Multicultural Societies, Monotheistic Religions, and Globalization: Semioethic Vistas

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Abstract: Two "qualifications," "masters of the sign" and "peacemakers," in many cases converge. The scholar of signs knows that for there to be a sign, there must be another sign to interpret its meaning. The sign flourishes in the relationship of alterity. The "vocation" of the sign is the other, encounter, dialogue and listening. In this sense, the "nature" of the sign is oriented toward a sort of "preventive peace." In a globalized world where encounter among cultures is inevitable, reflection based on listening to the multiplicity of different languages, expressing different faiths and beliefs is ever more urgent. Encounter among cultures brings encounter among religions. The failure to listen, to take diversity into consideration, subtends fanaticism, imposition of one language over another, of one identity over another, closed and recalcitrant toward the other. But respect for the other, listening and opening to the other, responsibility in the face of the other who summons me is intrinsic to monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam—to their culture and discourse.

Keywords: alterity, semioethics, ecumenical humanism, preventive peace, interreligious dialogue, responsibility

1. Masters of the Sign, Peacemakers, and Interreligious Dialogue[1]

When speaking of the scholar of signs, language, and communication, two "qualifications" often converge—"master of the sign" and "peacemaker." Some names to signal in this regard include Charles S. Peirce, Victoria Welby, Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Morris, Roman Jakobson, Thomas Sebeok, Adam Schaff, Emmanuel Levinas, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Giuseppe Semerari, Ferruccio

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[1] This text is structured under the following subtitles: 1. Masters of the Sign, Peacemakers, and Interreligious Dialogue; 2. Faiths, Creeds, and Fanaticism; 3. Beyond the Trap of Identity: Proximity and Responsibility; 4. The Languages of War and Peace; 5. Monotheism, Preventive Peace, and Dialogic Listening; 6. The Dialogue between Secularism and Religion; 7. Not Fear of the Other, but Fear for the Other as the Foundation of Human Rights; 8. Ecumenical Humanism, alias Dialogue among Humanisms; 9. Identity and Alterity, Beyond Indifferent Humanity; 10. Global Semiotics, Semioethics, and the Future of Global Society.

Rossi-Landi, Umberto Eco, Massimo Bonfantini . . . The list is partial but indicates major signposts in our semio-philosophical research at the University of Bari Aldo Moro, led by Augusto Ponzio, and reflected in the *Athanor. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura* book series as much as in his personal publications. The most recent volume in the Athanor series is dedicated precisely to "masters of signs and peacemakers" (Petrilli 2021b).[2] Proceeding along research trajectories delineated by the authors listed, and while advancing looking back to other authors still, including Edmund Husserl and John Locke, we have proposed developments on the "general science of signs," or "semiotics" in terms of "semioethics," which has a special focus on the relation of signs and values (Petrilli 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2020b, 2021c; Petrilli and Ponzio 2003). Moreover, to Sebeok goes the merit of expanding "general semiotics" into "global semiotics" on a theoretical level and of recovering the connection for sign studies with "semeiotics" (Hippocrates and Galen) on the historical.

Convergence between sign theorists and peacemakers largely stems from awareness by the scholar of sign and language that for there to be a sign, there must be another sign that on interpreting the previous sign tells its meaning. Consequently, signs live and flourish in the relationship of alterity and translation (see the Athanor translation trilogy, edited by Susan Petrilli: *La traduzione*, 1999; *Tra segni*, 2000; *Lo stesso altro*, 2001). The "vocation" of the sign, thus of the word, is interpretation of the other, with the other, for the other; encounter with other signs, with other words; encounter which is inevitably dialogue and listening.

A fundamental practice in the use of signs is translation (Petrilli 2003, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b), and translation inevitably involves encounter with other signs, with other words, already in the same system, in the same language, before encounter with other systems, other languages. To speak is, in general, to communicate, to signify, and to translate. As such, to speak implies ongoing relations in the dynamics between identity and alterity (Petrilli and Ponzio 2019).

This partly explains the interest on behalf of the student of signs, of semiotics and philosophy of language, in the relation to the other (*autrui*), whatever the other's identity and community affiliation.

A central task for semiotics practiced as global semiotics oriented semioethically is to interpret the signs of the identity–alterity relationship and their signifying implications in our contemporary world. We believe this is

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[2] The present text presents and develops central topics addressed in a number of collaborative volumes published in the series *Athanor. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura,* directed by Augusto Ponzio. The series largely refers to historical-social problems afflicting contemporaneity and read in the light of recent developments in the sign and language sciences. *Athanor,* an annual monographic series that publishes mainly in Italian but also in English, French, and Spanish, was founded in 1990 by Augusto Ponzio with Claude Gandelman and promoted by the Institute of Philosophy of Language (subsequently the Department of Linguistic Practices and Text Analysis, now part of the Department of Letters, Languages, and Arts of the University of Bari Aldo Moro), and continued by Ponzio after Gandelman's death in 1996. The original publisher through 1997 was Angelo Longo in Ravenna. The new series—except for no. 1 from 1998, which was published by Piero Manni in Lecce—was produced by Meltemi in Roma (now part of Mimesis) until 2009. From 2010, it has been published with Mimesis in Milan. A complete and detailed description of all *Athanor* volumes is indexed in Petrilli 2020a, 381–83, as well as in Petrilli 2021b.

centrally important for inquiry into the conditions for the health of multicultural societies and interreligious dialogue over the globe today.

In the denomination "philosophy of language," "of language" may be interpreted as a subject genitive—thus, philosophy intrinsic to language, not language as the object of philosophy, but philosophy as the structural dimension of language, philosophy that belongs to language, which evokes the dialogical nature of the sign, verbal and nonverbal. Philosophy converges with language, the word—thus, with dialogue open to the other, the dialogue of life. Dialogue is a dimension of the word, thus, of life, that philosophy is engaged in recovering given the dialogic nature of language. The focus on dialogue on behalf of the student of signs and language—interspecies dialogue, intercultural dialogue, interreligious dialogue, dialogue among economic and political systems, exo- or extracommunitarian dialogue—ultimately, the focus on encounter and living together is explained by the sign's intrinsic otherness. Living together, peace, social justice demand listening to the word of the other.

If the world is in the word, if the human is in the word and the word is dialogue, the absence of dialogue translates into the absence of humanity, into inhuman(e) humanity. In the name of identity, closed identity (Morris 1948a), the word as other, as otherwise than being (Levinas 1974), as "saying" is interdicted, put under threat, expunged. Yet the nature of the word, of the sign, is dialogical, founded in otherness. Therefore, the claim is that the sign, the word is oriented in the sense of peace, to echo Levinas again, a sort of "preventive peace" (cf. Ponzio 2009a, 2012a), in contrast to the concept of "preventive war" circulating today (to justify military intervention, passed off as "just and necessary war," "humanitarian war," well and truly a *contradictio in terminis*). To evoke Levinas again, the word is in "saying" rather than in the "said"; as such, it is unique. This is the word *avant la lettre*, before the letter, which converges with otherness, absolute otherness, and with justice, justice before the law (Petrilli 2021a). Justice and understanding demand listening, and listening is a matter of love and care for the other. World peace, solidarity, living together, interhuman dialogue, social justice presuppose hospitality of the word, infinite opening to otherness, dialogical listening.

In a globalized world where encounter among cultures is inevitable, reflection based on listening to the multiplicity of different languages expressing different faiths and beliefs is ever more urgent. Encounter among cultures brings encounter among religions. The failure to listen and take diversity into consideration subtends fanaticism, whose distinctive trait is imposition of one language only, monolingualism and monologism, one language and one logic always the same, the imposition of one identity, closed and recalcitrant toward the other. Such worldwide phenomena as exploitation, social alienation, inequality, migration, starvation, unemployment, authoritarianism, misanthropy, racism in all its ugly faces mark the failure of dialogue, local and global, urban and nonurban; without dialogue, there can be no peace, no peaceful living together, whether local or global, urban or nonurban.

The capacity for dialogue and listening is structural to monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam. Respect, love, and care for the other, one's

neighbor, the foreigner, is part of the very fabric of their discourse, their culture, their texts. In other words, no less than intrinsic to religious discourse is opening to the other, and with opening to the other, the ethics of responsibility, responsibility in the face of the other who summons me and cannot be evaded.

2. Faiths, Creeds, and Fanaticism

Nonetheless, we know that religions have been used and continue to be used in our globalized world to justify violence, genocide, massacre (Dammacco and Petrilli 2016). In spite of a characteristic opening to the other and interrelationship, monotheistic languages throughout history have fallen into the "mortal trap of identity" (an expression used as the title of another volume in the Athanor series, cf. Ponzio 2009a). Languages are distorted according to a *crescendo* ranging from hypocrisy to tolerance to war in the extromission of the other. Languages, including the languages of religion, have been repeatedly captured and trapped in the logic of identities and affiliations, in closed communities ready to expunge the other. War is waged—and still today—in the name of religion. But is violence intrinsic to religious discourse? Or is religious discourse instrumentalized, mystified, and manipulated, a question of exploiting religion, abused in the name of deviated ends? The most peaceful of individuals is called to arms, recruited, put into a uniform, sent to eliminate the "enemy." Even love is used to justify homicide. What does all this mean, if not that the key is in society, in social organization? So, while we can agree with Pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio) (2020) when, in his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* (*All Brothers*), he claims that "radical individualism" is the most difficult "virus" ever to defeat, the problem to address is not so much the single individual—behave yourself!—as the social that sponsors the egocentric individualism of the single individual, *alias* identity closed to the other.

In order to achieve a religion in the sign of peace, a culture of peacemakers, the social must be questioned. The demand is for social change. The social constructed on identity, belonging, affiliation, and difference that discriminates based on skin color, origin, language, religion, putting one against the other is condemned to the current state of affairs, to the violence of war and conflict over the planet. It is necessary to work today, in the anterior future, for a better world tomorrow, for citizenship in a new world, for new world citizenship (Dammacco and Ponzio 2016; Ellis 2019; Petrilli 2019a; Ponzio 2008).

Living together in multicultural societies requires an end to the paroxysm of identity. Identity, closed identity, calls for difference and for corresponding indifference to assert itself and subsist. Identity is difference founded in indifference (cf. Ponzio 2013). The Berlin Wall was demolished in 1989, when it no longer served its purpose. It was replaced by another wall, one far more resistant, far more pervasive, the wall of indifference. The form of resistance alluded to here arises, consolidates, and spreads worldwide in association with a consumerist global market as it too expands and is reinforced. The global market is supported by a global communication network and by progress in technology functional to

the same market. Pope Francis has described the current situation as the "globalization of indifference."[3]

In spite of the marked tendency in the present-day world toward multicultural societies with migration and encounter in its diversified forms, intensifying day by day, we are currently witnessing a social situation characterized by the opposite tendency, that is, toward homologation, uniformity, the leveling of differences. Paradoxically, this contrasting tendency is typical of the globalization era in its present-day phase of development—globalization of the market, of production, of communication, of feeling and perception, in other words, of human behaviors, signs, and values. Indifference, which is now global, is connected to market consumerist indifference. Life in its various aspects floats in a sea of indifference, which has assumed world dimensions, indifference to the other, to multiplicity, to social inequality, to difficulties in terms of the possibility of my neighbor's survival even.

The present-day world is marked by contradictions that render human existence ever more complex; the capacity to establish balanced interpersonal relationships in the sign of *reasonableness* is frequently compromised (cf. Peirce, *CP* 1.615, 2.195, 5.3; Petrilli 2019b, 58–59). Uncertainty, crisis, precarity hit social systems and destabilize human thought and action. Faith itself has been exploited as a breeding ground for fanaticism. Social and personal equilibriums are heavily influenced by external pressure, events, ideas, cultural atmosphere; by the representation and communication of reality conditioned by fear and its manifold faces; and by obscure self-interest. The crises experienced by the contemporary world—not only economic crises, but also political, social, cultural, ethical, and moral crises—enhance the spaces of personal insecurity, the sense of precariousness, driving human behavior in one of two directions: either in the search for creeds and fideistic certainties, or in the direction of fanaticism, the expression of ideals that have degenerated. Believing in somebody or something endows existence with significance, even founds the reason for living (Russell 1917, 2017); as such, belief can consolidate solidarity as much as intolerance. Revival of faiths, creeds, beliefs across the twentieth century, in the sign of identity, has often degenerated into fanaticism ably orchestrated and exploited for illegitimate, even criminal, self-interest and profit.

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[3] Dio "non è indifferente a noi" e a "quello che ci accade": per questo il cristiano deve dire no alla "globalizzazione dell'indifferenza," cioè a quella "attitudine egoistica" che "ha preso oggi una dimensione mondiale" ed è diventata una vera e propria "vertigine." È quanto scrive il Papa, nel Messaggio per la Quaresima—sul tema: "Rinfrancate i vostri cuori" (Gc 5,8)—in cui esorta i credenti a non cedere alla "tentazione dell'indifferenza" e a non lasciarsi "assorbire" dalla "spirale di spavento e di impotenza," "saturi" come siamo "di notizie e immagini sconvolgenti che ci narrano la sofferenza umana" (Nicolai 2020).

In English: God "is not indifferent to us" or "to what happens to us": this is why the Christian must say "no" to the "globalization of indifference," to that "selfish attitude" which "today has overwhelmed the world" and makes us "dizzy." This is what the pope writes in his message for Lent on the theme "Establish your hearts" (James 5:8), in which he exhorts believers not to believe in the "temptation of indifference" and not let themselves be "absorbed" by the "spiral of fear and powerlessnes," "oversaturated" as we are "by the appalling news and images that narrate human suffering" (Nicolai 2020, my translation).

The ghost haunting the world today is wearing a new mask, that of international terrorism. Terrorism is no more than a symptom of a widespread sense of unease in our global world, and a scapegoat—at times, even a mystification—used to deviate attention from generalized dissatisfaction and its causes. The ghost of terrorism finds an immediate response from the masses, putting politics and politicians in the position to justify the war machine in the collective imaginary dulled by the banality of everyday life—a war machine that hangs over the world and prevails with its profits, strategical objectives, and "side effects."

The third millennium was inaugurated tragically, on September 11, 2001, with the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. The message was dramatic and premised a whole series of tragedies that followed, all in the name of a fundamentalist and distorted vision of religion, marked by a general lack of tolerance, rejection of any form of religious and, more broadly, cultural difference, violence, terrorist attacks, war, all sorts of walls and barriers.

The Twin Towers disaster recalls another disaster that occurred almost thirty years earlier, another tragic event associated with the United States, specifically the Central Intelligence Agency. On September 11, 1973, a military coup, intended to remove Salvador Allende, was led by traitor Augusto Pinochet and his supporters—this, again, at the cost of thousands of lives.

Nonetheless, neither religion nor politics is reducible to violence and destruction.

How can one not remember in the circumstances just described the words and actions of such extraordinary figures as the Italian filmmaker and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini (Petrilli 2021d, 89–102) or, from the religious sphere, Father Alessandro Zanotelli, who has spent his life assisting alienated, violated humanity, even living with the disinherited of the earth in the slums surrounding Nairobi in Kenya for over twenty years, or the poet and bishop Father Antonino Bello, who opened his cathedral in Molfetta to interreligious prayer with Islam and, the day after, marched with his parishioners on Belgrade for peace.

A return is necessary to the original word of monotheisms and their texts, which is to return to the original condition of otherness. But not only this: a return to the original words of monotheisms is also a return to the words and acts of all those who have worked for peace, preventive peace, and continue doing so as witnesses and agents, contributing with their lives to liberating the languages of monotheism from distortion and misunderstanding, connected with the exaltation and fanaticism of identity (Ponzio 2012a).

According to Levinas, throughout his writings, the real issue for "Westerners" is not so much to refuse violence as to resist the institution of violence, to reject the practice of eliminating violence through recourse to violence, through "war on war" (Levinas 1991, 21–25). War against war perpetuates war. Far from resisting the institution of violence, "infinite war," "preventive war" enhances violence. War against terrorism, against fanaticism, not least of all religious fanaticism confirms, even consecrates, what it is called to defeat, the values of war and violence.

But religious phenomena are essentially capable of building social relationships in complex and changing contexts, characterized ever more by plurality, diversity, and multiculturalism. In a global and globalized world, encounter in one form or another, for one reason or another is inevitable; despite difficulties, as presented, for example, by uncontrolled migratory fluxes over the planet, cultural and religious differences must learn to co-exist, and do so in the dynamics between global and local contexts. In spite of socio-cultural-political problems and interrelational difficulties, religious discourse before and beyond the monologism of fundamentalism, of fanaticism is essentially dialogical discourse open to the other. The essential vocation of religious discourse, of creed is to favor dialogue and listening to the other (Ponzio 2009c), interpersonal relationships, including across different cultures in multicultural social contexts, peaceful living together. Under this aspect, the co-presence in urban settings of different religions can contribute to the construction of intercultural legal systems devised to guarantee fundamental human rights and security for all, personal and social.

3. Beyond the Trap of Identity: Proximity and Responsibility

Levinas advocated "preventive peace" beyond the alibis provided by identity, by a "clean conscience." Passive resistance to war and violence is not enough. Preventive peace demands unindifference to the other, responsibility without alibis. This is not the peace of war, but peace that comes from *otherwise than being*, from *otherwise than reality*, otherwise than the world as-it-is, before and beyond the world that results from war and that foresees war. This *otherwise*, this *beyond*, this opening to the other, my neighbor, *proximity*—which, of course, is not merely a question of spatial proximity—proximity as *responsibility*, implies more than accessibility, tolerance, the will to dialogue (Petrilli 2021a). Opening is the condition for a culture founded in the logic of alterity, for otherness without shelter, opening as vulnerability, exteriority, no boundaries, no protection, no security, no alibis (Petrilli 2021d). Opening is associated with subjectivity understood in terms of uniqueness, singularity, absolute otherness before consolidation in the closed "Ident," to evoke Victoria Welby's terminology (Petrilli 2009, 2015b), in the "closed self" with Charles Morris (1948a), before falling into the trap of identity, identity of the I and the you, and of "dialogue" between the I and the you, before fixation in abstract concepts and categories, in gnoseological epistemes, before fixation in the abstract notions of freedom and nonfreedom.

Freedom is also freedom of the word, the word's freedom. As freedom of the word, freedom is associated with intelligence, with human happiness. Freedom is also political freedom—that is to say, freedom achieved in the *polis*, the place where the human being develops as self, in relation to the other, reaches consciousness of self, of the self's rights, the rights of the human individual and of the people, human rights (Petrilli 2013a).

Multiple faiths are an expression of human freedom. Religion in its cultural diversity indicates freedom as an absolute value, freedom of the single individual.

On the contrary, fanaticism presents the same distinctive elements, in whatever time, culture, or faith. Religious fanaticism and political fanaticism, a constant throughout history, consist in extremist exaltation of ideologies and beliefs (religious and/or political), a threat now amplified through the instruments of mass media in today's global communication world (cf. Dammacco 2016; Incampo 2016; Ricca 2016).

Freedom is also the freedom to search for new juridical and social categories able to interpret multicultural society and its changing faces (social, emotional, psychological, sociological, political, economic, juridical), including the proliferation of religious creeds within the same socio-cultural urban space. In effect, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the world bipolar system favored globalization of the world economy and the global spread of culture, religion, and social media. The other side of the story is that different worldviews and cultural practices enter local cultural systems and urban settings, inevitably transforming them. Introduction of new cultural factors modifies interpersonal relationships and interrogates fundamental human rights. Interaction among different cultures and religions is oriented by values that concern each single individual and that single individual's rights, human rights.

When a question of the religious phenomenon and multicultural societies, central values are those that safeguard the right to freedom, including religious freedom, the right to equality, to solidarity, to intercultural dialogue, to social justice and corresponding legal systems (Essoua and Ponzio 2016; Santoro 2018). In chapter three of his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis underlines the relation between human rights and human dignity, acknowledging that which is a starting point for hope in a new humanity, in a new humanism, what with Adam Schaff we might denominate "ecumenical humanism" (Schaff 1992; see also Schaff in Petrilli 2021b).

4. The Languages of War and Peace

The word "peace" is loaded with multiple signifying nuances, even more so today as a consequence of globalization with its plans for "world peace," "peace in the world," a "world of peace." Even war is used as a justification to "maintain" or "achieve" peace, qualifying the decision for war as "preventive" in the name of "freedom" and "democracy": therefore, "preventive war," as such, "just and necessary war"; and given this noble goal for the sake of "humanity," for peace in the world, also "humanitarian war" (Petrilli 2017)!

The propensity for peace is often merely the expression of the will to pacify one's conscience: to put one's conscience at rest, in peace (Rest in Peace); to feel justified, to have a clean conscience. There exist pacifists and there exist pacifiers of one's own conscience, those with a conscience in peace. The idea of peace is connected with the idea that peace is an affair that concerns the subject, that depends on the subject, whether individual or collective: to recognize the existence of peace, its characteristics, to establish conditions and modalities to reach peace. All prerogatives and competencies of the subject: to be in peace, to want peace, to

achieve peace, to give peace, to make peace, to put oneself at peace, peace of mind (cf. Merrell 2017).

But peace is effectively *with the other*, in dialogue with the other, listening to the other. Otherwise, peace is peace of the pacified conscience, the peace of war, achieved by getting the upper hand over the other, without the other, through oppression and repression and suppression of the other: possibly in the name of "altruism" or "humanitarian intervention," now also "humanitarian war" considered as the "*extrema ratio*," reason that offers the peace and quiet of cemeteries.

There would seem to be no limitations on what the individual and collective subject as an identity can claim in the name of peace. The discourse of war is in the name of peace. War is peace. *Friedensrede*, "peace speech": this is the title of Adolph Hitler's speech of May 17, 1933, one that moved the German people deeply and produced a favourable impression abroad.

"War is peace" is the slogan of the political system described by George Orwell in his 1948 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* Since then, from the 1991 Gulf War onward, "war is peace" has become the slogan of governments—the United States and the United Kingdom in the front line. And with their ready deployment of the military for war, these governments have earned themselves the title of global "peacekeepers."

If you want peace, prepare for war, cites an ancient adage, which, reinforced with the undisputable formula of "prevention is better than cure," renders the idea of "preventive war" irrefutable. The real face of reality is manifest in war. "War speech" is the discourse that takes account of the reality of things, of its *dura lex, sed lex*; it is the discourse of naked truth, its undeniable revelation.

In terms of argumentation, just and necessary war, the *extrema ratio* of war, calls for the "end of war." In fact, like all production cycles, war too needs to see an end, a conclusion; it cannot begin once again if the products of the preceding cycle are not eliminated first. The idea of the "end of war," of its "brevity," of "speedy performance" is not inconsistent with the idea of "infinite war." The productive cycle of war finishes each time, that is, as quickly as possible, to begin anew once again, incessantly, not simply in terms of mere reproduction, but of expanding production as relative markets get stronger and healthier (Petrilli and Ponzio 2016b, 2017).

To put one's conscience at rest, at peace, other justifications alongside the qualification of war as "just" include the idea of the war machine as precise, circumscribed, capable of rapid surgical intervention, with reduced collateral damage: for the sake of peace, minimal harm, only that which is necessary, and for the last time (!). The question of peace and war, or rather of the "peace of war," requires analysis—semantic, logical, semiotico-pragmatical—of the different languages and argumentations implied in the different meanings of "peace," their different functions and projects, their sense and significance. A semioethical perspective on the languages of peace and war can contribute to a better understanding of implied meaning and value, for the sake of healthier and happier projectuality (cf. Fistetti 2017; Solimini 2015, 2017).

5. Monotheism, Preventive Peace, and Dialogic Listening

The languages of monotheism, whether Judaic, Christian, or Islamic, are characterized by opening to the other, by exhortation to listen to the other, by the appeal for responsibility toward the other, by unindifference, hospitality, dialogue. The Athanor volume dedicated to the languages of monotheism and preventive peace (Ponzio 2012b) begins with an epigraph from a book by Father Roberto Busa, S.J., *Quodlibet. Briciole del mio mulino*: "monotheism is the expression of a certainty or, rather, of the truth of a presence—that is, that we are two" (1999, 62; my translation). The languages of religion, indeed the languages of the world, must recover the original word of monotheistic religions, the word as otherness, dialogue, listening. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam unite ethnic diversity, differences across the globe. From this perspective, all three monotheistic religions associate different peoples and races in a common cause for *human(e) humanity*, for *human(e) solidarity*. Dialogue is installed among alterities. In our globalized world, it is now urgent, more than ever before, to free the original word from distortion, misinterpretation, mystification, including the myth of tolerance, from exaltation of identity in its various forms, more or less extreme, from action dictated by fanaticism.

The problem of alterity and the critique of identity are pivotal in Western reason and central concerns in the writings of Levinas (cf. Ponzio 1995). In "Monothéisme et langage" (a presentation delivered by Levinas in 1959 at a meeting organized by the Union des Etudiants Juifs at the Mutualité; published in *Difficile liberté*, 1963), Levinas observes how Jews, Christians, and Muslims have collaborated historically, joined by monotheism in spite of differences and misunderstandings. Accords are possible and mature on the basis of listening to one another, but listening is the condition. Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction does not work without listening. The language of monotheism calls for listening and responsive understanding. Monotheism, as Levinas (1990) says in "Monotheism and Language," is not simply an "arithmetics of the Divine," but schooling in xenophilia and antiracism: "It is the perhaps supernatural gift of seeing that one man is absolutely like another man beneath the variety of historical traditions kept alive in each case. It is a school of xenophilia and anti-racism" (178).

Levinas (1961) mediates on the condition of alterity and peace, which he describes as pre-political, extra-political. He cites the following biblical prescriptions: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18) and "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself" (Lev. 19:34). Peace is the relation with the other as other, with the stranger that we each are for every other, in the stranger's uniqueness and singularity. Proximity signifies responsibility in my singularity as a unique human being, responsibility that cannot be delegated. Singularity is not a property of the individual (as posited instead by Max Stirner 1844), but is associated with non-delegable responsibility in the relation among absolute alterities (Levinas [1953] 2017; Morris 1942, 2012; Rossi-Landi 1975, 2012; Schaff 2001, 2012).

In spite of the validity of logical argument, in spite of Aristotelian logic for the sake of persuasion, there is no possibility of dialogue without listening, without hospitality toward the word of the other. As observed by Levinas (1990), monotheism, the word of the one and only God,

> is precisely the word that one cannot help but hear, and cannot help but answer. It is the word that obliges us to enter into discourse. It is because the monotheists have enabled the world to hear the word of the one and only God that Greek universalism can separate in humanity and slowly unify that humanity. This homogeneous humanity gradually forming before our eyes, which lives in fear and anguish but already achieves solidarity by collaborating economically, has been created by those of us who are monotheists! It is not the play of economic forces that has created the solidarity which is in fact uniting races and states around the world. The opposite is the case: the power of monotheism to make one man tolerate another and bring him to reply has made possible the entire economy of solidarity. (178–79)

Levinas underlines the long and intense history of collaboration, insofar as they share monotheism, among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean, in spite of differences, disagreements, and disputes. The permanent condition of Mediterranean societies is diversity, multiculturalism, plurilingualism, even if at varying degrees. The Mediterranean is characterized by the co-existence of a multiplicity of different cultures, languages, religions, lifestyles, moral codes, visions of the world, philosophies, all of which encounter each other and clash with each other, in spaces (national and international) that become ever smaller in globalization, in the sign of neighborhood and promiscuity (cf. Dammacco 2012). A major problematic in situations of multiculturalism and plurilingualism, together with mutual understanding, is the associated question of mutual living together, referring to the same juridical system, the same legislation. The problematic nature of the relationship between multiple cultures, multiple languages, and the law emerges under different aspects. Nonetheless, thanks to the original capacity for opening to the other, as inscribed in the materiality of the sign, verbal and nonverbal, all three great monotheistic religions are implicated in the condition of living together beyond differences that divide and can contribute to building peace-loving human communities (cf. Petrosino 2012). And they do so in spite of short-sighted economic interests on behalf of those who draw advantages from conflict, including in the religious sphere, exasperating differences and favoring mutual misunderstanding. Religion too can be used as a pretext for exploitation, conflict, and extermination, but this is an "improper use," an abuse of religion. The propensity for dialogue, listening, mutual understanding, hospitality, respect for minorities, protection and welfare of the human person are values that our monotheistic religions as represented by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share, in spite of substantial differences, and are a condition for world peace and social justice.

6. The Dialogue between Secularism and Religion

With the question of the possibility (or demand) of interrelationship and dialogue among monotheistic religions in a multicultural society, another question is that of the possibility (or demand) of interrelationship and dialogue between secularism and religion. In our multicultural world, dialogue between secularism and religion(s) continues to be a central concern (cf. Levinas 1960; Ricca 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Stefanì 2012). Securalism in the course of its history has played an important role in resolving conflict arising from exclusionist tendencies in religious identity. This means guaranteeing equality among citizens, including in political and juridical terms. Equality implies the equal dignity of all human beings, and equal dignity is the dignity of diversity, dignity that recognizes difference, unindifferent difference, otherness-difference, alterity-difference, the word's uniqueness. And difference, otherness, dignified humanity call for interhuman, intercultural, interreligious dialogue.

In a global world where the reality of multiculturalism and multireligions is intensifying locally, in urban and nonurban settings, the state's difficulty in managing religious diversity on a juridical level, for example in a Christian state like Italy, is largely determined by the incapacity to govern diversity no longer inscribed in the cultural horizon of the Christian religion. A situation where the legal system is not neutral in religious and, more broadly, cultural matters evidences weaknesses in the constitutional principles of religious freedom and equality. Secularism of the juridical order is flawed because of the lack of neutrality on the religious and cultural levels. Presence of the other in a multicultural society helps unmask the degree to which religion is hidden in the conception of law, rights, regulations in legal institutions, inevitably causing observance of juridical norms to be perceived as imposition associated with processes of religious and cultural assimilation.

Multicultural societies and interreligious dialogue call for "intercultural secularism," the outcome of dialogue among differences, which involves the work of translation, not only interlingual translation but also translation broadly understood as intercultural translation (Petrilli 2003, 2013b, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b; Petrilli and Ponzio 2006, 2008). If the task is to achieve "intercultural secularism," different cultures, languages, and religions must be prepared to encounter and accommodate each other beyond the boundaries of identity, of closed identity (Ponzio 2010, 2011). Another requirement is to recognize the degree to which religious values perfuse what is declared to be purely secular discourse, just as the appeal to natural law is thus likewise pervaded.

Secularism calls for dialogue among religions, for mutual opening, listening and hospitality, for dialogue among monotheisms. Moreover, interreligious and intercultural dialogue is a powerful antidote against the plague of homologation and uniformity, against the monologism and monolingualism imposed upon world cultures by socio-economic globalization, which also means that it is against subservience to technological progress and to relations regulated by global market logic.

The Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs published a "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" in May of 2008, the European year for intercultural dialogue. This particular document recognizes "Europe's rich cultural heritage"

as including a great diversity of religious and secular conceptions, different expressions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which have profoundly influenced the European continent (22). On acknowledging the multiplicity of different matrixes forming European culture, the White Paper appeals to the "responsibility of the religious communities themselves" to foster "understanding between different cultures" through "interreligious dialogue" (22). The appeal is for a new model for cooperation between religion and secularity, for participation of religions in the construction of the public sphere in the sign of peaceful living together and social cohesion (cf. Stefanì 2016).

The "public nature" of religion as it results from interculturalism is a central value for contemporary society. This "public nature" distinguishes religion today from its familiar, indeed traditional, qualification as a "private affair," in contrast to the secularity of public life (cf. Santoro 2016). In our contemporary global, multicultural, and multilingual world, dialogue among religions has become ever more important for the sake of living together, and certainly among religions in multicultural societies. It is essential that juridical norms be reorganized to include the rights of others within the sphere of "human rights," and not to exclude them as foreseen by (closed) identity logic (cf. "Les droits de l'homme et les droits d'autrui," in Levinas 1987b). This is an imperative task to accomplish at the profound social level of constitutional foundations (Petrilli 2021a).

Closing to difference and diversity, including religious difference, most often masks fear and the will to discrimination. But paradoxically, the problems that derive from social and political action based on fear, thus on closing to the other and violating fundamental human rights, end up backfiring: identity achieved in such terms and imposed upon the other is identity artificially opposed to alterity, to diversity, identity placed in relation to conflict rather than to dialogue and mutual participation with the other—conflictual identity, identity under threat.

No doubt the co-presence of differences (worldviews, cultures, languages, religions) can accentuate difficulties in governing social phenomena. Consequently, if the plan is to address problems and find solutions that favor co-existence among differences in a healthy multicultural society, it is ever more urgent to build legal systems on unbiased socio-juridical foundations, uncompromised by prejudice and stereotypes. Moreover, problems connected with multiculturalism overlap with emergencies on other fronts, not least of all connected with the economy and the possibility of employment, thereby generating further fragmentation and conflictuality. Juridical categories and legal systems are called to respond adequately to complex interpersonal and social relationships, which also involves the need to pay special attention to language and communication. In multicultural contexts, ever more urgent is recourse to dialogue as a juridical instrument, apt to favor the resolution of conflicts, interpersonal and social, public and private.

The happy development of multicultural social systems requires ethical rules, juridical norms, and fundamental values that can be shared in diversity, as the multiplicity moves together toward common social goals, governed by political models acknowledged by all. From this point of view, democracy as a method constitutes a fundamental resource for the creation of consensus. Different

interests and common goals can only be achieved with the participation of all subjects (physical and juridical) implied, living together in the same cultural space, for the overall development of what, echoing Charles Morris, could be described as a "multiverse" social system, one that recognizes diversity and the ability to govern diversity democratically, as a resource.

The question today takes on global dimensions and points to the need for global dialogue at the height of the challenges launched by globalization under all its aspects: social, economic, political, cultural, and ethical. Democracy—not only as a juridical but also as a social and political construction—is in crisis for many and heterogeneous reasons, even in those countries where, until recently, it was thought that the process was irreversible (Ferrajoli 2022). A healthy multicultural society develops in the dialectics between unity (of the system) and diversity (of its participants), identity, and alterity, which inevitably calls for critical awareness of the problems involved to achieve social harmony and peaceful co-habitation, including questions connected with religious diversity.

7. Not Fear *of* the Other, but Fear *for* the Other as the Foundation of Human Rights

As observed by the American semiotician Charles Morris (1948a, 2002, 2017) in *The Open Self*, referencing the socio-political situation in the United States during the Cold War era, the cause of fear, fear of the other at paroxystic degrees is to be searched for elsewhere—not in the other, but in one's own closed self, in the self's egoity, in the selfish self, in the self barricaded behind walls of indifference to the other, to plurality and diversity, to dialogue and listening. The real center of danger is the closed self, the individual self. The enemy is in the self, as Morris averred, in our anxieties, prejudices, and preclusions. Ongoing violation of human rights, the repression of differences, genocide, war disseminated over the globe— all such phenomena are largely imputable to the logic regulating the "closed society," the "closed community."

Whilst favoring encounter, globalization has also fostered an opposite movement in the world in terms of cultural fragmentation. Identities under threat, whether individual or collective, assert themselves against the other, impose upon the other, for fear of the other, for fear of cultural and axiological relativism, for fear that the other's difficulty, the other's poverty may become my own. In the struggle for survival, identities are ready to enter into relations of conflict, emphasizing divisive elements and generating a system of walls and barriers to keep the other away. The Trump Mexican wall is a recent example, but examples of brutal (in)humanity have been proliferating in Europe and across the world for decades now. In relation to Australia, suffice it to remember the irony of Christmas Island, in spite of the name no less a cruel detention center, as are all detention centers, including in Woomera in my own home state of South Australia. But in terms of human(e) humanity, an adequate reply can only come from the "open self," the unindifferent self with respect to difference and diversity, as described

by Morris, advocate of the "open society," convergent with listening and hospitality.

In the difficult context of conflict across the world, human rights are faltering and, though formally undersigned by states, are often violated by state legislation, by identities at war. In the face of cultural or traditional fundamentalisms, ever more exploited by low-key populist politics and politicians, the right to religious freedom is among the human rights most under pressure. Other social phenomena intervene, charging religion further with conflictual relationships—among these, migration as it presents itself today. Migratory fluxes have now reached dimensions so significant as to confirm the idea that the world is undergoing a significant anthropological transformation. The closed self contributes to producing that consistent part of humanity forced to beg for what is a natural right: a place in the world.

Levinas significantly titles his essay of 1985 "Les droits de l'homme et les droits d'autrui" ("Human Rights and the Rights of Others"; see Levinas 1987a). This title underlines the paradox that is human rights today and, ever more, the rights of identity, of the self, and not the rights of the other. Human rights do not include but even exclude the rights of the other, neglect the condition of responsibility for the other (cf. Petrilli 2020a). In this world made of walls and barriers, so-called "human rights" are the rights of affiliation, of belonging, the rights of the privileged community, closed and exclusive, the rights of the "work community." In Europe today, a migrant without a work certificate is classified as an "extracommunitarian," an illegal, which translates into rejection, expulsion from the community. This situation recalls Nazist Germany, where Jews were saved if they could prove they were employed, as portrayed by Steven Spielberg in his 1993 film *Schindler's List*.

Human rights derive from an original, primordial relation with the other, antecedent to all legislation and all justification. In this sense, human rights refer to a relation of unindifference, involvement, responsibility with the other and for the other. This relation is an a priori relation with respect to the "declaration of human rights," a relation that is antecedent and independent with respect to roles, functions, merits, and recognitions.

Insofar as they include rather than exclude the rights of others, human rights are a priori with respect to any permit, permission, concession, authority, with respect to any claim to one's own rights, the rights of identity, with respect to tradition, legislation, jurisprudence, privilege, affiliation, with respect to all reason. That human rights are effectively human rights only when they include the other's rights is immediately evident if we recognize, with Giambattista Vico, that *humanitas* derives not from *homo*, but like *humilitas*, from *humus*, humid mother earth cultivated together.

As demonstrated by Levinas, a "new humanism" can only be a "humanism of alterity." Entirely dedicated to this issue is his book of 1972, significantly titled *Humanisme de l'autre homme*. The claim to human rights centered on identity, until now dominant, neglects the rights of the other and thus needs to be counteracted by a new form of humanism ready to recognize them, in a sense even prioritizing them. This is not only a question of the rights of the other *from self*, but also the

other *of the same self*, a self that often removes, suffocates, eliminates, and isolates its own alterity, sacrificing it to identity, which, achieved in such terms, is artificial, fictitious, destined to fragmentation.

Peirce significantly focused the final phase of his research on the "normative sciences"—beyond logic, on ethics and aesthetics—contemplating the question of ultimate ends, the *summum bonum*, ultimate value, which he identified in the "evolutionary process," in the "growth of reasonableness," and not in individual satisfaction (hedonism) or the common good (English utilitarianism). Reasonableness has the power to transform anxiety, diffidence, suspicion of the stranger, the alien, fear of the other, that is, fear that the subject—whether individual or collective—perceives of the stranger, in sympathy for the other, who then becomes "lovable," as Peirce writes, referencing St. John's Gospel (cf. Peirce, *CP* 6.289, 1893).

If we associate Peirce with Levinas on the I–other relationship, we could add that love rediscovers *fear for the other*, for the other's well-being, fear that disquiets and concerns my alterity. *Fear for the other* subtends *fear of the other* surrounding the hardened crust of the self, its identity (fear "of the other," "object genitive," and "subject genitive"). But fear "of the other," as in "to perceive fear of the other," can also be developed as an "ethical genitive," in terms of fear "for the other" (Ponzio 2019). Love, reasonableness, creativity find a common foundation in the logic of alterity and dialogicality, which is also the dialogic of intercorporeity (Bakhtin 1981; Ponzio 2016), and *religiously* relate (in the etymological sense of *religo*) the development of human consciousness with the evolutionary development of the entire universe.

The concept of "preventive peace," as proposed by Augusto Ponzio in the title of his 2009 book *Emmanuel Levinas, Globalisation, and Preventive Peace* (and in Ponzio 2012b), is intended to contrast what is denominated as "preventive war"—another name for "infinite war." War against war, war against terrorism, justifies, provokes, and perpetuates what it wants to eliminate. War against war justifies war, reconciling it with a clean conscience. Developing Levinas's meditations, "just" and "necessary" wars, "humanitarian" and "preventive" wars are passed off as different from wars that do not qualify as such. The alibi of a clean conscience reassures us that wars that are not just, necessary, or humanitarian are wars waged by the *menacing other*, the "enemy," the other who threatens me.

8. Ecumenical Humanism, *alias* Dialogue among Humanisms

In spite of the persistence of dogmatic forms of secularism and manifestations of religious fanaticism, the relationship between secularism and religion is becoming stronger, developing ever more in terms of inevitable collaboration, especially when the aim is "new humanism," what with Levinas has been denominated "humanism of alterity."

Under this aspect, particularly interesting are reflections by Polish philosopher Adam Schaff on religious faith, the Catholic Church, and humanistic ecumenicalism in his 2001 book *Książka dla mojej żony. Autobiografia problemowa*

(*Letter to Teresa: A Life of Philosophical and Political Meditations*); see also the Italian translation of this work (Schaff 2014).

Adam Schaff, another master of the sign, is known above all for his book *Introduction to Semantics*, first published in Polish in 1960 (English translation in 1962 and Italian translation in 1965), and *Marxism and the Human Individual*, which was first published in Polish in 1965 (Italian translation in 1966). Most of his publications have been translated into Italian under the direction of Augusto Ponzio (who has also authored two monographs on Schaff, the first published in 1974 and the second in 2002).

Schaff was forced to shift to Vienna in 1969 at a time of growing nationalism and strong anti-Semitism on behalf of powerful groups in the Communist party. He was expelled from the Central Committee and made to leave his post as director of the Institute of Philosophy and his position as chair of philosophy at the University of Warsaw. As honorary president of the European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences, of UNESCO, he promoted a series of international meetings in various cities, including Budapest, Moscow, and Vienna, in the second half of the 1980s. The topic was Semiotics of the Vocabulary of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Centre was known for the ban on recourse to war as the solution to international controversy, signed by all participating states. The accord was no longer respected from the time of the Gulf War (defined as a "just and necessary war") in 1991.

Schaff promoted the beginnings of "new socialism," ideologically close to Latin-American "liberation theology," with the Spanish Father Juan García Nieto, S.J. As Schaff explains in *Lettera a Teresa* (Letters to Teresa, a book in Polish dedicated to his wife and conceived in the form of letters to her), new socialism "is centered on the idea of 'suspending' (the *epoché* of phenomenological philosophy) differences between the layperson and the believer, thereby uniting Christian and Marxist humanism" (Schaff 2014, 192–93, my English translation). However, as he also goes on to explain, "All came to an end with the death of Father Juan. . . . An organization needs a man, its driving force. Nonetheless, his idea is alive" (Schaff 2014, 192–93). Schaff conceived his "new socialism" in terms of the movement he denominated "ecumenical humanism" in collaboration with Father Juan and was commissioned to write a book on the movement, which he did, using this expression as the title—*Ökumenischer Humanismus*, published in 1992, a sort of manifesto, translated from German into Italian as *Umanesimo ecumenico* in 1994.

Schaff worked for collaboration between two great humanisms of our time, the Christian and the socialist, an alliance that was to involve the social interiorization of values that would allow for transition to a lifestyle not only at improved levels of material well-being, but also at higher degrees of democracy and freedom. The idea was to forge an alliance, philosophical, pragmatic, and political, around the highest value for both these humanisms, *the human individual*. Schaff says "man" in the Greek sense of *anthropos*, and not *anēr* as opposed to *gyné*. This is "man" with a small letter, concrete man as a social individual, formed through social relations, born from the society he at once contributes to creating. As Schaff (1992) writes in *Umanesimo ecumenico* (*Ecumenical Humanism*):

Not only do we differentiate ourselves from one another, but we sometimes conduct discussions that are so fierce that we are ready to sacrifice on their alter the life of this "man", written with a small letter, that, in the name of "our" truth, we rally and drive to combat. Often, more exactly in most cases, we don't care—both as laymen and as believers—about how many tears and how much blood this impetus from ideologies, that fight for "their" truth, costs man, written with a small letter. We conduct noble battles and "man", with a small m, lives, suffers, faces the danger of various catastrophes— genocide, drought, famine, destruction of the earth where we all live, of fields, the land, water, air, and even of the universe that surrounds us. Is it not time to return to a clear head? (It. trans.135; my Eng. trans.).

Based on objective social needs and in the framework of dialogue among humanisms, Schaff applies the principle of cooperation in support of the constitution of a movement for *ecumenical humanism*. Beginning from "man," small letter, with his or her present-day needs, and applying the *epoché* of Husserlian phenomenology—the expedient of standing back with respect to "Man" with a capital letter—it is possible to focus on what unites the two humanisms and not on what divides them:

I have introduced the expression "ecumenical humanism" consciously, by which I understanding the result of a profound meditation on affinities with problems of the religious order. . . . The expression "ecumenical" derives from the modern language of the Catholic church and indicates the tendency to unite all those whom believe in God (Christ) in the same house (*oikos*), with no concern for differences in the single Christian confessions. The common element—faith in God—is decisive, confessional differences will not be denied, but are left aside "with discretion", as something of minor importance. This is the idea. And if it is possible to avoid expressing extremely complex confessional differences, then such an attitude should be transferable all the more so to differences in interpretation of the foundations of humanism, once its content has been accepted—that is, that man represents the highest value (for believers with a reserve, for Marxist believers without such reserve). (Schaff 1992, 136–37; my translation)

Through a meditation now more topical than ever, Schaff indicates a point of departure for collaborative dialogue among humanisms considered to be similar, bordering on each other: as anticipated, the Christian and the socialist. Ecumenical humanism is based on concrete programs intended to address juridical, political, social, economic problems that afflict our humanity today, to the end of safeguarding life, human and nonhuman, over the planet, for global humanity. He conceived of a "new socialism," "radical socialism," which he described as humanism, "radical humanism," not socialism from the past associated with real socialism and dogmatic communism, but socialism as a development on the current form of capitalism, connected with a social system that non-Marxist theorists like Jeremy Rifkin describe as "post-capitalism," which, as Schaff comments, is no longer capitalism.

9. Identity and Alterity, beyond Indifferent Humanity

The question of identity is centrally important in present-day society over the planet. In the era of global homologation, to assert one's identity has become ever more difficult, and as a result, the search for identity has become ever more obsessive, leading to forms of self-exaltation and vilification, even rejection of the other (Petrilli and Ponzio 2019). The rights of self-interest are claimed in the name of "human rights," implicitly establishing a relation of identification between human rights and my own rights, asserted over the rights of the other, which are often denied.

Any identity, a genre, type, class, category, assemblage, etc., with claims to community affiliation—ethnic, sexual, national, religious credo, role, job, social status—is in contrast to another identity, as in the binary oppositions: black/white, male/female, communitarian/ extracommunitarian, compatriot/foreigner, professor/student . . . All groups, ensembles, sets, standardize, equalize, unify indifferently, canceling diversity among their members and implying a relation of opposition indifferently to those who just as uniformly are affiliated with the opposite genre, who necessarily belong as a means of asserting one's own identity, one's own difference, *identity-difference*.

The noun "uniform" belongs to military language, just like "general" and "official": all three words are somehow related to the uniformity of genre, with its value, in general, responding to official discourse (Petrilli and Ponzio 2016b; Ponzio 2018). Based on indifference and opposition, all genres, ensembles, sets, which all identities presuppose, are put into a uniform, are recruited, enlisted, foreseeing conflict and a call to arms. All identity-difference, all genre difference implies internal cancelation of alterity, of difference understood as alterity-difference, singularity-difference. Difference that eliminates alterity, *alterity-difference*, is *identity-difference*, thus *indifferent difference*.

But is it possible to achieve difference that is not indifferent, unindifferent difference? Non-oppositional difference? *Unindifferent difference* is *alterity-difference, otherness-difference, singular-difference*, outside identity, outside genre, *sui generis*, non-interchangeable, non-replaceable. Reference here is to non-oppositional difference, non-relative alterity, in this sense *absolute* alterity. This is the alterity of *each one*, not everyone's alterity, but the alterity of each; not alterity in the relation to the other, which is relative alterity, but *alterity that is* the relation with the other. Absolute alterity implies relation among singularities, between one singularity and another, where each one is unreplaceable and unindifferent to the other, independently of relations of reciprocity, where the other (*autrui*) is not indifferent to the other, where others are not indifferent to each other. This is alterity that identity removes and censors, bans and relegates to the private sphere, but that each one, each singularity lives and recognizes as the only real relation with the other ("real/true love," "real/true friendship").

Independently from the egocentric self-interest of any one single individual, of any one individual or collective identity, independently from myopic economic reason dominating over any given social system, from what we might call the

short-sighted economy of greed devastating today's world, healthy humanity calls for hospitality toward the other, unindifference, listening, proximity, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, love, tenderness, affection, hence, considering how things stand today and how things have evolved historically, *reconciliation*. Such are the characteristics of what Morris understands by the "open society," the "open self." Morris contrasts the "open self"—beginning from the title of his book of 1948 where this expression forms the title—to the "closed self," "closed society." The closed self, closed society builds walls, walls and barriers that divide, separate and imprison, erected upon the foundations of indifference, on lack of interest in anything that escapes the sphere of short-sighted self-interest, self-advantage, thus, fear of the other.

To the "gospel of greed," of avarice that has progress depend upon the capacity to assert egocentric identity over the other, Peirce juxtaposes what we might call the "gospel of hospitality" (*CP* 6.294–295; Petrilli 2013a, 93–94). To the principle of the survival of the fittest, the struggle for life, Peirce (cf. his papers collected under the well-chosen title *Chance, Love and Logic*, 1923) juxtaposes his conception of *agapasm* (from *agape*, love) as a necessary integration of *ananchasm* (from *ananche*, necessity) and of *tychasm* (from *tyche*, chance), which instead generally dominate in philosophy as in the natural and historical-social sciences.

Sebeok (2001) promoted "global semiotics," and global semiotics has served "semioethics" well as the platform and perspective for return to Morris's (1964, 1988, 2000) concern with the relation of signs to values as part of our own project to reconnect semiotics to axiology. Such an approach to the life of signs valorizes the problem of dialogic engagement with the other and of our responsibility, for life generally, human and nonhuman (see Petrilli 2014a). Global semiotics marks the lesson of interconnectivity, of intercorporeity, of the condition of interdependency and mutual implication among all lifeforms over the planet.

Based on this premise and its scientific nature, semioethics develops such awareness in terms of the ethical demand for non-indifference toward the other, thus in terms of the global condition of dialogical intercorporeity, recognition that the other not only cannot be escaped, but is also the condition for life and communication to perpetuate; thus, if life is to continue flourishing, there is a need to recognize the original human condition of responsiveness/responsibility toward the other, the need to take an interest in the other, to listen to the other's difference and diversity, to account for the other's singularity, to care for the other. This is a task for "human(e) understanding," for human(e) humanity, to perform in the sign of humility where, let us repeat, "humanity" does not derive from *homo*, but like "humility" from *humus*, mother earth.

If we acknowledge this approach, the challenge today is to draw not only the philosophical-theoretical implications, but also the practical-methodological, translating to the social, economic, political, and juridical spheres, from nature to culture and back again. In this time of ecological emergency (humanity representing but the smaller totality within the larger totality that is the ecological environment overall, but where the signs of humanity—today inhuman(e) humanity, too inhuman(e)—prevail and make a difference), dialogue based on listening to the other, the human and nonhuman other, dialogue as co-

participative intercorporeity, therefore, as critique of arrogant, anthropomorphic attempts at totalization, offers a perspective for the future of semiosis and a hope.

Beyond myopic obsession with identity, beyond short-sighted extremist fundamentalisms and fanaticism, beyond affiliation to a community, even a religious community, "interreligious dialogue" can play a leading role for all, across the globe. A primary task is to recover the sense of *religiousness* as a value for the sake of life and its health in general, the meaning of "religion" in its intrinsic etymological sense as "*religare*," bonding, living together. Utopia? If by utopia we understand unrealistic, yes, of course. In fact, humanity today needs to overcome the realism of reality, to detach from the trap of obsession with present-day reality (as in the reality of "reality shows"), from the realism of political-economical systems passed off as the inescapable, inexorable logic of reality, from the reality of identity and identities, and explore the possibility of building new worlds, ever larger and detotalizing worlds, beyond reality mortified by its own realism, by its own realistic short-sighted identity, beyond deadly reality—in Italian, *realtà mortifera* and *mortificata.*

The conviction that there is no otherwise, that there do not exist other possibilities than the world as it is, paralyzes understanding and behavior. But to construct new worlds is possible, as foreseen by our very nature as human animals, that is, "semiotic animals," endowed with a primary modelling device, *alias* syntactical modelling, *alias* a capacity for critique, creativity, and innovation (Deely, Petrilli, and Ponzio 2005). To interrogate "reality" calls for interrogation of fundamental human rights to the end of guaranteeing human rights, including those of the other, thus social justice, equality, and peace for all. The semiotic animal is endowed with "metasemiosis," with a capacity for "metalanguage," for "signs about signs about signs," to evoke Charles Morris (1948b). "Semiotics" as the science of signs is the place where humans, thanks to "semiotics" as "metasemiosis," can reach conscious awareness to maximum degrees (Petrilli 2012; Petrilli and Ponzio 2001, 2002). Today, human awareness must expand to reach global dimensions, accounting for the public interest, for interests common to the whole of humanity (remembering that the human is interdependent upon the nonhuman), beyond short-sighted self-interest. And this implies the need for expansion at a planetary level of constitutions and juridical systems equal to the global challenges, powers, and problems proposed to us today by a global and globalized world.

10. Global Semiotics, Semioethics, and the Future of Global Society

Semiotics, the general doctrine of signs advocated by Locke and developed by Sebeok according to the orientation delineated by Peirce and Morris—as well as Jakobson, whom with Morris can be counted among Sebeok's direct "masters of the sign"—supports the idea of a "new humanism," the "humanism of alterity." In fact, we know that "semiotics" as "general semiotics" and "global semiotics" in particular evidence the breadth and consistency of the sign network that connects

each single individual to every other, both on a synchronic level (the worldwide spread of communication drives such connectivity to a maximum degree) and a diachronic level. The human species—from its remote to its most recent and close manifestations, in the past and in its evolutionary future, on the biological and socio-historical levels—is implicated in all events, behaviors, decisions that concern the single individual: the destiny of the human species in its totality and that of the single individual, the smaller totality constitutive of the larger, are co-implicated.

This network concerns the semiosphere as constructed by humanity, its cultures, signs, symbols, artifacts, etc. But global semiotics shows that this semiosphere is part of a larger semiosphere, the semiobiosphere—a web man has never left, nor ever will for so long as he is alive. Semiotics has the merit of evidencing that all the human is in signs. Even more: all the lifeworld is in signs. This is as far as cognitive semiotics and global semiotics reach. With its focus on the relation of signs to values, semioethics translates such awareness into ethical terms, calling attention to the need for responsibility toward all semiosic and semiotic networks, toward the other, the human and nonhuman other.

This serves to orient human sign behavior in the direction of contemplating the possibility that if all the human is sign material, then sign material can in turn be human(e), a question concerning human(e) responsibility. Nor does this humanistic commitment involve asserting human identity at the detriment of others, thus proposing yet another form of anthropocentrism. On the contrary, the task is to effect a radical operation of decentralization, a Copernican revolution, with Victoria Welby surpassing "heliocentrism" in the direction of a vision no less than "cosmic." Again, what is at stake here is responsibility, humanism and humanisms, humanism understood as humanism of alterity, of the other, my neighbor, no matter how distant, whether spatially or genetically.

Reformulating an adage by Terence—"*homo sum; nihil humani a me alienum puto*"—Jakobson (1963) asserted that "*linguista sum et nihil linguistici a me alienum puto*" (6). The semiotician's concern for the linguistic, indeed all signs (not only in the anthroposphere or, more broadly, the zoosphere, but in the entire semiobiosphere), is not only a cognitive concern, but rather involves ethics. In addition to addressing a given topic, "concern" here resounds in the sense of "care," as in such expressions as "to be concerned for somebody," "to take an interest in," "to care for," or, in Italian, *curarsi di* . . .

Moreover, concern, care, responsibility beyond the boundaries of affiliation, belonging, closeness, community, communion is not an affair limited to the "linguist" or "semiotician," obviously. Rather than translate "*homo sum*" as "*linguistica sum*," unlike Jakobson, we choose to leave "*homo sum*" and claim that no sign material, in general, "*a me alienum puto*", "*a me*" but not simply as a professional linguist or semiotician: "*homo sum*" and insofar as I am "*homo*" I am an animal, not only a *semiosic animal* like all other animals, but a *semiotic animal.* As a "semiotic animal," the human is unique, because the semiotic animal is the only existing animal capable of reflecting on signs, of developing a global vision, of making responsible decisions, beyond local self-interest, for the sake of global

humanity, for life globally. Nothing qualifiable as semiosic, at least over the planet, "*a me alienum puto*."

To fully understand global and globalized communication in the world today, its current phase of development, means to understand the risks involved, including the risk of communication coming to an end. This is not merely the problem of "incommunicability," an individual-subjectivistic condition accompanying the transition to our contemporary communication system, studied by theoreticians, even depicted in the arts. Considering the relation of identification between communication (which together with modeling constitutes semiosis) and life (as demonstrated by Sebeok with his biosemiotics), as well as the enormous potential for destruction at the disposal of social reproduction today by comparison to all other preceding social forms, "the risk of communication coming to an end" is the risk that life may come to an end.

According to Adam Schaff, the central problem today in this phase of extraordinary social change is still what he chose to call the "human individual" (the expression he preferred to "human person" with its personalistic signifying implications). Real socialism has fallen and capitalism is in crisis, followed by so-called post-capitalism, an expression introduced by the American scholar Jeremy Rifkin (1995), author of *The End of Work*. Schaff is very much in accord with Rifkin's analysis, though not necessarily the terminology. The increase in unemployment is only the beginning of a process leading to the end of the working class sanctioned by automation, by robotization in production and services.

In Schaff's view, we have entered a decisive moment in the second revolution, without having reached full consciousness of what is happening. The problem does not involve a sole class, but the world population globally. The crisis we are experiencing is not circumstantial, as Schaff says, arising from a momentary crisis of the economic order. On the contrary, the phenomenon is structural, and it concerns the capitalistic mode of production in its essence. Human work is expelled and replaced by machines—these days not only manual human work, but also intellectual work, a phenomenon that is changing society radically. And as explained by Rifkin—all but a Marxist, though Schaff describes him as speaking the same language—capitalism has progressed into a new social form, "post-capitalism," and though it is not quite clear what exactly post-capitalism is, it certainly is no longer capitalism. The end of work gives rise to new forms of work, incommensurable work, which is not translatable into merchandise.

But with Schaff, the point to emphasize here is that this final phase in the life of capitalism, characterized by the end of work, that is, alienated work, is rich in implications for the future of global society, where a most promising perspective is the possibility of disalienating the human individual, the human condition. Schaff speaks of an objective historical process, which, rather than as "post-capitalism," he believes is better designated as "new socialism," as it is different from socialism as we know it, characterized by different historical conditions and a different social structure, considering that proletariat and bourgeoisie social classes are disappearing, a new form of humanism. Liberation from the condition of work-merchandise implies liberating the human being, the single individual. With the favor of such objective conditions, a realistic task is to work for the

process of disalienation, for the liberation of humanity both in terms of economy with the end of work and in terms of politics with the development of democracy. As Schaff avers, this is a question of studying the situation scientifically, just as the natural sciences study processes of evolution and transformation.

Like Levinas, Schaff looks towards a "new humanism," one that can find allies among all those who care for humanism and humanity, whatever the foundations, whether secular or religious. To recall a concept proposed by Edmund Husserl and his phenomenology, what is required today is a new *epoché*—in other words, the assumptions of different humanisms need to be suspended, put into brackets, so to say, in order to achieve an *ecumenical humanism*. We have mentioned that Schaff had worked with Spanish Jesuits and that a good friend to him was Father José Maria Gómez Caffarena. Schaff recounts that this priest lived and died as a saint. He was a devout Catholic, a believer, and at once a member of the Communist Party. Schaff's book *Ecumenical Humanism* was published in Spanish in 1993 with a preface co-authored by José Gómez Caffarena and Father Juan N. García-Nieto París. This book was translated into many languages, and Schaff's proposal—as a Marxist in the sense of scientific and not dogmatic Marxism, a Marxist without Marxism—of a *new humanism* that all faiths could accept was undersigned by Catholics, but not in Poland in spite of the Polish pope. But the pope is supranational. Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) was considered to be a conservatist, and yet in his encyclical *Laborem exercens* (*L'uomo che esercita il lavoro*, or *Through Work*) of 1981, he claims that property is not a *sacrosanctum* right. He questioned capitalist sanctification of "private property"; in the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* ([*Cristo*] *redentore dell'uomo*, or *Redeemer of Man*) of 1979, he unequivocally announces the supremacy of the interest of the human individual over the interests of capital, elaborating on a theory of alienation very close to the ideas of Marxism (cf. Babie 2017).

Schaff recounts how he had been called to prepare Pope John II's pilgrimage to Poland and how on that occasion he had had the grand possibility of spending a whole hour with the pope in discussion. The pope had read Schaff's 1966 book *Il marxismo e la persona umana* (*Marxism and the Human Person*), sympathizing with his analysis of alienation and the distinction between subjective alienation and objective alienation, which returns in his encyclical *Redemptor hominis.* In spite of differences that can effectively be put aside and overlooked, rather than used to divide and separate, it is always possible to find common ground for encounter among humans and humanisms. And this, no doubt, is a story worth telling.

After his first encyclical letter, *Lumen fidei* (*Light of Faith*), written with Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), released in 2013, and his second encyclical letter, *Laudato sí* (*On Care for Our Common Home and the Future of Life on the Planet*), released in 2015, Pope Francis signed his third encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, on October 3, 2020, in Assisi, and not incidentally given that it is inspired by St. Francis. This document is dedicated to what I would call "human(e) humanity" (*fratellanza*) and social friendship (*amicizia sociale*), for peace, freedom, and social justice in the world.

All such values presuppose an education to alterity, to otherness, to openness to the other (see also Pope Francis's *Amoris laetitia* and *Gaudete et*

exsultate),[4] beyond forms of obsession with identity, beyond the extremism of fanaticism, of discrimination, including religious forms. Moreover, as clearly emerges in *Laudato sí*, a document on environmental ethics, thus on the environmental and human ecological crisis threatening life on our planet, openness to the other clearly includes the nonhuman other. In fact, if we do not learn to love and care for the planet in its wholeness and diversity, to exercise our human privilege for metasemiosis and responsibility for the other, and safeguard, beyond short-sighted anthropocentrism, all lifeforms on earth, human and nonhuman, we forsake the condition itself of love and care for humanity: interhuman dialogue, solidarity, integral ecology presuppose each other.

Contrary to the "globalization of indifference," to global political-economic systems indifferent to diversity, whether environmental, cultural, or religious, contrary to humanity reduced to the global market, its values and self-interests, all themes addressed by Pope Francis relate to the question of otherness. The future of life on the planet is in the globalization of human(e) humanity, unindifference to the other, opening to the other, dialogical listening to the other, the human and nonhuman other. Peace and living together can only be achieved on the basis of dialogue, interspecies dialogue, interhuman dialogue, multicultural and interreligious dialogue, exo- and extracommunitarian dialogue, beyond community walls and boundaries as indicated by general and global semiotics in dialogue with semioethics.

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[4] Apostolic exhortations by Pope Francis Bergoglio include *Amoris laetitia* (*La gioia dell'amore*, or *The Joy of Love*), published in 2016 and dedicated to family life and its transformations in our modern world, and *Gaudete et exsultate* (*Rallegratevi e esultate*, or *Rejoice and Be Glad*), published in 2018 and concerning sanctity in the world today.

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