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Translation as Listening and Encounter with the Other in Migration and Globalization Processes Today

La traduction comme écoute et rencontre avec l'autre dans les processus de migration et de mondialisation

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Translating the Americas

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

Translation is viewed from a semiotic perspective with a special focus on translator discourse genre and the different forms of reported discourse. The distinction between *listening* and *wanting to hear* and between *silence* and *taciturnity* is introduced to analyze the relation between translation and understanding, translation and the other, translation and hospitality, with special reference to the problematic of migration and globalization processes today. This leads to considerations on the ethical character of translation understood as listening, therefore on the responsibility of the translator towards the other in the encounter between different signs, languages, and cultures. The translator is called to account to and for the other. Given that translation must ultimately acknowledge the rights of others, the responsibility of the translator may be qualified as “semioethical responsibility.”

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Premise

This essay is part of an ongoing research project by the authors on the problem of rights and differences and on interrelated interlinguistic, intersemiotic and ideological problems of translation. Of the numerous publications which have ensued from this project some have been signaled in the reference section below. The present essay is divided into three main sections.

The first, entitled “The task and the mask of the translator,” by Susan Petrilli, analyses the connection between translating and interpreting and the semiotic and linguistic implications involved. Particular reference is made to the question of translator discourse genre.

The section entitled “Listening and wanting to hear in translation,” by Augusto Ponzio, examines the difference between *listening* and *wanting to hear*. *Listening* is understood as opening towards the other; instead, *wanting to hear* as englobing the other. Wanting to hear the other implies silence; listening does not imply silence or muteness, but what (with a quasi neologism) we may call *taciturnity*, that is, irony, indirect discourse, responsive understanding, and openness to the other. Translation always implies encounter not

only among different languages but also among different cultures, and can be oriented as listening or as wanting to hear. The difference is a difference of attitude towards the other with implications of the ideological and political orders. All this emerges, for example, in relation to today's migration and globalization processes. Listening is connected with hospitality. Instead, wanting to hear aims to distinguish, classify, reduce to identity, define, judge. This generally occurs on the basis of categories intended to defend one's own rights to the disadvantage of the rights and viewpoints of others.

The third section entitled "Semioethics of translation," by Susan Petrilli, develops this perspective and evidences the ethical character of translation understood as listening, showing how from this perspective the translator's responsibility becomes responsibility for the other. The translator must account to the other and for the other. Therefore, the translator carries out a role of fundamental importance in the encounter between languages, signs and cultures, which involve processes of migration and globalization. This type of responsibility is neither specialized nor technical, but ethical and global, given that whether we like it or not even the person most distant from us is our neighbour in one way or another. We may also call this type of responsibility "semioethical responsibility" given that it concerns signs finalized to acknowledging the rights of others, and not to asserting one's own identity and one's own rights over others.

1. The task and the mask of the translator (by Susan Petrilli)

In its most obvious sense translation concerns verbal texts in their relation between different languages. But even if we remain within the sphere of verbal signs, translation does not only concern the relation between one language and another, but also among the different languages forming the same language given that all languages are endowed to a lesser or greater degree with internal plurilingualism. Furthermore, translation occurs between verbal languages and non-verbal languages, and vice versa, as well as among non-verbal languages without referring to verbal language (if not implicitly). Understood in such terms, the problem of translation obviously cannot be restricted to the field of linguistics, but must concern semiotics, the general science of signs.

Before being the object of *semiotics*, translation is a *sign operation*. In other words, translation occurs among signs, and cannot

be reduced to the linguistic-verbal order alone. Translation invests the sign sphere in its entirety. Where there are signs and semiotic processes, there is translation. A semiotic approach to the problem of translation—if we must identify fields and boundaries—does not limit its focus to verbal language, but rather extends its gaze to all human languages, verbal and non-verbal, therefore to the anthroposemiotic sphere in its totality.

Victoria Welby (1837-1912) describes mankind's capacity for signification in terms of "translative thinking," an automatic process "in which everything suggests or reminds us of something else" (Welby, 1983, p. 34). Translated into semiotic terms we could say that translative thinking is a semiotic process in which something stands for something else, in which different sign systems are related, in which one sign is more fully developed, enriched, criticized, put at a distance, placed between inverted commas, parodied or simply imitated, and, in any case, interpreted in terms of another sign. Translation is a method of investigation and discovery, says Welby, a method for the verification and acquisition of knowledge and for the development of critical consciousness:

As language involves both unity and distinction (the one actually and the other implicitly), language must itself be recognised as a means of discovering contrasts together with the links which constitute these elements of unity, or at least completely exclude the idea of final disparateness ... For a thing is significant, both in the lower and in the higher sense, in proportion as it is expressible through bare sign or pictorial symbol or representative action. In the higher sense (that of vital or moral or rational import) it is significant in proportion as it is capable of expressing itself in, or being translated into, more and more phases of thought or branches of science. The more varied and rich our employment of signs ..., the greater our power of inter-relating, inter-translating, various phases of thought, and thus of coming closer and closer to the nature of things in the sense of starting-points for the acquisition of fresh knowledge, new truth. (Welby, 1983, p. 150)

We could develop such intuitions in the light of more recent studies in language theory and the science of signs generally and state that semiosis, that is, the situation in which something functions as a sign, cannot subsist without translation, for semiosis *is* a translation-interpretation process. The role of translation is fundamental to the constitution of the sign itself, both verbal and non-verbal, in the determination of meaning itself. The intimate connection between signs

and translation is particularly evident when we place the category of replaceability as a necessary condition for signhood, that is, when the sign is considered not only as something that replaces something else, but as something that may also in turn be replaced by something else (see Ponzio, 1981, pp. 15-42). And meaning may be defined as a class of verbal and non-verbal signs which may replace each other reciprocally in semiotic processes in which an interpretant sign replaces a previous interpreted sign which it somehow develops. As Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) teaches us, a sign subsists thanks to another sign acting as its interpretant, so that its meaning is its translation into another sign. The sign flourishes in relations of reciprocal translation and substitution among signs with respect to which the original sign is never given autonomously and antecedently.

The problem of the interconnection between interpretation, translation, and alterity cannot be ignored by translation semiotics. The journal *Athanor* (University of Bari, Italy) has dedicated a trilogy of collective volumes, edited by myself, to translation (essays are mostly in English). The third issue was published in 2001 under the title *Lo stesso altro* (The Same Other). *The paradox of translation is determined by the fact that the text must remain the same, while becoming other* simply because it has been reorganized into the expressive modalities of another sign complex. The translation (target) text is at once identical to and different from the translated (source) text.

From this perspective, translation is a form of reported discourse, a form of discourse reporting the discourse of the other. Reporting discourse, that is, translator discourse is masked as direct discourse, as authorial discourse, in other words, translator discourse is not evidenced as such. On the contrary, it is erased—or, better, this is the claim. The aim is to allow the person whose discourse is reported to speak directly. Under this aspect, translation resembles direct discourse, because it cancels all traces of reporting discourse. It ensues that the reader of the translated text believes that the task of the translator is not to interpret, comment, or resort to expedients that trace boundaries between his/her own word and the word of the other (such as citation marks or dashes). The reader believes that the translator is completely transparent. And what the reader perceives is the word of the original author, only that this word is now in the same language as the reader's (a true miracle!).

As indirect discourse masked as direct discourse, translation is a kind of dramatization. In other words, the same thing happens in translation as occurs in drama. Just as the author of a theatrical text makes his/her characters speak directly, while his/her own word as author does not emerge (if not in some prescription for the *mise en scène*), in translation the translator's word, the word that reports the other's discourse (the original author's discourse) in another language is silenced: the translator's word is expected to converge with the direct word of the person whose discourse is translated. Translator discourse claims to be merely the discourse of the other, the author, reported discourse that speaks in the direct form. The translator aims to completely eliminate any traces of his/her own voice as translator, as interpreter, as reporter. This is not mystification but a form of abnegation, or empathy, identification of the translator's word with the author's, to the point of disappearing. This is the attitude that the reader demands from the translator: the reader expects the translator to act as a mere mouthpiece, a mechanical transformer, convertor. If the translator deserves to be mentioned in the translation-text, whether marginally or emphatically, this is always in his/her role as simple mouthpiece, in which s/he excels the more s/he denies him/herself. Of two voices, one only must remain, the voice of the original author now resounding in the target language: this is in the tradition of what is generally considered as a good translation.

In the case of indirect discourse, one's own word and the word of the other are clearly distinct and flourish together in a dialogic relation which may vary from simple exposition, deferent and obsequious indication, even appeal to the authority of an author in the form of *ipse dixit*, through to citation of another's text for critical discussion and eventual rejection even. On the contrary, in translation the aim is to eliminate traces of one's own word (the translator's): the word of the other is the only one recognized. We could make the claim that the sole function of the translation text (target text) in relation to the original text (source text) is of an ostensive order: the translation text limits itself to indicating the original-text, to showing it. From this perspective, translation completely draws away from the practice of reporting the other's discourse in the form of indirect discourse where reporting discourse is not only obliged to manifest itself, but must also carry out an analytical function towards reported discourse. In the case of indirect discourse, reporting discourse must necessarily explain, clarify, explicate the sense of reported discourse and more or less explicitly mark its own position towards it. On the contrary, the

ostensive function of the translator implies that the original text subsists without interventions, is presented for what it is. In this case, the claim is that interpretive discourse is one thing, and translator discourse is another, that is, merely ostensive discourse. In reality, ostensive discourse does not exist if not in the form of direct discourse: the only real possibility of ostensive discourse for the translator would be to report the text as it is, in the original language, as Borges's Pierre Menard rightly did.

To translate is inevitably to interpret, and the translator is no more than one of the many masks that the author of a text can wear. This mask is that of a "faithful mouthpiece" that neither critically interprets, nor analyses, nor discusses, nor takes a standpoint, but simply reports, and does so faithfully. In other words, among the various forms of reported discourse, translation is a *sui generis* form of indirect discourse which presents itself in the "masked" form of direct discourse. But we all know that this mask is a deception: *traduttore traditore!* But the translator is *traditore* only because an impossible fidelity is required of him/her. The translator is not a *traditore*, but simply an interpreter, one of the possible interpreters of the text.

The modalities (with internal differences) of reported discourse foreseen by historical-natural languages include: direct discourse, indirect discourse and free indirect discourse. In line with our discussion, we can now add a fourth modality: reported discourse in the form of translation from the source language to the target language.

Translation is indirect discourse if by indirect discourse is understood discourse that analyzes, interprets, explicates, clarifies, solves ambiguities, decides on senses, establishes the intonation, orientation, intent according to which something is pronounced. And no doubt the translator does all this. Reporting discourse is pervasive, omniscient in the form of reported discourse, to the point that all syntactical and punctuation indicators which distinguish the translator's word from the word that is translated are eliminated. Consequently, if free indirect discourse is direct discourse masked as indirect discourse, translation is *indirect discourse masked as direct discourse*.

As indirect discourse masked as direct discourse, as explanation and unfolding of the word of the other, translation cannot be deferent, if not hypocritically, towards the word in translation; the

translating word cannot consider the word in translation as an authoritative word protected by boundaries, an inaccessible word, a word that withdraws from contact, closed in an attitude of haughty self-sufficiency. Similarly to indirect discourse and to free indirect discourse, the translating word is a word that necessarily attracts and involves the word in translation, the translated word, in a relation of dialogic interaction. The word in translation cannot be cited respectfully. On the contrary, it inevitably enters an interpretive game and becomes part of a relation of dialogic involvement. Its pretentious claim to autonomy, identity and belonging to the author of the so-called “original” should be uncovered for what it is. In truth, the translating word is imbued with dialogism, similarly to the word of the author from the very beginning, which to become such had to enter a relation of dialogic involvement with other words, with the word of the other.

Translation restores the word with its constitutive dialogism with respect to other words. But not only: translation restores historical-natural languages and their special languages with their constitutive dialogism in relation to other historical-natural languages and other special languages.

The implications of this claim are the following: in principle, translation among different historical-natural languages is no different from translation within a single language. In both cases interpretive and explanatory processes are at work. To the question, “what do you mean?, explain yourself better,” we can just as easily reply by reformulating the utterance in the same historical-natural language, or in a different one: this will simply depend on the relation among speakers with regard to the different special languages and historical-natural languages. In any case, it is a question of reformulation that necessarily specifies sense and orients interpretation. When reformulating one’s own discourse or someone else’s discourse in the same historical-natural language, eventually using a different special language, it is common practice to introduce expressions which signal indirect discourse: “I mean that...,” “she means that...,” “what I mean is that...,” “what she means is that...,” etc... Analogously, to use similar expressions in the case of interlingual translation should seem just as normal, eventually even transforming first person into third person, “It’s cold,” “She says it’s cold,” or “How are you?,” “She wants to know how you are”. And even if such expressions are not used explicitly, they are certainly implied. Though presented in the form of direct discourse, translation is no doubt indirect discourse.

But there's more. As says Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975), considering that words are taken from the mouths of others, even direct speech in a given historical-natural language is, in reality, indirect speech (see also Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Direct speech is always the discourse of others reported as "one's own," or at least discourse that must work hard to establish itself as "one's own," discourse that must make its way in discourse that was originally someone else's. This makes discourse in translation from one historical-natural language to another very similar to reformulated discourse in the same language. Such reformulation in its various forms, including those identified as one's own discourse, may range from imitation to parodization to caricature to more or less obvious, or more or less hidden controversy.

Translative processes are active not only in all forms of discourse—which is always interpretation, reformulation, reported discourse, indirect discourse—, but also in all single historical-natural languages given that interlingual translation is part of their very constitution. A historical-natural language is predisposed for translation, for the word of others, for the other word; it is prone to translation because it flourishes on translation, in relations with others, with other languages. This is the case with respect to its internal special languages as well as externally in relation to other historical-natural languages. This problematic is of central importance for the question of translatability.

2. Listening and wanting to hear in translation (by Augusto Ponzio)

We may state that semiotics understood as a general theory of signs is not separable from a theory of translation, of interpretation, of transposition of discourse of the other, and vice versa. From this point of view, semiotics is semiotics of listening and translation is listening. The methodics of sign interpretation as well as the methodics of translation is a methodics of listening. Listening has, in this context, a double sense: 1) listening as it may be used in the context of music; and 2) listening as it is implied in medical semeiotics, in symptomatology (auscultation).

In translation, listening is an interpretant of answering comprehension, a disposition for hospitality towards the signs of others, of the other person, a disposition for welcoming signs of the

other into the house of the target language. In semiotics listening is an interpretant of a disposition for welcoming signs into the house of semiotics that are other than verbal signs: signs that are other to such a high degree that we can only denominate them in the negative. We are alluding to so-called non-verbal signs, the non-verbal cultural system of signs. Here, listening is analogous to listening in a musical performance.

But if we understand listening in the second sense, listening takes on the meaning of auscultation, in the sense of medical semeiotics or symptomatology: semiotics and translation theory and practice today must listen to the symptoms of today's globalized world and identify the different expressions of unease and disease—in social relations, international relations, in the life of individuals, in the environment, in life generally over the entire planet. The aim is to make a diagnosis of today's globalized world to which production, interpretation and translation of texts and utterances belong. Interpretation and translation are not possible, or are possible in terms that are inadequate, without listening in this second sense. From this point of view interpretation of sign and translation are listening, are turned to listening, but this time in the sense of medical semeiotics or symptomatology. The two meanings of “listening” are inseparable: the first is listening related to a specific, unique utterance or text, the second is listening related to social context, to the situation of encounter and interaction among different contexts, different languages, as a consequence of globalization and migration processes. To read in this context means to read today's global world organization, to listen and criticize structural aspects of today's globalization.

Homologation of the communicative universe reduces listening to wanting to hear (connected with *silence*). It diminishes the spaces of *taciturnity* where the *freedom of listening* is as necessary as the freedom of speech.

The words “silence” and “taciturnity” as we define them here correspond to the Russian words “тишина” and “молчание”, as used by Bakhtin (1970-71). Bakhtin distinguishes between the conditions for perceiving a sound, the conditions for recognizing a verbal sign, therefore its meaning, and the conditions for understanding the sense (and not only meaning) of an utterance. Silence belongs to the first two, that is, to the conditions for perceiving a sound, and the conditions for

recognizing a sign in its meaning. Instead, taciturnity concerns the conditions for understanding sense.

Homologation of the communicative universe concretely invests the verbal sign with the conventional characteristics of the signal alone, or with the natural characteristics of sound. From the necessity of the natural to the repetition of the conventional, or, as Peirce says, from *indexicality* to *symbolicity*: such is the sphere reserved for the sign which thus loses its ambivalence, ductility, possibility of interpretants as characterized by originality, autonomy, absolute otherness—all qualities attributed by Peirce to *iconicity*. Enclosed within the universe of silence and the constriction of speech according to laws, conventions and habits, the sign loses its character as a challenge, as a provocation to identity and the closed totality; the sign loses its ability to question what seems stable and definitive as though it were endowed with the characters of naturality. All this can only be accomplished by the sign by upholding taciturnity, by tacitly refusing to collaborate with the closed universe of discourse, by escaping monologism, by exceeding the logic of equal exchange between the signifier and the signified, between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign. “The disturbance of quietude by sound is mechanical and physiological [...]. Silence is possible only in the human world”, says Bakhtin (1970-71, pp. 133-34). The authors of the present essay prefer to translate with the term “silence” that which is intended by “quietude” and with “taciturnity” that which is intended by “silence.” The sign’s constriction within the space of silence, its separation from taciturnity and from the freedom of listening, from listening open to polysemy, denies the sign its human character and renders it mechanical and natural, causing it to oscillate between the conventionality of the signal and the naturality of sound, the naturality of what does not claim sense.

Silence belongs to the sphere of language as a system, to language as reiteration, as reproduction of the order of discourse (Foucault). Taciturnity, instead, belongs to the sphere of the unrepeatable utterance, it participates in the “unfinalized totality of the logosphere” (Bakhtin 1970-71, p. 134). Taciturnity enables the utterance to escape the inquiring, coercive silence of the linguistic system whose fascist character, as Roland Barthes (1978) says, does not lie in the fact that it impedes speech but, on the contrary, in the fact that it compels it, imposing the repetition of fixed meanings sanctioned by the order of discourse. Silence imposes speaking but is not listening.

Taciturnity is listening and as responsive listening it constitutes a pause in the unrepeatable utterance. Silence is the system of language intended as a “closed discourse universe” (Marcuse, 1974, ch. 1, para. 4). It abolishes listening which belongs to historical unrepeatability and to the open, unfinalized totality of the logosphere. Listening is one thing, wanting to hear is another: listening allows us to speak and to choose what we want to say, it allows for manifestation and is turned to signs in their constitutive multi-voicedness and contradictoriness; to want to hear compels us to speak, imposes univocality, relevance to questions, coherence, noncontradiction (see also Barthes and Havas, 1977, p. 989).

In all forms of society the realization, management and reproduction of power is achieved through control over the communication system. However, this has only clearly emerged recently. In the current phase of globalization, dominion is obviously not achieved through the possession of things but through control over communication relations. More simply, we could say, with Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, author of the monograph *Language as Work and Trade* (see Rossi-Landi, 1968), that the ruling class is the class that possesses capital. But the expression “capital” must now be specified in terms of *communication control*. If in mercantile exchange in general the “arcanum” of merchandise is identifiable by going back to communication relations between humans, now, more than ever before, in today’s global system, *production is communication*. With the expansion of capitalism, the market has realized its tendency to become a world market, and communication has also achieved worldwide dissemination. This means that all communication programs are part of a single global project which coincides with the plan for the development of capital. This plan is grounded in the reality itself of capital, so that *the ideology of capital is its own logic*.

The consequence is unitary, compact, monologic communication oriented towards a single, dominant point of view; an orientation which forces us to speak according to a given logic and which imposes silence. As observed elsewhere, it is not so much a question of the end of ideology as of the fact that dominant ideology is able to impose and reproduce itself in this phase of social reproduction without encountering opposition, automatically, quietly. Therefore, communication today is characterized by the defence of Identity, by reproduction of the Same, by the Totality, by Reality, by the Being. In a universe where everything communicates with itself, where what is

communicated concerns Identity and its reproduction, communication is emptied and silence imposed. In the relation between the interpreted and the interpretant there is no excess, no margin; this relation is realized on the basis of an identification process in which the sign's escape into the interpretant ends with a return to the self, with the negation of what is other and the reassertion of identity.

Monologism in communication corresponds on the verbal level with the tendency towards *monolingualism*: on an external plane as linguistic imperialism, the imposition of one language over others; on an internal plane as the leveling out of language, the loss of effective diversity among internal languages, the loss of expressiveness to the benefit of easy, direct, efficient and speedy communication.

But homologation does not concern verbal language alone. It concerns all behaviour insofar as it is sign behaviour. To a universal market there corresponds universal communication which expresses the same needs, the same exigencies, the same desires, the same fancies. To "closure of the universe of discourse" there corresponds *closure of the communicative universe in general*, of the *human semiotic universe*. As Italo Calvino writes:

At times it seems to me that a pestilential epidemic has struck humanity in the faculty that characterizes it most, i.e. its use of the word. A plague of language which manifests itself as the loss of cognitive force and immediacy, as automatism tending to level out expression into the most generic and abstract formulations, to dilute meanings, to blunt expressive heights, to put out all flashes produced by words in new circumstances. But inconsistency is perhaps present not only in images or languages, but also in the world. This plague also strikes the lives of people, the history of nations, thus rendering all (hi)stories formless, incidental, confused [...]. My uneasiness is for the loss of form which I observe in life [...]. (Calvino, 1988, p. 59) [English translation by Susan Petrilli. Only the Italian version is in the bibliography]

Taciturnity is not only muteness. Taciturnity is not rejection of language. It is also listening, responsive comprehension, indirect discourse, distanced word. Kierkegaard (1843), the theoretician of the indirect word as reaction to the contradiction between the enormity of mass media and the absence of effective communication, observes that the direct, objective word is not concerned with otherness, with the other word with respect to itself, it does not constitute real and proper

communication, or, so to speak, it communicates silence alone (see Ponzio, 1992).

Taciturnity as listening and indirect speaking may consist of “that *shifting action*” exercised on language which Barthes in *Leçon* (1978) considers as a characteristic of literary writing. “The writer,” says Bakhtin, “is he who knows how to work on language while standing outside it, is he who possesses the gift of indirect speaking” (Bakhtin, 1959-6; Eng. trans. 1986, p. 110). Moreover, the writer, says Bakhtin, “clothes himself in taciturnity” (Bakhtin, 1970-71; Eng. trans. 1986, p. 149). But this taciturnity, continues Bakhtin, “can assume various forms of expression, various forms of reduced laughter (irony), allegory, and so forth” (*idem.*).

Translation as indirect discourse, that is, the interpretive word of the word of other, and consequently translation as listening, is a decisive possibility of encounter with the other in current migratory and globalization processes. The translator as a semiotician is responsible for expressing the rights of others in the present situation of interaction among the various categories of “belonging to” and “not belonging to”, including resident aliens, guest workers, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Translation and sign interpretation play a decisive role not only in communication between one culture, with its verbal and non-verbal languages, and another, but also in the possibility of the rise of transnational subjectivities for which human rights are also the rights of others.

3. Semioethics of translation (by Susan Petrilli)

The term “semioethics” (see Petrilli and Ponzio, 2003, 2005) refers to an orientation necessary today more than ever before in the context of globalization, for a better understanding of semiosis—its implications, perspectives, the risks involved and responsibilities. “Semioethics” indicates the propensity of semiotics to recover its ancient vocation as “semeiotics” (or symptomatology), which focuses on symptoms. In other words, a major issue for semioethics is “care for life” in a global perspective according to which semiosis and life coincide.

The expression “global or globalized communication” has different meanings. Our focus is on communication as it characterizes society today in social, cultural, economic and political terms. In the present context it refers to a characteristic socio-semiotic phenomenon

of our time: communication developed by technology, supported by the market and market logic, and extended over the entire globe. All this is directly connected with the production system called “capitalism” in its current phase of development—the global communication-production phase (in technology and knowledge society).

Globalization can be understood in both socio-economic and semiotic terms: therefore the expression “global communication” has two different sets of meanings and ideological values depending on whether it is understood as referring to the socio-economic perspective or to the semiotic perspective. The socio-economic perspective of globalization is limited and short-sighted, as paradoxical as this may seem, given that it serves sectorial and egotistical interests. On the contrary, the semiotic perspective evidences the condition of reciprocal involvement and interrelatedness of all life forms on the planet. And the condition of interrelatedness implies that in the long run indifference towards the other, the tendency to oppress the other, can only backfire on the oppressor.

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

Human life, we underline *human* life, is the right to otherness, unindifferent difference, nonfunctionality, excess with respect to a

world sanctioned by officialdom and convention (see Ponzio, 1997). The properly human converges with the capacity for absolute otherness, unlimited responsibility, the relation of dialogical intercorporeity among unindifferent differences, nonfunctionality with respect to the functionality of identity and relative roles. The properly human is the condition of vulnerability and exposition to the other. The places that best evidence the properly human are the places where time is beaten out in terms of the relation to the absolute and nonfunctional other; the time of death, aging, disease, of friendship and eroticism, the time of mothering and nurturing, the time of aesthetic discourse—whether a question of literature, figurative arts, music, cinema and their signs, the time of inventiveness and scientific progress, of the play of musement, of the ephemeral. This is the time of excess with respect to closed identity, the time of dialogical detotalization and proliferation of differences that cannot be recruited and put at the service of the World. By “World” is understood the most vulgar forms of realism, dominant ideology, identity, being, the order of discourse, the functional subject with a clean conscience, the lying rhetoric of political systems or of mass media which are subservient to a global and totalizing world.

The multiplicity of different languages, special semioses and cultures flourishing in today’s world are signs of the potential for resistance to globalization reductively understood in terms of leveling of values onto global market logic, power, control (see Petrilli, 2003a, 2003b). The connection between world, narration, history, duration, identity, subject, freedom, donation, conferral of sense from intentional consciousness, individuality, difference-indifference, interest, ontology, truth, force, reason, power, work, productivity, politics, war is inscribed in the worldview of Western culture.

This connection has been exploited and exasperated by capitalism from its very beginnings and ever more so now. The word is connected to a consciousness, a subject (whether individual or collective) experienced as part of the world, as the place of signification of the world as it is. Therefore a connection may be established between project, narration, ontology, signification, and subject.

The world is also connected with politics practiced in terms of totalization and functionality. The field of politics is realistic and implements the strategies of productivity and efficiency, it is faithful to reality and mediates the interest of subjects (individual and collective),

it orients the process of becoming according to a realistic view of the present.

The world as it is, the present, is defended at all costs, even at the cost of the *extrema ratio* of war which belongs to the world. Indeed, insofar as the world is based upon identity, it is programmed for sacrifice of the other in the name of identity. From this perspective peace is no more than an interval, momentary repose, reintegration of forces, respite from war, preparation for the next war, similarly to rest, free-time, the night necessary for the resumption of work, for the “madness of the day” (Blanchot). Peace flourishes in and for war, similarly to rest and the night, which flourish in and for work, for the day.

3.1. *Migration and alterity*

Unlike *emigration*, *migration* cannot be controlled and contained and does not arise as the transfer of labour-force which as much as it may be an antagonist to capital is a complementary part of it. Migration is the displacement of human beings who arrive in large numbers from underdeveloped areas in the world and request hospitality from developed countries. Their request is for a place to live in and not just a work-place. To request hospitality is also to interrogate those people who instead do have a place in the developed world (and not just a work-place). To request hospitality from these people means to request that they justify themselves, which means to request justification from those who have a place in the world and have never had to account for their privilege.

In the case of migration, alterity is not the alterity of labour-force (which is relative alterity, internal to the community, or if external to the community, it can be absorbed by that community) which requests and interrogates, but absolute alterity. With its request for hospitality, absolute alterity questions identity. However, this request cannot be registered, it cannot be acknowledged, it resounds like an accusation, even if this is not the intention. In fact, the request for hospitality evidences a bad conscience in the good conscience of identity, it evidences those characteristics of the capitalist system that are preferably ignored: underdevelopment, oppression, segregation, poverty, famine, illness, death, war—all being irreducible excesses of this same system.

The request for hospitality made by migration comes from an alterity that cannot be assimilated by the community—this is an absolute request made by those who in Italy are indicated as the so-called “extracomunitario,” in English “extracommunitarian” (a concept and reality indicated with such expressions as “illegal aliens” or simply “illegals”). The request for hospitality cannot be translated into the request for a work-place or a job, it cannot be assimilated to the request made by the unemployed; instead it is a request made by those who cannot find a place in the totality, in the order of the identical: a request made by those who cannot be assimilated by the dialectics internal to the identity of capital: a request made by absolute alterity which does not fit the preordained plan of *monologic* dialectics, but rather is exposure to the risk of *dialogic* dialectics.

The request for hospitality made by the absolute alterity of migration is not made in the name of “human rights.” Human rights as traditionally understood mostly correspond to the rights of identity. Instead, our focus is on the rights of alterity, the rights of the *other* human being, *autrui*, to say it with Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), the rights of difference. But this is difference that does not belong to a genre, a group or class of some sort, a community; difference that is not relative, that is not internal to community identity and its dialectics. Instead, the type of difference foreseen by the humanism of alterity is characteristic of the extracommunitarian. The rights of the extracommunitarian also need to be translated into the declaration of “human rights”. His/her word calls for translation understood in terms of hospitality; his/her existence calls for listening, for understanding of his/her irreducibility to the system, consequently for transformation of this very same system.

3.2. *Human rights and the rights of others*

The question we must ask is that posed by Levinas: is there no other sense for being than being in the world and for the world? Can the *properly human* transcend the space and time of objects, the space-time of identity? Do such relations exist that cannot be reduced to the category of identity, such that are alien from relations between subject and object, from relations of exchange, equivalence, functionality, interest, productivity? Do there exist such interhuman relations that are altogether other, yet material and earthly, to which one’s body may open? Does there exist a sense that is other with respect to the sense of objects? Throughout all his writings Levinas proposes a form of

humanism which is different from the humanism of identity—what we may propose to call the *humanism of alterity* (see, for example, *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, 1972).

The humanism of alterity implies “movement” without return to the subject, movement which Levinas calls *œuvre*, exposition to alterity, hybridization of identity, interruption of monologism and evasion from the subject-object relation. *Hors-sujet* corresponds to the title of a book by Levinas published in 1987; “hors-sujet” also means to be off the subject, not to respond to thematization, representation. This is possible thanks to the logic of otherness—the condition of possibility for a form of humanism where a good or clean conscience and human rights are interrogated in the light of the rights of others. The logic of otherness implies the capacity for critique of Western thought which instead legitimizes the reasons of identity, prevarication over the other, the reasons of war.

In front of the face of the other, the I is questioned. Through its nudity, exposition, fragility, the face says that alterity will never be eliminated. The alterity of others resists to the very point of calling for recourse to homicide and war (which are proof of the other’s irreducibility). Another one, *autrui*, this other, says Levinas, puts the I into the accusative, summoning it, questioning it, calling it back to the condition of absolute responsibility, outside the I’s initiative.

Absolute responsibility is responsibility for the other, responsibility understood as answering to the other and for the other. This type of responsibility allows for neither rest nor peace. Peace essential to war, peace intrinsic to war, a truce, is fully revealed in its misery and vanity in the light of absolute responsibility. The relation to the other is asymmetrical, unequal: the other is disproportionate with respect to the power and freedom of the I. Moral consciousness is the lack of the sense of proportion, it interrogates the freedom of the self. However, interrogation is constitutive of the self as much as of freedom, insofar as it sanctions the transition from spontaneity to consciousness, from freedom experienced as passive *jouissance* and happy spontaneity of self, to freedom understood as a right, and speaking that right. The rights and freedom of the self are established as a result of the need to answer to others, under the weight of unlimited responsibility for others.

The origin of the self, an origin without *arché*, anarchical self, rises from an uneasy conscience in the face of others, a dirty conscience; therefore, it arises from the need to justify its presence, from responsibility without alibis and without escape from others. In the continued effort to achieve a clear conscience, the self in the nominative, understood as the subject, as intentional consciousness, as speech, derives from interrogating another self and putting it into the accusative. The self's freedoms and rights ('human rights') also derive from such interrogation; they are elaborated to defend self who is summoned by the other to account for the rights of the other as well and therefore to defend itself as "I".

All that which is realistically administered by the impersonal discourse of law, in the context of which war is presented as inevitable violence and self-sacrifice, has its otherwise in its very foundation, that is, in the face-to-face relation with others. This condition is even more realistic, indeed this time truly realistic: the face-to-face condition, as says Levinas, implies a relation of commandment without tyranny, which is not yet obedience to an impersonal law, but the indispensable condition for the institution of law thus conceived.

The opposition of a naked face, the opposition of disarmed eyes, with no protection, which gives rise to the responsibility of the self, is not the opposition of a force, a relation of hostility. It is peace-loving opposition, where peace is not understood as suspension of war, violence withheld in order to be used more effectively. On the contrary, the violence perpetuated consists in eliminating this very opposition, in outwitting it, in ignoring the face, in avoiding the gaze. "No" is written on the face of the other (firstly "You shall not kill") simply for being a face. Having a sense for itself, absolved from the relation with an I, a self, the other evades the presence of the self and its projects, does not go along with it. Violence is achieved by converting the *no which is inscribed* on the face of the other into hostile force or submission. Violence consists in prevailing over the other, to the point even of murder and war, in spite of opposition to violence; opposition that is expressed in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill", which is inscribed in the face even before it is explicit in a formula.

An extrapolitical or prepolitical peace, solicitation for another person (see "Entretiens" in Poirié, 1987, p. 104) precedes rational thought, being as "I", statements made by the subject, knowledge and objectifying consciousness. Primordial peace is paradoxical and

contradictory, it implies responsibility for peace that is otherwise from the peace of war (see Levinas, 1986). Primordial peace implies the interpersonal relationship where the subject “reaches the human condition assuming responsibility for the other person in the election that elevates it to this degree” (‘Preface’ of 1990 to English translation of Levinas, 1934). According to Levinas, the situation of peace and responsibility in relation to the other, a situation where individuals give themselves in their singularity, difference, non-interchangeability, unindifference, precedes politics and logic. Politics and logic share the fact that they consider individuals as belonging to a genre, as equals; the relation of alterity is prepolitical and pre-logical. And given my exclusive responsibility towards every other, this relation itself obliges me to relate to another according to a genre, to the individual of a given system or group, whom as such is interchangeable, indifferent. Knowing, judging, doing justice, confronting two individuals in order to establish who is guilty, all this requires generalization through logic and the State, equalization of singularities with reference to a genre, insofar as they belong to the same State as citizens. The relationship with the other is mediated by institutions and juridical procedure, which generalizes and at the same time delimits responsibility, responsibility of each one of us for every other. From this type of generalization derives the necessity of the State. The action of the State is added to the work of interpersonal responsibility, responsibility as expected from the individual in his/her singularity (which in a sense the State denies). The work of interpersonal responsibility is the work of the individual in his/her singularity, of the person who is responsible in an absolute sense: responsible like a hostage who must answer for something s/he did not do, for a past which was never his/hers, which was never present to him/her (see “Entretiens”, in Poirié, 1987, p. 118).

3.3. For a semioethics of translation

Semioethics of translation may be considered as working towards a new form of humanism which cannot be separated from the question of otherness, what we have designated as the “humanism of alterity”. Human rights as they have been claimed so far tend to be oriented by the logic of identity, leaving aside the rights of the other. Traditionally, as anticipated, the expression “human rights” refers to one’s own rights, the rights of identity, of self, and tends to forget the rights of the other. On the contrary, from the perspective of concern for life (human and nonhuman) over the planet, for the health of semiosis generally, for the development of communication not only in strictly cultural terms

but also in broader biosemiosical terms, this tendency must quickly be counteracted by the humanism of alterity, where the rights of the other are the first to be recognized. “The rights of the other” is an expression that not only indicates the rights of the other *beyond self*, but also the self’s own other, the other *of self*. Indeed, the self characteristically removes, suffocates, and segregates the other, the other which is sacrificed to the cause of identity. But developed in such terms identity is fictitious and all efforts to maintain or recover it are destined to fail.

Semiotics contributes to the humanism of alterity by evidencing the extension and consistency of the sign network connecting every human being to every other, on both a synchronic and diachronic level. The communication network has extended worldwide and requires analysis in synchronic terms; furthermore, given that the destiny of the human species (from its most remote manifestations to the most recent, with reference to biological as well as historical-social evolution) is implied in the behaviour of the single individual, in the destiny of the individual, and vice versa, diachronic investigations are also necessary.

The sign network involves the semiosphere constructed by humankind, in other words, culture with its signs, symbols, artifacts, etc.; but if we accept the axiom that semiosis converges with life, global semiotics teaches us that the semiosphere is far broader than the sphere of human culture alone, and in fact converges with the great biosphere. The semio(bio)sphere is the habitat of humanity, the matrix whence we sprang and the stage on which we are destined to act.

Semiotics has demonstrated that whatever is human involves signs. Indeed, from a global semiotic perspective we now know that whatever is simply alive involves signs. This is as far as cognitive semiotics and global semiotics reach. However, semioethics pushes this awareness even farther by relating semiosis to values. Semioethics focuses on the question of responsibility, of radical, inescapable responsibility inscribed in our bodies insofar as we are “semiotic animals.” As human beings we are responsible for life over the entire planet. This also leads us to interpret the sign behaviour of humanity in the light of the hypothesis that if the human involves signs, signs in turn are human. However, a humanistic commitment does not mean reasserting humanity’s (monological) identity yet again, nor proposing yet another form of anthropocentrism. On the contrary, what is implied is radical decentralization, nothing less than a Copernican revolution.

As Welby would say, “geocentrism” must be superceded, even “heliocentrism” until we approximate a truly cosmic perspective where global semiotics and semioethics intersect. Otherness more than anything else is at stake when it is a question of responsibility, therefore of humanism understood as the humanism of alterity. It should also be underlined that by “otherness” is understood not only the otherness of our neighbour, or even of another person at a distance—though now relatively so given the worldwide expansion of the communication network—, but also the otherness of living beings most distant from us in genetic terms.

Reformulating a famous saying by Terence (“*homo sum: umani nihil a me alienum puto*”), Roman Jakobson asserts that: “*linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto.*” This commitment by the semiotician to all that is linguistic, indeed, to all that is sign material (not only relative to anthroposemiosis or more extensively to zoosemiosis, but to the whole semiobiosphere) is not only intended in a cognitive sense, but also in an ethical sense. Such a commitment involves concern for the other, not only in the sense of “to be concerned with...”, but also in the sense of “to be concerned for...”, “to care for...”. Indeed, viewed from such a perspective, concern for the other, care for the other imply a capacity for responsibility without limitations of belonging, proximity, or community. In truth this capacity is not exclusive to the “linguist” or “semiotician”. Developing Jakobson’s intuition, we could claim that it is not as professional linguists or semioticians, but more significantly as human beings that no sign is “*a me alienum*”. Leaving the first part of Terence’s saying unmodified, “*homo sum*”, we may now continue with the statement that insofar as we are human beings not only are we *semiosical* animals (like all other animals), but we are also *semiotic* animals. From this point of view humans are unique by comparison to the rest of the animal kingdom. The consequence is that nothing semiosical, including the biosphere and the evolutionary cosmos whence it sprang, “*a me alienum puto*”.

From the perspective of a semioethics of translation, the translator is an interlocutor who does not expel the other with his/her singularity, cultural difference, values and specific idiom. The semioethic translator is a device for listening, for hospitality towards the word of the other.

Semioethics does not have a program with intended aims and practices, nor a decalogue or formula to apply more or less sincerely, more or less hypocritically. Semioethics contrasts with *stereotypes* as much as with *norms* and *ideology*. If anything, it proposes a *critique* of stereotypes, norms and ideology, therefore of different types of value, for example such as those described by Charles Morris (1901-1979) in his book of 1964, *Signification and Significance* (think of his triad “operative value,” “conceived value,” and “object value” and subordinate tripartitions such as “detachment,” “dominance,” and “dependence”). Semioethics accounts for the human capacity for critique, its vocation is to evidence sign networks where it seemed that there were none. This means to bring to light and to evaluate connections and implications (which in truth cannot be avoided), where there seemed to exist only net separations and divisions, boundaries and distances, with relative alibis. Alibis serve to safeguard responsibility in a limited sense, that is, the individual conscience which readily presents itself in the form of a good conscience, a clear conscience. Semioethics is not fixed upon a pre-established end, an ultimate end or *summum bonum*, but rather is concerned with semiosis in its dialogical and detotalized globality. Indeed, semioethics pushes beyond the totality, outside the closure of totality, with a gaze that transcends the totality, a given being, a defined entity, in the direction of unending semiosis—a movement towards the infinite, desire of the other. A special task for semioethics is to unmask the illusoriness of the claim to the status of indifferent differences and to evidence the biosemiotic condition of dialogic involvement among signs, intercorporeity.

The critical work of *semioethics* helps to uncover the illusoriness of the condition of differences that are reciprocally indifferent to each other, showing instead how the planet’s destiny is ultimately implied in the destiny and behaviour of each and every one of us and vice versa. As such semioethics must necessarily begin by analyzing and questioning the social system from which it arises. Semioethics must begin from where we are today in historical-social terms. Its point of departure is contemporaneity with a focus on today’s communication-production relations, which require analysis that is rigorous and precise.

The task of semioethics is facilitated by the fact that globalized communication has reached high degrees of homogenization, of leveling of differences in the social reproduction

system. In fact, in the world of global communication-production a dominant production-exchange-consumption system has pervaded the entire planet. This has led to the worldwide spread of the same type of behaviour, habit, fashion (also in the sense of dress fashion), even the same type of imaginary, where difference understood in terms of *otherness* is replaced by difference understood in terms of mere *alternatives*.

The advantage of homogenization is that by eliminating diversity and difference based on the logic of otherness, there is only a single block to analyze. However, this advantage is short-lived for it is the advantage of *monologism* which backfires making criticism and creativity impossible. On the contrary, plurivocality and polylogism favour creative interpretation and critical questioning. Currently the critical task of semioethics is hindered by the fact that it does not yet have appropriate conceptual instruments at its disposal; adequate categories are yet to be constructed, and assumptions cannot be taken for granted when they run counter to the general orientation pervading today's communication-production system.

The present day and age is characterized by migration and globalization processes. In this context semioethics offers translation a basis for the constitution of the translator as a responsible agent of alterity. This means that the translator is capable of safeguarding not only human life, but life over the entire planet.

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ABSTRACT: Translation as Listening and Encounter with the Other in Migration and Globalization Processes Today —

Translation is viewed from a semiotic perspective with a special focus on translator discourse genre and the different forms of reported discourse. The distinction between *listening* and *wanting to hear* and between *silence* and *taciturnity* is introduced to analyze the relation between translation and understanding, translation and the other, translation and hospitality, with special reference to the problematic of migration and globalization processes today. This leads to considerations on the ethical character of translation understood as listening, therefore on the responsibility of the translator towards the other in the encounter between different signs, languages, and cultures. The translator is called to account to and for the other. Given that translation must ultimately acknowledge the rights of others, the responsibility of the translator may be qualified as “semioethic responsibility.”

RÉSUMÉ : La traduction comme écoute et rencontre avec l’autre dans les processus de migration et de mondialisation —

On considère la traduction du point de vue de la sémiotique, en focalisant le genre qu’est le discours du traducteur et les différentes formes de discours rapporté. On introduit la distinction entre *écouter* et *entendre ce qu’on veut* et entre le *silence* et la *taciturnité* pour analyser la relation entre la traduction et la compréhension, la traduction et l’autre, la traduction et l’hospitalité, en portant une attention particulière à la problématique des processus de migration et de mondialisation. Cette démarche mène à la considération du caractère éthique de la traduction en tant qu’écoute et par conséquent à la responsabilité du traducteur envers l’autre, lors de la rencontre entre différents signes, langues et cultures. Le traducteur doit à la fois rendre des comptes à l’autre et se sentir responsable de l’autre. Comme la traduction doit en dernière analyse reconnaître les droits de l’autre, on peut qualifier la responsabilité du traducteur de « responsabilité sémioéthique ».

Keywords: otherness, listening, hospitality, responsibility, semioethics.

Mots-clés : altérité, écoute, hospitalité, responsabilité, sémioéthique.

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