; while that which *had a referent,* i.e., a sign with implicit meaning, becomes an *interpreted.* Referent, interpretant and interpreted are, therefore, the different functions carried out by the sign.

It turns out, also, that both meaning and referent go to form the interpretative route traced out by the interpretants of the sign, with the *difference*, however, that meaning is the explicit part and the referent is the implicit part. Or, the implicit part of an interpretative route (referent) is what the explicit part (*meaning*) refers to. Due to this diversity in roles, meaning and referent are to be kept distinct in the study of signs.

Those signs which are connected directly to the interpretative route and which thus make their appearance in it as *meaning* are, as we have said, *explicative. Non explicative* are, instead, those signs which are connected indirectly to the interpretative route and which therefore appear in it as *referent.* The latter may have different functions, these are: descriptive, illustrative, expositive, informative, judicial, imperative, prescriptive, “declarative-performative” (“I declare you Doctor in Law”; “I declare you husband and wife”).

If I say: “The evening star and the morning star are both Venus”, the utterance is

explicative and “Venus” acts as interpretant. While, on the other hand, in “The luminous point that shines in the sky at sunrise is the morning star”, “morning star” is the interpretant while “Venus” or “One of the planets of the solar system” (for whoever may put “Venus”, or “One of the planets of the solar system” on the same interpretative route as “morning star”) is the referent.

“Venus” is soon transformed from referent into interpretant (or interpreted, depending on how the utterance is accentuated) if in the utterance of the last example we add “i.e., Venus”. “One of the planets of the solar system” will remain in the position of utterance referent. If the latter is also made explicit as interpretant, the utterance could have, e.g., “the second planet from the Sun” as referent, and so forth.

If a sign can be such this is not only because of its explicit, immediate, and direct meanings, but also because of its implicit, mediated, and indirect meanings which constitute the referent.

Identification of the referent depends upon concomitant factors which connect the referent indirectly to the meaning and which may act as interpretants of such a relation. If, for example, the news item

“The President of the United States has declared himself in favour of disarmament” has Ronald Reagan as referent, this is determined by the fact that the newspaper bears a certain date, and that the reader possesses information which is presupposed in the formulation of the news item. We call the group of factors concurring in the determination of the referent, CONTEXT.

The context is always made of signs — verbal as much as nonverbal —, interpretant signs of the connection meaning-referent. Whether verbal or nonverbal, “linguistic” or “situational”, the context is always characterized by its sign quality.

The impossibility of making all the interpretants-interpreteds of a sign explicit given that they are infinite in number, means that every sign has a referent (implicit interpretant-interpreted) just as it has meaning (explicit interpretant-interpreted). Meanings (and thereby signs) without a referent do not exist. No explicitation, however much it may broaden the field of meaning, manages to completely absorb the referent.

Therefore referents are not external to sign reality. It is not possible to refer to something without this something becoming part of an interpretative route, i.e., without it being an implicit interpretant or interpreted. *Referents are not external to the network of signs.*

A sign can refer to something considering it as existent, or considering it as non existent. In other words, the referent of a sign may or may not exist in the sense of “exist” referred to by the sign.

Thus, for example, “There’s a book on the table” has as referent something that does not exist if on the table there is no book.

“Toyland” in the book *Pinocchio* has as referent something that really exists in the sense referred to by this expression in the story, even if such a country does not really exist in the same sense that this table and this book exist; on the other hand, “The Field of Miracles”, in the same text *Pinocchio,* has as referent something that does not exist in the sense referred to by this expression in the story.

“Hippogryph” has as referent something that exists in mythology, but that does not exist in zoology.

That which acts as referent is a DENOTATUM if it exists in the sense of “exist” as referred to by the sign; it is a DESIGNATUM if it does not exist in the sense of “exist” as referred to by the sign.

Thus “Ulysses” has a *denotatum* in the *Odyssey* while from a historiographical point of view, it only has a *designatum.* The sign always has a referent, in certain cases it is a *designatum,* in others a *denotatum.*

As the referent of a sign, even a nonsign object or event ceases to be such and becomes the implicit interpretant-interpreted of a sign, i.e., it itself becomes a sign: only on this condition can it be identified as the referent of a sign.

What we refer to then are not “bare facts” or “things in flesh and blood”, but facts and things which are *interpreted* and which in their turn become *interpretants.* We can only refer (to recall Plato’s famous “myth of the cave”) to the sign shadow of things (for further discussion of the role of the referent in semiosis, see 2.1.4 and 2.12.3).

3. *Signality and the Interpretant of Identification in Verbal Signs*

As we have seen, in a typology of signs, signals may be considered as *sui generis signs,* characterized as they are by the arrangement of interpretants upon a single interpretative route.

We could say that signals are signs with the least semiotic consistency or signs with the lowest level of sign quality. From this point of view, signals form a distinct sector with respect to other signs, even if, like all other signs, they are made of deferrals from interpretant to interpretant.

They belong to the sphere of signs also in the sense that they are *always* part of the network of signs, they work full time.

Thus as nonverbal signs, signals are those signs in which the nonsign residue is reduced the most, in certain cases to nothing.

All signals are chiefly *conventional* in the sense that the interpretedinterpretant relation is to a large extent (but not only) determined arbitrarily, on the basis of a law (see further on).

Signals presuppose a CODE, i.e., a system of rules, with respect to which the relation between interpreted and interpretant is *predetermined.*

Furthermore, all signals have an *intentionally communicative function,* they presuppose, i.e., a sender's will and intention of communicating something to someone or: signals are used by a sender to communicate a message to a receiver.

The following are *signals* as we understand them:

— signals in the narrow sense, i.e., those which are indicated as such in everyday language: e.g., road signs, all types of light and acoustic signals, flag signals, etc.);

— symbols, these also as intended in everyday language: zodiacal, heraldic, alchemistic, chemical, algebraic, logico-mathematical symbols, etc.; furthermore, coat of arms, emblems, flags, badges, medals, insignia, decorations, trade-marks, initials, number-plates, seals; conventional signs such as typographical signs used in the correction of proofs;

— measurement systems. The horological and the calendar systems;

— (roman and arabic) numerals in all their uses (mathematics, statistics, accountancy, etc.); telephone, civic, postal, tram numbers, etc.;

— alphabets substituting those of natural languages: the Morse code, flag alphabets, the alphabet of the deaf and dumb, etc.;

— musical notes;

— commodities as exchange value, and money;

— verbal and nonverbal expressions of mutual understanding, courtesy, command, recognition;

— punctuation marks and all other symbols indicating the reading itinery of the written text;

— the language of computers: Fortran, Pascal, Basic.

But signals do not merely form a separate section among signs.

We also find that they are a constitutive factor in the make up of signs.

In this sense, more than "signals", which suggest something separate from signs, we could speak of SIGNALITY, considering the latter as the lowest level of sign existence.

Let us look at what signality consists of with reference to verbal signs.

As much as it is characterized by multi-voicedness the verbal sign also contains a margin of signality. In other words, verbal signs are, *under certain aspects,* signals as well, which is to say that signs, too, *from a certain point of view,* present a univocal relation between interpreted

and interpretant.

These aspects (which we will consider in what follows) according to which verbal signs are signals as well, do not characterize *signs as such.* For this reason, a description of verbal signs limited to such aspects would neglect accounting for their specificity as signs. In other words, verbal signs are made of signality also; but just as, despite their being made of physical material, they do not find in the latter their specificity as signs, nor are they characterized by signality.

Thus which are the aspects that make verbal signs signals also?

Let us consider any phonia whatsoever. The lowest level of interpretation, as from which the phonia is characterized as a verbal sign, is that of identification, of recognition.

The phonia is interpreted as the *such and such* phonia. This second phonia which acts as interpretant of the former in the sense that it identifies it (i.e., it determines its configuration and enables it to be recognized), has an extremely low level of differentiation, of alterity in relation to the former. Indeed, considering the distance between a phonia and its interpretant when the latter is a definition or comment or logical conclusive derivation, the relation between interpreted and interpretant, in the case of recognition, of identification of the phonia, may be considered as a relation of *identity.*

In fact, in this case the interpretant *repeats* the phonia. The phonia 'we will catch the three o'clock train' has, when merely a question of its identification, the phonia "we will catch the three o'clock train", as interpretant.

It would seem, therefore, that the interpreted and interpretant are the *same* phonia.

In reality, the interpretant with an identification function is *different* from its interpreted even though it repeats it; and if the interpretant in question seems to be *the same,* to the point of enabling us to identify the interpreted, this is due to a process of abstraction concerning what is not *relevant* with respect to the identification function here carried out by the interpretant: whether the phonia is produced by the voice of a man, woman or child, whether it is pronounced loudly or is whispered, whether it is articulated slowly or pronounced quickly, is not relevant. There are interpretants that draw illations and conjectures from these very particulars, e.g., the timbre, tone, velocity or pitch of the voice, referred to as a means of identifying the speaker or of working out his attitude towards the listener.

But, in the case of *identification* of the phonia, all this is not relevant and is abstracted from by the interpretant.

The interpretant identifying a phonia is thus *the phonia minus what is not relevant for its identification.* In this sense, the former does not coincide with the phonia unless we abstract

from all the excess particulars with respect to those necessary for its recognition.

Between ‘We’ll catch the three o’clock train’, uttered softly by a woman, and a loud repetition of it by a man ‘you said “We’ll catch the three o’clock train”, didn’t you?’, there is identity only by abstracting from a whole series of differences in relation to which “We’ll catch the three o’clock train” and “We’ll dine in the train at three o’clock”, pronounced softly by the same woman, have more things in common.

Abstraction occurs in relation to both physical and semiotic material.

As regards physical material, we disregard what does not have a distinctive function for the recognition of the phonia and which, therefore, is not *relevant:* from this point of view, e.g., that the initial element *t* of ‘train’ uttered by a certain person should resemble the initial element *t* of ‘train’ as pronounced by another is not as important (or not only) as the fact that this element should be distinguished from the other elements of the phonematic system (the code) to which the speaker and interpreter refer — in this case that of the English language - , for which ‘train’ differs from ‘drain’ because of the initial letter, just as ‘pig’ is different from ‘big’; ‘pig’ is different from ‘big’ just as ‘fine’ is different from ‘vine’; and so forth.

With respect to physical material, abstraction concerns the elimination of all those acoustic aspects that impede consideration of the interpreted phonia as being the *same* as the interpretant with the functionof identification.

With respect to semiotic material, abstraction concerns the eliminationof all other possible interpretative routes irrelevant to the identification of the phonia. The same thing happens when, instead of a phonia, we are dealing with the identification of a piece of writing, whether it be a single element, e.g., a letter, or a whole word or text drawn up in a secret code or in an unknown language.

A question of meaning is certainly at play in both cases given that interpretative operations are accomplished. Nor is the *problem of meaning excluded* in the identification of a phonia or graphia: ‘train’ pronounced with a French “r” *means* “train”; in a secret code, the graphic sign ‘X’ *means* “a”, i.e., it has “a” as interpretant. A kind of cross recurring in a certain person’s writing *means* “f” (it has “f” as interpretant) and not “t”; the sign ‘LI’ means “51” and not “li”.

Thus, the problem of *meaning,* i.e., of the relation between interpreted and interpretant is also present at the level of phonological or graphological interpretation, i.e., of *formal* interpretation as a phase distinguishable from that concentrating on content. In other words, the question of meaning is also present at the level of the identification of the units composing words, phrases and texts.

This relation emerges with the characteristics proper to the signal.

The identification, the recognition of the verbal sign at the phonological or graphological level is a kind of interpretation not unlike that concerning signals.

Indeed, the interpreted-interpretant relation is not necessarily immediate, certain, nor to be taken for granted at the level of phonological or graphological identification but, on the contrary, may be merely given as a hypothesis or conjecture; and there may be different reasons for this, ranging from disturbed listening or reading *(noise,* as intended by information theory) to cognitive deficiencies on the part of the interpreter with respect to the code (a secret code, a language that the interpreter is not familiar with, etc.). But such things only concern faulty reception. On the sender's part, instead, the interpreted-interpretant relation is univocal and predetermined by the code, i.e., *it is imposed as in the signal* (the reading of a road sign may also be disturbed and give rise, therefore, to conjectures, e.g., owing to fog).

A relation of the *signal type* between interpretant and interpreted in the verbal sign is not present at the phonemic and graphemic levels alone. It is also present in the *identification* of an expression at the level of *semantic content* and of *syntactic construction.*

Not only is the phonia 'pine' deciphered by an interpretant fixed by use and tradition as "pine" and not "dine" or "fine" or "line" or "mine" (phonological recognition), but also as "pine" and not "walnut" or "mahogany" or "sandalwood" (recognition of *semantic content).*

Similarly, the sentence΄I returned for Mario' is different from΄I returned, Mario' or from΄I returned with Mario', as it is different from 'Mario returned for me' or 'They returned for Mario', etc., not only if interpreted at the phonological level, but also at the syntactic level.

We may have interpretants of a verbal sign that are such from a phonological point of view, but not from the semantic content point of view: "bank", in the sense of an establishment for the custody of money, as compared to 'bank' in the sense of the sloping margin of ground along the riverside.

Vice versa, we may have interpretants of a verbal sign which are such from the semantic content point of view but not from the phonological point of view, e.g., "turkey" as compared to 'capon' or "tree of the conifer species", with respect to 'pine'.

There are verbal sign interpretants at the level of syntactic conformation which instead are not such from the phonological and content point of view: e.g., "Antonio is reading a book" as compared to 'Maria is eating an ice-cream'.

There are verbal sign interpretants from a phonological and syntactic surface (structure) point of view which, instead, are not such from the semantic content point of view: e.g., 'The shooting of the hunters is a scandal' (i.e., "The fact that the hunters go shooting is a scandal"),

as compared to 'The shooting of the hunters is a scandal' (i.e., "The fact that the hunters are shot is a scandal").

There are verbal sign interpretants from a content point of view which, instead, are not such from a syntactic and phonological point of view: e.g., "Anthony loves Mary" as compared to 'Mary is loved by Anthony'.

We may use the term INTERPRETANT OF IDENTIFICATION for those interpretants which

a) permit the recognition of the verbal sign in its phonemic or graphic contour;

b) identify the verbal sign in its semantic content; and lastly,

c) identify the morphological and syntactic conformation of the verbal sign.

The relation of the interpretant of identification to the interpreted is univocal and predetermined by a code, i.e., it is analogous to that proper to the signal. This proves to be the case, as we have said, if we consider the interpretant from the sender's point of view.

It may seem strange to speak of the interpretant from the point of view of the sender. Indeed, the interpretant of identification (as all interpretant signs) is not activated by the receiver alone, i.e., when deciphering the sign, but actually comes into play with the very performance of the sender. Whoever speaks or writes organizes the phonic or graphic material with reference to the interpretant of identification at the phonemic and graphemic, as well as the syntactic and semantic levels. In addition to all the other objectives that he may have in the communication process, the sender concentrates intentionally upon making the phonic or graphic material meaningful not only as a sign but as a signal also, i.e., *at the level of mere signality*.

In other words, the sender is intent upon rendering the phonic or graphic material *recognizable* on the basis of the repetition of what confers such material its distinctive character and relevance at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels. Thus the sign is already conceived as repetition in its signal component by the sender.

The sign is produced as the repetition of its interpretant of identification.The speaker takes the interpretant of identification from the word of others.

As he gradually develops his linguistic competence, he revises and specifies it both in the light of interpretation of the alien word at the signal level,as well as in the light of the success of his communicative efforts at the same level. The interpretant of identification is the result of abstraction processes necessary to successful communication.

It is thanks to such processes that the speakers (senders and receivers) are able to recognize what, beyond any differences in physical and actual sign materiality of verbal

messages, remains *the same* thus affording the speakers in question immediate understanding and a certain reciprocal familiarity.

4. *Signality and the Interpretant of Identification in Nonverbal Signs*

As we have seen, verbal signs present a certain margin of signality. Nonverbal signs which are not signals (that do not belong to the sphere of signals as described in the preceding paragraph) also present a certain degree of signality insofar as they, too, are singled out by an interpretant of identification, even if with certain differences as compared to verbal signs and signals.

Let us begin by considering this aspect in the following types of signs:

— *symptoms* (medical, psychological, pertaining to natural phenomena) ;

— *clues* (pertaining to natural phenomena, attitudes and inclinations);

— *traces* (physical, such as a footstep in the sand, or mental, such as memories, a state of mind impressed by an event, etc).

In the case of the SYMPTOM, the relation of the interpretant to the interpreted is of *contiguity* and *causality,* blotchy skin (interpreted), liver disease (interpretant); smoke (interpreted), fire (interpretant).

In the case of the CLUE, the relation of the interpretant to the interpreted is of *causality* (but not given in present time), on the basis of a *presumed* relation of *contiguity* : a cloudy sky as a sign that it will rain; a bloodstain on a person's glove as a clue that this person is the wanted assassin.

In the case of the TRACE, the relation of the interpretant to the interpreted is of *contiguity* (not given in present time) on the basis of a *presumed* relation of *causality*: a footstep is interpreted as a trace of the passing of a man or animal; a phobia as the trace of a certain event.

Indeed, given that there is no communicative intentionality (otherwise they would be signals: smoke used to signal one's presence or to transmit messages; footsteps left expressly by a person to signal the route taken) and that they are not the result of a coding process, symptoms, clues and traces are not produced as the repetition of a pre-established interpretant of identification. However, they are interpretable because of their typicality, i.e., because they are already known, they have already been seen for they repeat certain distinctive features.

A preliminary moment of identification, of recognition is also necessary in the case of symptoms, clues and traces: a footstep appears as the repetition of certain distinctive features

that characterize it as the imprint left by an animal or a man's shoe or a woman's shoe or by a bare foot; if left by an animal it may be characteristic, e.g., of a horse (whether shod or not), a deer, etc.: Similarly, a certain somatic fact appears as a symptom insofar as it repeats characteristics which identify it as *that* particular symptom and which link it to a certain pathological state; and in the same way, clouds mean rain if they are identified as that certain type of cloud which bears rain.

Thus traces, symptoms and clues, also, have an interpretant ofidentification which is determined on the basis of one's own experience or on that of others, and is established on the basis of a certain tradition, of a certain social practice.

Similarly to signals, the relation between the interpreted and interpretant is fixed on the basis of a law, which makes it possible to prepare handbooks which propose the identification of certain types of symptoms or clues or traces on the basis of specific distinctive features.

A handbook of medical symptomatology or a handbook on hunting are two such examples: we use them as though we were consulting a signal code or a language dictionary, so that with reference to such handbooks it is possible to decode specific traces or symptoms or clues which can thus be recognized even by people who have no previous direct experience of them.

There are cases in which symptoms or clues or traces are also produced intentionally, in which they are predetermined by the interpretant of identification in the course of their very production. In such cases they work as real signals, even if masked as symptoms, clues or traces. A person who pretends to be moved, an actor who recites rage or fear, a person who feigns illness, a person who leaves footprints on the ground so as to be followed (e.g. to set a trap), or to divert the pursuer, intentionally produces symptoms, clues and traces according to the distinctive features foreseen by the interpretant of identification which, therefore, contrary to what the interpreter believes, does not come into play exclusively when such features are being decoded.

In signals disguised as symptoms, clues or traces, the success of pretence depends on the very fact that these signs remain *distinct from signals,* i.e., that they appear to be uncoded and devoid of an interpretant of identification produced intentionally by a sender: they must not appear to be characterized by the interpretant of identification "at the source", but only when they are actually being read and decoded. Thus those very cases where symptoms, clues and traces are in reality signals, rather than generally invalidating the distinction between such signs and signals, actually serve to highlightthis distinction, as well as the distinction between these and verbal signs in their signal dimension.

Besides acting as signals when such aspects as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph come into play, verbal signs may also function as symptoms, traces and clues: a certain piece of discourse, whether written or oral, may be read, without the speaker or writer intending this, as indicating a specific social status, or place of origin, it may betray impatience or uneasiness, foresee a certain development in the relation between interlocutors, indicate that the person speaking is in a hurry to conclude the conversation, etc.

We call symptoms, clues and traces made of verbal signs, PARA VERBAL. Verbal signs, therefore, have double signality: related to the fact that as far as they are *intentional,* they are also signals, and related to the fact that as far as they are *unintentional,* they may also be symptoms, clues and traces. Such double signality of verbal signs becomes triple when unintentionality is recited, calculated or feigned, when i.e., what in the verbal sign seems to be a symptom, clue or trace is in reality a disguised signal.

5. *Conventionality, Indexicality and Iconicity between Interpreteds and Interpretants*

If we consider an interpretative route, i.e., if we follow the series of deferrals from one interpretant to the next forming the meaning of a sign, we will discover interpretants of different kinds.

The phonia ‘book’, e.g., has as its interpretant the object to which the reader is turning his attention at this very moment, other multiple objects which are books, the graphia “book”, the words “libro” and “livre”, etc. The phonia ‘book’ and the graphia ‘book’ or the written or pronounced words ‘libro’ or ‘livre’ are related solely by convention.

In the same way, the relation between the word ‘book’ and the object book is *conventional.* We may say then that the interpreted and interpretant are connected by a relation of CONVENTIONALITY.

On the other hand, between this object that we call book and another object which is also a book, there is a relation of *similarity.*

Likewise, there is a relation of similarity between the phonia ‘book’ pronounced by myself, and the same phonia pronounced by another person, just as there is a relation of similarity between all the graphae of ‘book’, in italics, in block letters, etc.

We have already said that such similarity is in any case the result of a process of abstraction because it uniquely concerns certain specific distinctive features. We call this kind of similarity, “similarity of the ICONIC type”. *Similarity of the iconic type is established*

among signs and these are situated along the same interpretative route.

Similarity between two people, like that between twins who can actually be so similar as to appear identical, or the specular likeness to one's own image reflected in the mirror, is not, as such, of the iconic type. Rather, there is an iconic relation between, e.g., a written word in the same print as this book and the same word in very large letters; a diagram and what it represents; a ten dollar bank-note and a smallscalemreproduction of it used as a chip. Any relevant distinctive feature of an iconic relation is determined by social practices and functions.

This does not mean that similarity is sanctioned by convention. If anything, we might say that the iconic relation is fixed by a convention that uses similarity as a criterion. Therefore, that which must be similar in the iconic relation, that which is relevant in the similarity, varies according to different conventions. The criteria of similarity which enable us to point to the reproduction of a stamp in a catalogue as a sign of the stamp that a philatelist wishes to buy, are different to those that allow us to say that the such and such stamp collector is actually in possesion of a certain exemplar. Nobody would want two identical fifty dollar bank-notes in exchange for a hundred dollar bank-note!

The relation among signs of an interpretative route may also be a relation of *contiguity* and/or of *causality*. Such is the relation between, e.g., hearing someone knock at the door and the interpretant "someone is behind the door and wants to enter". A pointing forefinger has a certain object as interpretant on the basis of a relation of contiguity.

The same thing is true of demonstrative and personal pronouns whose changing interpreted is determined each time by the relation of contiguity connecting them. As we may see from these examples, the relation of contiguity or of causality established between interpreted and interpretant is always more or less identified by convention.

Identified but not determined. We could say that convention here resorts to contiguity and causality, just as it resorts to similarity in the case of the iconic relation. The relation between interpreted and interpretant fixed by a convention using contiguity and/or causality as its criterion is called INDEXICAL.

An indexical relation may be traced even where only a conventional relation seems to exist between interpreted and interpretant. As we have seen, the relation between the phonia 'book' and the object book or between the phonia 'book' and the graphia 'book' is of the conventional type. However, it also has the characteristics of indexicality because of the relation of contiguity established between phonia and object and between phonia and graphia. Indeed, contiguity is here sanctioned by convention; however, this convention is learned and becomes an *obligation* and may thus continue to exist thanks to the fact that the name and the

object or the phonia and the graphia of the same word are given in a relation of contiguity.

But the phonia ‘book’ which has the object book as interpretant has distinctive features, i.e., if a phonia produced by a certain person has relations of interpreted/interpretant with the object book, this is so because it resembles the phonia ‘book’ in certain distinctive features, i.e., as we have seen, it has this phonia as its identification interpretant. Thus this example shows how convention is always connected to iconicity also, and not only to indexicality.

Generally there is a relation of mutual participation between iconicity and indexicality. Though a sign chiefly on the basis of iconic similarity, the portrait of a person, independently of the co-presence of the person depicted, is also the effect produced by the latter on the artist (according to a relation of contiguity and of causality), and thus it also has an indexical relation with the interpretant (besides a conventional relation insofar as it obeys conventional rules both when it is produced and when it is interpreted).

A knock at the door is the indexical sign of “someone is behind the door and wants to enter”; however, it can be recognized as such because it answers to certain characteristics that make it similar to preceding experiences where the same link between interpreted and interpretant was verified. Thus this sign has a margin of iconicity also (in addition to being a symbol insofar as it is predisposed by a convention).

Therefore, we may say that signs — as regards the relation between interpreteds and interpretants — are conventional, iconic and indexical.

Conventionality, iconicity and indexicality are always more or less present in signs, even if certain signs are mainly conventional, others mainly iconic and others still, mainly indexical. We may also say that all signs (including so-called natural signs: smoke sign of fire, cloud sign of rain) are conventional and that, in certain cases, conventionality resorts chiefly to indexicality as well as to iconicity, and in certain other cases it resorts mainly to iconicity as well as to indexicality.

Or, as Peirce stated, as much as they are conventional, all signs are always more or less *degenerate* in the iconic or in the indexical sense.

All that has been said about the iconic, indexical and conventional character of the interpreted/interpretant relation holds true both when the interpretant is explicit as well as when it is implicit; in other words, what we are saying *also refers to the relation between interpreted and referent.*

A single interpreted may have relations of different kinds with its interpretant. Let us examine the phonic expression ‘This pen is red’.

Its meaning is determined (among other things) by:

— *the interpretant of phonemic identification* linked to the interpreted chiefly by a relation of similarity, i.e., an *iconic* relation (even if a relation of the conventional type already implicit in the iconic likeness, and a relation of the indexical type determined by the relation of causality and of contiguity connecting the interpreted to the interpretant also intervene);
— *the interpretant of identification of syntactic form* to which the interpreted continues to be linked above all by a *relation of the iconic type ;*
— *the interpretant of identification of semantic content* to which the interpreted is connected *mainly* by a conventional relation;
— *the interpretant formed by the object with the function of referent* to which the phonic expression is connected *mainly* by an *indexical* relation;
— *the interpretants of the perception of what is 'red'* formed by all the objects that provoke sensory impressions similar to those provoked by the object in question and that are considered to be red in colour.

Thus the relation between interpreted and interpretant is in this case *predominantly iconic.*

As regards the signal, such as the road sign indicating the proximity of an intersection, we are able to identify:
— an identification interpretant causing that signal to be perceived in a relation of iconic similarity with other intersection road signs, distinguishing it from those that indicate, e.g. No Entry, or from publicity signs;
— the interpretant of identification of semantic content, connected to the interpreted in the first place by a conventional relation, but also by an indexical relation because of the necessary relation of contiguity and of causality that comes to be established between the interpretant and the interpreted as the condition of maintenance of the convention;
— an interpretant-referent formed by what the signal refers to, i.e., the actual intersection to which the signal is connected by a relation of indexicality in virtue of a relation of spatial vicinity (pre-established, however, by convention, e.g., a distance of a hundred and fifty metres). Generally speaking, we may state that in percepts iconicity dominates in the relation between interpreted and interpretant (though iconicity is always connected also to conventionality and indexicality), and for this reason it dominates in all signs considered in their perceptive component.

In signals, conventionality dominates between interpreted and interpretant. Such conventionality also causes indexical relations of contiguity and of causality to be established between interpreted and interpretant. In other words, the signal is subjected to a convention, sanctioned by a code, and such a convention renders contiguity between a specific interpreted

and a specific interpretant necessary, in the same way that indexicality is expressed, e.g., between a knock at the door and the fact that someone is behind the door and wants to enter. Conventionality and indexicality are also dominant in all signs considered in their signal component.

In symptoms, traces and clues indexicality dominates between interpreted and interpretant. Thus it is present in all signs insofar as they are all capable of carrying out the function of symptoms, traces and clues.

As percepts, verbal signs present an iconic dominance; as signals, a conventional and consequently indexical dominance; as symptoms, traces and clues, yet again an indexical dominance (for further discussion of symbol, icon and index, see 2.8.1 and 2.8.2).

6. *Signs and Responsive Understanding*

None of the features of signs as signals exhaust their character as signs. Nonverbal signs such as percepts, traces, clues, symptoms, and verbal signs, are signals *as well,* but *they are not only signals.* On the other hand, we have said that even signs with the lowest degree of sign quality and which may thus be considered as *signals in the narrow* sense (see section 1.3), continue to be part of the sign network. As such they are subjected to interpretations which connect the compulsory route between interpreted and interpretant proper to the signal, to routes which are open and not pre-established, characteristic of the higher levels of sign resonance.

The interpretant of a signal is not only that which allows the signal to be identified: each time we formulate the interpretation "that is a sign indicating an intersection" in relation to a signal indicating an intersection, we are dealing with a verbal interpretant which, as such, does not belong to the sector of signals and actually has sign meaning, i.e., it is, in its turn, interpretable as an explanation, a warning, a reproach, a notification of a breach of law, etc.

Similarly, as regards the expression 'This pen is red' used as an example in the preceding paragraph, beyond the interpretants taken into consideration - which remain at the level of identification and therefore of signality —, we must add those interpretants which cause the expression to take on an actual sign character and which establish the interpretative route in which such an expression is to be located. We are dealing with what is added to interpretation as mere identification of the utterance or gesture. All interpretations open interpretative routes that concern the sense, or, they open interpretative routes that advance towards sign life, beyond signality.

Rather than introduce the word “sense” alongside the word “meaning” to indicate the calling into play of interpretants that do not limit themselves to the identification of the interpreted, we may distinguish between *two zones of meaning , that* of signals and that of signs.

We have called the interpretant relative to the signal and to signality the *identification interpretant*. We now propose to call the interpretant specific to the sign, that which interprets the sense or *actual sign meaning,* INTERPRETANT OF RESPONSIVE UNDERSTANDING.

Such an interpretant does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted, but installs with it a relation of involvement, of participation: it responds to the interpreted and takes a stance towards it.

The interpretant of responsive understanding of the utterance ‘It’s hot in this room’ is any expression that ensues from such an utterance, from that consisting in playing dumb and ignoring the interpreted, to the proposal of leaving the room, the action of opening the window, the negation of what the utterance affirms, repetition of the utterance to express agreement, or to transmit what has been said to someone else, or to install a relation of the phatic type should the utterance be interpreted as an invitation to begin a conversation.

The action of opening the window and the invitation to “take off your coat” are interpretants of ‘It’s very hot in this room’. And even the very repetition “It’s very hot in this room” is an interpretant of responsive understanding, given that it may install a relation of agreement with the interpreted, or a relation of the phatic type, or that it may be intended to make fun of the interpreted, or to report it, etc.

It is immediately evident from this simple example that the interpretants of responsive understanding of a single interpreted are multiple and cannot be predetermined by a code as, instead, happens in the case of identification interpretants. An unspecified number of interpretative routes branch out from a single interpreted and it is here that the multi-voicedness and ambiguity of the sign fully manifest themselves.

The interpretant of responsive understanding ventures a response in relation to the interpreted and if no doubt it is helped in some way by the context which delimits the interpretative possibilities, it is always the interpretant that decides fully assuming the responsibility answerability of its own choice. On the other hand, as we have already said, the context itself is made of signs and, as such, it too is the result of interpretation.

The relation between the interpretant of responsive understanding and the interpreted obeys the logical rules of deduction, induction and of abduction (see the final part of section 1.1). But such rules simply provide us with an empty form. Everything depends upon how this form is filled on drawing from the values, habits and customs that characterize the sign-cultural

field in which the interpreted interpretant relation is situated.

We can always reconstruct the logical steps that give rise to a given interpretant of responsive understanding but such a reconstruction does not occur in the abstract; as interpretation it occurs within the network of signs. In fact, the explanation of the steps which give rise to a certain interpretant of responsive understanding cannot be given in terms of the general structures of the human mind: the explanation is of a historical-cultural order and concerns the reconstruction of the relation between the actual interpretant and the usual interpretative routes of a specific cultural system. We must not forget that the reconstruction of the logical steps which lead to a certain interpretant is the work of another interpretant, it, too, connected to interpretative habits (verbal, ideological, behavioural), analogous or different to those which affect the interpretant, object of interpretation.

Thus such a reconstruction emerges as a process which inevitably occurs inside the sign network.

On obeying the logical rules of deduction, induction and abduction, the interpreant of responsive understanding is connected to the interpreted by the kind of relation foreseen by deduction, induction and abduction, respectively. In *deduction,* the relation between the interpreted (the premisses) and the interpretant (the conclusion) is of the *indexical* type for it is characterized by causality, by compulsive force. In *induction,* the relation between interpreted and interpretant is chiefly of the *conventional* type owing to the absence of a relation of mechanical dependence of the conclusion upon the premisses.

In *abduction,* the relation is mainly of the *iconic* type insofar as the interpretation determines the major premiss on the basis of a relation of iconic likeness with the interpreted (see sections 2.8 and 2.11).

The interpretant of responsive understanding is the *conclusion* of a line of reasoning in an inferential process that has, as we said in section 1.1, a dialogic structure. The steps leading to the conclusion very often escape us to the point that they do not seem to exist at all, so that the interpretant of responsive understanding seems to be given in the form of an immediate reaction. This is not only true when dealing with the behaviour of others, but also in the case of our very own behaviour: we are not always able to reconstruct the internal dialogic process that has conducted us to a certain verbal or nonverbal action as the conclusion.

Thus the question/answer type relation between the interpreted and interpretant is given, in the main part, in the form of a dialogue, of dramatization: we witness the conclusive (verbal and nonverbal) actions and we do not discern the dialogic-inferential process that provoked them.

However, each time we question ourselves about the significance of a certain stance, of a certain answer, we are in search of the dialogic inferential route that, on starting from a given interpreted, has its point of arrival (which then becomes the departure point of subsequent interpretation) in a given interpretant of responsive understanding (cf. also section 2.8.3 and 2.8.4).

7. *Enuntiatum, Text and Discourse Genre*

All utterances, that is, all verbal realizations may be divided into two parts, relative, respectively, to the interpretant of responsive understanding and to the interpretant of identification. What we need to establish, therefore, is which part is ascribable to the higher levels of sign resonance and which to signality.

Utterance meaning connected to the interpretant of responsive understanding may be called ENUNTIATUM. In other words, the enuntiatum of an utterance refers to the highest sign levels of utterance meaning.

Utterance meaning connected to the interpretant of identification may be called SENTENCE or sentence complex. In other words, the sentence or sentence complex refers to the lowest abstract levels of utterance meaning.

The sentence is the level of the deconstructable, of the linguistic elements, while the enuntiatum is the level of linguistic unity, of sign wholeness. The interpretant of responsive understanding relates to the utterance as a unitary and undeconstructable totality, capturing its general meaning; the interpretant of identification, instead, relates to the constitutive elements of the utterance, as a sentence or sentence complex, at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels.

Furthermore, in relation to the interpretant of identification the utterance is given as the repetition of certain distinctive features that permit the recognition of phonemes, monemes and syntactic structures; on the other hand, in relation to the interpretant of responsive understanding the utterance is taken in its singularity, for that which it means here and now: not only does the interpretant of responsive understanding not limit itself to repeating the utterance as does the interpretant of identification but it treats the utterance in question as something unique and unrepeatable.

A repeated sentence is always the same sentence; a repeated enunciatum is never the same enunciatum, it cannot be repeated, or, in other words, on repeating an utterance what is repeated is the sentence and not the enuntiatum. Each time the utterance is repeated, the

enuntiatum has a special interpretant of responsive understanding; on the contrary, the sentence always has the same eof identification. At the level of identification, i.e., as a sentence, the utterance calls for knowledge (linguistic competence) in the form of *mathesis universalis·,* to be understood at the level of answerability, i.e., as an enuntiatum, the utterance calls for knowledge (communicative competence) in the form of *mathesis singularis,* new knowledge for each new enuntiatum.

As an enuntiatum, not only does the utterance have an interpretant of responsive understanding but is itself an answering interpretant of another verbal or nonverbal interpretant. As such, it expresses a point of view, a value judgement, an orientation: this causes every utterance to always have its own particular accentuation, evaluative intonation. As a sentence, the utterance is not of the answering kind and, therefore, it has no evaluative intonation.

The utterance always *belongs* to someone and is *for* someone.

It is characterized by answerability and requires a reaction. This reaction may go beyond the limits of the verbal. The utterance is elicited by one's behaviour and elicits behaviours that are not of the verbal type alone: it subsists within the context of extraverbal communicative acts readable as signs that interpret it or as signs that it has interpreted. As we have already seen, the interpretant of an utterance (e.g., it's hot) may also be another utterance ("open the window if you like" or "turn off the heating"), or it may be a nonverbal action (the act of opening the window by the interlocutor, or of shutting off the heating).

All this may be summarized by saying that *the utterance subsists in a play of verbal and nonverbal interpretants whereby it is elicited as interpretant and elicits interpretants.*

When we do not consider the utterance in isolation from the context of utterances, we supercede the abstraction of the isolated utterance, but we are still moving at an abstract level because the interconnection between the utterance and the nonverbal signs that it interprets and which act as its interpretants ("I'm not cold!" as the utterance interpretant of the fact that x's action of closing the window has the utterance "I think you're cold" as interpretant), are left out of consideration.

We may view the TEXT as an interconnection of interpretants in which the utterance subsists and distinguish between a *verbal* text, made exclusively of utterances, and a *verbal and nonverbal text* where nonverbal signs and interpretants also intervene.

The concept of text recalls the image of a network used from the very beginning to explain what we mean by interpretative route.

A text is a portion of the network.

The CONTEXT (see also section 1.2) is that which surrounds a specific portion of the

network, enabling us to catch sight of other portions of the interpretative route and to grasp the new interpretants which become part of it.

But a text does not necessarily find its interpretants and interpreteds exclusively in the immediate vicinities: it may receive meaning from a distant part of the sign network with which, therefore, there is no relation of the indexical type, or at least, not in any immediately visible manner. In such cases we will speak of INTERTEXTUALITY.

That which is momentarily outside the sign network, we call EXTRATEXTUAL. As soon as we refer to the latter in terms of the interpreant or interpreted of a text, we can no longer speak of the "extratextual" : extratextuality becomes contextualityor intertextuality.

Outside the text, the utterance is no longer such. It becomes an isolated sentence or sentence complex which neither belongs to anyone, nor is addressed to anyone. As such, sentences are void of communicative intentionality and say nothing about their own specificity in relation to that of which they become an interpretant, or to that of which they require an interpretant.

Textuality is thus one of the paramétrés of the utterance and is what diversifies the enuntiatum from the sentence.

As an interconnection of utterances the text is also an interconnection of points of view: every utterance is always positioned, it moves from one position to another and thus pronounces through its very form, apart from through its content, the position we speak from and to which we address ourselves. In this sense, the text is always ***oriented:*** there are one-way routes, utterance orientations that cannot be inverted.

Hence the text does not organize itself at a single level; it is stratified, it presents differences in level, discrepancies. The utterance is, in the first place, an expression of its own position and of that of the utterances or of the nonverbal behaviour that it intends as interpretants.

In addition to textuality, another criterion for the realization and the specification of the utterance is DISCOURSE GENRE.

Discourse genres underlie all utterances, conditioning them at the level of both content and form. There are discourse genres of "ordinary" language, genres of artistic-literary language, literary genres of scientific language, "high" genres and "low" genres. That which belongs to a discourse genre is not the abstract linguistic entity, e.g., the sentence, but the live word, the utterance.

The discourse genre is a specific meaning system relative to a particular kind of meaning practice, worldview model, ideological model. As meaning systems corresponding to types of

meaning practices, discourse genres are the expression of particular modalities of social-linguistic consciousness objectively fixed in the expressive and receptive potential of language. In other words, we may consider the genre as a system of methods for collective orientation in the real world, a way of envisaging reality, which develops together with social communication.

It is precisely because they are created with utterances that discourse genres come into play at the level of *token* and not of *type.* However, we need to specify that even though they do not exist outside concrete linguistic life, discourse genres are abstract entities that condition linguistic acts and are produced in concrete communicative processes.

They are contemporarily the product, the sedimentation and the modelling forms of the processes that they condition and are conditioned by. The discourse genre is the *type* of which a certain discourse is the *token.* Discourse genres are abstractions which have a specific value in relation to the utterance in question. They are *real abstractions,* that is, they are not produced at the level of a thinker's quiet meditation, but rather are *concretely* operative in language (for further discussion of the aspects of sign life, text and intertexuality discussed in this section, see Ponzio 1990: 2.10).

3.

Peirce and medieval semiotics

by Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

1. Premiss; 2. The Sign in Peirce and Petrus Hispanus; 2.1 *Significatio* and *acceptio*; 2.2. *Suppositio* and *copulation*; 2.3. *Significatio* and meaning; 2.4. *Suppositio* and *signification*; 3. Peirce's view of Petrus Hispanus; 4. *Appellatio* and the object of the sign; 5. Autonomy of logic and pragmatism

1. *Premiss*

A glance at the Index of Proper Names in the *Collected Papers* soon reveals that the Medieval logicians are well represented throughout Peirce's thought system. Peirce had a profound knowledge of Medieval logic to which he often referred in his criticism of modern logic: in fact, he measured the imprecision and untenability of certain statements made in modern logic against the more precise and rigorous statements of Medieval logic. References to Medieval logic are scattered throughout the whole of the *Collected Papers* and in the attempt to relate them, we shall take the frequently mentioned *Tractatus* (subsequently called *Summule logicales)* by Petrus Hispanus as our main point of reference. There are three main reasons for our approach:

1) The *Tractatus* was probably written toward the beginning of 1230 and was heavily influenced by previous studies in logic: we may even consider it as a sort of point of arrival for the Aristotelian-Bothian tradition. Peirce too had this view of the *Summule logicales* and criticized Prantl's mistaken conviction that it was the Latin translation of a Greek work (by Psellus). Furthermore, Peirce was aware of the potential importance of the *Tractatus* as a handbook in logic thanks to its extraordinary capacity for synthesis. In his own words: "The *Summule* of Petrus Hispanus are nearly identical with some other contemporary works and evidently show a doctrine which had been taught in the schools from about A.D. 1200. After Bothius, it is the highest authority for logical terminology, according to the present writer's ethical views" *(CP* 2.323n).

2) *The Tractatus* presents new elements which were to find subsequent development in the tradition of studies in logic as represented by the Modists, Scotus, and Ockham. In spite of

certain similarities in terminology, these elements were also new with respect to the logic of William of Shyreswood and of Lambert d'Auxerre (see 1972: Introduction).

3) Because of such innovation, the theories of Petrus Hispanus more than those of anyone else have many points in common with Peirce's thought system.

2. *The Sign in Peirce and Petrus Hispanus*

We believe that parallels may be drawn between the two models of sign as proposed in *thcTractatus* and in *the Collected Papers.* Just as Peirce described the sign as a representamen which stands for an object in some respect signified by an interpretant, Petrus Hispanus also produced a complex sign model articulated into various elements. Their sign models are far more powerful and, therefore, far more adequate for a description of semiosis, than is our contemporary Saussurean model of sign with its binary division into the *signifiant* and the *signifié.*

We could even go as far as establishing correspondences between Petrus Hispanus and Peirce on a terminological level. These should not be understood merely as fixed coincidences, but as indicating the general orientation of Hispanus's sign model: Such correspondences are potential and not factual. Working along these lines the following relations may be established:

vox significativa = representamen;
significatio or *representatio* = interpretant;
acceptio pro = to stand for;
aliquid (to which the operation of the *acceptio* is referred) = dynamical object.

2.1 Significatio *and* acceptio

The Tractatus turns its attention to signifying units that are either simple (the single categorematic terms, *nomina* and *verba*) or complex (or composite) such as *oratio* 'the utterance', with its division into the declarative or *propositio,* optative, imperative, etc. In relation to such signifying units, *significatio* 'meaning' is defined as the *representatio rei* 'representation of a thing' through a conventional vocal sound (1972: 79). The verbal sign (*nomen, verbum, oratio*) is made of a signifying verbal sound and a representation or meaning. Therefore, the *res* represented by the sign is not externa! to the sign; it is not something to which the sign refers,but rather it is a constitutive part of it, something by virtue of which a sign is a sign, a signifying

vocal sound. A sign stands for something to which it refers through the expression of a representation which constitutes the sign's meaning.

Petrus Hispanus was not only perfectly aware of the difference between meaning and referent (or in Peirce's terminology, between the interpretant and object), but also of the mediated character of the relation between sign and referent: such necessary mediation is achieved by representation or meaning. The verbal sign stands for something in relation to a given representation, "under some respect", as Peirce would say, or through a given reference in Ogden and Richards' terminology. To obtain a verbal sign, not only is the *acceptio pro aliquo* (1972: 80) necessary, but also the meaning or representation with respect to which the *acceptio* occurs.

2.2. Suppositio *and* copulatio

The assumption of a sign for something in relation to a given meaning or representation was subdivided by Petrus Hispanus, with reference to the *nomina* and *verba,* into two forms: *suppositio* 'supposition' and *copulation* 'copulation'. These two distinct forms of the *acceptio,* that is, of the relation of the verbal sign to its referent, also depend upon the *significatio,* that is, upon the fact that the thing signified (not to be confused with the referent) is signified as a noun, adjective or verb. In fact, Petrus Hispanus distinguished between two *modi rerum que significantur* : the *adiectivatio* and *the substantivatio.* In the *Tractatus,* to the *substantivatio* and the *adiectivatio* there correspond respectively, on the side of signifying terms, *the nomina substantiva* on the one hand, and the *nomina adiectiva* and *the verba,* on the other. Therefore, we have:

a) two forms of *acceptio,* that is, of the assumption of a verbal sign for something: *suppositio* and *acceptio;*
b) two *modi rerum quae significantur* which correspond to the above-mentioned forms: *adiectivatio* and *substantivatio;*
c) two types of *nomina : nomina substantiva* and *nomina adiectiva*; the *nomina adiectiva* together with the *verba* corresponding to the *adiectivatio.* Petrus Hispanus specified that: *"proprie non est signification substantiva vel adiectiva, sed aliquid significatur substantive et aliquid adiective, quia adiectivatio vel substantivatio sunt modi rerum que significantur, et non significationis"* (1972: 80).

This also clarifies that the *significatio* or *representatio* must be kept distinct from the *res* signified or represented. Translation of *signification* with meaning obstacles this distinction or at least makes it difficult to maintain or comprehend. *Significatio* indicates an operation, an activity which results in the *res significata* or *representata.*

2.3. *Significatio* and meaning

The *significatio* is not a *res,* as we may be led to believe on using the term "meaning" in the place of *"significatio* ", unless we intentionally wish meaning to be understood as *significatio,* as a process, just as the *Tractatus* would seem to propose. In relation to this point, the problem of meaning is proposed in the *Tractatus* in terms used not only in Peirce's pragmatism, but also in the theories of authors, such as Morris, Wittgenstein and Ryle, who criticized reifying and hypostatizing conceptions of meaning: meanings are not things; to say that there are meanings is not the same as stating that there are trees and rocks; meanings are inseparable from the signifying process (see Morris 1938 and Ryle 1957).

2.4. Suppositio *and* significatio

The *acceptio,* that is, the assumption of a verbal sign for something inrelation to a certain representation may either take the form of the *suppositio* or of the *copulatio.* Furthermore, such a distinction is connected with that between nouns on the one hand, and adjectives and verbs, on the other. Petrus Hispanus explained the difference between the *substantivatio* and the *adiectivatio* in the following terms: nouns *supponunt* 'stand for' the object to which they refer autonomously, contrary to adjectives and verbs which only relate to the referent by *copulant* 'uniting' their meaning to a noun. Broadly speaking, however, we still have a *suppositio* in the case of verbs and adjectives, for to use them is to accept them for *something acceptio pro aliquo*).

In the *Tractatus,* both the *acceptio pro aliquo* of nouns, adjectives and verbs, as well as the *suppositio,* which in a narrow sense is specific to nouns, are kept distinct from the *significatio.* The *significatio* is what makes a *vox* significant. The *suppositio* is generally the referring of the *vox significativa* to a given referent. To say it with Petrus Hispanus, *to signify* is a function of the voice; *to stand for,* that is, to refer to an object, is a function of a term composed of voice and meaning.

Differunt autem suppositio et significatio, quia significatio est per impositionem vocem ad rem, suppositio vero est acceptio ipsius termini iam significantis rem pro aliquo. Ut cum dicitur 'homo currit ', iste terminu 'homo' supponit pro Socrate vel Platone, et sic de aliis. Quare signification prior est suppositione. Nesque sunt eiusdem, quia significare est vocis, supponere vero est termini iam quasi compositi ex voce et significatione. Ergo suppositio non est significatio (1972: 80).

[Moreover, *suppositio* and *significatio* differ from each other because *significatio* is through the application of the voice, whereas *suppositio* is the reception of the term itself which is already signifying something on behalf of something else. For example, when one says "the man is running", this term "man" stands for either a Socrates or a Plato, and so also in other cases. This is the reason why *significatio* is prior to *suppositio.* Neither has to do with the term which is already as it were compounded from the voice and the *significatio.* Therefore, *suppositio* is not *signficatio*.]

3. *Peirce's view of Petrus Hispanus*

To reach the Peircean model of sign taking Petrus Hispanus as our starting point, we must go a step further and explain the *significatio* in terms *of renvoi* from one sign to the next, where the latter acts as the interpretant of its *acceptio pro* (the interpretant is subdivided into the immediate interpretant and the dynamical interpretant; see *CP* 4.536).

Peirce's interest in Petrus Hispanus on this point was not incidental. With directreference to the *Tractatus,* Peirce made a point of specifying that the *significatio* belongs to the field of lexicography, given that it depends upon conventions, whether only one *significatio* or several correspond to the *vox,* while the *suppositio* is more specifically the object of logico-linguistic studies:

> The various *suppositiones* which may belong to one word with one *significatio* are the different senses in which the word may be taken, according to the general principles of she language or of logic. Thus, the word *table* has different *significationes* in the expressions "table of logarithms" and "writing-table"; but the word *man* has one and the same *significatio,* and only different *suppositiones,* in the following sentences: "A man is an animal", "a butcher is a man", "man cooks his food", "man appeared upon the earth at such a date", etc (*CP* 5.320).

Furthermore, Peirce agreed with Petrus Hispanus that the *supposition* must be kept distinct from the *acceptio* of which together with the *copulatio* it is a special case:

> Some later writers have endeavored to make *"acceptio"* do service for *"suppositio";* but it seems to me better, now that scientific terminology is no longer forbidden, to revive supposition. I should add that as the principles of logic and language for the different uses of the different parts of speech are *different, suppositio* must be restricted to the acceptation of a substantive. The term *copulatio* was used for the acceptation of an adjective or verb *(CP* 5.320).

Suppositio, and in general *acceptio,* do not concern terms taken in isolation, as instead occurs by abstraction in the field of lexicography, but as they are used in linguistics and situational contexts. Thus, the distention between *significatio* and *suppositio* (and *acceptio)* tend to take the form of a distinction between the abstract, general signification of an isolated

term, on the one hand, and its specific signification within the proposition (and the utterance in general), on the other. This is the sense in which the distinction was to be understood by Ockham.

The distinction between *significatio* and *acceptio* may also be seen as corresponding to the subdivision of the interpretant, as proposed by Peirce, into *immediate interpretant {significatio,* whose *res significata* is what Peirce calls the immediate object) and *dynamical interpretant* (*acceptio,* where Hispanus' *aliquid - acceptio pro aliquo* - corresponds to Peirce' dynamical object). In fact, according to Peirce, the immediate interpretant is fixed by use and tradition; it is given through the correct deciphering of the sign itself, through its recognition, "and is ordinarily called the meaning of the sign" (*CP* 4.536). The dynamical interpretant "is the actual effect that the sign, as a sign, *really* determines" *(ibid.*).

4. Appellatio *and the object of the sign*

In the *Tractatus,* to the distinction between the *significatio* and *acceptio* is added that between these two on the one hand, and the *appellatio,* on the other (1972: 197-198). The latter distinction makes a noteworthy contribution to the critique of hypostatization, reification, and mystification of the referent, at the basis of so-called contemporary non-referential semantics. The thesis according to which meaning does not require a referent is based upon a contradictory interpretation of the referent as finding its place outside semiosis, while being, at the same time, something that may be observed and determined in its value of reality. This thesis stands upon reification of the referent, which is considered to be autonomous with respect to the sign, thus supporting the argument in favor of the reciprocal autonomy of meaning and referent. The contrary, however, is the case. The referent is a referent only within semiosis, for that which acts as a referent is decided within the very process itself of semiosis. Identication of the referent in the physical object has often led to the mistaken conclusion that since there are signs which do not refer to things, to physical objects, the referent is not essential to semiosis. In reality, the role of referent may also be carried out by a thought, sentiment or desire, or by an imaginary or fictitious object. Furthermore, the referent of the supposition may be an individual object, as in the expression "this is a dog", but it may also be an object in its generalized aspect, a class, as in the expression "the dog is a quadrupedal animal". This emerges very clearly in the *Tractatus.*

In order to avoid the misunderstanding that a referent, that is, a supposition, necessarily involves the physical existence of that to which the expression refers, Petrus Hispanus distinguished between *significatio* and *suppositio,* on the one hand, and *appellatio,* on the other.

Thus when a term or proposition expresses something non-existent, or when the existence of something non-existent is simulated, this does not imply that the term or proposition does not have a referent or a *suppositio,* but that the *appellatio* is lacking. We have an *appellatio,* in addition to the *signification* and *suppositio,* when the object referred to really exists.

This distinction is analogous to that proposed by Morris in 1938, when he subdivided Ogden and Richard s's referent into the concepts *oidenotatum* and *designatum.* We have a *denotatum* when the sign, with its interpretant (Petrus Hispanus's *significatio),* refers to something that really exists in the terms referred to. If this is not the case, the sign has a *designatum* all the same, but it does not have a *denotatum.* In section X of the *Tractatus* entitled "De Appellationibus", Petrus Hispanus works in the same direction:

> *Appellatio est acceptio termini communis pro re existente. Dico autem "pro existente", quia terminus significans non ens nichil appellat, ut "Cesar" vel "Antichristus" et "chimera" et sic de aliis.*
>
> *Differt autem appellatio a suppositione et a significatione, quia appellatio est tantum de re existente, sed significatio et suppositio tarn re existente quam non existente. Ut "Antichristus" significat Antichristum et supponit pro AntiChristo, sed nichil appellat, "homo" autem significat hominem et de natura sua supponit tarn pro existentibus quam non existentibus et appellat tantum homines existentes. Appellationum. autem alia est termini communis, ut "hominis" alia termini singolaris, ut "Sortis". Terminus singularis idem significat et supponit et appellat, quia, significat rem existentem, ut "Petrus" vel "lohannes"* (1972: 196).
>
> [Naming is the reception of a shared boundary on behalf of an existent thing. I say additionally, "on behalf of an existent", because die term that signifies a non-being names nothing, as, for example, "Caesar" or "Antichrist" and "chimera" and likewise in other cases.
>
> Moreover, naming differs from *suppositio* and *significatio,* because naming is only about an existent, but *significatio* and *suppositio* occur whether the thing exists or not. For example, "Antichrist" signifies the Antichrist and stands for the Antichrist, but names nothing. "Man" also signifies a man and from its own nature stands for both existing and non-existing men, but names only existing men. It is moreover characteristic of naming that one instance ois of a shared term as in the case of "man", whereas another instance is of a singular term as is the case of "Lot". A singular term signifies, stands for, and names the same thing, because it signifies an existent thing, "Peter" or "John", for example.]

Similarly to the notion of *suppositio,* the *appellatio* is also decided in the utterance and within the field of semiosis (which means going beyond what is specifically stated in the *Tractatus,* though perhaps not losing sight of what is implied). To limit our attention to isolated terms, it is not clear why in the passage quoted above "Caesar" signifies and supposes, but does not have appellation, while *"Petrus"* signifies, supposes, and does have appellation. We believe the answer is that the term *''Caesar"* is used in a context in which the referent no longer exists, while *"Petrus"* is used to refer to a real person who still exists. In this sense, the concept of the existence of referents (Morris' *designata*), on the basis of which we decide

whether a term has appellation (Morris' *denotatum),* is relative to the mode of intending existence in the actual linguistic and situational context.

Thus"Caesar" used today to refer to the person killed on the Ides of March of 44 B.C. does not have *appellatio,* though it does have signification and supposition. On the other hand, if referred to one of my colleagues, it has an appellative function similarly to "Caesar" in the context of *De Bello gallico.* Centaurs exist in Greek mythology, while they do not exist in zoology, so that the term "centaur" has appellation (and may or may not have a *denotatum* as intended by Morris) depending upon the various contexts of semiosis. In the Odyssey, "Ulysses" *appellat,* while it has no corresponding *denotatum* from the historical point of view. Certain expressions may have an appellative function and therefore a *denotatum,* while others do not, within the same ideational context (for example, in a novel or a fable), even if, with respect to the concept of existence in the empirical sense, none of them have either appellation or denotation. The well known utterance examined by English analytical philosophers, "The present King of France does not exist", may be considered to be simultaneously both true and contradictory, for it denies the existence of that to which it refers. In fact, this utterance has supposition and, therefore, a referent about which a true judgment may be made, though it is devoid of appellation as is explicitly stated on its denying the existence of its own referent: the distinction between appellation and supposition clears up the contradiction that this utterance would seem to present. For example, the same utterance pronounced during the reign of Louis XIV would be false, while being endowed simultaneously with both appellation and supposition.

5. *Autonomy of logic and pragmatism*

Apart from any points of contact between the *Tractatus* and Peirce's sign theory, the logic of both Petrus Hispanus and Lambert D'Auxerre is oriented toward the dialectics of probability; that is, toward a view of dialectics as the art of reaching probable opinions. It is exactly this line of development that makes the *Tractatus* emerge as a method in orientation in language and reasoning, a method which to some extent becomes autonomous with respect to ontological assumptions (see the distinction between the logical and the natural-ontological viewpoints in the *Tractatus:* 6,12), in spite of reference, for example, to the hierarchization of species and genera as represented in Porphyry's Tree (in comparison to which the *Tractatus* presents noteworthy innovations). As to the ontological, metaphysical foundations of logic, Peirce observes that:

> Some of the most celebrated logics, however, are written from the points of view of metaphysical sects. The *Organon* of Aristotle, the title which the collection of his logical treatises received, probably at the hands of

> Andronicus, the Rhodian who put them together about 60 B.C., opens with a metaphysical book, the Categories or Predicaments, although in that same treatise Aristotle evidently bases the metaphysics upon a grammatical-logical analysis of the Greek sentence. To this book was usually prefixed the treatise of Porphyry on the Predicables. About half the scholastics' works on logic are commentaries on the collection of books so formed. These works therefore base logic on metaphysics to some extent (*CP* 2.37).

Peirce proposed a pragmatic interpretation of logical terms. "Term" derives from "terminus" as employed by Boethius. A categorical proposition is usually said to have three terms, a subject, a predicate and a copula (Abelard). Peirce questioned this tripartition, stressing that "term" referred to the subject or predicate stands for "extreme", which is a translation of the Greek term *"opos";* this, however, does not justify designation of *copula* as a term. On the contrary, Peirce considered the copula *is* as an inseparable part of class-names. He worked with reference to many languages in order to avoid mistaking the characteristics of one particular language for the logical characteristics of thought-language in general. Such equivocation is obvious, for example, when it is stated that the copula is implicit in the Russian equivalent of the English proposition, "Snow is white". In reality, the Russian language does not have a copula so that "white" added to snow has predicative value in itself. Wittgenstein also criticized this glottocentric orientation in his *Philosophical Investigations* from which the above example is drawn. Analogously, Petrus Hispanus did not consider the presence or absence of the copula as being necessary. In fact, he realized that parts of speech *(oratio)* could not be consideredin isolation and that the distinction between *oratio perfecta* and *oratio imperfecta* did not simply depend upon the presence or absence of the copula, but upon the overall effect provoked by discourse upon the mind of the listener:

> *"Oratio perfecta est que perfectum general sensum in animo auditoris, ut 'homo est albus'; imperfecta oratio est que imperfectum general sensum in animo auditoris ut 'homo albus'"* (1972: 3).
>
> [Complete speech is that which produces a complete meaning in the mind of the hearer, and in "the man is white"; incomplete speech is that which produces incomplete meaning in the mind of the hearer, as in "the white man"].

On dealing with the question as to whether or not it is useful to consider the proposition as being tripartite (subject, predicate, copula), Peirce refuted hypostatizations of logical categories in his attempt to formulate general rules independently from the characteristics of any one given language. On this point, we could maintain that Peirce worked in a perspective similar to that of Rossi-Landi (1961) with his theory of *common speech.* In other words, Peirce too worked for the construction of a linguistic model independent of any one given language and such as to respond to the common characteristics shared by the majority of languages. With reference to the problem of the copula as a *term,* Peirce stated the following:

> It happens to be true that in the overwhelming majority of languages there are no general class names and adjectives that are not conceived as parts of some verb (even when there really is no such verb) and consequently nothing like a copula is required in forming sentences in such languages (*CP* 2.328).

And he continued:

> The author [that is, Peirce] (though with no pretension to being a linguist), has fumbled the grammars of many languages in the search for a language constructed at all in the way in which the logicians go out of their way to teach that all men think (for even if they do so, that has really nothing to do with logic). The only such tongue that he has succeeded in finding is the Basque, which seems to have but two or three verbs, all the other principal words being conceived as nouns. Every language must have proper names; and there is no verb wrapped up in a proper name. Therefore, there would seem to be a direct suggestion there of a true common noun or adjective. But, notwithstanding that suggestion, almost every family of man thinks of general words as parts of verbs. This seems to refute the logicians' psychology (*ibid*.).

Peirce's pragmatic interpretation of the subject and predicate led to his insistence upon the necessity of a connection called Syntax, rather than upon the copula, that is, a linguistic element acting as a connective between the subject and predicate. He pointed out that affirmation of the necessity of the copula was relevant to Medieval Latin which did not foresee omission of the verb *"est",* by contrast with Greek, Classical Latin and many languages today: "But it is plain that one does not escape the need of a Syntax by regarding the copula as a third part of the proposition; and it is simpler to say that it is merely the accidental form that syntax may take" (*CP* 2.319).

Similarly, Petrus Hispanus viewed substantivity and adjectivity as functional forms of the subject and predicate. Substantivity and adjectivity (expressed by nouns and adjectives or verbs) are the presuppositions *of acceptio* in the respective forms of the *suppposition* and *copulation* and in such forms *acceptio* is the presupposition of the subject and predicate forms proper to the proposition (the subject generally presupposes the *suppositio,* the predicate the *copulatio)*. All this emerges directly and indirectly in the *Tractatus* and, furthermore, finds expression in Husserl (1948) in the following terms:

> *Genauer besehen ist schon in jedem einfachsten pradikativen Urteil eine doppelte Formung vollzogen. Die Glieder des Urteilssatzes haben nicht nur die syntaktische Formung als Subjekt, Pradikat usw als Funktionsformen, die ihnen als Gliedern des Satzes zukommen, sondern sie haben darunter liegend noch eine andere Art Formung, die Kernformen: das Subjekt hat die Kernform der Substantivitat, im Pradikat steht die Bestimmung p in der Kernform der Adjektivitat.* (Husserl 1948:247-8)

> [Examined more closely, it is clear that in even the simplest predicative judgment, a double formation is carried out. The members of a statement of judgment have not only the syntactical formation as subject, predicate, etc., as functional forms, which belong as members of the statement, but they have underlying these another kind of formation, the core forms: the subject has the core-form of substantively; in the predicate, the determination p is in the core-form of adjectivity.]

Peirce frequently referred to the Medieval tradition in logic in his criticism of modern logic, not only at the level of conceptions, but also of terminology. In fact, he demonstrated the

validity of the use of terms and their accepted meanings in Medieval logic by comparison with certain modern terminological proposals. Let us remember, for example, his comments concerning John Stuart Mill's use of "connote" and "connotation" with respect to the more ancient "signify" and "signification": "But signify has been in uninterrupted use in this sense since the twelfth century, when John of Salisbury spoke of 'quod fere in omnium ore celebre est aliud scilicet esse appellativa significant'" (*CP* 2.434).

On the basis of our study as it has been conducted so far, we are now in a position to conclude that Peirce attributed special importance to Medieval logic which, indeed, he mastered and competently cited. A great deal more has yet to be said concerning the relation between Peirce and Medieval semiotics, and we propose that such work be continued in future research beyond the scope of our present chapter.

4.

Symbol, Alterity and Abduction

by Augusto Ponzio

1. Symbol and Alterity; 2. Indexicality and Iconicity as Degeneracy of the Symbol; 3. Logic and Dia-Logic; 4. Orience and Alterity; 5. From Equivalence to Displacement: Icons and Alterity

1. *Symbol and Alterity*

One of the fundamental problems of the sign is that of establishing in what way we might reconcile similarity and difference, stability and transformation, uniqueness and polysemy, identity and alterity. The symbolic universe is not stable, uniform and monolithic. It is made of deviations, differences, deferments and *renvois,* displacements and transformations. In other words, we need to explain in what way alterity is able to infiltrate the very sphere of the symbolic. It is precisely the semiotics of Peirce that offers a possible solution to the problem, especially because in his theorizations the symbol, the sign *par excellence,* is such because alterity and identity co-exist in it. In the Peircean conception of the symbol, alterity is constitutive of the very identity of the sign. By taking Peirce's viewpoint into consideration we are led to the awareness that the problem of the connection between identity and alterity in the sign is not a problem of semiotics alone but also concerns the theory of knowledge. It is not, in fact, incidental that Peircean semiotics is definable as cognitive semiotics. In Peirce this problem directly concerns logic which as a theory of argumentation also involves the problem of dialogue.

Abduction belongs to the sphere of the *symbolic* as intended by Peirce, that is, it concerns the *transuasional:* the symbol is a transuasional sign because it signifies through the mediation of another sign which functions as an interprétant1 (see *CP* 2.92. Unless otherwise stated, the numbers in brackets in this chapter refer to *Collected Papers,* by C. S. Peirce)**.** The symbol is a sign seen in its dependence on a third element, the interprétant, as compared to the two-way relation constituted by the sign and that to which it refers, that is, the object. This triple relation exists by virtue of a law, a convention, an arbitrary decision. The symbol itself is a general type of law, that is to say, it is a *Legisign* and as such acts through a *Replica.* Not only the symbol,

but also the object to which it refers is of a general nature (see *CP* 2.249).

However, identity of the law, its self-sufficiency and repetitiveness, is continually threatened. Unlike the semiotics of Saussurean derivation it is not founded on a code, a system of conventionally established modalities of correlation between elements at the level of expression and those at the level of content. The symbol refers to the object in some particular respect or quality through a thought that interprets it, that is to say, through a *sign which functions as an interprétant* and which in turn is a sign related to an object through the mediation of another interprétant, and so forth *ad infinitum.*

> Anything which determines something else (its *interprétant)* to refer to an object to which itself refers *(its object*) in the same way, the interprétant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum.* [. . .] If the series of successive interprétants comes to an end, the sign is thereby rendered imperfect, at least (*CP* 2.303).

This endless succession of interprétants, this interminable process of deferment and *renvoi* is the foundation of the law of the symbol, that is to say, that which *zu Grunde gehet* (Ponzio 1990: 2.11.1).

Peirce makes the overcoming of the myth of the ontological guarantee of the code possible by proposing a semiotic conception according to which *identity* of the law of the symbol is continually exposed to *alterity* of the interprétant and object. At the same time all the difficulties that the myth of the ontological guarantee of the code involve concerning the explanation of the communication process are overcome. A double exclusion associated with this myth is also annulled: that is, the exclusion of the subjectivity of the interpretant and objectivity. In fact, identity of the law of the symbol is such in Peirce merely on the basis of creative mediation, of "tri-relative" influence [5.484] which impedes closure within a dual and fixed relation in which alterity ultimately merges into identity and the logic of sameness. This instead would happen if to interpret were to mean nought else but to decodify and if the foundation of the symbol were to be given by the code instead of by the interprétant.

Abduction plays a central role in the symbolic and indexical nature of the sign. This is especially true of that which concerns the innovation and enrichment of the interprétant. And all this is due to the iconic character of abduction.

> An originary Argument, or *Abduction,* is an argument which presents facts in its Premiss which present a similarity to the fact stated in the Conclusion, but which could perfectly well be true without the latter being so, much more without its being recognized; so that we are not led to assert the Conclusion positively but are only inclined toward admitting it as representing a fact of which the facts of the Premiss constitute an Icon (*CP* 2.96)

In denoting an object by virtue of a law, the symbol involves indexicality within its very own universe given that it is determined by existent instances in that universe:

> There must, therefore, be existent instances of what the Symbol denotes, although we must here understand by "existent," existent in the possibly imaginary universe to which the Symbol refers. The Symbol will indirectly, through association or some other law, be affected by those instances; *and thus the Symbol will involve a sort of Index, although an Index of a peculiar kind.* It will not, however, be by any means true that the slight effect upon the Symbo of those instances accounts for the significant character of the Symbol (2.249, the italics are my own).

Although it determines the relation of the symbol to its object (Dynamical Object), and its content (Immediate Object), the interprétant does not ***per se*** permit identification of its instances. In this case too, identity involves alterity. Such alterity, however, is entirely internal to one and the same system whether meaning is expressed in a more analytic form by means of other expressions (endolinguistic translation as intended by Jakobson) within the same system, or meaning is translated (interlinguistic translation) into the expressive elements of another system.

However, not even in these relations of substitution through which the sign develops its self-identity, is identity at all fixed and definitive. It is obtained rather at the price of a relative indeterminacy and instabilityof the sign which must appear alien in order to be *this sign here***.** The identification of a sign cannot be developed if not by exhibiting another sign and cannot be grasped if not as the reflection in the mirror of another sign: therefore, it also contains all the deformations that such a play of mirrors involves.

But, as previously mentioned, the interprétant does not come into play for identification alone. The relation to the interprétant also makes the surpassing of identification possible so that identification becomes *comprehension* of actual sense. The comprehension of contextual, actual sense does not merely consist in the recognition of elements that constantly repeat themselves without change. Here, too, we have a dialectic unit of self-identity and alterity. The actual sense of a sign consists in something more than what may be merely added to elements so that they may be recognized.

Bakhtin (VoloSinov 1929) insisted on the dialectic nature of the relation between these two aspects of the sign. He labelled them with the terms "meaning" (all those properties of the sign that are reproducible, stable and subject to the process of identification), and "theme" (the new aspects of the sign requiring active comprehension, a response, a viewpoint, and are connected to a specific semiosic situation). The distinction between "meaning" and "theme" corresponds to the subdivision of the interprétant, as proposed by Peirce, into the *immediate interprétant* and *dynamical interprétant.* The immediate interprétant *is fixed by use* and

tradition, it is given by the correct deciphering of the sign itself, by its recognition, "and is ordinarily called the *meaning* of the sign" (4.536). The dynamical interprétant "is the *actual* effect which *the Sign,* as a Sign, really determines" *(ibid,* the italics are my own) (see 2.1.2 and 2.11.1, this volume). Considered in relation to both the dynamical interprétant and dynamical object, that is to say, in relation to "the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation" *(ibid.*), the sign can by no means be repetetive. Each time it is used we have a new semiotical act. This implies a continual renewal of the sign so that the corresponding interprétant is never fixed and established. All this is connected to the conception of the hypothetical and approximative nature of knowledge which underlies Peirce's "cognitive semiotics".

2. *Indexicality and Iconicity as Degeneracy of the Symbol*

Let us think a moment about the Peircean conception of the relation between the symbol, icon, and index which has very often been misunderstood, (a significant example may be found in the exposition and relative criticism of Peirce's theories in the volume by Adam Schaff entitled, *Introduction to Semantics).* This has come about because the symbol, icon and index were thought to denote three clearly distinguished and different types of sign, each with characteristics so specific as to exclude the other two. Now, first of all, signs which are exclusively symbols, icons or indices do not exist in the real world. Secondly, and what most interests us here, in the theory of Peirce the symbol is a mere abstraction. It is never conceived as existing as a pure symbol but is always more or less mixed with iconicity and indexicality, or to say it with Peirce, it is always more or less degenerate. This implies, therefore, that more than being signs in their own right, the icon and index represent different levels of degeneracy of the symbol.

The symbol is not a symbol alone; it almost always assumes some of the characteristics of either the icon or index. The symbol can be represented iconically as a body in a state of unstable equilibrium in which the stabilizing symbolic force is counteracted by the iconic and indexical forces. But this image establishes a relation of contrast between symbol, index and icon when, in fact, they are not distinct, nor are they in a relation of opposition. Otherwise we would have with respect to the symbol, for example, signs that are purely icons or indices and not contemporaneously symbols, or symbols with no trace of iconicity or indexicality. Perhaps the image that best accounts for the relation of the symbol to the index and icon is that of a filigreed transparence with uneven traces of iconicity and indexicality as opposed to pure

transparence. Indexicality is at the core of the symbol for the very reason that the symbol depends upon the interpretant as a result of its relation to the object. This is what makes a sign a symbol. This means that Transuasion, which characterizes the symbol making it a transuasional sign, is considered in its obsistent aspect (see *CP* 2.92), and that the index is an obsistent sign. On the other hand, as already seen above, in so far as it is determined by the instances of what it denotes and being a general type of law, the symbol entails indexicality.

In the sign considered as a symbol, identity hinges upon alterity of the sign which is determined by the mediation of the interprétant so that, insofar as it is a symbol, "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (*CP* 8.332). But this is true because the sign is not a symbol alone, or better still, the very fact of its being a symbol involves iconicity and indexicality for the reason that thirdness, the mode of existence of the symbol, presupposes firstness and secondness or originality and obsistence, the ways of being of the icon and index respectively.

Considered from the point of view of its relation to the object, the sign is a symbol insofar as it involves the mediation of an interprétant; from the point of view of its relation to the interprétant, the sign-symbol is an Argument. This is true if the sign-symbol distinctly represents the interpretant which it determines as its Conclusion through a proposition that forms its Premiss, or more generally its premisses (see *CP* 2.95). Depending on the type of sign relation that comes to be established in the argument between the premiss and conclusion, three kinds of arguments are possible: Deduction, Induction and Abduction. Though differentiated, all three *belong to the sphere of the symbolic* and are therefore of a transuasional nature. For this reason Peirce used the term Transuasional logic to indicate the doctrine of the general conditions of determination of the interpretant (the conclusion) through propositions acting as premisses (see *CP* 2.93). But three types of arguments are possible because they do not belong to the sphere of the symbolic alone. This implies that not only the category of *Transuasion* comes into play but also that of *Originality* and *Obsistence* (see *CP* 2.84-2.96).

In Peirce, the term Symbol indicates the genuine Sign obtained *by abstracting* from the two levels of "degeneracy" of the sign. These are: the minor level - that of the Index; and the major level - that of the Icon. In the Symbol or genuine sign, signification is dependent upon the relation to the interprétant, whereas in the index and icon the capacity to signify is relatively autonomous with respect to the relation to the interprétant (see *CP* 2.92).

By virtue of the relation between icon, index and symbol, which is neither of autonomy and indifference nor of opposition, but rather of reciprocal implication, the sign is at the same time both identical to itself, and other. The relation of implication has different weightings

according to whether the iconic, symbolic or indexical aspect dominates and this is determined by the type of semiosis in course. (For criticism in a Peircean perspective of the conception of the sign as similarity, equation and identification, see Eco 1981a: 642 and 663-664). All signs are symbols given that they signify through the mediation of an interprétant, but it is precisely because they do so that they are not symbols alone. The overlapping of symbols, indices and icons is such in the semiotics of Peirce that if the symbol were to be of purely symbolic nature, the relation between the premiss and the conclusion in the argument would paradoxically be indexical and not symbolic: it would not, in fact, give rise to a transuasive argument or induction. Among other things, the latter presupposes a hypothesis resulting from a preceding abduction which implies iconicity (see *CP* 2.96). Let us suppose that the relation between the conclusion and premiss is of a purely analytical type thus remaining wholly within the symbolic universe, the conventional/arbitrary, the Law; let us suppose, that is, that there is a mere relation of identity between the symbol and interprétant. In such a case the relation between the conclusion and premiss would be of deduction and as a constrictive argument it would have the character of indexicality.

From what has been said so far, the reciprocal complicity between the symbol, icon and index is evident. These three different shades of the sign are in their turn implicated in the cognitive process. This means that they are at the same time categories of both logic and semiotics. This is of importance to that which concerns the character of the Argument and to the role of the icon in the argument of the abductive type (cf. also Ponzio 1990: section 2.11.2, this volume).

3. *Logic and Dia-Logic*

Between the sign and the interprétant the relation is not of equality, similarity, reduction of the differences, of ultimate equivalences, or of substitution of the identical with the identical (see Eco 1981: 663). On the contrary, there is a relation of reciprocal alterity which implies that the sign and interprétant are not to be viewed within a monologic framework: their rapport is *dialogic.* Such a relation is internal to the sign since the interprétant is basic to the sign function. Furthermore, given that the interpretant, as a sign, refers to another interpretant, and that the sign function is thirdness — a triadic relation between the sign, interpreting thought and object (which as the immediate object refers dialectically to the dynamical object), not only are the dialogic voices internal to the sign, but the dialogue itself is *polysémie* and *open;* it is not univocally orientated towards a *single* conclusion.

Given the polyphonic structure of dialogue constitutive of and internal to the sign, alterity, in Peirce, cannot be conceived as an accessory, as something external or mechanically opposed to identity, to subjectivity, or to the interpreting thought. Alterity is essential to the constitution of subjective identity, it is the internal condition, the only possible mode of existence of subjectivity. Therefore, the relation with the other self is by no means different from that with internal alterity. By the latter we mean the multiple others in dialogue within the single individual continually experienced by the self and with which the self dialectically co-exists and increases (or decreases). Cases of "double and multiple personality", says Peirce, "make quite manifest [. . .] that personality is some kind of coordination or connection of ideas." The word coordination implies "a teleological harmony in ideas, and in the case of personality this teleology is more than a mere purposive pursuit of a predeterminate end; it is a developmental teleology [. . .]. A general idea, living and conscious now, it is already determinative of acts in the future to an extent to which it is not now conscious" (*CP* 6.155-156).

Only rarely did Peirce directly examine the so-called "problem of the other", that is, the problem concerning both the possibility of experiencing other selves separate from the self who actually poses the problem, and the possibility of interpersonal communication. This is because Peirce continually dealt with this problem implicitly in his conception of the relation sign/interpretant, and found a solution in characterizing this relation as one of alterity. On those rare occasions when Peirce did directly examine the "problem of the other", it was to affirm that there is absolutely no ontological or metaphysical bias in favour of thoughts or feelings that the self calls "mine". Further, he claimed that experience of the other self does not present a more complex problem than that relative to the fact that specific interprétants are recognized as "mine"; those through which "I" become conscious of myself. Such interprétants permit self-consciousness and are related to the signs that they interpret by alterity.

> The recognition by one person of another's personality takes place by means to some extent identical with the means by which he is conscious of his own personality. The idea of the second personality, which is as much as to say that second personality itself enters within the field of direct consciousness of the first person, and is as immediately perceived as his ego, though less strongly. At the same time, the opposition between the two persons is perceived, so that the externality of the second is recognized.

While the interprétant of a sign can in general be actual or potential the argument aims at determining the interprétant, its conclusion, in a precise and programmed fashion. In the argument, the sign or more exactly the symbol (and given its degeneracy, the other signs as well) directly encounters its interprétant. This relation of alterity, implicit and virtual in the sign in general but in this case explicit and actualized might lead us to represent the Argument as

divided (a division between premiss and conclusion) between the two participators of a dialogue.

Now, in the case of the Obsistent Argument or Deduction, both speakers are *compelled* (see *CP* 2.96) to acknowledge that the facts asserted in the premisses by both or only one of the speakers could not obtain if the fact stated in the conclusion did not exist. On the other hand, in the Originary Argument or Abduction, and in the Transuasive Argument or Induction, speakers *can only be inclined* towards admitting that the conclusion — which as the *rule* is drawn from the case and result (induction), or as the *case* is drawn from the rule and result (abduction) (see *CP* 2.619-631) — is true, given that the speakers are in a position to accept the premisses without having to accept the conclusion also.

This division of the Argument into parts so that each is supported by a subject, on the one hand, accounts for the difference between a *proposition,* a sign for which no-one makes himself responsible, and an *assertion* for which *someone* makes himself responsible for the truth of a proposition through the *judgement* which is precisely the act wherewith one resolves to adhere to a proposition (see Peirce 1902: 5-15). On the other hand, the dialogic division between the parts enables us to take into account the level of dialogic complexity, that is, of alterity, differentiation, distance and novelty that comes to be established in the argument between the sign and the interprétant that it represents. It is not incidental that Peirce should have used the term *Speculative Rhetoric* to designate transuasional logic (see *CP* 2.93), the doctrine of the general conditions whereby symbols and other signs refer to and determine the interprétants. In fact, the term Rhetoric implies reference to the addressee, the interlocutor and recalls such terms as to converse, to argument, to convince and to account for. Furthermore, it represents a "break in the conception of reason and reasoning that originated from Descartes" (Perelman), and therefore alludes to the uncertain, probabalistic, and approximative nature of human knowledge.

Peircean logic is presented as dia-logic. It is closely related to the conception of sign (with its various shades of degeneracy beginning with the genuineness of the symbol) as identity/alterity. The sign,in fact, is actualized by a relation of alterity to the interprétant without which no specific conferral of sense would be possible. The interweaving of iconicity, indexicality and symbolicity involves different levels of dialogue and alterity of the interprétant (conclusion) with respect to the initial propositions of the argument (premisses). However, this is quite independent of the fact that the selves which determine propositions through judgements transforming them into assertions, and which argument among themselves, should be external to each other or part of the same person. We could have a purely formal dialogic

situation with two or more interlocutors between whom, however, there is no effective relation of alterity, or we could achieve a substantially dialogic interaction among the selves of one and the same person.

4. *Orience and Alterity*

a) In deduction the relation to the interprétant is of an indexical type; in induction it is symbolic; in abduction, iconic. In the case of deduction there is no relation of alterity (or at least it exists at a minimal level given that there is always a certain amount of distancing in the deferment and *renvoi* to the interprétant between the two parts of the argument, that is to say, between the premisses and the interpretant-conclusion). Once the premisses have been accepted the conclusion imposes itself making its acceptance compulsory. We are dealing with *obsistence* which characterizes the category of secondness and is typical of the index.

There is secondness and obsistence each time two terms are related to each other in such a way that one term cannot be eliminated without negating the other (*CP* 2.84). Such terms are connected to each other by a relation of dependence and reciprocal imposition.

If such were the relation of the self to the other (for reasons already given it is of no consequence whether this other is intended as being external or internal to the sphere of the single individual) neither of the two would have alterity, nor effectively be other given that their existence would come to depend upon reference one to the other:

'If χ, therefore y'

'If y, therefore x'.

These formulas do not express an effective relation of alterity as it truly exists between the self and the other. With respect to each other, each term is other, each term exists in itself, as Lévinas would say, has meaning in its own right, autonomously from anything else. Each term manifests itself independently from the position that is taken towards it.

Obsistence, which characterizes the category of binarity, does not make alterity possible. An effective relation of alterity is not possiblewhere there is binarity, secondness, and therefore obsistence. Relations of alterity are not possible in a system of binary oppositions where an element exists with its distinctive traits only on the condition that it refers to another element and would be destroyed should thisother element be negated. Alterity goes beyond such a system, it is not part of the Totality, of the sphere of the identical, of the order of discourse. If each self is other, this is because it is not reduced to the meanings, roles, and functions foreseen by a specific code.

> Take, for example, a husband and wife. Here there is nothing but a real twoness; but it constitutes a reaction, in the sense that the husband makes the wife a wife in fact (not merely in some comparing thought); while the wife makes the husband a husband (2.84) (see also section 2.12.4, in Ponzio 1990).

The category of binarity appears in the case of doubt (*duo habeo)* which as such does not imply something: there is no opening therefore towards alterity. This is especially true when by doubt we intend total doubt in the Cartesian sense (see Peirce's criticism of Cartesianism, *CP* 5.265). The category of binarity also appears in negation, similarity, and identity (see *ibid).* Identity does not mean to exist for the self, which, on the contrary, characterizes alterity, but presupposes reference to a second term on which it depends. Individual identity is a "markedly dualistic conception" (2.11.4, this volume).

The two speakers among whom a deductive type of argument is hypothetically divided are connected by a relation of reciprocal dependence and constraint. Despite each having its own identity they are not reciprocally other just like husband and wife, where one cannot exist without the other.

In the deductive argument the premiss determines the conclusion, that is, the precedent determines the consequent with the same force of compulsion with which the past imposes itself upon the present. The conclusion must passively acknowledge the premiss which has already been formulated like a *fait accompli:*

> [. . .] the Conclusion is drawn to recognize that, quite independently of whether it be recognized or not, the facts stated in the premisses are such as could not be if the fact stated in the conclusion were not there; that is to say, the Conclusion is drawn in acknowledgement that the facts stated in the Premiss constitute an Index of the fact which it is thus compelled to acknowledge (*CP* 2.96).

b) In induction, on the other hand, the conclusion is not imposed by the premiss and is susceptible to modification. The value of the facts stated in the Premisses depends on their predictive character. The premisses, therefore, refer to the interprétant (conclusion) on which their meaning depends as well as to their status as assertions and not mere propositions. Thus the first part of the argument, completely orientated as it is towards the second part (the interprétant) is a predominantly symbolic type of sign.

We do not have here the predetermination of one part of the argument by virtue of the other as occurs in deduction. They are to a degree independent of each other in the sense that if the assertion of the premisses is definitely a function of the conclusion, the facts stated could

exist even if the fact stated in the conclusion did not. The category of mediation or thirdness with its characteristic element of Transuasion, dominates (see *CP* 2.86).

Given that in induction there is no determination of the consequent by the precedent, as occurs on the contrary in deduction, it is not so much memory and the past that has weight in the argument, as prediction, expectation and orientation towards the future. The premiss predisposes the interprétant, it feeds the conclusion and is its foil. There is an adjustment to the future in the sense that the formulation of the premisses whatever they be, and the very statement of the facts could not have been, had a third element — prediction — not been formulated.

Contrary to the deductive argument dominated by the category of obsistence, the transuasive argument or induction, by virtue of its opening towards the future, of the importance attached to reference to the interprétant, and of the lack of a relation of mechanical dependence of the conclusion upon the premisses, offers us the possibility of broadening our beliefs. Despite this, however, the inductive argument is merely repetitive and quantitative, given that its sphere of validity remains that of the fact, that is, of the totality of facts on whose basis alone can it infer the future.

As in deduction, the inductive process is unilinear and moves in a precise order of succession from the point of departure to the point of arrival without interruption, reversal or retroaction as opposed to abduction which, as we will see, moves backwards from the consequent to the antecedent. Because of the role played by the category of mediation, we might compare induction to the process of natural evolution (see *CP* 2.86). We might also say that it is similar to a narrative process which develops the unitary story of an ego or single individual.

Furthermore, relations in both the inductive and deductive arguments (similarly to those of egological identity which obviously cannot be reduced to the tautology self-self), are relations of the *subject-object* type. They are, without doubt, relations in which the subject is determined by the object and is projected towards an end that displaces it and makes it move onwards. Such a subject, however, does continually reaffirm its own subjective identity as these determinations and objectives take their place in the univocous and unilinear process of its constitution. We are not dealing, therefore, with intersubjective relations, or with relations of effective alterity (yet again here intended as being external as much as internal to the same person).

It is the connection of induction to abduction, mediated in scientific research by the experiment, which allows a qualitative broadening, enrichment and renewal of knowledge.

c) In abduction the relation between the Premiss and Conclusion is one of similarity: the facts in the premiss form an icon of those facts stated in the conclusion. *Renvoi* to the interprétant is of an iconic type. Furthermore, whatever is stated in the premisses is independent of the conclusion in the sense that its validity is independent of the value of truth of the conclusion (see also section 1.1, in Ponzio 1990).

The category of Originality dominates in abduction, "*Originality* is being such as that being is, regardless of aught else" (see *CP* 2.89). It is precisely this capacity of being regardless of anything else that constitutes alterity. The other is other because of its being *Kaâ 'αύτό,* that is, independently of reference to a viewpoint, a function, an objective, a relation of distinction or opposition, or of insertion into a unitary story. For this reason, the *other* is a *surplus* external to the totality, to the totality of the Self and Sameness (see Lévinas, *cit.)* which in so far as being a unity, a teleological organization, is in the order of binarity and mediation (cf. section 2.10.4, in Ponzio 1990).

Firstness, or Orience, or Originality is "something *which is what it is without reference to anything else* within it or without it, regardless of all force and of all reason" (*CP* 2.85). For this reason it cannot be incorporated by the totality, but on the contrary stimulates a breach, a renewal, the reopening and reorganization of a totality which is never definitively concluded and systematized.

All knowledge, totality, binarity and mediation, all cognition as adjustment to objects, presuppose orience, that is, alterity. The latter being the lack of adjustment *par excellence,* the surpassing of the objectifying thought, of the subject/object, and means/end relation.

In its more innovative aspects at the basis of the abductive process, abduction ventures beyong the limits of a defined totality without the guarantee of return or reconciliation to the principles that exist in it. There is a movement towards alterity which more than in terms of intentionality (the latter belongs to objectivization and the relation subject/object) or of need, we might express as desire: desire of the absolute other. The Peircean conception of the interminable deferment and *renvoi* of interprétants on which the sign flourishes and through which the "dynamical object" manifests itself, alludes to this nonfinalized and disinterested movement towards alterity. Peirce, in fact, established an explicit relation between meaning and desire: if meaning characterizes a sign, and if meaning belongs to the family of value, it is connected to desire through the relation between value and desirability (see Peirce 1902: 26ff.).

Given that the process of abduction is present in every moment of psychic life including sensation, the inherent opening to alterity is the foundation of all totalizing operations. However this opening is not satisfied, concluded or exhausted in such operations: it does not

find its own justification in them. Furthermore, the opening to alterity is relative to the different levels of freedom and creativity in abductive "orience" (for a typology of abduction, see Bonfantini and Proni 1980: 264-265 and Eco 1981:10-11).

At the higher levels of abductive creativity an effective dialogic relation is established between the parts of the argument. This is due to two main factors: the interprétant is relatively independent of the premiss; and the remainder of the argument contains *within itself* relations of alterity with respect to the interprétant (the conclusion) which are determined by the level of novelty in the abductive conclusion.

We make inferences from case through interpretation on the basis of a rule and a datum or result. The rule, therefore, is not given antecedently to and outside the processsof interpretation — there are no pre-established rules that orientate the relation between the parts of the argument uni-directionally. The conclusion is the interprétant of the statement that describes a certain datum or result, and from this interpretation springs the law or general principle with respect to which the interprétant is determined. The thought-sign (the minor premiss) and the thought-interpretant are connected by a dialogic relation which is not pre-determined by the pre-dialogic selection of a law. Retroaction of the interpretant on the premiss to the point that interpretation determines the major premiss is precisely what causes us to define this type of reasoning as *retroduction* or *abduction.*

At the higher levels of creativity and abductive innovation, the relation of alterity that comes to be established between the parts of this kind of argument allows us to characterize the dialogic relation between these parts as:

1) a *dialogue of inquiry and constriction,* here we have planning, the determination of a specific field of investigation and orientation towards the search for a conclusion; or as

2) a *dialogue of inquiry and questioning* in which though the intention of investigation remains, the explorative sense of adventure is pushed to an extreme. In this case, similarly to philosophic-convivial conversation (see Bonfantini & Ponzio, 1982), icons, images, models and metaphors do not have a purely functional value in the search for truth.

By virtue of its dialogic opening, abductive reasoning can push the sense of exploration to the point of making the relation between the parts of the argument independent of immediately productive, transformative and practical objectives so as to favour the moment of contemplation, projectual imagination, and understanding (see Bonfantini "Dalla produzione all' interpretazione del senso", Bonfantini 1981: 30-31).

5. *From Equivalence to Displacement: Icons and Alterity*

We have abductions of the following kind: "Tom is a person of male sex who has never been married" = "Tom is a bachelor": in fact, "bachelor" = "a person of male sex who has never been married"; as we can see, this kind of abduction does not involve an effective development in thought with respect to what is stated in the Premiss.

We could describe them as *low* abductions: they are characterized by the actualization of exchange and equivalence between the premiss and interpretant-conclusion.

We also have, however, what we could call *high* abductions in which there is no equivalence between the interprétant and the datum or result to which it is connected: in such cases the interprétant says something more with respect to the datum or result, it gives more than what the datum offers. Thus, the interprétant runs risks, and sometimes evaluates the datum in the light of a general principle invented *ex novo*. A principle, that is, to which the datum is not automatically connected. The interprétant risks an investment without exchange, a *dépense* (as intended by Bataille), it places itself in a position which is not at all economical in the sense that there is an investment with no return, that is, without a counterpart. This happens, for example, in scientific reasoning each time abductions that revolutionizeconceptions relative to a specific field of knowledge are produced.

Together with Peirce, we might call the relation that comes to be established between the sign and the interprétant in such abductions, an agapastic relation (6.302). The premiss is connected to the conclusion by a movement of affinity or attraction stronger and more passionate than any calculation of convenience, fair exchange, correspondence and equivalence. Platonically we could say that, in this case, knowledge is animated by *Eros* which sets aside all prudence and convenience thus risking exposure even when uncertain of finding support. This does not mean that the relation between sign and interprétant is haphazard. The deferment and *renvoi* between sign and interpretant is neither a question of chance (tychism) nor of mechanical necessity (anancism): we are dealing, rather, with a movement of evolutionary development through creative love (agapism). We also need to add, however, that just as there is no reciprocal exclusion between the symbol, icon and index, an agapastic evolutionary process excludes neither chance (tychasm) nor necessity (anancasm). The latter are degenerate forms of agapasm just as the icon and index are degenerate forms of the symbol. Tychasm and anancasm are therefore to be considered as two degenerate expressions of the very agapastic relation (*CP* 6.303).

The relation between the sign and interprétant in high abductions contradicts the unconditional validity of the model of economic exchange and its extension to all human

activity. This also implies moving away from Saussurean semiotics or better still, from a particular way of interpreting it in which both the relation between *signifiant* and *signifié* and that among signs in the system of the *langue* (linguistic value) are led back to the model of economic exchange. It is not incidental that Saussure, in developing his linguistic theory, should refer to the marginalistic economy of Walras and Pareto (see Ponzio 1981: 95f.).

As far back as 1893, Peirce argued that

> The nineteenth century is now fast sinking into the grave, and we all begin to review its doings and to think what character it is destined to bear as compared with other centuries in the minds of future historians. It will be called, I guess, the Economical Century; for political economy has more direct relations with all the branches of its activity than has any other science. [...]. But the study of doctrines, themselves true, will often temporarily encourage generalizations extremely false, as the study of physics has encouraged necessitarianism (*CP* 6.290).

In the *renvoi* and deferment between the sign and the interprétant which forms the thought process, we have, in abduction, signs thatì though related do not follow on mechanically one from the other, nor do they correlate perfectly: what we do have is a *surplus* which stimulates the qualitative amplification, modification and revision of the totality with which at a certain point thought identifies. The iconicity of abduction consists in establishing a relation between that which originally and naturally is not related: imaginative representation attempts an approach to that which is given as *other* in order to lead it back to a relation of similarity.

Similarity is rightly listed by Peirce together with all that we associate with the category of obsistence; in fact, originality or firstness is surpassed by secondness or obsistence when whatever exists autonomously is related to something else. To have an understanding of alterity in a certain sense means to exceed it. The innovating, creative, displacing capacity of abduction is not to be found therefore, so much in its exhibiting an image which draws that which seems to evade all constraints nearer, as in its directing itself towards the autonomously other. In the abductive process we run the risk of surpassing the datum, thus developing an interprétant that has *its own alterity and autonomy* in so far as it is not motivated, justifiedor compensated by the object-datum it specifically refers to. Such self-sufficiency of the abductive interprétant, that is, its iconicity and originality presents a challenge, a provocation with regards to the concept of identity and totality. It thus questions even that which seemed settled and definitive, and exhibits an image which can neither be incorporated nor accounted for whether through immediate reference to the fact or datum, or on the basis of a system of preestablished laws. With a logic that goes beyond the logic of exchange and equilibrium, it is possible for an argument to actualize firstness, originality, or alterity in the very core of the symbolic, of the

law, of the transuasional. Although the argument has traces of symbolicity and indexicality, it also has the characteristics of iconic invention whose value "consists in its exhibitioning the features of a state of things regarded as if it were purely imaginary" (*CP* 4.448).

As we can see, the Peircean conception of Sign allows a revision of the traditional concept of the image. In all western thought from Plato to our own times, the image has always been conceived as a means of reduction to sameness. It is in the image that the subject finds and recognizes himself: the image is nought else but the reflection of he who produces it. In this sense, the myth of Narcissus is particularly significant. In the function that Peirce assigns to the image, and that is, to the iconic dimension of the symbol, we find instead a new conception: rather than being confirmation and repetition, a moment of encounter and recognition, the image is *déplacement,* an opening towards alterity, the beginning of a *voyage* in which the return *chez soi* is not guaranteed.

5.

Signs of silence

by Susan Petrilli

1. Silence and Responsive Understanding; 2. Toward a Typology of Silence: Conventionality, Indexicality and Iconicity; 3. Silence, Iconicity and Listening

Hamlet: "He has my dying voice.
So tell him, with th'occurrents, more or less,
Which have solicited – the rest is Silence".
(William Shakespear, *Hamlet*, Act V.ii.1.360)

1. *Silence as responsive understanding*

This lesson deals with the problem of silence understood as the absence of words, silence as it results from suspending the word and not as the consequence of some physiological or psychopathological dysfunction. There exist a series of ordinary modalities of suspending the word sanctioned by social norms, just as there exist modalities of word suspension that belong to the order of the extraordinary, of the exceptional. In this framework, silence is a semiotic phenomenon, a sign. Moreover, we all know just how eloquent silence can be. It ensues that silence is a modality of communication. Silence speaks. And insofar as this is the case, silence always implicates the other. Therefore, as we are presenting the problem, silence is not merely the absence of noise.

The signs of silence are nonverbal signs. At this point, a distinction can be made in relation to nonverbal signs: nonverbal signs resulting from the absence of verbal signs, from suspending the word, on the one hand, and nonverbal signs used as the immediate means of expression, on the other. The absence of words as a result of keeping silent is one thing, the absence of words as a result of using nonverbal signs, for example, gestures, dance, photography, signs relating to proxemics, is another (Hall 1990 [1959]).Word suspension enters the sphere of nonverbal signs and can be classified with nonverbal signs in general: the suspended word is a nonverbal sign. The absence of words or not speaking is eloquent insofar

as it is non-speech. From this point of view, not to speak is very different from all those forms of expression that also feature gesture, body movement: dance, for example, where no spectator-interpreter would dream of searching for the unsaid word, the word unuttered; or the opposite case, as in the language of deaf-mutes where gesture signifies directly and is simply a translation, according to a precise code, of the verbal into the nonverbal.

In silence that speaks, in silence endowed with value of the requalifying type – in certain cases with the value of protest, of dissidence with respect to customary modalities of expression and communication, to common codes, and shared values – also enterwhat Mikhail Bakhtin in "FromNotes Made in 1970–71" describes as "forms of silence" (1986: 134): irony, parody, allegory, parable, etc. In these "forms of silence," the speaker appeals to a listener or reader that is different from the "normal audience", an "exceptional" listener capable of intuitingwhat is implied, what is asserted with emphasis, and in certain cases even courageously, precisely by keeping silent. Here, the implied, the unspoken, is altogether different from that which is commonly understood, from that which is recurrently left unsaid for reasons of "economy" of theword, and also as a way of underlining and substantiating an agreement, shared values, intentions or habits: in these cases to understand implied meaning and behave as a consequence has the same function as responding opportunely to a "password." That which remains implied or unsaid is that which is obvious, easily understood on the basis of common values, previous agreements or shared habits. Silence here carries out the function of confirming, maintaining and preserving, and therefore plays a role which
is altogether different from silence intended to open up to a new way, to a pause for reflection and critique, to a break in the communication routine, whether at the level of a community, a group of varying dimensions, a relation among several people or limited to two only. Just as it plays a role that is completely different from that carried out by the "forms of silence" as understood in Bakhtin's sense, as clearly emerges in irony used with a critical and caustic function towards that which is considered obvious and indisputable, out of the question.

To characterize silence in the modality that interests us here, we must also distinguish it from what merely acts as an interval between words, for reasons of the syntactical order so to say, or to achieve effects of the rhetorical order. Our reference here is to the usual gaps or spaces implemented in both oral and written expression. In orality, in speech, however broad these intervals may be, they are simply a way of marking and articulating discourse, of drawing the listener's attention to the words themselves, to what is uttered explicitly. Intervals are auxiliary to the words that are spoken. As regards gaps in written language, they are the white intervals that normally space out words on a page. Gaps between words as foreseen by the

langue, by the system of language are conventional signs and as such call for interpretation in terms of identification.

However, gaps and intervals can also respond to demands that are altogether different from the ordinary and customary requirements of the syntactical and rhetorical order. They too can belong to the order of the exceptional and be introduced intentionally to create a shift in sense, as in the case of artistic vision (think of the images created by the interplay between words and gaps in the poetic text, for example), whereas in verbal signs their meaning value is enhanced even to high degrees of otherness, dialogism and creativity. But signifying gaps are not limited to the verbal order alone, think of their implementation, for example,in the musical score. Here, too, as in the relation between signs connected with the verbal, gaps in the relation between musical signs can also be endowed with sense that escapes the order of repetition and recognition, of identification, and requires an interpretant of *responsive understanding*, a creative interpretant. Similarly to the silence of signifying gaps in verbal language, in themusical score, silence calls for *responsive listening*.

In any case, silence signifies something and on turning toward the other it carries out a pragmatic function. Silence is always the expression of value, of valuation and like all other valuations it implies a social origin. This is what makes semiotical forms of silence interesting, that is, the relation between signs and values in their mutual implication and inseparability. Consequently, a discussion in the direction of semioethics ought not to neglect the "social forms" of silence, those forms where the absence of the sign, precisely the absence of the word (because gesture, mimicry and other bodily forms of expression can, instead, be present) is apparent, in which the responsive understanding of others, the other's response, even in the form of respecting or of observing silence, is strongly requested.

The signs of silence depend on verbal signs, on language. They are significant in relation to speech, to verbal expression.We have referred to irony as a "form of silence" in Bakhtin's sense. We can also refer to Roland Barthes (1964) and what he claims about nonverbal social signs in general, which too can be applied to the signs of silence: that with respect to verbal expression they are parasitical. The signs of silence are situated in speech like islandswhere speech is suspended and the space of non-speech thus obtained is surrounded by speech and is significant precisely because of this.

In a book of 1961, *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi developed the notion of "common speech." Common speech refers to linguistic practices or operations that recur in different languages, that are common to these languages in spite of the differences among them. Thanks to common speech, it is possible to translate from one

language to another. At this point we could make the claim that common speech has a correlate in "common non-speech." The relation between speech and non-speech concerns human language-in-general, more than just this or that language. Silence is common non-speech which leaves aside linguistic difference to concern human language-in-general rather than specific historico-natural languages.

In his notes of 1970–71, Bakhtin distinguishes between "silence" and "quietude". These terms correspond respectively to the Russian "molčanie" and "tišina":

> Quietude and sound. The perception of sound (against the background of quietude). *Quietude* and *silence* (absence of the word). The pause and the beginning of the word. The disturbance of quietude by sound is mechanistic and physiological (as a condition of perception); the disturbance of silence by the word is personalistic and intelligible: it is an entirely different world. In quietude nothing makes a sound (or something does not make a sound); in silence nobody *speaks* (or somebody does not speak). Silence is possible only in the human world (and only for a person). Of course, both quietude and silence are always relative.
>
> The conditions for perceiving a sound, the conditions for understanding/recognizing a sign, the conditions for intelligent understanding of the word.
>
> Silence – intelligible sound (a word) – and the pause constitute a special logosphere, a unified and continuous structure, an open (unfinalized) totality.
>
> Understanding-recognition of repeated elements of speech (i.e., language) and intelligent understanding of the unrepeatable utterance. Each element of speech is perceived on two planes: on the plance of the repeatability of the language and on the plane of the unrepeatability of the utterance. Throught the utterance, language joins the historical unrepeatability and unfinalized totality of the logosphere.
>
> The word as a means (language) and the word as intelligibility. The intelligizing word belongs to the domain of goals. The word as the final (highest goal). (Bakhtin [1970-1971]: Eng. trans.: 133–134)

Bakhtin distinguishes between the conditions for perceiving a sound, the conditions for identifying a sign and the conditions for responding to the sense of a sign. Quietude is associated to the first two cases, silence to the third, i.e. to the conditions for responding to the sign and understanding sense. Quietude is the condition for perceiving sound and the distinguishing features of language; thus for identifying the repeatable elements of language, those belonging to the system of language on the phonological, syntactical and semantical levels. Instead, silence is the condition for understanding the sense of the utterance, sense in its unrepeatability; silence is the condition for response to the utterance in its singularity.

Quietude is associated with language understood as the *langue* and with its physical (acoustic and physiological) substratum. Silence is associated with the utterance and with sense, with the socio-historical materiality of the sign. Whilst quietude is an expression of the logic of identity, silence is associated with high degrees of alterity and is an expression of the properly human (Ponzio 1993: 138–154). It ensues that silence can reach high degrees of critique and creativity. In terms of interpretive capacity it is associated with responsive understanding and

responsible engagement. According to this analysis, quietude is associated with signality and silence with semioticity.

2. *Toward a typology of silence: conventionality, indexicality and iconicity*

In an essay entitled "Per una tipologia del silenzio" [For a typology of silence], Gian Paolo Caprettini proposes a typology of silence based on Roman Jakobson's communication model (1963). With reference to the factors of verbal communication, he describes silence in relation to the: 1) sender, 2) receiver, 3) message, 4) channel, 5) code; and distinguishes between: 1) emotional, 2) connotative, 3) referential, 4) phatic, and 5) metalinguistic silence. A typology of silence is also well founded on Charles S. Peirce's triadic subdivision of signs into symbols, indexes and icons, which is what I propose to do here.

This approach aims to characterize signs of silence and distinguish among them, more than analyze silence in relation to the communicative process and its various functions. With reference to the description above, signs of silence are distinct from the nonverbal signs of sign language as used by the Native American peoples, for example, or by deaf-mutes, the signs of gestural language-in-general, or any other form of nonverbal behaviour.

In Peirce's description, a sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect. This means that the sign creates an equivalent sign in the mind of the interpreter, or perhaps a more developed sign, namely an interpretant (*CP* 2.228). That the sign stands for something *in some respect* means that it does not refer to the object in its entirety (dynamic object), but only to a part of it (immediate object). Furthermore, a sign subsists for Peirce according to the category of thirdness, in other words, it presupposes a triadic relation between itself, the object and the interpretant thought which is a sign itself. And given that it mediates between the interpretant sign and the object, the sign always plays the role of third party.

Signs subsist in the dialectic between symbolicity, indexicality and iconicity. The symbol is never pure but contains varying degrees of indexicality and iconicity; similarly, as much as a sign can be prevalently indexical or iconic, it will always maintain the characteristics of symbolicity. In other words, the sign to subsist as a sign requires the mediation of an interpretant and recourse to a convention. Following this logic, the icon too contains traces of indexicality and symbolicity even if at low degrees.

Symbolicity refers to the sign's conventional character, to the relation of constriction by convention between a sign and its object, as established on the basis of a code, a law. In the words of Peirce, from a letter dated 12 October 1904, to Victoria Welby: "I define a Symbol as

a sign which is determined by its dynamic object only in the sense that it will be so interpreted. It thus depends either on a convention, a habit, or a natural disposition of its interpretant, or of the field of its interpretant (that of which the interpretant is a determination)" (in Hardwick 1977: 33).

Indexicality refers to the compulsory character of the sign, to the relation of cause and effect, of necessary contiguity between a sign and its object: "I define an Index as a sign determined by its dynamic object by virtue of being in a real relation to it" (1977: 33). Unlike the symbol (where the interpretant determines the object), in the case of the index the relationship between the sign and the object is preexistent with respect to interpretation, as such it is an objective relationship and in fact conditions interpretation. The sign and what it stands for are given together independently of the interpretant. Nonetheless, this does not exclude the need to resort to a convention for recognition of the relation between the sign and the object as a sign relation.

In the case of the icon the relationship between sign and object is one of similarity. As Peirce says: "I define an Icon as a sign which is determined by its dynamic object by virtue of its own internal nature" (1977: 33). The icon is a sign whose signifying capacity is determined by its quality. Icons realize a maximum degree of independence from the object, while the interpretant can occur in a system that may even be distant, identifiable neither through a relation of necessary contiguity (index), nor of conventionality (symbol), but of hypothetical similarity. The iconic relation is characterized by such factors as affinity, attraction, innovation, creativity, and alterity.

That all signs share simultaneously in the character of symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity means, with specific reference verbal signs, that as much as they are characterized by a high degree of conventionality, they also contain traces of iconicity. This has been illustrated among others by Jakobson (1965) and Paolo Valesio (1967). But the point I wish to make here is that the different signs of silence also contain traces of conventionality, indexicality and iconicity, simultaneously, to different degrees and in different combinations. On this basis, a typology of silence can be developed that distinguishes between different types of signs of silence on the basis of the degree of symbolicity, indexicality, or iconicity which characterizes them.

Those signs which obey a convention, a rule sanctioned and accepted by a group or a community are symbols. The different kinds of signs of silence that belong to this group express silence in different ways and share the fact that they do so on the basis of a norm, a convention. Examples include: expressions of respect as observed in religious contexts and

foreseen by given rites, for instance, in certain phases of catholic liturgy; monastic silence – monastic signs comprise both nonverbal signs as distinguished from signs of silence and signs of silence as such (cf. Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1987); furthermore, there is military silence, the silence of mourning, commemorative silence, silence in sign of protest, etc.

The indexical character of signs of silence emerges with the relation of cause and effect and of spatio-temporal contiguity. In such cases, the signs of silence could almost seem to be symptoms – silence as the effect of a fright, surprize, suffocated anger, resentment, etc. Silence in symbolic signs is established on the basis of a convention. Instead, when a question of indexical signs, silence is provoked by an immediate cause and in this sense is inevitable, a mechanical response. Both conventional and indexical silence present a necessity or imposition with the difference that in the first case, necessity ensues from accepting a convention; in the second, it is passively endured as the consequence of an external effect.

Conventional signs of silence are dominated by what Peirce calls the category of thirdness. In this case, the relationship between sign and object is mediated by a convention and depends on an interpretant. Signs of silence of the symbolic type, like all other symbolic signs, are not comprehensible if the interpretant is not familiar.

Instead, indexical signs of silence are dominated by the category of secondness. The sign relates to the object independently of the interpretant. The sign and the object are connected by a relation of cause and effect, of contiguity, as in the case of the relation between fire and smoke, spotty skin and a liver disease, a knock at the door and someone behind it wanting to enter.

Signs of silence of the third type are iconic. In this case, silence is neither related to a system of conventional signs, nor to natural causes. Instead, it is is the expression of individual intentionality: the absence of verbal signs is not the absence of language – for instance, monastic silence; nor is it the absence of phonation – as in the case of silence caused by fear or surprise; rather, silence here is the absence of the word, of discourse, of the utterance with respect to a presence: the speaking subject says nothing and this nothing is pervaded with meaning. In this case too silence presupposes a participative relation with the other (see above, 1.1.). As such, it is invested with the value of an interpretant that responds to a preceding word and insofar as it responds to the preceding word, the word of another, from this point of view too silence speaks and on speaking is dialogic.

3. *Silence, iconicity and listening*

Signs of silence of the iconic type present themselves on their own account, that is, they have their own meaning, their own signifying potential without reference to anything else, regardless of anything else – like the face of the other (Levinas 1961). The iconic sign is eloquent, without the need of resorting to a code or an interpretant, a convention, without depending on conferral of sense by the self. Therefore, the iconic sign of silence is dominated by what Peirce calls the category of firstness. That the signs of silence or, if we prefer, of "taciturnity," are endowed with signifying value on their own account means that they signify regardless of anything else. The iconic sign of silence is dialogic: it expresses a response, a viewpoint, a standpoint with respect to the word of another. Here, silence is not the result of a convention, nor is it the mechanical effect of a cause; quite the contrary, it tells of the interpretive autonomy, of the capacity for self-signification and alterity, of the other's signifying otherness, irreducibility and resistance, the other's signifying materiality.

Silence dominated by iconicity gives itself as an image – the image of otherness. It is endowed with signifying value. As Bakhtin would say, insofar as it indicates an evaluation or standpoint or a relation of consensus, perplexity, conflict, or refusal, etc., the sign of silence is always "accentuated" or "intonated". As Victoria Welby says, "silence is often a most significant declaration":

> [...] for whether positive or negative, excessive or deficient, present or absent even, our words are of moment always. [...] the *word unsaid*, which has often helped or hindered, and in all human ways signified so much. [...] Yet even in silence there is no escape for us either from danger or duty. Silence is often a most significant declaration, and a most misleading one. (Welby 1985a[1911]: 40–41)

As Welby argues, silence allows no escape neither from danger nor duty. But no doubt this is only true of iconic silence, where the subject is exposed in its singularity and freedom, and not of symbolic-conventional or indexical silence. Consequently, iconic silence is associated with responsibility. It is also associated with dialogue, insofar as it gives itself as a response in terms of answering comprehension to another's verbal or nonverbal standpoint, to a provocation, prayer, threat or question, etc. Iconicity, responsibility and dialogue are thus strongly related in the iconic signs of silence.

Bakhtin theorizes the relationship between responsibility, dialogue and alterity in a paper of 1919 entitled "Art and Answerability" (Bakhtin 1919, Eng. trans. : 1–3). The word "answerability" – which involves the concepts of responsivess, responsibility, accountability – conveys the dialogic character of responsibility itself, which in semiotic terms is related to

iconicity. There is an allusion here to the condition of *absolute answerability*, that is, answerability without alibis and limitations, without appealing to rules, guarantees, and boundaries as established by a contract. From this perspective, the self is at last freed from subservience to such values as coherence, unilinearity, oppositional logic, integrity, identity, and from the dogmatism of authority. Consequently, he or she is enabled to give full play to the human capacity for dialogic pluri-availability, answerability, and otherness (Bakhtin 1986: 133–134).

Thus described, the self is endowed with a capacity to transcend the limits of the code and give up any guarantees offered by the law. And this opens to the possibility of developing the correlate capacity for *unconditional listening* to the other.

The eloquence of listening is inevitably associated with the eloquence of silence. And in both cases, given the connection with values, we could appropriately speak of the "ethics of listening" and correlate "ethics of silence," as we are describing it. Following Augusto Ponzio we can propose a "linguistics of silence" ("Filosofia del linguaggio come arte dell'ascolto," in Petrilli and Ponzio 2008: 3–38; see also Petrilli, ed., 2007) as opposed to a "linguistics of quietude" – in his search for appropriate terminology, Ponzio also experiments with the expressions "linguistics of taciturnity" and "linguistics of silence."

In any case, apart from terminological preferences, what we are signalling is the need to elaborate an approach to sign and language studies that is open to the word of the other, that is capable of listening to the word of the other and of thematizing the word of the other, by contrast to those approaches that, instead, unfold in terms of the absence of listening and of hospitality toward the other. The latter is an attitude characteristic of so-called "official linguistics" where the monologism of quietude prevails over the dialogism of silence (Ponzio 2004a, 2010a, b, c, d, 2012b). But true and unhypocritcal encounter among words requires unprejudiced listening and unlimited responsibility as implied by silence understood in the terms outlined in this lesson.

As described by Bakhtin in the passage cited above, quietude is related to the condition for perceiving sound and recognizing the verbal sign, the repeatable elements of discourse (*langue*). Instead, silence is species-specific and is only possible in the human world. It enters the "logosphere" as the condition for understanding the word's sense, the utterance in its singularity, unrepeatability. All elements of discourse are perceived on two levels: the level of repeatability, the sentence, langue which requires quietude as a condition for perception of sound and identification of the repeatable elements of language – phonological, syntactical and semantical; and the level of unrepeatability, the utterance, the text which requires silence and

calls for understanding of sense in its uniqueness, for a response to sense in its singularity, unrepeatability and absolute otherness.

"Official linguistics" (both taxonomical linguistics and generative-transformational linguistics) is based on the notion of the system of rules or code. Therefore, it ranges from sound to the verbal sign identified in its phonological, syntactical and semantical value, the space of quietude. Official linguistics is the linguistics of the code, and may also be denominated as the "linguistics of quietude." Instead, the "linguistics of silence" focuses on the interpretant of responsive understanding, on the dialogism and intertextuality of the utterance.

In contrast to "official linguistics," the "linguistics of silence," what Bakhtin calls "metalinguistics," and what we also call "philosophy of language" and "semioethics," do not study the elements of the *langue*, of the sentence, the objects of linguistics as they emerge fromthe background of quietude. Instead, the "linguistics of silence" elects sense as its object of study, sense as it arises fromthe dialogical relations interconnecting verbal signs, insofar as they are utterances, and fromthework of the interpretants of answering comprehension. The background from which these dialogical relations emerge, from which sense emerges, is silence.

Silence is possible only in the human world, as Bakhtin says in the citation reported above (1986 [1970–1971]: 133). To compel the sign to the space of quietude, to separate it from the dialogism, polysemy and ambiguity of silence, fromutterance sense and fromthe freedom of listening, from listening to the other, all this cancels and removes the properly human from the sign. The result is a sign rendered mechanical and pseudonatural, as it oscillates between the conventionality of signals and the naturalness of sound, naturalness that does not lay claim to sense.

While official linguistics tends to cancel the relation to the other which, instead, is constitutive of the word, the linguistics of silence thematizes dialogue, listening, and hospitality toward theword of the other. Fromthis point of view, the practice of translation, like literary writing, is particularly interesting as a practice whose condition of possibility is the indirectword, theword implicated in the relation to the word of the other. Translative practice best displays the word in its relation to the other, by contrast with the homologation of identity logic as it governs and regulates the official communication order, incapable of hospitality toward the other, of listening.

Part III: Semiotics Dialogues:

On Rhetoric, Argumentation and New Media

by Massimo A. Bonfantini, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

7.

Argumentative Dialogues and Non.
Conditions of Dialogic Argumentation

by Massimo A. Bonfantini, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

1. Dialogue and Argumentation; 2. Logic, Dia-logic, Axiology; 3. Typology of Arguments and Typology of Signs; 4. To Argument, To Signify, To Simulate; 5. Dia-logic and Dialectic; 6. To Argument, To Announce, To Denounce

1. *Dialogue and Argumentation*

Augusto: The idea subtending our discussion on the relationship between dialogue and argumentation does not merely allude to the fact that each time we reason we do so in the context of a dialogic relationship with another person, even when this other person is our own interior double self through which we evaluate the validity of a given argument.

Nor, on considering the relationship between dialogue and argumentation, are we particularly concerned with the fact that dialogue implies argumentation more or less explicitly.

In my opinion the problem is far more complex and compels us to shift our attention from dialogue-argumentation to its conditions of possibility. Understood in such terms our problem concerns the foundations, thereby implying a discussion along the boundaries interconnecting the study of argumentation — or *logic* —, *dialogue analysis* and *semiotics* in what may be described — if the expression is allowed me — a 'semiodialogic' perspective.

Two authors whom I believe are fundamental for the adequate development of such a perspective are Charles S. Peirce and Mikhail M. Bakhtin.

Susan: I'd add another two names, that is, Victoria Welby and Charles Morris. In my opinion both Welby's theory of meaning, or 'Significs' — as she chose to call it — as well as Morris's 'axiology' are rich in precious suggestions for a fuller understanding of the problem we're now discussing. But since you're an expert in Peircean semiotics Massimo, I'd like to know what contribution you believe may come from Peirce in a study of the relationship between dialogue and argumentation. Do you agree that Peirce, as Augusto maintains, can help identify the characteristics of dialogue in argumentation?

Massimo: With reference to texts that are dialogues on a formal level, that is, an exchange of "rejoinders" between more than one interlocutor, the following typology may be

proposed on the basis of the structure of action and, therefore, of verbal action: 1) dialogue considered and experienced as an end in itself; 2) dialogue functional to attainment or operative dialogue; 3) reflection dialogue for the definition of problems, objects, ends.

This typology is quite obviously based on Peirce's model for the tripartition of sign aspects. Bearing this renown model in mind, let us remember that: firstly, a sign may be considered isolatedly in itself; or, secondly, in its dependency on the object; or, lastly, in the *ratio* of its relationship with its object.

Similarly to the tripartition of dialogues already proposed by Augusto and myself (cf. Bonfantini/Ponzio 1983 and 1986), the sign-object-interpretant triad is an application of the three categories recognized by Peirce (*CP* 2.227) as the 'quasi-necessary' matrixes of semiosis.

In my own version (cf. Bonfantini 1987b), I broaden tthese three catgories into the 'precategorial principles' of the 'three faces or qualities of A Priori'. The three faces are the three faculties or modalities necessary and sufficient to living beings for interaction in objectuality: sense, desire, praxis.

Augusto: Yes, these are some of the aspects of the issue under discussion I was referring to, which no doubt make the connection between theory of dialogue, theory of semiosis and theory of argumentation necessary.

A common denominator linking these three theories, or, better, these three aspects implied by *semiodialogic theory* is *interpretation*.. Interpretation, in fact, plays a central role in dialogue as much as in semiosis and argumentation.

Well then, to evidence the connection of argumentation and semiosis to dialogue is to evidence the dialogic character of interpretation insofar as interpretation is not only identification, recognition but also 'answering comprehension', an expression adapted from Bakhtin. In other words, together with the *identification interpretant,* which is the aspect we stop at when considering meaning in terms of the *signifié* understood in the Saussurean sense and, therefore, in its dependency on the 'code', we must also consider the interpretant of answering comprehension which does not merely limit itself to identifying signs but responds to them dialogically, takes a stand, makes a choice, and therefore implicitly involves reference to values, habits, norms of behavior, stereotypes, ideologies (cf. Ponzio 1994).

This is why a typology of dialogue must begin with a typology of action, as Massimo says. Nor is it incidental that a typology of action should correspond to a typology of signs, as in Peirce, or to the three categories or, rather, as Massimo says, the 'precategorial principles of the three faces of a priori'.

2. *Logic, Dia-logic, Axiology*

Massimo: Yes, it's important that a typology of dialogue should be developed in relation to a typology of action. All signs are semiosic acts: the rejoinder in a dialogue still to

be defined as to how it will proceed. A dialogic rejoinder is always an *interpretandum*, an interrogation. An abduction begins with an interrogation, a question, the subject-interpreter remembers or invents a possible answer, an interpretant and assumes it as a hypothesis. An example: why is the ground wet? Well, I recall that when it rains the ground gets wet. I assume that it has rained as a hypothesis. The ideas assumed, or better the judgements that recall them tend to associate with each other, to gravitate into a synthesis: they come together as two premises and form an implication. And this is induction. An example: premise: it's raining, and the ground is wet; conclusion: that it's raining results in the ground getting wet. These implications, these mental habits, remain inside us as mechanisms ready to enter into action as soon as the right *case* presents itself. Like a bow when you position the arrow and let it go. The bow that shoots the arrow and the physiological phenomenon called the reflex arch are invested with the inexorability of deduction. That it is raining *involves* the ground getting wet; but it's now the case that it's raining; therefore, the ground will get wet. This is the prevision that necessarily springs from the premises. Any idiot, as Holmes would have it, is capable of making such mechanical previsions; even computers, we might add. All the same they must be put into motion. It seems to me that even deduction involves a gap between premises and conclusion, that is, it involves some form of distancing with respect to mere repetition, and, therefore, perhaps even deduction has something dialogical about it.

Susan: What you're saying, Massimo, would seem to confirm the opportuneness of putting together Peirce and Bakhtin, in other words, of putting together 'semiotics of interpretation' and 'philosophy of dialogicality', an association proposed by Augusto on several occasions throughout his writings. But, Augusto, thinking about sense in terms of answering comprehension and dialogicality, such that reference to a code obviously cannot offer an acceptable account of sense, what I'd like to know is how Bakhtin contributes to our understanding of such mechanisms.

Augusto: The logic that makes sense comprehensible is a *dia-logic.* The comprehension of sense always implies dialogically structured argumentation. Sense is always an answer to a question, a sort of rejoinder in a dialogue where question and answer do not simply involve information exchange, but far more than this, values and valutative orientations. The kind of question we intend calls for a pragmatico-valutative standpoint, just as the answer involved in comprehending sense also requires a standpoint, whether implicitly or explicitly.

The question and answer logic in which sense is decided escapes the limits of monologicality. By question and answer I do not intend the absolute and impersonal abstract categories of *Logos*, but rather concrete aspects of dialogue. Differently to monological sign relationships, which would not seem to have spatio-temporal and axiological limits, or, which are situated in the space-time of monological discourse, dialogical question and answer

relationships have a precise and diversified spatial, temporal and axiological collocation, which determines the degree of *irreducible otherness* with which such relationships are endowed.

I believe Bakhtin's main contribution to the problem of the conditions of possibility, to the foundations of dialogical argumentation lies in his approach, in the terms just described, to the problem of sense (cf. Ponzio 1993a).

Susan: Well, as I was saying earlier, a connection could be established between the problem of dialogue and both the work of Victoria Welby and Charles Morris. The latter, in fact, each researched into the interrelation between signs, values and action and, therefore, between semiotics, axiology and pragmatics evidencing the importance of such interrelation in cognitive processes and in praxis. Values are vehicled by signs, or, better, signs are the material out of which values are created while the opposite is not necessarily true — not all signs necessary involve values, such as signs in the nonhuman animal world, or signs forming our genetic codes, etc. — and signs and values in their turn relate to behavior.

Morris divides 'meaning' into 'signification', the object of semiotics alluding to the condition of 'having meaning', on the one hand, and 'significance', the object of axiology alluding to the condition of 'being meaningful' or 'significant', on the other. Welby also makes a similar distinction with her own tripartition of meaning into 'sense', 'meaning' and 'significance'. In both cases the term 'significance' underlines the connection of signs and meaning to values and therefore to human behavior.

Both Welby and Morris study sign action, particularly *verbal* sign action, as the place of production of knowledge and truth values. But beyond this sign action is considered as the place of production of ethic and esthetic judgement and, therefore, of the capacity for critique and responsibility. This implies analysing signifying processes intended in a broad sense in situations where dialogical potential is at its highest and, therefore, where the answer required for the comprehension of sense is grounded in the logic of otherness, as Augusto says, and calls for a standpoint.

Augusto: This connection you're highlighting between values, signs and argumentative dialogue Susan makes 'ethosemiodialogics' even more appropriate than 'semiodialogics' as a means of indicating the founding theoretical perspective in which to analyze the conditions of dialogic argumentation.

Susan: Yes, there's no doubt you're right. Indeed, to study meaning in relation to value, that is, to study signifying processes from the point of view of significance means to assume the responsibility of interrogating the value of meaning beyond its systemic articulation. This implies the critical effort of examining *à la Kant* the "conditions of possibility" of meaning as well as attempting *à la Marx* to recover the sense for man of semiosis considered, following Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (cf. 1992), as 'social reproduction'.

To study meaning as the production of significance, that is, to put together signs and values also implies doing what Marx does with his critique of merchandise, that is, deconstruct sense to evidence the action of signs and communication relationships between things in production processes instead of just considering 'facts', 'things' or 'relationships between things' independently of such processes. It also means to restore human sense to things and facts by critically revealing the linguistic and social alienation processes to which the human person is subject in daily signifying and communicative practices.

Especially when dealing with the problem of 'significance' Welby (cf. 1983, 1985) is referring specifically to the problem of responsibility which she considers as structural to the production of signs and meaning. She uses the term 'significance' to refer to the overall signifying power of signs and therefore to value producing processes active in semiosis, being the result of the human person's involvement in the life of signs both at the cognitive and emotional levels as well as at the level of praxis.

As regards the connection between values, signs and action, referred to by you Massimo earlier on, it's worth remembering that as early as 1964, in a book entitled *Signification and Significance*, Morris related a typology of values to a typology of action. Values are classified as 'object', 'operative' and 'conceived values' and are made to correspond to the subdivision of action, respectively, into 'perceptual', 'manipulatory' and 'consummatory action'.

Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the relationship between the sign and its interpretant, a correspondence may also be established between these three types of value and three types of action, on the one hand, and the 'index', 'symbol' and 'icon', respectively, as established by Peirce in his typology of signs, on the other. Infact, *object values* (stereotypes) relate to objects indexically, that is, according to the law of necessity. The relationship of *operative values* (ethical, juridical, religious norms) to objects is of the symbolic type: it is based on a convention. *Conceived values* (ideologies) express a relationship of similarity corresponding to the sign condition where iconicity dominates.

3. *Typology of Arguments and Typology of Signs*

Massimo: As I was implying earlier when I suggested that even deduction involves a minimal degree of dialogicality given that it too involves a gap between the premises and their conclusion, I think it's a good idea to examine the relationship between argument type or inference (induction, deduction, abduction), the typology of signs (symbol, index, icon) and dialogicality.

Augusto: A relationship may indeed be established between inferential argumentation and Peirce's sign typology especially if we consider his tripartition into symbol, index and icon in terms of the degree of dialogicality and otherness implied in the relationship between interpretant and interpreted.

In symbols the relationship between the interpreted and interpretant is regulated by a habit and therefore it is conventional; in the index it is regulated by causal necessity and therefore it is constrictive; in the icon it is regulated by similarity and therefore by the principal of reciprocal autonomy.

This also applies to argumentation if we consider the relationship between premises and conclusion as a relationship between interpreted and interpretant signs. In induction the relationship between the premise and the conclusion is of the symbolic type, it is based on a habit. In deduction it is of the indexical type given that the conclusion is a necessary derivation from the premises. In abduction the relationship between premises and conclusion is of the iconic type, that is to say, of reciprocal autonomy, and this implies a high degree of inventiveness together with a high risk margin for error. Abductive processes are highly dialogical and generate answers that may be considered as the most risky, inventive and creative.

As already demonstrated in detail in a paper published in 1983 (Bonfantini/Ponzio 1983), the degree of dialogicality in the relationship between interpreted and interpretant is minimal in deduction where once the premises are accepted the conclusion is compulsory. Inferential processes also remain unilinear in induction where identity and repetition dominate even though the relationship between premises and conclusion is no longer compulsory. On the contrary, in abduction the relationship between argumentative parts is dialogical in a substantial sense and, in fact, very high degrees of dialogicality may be reached and the higher the more inventive becomes reasoning. Abductive argumentative procedure is risky, that is, it is mainly tentative and hypothetical leaving a minimal margin to convention (symbolicity) and mechanical necessity (indexicality). Abductive inferential processes — in which iconicity prevails — involve transcending the logic of identity and equal exchange and generating sign processes at high levels of otherness and dialogicality.

Massimo: Well, Augusto, single rejoinders and explicit reasoning — even the most isolated rejoinder always implies whole pieces of reasoning or argumentation — take on each time they are used a different sense from context, that is, from the situation, the communicative game of the moment.

This is true, firstly, of dialogues *in praesentia.* Though more or less explicitly argumented but in any case identical even from the point of view of intonation, the rejoinder "This dish is tasteless" will mean something different, that is, will be interpreted differently, for example, in the two following typical situations: 1) if uttered by myself while at table with the family my wife will interpret it as a request of adding a little salt; 2) if uttered by myself as a member of a jury in a cooking competition the others present will interpret it as a negative verdict on the quality of the cook's performance.

There's no doubt that in more standard, more routine attainment dialogues the rejoinder, whether argumented or not, receives its color from the situation, from the communicative game.

Similarly to cinema, as in Kulesov's experiment. A close up of an isolated actor. He watches attentively. The same close up. Followed by a shot of a dead child expresses compassion. The same close up. Followed by a shot of a delicious dish of steaming roast, expresses hunger.

Rejoinders, sentences, transitions, musical cadences, sequences do not necessarily occur in a continuous communicative game. Just as on television or at the cinema. They can be recorded. As in a book or on video. In that case you can go back to them, think about the sharpness, or about the stupefying obtuse sensuality of the details. Relaunch the semiosis of the fleeting moment caught up once again, beyond dialocutory obviousness, in the open dimension of persemiosis. For example in a conversation *in praesentia* on a videoessay used for artistic purposes and/or as a report.

4. *To Argument, To Signify, To Simulate*

Susan: This makes reasoning dialectical. No doubt dialectics is also the art of persuading through deceit or the art of finding a solution to problems by playing the illusionist game and putting contradictions together in a synthesis. But dialectics is also positive in its effort to overcome the obvious, that is, in its effort to amplify and problematize. As to computers, I doubt we can say they're capable of dialectical reasoning, they're not dialectical and are incapable of lying. What do you think, Massimo?

Massimo: We sometimes think computers can simulate man's thought processes. Or even go further than man's thought processes. Perhaps by correcting iniquities or conciliating human conflicts and contradictions in the light of some superior design. Just as in the suggestive science fiction novel by our friend Giampaolo Proni: *Il caso del Computer Asia*.

But the fact is thinking is contradictory in itself. And not even love implies synthesizing and annuling contradictions, but accepting and even welcoming contradictions. Computers don't feel, think, hate or love. They don't reason dialogically. They don't think. They calculate. This is the point. We all know this.

But in reality whoever says that computers can simulate man is thinking that man can simulate computers. By becoming cold, still, indeed, static, free of problems, unidirectional.

Thinking means being capable of lying and of deceit, of dialectics and of diairetics. One divides into two and two conjugate and/or oppose each other and/or devour each other. They don't melt into each other. Through exercises of displacement, struggle and problematic conjugation of contradictory perspectives, we work toward moments of increasing harmony. But, Augusto, I want to ask you a question. How can dialectic in the plural escape what would seem to be the recurrent destiny of gerarchies and totalitarianisms.

5. *Dia-logic and Dialectic*

Augusto: This problem brings us back to the question of the centrality of dialogue in argumentative reasoning, that is, reasoning that has not stiffened into the defense and reproduction of identity but is open and available towards otherness.

Bakhtin (1975, It. trans. 1979: 365) evidenced how unilaterality, ossification, rectilinear and unilateral dialectics derives from sclerotized dialogue. Monological, unilinear and totalizing dialectics is necessarily orientated towards a sythesis and a conclusion and as such calls for a *critique of dialogical reason* (cf. Ponzio 1994: 79-106). From this point of view Bakhtin is a main point of reference also because the whole of his research, including his most recent paper of 1974 on the methodology of the human sciences, concentrates on the same problem faced by Sartre in his *Critique de la raison dialetique:,*that is, whether the knowledge and understanding of man by man not only implies specific methods but a *New reason*. This, however, cannot be understood in terms of a new relation between *thought* and its *object* as Sartre believed (cf. 1960, It. trans. 1963: 13). In fact, Sartre's dialectics remains wholly inside the limits of monological dialectics given that he reduces the relation of otherness to a relation of identity and of reciprocal objectification: dialetics between *for self* and *for others* is dialetics in totalizing consciousnesses, where the tendency is to affirm one's own objectifying view.

The critique of dialogical reason is the critique of the category of Identity, which is the category currently dominating in Western thought and praxis. In the perspective of identity where sense is made to coincide with partial and limited interests only mystification is possible: and this is true whether we are speaking of the identity of an individual, group, nation, language, cultural system or of a very large community such as the European or the entire Western world or the United Nations.

The category of Identity dominates today not only because of the *concrete abstractions* constructed on it, which form the *Reality* we experience: such conrete abstractions as Individual, Society, State, Nation, Truth, Knowledge, Equality, Justice, Freedom, circumscribable and definable Responsibility, Need, Equal exchange, etc., which are 'internal' to today's overall system of social reproduction; but also because the system itself is actually grounded in the category of Identity which tends to assert itself structurally and constitutively as Universal in a worldwide Production, Market and Consumption process. The logic of concrete abstraction in the current process of social reproduction is the logic of Identity. And the category of Individual with its rights, obligations, responsibilities; of Society with its interests; of State with its Politics adhering as much as possible to Reality; of Equal exchange with its needs, all obey the logic of Identity.

The places of argumentation internal to the order of discourse are the places of the logic of identity. Our forms of Reason, which include the reasons of war even if in the form of *extrema ratio* which makes war itself seem legitimate, just, legal; our Reason inclusive of the reasons of elimination — from emargination and segregation to extermination — of the other, is the Reason of Identity. Its logic is asserted by barricading, isolating, expelling or exterminating the other thereby allowing for the construction of the concrete abstractions in

which it is founded. This includes the Individual which must firstly sacrifice its own otherness to itself in order to assert itself as identity.

The critique of Reason and argumentation thus intended requires a *point of view that is other*. This requires preliminary *recognition of the other*, or, rather, recognition of the fact that recognition of the other*i*s an *inevitable imposition* (cf. Ponzio 1995a). Recognition of the other not as a concession, a free choice made by the Individual, the Subject, the Same, but as a necessity imposed by alienation, the loss of sense, by the situation of *homo homini lupus*. The situation of *homo homini lupus* consequent and not mythically antecedent to — Hobbes' fallacy! — the concrete abstractions of State, Politics, Law.

6. *To Argument, To Announce, To Denounce*

Susan: It seems to me that we must aim at overcoming specialistic separations giving rise to lying in the form of not saying something, which is a form of concealment in itself. Self-limitation is lying. All discourses, no doubt, have a provisional conclusion and inevitably come to a close; but such an ending cannot be definitive or exhaustive.

Massimo: I remember being struck several years ago by Aldo Capitini's criticism of the specialism and antidemocratic formalism of institutions, by his criticism of the closed reasoning of corporations and of whoever greedily capitalizes on knowledge and power.

He was thinking of those socially oriented centres where one learns the art of discussion and administration, the art of eliminating and putting all presuppositions out of play. With everyone participating in the discussion without prohibitions and self-limitations. And therefore without keeping silent and without lying.

But in such situations the decision taken is put into parentheses. If, instead, a decision must be taken, or at least decisions must be proposed, we must be able to count on a procedure. One that ensures a conclusion. Provisional, not totalizing, but perentory.

Susan: So what do we do, Massimo? Deal with everything? If, on the one hand, specialistic separations, self-limitations are forms of lying and deceit, on the other, wouldn't dealing with everything be a form of (vain) pretension, typical of totalizing and systematizing knowledge?

Massimo: Argumentation and/or dialogic procedure must favor the relevance of communication, the exaggeration of reports, the local efficaciousness of action: communication as a means of acting on the spot.

The criterion that must dominate is expressed by the word 'now'. I know there's a lot we must do, countless evils in the world, numerous decisions to be made by discussing them. I

know all this very well. But I am forced to decide that I must now struggle to solve those evils that I believe need to be solved most.

The Kantian maxim concerning the need to question the universal validity of the law regulating one's actions is no doubt still valid. But turned upside down: in a pragmatic perspective. And it doesn't begin with fixed principles. But rather from the moment we make a choice. From the exemplarity of possible action. What would the consequences be if no-one were to intervene in such a situation? If everyone follows my inertia? Or if, instead, the style of my decision and of my action is repeated?

Therefore, to proclaim and apply the motto 'the end justifies the means' is hypocritical, a deferral that destroys the present and the future.

In reality, the means justifies the end. To put the fleeting moment to interest reinforces the habit of industriousness and makes the utopia of the future city 'legitimate' without stiffening it into a consolatory and ideological end of (hi)story.

8.

TV Is Dead. Dialogue and New Media Communication

by Massimo A. Bonfantini, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

1. The Television Crisis; 2. Television Communication in the Verbal and Non-verbal Marketplace; 3. Centrality of Pragmatics and Typology of Dialogue; 4. Semiotics and the Critique of Television Communication; 5. From a Passive Relationship with Media to an Active and Operative Relationship; 6. Lying and Dialogue; 7. Television and Keeping a Good Conscience; 8. Exaggeration and Critique of Common Places; 9. The 'Video Essay'

1. *The Television Crisis*

Massimo: TV is dead, but video is already born!

Susan: Would you explain this paradoxical 'slogan' you've been using a lot lately in your essays, lessons and conferences?

Massimo: Great disorder under the sun: an excellent situation! What I'm saying is TV is dead, but the reign of video is born: recordings, videocassettes, video essays, inquiries, reports, and denunciations through selfmanaged and economical television films. Long live the media system crisis as the crisis of the centrality of television. Life is wonderful as long as you can get your bearings and understand things and as long as you have a project to avoid dying.

Susan: To avoid dying of what and to understand what?

Massimo: To avoid dying of boredom or of television contamination. And above all to understand that there's no point for intellectuals, the press or the public in tediously hovering around the deathbed; there's no good in it for anyone.

Susan: I doubt that we'll survive the television crisis by proposing new television programs. What we ought to do is work together on a social project for 'new and more human programs'. This expression was first introduced by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi who began critically demystifying the communication network as early as the 1960s, when he in fact demonstrated that all human behavior is programmed behavior insofar as it is communicative behavior, that

is, sign behavior. What we must realize is that programs, programming and social projects are closely connected, and that the more the capitalist production system develops the more such interconnection becomes closer and even more necessary.

Massimo: The television crisis, in fact, is not the crisis of programs or of technical services. That the palimsests should improve or worsen is not important. It's not the RAI's crisis in Italy or of some other television channel in some other country. The crisis concerns all television, whether in the 'public' or 'private' sector, whether centralized or totalizing, or, as they say, 'generalizing'. The crisis of television communication is the crisis of social functionality. And this is experienced as a crisis of glory and prestige, and therefore of one's investment of libido, attention, and audience.

TV, centralized national state, automobiles, oligopolistic world market: a gang of dinosaurs. They have aged before our very eyes. Though at the height of their power, they're hardly loved. They promise the world, but in fact maintain very little. They are systems for the suppl y of goods and services which prove to be authoritarian and out of people's control. They have caused a terrific increase in the swarm of interactions. They colonize and contaminate us in time and space. Above all, they are a source of pressure and constraint: they're not at our service.

There was talk of a fiscal crisis as well as of a crisis in the possibility of governing nation states, and the break up of a near future Middle Ages was theorized. And here we are. No doubt there has been an increase in revolts led by autonomous and local movements roused by the will to independence and by the desire of control over one's own most immediate environment. But ecology of the mind also means to choose and control communicative games. Information, culture, all the entertainment you want, enjoying it alone, if not in company, with friends.

Augusto: 'Communicative games': a pertinent 'object' in semiotics, our specific point of view. As to television communication, I doubt that any one of us is particularly interested in a specifically sociological analysis or in an analysis from the viewpoint of the psychology of mass communication. And it's not a matter of professional choice. The fact is that without studying signs there's no way of understanding anything about programming, projects, ideologies. The whole system of social reproduction is made possibile by communication and, therefore, by signs, verbal and nonverbal signs. What semiotics should do is examine signs as a constituent part of the processes they belong to. Such an approach puts into evidence the effective connection between communication and ideology — and between the disciplines that deal with them both at the foundational level as well as at the level of general theory: semiotics as the general theory of signs and as theory of ideology. On examining communication in the process of social reproduction to which it belongs, we must not only consider it in relation to systems of sign exchange, but also of sign production and consumption. And as part of the

totality of social reproduction, ideology must also be viewed in its necessary relationship with sign systems.

2. *Television Communication in the Verbal and Non-verbal Marketplace*

Massimo: I agree entirely. Our perspective is semiotical. Though of course our approach to semiotics has changed perspective, or better, the approach to the kind of semiotics we practice has undergone a general, fundamental change in theoretical attention. And I'm not talking about semiotics of the code or of codes...

Susan: ...which Rossi-Landi had already amply criticized in his 1961 book, *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune*, ironically naming it 'postal package semiotics'. Nor is it a question of 'semiotics of marketing'. The latter, in fact — on losing its critical function toward the "verbal and nonverbal market", as theorized by Rossi-Landi in *Language as Work and Trade* (1968), that is, toward the production, exchange, and consumption of merchandise-messages and messages-merchandise — ends up becoming semiotics of marketing in the sense that it puts itself at the service of the market and becomes dependent upon it. A critical analysis of television communication just cannot be expected from this kind of semiotics. It in fact goes hand in hand with TV (whether state or private) given that it is subject to the market, which is fundamentally a publicity market; it works for the market. I'm thinking of that relatively recent phenomenon whereby semioticians sell their work as consultants for publicity agencies which tend to privilege television as their main and most effective communication channel.

Augusto: These days, anyone wishing to gain consensus for one's 'resistable rise' needs to be in control of communication, above all newspapers, the press, but even more so television. However, these days one must also have control over the marketing semiotician. You both mentioned Rossi-Landi, and I too wish to remember him. After all, Rossi-Landi's pioneer research deserves due consideration given its central importance for a semiotico-critical approach to mass communication. Rossi-Landi defines the dominant class 'as the class that holds control over the emission and circulation of verbal messages in a given community' (1972: 203-204). As I was saying, today's Arthur Ui must necessarily make use of television and, differently from Brecht's Ui, who consulted an actor from the theatre, today's Ui must necessarily resort to an advertising agent, and, specifically, an expert in the semiotics of marketing in order to learn the tricks of the trade in correctly presenting oneself to the public. Nor is this hypothetical, for indeed we're talking about reality. Television and publicity are so closely connected that they have become interdependent, but television depends on publicity economically, and both depend on whoever controls communication. All television programs are part of the same network, of the same text, that is to say, of the publicity network. Anyone

wishing to speak to the public must enter this network. Not only has politics been televised; not only has televised political discourse become a publicity spot, but the political message itself has become a photogram in the ongoing publicity sequence. Here then is a possible role for semiotics, which nowadays it is effectively carrying out: semiotics at the service of persuasion, whose strategies are no longer concealed, at the service of the televised circulation of messages, of marketing. And, alongside this, we have an approach to semiotics that discusses codes, meanings, communication, and signification, referential and nonreferential semantics, while leaving aside the pragmatic dimension of semiosis, and all in the name of a delusive and 'impossible neutrality', to recall the title of a very topical book by Massimo Bonfantini.

3. *Centrality of Pragmatics and Typology of Dialogue*

Massimo: That's right, that's why I was talking before about the need for a general and fundamental shift in theoretical attention. And I'm talking about the shift that has already taken place in semiotics from the centrality of semantics to the centrality of pragmatics. From meaning to sense. In short, from the vehicled message to the semiosical act. From looking only at what is said to how, to whom, and why it is said, why that act communicates, wants to communicate, and in fact does communicate.

Briefly then, centrality of pragmatics, specificity of the modality of expression and signification, but also multimediality and poliedricity in the semiosical act and its interpretation. These are the three main characteristics of our new approach to semiotics as it finds expression in a volume edited by myself with Arturo Martone, *Specchi del senso/ Le semiotiche speciali* (1991) which I consider as a possible manifesto.

Augusto: And another manifesto published in the same book series (significantly entitled *Semiosis: Il senso e la fabbrica dei testi*), edited by Massimo and myself together with Jeff Bernard and Janos Kelemen, is dedicated to Rossi-Landi's research: *Reading su Ferruccio Rossi-Landi: Semiosi come pratica sociale* .

Susan: I'd like to return to the question I put to Massimo at the beginning concerning the death of TV and the birth of video. Has this change toward pragmatics got anything to do with the claim to the death of TV and the paradoxical birth of video communication from its ashes. And if pragmatics does have something to do with it all, in what way?

Massimo: Pragmatics certainly does have a part in it all and I'll tell you why. Thanks to the move toward pragmatics, it is now possible to analyze television communication fully, highlighting the current forms of depersonalization and alienation, but also identifying the concrete possibilities of reappropriation and disalienation.

A text I base myself on and which I wish to refer to is in fact another dialogue, this one too with Augusto, *Il dialogo sui dialoghi* (1986). In this volume we distinguish between substantial dialogicality and dialogicality on a purely formal level, that is, a type of dialogicality that is not determined by the dialogic form of the text but by the degree of dialogicality in that text apart from whether or not it takes the form of a dialogue. Having done this, we then proceed to proposing a typology of dialogue.

Augusto: The present dialogue, like the preceding just remembered by Massimo, is of the 'cooperative-investigative type', and I think I can make a contribution to this particular dialogue by briefly expounding the typology of dialogue which Massimo and myself proposed in our book in 1986.

The criterion used for our typology was the following: from a pragmatic point of view, any verbal action at all, dialogues included, may either be considered as being an end in itself, or as having an instrumental function. In this case it is a means to an end, or — a third possibility — it may be intent upon determining and evaluating ends and means (see Bonfantini 1981). Consequently, we distinguished between three types of dialogue:

(1) Dialogue as an end in itself, that is, conversation or entertainment dialogue. In other words, this kind of dialogue refers to talking for the sake of talking, to dialogue with a phatic function and may in turn be divided into, (1.1) 'conformative-repetetive dialogue', and (1.2) 'di-verting dialogue'. An example of variant (1.1) was identified precisely in certain types of television communication that tend toward repetition and are obedient to hyperdetermined compositional-instructional rules and to just as hyperdetermined decodifcation itineraries.

(2) Dialogue functional to attainment, which may in turn be divided into: (2.1) 'exchange dialogue' and (2.2) 'competition dialogue'.

3) Cooperative or reflective or investigative dialogue. Referring to the degree of substantial dialogicality as the criterion for differentiation, this type of dialogue may be divided into the following (with a progressive increase in the degree of dialogicality from the first to the third): (3.1) 're-discovery and revelation dialogue', (3.2) 'research and construction dialogue', (3.3) 'exploration and problematization dialogue'.

Massimo: Good. Let's now shift our attention specifically to the communicative channel, given that our conversation is specifically concerned with television media. Well then, from this point of view, we may distinguish between three different modalities in the dialogic relation:

(1) *Interpersonal dialogicality,* (1.1) in praesentia or (1.2) in absentia, the latter in the form of written, telephonic, or television communication.

(2) *Dialogicality with replica*, (2.1) required and foreseen as part of the communicative game, or tollerated, or conceded, or (2.2) indirect or unforeseen.

(3) *Intermedial or hypertextual dialogicality.*

To regain possession over the communicative channel and to shift away from television communicative games, we may talk of transformative dialogicality as metatextual dialogicality in praesentia. Through documentation, the support of images, the filming of an event, of an interview, etc., this enables continued use of the means of communication, for the case in question, the video, as a way of reinforcing communication in praesentia.

Augusto: No doubt it's a question of eliminating dominion of the communicative channel over the message as it occurs in today's system for the reproduction of communication, that is, communication for the sake of communication. On the contrary, communication must reacquire its use value as related to interpersonal dialogicality, critical awareness, and disalienated praxis.

Susan: But doesn't that simply imply wanting to take over television channels once again and therefore acknowledging television a certain predominance in the current media system?

Massimo: Quite the opposite I'd say. What I'm promoting is the use of video in praesentia, communication in praesentia, a metatextual dialogicality in praesentia, by contrast with pseudocommunication at a distance as carried out by television. You know, the same objection was raised by another person after he read my *Morte Tv: Nascita del video* (cf. Bonfantini 1993). This is the dialogue that took place between us word for word:

READER: It's my impression that by concentrating on pragmatics one cannot help but recognize the decisiveness of media and above all of TV in the making of history: the sense of history and the reality itself of history. Obsolescence or death of TV as you maintain, Bonfantini, indeed! On the contrary, I think Furio Colombo is right.

ME: Who? Lieutenant Colombo?

READER: Stop joking and listen to me! Furio Colombo is right when he writes that differently from the past, TV today englobes concrete reality. Listen to this (from "Panorama", April 26th 1992): 'The change consists in the following. In the past, reality developed outside television and television was intent upon demonstrating its usefulness by hitching onto true facts and showing them. These days, reality only happens on television and anyone left out is ready to do anything to hitch onto that luminous ship [...]. Anything outside television is useless. Why? Because we cannot live without an idea of the world. But we don't have an idea of the world. What we have instead is an uninterrupted sequence of images, and we have no intention of giving them up, we cannot.'

ME: Yet it's just this imposed and abstract, 'uninterrupted sequence of images', a sequence that is shamelessly deceptive as regards everyday life, and so poor with all its shows and various forms of entertainment, that makes TV an almost unbearable pastime even though

it is almost free. But thank goodness, all this is coming to an end at last just like the gramophone, record player, and tape recorder, at least as far as listening to music is concerned, while the use of radio has been limited; similarly, videorecorders and videocassettes are perhaps already on the point of thwarting and reorganizing television, at least as far as seeing films, discussing documentaries, and making investigations is concerned.

4. *Semiotics and the Critique of Television Communication*

Augusto: The focus on the relationship between dominant forms of communication (television included) and the world in the dialogue you just reported Massimo, seems important to me. The world is indissolubly tied to politics, already as a projection, a plan, as the space for the satisfaction of needs, to politics as a totalizing overview and functional system, as the strategy of productivity, efficiency, as adhesion to reality, as a guarantee of the *conatus essendi*, as mediation of the interests — in Latin *inter-esse*, which plays on the concept of being — of both the indivual and the collective subject, as the awareness and management of *becoming,* starting from a realistic view of the present and through readaptation to the present by the past, as economy of the lasting, of the persistant, of the progressive in *being*, *essere* in Italian, at any cost. Even at the cost of war, the *extrema ratio* of war, war considered as part of the world, which is foreseen by it, is part of its logic, of the ontology of the *conatus essendi* . The world foresees war given that, being constitutively based on identity, it exploits that which is other for the maintenance, reinforcement, duration, and expanded reproduction of the same. The world is ready, it is prepared for the sacrifice of otherness. The connection between World, History, Reality, Identity, Truth, Force, Reason, Power, Productivity, Politics, War is inscribed in our experience, in our mentality as Westerners. And it is a connection that has always been exploited and exasperated by capitalism, even more so these days. Communication functional to the reproduction of this social system extends and consolidates this connection. And as a powerful means of communication, television is used in this sense as well. How else can we explain the important role carried out by television in triggering off the Gulf War and in its development? This war marks a decisive phase in recent history as a kind of watershed between a period that begins from the Second World War and is still characterized by widespread refusal of war, and another period, today's, characterized by its suitability to the ideo-logic of capital and by its assent to war as a just and necessary way of asserting peace, the rights of identity, and of difference.

Susan: That confirms our considerations made at the beginning of this conversation on the relationship between semiotics and the critique of television communication. The latter being a critique, as I was saying, aiming at the development of new and more human programs. The demystification of ideologies, just as much as of such notions as Reality, Subject, Reason, Truth, is only possible through a critique of signs which is able to account for the production,

exchange and circulation of signs as this cycle takes place in the global process of social reproduction. Such a project is committed to the development of a new and more conscious form of humanism, which not only focuses on the sign dimension of man (as semiotics has done so far; and an enormous contribution in this sense was made by Peirce), but also on the human dimension of signs (as established by a project conceived and developed by such figures as Marx, Welby, Bakhtin, Schaff, Lévinas, Rossi-Landi). I include Marx for his having evidenced, through his critique of political economy, social relations among human beings where it was thought that there merely existed relations among things and reified relations among signs. Therefore, a possibility is that the fact of people meeting face to face thanks to video by contrast with television, as pointed out by Massimo, could help towards reconstituting and developing the human in things, instruments, and signs.

These day the danger of submitting passively to social programs that mask widespread forms of 'refined oppression' under mystifying banners which are paradoxically mistaken for liberating practices, is increasing. The widespread effects of mass communication and, therefore, of ideology, or as you say Augusto, of the dominant ideo-logic supporting the whole multi-medial communication network, represent this kind of danger. The conjunction between telecommunications and informatics is favoring expansion of this network at a planetary level, which is producing a form of sociocultural reality without precedents from the viewpoint of the messages teaming in it in terms of quantity, immediacy, and diffusion. Use of television itself is now characterized by the proliferation of a great plurality of channels and services, and by the possibility of zapping through the various programs and of creating one's own intertexts. A direct consequence of advanced technology and of the intensification of sign traffic is the superimposing of messages. This also implies translating and evaluating such progress in terms of alienation of the human subject, in terms of mystification and fetishization of its linguistic and nonlinguistic products made ready for the market. The more message production is redundant, the more the individual as a critical subject is suffocated despite its active participation in such production processes. Even those subjects who would seem to be immune from the effects of the so-called electronic revolution variously contribute to the expansion of the world 'sign marketplace' (see Sebeok 1987) in which consciousness and praxis are separated in a productive cycle whose end is production itself.

With reference to the problem of the status of the subject considered as a user-consumer, the obvious truth is that such developments in the communication network, which inevitably attract all of us, do not necessarily imply higher levels of critical awareness, creativity, responsible participation, or 'freedom'. Quite the contrary: the risk of remaining trapped in this communication network, which becomes increasingly oppressive the more it expands, is enormous. Such questions as the following immediately come to mind: What is the real nature of the relation between the use of electronic devices and the user-consumer? Does the subject construct his or her own texts or, rather, is the subject reduced to passively submitting to the products offered by the sign market, to operating as a function of an institutionalized system, of

socio-economic production processes conceived in the interests of whoever infact owns and controls the communication network?

6. *From a Passive Relationship with Media to One that Is Active and Operative*

Massimo: Audio and video cassettes are at our disposal far more than the market would want. They're easy to produce at low costs or by sharing costs. It's still easier for books: think of the pocket-size, easy to handle, low cost classics. But this kind of media, together with well chosen recordings of radio and television programs, are the most suitable in aiding social communication *in praesentia*, discussions in cultural clubs, lessons in schools and in professional courses, and lastly in aiding local political activity in exerting pressure and contributing to projects and control.

A crisis is taking place in the media system which could turn out to be beneficial. The crisis I'm alluding to consists in a shift in focus. From the centrality of the continuous and vertical flux of radio and television to the centrality of multimedial recordings and recombinations. From a passive relationship with media to an active and operative relationship. And perhaps parallel to this, from a delegating democracy to a participating democracy: communication as a way of acting on the spot.

But the press will have to take a clear stand regarding communication functions and strategies if we are to reach such a happy conclusion to the media crisis. What we need is less entertainment and more reports; less goverment affairs and more society; less gossip and more contemporary history. But above all what we need is very little TV.

Susan: And yet there's just so much TV these days. And it contributes to transforming everything into merchandise, it contributes to reification functional to the market and to revival of the productive-communicative cycle, and not only because of its connections with publicity.

Augusto: Reification: *fluidification* is better. What radio and television provide, as observed by Anders (1992), doesn't take on the form of an object or of property, but rather remains *fluid.* This is true of telematics as well. What is provided is absorbed in the same fluid in which it flows outside the factory. In this sense, the word 'transmission' is symptomatic, designating, as it does, two meanings in a single word: both the act of transmitting as well as the object transmitted. What we are owners of is the apparatus used to transmit the merchandise, not the transmitted merchandise itself. 'Stated in the form of a paradox', says Anders, 'we are sovereigns of a mere passivity. [...] Figures not less comical than the Stirnian "owners of their own hunger", scorned by Marx' (Anders 1992: 48). 'The term "reification", used to describe the trends characterizing the past century or so, will no longer suffice to characterize the situation today. We're now on the threshold of a new phase, a phase in which, viceversa, the

form of the thing is avoided, the fluidified thing. Or at least a phase in which fluidification of the object will be as characteristic as reification of the nonobjectual. I propose we use the term "liquidation" to indicate this state of affairs which as yet has been forgotten by theory' (*ibidem*).

According to Anders, recorders and videocassettes don't contradict the production cycle's interest in producing its products 'in the liquid state'. All the same, he is forced to admit that such inventions are not 'created in the interests of production', but of those consumers who want to own their transmissions in just as solid a form as books and paintings, even though this is not possible for the consumer without the help of capital. As soon as the chance is sensed of producing new merchandise, capitalistic industry is ready to exploit it, 'even if the new product contradicts the principles of production' (Anders 1992: 49). It is precisely this contradiction of audio and video cassettes that can be turned around to the favour of 'social communication *in praesentia*', as you were saying, Massimo, 'for a transformative dialogicality', for a 'metatextual dialogicality *in praesentia*'.

6. *Lying and dialogue*

Susan: Massimo was saying before that what he was describing as 'communication as a way of acting on the spot' is a form of communication that is inherent in 'participating democracy'. What is he talking about exactly? And what is the relationship with information, the news service, including television?

Augusto: That's a formula I've already heard Massimo use in another one of our dialogues - you see, our dialogues are so numerous that it now seems to me that we do nothing else but 'hold dialogues'. And, in fact, every time we meet, which doesn't happen a lot, we look for the opportunity to work together on some issue we are both interested in, taking advantage as best we can of the possibility of communicating *in praesentia*. I'm now thinking of a dialogue part of which we held in Naples, another part in Novara, and another in Milan, our *Dialogo della menzogna* (Dialogue on lying). One of its main theses is that lying these days is no longer based on keeping things hidden, and this is thanks also to the power of media and to the preponderance of images. Just think of the techniques used by dominant information services. Intangibility based on secrecy is no longer possibile in a culture aspiring to 'transparency', to glassiness -'glass things do not have an "aura". Glass is the special enemy of secrets' (Benjamin, *Experience and Poverty*, 1933). The impossibility of gaining awareness and of intervening transformatively on things and situations which, on the contrary, must be preserved, concealed and handed down is obtained by organizing things so that to see does not mean to understand, which, if anything, is impeded. 'The destructive character' (Benjamin) of the present day, of the present day equal to current society as it is characterized by production for the sake of production, by communication for the sake of communication, shows, unveils, has its own constitutive obscenity. Destructive work needs a public, witnesses, says Benjamin.

The succession and overlapping of information in the name of 'transparency' and to the satisfaction of a sort of widespread 'voyeurism' makes it possible to level reality on appearance and destroys the very notion of control by public opinion. The possibility of attention is replaced by confusion, the possibility of scandal by inurement, comprehension by misunderstanding. Indeed, says Benjamin (*The Destructive Character* 1933), in the end one lets oneself be misunderstood, which eliminates gossip, and this happens because people don't want to be misunderstood; more exactly, the destructive character requires a continual provocation to misunderstanding. But I'll now repeat more or less word by word what was said in the dialogue just mentioned so as to avoid modifying my discourse, as I'm doing now, in the light of subsequent thoughts and readings:

Massimo: Lying, as I was saying, no longer plays on secrecy, on concealing things — simply because it can't. On the contrary, it plays on the fact that showing does not necessarily imply thematizing, which, if anything, is impeded. The facts can be discovered, but there's a trick for impeding the kind of thematization which affords knowledge of the truth. These days — as the case of 'externalization' shows — we do not make use of secrets, diplomacy, concealed blackmail, dissimulation in the full sense of the term. On the contrary, externalization is preferred, even in the form of blackmail, allusion to the possibility of revelation. And in any case, externalization does not necessarily imply making reports, but if anything is part of the mechanism of lying.

So, the problem is not that of making reports and unmasking things, but of which thematizations should be privileged with respect to others. It's not a question of 'transparency', a word which seems to offer a decisive formula. While there's so much talk about 'transparency', this ends by levelling reality on appearance without revealing anything significant at all. With its multitude of messages the strategy of transparency aims at disconcerting the citizen and tends to destroy the notion of control by public opinion. I don't know whether you've noticed, but it's no coincidence that we've been speaking less and less about 'public opinion' in the past few years, and more instead about 'audience' and luckily about 'absence' as well. As Michele Serra jokingly says, 'absence is increasing'.

Augusto: What can we set against the levelness of transparency and the silence of ostentation, 'externalization' as an alternative to the monological character of a lying dialogue?

Massimo: To return to what I was saying before on the importance of choosing what should be thematized, as against ostentations and revelations made either directly or indirectly to distract from thematization and impede the choice, it's not a question of honest dissimulation, whether justifying or not the strategy of deception by lying.

Augusto: No doubt! It's a question of making the choice of what to thematize as dialogically participative as possible.

Massimo: We ought to ask ourselves, therefore, whether we want to go as far as inverting the Machiavellism of 'the end justifies the means: therefore I can lie' with 'the means justifies the end, I know the world is full of evil..., but I'll now only work on what now seems to me to require an immediate solution'. I won't be objective, impartial, but rather I'll be mendacious even in this, since I don't mention anything else. But given that it is important for each of us to emphasize what our priorities are in a common action, I insist on thematizing a particular aspect. This could help us to leave behind that sort of voyeurism between citizens and power characteristic of our times and to get free from overevaluating representation, transparency, the possibility of observation, ostentation, undifferentiated ostentation... What we must do is oppose an authentically dialogical choice to the inertia of representation and to an abundance of themes which end up concealing each other in communication at a distance as well as in voyeuristic communication, substitutive dialogues and discussions as proposed on television. These days, it's not so important to establish whether or not we can tell the truth, whether or not facts should be reported, whether or not it is legitimate to reveal given truths and conceal others, whether or not we should recommend sincerity, since it seems to me that the game is another. Against a repetetive, ritual and commemorative conception of truthful procedure, today we must insist:

(1) on thematizing information, on the possibility of going to the bottom of what have been identified as priority thematizations, without fearing to use exaggeration, which, in fact, is useful in achieving this end: yes, exaggeration as against ommission, concealment, mystification; and, furthermore,

(2) on the use of information and on its connection to pratical power, great or little as it may be, to routine with others and therefore to dialogic exchange in order to create a different condition as we are already experiencing it here and now, convivially: communication for acting on the spot...

Augusto: which is a slogan you already used in your book, *Semiotica ai media*. It means moving away from what we have classified as the dialogue of attainment where interlocutors aim at achieving their own advantage, at maintaining and reconfirming their own identity. We could make another distinction in lying discourse as well as in externalizing discourse beyond the superficially positive connotations of 'lying to a good end' or 'altruistically', or of 'making reports', 'showing', 'revealing', 'telling the truth'. On the contrary, we might consider which of these orients discourse away from attainment and reconfirmation dialogues and, therefore, away from the category of identity, opening to otherness and substantial dialogicality...

Massimo: yes, an investigative and propositional dialogue or a convivial and entertainment dialogue or, better still, a dialogue in which these two types of dialogue converge.

There now, that's how we reasoned in our *Dialogo sulla menzogna* held between January and February 1992.

7. *Television and Keeping a Good Conscience*

Susan: Organizing interpretative and transformative work groups seems really important to me, especially remembering that interrelation between the dominant cultural system and capitalism involves the production of both verbal and nonverbal signs. And this is particularly important today considering the phase we have now reached in social reproduction. Far from being a mere metaphor, the expression 'cultural capital' now corresponds to reality. Linguistic and nonlinguistic work produces and develops cultural capital and, similarly to all capital producing processes, an increase in cultural capital is achieved through the production of surplus value and therefore through surplus work (cf. Rossi-Landi 1968, 1992; Ponzio 1992). The fact is that not only does all this take place without the subject being conscious of the ends of his or her most basic activities, but often he or she is not even aware that such activities may be defined as work. As Rossi-Landi says:

> We can admit that man erogates his work-force even without being aware of doing so for some end and therefore without being aware of the fact itself that he is working. The end pursued may be supra-individual in that it is imposed by a social program which remains unconscious. In these cases *work is distinguished from activity insofar as it executes programs that are indifferently conscious or unconscious. As Marx says mankind does not know it but does it* (1971: 22).

An immediate consequence of such a situation is what may be referred to as the 'invisibility' of ideology, determined by its functionality to the development of capital. Another consequence is the 'imperceptibility' of exploitation due to its dissemination throughout most of our activities. We're justified in saying that we are currently going through an exceptionally difficult phase as far as the critique of ideology and analysis of social alienation are concerned.

These days cultural reality is amply regulated by the interests of multi-media capital. So it is no coincidence that such issues are quickly set aside by proclaiming the 'crisis', or even the 'end' of ideology, and by judging such expressions as 'alienation', 'class interest', and 'social exploitation' as outdated. This is why it is important to construct different communicative situations, by acting on the spot or on the scene, as Massimo says. We must act directly on the mechanisms regulating the production cycles for the reproduction of cultural capital, and to do this we need a pragmatic perspective on the signs of ideology and culture in general. But until we defeat popular consensus achieved through mass-media, especially television, this kind of intervention will be ineffective. From this point of view, the power of television was recently and very effectively demonstrated by the Gulf War. As pointed out by Augusto, this occasion was significant in showing just how quickly support can be gained through television for an idea or a project, even if initially unpopular. In this case it was a question of gaining popular assent to war considered as a decisive means for the resolution of divergencies at an international level and for 'imposing' peace.

Augusto: The case of the Gulf war is emblematic for an understanding of how ideas are communicated through the press and particularly through television, in this case the idea of war considered as just, necessary, legal, and legitimate; it also affords an understanding of the role played through television by intellectuals, journalists, political commentators, historians, philosophers in spreading an idea which not long behorehand seemed anachronistic — the distinguished Noberto Bobbio is frequently mentioned by Massimo and myself in our dialogues. The point was to set war against 'madness', which in these cases is always the madness of 'others', to support the reasoning for war. How this idea of war was accepted so quickly by public opionion, or better by the 'audience', as Massimo was specifying previously, can only be explained in terms of the powerfulness of television. And we must remember that, as far as Italy is concerned, war is in net contrast with art. 11 of the Constitution; on an international level it contradicts the Helsinki Convention; and at a world level it caused the the UN, whose main task is to keep peace in the world, to assent to the Orwellian slogan (from *1984*), 'war is peace'. Television not only made assent to war possible, but also direct participation in it at a world level. From this point of view, even though the war was mainly conducted by the United States, the Gulf war was in a true sense a world war. Never has any war achieved such a high level of involvement and responsibility despite the widespread assumption of responsibility characteristic of 'good conscience'. When I talk of 'assent's, I have a broad range of its meanings in mind: support, apology, acceptance, passive consensus, inert non refusal; in any case complicity and responsibility.

An idea that circulated a lot during the Gulf war with the 'well-meaning intention' of working for 'counterinformation' was that, in reality, there were two wars: a real war and a make-believe war; a war that was fought, that was made of death, blood and wreckage, and a war watched on the TV screen where all we could see were the tracks outlined by so-

called'intelligent' bombs directed against 'military targets', with no traces of dying people, blood or wreckage. In truth, I believe there was only one war, and the 'make-believe' war was structural, of crucial importance to it. Another vitally important part in making this war successful was played by ourselves, as telespectators. In this guise, we too took part in the real war (in spite of our good conscience) by taking up our 'posts' in front of the television screen, and therefore with our more or less active consensus, with our passive acceptance of war, and, above all, with our pretence of being only neutral, uninvolved spectators: in this sense, we all played a part in making sure we got death, blood, and wreckage. As telespectators, then, we too fought the Gulf war; and we continue fighting it, reproducing war in the same places as well as in other parts of the world. And a large part of the responsibility in reproducing this cycle goes to the television show offered by the Gulf war and its promotion of the idea of war as being legitimate and necessary.

8. *Exaggeration and Critique of Common Places*

Massimo: No doubt you're right. And in any case, as another reader, one of my students, understood my message in *Morte TV e nascita del video,* 'all this is going through a mortal crisis. The macroindustry of the world supermarket, the dinosaurs, as you say, go ahead with the serial production of automobiles and goods which are always the same and increasingly the same for everyone...'.

Augusto: ...'conventional' and 'nonconventional' weapons included. Let's not forget there exists a world supermarket for weapons and for 'drugs' as well, this being the 'literal' logical consequence of addiction to the daily 'metaphorical drug' of mass media, of the 'entertaiment' and 'free-time industry'...

Massimo: '...it goes ahead copying and distributing, transmitting "live", from the studios, from the stadium, from buildings, satellites, always the same images. The attempt is to convince us that this is an offer of opulence and truth, of transparency and democracy. And that in any case we are obliged to believe this because there is no other God but television and the market. But, in truth, people consider this monotonous message as being pragmatically inadequate, "unhappy". In a time of ecological crisis we need ductile and differentiated instruments of knowledge and actions, wide-ranging and effective operations, communications that serve for making decisions and acting on the spot, and not one-to-many emissions for self-confirmation/consolation, or to get a bit of information, or, as they say, to "form an opinion".' That's how my reader-student expressed himself. He got full marks for his exam, thirty plus!...

All this is part of what I was indicating before as the primacy of pragmatics, which means understanding that sense is something you construct. Truth is not something there ready for us to shoot live. It needs cutting and editing.

Susan: Massimo mentioned the use of 'exaggeration' as an expedient in focusing and concentrating attention, as an antidote to widespread distraction, and as a way of channeling attention through stereotypes and 'common places'. Exaggeration, I'd say, also in the sense of shifting meaning, deconstructing obvious sense, plain meaning, and constructing new meanings, new interpretants, new metaphors, as Victoria Welby says, thereby translating and betraying meanings taken for granted and considered obvious. From this point of view, I find intriguing the attempt made at counter-information by the Mexican Zapatists in Chiapas with a comuniqué entitled: 'Subcommander Marcos is more than just gay'. This is their reply to the news communicated by 'The San Francisco Chronicle' about Marcos's homosexuality, exploited by the pro-government Mexican press to cause a scandal:

About whether Marcos is homosexual

Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristòbal, a gang member in Neza [a huge Mexico City slum] a rocker in the National University [a folk music citadel], a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Defense Ministry, a communist in the post-Cold War era, an artist without gallery or portfolio...A pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on Saturday night in any neighbourhood in any city in Mexico, a striker in the CTM [the giant pro-government union federation, which virtually never authorizes strikes], a reporter writing filler stories for the back pages, a single woman on the metro at 10 p.m., a peasant without land, an unemployed worker... an unhappy student, a dissident amid free-market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, a Zapatist in the mountains of southeast Mexico.

So Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all the exploited, marginalized, and oppressed minorities, resisting and saying, 'Enough!' (from 'Monthly Review' 46, 1994).

9. *The 'video essay'*

Augusto: The idea of 'cutting and editing' proposd by Massimo seems particularly important, and it is probably fundamental for an understanding of the anti-television role to be carried out by what he is calling the 'video essay'. Massimo you discussed this with my students at the University of Bari during a semiotics lesson; semiotics being the discipline, as we were saying at the beginning, which is fundamentally involved and called into question in our discussion.

These days the permissiveness of communication programs and of dominant ideologies makes the development of critical awareness even more difficult, to the point that the era of the 'end of ideologies' has been proclaimed and the social systems connected with them are welcomed as acceptable forms of human relationships. Semiotics itself has largely lost its critical function, has been broken down into the various applied semiotics and has generally put itself at the service of the development of communication and, in some cases, of consensus within the established order (from marketing to election campaigns).

And yet, the need for critical awareness is growing stronger, as much as it is difficult to achieve. This is an inevitable reaction to the widespread and unbearable condition of false conscience and social alienation in the customary behavior of everyday life.

Massimo: We need cutting and editing and we need dialogue among people, interpretants and media. Cutting and editing and replay are the basis of recorded video.

The 'video essay' — I could perhaps claim to be its inventor, if not its prophet as well — as I was saying, the video essay puts together the characteristics of the 'essay' genre with the instrumentation offered by recordered video. The 'essay', both as inaugurated by Montaigne and as it was used by his successor, Bacon, is both subjective and experimental in character, useful for research and investigation, with overtones that may be more or less polemical. The essay is different from the 'treatise', which is impassive and prescriptive, as well as from 'scientific memory', which is characterized by intentional objectiveness and the search for unquestionable truth relative to the theme under consideration. The essay may also be distinguished from another genre, though it comes near to it, much used by the followers of the Enlightenment, what in English is called inquiry. This genre is taken up and used again, and not incidentally, by a contemporary author and representative of the enlightenment, Bertand Russell. Furthermore, the 'essay', *essai*, also generally expresses commitment on an ethical level, the taking up of a stand, the assumption of responsibility toward the social, contemporaneity. It privileges hypothesis with respect to prescription. The video essay is a modified version of the essay mixed with the characteristics of a report and, furthermore, is based on the contextualization of communication *in praesentia*. This allows for the dialogization denied by television communication by which we are treated as spectators and not as interlocutors in a dialogue. And this dialogical void or impossibility characterizing television communication is certainly far greater than that attributed by Plato to the written text, with which it is always possible to install some form of dialogue or live discussion, especially if an essay or dialogue. The written text is susceptible to active interpretation, and, at the same time, it can resist or confirm other interpretative possibilities with respect to that which claims to be unique, definitive, or which often, because of such an attitude, proves to be aberrant. Videorecorders present the advantage, similarly to the record or tape, of being able to go backwards, of being able to listen to or see given pieces again and to concentrate our attention on them. Thanks to such technology, sound messages and images are no longer effimeral, but have become more like written texts which can always be read once again. It's not a question of giving over to technological optimism and determinism by exalting today's technological potential, but of being capable of exploiting the dialectics between the development of productive forces and the social relationships of production discussed by Marx and thematized by Rossi-Landi as well in his studies on signs and ideologies. On one hand, the videorecorder, with its potentialities, makes us independent from television communication; on the other, it contributes to a new style in the creation of political subjectivity and antagonism, which

doesn't necessarily do away with the preceding and is closely connected to ecology, the environment, to direct administration and to localism. The video essay makes possible reports on a given issue related to concrete reality, to the determination of a place, offering the opportunity of documentation, interviews, use of images, music, etc., and with the advantage of discussion *in praesentia*, of being able to return to a sequence, of blocking a photogram, etc. The video essay is dialogical to the extent that it may be used as a basic text, a stimulus text for discussion, presenting itself as a mixture of communication *in praesentia* and at a distance. Differently from films or commentaries of sporting events, video essays are not conceived for fruition as entertainment, nor as documentaries which we could associate to a treatise. Video essays favour dialogical interaction in the direction of research, inquiry and collaboration, and of transformative interaction. Playing on the term in Italian, the video essay, 'saggio', is also *saggio*, that is, 'wise', being endowed with dialogical and pragmatic wisdom, *saggezza dialogica e pragmatica*. And in this sense, it fits in perfectly with the project for a *Semiotica ai media* (Semiotics to the media) — this being the title of a book by myself remembered above by Augusto: 'ai media', 'to the media' in the triple sense of semiotics applied to the media, semiotics that addresses media polemically and critically, but also in the sense that semiotics is flavored by interaction with mass communication, as when we say 'a pistacchio flavored icecream' ('un gelato al pistacchio'). What we are proposing, then, is a new approach to semiotics based on the primacy of pragmatics, an approach promoting a new form of dialogicality, flavored by the new techniques of communication both at a distance and *in praesentia*, or, as we were saying above: communication as a way of acting on the spot.

9.

Dialogue on Lying and Dialogue on Truth: Rhetoric Versus Argumentation

by Massimo A. Bonfantini, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

1. The Signs of Rhetorical Tricks; 2. The Information Game; 3. Rhetoric of Definition and Decodification; 4. Direct, Indirect, and Free Indirect Speech; 5. Argumentation And Simulation; 6. 'Rhetoricae Magistra' Tv

1. *The Signs of Rhetorical Tricks*

Susan: 'Rhetoric versus argumentation'. The three of us agree then that rhetoric and argumentation must be juxtapposed. Negativity of rhetoric and positivity of argumentation. This would seem to be a classical position: very much *à la* Plato. But I do agree. Indeed, it's a question of sound common sense to accuse discourse of being *rhetorical* when it is not sincere, when it's messy on a logical level, egotistic, and when in the face of all this it still expects to persuade. Rhetoric is something you hear in the texture of discourse. It's like a trick you perceive before you actually discover it. But, Massimo, do you know how to trace the signs of rhetorical tricks?

Massimo: Ah, yes, an example comes to mind: it goes back to a few years ago when Craxi was still around and publicity was favouring his political party during the administrative elections in Capitalia-Italia. At the time a poster was withdrawn because of furious protesting by femminists and democrats. It pictured a bare chested girl who says in a balloon, 'I vote PSI, and you?', while coolly sipping coca-coca from a bottle through a straw. This is a great example of the tricks of rhetoric: in this case of ideological and cheating discourse, which here consists in combining the psychogogic impression of the example (the bare chested girl) and the quickness and hidden allusiveness of mental associations. Such a strategy gives rise to suggestive and efficient reasoning which is able to resist *so long as it is not questioned*.

Augusto: What do you mean by that? Don't you think that the logic of rhetorical and/or tricked discourse is different from the logic of efficient reasoning? Or are you implying rather that in the same logical context there's some improper, uncontrolled discursive transformation with the power to seduce because of its charm and the desiderability of the conclusion it perspects?

Massimo: Hmmm! The bare chested girl comunicates by showing and therefore by offering herself, even if immaterially, appealing to the immagination and arousing apetites, while at the same time formulating an obviously rhetorical question: 'I vote PSI, and you?'. She is in fact communicating an associative-argumentative chain that runs something like this: 'I want you to vote PSI, like me, so we can be friends, o better still, *companions*; if you are my *companion*, you're also my *partner*; and I'm attractive, desirable and uninhibited; therefore if you want me and want to stay with me, even if only day-dreaming, symbolically (but which, as everyone now seems to be maintaining, is more real than reality, etc., etc.), then vote me, I mean, vote with me, vote PSI'. This kind of reasoning is fun and efficient until dialectics analyzes and ridicules it. But the rhetorical trick keeps its charm, perhaps even after it has been unmasked.

Augusto: My impression is that you're making things sound simpler than what they really are. My dear Massimo, what I mean is that rhetorical discourse as encomiastic and eulogistic discourse is not simply transgressive, fake and cheating discourse like commerical pubblicity. On the contrary, I'd say that this kind of rhetoric is an essential part of the rhetoric of institutions, the rhetoric of keeping a good and clean conscience and of defending values. This kind of rhetorical discourse safeguards the conscience with alibis, a conscience which finds justification in its appeal to axiomatic foundations, that is to say, in its appeal to identity, appurtenance, roles, the nation, or to the *esprit de corps*, to the duties of contracts and civil conventions, all of which serve to tranquillize us, to keep us in our places, protected by our reassuring guarantees and responsibilities. Rhetoric is pleasant and consoles us because it defends the 'fixing of beliefs and habits', as your Peirce says in his famous essay.

2. *The Information Game*

Susan: No doubt rhetoric as false conscience consists in not questionning dogmas and idola, but if anything in elaborating on them. And my impression is that rhetoric of the market and of consumption, of commercial publicity, leads us through chatter to being satisfied with daydreams, while the monologic propaganda of institutions promises salvation of the soul through deduction.

Augusto: Yes. But we musn't forget that rhetorical devices are part of the information game: they have a part in winning consensus for stereotypes, in putting together stories, in presenting facts in order to make them acceptable.

It would seem that information with no other aim beyond informing, in other words, that information for the sake of informing, is wonderful, a noble mission. But, in truth, what this really means is that the sole end of information is to reproduce the information process

through the consumption of information itself. As Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's principle of homology teaches us, information for the sake of information is no less than the other face of production for the sake of production.

Massimo: In the information sphere and in mass communication generally, rhetoric resorts to its habitual artifices, those we mentioned in relation to publicity and propaganda favoring given values and official institutions. The main device is that of *fixation*, which largely exploits the fascination of repetition. It consists in offering sense for the sake of consumption and not just for contemplation, choice and discussion. The facts are proposed to the public like pills and monotonous hamburgers served at Macdonalds; they're well packed into categories and frames; taste in publicity 'must never be questioned'...

Susan: Sorry Massimo if I interrupt and comment, and, maybe, who knows, even clarify what you're saying to yourself by remembering something that you said and wrote yourself. Well then, as to Plato, you once wrote, and have since repeated many times, that the extroadinary thing about his texts, at least his better ones, is the open harmony deriving from the interweaving: firstly, of dialogic displacement; secondly, of mythical interpretation or narrative; thirdly, of dialectic or logico-inferential skepsis. I believe that these three elements help to argument discourse. I also believe that in the three types of rhetorical discourse they tend to disappear: in apologetic discourse, dialogue is lacking; in pubblicity, the development of inferentiality is lacking; in information, narration is lacking: if it is present it is deprived of plots and adventures, reduced to the skeleton of a fabula without adornments.

Augusto: Ah, Ah! *A' la* Massimo better than Massimo, *à la* MAB better than MAB! I'll thank Susan for you, since you seem to be in a bit of a daze. But maybe you're thinking after all. I'll take advantage and distract you both for a moment from this terrible classificatory triadomania at least, which I would go as far as saying is hyper-Peircean. What I want to do is lead you to the idea of unity, allow me this as a personal request, just this once. More exactly, I want you to reflect on the style that unites what are presumably three different tyes of rhetoric. In the last analysis, they are three styles of discourse at a distance, oriented from one to many. Therefore, they are modelled according to the logic of serial production and information. The aim of this kind of rhetoric is to achieve homologized, increasingly speedy and repetetive consumer behaviour: consumption of homologized news and information; of merchandise and fashion, which defer to each other, continuously citing and taking each other up again in monotonous alternation; consumption of values and attitudes with a tendency to diverge less and less. This is a trap we want to escape from, one day or another we ought to stop the productive cycle of daily information: *get uninformed and reflect.*

3. *Rhetoric of Definition and Decodification*

Massimo: But Augusto we already have openings for reflexive and antagonistic communication, at least to some extent, I'm thinking of dialogue in presence: as I usually like to say, *communicating as a means of acting on the spot*. And I'd like to...

Susan: Massimo I love interrupting you and can't stop myself from doing it again. A part from anything else it's a way of not loosing sight of our critique of rhetoric. And maybe because I'm a female and have seven lives and seven forms of intelligence like cats, not like you males that can only cope with one problem at a time, I'd like our critique of rhetoric to be articulate and multifarious, and not reduced to unity. Well then, what I wanted to say is that rhetoric also has a part in the sciences and in definitions.

An example of the rhetoric of definition is proposed by Rossi-Landi quoting from Benedetto Croce's definitions of art: '*Art is intuition* or *sentiment enclosed in an image* or a *particular theoretical moment of the spirit'*. A fake dialogue between the interpreted sign and the interpretant is established between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, and this implies that certain terms considered as being well known dominate over unknown terms in need of a definition. Croce introduced the exchange value 'art as intuition, etc.' into the linguistic market, and the Croceans were then able to write, 'art, as we know, is intuition'.

Augusto: Yes, but as we know the rhetorical trick consists in producing, repeating, imposing convenient stereotypes for the sake of market consumption. We could probably claim that insofar as it reduces interpretation to decodification, *code semiotics* is a form of rhetoric: it uses the rhetorical trick of stopping deferral from one interpretant to another, while isolating and exalting just a small piece of the process. On the other hand, *interpretation semiotics* is grounded in the principle of aperture and adventure of dialogues and arguments.

Massimo: Nor does the *semiotics of sense production* as theorized by Kristeva and others leave room for argumentation, as I have already demonstated in my paper on *Three tendencies in twentieth century semiotics*. What I mean is it doesn't leave room for the *intrinsic* dialogicality of argumentation. It is only in the pragmaticist perspective of interpretation semiotics that sense is never copied nor unveiled, but, rather, is continuosly regenerated through argumentative adaptations and improvements. It's important — a question of ethics a part from anything else — for us to clearly bear in mind that sense, in comunication and in life, is not and must never be what already exists, but a form of utopia left to inventiveness.

4. *Direct, Indirect and Free Indirect Speech*

Susan: This reminds me of Vailati who in a letter to Victoria Welby insists on the usefulness of pedagogical expedients as a way of favouring critical and inventive dialogue. He

says that 'to caricature' is one of the most effective pedagogical tricks at our disposal: being a matter of detecting the weak points of a discourse by using the word of others and making it ring with the voice of another who is making fun of it, parodies it. This is an ambiguous form of reported speech which is neither direct speech, nor comment on indirect discourse, but free indirect discourse.

Ponzio: Good Susan! On the other hand, as from studies on Flaubert's writings, in particular *Madame Bovary*, critical semiotics of the literary text has for some time rightly made a point of underlining, of underlining what? Well, ambivalence and ambiguity, causing sea-sickness in the reader resulting from skilful use of free indirect discourse. Who's speaking? Emma, Rodolphe, Flaubert? Which one of the three? All the three of them together? On examining discourses and texts it becomes obvious that not only must we pass from analytics to dialectics but also from dialectics to dialogics. If we proceed like this we'll capture the specific dialogicality of all discourses. Now Bakhtin ...

Massimo: All the same, Augusto, my impression is that when Bakhtin polemicizes against the single idealisitic consciousness or the unity of consciousness, he over does it a bit, insisting on this concept almost monologically, and ends up throwing out the baby with the Hegelian dirty water. The baby of intentionality: the forms of *a priori*, of universal and constant operations, that is, exactly what puts us into the position of comparing and discovering differences. Unity and difference are opposed and at the same time imply each other: they are present in each other. Unity cannot exist without multiplicity. Nor can multiplicity exist without unity.

Augusto: Yes, you might have a point there. And perhaps this is how Plato's reply should be understood. But talking about dialogue and going back to Bakhtin I'm convinced that, even if you think he exaggerates, his influence is decisive. Nowadays, formal, external dialogue among media is not important. What we must stimulate is internal dialogue.

It's a matter of emphasizing and reinforcing the internal dialogic character of our own points of view, of showing up the ambiguity of the meanings to which we entrust our certainties, of evidencing the internal dialogicality inside the very words we use. Dialogue is structural to discourse, ensuing from the gap between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign, a gap which no homologizing ideology could ever annul. And because of this dialogue is not the outcome of initiative taken by separate subjects but the condition itself for the subject to exist.

5. *Argumentation and Simulation*

Susan: On the other hand, my impression is that the three of us in each of our three three-voiced dialogues, this being the third of the series — as I was saying, the three of us together always, and you two *seniores*, Augusto and Massimo, well, we've always, from the times of your two-voiced *Dialogo sui dialoghi* first version, Cadenabbia, October 1982 — as I was saying then, we've always insisted on the thesis that real dialogue, whether among various interlocutors or within a single consciousness, is genuine and antirhetorical when it implies discussion and debate, that is to say, when it is argumented, and when it appeals to *the verosimilar*. This type of dialogue is careful to stop and as it were to simulate the reality of experience. Would you agree that contrary to rhetoric which favours *dissimulation,* we dialogicians and argumentators are for *simulation?*

Massimo: Quite frankly no, Susan. As already anticipated in my presentation — in Bari and in Milan — of the volume *Menzogna e simulazione*, a collective international enterprize, I now tend to consider this title as expressing an hendiadys. In other words, all lies are simulations because they seem to be like the facts they are covering and completely distorting; and all simulations, exactly because they're verisimilar, because they copy but impoverish the reality of experience, are lies, as Plato has already taught us. Infact, simulation is not an active interpretation with the aim of transforming according to some project. The cult of computerological simulations is typical of the repetitive and inert culture of the postmodern: expression of putrefying capitalism.

Susan: You're not convincing Massimo. I agree that 'simulation' is a double word and even more so than others. But as a great supporter and innovater of icons and abductions you cannot refuse to allow that simulations, in metaphors and models, are the basis of inventions and projects. The relationship between argumentation and the verosimilar is also determined by the fact that, as amply demonstrated by Welby, 'one of the most splendid of all our intellectual instruments' is the 'image or the figure' (Welby 1911, 1985[2]: 13). Its not an illusory question of eliminating figurative or metaphorical discourse to the advantage of so-called literal discourse, but of identifying and eliminating inadequate images that mystify relationships between things and distort our reasoning. 'We need', says Welby, 'a linguistic oculist to restore lost focussing power, to bring our images back to reality by some normalizing kind of lens' (cit.: 16).

Augusto: With all my affection for you, Susan, and my respects for your Victoria Lady Welby, this 'normalizing lent' worries me a bit. It reminds of the normalizing politics in educational discourse patronized by the European Commission. For example, in the *Green book on innovation*. Here, the only reference for innovation is the market, and the innovative character of the product is made to consist in its capacity to destroy products that are similar and that precede it on the market. An example: the compact disk thanks to which traditional

records are now obsolete and useless, together with the rest of the stereo. And this has happened over a very short period of time, which is exactly what happened with the old gramophone. The relationship between inventiveness and destruction is revealing for anyone wanting to understand the 'ideologics' of todays society.

Massimo, as your club Psomega studies innovation and inventiveness, why don't you dedicate a seminar to demystifying the concept of 'innovation' circulating in Europe today. I'd be very happy to participate.

Massimo: Well, yes, no doubt... There's innovation and innovation. There are many capitalistic innovations that are wholly repetetive. Small variations in the absolute constancy of functions and effects. Take the case of the automobile. It has succeeded in a century to eliminate trams, the latter being both a far more civil and refined invention and far more favourable for socializing. And in spite of its devastating effect on the environment and on the quality of life, the automobile is now trying to get rid of trains in Europe as well. Yes indeed, my friend, we'll organize these seminars in Milan and in Lugano too...

Susan: Ah yes, my dear straying utopians. I stand with Victoria with my feet firmly on the ground, and to think that truth is the sister of verosimilitude. And now back to order and to our specific subject. Well then, two questions come to the fore at this stage: on a formal level, one concerns the way we can pick out the tricks used by false reasoning to seem true or at least valid and acceptable; the other concerns the possibility of finding means, in the sense also of discourse genres or, more generally, semiotic genres, which allow for well grounded and critical argumentation.

Augusto: As to the first question, a good basis and repertoire to begin with is no doubt Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tyteca's famous treatise on argumentation. But I wish to recall yet another, more ancient, work which I have studied very closely — Peter of Spain's *Tractatus or Summule logicales*. By comparison with other Medieval books in logic, it has the merit of presenting itself as a system of definitions and dialectical rules, without involving a particular metaphysics. To deal with the first question posed by Susan, we'd start well by taking a close look at book VII, entitled *Fallacies*.

Massimo: The general and fundamental fallacy consists in taking or letting pass as a necessary *deduction*, in good or bad faith, what is no less than an *abduction* or more or less probable hypothesis. But once we have demystified discourse and once we have explicited all transformations, because ideology and rhetoric are deeply rooted in the quick, implicit and uncontrolled character of transformations, like the tricks of magicians, ..., yes, as I was saying once we've done this work *à la* Russell — good then, as Peirce warns and demonstrates irrevocably in *Thought-sign-man*, that is, in his important essay of '68, which we have

translated and commented in the volume *Semiotica* —, the form of fallacious reasoning, reasoning by error, rhetorical falseness or madness, whatever the case may be, is absolutely no different from the form of valid reasoning. Error and madness do not lie in the *form*. We cannot avoid connecting thoughts in a perfect *form.* The error lies in maniac and consolatory fixation. In sticking to a single hypothesis without ever changing. Well then: when is an argument ideological, rhetorical, false? When accepting it implies being content with things as they are. When it gets swamped in repetition. It doesn't push you to changing the world, to putting it to trial in praxis. If reasoning does not need you, your practices, your action, but asks you only to be believed because that way everybody is happy, good then, that's when it's false. On the other hand, this is in perfect accord with the pragmatic maxim.

6. "Rhetoricae magistra" *TV*

Susan: Well then, if this is the criterion, all media discourse, especially on TV, is false, because it doessn't call for action. All it wants is to be believed: money, votes, conformity.

Augusto: From the Baudrillard of *Critique du l'economie politique du signe* to our master Rossi-Landi, a whole tradition in humanistic and Marxist critique of media moves in this direction...

Susan: Yes, well, if I'm not mistaken in the last dialogue of the three included in *I tre dialoghi della menzogna e della verità,* the one where I too have a part, *Morte TV: nascita del video!,* Massimo proposes his hypothesis of a weapon against television: a kind of spiritual pick-lock inside the closed circuits of media; a genre he has invented, or at least he invented the name. I'm referring to his video-essay which offers an opening against television.

Massimo: The important thing is to understand that video-essays belong to a genre that goes *against* television: and is not *inside* television in the sense of being *with* television. Video-essays are communicated in cassettes through a monitor, through the television video, but not through the television communicative game: effemeral and irreversible transmission, one-to-many, on the basis of an imposed palimpsest. The video-essay, in its currently most common widespread use, which is domestic and private, is like a book or music on tape, something you choose by buying it or reproducing it, that you can study and study over and over again, as you please: going backwards, testing associations, stopping the tape. So, information is sedimented and calls you to dialogue: to discussion and inventive research. Scholars and enthusiasts have been studying film in this way for some time now. And the younger generations are now beginning to open their eyes to twentieth century history.

It's time we understand that a special social use of video-essays is imminent, involving denunciation, criticism, testimonies that move us to action. Video-essays, in the first place, act

as a stimulus text for public discussions in cultural circles and in schools; and secondly, in the places of administrative and political discussions and decisions. I'm thinking of pamphlets on video. But we'll talk more diffusely and more specifically about the semiotic theory, politics and esthetics of the video-essay some other time.

10.

Intercultural Communication – a Mystification of Capitalist Communication-Production

by Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio

1. Premiss; 2. Translation in Today's Capitalist Global Communication World; 3. Communication as Translation for Others, Reconstruction with Others, and Restitution to Others

1. *Premiss*

What goes under the name of *globalization* is no more than what we propose to call communication-production, a new phase in social reproduction controlling communication today. Communication is production: no doubt what remains is the old production system, its characteristic modality of exploitation through paid labour, the realization of increasing profits by a minority that is ever more reduced, profit at all costs, even at the cost of destroying the ecological environment, of producing underdevelopment beyond the margins of survival, of resorting to war as a solution to international conflict.

This means that the centre (which is ever more degraded and dehumanized) continues to dominate over peripheries, such that transformation in a globalising world is no more that the adaptation of dominion in terms of a "glocalising world". This phase in social reproduction is widely recognized as post-, with its pas-partout term "cultural interaction" which also applies to translation. It presents itself as globalization, interculturalism, hybridization, contamination, post-capitalism, post-colonialism, post-apartheid, and is what we are proposing to call *communication-production*.

Communication in this situation is not only the intermediary phase between production and consumption in the reproduction process. Not only is exchange, that is, the circulation of merchandise, communication, but production and consumption are also communication. In other words, not only does the exchange phase call for communication, but so does the production phase – more precisely, production depends on communication that is ever more extended and global permitting exploitation of low cost labour at a world level. In addition to this, communication today avails itself of communication channels that can easily cross through space and time, such as oilpipes and electronic devices.

In spite of multinationals, the amplification of communication scenarios, encounter among different cultures, foreignisation, we are faced by the same misery: the realization of profit by a few at the expense of the many, which in "globalization" are on the increase: exploitation is spreading at a world level because global communication-production is imposing itself at a world level as the only form of production possible.

To make such a claim means in itself to work in terms of translation. The translator, the interpreter, the interculturalist today cannot prescind from the situation of global communication-production as we are describing it, if the intention is to impede (in different forms, with different means and effects) that translation emanating from the *little* centre of communication control, with its so-called "development areas" – the target in interlingual and intercultural translation –, should do violence to the *big*, proletarianized, exploited periphery with its so called "underdevelopment areas" – the peripheral source in interlingual and intercultural translation.

1. *Translation in Today's Capitalist Global Communication World*

Production today is characterised by the industrial revolution of automation, globalisation of communication and universalisation of the market. Universalisation is not only a quantitative fact of expansion, but above all qualitative transformation represented by the fact that anything can be translated into merchandise. Communication today is no longer just an intermediate phase in the reproductive cycle (production, exchange, consumption). Far more radically, communication now represents the constitutive modality of production and consumption processes themselves. Not only does the *exchange* phase involve communication, but *production* and *consumption* as well converge with communication. So the whole reproductive cycle is communication. This phase in capitalist reproduction can be characterised as the '*communication-production' phase*.

The problem of translation and cultural interaction in the so-called "post" querelle is also a problem of communication. Translational processes and cultural interaction are connected with language, with speech understood as work, trade and consumption in the terms analysed by Ferruccio RossiLandi (see his *Language as Work and Trade*, 1968, Eng. trans. 1983). Language as communication and production, the productive character of speech enters todays' global communication-production cycle and serves it without asking questions. Our interest here on this particular issue is neither of the sociological nor of the translatological orders, it is not limited to a matter of professional choice. On the contrar, we are specifically

concerned with the broader, overall issue of the inevitable connection between sign and ideology. This is what needs to be underlined and understood, that is, the fact that the connection between signs and ideology, signs and values in the human world cannot be escaped and consequently, for the sake of communication and its health, must be dealt with scientifically and without mystifications.

Sign systems are the material of social reproduction just as human behavior is sign behavior, therefore signifying behavior, insofar as human behavior is social. This is to say that behavior is programmed behavior, whether conscious or unconscious, and develops according to social programs. What is a program? A program regulates behavior that is established socially. The individual may or may not be aware that behavior is organized socially, but in any case as a social being the individual behaves according to programs. At this point, a distinction may be drawn between the terms 'program' properly understood, 'project,' and 'plan': a program is part of project, and a project is part of a plan. A plan is what we normally call ideology. With the Italian philosopher and semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi we may define ideology as a social plan with given social interests, models, goals, and perspectives. A given ideology is always connected with the interests of a given social group. That our behavior is programmed behavior means that it is part of the larger picture, as in a series of concentric circles. Consequently, spontaneous or natural behavior does not exist in the human world, if not as a mystification. Human behavior is programmed behavior. And the idea that ideology has come to an end is only an ideological illusion, itself ideology connected with the spread of a given ideology that has become dominant. The social sign systems that regulate individual behavior are pseudo-totalities which function as pieces in larger totalities. Consequently, all social programs are controlled by a higher social level. The social interests of given groups, that are more or less extended, are connected with verbal and nonverbal communication programs, which are part given social projects, which in turn are part of given social plans.

This approach puts us in a position to deal with the problem of the conditions of power, that is, the conditions that make control over human behavior possible in politically defined situations. This is the problem of ideology as social planning (see Rossi-Landi 1990, 1994). The processes of the production and circulation of signs are also the processes of the production and circulation of ideologies. As we progress from the smaller programs of pseudo-totalities to larger programs, projects, and plans to which pseudo-totalities belong, we obtain a general overview of the control mechanisms that behavioral programs exert upon each other concentrically. The processes involved are mostly retroactive and not at all unidirectional (that is, not mechanical processes of cause and effect, but dialectical processes, or in the terminology

of engineering, feedback processes). And what is important to underline from our own point of view is that this whole system coincides with the general communication system. Whoever best controls this system, or at least consistent parts of it, is in the most favorable position to reach a situation of hegemony and power.

In the era of globalization of market and capital, dominant ideology converges with the logic itself of social reality, to the point that we can speak of the 'ideo-logic' rather than the logic – to which it corresponds – of social reality.

In all societies power has always been reached, organized and reproduced by controlling the communication network. However, the extent to which this is true has only become clear to us today, and indeed is today ever more the case. Hegemony in the communication-production phase is not the result of possessing things, but is connected with controlling communication relations, exchange relations at the level of market and production. The ruling class is specified as such in terms of control over communication.

Today grand ideologic narrative discourses are in crisis. They have been replaced by ideology, that is, the *ideo-logic* of the communication-production system. We can only understand the role of interlingual and intercultural translation today in light of the connection between signs and the ideo-logic of the social reproduction system. The whole system of social reproduction is made possible by communication and, therefore, by signs, verbal and nonverbal signs. Intersemiotic, interlingual and endolingual translations are a constituent part of the social structures and processes. Such an approach to the question of translation and to the role of the translator goes beyond generic terms including, for example, cultural interaction, hybridity, domestication, contamination of the different post- conceptions, evidencing the effective connection between communication, ideology and the presentday production system. To examine the ideologic value of translation across different linguistic and cultural worlds in order to contribute to global communication functional to the market and the reproducion cycle of production, means to consider communication not only in relation to the systems of sign exchange, but also to the systems of sign production and consumption.

Translation belongs to global communication and, consequently, it feels the effects of its characteristics and functions. Global communication is *global* not only in the sense that it has expanded over the whole planet but also in the sense that it adheres to the world, relates to the world as it is, and contributes to reproduce this world as it is. Communication-production is communication of this world. Communication and reality, communication and being, coincide. Realism in politics also implies the *extrema ratio* of war, as dictated by the strict law of the force of things. Realistic politics as such is the only kind of politics appropriate to global

communication, to present-day communication-production. And this aspect of political-ideological communication is reflected in the function of translation in "cultural interaction". An important factor in cultural interaction is the relation between the language and culture of the target centre, on the one hand, and the language and culture of the peripheral source, on the other.

Persistence of communication-production, in spite of all posts-, is *persistence of the same social system* over the planet with its continual adjustments and metamorphoses functional to its own perseverance (think of so-called post-apartheid in this country); and translation is a decisive instrument for this target. World planning is based on the productive character of communication, and on identification of communication with being in social reproduction today. But this project is also based on the fact that control over social reproduction can only be achieved by controlling communication. A critical reflection on the processes of translation among languages, cultures, and values, must consider this fundamental aspect of translative processes and explicate it in its different aspects, tasks, and targets. In this sense, reflection on translation and its functions in cultural communication implies a critical view of the reproduction of communication-production.

To preserve the presentday system of communication-production is destructive. Communication-production is communication for communication, production for production, to the detriment of invention, innovation, re-planning, and to the detriment of the recognition of the rights of others, of differences. Reproduction of communication-production endangers the existence of man, not only his existence as an intelligent being, the preservation and expansion of his intellectual faculties, his inventive capacity, but it also endangers his existence as a living being, his health and survival. The preservation, reinforcement and expansion of today's social system, that is, communication-production, at all costs, is a lethal threat to life over the whole planet: think of the ozone hole, ecological disasters caused by normal reproduction cycles, as well as exceptional disasters. 'Normal' disasters include disasters connected with the communication-production of war, to which the translation device contributes by translating the language of war and its argumentations, its rhetoric and justifications.

2. *Communication as Translation for Others, Reconstruction with Others, and Restitution to Others*

As has often occurred in the course of history, presentday institutions coexist as integral parts of social life, but in fact derive from earlier economic, social and cultural systems with

their stereotypes and ideologies. This is also true of such concepts as identity and difference together with the rules and norms that accompany them. Translation (theory and practice) is implied in the question of identity and difference. And the risk that translation runs in the present day and age is that of contributing to homologating identities and differences, linguistic and cultural identities and differences, of contributing to their negation and favouring the few and the survival of not many more. But what does identity and difference mean? How do they relate to signs?

"Signs make difference". "Difference makes signs". These two statements tell of a relation between "signs" and "difference". However the relation is neither of symmetry nor of reciprocity, as may seem at first sight.

In the first statement the term "difference" only indicates a *state*, instead, in the second case it also indicates a *process*.

In the conception of Charles S. Peirce the sign *stat pro aliquo* and is understood in terms of *interpretation*. His approach shows how the sign is made of difference. Difference here has at least two meanings.

'Difference' may be understood in the sense of *differing from* other signs. 'Difference' may also be understood in the sense of *deferral*. The sign is made of difference also in the sense of differing understood as *deferral*. The sign refers to or defers to another sign which acts as its interpretant. In this case, the sign is not merely a static fact of pre-established relationships, but a *process of deferral*, an infinite process of deferrals, says Peirce, from one interpretant to another.

Before Jacques Derrida replaced the 'e' with an 'a' in the French word *différance* to indicate the process of deferral, Peirce had already conveyed the dynamical sense of difference, that is, of deferral among signs with his idea of *infinite semiosis*. Deferral among sign and interpretant is understood in the dialogical terms of question and answer: the interpretant responds to the sign, is an answer to it, an answer to the sign that presents itself as a question, which as such sets clear limits to interpretation, according to a dialogical relation that is open and at once tied to or restrained by the irreducible otherness of its terms.

That the two statements "signs make difference" and "difference makes signs" are not symmetrical, nor imply each other reciprocally, given that in the first case 'difference' indicates a state and in the second a process, is also evidenced by the fact in the first case 'difference' may be replaced with 'identity', while this is not true in the second case.

"Sign makes difference" may be equalled to "signs makes identity". In fact, the static sense of difference implies the interpretation of difference as "identity".

On the contrary, "difference makes signs" does not mean "identity makes signs". This is a statement that not only Peirce would not accept, but not even Saussure, nor could it find a place in any semiotic conception worthy of that name.

The sign resists identity, is refractory to difference understood as a state, and instead flourishes in deferral, in infinite deferral. Yet, according to the first statement, "signs make difference", understood as "signs make identity", signs most ironically seem to make difference as a state, as identity.

Therefore, we can speak of an abnormal, an aberrant use of signs, in the sense that they are used to 'make' difference understood as identity.

However, the sign is vowed to difference, understood as shift, deferral, dialogical opening, otherness. Difference that makes signs is *otherness*; difference thus understood distinguishes the sign from the static nature, univocality, and monologism of the signal, opening the sign to infinite semiosis. Signs that make difference are signs reduced to the status of signals, that lose their capacity for deferral. Such use of signs is reductive given that they are used as signals. Signs used to make difference are used abusively, aberrantly with respect to semiosis in general. In fact, such use blocks deferral, relating signs to static difference, difference understood as identity, and not to difference understood as an open process, as dialogical movement, as otherness.

Difference as identity is *indifferent difference*, the type of difference attached to functions and roles required by a closed universe of discourse, difference that only foresees *alternatives* and excludes *difference as otherness*.

Difference as otherness is unindifferent difference, difference as involvement and participation with other differences. Difference as otherness is not difference as *being otherwise*, which is characteristic of alternatives, but rather it is difference understood as *deferral beyond the identity of being, whether individual or collective*.

All cultures may use signs to establish differences with respect to other cultures, to establish identities, to determine a culture's identity and juxtapose it to others. On the other hand, all cultures may employ these differences to defer their signs as well as the signs of others. In this case cultures recognize the capacity for *interrogative intonation* (Bakhtin) in their signs. Insofar as they are signs such signs interrogate other interpretants, in turn signs, in turn a question in a *dialogue*. The dialogic dialectics of this type of interaction represents the only possibility of escape from relativism as well as from dogmatism, both expressions of the failure to recognize and the tendency to overpower the other.

Translation is a modelling device which depends on the culture it belongs to, with its conception of identity and difference. But reflection on the question of translation can be oriented in the sense of developing a critical perspective on the conception of difference and its relation to signs. Consequently, the double sense according to which we may understand the relation between signs and difference can be specified in relation to the conception of translation in one sense or in the other: according to dominant ideology, or to the capacity for critiquing dominant ideology.

Today's sign universe as characterized by global communication tends to homologate, that is, to level and eliminate differences. This ensues in a sense of frustration for identities and differences which, as a result, become ever more obstinate in the will to assert themselves and prevail over other identities and other differences, in the will to affirm their separation, their identity-difference which is denied. Consequently, reciprocal indifference among differences is transformed into hostility and conflict towards whomever is different, the stranger.

In what signs can differences be traced? Consider that signs have now entered the circuits of global communication and circulate on the world market (which is connected to global communication), whose vocation is to cancel differences.

Differences can only be traced in the past; the present cancels them. That which may unite and differentiate and therefore identify is a common past: religion, language, territorial distribution, origin, descendency, roots, blood, colour of the skin, etc.

Identity looks for the possibility of asserting itself in that which may constitute difference, whether in the name of some historical residue or "natural" characteristic: tradition, habit, monuments, witnesses to a cultural past, language and dialect, religion, ethnic group.

It is significant that churches, museums, ruins, the historical parts of a city are the only characterizing elements, elements of identification of urban space which otherwise is anonymous and indistinct with respect to other urban spaces in today's global communication world.

Signs of identity are trapped between *indifference* and *mummified difference*.

On the basis of identities fixed in this way, what has now become permeable in terms of national territory, urban space, suburbs, neighbourhoods, work-place and everyday life, can now be kept at a distance to varying degrees of abjection – ranging from hatred to so-called tolerance. The link to identity is given by religious, ethnic, linguistic differences, cultural past, and so forth.

The signs of the *closed community*, of *community identity*, signs of the "small experience" may be counteracted by signs of the "great experience" (Bakhtin) which flourish in

dialogical deferral. Thanks to the processes of deferral these signs are part of the *open community*, participating in terms of fundamental "interconnection with the other" (Levinas), therefore involvement and irrevocable responsibility for others, unindifferent difference.

That which unites each and every one of us to every other is otherness, which cannot be reduced to identity, whether of the individual or of the collectivity, which cannot be reduced to difference connected to a genre of any sort. This condition of not belonging, of reciprocal strangeness is what unites us all in the relation of unindifference towards each other. No difference based on closed identity with its identity interests can cancel the essential condition of reciprocal strangeness, reciprocal otherness, as much as identity and identity interests may be indifferent to the difference of single individuals, as much as to other identity differences, to the very point of overpowering them.

Global communication is making the signs of difference obsolete, it is rendering the aberrant use of signs to make difference ever more anachronistic and delusory. *Today's social reproduction system is the most recent social form in which signs make difference.* But the paradox is that the system itself is making it impossible to use signs in this sense.

We believe that translation – translation theory as much as translation practice – conceived in terms of translation for others, reconstruction with others and restitution to others can contribute to recovering the condition of communication among differences, differences that are not indifferent to each other, mutually unindifferent differences. Intercultural translation can contribute to interconnection and intercorporeity at a planetary level, beyond the limits of closed communities, of communities characterized by walls, boundaries and *fear of the other*, instead of *fear for the other*. In this way, translation can contribute to the condition of planetary interconnection, where there are no closed communities. Charles Morris, the twentieth century semiotician from the United States of America, in his early book of 1948, eloquently titled *The Open Self*, had already warned us against the dangers for the whole of humanity of building closed communities. For the health of semiosis and of life, human and non-human, we must persist in building communities made of signs that are different, but without the signs of difference in the sense of signs that make and mark difference, that fix and freeze difference, with its walls and barriers. Healthy humanity is humanity without the signs of property, territory, ownership, inequality, roots, that is, without closed identities. This is what "post" should really mean.

11.

Rhetoric, Social Alienation and Semioethics in Global Communication

by Susan Petrilli

> The increase in communication may not only fail to give agreement in valuations and modes of conduct but may actually be used to increase conflict, competitiveness and slavery. For sharing a language with other persons provides the subtlest and most powerful of all tools for controlling the behavior of these other persons to one's advantage – for stirring up rivalries, advancing one's own goals, exploiting others. Modern propaganda is the witness to this within existing nations; a world language would make the same phenomena possible over the earth as a whole. And semiotic itself, as it develops, will be subject to the same kind of utilization by individuals and groups for the control of other individuals and groups in terms of self-interest.
>
> […] If one of the practical tasks of the theory of signs is to further co-operative behavior, another complementary and equally insistent task is to so incite and fortify the individual that he keeps his own creative integrity in the face of the powerful forces in the modern world that tend to reduce him to a puppet pulled by the socially controlled strings of communication. (Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior*, 1946, in Morris, 1971: 293-294)

1. *Premiss*

In this lesson a distinction is made between rhetoric and argumentation. By contrast to argumentation, rhetoric is here understood as persuasive discourse aiming to deceive. Pressing examples of rhetoric abound in political discourse, mass-media communication and publicity. Through rhetoric, publicity imposes dominant ideology. But rhetoric that deceives is related to ideology understood in a narrow sense, and is deceptive only if it is not questioned. Rhetoric is related to strategies for keeping a clean conscience, to the official discourse of institutions and is committed to defending dominant ideology. A clean conscience resorts to alibis and is based on the logic of identity, the order of discourse, the logic of roles with their limited responsibilities, on unquestioning obedience to the social order. Rhetoric contributes to the necessary conditions for maintaining a clean conscience and limited responsibilities. In the last analysis it flourishes on indifference to the other. As such it emerges as an effective means of

imposing dominant ideology and keeping the masses under control in submission to the dominant social order.

Human behaviour is sign behaviour and ideological behaviour, where "ideology" is now understood in a broad sense. The expression "ideology" in this sense indicates the fact that human behaviour is never neutral, but rather is always permeated with values and regulated by social programs. As such human behaviour calls for analysis from the perspective of the interrelation between sign theory, communication theory and value theory. Furthermore, a semiotic approach to the problem of ideology and social planning must keep account of the dialogic relation with the other.

Dialogism is the condition for an approach that is at once global and detotalized, capable of opening to the other, of involvement with the other, of listening and critique. In its current phase of socio-economic development, semiotics understood as so-called "global semiotics" (Sebeok 2001) can contribute to developing the humanism of otherness (as against the humanism of identity). In fact, global semiotics evidences the extension and consistency of the sign network interconnecting each human being to every other on a global level.

Beyond global semiotics, the proposal of "semioethics" (Petrilli & Ponzio, 2003) underlines the need to develop the capacity for critique and is oriented by the logic of otherness, of the relation to the other, with a special vocation for evidencing sign networks where it seemed there were none. For the health of semiosis, which from a global semiotic perspective converges with life, relations with the other are structured by the logic of dialogic intercorporeity and interconnectedness, unindifferent difference, listening, hospitality, unlimited responsibility. Only on the basis of such values is it possible to create sustainable life conditions for all life forms on Earth, human and nonhuman.

The expression "global communication" is included in the title of this lesson and is intended to refer to the situation we live in today, in contemporaneity, today's world. I distinguish between rhetoric, on the one hand, and argumentation, on the other. If we imagine two columns, on the side of rhetoric we have the art of persuasion, deceptive discourse, dominant ideology, limited responsibility (by comparison to unlimited responsibility). Rhetoric involves keeping a clean conscience on the basis of recourse to alibis, even if unconsciously. In the last analysis, rhetoric is based on the "logic of identity," where this expression is understood in a negative sense, as closed identity, as identity which is closed in upon its own short-sighted, egotistic interests, completely indifferent to the other, to the need for listening and hospitality and welcoming the other. In what follows, I distinguish rhetoric understood in these terms from argumentation. By contrast with rhetoric, argumentation is based on the logic

of otherness, of dialogue and opening towards the other, where dialogue is understood not necessarily as speaking, but in the biosemiosic sense of dialogism, that is, of dialogic interconnection with the other, and therefore of listening to the other, the welcome. Before we speak we need to listen, but not only. Listening is not external to the word, rather it is structural to it; the word as a live word is listening, hospitality, opening to the other. With reference to the second imaginary column, argumentation is associated with what has been indicated by Mikhail M. Bakhtin as "substantial dialogue," and "responsive understanding,' by contrast with "formal dialogue," and is based on creative listening, the capacity for interrogation, and critique, that is, dialogic critique and response to the other (cf. Ponzio and Petrilli 2008).

2. *Rhetoric versus argumentation*

Rhetoric and argumentation are juxtaposed: negativity of rhetoric and positivity of argumentation. This would seem to be a classical position: very much *à la* Plato. But to describe discourse as *rhetorical* when it is not sincere is also a question of common sense. Discourse sounds rhetorical when it is unclear and confused in terms of logic, when it is egotistic in ethical terms, and despite this, or, rather, precisely because of this, it expects to persuade. Rhetoric resounds in the grain of discourse as an attempt to deceive and is perceived as such before it is actually understood for what it is. In fact, rhetoric as we are describing it is ideological discourse in a narrow sense, and therefore deceptive discourse.

But what are the signs of deceptive rhetoric? Rhetorical discourse exploits the immediacy and allusiveness of mental association, giving rise to inferential processes that are suggestive and effective, though this type of discourse can only deceive *if it is not questioned*. Is the logic of rhetorical discourse different from the logic of straightforward reasoning?, do these different discourses have the same logical structure?, what makes the difference between the two types of discourse? Is rhetorical discourse simply manipulative discourse aiming to seduce by making false promises? In truth, this is an oversimplification. For example, when rhetorical discourse is encomiastic, eulogistic, that is, praising discourse, it is not only deceptive, like publicity. Encomiastic, eulogistic discourse is structural to the rhetoric of institutions which aims to defend dominant ideology, dominant values and keep a clean conscience by providing it with alibis.

To keep a "clean conscience" involves appealing to alibis and finding justification in axiomatic foundations, in the logic of identity, of belonging, in roles regulated by such logic. The logic of identity leads to undersigning the concepts of nation, *esprit de corps*, duty, etc.

established with reference to contracts and civil accords. By guaranteeing rights and establishing duties and responsibilities – limited responsibilities –, such concepts are part of strategies of reassurance that keep the masses happy and under control, in their places. Rhetoric connected with the market, the ideology of consumption, with publicity causes people to daydream, creating a sense of satisfaction and happiness. Indeed, rhetoric can be pleasant and consolatory when it safeguards "beliefs and habits," as says Charles S. Peirce in his renowned essay, "The Fixation of Belief" (*CP* 5.358-387). Understood as "false conscience," rhetoric confirms and exploits dogmas and idola for precise ends, instead of questioning them. And in fact as anticipated above, deceptive rhetoric can only prevail if it is not interrogated. The rhetoric of propaganda connected with institutions promises, as inferred on the basis of recourse to stereotypes, to defend and safeguard the masses. By constructing stories and presenting facts so as to make them not only acceptable, but also desirable, rhetorical devices are part of the information game and play an important role in winning over general consensus.

It would seem that to inform with no other intention but to inform, that information for the sake of information is desirable. But the truth is different: when the sole end of information is information, what this really means is that the sole end of information is to reproduce the information production process. And the information production process can only be reproduced by consuming information. Italian twentieth century philosopher of language and semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1921-1985) applied the principle of homology between studies in language and communication, on the one hand, and economics, on the other. Rossi-Landi demonstrated that information for the sake of information is nothing less than the other face of production for the sake of production.

In the information sphere and in mass communication generally (we have mentioned publicity and propaganda), rhetoric commonly employs discourse expedients that favour dominant ideology, given values and not others, official institutions. An important rhetorical expedient, for example, is *obsessive reiteration*. Reiteration exploits the fascination of repetition orienting sense in the direction of consumption as against reflection, critical interrogation and responsible behaviour. The facts are proposed to the public like pills or hamburgers served at Macdonalds, nicely packed into categories and frames, and of course without ever questioning taste…

An extraordinary characteristic of Plato's texts (at least his better ones) is the harmony achieved by interweaving three elements: dialogic displacement, mythical interpretation or narrative, and dialectic or logico-inferential skepsis. These elements contribute to developing argumentative discourse. But they also tend to disappear in three types of rhetorical discourse:

in the apologetic, dialogue is lacking; in information, narration is lacking – and if it is present it is reduced to the skeleton of a fabula, deprived of plots, adventures, of ornamentations of any sort; in publicity, dialectic inference is lacking.

Rhetoric also plays a part in science and in the formulation of definitions. An example of the rhetoric of definition is offered by Rossi-Landi – he quotes from Benedetto Croce's definitions of art: "*Art is intuition* or *sentiment enclosed in an image* or a *particular theoretical moment of the spirit*" (cited in Rossi-Landi 1972). A false dialogue is established between the interpreted sign and the interpretant, that is, between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*. Known terms dominate over unknown terms in need of a definition. Croce introduced the exchange value "art is intuition, etc." onto the linguistic market, and his followers were then able to write, "art, as we know, is intuition."

In a letter to Victoria Welby (mother of modern semiotics and inventor of significs), the Italian mathematician and philosopher Giovanni Vailati emphasizes the importance of pedagogical expedients, for example, caricature, parody, irony, in the development of critical and inventive dialogue. According to Vailati, caricature is one of the most effective pedagogical expedients at our disposal: it involves detecting the weak points of discourse, using the word of the other and making it resound with the voice of another who makes fun of it, parodies it, etc. This is an ambiguous form of reported speech: neither direct discourse, nor indirect discourse, but commented free indirect discourse.

To examine discourses and texts means to pass from analytics to dialectics and beyond, from dialectics to dialogics. This approach evidences the specific dialogism of all discourse. The presentday media world is connected with formal dialogue, monologic dialogue, and as such does not signify at high degrees of dialogism. On the contrary, *substantial dialogism* is oriented by the logic of otherness and listening. This confirms the appropriateness of relating the semiotic research of Charles S. Peirce to Mikhail M. Bakhtin, which means to relate "semiotics of interpretation" to "philosophy of dialogism," as proposed by Augusto Ponzio in his own studies on the problem of interpretation analyzed in terms of "answering comprehension" or "responsive understanding" and dialogism (see Ponzio 1984, 1990, 2006).

A connection can also be established between the problem of dialogue and the work of Welby and Charles Morris. Both scholars focus on the interrelation between signs, values and action, therefore between semiotics, axiology and pragmatics. Both evidence the importance of this interrelation in cognitive processes and in praxis. Values are vehicled by signs, indeed are made of sign material, while the opposite is not necessarily true. Not all signs necessary

involve values, such as signs in the nonhuman animal world, or signs forming our genetic code, etc., but values do necessarily involve signs. In turn, signs and values relate to behaviour.

Morris divided "meaning" into "signification," the object of semiotics, and "significance," the object of axiology. Signification indicates the condition of "having meaning," while significance the condition of "being meaningful" or "significant." Welby before Morris had already taken a similar standpoint with her own distinction between "sense," "meaning" and "significance." In both cases, the term "significance" underlines the connection of signs and meaning to values and human behaviour. Welby used the term "significance" to refer to the overall signifying import of signs, to sign processes that produce value – whether cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, ethic, or operative-pragmatic, and thematized the relation between the problem of "significance" and the problem of responsibility, which she considered a central issue in the production of signs and meaning. Both Welby and Morris described sign action, particularly *verbal* sign action, as producing knowledge and truth values. But beyond this, sign action is also related to the production of ethic and aesthetic judgment, therefore, to the capacity for critique and responsibility. This implies the production of signifying processes at high degrees of dialogical potential, signifying processes that call for a standpoint, for response and understanding grounded in the logic of otherness, a dia-logic.

To study meaning in relation to value, that is, to study signifying processes from the point of view of significance, means to interrogate the value of meaning beyond its systemic articulation, and to consider its relation with responsibility. This implies the critical effort of examining the "conditions of possibility" of meaning following Kant, and attempting to recover the sense of semiosis for man, of semiosis considered in terms of "social reproduction" following Marx (see Rossi-Landi 1968, 1985, 1992). In fact, to associate signs and values, to study signifying processes in terms of the production of significance, implies doing what Marx did with his critique of merchandise. That is, to focus on the relation between signs and values means to deconstruct sense, and to show that relations among things are, in reality, relations among human beings who produce things and signs, and relations among things and signs to the end of producing given values, such as use value and exchange value. So-called "facts," "things" and "relations" are part of production processes and not independent of them. This also means to restore sense to things and facts given that by focusing on the processes of production, it is also possible to analyze and critique the processes that produce linguistic and social alienation to which humankind is subject in daily signifying and communicative practices.

As regards Charles Morris on the connection between signs, values, and action, he proposed a typology of values and typology of action which he related systematically in a book of 1964, *Signification and Significance*. Value is classified as "object," "operative" and "conceived" value and corresponds to action classified respectively as "perceptual," "manipulatory" and "consummatory" action. Furthermore, from the perspective of Peirce's most renowned sign triad, a correspondence can also be established between these three types of value and action, on the one hand, and the "index," "symbol" and "icon," on the other. In fact, *object values* (stereotypes) relate to their objects indexically for the interpretant, that is, according to the law of necessity. *Operative values* (ethical, juridical, religious norms) relate to their objects symbolically, that is, on the basis of convention. *Conceived values* (ideologies) relate to their objects iconically, that is, on the basis of similarity (see Ponzio 1985, 1990).

Real dialogue, whether among several interlocutors or within the single consciousness, is genuine and anti-rhetorical when it allows for discussion and debate. That is, when dialogue is dialectical, or better, dialogical in the "substantial" sense, as understood by Bakhtin, and when it appeals to *the verisimilar* (see Bonfantini & Ponzio 1986; Bonfantini, Ponzio, & Petrilli 2006). Real dialogue and argumentation simulate the reality of experience. That is, contrary to rhetoric which favours *dissimulation* and deception, dialogue and argumentation favour *simulation.*

The term "simulation" is ambiguous. As studies on iconicity and abduction so eloquently teach us, simulation plays a fundamental role in metaphors and models and is at the basis of inventiveness and the capacity for planning. The relation of argumentation to the verosimilar is also determined by the fact that, as demonstrated by Welby (1985a: 13), "one of the most splendid of all our intellectual instruments" is the "image or the figure." The problem is not to eliminate figurative or metaphorical discourse to the advantage of so-called literal discourse, but to identify and eliminate inadequate images that mystify relations among things and distort reasoning. "We need," says Welby, "a linguistic oculist to restore lost focusing power, to bring our images back to reality by some normalizing kind of lens" (*Ibid.*: 16). And let us remember that truth is the sister of verosimilitude! At this stage two questions come to the fore: firstly, how do we identify the linguistic-logical traps used by rhetorical reasoning to deceive?; secondly, how do we identify the devices (including discourse genres or semiotic genres in general) which make for well grounded and critical argumentation?

3. *Global communication and Behaviour Programs*

The language of publicity is ambiguous, allusive, equivocal, inventive, imaginative, creative, suggestive, insinuating, figurative, metaphoric. But in spite of such signifying qualities, the discourse of publicity is monologic, repetitive, stereotyped. This renders the language of publicity functional to dominant discourse, to reproducing the current production system and maintaining the established order. In such a context the new is already stale. Innovation, in fact, here converges with the destruction of products readily available on the market. With the consumption phase, the ultimate aim of the reproductive cycle is to start again in the name of production for production, communication for communication, consumption for consumption. Everybody belonging to the system shares a common task, that of indulging in the market as a consumerist.

Verbal linguistic production and material production are part of one and the same semiotic process, that of social reproduction, which is reproduction of human social life. All economical-cultural forms are made of verbal and nonverbal sign systems and share in subtending semiosic processes. As a development on his "methodics of common speech" (Rossi-Landi 1961, new ed. 1980), Ferruccio Rossi-Landi proposed a "methodics of common semiosis" (Rossi-Landi 1985, new ed. 2006), based on the homology he had already identified in the1960s between verbal linguistic work and nonlinguistic work in his monograph *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (Ferruccio, 1968, Eng. trans. as *Language as Work and Trade*, 1983). According to Rossi-Landi a general theory of society must identify the structural-genetic interconnections among the various expressions of semiosis beyond separations of the historical-social and ideological order, or relatively to specializations in the sciences. As such a general theory of society converges with general semiotics given that human beings communicate with their whole social organization (Rossi-Landi 1968).

There are no such things as "natural divisions" that impose separations between verbal work and nonverbal work, the production of verbal messages and the production of commodities given that, in both cases, it is a question of the same type of semiosis. In other words, if we relate Rossi-Landi's conception of "work" to the research of Thomas A. Sebeok and his conception of "modeling," remembering that another term he introduces for human primary modeling is "language" (Sebeok 1991, 2001a, b), the claim is that verbal and nonverbal work are both expressions of the common "linguistic" (but nonverbal or preverbal) work of modeling. For this reason, the study of one sign system in human culture and social reproduction can be useful in the study of another, given that whether we study one sign system

or another, we are fundamentally studying the same thing. Whether a question of commodities or of verbal messages, the production and exchange of objects, or the production and exchange of signs, semiotics focuses on the same problem, the work processes that produce them and make exchange possible (Ponzio and Petrilli 2008: 12-18).

This standpoint is confirmed by the presentday phase in the development of capitalism, described as "globalization" or "communication-production," as proposed by Augusto Ponzio (2000). In this phase of socio-economic development communication is pervasive: we now know that not only are commodities messages, but that messages themselves have become commodities and that in the productive cycle today communication does not only occur in the intermediary stage of that cycle – that of exchange, circulation, the market –, but that it is now an essential part of the initial and final stages, that of production and consumption.

Furthermore, according to Rossi-Landi (1972, 1978, 1992), human behaviour is sign behaviour, therefore behaviour related to communication and programs: human sign behaviour is communicative behaviour and programmed behaviour. Social programs, projects and plans are interconnected and interdependent in an ongoing progression resembling the relation among a series of concentric circles. The more the capitalist production system develops, the more such interconnection is inevitable. What is a program? Here "program" is not understood in terms of a "television program." It is not by proposing new television programs that we will survive today's television crisis. On the contrary, a general social plan is necessary for "new and more human programs." The concept of "communication programs" was first introduced by Rossi-Landi in the early 1960s. He demystified human social communication showing how communication consists of communication programs, of the relation of signs and behaviour to ideology. This led to evidencing the need for new and more human communication programs against the reality of linguistic and social alienation.

This essay presents a semiotic perspective on communication and social repreoduction, but reference is not to code and message semiotics which was thoroughly critiqued by Rossi-Landi as early as 1961 with his monograph, *Significato, comunicazione e parlare commune* (Meaning, communication and common speech), and which he ironically tagged "postal package semiotics." Nor is the approach proposed in this paper connected with "semiotics of marketing." In fact, as demonstrated by Rossi-Landi in his epochal book of 1968, *Language as Work and Trade*, what is commonly understood by "semiotics of marketing" loses its critical function and is subservient to the "verbal and nonverbal market." In other words, semiotics of marketing loses its capacity for critique and puts itself at the service of the capitalist social reproduction cycle, of equal exchange market logic, of the production, exchange, and

consumption of merchandise-messages and messages-merchandise. In such a framework semiotics is not even capable of critiquing communication connected with television which answers to dominant ideology. Semiotics of marketing is an ally to dominant ideology (whether state or private), it serves the established order, and is subject to market logic and the circulation of publicity. A recent trend in the "professionalization" of semioticians is to sell one's expertise as consultants to advertising agencies, which in turn privilege television as their most powerful communication channel. Today it is urgent for semiotics to free itself from subservience to official ideology, communication programs, the market, and recover its capacity for critique.

Rossi-Landi defined the dominant class as the class that holds control over the emission and circulation of verbal messages in a given community (1972: 203-204). These days anyone wishing to gain consensus for his "preventible rise" ("The Preventible Rise of Arturo Ui," Brecht) must have control over communication and the communication network – the press, especially newspapers, but now television even more so. Arturo Ui must now necessarily resort to television. And differently from Brecht's Ui who consulted a theatre actor, in order to learn the tricks of the trade and present himself successfully to the public today's Ui must consult an advertising agent, or better, a semiotics of marketing expert. This is the reality of communication today. Television and publicity are so closely interconnected that they have become interdependent. Television depends on publicity from a financial point of view, and television and publicity in turn depend on whomever controls the communication network. All television programs are part of the same network, the same text, that is, the publicity network. To speak to the public implies to enter this network. Even politics has been televised to the extent that televised political discourse has become a publicity spot. That is, the political message itself has become a photogram in an ongoing publicity sequence.

Semiotics today must be critical semiotics. And in fact ideologies and concepts such as Reality, Subject, Reason, Truth can only be demystified through a critique of signs ready to address the production, exchange and consumption of signs in the global context of social reproduction. This critical approach to semiotics is committed to the project for the development of a new and more conscious form of humanism focused not only on the sign dimension of man, but also on the human dimension of signs (in addition to Peirce important references are Karl Marx, Victoria Welby, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Adam Schaff, Emmanuel Levinas, Charles Morris, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi). With his critique of political economy, Marx (as anticipated above) evidenced social relations among human beings where it was thought that there only existed relations among things and reified relations among signs.

The tendency in today's global world is to submit passively to social programs that pass off refined forms of oppression as liberating practices. This mystification is typical of mass communication and dominant ideology or "ideo-logic," to use another expression proposed by Ponzio (1992; see also Petrilli, ed., 2004; Petrilli & Ponzio 2005; Ponzio 2006), and in fact subtends the whole global multi-medial communication network. Massimo A. Bonfantini (see 1985, 1993) underlines the need for critical and creative intervention, and suggests a series of strategies to counteract the negative effects of the invasive use of television. According to Bonfantini, eople need to enter face-to-face interpersonal relations, recover the properly human dimension of things and signs, and evidence the human relations that interconnect them. He suggests that one strategy is for people to make their own videos.

Favoured by the connection between telecommunications and informatics, the communication network has expanded at a planetary level. A new socio-cultural system has emerged without precedents in terms of the quantity of messages produced and the velocity, extension and immediacy of circulation. Television channels and services continue to proliferate and the practice of zapping across different programs enables the consumer to create his own intertext. But an immediate consequence of advanced technology and intensified sign traffic is redundancy in message production.

4. *The Problem of Social Alienation*

In this context the problem of social alienation remains and in many cases is exasperated – alienation of the human subject, the single individual, the "each" of everyone of us. Communication processes call for critical evaluation in terms of their effects on human behaviour, and so-called "progress" will inevitably emerge in its connection with the problem of social alienation. The more message production is redundant, the more the single individual is overwhelmed by communication processes, and the greater is the problem of social alienation in spite of seemingly active participation in these production processes. In the era of globalization and the electronic revolution dominant ideology and global communication favour mystification of linguistic and nonlinguistic products for the market. Consciousness is separated from praxis in a production cycle whose end is production itself where even those subjects who seem immune to equal exchange market ideology variously contribute to the expansion of a "sign marketplace" worldwide (see Sebeok 1987).

As regards the problem of the status of the subject considered as a user-consumer, developments in the communication network do not necessarily imply developments in critical

awareness, creativity, responsible participation, or "freedom." Quite on the contrary, the risk is that of remaining trapped in the communication network as it expands and becomes ever more invasive, of being overwhelmed by sign redundancy on the market, and alienated – socially, linguistically. We need to interrogate the nature of the relation between products, for example, electronic devices, and the user-consumer, verifying the degree of critical participation and creativity in the relation between the subject, on one hand, and the sign market and its products, on the other. The acritical subject passively submits to dominate ideology, the order of discourse, socio-economic production processes conceived in the interests of whomever controls the communication network, and operates as a function of that system without interrogating one's own status a subject, or the sense and effect of one's own behaviour on the other.

Mass media contributes to the transformation of anything into commodities, reinforcing processes of reification, or better liquefaction or fluidification functional to the market, and maintaining the production-communication cycle, as in the case of television and publicity. As observed by Gunther Anders (1956, 1980), television and radio products, and today products connected with telematics generally do not necessarily take the form of objects or property, but rather are what he calls "liquid" products flowing into the general social reproduction system. The word "transmission" is symptomatic as it resounds with two different meanings: the act of transmitting and the object transmitted. We own the apparatus used to transmit the commodity, but not the commodity itself. "Stated in the form of a paradox," says Anders, "we are sovereigns of a mere passivity. [...] Figures not less comical than the Stirnian 'owners of their own hunger,' scorned by Marx" (Anders 1956, 1980, It. trans.: 48, Eng. trans. my own). According to Anders, the term "reification" commonly used to describe trends in the past century does not adequately characterize the state of affairs today. We are now on the threshold of a new phase in history in which forms are acquired and things are liquefied, or at least liquefaction will be as characteristic as reification. "I propose we use the term 'liquefaction' to indicate this state of affairs which is still forgotten by theory" (*Ibid.*). Recorders and videocassettes, for example, do not contradict the production cycle's interest in producing products "in the liquid state," although such products are "not created in the interest of production." Rather, they are created for those consumers who wish to own their transmissions in forms just as solid as books and paintings. However, when a question of favouring the development of capital, the capitalist industry is ready to produce new commodities, "even if the new product contradicts the principles of production" (*Ibid.*: 49).

Presentday social reproduction and cultural systems interrelate with capitalism in such a way as to capitalize on both verbal and nonverbal signs. In the context of globalization and global communication (see Petrilli 2008) strategies must be developed to counteract the signs of social alienation as it directly ensues from such capitalization. From a socio-semiotic perspective, Bonfantini for example proposes that work groups be set up with the task of interpreting, critiquing, and even transforming mass-medial signs. In this context, it is important to underline that the expression "cultural capital" is not an ornamental metaphor, but rather is part of the very structure of reality (see Petrilli, 2006c). Linguistic and nonlinguistic work produces and develops cultural capital and similarly to all processes that produce capital, "cultural capital" is increased on the basis of surplus value and surplus work (see Rossi-Landi 1968, 1992). Such mechanisms mostly operate without the subject's awareness, indeed not only is the subject unaware of the ends orienting his activities, but most often he does not even know he is working. As says Rossi-Landi:

> We can admit that man supplies labour-force even without being aware of doing so for some end and therefore without being aware of the fact that he is working. The end pursued may be supra-individual in that it is imposed by a social program which remains unconscious. In these cases *work is distinguished from activity insofar as it carries out programs that are indifferently conscious or unconscious. As Marx says, mankind does not know it but does it*. (1971: 22)

Capitalist production today is pushed to the extreme, which implies that dominant ideology serves the development of capital. In this context ideology is mostly *invisible* and exploitation, which we could even claim is now structural to behaviour, is imperceptible. The era of globalization is one of the most difficult ever for the critique of ideology and analysis of social alienation. Cultural systems are regulated by the self-interest of multi-media capital. It is not incidental that the dominant social order ignors such issues as social alienation and exploitation, or that it proclaims the "crisis" or even the "end" of ideology, or that it ignores or does not even recognize such expressions as "alienation," "class interest," and "social exploitation".

One way of counteracting and resisting this situation is to construct different communicative situations and act on the mechanisms that regulate production cycles for the reproduction of cultural capital. Such intervention requires a pragmatic perspective on the signs of culture and ideology, with the capacity to critique popular consensus gained through mass-media. From this point of view, the power of television has been made particularly manifest from 1991 onwards with the serial entitled "Gulf War." This episode in Western history has revealed just how easy it is to gain support for an idea through recourse to television, even when initially that idea was unpopular. At the time, the Bush administration in the United

States needed popular consensus for a war that was described as a necessary means for the resolution of differences internationally and for the imposition of peace.

Exaggeration may be used as a discursive device to focus upon problems afflicting today's world against the numbing effect of stereotypes and "common places". Exaggeration can be used to shift meaning, deconstruct obvious sense, plain meaning, and to construct new meanings and metaphors, which can also involve translating and betraying meanings that seem obvious or are simply taken for granted. A significant example of counter-information achieved through recourse to such discourse expedients is the *comuniqué* below entitled, "Subcommander Marcos is more than just gay". This is the response from the Mexican Zapatists in Chiapas to the news featured about their leader Marcos and his homosexuality in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Marcos was quoted as saying that he had worked for a San Francisco restaurant but had been fired for being gay. The pro-government Mexican press exploited the incident to cause a scandal and discredit Marcos, ridiculed as a "queer revolutionary":

About whether Marcos is homosexual

> Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristòbal, a gang member in Neza [a huge Mexico City slum] a rocker in the National University [a folk music citadel], a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Defense Ministry, a communist in the post-Cold War era, an artist without gallery or portfolio...
>
> A pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on Saturday night in any neighbourhood in any city in Mexico, a striker in the CTM [the giant pro-government union federation, which virtually never authorizes strikes], a reporter writing filler stories for the back pages, a single woman on the metro at 10 p.m., a peasant without land, an unemployed worker... an unhappy student, a dissident amid free-market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, aZapatist in the mountains of southeast Mexico.
>
> So Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all the exploited, marginalized, and oppressed minorities, resisting and saying, "Enough!" (in *Monthly Review* 46/4, Sept. 1994: 1).

5. Communication and *Semioethics*

A critical approach to signs, communication and dominant ideology from a semiotic perspective requires a high degree of listening, opening towards the other, and dialogism. Opening is not only quantitative (as allowed for by the omnicomprehensive character of global semiotics, see Sebeok 2001a), but also qualitative. A semiotic approach must keep account of the dialogic nature of the relation with the other (see Ponzio 2006). As anticipated above,

dialogism is the fundamental condition for an approach to signs and meaning – a detotalizing approach – that is oriented globally and is based on listening, on opening towards the other, rather than englobing and sacrificing the other.

As Emmanuel Levinas has evidenced, otherness obliges the totality to reorganize itself ever anew in a process related to what he calls "infinity". This can be related to infinite semiosis as emerges from the writings of Charles S. Peirce. The relation to infinity is not only cognitive: beyond the established order, beyond the symbolic order, beyond conventions and habits, the relation to infinity is a relation of involvement and responsibility. A detotalized approach to signs and communication is refractory to the totality. Contrary to the tendency towards totalization, the detotalized approach opens to the otherness of others, to the other *from* self and to the other *of* self, where "self" is not understood as another self like myself, another *alter ego*, another self belonging to the *same community*, oriented by the logic of identity, but as absolute otherness. According to this logic, the other is experienced in terms of strangeness, difference, and uniqueness towards which indifference is impossible despite any efforts made to the contrary.

Semiotics favours awareness of human responsibility as a "semiotic animal" for the health of semiosis, indeed of life over the entire planet. Differently to nonhuman animals, the semiotic animal is capable of producing *signs of* signs. In other words, the semiotic animal is capable of mediation, reflection, critical awareness, of taking a standpoint and assuming responsibility. From this point of view, the semiotic animal may also be designated as a semioethic animal. An in fact with co-author Augusto Ponzio we propose to call this particular dimension of semiosis "semioethics" (see Petrilli 1998, 2001; Petrilli & Ponzio 2003, 2005, 2007). "Semioethics" can contribute to a critical understanding of the negative, even destructive, aspects of global communication. A critical approach is necessary to communication today with its commonplaces, stereotypes, and vocation to deceive as manifested in global marketing and the discourse of publicity.

Global communication is functional to the ideologico-social standards of the "new cannon of the individualized body" (Bakhtin), which in turn is functional to controling individual bodies and inserting them into the social reproduction system. "Bio-power," as discussed by Michel Foucault, in fact relates to a concept of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity subtending the global communication system worldwide. In such a framework, the body is experienced as an isolated biological entity that belongs to the individual, and this is connected with the almost total extinction of cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency, opening and exposition to the other

(what is left are mummified remains studied by folklore analysts, archeological residues preserved in ethnological museums and in the histories of national literature – the expression of a generalized situation of museumification).

Instead Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1963 and 1965) analyzes the perception of the body in popular culture, the various forms of "grotesque realism." In this context the body is not conceived individualistically or separately from life over the planet in its totality. Signs of the grotesque body, of which only very weak traces have survived in the present day, include ritual masks, masks used during popular festivities, carnival masks. "Grotesque realism" in medieval popular culture precedes the development of individualism as connected to the rise of the bourgeosie, and presents the body as an undefined entity flourishing in symbiosis with other bodies, in relations of transformation and renewal that go well beyond the limits, barriers and separations of individual life. Subsequently, with the rise and development of the capitalist reproduction system, the individualistic, private and static conception of the body gradually asserted itself and now in the context of global communication is reinforced.

Subjectivity must recover the link between subject-semiotic self-body-living being, which means to say the condition of continuity and interrelatedness connecting one's own body to the body of others, to other living beings in the global communication network. Insofar as the "global communication network" is described as converging with the biosphere, our conception of communication is far broader that what is commonly understood by this expression. Our conception of subjectivity can also be appropriately reformulated in terms of the logic of otherness by contrast to monologic identity which, on the contrary, sacrifices and excludes the other. Also important to underline is that such reformulation is not limited to the cognitive-theoretical order, but rather is concrete and vital, relative to praxis, to the quality of life, in other words it is also of the ethical-pragmatic order.

With Levinas (see, for example, 1972), but also with Bakhtin, Peirce, Welby and Morris, we propose a new form of humanism: not the humanism of identity which has dominated Western civilization so far, where human rights are always the rights of identity, but the humanism of otherness based on listening and welcoming the other. The revendication of human rights oriented by the logic of identity has mostly forgotten the rights of the other; instead with the humanism of otherness the rights of the other are the first to be recognized. The humanism of otherness conceives the other as both the other *from self* and as the other *of self*. Indeed, the self most often removes, suffocates, segregates its own otherness sacrificing it to the cause of identity which thus attained is fictitious and destined to break down at some point.

Semiotics contributes to the humanism of otherness by evidencing the extension and consistency of the sign network. As part of this network each human being is interconnected to every other on both a synchronic and diachronic axis (the allusion is to worldwide and planetary communication from a biosemiosic perspective). The global destiny of the human species — from its remotest manifestations to the most recent, from its past to its evolutionary future, in biological as well as historical-social terms — is implied in the behaviour and decisions of each and every one of us, and vice versa.

Semioethics does not have a program to propose with intended goals, nor a decalogue, nor a formula to apply more or less sincerely, more or less hypocritically. The human capacity for critique and responsibility is a special focus for semioethics, which it proposes to develop. Semioethics critiques *stereotypes*, *norms* and *ideology*. For example, with Charles Morris it focuses on different types of value (e.g., see Morris 1948, 1956, 1964). A special vocation for semioethics is to evidence sign networks and interconnections where it seemed there were none. The semioethic approach to semiosis in fact focuses on connections, implications, and narrations that cannot be evaded, where it seemed there were only separations, boundaries, and distances with their relative alibis. Alibis serve to safeguard responsibility understood in a limited sense, based on the logic of identity and allowing for consciousness in terms of a "clean conscience."

By contrast to the condition of "joyous relativity," as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, the dialogic conviviality of difference, the critical work of semioethics shows how the condition of differences indifferent to each other is delusory, and how in the last analysis the entire planet's destiny is implied in the choices made by each human being, and vice versa. Semioethics must necessarily begin by analyzing and interrogating today's social reproduction system – which means to say contemporaneity, where we stand today, historically and socially –, and elaborate an analysis that is rigourous and precise of today's communication-production relations.

In the era of globalization, social models of production, therefore global communication-production relations have been largely homologated. In a sense this is an "advantage" for the work of semioethics. The whole planet is now dominated by a single type of market, by a single type of production cycle which has not only homologated human behaviour, habits, and fashion (including dress fashion) worldwide, but also the life of the imaginary. In today's global social reproduction system as it embraces the entire planet, difference understood in terms of *otherness* is replaced ever more by difference understood in terms of *alternatives.* The so-called "advantage" for semioethics is that this situation presents a unified object of analysis, so that a great array of different issues will not have to be taken into

account in that they are no longer relevant. However, it should also be obvious that the word "advantage" is intended ironically, for the implication is that we are dealing with reality taken as a single, compact, monologic block. But the "advantage" of *monologism* inevitably backfires on the capacity for critique and obstacles interrogation, by contrast to the condition of plurivocality and polylogism which instead favours creative interpretation and critical questioning. Moreover, the work of critique is made difficult by the fact that appropriate conceptual instruments are not yet readily available; new categories and assumptions beyond those taken for granted are necessary if we are to deal appropriately with innovations emerging in the current phase of development in history. Such work is now urgent given the worldwide spread of the global communication-production system and with it of global mass media communication which in globalization, as we know, is closely interconnected with the social reproduction cycle.

Global communication today is strictly connected to the dominant social reproduction system which is regulated by dominant ideology and official discourse with its rhetorical devices. These are grounded in the logic of identity, therefore the logic of roles with their limited responsibilities and alibis, ultimately the logic of self-interest. Human behaviour is sign behaviour and ideological behaviour, in other words, it is never neutral, but, on the contrary, is permeated with values and regulated by social programs. Global semiotics and semioethics contribute towards a critical understanding of communication today, of semiosis, in a globalized world. Dialogism and listening are the condition for a new form of humanism based on the logic of otherness rather than on the logic of identity.

Semioethics offers an eyeview that is as global as the semiotic animal is capable of. Today perhaps more than ever before we must become aware of our semioethic capacity as semiotic animals, and live up to it, that is, to the human capacity for dialogue, otherness, listening, hospitality, critique and responsibility, by contrast to the indifference of monologism and acritical submission to official ideology and social programs. Most significantly, it is now urgent to realize that such values as critical and creative awareness, dialogic responsiveness and responsibility, therefore the semioethic dimension of human semiosis must be fully recovered and developed if life, not only human life but all life-forms over the planet are to survive and flourish.

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