

Preface

by Augusto Ponzio

Susan Petrilli and myself are grateful to Jeff Bernard and Gloria Withalm for the generous opportunity of presenting our work in the pages of this journal.

Our guiding principle has been to convey a general, even if inevitably schematic, overview of our research relating to semiotics (for further reading, cf. References), as it has so far been conducted, having begun in 1979—for those aspects shared with Susan –, that is, almost twenty years ago. The Institute of Philosophy of Language (IFL) which I founded in 1980 and have directed since has been active during the same period.

The studies here proposed only represent a part of our research at the Institute where interests are as different as the people working there or who collaborate from the outside, being connected to us either because their studies originated at the Institute or for the mere "pleasure" of working together in spite of—or perhaps thanks to—different intellectual origins (for information of a bio-bibliographical order as well, cf. our website <[http://www.pandora.it.ifl](http://www.pandora.it/ifl)>).

IFL is currently transforming into a larger structure, the Department of Linguistic Practices and Text Analysis. Consequently, even if by pure chance and only partially, this issue of *Semiotische Berichte* may be considered as a contribution to weighing our scientific activity in the balance. And given that Jeff Bernard has also kindly reserved the pages of an imminent issue of *S-European Journal for Semiotic Studies* for researchers at IFL, a more articulate survey will soon be available for the curious.

For the present issue of *Semiotische Berichte* papers from different periods have been reorganized and reassembled according to a general plan and in a unitary perspective, conceived especially for the occasion. The result is that these papers are now mostly appearing in a substantially new edition and given our wish to present "signs of research on signs", this seemed the best way to proceed. The organic structure of this volume, with its subdivision into four sections, has also been achieved by integrating parts written by myself with those by Susan so that they appear as pieces of a single discourse, built dialogically and diversified (authorship for each chapter is specified at the end of this introduction, even though no author should ever forget Bakhtin when he says that

the word is never one's own but rings with the word of the other, is always and at the least semi-other).

The aim of the first section, *Authors referred to*, is to name and present the authors around whom our research mainly revolves in the sense that our studies focus on them or have to a degree been influenced by them. *Noms propres*. is the title of a book by Emmanuel Lévinas, it could also most appropriately be used as the title of the section we are discussing.

Lévinas may be counted among these names, he is the subject of my first book of 1967 and of another monograph of 1995 (the year of his death), published in French by l'Harmattan (Paris) the year after. Adam Schaff is another important name in my own research. I have promoted the Italian editions of most of his works, the most recent being *Umanesimo ecumenico* and *Il mio XX secolo*. and to his thought I dedicated a monograph of 1974. I am currently promoting the Italian translation of his most recent book *Meditacje* (1997), published in Spanish as *Meditaciones sobre el socialismo* (1998). Other names include Mikhail Bakhtin, whom I have been studying since 1976 (four of my books, the first of which was published in 1980, bear his name in the title). Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, a master of signs and dear friend to me, is a reference we share with Jeff Bernard and Gloria Withalm, together the four of us are planning to write a monograph on him.

And beyond these, other authors of particular interest to Susan include Charles Morris, Thomas A. Sebeok and Victoria Lady Welby. Susan has edited the correspondence between Morris and Rossi-Landi for a special issue of the journal, *Semiotica*. In addition to this she has contributed to awareness of his sign theory which has tended to be studied superficially, and classified insignificantly as "behaviorism"—which has ensued in unawareness of all Morris' work on the relation between signs and values, semiotics and axiology as well as of his important contribution to biosemiotics. Susan considers all these aspects to which she has dedicated several papers as well as having promoted Italian editions of Morris' works. She has also translated most of Sebeok's books which have so far appeared in Italy, and edited volumes of his writings for the Italian reading public, these include *A Sign Is Just a Sign*. *La semiotica globale* and *Come come comunicano gli animali che non parlano*, both of which appeared this year.

Special mention should be made of Welby, mainly known because of her correspondence with Charles S. Peirce. Susan has contributed to underlining Welby's importance for semiotics and philosophy of language with a monograph in Italian entitled, *Su Victoria Welby*, 1998. She is now continuing her work on Welby's unpublished manuscripts, deposited at York University, Ontario, and is preparing an annotated anthology of Welby's writings for a Special Issue of *Semiotica*.

Another important name not only in my own research but also in my intellectual formation is Giuseppe Semerari, my professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Bari, whom I must here remember even though he does not appear in the present volume. In any case, a paper dedicated to Semerari (written in collaboration with Maria Solimini) has just appeared in the last issue of *S - Journal for Semiotic Studies* (10-1,2, 1998).

The second section of the present volume, *Confrontations*, includes a series of studies, as this title announces, in which some of the authors described in the first section are confronted. In some cases these authors were in direct contact and effectively confronted their ideas as did Peirce and Welby or Morris and Rossi-Landi, but in other cases, such as for Welby and Bachtin, different theoretical horizons are made to interact dialogically without the authors ever having met in real life. This section is a development of the first and serves as a link with the third.

The third section, *Surveys*, includes descriptions of studies in Italy dedicated to those authors and themes that best evidence our own contributions through our research and publications. These include, in particular: 1) studies and interpretations of Morris in Italy, with special reference to Rossi-Landi who has the merit of having been a pioneer in the discovery and analysis of Morris' ideas, as well as one of his major interpreters at a world level; 2) readings of Bachtin's work in Italy; and, finally, 3) developments in Italian semiotics which we may date as beginning officially at around the early 1970s—a part from Rossi-Landi's work which had already begun in the 1950s (with his 1953 monograph on Morris), and still earlier Giovanni Vailati, the interesting "pragmaticist" (the reference here is to Vailati's attention for Peirce) and "significian" (having been a follower of Welby, whom he knew personally, and her "significs").

Finally, the aim of the fourth section, *Perspectives*, is to convey an idea of our research in progress, of the themes that orient it and of the orientation it is now taking on. We have chosen to present some of the themes and problems now at the centre of our attention, thereby giving the reader an idea of our current interests and positions.

This section terminates with a programmatic text, a research project which we are happy to publish in the present context also as a means of inviting other scholars to participate—beyond those with whom we are already sharing the project either because we have prepared it together or through subsequent adhesions to it.

A single bibliography has been added at the end of the present volume rather than of each paper to the end of making consultation easier.

The order according to which the themes have been distributed in the present issue obviously enough only corresponds to the order of exposition and not to the order of writing. Nor do we expect it to correspond to the order of reading, which should begin and continue according to one's own interests and appetites. From this viewpoint, our claim is that this text should function as a hypertext and be open to discontinuous and non-linear reading, bearing in mind also that we are not presenting a book but the issue, however organically planned by two authors, of a journal.

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References

Petrilli: I.1, I.6, II.1, II.2, II.3, II.4, III.1, III.2, III.3, IV.1, IV.2

Ponzio: I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5, IV.3, IV.4, IV.5 (Engl. trans. by S. Petrilli)