Lesson 7

Listening, Otherness and Translation

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1. Listening, voice and responsiveness; 2. Interpretation, subjectivity and the other; 3. Extralocalization, dialogism, singularity; 4. Otherness and responsibility; 5. Amorous discourse, translation and listening; 6. Listening versus hearing; 7. Listening in love: the same other

1. Listening, voice and responsiveness

As we have highlighted in our lessons so far, the fundamental problem in "semiotics" – understood as the "general doctrine of signs" (John Locke) – as well as in "philosophy of language" – which is interconnected to semiotics – is the problem of the other. And in human communication the problem of the other is essentially the problem of the word, that is, of the word as voice recognized as the quest for listening.

On a linguistic level the "voice" is a characteristic of the utterance, not only the oral utterance, but also the utterance in *writing*, writing versus transcription, writing as understood by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva. Mikhail Bakhtin also understands "voice" in this sense, that is, as indicating a singular, unique perspective, as a singular, unique act, a special standpoint, to stay in a position without the possibility of substitution, of replacement, voice with its unrepeatable intonation, accentuation. "Voice" thus described is connected to responsibility without alibis, not technical responsibility, special responsibility, responsibility associated with a particular role, profession, competence, but what Bakhtin denominates as "moral responsibility".

This is the "voice" as discussed by Bakhtin in relation to Dostoevsky's "polyphonic novel", where dialogism is encounter and interweaving of voices. The voice is always oriented toward another voice. In this sense it is transcendent, "transgredient". One's own utterance alludes always and in spite of itself, whether it knows it or not, to the utterance of others. No

judgment-utterance, no judgment of an object, may be separated from an orientation, a standpoint which must necessarily be taken toward the other.

This means that the utterance is never oriented directly towards its theme. There is always a process of refraction in a word, for the word is always mediated by the relation to others, which is a relation of both the cognitive and emotional orders. Judgment-utterances are at once allocution-utterances, therefore utterances that enter into dialogic contact with other utterances. Consciousness of self is reached and perceived against the background of the consciousness that another has of consciousness of self; "I-for-myself" against the background of "I-for-the-other". It follows that dialogism also presents itself in a single voice, in a single utterance, as interference of contradictory voices present in every "atom" of this utterance, in the most subtle structural elements of discourse, hence of consciousness.

Dialogism cannot be separated from voice understood in this non-literal sense. Otherwise, it becomes abstract and void dialectics. Dialogue takes place among *voices* – not monological and integral voices, but internally dialogic and divided voices – and *voices* allude to the ideological position *embodied* in the word. Bakhtin highlights the problematic of the voice's embodiment. He states that Dostoevsky's hero is *voice* and that the author does not show it to us as though it were an object, but has us listen to it, to the voice, the word.

In Bakhtin's view given that no contradictions can arise from *disembodied ideas*, (monological) dialogues are neither dialectical nor synthetic. In Dostoevskij's polyphonic novel the idea is not conceived as a monological conclusion, but rather as the event of interacting voices. Ideas are embodied in different voices and these voices respond to each other in relations of non-indifference, relations of participative, responsive understanding (see Bakhtin 1963).

In light of such considerations it is evident that listening is not external to the word, to the utterance, to the voice as we are describing it. Listening is not a mere addition, supplement, or concession; it does not result from initiative taken by an interlocutor ready to receive the word, as a choice, an act of respect toward that word. Instead, listening is a *constitutive element of the word*, it derives from the nature of the word, which always calls for listening, demands it. In fact, the word wants listening, it wants to be understood, it demands a response and wants to respond, in turn, to the response. The live word is always in dialogue, always a dialogical relation.

Listening to the other is the condition of possibility for the very constitution of subjectivity and communication. It is in listening to the other, to the word of the other that

subjectivity flourishes and develops. The body is in the sign, in the word, in language, in the relation to the other.

2. Interpretation, subjectivity and the other

According to Peircean pragmatism, knowledge understood in terms of innovation and inventiveness is not a purely epistemic process. Knowledge as an interpretive process presupposes the ethical dimension of semiosis and human relations, responsiveness to the other, both the *other from self* and the *other of self*, which the self should welcome and listen to: for there to be an interpreted sign, the object of interpretation, there must be an interpretant, even when a question of cognitive signs in a strict sense. And given that it evolves in the relation between the interpretant sign and the interpreted sign, interpretation always involves dialogue, otherness and listening.

Insofar as it is a sign, the sign is other. This means to say that a sign may be characterized as a sign because of its structural opening to the other, because it dialogues with the other. The sign's identity is inevitably grounded in alterity, in otherness.

Consequently, such phenomena as learning, knowledge, wisdom, sagacity, understanding in their diverse forms emerge in a sign situation that is ultimately perfused with otherness, is opening to the other, listening to the other. This is to say that such phenomena as the acquisition of knowledge and understanding proceed from otherness and listening. Cognitive identity is subject to the other and as such is continuously put into crisis by the restlessness of signs as inexorably provoked by the attraction, the appeal exerted upon the subject by the other.

Insofar as it is part of the semiosic network, by virtue of which alone it reaches its status as a sign, and is characterized by dialogism and otherness, the cognitive sign is situated and modelled in a context that is irreducibly of the ethical order as well.

When a question of absolute and non-relative otherness (Levinas), the otherness of the other person can neither be reduced to the community "We" of Heidegger's *Mitsein* (*being-with*), nor to the Subject-Object relation of Sartre's *being-for*. Otherness, alterity is located internally to the subject, at its very heart, but without being assimilated by the subject. For this very reason the subject cannot become a closed totality but is continuously exposed to dialogue, indeed is itself dialogue, a relation between self and other. Contrary to Sartre's and Hegel's claims, the self of "self-consciousness" does not converge with consciousness, nor does self presuppose consciousness; on the contrary, self pre-exists with respect to

consciousness and is at once connected to it by the otherness relation. The other is inseparable from the ego, the I, the Self (*Même* as described by Levinas), at the ego's very heart, but is not absorbed by it, by the totality. The other is necessary to the constitution of the ego and its world, to the constitution of being, but is simultaneously a constitutive impediment to the integrity, to the coherent unity of the I, the World, being, to totalization.

The relationship between humility and fragility of the self, on one hand, and the risks implied in the self's trusting readiness to venture toward that which is other, alien, on the other, was early portrayed by Plato in his myth about Eros (in the *Symposium*), a sort of intermediate divinity or demon, generated by Penia (poverty, need) and Porus (the God of resourcefulness or expediency), always capable of finding his way again, even when it is hidden.

Peirce's reflections can be associated to this myth especially when he maintains that communication from one mind to another occurs through continuity of being, a process in which the individual self in all its misery disappears; and the human being identifies with its Author to the extent that one is capable of accepting the role assigned in the theatre of creation and losing oneself in it: in other words, creativity and ingenuity presuppose the condition of passivity and dependence on the other.

As Peirce states in his paper of 1878, "How to Make our Ideas Clear", "the great principle of logic" is "self-surrender", where self-surrender "does not mean that the self is to lay low for the sake of ultimate triumph. It may turn out so; but that must not be the governing purpose" (*CP* 5.402, n. 2, 1878). Peirce's conception of logic can be associated with Welby's when she establishes a connection between logic and the concept of "mother-sense" (see below). *Self-surrender* is the rule that governs the relation with the other.

The Peircean concept of self-surrender" is associated with the human capacity for listening; the capacity to surrender oneself to the other means to take a listening position and thus perceive, feel the other. Humility, the capacity to put aside one's own misery – that is to say, one's own "individual" identity, understood as undivided and indivisible identity, with Mikhail Bakhtin, monologic identity –, is the condition for creativity and at once the departure point for the greatest adventure ever in the company of the extralocalized, alien other.

The semiotic materiality of the human, its sphere of action is related to the other and the politics of *listening*. If the other is ignored – but otherness can never be expunged –, "listening" becomes formalized, institutionalized listening. The canon of listening is not listening, but rather canonic listening, i.e., listening without listening. A distinction can be drawn between "listening" and "hearing": "let me *hear* what you have to say", in the words of an investigator (whether a judge, a policeman, a psychoanalyst, and so forth) convinced of the other person's

guilt or limits, an expression which establishes an act of *formal listening*, of *institutionalized listening* indifferent to the word of the other; by contrast with "let me *listen to* what you have to say", which establishes a relation of *dialogical listening* to the other, to the word of the other.

In light of the "semiotic materiality" of signs (see Petrilli 1986, 1990c) which posits otherness as no less than structural to the constitution of subjectivity, human consciousness, language and communication, of the properly human, it is clear that formal, institutionalized listening, as in a *hearing*, is not at all listening understood in terms of a dialogical, participative relation to the other. The politics of listening subtends live communication, speaking. Whenever communication does not involve listening, it tends toward institutionalized social practice, which rather than listen to the other, to the other's word is always ready to eliminate it. The grammar of everyday life, of life articulated into social roles based on the logic of identity, of the world-as-it-is, is always ready to sacrifice the other, to eliminate the other. This is the condition for affiliation with a group, an assemblage, a community of some sort, which is inevitably based on identity logic.

Thomas S. Szasz (1920), the Hungarian born and raised American psychiatrist renown for his unflagging critique of institutionalized psychiatry, criticizes psychiatry with its vocation for surveillance and control, and not only. He also criticizes the common places that subtend psychiatrical discourse and tend even to obstacle encounter with the other. In Szasz's work too there emerges the distinction between what we have tagged *listening to the other* and *institutional hearing*. Listening to the other is an attitude that extends beyond roles and identities, listening understood as hospitality toward the other in one's singularity. In his monograph "*My Madness Saved Me*" (2006), Szasz attempts to free Virginia Woolf from reduction to the common places of discourse and social roles – "married woman", "mad genius", which legitimize her status as a victim of "mental illness". "My madness saved me", she declared in a letter of 1924 to her painter friend Jacques Raverat. However, if "madness" it be this consists in her refusal to let the different parts of herself, her multiple selves, the different "voices" (in Bakhtin's sense of the term) listen to each other, in her refusal to let them dialogue with each other.

Instead of developing the propensity for listening and hospitality toward her own differences, toward the different spheres of her own life, Virginia Woolf chose to keep them separate from each other. The common places "married woman" and "mad genius", her masks, became reality to the point that, in Szasz's view, she resorted to suicide not because she was mad, but simply because she was fatigued and disillusioned and as a consequence wished to put an end to her life.

From our own perspective of listening, dialogism and otherness as delineated in the present essay, Virginia's suicide more than as an act of liberation reads instead as an act of submission to the monologism of identity, including her own separate and closed identities. In this case, evasion is not "self-surrender" to the other, understood positively, creatively as listening to the other, dialogue with the other, communication with the other. In fact, such an attitude as the latter presupposes life (that is to say, the vitality of relationships that belong to this world, earthly, material relationships). Instead, Virginia surrenders to the tyranny, to the violence of identity.

3. Extralocalization, dialogism, singularity

A characteristic of the properly human is singularity, uniqueness. Emmanuel Levinas (1987b) theorizes the concept of "*hors sujet*", "outside the subject", also "off the subject"; "*hors sujet*" recalls the expression "*hors lieu*", "outside place", also in the sense of "out of place". Such expressions indicate the condition of "extralocalization", "exo-topy", "u-topia" with respect to role, position, function, community, affiliation, allegiance, belonging, identity, which is the condition for singularity, the singularity of each one of us. The "self" (here juxtaposed to the "I"), the self in its uniqueness is inevitably involved in the relation with others, that is to say, a relation without alibis, without substitutes. In this sense, the self is unique, incomparable, irreducibly other. "Out of place" means to be exposed, to find oneself in a position of exposition, vulnerability, without shelter, protection, justification, without excuses, without ways out, without utopism. "Out of place", extralocalization, means outside of any kind of assemblage, out of genre, gender, classifications or role. It implies not to belong, not to enter a relation of identification and homologation with the totality, evasion from the role of subject, from the subject-object relation, from the concept of self-sufficient individual, from aggregations, agglomerates, from the community.

Outside the subject, outside identity, the self is open to the other; insofar as the self relates to the other, it is unindifferent to the other, involved with the other *malgré lui*, in terms of a listening attitude toward the other.

Outside place implies evasion from the places of discourse, outside judgment, definition, stereotypes, nomination, predication of being, from claims to closing with the other. The condition of "hors lieu", "hors sujet", implies the condition of listening and hospitality, a return to the word that listens and makes a gift of time to the other and for the other. Out of

place is the place of encounter with the other, of unlimited responsibility for the other, responsibility without alibis, unlimited answerability, accountability to the other.

The "properly human" can only be traced outside the space-time of ontology. It belongs to a dimension where interhuman relations cannot be reduced to the category of identity, to relations among predefined subjects and objects, that cannot be reduced to relations of exchange, equality, functionality, productivity, self-interest. Levinas (1974) explores the possibility of response in a dimension beyond being, what he denominates the "otherwise than being". By contrast with "being otherwise", the expression "otherwise than being" indicates the outside with respect to ontology, to the World-as-it-is. "Otherwise than being" is a question of earthly transcendence with respect to the world, indicating a dimension of sense that is other with respect to sense connected with the World, the World-as-it-is. Reasoning with Levinas, by contrast to the "humanism of identity", another form of humanism is possible, humanism oriented by otherness, the "humanism of otherness", of otherwise than being.

Language, speaking, communication in the human world presuppose the relation to the other, where the other is understood in terms of singularity or uniqueness, as an end in itself, and not as a means, the other outside identity, outside roles, outside social position, outside national, ethnic, cultural difference, etc. The I-other relation is a face-to-face relation (Levinas, 1961), a relation among singularities, of single to single, of unique to unique. It refuses all forms of exclusion of the other, all forms of violence. This relation is presupposed by all forms of communication and representation, by all forms of objectification and nomination of the other. In this relation the self is responsible toward the other in an absolute sense, which means to say responsible without alibis (Bakhtin 1919, 1990), without the possibility of escape, compelled to respond *to the other* and *for the other*.

Communication presupposes hospitality toward the interlocutor. The word, whether written or oral, is addressed to the other, to the otherness of the other which as such is contextualized in a face-to-face relation and cannot be represented or thematized. Listening to the other transcends space and time as they pertain to the realistic face of the world, to the world-as-it-is, to the world of work, to the time of work, all of which pertains to war. In the economy of World logic, peace is no more than momentary rest, respite, to gather up strength and continue war, just as free-time, the night serve the day. Contrary to free-time and labour-time in the framework of society based on equal exchange logic, listening is a gift of time to the other, without return. A such listening represents real social wealth in terms of the quest for the properly human. Contrary to preventive peace which produces nothing else but infinite war, listening is the condition for real preventive peace (Ponzio 2009b).

Coherently with pragmatism or "pragmaticism" (the term subsequently privileged by Peirce to distinguish his own approach from his interpreters whom he disapproved, see Petrilli, 2010b), Peirce developed his semiotics relatedly to the social behaviour of humanity and the totality of its interests. In this framework, the problem of knowledge necessary implies considerations of the axiological order and allows for critical interpretation of the concept of "reason" from the perspective of "reasonableness". The concept of "reasonableness" indicates dialectical-dialogical signifying processes that are unfinalized and unfinalizable, unbiased by prejudice, oriented by the dia-logic of otherness, by listening to the other, and regulated by the principle of continuity or synechism.

4. Otherness and responsibility

With its broad view on semiosis and life, "global semiotics" accounts for the "reason of things". However, detotalization as the condition for critical and dialogical totalization leads to the observation that the capacity to grasp the *reason of things* should not be separated from the capacity for *reasonableness*. The claim could be stated as follows: *given all the risks (for semiosis and for life) we are subject to in the present day and age, the human being, a rational animal, must now urgently become a reasonable animal* (Petrilli 1998b: 151-4; 2013: 91-93). Reasonableness is regulated by the logic of otherness and dialogism. As such it is endowed with the power to transform the subject's fear of the stranger, the alien – the fear that the subject (whether individual or collective) experiences of the stranger, the alien – into sympathy for the other, even attraction toward the other become loveable.

The processes of conventionalization and monologization practiced on human consciousness restrict and reduce its potential for responsiveness toward the other, for listening to the other, for dialogism and critique.

Victoria Welby is another author who thematized the condition of maximum opening and orientation toward the other, such is the nature of the so-called "properly human" (Petrilli 2013: 200-203). To exemplify she cites the discourse of love and passion, of altruistic love, creativity of the genius, and literature as places where our secret being, our unknown being, the unsaid, simultaneously a relational being emerges, only to be hidden once again in the deferral among interpretants forming the open-ended processes of semiosis. The other as discussed by Welby – and once again the association to Peirce, Bakhtin, Levinas is immediate – is both the other *of myself*, the other constitutive of my very own identity and the other *from myself*, the other external to my own identity and which concerns me all the same, which relates to me and

subsists as other *for myself*. As Welby says: "the language of passion […] is a case of this or the other Self; and we are more interested in the other, *still ours* ("The I and the Self", in Petrilli 2009: 669).

The self constructs itself through its own choices and as such is a creative maker of itself, but always interrelatedly with context, with the environment, natural and social. To know itself, the self must take a listening position. The self must listen to others, to the external other as much as to one's own other, to the self's own urges and desires, as well as to what others say about the self, and in this light eventually integrate and even modify, correct one's conception of one's own self. The social conditions the self, and the self, in turn, contributes to constructing the social. The condition for elaborating preferences and expressing choices is the body. The self, as Peirce has also demonstrated, is an incarnate self (*CP* 7.591-6; Petrilli 2013: 133, 155-156).

The body calls for the satisfaction of needs and desires, but needs and desires are in turn inevitably conditioned by cultural context. Cultures establish which needs and desires are socially acceptable and how they may be satisfied. In a given culture certain types of personality are approved more than others. This leads each individual to search for approval and to avoid disapproval in relation to value systems and the prospect of reward or deprivation. However, as Charles Morris observes, the body is "plastic but not clay", and social clothes fit some people better than others. In any case, that which is desired is not merely the satisfaction of desires *tout court*, but of "socially approved desires satisfied in socially approved ways" (Morris 1948a: 47). The body dresses in social clothes. It looks at itself through the eyes of others, in a social mirror, it approves or disapproves of itself through the gaze of the social. The truly human self is not only what it is, but what it desires to be. The self not only responds to the idea of self *tout court*, but to the idea of self oriented by one's ideals. To look at oneself through the gaze of others also means to take the role of others, as Morris claims elaborating on George H. Mead, author of the monograph *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). On the basis of the logic of otherness, we signify self, respond to self, create a distance between the I and the self, thereby placing the condition for listening to the other, for dialogue, critical thought, the suspension of action and deliberation.

As Morris also points out, the causes of discomfort to the point of nonsurvival should not be attributed to the other, but should be searched for elsewhere, in the "closed self", the "closed community" – closed in its egocentrism, in its egoisms, barricaded behind the wall of indifference to the multiform, closed to dialogue, ultimately to the other.

The closed self contributes to producing that ever more consistent part of humanity that is forced to beg for that which should be taken for granted, a place in the world. The generative centre of danger is the closed self, the self-interested individual, and the closed society to which such a self belongs. The enemy resides in each and every one of us, as Morris says, in our anxieties, prejudices, fears and preclusions. On the contrary, the "open self", the self unindifferent to difference, the open self advocate of the "open society" is a truly creative self, capable of listening and hospitality (Petrilli 2007a; Petrilli and Ponzio 2016).

Responsible living implies *listening*, *hospitality, care* toward difference, toward the other constitutive of self and beyond self. Listening, hospitality, care are conditional to cohabitation and cooperation among differences, where individual freedom must be negotiated with the other. Otherness is not a concession made on the basis of an act of generosity, but rather is structural to signs and life, to the self – the other imposes upon the subject both from the outside and the inside, as the very condition of existing. Life involves the right to otherness which must inevitably be associated to such values as the right to *non-functionality*, to *unproductiveness*, to the status of *unindifferent difference*, to excess with respect to the values of a world based on closed identity, which instead tends to repress the otherness of the other, "absolute otherness", to expunge it. To evoke Levinas, in global industrial society reason and identity render the opacity of creatures transparent and cause human beings to lose their other, their shadow (Levinas 1948).

The non-functionality of alterity can be juxtaposed to the ideology of functionality, productiveness, competitiveness as fostered through social behaviour and roles regulated by the logic of closed identity. Identity, non-contradiction, the excluded-middle recall Peirce's "secondness" without "firstness" and genuine "thirdness"; without "firstness" and "thirdness" secondness is bivalent; the egocentric "me and to hell with everybody else"; such logic has created the widening gap between the rich and the poor, between rich countries and poor countries; it is well-oiled functionality among the powerful few, but non-functionality when taking the entire human community into consideration.

The properly human may be characterized in terms of non-functionality, the time of otherness and excess, of differences that interrelate dialogically and are reciprocally responsive to each other rather than indifferent. All this is presupposed by identities, roles and conventions, but is not exhausted in them. On the contrary, the properly human evades identities, roles and conventions with respect to which it presents a surplus, transcends them. Distinguishing with Levinas between "relative otherness" and "absolute otherness", roles and identities can be differentiated on the basis of the otherness relation, but this is a question of

relative otherness, otherness relative to a given role, a given identity, otherness which serves to indicate alternatives. Relative otherness is accompanied by the condition of *limited responsibility*, responsibility relative to social roles. On the contrary*, absolute otherness*, which transcends roles and identities, cannot be reduced to them, is associated with *unlimited responsibility*.

The individual with its rituals and symbols is modelled in the identity of a community, class, assemblage of some sort (role, sex, ethnic group, religion, nation, social position, profession, political party, etc.), attained by sacrificing absolute otherness, singularity. The self is a generic entity, the member of a class, a gender, a group, and as such is defined in its individuality, identity, rights, freedom, will, that is, with reference to its affiliation and its limited and self-protective responsibilities. The self represents the group it belongs to, identifies with, and in turn can be represented, replaced. Identity is generic, a denotation/connotation of the genre it belongs to, the class, group, etc. from which uniqueness, absolute otherness is excluded. Here the self's discourse is relative to the assemblage it identifies with; the self's discourse, the subject's discourse is discourse that belongs to a given identity, community, class, etc.

The self is constituted in terms of defence from the other and of the need for justification, as defence from responsibility without alibis for the other, from exposition to the other. The other of the relation with *others*, *autrui* (Levinas), the singular other, the unique other, the face of the other, is only traceable outside the places of the order of discourse, outside the subject, outside theme, outside genre. As a category, as a system of relations that defines and signifies identity, a group, class, assemblage, community of some sort does not as such contain singularity, the other, does not account for singularity, does not respond to it. Singularity, uniqueness, the peculiarity of each one of us is refractory to the generality of an assemblage, to the abstraction of categories, to the generic in all places in the order of discourse.

Outside genre, outside theme, outside place: the relation with the other, *autrui*, cannot be reduced to a cognitive relation. The relation of otherness is the precondition for cognition, but it is not reducible to the latter, it cannot be reduced to the subject-object relation. The other in the face-to-face relation cannot be objectified, it cannot be reduced to thematization. The production of sense as representation, individualizing generalization, nomination begins from this irreducibility, from this relation, as its precondition. The word calls for listening, hospitality toward the other in its otherness; the word, the utterance is constructed beginning from a presence-absence, from encounter with the other. Discourse, communication, the subject

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all have the other-to-other relationship at their foundation, in which each person reveals itself as a *face*, also in the sense of *facing* the other; at their foundation is encounter among singularities, among non-functionalities; escape from the trap of identity, from difference as established by genre, ethnic group, nation, social class, evasion from relations based on the logic of equal exchange. "Same, it does not admit indifference to the other. As such absolute otherness is connected to *unlimited responsibility*, which means to say responsibility without alibis" (Levinas 1961, Eng. trans.: 33-52).

5. Amorous discourse, translation and listening

The demand for listening that characterises the word is amplified in translation processes across different languages, and is a condition thereof. The task of translation, the shift from one language into another language, transposition of sense and signifying materiality, of the very musicality and rhythm of language calls for a *listening* attitude toward the text, toward the other in translation.

Just like the seminar in Roland Barthes's description, translation too can be declined in terms of the lover's discourse. According to Barthes, the seminar as the space of encounter between a director and its members, a tutor and a group of students is an object of love. In *Le bruissement de la langue* (1984), under the title, "To the Seminar", where "to" resounds at once as a locative, an encomium, and a dedication, Barthes writes that "the (real) seminar is for me the object of a (minor) delirium, and that my relations to the object are, literally, amorous" (Barthes 1984, Eng. trans.: 332). The act of translation, like the seminar, is the space of encounter among texts, among others, the place of listening and dialogue interconnecting the original and the translation in the undefined space of open-ended signifying / interpretive trajectories. Translational procedure tells of the gap in sense between "literal" and "metaphorical", "emotional" and "intellectual", "cognitive" and "ethical". And like speaking of love, translating involves returning repeatedly, even obsessively to the same thing, to reflect continuously upon the same object, and to question it, never taking it for granted. Understood as a dialogic relation among texts, among alterities, to translate means to elect, to elevate, to refine, and to enhance the signifying otherness of the texts involved in renewal processes in the shift across languages, whereby the same text is rendered altogether other, reorganised in another language. The translated text is always *the same other*. The paradox of translation is that the text *must remain the same while becoming other* simply because it is reproduced and at once recreated in a different language from the original. *The same other*: the translated text is

identical and different to the source text, the so-called "original" (Petrilli 2001, 2003b, 2015c, 2016a: 74-77, 260, 2016b).

The expression "same other" renders well the sense of the relationship established in a translation with the original. This relationship is one of similarity, but of a special type of similarity, that is, similarity among singularities, what reading Charles S. Peirce can be indicated as "iconic similarity", as "agapastic similarity". In other words, the relation between texts in translation does not merely involve one text reproducing another, nor pouring the same content from one linguistic container into another. Instead, to translate means to relate differences, to create a dialogue among differences, among singularities. In semiotic terminology, reading Peirce, similarity, resemblance among signs in translation not only involves the indexical and symbolic dimensions of semiosis, causality, contiguity, the arbitrariness of convention, but also and above all the iconic, the relation of attraction among signs, of affinity, election, and desire.

Like amorous discourse, translational discourse calls for *participative involvement* with the other, a relation of *non-indifference* toward the other, toward the *otherness* of the other, toward the other's *singularity*, its *uniqueness*, its sense, its signifying otherness. To speak of the other is to speak of the text, the word, the utterance. From this point of view, the act of translation which presupposes such attitudes as listening, non-indifference, participative involvement, dialogic responsiveness, hospitality is already a lover's gesture in itself.

Interlingual translation between different historical-natural languages and their internal special languages exalts the condition of extralocalisation of the word, of the utterance, and consequently that of dialogised plurilingualism in the relation among different words, utterances, languages. In fact, as anticipated, translation / transferral / transformation of a text from one verbal sign system into another involves a shift toward the other, decentralisation with respect to the identity of a given natural language and it's speakers, a centrifugal movement from the centre to the periphery, opening to the other, to the other's word, availability toward the other, listening to the other in that other's otherness, hospitality and care for the other, dedication to the other.

6. Listening versus hearing

Listening as a condition for the relation to the other *is not wanting to hear*, institutionalised listening, what Barthes calls "applied listening", that is, listening in the sense of a "hearing", according to official schemes, to codified, pre-established expectations,

conditioned by short-sighted identity and the demand for reassurance; the "hearing" of an interrogation, as in a police interrogation, is characterised by univocality, unidirectionality, monologism, and enters a hierarchical order. "Listening" is one thing, "wanting to hear" is another: listening calls for the other, its vocation is the other, listening allows the other to speak and for that other to choose what one wants to say, listening values plurivocality, polylogism, dialogism, heteroglossia, signifying ambiguity, responsiveness and contradiction as structural components of the sign.

Instead, "wanting to hear" obliges one to say, it imposes univocality, monologism, relevance to a given question, coherence, non-contradiction. Wanting to hear belongs to the order of the *Langue* understood as a system, to the silence of the system of language that obligates one to speak, it belongs to language understood as a "closed community" (Morris 1948), to the "closing of the universe of discourse" (Marcuse 1964). "Wanting to hear", Barthes's "applied listening", "direct listening" abolishes the type of listening that is associated with historical non-repeatability, with the open, unfinalisable totality of the logosphere. As Barthes writes (with Havas) in his 1977 Einaudi Encyclopaedic entry "Ascolto" (Listening) (now also in *L'Obvie et l'obtus*, 1982):

the sphere of listening includes the unconscious not only in the topical sense of the term, but also, as it were, in its lay forms: the implicit, the indirect, the supplementary, the deferred. Listening opens to all forms of polysemy, overdetermination, superimposition, thereby disrupting the Law which prescribes univocal, direct listening (Barthes and Havas 1977: 989, Eng. trans. from the Italian).

"Univocal, direct listening" is "applied listening", "wanting to hear", hearing connected with *silence* understood as the absence of listening, the absence of dialogical participation. By contrast, silence may be connected with listening understood as participative listening, responsiveness, unindifferent involvement, intercorporeity, dialogism. Wishing to differentiate, this second type of silence is denominated here as *taciturnity*. Applied listening, as Barthes says, obligates one to speak, to say univocally, therefore it obligates one to silence. Instead, participative, dialogic listening, active listening is connected with taciturnity and as such speaks; "listening speaks", as Barthes says, like Mikhail Bakhtin.

While one believes that in order to liberate listening, it will suffice to speak (in Italian "*prendere la parola*", literally "to take the word", in English the metaphor in fact is "to take the floor"), in truth listening, freed listening, liberated listening is essentially listening that circulates and that thanks to its mobility disrupts the rigid network of word roles (*Ibid.*: 990). The polymorphic nature of listening, its plasticity, it's capacity for responsiveness, free listening, liberated listening is connected to taciturnity and as such is capable of overturning the

order of discourse, of subverting the regimented word.

If we accept that the vocation of the word is the other, then the word is first and foremost listening, or as Bakhtin suggests, the word clothes itself in taciturnity and becomes listening (cf. Bakhtin 1970-1971, in Bakhtin 1986: 149ff.). Listening is a structural component of the word, the word *is* listening and demands a response, as such the word is plastic, polymorphic, hybridized discourse, listening discourse. Listening is connected to the spaces of absence, to spaces connected with desire, with the gaze, with the places of encounter, the face-to-face relation, the chance meeting with the face (Levinas 1961). In the face-to-face relation we are in front of the secret, the otherness of the other that resists the demand for reduction to the identical, to a pre-ordained project, to a plan, to order; before the face of the other, the otherness of the other, and my own otherness, we stand on a foundation without a base.

7. Listening in love: the same other

Free listening is the type of listening demanded by translational discourse, *listening freed*, *liberated* from the ancient places of silence, where "silence" is the negation of taciturnity, its elimination. The places of silence thus understood are those foreseen by a certain type of linguistics, so-called "official linguistics", mainstream linguistics which centres around the system of language, the code, and describes signifying processes in terms of equal exchange relations between the signifier and signified in the sign. Such an approach to language and meaning has contributed to conceptualising "translative rendering" in terms of the transferral of meaning from one language to another, of pouring the same meaning into different linguistic containers, merely substituting the words of one language with the words of another, in order to say "the same thing", almost (Eco 2003; Petrilli 2001).

It follows that a necessary condition for translation is *freedom of listening*, *liberated listening*, which implies freedom of responding to the other, of putting oneself at the service of the other, of the other's otherness, the other's singularity, irreplaceability, unrepeatability. A dialogic relation is established among texts and subjectivities, one that involves the capacity for responsive understanding, responsibility/responsiveness among the elements forming the relation. The utterance in live communication, the living word, is always dialogic. The relation among utterances in translation calls for responsiveness, for responsive understanding, also in the sense of responsibility, translator responsibility.

Applied to interlingual translation, orientation toward the other, listening to the other, unindifference, this amorous attitude toward the other tells of a positioning in discourse, of an

"andamento" that in its possibility renders the impossibility of translation insofar as it is turned to the word's singularity, to the word as text, unique, unrepeatable, irreplaceable. On this account, as Mikhail Bakhtin says in "The Problem of the Text", 1960-61:

> Any sign system (i.e. any language) […] can always in principle be deciphered, that is, translated into other sign systems (other languages). Consequently, sign systems have a common logic, a potential single language of languages […]. But the text […] can never be completely translated, for there is no potential single text of texts (in Bakhtin 1986: 106).

The life of the word as an event, as a unique and unrepeatable utterance, unfolds along the margins of discourses and subjectivities, along their boundaries, at their intersections, among their implicit meanings and unique intonations. The word's cypher is realised in the encounter with the other, with the word of the other, with the other's consciousness, among singularities, in an interplay of signifying nuances which the word indulges in and which interlingual translation enhances. In fact, the propensity for listening to the word of the other is a condition for rendering the text's signifying singularity, the sense potential of each of its utterances, its characteristic ambiguity in a process that the transition from one verbal system to another, interlingual translation, enhances and potentiates. Language is always metaphorical, always elusive, constructed in the dialectics between implied and explicated meanings, which once explicated generate new implied meanings, new signifying nuances (Welby 1983; Petrilli 2009, 2010). When a question of live communication, of live language, of the utterance, of the text, ambivalence, equivocalness is never eliminated once and for all, a truth of the word which the work of translation contributes to evidencing. That which varies in live communication is simply the degree of ambiguity, which can pass from a maximum of signifying otherness, of semiotic materiality, to a minimum.

The two seminars held by Barthes in 1974-1976 and published posthumously in his 2007 volume *Le discours amoureux*, especially the second, leads directly into what is said to be his last text, written in 1980, "On échoue toujours à parler de ce qu'on aime", dedicated to Stendhal. In 1977 Barthes had already published *Fragments du discours amoureux* which he had drawn essentially from his 1974-1975 seminar. To the same orientation can be associated another two seminars held by Barthes at the Collège de France, *Le lexique de l'auteur*, in 1973-1974 – which provided the groundwork for his 1975 book, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (the enlarged 2010 edition includes *Fragments inédits du Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*) –, and his last seminar of 1979-1980, *La préparation du roman*, published in 2003. A theme uniting all these texts is precisely the difficulty one experiences in speaking of what one loves, in speaking of being in love: on Barthes's account Stendhal was in love with Italy, in particular Milan, a city that had burst into his imaginary like a strike of lightening. With Goethe cited by

Barthes in *Discours amoureux* the object of love is love itself: "It is with love alone that we (poets) are in love" (C'est de l'amour seulement que nous [les poètes] sommes amoureux (2007: 96). Like the artist and his artwork, in speaking of love the lover and the beloved, the object of love, the sensation of being in love, one's perception of love, the idea, the image of love, the desire provoked by the object of love are all one, indeed love may be overwhelming even in spite of the object: Stendhal's amorous fantasy for the soprano in spite of her broken front tooth in full view as she was singing Cimarosa's *Matrimonio segreto* at Ivrea; in Goethe's *Dei Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther), Charlotte glimpsed by Werther through an open door as she was slicing bread for her hungry little brothers, "the height of ecstasy" ("point du rapt", Barthes 2007: 70), in its triviality a vision that was to lead him to the most powerful of passions and to suicide (also Barthes 1995-2002, Eng. trans.: 296); Sylvie's humble peasant grace loved by Jérard, as narrated in the story named after her, *Sylvie*, by Gérard de Nerval. As Barthes says in "One Always Fails in Speaking of What One Loves":

> […] what characterises transference is its gratuitousness: it occurs without any apparent reason. Music, for Stendhal, is the *symptom* of the mysterious act by which he inaugurated his transference – the symptom, i.e., the thing which simultaneously produces and masks passion's irrationality. For once the opening scene is established, Stendhal constantly reproduces it, like a lover trying to regain that crucial thing which rules so great a share of our actions: the first pleasure. […] The signs of a true passion are always somewhat incongruous, the objects of transference always tending to become tenuous, trivial, unforeseen… (Barthes 1995-2002, Eng. trans.: 296-297).

The story of one's love, of love at first sight (Fr. *coup de foudre*; It., *colpo di fulmine*), of falling in love (Fr., *tomber en amour*, *tomber amoureux*; It., *innamorarsi*, *innamoramento*) is narrated at a distance, in deferral, as an after-thought, an "*après-coup*", an expression introduced by Barthes to distinguish between *transitive writing* and *intransitive writing*, or *writing tout court*. Transitive writing is oriented toward an object which the author claims to grasp and comprehend, to know. On the contrary, intransitive writing knows that comprehension is obtuse (Barthes's "*sens obtus*"), is delayed, deferred with respect to the object, because of the *après-coup*, the gap, the excess in the relation among signs in the work of interpretation.

The *après-coup*, the delayed-onset, the gap among the elements constitutive of signs and senses marks the difference between "saying" and "figuring", "saying" and "portrayal", "saying" and "narrating", where the second term in these pairs is intended to highlight the fundamental role carried out by imaginary discourse, the "play of musement", to echo Charles S. Peirce. The *après coup*, the delayed-onset, the after-thought in Barthes's argument means to remain at the margins of discourse, where the expression "margin" designates an open space-

time, outside of conventions, beyond official life, on the borders, in the periphery, a dialogical space-time whose sense is oriented by a protension toward the other for the other. The *après coup* facilitates that movement which allows for the translation of perception, of feeling in narration, of musicality, rhythm and beauty, this too a form of intransitive writing, where that which counts is the search itself for singularity, the *mathesis singularis*, whose sense, or non-sense, is potentially enhanced by interlingual translation.

Transitive writing as described by Barthes is instrumental writing, writing functional to an idea, to an objective external to writing. Transitive writing is at the service of grand systems and their articulations – an ideological conception, a socio-economic system, a politico-cultural program, the order of discourse. It refers to the truth of History and its objectives, it is transcription, a type of writing that grand systems are able to englobe (see George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Ray Bradbury, *Fahreneit 451*). From the viewpoint of transitive writing, of the direct word, of discourse functional to a given end, the non-functional is altogether irrelevant.

Intransitive writing is writing that does not aim to inform, persuade, obtain, educate, judge, consequently writing that is not functional to something else, that is not instrumental, that is without meaning as the expression of a finalised project, an objective, under this aspect writing that makes no claims, that says nothing, writing indifferent to the difference of identity, un-self-interested with respect to ordinary interest. Intransitive writing starts from passion for the other, for otherness, the indifferent, the absent. Passion for the indifferent with respect to self-interest joins the literary word to the deferral of signifiers in the lover's discourse (Marcel Proust, *L'indifferent*; Pierre Loti, *Aziyadé*). Impossible for grand systems to integrate this type of writing, to englobe its otherness.

Here the semiotic materiality of signs, their absolute alterity resists all attempts at dominion, integration, assimilation. In this sense intransitive writing like amorous discourse is "perverse": it unfolds in a play of signs turning around on themselves, in a void, running after each other in processes of infinite deferral, from one sign to the next, without return; perversion of the non-functional, of the unproductive, of un-self-interested indifference, of digression, of what resists instrumentalisation for the sake of an end outside of itself. In this sense intransitive writing is anticipation of death, a non-functional practice, for nothing, no second end. Absence, indifference, insignificance as the starting point of writing is orientation to communication as contact, to the sphere of the properly human, outside of the self-interest of the direct word, the productive word, committed to a given end as in the case of the lover's discourse, parental love, friendship, care for the other, being there for nothing, participation without returns, listening.

As forms of intransitive writing, speaking of love, the play of musement, the literary word, translation all have traits in common, are similar at a deep level, in genetico-structural terms. This is similarity of the homological order, homology, by contrast with surface similarity, analogy. Love, musement, writing, translation: each is an open space-time inspired by fascination for the other, by listening to the other, the play of seduction among signs, of passion among signifiers that refer to each other, in an unending chain of deferrals, according to relations of unindifferent involvement with the other, of responsiveness to the other, assymetrical relations among alterities, singularities, relations of exchange non-functional to self-interest, un-self-interested exchange, without returns.

In the next lesson we will continue to explore the concepts of dialogism, otherness and intercorporeity in language and communication generally, the possibility of cohabitation and interference among different voices in the same word, participative listening, responsiveness/responsibility toward the other, the grotesque body as characteristic aspects of Bakhtin's philosophy, or more specifically his philosophy of language. The name itself Mikhail M. Bakhtin announces a polyphony of different voices and viewpoints, internally to Bakhtin's own voice and externally with special reference to members of the Bakhtin Circle, thereby offering a concrete perspective for a world constructed in terms of multiplicity, diversity, and hospitality toward the other. By contrast to global communication today dominated by deafening monologism and correlate monolingualism, accompanied by an individualistic and egocentric conception of the body, by contrast to communication of the same with the same, among "identicals," the Bakhtinian carnival chronotope interrogates the general orientation of Western philosophy and the dominant cultural trends in which it is engendered and facilitates critique in terms of dialogic reason.