

# Welby's Significs and Translation as Meaning in Process and Progress Three Modes of Meaning – Sense, Meaning and Signification

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*In the triadic scheme of Translation – Interpretation – Meaning, the basic concept is that of meaning as it relates to all kinds of translation and interpretation. Discussing the role of meaning in translation semiosis, with special reference to three modes of translation presented by Roman Jakobson, I focus on an early semiotic point of view, represented by the “proto-semiotician” Victoria Welby (1837–1912). Her triadic theory of signs, which she calls “Significs”, involves three modes: sense, meaning, and signification. It covers the essence of interpretation as a multifunctional tool for analysis of the articulated sign. Welby’s method of “translation” gives language a paramount role: all language and all expression are a form of translation as a method that “becomes a means both of testing knowledge and of widening its range”; in this procedure “we cannot cancel the automatic process of translative thinking”. Welby’s ideas are compared with a modern semiotic perspective on issues concerning “global semiotics” and “semioethics”. Her significs, as a communication oriented theory of signs, is also an early semiotic theory of values (axiology), hence relevant to translation studies as well. It is argued that significs is a generic branch of knowledge in which “translation” becomes a hermeneutic method for arriving at knowledge and understanding.*

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## “Significs” as a Fundamental Science – “What Things Signify”

In 1903, Victoria Welby (1837–1912)<sup>1</sup> wrote that her “Significs in fact suggests a new starting point to approach the subject of analogy, and implies the emergence of a systematic and scientifically valid critique of imagery” ([1903] 1983, 23). Around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can recall the development of the study of meaning; e.g., Bréal’s “semantics”, 1897; Peirce’s “semeiotics”, “semeiotic”, “semiotic”, 1894 ff.; de Saussure’s “semiologie”, 1916; the meaning of meaning, Ogden & Richards, 1923<sup>2</sup>; Morris’s “semiotic”, 1938, to mention just a few representatives from the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novelty of Welby’s approach is, to quote Eschbach (1983, xxviii), in her “conception of the theory of signs as a universally valid, fundamental branch of science”. Welby’s writings have been discussed by, for instance, Eschbach (1983), Mannoury (1983), Schmitz (1985), and Petrilli (1998). My focus is on the relevance of Welby’s ideas for translation and interpretation with special reference to the problem of meaning, especially her idea on “translation” as a method for “translative thinking” that produces new knowledge.

As early as in her essay *Sense, Meaning and Interpretation* (1896), Welby discusses the three interwoven fields: the constitution of meaning, the function of signs in human interaction, and the ethics of terminology, on one hand, and on the other, the effects of these for the formation of significs (i.e., for semiotic theory) and for semiotic and hermeneutic maxims, even though the terms “semeiotics” or “hermeneutics” do not appear in her texts, as Eschbach also notes (1983, xi, cf. note 2, xxix–xxx). Her major work *What is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance* ([1903] 1983) deals with the search for the meaning of “meaning”, in the triadic frame of “sense”, “meaning”, and “significance” / “signification”, elaborating on the fundamental aspects of her theory of signs, which she christens “Significs”.<sup>3</sup>

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1 At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Welby carried on extensive correspondence with scholars (e.g., Charles S. Peirce, William James, F. C. S. Schiller, Giovanni Vailati, Mario Calderoni, Bertrand Russell, F. Cook Wilson, and C. K. Ogden), and she had memberships in learned societies, which gave her an intermediary role in spreading of scientific ideas (Eschbach 1983, xiv). On Welby’s significance in the history of ideas and her influence on some of her contemporaries, see especially remarks on the correspondence between Peirce and Welby in Hardwick (ed.) 1977, Schmitz (1983, cviii–clxxxiv); for a detailed list of Welby’s publications, cf. Schmitz (1983, ccxiv–ccxxxiii). Biographical information on Welby and her place in the history of semiotics, cf. Eschbach (1983), Mannoury (1983), Schmitz (1985), and Petrilli (1998).

2 On the connection between Welby and Ogden, cf. Mannoury (1983, xxxiii); and Schmitz (1985, clxxviii–clxxxiv).

3 Welby writes in a letter to the French linguist Michel Bréal (1832–1915), the founder of the term “semantics”, on November 10, 1900: “It is now decided that this is to be called SIGNIFICS as the study of the sign, especially of course the articulate sign, and its various modes and degrees of value which we call sense, meaning, signification, import, purport, significance, (and others). [...] You will see that it must include your own great study”. Bréal’s book *Essai de sémantique (science des significations)* was published 1897, English trans. by Welby’s daughter Mrs Henry Cust = Nina (Emmeline) Cust, as *Semantics: Studies in the Science of Meaning* (1900).

Welby, as a proto-semiotician, had an important influence on the thought of the American philosopher, logician and semiotician Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), as Houser (1998, xviii) points out: “[Welby’s] attentive interest in his [Peirce] semiotic ideas encouraged him to develop his theory of signs more fully than he would have without her”. In 1903, Peirce reviewed her book in *The Nation* 77 (15 Oct. 1903, 308–309), and in the same year they also began their correspondence. In his Lowell Lectures in 1903, *What Makes a Reasoning Sound?* (EP 2.242–257, 1903), Peirce writes:

A little book by Victoria Lady Welby has lately appeared entitled *What is Meaning?* The book has sundry merits, among them that of showing that there are three modes of meaning. But the best feature of it is that it presses home the question “What is meaning?” A word has meaning for us in so far as we are able to make use of it in communicating our knowledge to others and in getting at the knowledge that these others seek to communicate to us. That is the lowest grade of meaning. The *meaning* of a word is more fully the sum total of all the conditional predictions which the person who uses it *intends* to make himself responsible for or intends to deny. That conscious or quasi-conscious *intention* in using the word is the second grade of meaning. But besides the consequences to which the person who accepts a word knowingly commits himself, there is a vast ocean of unforeseen consequences which the acceptance of the word is destined to bring about, not merely consequences of knowing but perhaps revolutions of society. One cannot tell what power there may be in a word or a phrase to change the face of the world; and the sum of the consequences makes up the third grade of meaning. (EP 2.255–257, [1903]; CP8.176; Peirce’s italics)

In the above quotation, we see triadic thinking; the first is sense (possible meanings), the second is meaning as “intention”, and the third is meaning as significance, together forming the triadic idea. In Welby’s signification these three modes of meaning form a triadic system, and thus, as Peirce writes, it is important to investigate the problem of meaning: “what power there will be in a word or a phrase to change the face of the world”. In Welby’s system we notice a parallel to Peirce’s triadic ontological categories of *Firstness* (potentiality), *Secondness* (causality), and *Thirdness* (EP 1.296–297, [1891]). Peirce deals with these in his sign theory and in his philosophical and logical thinking, that is to say, in his studies of the sign’s relation to truth and reality, for instance, in his *Architecture of Theories* (EP 1.296–297, [1891]). In *What Is Meaning?* ([1903] 1983, 6, 46), even though “rather vague” in her expression (as Mannoury, too, points out; 1983, xxxvii), Welby presents the kernel ideas of her signification in efforts to shape a fundamental and universal theory of signs:

There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as the Sense of a word, but only the sense in which it is used – the circumstances, state of mind, reference, “universe of discourse” belonging to it. The Meaning of a word is the intent which it is desired to convey – the intention of the user. The Significance is always manifold, and intensifies its sense as well as its meaning, by expressing its importance, its appeal to us, its moment for us, its

emotional force, its ideal value, its moral aspect, its universal or at least social range. All science, all logic, all philosophy, the whole controversy about aesthetics, about ethics, about religion, ultimately concentrate upon this: What is the sense of, What do we mean by, What is the significance of, that is, Why do we care for, Beauty, Truth, Goodness? Why do we value experience? And why do we seek for Significance, and resume the value of innumerable observed facts under formulæ of significance like gravitation or natural selection? Because we are the Expression of the world, as it were, “expressed from” it by the commanding or insistent pressure of natural stimuli not yet understood. (Welby [1903] 1983, 5–6)

Quite modern, from semiotic and pragmatic points of view, are Welby’s expressions “used”, “the circumstances”, “state of mind”, “reference”, and “universe of discourse”, that is to say, her pragmatic and functional view of the role of language in the constitution of meaning (semiosis, signification). Significs seems therefore to represent a dynamic view of meaning. Also central to all kinds of translation and interpretation is what she says about how we must learn to “signify” and “signalise”:

Man questions and an answer is waiting for him. But first he must learn to speak, really to “express” himself and the world. To do that he must learn to *signify* and to signalise. He must discover, observe, analyse, appraise, first the sense of all that he senses through touch, hearing, sight, and to realise its interest, what it practically signifies for him; then the meaning – the intention – of action, the motive of conduct, the cause of each effect. Thus at last he will see the Significance, the ultimate bearing, the central value, the vital implication – of what? of all experience, all knowledge, all fact, and all thought. (Welby [1903] 1983, 6; Welby’s italics)

Hence, in significs, which is none other than a theory of signs and their significance and signification, the key terms are “experience” and “expression of the world”, along with other concepts such as “the reference”, “types of experience”, “types of knowledge”, “three grades of levels of consciousness (and therefore of experience)”; “three main levels or classes of expression-value” (Welby [1903] 1983, 30, 46, 48, 94–95; 163, 233; Welby [1911] 1985, 79). In the universe of discourse, expression and experience are central terms:

There is just now a marked tendency to confess that Experience is a concept which imperatively needs both expansion and enrichment. [...] Experience can only be enriched through the acquirement in a broad sense of fresh symbols or fresh significance: expression needs development in the same way for the same reason. Thus it follows that, as already suggested, every conceivable form of human interest is centrally touched and transformed by Significs. [...] (Welby [1903] 1983, 6–7)

In order to define significs, Welby presents varied terms and metaphorical contexts for sense, meaning, and significance, listed in a figure by Schmitz (1985, xcvi–xcvii). In these definitions the problem of meaning is seen to lie in a theory of value, “ideal value”, a paramount idea in her significs:

We have already touched upon some forms of this triad, which may also be put as signification, intention and ideal value. From this point of view, the reference of sense is mainly instinctive, of meaning volitional, and of significance moral; we have a sense of discomfort, a thing is true in a certain sense, we mean (*i.e.* intend) to do something, and we speak of some event, “the significance of which cannot be over-rated”. (Welby ([1903] 1983, 46)

Welby wrote in a letter of December 4, 1908 (Hardwick 1977, 63) to Peirce: “I come to what is my business though in a much more elementary sense than is yours. I mean the essential value of Sign; ‘so to speak, the Sign’s Soul’. For that, as you know, under the term Significs and the phrase *what things signify*, is my special interest”. Regarding which methods we can apply to this triadic thinking of meaning, Welby states that significs suggests an approach by means of “analogy”, which “implies the emergence of a systematic and scientifically valid critique of imagery”, as quoted above. Thus, significs, as she believed, “obviously makes for a new dew departure in philosophy as well as in psychology” (op. cit., 23, 52, 245). “Analogy”, she writes, is, “the only method we have for most of our mental work, involved indeed in its primary presuppositions, *i.e.* the likeness between our reader’s mind and our own. This we have to assume though we cannot prove it, or our writing becomes an absolute waste. No one can even controvert this statement, giving reasons for dissent, without the use of analogy” (op. cit., 24). Hence, her ways to solve the problem of sense, meaning, and signification are connected with terms like “translative thinking”, “analogy”, “expression”, and “values” (op. cit., 19, 20, 126, 161, 194) – paramount concepts in her significs. Language, however, plays the central role, because “all language and all expression is a form of *translation*: (op. cit., 127), she writes, quoting R. L. Nettleship’s *Philosophical Lectures and Remains* (1897, vol. 1, 86). Welby states that significs extends and develops that idea in practical directions. It is a method “both of discovering, testing, and using analogy (or in some cases homology), the value of which does not yet seem to be recognised; and this may be called in an extended sense Translation” (Welby [1903] 1983, 126). We shall return to the concept of translation later.

In 1911, Welby published another book on the logic of signs, meaning and signification, entitled *Significs and Language: The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources*, which continued her inquiry into the nature of interpretation. In her last major work, which appeared only a year before her death, she gives the following overview of the theory of sign (“Significs”):

SIGNIFICS may be briefly and provisionally defined as the study of the nature of Significance in all its forms and relations, and thus of its working in every possible sphere of human interest and purpose. But the fact that this study is completely neglected even in the education renders a fully satisfactory definition difficult at present to formulate. The interpretative function is, in truth, the only one in any direct sense ignored or at least

casually treated. And yet it is that which naturally precedes and is the very condition of human intercourse, as of man's mastery of his world. (Welby [1911] 1985, Preface, vii)

The interpretative function is, according to Welby ([1911] 1985, 10), the kernel idea in education, being “the essential value of Sign”. She continues: “[...] that the one crucial question in all Expression, whether by action or sound, symbol or picture, is its special property, first of Sense, that in which it is used, then of Meaning as the intention of the user, and, most far-reaching and momentous of all, of implication, of ultimate Significance” (op. cit., 9). This is “the very condition of human intercourse”; it is “Simply the whole of human intercourse”, claims Welby ([1903] 1983, 36).

## Semiosis in Interpretative and Translative Processes

For the study of meaning in language, culture, and communication, and hence implicating “translation” in modern semantics, pragmatics and semiotics, the study of semiosis – as the act of signification, the production of signs and significance, the sign in process and progress – is a central idea in the constitution of meaning by discursive or translative thinking. In the 1970s, Leech ([1974] 1985, ix) wrote about the status of semantics as a basis for such study:

Semantics is central to the study of communication [...] Semantics is also at the centre of the study of the human mind – thought processes, cognition, conceptualization – all these are intricately bound up with the way in which we classify and convey our experience of the world through language. (Leech [1974] 1985, ix)

Among the crucial research objects of semiotic studies is translation as a method, that is, how we “translate” signs into other signs. It is crucial not only for translation proper (interlingual translation) but also for other kinds of translation procedures (intralingual and intersemiotic translation) in language, cognition, communication and culture. Roman Jakobson's presented “three modes of translation” in his essay “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” ([1959] 1987, 428–435):<sup>4</sup>

- (1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
- (2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
- (3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (Jakobson [1959] 1987, 429)

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4 Cf. also Torop (2003, 271–282) on intersemiosis and intersemiotic translation.



Hence, the concept of translation can be applied to all kinds of signs and sign systems, particularly to the interactions between these (trans-processes), in which the signs remain the at once the same and other. It is not our primary aim here to try to answer the vast question, “What is meaning?”, as Welby asks in her book title. Rather, as she also does, we look at how the word is “used” in its “circumstances” and in the “universe of discourse” (Welby [1903] 1983, 5–6). Later representatives of pragmatics and semantics (e.g., Austin, Searle, Wittgenstein, Grice) did the same: they looked for the use of signs and their relations in discourse and communication, in speech acts and in language games. The hermeneutic triangle of translation, interpretation and meaning (cf. Gadamer [1960] 1993, 383–389, 396, 527–528; [1976] 1997, 59–68) is fundamental in translative processes, which is why a semiotic point of view of the constitution of meaning seems to be a relevant one. Translation processes and products require different theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of signs and various sign systems in *semiosis*; for example, the producing and interpreting of signs in dialogue (cf. Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism, 1981), in their transference from A to B. Hence, translation is not only a phenomenon concerning translation proper (interlingual translation) between languages and cultures, but as an interpretative process in various fields. “In the first place, to translate is to interpret”, writes Petrilli (2003a, 17). The translation process is actually a paradox: the same sign is always “the same other, for in order to be itself and continue being so, it must become other in intersign or transsign interpretation/translation processes”, as Petrilli (op. cit., 33) states, referring to certain of Peirce’s views. The latter author wrote (CP 2.230) that “nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign”, that signs do not exist without an *interpretant* (CP2.228), that the meaning of a sign can only be expressed by another sign acting as its interpretant. In short, translation is constitutive of the sign, which indeed makes *semiosis* something like a translative process parallel to Welby’s ([1903] 1983, 34) idea: “We cannot cancel the automatic process of translative thinking. Everything suggests or reminds us of something else”. This idea is also found in the anthology *Translation Translation*, in which Petrilli (2003a, 17–37; 2003b, 41–53), Ponzio (2003a, 13–16), and other scholars present the issue of “translation” as an interdisciplinary approach including fields such as semiotics, linguistics, literary criticism, philosophy, biology, and the medical sciences. The problem of translation is discussed in the book from various perspectives as an intertextual relation.

In accordance with Welby ([1903] 1983, 161, 230), who sees her new science of signification to be relevant for practical life and education, Petrilli (2003a, 33–34) also states that translation is a primary concern for education (didactics) in addition to theory, such that “meaning” is the starting point for interpretation and translation. This is true when we read, analyze and translate various kinds of traditional texts, and also complex texts of today having many functions at the same time. These last are so-called multi- or polysemiotic texts; multimodal text types, such as television, film, video, subtitling, web texts, drama, “from page to stage”, opera, vocal texts

with various channels (sound, image, oral and written speech, music texts, etc.); such texts go from verbal to non-verbal texts and vice versa. “Translation” can be seen as a method of “translative thinking” by which to learn to read various texts and to interpret the processes between signs and sign systems, that is, to reveal implicit and explicit structures of the intersemiotic nature of texts.

We can also interpret the concept of translation as a “global” issue, to borrow from Sebeok’s (2001) concept of “global semiotics”. Processes of translation, if we restrict it to translation proper (interlingual translation), exemplify how culture-bound and localized texts become global. Conversely, such processes show how global texts become culturally “local” through localized translation activities.<sup>5</sup> Local becomes global becomes local becomes global *ad infinitum* ... through “translation” and translative thinking that is meant to gain new knowledge. Hence for education, translation as a means of interpreting and understanding is of paramount importance. As Ponzio (2003a, 13) writes: “With reference to Europe, our interest in translation responds to new community needs. On an international level and in the context of globalization the problem of translation is no less than fundamental”. He continues:

Translation concerns verbal texts in their relations among different languages; translation does not only deal with verbal signs, but it means internal plurilingualism, a plurality of different languages which relate to each other through translation processes. Translation occurs between verbal languages and nonverbal languages as well as among different nonverbal languages without necessarily involving verbal languages. Approached in this way it is obvious that translation cannot be restricted to the domain of linguistics only but necessarily involves semiotics, the general science of the theory of signs [...]. (Ponzio 2003a, 14)

The idea of combining semiotics and translation is inherent in the following statement by Ponzio (2003a, 14): “Where there are signs, or, better, where there are semiotic processes there is translation”. In accordance with Torop (2003, 271–282), we can also state that translation has an inherently intersemiotic character, an idea which Petrilli (2003b, 41) also formulates when she talks about translatability in terms of a semiotic order:

The question of the translatability of a text must be connected to the problem of the meaning of a sign and to the fact that this cannot be circumscribed to the type of sign and sign system a sign belongs to. From this point of view translatability may be explained in terms of a semiotic order. (Petrilli 2003b, 41)

These few examples from modern discussions on semiotics and translation show some important parallels to Welby’s early thinking. Firstly, there is the role

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5 Cf. the discussion on foreignizing and domestication in translation studies in Venuti 1995, *passim*; cf. also Paloposki 2002, *passim*, in her research on *Variation in Translation*.



of signification in science, the global relevance of semiotics today. In his book *Global Semiotics*, Sebeok (2001, 1–2, 8–9) discusses what the title means, first of all in terms of a network, or a web, as he had described it as early as in the 1970s. Each sign maintains itself as a part of a larger “semiotic web”, and to understand how a sign is maintained in its proper being is the project of semiotics. Sebeok (2001, 1–2; 8, 9) coined the term “global semiotics”, and talked about signs in the biosphere, “life signs”, i.e., life = semiotics. The terms “semiotic web” and “global semiotics” stand for the production and exchange of signs.

Secondly, key to all semiotic research is Welby’s dynamic and process-oriented notion of sense, meaning and significance, (i.e., semiosis) as the act of signification in use and discourse in communication. Thirdly, signification corresponds to the modern idea of values, to “semioethics”, with its concern about ethics in signification – which is also a central issue in modern translation studies as well (e.g., Chesterman 1997, 169–194; Koskinen 2000, *passim*). With Welby and Peirce, “translation may be considered to be implicit in the concept of sign itself”, remarks Petrilli (2003b, 41). In fact, a sign is not possible without an interpretant, according to Peirce, that is, without another sign that explains its meaning. In other words, “meaning subsists in the relation of reciprocal translation among signs [...] meaning and translation are semiotic phenomena whether interpretation/translation processes occur in the verbal sign system, among the sectorial languages of a single historical-natural language – intralingual translation – or among different historical-natural languages – interlingual translation” (Petrilli, *ibid.*).

As argued above, translation can be seen as a fundamental procedure for interpreting sign and sign systems. For Ponzio (2003a, 13–16; 2003b, 55–68), crucial to both semiotics and translation are the activities of modeling and dialogue; and in this dialogue arises the concept of “semioethics”, which concerns issues regarding value and human responsibility (cf. Petrilli 2004a, 1–9; 2004b, 23–38; Deeley 2005: 1–13). Petrilli (2003a, 17–37; 2003b, 42–53)<sup>6</sup> sees translation and semiosis as fundamental procedures not only in the anthroposemiosphere, but also in the whole biosphere. The latter claim is made by Sebeok (2001, 11), in reference to Yuri Lotman’s (1990: 203) idea of “semiosphere” as “a complex semiotic mechanism which is in constant motion” [...] as the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages”. According to Sebeok (2001, 2), Roman Jakobson (cf. [1975] 1987, 436–454) was the first to define semiotics as an inquiry into the communication of all kinds of messages (*op. cit.*, 454), which are in turn composed of signs. Sebeok (2001, 2) proposes to amplify this idea: “The subject matter of semiotics [...] is the exchange of any messages whatsoever and of the systems of

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Petrilli (2003, 19) for a figure on the typology of translation in the biosemiosphere and in the anthroposemiosphere.

signs which underlie them [...].<sup>7</sup> For Peirce, the universe was itself a comprehensive global sign, “a vast representamen, a great symbol [...]” (CP 5.119). According to Peirce, “the entire universe” is not merely “perfused with signs” but “composed exclusively of signs” (CP 5.448n). This was also Welby’s idea of signification when she talked about the “universe of discourse”. From Peirce’s claim it follows that semiotics is *per definitionem* relevant, and is an analytical tool for every actual and conceivable province of knowledge, as Sebeok claimed (2000, 2–3, 8–9).

As Schmitz (1985, x) states, Welby belonged to two worlds: to the early Victorian era on the one hand and, in view of her own studies and her trust in scientific progress, to the threshold of the future. We can say that she represented a “global semiotics” of her time, an interdisciplinary view, espoused in her writings and correspondence as concerning the constitution of meaning in various fields by means of “translation”.

## Translation as a Method – Language as a Form of Translation

Signification is a universal theory of signs based on the view that language makes all thought possible, and, “all language and all expression is a form of *translation*” (Welby [1903] 1983, 127). For Welby, signification was not, as Schmitz (1985, x) states, a mere collective term for the stages of enquiry into the three dimensions of meaning; rather she conceived of a universal theory of signs (cf. Welby [1903] 1983, 4–7), actually, what semiotics is today. This theory should be developed into “a polyfunctional tool” as versatile as the system of symbolic numerals and the alphabet. Hence, Welby’s ideas on the dialogue between various scientific fields were already “interdisciplinary” (cf. also Sebeok 2001, 8–9) in suggesting a view, not only of language and language philosophy or psychology, but for science in general (e.g., the exact terminology of sciences) and for education as well:

Thus Signification involves essentially and typically the philosophy of Interpretation, of translation, and thereby of a mode of synthesis accepted and worked with by science and philosophy alike; profoundly modifying what we wrongly call the “root” idea of religion, of ethics, of poetry, of art, and lastly, of practical life in all forms. But if studied systematically it would be seen from the first to provide a method of observation, a mode of experiment which extends far beyond the laboratory, and includes the inductive and deductive methods in one process. (Welby [1903] 1983, 161)

For Welby language was the starting point, and she has several comments also on “the tyranny of language” (op. cit., 58), particularly the ambiguity and fuzziness

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<sup>7</sup> Deeley (2004, 187–228) discusses the interplay of translation and interpretation in the founding of semiotics.

of language.<sup>8</sup> Her critique of the language of her time and of the vagueness of scientific terminologies “places the diagnostic aspect of signfic investigative procedures in the forefront” (Schmitz 1983, lxxxviii). Welby’s signfic forecasted future concerns with terminological research (cf. the modern term *LSP: Language for Specific Purposes* referring to the study of special texts in translation studies), and her efforts to fight ambiguity and vagueness in language were remarkably prescient (cf. *Fight the Fog* in the language policy and language planning of the European Union today).<sup>9</sup> In her book *What Is Meaning?* Welby wrote: “What we do want is a really plastic language” ([1903] 1983, 60), that is, to write and act in such a way as to achieve conceptual clarification (op. cit., 73–78).

What is Welby’s method for obtaining such an explicit language? A central process in analysing meaning is that of “Significs as Translation”; the latter is an essential method of signfic (Welby [1903] 1983, 51). By “translation” she does not mean “the rendering of one language into another”, but a methodical construction of analogies, primarily of proportional, structural and functional analogies (Welby [1903] 1983, 126–127). With Schmitz (1985, lxxxviii), we can state that in Welby’s *What is Meaning?* (1903) there is a close relation between the role of analogy in thought processes, communication, and the central nature of language on the one hand, and her conception of “translation” on the other. She presents “translation” as a means “both of discovering, testing, and using analogy” [...] (Welby [1903] 1983, 126–129). In particular, she discusses concepts such as “transference”, “transformation”, “transmutation”, “transfiguration”, and, above all, “transvaluation” (op. cit., 126), a term she emphasises in the translation process as it relates to the triad of “sense”, “meaning”, and “significance”, which are for her levels or classes of “expression value” (cf. Schmitz 1985, lxxxviii).<sup>10</sup> For Welby ([1903] 1983, 153), communication of thoughts is “the very supposition of all thinking, and is essentially translation in the sense now suggested, that is, as including transformation, transmutation, and transfiguration, making translucent and transparent [...]”. In her struggles to achieve conceptual clarification and purification, she describes her method:

. . . it must be borne in mind that the significance is infinitely rich in its aspects, yielding a world of delicate reactions to the complexities of varying mind in races, societies, and individuals. But, as we have already seen, significance must not be confounded with the meaning or intention of acts and events; it is rather their value for us, that which

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8 Cf. also Schmitz (1983, lxxvi–cviii) on Significs as a communication-oriented theory of signs, and Welby’s critique of language and terminology, as well as “translation” and the unity of science.

9 She offered a prize, the so-called Welby Prize, in 1896 for an investigation on the prevailing obscurity and confusion in psychological and philosophical terminology, and how a change might be brought about (cf. Mannoury 1983, xxxviii). Cf. also the ethics of terminology discussed by Welby and Peirce (e.g., Hardwick [ed.] 1977, 69; CP 2.219–226, [1903]; EP 2.263–266, [1903]).

10 “Translation” and the unity of science are discussed by Schmitz (1985, lxxxviii–xciii).

makes them signify for us, that which constitutes their importance, their moment, their consequence for mankind. (Welby [1903] 1983, 100)

Here signification takes on the dimensions Sebeok (2001, 1–16) writes about in his global semiotics on life-signs. Semiosis and signification is, as Welby ([1903] 1983, 120) writes, “the assimilating, the life-generating, the life-crowning term”; it has a deep and predictive sense. Hence, Welby’s essential method is “translation”, translative thinking, a procedure that “becomes a means both of testing knowledge and of widening its range” ([1911] 1985, 129), as discussed earlier. But language also manifests vagueness:

But, unfortunately, language itself has long ago decided that whether we will or no we shall use it or be content to forgo speech entirely. We cannot cancel the automatic process of translative thinking. Everything suggests or reminds us of something else. What have we just said? Mischief “lies in” the “strength” of something: “constraint”, “process”, “translative” – every word calls up more or less consciously some physical experience transferred to the mental sphere. “Transferred”, “sphere” – once more we are ensnared; “ensnared” again a case in point, and so on. (Welby [1903] 1983, 34)

“We cannot cancel the automatic process of translative thinking. Everything suggests or reminds us of something else”, Welby writes (op. cit., 34). To distinguish the three modes of meaning (sense, meaning, and signification) that Welby calls “Signification”, “the very idea of Signification [...] [of the] sign and what it signifies at its lowest and humblest, [...] leads us to a fresh study of sense [and] to a fresh study of meaning which shows us signification as the key of keys to reality” (op. cit., 246). Hence, semiosis means the process of signification wherein three modes of meaning are manifested, as discussed by Peirce (cf. EP 2.242–257, [1903]).<sup>11</sup> Welby’s ideas on the three modes of meaning ([1903] 1983, passim; [1911] 1985, passim) and Peirce’s views on intentional, effectual and communicational interpretants (EP 2.478, [1906]) are the key concepts of interpretation and of translation semiosis. In his letter to Welby in the spring of 1906, Peirce writes about his use of the word “Sign”, and how signs “grow” in semiosis: “I use the word ‘*Sign*’ in the widest sense for any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature)” (EP 2.477, 1906). In the signification, production and interpretation of signs, Peirce distinguishes the following triadic relations:

There is the *Intentional* Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the utterer; the *Effectual* Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the interpreter; and the *Communicational* Interpretant, or say the *Cominterpretant*, which is a determination of that mind into which the minds of utterer and interpreter have to be fused in order

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11 Cf. Kukkonen (2001, 121–138) on the concept of flux and knowledge in translation studies, and the production of meaning as “What is *becoming*?”, “a would-be” state of affairs in the act of semiosis (see *Theaetetus* 142a–210d); Peirce’s view on fallibilism: “For fallibilism is the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy” (CP 1.171, c. [1897]; cf. EP 2.410–411, [1907]; cf. also Merrell 2003, 165–188).

that any communication should take place. This mind may be called the *commens*. It consists of all that is, and must be, well understood between utterer and interpreter, at the outset, in order that the sign in question should fulfill its function. (EP 2.477–478, 1906)

For translation studies, these three terms are crucial; new knowledge grows from sameness and likeness, or as Ponzio (2003a, 16) puts it: “The paradox of translation consists in the fact that *the text must remain the same while becoming other* [...]”, and “translation is the same other” (Ponzio 2003b, 55–68, Ponzio’s italics) in semiosis through intentional, effectual and communicational interpretation. The idea of the growth of knowledge is present also in Welby’s view, for instance, in the following passages:

SIGNIFICANCE, then, fully resumes, in transfigured form, all that is summed up (1) in the idea of Motion, force, energy, activity, function, (2) in the idea of Sense (in all senses) and in that of Meaning (intention, purport, purpose). The concern for reality is the ultimate tie between the ‘plain man’, the scientific man and the philosopher. (Welby [1903] 1983, 50) [...]. Language is still in what we have to express by that vague and misused word, the “instinctive’ stage”. (Op. cit., 52)

As pointed out, the application of signifiCS involves language, analogy, comparison, expression, experience, and translation; the translative thinking method is at the same time both unity and distinction; sense, meaning and signification grow in “use” and in “the universe of discourse”. In the following quotation we find Welby’s early notions concerning her “Idea of Translation”:

The Idea of Translation in all its applications naturally implies the recognition of Distinction, and starts from the conception (or principle) of Equation, which is in the quantitative what translation (the discovery and application of the common element in the diverse or different) is in the qualitative sphere. (Welby [1903] 1983, 148–149.) [...]. As Translation involves both unity and distinction (the one actually and the other implicitly), language must itself be recognised as the means of discovering contrasts together with the links which constitute them element of unity, or at least completely exclude the idea of final disparateness (op. cit., 150) [...] aspect of Translation in its transformative character [...]. (Op. cit., 153)

Her vast method, with parallels to “global semiotics” and “global semiosis” (cf. Sebeok 2001), is defined in the following way:

SIGNIFICS, then, will bring us the philosophy of Significance; *i.e.* a raising of our whole conception of meaning to a higher and more efficient level; a bringing cosmos out of the present “chaos” of our ideas as to sense, meaning, and significance, and showing us that we need to use these terms in a certain order of value and range. Its best type of metaphor is the “solar”, its best mine of analogy is the biological; because, as implying an extension of purview given us in spatial form by (post-Copernican) astronomy, it

tends to relate the idea of life to the ideas of motion and matter, and moreover to relate the idea of mind to both. (Welby [1903] 1983, 161)

For Welby signification presented a challenge to education, “a new way of looking at things” in interpreting carefully the three modes of meaning (sense, meaning, and signification). Signification, with its essential method as that of “translation”, leads to the following conclusions:

[...] This led us to the suggestion of a method of Translation in a sense wider than any in which the word has yet been applied. An examination of the implications of this idea brought us to a definition of man as in one sense the Expression of the world. [...] We proceeded to show that, in any full sense, a new start could only be accomplished by a generation which for the first time had been universally trained to recognise the central importance of sense, meaning, and significance: to distinguish and rightly to interpret all three. Such a training of the future is here called Signification, [...]. (Welby [1903] 1983, 245–246)

A parallel idea to this can be found in Jakobson's ([1959] 1987, 428–435) “three modes of translation”, especially intralingual translation (rewording) and other kinds of translation procedures, such as intersemiotic translation (cf. Petrilli 2003a; 2003b; Ponzio 2003a; 2003b; Torop 2003; Deeley 2005). In regard to semiotics, as *la science du signe et des signes*, Jakobson ([1975] 1987, 454) states also that it has “the right and duty to study the structure of all of the types and systems of signs and to elucidate their various hierarchical relationships, the network of their functions, and the common or differing properties of *all* systems” (Jakobson's italics). “Translation”, for Welby too, is the unity of science, in which language plays the leading role in her signification method: “[...] we must begin in the broadest sense with Expression, and reach this through language”, i.e. with a language that is transparent and plastic” (Welby [1903] 1983, 250). Signs enter into *semiosis* – the act of signification, the production and interpretation of signs and sign systems in a constant open-ended process of knowledge. One sign leads to another, making a new sign through interpretation (*interpretants*) depending on how these signs are understood and interpreted in relation to reality, perception and cognition; Peirce defines this never-ending semiosis in his work *What Is a Sign?*:

Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from likenesses or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of likenesses and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. *Omne symbolum de symbolo*. A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Such words as *force, law, wealth, marriage*, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors. [...] In all reasoning, we have to use a mixture of *likenesses, indices, and symbols*. (EP 2.10, [1894], Peirce's italics)



A parallel idea is pondered by Welby, as we have seen, which makes it a central issue in all kinds of discussions about translation semiosis as theory and practice, as well as about truth and problem-solving as relativistic. As thinkers, readers and translators we can “read”, understand and interpret the signs of reality in various ways (cf. Peirce’s definitions of the concept of fallibilism).<sup>12</sup>

## The Role of Context and Environment – The Sociality of Signs

Welby seeks to use signifiacs to explain the constitution of meaning as a synthesizing process, with “translation” as an essential method (Eschbach 1983, xvii). She started to built up signifiacs from her own experience of a number of inadequacies in language and in the idea of language. As she had written earlier in *Meaning and Metaphor* (1891, 513): “we need a ‘Critique of Plain Meaning!’” (Welby [1911] 1985, 513). “For one thing meaning is not, and that is ‘plain’ in the sense of being the same at all times, in all places, and to all” (op. cit., 143); and: “There is nothing more curious than the prevalence of the myth of the ‘plain’ meaning which all can read at all times and in all places” (Welby [1903] 1983, 143, note 1). Therefore, the constitution of meaning has to be studied in how a word or term is “used”, in its “circumstances”.

According to Welby, ambiguity, the category of vagueness, “is the condition of the highest forms of expression” (Welby [1903] 1983, 74), but not even the context can bring any clarity to the subject, because the context itself is ambiguous to a higher degree (op. cit., 75). This condition, in the process of the constitution of meaning in a dynamic theory of meaning, is illustrated as “sense” by Welby. Like every sign, a linguistic sign acts primarily as an intermediary (Eschbach 1983, xviii), as does every vehicle of expression: all language is a form of translation, as quoted above (Welby [1903] 1983, 127). Here we have an important observation about the active aspect of a dynamic theory of meaning; the primary and original function of language is to represent actions and not objects, as Eschbach (1983, xix) also states. Hence, as Peirce states, a sign is only a sign when it is actively interpreted as a sign (EP 2.4–10, [1894]), that is, when it is translated into another sign during the process of constituting its meaning (Welby [1903] 1983, 192; cf. Eschbach 1983, xix). Welby’s method can be sketched simply: “We must begin in the broadest sense with Expression, and reach this through language” (Welby [1903] 1983, 250).<sup>13</sup>

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12 Cf. Peirce’s theory of signs and semiosis, knowledge, interpretation, and understanding as relativistic truth; on the concept of fallibilism, cf. CP 1.171, [c. 1897] and Kukkonen (2001, 123, 127–129, 135) as applied to translation studies; cf. also Merrell (2003, 165–188).

13 E.g. for the semiotics of Bakhtin (1981) and for Lotman (1990) the role of language was central.

Welby's main concern is the use of signs in communication, in "the universe of discourse". "It is in this spirit then that we must postulate an analogy between Context and Environment: the adaptation of the word, as of the organism, to its surroundings, and conversely its effect upon these", Welby states ([1903] 1983, 40). She continues: "We strangely ignore the fact that *comparison* is our one way of acquiring or imparting knowledge; that no perception has its full 'sense', much less meaning, until we have started from its likeness to our correspondence with some other perception already ours; as we have seen, we forget that we cannot say one word to our fellow without assuming the analogy between his 'mind' and our own [...]" (op. cit., 43). In agreement with Eschbach (1983, xxi), who sees Welby's analogy between context and environment as a postulate, we can suggest the term "pragmatic maxim" for this testing procedure, even though she never used this expression herself. As Schmitz (1985, lxxx) states, Welby's conception of the relation between signs and their meaning is "a mobile one" (cf. Peirce's "immediate" and "dynamical object", EP 2.477–483, [1906]), in contrast to the stable one that she criticizes. The meaning attributed to a sign is for her not only dependent on the context of use and situation, but at the same time on a series of purely subjective processes on the part of the person using the sign (Welby [1903] 1983, 40–42). Significs can therefore be seen as a communication-oriented theory of signs (Schmitz 1985, lxxvi–lxxxviii), in which "all our ideas work through and by analogy" (Welby [1903] 1983, 42):

But there is a method both of discovering, testing, and using analogy (or in some cases homology), the value of which does not yet seem to be recognised; and this may be called in an extended sense Translation (Welby ([1903] 1983, 126).

It must be borne in mind that although the term "translation" has been chosen because it is already used in at least part of the sense here suggested, it does not cover the whole ground required. Many words with the prefix "trans-" represent one aspect of the process in question, e.g. transference, transformation, transmutation, transfiguration, and, above all, transvaluation. (Welby ([1903] 1983, 126, note 2)

For Welby translation in this new sense becomes a means both of testing knowledge and of widening its range. "Translation" consists of openly borrowing a statement or thesis by some master of thought and word and applying it, with some necessary changes, to another statement or thesis. Whether the result is a good fit, an incongruity, or falsification of an argument, it will prove equally useful as a "signific" exercise (op. cit., 129). As Eschbach (1983, xxiii) states, the analogy principle brings us to the core of the signific theory of meaning, which, according to him, reveals the most surprising parallels both to de Saussure's theory of meaning and to Peirce's semiotics. In *Significs and Language* ([1911] 1985, 13) Welby writes:

The most important elements of experience are distinction and unification, comparison and combination – analysis and synthesis. We first analyse what is called a confused

manifold, really a generic or “given” manifold. Then we synthetise what we have distinguished to the uttermost [...]. (Welby ([1911] 1985, 13)

In comparison, we go from the familiar to the unknown, a level conveyed to us by signs, the level of manifestations of phenomena (Eschbach 1983, xxiii). The inference from the familiar to the unknown is a special kind of sign process, namely, a translation or sign interpretation to which Peirce gave the term “abduction”.<sup>14</sup> For Welby ([1903] 1983, 210) this translation process is something normal and commonplace: “The most natural and spontaneous tendency in man is the tendency to search out, to explore, to master the unknown; and the unknown in this case is the very reason and value of his being.” Peirce (EP 2.227, [1903]) calls the interpretation process “translation *in sensu*”, “the formation of perceptual judgments”, which build up a network of experiences to be compared with other systems so as to appreciate its validity or inadequacy. For Welby ([1903] 1983, 28, 150), the interpretation process is “a potentially interminable flux”, as Eschbach (1983, xxv) states.<sup>15</sup> Welby describes the dynamic process of interpretations: “We cannot cancel the automatic process of translative thinking. Everything suggests or reminds us of something else (Welby [1903] 1983, 34). Further, even “the fact that there *is* an experience, aside from *what* it is, is not the sensation itself; it is the interpretation of the sensation. It is part of the meaning” (Welby op. cit., 255, Welby’s italics).

As early as in her essay *Threefold Laws* from 1886, Welby distinguishes the concept of meaning as triadic, operating between sense, meaning, and interpretation. In her book *What Is Meaning?* ([1903] 1983, 2) she talks about “sense”, “meaning”, and “significance”, also using the terms “tendency”, “intuition”, and “essential interest” to clarify the distinction between the former three terms. The fundamental triad also contains related locations such as “express meaning”, “meaning indicated”, and “meaning suggested” (op. cit., 46).<sup>16</sup> This recalls a parallel pointed out by Eschbach (1983, xxv) as related to Karl Bühler’s (1934) distinctions based on his three-sided model of language as a means of communication, called the “organon-model” (from Greek *organon*: “tool”), a concept of three basic functional dimensions of language. Welby also uses the terms “signification”, “intention” and “ideal value” (Welby [1903] 1983, 46). As for sense, “the whole animal ‘kingdom’ (if not also the plant order) shares the senseworld” (op. cit., 28);

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14 On Peirce’s concept of “abduction”, cf. CP 7.164–231, [1901]; EP 2.75–114, [1901]. In Kukkonen (1993a, 149–172), on semiotics as a new paradigm of translation studies, as well as in Kukkonen (1993b, 43–45) and Kukkonen (2001, 121–138) following Peirce’s ontological categories, semiosis is discussed as a central method for education in translation, wherein knowledge of translation processes and products grows. This raises the issue of the heuristic view on problem-solving, and also see Merrell (2003, 165–188) on Peircean semiotics from the viewpoint of translation. On “abduction”, see Hartama-Heinonen in the present volume on abductive translation.

15 On flux in translation semiosis, cf. Kukkonen (2001, 121–138) and Merrell (2003, 165–187).

16 Cf. Schmitz (1985, xcvi–xcvii) for an overview of the variety of Welby’s terminology.

sense is “the determining medium for every experience, every interpretation, every cognition, every behaviour and every prediction in the same way as letters, words, sentences, position, form or content are nothing other than means of conveying sense” (op. cit., 221). Sense functions as “means of message”, “and ‘message’ is meaningless unless it involves the idea ‘from somewhat to somewhat’, just as ‘link’ must needs be between two somewhats” (op. cit., 113). “Sense” gives expression to the value of experience; hence Welby sees “sense” as the connection between “the intellectual, the moral, and the aesthetic worlds” (op. cit., 48); sense exists in motion and change (cf. the idea of flux in semiosis).

Thus, meaning is first of all intentional (Welby ([1903] 1983, 12). As the third level of meaning, significance comprehends the following: “it is rather their value for us, that which makes them signify for us, that which constitutes their importance, their moment, their consequence for mankind” (op. cit., 100). Significs consists of the triad of meaning with sense, meaning, and significance. The third aspect of meaning is also affected when it is a matter of deciding to what extent something is capable of expressing itself in, or being translated into, more and more phases of thought or branches of science (cf. *ibid.*). The third level of meaning emphasizes value, the axiological, moral aspect of meaning; significance can hence be seen as the integrative force of meaning (cf. Eschbach 1983, xxvii). “Significance, then, fully resumes, in transfigured form, all that is summed up (1) in the idea of Motion, force, energy, activity, function, (2) in the idea of sense (in all senses) and in that of Meaning (intention, purport, purpose)” (Welby [1903] 1983, 50).<sup>17</sup>

Welby tried to create a multifunctional tool ([1903] 1983, 4–7) for the study of signification, significs being a generic branch of knowledge, a kind of applied philosophy. Significs, as interpreted by Eschbach (1983, xxviii), is “a practical procedure by which, starting from an understanding of the mutually supportive interdependence of the constitutions of sign and meaning, an attempt can be made to meet the urgent necessity”. He continues with a quotation from Welby ([1903] 1983, 57f.): “[...] of stimulating thought by the creation of a general interest in the logical and practical as well as the aesthetical value of all forms of Expression”. In accordance with the concept of knowledge in semiosis in constant flux,<sup>18</sup> each semiosis, as translation semiosis, is a dialogue between implicit or explicit, increasing or decreasing information. In his letter to Welby in the spring of 1906, Peirce (CP 2.477, [1906]) writes about his use of the word “Sign” in the “widest sense for any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature)”. In the act of signification, in the production and interpretation of signs, in semiosis, signs are in “flux”. Margolis talks about the central concept of *flux* in his book

17 Peirce remarks on Welby’s three modes of meaning: “One can see, though she does not remark it, that her three kinds of meaning correspond roughly to Hegel’s three stages of thought” (CP 8.174).

18 Cf. note 11.

*The Flux of History and the Flux of Science* (1993), referring to the specificity and individuality of how phenomena get various meanings in different contexts.<sup>19</sup> In analogy, understanding implicit information as a phenomenon (e.g., as occurs in translation proper), is a question of both understanding and of the emergence of the concept of knowledge, as when new knowledge becomes our “own” knowledge during heuristic processes; it involves also ethics, aesthetics, empirical experience, emotions and intuition. The crucial journey of semiotic interpretation is to explore the semiosis, the acts that manifest meanings; in analysing texts and translated texts we make the implicit explicit through interpretative and translative thinking (cf. Welby [1903] 1983, 5–6). In this process, we use “translation” as a method for rendering implicit information as explicit information, which is the movement of signs toward significance, the universal idea of semiosis.<sup>20</sup>

Knowledge in growth is always an hypothesis, as Plato noted as early as the *Meno*. In his *The Basis of Pragmatism in the Normative Sciences* (EP 2.371–397, [1906]) Peirce writes about logic, the general theory of signs, and how signs and knowledge grow, as well as on his relativistic truth, fallibilism, which emphasises not only the uncertain nature of science but its dynamic character. In translation studies (translation proper) we are dealing with revision, re-revisions, error elimination (cf. Popper 1972, *passim*; Chesterman 1997, 16–17, 117–145) and new signs, in an open-ended process of semiosis, the evolution of knowledge (EP 2.373–374, [1906]).<sup>21</sup>

## Theory of Value – Intersemiotic Translation – a Hermeneutic Understanding

As discussed above, we can say that Welby’s signifiics represents an early version of global semiotics (Sebeok 2001). Hers was an effort to shape a global semiosis, with her concept of “universe of signs” with special reference to language, and to translation in a broad sense. To describe the constitution of meaning, in context and situation, she advocated the method of analogy and comparison, i.e., the modeling and dialogue of signs and sign systems, in this way reaching the notion of translative thinking, of “transvaluation”, i.e., semioethics. “To be significant means *to have value*”, writes Petrilli (2003b, 47, *her italics*), who explains the term “significance” as used by Welby in triadic correlation with the other two terms, “sense” and “meaning”. In accordance with Petrilli (*ibid.*), we can say after

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19 Cf. Kukkonen (2001, 121–138); Merrell (2003, 174–175).

20 Leech [1974] 1985, 319–323, 328–329. On Peirce’s “pragmatism”, cf. EP 2.133–257, [1903]; Morris [1938] 1971, 301–303, 329; see also Morris 1938, 55–59, chapter entitled “The Unity of Semiotic. 1. Meaning”.

21 On Plato’s dialogue *Theaetetus* (c. 367 B.C.) in relation to the question “What is knowledge?” in translation studies, see Kukkonen (2001, 121–138).



reading Welby, that the “meaning” of action presupposes “sense”, “understood as a derivative of ‘to sense’ and not only as ‘orientation’, ‘direction’, in a given communicative context” (Petrilli 2003b, 47, 48). Welby’s writings focus closely on the relation between signs and values.<sup>22</sup>

Welby’s writings, according also to Eschbach (1983, xxi), postulate an analogy between context and environment; the term “pragmatic maxim” is used for this testing procedure. From the point of view of today’s semiotics and “semioethics”, a term coined by Ponzio and Petrilli (cf. Petrilli 2004a, 3–4, 9; 2004b, 31–35), we can state that Welby, and after her the behaviourist and pragmatist Morris, were early representatives of those concerned with the relation between sign theory and value theory, and with so-called “interpretation semiotics” (e.g., Peirce, Welby, Morris, Bakhtin, Rossi-Landi). Petrilli ([2000] 2003c, 14) states that “as a global science of signs, semiotics must focus upon all aspects of semiosis without ignoring what is understood by the terms ‘signification’ and ‘significance.’” “Semioethics”, according to Petrilli, contributes to

a global understanding of human beings in the entirety of their relations to themselves, to the world, and to others. Therefore, with respect to “semiotics”, the term “semioethics” is intended to highlight that particular orientation in sign studies that is not purely descriptive, that does not claim to be neutral. From the viewpoint of theory of knowledge, semioethics evidences the axiological dimension of sign processes beyond, or, better, in conjunction with the strictly logical-cognitive aspects. (Petrilli [2000] 2003c, 14–15)

In fact, Welby’s *significs* had already mentioned these aspects, while it also covered language philosophy, semantics and semiotics, the study of signs and meaning, value, transvaluation, i.e., the whole problem of significance and signification. *Significs* is a communication-oriented theory of “use” and “discursive thinking”, as is Morris’s research concerning communication among the order of signs and the order of values. Various kinds of translation are based on interpretation and message; but a communicative view of meaning should also shed light on ethics as well.

The triadic idea connected Welby and Peirce: Welby talks about *significs*, Peirce about “*semeiotic*”. Semiosis, as the dynamic act of signification, is the joint idea. She, as we have seen, did not use “translation” in the sense of “translation proper”, the *interlingual* mode of translation, but in the *intralingual* and *intersemiotic* mode, *intersemiotic* being a better term to describe all kinds of translation semiosis (cf. Jakobson [1959], 1987, 428–435). Welby’s method of “translation” as a “practice”, as a heuristic method of *significs*, emphasises the semantics and pragmatics, the functional and communicative aspects in discourse. Translation is a means of

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22 Cf. Petrilli 2003b, 47–48, note 8. Also, Morris ([1938] 1971, 35–42; [1946] 1971, 140–171; [1964] 1971, 401–414) writes about the dual meaning of “meaning”: “signification” as the action in which something signifies, in a semantic sense, or as “significance” as the value of that which is signified, in an axiological sense; on Morris’s semiotic, cf. Petrilli (2003b, 48 and [2000] 2003, 1–19).



pursuing new knowledge. Intralingual “translation” can serve as a multifunctional tool for all kinds of translation, both interlingual and intersemiotic. Creative processes of knowing and problem-solving may start with intralingual translation and continue to ponder translation as both process and product. We can say that all thinking is translation of thoughts; “we cannot cancel the translative process of thinking”, as Welby wrote.

What Welby dubbed *significs*, from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen as an important study of “meaning” as sense, meaning, and significance. Though her descriptive style has to be understood in the idiom of the time, and even though she may lack a rigorously systematic methodological presentation of her ideas, she nevertheless presents a proto-theory, a fundamental theory of signs and their interpretation. *Significs* has “sundry merits”, wrote Peirce (CP 2.255–256, [1903], when discussing issues of sense, meaning, and significance. Among the central semiotic issues of today, questions of value are paramount. For example, Petrilli (2004a; 2004b, “*semioetica*”, “*semioethics*” coined by Ponzio & Petrilli), as well as Tarasti (2000; 2005, “*existential semiotics*”), Bernard (2005, “*semioethics*”), and Deeley (2005, “*semioethics*”) have discussed “*semioethics*” in various contexts. Welby was among the first to do so, a “pre-semiotician”, who combined in her *significs* semiotic ideas about values and transvaluation, applying them to the problem of sense, meaning, and significance. She did so using the method of “translative thinking”, as she called translation.

The question of values and ethics in various fields is a pressing one in many fields today. Deeley (2005, 8) points out, with reference to Petrilli on *semioethics* and translation in various forms: “[. . .] the ‘translation’ can only be understood ‘in the broadest sense possible, that is to say, beyond the limits of interlingual translation, translation as interpretation and verification of verbal and nonverbal signs alike’”:<sup>23</sup>

[...] the boundaries of semiotic reality are never fixed and always shifting is the key realization for this new, this postmodern, humanism, wherein traditional objective “ethics” is transformed as “*semioethics*” by the discovery that human knowledge in the whole off its extent – speculative no less than practical – depends upon the action of signs, an action that is presupposed to every “world of objects”, every *Umwelt* around the whole planet (or elsewhere in this universe, as the case may be). Things may pre-exist us in various ways, but only as they are translated into objects can we intelligently

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23 See also Torop (2003, 271–282), and Petrilli (2003a, 17–37, 2003b, 41–53) on “intersemiotic translation”; Ponzio (2003a, 13–16) on “translation as a sign process”; and Petrilli 2004a, 3–4, 9; 2004b, 23–38 on “global semiotics” and “*semioethics*”. See also Bernard 2005, 1–4: “[...] the point where ethics as the basis of all action enters, together with biosemiotics, resting, first of all, on Jakob von Uexküll’s *semio-umwelt*-theory, on Sebeok’s ‘global semiotics’, and Lady Welby’s early semiotic preoccupation with ethics, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio have for the first time postulated a *semio-ethics* stringently derived from semiosis itself, an ethics which should orient us not only in view of the challenges of today’s societies but also in our actions within the increasing ecological crisis. Thus, besides the indispensable socio-semiotic analysis of society and culture we are also in need of a biosemiotic one studying their *umwelt* interdependencies, [...]”. (Bernard 2005, 4)

deal with them. And since there is (and can be) no single path for this translation, it is especially the procedures of abductive logic on which we above all depend for the translation, and the “translation” can only be understood “in the broadest sense possible, [...]” (Deeley 2005, 8)

The three modes of translation presented by Jakobson, and “translative thinking” along with interpretative and communicative translation by Welby, are essential methods with which semiotics and all kinds of translation studies can understand the essential nature of “meaning” (sense, meaning and significance) in various universes of discourses and states of mind, as manifested in source and target languages, and in all kinds of texts in communication. In this process, “translation” as a method, and “translation” in its various forms and manifestations has to include signification and its accompanying theory of value. All this lays the foundation for the hermeneutic triangle of translation, interpretation and meaning. Especially relevant are Welby’s ideas on language and “translation”, when we recall Gadamer’s ([1960] 1993, 383–389, 396, 527–528; [1976] 1997, 59–68) hermeneutic view on man and language, translation and interpretation. The very goal is to gain understanding, to avoid misunderstanding, and to promote self-understanding. Welby also discussed “translation” as a universal method for science, which is what we today call “interdisciplinarity”. Different kinds of translation semiosis and translation studies require a highly interdisciplinary approach (cf. Chesterman 2005, 19–28). Studies on causality in translation studies, for instance (as by Chesterman 2002: 145–158) show how the Greimassian (1983) semiotic modalities (*être* Being, *faire* Doing, *devoir* To be obliged to, *savoir* To know, *pouvoir* To be able to and *vouloir* To want) can be applied to translation as effect and cause. This involves ontological, epistemological, and translation-sociological aspects as well, i.e., questions of norms, ethics and values (global semiotics, global semiosis, semioethics). Relevant here is Welby’s signification as a theory of knowledge and a general theory of semiotics, the science of signs and sign systems, including “transvaluation” and values, concerning the triadic system of meaning as sense, meaning as intention, and meaning as significance; and on the highest level, a theory of value. She saw the importance of “interdisciplinarity” and axiology to science. In 1938, Morris wrote:

It is doubtful if signs have ever before been so vigorously studied by so many persons and from so many points of view. The army of investigators includes linguists, logicians, philosophers, psychologists, biologists, anthropologists, psychopathologists, aestheticians, and sociologists. (Morris 1938: 1)

Today, we can say that semiotics has become “a world science”, as predicted by Wouters ([1997] 2003, 8):

As far as trends are concerned, sign studies will undoubtedly continue to focus on the larger contexts of signs. In other words, semiotics will evolve more and more towards a global semiotics that envisages an understanding of signs in human behaviour and

in nature in general. In this pansemiotic view, the emphasis will be on the sign outside linguistics. (Wouters [1997] 2003, 8)

Meaning, as conceived triadically by Peirce and Welby, has relevance for the global semiotics and semioethics of today. Significs was really a new starting point, as Welby herself wrote in 1903; her ideas are reflected in Peirce's, Ogden's, and Morris's views on signs and values. Such issues are specially relevant today, when we discuss global matters, values and ethics in various fields of human knowledge. Translation is the critical heuristics of problem-solving, and it comes in many forms: in language, culture, communication, in anthroposemiosphere, in semiosphere and biosphere as well, there is various translation processes going on, or as Peirce states (EP 2.394; CP 5.448n, [1906]): "all this universe is perfused with signs", and all signification is but the "translation of a sign into another system of signs" (CP 4.127) – intersemiotic translation is a life-generating, the life-crowning activity: "Simply the whole of human intercourse" using Welby's expression ([1903] 1983, 36). Therefore, studies on semiosis, the act of signification, is of paramount import in human understanding of sense, meaning, and significance. In 1903, Welby writes about signifiics, significance and the 'universe of discourse', as "the assimilating, the life-generating, the life-crowning term", "essential value", and "the power of inter-translation", in 1984 Eco talks about "interpretability", and "the whole universe of semiosis":

"Significance, ... is the gathering, the concentrating into its focus of radiation; it is in a deep and predictive sense the assimilating, the life-generating, the life-crowning term. All systems also inevitably concentrate in Significance as their essential value as test. And thus Signifiics alone gives us the power of inter-translation." (Welby [1903] 1983, 119–120)

A sign is not only something which stands for something else; it is also something that can and must be interpreted. The criterion of interpretability allows us to start from a given sign to cover, step by step, the whole universe of semiosis." (Eco 1984, 46)

We can state that semiosis is the act of signification in all kinds of "inter-translation" concerning interpretation of signs and sign systems. In translation studies, Chesterman (2005, 25) states that "from the consilience point of view, modern translation studies thus announces itself as a new attempt to cut across boundaries in the search for deeper understanding of the relations between texts, societies and cultures". If we see, as Chesterman (ibid.) writes, "translations as carriers of memes, and Translation Studies as part of memetics, we may be able to embed our field more readily into the study of evolution more generally. By exploring the parallels between biological and cultural evolution, we may perhaps make a few constructive steps in the direction of consilience." Welby was one of the pioneers in showing the *interdisciplinary* idea of "Signifiics" and "inter-translation",

how they spread as memes in semiotics, and how they are relevant to the global semiotics and semioethics of today.

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