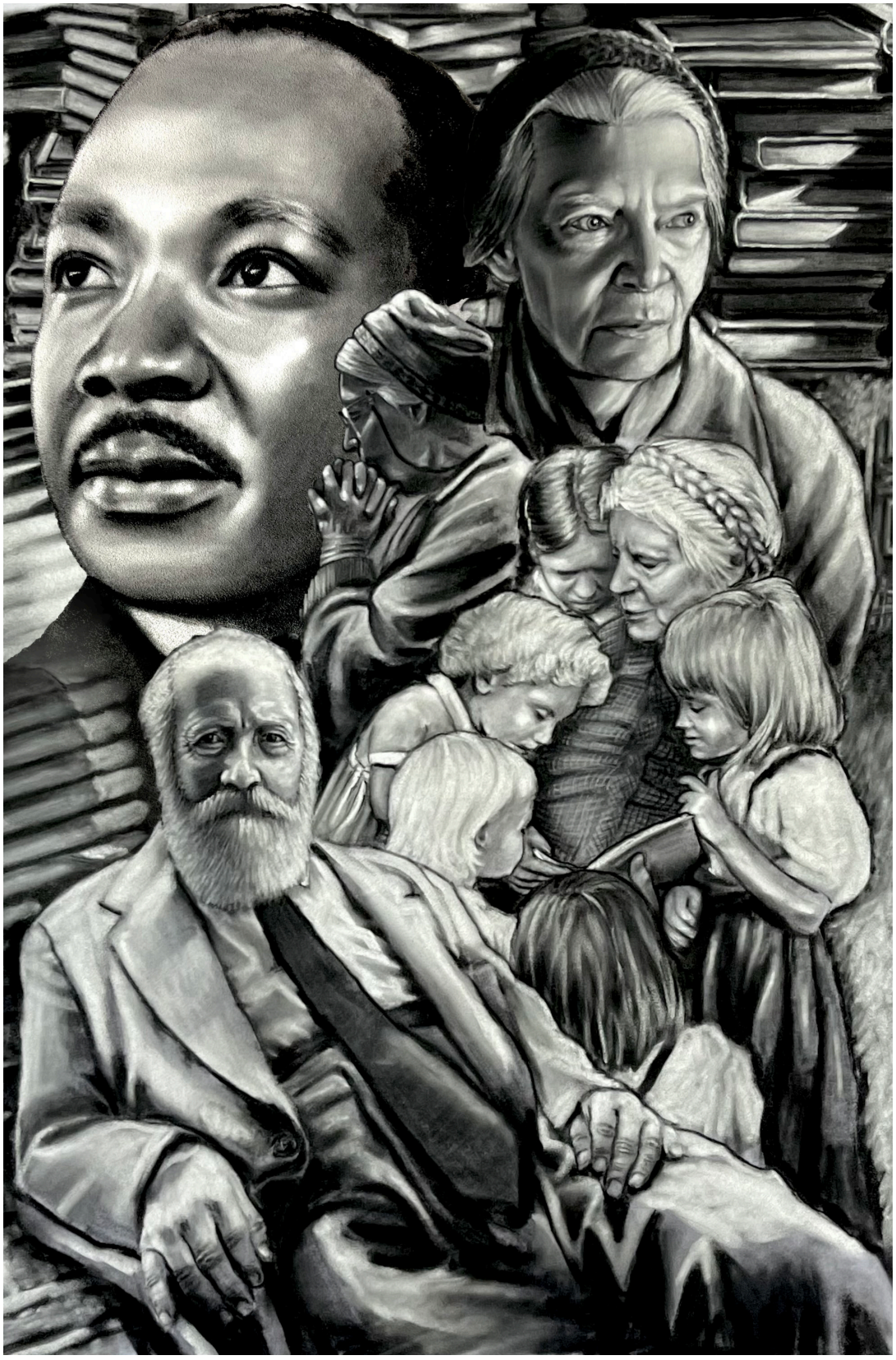
# THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS:
## Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives



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# Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives

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*The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* exists to promote dialogue within and among religious and/or interhuman traditions in response to emerging communication ethics issues in the current historical moment. The journal provides an academic home for a multiplicity of faith perspectives, welcoming both articles that speak from the particularity of a religious tradition and articles that engage interfaith dialogue directly. In addition, the journal welcomes a variety of interhuman perspectives addressing issues of dialogue.

*The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* is an open-access journal that publishes two issues per year containing original articles that advance theory and research about communication ethics implications between and among religious traditions and interhuman perspectives. Manuscripts submitted to the Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives should be original material not under consideration for another journal or publication. At the editor's discretion, each submission will undergo masked peer review by two members of the editorial board. Suggestions for revision will keep issues of argument, style, and contribution to the areas of communication ethics and interfaith/interhuman dialogue in mind. The editor makes final publication decisions.

# THE JOURNAL OF DIALOGIC ETHICS:
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# Editorial Introduction: A Beginning

Ronald C. Arnett

*The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* exists to promote dialogue within and among religious and/or interhuman traditions in response to emerging communication ethics issues in the current historical moment. The journal provides an academic home for a multiplicity of faith perspectives, welcoming both articles that speak from the particularity of a religious tradition and articles that engage interfaith dialogue directly. In addition, the journal welcomes a variety of interhuman perspectives addressing issues of dialogue. In the spirit of dialogue, the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* is an open-access journal publishing two issues per year.

The cover of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* was drawn by Duquesne University alumnus David DeIuliis, now an assistant professor in the Department of Communications and Media Arts at Bethany College. Representing the journal on the cover of the first issue of each volume are dialogic exemplars Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Martin Buber. They will be joined by the Dalai Lama, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Elizabeth Ann Seton on the cover of the second issue of each volume. Together, their faces echo a call reminding us of the dialogic responsibility to engage with the perspectives of others—no matter the cost. Thanks to the glorious work of Dr. DeIuliis, their voices will join those of contributors to this journal for volumes to come.

The four articles offered in this inaugural issue of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* were initially delivered in dialogic form as conference presentations at the 16th Biennial Communication Ethics Conference hosted by the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies and the Communication Ethics Institute at Duquesne University. Andre E. Johnson, Father Jordi Pujol, and Susan Petrilli served as keynote speakers.

In "Communicating Change in Chaotic Times: Toward a Maatian Understanding of Civility," Andre E. Johnson addresses the difficult notion of civility within religious communication. Civil dialogue and communication have been advanced as necessary responses to incivility, especially uncivil acts on social media. However, Johnson recognizes an ethical dilemma in discerning how to communicate civilly with people who are dishonest, immoral, and unjust. He asks,

"How are harmony, balance, reciprocity, and order maintained amid disharmony, imbalance, and disorder?" In exploring the answer to this question, Johnson presents "an understanding of the Africana communication paradigm grounded in Maat." The Maatian understanding of truth has implications for contemporary difficulties of incivility, including the case study of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the United States Capitol, as framed by Johnson. The ability of Maat to bring stability to chaos offers a communication model capable of addressing incivility.

In "Facing the Divide since Babel: The Role of Faith in Urban Settings," Father Jordi Pujol unpacks the paradoxical power of speech to prevent and simultaneously promote the good of pluralism. Writing from a Catholic perspective, Pujol explores the "division of Babel, where people were scattered in their speech because of pride," alongside "the division of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost sent out men of one dialect to speak all the languages of the earth and bring all men to unity." In response to this dual capacity, Pujol investigates the role of faith and religion in communication ethics. Especially within the context of political disagreement, Pujol advances the potential of faith and religion to promote unity and appreciation of diversity.

In "The Dialogical Ethics of Romance: Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*," Thomas M. Lessl also engages a unity of contraries—this time the interplay of tragedy and comedy and the dual capacity of human motivation either to abuse power or to enable democratic dialogue. Lessl's analysis of the popular Broadway musical *Hamilton* puts "comic plots in dialogue with tragic ones" through the notion of romance in order to explore complex questions of rhetorical ethics surrounding motives. Like Pujol, Lessl recognizes the power of speech both to "build and maintain communities" and to destroy them through the abuse of power. For the sake of navigating these alternative paths, Lessl's work calls for a dialogical political discourse capable of uniting the tragic and the comic.

In "Multicultural Societies, Monotheistic Religions, and Globalization: Semioethic Vistas," Susan Petrilli discusses the convergence of two identities: masters of the sign and peacemakers. Her work identifies the "vocation" of the sign: the embrace of the other, the encounter with alterity, and the engagement of dialogue and listening. In particular, Petrilli addresses cultural and linguistic intersections among monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—that require dialogic efforts of "preventive peace." Petrilli's contribution offers a reminder that peace is only possible through dialogue, especially that which reaches beyond the boundaries of one's own convictions.

Finally, it is my great honor to introduce Annette M. Holba, who will become the editor of the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* beginning with the second volume. Dr. Holba is a professor of rhetoric at Plymouth State University. Dr. Holba has previously served as the editor of *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* (2015–2017), the guest co-editor of *New Directions for Higher Education* with Pat Bahr (2019), and the guest editor of *Pennsylvania Communication Annual* (2020), in addition to her reviewing experience for two journals and her service on the editorial board of five journals. Her academic reputation precedes her with several scholarly books, including

*Philosophy of Communication Inquiry: An Introduction* (2021), *Redesigning Higher Education: A Small New England Public University Changes Higher Education* (2020), *An Encyclopedia of Communication Ethics* (2018, coedited with Ronald C. Arnett and Susan Mancino), *Transformative Leisure: A Philosophy of Communication* (2013), *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (2012, co-authored with Ronald C. Arnett), and *Philosophical Leisure: Recuperative Praxis for Human Communication* (2007). These titles are joined by two other co-authored books and four other co-edited books. The excellence of her scholarly work is widely attested, with the Eastern Communication Association recognizing both *Philosophy of Communication Inquiry: An Introduction* (2021) and *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (2012) with the Everett Lee Hunt Book Award and the National Communication Association's Philosophy of Communication Division recognizing the latter work with the Top Book Award. Additionally, she has authored eleven book chapters, seven encyclopedia entries, and thirty-eight articles. She is well known for her service to the discipline of communication, not to mention her excellence as a violinist. Dr. Holba is simply a wonderful scholar and the right person to edit this journal.

*The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* remains with the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, housed in the Communication Ethics Institute, under the guidance of Chief Production Editor Janie M. Harden Fritz. Please submit full manuscripts as Microsoft Word documents to dialogicethics@duq.edu**.** One file should be sent, including a cover page with the author's name, current institutional affiliation and mailing address, email address, and a 75–100-word biography. The rest of the manuscript should include a 100–150-word abstract and 4–6 keywords. The paper should be 20–25 double-spaced pages in length, including references. Manuscript formatting and citations should conform to the current edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Author-Date References format). Manuscripts submitted to the *Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives* should be original material not under review at another journal or publication.

***Ronald C. Arnett*** *(Ph.D., Ohio University, 1978) is chair and professor of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, the Patricia Doherty Yoder and Ronald Wolfe Endowed Chair in Communication Ethics, and the Henry Koren, C.S.Sp., Endowed Chair for Scholarly Excellence (2010–2015) at Duquesne University. He has co-edited seven books and authored/coauthored twelve books, most recently* Communication Ethics and Tenacious Hope: Contemporary Implications of the Scottish Enlightenment *(2022, Southern Illinois University Press). He is the recipient of eight book awards, including the 2017 Top Book award from the National Communication Association's Communication Ethics Division and 2017 Distinguished Book award from National Communication Association's Philosophy of Communication Division for his book* Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics *and the 2013 Top Book Award for Communication Ethics in Dark Times:* Hannah Arendt's Rhetoric of Warning and Hope *from the Communication Ethics Division of the National Communication Association. In 2017, he was named Distinguished Scholar*

*by the National Communication Association. He is the recipient of the 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarship from Duquesne University and is the recipient of the 2005 Scholar of the Year Award from the Religious Communication Association. Arnett was named Centennial Scholar of Communication and Centennial Scholar of Philosophy of Communication by the Eastern Communication Association in 2009 and received its Distinguished Service Award in 2019. Arnett is currently serving his third editorship for the* Journal of Communication and Religion *and is the former editor of the* Review of Communication. *He is the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Communication Association, former Executive Director of the Eastern Communication Association, and current President of the Semiotic Society of America.*

# Communicating Change in Chaotic Times: Toward a Maatian Understanding of Civility

Andre E. Johnson

**Abstract**: As a field, and especially for those of us who are religious communication scholars, we have addressed notions of civility. We have used civility to understand our research, pedagogical practices, and dialogue construction. When addressing the uncivil acts on social media and in our political discussions, many scholars have cited the scholarship in "civil communication" as a starting place for inquiry. Many institutions have turned to creating entire programs in "civil communication" or "civil dialogue." However, much of this grounds itself in a Western understanding of communication and rhetoric. For instance, our understanding of ethics, morality, good judgment, civility, and the like spring from our readings of Aristotle, Plato, and others in the classical Western tradition of our field. Only recently has there been an effort to draw from non-Western, non-European writings and scholarship. I argue that the ethical dilemma for our time is as follows: How do we communicate with people who are not telling the truth? How do we form community with people who are living and perpetuating a lie? What do civility, morality, and justice look like amid incivility, immorality, and injustice? How are harmony, balance, reciprocity, and order maintained amid disharmony, imbalance, and disorder? In this presentation, I suggest that an understanding of the Africana communication paradigm grounded in Maat would be helpful when addressing and discussing conceptions of civil communication. Using the January 6, 2021, insurrection and the continued fallout from the riot at the United States Capitol as a case study, I call for a civility grounded in an ethical and moral presentation and articulation of a Maatian understanding of truth.

**Keywords**: civility, Maat, communication ethics, Africana communication, insurrection

## Introduction[1]

On May 28, 2021, Republican senators effectively stopped Congress from forming a bipartisan commission to investigate the failures of the January 6, 2021,

[1] Parts of this essay were first delivered at the 16th Biennial Communication Ethics Conference sponsored by the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies and the Communication Ethics Institute at Duquesne University via Zoom on June 9, 2021.

insurrection attempt by supporters of then-President Trump. Broadcast live throughout traditional and social media outlets, the insurrectionists stormed the United States Capitol with the intention of violently attacking members of Congress and overthrowing the recent presidential election. Made up of Trump supporters and conspiracy theorists linked to QAnon and the Proud Boys, and encouraged by the rhetoric of Donald Trump, the mob laid waste to the Capitol.

Members of Congress "hid under desks, stripped their identification pins from their lapels to avoid being attacked and escaped into secret passageways," while rioters "ransacked the office of the House speaker." This mob of so-called patriots also "smashed windows and assaulted police inside the nation's iconic symbol of democracy." *The Washington Post* reported it this way:

> By the hundreds, they climbed the grand marble staircase and breached police gates and smashed windows and shoved police officers and broke through doorways and forced their way in. They burst into the offices and chambers of the Capitol, taking over the place as though it were their own, lounging in members' offices, strolling through the statuaries, halting the constitutional process of completing Joe Biden's election to the presidency and raising the specter of a coup against this 232-year-old democracy. (Fisher et al. 2021)

After the carnage of that day, more than 140 people were injured, and five people died. There will be much to talk about regarding the insurrection, and, undoubtably, scholars from all disciplines will weigh in, for instance, on how the police treated the rioters, the role of President Trump and his supporters, and how race functioned in all of this. However, today, I want to focus on the rhetoric that many of us heard after the attempted coup. Calls to "move on," that "it's over now," or that "we need to get to the business of governing" echoed from the Capitol. Just a couple of weeks after the failed coup, the United States senator from Texas, Ted Cruz, went on Fox News and declared that it was "time to move on" (Mazza 2021).

After denouncing Trump and his rhetoric in the immediate aftermath of the insurrection, Nikki Haley, former South Carolina governor and rumored presidential candidate, had a change of heart. Noting that the majority of the GOP still sided with Trump, she quickly pivoted and offered support for the former president. In speaking about the second impeachment trial of Trump, she said, "They beat him up before he got into office and they're beating him up after he leaves office. I mean at some point, give the man a break. I mean, move on if you truly are about moving on" (Oh 2021).

Senator Lindsey Graham echoed Haley's sentiments. In his disapproval of a second impeachment trial of the former president, Graham opined, "It is past time for all of us to try to heal our country and move forward." Also addressing concerns about a second impeachment trial, Rep. Ted Budd chided Democrats' attempts at accountability by framing his concern around unity: "If Democrats say they want unity, this isn't the way to show it" (McGrane 2021).

However, one of the strongest appeals for moving on came from the left-leaning Glenn Greenwald. Speaking about Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's response and refusal of the outward gesture from Ted Cruz to work together on

Wall Street reforms, Greenwald condemned her actions. In an interview on *The Jimmy Dore Show* on YouTube, "Greenwald argued that by taking so strong a stance against Republicans, Ocasio-Cortez ruined an opportunity to forge a bipartisan opposition to Wall Street based on the current conflict between small investors organized on Reddit and large hedge funds" (Heer 2021).

"Ted Cruz," he continued,

> whatever you think of him, reached out by saying, "I agree with AOC about this." So that was an opportunity for right and left to join together to do something that is supposedly her main reason for existing as a political figure, which is fighting income inequality, and instead she turns around and says, "F— you, I don't want to work with you. You guys got me murdered. You're a white supremacist." And suddenly the two camps divide again and over here you have the red team and over here you have the blue team cheering like morons at a f—ing high school football game again because she ruined that movement. Because all she wants to do is attack Republicans and fortify the Democratic Party. (Heer 2021)

Greenwald continued, saying,

> I do believe AOC was genuinely rattled by what happened at the Capitol. But she made it through completely unscathed. Not even a tiny little bruise on her body. Every other member of Congress in the Democratic caucus, including Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib and others are equally demonized, and they are f—ing over it. They got over it. If you want to be a member of Congress, you can't constantly center your own lived experiences, you're not there to center yourself in every drama. (Heer 2021)

## Civility

The whole idea of moving on before you address the issues and problems that would help you to move on has always baffled me. But maybe this need to move on, or in Greenwald's comments, to work with someone who you believe supported the insurrection that could have led to injury or, even worse, death, is grounded in our notions of civility. The term "civility" has found a home in our study of communication, especially in religious communication. Kristiana Báez and Ersula Ore write,

> "Civil" dialogue is valued most amid instances of difference and disagreement because it expresses that despite difference and differences, diverse perspectives—the voices of "others"—are valued. In this way, civility is conceived as a democratic good, a proper civic posture, and an ethical practice of egalitarianism. The rhetorical construction of civility as a "democratic good" is based on the presumption that the expectation to be "civil" will be imposed and regulated in an objective, neutral, and fair way. This, however, is the ideal of civility. As we know, there is always tension between the ideal of a thing and the actuality of its practice. (2018, 331)

Thus, the ideal has ruled the day. We have used civility to understand our research, pedagogical practices, and dialogue construction. When addressing uncivil acts on social media and in our political discussions, many scholars have cited the scholarship in civil communication as a starting place for inquiry. Many institutions have turned to creating entire programs in civil communication or civil dialogue (Hawn 2020, 225–26).

However, as recent scholarship attests, some scholars take issue with the term. For instance, Allison Hawn, drawing from the work of Roland Barthes, calls civility a "myth." She writes,

> This use of civility as a basis for what constitutes "good communication" has permeated the Communication field, further reinforcing the modern dichotomous version of the myth adopted in academia. The myth propelled by programs . . . further promotes the idea that a lack of civility leads to discord, and for any successful communication to take place between disagreeing sides, that a level of decorum needs to be established, maintained, and utilized. (Hawn 2020, 226)

She continues by arguing that "civility," no matter how "well intentioned or how much one wishes to reclaim the term for the better, is a word so entrenched in the myth of insiders and outsiders, whose voice counts and whose does not, whose behaviors are proper and whose are deemed barbaric, that it is inextricably linked at this juncture to its oppressive roots" (Hawn 2020, 226).

While Hawn's critiques of civility have merit, she admittedly does not offer a replacement. As a matter of fact, many critiques of civility leave the reader to wonder: What else can we do? If we are not civil in our discussions and dialogues, how can change take place? As such, many scholars call on us to come up with new models and methods that can help us achieve communication goals while maintaining our dignity and humanity. For instance, Hawn argues that the place to start is to stop "putting our time, our funding, and our mental energy into shoring up a practice that in name and praxis is problematic at its core. . . . As a community of thinkers, let us move in new directions, let us think uncivilly, let us think boldly, and let us not pause to worry about the feelings of those who oppress" (2020, 228).

Nina Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud (2009), in their response to Jennifer Emerling Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Sholz's (2008) essay "Beyond Traditional Conceptions of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move Toward Civility," write that while "civil discourse provides an ethically desirable stance," they push for equality as the "necessary prerequisite (not outcome) for a productive invitational, civil discourse" (225). They close their essay by writing that "the cause of justice may not need a theory of invitation but rather a theory of the uncivil tongue" (226).

Stacy Sowards (2020) notes that many "use politeness and civility to engage in unjust and unequal social and material circumstances, and have learned to do so through our families, educational and religious institutions, and social structures" (399). This leads her to wonder, "How do we move past this survival mode of politeness" and "how do we unlearn politeness and civility?" Further, she

asks, "How do we call people out for injustice while maintaining relationships with those same people and supporting our own mental health?" (399).

When I think about civility, I too ask similar questions. I mean, if civility is off the table, if there are no notions of civil dialogue and discussions, how do we talk to each other? How should politicians and other leaders speak to the masses of people? How should we seek understanding from the other? So, is there a way out of this?

Well, maybe, but then my pessimism kicks in, and I say probably not. However, if we venture to try, I submit that a place for us to turn, especially as religious communication scholars, is the Africana communication paradigm. The paradigm, from its inception, has been concerned with "building community, reaffirming human dignity, and enhancing the life of the people," and in later reiterations has been expanded to include "political, economic, and cultural senses as a rhetoric of resistance" (Karenga 2003).

Maulana Karenga suggests that African rhetoric has four overarching ethical concerns: "the dignity and rights of the human person, the well-being of family and community, the integrity and value of the environment, and the reciprocal solidarity and cooperation for mutual benefit of humanity" (2003, 14).[2] The Africana communication paradigm is a spiritual one focused on balance and harmony for the person as well as for the society.

Again, I know that as a field, we have addressed this tension between civility and the lack thereof thoroughly. There have been calls for us, especially in these days and times, to be more civil to one another, to be open and listen to each other. Some have romanticized the era in which there was a high level of bipartisanship grounded in the civil ways in which political adversaries could talk to one another. However, much of this grounds itself in a Western understanding of communication and rhetoric. For instance, our understanding of ethics, morality, good judgment, civility, and the like springs from our readings of Aristotle, Plato, and others in the classical Western tradition of our field. Only recently has there been an effort to draw from non-Western, non-European writings and scholarship.

But in this particular address, I want to focus on the Africana communication paradigm. I suggest this as a starting point because it is the Africana tradition that grounds itself in a spiritual conception of communication. In short, its very foundation is spiritual, and it is amazing that we have not turned to this tradition to theorize our concepts. While I do not have time to address the entirety of the Africana paradigm, I do want to bring our attention to the concept of Maat. While not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, it provides, I argue, a starting point for us to engage in discussions big and small that we need to have to achieve a better understanding of each other.

[2] By the way, for a good example of how these ethical concerns are brought together in rhetorical criticism, see Damariye Smith's essay "Kemetic Principles in African American Public Address: An Interrogation of the Rhetoric of Joseph C. Price and the Kemetic Tradition," published in the Journal of Black Studies.

## Africana Communication: Maat

Molefi Asante (2018) starts his essay "The Classical African Concept of Maat and Human Communication" by acknowledging the crisis in our field: "There is a crisis in the field of communication, but it is brought on by a moral crisis deeply rooted in much of the Western world's devotion to an ideology of domination" (11). His answer to this crisis is for us to turn to an Africana understanding of Maat. He writes, "African communication in its Maatic dimension may be an answer to the critical issues confronting African and Western culture at this moment of political chaos and uncertainty around what is real and what is unreal" (Asante 2018, 14). For Asante, Maat "is [concerned] about the promotion of sanity, order, balance, harmony, peace, and justice among human beings" (2011, 50). Further, he writes, "What we observe with the practice of Maat is the inevitability of good overcoming evil, of harmony replacing disharmony, and order taking the place of disorder" (Asante 2011, 52).

Carol Lipson argues that the whole of Egyptian rhetoric is "built upon the central concept of Maat" (2004, 79). She translates Maat as "what is right," drawing from the work of Jan Assmann who described Maat as "connective justice" that directs how people should interact to create communities (Lipson 2004, 79). Edward Karshner suggests that "Maat [is] the universal idea of order, justice, or truth. More fundamentally, Maat was the onto-cosmological principle that connected the divine order of the cosmos with the social order of justice and the ethical reality of human beings" (2011, 58). For Karshner, "What is perceived and spoken must reflect what is true. Just as word is a manifestation of mind, justice or truth is a product of them both. Their power is found in the articulate expression of concepts. When heart and tongue are in agreement, all faculties are 'made and all qualities determined'" (2011, 59).

Maat then, Karshner writes,

> becomes an organizing principle a speaker follows in order to structure both the investigation of phenomena and the expression of the particular knowledge he or she arrives at. . . . Language not only expresses Maat, but stresses that the most powerful speech is that which comes nearer to approximating the reality of Maat. One knows Maat by doing and speaking Maat. Conversely, it is Maat that an audience or reader will respond to in communication. Maat, then, is the preferred method of rhetorical arrangement. (2011, 66)

Maat is more than justice or harmony. Maat is a system of principles that connects to the people in a deep and profoundly spiritual way. Maat helps give people a sense of "divine order, balance, symmetry, geometry, truth, and immortality" (Alkebulan 2004, 25). This only makes sense when one understands that in a traditional African cosmology, there is no separation between the sacred and secular. Maulana Karenga, the foremost scholar of the Maatian ideal, writes that "Maat is a polysemic word, but in the simplest terms it means 'rightness in the world,' that is in the divine, natural, and social realms. It is informed by seven cardinal virtues: truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity, and

order" (2003, 11). For the balance of my time today, I would like to focus on the first virtue, truth.

Asante writes that "truth as a trait of Maat is that which is in synchrony with reality or fact" (2018, 20). He continues, stating that "using this concept of truth, alongside the idea of humans exhibiting the quality of rationality, means that the communicator can demonstrate a logical front for any argument, persuasive communication or informative presentation" (Asante 2018, 20). This means not only that the person speaking must ground themselves in what is true, but also that the person who does not cannot make a good speech. Asante puts it like this: "If you are not a good person then you cannot be a good communicator" (2018, 20). A Maatian understanding of communication calls on us to "distinguish between ideas of eloquence and effectiveness" (2018, 20). In short, even if someone is eloquent, if that eloquence is not grounded in truth, we cannot label that speech a "good speech."

So, the ethical dilemma for our time is this: How do we communicate with people who are not telling the truth? How do we form community with people who are living and perpetuating a lie? What do civility, morality, and justice look like amid incivility, immorality, and injustice? How are harmony, balance, reciprocity, and order maintained amid disharmony, imbalance, and disorder? Again, maybe the Maatian conception of communication and its insistence on truth as a starting point is a place for us to turn.

## Case Study: Congress

But just how would a Maatian response look, for instance, when discussing the January 6, 2021, insurrection? Well, understanding that the insurrection was a bad look, Republicans had to reinterpret the event. This started soon after the insurrection, when Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson told an interviewer that he was not afraid at all on January 6 because he "knew" that "those people" were those who "love this country, that truly respect law enforcement, would never do anything to break the law" (Wang 2021).

Earlier, Johnson, in an interview, was quoted as saying, "This didn't seem like an armed insurrection to me." And, "When you hear the word 'armed,' don't you think of firearms? Here's the questions I would have liked to ask: How many firearms were confiscated? How many shots were fired? If that was a planned armed insurrection, man, you had really a bunch of idiots" (Wang, 2021). In another interview he said, "To call that an armed insurrection, it was the most pitiful armed insurrection anyone could possibly imagine." "An armed insurrection? No," he said on WTAQ. "This was a breach" (Elfrink 2021).

During congressional hearings, GOP representatives continued to operate in denial. Rep. Ralph Norman of South Carolina questioned if the rioters involved were actual Trump supporters, despite, as the *New York Times* reported, "their Trump shirts, hats and flags, 'Make America Great Again' paraphernalia, and pro-Trump chants and social media posts" (Broadwater 2021). Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia described that scene as appearing like a "normal tourist visit" to the

Capitol. "Let's be honest with the American people: It was not an insurrection," Clyde proclaimed. "There was an undisciplined mob. There were some rioters, and some who committed acts of vandalism" (Shammas 2021).

So, what does one do when you are up against someone who is not operating in good faith? Traditionally, we have told our students to find the "available means of persuasion," "do not offend," "do not run people away from the table." We traditionally, as I mentioned earlier, ground our responses in civil discourse and dialogue. We place a high value on listening as well so that we can open ourselves to persuasion. However, is there a way to be civil without losing one's dignity? Is there a way to speak and not feel disempowered? I believe if we would adopt a Maatian framework, some of these questions could be answered.

What would a Maatian concept look while addressing this? Well, first, a Maatian conception will speak truth about and to this situation; in this truth, there will be no use of innuendo, soft pedaling, because one does not feel the fragility. You would simply say, "What you are saying is false, a lie, and since it is, I understand now that you do not want to engage in an open manner." The ethical response is to be truthful and stand in that truth.

Furthermore, a Maatian understanding would even address how someone could work in a bipartisan way with a person who traffics in lies and falsities. The expectation to do so is suspect at best. For instance, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said during the House deliberations on January 6 that "[a] denial of finding the truth is what we have to deal with. We have to find the truth, and we are hoping to do so in the most bipartisan way possible" (Broadwater 2021). One practicing a Maatian ethic would ask, "How can you find truth from people who are in denial and demonstrably not truthful?" When one stands on a false idea or notion of the truth of what we have collectively witnessed, there is no middle ground, there is no consensus to have, there is no way to come to bipartisan agreement. Traditional rhetorical theory and religious communication become limited in their responses, but a Maatian ethic would at least ask this question: "How would you want me to work with this person or these people?" How would you want me to serve as if nothing has happened?

Second, a Maatian ethic always leaves the option open just to walk away. Again, staying at the table and working out differences is important; it is only important, however, insofar as the parties engaged are doing it in good faith. A Maatian ethic, grounded in the spirituality of discernment, leaves open the option to leave and not to engage in toxic or spiritually damaging behavior. Paraphrasing communication scholar Jack L. Daniel (1970), there are some people you are not going to persuade, no matter how much you practice and how good you are rhetorically. Or better yet, echoing the first-century Galilean prophet who had no place to lay his head, "if they don't receive you, shake the dust off your feet and move on!"

It is here Maatian ethics flips the script on civility. No longer do we have to endure lies and falsities, but to be civil is to tell the truth. To be civil is to speak to the issues and problems that plague this nation. To be civil is to reject those who are not operating in good faith. To be civil is to have the power to leave the situation when it becomes toxic to your health and spirit. To be civil is to engage

truthfully and honestly about issues you are addressing. To be civil is to apologize when you have made an error or mistake and to take the repercussions that come from that mistake. To be civil is to question motives not by what's in a person's heart, but by what they have said and the actions that they have taken. To be civil is to seek out shalom, by grounding yourself in the seeking of the truth, because it is the truth that truly sets us free.

## Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier, I am in the early stages of unpacking the whole of the Africana communication paradigm. But, before I end, I would be remiss if I did not share that Maat in ancient Egypt is personified as female. According to Muata Ashby (n.d.), "She is the divinity who manages the order of Creation. She is the fulcrum upon which the entire Creation and the Law of Cause and Effect or Karma, functions. Maat represents the very order which constitutes creation." In short, Maat brings stability to chaos. She was there at the beginning, and so when order becomes out of balance, or chaotic, maybe an Africana communication model grounded in Maat is what we need to not necessarily bring back but to establish a solid foundation that we can all build.

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# Facing the Divide since Babel: The Role of Faith in Urban Settings

Jordi Pujol

**Abstract**: There are two divisions of tongues: the division of Babel, where people were scattered in their speech because of pride, and the division of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost sent out men of one dialect to speak all the languages of the earth and bring all men to unity. Both speak about the power of speech: its potentiality of *communion* and of *division*. "Speaking in tongues" means difference, variety of languages, plurality of views. This article examines the paradox of simultaneously promoting pluralism and difference in the public sphere and building common ground. Communication helps to build the former and, when inspired by faith, can also be a catalyst for the latter, fostering networks of solidarity.

**Keywords**: free speech, pluralism, religion, communion, faith, communication

## Introduction

The dialogical nature of humankind points to speech as a foundation for personal growth and societal relationships. This article is about the power of speech to either build understanding or generate divisiveness in urban settings, and the role of faith in this. I use the two divisions of tongues narrated in the Bible: the one of confusion and divisiveness of Babel, and the other of understanding and communion of Pentecost.

## The Power of Speech and the Two Divisions of Tongues

Language is key because it determines two main bonds: First, it helps us to know reality (including ourselves), and second, it helps us to communicate with others. The first human bond is the relationship with reality. The knowledge of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus* (the adequation of things and intellect) means the matching between what reality is and our minds and hearts that unveil that truth (Aquinas 1964, q. 16, art. 1, 3). In this sense, the search for truth is one of the key tasks of mankind.

The second important bond is to other human beings, with whom we share life and the experience of the reality of what things are. In this interrelationship we try to understand, we communicate, and we discuss what is real. We codify information and describe, but we also grow through language (cf. Taylor 2016). In this sense, meaningful conversations constitute an important part of the search for truth.

One of the main features that defines and constitutes human beings is that we are *conversational*; language distinguishes us from other animals. Many authors, including Alasdair MacIntyre (1999), Charles Taylor (2016), and Hannah Arendt (1958), have stressed this dialogical dimension of mankind. However, this capacity is not inoffensive: words are not neutral and innocuous, but convey intentions and become deeds. The words of spouses in a given setting can perform a marriage (whereas the same words said by actors representing in a theater do not!), and words can also kill or destroy the reputation of a person not only on the internet, but also in real life.

Ideologies know well about the *power of language* and the old art of twisting words that is sophistry. The capacity of corrupting language works by obscuring these two aspects mentioned above: knowledge of reality and human relationships. Oftentimes, this power is exercised to pursue motives different than mere communication of the truth. When the power of language is exercised to produce a behavior in the other (without full awareness), that communication alters the interrelationship among subjects, because the *other* becomes an object to be manipulated (dominated, handled, and controlled) (cf. Pieper 1992, 22).

In the context of the power of language, its link to truth and reality, and its impact in human relationships, there are two divisions of tongues narrated in the Bible: the division of Babel, where men were scattered in their speech because of pride, and the division of Pentecost, when the Spirit sent out men of one dialect to speak all the languages of the earth and bring all men to unity. Both talk about speech, and its potentiality for *communion* and for *division*, in an urban setting—in the first case Mesopotamia, and in the second case Jerusalem. The next section focuses on the second bond mentioned above—the "inter-personal character of human speech" (Pieper 1992, 15)—using the passage of the Tower of Babel.

## The Division of Babel

In the book of Genesis, we read about the division of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9):[1]

> 1 The whole world had the same language and the same words.
>
> 2 When they were migrating from the east, they came to a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.
>
> 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us mold bricks and harden them with fire." They used bricks for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

[1] Version of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; this version is the New American Bible Revised Edition.

> 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top
> in the sky and so make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered
> all over the earth."
>
> 5 The Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the people had built.
>
> 6 Then the Lord said: If now, while they are one people and all have the same
> language, they have started to do this, nothing they presume to do will be out
> of their reach.
>
> 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that no one will
> understand the speech of another.
>
> 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped
> building the city.
>
> 9 That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the speech
> of all the world. From there the Lord scattered them over all the earth.

The content of the passage looks like other famous episodes of human origins: the one of Adam and Eve's selfishness, deciding to go their own way, and the resulting punishment. Or Noah's flood as a divine punishment and new beginning after the wickedness of the first generations (Cain and his descendants). The distinctive feature in Babel is that this rebellion is *collective* ("they said to one another," in verse 3), involving 600,000 people, Castello (2013, 274) says.

The project of Babel aims to be a self-affirmation based on technical capacities ("let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky," in verse 4). It is a project aimed to "make a name for ourselves" (verse 4), in order to "achieve a situation in which they can be proud of their own will and effort" (Castello 2013, 267). This foolish human purpose to compete with God is driven by distrust and fear ("Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky . . . otherwise we shall be scattered all over the earth," in verse 4), and this was the cause of confusion.

*Muddle* is the key word to define Babel (cf. Fokkelman 2004, 14). The text starts and ends with a reference to the entire world that conveys that moral message: "The *whole world* had the same language and the same words" (Genesis 11:1, emphasis added). It finishes by saying, "That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the speech of *all the world*. From there the Lord scattered them over *all the earth*" (Genesis 11:9, emphasis added). In addition, "More than the theme of [geographical] dispersion, the theme of the difference of languages prevails, explained through the confusion wanted by God to prevent the sense of human power to rise disastrously . . . losing sight of the intrinsic limit of being a creature" (Castello 2013, 273). Humankind, full of pride and arrogance, was seeking recognition and wanted to guarantee its security by itself reaching up to heaven.

However, examining language, I find noteworthy the irony underpinning the entire text. As Castello suggests, the text is rich in assonance that is hard to grasp in the translation, but that suggests irony. This is evident in the conclusion

of the passage when "the name of Babel is ridiculed by passing from the meaning of *God's door* to that of *confusion*" (Castello 2013, 265; emphasis added). The final verses of the episode connect the fatal end of the project with the etiology of the word *Babel*: They called their city *Bab-ili* (gate of god), and here the narrator connects *babel* to the Hebrew root *balal*, "he confused," with a similar sound. The effect is rather caricatured (Castello 2013, 269). The true meaning of Babel, interpreted in its narrative context, is "the ironic explanation of how the attempts of mankind to entrust to his own technical capacities and to his own power, the contact with the divinity have been vain" (Castello 2013, 273).

This etiology connects the meaning of this passage also with some historical and archeological findings (Cabello Morales 2019). The *ziggurats* were high buildings constructed in Mesopotamia as royal tombs, temples, or observatories (cf. Cabello Morales 2019, 191). These buildings had a square- or rectangular-shaped foundation, and, "above it, in the form of a stepped terrace, there were several levels or floors—up to seven times!—in the last of which there was a chapel or temple that was accessed through the stairs located perpendicular to the facade or attached to it" (191; translation mine).

In the area between the Tigris and Euphrates, we can still find the remains of a group of 32 *ziggurats*. There was a big one near Babylon, close to the temple of the god Marduk, called Etemenanki (which means "house of the foundation of heaven and earth"), described on the Esagil tablet preserved at the Louvre Museum, more than 90 meters high, with seven stories, and it seemed to be unfinished. This building was destroyed, so all we know comes from the descriptions made by Herodoto in the mid-fifth century BC (cf. Cabello Morales 2019, 192). Historians like Liverani (2003, 259–62) place the story of the Babel Tower in the context of Nebuchadnezzar, the expansion of Babylon, and the collapse of Assyria in 614–610 BC, where there was evidence of new urbanizations (cf. Castello 2013, 270).

The building techniques of the Mesopotamian world—in contrast with the very elementary ones in Canaan—were very much sophisticated and admired. The elevation of the building was considered enormous human progress. But, at the same time, this new model of civilization "concealed a subjugation of man (the anonymous collectivity) and its finalization to the production of the work" (Castello 2013, 274). So, in the eyes of the leaders of the construction, a *brick* became more important than the *life* of a human being: "If a man crashed and died no one paid attention, but if a brick fell everyone cried because it would take a year to replace it" (Castello 2013, 274), because to climb to the top of the building with the materials was difficult and arduous. In this same sense, even the women were compelled not to stop working unless they were about to give birth. In fact, Ginzberg (2008) says that women "gave birth forging bricks" (170).

The historical context of the Tower of Babel speaks of a project driven by the tyrannical purposes of political leaders. As Ravasi states, commenting on this passage, God detests tyranny and rejects those who have autonomous plans of conquest and not of dialogue, of oppression and not of collaboration: "The dream of imposing a unity of slaves is frustrated by the God of freedom" (1990, 163).

Ravasi thinks that the Jahvist version makes four key points: "a popular etymology of the name *Babel/Babylon*, the great capital of the eastern superpower; an explanation of the linguistic diversity spread across the earth; the diaspora of peoples in different and even opposing forms of culture; and the theme of urbanism, that is, the meaning and risks of gathering in the city, symbolically represented by the *tower*" (1990, 162).

## The Coming of the Spirit

During the Jewish feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, the Church came together in the Cenacle of Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit promised by Jesus before the Ascension. We read the following in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (2:1–11):

> 1 When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together.
>
> 2 And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.
>
> 3 Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
>
> 4 And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.
>
> 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.
>
> 6 At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
>
> 7 They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?
>
> 8 Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?
>
> 9 We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
>
> 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome,
>
> 11 both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.

The disciples gathering "in one place together" (verse 1) and "the doors being shut where the disciples were" (John 20:19) God irrupted, throwing open the doors "through the strength of a wind that recalls *ruah*, the primordial breath and fulfils the promise of 'power' made by the Risen One before he takes his leave

(cf. Acts 1:8)" (Pope Francis 2019). The Spirit filled their minds and hearts, and the disciples started speaking all languages.

*Speaking different tongues* means difference, variety of languages, plurality of views . . . under a common teleological truth that is the fact of being human. This event sets communion and plurality as a common denominator (Peters 2005, 46). I consider that the first message of this event is that, as human beings, we all convey a common truth of what it means to be human. Modernity denied creaturehood, "[f]reeing man from his condition as a created being" (Von Hildebrand 1994, 10), in two ways: "[i]ndividualistic self-sufficiency . . . characterized by a rejection of all bonds linking us to God and to the moral law" (Von Hildebrand 1994, 11) and collectivistic antipersonalism as represented by Communism. This epistemological fracture coming from modernity distorted many things, creating problems related to speech, such as abusing freedom of expression in the name of free speech. With expression it also happens that if everything goes, nothing matters.

> Language and speech have their own rules, and *speaking all tongues* does not mean that *everything goes*. We observe that some hateful expressions are a celebration of offense more than an exercise of free speech. Language and information do not only involve the *locutionary* dimension (just saying something), but also the *illocutionary* dimension (by saying something, we do something), because the words are really actions, and they also involve the listener and the *perlocutionary* dimension (its effects), because some possible effects of speech acts could be anticipated. There are some abuses of expression (in journalism, politics, cinema, and literature) where speakers or authors are subverting the fair use of the various types of discourse (Pujol, forthcoming).

Going back to the text, the enumeration of the origin of those who listened to the disciples (verses 5, 9–11), and the fact that they all understood the language spoken by the Apostles (verses 4, 6, 8, 11), evokes, by contrast, the *confusion* of tongues at Babel.

With this event, "[t]he Church was publicly displayed to the multitude, the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching, and there was presaged that union of all peoples in the catholicity of the faith by means of the Church of the New Covenant, a Church which speaks all tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the divisiveness of Babel" (Vatican Council II 1965, no. 4). It is the *language of truth and love*, which is a *universal language* (cf. Pope Francis 2019).

Pope Francis presented the Holy Spirit as "the *creator of communion*," comparing Him to "the conductor of an orchestra that plays the scores of praises for the 'great works' of God," emphasizing that the gift of tongues is "*a symphony of sounds that unite and harmonically form diversity* . . . removing barriers between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, to make a single body" (Pope Francis 2019; emphasis added). In a similar line of thought, Pope Benedict XVI (2010) asked himself: "What does this new and powerful self-communication of God produce? The Spirit triggers a process of reunification of the divided and dispersed parts of

the human family. People, often reduced to individuals in competition or in conflict with each other, when touched by the Spirit of Christ open themselves to the experience of communion."

We can conclude that the plurality of languages, cultures, and races is a positive element when it is an expression of freedom, but not when it comes from oppression and tyranny. In these cases, it is an expression of confusion and divisiveness. God wants the communion and unity of humanity created by Him in freedom, and rejects the projects of uniformity based on any political and social kind of slavery (cf. Ravasi 1990, 164).

## The Paradox of Promoting Difference and Building Common Ground

The question of a shared common *telos* of humanity and the necessary pluralism of the public sphere has been abundantly studied by political philosophy, communication, sociology, and law, offering complementary views. I cannot be systematic and offer a complete picture on this, because I need to get to my point without getting lost in many preliminary debates. On these topics, ethics and justice are intertwined (and I will use both in this section). Let me start with a pioneer on human rights.

Francis of Vitoria (1483–1546) was a Spanish Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian of the Renaissance, who was known as one of the "fathers of international law." In the context of the *new world* in America, Vitoria developed the notion of *ius gentium*, the "law of peoples," as a preexisting law for all humankind (intrinsically) based on their dignity as human beings. Therefore, the laws and rights of the Spanish Empire—also enforced overseas—included not only Christians but also pagans. This was a gigantic change of rules. This common ground of *humanity* was theorized philosophically and legally, as the earliest opening guide for the human rights project. However, the new public sphere created by the modern nation-states in Europe and the United States to defend the rights of citizens shared this Judeo-Christian universalism, though some authors tried to slash the link with that tradition. It will take us long to elaborate on this, so I will leave it here.

Within this tradition, we find Hannah Arendt (1958) who understands *pluralism* in the public sphere as a "common world" characterized by "human plurality" (52–54, 175). Balancing these two elements is the need to defend equality within the public sphere by fostering respect for difference (meaning by *equality* "same dignity" and *difference* "promotion of particularity"). The question would be: Where do we put the effort? The debate on these questions is endless. Following our argument here, I would respond: In both. We need to protect a common bond to reality (of what things are in nature), like a common dignity as humans. At the same time, we must protect human plurality because we are very different, and we must reflect on the notion of difference as something positive.

It is not by chance that with a better appreciation of the "common world" as common identity (a man or a woman like me), the relationships and differences

are perceived in a less negative way (cf. Donati 2008, 32). If we first look at what is common, recognizing the other as an *alter ego* with whom I share a common world, it will be easier to accept difference. It will be simpler to be more open, and to find something valuable on that person, or accept in his or her arguments something worthy of dialogue. Under this understanding, difference or *diversity* is not an individualistic feature.

Multiculturalism promises the recognition of all identities on the ground of epistemological relativism: "all different, all equal." But that promise is not possible to achieve, because *recognition* means assigning a truth (cf. Ricœur 2004). Multiculturalism erases the common truth that we all convey as men and women, canceling any common bond to truth and nature (teleology), embracing moral indifference: "All different, all equal" forgets the key social notions of solidarity and reciprocity (cf. Donati 2008, 30). There are many authors that have addressed this challenge of recognition of identities and social relationships in the public sphere, proposing different kinds of universalisms (e.g., emphasizing *impartiality* or *dialogue* as values to guide relationships in the public sphere). Pierpaolo Donati thinks that this formulation is ambiguous and, in the end, inconsistent, because this recognition is based on the original dignity of each individual and at the same time is a "cultural recognition" of (isolated) identities. As Hobbes and other contemporary followers suggest, this process of recognition is guided by clashes among them (individuals and cultures). Under this Hobbesian mindset, recognition and respect for difference are a product of conflict, whereas other authors (such as Fichte, Ricœur, and Donati) see recognition of identities as a product of a *symbolic exchange*. The former model of recognition is negative (confrontational), with no shared common world (*telos),* and external (the State guiding the process of clashes), whereas the latter becomes a social *task*, relational and dialogical by nature, and based on social networks of solidarity and reciprocity (cf. Donati 2008, 48).

The understanding of *difference* in a dialogical and relational model is much more positive than in a multicultural one, where difference is a problem (difference as separation, opposition, exclusion), in the sense that there is no possibility of a common world between the poles. The only connection between the poles is the identification of problems (cf. Donati 2008, 82). The consideration of *what we are* (identity, common word) is not due to political negotiation, as it is with rival interests and opinions. Within the framework of a "common world of human plurality," different values are not the object of negotiation but guided by a *relational and rational semantic* of intercultural reflection. For Donati, *respect* becomes a rational act (reflexive) and relational (there is a symbolic exchange or interchange).

## Differences in Roman Law between the Private and Public Spheres and the Common (Urban) Spaces

In Roman law, the notion of "common" is not physical (private or public). Common is not a "thing" (*res*) a space, but an activity, a process (*lis*). The fact of

being common is a matter of relationships, procedures, exchange . . . communication! The common is what we face ahead. For example, I think it is important not to focus only on the situation of public furniture. The condition of public equipment is important for the common, but not enough, because *common* means "what can happen between us" in a space—the city, the neighborhood—but is a process, an activity. And communication can help a lot on this.

Communication and freedom of expression as public discourse help to build the public sphere in an abstract way. At the same time, I consider that communication inspired by faith can be a catalyzer for the *common*. A city is a potential common space (of reciprocity), where one is a citizen (*civis*) in relationship to another citizen, with the need of recognition. The fact of *being a citizen* was not a bond to language or religion, but to the fact that we are "mutual beings": we can make something new happen between us.[2]

We are concentrated on the urban setting, but before finishing this short section on the public and the common spheres, I would like to pose an open question. The *networked public sphere* (of the internet) is not private or public (following the classical division of realms). Can it be considered a *common space*? The concentration of power of the big tech companies, and their ability to moderate content and connect people: Is it a new Babel phenomenon? Or rather a Pentecost? To answer this question would require a follow-up article. Instead of unfolding that debate, I address the underpinning question of this article on the role of faith in urban settings.

## What Is the Role of Faith and Religion in All This?

When we talk about the interplay between faith and politics in the public sphere, we must start acknowledging that the message of Jesus Christ was totally innovative: "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (a passage included in Matthew, Mark and Luke). Thus, Jesus's formula is *dualism*, that is, something opposed to theocratic systems. The Church must not look for an exclusivist position of religion in the public sphere, nor the reductionism of liberal orthodoxy excluding faith from the public realm. Faith and politics are different realms, and faith and reason are two different languages, not opposed but complementary.

Luther's approach to faith and reason was the doctrine of *sola fides* (faith alone). Luther said very strongly: "Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has: it never comes to the aid of spiritual things" (Luther and Chalmers 1857, 164). Paradoxically, an approach that defended faith so boldly gave rise to the secularization of the Western world. And this is the reason why the Catholic Church defends (far before Luther) *fides et ratio* and not *sola fides*. This is because faith and reason work together, are complementary. Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) gave us a short and clear sentence about this when he defined *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). To have faith does not mean "to

[2] The first natural relationship happens within the family, and it exists prior to the city. Family is the first society, though it is private.

put reason to sleep" (Barron 2012). Faith is reasonable. As Bishop Robert Barron (2012) likes to explain, "authentic faith is never infra-rational." Faith is never: Do not think, just light that candle, or repeat that prayer, or take holy water and believe . . . No! That is superstition, and it is bad. Superstition and credulity are *infra-rational*, but these are not Catholic. However, "authentic faith is supra-rational," super-rational, meaning that it sometimes overwhelms our capacities (Barron 2012). Is it sometimes a surrender? Yes, but on the side of reason! This is because there are realities that I cannot control or dominate. Anselm describes the sort of faith that "merely believes what it ought to believe" as "dead" (1996, 88). So "faith seeking understanding" means something like "an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God" (Williams 2020).

Faith is reasonable; this is why the Church founded universities in the Middle Ages, precisely to spread culture and inquiry beyond the walls of convents and monasteries. The Church has been doing research in astronomy for more than 400 years. Two important telescopes in the world are run by the Church: one in Arizona (United States), and the other in Castelgandolfo (close to Rome, Italy).

Going to my point, and using John D. Peters's idea: Belief is public, and we enact our beliefs in all that we do. Reason operates in many tongues (Pujol 2019, 99). And Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:5 calls the faithful to take seriously speech and public discourse: "I want you all to speak in tongues." Plurality of views and languages is not seen by the apostle as a problem: "If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?" (verse 7), and "There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning" (verse 10). Paul makes an explicit call to rationality and knowledge: "Do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature" (verse 20). Faith seeking understanding, and reason open to sacredness and mystery . . . This is not wishful thinking; it is about rebuilding the relationship between faith and reason (Pujol, forthcoming).

"God is a meta-legal concept; though the concept of God is not properly a legal concept like contract or testamentary will, it does have some legal significance. The meta-legal God requires recognition by secular legal systems" (Domingo 2020, 2). This recognition does not mean that God must be translated into positive law, because "God does not need legal protection" (Domingo 2020, 2).

As Domingo explains, there is no legal effect regarding the existence of God: just recognition. "The legal recognition of God never involves the demand that citizens make an act of faith. As a meta-legal concept, God illuminates the legal system from the outside, providing support for pillars such as dignity, equality, solidarity, and human rights. The recognition of God, therefore, does not constitute a sacrifice of democratic principles; instead, it constitutes a strong meta-legal support, even for the secular character of the legal system" (Domingo 2020, 2). As a meta-legal concept, God is a source of meaningful behavior and of social consistency.

Therefore, it is crucial for communication ethics (for dialogical ethics in urban settings) that we restore the relationship between faith and reason, which must be circular, reciprocal. And by "reciprocal" I mean a mutual exchange.

Quoting again a maxim from Anselm: *intellego ut credam* . . . "We think," we ask ourselves questions, so that "we may believe," which is based on Augustine's *credo ut intellegam*, "I believe so that I may understand." Faith gives meaning and purpose and, in doing that, helps each of us to understand.

Connecting this to dialogic ethics, I see faith and religion as *catalyzers* for political identity, providing a consistent tradition of social doctrine on common good, equality, networks of solidarity, etc. Christianity owns a patrimony of foundational values that must transcend the logic of negotiation, precisely because they have an intrinsic value that comes from the authority of truth and nature. I see faith and religion as catalyzers for personal flourishing, as ingredients for a community that provides purpose, sense, and meaning to the life of men and women. The faith and tongues of Pentecost are positive moral powers that offer a horizon; they build not only civil co-existence, but also a route for a meaningful life and happiness.

Let me finish with an image that will sound very familiar to you: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves" (Pope John Paul II 1998).

This tradition is perfectly represented in the great seal of the United States. The American eagle (representing the nation), with two wings, can take flight because of both wings: the *thought* of political philosophers like John Locke, but also because the Founding Fathers, under the leadership of George Washington, believed that liberty depends as much on faith as on reason.

Saint John Paul II used this analogy in a beautiful way: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises" (1988). Faith and reason are two languages, both needed. Or in a less patriotic analogy: faith and reason are the pair of shoes on your feet. You can travel farther with both than you can with just one.

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*Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Church governance, and* Chiesa e protezione dei dati personali *(Roma: Edizioni Santa Croce, 2019).*

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# The Dialogical Ethics of Romance: Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*

Thomas M. Lessl

**Abstract**: Because romance puts comic plots in dialogue with tragic ones, it is especially well-suited to the exploration of complex ethical questions. This paper supports this argument by examining Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*, but it does so in consideration of rhetorical ethics more broadly. Like comedy, public communication is socially purposed, created to build and maintain communities, but because public communication is also a tragic instrument of the imperfect mortals who govern, it must come to terms with their individual failings. Miranda's *Hamilton* exemplifies how the "creative uncertainty" that results from such an ethical dialogue can sustain what Ronald C. Arnett calls "tenacious hope" (2022). This romance enables us to see how the motives that give rise to Hamilton's tragic overreaching bespeak the abuses of power that tempt those who govern, but the convergence of this tragic plot with a comic one also enables us to see the democratic possibility of these same motives.

**Keywords**: rhetoric, romance, Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton*, tragedy, comedy

## Introduction

Every narrative is a kind of ethical dialogue, and each of the four narrative modes (comedy, tragedy, irony, and romance) will tend to manifest this in its own way. The characters typically put in conversation in a comedy reflect the societal divisions characteristic of some milieu, and, by symbolically overcoming these, its plot will envision a more perfect world. Tragedies, by contrast, examine human limits, often ethical ones, by putting conflicting motives in conversation. Tragedy makes visible the "determined shape" of some actor's chosen life, as Northrop Frye describes this, in "implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life" envisioned for this character (1957, 212). A more complicated ethical dialogue transpires in irony and romance, the two narrative forms that interweave the comic and tragic. On its comic side, an ironic narrative will envision some proposed remedy to the divisions and disfunctions of society, but because irony has a tragic ground, its comic meaning will be subordinate to its tragic theme. For instance, the social engineering pitched by the narrator in Jonathan Swift's *A*

*Modest Proposal* (1729) is its comic vision, but we cannot listen to this without putting it in dialogue with a tragic counter-narrative. The fantastical absurdity of the narrator's plan to cannibalize Irish children bespeaks the self-deception of some imagined power, perhaps a parliament so benumbed by its distance from the misery of its subjects and by its own contrivances of abstract reason that it has lost the capacity for human feeling. Once recognized, this unspoken tragedy belies the speaker's motives and enables the reader to recognize the ethical blindness of Britain's leadership.

Romance, the mixed story type I will explore here, is the inverse of irony, "a comedy which contains a tragedy" (Frye 1976, 92). On its tragic side, the story's protagonist will manifest some superior but fallible quality, but this attribute will ultimately find a comic expression, a resolution to the societal division at the heart of the narrative. The protagonist's heroism for this reason is typically set against some backdrop of societal decay. If, for instance, the protagonist is especially courageous, the story will also make us aware of some absence of the same in society's current leadership that accounts for its divisions. But because this is also a tragedy, this attribute will occasion an inward struggle that the protagonist must work out en route to the story's comic resolution. We will perhaps discover that courage is somehow also the protagonist's folly, that while it promises to redress society's disorder, it can also manifest some imprudence or impulsiveness that compounds the dangers that beset this community. Thus, as the problems of society mount in the course of the story, so do the protagonist's failures. But at the story's climax these tragic and comic storylines will converge; the climactic act that culminates its tragic storyline will double as a comic *anagnorisis*, a discovery about the protagonist's fatal heroism that enables it to bring about society's redemption.

All four narrative types are capable of expressing ethical meaning, but because the mixed modes integrate and reflect both the personal and social dimensions of human experience, they are capable of offering more complex ethical insights. Because of its tragic basis, irony invites ethical introspection by fostering what Paul Ricœur has called a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (1970). Ironic narratives, by enfolding comic plots into tragic ones, enlarge awareness of hidden failings that undermine societal aspirations. The inversion of these comic and tragic roles in romance, by contrast, can sustain a "hermeneutics of faith." By enfolding a tragedy into a comic plot, a romantic narrative can face up to human limitations without foreclosing upon hope. Because it puts the comic and tragic in dialogue, this is to say, romance is the narrative mode best able to sustain the "unity of contraries" that makes "tenacious hope" possible (Arnett 2022).

Romance is by no means intrinsically ethical. A narrative form capable of sustaining tenacious hope might just as easily support the careless optimism that Arnett associates with modernity. I am merely arguing that romance has the greatest capacity for ethical expression. We can only do good if we also see paths of action capable of achieving the good, and comedy is the narrative form that envisions such pathways. Conversely, however, we can only pursue the good if we are also mindful of the human failings that are inevitably intermixed with these societal aspirations, and tragedy makes such awareness possible. Comedy without tragedy tempts false idealism, proposed actions that are not grounded in self-

awareness. Tragedy without comedy may invite a paralyzing pessimism. Because romance puts tragedy and comedy in dialogue, it can enable a more cautious self-awareness that constrains but does not block corrective action. This, in fact, seems to be what Kenneth Burke envisioned as the ethical outcome of his proposed "comic frame," a narrative perspective that could "enable *people to be observers of themselves, while acting*. Its ultimate would not be *passiveness*, but *maximum consciousness*" ([1959] 1984, 171).

My goal here is to support this argument by exploring the ethical dialogue that unfolds in Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton*. I do so as a rhetorical critic interested in practical public discourse. I operate upon the assumption that narrativity is a vital component of practical public discourse as well as of literature, film, television, and drama, and thus I am especially interested in what *Hamilton*'s romantic structure might suggest about public discourse that is similarly structured. Miranda's story has special application to public life because it explores an ethical dilemma that is forever at issue in rhetoric: how governing powers that are necessarily wielded by an imperfect few might nevertheless serve the interests of the many. Governing power is socially purposed, ceded to some in the expectation, as Thomas Paine famously wrote, so that it may be a "blessing" to society, but because governing power necessarily excludes others, it is also a "necessary evil." It advances propositions that purport to foster societal ends, but it does so necessarily through oligarchical means, through the actions of a subset of individuals who wield powers denied to all others. Such powers are delegated for the sake of the whole, but the actions of those so entrusted are always subject to the individual failings and interests of the powerful. In narrative terms, one might thus say that both comic and tragic exigencies forever need to be rationalized in public discourse. Political actors advance policies on the comic assumption that these will repair some imperfection of society, but because these policies are enacted by select individuals, the imperfections of human judgment, the usual stuff of tragedy, are just as perennially at issue.

For this reason, rhetoric will tend to put tragic and comic concerns in dialogue, and since romance and irony are the forms that do this, rhetorical narrativity is likely to manifest one or the other of these patterns. In the arena of deliberative rhetoric, one should expect messages intended as rebuttals to have an ironic cast and those intended to advance policies to have a romantic cast. With respect to epideictic, perhaps the genre of speech most like narrative art, we should expect to find romantic narrativity in speeches of praise and ironic narrativity in speeches of blame. Speeches of praise, especially when they engage in historical reflection, are likely to affirm some newly victorious or otherwise established power by showing how it has overcome a tragic propensity (Frye 1957, 186). Speeches of blame inevitably challenge the societal vision of those in power by exposing the tragic imposture of their comic pretensions.

As a musical celebrating one of America's founders, Miranda's *Hamilton* is akin to romantic epideictic, a comedy of praise that explores the part played by Alexander Hamilton in establishing the United States. As such, it offers a representative anecdote for democratic leadership. But as a tragedy of blame, it explores how the personal ambition that makes Hamilton's heroism possible is

also a perennial danger to good government. The musical's ethical potential lies in its capacity to put its comic and tragic themes in dialogue and, by doing so, to sustain an understanding of public virtue that is also tempered by an understanding of the inescapable vices that tempt those who govern. In my judgment, Miranda has risen to this challenge, and in the remaining pages of this essay I will explore how the musical's romantic grammar makes this possible.

## Analysis: Dialogic Character Development in Miranda's Romance

We usually think of dialogue as any interaction that sustains a consciousness of self and other, and typically this is signaled by a communication episode's interactive quality, how effectively its actors both speak and listen. The narrative counterpart to this, which Bakhtin called "heteroglossia," is achieved by bringing characters into interaction to reveal "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values" (1981, 291). These interactions contribute to the meaning or theme of a story by enabling us to interpret its plot, its grammar of action. Characters, so to speak, are a narrative's semantic elements, a story's key terms. Plot is a story's syntax, the narrative grammar that orders characters' actions into a meaningful whole. When character A acts in relation to character B, the points of view expressed by these characters are set in motion as well, and because these actions and counteractions fill out the story, this interaction of perspectives will shape its thematic meaning.

As a romance, *Hamilton* is at base a comedy that explores how this founder's heroic attributes and actions helped build America, but the musical is also a tragic exploration of the personal failings that threatened these efforts. These two parallel narratives simultaneously unfold to enact an ethical dialogue. Hamilton's extraordinary energy, intelligence, and democratic fervor are forever bent upon establishing and sustaining the nation, but the personal aspirations and political necessities that also drive him often contradict these aims. The musical refrain that marks the onset of Hamilton's political career, "I'm not throwin' away my shot," expresses his determination to contribute to the democratic cause, but as an expression of his restless ambition, this utterance also has a tragic aspect. As comic heroism, his "shot" has exceptional societal promise, but it also gives rise to hubris. As much as he is intent upon securing the blessings of society, his efforts are inevitably also expressed in ways that do not, either because pragmatic political concerns compel him to exclude others and thus to exert undemocratic power, or because his personal aspirations sometimes conflict with his public responsibilities.

The words and actions of the musical's supporting characters externalize and enlarge upon this protagonist's inward struggle. Being either for or against Hamilton, they sustain what Frye calls the form's "general dialectic structure," and for this reason they do not offer much "subtlety and complexity" (1957, 195). As "stylized figures," they "expand into psychological archetypes," that give

romance "a glow of subjective intensity" and sustain its "suggestion of allegory" (1957, 304). While such formulaic characterizations frequently subject romance to charges of sentimentality and imaginative excess, this is precisely the rhetorical feature that enables it to get at ethical complexities that attempts at realism tend to obscure. The familiar character archetypes of romance are "indications and signals" that enable us to understand "how it is properly to be used" (Jameson 1975, 135). This is especially true of the protagonist-antagonist opposition in *Hamilton*. From the moment they are introduced, we know that Hamilton and Aaron Burr are moral opposites, that Hamilton aspires to serve society and Burr to exploit it. Once Hamilton's heroism is fixed in our minds, there can be no letting go. We are decidedly on his side. However, his simultaneous identification with Burr creates a "unity of contraries" (Buber 1966, 111). In this, Miranda has also drawn us into an ethical dialogue. Because we side with Hamilton, we want his heroism to triumph, but because he is also a version of Burr, we find ourselves joining in with this hero as he searches for a way out of his moral conundrum.

As in other romances, Hamilton's antagonist also plays a key role in the story's resolution, and so I will discuss his relationship to Burr at the end of this analysis where that climax and resolution is treated. I will first look at the similar dialogues that develop out of Hamilton's linkages with the three main characters who support his quest: Eliza Schuyler Hamilton, her sister Angelica Schuyler, and George Washington, who is Hamilton's mentor. The heroic qualities that we come to recognize in Hamilton over the course of the story are also projected onto these characters, and they manifest in each instance in ways that help to illuminate Hamilton's moral struggle.

### *Eliza Schuyler and Hamilton*

In her role as wife and family matriarch, Eliza Schuyler is the character who most purely manifests the comic aspirations that are undermined by Hamilton's hubris. In allegorical terms, one might say that she is society. Constantly preoccupied with the concerns of family, she is largely immune to the individualistic aspirations that divert Hamilton from his quest, but this also makes her the chief victim of his affair with Maria Reynolds. When he decides to publish a pamphlet detailing the affair in order to salvage his political career, he forces Eliza to withdraw from the public sphere by "erasing" herself "from the narrative." Her public humiliation in this instance symbolizes the civic alienation forever promulgated by political corruption.

Hamilton's inability to recognize such failings is treated in the scene just prior to the Reynolds affair. Here, he is writing to Eliza's sister Angelica about the political contest that consumes his attention, his struggle to get his debt plan through Congress. My enemies "think me Macbeth, and ambition is my folly," and that "Madison is Banquo, Jefferson's Macduff," the rivals to the Scottish throne who are vindicated by Macbeth's tragic fall. There is a subtle irony here. In rejecting these comparisons, Hamilton has acted the part of this Scottish king. Like Macbeth, Hamilton's yearning for power has blinded him to the prophesy that

warns of his own doom. He is so certain of his virtuous leadership that he fails to recognize the egoistical follies that inevitably come with it.

The contrasting innocence that makes Eliza Miranda's archetype for society is dramatized just prior to Hamilton's affair. Ever-mindful of the family's well-being, Eliza urges Hamilton to "take a break" from work and spend time with them in upstate New York. Hamilton begs off by insisting that an analogous public interest must take priority, but his private affair with Maria Reynolds soon diverts him from this course. This episode is the musical's tragedy in parable. It is Hamilton's public-mindedness that makes him receptive to the pleas of the destitute Reynolds who is fleeing an abusive husband. Just as he wants to help America, he wants to help her, but personal interests instantly have him in her bed. These motives are again conflated when the husband then begins to blackmail him. Even as he pays Reynolds off to cover up this personal indiscretion, he is ever-mindful of his public image and scrupulously records each transaction to protect himself against the charge that he has misappropriated public funds. Ultimately, the personal becomes public and the public personal when he is exposed and compelled to clear his name by detailing the affair and blackmailing in the *Reynolds Pamphlet*.

The civic harm of the Reynolds affair finds its allegorical expression in the destructive effect it has upon Eliza. The episode ends with Eliza alone on stage, burning Hamilton's love letters. She now understands the warning spoken by Angelica at the onset of their courtship: "Be careful with that one, love. He will do what it takes to survive." As artifacts of *eros*, his letters expressed the personal love that gave rise to the collective bonds of family. You "built me palaces out of paragraphs, you built cathedrals," Eliza says, but now she tells us, "I'm erasing myself from the narrative" as she sets them afire. Hamilton's personal falsity has compromised the family that symbolizes his public ends. Eliza recognizes this in his apologetic *Reynolds Pamphlet*. The "palaces" and "cathedrals" of his earlier love letters are gone. Instead, we have the "paranoid" sentences of someone so "obsessed with [his] legacy" that he willingly tells "the whole world" how he "brought this girl into our bed." "In clearing your name," Eliza says, "you have ruined our lives."

### *Angelica Schuyler and Hamilton*

The weddings that frequently occur at the close of romances symbolize the societal redemption wrought by a completed quest. In *Hamilton* this is the marriage of Alexander and Eliza which occurs, not at the end, but rather, in keeping with historical chronology, thirty-five minutes into the musical. The scene is nevertheless able to fulfill this traditional function because it has been brought about by an act of heroism that is clearly analogous to the one Hamilton will perform at the musical's climax—in this instance Angelica Schuyler's act of sacrificial heroism that has made this marriage possible.

Miranda links Angelica's sacrifice to Hamilton's by closely identifying these characters. When Angelica first meets him at a New York ball, she finds in his radiant intellect and revolutionary zeal the "mind at work" she has been looking

for, but when she then introduces him to her sister Eliza, Hamilton falls in love with her instead. We only become aware of the enduring depth of Angelica's love for Hamilton during the subsequent wedding when her toast to the newlyweds, "May you always be satisfied," induces a reverie, a "rewind" of the earlier exchange. Upon being introduced to her at the ball, Hamilton says, "You strike me as a woman who has never been satisfied." Angelica thinks Hamilton is merely flirting, but in fact he has recognized a deep kinship. "You're like me," he says, "I'm never satisfied." Angelica has the same insatiable need for identity, and because of this, she understands Hamilton's tragic struggle, that his are "intelligent eyes in a hunger-pang frame." The intelligence that later enables him to build the nation's financial system may direct his appetites, but it is not their source. Like Angelica's awakened *eros*, Hamilton's all-consuming ambition is rooted in his insatiable desire for identity. "And when you said 'Hi,'" she remembers, "I forgot my dang name. Set my heart aflame, every part aflame," and because she, too, can never be satisfied, she also recognizes that "this is not a game." Like him, she is captive to a desire capable of destroying herself and others.

Angelica's response to this tragic self-awareness prefigures the sacrifice that resolves Hamilton's inward confusion—the fact that his identity needs are entangled with his civic desires. The analogous desires at war in Angelica are romantic love and family love—*eros* and *philia* (Lewis 1960). *Eros* pulls her out of society. "I wanna take him far away from this place," she says. In intimacy, the self is discovered in the other. But familial love intrudes. "Then I turn and see my sister's face and she is . . . Helpless." Eliza is in love with Hamilton too, and Angelica realizes that she cannot satisfy her personal desire without also harming her sister. She must choose between *eros* and *philia*, between her love for Hamilton and her love for her sister, and realizing that Eliza would make the same sacrifice for her, she steps aside:

> I know my sister like I know my own mind. You will never find anyone as trusting or as kind. If I tell her that I love him she'd be silently resigned, he'd be mine. She would say, "I'm fine." She'd be lying.

Angelica does what she knows her sister would do. Something higher than *eros* has intruded to stay her hand, a sacrificial love that transcends the natural ones. Like the shot that Hamilton throws away at the story's climax, Angelica's choice is tragic. She knows she will "never be satisfied." But the wedding scene we now return to signals the comic redemption that her sacrifice, like Hamilton's later one, makes possible.

### *George Washington and Hamilton*

The dialogical work that Angelica and Eliza Schuyler perform as alter egos to Hamilton is supported by metaphorical or allegorical imagination, the viewer's ability to think about the erotic and familial love expressed by these sisters *as if* these corresponded to the personal and societal aspirations that make Hamilton both tragic and comic. By comparison, the understanding of Hamilton that arises when he is put in dialogue with George Washington has a typological basis—more

like that produced by synecdoche. The follies of his own youth that Washington recalls as he tries to curb the similar ambitions of his younger protégé invite us to see him as a type for the tragic Hamilton. For the same reason, the idealized Washington of public memory plays an opposite role as the image of what Hamilton is destined to become should he complete his quest.

That Washington would stand in for both the tragic Hamilton of the present and the comic redeemer that Hamilton may become is consistent with what one sees in other stock characters of this kind—the wise elders who guide romantic heroes and heroines (Frye 1957, 195). In his interactions with Hamilton, both aspects of Washington's character are made visible. The constant danger that personal ambition will undermine Hamilton's public service is foreshadowed in Washington's references to his own youth. But as a wise counselor who has completed his quest, Washington transcends his own past and is able to prefigure Hamilton's comic destiny.

Both patterns are visible in their first meeting during the American War of Independence when General Washington offers him a clerical position on his staff. Hamilton resists. He wants a combat role that will win him instantaneous fame. Per the signature refrain that introduces him in the musical, he will not throw away his "shot," and whenever this theme recurs, it is because Hamilton's yearning for identity threatens to compromise his leadership, the intelligence, creative energy, and administrative genius that he brings to building the new republic. In the language that Frye uses to describe tragic protagonists, this first exchange reveals the "determined shape" of Hamilton's chosen path in "implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life" that we also envision for him (1957, 212). However, the possibility that the protagonist might yet realize this uncreated potential is made possible by Hamilton's simultaneous identification with his mentor. Washington understands Hamilton's tragic desire because he shares it: "It's alright, you want to fight, you've got a hunger. I was just like you when I was younger. . . . Head full of fantasies of dyin' like a martyr." Hamilton instantly agrees with this representation, but then Washington's other identity fires back: "Dying is easy, young man. Living is harder." He sees Hamilton's desire for glory in wider perspective. Bravery is a virtue since those who lead must encounter risks, but Hamilton's identity aspirations have misapplied it.

Hamilton's identity yearnings persist even as he accepts the job. When Washington calls the question by holding out his writing quill to the young officer, the chorus voices his inward divide by chanting his signature phrase: "I'm not throwin' away my shot," and when this crescendos, Hamilton shouts the same defiant words even as he snatches the quill from Washington's hand and goes to work. He is of two minds. The tragic ambition that links him to the young Washington of the past abides amidst the comic hope that links him to the present one.

In their next dialogue in which Hamilton's commander reprimands him for his part in a duel between John Laurens and General Charles Lee, Washington performs the public-mindedness that Hamilton's conflation of the public and personal undermines. Hamilton claims to have acted in the public's interest, that he was defending Washington's leadership against Lee's insults. "Charles Lee,

Thomas Conway," he says, "take your name and they rake it through the mud," but when Washington answers, "My name's been through a lot, I can take it," we discover Hamilton's real sore spot. "Well, I don't have your name. I don't have your titles. I don't have your land," but "if you gave me command of a battalion, a group of men to lead, I could fly above my station after the war."

These dueling public and personal motives are symbolized by a terminological dispute that also unfolds in this scene. Washington three times calls Hamilton "son," and each time Hamilton rejects this appellation. In the first instance Hamilton fires back with "Don't call me son," refusing to accept the societal role this familial term imposes upon him. He reacts as though Washington has patronized him, forced a role identity upon him that is not his to assign. But insofar as the public role he has already agreed to play is analogous to this familial one, Hamilton's outrage is unwarranted. Thus, when Hamilton reacts more vehemently the second time Washington calls him this, his commander cautions him to watch his "tone."

The tragedy of Hamilton's personal ambition is that it threatens to undermine his unique talents. He is "willing to die" if that means personal fulfillment, even though this will deprive the infant nation of his gifts. "We need you alive," Washington says, and when Hamilton brushes this aside, the general drives this point home a third time, again by couching this in personal terms: "Your wife needs you alive, *son*, I need you alive." But Hamilton is defiant. He shouts in Washington's face, "Call me son one more time!" Like the prodigal son of Luke's Gospel who strains against the bonds of family, Hamilton thinks that Washington's public demands will deprive him of personal happiness. And like the father in Christ's parable, Washington responds at the end of this scene as only he can, by sending Hamilton away.

Although Hamilton's conflicting motives are still visible in the closing months of Washington's presidency, their ultimate harmonization is foreshadowed in their final meeting. When the president tells him that he needs a "favor" now that Thomas Jefferson has resigned his cabinet post, Hamilton immediately reads this as an opportunity for personal advancement. Assuming that his hated rival has committed some wrong, he gleefully offers to retaliate. But Washington has an opposite purpose. Washington is stepping down, and Jefferson has resigned so he can run for this office. The president wants Hamilton to help him to surrender power, not to exert it. He means to teach his successors "how to say goodbye," how to relinquish personal interests for the public good. As Hamilton helps him to formulate this message, we see him beginning to become like Washington, and in anticipation of this, Miranda subtly reconfigures their relationship. No longer playing the part of a father struggling to rein in a rebellious son, Washington now reaches out to Hamilton as a friend. They act as companions and equals, citizens drawn together by a common civic interest. "One last time," he says to Hamilton, "relax, have a drink with me one last time. Let's take a break tonight, and then we'll teach them how to say goodbye. You and I." As friends, as C. S. Lewis would say, they stand "side by side; their eyes look ahead" toward "the same truth" (1960, 66)—in this instance the civic future they have collaborated to bring about.

As this scene unfolds, Hamilton's perspective gradually merges with Washington's. Hamilton raises various objections to the other's decision, but each of the president's responses envisions some broader public benefit. In answer to Hamilton's fear that Americans will think him "weak" if he steps down, Washington says "they will see we're strong." When Hamilton protests that his "position is so unique," Washington says that "I'll use it to move them along." Hamilton's reasons are plausible enough. Good government should be sustained, and it could be if Washington continued as president. But Washington sees the other side of this, a public responsibility that can only be fulfilled by relinquishing power: "If I say goodbye, the nation learns to move on. It outlives me when I'm gone."

Just as the societal meaning of Angelica's sacrifice is found in the home made possible by her sister Eliza's wedding, the meaning of Washington's retirement is found in the domestic peace prophesied by Micah (4:4):

> "Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid." They'll be safe in the nation we've made. I wanna sit under my own vine and fig tree, a moment alone in the shade, at home in this nation we've made. One last time.

After repeating this a second time, Washington again performs the gesture that inaugurated their professional collaboration. He holds out his writing quill to Hamilton, and in this moment the younger man transcends the tragic individualism expressed in his earlier defiance. Their identities converge as he repeats Washington's words "one last time," and as the scene continues their voices speak together the words of the first president's farewell address.

*Aaron Burr and Hamilton*

In dialogue with the musical's protagonist, each character profiled thus far in some way enlarges understanding of the ethical tension at the story's center. Because these allies move in step with the protagonist, their choices inform the struggles he faces in his dual quests for public service and self-advancement. Aaron Burr, the story's antagonist, contributes to this process by providing a purer representation of Hamilton's tragic aspect. Just as George Washington and Angelica Schuyler typify Hamilton's sacrificial heroism, Burr for the most part typifies the tragic self-interest that Hamilton must learn to transcend. In the language of Carl Jung, Burr is Hamilton's "shadow." He brings to our attention a destructive aspect of Hamilton's personality that lies outside his awareness (Jung 2001, 139–40). For the same reason, this antagonist plays a crucial part in the execution of the story's plot. Hamilton's tragic destiny is filled out in his fatal duel with Burr, but this climactic moment also gives rise to the comic revelation that enables him to overcome.

The shared ambition that ultimately brings about this death-struggle is manifest when these characters first meet on stage. Burr has already begun to make a name for himself, and Hamilton, who is desperate to do the same, wants his advice. In spite of the public services both actors will eventually perform, at

the story's onset their preeminent aspirations are personal. While Hamilton desires a military appointment because he is fired with enthusiasm for the political ideals of the coming revolution, he is just as determined to parlay public service into personal advancement. Given a chance on the battlefield, he tells Burr, "we could prove that we're worth more than anyone bargained for." Burr has similar ambitions, but his stratagem for fulfilling them shows his greater willingness to compromise his public responsibilities. If you want to "get ahead," Burr tells him, "talk less, smile more, don't let them know what you're against or what you're for." When Hamilton scoffs at this, Burr turns the tables with an ominous warning: "Fools who run their mouths off wind up dead." Burr's tactical evasiveness may seem self-interested, but the heated polemics that later pour from Hamilton's pen betray the same motive. This becomes progressively more visible as the story unfolds. At one moment Hamilton is fertilizing the soil of the sprouting American democracy with civic wisdom, and at the next fouling it with a poisonous egotism.

Burr's habit of circumventing public deliberation makes him appear to be Hamilton's moral opposite, but as Hamilton rises and evolves, we soon find him employing the same tactics. This reaches a critical point in the scene depicting his battle, now as Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, to push his debt plan through Congress. When Burr asks how he plans to do this, since Jefferson and Madison mean to block him, Hamilton answers by saying, "I guess I'm gonna have to finally listen to you: Talk less, smile more, do whatever it takes to get my plan on the Congress floor." Like Burr, Hamilton's ends seem to be public, but his means show his willingness to subvert democratic deliberation—in this instance through a quid pro quo. In exchange for the votes he needs, he promises to get the nation's capital located in the South, just across the Potomac River from Jefferson and Madison's Virginia. He is willing to sacrifice his democratic principles in order to win a political battle that to his enemies smacks of self-interest—a deal that will ensure Hamilton's wealth by making his own city of New York the nation's financial center.

Burr's rage when he gets wind of this is voiced in the scene's musical refrain: "No one else was in the room where it happened." Having attained political power, Hamilton is as willing as Burr to subvert the democratic process to the exclusion of others. After the same pattern is repeated in the election of 1800, Burr's hatred takes a murderous turn. To break the tie between Jefferson and Burr who each hold seventy-three electoral votes, Hamilton swings the contest in Jefferson's favor. Even though he has "never agreed with Jefferson once," Hamilton manipulates the process to keep Burr out. The same amoral instrumentalism that Burr has displayed throughout the story has been turned against him.

When their fatal showdown arrives, it has become clear that the aspirations that have brought Hamilton to the brink of extinction are the same ones that have made Burr a villain. This tragic identification is reviewed in the soliloquy spoken by Burr as the two men make their final preparations for the duel. He voices the frustrated ambition he is about to act out. He means to kill the man who "poisoned my political pursuits," and since he knows that Hamilton is driven by the same motive, he assumes his similar intent. Why else, Burr says, would Hamilton put on glasses to inspect "his gun with such rigor" and "methodically fiddle with the

trigger"? His enemy means "to take deadly aim," and so Burr will too. "It's him or me."

But as with other romantic protagonists, Hamilton's is a "fortunate fall," as Milton would say. His tragic death-struggle also brings about a comic revelation, a symbolic corrective for his flawed leadership. When the opponents raise their pistols, Hamilton steps out of time and contemplates his next action as though from an eternal vantage point. This marks his "point of epiphany," as Frye calls it, the "point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment" (1957, 203):

> I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory. Is this where it gets me, on my feet, sev'ral feet ahead of me? I see it coming. Do I run or fire my gun or let it be? There is no beat, no melody. Burr, my first friend, my enemy, maybe the last face I ever see. If I throw away my shot, is this how you'll remember me? What if this bullet is my legacy?

The first line of this speech repeats the utterance that, when spoken at the onset of Hamilton's quest, marked the tragic onset of his frenetic race against death—against the despoiling effects of poverty, disease, slavery and lawlessness that overshadowed his childhood on St. Croix. What weighs upon him now in that statement's reprise is the realization that his actions will outlive him. If he kills Burr, he may prolong his mortal life, but he will poison the life of the society that lives on. Hamilton's warning to his son Philip on the eve of his own fatal duel bespoke this danger: "You don't want this young man's blood on your conscience." Like Philip who has already died after throwing away his shot, Hamilton understands that he has a moral responsibility that extends into the future. His "legacy" is not his own.

> Legacy, what is a legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see. I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for me. America, you great unfinished symphony, you sent for me. You let me make a difference, a place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and rise up.

The meaning of Hamilton's life exceeds his individuality and thus also its mortal span, and so at the close of his life he sees it in eternal perspective, from some vantage point outside of time:

> I catch a glimpse of the other side. Laurens leads a soldiers' chorus on the other side. My son is on the other side. He's with my mother on the other side. Washington is watching from the other side. Teach me how to say goodbye. Rise up, rise up, rise up, Eliza! My love, take your time. I'll see you on the other side. Raise a glass to freedom.

Like Angelica's wedding speech, Hamilton's final toast to freedom coincides with a sacrificial act. When time begins again, he discharges his pistol into the air, allowing himself to be fatally wounded. The fate prophesied in Angelica's toast has come to pass: "He will never be satisfied." However, the same act by which he

abandons his striving creates a legacy of peace that gives society a shot at realizing its collective aspirations.

The story's epilogue is spoken by Eliza. As the family matriarch, she personifies society and thus is the character best suited to envision the redeemed world made possible by Hamilton's sacrifice. Her crowning achievement as she carries on his work for another fifty years is the establishment of the first private orphanage in New York City, an institution that symbolizes both the familial aspirations and inevitable imperfections of society. In the eyes of these orphans, Eliza says, "I see you Alexander. I see you every time." Like Hamilton, these children are parentless and thus without identity, and in some sense, the same may be said of every member of society. As citizens we are orphans, members of a kind of pseudo-family, an unnatural societal contrivance. Like Hamilton and Washington, "we have no control who lives who dies who tells our story," and yet in growing up we may surpass the limits of these circumstances.

## Concluding Thoughts

This exploration begins an effort to explore one of the public implications of an observation first set out in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) and expanded upon two decades later in his *Secular Scripture* (1976). When Frye introduced the subject of romance in his *Anatomy*, he made the provocative observation that in every age since the Middle Ages, "the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy" (1957, 186). If this is true for literary fiction, it seems reasonable to suppose that it might also be true for the narrative patterns that shape public address.

Frye's observation suggests only that romance has some special capacity to rationalize power, but if we assume that the appearance of ethicality is a vital ingredient of such rationalizations, we might also ask what ethical advantage is likely to be gained when public discourse is romantically structured. My answer is that romance's integration of comedy and tragedy enables it to more fully address the ethical complexities of rhetorical situations. Every policy problem involves both tragic and comic concerns, but the partisan dispositions of political actors incline them to set one concern against another. Those arguing the affirmative side of a policy are likely to privilege comic concerns—the policy's societal benefits. Opponents, conversely, will privilege the policy's tragic aspect, the abuses of power it is likely to make possible.

Were we to consider this kind of imbalance merely as a deliberative challenge, we would say that this is why political discourse should be dialogical, why all points of view should be heard, but from a narrative standpoint this would mean that policy proposals should be able to fit the tragic and comic together in some plausible way. They should mindfully acknowledge the dangers at stake in any proposal while expectantly exploring societal solutions. Political actors whose messages are unbalanced in either of these ways cannot carry out their ethical

responsibilities. Those whose messages are purely comic will likely fail to satisfy their obligation to address serious dangers that may arise from any exercise of governing power. Those whose messages are purely tragic are likely to tempt cynicism and so to abdicate their responsibility to hope.

I suspect that those speeches that outlive their historical moments and continue to speak to the American conscience are likely to be romantically narrativized, that their comic hopefulness springs from tragic honesty. This, I surmise, is why we continue to resonate to the ethical nobility of Lincoln's second inaugural. The speech's closing call for "malice toward none" and "charity for all" is plausible and desirable only because the message also recognizes the tragic futility of any form of ultimate justice. Were "every drop of blood drawn with the lash" to be paid for "by another drawn with the sword," every war would continue ad infinitum. No peace can undo every wrong. Justice is a righteous demand, but no reprieve from violence can come without forgiveness.

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# Multicultural Societies, Monotheistic Religions, and Globalization: Semioethic Vistas

Susan Petrilli

**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

[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

[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.

[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 anima*l 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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