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31.1

# Sign Systems Studies

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## Is language a primary modeling system? On Juri Lotman's concept of semiosphere

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**Abstract.** Juri Lotman's well-known distinction of primary modeling system versus secondary modeling system is a lasting legacy of his that has been adhered to, modified, and refuted by semioticians of culture and nature. Adherence aside, modifications and refutations have focused on the issue whether or not language is a primary modeling system, and, if not, what alternatives can be made available to replace it. As Sebeok would concur, for both biosemiosis and anthrosemiosis, language can only be a secondary modeling system on top of the biological experience of *Umwelt* or human sensory system. This paper proposes to explore the possibility of a "pre-verbal" modeling system suggested by Lotman's spatial concept of semiosphere, and discuss its implications in cross-cultural dialogue.

The well-known distinction of primary modeling system versus secondary modeling system suggested by Lotman and others (Lotman 1977) is a lasting legacy of the Tartu School's that has been adhered to, modified, and refuted by semioticians of culture and nature (Sebeok 1991; 1994; Sebeok, Danesi 2000).<sup>1</sup> Adherence aside, modifications and refutations have focused on the issue whether or not language is a primary modeling system (hereinafter PMS) and, if not, what alterna-

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<sup>1</sup> It would be inaccurate to attribute this distinction to Lotman. Sebeok (1991: 49) identifies A. A. Zaliznjak, V. V. Ivanov, and V. N. Toporov (Zaliznjak *et al.* 1977 [1962]) as the original users of the terms in their joint paper for the Moscow-based Academy of Sciences. It must be noted, however, that Sebeok and Danesi do not explicitly make the PMS and SMS distinction; instead, they suggest the gradational and hierarchical relationships among strata, for example, a situation in which natural language mediates between the most abstract mathematical model and the least abstract but most connotated religious model (Zaliznjak *et al.* 1977: 47).

tive can be made available to replace it. For both biosemiosis and anthroposemiosis, language can only be a secondary modeling system (hereinafter SMS) on top of the biological experience of *Umwelt*. As Sebeok and Danesi have recently observed:

language is, by definition, a secondary cohesive modeling system providing humans with the resources for extending primary forms ad infinitum. [...] From a biosemiotic perspective, the language code can be defined as the cohesive system providing the modeling resources for converting what von Uexküll (1909) called 'concrete living existence' into 'active plans'. (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 108)

Here they are reiterating Sebeok's entrenched position over the decades. He had observed in 1991, "Solely in the genus *Homo* have verbal signs emerged. To put it in another way, only hominids possess two mutually sustaining repertoires of signs, the zoosemiotic non-verbal, plus, superimposed, the anthroposemiotic verbal" (Sebeok 1991: 55). According to Sebeok, what the Russo-Estonian semioticians call "primary", i.e., the anthroposemiotic verbal, is "phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically secondary to the nonverbal; and, therefore, what they call 'secondary' is actually a further, tertiary augmentation of the former" (Sebeok 1991: 55). In anthroposemiosis the triadic relationship is "developmental" (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 10) and can be displayed as follows.

- (1) Primary Modeling System (PMS) = the system that predisposes the human infant to engage in sense-based forms of modeling.
- (2) Secondary Modeling System (SMS) = the system that subsequently impels the child to engage in extensional and indexical forms of modeling.
- (3) Tertiary Modeling System (TMS) = the system that allows the maturing child to engage in highly abstract (symbol-based) forms of modeling. (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 10)

In this more refined configuration, language as symbolic system is reduced (or elevated) to the still higher tertiary layer. This accepted, a cultural system with maximal modeling capacity like religion would be none other than a quaternary model (Zaliznjak *et al.* 1977 [1962]), still further removed from the biological foundation. Sebeok's argument against the Russo-Estonian semioticians can stand insofar as language is secondary to human sensory system, the appropriateness

of the Peircian terms being another question.<sup>2</sup> However, insofar as that sensory system or any other biological system is articulated and described in language, its a priority and transparency would be compromised and undermined. This is especially true to semiotics of culture, which is a major contribution of the Tartu School's.

Given the fact that language, as Emile Benveniste (1969) asserts, is the only semiotic system that can be at once both an interpreting and interpreted system, the primacy granted to object-language is replaced by the dialectic between object-language and meta-language.<sup>3</sup> This had already been observed by the joint authors of the "Theses", manifesto of the Tartu-Moscow School:

The choice of a discrete metalanguage of distinctive features of the types upper-lower, left-right, dark-light, black-white, to describe such continuous texts as those of paintings or the cinema, may itself be regarded as a manifestation of archaizing tendencies which impose on the continuous text of the object-language metalinguistic categories more characteristic of archaic systems of binary symbolic classification (of mythological and ritual types). But we must not rule out the fact that features of this kind remain as archetypal features even during the creation and perception of continuous texts. (Lotman *et al.* 1975: 64)

The dating of this manifesto is important because only a few years later were Lotman and Uspensky (1978 [1971]) seen to criticize Benveniste's unqualified privileging language. Their criticism shows, from the perspective of linguistics or semiotics of language, a seemingly contradictory position which can be explained only by

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<sup>2</sup> The triadic structure suggests Peirce. However, a number of questions can be raised. (1) Whilst the development from Firstness to Secondness and Thirdness is acceptable, only two rather than three types of sign are at work here, namely, the indexical and the symbolic. One wonders if the iconic does not have a role to play, especially with reference to the sign of sphere. (2) As far as the human sensory system is concerned, the fundamental and dominant sign that cuts across the three realms is the indexical. (3) In Peirce the triadic relationship of representamen, object, and interpretant is irreducible.

<sup>3</sup> Lotman and Uspensky (1978: 212) allude to Benveniste (1969) to support their argument for the PMS versus SMS distinction. Whilst they agree with Benveniste on natural languages' metalingual capacity, they believe that, in actual historical functioning, "languages are inseparable from culture". To be sure, the distinction is only heuristic and by no means precludes inter-level or inter-systemic transcoding.

looking at Lotman historically, i.e., in terms of historicity. Since this is a key passage, it is worth quoting in length.

A key question is the relationship of culture to natural language. In the preceding publications of Tartu University (the semiotic series), cultural phenomena were defined as secondary modeling systems, a term which indicated their derivational nature in relation to natural language. Many studies, following the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, emphasized, and examined the influence of language on various manifestations of human culture. Recently [i.e., 1969] Benveniste has emphasized that only natural languages can fulfill a metalinguistic role and that, by virtue of this, they hold a distinct place in the system of human communication. *More questionable, however, is the author's proposal in the same article to consider only natural languages as strictly semiotic systems, defining all other cultural models as semantic, that is, not possessing their own systematic semiosis but borrowing it from the sphere of natural languages.* Even though it is valuable to contrast primary and secondary modeling systems (without such a contrast it is impossible to single out the distinguishing characteristics of each), it would be appropriate to stress here that in their actual historical functioning, languages are inseparable from culture. No language (in the full sense of the word) can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have, as its center, the structure of natural language. (Lotman, Uspensky 1978: 212; emphasis mine — *H. C.*)

Several points in this passage merit our notice, and most of which recur here and there, some more developed than others, throughout Lotman's writings. Particularly relevant to this paper is the word *sphere*, which I shall dwell on later. The emphasized passage is quite puzzling. For now, one should examine closely the authors' position regarding language.

First of all, the authors agree with Benveniste that only language can be in itself both object-language and meta-language. This, however, should not be construed to mean that language is the only meta-semiotics, mathematics and logic being two other notable examples. As meta-language, language serves to model, describe, explain, and by so doing, impose its linguistic features, such as binarism, on the object it studies. As *homo loquens*, we verbalise other semiotic systems, in the same way that we, as *homo symbolicum*, configurate such systems in mathematics and symbolic logic. By virtue of its double articulation, language is capable of mapping culture, i.e., articulating cultural phenomena as secondary modeling systems, as aptly demonstrated by Zaliznjak *et al.* (1977) on religion. The authors of the "Theses" actually lend their support to Benveniste when they assert that culture

is “a system of systems based in the final analysis on a natural language (this is implied in the term ‘secondary modeling systems’, which are contrasted with the ‘primary system’, that is to say, the natural language)” (Lotman *et al.* 1975: 76); and that “the analysis of Slavic cultures and languages may prove a convenient model for investigating the interlations between natural languages and secondary (superlinguistic) semiotic modeling systems” (Lotman *et al.* 1975: 78).

To return to their criticism of Benveniste, one may observe that the afore-said structural function of language as system by no means precludes the PMS’s being affected reversely by the SMS, nor for that matter, language’s being historicised. However, our defense of Benveniste may run the risk of missing the point of Lotman’s attempt, albeit in its embryonic form, to propose an alternative model. The possibility of a pre-verbal or non-verbal modeling system suggested by Lotman is the semiosphere. What is significant about this model is its holistic approach as a remedy to the linguistic model’s atomism. While early linguistics-based semiotics “moves from simple and clearly defined atomic elements to gradually more complicated elements”, the semiosphere is “a semiotic continuum filled with semiotic structures of different types and with different levels of organization” (Lotman 1989: 42–43 [Russian 1984]). The semiosphere is arguably Lotman’s major contribution in his later years. Presumably proposed in 1984, this latter conceptual category, even in Sebeok and Danesi’s words, is so “pliable” and “adaptive” (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 106) that one may wonder why it does not have the potential of serving as a PMS if the hierarchical order of “bottom-up” can be reversed to “top-down” (Alexandrov 2000: 343).

Two questions can be raised regarding semiosphere’s semiotic functions: first, “Whether the semiosphere and language as modeling systems (PMS) are compatible?” second, “How does the semiosphere function heuristically?” Regarding the first question, one recalls that Lotman has defined the semiosphere as “the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages”; and in a sense it “has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages [...]. Outside the semiosphere there can be neither communication, nor language” (Lotman 2001: 123–124).

I shall return to the relationship between semiosphere and language towards the latter part of the paper. I raised the first question in an e-

mail correspondence with Professor Mihhail Lotman. In his good reply, Mihhail Lotman comments,<sup>4</sup> “In my opinion, the concept of semiosphere is not in conflict with a language as primary-modelling system, if we approach language as well in so-to-say holistic perspective[:] contradiction evolves only if we treat semiosphere in holistic way, but language in atomistic way”.<sup>5</sup> One may certainly look at language holistically, but one does not analyse it that way. This leads to the next question: How can the holistic model of semiosphere be cognitive and operational? This question is not only a fundamental one of semiosis but also one of hermeneutic circle involving the dialectic relationship between part and whole.<sup>6</sup>

Since the early stage of Tartu School, Lotman’s writings have been highlighted by his favourite word of sphere — I say word rather than concept because this single word may stand for a whole spectrum of concepts. The word had recurred throughout his writings, until the writer coined the term *semiosphere* in 1984. It seems appropriate now to examine the very concept of sphere as a semiotic entity, because we are confronted with the complex semiotic problem of a single signifier closing on a dozen of signifieds as well as the semantic problem of a word pointing to a large number of referents and references. The word is so frequently used by Lotman that its semantic precision is often blurred. In fact, it was already used as early as in the “Theses” and used together with the concept of language as PMS though their relationship was then not clear. But even there in the “Theses”, the word *sphere* seems to be dominating. I have prepared a provisional list enumerating its various instances of usage in English translation. They

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<sup>4</sup> In an e-mail correspondence with the author, dated December 11, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Apparently, in the time-honoured conflict between reductionists and anti-reductionists, J. Lotman aligns himself with the antireductionists in the belief that the whole is predominant rather than the part (cf. Prigogine, Stengers 1984: 173). Lotman once criticises the analytical tradition initiated by Descartes to the effect that “for this procedure [i.e., ‘isolating an object and then making it into a general model’] to be a correct one, the isolated fact must be able to model all the qualities of the phenomenon on to which the conclusions are being extrapolated” (Lotman 2001: 123).

<sup>6</sup> Alexandrov points out that in his earlier writings “Lotman’s methodology entailed a systematic and hierarchical accumulation of data ranging from sound repetitions to broad ideological formulations and never dissolved an individual work’s *sui generis* patterns of meaning in larger considerations such as ideology, genre, or period” (Alexandrov 2000: 343).

are not arranged according to the chronological order, nor do they show necessary evolution.

(1) As space

- (a) "from this point of view [the functional correlation of different sign systems] particular importance is attached to questions of the hierarchical structure of the languages of culture, of the distribution of spheres among them, of cases in which these spheres intersect or merely border upon each other" (Lotman *et al.* 1975: 57);
- (b) "culture will have the appearance of a certain delimited sphere" (*ibid.*: 57);
- (c) "the sphere of organization (information) in human society" (*ibid.*: 58);
- (d) "the sphere of cultural organization" (*ibid.*: 58);
- (e) "the sphere of extracultural nonorganization" (*ibid.*: 58);
- (f) "culture and non-culture appear as spheres" (*ibid.*: 58);
- (g) "the spheres of the unconscious" (*ibid.*: 59);
- (h) "the tension between the corresponding cultural spheres" (*ibid.*: 61);
- (i) "mutual breaches of the cultural sphere into chaos and of chaos into the cultural sphere" (*ibid.*: 61);
- (j) "different spheres of culture have inherent in them a different extent of internal organization" (*ibid.*: 82);
- (k) "culture [...] forms [...] a marked-off sphere" (Lotman, Uspensky 1978: 211);
- (l) "the space of the semiosphere is abstract in nature" (Lotman 1989: 43);
- (m) "it is a specific sphere, with the same attributes that are ascribed to a closed sphere" (*ibid.*: 43).

(2) As system [of signs]

- (n) by inference, "culture appears as a system of signs" (Lotman, Uspensky 1978: 211);
- (o) "the sphere of natural languages" (*ibid.*: 212);
- (p) "a semiosphere" can be defined as "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages" (Lotman 2001: 123).

(3) As geographical place

- (q) "the function of myth [...] is [...] to establish identity between different spheres" (*ibid.*: 152);
- (r) "when the semiosphere involves real territorial features as well, the boundary is spatial in the literal sense" (*ibid.*: 140).

(4) As collection of texts

- (s) "if we take the central and peripheral spheres of culture to be texts organized in a particular way, then we shall notice that these texts have different types of internal organization" (*ibid.*: 162).

(5) As academic discipline

- (t) "the dispute between the causal-predetermined and the probability theories in theoretical physics of this century is an example of the conflict we have been discussing in the sphere of science" (*ibid.*: 163).

- (6) As conceptual category
  - (u) "so if dialogism is the penetration of the diversity of life into the ordered sphere of theory, at the same time mythologism penetrates into the sphere of the extraordinary" (*ibid.*: 167).
- (7) As genre
  - (v) "the sphere of the detective story" (*ibid.*: 164).
- (8) As geometrical figure
  - (w) "in the light of Pythagorean ideas about the perfection of the circle and the sphere among geometrical figures and bodies, we can explain the circular construction of Hell as follows: the circle is the image of perfection" (*ibid.*: 181).
- (9) As celestial body [in Dante]
  - (x) "after the boundary the poet ascends the mountain of Purgatory and is carried up through the heavenly spheres" (quoted from Pavel Florensky; *ibid.*: 178).
- (10) As Hell [in Dante]
  - (y) "for it is not the centre of the sphere but the top of the Axis that is his [Dante's] point of spatial and ethico-religious orientation" (*ibid.*: 182).
- (11) As cerebral division, i.e., hemisphere
  - (z) "to our surprise, observations about the bipolar asymmetry of semiotic mechanisms has been paralleled by research into the functional asymmetry of the large hemispheres of the brain" (*ibid.*: 2-3).

The list is not exhaustive, but the present one is enough to reveal the semantic flexibility of the concept. The first thing we notice is that all the eleven classes listed are conceptual categories, and for that matter, super-ordinate categories rather than basic-level categories that need the mediation of bodily experiences (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 26-27). The next thing worth notice is that as "spatial-relations concepts" (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 30), they cannot be perceived, but are rather conceptualised by our projection of a large amount of complex imagistic structure unto a scene. The only invariable element that helps to construct such structure is perhaps the simple circle which is but an image-schema, the so-called "container schema", with the attributes of inside, outside, and boundary (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 31-32).<sup>7</sup> But does this container schema, this iconic sign have such an extensive semantic power? The answer may be negative unless, with Peirce and his devout followers, iconicity can be granted a preliminary function in the holistic web of semiosis (Merrell 1991: 248; Spinks 1991: 444).

<sup>7</sup> Strikingly, the two schemata identified by Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 31-34), container schema logic and source-path-goal schema, are exactly the two models used by Lotman, viz. sphere and communication or information transmission.



Lotman's sources of the term sphere are quite heterogeneous. One is reminded of the word used by the Formalists and their followers. Vladimir Propp (1928), for one, proposes seven "spheres" of action which can accommodate the thirty-one functions of the kernel Russian fairy tale. Lotman occasionally uses sphere in this Proppian sense, e.g., "[A] plot-space is divided by one boundary into an internal and an external sphere, and one character has the plot-possibility of crossing that boundary" (Lotman 2001: 157).

As is well-known now, Lotman has derived his semiosphere from Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky's *biosphere* and *noosphere* (2001: 123, 125), and their rapport has received much critical attention recently (Kull 1998; 1999; Mandelker 1994; 1995; Mikulinsky 1984; Samson, Pitt 1999; Alexandrov 2000; M. Lotman 2001). Not a Slavist nor biologist by training, I have benefited from these studies, and in particular, am personally indebted to Professor Kull for his correspondence regarding the Lotman-Vernadsky links and the research he has done.<sup>8</sup> From the perspective of influence study, the possible rapports between Vernadsky and Lotman and between Jakob von Uexküll and Lotman would be worthy topics for further enquiry. Let it suffice to make the following brief comment.

As a closed geometrical figure or form, whether regular or irregular, symmetrical or asymmetrical, the sphere is a semiotic construct. Because of the long tradition of usage where it iconically stands for celestial bodies, including the Earth, and the popular references to the components of geosphere, viz. lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere, one tends to take what it stands for as empirical facts, and confuse genesis with metagenesis (Koch 1991: 214), or, in Popper's words, world-1 with world-3 knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Such is the case of biosphere. Lotman comments on Vernadsky's terms,

We should caution against confusing the term noosphere, introduced by V. I. Vernadskii, with the concept of semiosphere, which is our contribution. The noosphere is a specific stage in the development of the biosphere, a stage associated with the rational activity of man [...]. The noosphere is formed

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<sup>8</sup> E-mail correspondence with the author, dated 16 January 16, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> According to Koch, there is a "mirror-like difference" between genetic and metagenetic evolution. While genesis proceeds "from the general primum (e.g. atom) to a genetical secundum (e.g. molecule)", metagenesis "proceeds, in its process of the neural reflection of the outward world, from what is, in the eyes of overall evolution and genesis, posterior (e.g. the human body) to what is prior (e.g. geographical landscape, mountains)" (Koch 1991: 214).

when human reason acquires a dominant role in this process. Whereas the noosphere has a material and spatial existence that embraces part of our planet, the space of the semiosphere is abstract in nature. However, this by no means implies that the concept of space is used here in a metaphorical sense. It is a specific sphere, with the same attributes that are ascribed to a closed space. (Lotman 1989: 43)

Let us put aside Lotman's rather arbitrary assertion that the noosphere is material and the semiosphere abstract (but "specific" [Sic!]) as well as his curious argument that no metaphor is being used for his concept of space — our list above proves the contrary. The point is that not only is the noosphere a semiotic construct, like the semiosphere, but also is the biosphere or geosphere a construct. The only difference is that one tends to verify or falsify the other empirically a priori spheres by scientific observations and experiments, whereas one may not verify or falsify noosphere and semiosphere with the same methods. In fact, from our point of view, both noosphere and semiosphere take semiotics to construct and thus contribute to the so-called world-3 knowledge.

Before moving to the next topic of semiosphere as model, let me conclude this discussion by quoting Mihhail Lotman's well-balanced observation which he made in Taiwan in 2001:

The relationship between semiosphere and biosphere is the relationship between two possible worlds. They exist, so to say, in parallel: while biosphere is formed in accordance with laws of science (physics, biology, etc.), which is the realm of time and causality, [the] semiosphere is formed by means of semiotic mechanisms. (M. Lotman 2001: 100)

With the problematic of the two kinds of sphere's parallelism or convergence bracketed, I would return to the topic of language, which, I believe, constitutes what Mihhail Lotman means by "semiotic mechanisms".

We could agree with Lotman that the sphere, as micro-structure, is an icon (What else can it be?) and when temporalised, that is, from the macro-structural perspective, the dynamic, evolutionary semiosphere, together with the biosphere and noosphere, may be conceptualised, i.e., via the secondary indexisation and tertiary symbolisation, as an iconic continuum. In its most abstract form, i.e., as the micro-structure circle, the sphere no doubt conforms to what Sebeok and Danesi mean by model: "[A] form that has been imagined or made externally (through some physical medium) to stand for an object, event, feeling,

etc., known as a referent, or for a class of similar (or related) objects, events, feelings, etc., known as referential domain” (Sebeok, Danesi 2000: 2). This iconic sign may indeed in some aspect stand for something to someone. But when the icon is taken too literally, i.e., resembling a circle, and its iconicity too metaphorically, i.e., any kind of delimited space, so that it can be generalised as a master-sign that claims to embrace and subsume all the cultural and natural phenomena, then it loses its function and attraction as a model and fails to serve as a discovery procedure. This may have been what has happened to some generalisations of Peircian universe of the mind. Now among the items listed above, it is dubious if they can be grouped as referential domain precisely because the expression seems to be capable of content (i.e., reference) free.<sup>10</sup> Whereas a Peircian would regard every thought-sign iconic and therefore the human mind an infinite semiosis of iconicity, that is, “a continuous extension in space” (Peirce, CP 6.277); others have cautioned against using extending space as a semiotic model. Greimas and Courtés, for one, have this to say: “When all the different metaphorical uses of this word [space] are added together, one can see that the use of the term space requires great prudence on the semiotician’s part” (Greimas, Courtés 1982: 305).

We recall Lotman has designated the semiosphere as pre-requisite to language, a prior space only on which can language communication be enacted. From the perspective of mereology, the universe of semiosphere is indeed larger than that of language. However, qua model, the semiosphere is confronted with a dilemma: On the one hand, it has to be a “minimalist” abstraction (Merrell 1998: 153), the condition of which may be fulfilled by the iconic sphere; on the other, it should function to “constitute an entire system dictating semantic rules” and to provide “both descriptive and explanatory adequacy for a successful theory” (Merrell 1991: 257).<sup>11</sup> How does one get across

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<sup>10</sup> Much has been discussed about iconicity as modeling. In addition to diagrams, maps, metaphors, and images, almost ever instance of representation of human thinking is iconic in its firstness. See, for example, Spinks (1991).

<sup>11</sup> Floyd Merrell, in commenting on Ernest H. Hutten’s concept of model, has this to say: “A model specifies the meaning of an entire theoretical corpus. It prescribes a context and provides a universe of discourse, setting the very limits to what can and cannot be said, thus establishing a theory’s content and the logical range of the propositions. Moreover, a model, in addition to its metaphorical character, is not limited to a single expression, or even to a series of expressions.

this dilemma, or in Mihhail Lotman's phrase, the paradoxes of semiosphere (2001)?

Following Mihhail Lotman, one could suggest that the semiosphere is a holistic world model, one of metagenesis, in connection with which semiotics serves a metadiscipline (Koch 1991). By proposing this alternative we can hope to solve the afore-mentioned problem of semantic imprecision and semiotic border-crossings. When one assumes this holistic perspective (if possible at all!), inter-systemic intricacies and mechanisms of system mutations often retreat or even vanish from the horizon of perception.

As our preliminary list of the dozen categories (semantic areas) suggests, the semiosphere as world model provides ample space for the practice and interaction of multiple semiotic systems. However these categories can be grouped in different orders, whether as genre, collection of texts, or academic discipline, they belong to the discursive structure within the framework of subject and object relation, that is, the human subject's appellation and/or interpretation of supposedly extra-linguistic referents or contexts. In other words, linguistic semiosis (signification and communication) is always already there. Whereas natural languages are capable of making abstract semantic categories explicit — this is also seen in "the sphere of the detective story", some of the semiotic systems identified by Lotman, such as the sphere of the "extraordinary", are noted only for their semantic implicitness.

One final word about the use of semiosphere from the cross-cultural perspective. Among the cultural mechanisms which Lotman and his colleagues have identified (M. Lotman 2001), dialogue and translation figure prominently. With Lotman, dialogue as well as translation, in their continued process of emission and transmission of energy, can be enacted not only between historical periods of one culture, but also between inter-cultural and cross-cultural systems. A profound semiotician and cultural historian, Lotman will continue to shed light on our discipline of comparative culture with his insight into the possibility of intercultural dialogue. With this high tribute I beg to conclude my paper.

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It constitutes an entire system dictating semantic rules for future propositions. The system, so to speak, provides for both descriptive and explanatory adequacy for a successful theory. In short, a model functions as if it were an exceedingly complex and systematic metaphor, or, in a manner of speaking, an allegory" (Merrell 1991: 257).

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**Является ли язык первичной моделирующей системой? О  
понятии семиосферы у Юрия Лотмана**

Широко известное лотмановское разделение на первичные и вторичные моделирующие системы надолго стало “ярлыком” для того, к чему это “приклеивалось”, подвергаясь модификации и опровержению со стороны семиотиков культуры и природы. Как приверженцы этой теории, так и пытающиеся ее модифицировать или опровергнуть, фокусировались на вопросе, является ли язык первичной моделирующей системой, и если нет, то какая альтернатива могла бы занять это место. Как предложил Томас Себеок (для биосемиозиса и для антропосемиозиса), язык может быть только вторичной моделирующей системой, надстраиваемой над биологическим опытом умельта или человеческой сенсорной системы. Данная статья предлагает исследовать возможность выделения “довербальной” моделирующей системы, исходя из лотмановского понятия семиосферы, и обсудить ее возможные применения в межкультурном диалоге.

**Kas keel on esmane modelleeriv süsteem?  
Juri Lotmani mõistest ‘semiosfäär’**

Juri Lotmani tuntud dihhotoomia — primaarne modelleeriv süsteem vs sekundaarne modelleeriv süsteem — on pikka aega hoidnud ärevil semiootikute meeli. Nii selle teooria pooldajad, modifitseerijad kui ka eitajad keskenduvad seejuures põhiküsimusele: kas keel on primaarne modelleeriv süsteem? Ja kui ei ole, siis mis võiks seda kohta täita? Thomas Sebeok pakkus välja nii antro- kui biosemioosi ühendades, et keel võib olla vaid sekundaarne modelleeriv süsteem, järgnedes maailma või inimese sensoorse süsteemi bioloogilisele kogemusele. Artiklis pakutakse välja J. Lotmani semiosfääri mõistest lähtuv “eelverbaalne” modelleeriv süsteem, ja arutletakse selle võimalikke implikatsioone kultuuridevahelises dialoogis.

# **Modeling, dialogue, and globality: Biosemiotics and semiotics of self.**

## **1. Semiosis, modeling, and dialogism**

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**Abstract.** With our paper we intend to offer a critical overview of state of the art in semiotics, with specific reference to theoretical problems concerning the relationship between culture and nature. In other words, we intend to focus on the relationship between the concepts of semiosphere (Lotman) and biosphere (Vernadsky) considering the various approaches to this issue and proposing our own point of view. An important reference for a valid overview view of semiotics today is the Handbook *Semiotik/Semiotics*. It is no incident that the subtitle of this work is *A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture*. In this handbook a fundamental role is carried out by Thomas A. Sebeok and his particular approach to semiotics, which may be designated as 'global semiotics'. One of the pivotal concepts in Sebeok's global semiotics is that of modeling which traverses nature and culture. This concept connects natural semiosis and cultural semiosis and ensues in an original formulation of the relationship between the notions of 'semiosphere' and 'biosphere'. Such problematics respond to semiotic research in Tartu today, especially as it finds expression in the present journal. And, in fact, as in his book of 2001, *Global Semiotics*, Sebeok often underlined the importance of the Estonian connection himself in his writings for the development of semiotics.

### **From global semiotics onwards**

This paper proposes a critical overview of semiotics today. For a description and analysis of the state of the art an important point of reference is *Semiotik/Semiotics. A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture*, edited by Roland Posner, Klaus



Robering, Thomas A. Sebeok, 1997–2003. This work includes four volumes (the fourth is forthcoming) of more than 3000 pages with 178 articles written by 175 authors from 25 countries. As such it may be considered as a representation of the general state of research in descriptive and applied semiotics compared with other single disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches including medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, economics, mathematics, logic, grammar, stylistics, poetics, musicology, aesthetics, philosophy, etc.

This handbook studies sign processes in human cultures as well in non-human animals, in their orientation, perception and communication activities, in the metabolism of all living organisms generally, therefore in the behaviour of all living beings. In relation to human culture it deals with social institutions, everyday human communication, information processing in machines, knowledge and scientific research, the production and interpretation of works in literature, music, art and so forth.

Semiotics owes to Sebeok its current configuration as 'global semiotics'. By virtue of this 'global' or 'holistic' approach, Sebeok's research into the 'life of signs' may immediately be associated with his concern for the 'signs of life'. In his view, *semiosis* and *life* coincide (however, for a critical discussion of 'the relationships between the concepts of life process and sign process', arguing against what he considers the danger of oversimplifying equations, see Kull 2002). *Semiosis* originates with the first stirrings of life, which leads to his formulation of an axiom he believes cardinal to semiotics: 'semiosis is the criterial attribute of life'. Semiotics provides a point of convergence and observation post for studies on the life of signs and the signs of life. Moreover, Sebeok's global approach to sign life presupposes his critique of anthropocentric and glottocentric semiotic theory and practice. In his explorations of the boundaries and margins of the science or (as he also calls it) 'doctrine' of signs he opens the field to include *zoosemiotics* (a term he introduced in 1963) or even more broadly *biosemiotics*, on the one hand, and *endosemiotics*, on the other (see Sebeok, 'Biosemiotics. Its roots, proliferations, and prospects', in Sebeok 2001: 31–43). In Sebeok's conception, the sign science is not only the 'science qui étudie la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale' (Saussure), that is, the study of communication in culture, but also the study of communicative behaviour in a biosemiotic perspective.

The object of global semiotics, of semiotics of life, is the *semiosphere*. This term is taken from Juri M. Lotman (1990) but is understood by Sebeok ('Global semiotics',<sup>1</sup> Sebeok 2001: 1–16) in a far more extended sense than Lotman's. In fact, the latter limited the sphere of reference of the term 'semiosphere' to human culture and claimed that outside the semiosphere thus understood, there is no communication (cf. Lotman 1990: 123–124). On the contrary, in the perspective of global semiotics where *semiosis* coincides with *life* (in this sense we may also call it 'semiotics of life'), the *semiosphere* identifies with the *biosphere*, term coined in Russian by Vladimir Vernadskij in 1926, and emerges therefore as the *semiobiosphere*. Global semiotics is in a position to evidence the extension and consistency of the sign network which obviously includes the *semiosphere* in Lotman's sense as constructed by human beings, by human culture, signs, symbols and artifacts, etc. But *global semiotics* underlines the fact that the semiosphere is part of a *far broader semiosphere*, the *semiobiosphere*, a sign network human beings have never left, and to the extent that they are *living beings*, never will.

### Another meaning of 'semiotics'

We may add another meaning of 'semiotics' in addition to the general science of signs: that is, as indicating *the specificity of human semiosis*. Sebeok elaborates this concept in a text of 1989 'Semiosis and semiotics: what lies in their future?', now Chapter 9 of his book *A Sign is Just a Sign* (1991: 97–99). We consider it of crucial importance for a transcendental founding of semiotics given that it explains how semiotics as a science and metascience is possible. Says Sebeok:

Semiotics is an exclusively human style of inquiry, consisting of the contemplation — whether informally or in formalized fashion — of semiosis. This search will, it is safe to predict, continue at least as long as our genus survives, much as it has existed, for about three million years, in the successive expressions of *Homo*, variously labeled — reflecting, among other attributes, a growth in brain capacity with concomitant cognitive abilities —

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<sup>1</sup> Global Semiotics. Plenary lecture delivered on June 18, 1994 as Honorary President of the Fifth Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, held at the University of California, Berkeley. Published in Sebeok 2001: 1–16.

*habilis, erectus, sapiens, neanderthalensis*, and now *s. sapiens*. Semiotics, in other words, simply points to the universal propensity of the human mind for reverie focused specularly inward upon its own long-term cognitive strategy and daily maneuverings. Locke designated this quest as a search for 'humane understanding'; Peirce, as 'the play of musement'. (Sebeok 1991: 97)

This meaning of semiotics is implicitly connected with the general plan of *Semiotik/Semiotics* and its typology of semiosis.

In the world of life, which coincides with semiosis (see Sebeok 1997: 436–437), human semiosis is characterized as *metasemiosis*, that is, as the possibility of reflecting on signs. This means to make signs not only the object of interpretation not distinguishable from the immediate response to these signs, but also of interpretation understood as reflection on signs, as the suspension of response and possibility of deliberation. We may call this specific human capacity for metasemiosis 'semiotics'. Developing Aristotle's correct observation, made at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, that man tends by nature to knowledge, we could say that man tends by nature to semiotics (see Petrilli 1998).

Human semiosis or anthroposemiosis is characterized as *semiotics*.

### Substitution and interpretation

Semiosis is an event in which something functions as a sign. We find the standard notion of semiotics in Article 1, 'Semiotics and its presentation', of *Semiotik/Semiotics*:

We therefore stipulate that the following is a necessary and sufficient condition for something to be a semiosis: *A* interprets *B* as representing *C*. In this relational characterization of semiosis, *A* is the interpreter, *B* is some object, property, relation, event, or state of affairs, and *C* is the meaning that *A* assigns to *B*. (Posner 1997a: 4)

In a Peircean definition, *A* is viewed as the *Interpretant* that some interpreter uses to relate *B*, the Representamen, to *C*, the Object.

According to Sebeok (1994: 10–14), the Object (*O*) as well as the Interpretant (*I*) are Signs. Consequently, we may rewrite *O* as  $S_{O_n}$  and *I* as  $S_{I_n}$ , so that both the first distinction and the second are resolved in two sorts of signs.

In our opinion, the sign is firstly an interpretant (cf. Petrilli 1998: 3–4) in accordance with Peirce who reformulated the classic notion of *substitution*, in the medieval expression above, in terms of *interpretation*.

In fact, the Peircean terms of the sign include what we may call the *interpreted* sign, on the side of the object, and the *interpretant*, in a relation where the interpretant is what makes the interpreted sign possible. The interpreted becomes a *sign* component because it receives an interpretation. But the interpretant in turn is also a sign component with a potential for engendering a new sign. Therefore, where there is a sign, there are immediately two, and given that the interpretant can engender a new sign, there are immediately three, and so forth as conceived by Peirce with his notion of *infinite semiosis*, which describes semiosis as a chain of deferrals from one interpretant to another.

To analyze the sign beginning from the object of interpretation, that is, the interpreted, means to begin from a secondary level. In other words, to begin from the object-interpreted means to begin from a point in the chain of deferrals, or semiotic chain, which cannot be considered as the starting point. Nor can the interpreted be privileged by way of abstraction at a theoretical level to explain the workings of sign processes. An example: a spot on the skin is a sign insofar as it may be interpreted as a symptom of sickness of the liver: this is already a secondary level in the interpretive process. At a primary level, retrospectively, the skin disorder is an interpretation enacted by the organism itself in relation to an anomaly which is disturbing it and to which it responds. The skin disorder is already in itself an interpretant response.

To say that the sign in the first place is an interpretant means that the sign is firstly a response. We could also say that the sign is a reaction: but only on the condition that by 'reaction' we understand 'interpretation' (similarly to Morris's behaviourism, but differently from the mechanistic approach). To avoid superficial associations with the approaches they respectively recall, the expression 'solicitation-response' is preferable with respect to the expression 'stimulus-reaction'. Even a 'direct' response to a stimulus, or better solicitation, is never direct but 'mediated' by an interpretation. Unless it is a 'reflex action', the formulation of a response involves identifying the solicitation, situating it in a context, and relating it to given behavioural parameters (whether a question of simple types of beha-

viour, e.g., the prey-predator model, or more complex behaviours connected with cultural values, as in the human world).

The sign is firstly an interpretant, a response through which, on the one hand, something else is considered as a sign and becomes its interpreted, and which, on the other, may engender an infinite chain of signs.

In sum, in Peirce's view, semiosis is a triadic process and relation whose components include sign (or representamen), object and interpretant. 'A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object' (CP 2.274). Therefore, the sign stands for something, its object 'not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea' (CP 2.228). However, a sign can only do this if it determines the interpretant which is 'mediately determined by that object' (CP 8.343): semiosis is action of sign and action on sign, activity and passivity. 'A sign mediates between the *interpretant* sign and its object' insofar as it refers to its object under a certain respect or idea, the ground, and determines the interpretant 'in such a way as to bring the interpretant into a relation to the object, corresponding to its own relation to the object' (CP 8.332).

Thanks to what we call 'semiotic materiality', the interpreted object has its own consistency, a capacity to resist just any interpretation, which the interpretant will have to take into account and adjust to. What is interpreted and becomes a sign because of this — whether it be an utterance or a whole line of conduct (verbal and nonverbal), or a written text, or a dream, or a somatic symptom — does not lie at the mercy of a single interpretant. This is so because the interpreted is open to several interpretations and is therefore the place where numerous interpretive routes intersect.

Semiotics must reflect upon the conditions of possibility of what Husserl calls the already given, already done, already constituted, already determined world. And this is necessary to critical analysis of the world's current configuration, with a view to alternative planning. We might say that semiotics carries out the overall task of what Husserl calls *constitutive phenomenology*. As he shows in particular in *Erfahrung und Urteil* [*Experience and judgement*], 1948, the aim of *constitutive phenomenology* is to clarify the entire complex of operations leading to the constitution of a *possible world*. To investigate

how the world is formed means to deal with the essential form of the world in general and not our real effectively existent world. This means to investigate the modeling structures and processes of the human world not simply in terms of factuality, reality and history but also in terms of potential and possibility. Such an investigation is specific also in the sense that it deals with a species-specific modality of constructing the world. In fact, unlike other animals, the human animal is characterized by its capacity for constructing innumerable possible worlds. With Sebeok we call the human *modeling device* of the world 'language'. Such a capacity exists uniquely in the human species, because unlike all other species only humans are able to construct innumerable real or imaginary, concrete or fantastic worlds and not just a single world (cf. Sebeok 1991).

### Semiosis and dialogism

The interpretant of a sign is another sign which the first creates in the interpreter, 'an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign' (CP 2.228). Therefore the interpretant sign cannot be identical to the interpreted sign; it cannot be a repetition, precisely because it is *mediated*, interpretive and therefore always new. With respect to the first sign, the interpretant is a *response*, and as such it inaugurates a new sign process, a new semiosis. In this sense it is a more developed sign. As a sign the interpretant determines another sign which acts, in turn, as an interpretant: therefore, the interpretant opens to new semioses, it develops the sign process, it is a new sign occurrence. Indeed, we may state that every time there is a sign occurrence, including the 'First Sign', we have a 'Third', something that is mediated, a response, an interpretive novelty, an interpretant. This confirms our statement that a sign is constitutively an interpretant. The fact that the interpretant (Third) is in turn a sign (First), and that the sign (First) is in turn an interpretant (is already a Third) contextualizes the sign in an open network of interpretants according to the Peircean principle of infinite semiosis or endless series of interpretants (cf. CP 1.339).

Therefore, the meaning of a sign is a response, an interpretant that calls for another response, another interpretant. This implies *the dialogic nature of sign and semiosis*. A sign has its meaning in another sign which responds to it and which in turn is a sign if there is

another sign to respond to it and interpret it, and so forth ad infinitum. In our terminology (Ponzio 1985; 1990b; Ponzio *et al.* 1999) the 'First Sign' in the triadic relation of semiosis, the object that receives meaning, is the *interpreted*, and what confers meaning is the interpretant which may be of two main types.

The interpretant which enables recognition of the sign is an *interpretant of identification*, it is connected with the signal, code and sign system. The specific interpretant of a sign, that which interprets the actual sense, is the *interpretant of answering comprehension*. This second type of interpretant does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted, but rather expresses its properly pragmatic meaning, installing with it a relation of involvement and participation: the interpretant responds to the interpreted and takes a stand towards it.

This bifocal conception of the interpretant is in line with Peirce's semiotics, which is inseparable from his pragmatism. In a letter of 1904 to Victoria Welby, Peirce wrote that if we take a sign in a broad sense, its interpretant is not necessarily a sign, but an action or experience, or even just a feeling (cf. *CP* 8.332). Here, on considering the interpretant as not being necessarily a sign, Peirce is using the term 'sign' in a strict sense. In fact the interpretant understood as a response that signifies, that renders something significant and that consequently becomes a sign cannot be anything else but a sign occurrence, a semiotic act, even when a question of an action or feeling. In any case, we are dealing with what we are calling an 'interpretant of answering comprehension', and therefore a sign.

### **Semiosis as a prerogative of organisms**

In his article 'The evolution of semiosis', Sebeok (1997: 436) discusses the question 'what is semiosis?' citing Morris (1946: 253), who defined semiosis as 'a process in which something is a sign to some organism'. This definition implies effectively and ineluctably, says Sebeok, that in semiotic processes there must be a living entity, which means that there could not have been semiosis prior to the evolution of life.

For this reason one must, for example, assume that the report, in the King James version of the Bible (*Genesis* I: 3), quoting God as having said 'Let there be light,' must be a misrepresentation; what God probably said was 'let

there be photons,\* because the sensation of perception of electromagnetic radiation in the form of optical signals, that is, luminance, requires a living interpreter, and the animation of matter did not come to pass much earlier than about 3,900 million years ago. (Sebeok 1997: 436)

Let us return to Morris's definition. 'Signs', says Morris, 'are therefore described and differentiated in terms of the dispositions to behaviour which they cause in their interpreters' (Morris 1971: 75).

### Semiosis as biosemiosis

In 'The evolution of semiosis' Sebeok discusses the question of the cosmos before semiosis and after the beginning of the Universe with reference to the regnant paradigm of modern cosmology, that is the Big Bang theory. Before the appearance of life on our planet — the first traces of which date back to the so-called Archaean Aeon, from 3,900 to 2,500 million years ago — there were only physical phenomena involving interactions of nonbiological atoms and, later, of inorganic molecules. Such interactions may be described as 'quasi-semiotic'. But the notion of quasi-semiosis must be distinguished from that of 'protosemiosis' as understood by the Italian oncologist Giorgio Prodi (1977) (to whom is dedicated as a 'bold trailblazer of contemporary biosemiotics' the milestone volume *Biosemiotics*, edited by Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1992). In fact, in the case of physical phenomena the notion of 'protosemiosis' is only a metaphorical expression. In Sebeok's view, to semiosis must be assigned that which concerns life. He distinguishes nonbiological interactions from 'primitive communication', which refers to transfer of information-containing endoparticles, such as exists in neuron assemblies where such transfer is managed in modern cells by protein particles.

Since there is not a single example of life outside our terrestrial biosphere, the question of whether there is life/semiosis elsewhere in our galaxy, let alone in deep space, is wide open. Therefore — says Sebeok — one cannot but hold 'exobiology semiotics' and 'extra-terrestrial semiotics' to be twin sciences that so far remain without a subject matter (cf. Sebeok 1997: 437).

In the light of present-day information, all this implies that at least one link in the semiotic loop must necessarily be a living and terrestrial entity, which may simply be a portion of an organism, or



even an artifactual extension fabricated by a human being. Semiosis is after all terrestrial biosemiosis. A pivotal concept in Sebeok's research as well as in the *Semiotik/Semiotics* handbook is the identification of semiosis and life. On one hand semiosis is considered as the criterial feature that distinguishes the animate from the inanimate, on the other, sign processes have not always existed in the course of the development of the universe: sign processes and the animate originated together with the development of life. Identification of semiosis and life invests biosemiotics with a completely different role from that conceived by Umberto Eco (1975) when he refers to 'the inferior threshold of semiotics', or from its more reductive interpretation as a sector of semiotics which in his view is a cultural science. In Sebeok's research semiotics is interpreted and practiced as a life science, as biosemiotics.

This conception of semiosis as biosemiosis is the object of Article 19, 'Biosemiose' ['Biosemiosis'] by Thure von Uexküll in *S/S* (T. v. Uexküll 1997; see also T. v. Uexküll 1992; Sebeok *et al.* 1999). In this article, Th. von Uexküll distinguishes between three different kinds of semiosis characterized by differences in the roles of emitter and receiver. Th. von Uexküll calls these three kinds of semiosis:

- (1) *semiosis of information or signification*;
- (2) *semiosis of symptomatization*;
- (3) *semiosis of communication*.

In *semiosis of information or signification* we have an inanimate environment which acts as a 'quasi-emitter' without a semiotic function. The receiver, i.e., a living entity, a living system, which makes whatever it receives meaningful via its receptors, must perform all semiotic functions. In *semiosis of symptomatization* the emitter is a living being sending out signals through its behaviour or posture which are not directed towards a receiver and do not await an answer. The receiver receives signals as signs called 'symptoms'. In *semiosis of communication* signs are emitted for the receiver and must find the meaning intended by the emitter (cf. T. v. Uexküll 1997: 449–450).

### **Reformulating Thure von Uexküll's typology of semiosis**

In our terminology and in accordance with Peirce, these three kinds of semiosis, which are characterized by differences in the role played by emitter and receiver, may be reformulated in terms of differences in

the roles of the interpretant sign and the interpreted sign. We can say that

(1) the *interpreted* may become a *sign* only because it receives an interpretation from the interpretant, which is a response (*semiosis of information*); or

(2) before its interpretation as a sign by the interpretant, the interpreted is itself an interpretant response (*symptom*) which however is not oriented to being interpreted as a sign (*semiosis of symptomatization*);

(3) before its interpretation as a sign by the interpretant, the interpreted is itself an interpretant response which is now directed at being interpreted as a sign, i.e., it calls for another interpretant response (*semiosis of communication*). Our reformulation of Th. von Uexküll's typology of semiosis, distinguished by differences in participation in interpretation by the interpreted and interpretant, presents some advantages over the conception of semiotic differences established on the basis of 'emitter' and 'receiver' participation. We believe that our reformulation:

- (a) emphasizes the role of the interpretant in semiosis;
- (b) explains the meaning of 'the inanimate quasi-interpreter' in *semiosis of information or signification* as the 'interpreted-non-interpretant' (while in *semiosis of symptomatization* the interpreted is an interpretant-interpreted which is not directed at being interpreted as a sign; and in *semiosis of communication* the interpreted is an interpreted-interpretant directed at being interpreted as a sign);
- (c) identifies semiosis with the capacity for interpretation, i.e., for response;
- (d) confirms the importance of the pragmatic dimension in semiosis;
- (e) is in line with Th. von Uexküll's definition of biosemiotics as 'interpretation of interpretation', or, in a word, 'metainterpretation'. Semiosis of information or signification, semiosis of symptomatization, and semiosis of communication are founded in a specific type of modeling characteristic of a specific life form. The capacity of a species for modeling is required as an a priori for processing and interpreting perceptual input in its own way.

Thus we may say with Sebeok:

As Peirce (CP 1.358) taught us, 'every thought is a sign', but as he also wrote (CP 5.551), 'Not only is thought in the organic world, but it develops there.'

Every mental model is, of course, also a sign; and not only is modeling an indispensable characteristic of the human world, but also it permeates the entire organic world, where, indeed, it developed. The animals' *milieu extérieur* and *milieu intérieur*, as well as the feedback links between them are created and sustained by such models. A model in this general sense is a semiotic production with carefully stated assumptions and rules for biological operations. (Sebeok 1991: 57)

### Centrality of the interpretant in semiotic processes

Thure von Uexküll's model is so broad as to include sign processes from microsemiosis and endosemiosis to semiosis of higher organisms through to human biosemiotic metainterpretation. This model covers most of the complete catalogue of elements postulated for semiosis in Article 5, 'Model of semiosis', by Martin Krampen (1997).

Krampen's semiotic matrix is centered on the notion of *interpretant*. In fact, as we have already stated, the interpretant mediates between *solicitation* (interpretandum) and *response* (signaling behaviour or instrumental behaviour). In Peirce's view such mediation is what distinguishes a semiosis from a mere dynamical action — 'or action of brute force' — which takes place between the terms forming a pair. On the contrary, semiosis results from a triadic relation. It 'is an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant', nor is it 'in any way resolvable into action between pairs' (CP 5.484). The interpretant does not occur in physical phenomena or in nonbiological interactions, in short, in the inorganic world. As a consequence, Morris defines semiosis as 'a process in which something is a sign to some organism' (Morris 1971: 336). This definition according to our previous statements must not only be interpreted restrictively as referring to a whole organism, but also in a wider sense as referring to any living being or living system whatever.

In the article 'Models of semiosis' the semiotic matrix is also used to discuss the various types of semioses postulated in the history of semiotics. Consequently, the famous 'functional cycle' described by Jakob von Uexküll (1982) — this 'pivotal model', this 'simple albeit not linear, diagram', which 'constitutes a cybernetic theory of modeling so fundamental that the evolution of language cannot be grasped without it' (Sebeok 1994: 122) — may be represented within the semiotic matrix.

## The dialogic nature of signs

Dialogue too is illustrated graphically through the semiotic matrix (cf. Krampen 1997: 260). The author of the article in question maintains that dialogue commences with signaling behaviour from a sender that intends to communicate something about an object. What is not taken into account is that the 'if ... then' inference, hypothesis formation, and 'chain of thought' are dialogic forms in themselves. Contrary to Krampen's view, for the 'if ... then' model or 'chain of thought' to have a dialogic form, it is not necessary that the 'if ... then' model should 'combine with the dialogic model' as when 'the semiosis of the former type triggers a signaling behaviour', nor that the 'chain of thought' should 'occur in the organisms of the participants' (Krampen 1997: 260).

In inference, in the hypothetical argument, and in the chain of interpreted and interpretant thought signs generally, dialogue is implied in the relation itself between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign (cf. Ponzio 1985; 1990a; 1997b; Ponzio *et al.* 1999). The degree of dialogism is minimal in deduction, where the relation between the premises and the conclusion is *indexical*: here, once the premises are accepted the conclusion is obligatory. In induction, which too is characterized by a unilinear inferential process, the conclusion is determined by habit and is of the *symbolic* type: identity and repetition dominate, though the relation between the premises and the conclusion is no longer obligatory. By contrast, in abduction the relation between premises and conclusion is *iconic* and is dialogic in a substantial sense, in other words, it is characterized by high degrees of dialogism and inventiveness as well as by a high-risk margin for error. To claim that abductive argumentative procedures are risky is to say that they are mostly tentative and hypothetical with only a minimal margin for convention (symbolicity) and mechanical necessity (indexicality). Therefore, abductive inferential processes engender sign processes at the highest levels of otherness and dialogism. Thus we may say that 'abductive reasoning' (see the excellent entry by Wirth 1998) is at once 'dialogic reasoning'.

In *Semiotik/Semiotics* a direct analysis of the concept of dialogism is lacking, and yet semiosis as evidenced in this handbook is a dialogic process. The relation between sign (interpreted) and interpretant, as understood by Peirce, is a *dialogic* relation. We have already evidenced *the dialogic nature of sign and semiosis*. In

*semiosis of information or signification* (T. v. Uexküll 1997), where an inanimate environment acts as a 'quasi-emitter' — or, in our terminology, where the *interpreted* becomes a *sign* only because it receives an interpretation by the interpretant, which is a response — receiver interpretation is dialogic. Not only is there dialogue in *semiosis of communication* (T. v. Uexküll 1997), where the interpreted itself, before its interpretation as a sign by the interpretant, is an interpretant response directed at being interpreted as a sign. But also there is dialogue in *semiosis of symptomatization* (T. v. Uexküll 1997), in which the interpreted itself is an interpretant response (*symptom*) that is not directed at being interpreted as a sign, as well as in *semiosis of information or signification*. Dialogue does not commence with signaling behaviour from a sender intending to communicate something about an object. The whole semiotic process is dialogic. 'Dialogic' may be intended as *dia-logic*. The *logic* of semiosis as a whole and consequently of Krampen's semiotic matrix is a *dia-logic*. The interpretant as such is 'a disposition to repond', an expression used by Krampen (1997: 259) to describe the dialogic interaction between a sender and receiver.

Krampen's semiotic matrix in fact confirms the connection we have established between dialogue and semiosis. In fact, it shows that the two terms coincide not only in the sense that dialogue is semiosis, but also in the sense that semiosis is dialogue, an aspect which Krampen would seem not to see. The dialogue process presented in the semiotic matrix is similar to the 'if ... then' semiotic process, to hypothesis formation, chain of thought, and functional cycle after Jakob von Uexküll. In the article by Krampen, the semiotic matrix illustrates dialogue with two squares which represent the two partners, that is the sender and the receiver, where each has its own rhombus representing the interpretant. Despite this division, the graphic representation of dialogue is not different from the author's diagrams representing other types of semiosis. It could be the model, for example, of an 'if ... then' semiosis in which the two distinct interpretants are the premises and the conclusion of an argument in a single chain of thought.

## Dialogism and the 'functional cycle'

J. von Uexküll's (1973) 'functional cycle' is a model for semiotic processes. As such it too has a dialogic structure and involves inferences of the 'if ... then' type which may even occur on a primitive level, as in Pavlovian semiosis or as prefigurements of the type of semiosis (where we have a 'quasi-mind' interpreter) taking place during cognitive inference.

In the 'functional cycle' the interpretandum produced by the 'objective connecting structure' becomes an interpretatum and (represented in the organism by a signaling disposition) is translated by the interpretant into a behavioural disposition which triggers a behaviour onto the 'connecting structure'. The point we wish to make is that in the 'functional cycle' thus described a dialogic relation is established between an interpreted (Interpretandum) and an interpretant (interpreted by another interpretant, and so forth) which does not limit itself to identifying the interpreted, but establishes an interactive relation with it.

Vice versa, not only does the 'functional cycle' have a dialogic structure, but dialogue in communication understood in a strict sense may also be analyzed in the light of the 'functional cycle'. In other words, the dialogic communicative relation between a sender that intends to communicate something about an object and a receiver may in turn be considered on the basis of the 'functional cycle' model. The type of dialogue in question here corresponds to the processes described by the 'functional cycle' as presented, in Th. von Uexküll's terminology, neither in *semiosis of information or signification* nor in *semiosis of symptomatization* but in *semiosis of communication*. Here the interpreted itself, before its interpretation as a sign by the interpretant, is an interpretant response addressed to somebody both to be identified and to receive the required *interpretant of answering comprehension*.

The theory of an autopoietic system is incompatible with a trivial conception of dialogue, whether this is based on the communication model which describes communication as a linear causal process moving from source to destination, or on the conversation model governed by the turning around together rule. Also, the autopoietic system calls for a new notion of creativity. Otherwise, one may ask with Nöth (1990: 180): 'how are processes such as creativity and learning compatible with the principle of autonomous closure?' As

Maturana (1978: 54–55) would suggest, creativity and dialogic exchange as opposed to communication understood as a linear process from source to destination or as a circular process in which the participants take turns in playing the part of sender and receiver, should be conceived as ‘pre- or anticommunicative interactions’.

### **Another contributor to semiotics**

We have already stated that in *Semiotik/Semiotics* a direct analysis of the concept of ‘dialogism’ is lacking. This weak point may be attributed to the fact that these pivotal concepts as developed by Bakhtin and his collaborators are not held in due consideration in this handbook, which nevertheless deals with the theory of signs in Mikhail M. Bakhtin and his ‘Circle’. Bakhtin’s semiotic conception is explained in Article 114 (‘Der Russische Formalismus’ [‘Russian Formalism’]), by Rainer Grübel (1998) which assembles under this title various other topics, including Vladimir Propp, Lev S. Vygotskij, Gustav Špet, Mikhail Bakhtin and his Circle as well as Russian Formalism. Other Russian contributions to the study of signs such as those by Roman Jakobson, Nikolaj Trubetzkoy, Juri M. Lotman and the Moscow-Tartu School are suitably treated in Articles 115, ‘Prague functionalism’ (Winner 1998), 116, ‘Jakobson and structuralism’ (Rudy, Waugh 1998), and 118, ‘Die Schule von Moskau und Tartu’ (‘The Moscow-Tartu School’, Fleischer 1998).

### **Dialogism and biosemiosis**

In Bakhtin’s view dialogue consists of the fact that one’s own word alludes always and in spite of itself, whether it knows it or not, to the word of the other. Dialogue is not an initiative taken by self. As clearly emerges from novels by Dostoevsky, the human person does not enter into dialogue with the other out of respect for the other, but rather and even predominantly out of contempt for the other. Even a person’s identity is dialogic. As we read in the entry ‘Dialogism’ in the *Encyclopedia of Semiotics* (Bouissac 1998), ‘even the self cannot coincide with itself, since one’s sense of the self is essentially a dialogic configuration’ (Fielder 1998: 192). The author then quotes a statement made by Bakhtin in ‘Discourse in the Novel’ (1934, in

Bakhtin 1981: 341): 'The ideological becoming of a human being [...] is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others' (Fielder 1998: 192). They also quote a statement by Voloshinov 1986: 86: 'word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee', with the comment that 'communication is grounded in dialogism' (Fielder 1998: 192).

The word and the self alike are dialogic in the sense that they are passively involved with the word and self of the other. Self is implied dialogically in otherness, just as the 'grotesque body' (Bakhtin 1965) is implied in the body of the other. In fact, dialogue and body are closely interconnected. Bakhtin's dialogism cannot be understood separately from his biosemiotic conception of sign on which basis he criticizes both subjective individualism and objective abstraction. According to Bakhtin, there cannot be dialogism among disembodied minds. Unlike platonic dialogue, and similarly to Dostoevsky, for Bakhtin dialogue is not only cognitive and functional to abstract truth, but rather it is a life need grounded in inevitable entanglement of self with other.

Dialogue is not a synthesis of multiple points of view, indeed it is refractory to synthesis. Therefore, Bakhtin opposes dialogue to unilinear and monologic dialectics. Dialogism emerges here as another *configuration of logic* which contrasts with both formal logic and dialectic logic and their monologic perspective. All this is excellently expressed by the author of the entry 'Dialogism' (Fielder 1998: 192) when he says that the term 'dialogic' must be understood not only as *dialog-ic* but also as *dia-logic*:

Understood in this way, dialogism undercuts the hegemonic assumption of a singular, rational form of logic. Bakhtin does not accept the linear, teleological trajectory of simplistic dialecticism, particularly the assumption that synthesis is actually ever realizable. Final and absolute agreement is not possible. Even the self cannot coincide with himself, since one's sense of the self is essentially a dialogic configuration. (Fielder 1998: 192)

Interpretation of the term 'dialogic' as 'dia-logic' validates our conviction (discussed elsewhere) that Bakhtin's main interpreters — Holquist, Todorov, Krysinsky, Wellek, etc., — have all fundamentally misunderstood Bakhtin and his concept of dialogue (cf. Ponzio's presentation in Bakhtin 1997). And this is confirmed by the fact that



they compare Bakhtin's concept of dialogue to its formulation by Martin Buber, Jean Mukarovsky, Plato. Above all, they all understand dialogue in the abused sense of encounter, agreement, convergence, compromise, synthesis. It is symptomatic that Todorov (1981) should have replaced the Bakhtinian term 'dialogue' with 'intertextuality', and 'metalinguistics' with 'translinguistics'.

Intertextuality reduces dialogue to a relation among utterances, while translinguistics, which unlike linguistics focuses on discourse rather than on language (*langue*), reduces the critical instance of metalinguistics to a sectorial specialization. This approach minimizes the revolutionary capacity of Bakhtin's thought — if it does not completely annul it! The 'Copernican revolution' operated by Bakhtin on a philosophical level and by Dostoevsky on an artistic level, concerns the human being as he is involved with his entire life, needs, thoughts, and behaviour in the life of others, not only the human other, but all living beings.

By contrast with Kant's 'critique of pure reason' and Sartre's 'critique of dialectic reason', Bakhtin inaugurates a 'critique of dialogic reason'.

Consciousness implies a dialogic relation including a witness and a judge. This dialogic relation is not only present in the strictly human world but also in the biological. Says Bakhtin:

When consciousness appeared in the world (in existence) and, perhaps, when biological life appeared (perhaps not only animals, but trees and grass also witness and judge), the world (existence) changed radically. A stone is still stony and the sun still sunny, but the event of existence as a whole (unfinalized) becomes completely different because a new and major character in this event appears for the first time on the scene of earthly existence — the witness and the judge. And the sun, while remaining physically the same, has changed because it has begun to be cognized by the witness and the judge. It has stopped simply being and has started being in itself and for itself [...] as well as for the other, because it has been reflected in the consciousness of the other [...]. (Bakhtin 1970–1971: 137)

For Bakhtin dialogue is the embodied, intercorporeal expression of the involvement of one's body, which is only illusorily an individual, separate, and autonomous body, with the body of the other. The image that most adequately expresses this is that of the 'grotesque body' (cf. Bakhtin 1965) in popular culture, in vulgar language of the public place, and above all in the masks of carnival. This is the body *in its vital and indissoluble relation to the world and to the body of others*.

The shift in focus from identity (whether individual, as in the case of consciousness of self, or collective, that is, a community, historical language, or cultural system at large) to alterity is a sort of *Copernican revolution* in itself (see Ponzio 1997a). With such a shift Bakhtinian critique of dialogic reason calls into question not only the general orientation of Western philosophy, but also the dominant cultural tendencies that engender it.

### The 'great experience' in Bakhtin's view of dialogism

In human beings architectonics becomes an 'architectonics of answerability', a semiotic consciousness of 'being-in-the-world-without-alibis'. It may be limited to a small sphere — i. e., a restricted life environment of the single individual, one's family, professional, working, ethnic religious group, culture, contemporaneity — or instead it may extend, as 'global semiotic' (the term is Sebeok's) consciousness, to the whole world in a planetary or solar, or even (as hoped by Victoria Welby) cosmic sense. Bakhtin distinguishes between 'small experience' and 'great experience'. The former is narrow-minded experience. Instead,

[...] in the great experience, the world does not coincide with itself (it is not what it is), it is not closed and finalized. In it there is memory which flows and fades away into the human depths of matter and of boundless life, experience of worlds and atoms. And for such memory the history of the single individual begins long before its cognitive acts (its cognizable 'Self'). (Bakhtin's 'Notes of 1950', in Bakhtin 1996: 99. Eng trans., our own)

We must not forget that in 1926 Bakhtin authored an article in which he discussed the biological and philosophical subject. This article appeared under the name of the biologist I. I. Kanaev, but unfortunately it is not even mentioned in the entry on Bakhtin included in *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*. In any case, this article is an important tessera for the reconstruction of Bakhtin's thought since his early studies. Similarly to the development of research by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll, in Bakhtin too we find an early interest specifically in biology in relation to the study of signs.

The article on vitalism was written during a period of frenzied activity for Bakhtin during the years 1924–1929, in Petersburg, then Leningrad.

In this productive period of his life he published four books on different subjects (Freud, Russian Formalism, philosophy of language, Dostoevsky's novel), of which only the last under his name, while the others (together with several articles) were signed by Voloshinov or Medvedev. Among Bakhtin's early articles we find 'Contemporary vitalism', of 1926, published in two parts in the popular scientific Russian journal *Man and Nature* (Nos. 1 and 2), signed by his friend, the biologist Kanaev. Bakhtin's authorship of 'Contemporary vitalism' has never been disputed.

Bakhtin's life in Leningrad was very difficult. Given the increasing seriousness of his illness (osteomyelitis) he qualified for a state pension which, however, was meager. Bakhtin lived in his new friend Kanaev's apartment for several years, from 1924 until 1927, where with his wife he occupied a big but sparsely furnished room described by Konstantin Vaginov, another friend from the 'Bakhtin Circle', as follows: 'Two motley blankets / Two shabby pillows / The beds stand side by side! But there are flowers in the window [...]. Books on the narrow shelves / And on the blankets people / A pale, bluish man / And his girlish wife' (Vaginov, 'Dva pestrykh odeyala...', quoted in Clark, Holquist 1984: 99).

Kanaev contributed to Bakhtin's interest in biology. Thanks to Kanaev Bakhtin, as he says in a note to his text 'Forms of time and the chronotope in the novel' (1937-1938, in Bakhtin 1981: 84), attended a lecture on the 'chronotope' in biology in the summer of 1925, held by the Leningrad physiologist Ukhtomsky. This lecture influenced Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope in the novel. And as Bakhtin further clarifies, 'in the lecture questions of aesthetics were also touched upon'. Ukhtomsky was also an attentive reader of Dostoevsky from whose novel the *Double* he derived his conception of the double's ghost as an obstacle to comprehending the interlocutor.

Bakhtin owes to the biological research of his time such as that carried out by Ukhtomsky (1966), the view of the relation of body and word as a dialogic relation in which the body responds to its environment modeling its world.

From this point of view Bakhtin's research can be associated with Jakob von Uexküll's. The latter is named in Bakhtin's text signed by Kanaev as one of the representatives of vitalism. In reality, Uexküll kept away from total adhesion to vitalism just as he remained constantly critical of conceptions of the behaviouristic and mechanistic type. As he was to state in his book of 1934 (cf. J. Uexküll

1967), he was not interested in how the organism-machine works but how the driver works. And Uexküll too was to find an explanation to life in the sign.

We may state, therefore, that both Uexküll and Bakhtin face the question of life in a semiotic perspective. Even if Bakhtin was to increasingly concern himself with problems connected with the literary sign, his dialogism is conceived in the context of research in biology, physiology (precisely the study of the central nervous system — Petersburg was one of the world centers in this field), physics, as well as in psychology and psychoanalysis. In particular, his concept of dialogism cannot be understood if it is not placed, with Uexküll's research in biology, on the line of development that leads to the contemporary field of biosemiotics (cf. T. v. Uexküll 1998: 2189–2190).

In 'Contemporary vitalism' Bakhtin's criticism of vitalism, that is, the conception which theorizes a special extramaterial force in living beings as the basis of life processes, is turned against Henry Bergson and specifically against the biologist Hans Driesch. The latter stated the difference between life and non-life and interpreted the organism's homeostasis in terms of radical autonomy from its surrounding environment. On the contrary, in his description of the interaction between organism and environment, Bakhtin, opposing the dualism of life force and physical-chemical processes, maintains that the organism forms a monistic unit with the surrounding world.

In his works of the 1920s Bakhtin criticizes both the vitalists and the reflexologists, as well as both Freudianism and mechanistic materialism (for instance the mechanistic view of the relation between base and superstructure). In Bakhtin's view, each of these different trends are vitiated by false scientific claims which underestimate the dialogic relation between body and world, which results in either dematerializing the living body or physicalizing it in terms of mechanistic relations. Bakhtin's reflection on signs is fundamental to such a critique. Reference to signs contributes to an understanding of both living and psychic processes as well as historical-cultural relations, such as that between base and superstructure. Another contribution to an adequate understanding of these processes ensues from replacing both unilinear and conclusive mechanical dialectics with the dialogic model. Jakob von Uexküll's research develops in the same way. For both Bakhtin and Uexküll the process under examination is a semiotic process. Though Uexküll does not use the

dialogic model explicitly, we have seen above how it is central to his famous 'functional cycle'.

### **Dialogism and the biosemiotic view in the 'Rabelaisian world'**

*Rabelais* occupies a place of central importance in the overall architectonics of Bakhtin's thinking. In contrast with oversimplifying and suffocating interpretations of Marxism, Bakhtin works on Marx's idea that the human being only comes to full realization when 'the reign of necessity ends'. Consequently, a social system that is effectively alternative to capitalism is one which considers *free time*, *available time*, and not work time, as the *real social wealth* (see Marx 1974 [1857]). In Bakhtin's language this is the 'time of non official festivity', which is closely connected to what he calls the 'great time' of literature.

Today's world of global communication is dominated by the ideology of production and efficiency. This is in complete contrast with the carnival worldview. Exasperated individualism associated with the logic of competition also characterizes the world of global communication. However, as much as production, efficiency, individualism, competition now represent dominant values, the structural presence of the grotesque body founded on intercorporeity, involvement of one's body with the body of others, cannot be ignored. The human being's vocation for the 'carnavalesque' has resisted. Literary writing testifies to this. Indeed, in Orwell's *1984*, the ultimate resistance to a social system dominated by the values of production and efficiency is offered by literature. In this sense we may say that literature (indeed art in general) is and always will be carnivalized.

To conclude: modeling and dialogism are pivotal concepts in the study of semiosis. Communication, information or signification, and symptommatization are all forms of semioses that presuppose modeling and dialogism. This is particularly evident if, in accordance with Peirce (who reformulates the classic notion of *substitution* in terms of *interpretation*), we consider the sign firstly as an interpretant, i.e. a dialogic response foreseen by a specific type of modeling.

## Binarism, triadism and dialogism

Concerning binarism in semiotics, the scope of semiotic enquiry as it appears in *Semiotik/Semiotics* as well as in Sebeok's global semiotics undoubtedly transcends the opposition between the semioticians with a Saussurean/Hjelmslevian/Greimasian orientation (see Larsen 1998; Johansen 1998; Parret 1998) and the semioticians of Peircean observance (cf. Pape 1998; and Paul Bouissac's article 'Semiotic terminology', in Bouissac 1998: 568–571). These two factions would seem to oppose *binarism* to *triadism*. However, the volumes forming *Semiotik/Semiotics* would seem to confirm our opinion that the heart of the matter does not at all lie in the opposition between binarism and triadism. Instead, of focal importance we believe is the opposition between a model of sign that tends to oversimplify things with respect to the complex process of semiosis and a semiotic model (as prospected by Peirce) that would seem to do more justice to the various aspects and factors of the process by which something is a sign. This is not merely achieved on the basis of an empty triadic form, but rather thanks to the specific contents of Peirce's triadism, in other words, thanks to the categories his triadism in fact consists of, the typology of sign it proposes, the dynamic model it offers by describing signs as grounded in *renvoi* from one interpretant to another. The categories of 'firstness', 'secondness', and 'thirdness', the triad 'representamen', 'interpretant', and 'object', characterization of the sign on the basis of its triple tendency towards symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity, enable us to emphasize and maintain in a semiotic perspective the *alterity* and *dialogism* constitutive of signs. In previous books and papers we have attempted to highlight the dialogic and polylogic character of Peircean logic. The merit does not go to the triadic formula. Proof for this is offered by Hegelian dialectic in which triadism, abstracted as it is from the constitutive dialogism of sign life, gives rise to metaphysical, abstract and monological dialectic. It is odd that in the entry 'Binarism' in *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*, the author should propose Hegelian philosophy as a means of overcoming the theory of binary opposition in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism (cf. Thibault 1998: 81). Bakhtin, in his 1970–1971 notebooks, gives a good explanation of how Hegelian monological dialectic is formed, showing how it actually has its roots in a vital dialogic sign context. The process consists in taking out the voices (division of voices) from dialogue, eliminating any (personal/emotional) intonations, and thus

transforming live words into abstract concepts and judgements, so that dialectic is obtained in the form of a single abstract consciousness. Peirce himself also took a stand against the systemic skeleton of Hegelian analysis, against dialectic intended as a kind of hypochondriac search for an end, that is, as being oriented unilaterally instead of being open and contradictory (on the relation between dialogue and dialectic in Peirce and Bakhtin, see Bonfantini, Ponzio 1986; Bonfantini *et al.* 1996).

The alternative in semiotics is not between binarism and triadism, but between *monologism* and *polylogism*.

### Language and writing

In Sebeok's view language was exapted for communication 'into speech, and later still, into other linear manifestations, such as script' (Sebeok 1997: 443). We have proposed (Ponzio *et al.* 1999) a distinction between 'script' or 'transcription' and 'writing'. In our opinion this distinction is as important as that between language and speech. We may use the term 'writing' for that characteristic of language understood as human modeling designated by Sebeok with the term 'syntax'.

Without distinguishing between script and writing — writing *avant la lettre* — it is not possible to free the mind from the widespread prejudice that in today's society writing is overwhelmed by other sign forms. Part of this prejudice is the thesis that nowadays the image dominates over writing, as though all forms of human sign production were not as such forms of writing. The fact is that we have a restricted view of writing. Accordingly, *writing* is identified with the *transcription* of oral language, which it merely registers, appearing as a sort of outer covering, subaltern and ancillary with respect to orality.

Thus considered writing is no more than mnemotechny (as in Plato). Such a restricted view is not only connected to the preconceived idea of the primacy of the oral word, of the *phoné*, and therefore to a prejudicial phonocentric order. It is also connected to a prejudicial view of an ethnocentric order. According to this perspective, writing — reduced to the status of transcription — would wrongly seem to be the prerogative of certain social forms and not others. It is thought to represent a fundamental stage in human history, a discriminating factor between prehistory and history, between 'cold'

societies devoid of history and 'warm' societies endowed with history, capable of evolution and historical memory.

Writing understood as transcription is connected to 'culture' in a narrow sense, according to which writing is opposed to 'non culture' and is thought to belong to the 'man of culture', with all the connections that writing thus described has with power and with the consolidation of relations of dominion of man over man. On the contrary, the capacity for writing as a species-specific capacity belongs to 'culture' in a broad sense, in an anthropological sense which opposes writing to 'nature', attributing it to man as such.

In reality, the invention of writing as transcription presupposes *writing* understood in a far more complex sense, and in a far broader temporal sphere than man's historical-cultural evolution, given that it concerns the very process of hominization, that is, the formation and evolution of the human species. Writing is a human species-specific modeling device through which the human being, resorting to various means — including one's body or external physical means —, organizes experience as well as surrounding reality both spatially and temporally conferring sense upon them and constructing whole worlds. The human being is capable of inventing new senses and constructing different worlds with the same means and elements. All animal species construct their own worlds in which things take on a given sense; the distinctive feature of the human species lies in the capacity to confer different senses upon the same elements, even limited in number, and to construct a plurality of possible worlds.

Thus intended the capacity for writing, '*ante litteram*' writing, writing antecedent to the written sign, to transcription, represents a fundamental stage in the hominization process antecedent to speech which is privileged with respect to other — even earlier — means of communication. Writing thus understood is not a means of communication like speaking and its transcription, but rather precedes and is the foundation of all forms of communication.

The development of speech and of relative verbal systems, that is, languages, presupposes writing. Without the capacity for writing man would not be in a position to articulate sounds and identify a limited number of distinctive features, phonemes, to be reproduced phonetically. Without the capacity for writing humans would not know how to assemble phonemes in different ways so as to form a great multiplicity of different words (monemes), nor would they know how to assemble words syntactically in different ways so as to form



utterances that are always different, expressing ever different meanings and senses.

And when, as in the case of deaf-mutes, the development of writing in the phonic form is impossible, writing — if adequately elicited — finds other possibilities of grafting (gesture, drawings) which (at times) allows for the noteworthy development of the language capacity unaccompanied by speech.

Today we are witnesses to a noteworthy development in languages which proliferate thanks to developments in technology as well as to encounters and exchanges among different cultures (closed frontiers and the assertion of community identity cannot obstacle such encounters and exchanges which obviously go far beyond market exchange). Nowadays writing understood in the broad sense described above has greater possibilities of manifesting itself in different ways. And thanks to language as described above, photography, cinema, television, videocassettes, computers represent new possibilities of writing increasing our capacity for the 'play of musement'. Furthermore, traditional forms of expression such as theatre, music, the figurative arts may now resort to new developments in technology to invent new forms of writing within their own spheres as well as through processes of reciprocal contamination leading to the formation of new expressive genres. Picture writing, design, photographic writing, film writing, musical writing should now all be reconsidered in this light and viewed as representing high levels in the manifestation and development of the creative need of writing understood as the capacity for language.

There is no question of the crisis of writing. No other historical era has ever been so rich in writing as the present. *We are now living in the civilization of writing*. And this fact should be stated emphatically to anyone who, confounding writing and the written sign, writing and transcription, should complain — through ignorance or for ideological reasons — about the 'loss' or 'debasement' of 'writing'.

These days what we especially need is a commitment to achieving the right conditions for the spread and free growth of writing systems, delivering them from any form of subjection to whomever holds control over communication. This is the real problem for education in writing. It is not a question of falsely opposing 'writing' to the 'image' in current forms of communication, but of the objective contradiction between continuing increase and expansion of writing, languages, the free 'play of musement' and increasing control over

communication, which is also increasing concentration of such control in the hand of a few.

Literary writing is another important place, and perhaps the earliest, where writing attains independence from transcription, that is, where the written sign attains independence from its ancillary function with respect to oral language, and therefore where writing is no longer reduced to mnemotechny. Today other forms of writing develop and supplement the work of literary writing.

Disengagement of literary writing, that is, disengagement with respect to the obligations characterizing other genres where writing figures as mere transcription, frees it from defined and circumscribed responsibilities, delimited by alibis. As writing and not as transcription, literary writing is refractory to any form of power that may obstruct it (see Orwell 1949). Such disengagement from (technical) partial and relative responsibility charges literary writing with the kind of (moral) responsibility that does not know limits (Bakhtin). This delivers man from all that which may obstruct the free manifestation of what characterizes him in his specificity as a human being: language, in other words, the possibility of the infinite play of constructing — and deconstructing — new possible worlds. The human lies in this nonfunctional, unproductive, freely creative play of writing, independent of need, an excess in relation to functionality, productivity, external to the 'reign of necessity' (Marx).

### **On the dimensions of semiosis: syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics**

In *Semiotik/Semiotics*, Chapter II, 'Systematics' (next after Posner's presentation), deals with the tripartition of semiotics into the three branches of *syntactics*, *semantics* and *pragmatics* (articles 2–4, respectively Posner, Robering 1997; Robering 1997; Posner 1997b).

It was Charles Morris (1938) who introduced this tripartition into semiotics, but the historical origins of these branches can be traced back to the *artes dicendi*, i.e., grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, taught as part of the so-called *trivium* in Medieval European schools.

Morris's trichotomy is related to Peirce's, who distinguished between speculative grammar, critical logic — the successor of dialectic — and methodetic — the successor of rhetoric (cf. *CP* 1.191ff and 2.93). Thus Peirce reinterpreted the *artes dicendi* as

branches of semiotics and systematized these as disciplines that treat signs as Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, respectively (cf. *S/S*, 1: 4). In this sense, semiotics consists of three subdisciplines: 'speculative grammar', which gives us a physiognomy of forms, a classification of the function and form of all signs; 'critic', the study of the classification and validity of arguments (divided into three parts: the logic of abduction, induction and deduction); and 'methodeutic', the study of methods for attaining truth. Pragmatism, which is based on the thesis that the meaning of a sign can be explicated by considering its practical consequences as the response of an interpretant, is a methodeutic theory in Peirce's sense (cf. Pape 1998: 2020).

As Posner (1997b) notes, although Morris's trichotomy is related to Peirce's, it is also motivated by reference to three leading philosophical movements of his time, Logical Positivism, Empiricism, and Pragmatism.

In Morris 1938, the three branches of semiotic, syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics, correspond respectively to the three *dimensions of semiosis*, the syntactical, the semantical and the pragmatical.

According to a tradition that goes back to Michel Bréal's *sémantique* (1897) understood as 'the science of significations', meaning is generally associated with the semantical dimension of semiosis. On the contrary, however, meaning is present in all three dimensions including the syntactical and pragmatical and to state that it belongs uniquely to the semantical is the result of a misunderstanding. When Morris claims that syntactics deals with relations among signs, this does not exclude that it involves meaning, which too is part of the relation among signs. Similarly, as much as pragmatics focuses on the relation of signs to interpreters, as says Morris, it too deals with signs and therefore with meanings (cf. Rossi-Landi 1994 [1972] which includes his paper of 1967, 'Sul modo in cui è stata fraintesa la semiotica estetica di Charles Morris').

To restrict meaning to the semantical dimension of semiosis instead of tracing it throughout all three dimensions is to reduce the sign totality to one of its parts only, in the case of semantics to the relation of designation and denotation. Similarly, the relation of the sign to other signs does not only concern the syntactical dimension in a strict sense to the exclusion of the pragmatical and the semantical, just as the relation of the interpreter to other interpreters does not uniquely concern the pragmatical dimension to the exclusion of the syntactical and the semantical. Each time there is semiosis and,

therefore, a sign, all three dimensions are involved and are the object of semiotics.

### Syntactics and syntax

'Syntactics' covers the syntactical aspects of signs, their formal aspects, relations and combinations, including texts, pieces of music, pictures, industrial artifacts, and so on. As specified in this article and in accord with our observations anticipated above in our discussion on 'syntax' (in Sebeok's sense), in linguistics, phonology, syntax (in the strict sense) and the morphology of natural language all fall under *syntactics*. Syntactics includes morphology as well as syntax.

An example of syntactics as the study of combination rules to form complex signs is in Posner and Robering's view Chomsky's transformational grammar which studies rules of transformation from 'deep structures' to 'surface structures' (Posner, Robering 1997: 33–37).

This distinction (introduced in Chomsky 1965), as well as the previous between 'nuclear' and 'non-nuclear sentences' (Chomsky 1957), is connected with a very questionable conception of language and knowledge and with an equally questionable method of analysis (cf. Ponzio 1973, amplified French. ed. 1992; 1997b: 313–320; 2001). In a context such as that offered by the *Semiotik/Semiotics* handbook, it would not have been out of place to signal some narrow ideas in Chomsky's linguistics. Apart from previous criticism, his limits in linguistics quite inevitably emerge in the light of a Peircean and Morrisian approach to the study of signs.

Chomsky's theoretical framework is lacking in those methodological features characteristic of a scientific sign theory enumerated in articles on semiotic method (see above). Chomsky sees no alternative to vulgar linguistic behaviourism (such as Skinner's), other than appealing to the rationalistic philosophy of the seventeenth century, and taking sides with mentalism and innatism. That the Chomskyan conception of language remains tied to the classical alternatives between consciousness and experience, rationalism and empiricism is not without negative consequences for a theory of language, even with respect to such a specialized branch as syntax. In this sense Chomsky's approach is alien to both Kantian criticism and along the same lines, to the conceptions of Edmund Husserl, Peirce, Ernst

Cassirer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Morris, etc. (see § 2. 'Kants Lehre vom Zeichen', Scheffczyk 1998: 1430–1431).

Unlike Chomsky's dichotomy between linguistic competence and experience, in modern conceptions after Kant experience is described as a series of interpretive operations. These include inferential processes of the abductive type (Peirce) through which the subject completes, organizes, and associates data which are always more or less fragmentary, partial, and discrete. Experience is these operations as such is innovative and qualitatively superior by comparison with the limited nature of eventual input. After all, experience coincides with competence. What Chomsky (1986) baptized 'Plato's problem' is a consequence of the false dichotomy between competence and experience as well as of the ensuing conception of experience as a passive state of the subject.

Morris's concept of syntactics as well as the notion of syntax which belongs to it are connected with semantics and pragmatics. Instead, Chomsky's syntax — as well as his phonology and semantics (morphology) — belongs to syntactics equated with syntax, as in Carnap, and separated from semantics and pragmatics.

Moreover, Chomsky confuses levels of analysis, mistaking the description of the objects of analysis for the construction of the models of analysis. In this sense, Chomsky's linguistics is a unigradual linguistic theory which, unlike Rossi-Landi's (1998 [1961]) 'methodics of common speech' (see Ponzio 1988; 1990a) or Shaumyan's (1987) bigradual theory of generative grammar, fails to distinguish between the genotypical level and the phenotypical level. This is a serious limit in the hypothetical-deductive method, or more properly, recalling the Peircean concept of 'abduction', in the abductive method.

Chomsky's error is no different from that of Oxonian analytical philosophy, which claimed to describe ordinary, daily, or colloquial language in general while, in reality, describing the characteristics of a given natural language. Such confusion between two levels, the general and abstract level of language and the particular and concrete level of a given language at a given moment in its historical development, is recurrent — and not only in the Oxonian conception or in more recent analyses of language inspired by the latter. Chomskyan generative grammar, too, mistakes the specific characteristics of a language — yet again English — for the universal structures of human language. The untranslatability of sentences used by Chomsky as examples of his analyses is symptomatic of the problem

at hand. The transformational model proposed by Chomsky confuses elements that in fact belong to two different degrees of abstraction, ideal language and natural language.

Thus Chomskyan grammar with its methodologic suppositions and dualism between competence and experience and between deep structures and surface structures, would not seem to offer a suitable example of *syntactics*, as understood by Posner and Robering (1997: 14) and in accord with Morris's approach to semiotics. Elsewhere (Ponzio 1990; 1997b; 2001) we have proposed, as a branch of syntactics which studies combination rules applied to verbal form complexes, an 'interpretive linguistic theory' able to 'generate' (in Chomsky's sense) an utterance in terms of its relation to another utterance that interprets it, an utterance that acts as interpretant. In fact, all utterances are engendered, that is, produced, identified and characterized by their interpretants. According to this approach, the interpretant of a 'sentence' (the dead cell of linguistic system) or, as we prefer, 'utterance' (the live cell of discourse) is not a deep structure grounded in underlying elementary sequences, but another verbal sign. An interpretant identifying an utterance or any verbal sign whatever is simply 'unexpressed' until the conditions are realized for its expression, explicitation'. We have introduced the expression 'identification interpretant' (cf. Ponzio 1990) for this type of interpretant which

- (a) identifies the verbal sign in its phonemic or graphic features;
- (b) identifies the verbal sign in its semantic content;
- (c) identifies the morphological and syntactic physiognomy of the verbal sign.

Given that the three dimensions of semiosis (syntactical, semantical and pragmatical) are inseparable, the interpretant engendered by an utterance or any verbal sign whatever is not only an identification interpretant. It is also an 'answering comprehension interpretant' which has a special focus on the pragmatical dimension of signs. Without the interpretant of answering comprehension, it is difficult or even impossible to recognize the sign at the level of phonemic or graphemic configuration, morphological and syntactic structure, as well as semantic content.

Just as we have highlighted the presence of syntactics in all aspects of signs, in the same way we must underline that the question of meaning (i.e., of the relation between interpreted and interpretant) is also present at the level of identification of the units composing words, phrases, utterances and texts.

### The referent as designatum and denotatum

Concerning the semantic dimension we wish to remember the important contribution made by Morris to sign theory in relation to the issue of the referent. At a given moment in the recent history of semiotics referential semantics was contrasted to nonreferential semantics. The starting point of the debate was Ogden and Richards's famous but often deviating triangle with its distinction between the three apexes denominated 'symbol', 'thought or reference' and 'referent'. Under the influence, among other things, of Saussure's binary conception of sign as the relation of a *signifiant* to a *signifié*, meaning was described as the relation of a 'symbol' to 'thought or reference'

Thus the question under debate became whether or not the 'referent' should be eliminated from this triangle. Supporters of non-referential semantics included Stephen Ullmann (1962) and Umberto Eco (1975). Subsequently, Eco (1984) became aware of the need to recover the concept of referent and did so implicitly by resorting to the Jakobsonian concept of *renvoi*.

In any case, if we accept Morris's distinction between designatum and denotatum the question of the referent and its misunderstandings are easily solved. This distinction was originally proposed by Morris in his 1938 book, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*.

'Where what is referred to actually exists as referred to the object of reference is a denotatum', says Morris (1971: 20). For example, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to its object considering it as existent in the world of mythology, that sign has a denotatum since unicorns do exist in mythology. On the contrary, if the sign 'unicorn' refers to its object considering it as existent in the world of zoology, that sign does not have a denotatum since unicorns do not exist in zoology. In this case the sign has a designatum (Morris 1938), or a significatum, as Morris (1946) was later to call it (see below), but it does not have a denotatum. 'It thus becomes clear that, while every sign has a designatum, not every sign has a denotatum' (Morris 1971: 20). By using Morris's distinction between designatum and denotatum misunderstandings in regard to the referent can in fact be avoided.

In other semantic theories, the referent is eliminated altogether on the basis of the fact that what the sign refers to does not always exist in the terms referred to by the sign. In this case the designatum is obviously not taken into account. On the contrary, as has been amply demonstrated (Calabrese *et al.* 1993; Ponzio 1985; 1990; 1997b;

Ponzio *et al.* 1999), the sign has a referent always, or in Morris's terminology, a designatum, and if this referent exists in the terms referred to by the sign, it also has a denotatum.

Indeed, the object of reference, referent, or Object in Peirce's sign triad, is a component of semiosis. In Ponzio (1990: 33–36) we proposed to consider the referent as an implicit interpretant. In other words, the referent of a sign is another sign to which the former refers implicitly. Once explicited, the referent changes position and becomes an interpretant with an explicative function; while the sign which had a referent, i.e., the sign with implicit meaning, becomes an interpreted.

Referent (object), interpretant, and interpreted (representamen, sign vehicle) are, therefore, three different functions carried out by the sign. A referent is an implicit part of an interpretive route that the explicit part (interpretant) refers to. The impossibility of expliciting all interpretants of a sign given that they are infinite in number (Peirce's 'infinite semiosis') causes every sign to have a referent (implicit interpretant) just as it has meaning (explicit interpretant). Meanings (and therefore signs) without a referent do not exist. Consequently, that the referent, or object of reference, is a component of semiosis, means that the referent is not external to sign reality, even if as a 'dynamical object' it is external to a current semiosis. It is not possible to refer to something without this something becoming part of an interpretive route, i.e., without it being an implicit interpretant or interpreted. Referents are not external to the network of signs.

### **Pragmatics and the interpretant of answering comprehension**

Morris defined pragmatics as the study of the relations of sign vehicles to interpreters or more simply as 'the relations of signs to their users' (Morris 1938). Unlike Rudolf Carnap (1939) who restricted the field of pragmatics to verbal signs only to include nonlinguistic signs much later (1955), Morris's conception of pragmatics concerns both verbal and nonverbal signs. John L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) also limited their interest in the pragmatical dimension to verbal signs. On the contrary, Morris goes so far as to include the ethic and esthetic dimensions as well. Morris's interest in the relation of signs to values is closely connected with pragmatics which deals with the relation of signs to interpreters.



Speech act theory (cf. McHoul 1998) 'is both distinct from and to some degree competitive with theories of signficatory and systemic difference proposed by the semiotician' (McHoul 1998: 591). In our opinion, the substantial difference between speech act theory and Peircean or Morrisian semiotics is that the former fails to consider two factors in the pragmatic dimension of meaning which, on the contrary, must not be neglected: interpretation and alterity. In other words, speech act theory does not account for the interpretant of answering comprehension. This is a consequence of the fact that the concept of verbal sign (in John L. Austin and John R. Searle) lacks a semiotic foundation.

Stressing the interpretant rather than the interpreter, pragmatics concerns the interpretant which does not merely identify the interpreted, thereby acting as an 'identification interpretant', but responds and takes a stand towards it. This is what we have called the interpretant of answering comprehension, which, unlike the identification interpretant, is specific to a sign interpreting its actual sense. Sign interpretation in terms of answering comprehension opens to interpretive trajectories connected with sense, advancing towards signness or semioticity beyond signality. Rather than use the term 'meaning' in relation to interpretants whose task it is to identify interpreteds, or 'sense' for interpretants whose task is not limited to merely identifying the interpreted, we may distinguish between *two zones of meaning*, that of signality (the object of syntactics) and that of signness (the *object of pragmatics*). As anticipated, the interpretant relative to the signal and to signality is the *identification interpretant* (cf. Ponzio 1985; 1990; 1997b; Ponzio *et al.* 1999); instead, the interpretant specific to the sign, that which interprets its actual sense has been called *respondent* or *answering comprehension interpretant*. This interpretant or this dimension of the interpretant concerns the pragmatical dimension of the sign, that is, the sign as such. The relation between interpreted and the answering comprehension interpretant depends on the models, habits and customs of the world in which the interpreted-interpretant relation is situated. The interpretant of answering comprehension is the conclusion of a line of reasoning in an inferential process with a dialogic structure. Pragmatics deals with the relation between the sign vehicle or 'representamen', the interpreted and the interpretant in its full sign nature, that is, as the interpretant of answering comprehension.

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**Моделирование, диалог, глобальность:  
биосемиотика и семиотика самости.**

**1. Семиозис, моделирование, диалогизм**

Статья предлагает критический обзор положения дел в семиотике, обращая особое внимание на теоретические проблемы, сосредотачивающиеся вокруг соотношения культуры и природы. Другими словами, мы фокусируемся на соотношении понятий семиосферы (Ю. Лотман) и биосферы (В. Вернадский), учитывая разные подходы и предлагая свою точку зрения. Существенным источником при изучении состояния современной семиотики является пособие *Semiotik/Semiotics*, подзаголовком которого не случайно является *Руководство по теоретико-знаковым основам природы и культуры*. В этой книге существенна роль Томаса А. Себеока и его понимания семиотики как “глобальной”. Одним из центральных понятий глобальной семиотики Себеока является моделирование, которое пронизывает как природу, так и культуру. Понятие моделирования соединяет два семиозиса — природный и культурный — и приводит к оригинальному определению понятий “семиосфера” и “биосфера”. Эта проблематика соотносится и с семиотическими исследованиями в современном Тарту, что находит свое выражение в журнале *Sign Systems Studies*. Как неоднократно подчеркивал Себеок, в частности в его вышедшей в 2001 году книге *Global Semiotics*, эстонские связи играют существенную роль в развитии семиотики.

**Modelleerimine, dialoog, globaalsus:  
biosemiootika ja enesemiootika.**

**1. Semioos, modelleerimine, dialogism**

Esitatakse kriitiline ülevaade olukorrast semiootikas, pöörates erilist tähelepanu teoreetilistele probleemidele, mis koonduvad kultuuri ja looduse suhete ümber. Teiste sõnadega, me paigutame fookuse semiosfääri

(J. Lotman) ja biosfääri (V. Vernadski) mõistete suhtele, arvestades erinevaid lähenemisi sellele küsimusele ja pakkudes välja oma vaatekoha. Oluline allikas tänapäeva semiootikast ülevaate saamisel on käsiraamat *Semiotik/Semiotics*, mille alapealkirjaks ei ole mitte juhuslikult *Looduse ja kultuuri märgilis-teoreetiliste aluste käsiraamat*. Selles käsiraamatus on oluline roll Thomas A. Sebeokil ja tema arusaamal semiootikast kui "globaalsest semiootikast". Üks kesketest mõistetest Sebeoki globaal-semiootikas on modelleerimine, mis läbib nii loodust kui kultuuri. Modelleerimise mõiste ühendab kaks semioosi — loodusliku ja kultuurilise — ning viib mõistete "semiosfäär" ja "biosfäär" seose originaalse määratluseni. See problemaatika vastab ka semiootiliste uuringutele tänapäeva Tartus, mis leiab väljendust ajakirjas *Sign Systems Studies*. Nagu Sebeok oma kirjutistes rõhutas, sealhulgas 2001. aastal ilmunud raamatus *Global Semiotics*, on eesti-sidemed tähtsad semiootika arengu jaoks.

**Modeling, dialogue, and globality:  
Biosemiotics and semiotics of self.**  
**2. Biosemiotics, semiotics of self, and semioethics**

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**Abstract.** The main approaches to semiotic inquiry today contradict the idea of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity. The body of an organism in the micro- and macrocosm is not an isolated biological entity, it does not belong to the individual, it is not a separate and self-sufficient sphere in itself. The body is an organism that lives in relation to other bodies, it is intercorporeal and interdependent. This concept of the body finds confirmation in cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency, exposition and opening, though nowadays such practices are almost extinct. An approach to semiotics that is global and at once capable of surpassing the illusory idea of definitive and ultimate boundaries to identity presupposes dialogue and otherness. Otherness obliges identity to question the tendency to totalizing closure and to reorganize itself always anew in a process related to 'infinity', as Emmanuel Levinas teaches us, or to 'infinite semiosis', to say it with Charles Sanders Peirce. Another topic of this paper is the interrelation in anthroposemiosis between man and machine and the implications involved for the future of humanity. Our overall purpose is to develop global semiotics in the direction of "semioethics", as proposed by S. Petrilli and A. Ponzio and their ongoing research.

**Dialogic interconnections among semiotic spheres**

Semiotics today has come a long way with respect to the science of signs as it had been conceived by Ferdinand de Saussure. In *Semiotik/Semiotics: A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture*, edited by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering, Thomas A. Sebeok, 1997–2003, semiotics is far broader than a science that

focuses on signs in the sphere of socio-cultural life. Semiotics is not only *anthroposemiotics* but also *endosemiotics* (semiotics of cybernetic systems inside the organic body on the ontogenetic and phylogenetic levels), *microsemiotics* (the study of metabolism in unicellular life forms), *mycosemiotics* (semiotics of fungi), *phytosemiotics* (semiotics of plant life), *zoosemiotics* (semiotics of interactions among animals), *machine semiotics* (semiotics of sign processing machinery), *environmental semiotics* (the study of the interaction between different species and environment).

Main trends in semiotic inquiry today contradict the idea of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity. The body of an organism in the micro- and macrocosm is not an isolated biological entity, it does not belong to the individual, it is not a separate and self-sufficient sphere in itself. The body is an organism that lives in relation to other bodies, it is intercorporeal and interdependent. This concept of the body finds confirmation in cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency, exposition and opening, though nowadays such practices are almost extinct (what remains are mummified, archeological residues studied by folklore analysts or preserved in ethnological museums and in the histories of national literature).

Think of how the body is perceived in popular culture, the forms of 'grotesque realism', as discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1963; 1965). In such contexts the life of the body is not conceived in individual terms, that is, separately from life over the planet, indeed from the world in its globality. However, only very weak traces of the grotesque body have survived in the present day. We are alluding to such signs as ritual masks, masks used during popular festivities, carnival masks. According to grotesque realism the contours of the body are undefined. In other words, the body is not confined to itself, but rather flourishes in relations of symbiosis with other bodies, in processes of transformation and renewal that transcend the limits of individual life. 'Grotesque realism' is characteristic of medieval popular culture indicating a condition preexistent to the development of individualism in relation to the rise of bourgeois society, to the development of an individualistic conception of the body. However, we wish to underline what would seem to be a paradox — *in today's society of world and global communication this individualistic, private and static conception of the body has in fact been reinforced and exasperated.*



An approach to semiotics that is at once global and detotalizing presupposes dialogue and otherness. In other words, global semiotics presupposes the capacity for listening to the other, a disposition for opening to others, for listening to others in their otherness, for hospitality. According to such logic, opening is not only understood in the quantitative sense (that is, with reference to the omnicomprehensive character of global semiotics), but also in the qualitative sense. Otherness obliges the totality to reorganize itself ever anew in a process related to 'infinity', as Emmanuel Levinas teaches us, or to 'infinite semiosis', to say it with Charles S. Peirce. This relation to infinity is far more than cognitive: beyond the established order, beyond the symbolic order, beyond our conventions and habits, it presupposes a relation of involvement and responsibility. The relation to infinity is a relation to what is most refractory to the totality, a relation to the otherness of others, of the other person. And the expression 'other person' is not understood in the sense of another Self like ourselves, another *alter ego*, an I belonging to the *same community*, but another in its extraneousness, strangeness, diversity, the alien self. This is also a question of difference that Self cannot ignore, towards which it cannot be indifferent in spite of all efforts and guarantees offered by identity.

As anticipated by Augusto Ponzio (2003), all semiotic interpretations by the student of signs must keep account of the dialogic character of the relation with the other. In fact, dialogism is a fundamental condition for an approach to semiotics that is oriented according to a global perspective with a tendency to privilege and enhance the particular and the local rather than englobe or enclose it.

### Sebeok's contribution to semiotics

Following a suggestion from Thomas A. Sebeok as may be deduced from the chapter title 'Looking in the destination for what should have been sought in the source', included in *The Sign & Its Masters* (Sebeok 1979: 84–106), the source we intend to research is the comprehensive view of semiotics presented by the general project subtending and orienting the Handbook *Semiotik/Semiotics*. We believe that this source coincides with Sebeok's own scientific and editorial work. Furthermore, he is one of the figures who has most contributed to promoting semiotics across the world through organizational activi-

ties leading to the institutionalization of semiotics on an international level and to its current configuration in the world of academia and research.

We believe that the foundational scope of *Semiotik/Semiotics* coincides with Sebeok's own approach to semiotics — which is holistic, ecumenical, or, to use his most recent terminology, *global*. The editorial enterprise achieved with this *Handbook* would not have been possible without Sebeok's semiotic enquiry (and as much may be said about *The Encyclopedia of Semiotics*, edited by Paul Bouissac 1998). The terms 'zoosemiotics' and 'endosemiotics' were coined by Sebeok in 1963 and 1976 respectively (cf. Sebeok 2001: 20, 27). And though the term 'biosemiotics' already existed, Sebeok was a pioneer in this field as well, which he was committed to promoting (cf. the entry 'Biosemiotics' by Hoffmeyer 1998, which mentions Gregory Bateson as another scholar in this field). Sebeok was one of the editors of *Semiotik/Semiotics*, but more than this we believe he created the conditions which made the general plan of the *Handbook* possible. Consequently, some information in the present context about his research and the directions in which it developed will be appropriate.

Sebeok's interests cover a broad range of territories varying from the natural sciences to the human sciences (see Sebeok, 'Signs, bridges, origins', in Sebeok 2001: 59–73). Consequently, he deals with theoretical issues and their applications from as many angles as the number and variety of disciplines he interrogates: linguistics, cultural anthropology, psychology, artificial intelligence, zoology, ethology, biology, medicine, robotics, mathematics, philosophy, literature, narratology, and so forth. Initially Sebeok's research may seem rather erratic as he experiments different perspectives and embarks upon a plurality of different research ventures. However, the truth is that the broad scope of his interests come together in the focus of his 'doctrine of signs' and fundamental conviction subtending his general method of enquiry: the universe is perfused with signs, indeed, as Peirce hazards, it may even be composed exclusively of signs.

As a fact of signification the entire universe enters Sebeok's 'global semiotics' (see Sebeok 2001). Semiotics is the place where the 'life sciences' and the 'sign sciences' converge, therefore where consciousness is reached of the fact that the human being is a sign in a universe of signs. Says Sebeok in his 'Introduction' to *Global Semiotics*:

In sum, *global semiotics* can be seen as composed of two partially overlapping estates: 'normal' semiotics, as defined above, the subject matter of which is, intrinsically, Minds, Models, and Mediation; and biosemiotics, all this and much, much more, as presented throughout this book. Needless to point out, practitioners of the discipline may be qualified to work in one aspect or the other, or, as a rule, in one or more fractions of the supervening category. Scarce is the polymath of the magistral stature of, say, Charles Peirce, capable of reaching athwart more than a couple of divisions, especially across the humanities and the sciences, which are perhaps uniquely bridged by semiotics [...]. (Sebeok 2001: xxii)

Through his numerous publications Sebeok has propounded a wide-ranging vision of semiotics that coincides with the study of the evolution of life. After Sebeok's work both the conception of the semiotic field and history of semiotics are changed noticeably. Thanks to him semiotics at the beginning of the new millennium presents a far more expanded view than that of the first half of the 1960s.

### Language in anthroposemiosis

In *Semiotik/Semiotics*, Article 18, 'The evolution of semiosis', authored by Sebeok (1997), analyzes the origins of anthroposemiosis signaling its distinctive feature with respect to nonhuman zoosemiosis, namely language. Hominid forms, which evolved out of the australopithecines, include *Homo habilis* ('handy man', 2.4 to 2.0 million years ago), first described in 1964, which is the first hominid with a distinctly enlarged brain (600–800 cm<sup>3</sup>). It appears virtually certain that *H. habilis* had language, as an *interior modeling device, although not speech*. A modeling system is a tool with which an organism analyzes its surroundings. Language-as-a-modeling-system seems to have always been an exclusive property of the genus *Homo*. Members of early hominid species communicated with each other by nonverbal means, in the manner of all other primates. *Homo erectus* too ('upright man', over 1.5 million years ago) with a brain volume of 800–1,200 cm<sup>3</sup> and a far more elaborate tool kit, including fire, *had language, yet not speech* (cf. Sebeok 1997: 443; see also Sebeok 1986; 1991a; 1994).

Thus while language as a specific human primary modeling system emerged on the scene perhaps 2.5 or even 3.0 million years ago *circa*, verbal language or speech appeared solely in *Homo sapiens* as a

communication system and gradually as a cognitive system, that is, a secondary modeling system, with the appearance of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

Emphasizing the species-specific character of human language, Sebeok (with Jean Umiker-Sebeok) intervened polemically and ironically as regards the general enthusiasm (which he attempted to cool down) for theories and practices developed for training animals on the basis of the assumption that they too are endowed with a capacity for speech (cf. Sebeok 1986: Ch. 2). Also, the distinction between *language* and *speech* together with the thesis that language appeared much earlier than speech in the evolution of the human species reinforce the critique of phonocentrism. Language cannot be reduced to a mere communicative device (on this point Sebeok is in accord with Chomsky, though the latter does not clearly distinguish between language and speech). Said differently, in the evolution of anthroposemiosis the specific function of language is not to transmit messages and give information.

All species communicate in a world that is specific to the species and that ensues from the type of modeling with which a given species is endowed (cf. J. v. Uexküll 1992). Very early in its development as a hominid, the human species was endowed with a modeling device capable of producing an infinite number of worlds. This explains the evolution of hominids into *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The reason why human animals are able to produce an unlimited number of worlds is that the human modeling device, or language, functions in terms of syntax. In other words, a finite number of elements are composed and recomposed in an infinite variety of ways in construction, deconstruction and reconstruction processes. The multiplicity of languages and of elements (or dimensions) forming each one of them (the phonological, syntactic, semantic) all depend on this modeling device. Therefore, thanks to this syntactic capacity that which is organized in a given way can be reorganized differently. The human modeling device is endowed with syntax and is capable of the work of bricolage.

Thanks to his studies on *la pensée sauvage*, Claude Lévi-Strauss may be counted among those researchers who have most contributed to identifying and illuminating the workings of such a special human capacity.

## Syntax and human semiosis as semiotics

The capacity for syntax, for reorganization presupposes the capacity for reflection. In other words, thanks to language human beings are capable of reflecting on materials, means and models, and consequently of engendering new modeling processes with the same materials. This capacity for reflection is the capacity for metasemiosis, or what we propose to call semiotics. In this sense, language and, therefore, the work of syntax is semiotical.

At this point we must specify that when we speak of 'syntax' we are not just referring to one of the three dimensions of semiotics, that is, syntactics, as opposed to the other two dimensions, that is, semantics and pragmatics, as described by Charles Morris (1938; Posner, Robering 1997; Robering 1997; Posner 1997b; Münch, Posner 1998). Syntax is part of each of the three 'dimensions'. Or, if in relation to verbal language we consider 'grammar' as formed of a phonological, semantic and syntactic component along the lines proposed by Noam Chomsky, syntax is also present in the other two components. The syntax of phonemes gives rise to monemes, and the syntax of monemes gives rise to the words of a language even before words (categorematic and syncategorematic terms) are organized by syntax properly understood. Consequently, syntax is language itself considered from the viewpoint of its constructive, deconstructive and reconstructive capacity, just as semiotics is language considered in terms of its capacity for metasemiosis.

By virtue of its syntactic component, language does not represent immediate reality. From this point of view Sebeok (1991a: 57–58) observes that language is, *properly speaking*, a secondary modeling system. Instead, the relatively simple, nonverbal models activated by nonhuman animals and likewise by human infants are examples of primary modeling. The models in question here are more or less pliable representations that must fit 'reality' sufficiently to tend to secure survival in one's Umwelt.

Such 'top-down' modeling (to use a current jargon borrowed from the cognitive sciences) can persist, and become very sophisticated indeed in the adult life of exceptionally gifted individuals, as borne out by Einstein's testimonial or by what we know about Mozart's or Picasso's ability to model intricate auditory or visual compositions in their heads in anticipation of transcribing this onto paper canvas. This kind of nonverbal modeling is indeed primary, in both a phylogenetic and an ontogenetic sense. [...] Syntax makes

it possible for hominids not only to represent immediate 'reality' (in the sense discussed above) but also, uniquely among animals, to frame an indefinite number of possible worlds in the sense of Leibniz. (Sebeok 1991a: 57–58)

In his article 'Evolution of semiosis', Sebeok (1997) briefly mentions the 'exaptation' processes of language into speech (and into other manifestations such as script), and vice versa of speech into language. In other works, Sebeok deals with adaptation and exaptation in language and speech, which being pivotal processes in the evolution of anthroposemiosis are topics that belong to anthroposemiotics (cf. Sebeok 1991a). 'Exaptation' is a term coined by paleontologists Stephen Jay Gould and Elizabeth Vrba as a counterpart to the Darwinian notion of 'adaptation'. *Encyclopedia of Semiotics* includes the entry 'Exaptation' (by Michael Ruse who is also the author of the entry 'Evolution'; Ruse 1998a; 1998b). Two types of exaptation have been identified: in fact, exaptation processes may arise either in a situation in which 'a character, previously shaped by natural selection for a particular function (an adaptation), is coopted for a new use' or when 'a character whose origin cannot be ascribed to the direct action of natural selection [...] is coopted for a current use' (Gould, Vrba 1982: 5). Observes Ruse:

The idea of an exaptation is one with obvious implications for any biological theory of communication, such as that of Noam Chomsky, which wants to locate language in evolution but has trouble seeing how the Darwinian mechanism of natural selection can do all that is required. (Ruse 1998b: 226)

The plurality of natural languages (as well as the 'inner plurilingualism' of any single natural language) cannot be explained (the 'Babel enigma') in terms of Chomsky's linguistics in spite of his insistence on the 'creative character of (verbal) language', given that his approach presupposes an innate Universal Grammar. Such phenomena as the plurality of languages and 'linguistic creativity' testify to the capacity of language, understood as a primary modeling device, for producing numerous possible worlds. Both phenomena ensue from the fact that human modeling is able to invent manifold worlds. In other words, linguistic creativity as well as the plurality of languages derive from the gift of language for the 'play of musement'. 'Purport', according to Hjelmslev (1953: 32–33) is an amorphous continuum 'on which boundaries are laid by the formative action of language'. Language articulates the shapeless purport of expression and content

in different ways in different languages. For instance, the human phonic material of purport is divided into different *figurae* (phonemes) by different languages; and the color continuum is also divided differently, e.g. in English or Welsh (see Johansen 1998: 2275–2282). All this may be explicated on the basis of creativity characterizing language understood as a species-specific human modeling device. To use Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's terminology, 'linguistic work' produces different paradigms that correspond to the various worlds of different languages. The same thing happens in the articulation and organization of the social continuum in different cultures — think of the systems of family relations analyzed by Lévi-Strauss (Scheffczyk 1998: 1454–1456; see also Ponzio 1997: 191–218; Ponzio *et al.* 1999: 50–53).

Chomsky's language theory does not keep account of the difference between language and speech. And the theory of the origin of verbal language also tends to ignore this difference. Consequently, Chomsky's language theory attempts to explain the different historical natural languages and their grammars in terms of a hypothetical universal grammar, while the latter searches for the origin of natural languages in another (primordial) natural language. On the contrary, the origin is to be searched for in the human species-specific primary modeling device, in Sebeok's terminology, language, which was a primary adaptation in the evolution of hominids. Speech developed out of language, and like language made its appearance as an adaptation, but for the sake of communication and much later than language, exactly with *Homo sapiens*, not more than about 300,000 years ago. Only after the physical and neurological capacity for speech evolved in *Homo sapiens* was speech possible, that is, use of language for vocal communication. Consequently, language too ended up becoming a communication device; and speech developed out of language as a derivative exaptation.

The relation between language and speech, as observes Sebeok, has required a plausible mutual adjustment of the encoding with the decoding capacity. On the one hand, language was 'exapted' for communication (first in the form of speech, i. e., for 'ear and mouth work' and later of script, and so forth), and, on the other, speech was exapted for (secondary) modeling, i.e., for 'mindwork'. 'But', adds Sebeok, 'since absolute mutual comprehension remains a distant goal, the system continues to be fine-tuned and tinkered with still' (Sebeok 1991a: 56).

But we also find another process of exaptation in the evolution of anthroposemiosis. We are referring to the separation between manual work and intellectual work, which coincides with the separation between 'nonlinguistic' [nonverbal] or 'material' work and 'linguistic [verbal] work', in Rossi-Landi's terminology. The expressions 'linguistic work' and 'nonlinguistic work' are convenient abstractions. However, we should note that they are more than this: they are 'concrete abstractions'. More than just simply convenient expressions for conceptual operations carried out in a theoretical context, they are also aspects of historico-social reality itself. From this second point of view, these two abstractions really exist, they are part of historical reality. Given that verbal linguistic work is functional not only to communication but also to modeling, it presents a fundamental condition with respect to nonlinguistic work. All nonlinguistic work takes place on the basis of the instruments, materials and models of linguistic work. Today's automatic machine represents one of the highest results of exaptation of linguistic work for production and profit, with all the derivative difficulties and contradictions that ensue in social relationships of production.

### **Machine semiosis and human language**

In their discussion of machine semiosis, Andersen, Hasle, and Brandt (see Andersen *et al.* 1997) ask what roles may eventually be played by machines in semiosis understood, following the Peircean definition and elaborated by Posner (1997a: 2), as the relationship between interpretant, representamen, and object. The exact question is: how machines can be objects of signs, but can they be representamens and interpretants? The authors take as their point of departure the homological scheme of production proposed by Rossi-Landi (1975; 1992).

Recognizing humans as the concrete subjects of history, the responsible agents of culture and communicative systems, Rossi-Landi formulates the thesis of a *homology* between verbal and non-verbal communication. Linguistic work may be placed on the same level as work that produces physical objects because 'if we do not want to admit that something *human* can exist for man without the intervention of man himself, we must adhere to the principle that every wealth or value, however understood, is the result of work



which man has accomplished and can do again' (Rossi-Landi 1983: 35). Since human beings construct themselves historically through the production of tools and verbal messages, Rossi-Landi suggests we render the definition of human beings as speaking and working animals a unitary definition, and consider these two modes of social behaviour as being homologous.

Rossi-Landi's goal was to study the relation between material artifacts and verbal artifacts through a method of analysis referred to as the 'homological method'. This method does not consist in identifying immediate and superficial relations of resemblance, as in analogy, but in identifying homologies, that is, resemblances of a structural and genetic order among objects associated with different fields of knowledge, and which at a superficial glance would seem to be separate. In spite of their different disciplinary provenance and the fact that they appear separate, material and linguistic artifacts may be considered as parts of the same totality because they are the result of human work. Therefore, the homological method has contributed to the critique of hypostatization of parts separated from the totality, to which instead they in fact belong. In so doing this method has also aided discussion about the need to transcend separatism in the sciences.

The homological element breaks with specialization: it obliges one to keep in mind different things at the same time, it disturbs the independent play of separate sub-totalities, and calls for a vaster totality, whose laws are not those of its parts. In other words, the homological method is an antiseparatist and reconstructive method, and, as such, unwelcomed by the specialists. (Rossi-Landi 1967–1972, 16–17; 1985: 53)<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that Rossi-Landi's semiotic perspective is holistic or global. Moreover, Rossi-Landi's scheme concerning the structural homology between material and linguistic production does not only use the linguistic notion of the double articulation of language, but also contributes to explaining it. For example, the passage, as described by André Martinet (1960), from the articulation of sentences into words and monemes and these into phonemes turns out to be oriented in the opposite direction from the real process of linguistic production (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992: 173–176). The linguistic work of speakers — both phylogenetically and ontogenetically — proceeds

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<sup>1</sup> On Rossi-Landi's homological method, see also Ponzio 1988.

from sounds that are initially disarticulate and gradually become ever more articulate as they form words, phrases and sentences of increasing complexity.

### Syntactic articulation and modeling

The important semiotic concepts of articulation and modeling are closely interrelated and throw light upon each other.

In his homological scheme of production, described in 'Articulations in verbal and objectual sign systems' (in Rossi-Landi 1992: 189–232), Rossi-Landi identifies ten levels in human production. These progress from the *zero level* of intact, unworked-upon nature, i.e., of material nonsound substance and material sound substance, to the *tenth level of global production*, i.e., of all objectual sign systems and all verbal sign systems forming a productive unit.

The pieces parked in these five levels, which involve qualitative leaps in the transition from one to the other, are used to build different constructions. The concept of modeling was developed by the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics in the early 1960s (Lucid 1977; Rudy 1986) to indicate *natural verbal language (langue)* described as a primary modeling system, while all other human cultural systems were described as secondary modeling systems. However, Sebeok extended the concept of modeling beyond the boundaries of human semiosis relating it to the concept of *Umwelt* as described by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1909). The notion of *Umwelt* is understood as a model of the external world and has proven crucial for research in disciplines grouped together as 'biosemiotics'. Following such research Sebeok too maintains that probably all life forms are indiscriminately endowed with a modeling capacity. His book of 2000, co-authored with Danesi, *The Forms of Meaning*, focuses on human modeling processes as distinct from other life forms in the living universe, in particular the world of superior animals.

### Machines that interpret

Let us now return to Rossi-Landi's level 5, the automated machine, and in particular to computer systems. The second question asked by Andersen, Hasle, and Brandt (1997: 549, 552) about machine semiosis

is the following: 'Should we place machines in the interpreter role?'. The authors' answer is affirmative. This confirms the spontaneous interpretation made in colloquial speech by those who use computers when they anthropomorphize their machines using words like 'ask', 'answer', 'comment', 'know', 'want'.

Finally, the authors deal with the question of whether it is possible to characterize machine-semiosis of semiotic-machines, i.e., of computer-based signs in a relation of contrast with human semiosis. Their reply is negative and is coherent with research on autopoietic systems carried out by the two Chilean biologists, Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela (cf. 1980) and their followers, who submit that exactly the same processes obtain in biological organisms. We have already had occasion to mention the *autopoiesis* theory with regard to the relationship between modeling and dialogue (see A. Ponzio's paper above).

The term autopoiesis was applied to semiosis in 1973 (in a paper entitled 'Autopoiesis and the organization of the living') by Maturana and Varela (see 1980) to name the capacity for self-producing organization unique to living beings. According to this theory, living systems are self-reproductive or autopoietic organizations: these consist of a network of processes that simultaneously produce and materialize that same network as a unity (see also the entry 'Artificial life', Keeley 1998).

The autopoietic organization is defined as a unity by a network of production of components which (i) participate recursively in the same network of productions of components which produced these components, and (ii) participate recursively in the same network of productions as a unity in the space in which the components exist. (Varela *et al.* 1974: 188)

The theory of autopoietic systems arises from the classical idea of *homeostasis*, but, as we read in the entry 'Autopoiesis' (Thompson 1998), extends the latter in two significant directions:

First, it makes every reference to homeostasis internal to the very system itself through the mutual interconnection of processes; second, it posits this mutual interconnection as the very source of the system's identity or, in biological terms, of its individuality. (Thompson 1998: 54)

In the light of this theory, according to Andersen *et al.* (1997: 569), a tentative conclusion of the discussion on the possibility of dis-

criminating between semiotic machines and human semiosis could run as follows:

[T]he difference between human and machine semiosis may not reside in the particular nature of any one of them. Rather, it may consist in the condition that machine semiosis presupposes human semiosis and the genesis of the former can be explained by the latter. (Andersen *et al.* 1997: 569)

### Automatic machines and human work

Let us comment on the interpretation, formulated in this article, of the relation between 'semiotic machine', 'computer-based signs', or 'sign machine', on the one hand, and human semiosis, on the other, whose specific characteristic is language, or in Rossi-Landi's terminology, 'linguistic work'.

Subordination of work to the machine is connected with the development of signs (which is discernible in the growth or proliferation of knowledge, competencies, specializations, and sciences). A specific form of subordination is that of linguistic work to the *sign machine*. In the present age the relation between these two poles is ever more a relation of identification than of homology. Production and communication can no longer be separated while the relation with machines coincides with the relation with signs, verbal and nonverbal. Nor is this simply a case of commodities that are messages and messages that are commodities.

If we follow Rossi-Landi's suggestion and shift from the level of the market to that of linguistic production and sign production in general, we soon realize that automation not only concerns the system of machines but also the system of languages. Reference is to language generally and to historical-natural languages alike, as much as these two different forms of language cannot operate separately from each other. Human work in the communication-production processes of automation developed to the level of the semiotic machine is linguistic work. We have identified a homology between work and its products in the ordinary sense, on the one hand, and linguistic work and its products, on the other (cf. Rossi-Landi 1975; 1985; 1992; 1994). These two faces of a common human capacity for work have now been united in the sign machine as is visible in the relation of inseparability between computer software and computer

hardware. Indeed, when we speak of *linguistic* work, reference is to language understood as a specifically human semiotic capacity. Language is a modeling device structural to human beings (cf. Sebeok 1997: 443–444).

Such considerations need to be related to the condition of world or global communication. As indicated by the union which has come about between computer software and hardware, the expression 'global communication-production' — beyond referring to the world-wide extension of the communication phenomenon, that is, over the whole planet — indicates a social system characterized by a new phase in production where machines and signs mutually integrate each other.

In today's phase of development in capitalist production, the machine may replace intellectual work. And this obviously implies that extremely high levels in automation have at last been reached. We are alluding to the fact that automation presents itself in the form of communication, so that in today's technologically advanced world the machine too functions as a sign.

This situation may be analyzed from two different though interconnected viewpoints: the economic and the semiotic. However, in both cases we are dealing with a new event. Regarding the economic aspect, communication is no longer limited to the intermediary phase (exchange) in the social reproductive cycle as in former phases in the development of the capitalist system. On the contrary, communication now identifies with production in the sense that the productive process now presents itself in the form of a communicative process. Furthermore, the third phase in the social reproductive cycle (consumption) also presents itself in terms of communication. In fact, consumption today is above all consumption of communication.

From a semiotic point of view, the development of automation (even in operations which had previously been reserved to intervention by human intelligence) means that communication extends to the field of the artifact, therefore to the field of the artificial and inorganic. This state of affairs does not question the relation of identification between semiosis and life. Indeed, even though communication is now possible in machines, machines continue to be part of the organic world given that they presuppose biosemiosis, and even more specifically anthroposemiosis. The fact is that machines presuppose a certain level in historico-social development in the sphere of anthroposemiosis, and the sphere of anthroposemiosis is the only

context where machines function as signs. This is exactly what marks the difference between human semiosis and machine semiosis as clarify Andersen *et al.* (1997: 569).

In any case, automatic development of the machine in terms of 'artificial intelligence' (see Peschl 1998: 44–46) marks the advent of something new in the field of semiosis over the planet Earth. The Authors of the article entitled 'Machine semiosis' are right when they claim that the level of the semiotic machine represents a whole new ladder with respect to preceding levels (cf. Andersen *et al.* 1997: 551). In the case of traditional automatic machines (i.e., machines that are mechanical and able to replace physical force), communication among machines has always been possible, whether internally or externally with respect to a single piece of machinery. But high levels of development in automation today achieve far more than just a mechanical type of communication relation. It is now possible to achieve in machines as well that type of semiosis we call language, which so far has been described as a species-specific characteristic pertaining to humans.

### Machines and metasemiosis

On the basis of these remarks, the expression 'semiotic machine' is particularly meaningful. Semiotically speaking, we may claim that the machine able to replace human intelligence is not only capable of semiosis but also of semiotics. In this context, as anticipated, by 'semiotics' is understood a metasemiotic process, that is, a process capable of interpreting other semiotic processes, therefore capable of metacommunication. Thus understood semiotics is specific to human beings. And if language is understood in the same terms, we may claim that language, or semiotics, is only possible within the field of anthroposemiosis. Therefore, the automatic machine in a position to replace intellectual work is a machine capable of semiotics — a machine endowed with language.

In this perspective, it is soon obvious that the type of automation we are describing does not merely involve extending semiosis to the inorganic world. In reality, even more significantly that which is extended to the inorganic order is 'semiotics' as we are describing it. Surprisingly enough, then, that which is not possible in any instance of zoosemiosis other than in anthroposemiosis, may instead be

achieved in the inorganic world. And such a limitation on zoosemiosis incapable of 'semiotics' is as real as the fact that communication is present throughout the entire organic world, indeed is the criterial feature of life itself. However, unlike every other form of organic life beyond the unique exception of human life, the inorganic may be communicative at the highest levels of metasemiosis. This is the most innovative aspect of sign machines, to the point that we may speak of revolution: the inorganic becomes communicative and, what's more, not only in terms of semiosis but also of metasemiosis or semiotics. Consequently, we may now claim that the machine endowed with language is the only case existent of non-organism that is communicative — even more than this, it is the sole non-organism that is not only semiosically but also semiotically communicative. If we consider the biosphere in its entirety in the present age, it will immediately be obvious that not only are human beings endowed with a capacity for metasemiosis, but also the machines that human beings produce.

### **Interactivity between humans and machines**

At a superficial glance, it may seem that the extremes reached by machine automation thanks to progress in artificial intelligence complete subjection of humanity to the machine, so that machines lose their instrumental character and humans their agency. However, at a closer look, we soon realize that at high degrees of automation this process is inverted. Humans become active subjects once again as they relate to machines that are progressively more intelligent. In fact, as they interact with such machines, human beings recover their function as an indispensable agent in the work process: neither humans nor machines are passive tools, but, on the contrary, are interactive participants in complex processes of exchange (see Böhme-Dürr 1997). *Interactivity* would seem an apt term to name this relation of exchange. Furthermore, continuous technological development in artificial intelligence calls for the ongoing acquisition of new competencies among the operators of high-powered automatic machines, not only in quantitative terms but also qualitatively.

From a technological perspective, intelligent machines doubtlessly require that human beings continuously update their active response, if they are to equal the new tasks and potential put to them by progress.

With earlier forms of automation, most typically represented by the assembly line (think of Charlie Chaplin's comico-ironical performance in *Modern Times*), human intelligence was mortified by the machine's capacity for efficiency. On the contrary, human intelligence today is continuously elicited and challenged for services that are not repetitive but rather require re-elaboration, redefinition and renewal of one's intellectual and practical competencies. Unlike the type of machine unendowed with language, intelligent machines elicit interactivity: active, variable response, innovation, updating, permanent training are all necessary and inevitable even for the sake of mere implementation. The decisive point here is that operators and not only inventors are active. Furthermore, the interactive relation not only concerns the relation between operator and machine, but also between one operator and another. The work process develops through mutual participation, reciprocal assistance, reciprocal exchange of information, data, etc. The functional scheme is neither linear nor circular, indeed the figure that best portrays this new condition is no doubt a grid. Intelligent machines require interactions that develop in networks and, in turn, networks that elicit interactions.

On the subject of the individual's active role in today's social system, Terry Threadgold's observations *à propos* contributions from the social sciences to semiotics in her article 'Social media of semiosis' are enlightening:

What social labour has asunder is now weaving back together again. It is perhaps interesting just to recall here that all of this also encompasses another significant rewriting, the re-alignment of social and the individual with quite different collocational sets and values. In de Saussure's early formulation, the social was located in the system, the individual outside it. Now, individual action, dialogism, heteroglossia, conflict, institution and society, all those individual and specific things which de Saussure's system excluded, are actually defined as the social, as what constitutes the social and constructs the systematics. The social and the individual are seen as mutually constructive and as constructive of the systems in terms of which they are understood. (Threadgold 1997: 400)

Threadgold clarifies that interaction between the individual and the social should not be understood in terms of opening to alterity, to the outside. In this case, too, what we have is an autopoietic system.

There is no longer any inside and outside, only a constant dialectic between individual and social. The dynamic excluded other (the individual) has



become the social and the system, and the static, synoptic, social system has now to be accounted for within the terms of that dynamic, as sets of products, codes, whose processes of production have been forgotten, and which maintain only a use-value within this dynamic economy. (Threadgold 1997: 400)

The new type of work that the intelligent machine requires from human beings is assimilated to abstract work, to work in general or indifferent work. Such assimilation is the condition of possibility for the evaluation of work in today's society. In other words, work associated with intelligent machines is quantified according to parameters established by the purchase and sale of work in capitalist society, therefore it is measured in hours.

But the type of work required by the intelligent machine involves specifically human qualities, most notably the capacity for language, semiotic sign behaviour, complex inferential processes capable of innovation and inventiveness. As such this type of work resists standard measurement as employed in today's society: that is, measurement in terms of work time. The type of human work we are describing is incommensurable and unquantifiable. Here human work manifests itself in its constitutive incommensurability, in its essentially qualitative character with respect to which quantity plays a subordinate role; in fact, quantity cannot be the true criterion or norm to account for human work.

In spite of its incommensurability as the source of all historico-social value, human work has been assimilated to quantified abstract work measured in hours. As such it has been reduced to the status of commodities, which is the condition for the very constitution of capitalist society. This same operation has already been applied to linguistic work as well, to the point that we may speak of 'linguistic alienation' (cf. Rossi-Landi 1983; 1992). However, never before has capitalist profit depended so heavily on the reduction of linguistic work to the status of commodities, as in the current phase in capitalist production (which may be described as the 'communication-production' phase: see Ponzio 1999; Ponzio, Petrilli 2000). It is paradigmatic that, as Anderson *et al.* (1997: 551) note, software (sign complexes) now defines the 'machine' while hardware (the physical machine) plays a subordinate role. This fact represents a fundamental change in the human production of artifacts. Such expressions as 'immaterial investment' or 'appreciation of human resources' or 'human capital' are symptomatic of today's subordination of produc-

tion to linguistic work. At the same time, however, the authors mentioned also refer to the employment of linguistic work, therefore of intelligence, the mind, the human brain as inexorable resources in the present day and age for the development of companies and their competitiveness.

All this implies that in today's world human individuals distinguish themselves thanks to their capacity for metasemiosis, i.e., for language, the source of value, while work continues to be considered in terms of commodities and evaluated in such terms. Consequently, never before has there emerged in human work so sharp a contrast between the inherent capacity to increase its value and its status as a commodity. While *human* work as such is manifestly incommensurable, today more than ever it is treated as just another piece of merchandise. The contradiction between linguistic work and the work market is intensified in a manner similar to the contradiction between the inherent unquantifiability of human work and the systematic demand to commodify (thus, to quantify) the worker's economic contribution to capitalist production. Such a contradiction in this specific system exalts the quality of work in the form of linguistic work to a maximum degree and is specific to what we have identified as communication-production society. This new contradiction between linguistic work and the work market ensues from the relationship between work in the contemporary world and semiotic machines.

### Semiotics, significs and ethics

As we have claimed elsewhere against a reductive interpretation of Peircean semiotics (see Petrilli 1997; 1999a; Sebeok *et al.* 2001: 73–135), the problem of the relation to others, of dialogue and ethical responsibility are no less than pivotal in Peirce's conception of the human subject. An aspect of Peirce's sign theory that should not be underestimated is its contribution towards a redefinition of the subject. In a Peircean perspective the human being, the self, viewed as a sign, coincides with the verbal and nonverbal language it is made of, with thought. The subject comes into being as a semiosis process with the capacity to engender a potentially infinite number of signifying trajectories in the dynamics of the relationship between utterance and interpretation. As says Peirce, 'men and words reciprocally educate each other; each increase of a man's information involves and is

involved by, a corresponding increase of a word's information' (CP 5.313). Insofar as it is a sign, that is, a sign in becoming, the subject emerges as a dialogic and relational open unit, an ongoing process evolving in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogic interrelationship with other subjects. The dialogic conception of thought and subjectivity as developed throughout the course of his research may be traced back to Peirce's early writings. Insofar as it is a sign, the subject's boundaries are not defined once and for all and can only be delimited in the dialogic encounter with other subjects. The human person is born into a community where experiences are lived in relation to the experiences of the other members of that community and never isolatedly from it.

[W]e know that man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man's experience is nothing, if it stands alone. If he sees what others cannot, we call it hallucination. It is not 'my' experience, but 'our' experience that has to be thought of; and this 'us' has indefinite possibilities. (CP 5.402, n.2)

As regards the ethic and social implications of semiotic inquiry, another eminent student of signs in addition to Peirce, Bakhtin, and Morris (see especially *The Open Self, Varieties of Human Value, and Signification and Significance*), is Victoria Lady Welby (see Petrilli 1998a; Sebeok 2001: 146–148). An article on 'Significs' (Schmitz 1998), the name of the semiotico-philosophical trend founded by Welby, is included in *Semiotik/Semiotics*, but it reserves too small a space for such an important scholar while rightly highlighting the Signific Movement in the Netherlands, which originated from Welby's research through the mediation of Frederik van Eeden.

Welby's significs transcends pure descriptivism in the effort to analyze signs in their ethical, esthetic and pragmatic dimensions beyond the epistemological and cognitive boundaries of semiotics, where semiotics and axiology intersect. Welby's proposal of significs arises from the assumption that the problem of sign and meaning cannot be dealt with separately from consideration of the place and value of meaning in all possible spheres of human interest and purpose. Her project pushes beyond the limits of semiotics understood as 'cognitive semiotics' as much as beyond the specialism of semantics. Being concerned with problems of meaning in everyday life and not just in relation to specialized sectors, significs invites us all, not just the specialist but each one of us in daily life, to ask the

question 'What does it signify?', which is not intended to interrogate linguistic meaning alone but also the value something has for us. Consequently, signification emerges as a method in mental exercise with implications of an ethic and pedagogic order, relevant to interpersonal and social relationships and therefore to making responsible choices.

Other expressions used by Welby to designate her theory of sign and meaning, or signification, is 'philosophy of significance' and 'philosophy of translation', which highlight different aspects of her approach. The significance of signs increases with the increase in translative processes across different types and orders of signs. In fact, translation as described by Welby is a method of interpretation and comprehension and as such is pioneeristically conducted into the territory of reflection on signs and meaning. In this context translation is not understood solely in interlingual terms, though it is this too, but even more significantly as intersemiotic and intralingual translation, to use Jakobson's terminology. All signs and expressions are already translations in themselves, as confirmed by Peirce's concept of sign. Mental activities, as Welby maintains — once again in accordance with Peirce — are automatic translative processes. Welby's theory of translation is structural to her signification and is closely connected with her reflections on the figurative nature of language, therefore on the role carried out by metaphor, analogy, and homology in the development of thought, knowledge and communication processes. Thanks to such an approach signification also emerges as a method for the enhancement of awareness, for augmenting and mastering translative processes as the condition for understanding the sense, meaning and significance of verbal and nonverbal behaviour at large. As such Welby's signification concerns the ethic dimension of sign life and its study beyond the strictly cognitive or epistemological dimension.

### **Listening and the vocation of semiotics for the health of life**

In the first and second volumes of *Semiotik/Semiotics* music is treated a topic in the study of signs, and is analyzed in different cultures and successive eras in Western history: sign conceptions in music in Ancient Greece and Rome (Riethmüller 1997), in the Latin Middle Ages (Gallo 1997), from the Renaissance to the early 19th century (Baroni 1998), from the 19th century to the present (Tarasti 1998),

Moreover, in the third volume (Posner *et al.* 2003) discussion of the relationship between semiotics and the individual disciplines (Chapter IX) also includes an article (Mazzola 2003) on semiotics of music. As in the case of other disciplines, discussion concerning music and musicology also focuses on the epistemologically relevant question concerning the extent to which the subject matter, methods, and forms of presentation in this discipline may be understood as sign process. But we must observe that music is not just another subject among many others in semiotics. Music is a special subject.

With respect to semiotics and the other sciences of language, music has proven to be a very difficult topic to deal with if treated in the light of the verbal language paradigm. Of the various languages music more than any other resists the phonocentric approach to semiosis. Semiotics of music must answer the question: 'which semiotics for semiotics of music?'. On referring to music, semiotics must be ready to interrogate its own categories and methods. Music may be understood as a sign process on the condition that semiotics is 'semiotics of music'. Here 'of music' is understood as a subject genitive, i.e., 'semiotics of music' not in the sense of semiotics applied to music, but semiotics as a perspective belonging to music, semiotics as proposed by music. Since music is inconceivable without the attitude of *listening*, semiotics of music is semiotics also in the sense of general semiotics understood as *semiotics of listening*. Instead of interrogating the different and various types of signs on the basis of preexisting categories, semiotics thus described is first of all listening. Global semiotics is global not only in terms of extension, but first and foremost because of its capacity for listening (on these aspects of general semiotics and semiotics of music, see Ponzio 1993: 138–154; Lomuto, Ponzio 1997).

Listening evokes auscultation, a medical posture. In Ancient Greece music was thought to be therapeutic. On the other hand, it seems that semiotics originated from semeiotics, classified by Galen as one of the principal branches of medicine (on sign conceptions in medicine in Ancient Greece, see Langhoff 1997; on the medical origin of semiotics, see Sebeok 1994: 50–54; on Galen in medical semiotics, see Sebeok 2001: 44–58). Besides auscultation and other ways of inspecting symptoms, diagnosis and anamnesis, following Galen, include listening to the patient who is invited to talk about his ailments and to tell the story of his troubles.

Medicine today, as denounced by Michel Foucault, is functional to exercising what he calls 'bio-power', to promoting the techniques of subordination of the body to the knowledge-power of *biopolitics*. Medicine contributes to the controlled insertion of bodies into the production cycle. With its specialisms and manipulation of bodies as self-sufficient entities, medicine strengthens the dominant conception of the individual as belonging to spheres of interest that are separate from each other and as having needs that are indifferent to each other. In such a context listening becomes 'direct, univocal listening', imposed by the Law (Barthes, Havas 1977: 989), by the 'order of discourse' (Foucault 1970), it becomes 'applied listening', 'wanting to hear', imposition to speak and, therefore, to say univocally. *Listening* is one thing, *to want to hear* is another. Listening is answering comprehension: 'listening speaks', says Barthes (Barthes, Havas 1977: 990) similarly to Bakhtin; listening is turned to signs in their constitutive dialogism. By excluding responsive listening, the will to hear or applied listening belongs to a 'closed universe of discourse' (Marcuse), which fixes interrogation and responsive roles and separates listening from answering comprehension. Unlike listening understood as dialogue and answering comprehension which continuously produces new signifiers and interpretants without ever fixing sense, 'applied' listening takes place in a rigid network of speech roles: it maintains the 'ancient places of the believer, the disciple, the patient' (Barthes, Havas 1977: 990).

The attitude of listening is decisive for the task of global semiotics, for the capacity to understand the entire semiotic universe as well as to discuss the different forms of separatism and the different tendencies to take the part for the whole, whether by mistake or in bad faith. This is the case of individualism in social and intercultural life as well as of the current 'crisis of overspecialization' (Posner *et al.* 1997: xxix) in scientific research.

The capacity of semiotics for listening is an effective condition for reconnecting semiotics to its early vocation and expression as medical semeiotics, as described especially by Sebeok. If semiotics is interested in life over the whole planet since life and semiosis coincide (however, for a critical discussion of the equation between 'the concepts of life process and sign process', see Kull 2002), and if the original motivation for the study of signs is 'health', we may claim that a non negligible task of semiotics, especially today in the era of globalization, is to care for the whole of life in its globality.

## **Semiotics and responsibility: semioethics**

With the spread of "bio-power" and the controlled insertion of bodies into the production system, world communication goes hand in hand with the spread of the idea of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity. As anticipated at the beginning of this paper, the body is experienced as an isolated biological entity, as belonging to the individual, as part of the individual's sphere of belonging which has led to the almost total extinction of cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency, exposition and opening. We have already compared the private and static conception of the body in today's system of global production-communication with 'grotesque realism' in medieval popular culture, as theorized by Bakhtin (1965) for example.

As Foucault in particular has revealed (but let us also remember Rossi-Landi's acute perception of the situation as formulated in his books of the 1970s), division and separatism among the sciences are functional to the ideologico-social necessities of the 'new canon of the individualized body' (Bakhtin). This in turn is functional to the controlled insertion of bodies into the reproduction cycle of today's production system.

A global and detotalizing approach to semiotics demands opening to the other and the extreme capacity for listening to the other, therefore, it involves the capacity for a dialogic relationship with the other. Accordingly, we propose an approach to semiotics that privileges the tendency towards detotalization rather than totalization. Otherness opens the totality to infinity or to 'infinite semiosis' which leads beyond the cognitive order or the symbolic order to enter the ethic dimension, opening to the condition of infinite involvement and participation with the other, of responsibility towards the other.

Such considerations orient semiotics according to a plan that is not the expression of a specific ideology. On the contrary, semiotics thus described concerns behaviour ensuing from awareness of the radical nature of human responsibility as a 'semiotic animal'. Properly understood, the 'semiotic animal' is a responsible actor capable of signs of signs, of mediation, reflection and awareness in relation to semiosis over the entire planet. In this sense global semiotics must be adequately founded in cognitive semiotics, but it must also be open to a third dimension beyond the quantitative and the theoretical, that is, the ethical. Since this third dimension concerns the ends towards

which we must strive and which we aim to reach, we propose to characterize it as 'semioethics' (see Ponzio and Petrilli 2003).

For semiotics to meet its commitment to the 'health of semiosis' as well as to cultivate its capacity to understand the entire semiotic universe, it must continuously refine its auditory and critical functions, its capacity for listening and criticism. And to accomplish such tasks we believe the trichotomy that distinguishes between (1) cognitive semiotics, (2) global semiotics, and (3) semioethics is important, indeed decisive not only theoretically but also for therapeutic reasons.

### Subjectivity and alterity

The categories of 'identity' and 'subjectivity' are intimately interconnected and perform a decisive role in world-wide and global communication, whether a question of the identity of the individual or of the collective subject (Western world, European Union, nation, ethnic group, social class, etc.).

The concepts of individual and community identity alike call for analysis in a semiotic key. And identity in either form may either be governed by a monologic or by a dialogic. The difference is profound and pervasive.

Peirce's reflections have contributed significantly to a redefinition of the subject (Petrilli and Ponzio 2002; see also Colapietro 1989; Petrilli 1999b; Sebeok *et al.* 2001). The human being, the I, is a sign of an extraordinarily complex order, made of verbal and nonverbal language: 'It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself [...] the man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical' (CP 5.314). Consequently, the subject may be described as a semiotic process, indeed thanks to its interpretive-propositional commitment, the subject consists of a potentially infinite number of signifying trajectories.

As a developing sign, the subject is a dialogic and relational entity, an *open* subject emerging in the intrapersonal and interpersonal interrelationship with other subjects. Therefore, the boundaries of the subject-sign are not defined once and for all, but can only be defined in and through dialogic encounters with other with other subjects.

The human person develops in sociality, relatedly to the experiences of others and never in isolation. Indeed, the self, the subject is a community structured to obey the laws of the logic of otherness. The



self is a community of dialogically interrelated selves. If we interpret the word 'in-dividual' literally as meaning 'non divided, non divisible', with Peirce we may claim that 'a person is not absolutely an individual' (CP 5.314). Peirce rejected the 'illusory phenomenon' of a finite self or a self-sufficient self.

The social and communal character of self does not contrast with its singularity and uniqueness or with its signifying otherness with respect to any interpretive process that may concern it. The self is ineffable (cf. CP 1.357), it is saying beyond the said; the utterances of self convey significance beyond words. At the same time, however, the ineffability and uniqueness of self do not imply incommunicability.

The identity of the subject is multiplex, plurifaceted and plurivocal, it is delineated and modeled in the dialogic relation among its various parts. Welby establishes a distinction between the I and the Self as we learn from her unpublished manuscripts, which include a file entitled *Subjectivity* with texts written between 1903 and 1910 (Welby Collection, York University Archives, Toronto, cf. Petrilli 1998a for a description of the materials available at the archives). In the papers included in this file, especially those written between 1907 and 1910, she analyzes the problem of subjectivity in terms of the complex and articulated relation between what she calls the 'I', or, introducing a neologism *Ident*, and the 'self'. The self, also designated with the neologism *ephemeron*, is mortal, ephemeral like the body. By contrast, the I tends towards immortality beyond the mortality of the body and of the self. Formed in this way, identity is not unitary or compact, but on the contrary presents a surplus, something more with respect to identity itself. Identity is constructed in the dialogic relationship of the self with the I. Welby's conception of identity recalls Peirce's as we have already discussed it. I or Ident is not the 'individual' but the 'unique'. Indeed, 'It is precisely our di-viduality that forms the wealth of our gifts', as says Welby in the unpublished papers we are interpreting.

That the subject is inevitably an incarnate subject, thus intercorporeal being, that is to say, a body connected to other bodies from the very outset, an expression of the condition of intercorporeity on both the synchronic and diachronic levels for the whole of its subsequent life, that the subject is not incarnated in a body isolated from other bodies is not indifferent to our conception of the person. The subject is an incarnate entity from the point of view of biological

evolution, of the species, as well as of sociality and cultural history. The body plays a fundamental role in the development of awareness or consciousness: consciousness is incarnate consciousness. The body is a condition for the full development of consciousness, of the human being as a semiotic animal. The self develops interrelatedly with other bodies through which it extends its boundaries, therefore the boundaries of the world it experiences. The word is an extension of the body. Indeed, echoing Bakhtin, we may claim that the word forms a bridge joining one's own body to the body of others. Peirce makes recurrent use of the expression 'flesh and blood' (cf. *CP* 1.337, 7.591) for the physiological body which can only be distinguished from the semiotic body by abstraction similarly to the distinction between physical, extrasign and instrumental materiality, on the one hand, and sign material which ultimately has a physical referent, on the other, even though it may not be immediately obvious as in the case of dreaming or silent thinking (see Petrilli 1986 and 1998b, new ed.: 38–48, and 146–147).

Given its broad scope, semiotics must keep account of and account for the 'reason of things'. However, the capacity for detotalization as the condition for critical and dialogic totalization implies that the ability to grasp the *reason* of things cannot be separated from the capacity for *reasonableness*. The issue at stake may be stated in the following terms: given the risks inherent in the current phase in historical development for semiosis and for life, *human beings must at their very earliest change from rational animals into reasonable animals*.

Both Welby and Peirce have contributed to the development of a truly global science of signs capable of accounting for signifying processes in all their complexity and articulation, of considering meaning not only in terms of signification, but also of sense and significance. For Peirce and Welby alike, study of the life of signs and of the signs of life cannot be conducted in merely descriptive terms, that is to say, with claims to neutrality. If Welby coined the term 'significs' her aim was to indicate a sign theory that is comprehensive and critical, one squarely confronting the problem of the relation of signs and values. The term 'significs' designates the disposition for evaluation and, therefore, the value conferred upon signs, their pertinence, scope, signifying value, significance.

In Welby's view, hedonist ethics, the dominant ideology of her time (similarly to the present era), reduces the vast multiform cosmos to the status of mere annex of the planetary egoist and parasite.

It is significant that Peirce too should have turned his attention specifically to the normative sciences in the final phase of his research. He linked logic to ethics and esthetics: while logic is the normative science concerned with self-controlled thought, ethics focuses on self-controlled conduct, and esthetics is devoted to ascertaining the end most worthy of our espousal. In this context, Peirce took up the question of the ultimate good, *summum bonum*, or ultimate value, which he refused to identify with either individual pleasure (hedonism) or with societal good such as the greatest happiness for the greatest number of human beings (English utilitarianism). On the contrary, he insisted that the *summum bonum* could only be defined in relation to the 'evolutionary process', that is, to a process of growth. Specifically, he identified the highest good in the continuous 'growth of concrete reasonableness'.

The dialogic relation between self and other (the other *from* self and the other *of* self) emerges as one of the most important conditions for continuity in the creative process. A driving force in this creative process is love in the sense of *agape*. According to Peirce, the most advanced developments in reason and knowledge are based on the creative power of reasonableness and the transformative suasions of *agape*.

Thus conceived, reasonableness is endowed with the power of transforming one's horror of the stranger, the alien, one's fear of the other understood as the fear one experiences of the other foreign to oneself, into sympathy for the other become lovely. Developing Peirce's discourse in the direction of Levinas's philosophy of subjectivity, we might add that under the hardened crust of its identity the subject rediscovers its fear for the other through love, for the other's safety, a fear that renders one incessantly restless and pre-occupied for the other. Love, reasonableness, creativity are all grounded in the logic of otherness and dialogism, and together they move the evolutionary dynamics of consciousness.

While working on pragmatism with reference to the problem of subjectivity, the self considered as a set of actions, practices, habits, Peirce identified 'power' as opposed to 'force' as a fundamental characteristic of the self. He describes the self as a center oriented towards an end, an agent devoted to a more or less integrated set of

'purposes'. This may be related to what Welby understood with the terms 'purport' or 'ultimate value' when she described sense as the signifying value designated by the third element of her meaning triad, that is to say, 'significance'. Power is not 'brute force' but the 'creative power of reasonableness', which, by virtue of its agapastic orientation rules over all other forms of power (cf. *CP* 5.520). We may claim that power, that is, the ideal of reasonableness, is the capacity to respond to the attraction exerted upon self by the other; power and reasonableness are related to the capacity for response to the other and the modality of such response is dialogue.

The relationship between self's humility and fragility, on the one side, and the risks implied in self's readiness to venture towards that which is other, on the other side, has already been portrayed by Plato in his myth about Eros (in the *Symposium*), a sort of intermediate divinity or demon generated by Penia (poverty, need) and Poros (the God of ingenuity), who is capable of finding the way even when it is hidden. With reference to the human world, Welby described the connection between self enrichment and risky opening towards others as a condition for evolution. Such connection engenders an orientation which may be described in terms of the critique of 'being satisfied', that is, in terms of 'transcendence' with respect to reality as it is, with respect to ontological being given and determined once and for all: 'We all tend now, men and women, to be satisfied [...] with things as they are. But we have all entered the world precisely to be dissatisfied with it', says Welby in the unpublished manuscripts on *Subjectivity* cited above. 'Dissatisfaction' is an important ingredient for the concept of 'mother sense' and signals the need to recover the critical instance of the human intellectual capacity. So beyond the cognitive capacity, it should now be obvious that we are alluding here, in the first place, to the capacity for otherness, to the structural capacity for creativity and innovation, for shifting and displacing sense. And thanks especially to the procedures of abductive logic this critical instance allows for prevision and 'translation' in the broadest sense possible, understood, that is, as interpretation and verification of verbal and nonverbal signs beyond the limits of interlingual translation.

It is significant for our discussion that Welby, in a letter of January 21st. 1909, agreed with Peirce's observation that logic is the 'ethics of the intellect', which she related to a concept central to her own theory — 'primal' or 'mother-sense': 'Of course I assent to your

definition of a logical inference, and agree that Logic is in fact an application of morality in the largest and highest sense of the word. That is entirely consonant with the witness of Primal Sense' (in Hardwick 1977: 91). Scientific rigor in reasoning results from agapastic logical procedures, from 'primal sense', therefore from the courage of admitting to the structural necessity — for the evolution of sign, subject and consciousness — of inexactitude, instability and crisis.

### Humanism of human signs

In the light of what has been said so far, semioethics may be considered as proposing a new form of humanism. In fact, semioethics is committed at a pragmatic level, furthermore it is capable of transcending separatism among the sciences relating the natural sciences and the logico-mathematical sciences to the historico-social or human science, and again it evidences interconnectedness between the problem of humanism and the question of alterity.

This new form of humanism cannot but be the humanism of alterity, a point convincingly demonstrated by Levinas throughout his writings and especially in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972). The claim to human rights centered on identity, the approach to human rights to have dominated thus far, has left out from the very concept of 'human rights' the rights of the other. This approach must quickly be counteracted by the humanism of alterity where the rights of the other are the first to be recognized. And our allusion here is not just to the rights of the other *beyond self*, but also to the self's very own other, to the other *of self*. Indeed, the self characteristically removes, suffocates, and segregates otherness mostly sacrificed to the cause of identity. But identity thus achieved is fictitious, so that all our efforts invested in maintaining or recovering identity thus understood are destined to fail.

Semiotics contributes to the humanism of alterity by bringing to light the extension and consistency of the sign network that connects each human being to every other. This is true both on a synchronic and a diachronic level: the world-wide spread of communication actually means that a communication system is progressively being established on a planetary level and as such is a phenomenon susceptible to synchronic analysis; and given that the human species is implied in all events, behaviours, individual decisions, in the overall destiny of the

individual from its most remote to its most recent and closest manifestations, in its past and in its evolutionary future, on a biological level and on a historico-social level, diachronic investigations, to say the least staggering for diversity, are necessary. The sign network we are describing concerns the semiosphere as constructed by humankind, a sphere inclusive of culture, its signs, symbols, artifacts, etc.; but global semiotics teaches us that this semiosphere is part of a far broader semiosphere, the semiobiosphere, forming the habitat of humanity (the matrix whence we sprang and the stage on which we are destined to act).

Semiotics has the merit of having demonstrated that whatever is human involves signs. Indeed, it implies more than this: whatever is simply alive involves signs. And this is as far as cognitive semiotics and global semiotics reach. But semioethics pushes this awareness further in the direction of ethics and even beyond ethics; for semioethics makes the question of responsibility inescapable at the most radical level (that of defining commitments and values). Our ethos, but more than this, the cosmos itself falls within the scope of our responsibility. Among other things, this means that we must interpret humanity's sign behaviour in the light of the hypothesis that *if all the human involves signs, all signs are human*. This humanistic commitment, however, does not mean to reassert humanity's (monologic) identity yet again, nor to propose yet another form of anthropocentrism. On the contrary, what is implied is a radical operation of decentralization, nothing less than a Copernican revolution. As Welby would say, 'geocentrism' must be superseded, then 'heliocentrism' itself, until we approximate a truly cosmic perspective. The attainment or approximation of such a perspective is an integral part of our ultimate end, hence a point where global and 'teleo-' or 'telosemiotics' or, as we now propose, 'semioethics' intersect. As already observed, otherness more than anything else is at stake in the question of human responsibility and therefore of humanism as we are now describing it. But the sense of alterity here is other than what has previously been acknowledged: it is not only a question of our neighbour's otherness or even of another person at a great distance from us, in truth now recognized as being extremely close, but also of living beings most distant from us on a genetic level.

Reformulating a famous saying by Terence (*homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*), Roman Jakobson (1963) asserts that: *linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto*. This commitment

on the part of the semiotician to all that is linguistic, indeed, endowed with sign value (not only relatively to anthroposemiosis nor just to zoosemiosis, but to the whole semiobiosphere) should not only be understood in a cognitive sense but also ethically. Such a commitment involves concern not only in the sense of 'being concerned with...', but also of 'being concerned for...', 'taking care of...'. Viewed in this perspective, concern, care, responsibility, unlimited by belonging, proximity, community, communion, is not even that of the 'linguist' nor of the 'semiotician'. Modifying Jakobson's claim, we may state that it is not as professional linguists or semioticians that we may not consider anything that is a sign as *a me alienum*, but rather (leaving the first part of Terence's saying unchanged) we could claim that *homo sum*, and, therefore, as humans we are not only semiotic animals (like all other animals), but also semiotic animals and in this sense we are unique. Consequently, nothing semiotic, including the biosphere and the evolutionary cosmos whence it sprang, *a me alienum puto*.

Semioethics does not have a program to propose with intended aims and practices, nor a decalogue, nor a formula to apply more or less sincerely, therefore, more or less hypocritically. From this point of view, semioethics contrasts with stereotypes as much as with norms and ideology. On the contrary, semioethics proposes a critique of stereotypes, norms and ideology, of the different types of value characterized, for example, by Morris in *Signification and Significance*, 1964 (above all, his tripartition of values into operative, conceived, and object values, along with the subordinate distinctions of the dimensions of value into detachment, dominance, and dependence). Semioethics is the capacity for critique and its special vocation is to make manifest sign networks where it seemed there were none, bringing to light and evaluating interconnections, implications, involvement, contact which cannot be evaded, where it seemed there were only net separations, boundaries and distances with relative alibis. These serve to safeguard responsibility in a limited sense, therefore consciousness, which in fact very easily presents itself as a 'clear conscience'. The component 'telos' in the expression 'teleo-' or 'telosemiotics', terms we also propose for this particular orientation in semiotics, does not indicate some external value or pre-established end, an ultimate end, a *summum bonum* outside the sign network. Rather it indicates the telos of semiosis itself understood as an orientation beyond the totality, beyond the closure of totality,

transcendence with respect to a given entity, a given being, infinite semiosis, movement towards infinity, desire of the other. And, indeed, in the present context one of the special tasks of semioethics is to expose the illusoriness of the claim to the status of differences that are indifferent to each other (cf. Ponzio 1994).

### **Bioethics and semioethics**

Problems relevant to bioethics must be appropriately contextualized if they are to be treated adequately. Global semiotics provides contextualization of the phenomenological and ontological orders, but we must also consider today's socio-economic context, that is, the context of global communication-production (see Petrilli, Ponzio 2002: III.1.1). These contexts are closely interrelated from the perspective of ethics.

In fact, if we consider the contribution made by global semiotics to bioethics from the point of view of global communication-production today, semiotics must clearly face an enormous responsibility, that of evidencing the limits of communication-production society. Semiotics must now accept the responsibility of denouncing incongruities in the global system with the same energy, instruments and social possibilities produced by the global communication-production system itself. Semioticians must now be ready to denounce the dangers inherent in this system for life over the entire planet.

The current phase in the development of the capitalist system has been indicated as 'global communication'. This expression may be understood in at least two different ways: (1) that communication is now characterized by its extension over the whole planet; and (2) that it accommodates itself realistically to the world as it is. Globalization implies that communication is omnipresent in production and characterizes the entire social reproductive cycle: not only is communication present at the level of the market, of exchange, as in earlier phases in socio-economic development, but also at the level of production and consumption. Globalization is tantamount to heavy interference by communication-production not only in human life, but in life in general over the whole planet.

An adequate understanding of world-wide global communication-production calls for an approach that is just as global. While the special sciences taken separately are not in a position to provide such



a global view, the general science of signs or semiotics as it is taking shape today on the international scene is, thanks especially to Sebeok and his ongoing research.

A full understanding of global communication today implies a full understanding of the risks involved by global communication, including the risk that communication may come to an end. However, this risk does not simply refer to the phenomenon known as 'incommunicability', a subjective-individualistic ailment which emerged in the transition to communication in its current forms (and no longer separable from production). More than this, if it is true that communication and life converge, the risk that communication may end is nothing less than the risk that life itself on the planet Earth may come to an end, considering today's enormous potential for destruction by comparison with earlier phases in the development of the social system.

Therefore, the expression 'global communication-production' does not only refer to the expansion of the communication network and of the market supporting it at a world-wide level, but also to the fact that the whole of human life is englobed by the communication-production system: whether in the form of development, well-being and consumerism or of underdevelopment, poverty and impossibility to survive; health or sickness; normality or deviation; integration or emargination; employment or unemployment; transfer functional to the work-force characteristic of emigration or transfer of peoples characteristic of migration as their request for hospitality is denied; the traffic and use of legal commodities or of illegal goods, from drugs to human organs, to 'non-conventional' weapons. Indeed, this process of englobement is not limited to human life alone. All of life over the entire planet is now inexorably implied (even compromised and put at risk) in today's communication-production system (cf. Petrilli, Ponzio 2002: III, II.1.1).

Reflection on problems relevant to bioethics today keeping account of the context they belong to, that of globalization, requires an approach that is just as global. An approach that does not simply consider partial and sectorial aspects of the communication-production system according to internal perspectives functional to the system itself; an approach that is not limited on an empirical level to psychological subjects, to subjects reduced to the parameters imposed by the social sciences, that is, measurable in terms of statistics. Global communication-production calls for a methodological and theoretical

perspective that is just as global as the phenomenon under observation, a perspective capable of understanding the logic of global communication-production and of proceeding therefore to an adequate critique.

Analysis of today's world of global communication in all its complexity calls for conceptual instruments that must be as precise as possible. These can only be furnished by a new theory of communication. Such conceptual instruments must also be as rigorous as possible and this can only be furnished by their philosophical grounding. An attempt in this sense has been made by Ponzio in the volume, *La comunicazione* (1999) and in another volume co-authored with Petrilli, *Il sentire nella comunicazione globale* (2000).

Social reproduction in the global communication-production system is destructive. Reproduction of the productive cycle itself is destructive. It destroys: (a) machines, which are continuously replaced with new machines — not because of wear but for reasons connected with competitiveness; (b) jobs, making way for automation which leads to an increase in unemployment; (c) products on the market where new forms of consumerism are elicited, ruled completely by the logic of reproducing the productive cycle; (d) previous products which once purchased would otherwise exhaust the demand and which in any case are designed to become immediately outdated and obsolete as new and similar products are continuously introduced on the market; (e) commodities and markets unable to resist competition any longer in the context of the global communication-production system.

The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys natural environments and life forms. It also destroys different types of economic systems and diversity in culture tending to be eliminated by the processes of homologation operated by market logic. These days not only are habits of behaviour and needs rendered identical (though the possibility of satisfying such needs is never identical), but even desires and the imaginary tend to be homologated. The *conatus essendi* of communication-production also tends to destroy traditions and cultural patrimonies that contrast with or obstacle or are simply useless or nonfunctional to the logic of development, productivity and competition. The *conatus essendi* of communication-production tends to the destruction of those productive forces that escape the logic of production penalizing intelligence, inventiveness and creativity, which are over-ruled by or subjected to 'market reason' (which cannot be avoided when production must necessarily invest in 'human re-

sources'). The destructive character of today's production system is also manifest in the fact that it produces growing areas of underdevelopment as the very condition for development, areas of human exploitation and misery to the point of nonsurvival. Such logic subtends the expanding phenomenon of migration which so-called 'developed' countries are no longer able to contain due to objective internal space limitations — no doubt greater than in earlier forms and phases in the development of the social system.

Universalization of the market, that is, the application of the status of commodities to all things and relationships is destructive; and the more so-called commodities are illegal and prohibited — think of drugs, human organs, children, uteruses, etc. — the more they are expensive. The principle of exploiting other people's work is destructive. Work obviously costs less the more it produces profit: with the help of global communication developed countries are more and more turning to low cost work in underdeveloped countries. The disgrace of the communication-production world is particularly manifest in the spreading exploitation of child labour that is heavy and even dangerous (much needs to be said and done about children as today's victims of underdevelopment, in misery, sickness, war, on the streets, in the work-force, on the market...).

The destructive character of world-wide communication-production is also evidenced by war, which is always a scandal. Global communication-production is the communication-production of war. War requires new and flourishing markets for the communication-production of conventional and unconventional weapons. War also requires widespread approval acknowledging it as just and necessary, as a necessary means of defence against the growing danger of the menacing 'other': therefore, war as a means of achieving respect for the rights of 'one's identity', 'one's difference'. The truth is that identities and differences are neither threatened nor destroyed by the 'other'. The real menace is today's social system that encourages and promotes identity and difference while rendering them fictitious and phantasmal. And this is precisely one of the reasons why we cling to such values so passionately, being a type of logic that fits the communication-production of war to perfection.

The technologies of separation as applied to human bodies, to interests, to the life of individual and collective subjects are functional to production and to identifying production with consumption characteristic of today's production system. With respect to all this and

thanks to its ontological perspective, global semiotics (or semiotics of life) if nothing else can oppose a whole series of signs showing how each instant of individual life is wholly interrelated, even compromised with all other forms of life over the entire planet.

To acknowledge such interconnectedness, such compromise involves a form of responsibility that far exceeds all positive rights and all limited responsibilities, restricted responsibilities with alibis. Such awareness is ever more urgent the more the reasons of production and of global communication functional to it impose ecological conditions that impede and distort communication between our bodies and the environment.

An ontological reformulation of bioethics on the basis of semiotics of life with reference to today's socio-economic context as delineated by global communication helps identify two fundamental principles for the human being: dispossession and extralocalization. These principles allude to the human individual as a living body interconnected with all other forms of life over the planet thanks to the condition of diachronic and synchronic intercorporeity. The human body is dispossessed with respect to techniques that encourage and favour subordination to the knowledge-power of biopolitics (Foucault); and extralocalized with respect to chronotopic coordinates, projects, structures and roles functional to reproduction in the economico-social form of global communication.

The principles of dispossession and extralocalization are manifest in the body's tendency to 'escape without rest' from techniques that, on the contrary, aim to dominate and control it; the body's 'persistence in dying'. Dispossession and extralocalization are principles that must be taken into account for the prolegomena of an approach to bioethics that is critical, philosophical and theoretical — the very condition for recognizing nothing less than the moral and juridical status of such principles.

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**Моделирование, диалог, глобальность:  
биосемиотика и семиотика самости.**

**2. Биосемиотика, семиотика самости и семиозтика**

Основные современные подходы в семиотических исследованиях противоречат идее индивида как обособленной и самодостаточной единицы. Тело организма в микро- и макрокосмосе не является изолированной биологической единицей и не принадлежит отдельному индивиду. Тело является организмом, который живет в отношениях с другими телами, таким образом находясь как бы между телами и во взаимной зависимости. Такое понимание тела находит подтверждение в культурных практиках и в мировоззрениях, которые основываются на межтелесности, взаимной зависимости, презентации и открытости — хотя к настоящему времени они почти исчезли. Подход к семиотике как к чему-то глобальному и в то же время способному преодолеть иллюзорную идею об определенных и окончательных границах идентичности, предполагает диалог и инаковость (*otherness*). Инаковость заставляет индивида сомневаться в направленности на всеобщую закрытость и постоянно себя перестраивать в процессе, соотносимом с “бесконечностью” (как учит Эммануэль Левинас) или в “бесконечном семиозисе” (следуя Чарльзу Пирсу). Вторая тема — соотношенность человека и машины в антропосемиозисе и исходящие из этого сценарии будущего. Цель данного совместного (с А. Понзио) исследования — развитие глобальной семиотики в направлении “семиозтики”.

**Modelleerimine, dialoog, globaalsus:  
biosemiootika ja enesesemiootika.**

**2. Biosemiootika, enesesemiootika ja semioeetika**

Peamised praegusaegsed vaated semiootilises uurimistöös räägivad vastu indiviidi kui eraldatud ja eneseküllase üksuse ideele. Organismi keha mikro- ja makrokosmoses ei ole isoleeritud biooloogiline üksus, ta ei kuulu üksikolendile, ei ole omaette eraldatud ja eneseküllane sfäär. Keha on organism, mis elab suhetes teiste kehadega, olles seega kehadevaheline ja vastassõltuvuses. Taoline keha mõiste leiab kinnitust kultuurilistes praktikates ja maailmavaadetes, mis põhinevad kehadevahelisusel, vastassõltuvusel, esitusel ja avatusel — kuigi praeguseks on need peaaegu välja surnud. Lähenedamine semiootikale kui globaalsele ja samaaegselt suutelisele ületama illusoorset ideed identiteedi kindlakujuliste ja lõplike



piiride kohta, eeldab dialoogi ja teistsugusust (*otherness*). Teistsugusust sunnib identiteeti kahtlema suunitluses üldisele suletusele ja end aina ümber korraldama "lõpmatusena" seonduvas protsessis, nagu Emmanuel Levinas õpetab, või "lõpmatus semioosis" Charles Peirce'i järgides. Teine teema ses artiklis on inimese ja masina suhestumine antroposemioosis ning sellest tulenevad tulevikustsenaariumid. Käesoleva ühisuurimuse eesmärk on globaalsemiootika arendamine "semioetika" suunas.

# What relations are: A case study on conceptual relations, displacement of meaning and knowledge profiling

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**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to introduce the knowledge profile as a tool to make realistic representations of knowledge organizations. In order to make these realistic representations, we must identify the fundamental sign of the given knowledge domains, since it seems to be the case that the fundamental sign puts epistemological constraints upon its research objects, eventually making the knowledge organization of a knowledge domain unique. Furthermore, the article points out that in order to make the realistic representations of knowledge organizations, we need a basic understanding of how conceptual relations emerge, develop and become related terms. In order to strengthen the theoretical points and to show the usability of the knowledge profile, we include a case study of a knowledge domain.

Pragmaticism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct.

C. S. Peirce (CP 5.442)

## Introduction

In the literature on Library and Information Science (LIS),<sup>1</sup> we often encounter the concept "related term" as an entity that needs no further

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<sup>1</sup> We use LIS as an example of a research field that uses a well-developed classification of relations. Naturally, there are other research fields, which also have developed such classification. However, being a librarian (Thellefsen) LIS seems obvious to use as an example.

definition and as something that is obvious. However, if we submit the concept to further exploration, the lack of preciseness makes the definition and classification of related terms somewhat confusing. In the literature on thesaurus construction,<sup>2</sup> relations are classified in the following way: *broader term* (BT) defined as a superordinate term in a hierarchical relation; *narrower term* (NT) defined as a narrower term to the heading term; *related term* (RT) defined as a term in a semantic relation, but not in a hierarchical relation, to another term; *semantic relation* (SR) defined as a relation between terms that is true as a matter of general knowledge, rather than depending on what the terms refer to in some particular document.

Of course, this is only a small excerpt of the general classification of terms in the study of thesaurus construction. However, we believe that the terms mentioned here emphasize one of the basic problems in LIS, namely the lack of ability to provide an answer to the most basic and simple question: regarding the nature of a related term — or to put it more simply: What is a related term?

When looking at the classification of related terms cited from LIS, there seems to be a need to operate with different types of relations. It is unclear; however, what makes a term more or less broad. Moreover, are NTs or SRs not related terms as a related term has its own name RT? Furthermore, the classification is unable to explain how relations emerge and how they are identified. How do we, e.g., determine that the term *activity dysfunction* within the knowledge domain of Occupational Therapy is related to *activity*? The answer could be based on the obvious similarity between the words. However, the case is considerably more complicated when the question addresses *A-one* as a related term to *activity*. Our answer to these questions is: *a related term is a term that shares epistemological qualities with the concept to which it relates. This means that the epistemological qualities of the concept are displaced to the related term, hence we get a displacement of meaning and the relation is maintained by an interpretative habit of conduct.*

This answer leads to even more questions: What is an epistemological quality and how do we identify these epistemological qualities; and are concepts able to carry such qualities in the first place? Furthermore, what is a habit of conduct? Are we able to identify such a habit?

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://instruct.uwo.ca/gplis/677/thesaur/main00.htm> for a thorough definition of how to construct a thesaurus.

These questions imply a more theoretical understanding of concepts and related terms. We believe that it is crucial to ask these kinds of questions since the answers provide new and, in our opinion, better ways to create representations of knowledge organisations.

Before we address the questions, we make a digression to Peirce's doctrine of pragmatism since this doctrine is able to provide the theoretical background for the answers to the above questions. We will not deal with pragmatism in detail. Instead, we will define basic concepts from pragmatism, which have an important impact upon concepts and related terms. Furthermore, we will introduce a new method of making representations of knowledge organisations: the *knowledge profile* (Thellefsen 2003b; 2004b). The knowledge profile consists of three elements: the epistemological basis, the consequences of this epistemological basis, and a knowledge map (Thellefsen 2003a; 2004a).

*The epistemological basis* is the knowledge basis of a particular knowledge domain. It contains the goal(s) and epistemological qualities (in a knowledge management context, epistemological qualities could also be called values) of the knowledge domain.

*The consequences of the epistemological basis* are the meaning of the epistemological basis. The consequences are manifestations of the epistemological basis. It is the sum of consequences that lead us towards the full understanding of the epistemological basis.

Knowledge profiling as a research area is also a matter of sharpening the terminology of a research area. The identification of the epistemological basis is a process of sharpening terminology – an identification and construction of a given conceptual order. The most precise state of the epistemological basis, where most of the disturbing connotations have been removed and its most precise consequences are identified is the fundamental sign<sup>3</sup> of the particular research area.

*The knowledge map* depicts the knowledge organization of a particular knowledge domain. It shows how the related terms are organized in relation to the fundamental sign of the knowledge domain. The knowledge map differs from other classifications of relations since the terms are organized according to the socio-cognitive knowledge structures of the actors in the knowledge domain. When drawing the knowledge map, we do not engage any relation classifications such as: superordinate or subordinate levels or any other concept hierarchies.

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<sup>3</sup> The fundamental sign is developed in Thellefsen (2002; 2003b).

These classifications seem to be artificial concept constructions that are unrealistic when it comes to mapping the knowledge structures of a research area.<sup>4</sup>

Summing up, knowledge profiling has the following aim: to identify the epistemological qualities of a research area such as: a concept, a research project, a knowledge domain, a corporation, etc. and thus to identify the habits of conduct within a particular field of research in order to: (1) sharpen the given terminology of the particular research field; (2) identify the fundamental sign of a particular research field; (3) draw a knowledge map of the particular research field.

These points are important since it is the habit of conduct that makes the relation between a concept and a related term possible. Basically, we need the knowledge profile in order to answer the questions stated above. In order to demonstrate the theoretical points, we present the complete knowledge profile and structure of concepts for the knowledge domain MARKK<sup>5</sup>.

MARKK is a research unit within Market Communication and Aesthetics at Aalborg University. It was founded in 2002 by a group of four senior researchers who have been working within this field in various more or less formalised groupings for at least a decade. The reason for establishing MARKK was primarily to create a permanent organisation for developing the knowledge domain. Secondly, the intention was to integrate junior researchers and PhD-students into more formal research programmes. The wish to create a platform for external funding was a third reason for this initiative. Today, MARKK consists of 10 members and offers frequent seminars on research topics. As a research unit, MARKK focuses on aesthetic aspects of Market Communication in order to: (a) examine the aesthetic potentials of the formal features of Market Communication; (b) investigate the impact of aesthetics on cognition in the moment of exposure, (c) understand by which means and in which ways Market Communications has a bearing on culture (and cultural change), e.g. on influencing the ideas and values of the consumer or on shaping concrete forms of practice (habits, rituals, etc.).

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<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that we disapprove of the mentioned concept hierarchical structures. We simply mean that they come into play in a later stage of knowledge organization.

<sup>5</sup> MARKK is an abbreviation for (M)arket communication, (A)esthetics, (R)eception, (K(C))ognition, and (K(C))ultur).

As an acronym, MARKK stands for “Market communication and Aesthetics: Reception (exposure), Cognition and Culture”. However, before we start defining the knowledge profile, let us take a closer look at the doctrine of pragmatism.

### Pragmatism

Peirce’s doctrine of pragmatism is central to the understanding of knowledge and knowledge organisation. Indeed, Peirce defines the meaning of a concept to be the sum of its conceivable consequences. “Pragmatism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct” (CP 5.442). And further: “[...] pragmatism does not undertake to say in what the meanings of all signs consist, but merely to lay down a method of determining the meanings of intellectual concepts, that is, of those upon which reasonings may turn” (CP 5.8). Furthermore, Peirce writes: “Now pragmatism is simply the doctrine that the inductive method is the only essential to the ascertainment of the intellectual purport of any symbol” (CP 8.209). In other words, pragmatism deals with identifying the meaning of symbols by examining the consequences of symbols. If we translate symbols<sup>6</sup> to concepts within a knowledge domain, and we have to accept that the knowledge domain places interpretive constraints upon its concepts, we arrive at the following definition: *within a knowledge domain, the meaning of a concept is identifiable in its related terms.*

Let us elaborate upon this. How does a consequence become a related term? This can be accounted for by the following interpretive steps.

1. We understand *bearing* (from the quote) as *consequences*.
2. *Tested consequences* are *general relations* hence the general relations of a concept are *related terms* **and only general relations can be related terms.**
3. Since any interpretation of a concept is a consequence and can express personal whims and preferences among the users, the consequence have to be tested within the knowledge domain.

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a concept is a symbol or a network of symbols.

4. A test is simply whether or not the term finds footing and is used according to the methods to obtain knowledge in the knowledge domain.
5. If so, the knowledge it contains is generalised and has been found useful; if it does not find footing, it may wither away.

Summing up, a related term is a consequence that has been tested through the use and experience of members in a knowledge domain and not all consequences become related terms.

Based on this very short pragmaticistically inspired definition of the meaning of concepts, we gain a very useful idea of the relation between a concept and its related terms. However, in order to answer the questions posed in the beginning of the article, we have to take a closer look at the epistemology that lies within the doctrine of pragmatism. However, we will not deal with all the aspects of pragmatism. The aspects that lie within the doctrine of fallibilism and the metaphysical realism will be sufficient to provide the epistemological background for satisfactory answers to the question of relations.

### **The fallibilistic and realistic angle of knowledge**

The doctrine of Fallibilism is the idea that knowledge is provisory. This means that knowledge is not static but develops as its meaning grows and, as Peirce writes, symbols tend to grow as a response to the usage of the symbols (CP 2.302). This growth of meaning also applies to concepts within knowledge domains. However, the growth of a concept resides in its conceivable consequences, which means that the development of a concept resides in the future. Consequently, the meaning of a concept cannot be static since we have not learned the consequences of the given concept. Peirce defines the doctrine of fallibilism in the following quotations.

Thus, the universe is *not* a mere mechanical result of the operation of blind law. The most obvious of all its characters cannot be so explained. It is the multitudinous facts of all experience that show us this; but that which has opened our eyes to these facts is the principle of fallibilism. Those who fail to appreciate the importance of fallibilism reason: we see these laws of mechanics; we see how extremely closely they have been verified in some cases. We suppose that what we haven't examined is like what we have examined, and that these laws are absolute, and the whole universe is a boundless machine working by the blind laws of mechanics. This is a

philosophy which leaves no room for a God! No, indeed! It leaves even human consciousness, which cannot well be denied to exist, as a perfectly idle and functionless *flâneur* in the world, with no possible influence upon anything — not even upon itself. Now will you tell me that this fallibilism amounts to nothing? (CP 1.162–163)

Even though this quotation has a cosmological turn, it emphasises the nature of fallibilism in a very precise way. We simply cannot suppose the exactitude of what we have not examined based on what we have examined. In knowledge organization, this means that *we cannot just presuppose a concept relation without prior investigation just because similar cases indeed turned out to be relations*. In the following quotation, Peirce defines the doctrine of fallibilism in the context of proportions.

All positive reasoning is of the nature of judging the proportion of something in a whole collection by the proportion found in a sample. Accordingly, there are three things to which we can never hope to attain by reasoning, namely, absolute certainty, absolute exactitude, absolute universality. We cannot be absolutely certain that our conclusions are even approximately true; for the sample may be utterly unlike the unsampled part of the collection. We cannot pretend to be even probably exact; because the sample consists of but a finite number of instances and only admits special values of the proportion sought. Finally, even if we could ascertain with absolute certainty and exactness that the ratio of sinful men to all men was as 1 to 1; still among the infinite generations of men there would be room for any finite number of sinless men without violating the proportion. The case is the same with a seven legged calf. Now if exactitude, certitude, and universality are not to be attained by reasoning, there is certainly no other means by which they can be reached. (CP 1.141–142)

Basically, Peirce states the same here as in the previous quotation; our senses are fallible thus our reasoning is fallible and based on the fact that every proportion we make can only be approximately true. Of course, this is the case when dealing with knowledge organisation. A representation of a knowledge domain e.g. a knowledge profile, a thesaurus, or a classification scheme is only approximate. When we accept this, we must do our utmost to make realistic representations that are as close as possible to the object represented. Here, we argue that we have to use the knowledge profile as the foundation for making realistic or approximately true representations. A thesaurus or a classification scheme that is constructed without this thorough preliminary work will be unrealistic or simply wrong. We will conclude



this line of quotes with another quote that sums up the fallibilistic impact upon knowledge:

By his system of nomenclature, Sir William Hamilton has conferred an immense boon not alone on his own school but on all English philosophers who believe in anchoring words to fixed meanings. I deeply regret that I am not one of these. That is the best way to be stationary, no doubt. But, nevertheless, I believe in mooring our words by certain applications and letting them change their meaning as our conceptions of the things to which we have applied them progresses. (Peirce, *Writings* 1: 58)<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the essence of fallibilism is that the meaning of a concept grows concurrently with the amount of the consequences we learn from the concept. In some way, we have to deal with the progressive nature of knowledge. Universalistic knowledge theories certainly cannot grasp the growth of concepts if our aim is to make realistic representations of knowledge organisations.

However, fallibilism is not the only aspect of Peirce's doctrine of pragmatism that has an impact upon our understanding of concepts. As the researcher Eugene Halton writes: "Though largely of a conventional nature, language is a mode of conduct, and as such, produces conceivable consequences and is normatively bounded. In its abilities to body forth new possibilities for conduct, to determine and be determined by further experience, and to communicate valid generals bearing conceivable consequences, language is real".<sup>8</sup> Peirce writes: "But if he thinks that, whether the word 'hard' itself be real or not, the property, the character, the predicate, hardness, is not invented by men, as the word is, but is really and truly in the hard things and is one in them all, as a description of habit, disposition, or behavior, then he is a realist" (CP 1.27 Cross-Ref).

So, it is not the word as such that is real, it is the qualities carried by the word and the habits of conduct making the word mean what it means that make the word real. And it is the qualities that are interesting when dealing with relations, because it is the qualities of the concept that become displaced to the related term. Indeed, it is the qualities and the interpretative habits we are able to identify. We will return to this important point when defining the knowledge profile. According to Peirce, a concept is a general and a manifested general is

<sup>7</sup> Cf. <http://members.door.net/arisbe/>.

<sup>8</sup> From <http://www.nd.edu/~ehalton/Peirce.htm>.

a real (CP 5.430). The general concept is an abstract and real entity, and the real is a manifestation of the general concept — it is a relation. The researcher C. Hausman describes Peirce's view on generals in the following way:

Peirce's conception of generals as reals was not, as indicated earlier, a commitment to the reality of universals in the sense in which universals are construed as static, completely determinate identities. For Peirce, generals are dynamic; they are tendencies that grow. A general should not be thought of apart from a telos. With respect to being a habit, a third or general is what it is by virtue of its influence on its future instances. A general is developmental, leading toward a more and more determinate realization of what had been unrealized. Generals can grow — first, individually, by changing identity or by being modified as rules can be modified, and, second, as complexes of intelligible identities or rules that contribute their intelligibilities to an evolving system of generals. (Hausman 1992: 12)

The main points from this quote are: (1) generals are dynamic; (2) generals are habits of conduct; (3) generals have a tendency to grow; (4) generals have a telos; (5) generals develop hitherto unrealised aspects.

If we take a closer look at the first point “generals are dynamic”, and try to elaborate upon it, we will see that this point implies all the following points. How can an abstract entity be dynamic? To answer this question, we have to understand Peirce's definition of an idea:

Three elements go to make up an idea. The first is its intrinsic quality as a feeling. The second is the energy with which it affects other ideas, an energy which is infinite in the here-and-nowness of immediate sensation, finite and relative in the recency of the past. The third element is the tendency of an idea to bring along other ideas with it. (CP 1.135)

However, the definition of the idea concerns the creation of an individual idea that starts to grow. The development of the individual idea into a symbol is what Hausman means when he interprets Peirce by writing: “[...] generals can grow — first, individually, by changing identity or by being modified as rules can be modified” (Hausman 1992: 12). However, the nature of the individual general makes it search for “[...] complexes of intelligible identities or rules that contribute their intelligibilities to an evolving system of generals” (Hausman 1992: 12). This must be what Peirce means, when he writes: “Symbols grow [...] a symbol, once in being, spreads among

the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows" (CP 2.302). Consequently, a general is a symbol or a complex of symbols constrained by certain conditions.

However, we still need to account for the determination of generals and more specifically generals as concepts in language of special purposes (LSP). Symbols grow through use and experience; concepts within knowledge domains also grow through use and experience. In fact, concepts are formed by the use and experience of the actors within the knowledge domain. The growth of concept meaning is determined by the conditions of the knowledge domain in question. This not only makes concepts able to grow in meaning but also to match the knowledge need in a knowledge domain. We may think of concepts as a kind of knowledge plasticity shaped in accordance with the way in which we form concepts. This constructs the telos of concepts and the form of the concepts is based upon a habit of conduct — namely the habit based upon the epistemological basis of the knowledge domain. Indeed, it is within the epistemological basis that we can identify the basic interpretative habit and its epistemological qualities. The epistemological basis can be understood as the sum of epistemological choices made in the knowledge domain, or as the ontology of the knowledge domain. The interpretative habit is similar to the fundamental sign (Thellefsen 2002; 2003). We will return to the epistemological basis and the fundamental sign when defining the knowledge profile.

In summary, we are dealing with a kind of constructivism — a pragmaticistic constructivism. The meaning of concepts is constructed, i.e. formed and sharpened by the use and experience of the actors in a knowledge domain. However, this constructivism is based on a realism that is best described as a metaphysical realism. Therefore, the meaning of concepts refers to generals that exist independently of human minds. Manifested reals within a knowledge domain are signs that refer to a dominating interpretative habit. The qualities and the dominating habit are identifiable in the conceptual structures of a knowledge domain. We will return to the definition of pragmaticistic constructivism after having defined and discussed the concept of sign displacement (displacement of meaning) and the knowledge profile.

## The knowledge profile

As we stated in the introduction, the knowledge profile is a way to create realistic representations of knowledge organisations. We claim that these representations are more in accordance with the way researchers within a specific knowledge domain actually structure their knowledge. Our claim is based on two presumptions:

- (1) we believe that knowledge structures are socio-cognitive: meaning within a knowledge domain is created through the interactions of the actors in this domain;
- (2) we believe that the knowledge organisation of a knowledge domain is unique to that specific domain.

Knowledge profiling is thus a reconstruction of the unique socio-cognitive structures in a specific knowledge domain. In order to make realistic representations of the knowledge organisations within knowledge domains this means that we must be in accordance with the knowledge domain in question. If, as information specialists, we neglect the uniqueness of every knowledge domain, we commit the error of making representations of knowledge organizations that fit perfectly into the world of e.g. Library Science but do not represent the internal organisation of the knowledge domain in question.<sup>9</sup>

As argumentation, we will further define the knowledge profile and provide an example of its usability as a tool to investigate the socio-cognitive structures of a specific knowledge domain. The knowledge profile consists of three basic elements: the epistemological basis, the consequences of this epistemological basis and a knowledge map. The idea of the epistemological basis is based on the pragmatic idea that every choice has consequences. This also applies for science. Every choice that affects the research object has consequences for this object. If terminology studies are conducted within the framework of pragmatism, we have to follow the basic epistemological ideas of pragmatism. We cannot neglect the aspect of fallibilism or the metaphysical realism, or the objective idealism for that matter. These -isms are essential to pragmatism. If we ignore them, we are guilty of unethical terminological behaviour. We ought to have very important reasons and very good arguments for neglecting this epistemological basis of the doctrine of pragmatism.

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, this is the case with most information retrieval systems and thesauri.

Let us take a closer look at the first part of the knowledge profile: the epistemological basis.

### The epistemological basis

The epistemological basis is the sum of theoretical choices used to e.g. solve a given problem or analyse a given research object. The epistemological basis is the *qualities* of the concept that are shared between the concept and its related term. It is the way in which the knowledge domain has historically chosen to view and understand its particular research object. In the following, we will use the knowledge domain of “MARKK” as an example of how to draw up a knowledge profile.

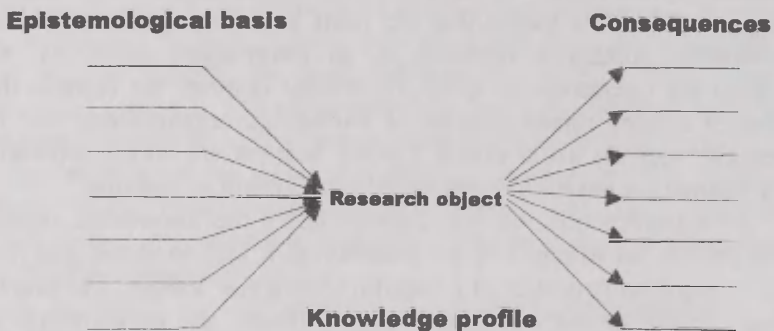


Figure 1. How to draw a knowledge profile.

We use the Figure 1 and the following six-step method:

1. Draw the knowledge profile of your concept, your project or your knowledge domain by identifying its epistemological basis and the consequences of this epistemological basis.
2. Start by writing the name of the research object (see Fig. 1), the concept, the problem, the knowledge domain in the middle. In the case of MARKK, we write MARKK in the middle.
3. Consider what theoretical basis you will unfold upon the research object; identify the most general state. Place the most general state

of theory on the first line in the upper left side of Fig. 1. In the case of MARKK, this is Aesthetics.

4. Consider how to sharpen this general mode by prefixing or suffixing terms to the concept. Peirce did this to positivism, which he prefixed with *prope*, and defined his pragmatism as *prope-positivism* (CP 5.412). See point 2 below.
5. Consider whether you can sharpen the concept/phrase even further e.g. by using a theory within the theory that narrows down the knowledge potential of the concept or use another theory that can make your concept or project more precise See point 3 below.
6. Consider whether you need to sharpen your concept even further, or whether you are ready to identify the consequences of your concept. See point 4, 5, and 6 below.

Working on the knowledge profile of MARKK, we have identified this epistemological basis (of MARKK):

1. Aesthetics
2. Aesthetics in Market Communication
3. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication
4. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective
5. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective with focus on the process of signification in the moment of exposure
6. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective with focus on the process of signification, understood as the intertwining of cognition and culture, in the moment of exposure

The point of departure in MARKK is not Market Communication but Aesthetics, which defines MARKK as a humanistic approach and not a marketing approach. This is step 1, a crucial one because it is seminal for the ideas, methodologies and other ways of practising research (organising and presenting knowledge) in MARKK. But in step 2, it is stated that MARKK is about aesthetics in a specific field (Market Communication). So, it is neither about the philosophy of aesthetics nor about art, nor media aesthetics in general. MARKK is solely interested in aesthetics that serve market communicative purposes: to convince consumers/receivers of the necessity of a certain product. Thus MARKK studies aesthetic phenomena — or artefacts — like advertisements, logos, brands and design.

MARKK's interest in the formal aspects of these artefacts means: (a) that expression is favoured over content; (b) that these artefacts are treated like texts, i.e. as a coherent and defined structure of meaning (or signification). This is step 3. Because these formal aspects are analysed from a structural(istic) perspective, the focus will be on structuralistic issues like the coding of the text, the system of meaning and the formal structure of the artefact (step 4). The next step (5) informs us that MARKK is not about the meaning of these formal structures *per se* but about how the receiver/consumer uses the text/message and about how formal structures effect — influence or determine — the response of the receiver in the moment of exposure. In step 6, it is pointed out that *effect* and *use* is viewed as a dynamic relation — a dialectics — between cognition and culture. This intersection is made up of patterns or schemes of emotion, embodiment and thinking.

Having identified the epistemological basis of MARKK, we have also identified the consequences of the epistemological basis. The consequences thus correspond to the level of abstractness in the epistemological basis. We have listed the consequences (of the epistemological basis of MARKK) as follows:

- Ad 1. The Humanities (history, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, taste)
  - Ad 2. A humanistic approach to Market Communication (focusing on artefacts produced to serve marketing purposes)
  - Ad 3. Artefacts understood as texts with focus on their formal features
  - Ad 4. System, structure, code (paradigms/syntagms)
  - Ad 5. Situational aspects of effect and use
  - Ad 6. Schemes of emotion, embodiment and thinking
- To sum up, this gives us an overall knowledge profile of MARKK (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The knowledge profile of MARKK.

<b>The epistemological basis of MARKK</b>	<b>The consequences of the epistemological basis of MARKK</b>
1. Aesthetics	Ad 1. The Humanities (history, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, taste)
2. Aesthetics in Market Communication	Ad 2. A humanistic approach to Market Communication (focusing on artefacts produced to serve marketing purposes)
3. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication	Ad 3. Artefacts understood as texts with focus on their formal features
4. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective	Ad 4. System, structure, code (paradigms/syntagms)
5. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective with focus on the process of signification in the moment of exposure	Ad 5. Situational aspects of effect and use
6. Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective with focus on the process of signification, understood as the intertwining of cognition and culture, in the moment of exposure	Ad 6. Schemes of emotion, embodiment and thinking

As discussed earlier, the basic aim of knowledge profiling MARKK is to sharpen the use of terminology amongst the researchers within MARKK and to identify the unique fundamental sign of MARKK in order to be able to make a realistic representation of MARKK's socio-cognitive knowledge organization. When focusing upon the use of terminology, the concepts are often filled with disturbing connotations that make the meaning of the concepts seem unclear not just to the members of the knowledge domain but also to people outside the knowledge domain. Naturally, this leads to misinformations and misunderstandings. Therefore, we have used the knowledge profile to



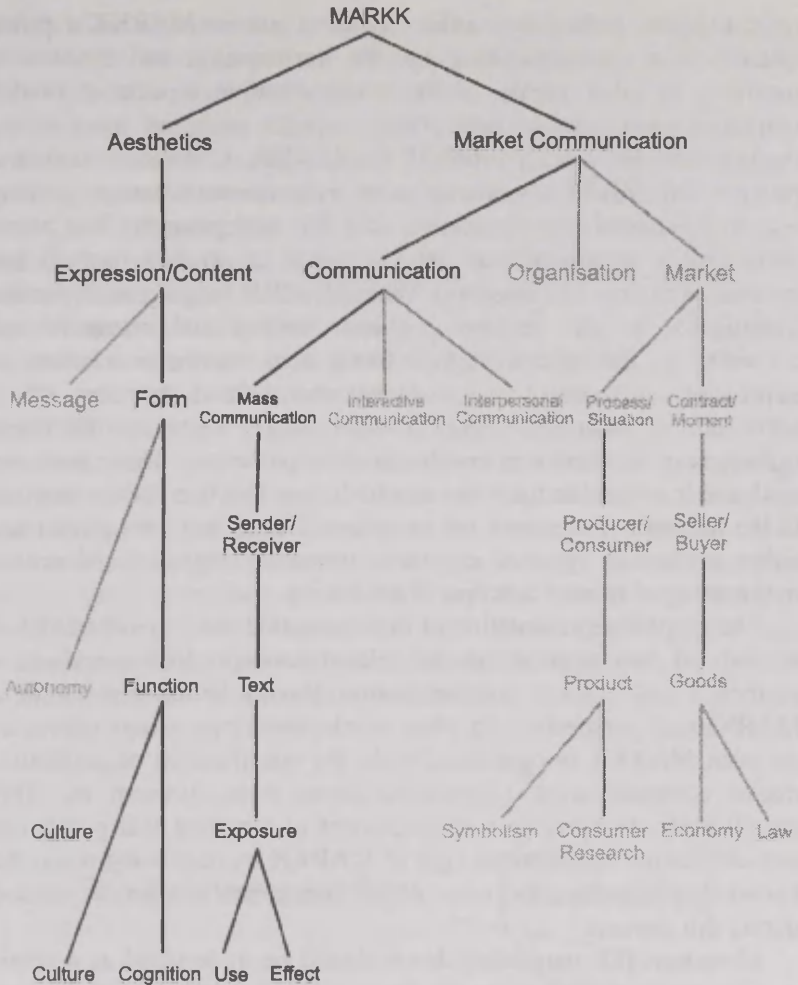
sharpen the use of terminology in MARKK. Furthermore, we have sharpened the scientific profile of the knowledge domain. We have sharpened the terminology of MARKK to a degree where the terminology is free of disturbing connotations and where it should be beyond doubt what the focus of MARKK is. Moreover, we have identified the fundamental sign of MARKK as:

Formal aspects of Aesthetics in Market Communication from a structuralistic perspective with focus on the process of signification, which is understood as the intertwining of cognition and culture. With focus upon schemes of emotion, embodiment and thinking.

This is the fundamental sign of MARKK and it is this fundamental sign that sharpens the meaning of the concepts in use. Moreover, the fundamental sign is the basis of the conceptual structure depicted in Figure 2.

This conceptual structure is a graphic representation of key concepts in the displacement of meaning that defines the qualities inherent in the MARKK knowledge domain of. As already elaborated, MARKK is concerned with *Aesthetics in Market Communication*, which makes these two terms the basic related concepts.

Within the field of Humanities, aesthetics is related to the dialectics of *expression* and *content* in the signification process. As stated in the epistemological basis, MARKK's prime interest is in *form* favouring expression instead of content. The intended meanings or ideological values of the message are therefore in the background (and therefore grey or dim in the graphic representation). In regard to a long lasting debate within aesthetics between autonomists (stressing that aesthetics concern "a purpose without purpose" or "*l'art pour l'art*") and functionalists (stressing that aesthetic form should be shaped in accordance with the practical purpose of the object), MARKK favours *function*. This is due to MARKK's structuralistic approach. Function is analysed in terms of *cognition* (schemes) and *culture* (patterns).



**Figure 2.** The knowledge map of MARKK. As pointed out in the introduction. The knowledge map is not alone built upon a top-down structure. It is a construction based upon the fundamental sign of MARKK and the consequences of this fundamental sign. This makes the knowledge map prior to any hierarchical structure and it makes knowledge mapping prior to building e.g. a thesaurus or other hierarchical structures.

The second basic concept for MARKK is Market Communication. It is a field where communication studies meet marketing, management

(organisation studies) and other social sciences. MARKK's prime interest is in *communication*: i.e. the transmission and creation of meaning. In other words, as the communicative aspects of market communication are stressed, other aspects such as market and organisation are more peripheral to MARKK. Communication is a process, and MARKK's interest is on *mass communication* (pushing e.g. interpersonal communication into the background). The actors within mass communication are conceived as *senders* (active) and *receivers* (passive and massive). What MARKK actually analyses and investigates in this process between senders and receivers are, according to the epistemological basis, *texts*: aesthetic relations of expression and content in a coherent and defined structure, which serve one or more functions. In other words, texts are the manifestations of aesthetics in communication processes. These texts are analysed in respect to the ways in which they function for the receiver in the moment of *exposure* (or reception). These ways are pinpointed either in terms of *effect* or *use*, terms mirroring cognition and culture in the string of related concepts of aesthetics.

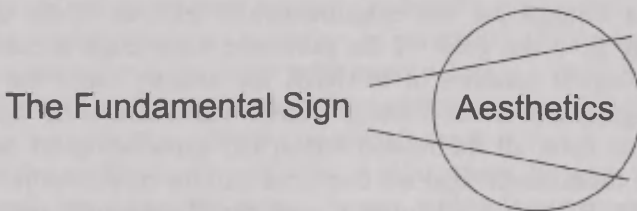
The graphic representation of the conceptual structure of MARKK consists of two main strings of related concepts that specify how aesthetics and market communication should be understood in a MARKK(ed) perspective. In other words, these two strings inform us on what MARKK is concerned with, the specification of aesthetics, market communication, expression/content, form, function, etc. This specification develops in a displacement of meaning that points out and defines the fundamental sign of MARKK by narrowing down the knowledge domain. The telos of the fundamental sign is realised during this process.

Moreover, this narrowing down should be understood as a continuous process of sharpening the focus of the domain, thereby shaping a more and more precise foreground. In this process, other concepts move into the background. They are not the prime focus of MARKK but, on the other hand, they are not to be discarded when dealing with the concepts in focus. They still give meaning to the strings of primary concepts. For example, the reason why market communication is a specific form of communication is the fact that the goal of the sender of market communication is to convince the receiver to buy the object of the text: that is to become a customer and a consumer. So, market communication is communication, which intends to transform receivers into buyers/customers and consumers through texts on the

goods to be acquired (implying law and a monetary system) and the products to be appropriated (implying consumption and meaning creating acts when consuming the product).

To grasp these two different kinds of relations, the graphic representation features concepts in bold and others in grey/dim. The strings in bold represent the *basic* or *primary* conceptual structure of relations. The strings in grey represent *secondary* relations to the fundamental sign which, being in the background, nonetheless hold relevant information in regard to the prime concepts. The primary concepts are the relations that MARKK should constantly keep in mind. The secondary concepts are relations that MARKK should not neglect.

To summarise, the fundamental sign contains the qualities of MARKK and it is the manifestation of the interpretative habit that constrains these qualities and makes them identifiable. Consequently, the qualities of the fundamental sign are displaced from the fundamental sign to the related terms in the conceptual structure. The abstract and yet precise fundamental sign becomes the centre in the socio-cognitive structure of MARKK and the related terms become manifestations of the fundamental sign. These manifestations, e.g. aesthetics, market communication, culture, and cognition, etc. are all interpreted in relation to the fundamental sign.



**Figure 3.** The fundamental sign of MARKK puts interpretative constraints upon the concepts in the conceptual structure, sharpening the meaning of aesthetics to address the purpose of MARKK.

This means that the specific MARKK-understanding of aesthetics is formed within the fundamental sign. MARKK is not about all kinds of aesthetic objects but is only interested in artefacts that fulfil purposes

of market communication. Furthermore, MARKK is not interested in how these objects serve as works of art in their own right (industrial design as the art form of modern society or in commercials as art), or how these works have an ideological function (by glorifying values of consumerism). MARKK's focus on aesthetics is in terms of cognition (effect) and culture (use) determined by the function of the object's formal structure. In other words, the fundamental sign carves out the MARKK position in the debate on aesthetics, stressing a functionalistic and structural approach to a relatively well-defined range of aesthetic objects.

### **What relations are?**

In the beginning of the article, we posed the following questions: What is a quality and how does a quality become displaced? What is a relation? How do relations occur? And how can we identify relations? Based on the discussions, definitions and analyses we have conducted, we are capable of answering these questions.

When identifying the fundamental sign of MARKK, we identified the epistemological qualities of MARKK. These epistemological qualities are the knowledge profile and are contained in the fundamental sign as epistemological constraints. The epistemological qualities of a concept are the epistemological features of the concept stemming from the goals of the particular knowledge domain. The epistemological qualities of MARKK are unique; hence the knowledge organisation is also unique. Since the fundamental sign puts constraints upon all the related terms, the epistemological qualities from the fundamental sign are displaced into the related terms. In the case of MARKK, it is important to understand the significance of the fundamental sign. If we have no knowledge about the fundamental sign in e.g. MARKK, we will not be able to understand the meaning of the related terms in the way the knowledge domain wants us to. This is what we try to stress in Figure 3 when showing that the fundamental sign puts constraints upon aesthetics. It is aesthetics in the way MARKK understand aesthetics that is interesting for us to know. The outcome is that the meaning of every related term in the knowledge map (Figure 2) have to be understood in relation to the fundamental sign, again this means that the epistemological qualities of the fundamental sign have been displaced to the related terms and

the displacement constrains the related terms with epistemological constraints.

In order to answer how an epistemological quality becomes displaced, we must answer the question posted above regarding related terms.

We understand *relations as consequences*. To become related terms, consequences have to be tested through the use and experience of the researchers within a given knowledge domain. If the consequence fails the test, it may wither away. Positively tested consequences become general relations *and general relations are* related terms and only general relations can be related terms. In the case of MARKK, there are three clear indications of a positive testing, besides the fact that the graphic representation of conceptual structure has been drafted by the MARKK members in their work with the knowledge profile:

- (1) the interrelatedness between the two primary strings in regard to the concepts of text, function, reception, etc.;
- (2) the interrelatedness between primary and secondary concepts: e.g. sender/receiver, seller/buyer, producer/consumer, illustrating the intricacies of market communication as well as pin pointing the main focus of MARKK;
- (3) the mirroring of concepts at the end of each string: *effect implying cognition; use implying culture*.

The answer to how relations occur is embedded in the above. A consequence occurs whenever a concept is interpreted. The consequence is a manifestation of the knowledge potential of a concept in accordance with the knowledge domain from which the concept originates.

How may we then identify relations? Since it is the knowledge domain that constructs the scientific context where the terminology is developed, we argue that every concept within this socio-cognitive structure in fact is a related term. As a starting point, only one concept exists in the knowledge domain and this concept is the fundamental sign. The fundamental sign contains the epistemological qualities of the knowledge domain and it is the displacement of these epistemological qualities that creates and constrains the related terms.

If we look at Figure 3, we see how the fundamental sign sharpens and forms the meaning of aesthetics by reducing the knowledge potential of aesthetics to match the knowledge need of MARKK in providing aesthetics with the telos of the fundamental sign. In this way, the epistemological qualities of the fundamental sign, the goal of

MARKK has been displaced to the related term and the meaning of aesthetics within the context of MARKK is unique to this knowledge domain. This makes the fundamental sign of MARKK equivalent to the interpretative habit discussed earlier in the article.

To get deeper into the understanding of the displacement of meaning, let us return to the concept *pragmaticistic constructivism*. As discussed above, Figure 3 shows how meaning becomes displaced from the fundamental sign to the related term. When drawing the knowledge profile, we sharpen and construct the meaning of MARKK embedded in the fundamental sign. Each time we sharpen the epistemological basis, we make a choice that ultimately could have been different with different consequences. Essentially, this means that we construct the telos for MARKK as we construct the fundamental sign. The meaning of the related terms is partly created by the fundamental sign through displacement of meaning (epistemological qualities and the interpretative habit in form of a telos) and partly by the epistemological qualities contained within the concept (which becomes the related term). Aesthetics is an abstract concept containing a vast knowledge potential. However, when it becomes constrained by the fundamental sign of MARKK, it becomes a related term that match the knowledge need of MARKK, which essentially contained both the epistemological qualities of the fundamental sign of MARKK and its general qualities that defined aesthetics as an abstract concept. However, the displacement of epistemological qualities implants the telos of MARKK in aesthetics, constructing the meaning of aesthetics to match the knowledge need of MARKK. These processes are displacements of epistemological qualities and implantations of telos'. Seen as a whole, these processes are pragmaticistic constructivism.

## Conclusion

We have introduced a new and hopefully better way to make realistic representations of knowledge organizations based on an intellectual method called the knowledge profile. We have defined the knowledge profile and we have profiled the knowledge domain of MARKK. Using Peirce's doctrine of pragmatism, we have been able to answer the questions regarding relations. We have defined the nature of related terms and we have argued that a related term is a result of usability tests in the knowledge domain. We have shown how to

identify related terms based on the displacement of epistemological qualities from the fundamental sign to the related terms. We have also argued that the fundamental sign is the identifiable interpretative habit of the knowledge domain that constrains the related terms to contain a certain meaning. Indeed, we believe that the knowledge profile is the answer to the search for methods of making representations of knowledge organisations based on pragmatic semiotics, which researchers have been aiming at over the last decade.

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### **Чем являются отношения: изучение концептуальных связей, сдвиг значения и профилирование знания**

Цель статьи — ознакомить с профилем знания как средством дать реалистическое представление об организации знания. Для репрезентации такого реалистического знания мы должны сначала идентифицировать основной, фундаментальный знак данной области знания, хотя может показаться, что основной знак приведет к эпистемологическому “насилию” над изучаемыми объектами, создавая в конечном итоге организацию знания только одной уникальной



области знания. Далее в статье указывается на то, что если мы хотим дать реалистическое представление об организации знания, мы должны знать, каким образом концептуальные связи проявляются, развиваются и становятся соотнесенными терминами. Чтобы подкрепить свои теоретические утверждения и показать пригодность профиля знания, мы включаем пример изучения одной конкретной области знания.

**Mis on suhted:  
kontseptuaalsete suhete uuring, tähenduse nihe ja  
teadmise profileering**

Artikli eesmärk on tutvustada teadmise profiili kui vahendit anda tõepärane esitus teadmise korraldusest. Tõepärase teadmise esitamise puhul peame me kõigepealt identifitseerima antud teadmisvaldkonna baasmärgi, kuid sel juhul näib, et baasmärk sätestab epistemoloogiliste sunduste prioriteedi uuritavate objektide suhtes, andes lõpptulemusena ühe, ainukordse teadmisevalla teadmise korralduse. Edaspidi juhitakse tähelepanu fakte, et kui me soovime anda teadmise korralduse tõepärase esitust, peame me teadma, mil viisil kontseptuaalsed suhted ilmuvad, arenevad ja saavad suhestatud terminiteks. Põhjendamaks oma teoreetilisi väiteid ja näitamaks teadmisprofiili kasutamiskõlblikkust, lisame ka ühe konkreetse teadmisevalla uuringu.

## The ontology of espionage in reality and fiction: A case study on iconicity

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**Abstract.** A basic form of iconicity in literature is the correspondence between basic conceptual schemata in literary semantics on the one hand and in factual treatments on the other. The semantics of a subject like espionage is argued to be dependent on the ontology of the field in question, with reference to the English philosopher Barry Smith's "fallibilistic apriorism". This article outlines such an ontology, on the basis of A. J. Greimas's semiotics and Carl Schmitt's philosophy of state, claiming that the semantics of espionage involves politology and narratology on an equal footing. The spy's "positional" character is analyzed on this basis. A structural difference between police and military espionage is outlined with reference to Georges Dumézil's theory of the three functions in Indo-European thought. A number of ontological so-called "insecurities" inherent in espionage and its literary representation are outlined. Finally, some hypotheses are stated concerning the connection between espionage and literature, and some central allegorical objects — love, theology — of the spy novel are sketched, and a conclusion on the iconicity of literature is made.

*The very fantasy of a spy's life, the loss of his own identity, his pursuit of pseudo-information through pseudo-relations, makes him a sort of hero of our time.*

Malcolm Muggeridge

Politology and historiography contain an enormous amount of concrete studies of famous espionage cases and agent operations.

concerning the activities of both domestic and foreign services. Similarly, cases of this kind have caught public imagination to a huge extent with a whole genre — that of the spy and the agent novel — as a literary result. Just like its cognate the detective genre rises with Poe and Rue Morgue, the spy novel is born, albeit more gradually, with Kipling, Conrad, Ambler, Greene, Somerset Maugham, etc., to grow into one of the 20th century's stable and comprehensive literary sub-genres.

It is a strange fact, however, that despite its firm grip around the imagination of the 20th century, both in fact and fiction, espionage does not seem to have given rise to any significant amount of principal scientific treatment. No classic piece of writing betitled *Vom Geheimdienste* by a Clausewitz exists in politology.<sup>1</sup> Despite the constant and delicate tension between the existence of secret services, necessary for the security of a democratic society, on the one hand, and the same democracy's basic principles about open administration, human rights, and equality, on the other, no tradition for deeper, theoretical understanding of this necessity and these tensions seems to exist. It is almost as if the natural secrecy of the subject is mirrored by a secrecy covering the principal reflection on it — whereas on the other hand both the factual and the fictitious coverings of single, concrete cases explode. The latter seems, in fact, to constitute a huge corpus of case-based reasoning governing the public — and maybe also the services' own — reasonings about the tasks, the constraints, and regulations of the services.

### Smith and Schmitt — fallibilistic apriorism

I shall here attempt to outline the ontology of espionage, as a basis for the factual as well as the fictitious cases and for the possibility of iconicity holding between them. The clever reader will be quick to intervene: do I not confuse two separate problems? Is the description of the espionage novel not a piece of narratology dealing with genre

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<sup>1</sup> Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege* is even remarkably sparse as to observations on the role of espionage in warfare; all is a 1-page chapter about "Nachrichten im Krieg" containing little exceeding common sense: "Ein grosser Teil der Nachrichten, die man im Kriege bekommt, ist widersprechend, ein noch grösserer ist falsch und bei weitem der grösste einer ziemlichen Ungewissheit unterworfen" (Clausewitz 1963: 48).

literature — a task for literary studies — while the recurring structures of the object itself, espionage, is rather a task for politology and sociology? It is of course not possible to assume beforehand that these two tasks will be identical, but still it seems to me that a strong argumentation is at hand for the fact that they are intimately related. Not only because of the fact that all reflection of a subject marked “secret” must keep on the distance of abduction from it, relying to some indefinite extent on the imagination and fantasies of the interpreter. But also because the relation between semantics and ontology for actual semiotics is rather different from what was assumed in a tradition running from structuralism to deconstruction and other post-structuralisms denying the possibility of iconicity language and literature. The question of literary mimesis pertains to several different levels: one is the possible similarity between aspects of textual expression and the subject treated (the figure poem as an example); another is the possible depicting value of a text in relation to certain empirical properties of reality (be they factual, as in journalism or science, be they more general like in the discussion of the possibility of literary realism to reveal insights about a given period, society or other issues). The iconicity at stake in the discussion in the following lies at an even more basic level: iconicity at the level of semantic structures used. I shall argue that the spy novel provides an example of this basic iconicity in so far as the very construction and understanding of a spy novel is only possible by the use of semantic concept structures similar to those incarnated in real life espionage cases.<sup>2</sup>

A basis for the discussion might be Barry Smith’s radical idea of a “fallibilistic apriorism” extending the philosophical a priori realm to a long range of conceptual structures in the foundations of the single empirical sciences. This a priori domain is not defined by its belonging to any transcendental subject and does not, for the same reason, suffer from any problems of presence. “A priori”, of course, signifies validity before (that is, independent of) empirical fact, but there is no reason to assume that this implies that human beings should automatically possess insight in these structures beforehand. Thus, there is no problem in supposing that we, during the development of civilization and of science, become increasingly able to

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, I use “iconicity” in a broad sense in the tradition from Charles Peirce. I have discussed the theoretical prerequisites and implications of this notion extensively, in Stjernfelt 1999 and 2000.

uncover ever more extended a priori structures. In the same vein, there is no problem in assuming that we may have fallacious ideas about significant parts of this a priori field (in exactly the same manner as we may be on the wrong track in the solution of mathematical problems which are not empirical issues either) — even if it is impossible that we could be wrong about all assumptions at the same time. Further research may be able to make up for such mistakes — hence the nickname “fallibilistic apriorism”.<sup>3</sup> An implication of this idea is that a priori structures cover a far wider field than normally assumed; there is no reason to believe that formal ontology, common to all possible objects, is yet complete, and there is similarly no reason to assume that the single sciences’ “material” or “regional” ontologies may not be investigated much more thoroughly than has been the case. The basis of each single science will contain, in its basic conceptual structures, a comprehensive network of interrelated terms of formal and regional ontology. It follows from this idea that works of fiction sharing the same subject as one of these sciences, will also share, to a large extent, one and the same basic conceptual structure.<sup>4</sup> This is why

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<sup>3</sup> These lines summarize the conclusion of Smith (1994) with its basis in the Austrian tradition of economics. A priori structures may not necessarily be deduced beforehand and must in many cases be abstracted out of empirical knowledge; thus they are, in a wider sense of the word, founded on an “empiricism”, albeit one which must acknowledge two wholly different spheres in experience: an aposterioric domain for what is in fact the case, and an aprioric domain for which stable categories these facts are articulated in. In Peirce’s concepts, this would correspond to a factual and a diagrammatic sphere, respectively (cf. Stjernfelt 2000). Subsequently, Smith (1996) has, inspired by Carl Stumpf and other Brentanians, proposed a long series of “Vorwissenschaften” of both material and formal kin — from arithmetics and set theory over geometry and chronometry to chromatology; from rational psychology over aprioric aesthetics and ontology of arts to universal grammar, speech act theory and theories of social interaction. Smith has himself applied the fallibilistic a priori principle to a number of subjects, so as for instance aprioric geography as a subdiscipline of the latter. What follows might be said to be a sketch of an “Austrian” a priori theory of espionage as a branch of political geography, investigating the systematic relations between “spy”, “secret service”, “sovereignty”, “state of emergency”, “sanction”, “democracy”, “law”, “fiction”, etc. In doing so, this paper will constitute part of a priori politology on the one hand and part of a priori narratology on the other. A meta-insight here will be the mutual dependency of politology and narratology — an idea which Greimas the narratologist would not find strange (even if seen from the perspective of a more scepticist methodology).

<sup>4</sup> In the case of espionage, we meet such structures in the recurrent, trans-historical claims about the nature, essence, principles, or problems of espionage in

Barry Smith's approach entails that the semantics describing the content of a given domain will have iconic affinity to the ontology of the domain (even if many specific differences of course may prevail in the single case). This is the implication of one of Smith's slogans: "putting the world back into semantics".<sup>5</sup>

If we begin, naively, by taking a dictionary definition of a central concept for the agent novel like the term "spy", we will find he is a person who "illegally investigates (especially military) secrets".<sup>6</sup> This definition refers to a whole range of implicit presuppositions belonging to an espionage script, an underlying highly structured scenario. Deprived of references to that scenario, the semantics of the word "spy" would be ineffable. A spy investigates some subject secretly because of a certain danger or illegality in the investigation which, in turn, is determined by the fact that its subject is the business of some competing power, political or private, domestic or foreign. There is thus an a priori connection between the secrecy of the information and the relative illegality in which the spy indulges. The parenthesis of the dictionary definition implies that the spy typically has been sent out as an instrument to gather information by one power, militarily competing with another power possessing the secrets. Thus it is only in the light of this a priori, more general and more comprehensive, ongoing struggle that espionage becomes meaningful. Any fight sufficiently elaborated in time and space will always imply

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spy literature. In *Spies and Spymasters*, e.g., we read about the 20th century espionage that "though considerable advances had been made in technology, the basic principles and problems of intelligence remained unchanged" (Haswell 1977: 144). In the same vein, we are told that as to the human element of espionage "[...] nothing had changed since the days of Joshua" (Haswell 1977: 146). Such general ideas are subsequently applied in the analyses of specific subjects, as when the espionage satellites of the 20th century are seen as evolutionary heirs to the balloons of the 18th century. They, in turn, had the function "[...] to take one stage further the instruction Moses gave to his spies: "Go up into the mountain, and see the land!" (Haswell 1977: 166).

<sup>5</sup> Smith is thus busy founding a center for philosophy and geography and conceives of political geography as an exemplary case for a priori studies, e.g., of border types. The idea of such a relation between reality and semantics remains, though, controversial. The present paper has thus been turned down by several literary journals, not because of its quality (they claimed), but because of the fact that it included real-world issues in the discussion of a literary genre.

<sup>6</sup> In an arbitrarily selected dictionary, *Nudansk Ordbog*, Copenhagen: Politiken 1977. This procedure is inspired by Greimas's investigation of the concepts "challenge" and "anger", in Greimas 1982.

that knowledge about the opponent's next move adds to the probability for a positive outcome: this implies it is possible to try to anticipate that move and improve the efficiency of one's own next move. Or one may simulate such a move in order to seduce the opponent to open a flank giving a possibility for an even more efficient move. The agonistic structure of feints, simulated feints, etc. is implied here, as it is well known from mathematical game theory and instantiated in a long series of other fight or game types. The historiography of warfare is to a large extent based on the investigation of such structures of mutual deception strategies.<sup>7</sup> The *raison d'être* of the spy as collector of information lies in this scenario of struggle, and his role is to be a tool for one of the agonists of the battle waged.

Here we have isolated a minimal version of the regional ontology of espionage by looking at background presuppositions to a dictionary definition of the word "spy". A more systematic investigation might go the opposite way and try to develop the concepts of war, fight, game, or battle in order to distill espionage as one of the possible moments of fighting. A project of this kind is to be found in A. J. Greimas's narratology. Despite its apparent simplicity, this narratology remains one of the most sophisticated instruments to analyse narrative structures.<sup>8</sup> At a first glance, the "narrative schema" of this theory is deceptively simple: a Destinator, defined as an actant impersonating central values, sends out an Operator Subject in order to solve a certain task. This subject is endowed with certain competences

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<sup>7</sup> A prominent example is the allies' large-scale deception operation before D-day in order to make Hitler believe the Dunkirk area to be the invasion spot, including not only a planning of a feinted invasion there but also the planning of a feinted feint, a more northerly invasion supposed to take place from Scotland, thus adding further credibility to the Dunkirk possibility.

<sup>8</sup> I believe this is not generally acknowledged, and among many literary scholars, Greimas even counts as an especially malign reductionist. This rests, however, upon a misinterpretation of Greimas' "narrative schema" as an assumedly identical deep structure underlying all concrete texts. This idea overlooks a crucial moment in all decent structuralisms: the concept of *transformation*. The schema must be transformed in order to grasp the single text's specificity. The specific features of the single text is grasped only by understanding — not only the schema — but the specific transformation (and its motivations and implications) resulting in just that text. Moreover, the schema may develop with the addition of further assumptions which make new aspects of the fight appear. The schema is not a causal regularity, it is a teleological regularity, and hence it may bifurcate at every possible joint, not satisfying the *telos* in question.

by a Helper during a first “qualifying” trial; then follows the “principal” trial where the Subject tries to beat an Anti-Subject in order to take some Object in his possession. Back at the Destinator’s, the Subject presents his results in a third and last, “glorifying” trial and he receives — if the result is convincing — a Sanction judging the Subject’s efforts. If the Subject wins this trial, he may receive a final Object as a reward or trophy. These three trials may, in specific cases, be realised in highly different ways, ranging from regular wars and to peaceful exchanges. A version of it clothed in fairy-tale garments makes the schema more intuitive: a King is threatened by a Dragon who has abducted the Princess, and he sends out a Hero to make up for it. The Hero must first gain a magical object or competence from some Sorcerer and he may now kill the Dragon and free the Princess. Back at the Court, the Hero displays the saved Princess and receives a reward, maybe the Princess and half of the Kingdom. If this schema is so apparently simple, then it is probably due to its omnipresence in human imagination rather than to an inherent simplicity, not to talk about triviality. The schema contains a complexity generator due to the fact that every single phase of it refers to intersubjective relations with all the possible mirrorings, dialectics of recognition and possible misunderstandings involved. This has as a consequence that the schema may “develop” in a huge bouquet of different directions. The interaction between two actants which is in one version a raging battle may in other versions be a completely peaceful exchange — and, what is more, in each phase the teleological development mapped by the schema may go wrong. Maybe the Hero is too afraid to go to war; maybe the Sorcerer refuses to let go of his medicine copyright; maybe the Dragon actively tries to get rid of the awful Princess; maybe the King stubbornly sticks to both halves of his Kingdom; maybe there is a secret alliance between Dragon and King in order to fool the public, etc., etc., and etc. As is evident, the schema is extremely plastic with respect to variations — at the same time as it has the stable character of being a prototype for the mapping of socially integrable actions in general. As an addition to this powerful variability, the staging of narrative events in more or less artful enunciation may select single phases of the schema to emphasize and elaborate, while other phases are neglected. It may, moreover, display the events narrated, as seen from changing points-of-views of different actants, and, finally, it may recursively repeat the realization of it in different versions including the substitution of characters filling the actant roles and the



embedding of local versions of the schema into more encompassing versions.

But the very question of social integration implied in the relation between Destinator and Subject guides us on our way to the status of the spy in this schema. Of course, espionage may occur in each of the phases in the schema — in so far as the secret obtaining of secret information may be desirable in all intersubjective relationships. But because the Destinator incarnates socially stable values, the character of the Hero's task is decisive for the interest taken in the narrative in question. If the Hero's task follows ordinary procedures as governed by central administration, little remains to be told ("Once upon a time, there was King who should send a document to the council in one of his towns. He gave the task to one of his very best couriers, and the document did in fact reach its goal regularly. The courier received his contractual wage and lived happily ever after."). A procedure of this kind is of course covered by the narrative schema's domain of modelisation, but for a narrative to be interesting it is well known that it must contain some moment or other of norm break. This is, in fact, already implied in the distinction between Destinator and Operator Subject: the frictionless action might as well be undertaken by the Destinator himself (if the Destinator in case is, e.g., central administration). The King might himself grab his good sword all at once and force it through the heart of the dragon. But he must have another actant do it, even one who receives occult, extraordinary, abilities from some Sorcerer, that is, a person incarnating a competence transgressing what is usual and lawbound. The killing of the Dragon, moreover, most often takes place far from home — that is, far from the regular domain of laws and outside of public control. In this extraordinary competence in the Hero lies as a germ espionage, and more broadly, the secret agent, as an aspect of the Hero's deed. The Hero constitutes his own Special Task Force, and his deed is in itself a Covert Action. Now these features in the Hero actant do not distinguish the spy as opposed to e.g. the warrior, the detective and similar stereotypes derived from the same basic structure in the Hero.

Consequently, further *differentia specifica* must be found in order to grasp the difference between spy, detective, soldier, and the correlated fiction genres. We may as a first preliminary emphasize that the three of them share the Hero's character of being exceptional. The detective novel does not have the regularly working police officer as its hero, the war novel does not have the average, ordinary soldier as

its hero. The detective novel favors precisely the private eye, and even more so, the deviant private eye who does not do his work "by the book" but differs from the police in two respects: he does not, like they do, act correctly according to the rules, and, conversely, he is not involved in their muddle of corruption and mafia deals. Exactly because he does not act "by the book" he may, paradoxically, act *by the spirit*. Even if we focus in fact on a regular police officer in the corps, we most often chose a deviant cop whose personal character and working methods transgress the average (model Colombo). Analogously, the modern war novel generally takes the point of view of a rebellious private, despising his superordinates far and comfortably removed from the front line, not following orders. Thus, this "front pig", being an uncompromising survivor, may perform especially dangerous services. What distinguishes the spy — and the spy novel — from these stereotypes is that while the private eye and the front pig form individual cases of deviancy in the service of a higher cause (which they may serve so much more efficiently because of their disregard for rules), then the spy's deviancy is systematical. The very service which he is working for, constitutes an anomaly in modern society.<sup>9</sup> The secret service is so to speak an institutionalized deviancy inside the state, a whole state organization characterized by *not* being forced to do things "by the book". As contemporary conflict researchers (like in Scandinavia Ole Waever and Ola Tunander) have emphasized, we must turn to obscure political thinkers like Carl Schmitt in order to understand the specific character of these organizations. Schmitt began his classic of philosophy of state *Politische Theologie* from 1922 with the famous words: "Sovereign is he who determines the state of emergency ...". In the context of Greimassian fairy tale logic, it is the Destinator who commands the state of emergency.<sup>10</sup> Ordinary law is only valid in so far a state of emergency is

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<sup>9</sup> Here sociological criteria enter: espionage does not seem to have been anomalous in GDR (German Democratic Republic), for instance, measured on what is known about the number of informants in the people employed by the Stasi, and generally espionage is considerably less controversial in pre-democratic or totalitarian states. But even here, the anomalous character is preserved in the secrecy of procedures.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Schmitt's personal career is highly controversial, involving extreme right wing positions and support for the nazi regime in the 30s. Despite Schmitt's dubious — to say the least — political positions, it is possible to discuss his more general philosophical and scientific points of view on a democratic basis. Schmitt's notion of sovereignty is explicitly mapped from theological concepts,

not declared — and the actant who decides whether the normal state prevails is of course endowed with the power of suspending it, to some (larger or lesser) degree depending on his own judgment only. Schmitt's cynical tradition turns Clausewitz upside down: the universalization of the schema of Friend and Foe makes politics a war continued with other means.<sup>11</sup> In such a tradition it will be a corollary that a preparedness outside ordinary legality must be kept, also during (apparent) peacetime. The state of emergency is always potentially present, and for this reason an organization is needed which is continuously able to judge which extralegal means are necessary to cope with occurring threats against the security of state.<sup>12</sup> Schmitt is, for this reason, the Cold War's theoretician *avant la lettre*: any peace is according to him nothing but a cold war. In the Greimassian narrative schema the agent and the spy thus belong to a scenario in which the Destinator as a sovereign stops doing things by the book — and turns, instead, to the Schmittian book.

### **The man who knew too much — the positional character of the spy**

This implies a series of distinguishing features in the spy as a potential aspect of the Hero — in contradistinction to the detective and soldier characters. In the most comprehensive and detailed text analysis which Greimas undertook — the booklength Maupassant reading *Maupassant*, the short story "Deux Amis" has as its main theme precisely: espionage. During the Prussians' siege of Paris in 1871, two Parisian friends go fishing, and they receive a paper passport in order

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cf. the hypothesis of *Politische Theologie* that modern political theory is constituted by secularized theology. A corollary is that fundamental political and political issues inherit structures from theology; the political wars of the largely atheist 20th century support this idea. It is easy to recognize the problems of incarnation and of theodicée in relation to espionage: how may democratic ideas become flesh? How can democracy be morally good when its own secret services are not?

<sup>11</sup> Schmitt does not explicitly claim this, but the idea clearly appears, e.g. in *Der Begriff des Politischen*, (Schmitt 1963: 34n) where the famous dictum of Clausewitz is interpreted with the conclusion that politics is determined by the Friend-or-Foe logic of war.

<sup>12</sup> The latter expression is, surprisingly, rather new and dates back only to American discussions in the beginning of the Cold War.

to cross the French lines into no-man's-land (which is a peaceful zone, there is still 40 years to the 1st World War). After fishing, they are picked up by a Prussian *patrouille* who demand that they reveal the password they are supposed to possess in order to pass the French lines. They are unable to do so, of course, as they do not possess any password, and they are executed. Greimas' detailed analysis finds that this killing represents the cruelty of power (especially Prussian power) as opposed to heroic citizens keeping a secret. The Danish semiotician Per Aage Brandt has, at this point, caught Greimas in a misinterpretation with crucial implications for the status of the spy. The two Parisians do *not* possess the password which the Prussians believe (they only have a paper passport), and they are unable to say what they do not know: they do not keep silent for heroic reasons. Correspondingly, the Prussian officer is not personally cruel, he just acts conforming to an ordinary logic of warfare.<sup>13</sup> The two of them *have* in fact seen the position of the German lines, and if they are allowed to get back behind the French lines, no Prussian may hinder them from informing the French defense. Even if the two fishermen are by no means spies, neither intentionally nor institutionally, they invariably *become* spies, functionally, because they are who they are where they are (Brandt 1983: 129). If you take a walk on a secret military area with your camera — we may recall certain Danish tourists arrested in Poland in the mid-eighties — then you *are* a spy, no matter whether the reason you do so may in fact be your innocent interest in a rare bird. In this light, the Prussian is not cruel, he just acts according to the *jus necessitatis* of war — exactly the same principle according to which secret services act during the cold war of peace. A classic of this species constitutes the Profumo affair, in which the British secretary of defense was forced to quit because he kept the same mistress, Christine Keeler — whether she took herself paid for her services or not — as a Russian intelligence officer, Jevgenij Ivanov. It is improbable that Keeler did in fact hand over sensitive information

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<sup>13</sup> We presuppose, of course, that the Prussians did not have the possibility of incarcerating the two and keep them as prisoners of war. We may note *en passant* that according to John Keegan, it was the Prussians' victory in the Franco-German war which made Clausewitz an international hero in military academies worldwide. This development formed part of the reason for the radical brutalization of war during the 20th century because of Clausewitz's idea of the war as tending to the utmost release of violence.

to the latter, but the simple fact of her position in the scenario was sufficient to release the scandal.<sup>14</sup>

This is of course the reason why it may be very important for the state to keep a file on persons with access to classified material. If they — who positionally are potential spies — should decide to become spies *in actu*, then they must be made silent. They may be forced, for instance, to go out in the press and discredit themselves, maybe declare themselves insane, so all their sayings become polluted with ambiguity — and then they are maybe rewarded, in secret, with a pension that they would not have received under other circumstances. The specific methods of pressure are many, but the structure is stable — it is, as we know from a classic of the spy genre: it is impossible definitely to come in from the cold when you have first been out there. When first you have had been a spy, then you keep on being it, positionally, no matter what you may personally decide, because you now have the property of knowing too much. This logic of position implies that the spy is a radical example of impossibility of social reintegration. It is a well-known fact in fairy-tales that when the victorious Hero returns home with a Dragon's ear in one arm and a Princess in the other, a narrative problem may arise. Why should he be satisfied with a Kingdom and half of the Princess or whatever the King will offer — he, the Dragon slayer, who achieved what the King himself could not? Why shouldn't he take it all? The military coup as a structural possibility is inherent in this argument, just like revolutions, stabs-in-the-back and so on, and during peacetime this logic seems to underlie the notoriously difficult reintegration of veterans after great wars. The extreme level of excitement and fear, the fact that every moment and every action concern life and death, the ultimate dependency upon the small *Männerbund* at the front and its unconditional friendship — all these experiences may make an ordinary civil life seem like a dull superficial existence. It has often been remarked that the rocker organisations *Hell's Angels* and *Bandidos* were founded by American veterans from the Second World War and the Vietnam War, respectively, and the same goes for Nazism's

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<sup>14</sup> Analogous cases occurred in USA during the same period — president Kennedy's affair with Judy Exner whom he shared with mafioso Sam Giancana, just like his affairs with the Eastern German girl Ellen Rometsch and several upper class whores with connections to the Profumo case. These affairs were only made silent with intensive emergency work by Robert Kennedy and J. Edgar Hoover (according to Hersh 1998).

triumph in the twenties and thirties which was only possible due to the support from enormous self-organized bands of First World War veterans in the SA and related *Freikorps*. The reintegration of the veterans is a psychological (and in large number cases a sociological or political) problem which may be contained by different means — the reintegration of the spy an individual problem (and of course no large scale social problem), but then again so much more impossible. The spy may sing until he is dead, and hence he must be bound with pensions, threats, blackmail etc., because he cannot leave the position of knowledge he now occupies. This structure is what, conversely, makes it possible for a spy to blackmail or punish his former organization if it does not treat him as expected. The British spy Leslie Nicholson was stationed in Prague in 1930 and spent 20 years there in the service of the SIS. When his wife became ill, he asked C, Sir Stewart Menzies (the “M” of the Bond novels) for a loan which was refused. After his wife’s death, Nicholson emigrated to the USA and took revenge on the SIS by publishing his *British Agent* there in 1964.<sup>15</sup> Peter Wright’s *Spycatcher* from 1987 is a related example.

## Two service types

The stable security structure of post-war 20th century in most countries features two organizations, foreign and domestic, and with connections to the military and the police, respectively. This structure has ancient roots (even if there was a tendency until the Second World War that services were founded *ad hoc* and cancelled in periods of peace<sup>16</sup>) and gives rise to a stable set of differences. Codes of honour based on mutual recognition is considered a military virtue and tend to have a certain influence on the former, while the latter in its tendency mirrors the radicality of civil war as opposed to interstate warfare. Police-based services have as their object the state’s own citizens (or domestic foreigners) conspirating against the security of the state in which they live. Thus, they are aimed against traitors who are not seen as objects for the soldier’s (potential, that is) gentleman-like behaviour

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<sup>15</sup> According to West 1993: 296–297.

<sup>16</sup> Famous is the alleged refusal of the USA to perpetuate the services in the period between the World Wars, with reference to the fact that “gentlemen do not read each other’s mail”.

towards other soldiers only accidentally serving foreign powers, maybe being forced to do so by conscription. The French historian of religions Georges Dumézil once made an interesting observation in this respect when he discussed the relation of freedom to the second function (the military one) of Indo-European religion and ideology.<sup>17</sup> I translate the relevant passage from an interview:

*Jacques-Alain Miller:* Generally, as you analyse it, the second function displays a paradoxical aspect, because it effects the socialization of rather asocial features.

*Georges Dumézil:* It is dangerous, but exactly for the reason that it does not respect laws, it may also happen that it may give rise to happy exceptions in those procedures where *summum jus summa injuria*. [cf. later in the interview: *GD:* The warrior is a creature who in all cases, not only sexuality, is always on the limit between the legal and the illegal, the ordinary and the exceptional.]

*JAM:* Thus you write that ‘the warrior keeps the features which takes him away from ordinary people and even puts him in an opposition to the social order which he has as his task to protect when necessary’.

*GD:* The possibility for opposition to the social order can appear for better and for worse. Deep down, it corresponds to the opposition between army and police. During the German occupation it was the opposition between *Wehrmacht* and *Gestapo*. It was much better to be involved with the former than with the latter. How could I forget the Mauss incident? He was saved because his flat had been claimed by the army ...

*JAM:* But doesn’t the army represent the military function here?

*GD:* Yes. The army needed his apartment and its terrace at eighth floor, close to *Porte d’Orléans*, for anti-aircraft defense. One morning, I was at Mauss’s place when a colonel, in a brusque but friendly manner, made him understand that the respite which he had been given had run out. Mauss negotiated and eventually got a new respite. Thanks to this, his library could be transported to the *Musée de l’Homme* and he himself could move into another place fifty meters from home in a flat required by the army.

*Jean-Claude Milner:* That is Mars Tranquillus?

*GD:* Let us say that is military honour.

*JCM:* And the *Gestapo*?

*GD:* They represented, unfortunately, the first function. Police has to do with the first function. The *RigVeda* calls the stars “spies” for the sovereign god Varuna.

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<sup>17</sup> The military function is the second function out of the three in Dumézil’s theory of three main functions in Indo-European culture: *justice/magic, war, fertility.*)

*Alain Grosrichard*: That implies that deep down the descendants of the Germans still used trifunctionality during the war?

*GD*: Let us not go that far. Let us just say that by coincidence, *Gestapo*'s and the Party's relation to the army now and then mirrored the mythical depth of the relation between Varuna and Indra.

*JCM*: You have written by several occasions that German culture has underlined two aspects of the second function: its violent side, the military gang, the *Männerbund*, as well as its autonomous side, freedom. But when I read you I have in the back of my head texts by 19th century historians claiming that the individual liberty was born in the forests of Germania. Is it possible, according to you, to find a sort of matrix in German law rather than Roman law, tied to the second function, which might serve as the structure in some sort of freedom?

*GD*: A priori, it does not seem improbable. Let us think of the *thing*, the English and Scandinavian parliaments.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the fact that the right-wing royalist Dumézil here appropriates a Scandinavian-German myth about the origins of freedom which must have been felt like an insult on the Left Bank, the distinction made is interesting. The warrior makes possible freedom, honour, mutual recognition and has his place on the limit between law and transgression; the high priest and judge — and their spies — of the first function seem highly elevated over that very limit. The spy and the police are connected to the somber first function which, unlike the second, has nothing to do with freedom, autonomy, and honour. We glimpse the ravens of the first function sovereign deity Odin, these scouting scavengers, as an archetype of the spy — and the crafty Odin versus the brave Thor as an adequate Nordic icon of the Indian Varuna/Indra distinction. According to this distinction, the first function's police is thus less democratic and concerned about rights than is the second function's army<sup>19</sup> — and the intelligence services of the two organizations accordingly, although both tend towards the first function side of the distinction so that army intelligence rather forms a sort of intermediate compromise between the constraints of the two functions. The first function, however, is superordinate to the second, it is exactly sovereign, also in a Schmittian sense of the word, because it is a task of the first function to determine whether ordinary law prevails. Prisoners of war are respected due to conventions and are

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<sup>18</sup> From *Ornicar!*, vol. 19, Paris 1979.

<sup>19</sup> We may remark the British military historian John Keegan's empirical claim that the Napoleonic revolutionary armies with their general conscription played a crucial role in the democratization of Europe.



returned to the enemy after the war; foreign spys are relegated, while the country's own undermining forces are classified as traitors and even criminals of an especially malign type — this indicates that Dumézil's distinction remains valid in our days foreign and domestic services and their different treatment of their opponents.

The foreign services meet as their opponents organisations, similarly organised and equipped, from enemy or neutral (or even friendly) states. This implies a mirror structure we recognize from many spy novels, and it entails defection as a constant possibility. For the double, triple or nth level agent it is a possible way out when the earth is burning beneath him and the threat of exposure comes close; for the agent in general a way out, also to escape from other possible, maybe personal problems. The capital you may use to buy defection is, of course, inside knowledge which will subsequently be paid off in long-stretched debriefing sessions. The defector will now find himself at the mercy of the receiver country and an obvious possibility is the emergence of a new relation of mistrust given by the fact that the defector's interest is to feint more knowledge than he actually has and to delay the disclosure of it until he has gained maximal advantages from it. Domestic services most clearly representing Dumézil's first function are only part of this mirroring by their involvement in counter-espionage, while its other measures taken against the state's own citizens do not face a similarly organized resistance. In return, the interior service must suffer from a structural paranoia due to its status as subject to a controlling Destinator in the form of public, parliamentary control.<sup>20</sup> It may seem natural for this service to act as an autonomous instance — also in a stronger sense than indicated by the natural Weberian tendency of all bureaucracies towards secrecy. Thus, it may seem a matter of course for it to extend its interests also to powers or persons which may not be a threat to security of the state but are merely threats to the service's interests, that is, politicians or writers with critical or even merely controlling intentions related to the services. A continuum thus stretches from security of state and to security of the service, and it is hard to exclude the possibility that a service may in case of crisis chose the latter rather than the former. The military coup is, by a homologous structure, the foreign service's

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<sup>20</sup> Of course, military intelligence is subject to the same control, but the recurrent and delicate political tension between state security and the human rights of the same state's citizens is structurally relevant for domestic services primarily.

corresponding possibility; the domestic service's possible unfaithfulness is bound to follow less conspicuous ways — for an unverified example, take the recurring rumours about right wing circles in the Stockholm secret police *SEPO* and their support for the Palme assassination.<sup>21</sup> According to Seymour Hersh's recent book on Kennedy's presidential period, it was the case that J. Edgar Hoover was able to guarantee his continued leadership of the FBI under the newly elected president (who disliked him) by maintaining huge dossiers involving sensitive information on Kennedy, including his first and blacked-out marriage in the forties.<sup>22</sup>

Generally, democratic control with such organizations is by nature a delicate issue. Control commissions must keep silent, even regarding the participants' own political parties, and on the other hand, how can a commission make sure it has received access to all relevant information from the services? This tension has a principal a priori character, in so far as total public control with such organizations would severely limit or even reduce their possibility of action — it is a given thing that such organizations must, for the sake of efficiency, be given a certain margin in which to operate, both as regards secrecy and as regards violation of law for the sake of security — even if this fact makes the organizations constantly vulnerable to potential public scandals. The old saying, attributed to Lenin: *trust is good; control is better*, cannot be applied here. The problem about control of the controller leads, of course, to an infinite regress which is only doubled by the necessary secrecy in the control of secrecies. Control must, sooner or later, at some delicate level, meet a limit, beyond which only trust remains.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. the Swedish conflict researcher Ola Tunander's work on the Palme case.

<sup>22</sup> When the present senator Moynihan (cf. below), after having served under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, was elected to the Senate, he got admission to his own FBI file of 561 pages, naming him as a communist.

<sup>23</sup> In one of the rare cases of principal reflection on these issues — the last chapter of former CIA-boss Allen Dulles's book *The Craft of Intelligence* (1963) — he claims that the president himself controls the services, that Dulles himself has supported a proposal for a civil control commission, that all his own knowledge of the services gives reason for trust: "After more than a decade of service, I can testify that I have never known a group of men and women more devoted to the defense of our country and its way of life than those who are working in the Central Intelligence Agency." (Dulles 1963: 264). Apart from the fact that a natural scepticism is easily felt towards a claim like that from the leader's own lips, it remains correct that it is assumptions like the ones quoted that

## Two insecurities

A further a priori necessity in the spy and agent characters is the particular recruitment circumstances. No matter how upright, well-educated, and clear-minded the leading figures in an intelligence organization are — and they must be, if any — they are in no position to impose the same requirements on all their subordinates. To the dirty work, they will have to use occurring characters of different kinds. The asymmetry between Destinator and Hero thus multiplies internally within the organization: the director of secret actions must make use of concrete tools operating in that part of reality which must be kept under surveillance, influenced and manipulated — and for secrecy reasons it is obvious that you can not arbitrarily plant anybody anywhere. You must, to a large extent, use persons who by coincidence have a character, a past or a position making it possible for them to fit unseen into the milieu in question. And this implies that you cannot afford to be too fastidious: this is not tasks which it is possible to educate people to fulfil, except for — exactly — exceptional cases. This does not imply unfaithfulness as a necessity but as an always threatening limit possibility: this personnel outside of perfect control consists to some extent of misfits, persons of a peculiar psychology, persons who for odd reasons feel attracted to intelligence work, people who feel drawn by sinister affairs, people who undertake such duties of bitter necessity, people who are easy to threaten to do such tasks — even if you may ever so much hope that their main motivation be idealist. As in so many aspects of intersubjectivity, these actors' motivations are hard to determine: idealism, loyalty, excitement, desire for recognition, money, threats, brute force ... the manifold of possible motivations implies that the superordinate person will have a tendency to make sure that he, just in case, has access to the latter means of influence. This insecurity implies that an elementary relation of mistrust inside the organization is obvious — which is proved by the many cases of important information that was not taken seriously. Dusan Popov informed the American army about the

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you have to rest your head on. On the other hand, Dulles adds immediately afterwards, as the last two sentences of the book that "The last thing we can afford to do today is to put our intelligence in chains. Its protective and informative role is indispensable in an era of unique and continuing danger." (Dulles 1963: 264). Dulles thus summarizes in a few lines all possible points of view: control, trust, limitation of control ...

Japanese Pearl Harbor plan but he was not believed; the Russian Western intelligence was well-informed about Operation Barbarossa, but they were in no position to convince Stalin ... this insecurity spreads like a fog in the relation between the intelligence organization and its own informants and henchmen on all levels. An obvious danger in this fuzzy world is that the organization believes what it wants to believe, and it must face the paradox that the more information a message contains — that is, the more surprising it is — the less probable is it that the message will be believed.

This top-down insecurity is doubled, however, by a parallel and even more decisive bottom-up insecurity. For security reasons, the single agent must of course know as little as possible about the general plan of which he forms a part — not to speak about other parallel operations — but this necessary “compartmentalization” of information and tasks implies a fundamental insecurity about the very character of the operation as seen from below.<sup>24</sup> Not only is the individual, like in all struggles, at a feint’s distance from the enemy and his intentions; this basic indecidability is doubled, for the spy, by a parallel insecurity as to the exact intentions of his own side. This structure has its most prominent result the heavy weapon of counter-espionage, the double agent, who acts as if he belongs to one side while employed by the other (probably, maybe his sympathies are changing ...). You will never know, as a spy, if your spymaster or leading officer is miserly with information because his deepest sympathy lies elsewhere — cf. the classic uncoverings of the third, fourth, fifth man of the Cambridge Five, all of whose existence was known long before a name could be singled out. This structure entails that a fundamental insecurity spreads in the whole spy world, pinpointed in Len Deighton’s description of how Bernard Samson’s own wife Fiona all of a sudden disappears as the enemy’s most treasured double agent. This insecurity has several sources (apart from the enemy’s natural attempts at spreading fog): the insecurity whether the mission you are

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<sup>24</sup> An actual Danish example is the schoolmaster Kristian Kjaer Nielsen who recently (in the Danish daily *Information* March 10th 1999) told about how he spied as a member of the Danish Neo-Nazi Party DNSB in the seventies. The information he collected was delivered anonymously by postbox in Copenhagen, and the spy had never any clear idea as to who his commissioners were. Obvious candidates included Israeli, West German, and Danish intelligence services, just like Jewish organizations for the tracing of Second World War criminals is a possibility.

on has a real purpose or if it is rather a deception operation destined to fool the enemy while the really important operation takes place elsewhere; the insecurity whether the mission you are on is in fact planned by double agents in your own organization; the insecurity whether your own organization does in fact attempt to satisfy the goals it presumes and not completely other purposes.

In extreme cases an agent may, as a “useful idiot”, function as a tool for an organization without even knowing it himself. And not even such matters may be settled by archive files — because a spy-master has his own interests, in turn, in relation to *his* superordinates on a higher level. A well-equipped archive with “agents” and “spies” may keep him safe, even if the persons mentioned are to a large extent not at all spies but only people to whom he maintains loose contacts.

In the secret organisation, the very secrecy principle has an ambiguous character which adds to the spreading of fog. The basic motivation for secrecy is naturally immanently given: the enemy must not know what we know. But to this, a procedural secrecy is quickly added: the enemy must not know the illegal procedures undertaken in order to gain information etc. — this becomes in itself a potential conflict cause. And this problem doubles once more internally in democratic societies: the public must not know (too much) about the types of method used because this may delegitimize democracy’s own laws and ideals. These constraints have led to a violent growth in the use of the three classic grades of secrecy: confidential, secret, and top secret. In the American context, this has recently been investigated by senator Moynihan (1998) finding that the extent of secrecy is now so all-encompassing that it forms a threat to the very efficiency of the services, and, in the last resort, to the security of state. Secrecy is naturally a basic problem in an open society, but in addition to that comes the fact that secrecy may blind the intelligence organizations for important real-world facts. Moynihan predicted the fall of the Soviet Union as early as in the late seventies, and he wonders why the CIA did not have the slightest idea of what was to come, even immediately before the breakdown — in spite of the obvious crisis in Soviet economy and the international decline of Marxism as an ideology.<sup>25</sup> Too much secrecy not only entails that the organization

<sup>25</sup> Moynihan relates, not without comical effects, how general Butler, one of the main responsables for the American atomic strategy, visited the Soviet Union for the first time in 1988 and got a shock. Everything is falling apart, and the chauffeur in the official limousine transporting him breaks off the gear stick. After

may loose grasp of its own informations; it may, furthermore, lead to the widespread misunderstanding that just because something is marked Top Secret it is *eo ipso* true. But even worse, Moynihan argues: the enormous increase in secrecy has given the American services a reputation as state monsters turned against the population, and a frightening statistics proves that around three fourths of the American population believe in conspiracy theories involving the services, among them the Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations, the lore about the secret military shutdown of ufos and obduction of extraterrestrials at Roswell in the fifties — and much more. The extent of secrecy thus may threaten to destabilize the very relation between state and population — and Moynihan proposes a radical intervention. Obligatory discharge of secrecy marked material after 10 years (of course with the possibility of withholding special cases). In all cases, his diagnosis is thought-provoking: the very act of secrecy may contribute to inefficiency as well as to discrediting of the organization using it.

It is thus a part of the nature of espionage that a potential insecurity spreads at all levels. This should not, of course, hide the fact that most of the everyday work in such an organization is probably completely undramatic and is concerned with information taken from official or other public sources. Very often 75% is mentioned as an estimate of the part of the organizations' work which remains completely untouched by such insecurities. But even if the insecurities do not have to be part of one and every operation, they are constantly present as a potential limit condition. Moreover, they are most often involved in sufficiently complicated, spectacular, and embarrassing cases which is why they play a main role in the spy literature — cf. Muggeridge the spy's quote at the beginning of this paper.

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all these years, Butler realizes in one second that he has been dealing with a caricature (Moynihan 1998: 78–79). Moynihan himself tells about a parallel experience by the Sandinists where he, as an official guest, is witness to the secretary of interior trying in vain to have served beans at a restaurant — all at the same time as the illegal Iran-Contra scandal develops on a CIA-automatic idea that the Sandinist state should be a strong and dangerous enemy (Moynihan 1998: 208–212). Instead, Moynihan's proposal would be that a "... reasonable American response to the new Communist government in Managua would have been a statement of condolence" (Moynihan 1998: 207).

## Literature and agents

These fundamental insecurities distinguish the spy from the detective and the front pig. The detective may be ever so insecure about who and what may be trusted in the world of crime and police, but his own common sense is unshaken, even if he is disillusioned about everything else; his own mission, be it with or without success, is basically out of the reach of doubt. The front pig may be ever so let down and deserted by superordinates and under attack from enemies, left behind in the most meaningless and disillusioned battle on Earth — but his own and his front pals' fundamental fight for survival provides a firm ground of reality not to be shaken. Before we go on to investigate the spy novel's relation to these a priori structures in the ontology of espionage, it is worth mentioning that exactly the insecurities mentioned give writings about espionage a particular relation to categories like fact and fiction. Even the memoir writing on indubitable spies is ripe with paragraphs to which they themselves are the only possible or only actual sources. This implies that they may have taken themselves all possible freedoms when describing the events in question, just like they may owe different persons and organizations to cut things out or color the narration in various ways. The insecurity moment in the very object thus implies that a potential fictivity sticks to even the most well documented spy accounts. It is very few other domains which could give rise to volumes like the *Faber Book of Espionage* (West 1993) which as matter of course mixes up excerpts from spy novels with dito memoirs. Ian Fleming side by side with Kim Philby, Graham Greene with George Blake, Somerset Maugham with "Dusko" Popov. This intricate relation between espionage and literature is also emphasized by the fact that very many agent novel authors possess a first hand knowledge about the business. This includes Fleming, le Carré, Somerset Maugham, Greene — who even worked together with Philby — which is why their works of fiction might be suspected (and are in fact suspected!) for, to larger or lesser extents, to be key novels. Is James Bond a fiction copy of Popov (minus his hump), is Leslie Nicholson the model for Greenes *Nobody to Blame*, etc. ...?). In the same vein, anecdotes flourish about the really existing organizations having lent inspirations from spy novels or their authors, cf. the idea that Fleming should be the father to CIA's plans of killing Castro by a cigar explosion or infecting him with barber's itch so he would lose his

charismatic beard and, with it, political power. Thus, there is a fluid borderline between fact and fiction because of the fact that fiction is a core part of the ontology of espionage. This does not imply that a unanimous reality of espionage does not exist — it just entails that we have no methodologically granted access to that reality.<sup>26</sup> Thus, there is a structural connection between literature and espionage. The author shares central features with the spy in so far he is a (partly) disinterested observer on the margin of the society in which he lives — but in addition to this structural analogy, there seems to be an empirically well-founded correlation between writers and intellectuals on the one hand and spys on the other. Already the playwright Christopher Marlowe performed counter-espionage for Queen Elizabeth I and her chief of intelligence Walsington against Mary Queen of Scots and paid with his life for it. Geoffrey Chaucer is said to have spied for John of Gaunt, and the famous French 18th century spy, the Knight of d'Eon (often disguised as Miss Lia of Bermont) was also the author of a treatise on economics. The first intelligence service in England around the Duke of Marlborough involved Daniel Defoe who later became the first leader of organized intelligence in England and thus, in a certain sense, one of the founders of *Secret Service*. In addition to many deeds as active spy, e.g., against the Scots, he even wrote one of the first papers on intelligence “A Scheme for General Intelligence” (1704).<sup>27</sup> “Intelligence is the soul of public business,” so Defoe, who continues to define counter-espionage: “For as intelligence is the most useful to us, so keeping our enemies from intelligence among us is as valuable a head.”, just like he recommends the organisation of archives with files on all potential problem sources. Already Defoe used his literary work as an alibi during information gathering, and he thus forms a prototypical example of a practical connection between the author’s and the intellectual’s free, wandering lifestyle and their potential use for intelligence purposes.

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<sup>26</sup> We may note that the postmodernist sceptic Jean Baudrillard took his best examples for his radical idea of the “disappearance of the real” from the world of secret services. Who was responsible for the Italian terror bombs of the seventies and eighties? — Many different groupings claimed responsibility, maybe it was instructed by one political wing in order to discredit the other, maybe by the police in order to discredit both, maybe by foreign interests in destabilising Italy ... Reality vanishes behind such interpretations and their effects.

<sup>27</sup> I take these informations from Haswell 1979: 48f.



### “Existential correlate” and enunciation

Both the detective, the agent, and the front pig novels are meaningless without some version of a first person narrator perspective — without which the elementary suspense of these genres is difficult to maintain. Omniscient narrators, especially with respect to the time aspect, but also with regard to the inner life of many persons, would spoil these effects, apart from the fact that they would seem unnatural with their unavailable amount of knowledge. But the spy novel seems even more tied to the first person perspective than the other two, in regard to time, space, and persons, because only thus the radical insecurity may be pictured.

This leads to the question of what could be called the “existential correlate” of these genres, that is, their iconic relation to other fields on a higher, secondary level of iconicity. We should of course not suppose that the legitimacy of these genres lies only in their ability to allegorize basic existential experiences for the reader. There is a huge amount of direct information about the ontology as well as empirical facts of real milieus and experiences in them, and espionage is in itself, moreover, a complicated facet of existence — but all the same it seems to call for an explanation that these genres possess the mass appeal which they do having made them huge popular genres of the 20th century. It seems to be connected to the fact that these related genres make possible a bouquet of rather different allegories in relation to other domains of life. The detective genre’s affinity to cool intellectual games, solution of enigmas, intelligence tests, a heart of gold behind the tough appearances, lonely cinema noir rainy day melancholy, etc. probably forms the most well-known of these male cocktails. The front pig genre rather has a connection to fundamental feelings of misfit, hatred towards superordinates and ordinary life, violent reaction, radical and unanimous choosing side, bodily primitivism, and the dream of *Männerbünde*, the blending of blood and unconditional male friendship. The spy genre, on the other hand, lies on a continuum from idealism over the violation of idealism and to mask games, loss of identity, fundamental lack of orientation and insecurity where any supposition about reality may vanish and initiate a foggy *Nebenwelt* in which a dark and somber worldwide destiny develops unpredictably. The spy may despair, but his loneliness is not the outsider’s like the detective’s, it is rather the loneliness of being tied to an irreversible position in a structural paranoia where any

figure like in a puzzle picture may all of a sudden change into its opposite. The connection to politics is of course direct and not allegorical, but in addition to that, these structures seem to give the spy genre a special relationship to love and religion, maybe even the more dark and despairing aspects of the two. Love, jealousy, sex, and so on play marginal roles for the detective and the front pig who may deal with these matters in a unashamed Hemingwayian toughness; for Marlowe or Kelly's Heroes the woman is interesting staffage but no intrinsic issue — but these issues are evidently generic in spy literature. Already in the object itself, there is a connection, cf. the classic features of female spies, both as *honeytraps*, patiently waiting for the appearance of the classical *pillow talk* (while maybe the seances are filmed or in other ways documented for use in blackmail).<sup>28</sup> Here, a common sense insecurity as to the continuum between sex and love is mirrored in a continuum between sex and blackmail. But in addition to these structures in espionage itself, the stable occurrence of these themes in spy literature is probably motivated in the structural analogies in the respective domains which make them obvious to use as allegories for each other. To many literary spies, the mysteries of love seem to be realities into which you may fly when the insecurity on the first level becomes unbearable — just to discover that a structurally analogous insecurity repeats itself at the second level.

A similar analogy of structure which may be a reason behind the popularity of the genre, is theology. We have already remarked upon Carl Schmitt's idea of the theological genealogy of modern political concepts. Theology becomes — via the deism of Enlightenment — constitutional law; the priest becomes the lawyer; God becomes the sovereign; epiphany becomes the state of emergency. You may continue yourself: the religious community and the heathens become friend and foe, respectively; atheism and doubt become the ideologies of the bourgeoisie (the "discussing" class trying to evade decision). Just like faith makes only sense for a believer, thus politics requires, according to Schmitt, "existentielle Teilhaben". It is not necessary to join Schmitt in his fascist conclusions to these analogies in order to

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<sup>28</sup> The first organized use of this effect was probably Bismarck's famous espionage chief Wilhelm Stieber who was the father of many classical espionage inventions. He erected the so-called "Greenhouse" in Berlin, an especially sophisticated and depraved whorehouse, with the intention of its use in blackmail of its customer circle involved in international politics.

see the spy novel as intensely occupied by a theology of the state.<sup>29</sup> Democracy to Schmitt was a naive belief in the possibility of the extermination of sovereignty; for a more cool point of view, democracy is rather a strong — if not the only — means to contain and control a sovereign position which can not be exterminated, and among the chief political virtues of democracy is precisely the fact that you need not be existentially aroused by it in order to claim your rights as a political citizen. But the position of sovereignty in democracies is precisely located in the secret services and the (most often, small) central parts of the political elite controlling them. In and around the intelligence organizations, all the theological paradoxes repeat themselves. This goes for the politological understanding of them, but also for the participants: the continuum in espionage from existential bottomlessness and to idealist confession mirrors the continuum from doubt to faith, and just like the ways of the Lord are past understanding, even for the believer, so exactly the same holds for the ways of the State, even for the most devoted spy. He becomes a mystic of the state, be it real or dreamt-up, serving an enigmatic entity which by its very nature never can be met with face to face, which he may only meet in his own doubtful deeds where any victory is provisional, open to dispute and maybe even a defeat in disguise. In theology, the spy novel thus finds another 'existential correlate' — and with it all the passions, the rare epiphanies, and the dark-nights-of-the-soul — both in dogmatic theology and popular belief versions.

But here, the espionage novel adds to these existential passions a cool and comfortable objectivation in so far as they are here played out in full intersubjective orchestration. In doing so, the spy genre may stage these existential and theological structures without the first person perspective leading to orgies of expressive psychologisms. Most often, the first person perspective is — in spite of its status as point-of-view — minimally described, exactly because the objective scenario of the plot stages the existential figures. This allows for a cool and objective rendering of structures which in other genres may be given rather juicy and self-indulgent psychological descriptions.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> An explicit example supporting this idea being Graham Greene the catholic.

<sup>30</sup> Maybe this fact gives part of an explanation of the often-noticed but relatively unexplained partition of the film and literature public into two segments: a masculine segment preferring the detectives, front pigs, spies, thrill, and objective action of B-movies, while a feminine segment wants children, doctors, artists, love, passion with full possibilities of heavy psychological identification.

This force of the spy novel may be that it orchestrates the passion of the state at the same time as it provides an objective iconic tool to grasp the bottomlessness of love, existence, and theology: a stable instrument to understand a set of basic insecurities.

### Iconicity

To conclude, a basic condition of possibility for the spy novel lies in its iconic use of basic ontological structures of espionage as such, that is, between semantic meaning and reference. A basic outline of this structure can be found in the presuppositions of any definition of the word spy. A further analysis demonstrates a series of structural corollaries to this spy definition:

- (1) the spy as a special moment of the narratological hero (as opposed to the related characters, the detective and the front pig);
- (2) the positional character of the spy — the possession of secret knowledge as determination independent of any espionage intention or affiliation in the person in question;
- (3) a tendential structural difference between foreign and domestic services;
- (4) two types of basic insecurities in any espionage hierarchy: one top-down insecurity eroding the superordinates' trust in the subordinates; and one bottom-up insecurity inflicted by the "compartmentalization" of secret services, eroding the spy's trust in the organization employing him;
- (5) the secrecy and insecurities of espionage makes fiction a possible aspect of every factual writing about it.

These basic ontological features of espionage is iconically reproduced in the spy novel genre and contributes to its very definition as such. The fifth property, moreover, implies an inner relation — and iconicity — between the role of authors and the role of spies.

Finally, the isolation of these basic properties of espionage makes possible a hypothesis about a second-order iconicity holding between the espionage novel and other discourses, namely those of love and of theology. These two fields structurally share the basic insecurities of espionage which is why it may be used iconically to address, more or less directly, central problems of love and religion.

Thus, iconicity is at stake in at least two different aspects. Basically, an iconicity between espionage as such and the novels about it

is made possible by shared structural semantics. On this basis, other important iconic relations become possible, namely those between spies and authors and those between espionage on the one hand and love and religion on the other.

This conclusion forms an empirical case against two ideas of the relation iconicity and literature. One is the skepticist idea that iconicity should play no role at all in literature and that, consequently, it should be possible to describe literary issues with literary theoretical concepts only. Against this, it may be argued that the very existence of stable genres — as for instance the spy novel — point to iconic, realist foundations outside of literature proper. Another is the idea that iconicity in literature should concern only the relation between expression and content (like figure poems, basically). Against this, it may be argued that a more basic iconicity concerns also the relation between meaning and reference.

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### **Онтология шпионажа в реальности и в литературе: проблема иконичности**

Базовой формой иконичности в литературе является соответствие между базовыми концептуальными схемами в литературной семантике и в мире фактов. Семантика шпионажа зависит от онтологии той области, которая связана с “фаллибилистическим априоризмом” английского философа Берри Смита. В данной статье делается попытка наметить в общих чертах своего рода онтологию, которая основывается на семиотике А. Ю. Греймаса и на философии обстоятельств Карла Шмитта, в связи с чем утверждается, что семантика шпионажа в равной степени содержит в себе политологию и нарратологию. “Позиционный” характер шпионажа анализируется именно исходя из этого. Структурное различие между полицейским и военным шпионажем очерчивается в соответствии с теорией Жоржа Дюмезиля о трех функциях в индоевропейском мышлении. Выделен ряд характерных для шпионажа онтологических “критических поло-

жений” и их литературных репрезентаций. Наконец, выдвигается несколько гипотез о связи шпионажа с литературой, обрисовываются некоторые центральные аллегорические объекты шпионского романа (любовь, теология) и делается заключение об иконичности литературы.

### **Spionaaži ontoloogia reaalsuses ja kirjanduses: ikoonilisuse juhtum**

Ikoonilisuse baasvorm kirjanduses on vastavus kontseptuaalse baasskeemi vahel kirjanduslikus semantikas ja faktide maailmas. Spionaaži semantika on sõltuvuses ontoloogiast selles vallas, mis osutab inglise filosoofi Barry Smithi “fallibilistlikule apriorismile”. Antud artiklis püütakse visandada ontoloogia, mis põhineb A. J. Greimasi semiootikal ja Carl Schmitti olukorra filosoofial, väites, et spionaaži semantika sisaldab võrdsel määral politoloogiat ja narratoloogiat. Spiooni “positsionaalset” iseloomu analüüsitakse just sellest lähtuvalt. Struktuuraalet erinevust politsei ja sõjaväe spionaaži vahel piiritletakse osutusega Georges Dumézili teorialele kolmest funktsioonist indoeroopalikus mõtlemises. On välja toodud rida spionaažile iseloomulikke ontoloogilisi nõ “ebakindlusi” ja nende kirjanduslikud esitused. Lõpuks püstitakse hüpoteese spionaaži ja kirjanduse seose kohta, visandatakse mõned spiooniromaani kesksed allegoorilised objektid (armastus, teoloogia) ja tehakse kokkuvõtte kirjanduse ikoonilisusest.

## Semiotics of guilt in two Lithuanian literary texts

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**Abstract.** The idea of the article was suggested by Lotman's theory about two basic mechanisms of social behaviour — fear and shame. The presented paper aims at highlighting two other mechanisms of such kind — guilt and repentance. The novella *Isaac* (1960–61) by Antanas Škëma, the Lithuanian writer in exile, is about a Lithuanian patriot who kills a Jew called Isaac during the years of German occupation. The author's fundamental conception implies that the real perpetrator of crime is not a separate individual but the crowd representing the values of the society. Škëma's interpretation of history demystifies the moral system in the inter-war Lithuania and proves it to be a collection of futile signs that fail to prevent society from falling into mass psychosis and following primitive impulses. The other Lithuanian novel, Leonardas Gutauskas' *Šešėliai* (*Shadows*) written in 2000, focuses on the tense relationships between Lithuanians and Russians, suggesting that there are several moral systems determining the concepts of guilt-repentance. The Christian agricultural society embodies the ethics of individual responsibility. The domination of the Russian ethic code is associated with the separation of Churches and the strengthening of the Orthodox Church. A moral system based on harmony and aiming to reconcile the guilty and the innocent comes across as a sought ideal. Both novels discussed exemplify different modes of a liberating society. The first one is an account of the society's effort to become free of the guilt complex and rethink its history. The second one articulates the guilt of the Russian nation against Lithuanians and fights russophobia at the same time.

Juri Lotman has pointed out that the analysis of a society at the time of crisis is one of the most convenient ways of throwing light on the non-critical (natural) invariant of its structure (Lotman 1998: 63). He regarded fear and shame as the principal mechanisms harmonising



social relations. We, in turn believe that it is relevant to consider the critical consciousness in terms of the mechanism of guilt and repentance embracing the universal opposition *own – alien*.

The Lithuanian sociologist of culture Vytautas Kavolis (1996: 73) considered the attitude towards Jews to be one of the main means to indicate the cultural level of a society. Lithuanians and the Jews had lived together for eight hundred years, and, according to historians, at the times of Lithuania's prosperity the Jewish people were protected and treated justly. Although during the periods of crises anti-Semitic tendencies would intensify, there were no pogroms either at the end of the 19th century nor in 1905. Furthermore, in the period of Lithuanian democracy, the issue of Jewish autonomy was settled in probably one of the best ways in Europe, although it is true that the two communities lived in separate worlds that had little to do with each other. Anti-Semitic tendencies in Lithuanian literature were not strong and took the form of kind-hearted mocking at the oddities of an alien culture, or showing distrust of Jewish merchants. Therefore, there was no more friction between Lithuanians and the Jews than in the Lithuanians' relationships with other minorities. The poet and cultural scholar Tomas Venclova (1996: 73) is convinced that the surge of anti-Semitism in Lithuania at the beginning of the World War II, in 1941, that is, the June pogroms and the infamous massacre in a Kaunas garage where hundreds of Jews were slashed to death by Lithuanians in front of Germans, while the latter did not take part in the massacre directly, contradict the whole Lithuanian historic tradition. This topic was did not get thorough consideration in literature: from the Soviet point of view, there is a distinct tendency to turn away from those who have stained their hands with the Jewish blood to the extent that they were expelled from the Lithuanian nation. This standpoint was associated with censorship and the ideological canon of the time. Exile literature would avoid the theme of the Lithuanian guilt before the Jews altogether.

Antanas Skėma's novella *Isaac (Izaokas)* written in 1960–1961 is of a special importance. Not only does it portray the fact of Lithuanians being present in the killing of the Jews but it also reveals the further existence of a murdered that turns into hell. Using the results of the semiotic analysis that will not be elaborated on in this paper, an attempt will be made to exhibit the profound conception of guilt in the novella and its cultural code.

As opposed to Soviet writers, the author who is an emigrant does not depict the murderer as a degenerate and a sadist but a sensitive artist like himself who in some ways can represent the youngest generation of Lithuanian intellectuals. The protagonist Andrius Gluosnis slashes a Jew called Isaac with a little shovel at the beginning of the war in the garage *Lietūkis* in Kaunas (this episode based on real facts is presented in the *Forward* of the novella). Ten years later, the protagonist, who is living in the United States, receives a letter with a single word "Isaac" in it and starts searching for his former victim and executor who used to prick him under his nails in the prisons of the NKVD. The protagonist is characterised by the passion of guilt that is generated by, first, the desire to meet Isaac and, second, the fear of punishment that is reinforced by the realisation of its inevitability. He is also haunted by a suspicion that Isaac might have survived and be living in the States at that moment in time. The guilt complex grows into a prosecution mania. Trying to get rid of it Gluosnis voluntarily commits himself to a mental institution that reminds of a prison. The grey sirs make Gluosnis and Isaac, whom he eventually meets in the asylum are made to, recreate violent actions of the past. They are not able to remember the exact details of the torture and murder. Finally, they refuse to perform somebody else's will, thus, kill the guard and fall into each other's embrace in the spell of brotherly love.

The episodes recounted before the scenes at the asylum keeps at least a small relation with possible reality. Starting with the eighth chapter the everyday logic is no longer valid and what happens between Gluosnis and Isaac should be understood as the theatre of the protagonist's mind. Isaac, who is a hallucination, represents the part of Gluosnis' personality that he lost twenty years ago, at the time of killing the Jew. The two parts of his personality, the present and the lost one, reunite when the guard of the asylum, who symbolises evil incarnate or Cain that hides inside every person, is murdered. The finale of the novella is imbued with irony, as the victory against evil is possible only in an asylum and the fate of its staff suggests even more. The mentally disturbed Gluosnis does not realise that by killing the guard he repeats Cain's story.

The victory that the protagonist gains over the universal evil, which to him is represented by a black guard, is demystified by the racist isotope, drawn in the previous chapters. Before Gluosnis finds himself in the asylum, his personality is gradually destroyed by the

suffering caused by his betrayed love and anger towards his lover Živilė for her having an affair with a black man. The ambiguous finale contains a moment of Gluosnis' repressed jealousy and revenge to Živilė's lover that turns into a farce both the possible escape from the dead-end of the victim-executioner situation and the final scene of brotherly (homosexual) love, into a farce.

In the semantic universe created by Škėma, the opposition *own – alien* is valid not only within the limits of a national culture distancing itself from the alien Jewish tradition. It applies for the whole modern multicultural world in which the whites tend to demonise the blacks who, in their own turn, hate the former and so on.

The figures that repeatedly emerge in the scenes at the institution and the *Forward* make it possible to grasp the idea of the work. For example, the black guard doubles the senior member of the SS that appears in the *Forward*: they are both called higher rank creatures, polished shoes are emphasised as a detail common to both of them, the patients of the asylum are figuratively associated with the Jews crawling in the yard of the garage portrayed in the *Forward*. According to the author's conception, human existence is as pointless, or, to put it more precisely, mad, in Europe possessed by the totalitarian demons of the war, as in the USA, comfortable in its peace. On the other hand, the world was equally incomprehensible in its violence at its beginning, when Cain, repudiated by God, killed his brother, or Abraham raised a knife against his beloved son.

Škėma does not emphasise the ideological or psychological reasons for people's disagreements; the protagonist's passion of guilt is characterised by the cognitive dimension. The author is rather looking for the primal root of evil, which is to be found in the very nature of humanity, that is bodily existence and sexuality. The elements of revenge and violence that can reach the level of hatred and fierce fight are found even in cases of strongest love between a man and a woman. The isotopes of love for Živilė and search for Isaac constantly overlap and blend in the episode at the asylum. When a young Jewish doctor asks Gluosnis whether he wants to kill Isaac, the latter admits: "The question wasn't unexpected. While thinking about Živilė, I may have pondered Isaac's fate" (Škėma 2001: 60).

The theme of an ideological confrontation between the Lithuanian patriot and the NKVD member is not developed in the novella. According to Škėma's concept, it is not ideas, but the body that instigates the murder (when the blood does not generate the desire to

revenge, killing becomes impossible). Although the classical body and soul dichotomy refers to the structure of Christian values, the position of the God is empty. The world after the two World Wars does not believe in the idea of a God expiating guilt any more; and the latter remains an eternal debt [*debt* is another meaning of the word *guilt* in Lithuanian] that can only be paid by emancipation from bodily oppression. Therefore, in Škėma's ironic interpretation, hell may be overcome only by way of a blissful madness, by freeing the pure spirit that is opposed by the bodily reality dividing people into their own personalities and the alien, white and black, Lithuanian and Jewish, men and women.

A phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur (2001: 114–116) believes that the most archaic symbolism of evil is the symbolism of a stain that defiles from the outside, while subjective guilt suggests self-control, self-accusation and self-condemnation of a double consciousness. Škėma's character is disfigured by guilt. The destruction of his body manifests the situation where the existential basis is eradicated, physical impotence metaphorises the spiritual state of the people in exile. The highlighted reference to the protagonist's big belly becomes a straightforward metaphor of the weight on his conscience. Gluosnis' notes reveal the signs of badly injured masculine identity: constant tears and crying for mother brings him close to the negative female stereotype or raises associations with a child who has not reached sexual maturity. In the context of the semiotic square, the fluctuation of the protagonist's sexual values would correspond with the movements in the *poles mediators* of the square, i.e. on the axis not-man vs not-woman.

Gluosnis cannot and does not want to be a traditional strong man, as he associates manhood with war and killing. In the Modern Art Museum, Gluosnis threatens to cut off his genitals as a sacrifice to the statute of an Etruscan God. This sort of eccentric behaviour is caused by the memory of the murdered Isaac. The refusal of the genitals in this case means his wish to become free from guilt and responsibility; guilt and manhood are overcome in the final scene, when Gluosnis is reciting the lyrics of *Song of Songs*, attributed to the female lover, to Isaac. Gluosnis also feels guilty for not having been able to defend his motherland and family as a real man. His daughter stayed in Lithuania and, according to the assumption of the former NKVD prisoner, *she has probably studied Marx seriously* (Škėma 2001: 25). Gluosnis who

has denounced his daughter is the opposite of Abraham, who, as we know, is considered to be the father of the chosen people.

Škėma uses interpretative possibilities of the Abraham-Isaac story in an original way. Gluosnis' portrait embodies characteristics opposite to the biblical Abraham: the murder of the Jewish NKVD member is his way to fulfil his own desire for revenge that he identifies with God's will. The character's secret desire is voiced by the kerchiefed little old lady, featured as a fairytale character, who enters the scene in the *Forward*. A semiotician Algirdas Julius Greimas (1989: 378–379) writes that revenge as the narrative programme of the subject takes form after the emergence of a possibility to act. The act of granting this competence creates the sender-judge and turns revenge into justice.

The kerchiefed little old lady functions in the novella as a sender who instigates and judges the actions of the protagonist. She tempts the main character to kill, then, recognises him to be unworthy of Živilė's love, appears in Gluosnis' mind when he is suffering and trying to find answers to his damned questions and announces the end of revenge in the final scene: "“Well, now you've gotten your revenge, sonny,” the kerchiefed little old lady was happy and didn't need to ask any more” (Škėma 2001: 87).

The protagonist of Škėma's novella might be considered to be a tragic character who is guilty without guilt. Gluosnis is a kind of pseudo Abraham who has sinned, having taken *vox populi* for the will of the God. The author does not aim his accusations at the exhausted intellectual but at the 'choir' of spectators watching the execution of the Jews with great amusement, common Lithuanian passers-by, the kerchiefed little old lady mentioned above, or street boys, beating the rhythm of the SS soldiers' march with their feet.

Škėma deconstructs the myth of the inter-war Lithuanian society by interpreting it as immature, trying to control natural impulses. In the asylum, Gluosnis is characterised as a Lithuanian nationalist whose nationalism, he believes, goes back to the times of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas and allows opting for Nazism. At this point, it is worthwhile to remember the privilege that Vytautas granted to the Lithuanian Jews in 1388, according to which each Christian Lithuanian who did not help his or her Jewish neighbour in need, was to be severely punished. The scene of the massacre in the Kaunas garage depicted by Škėma illustrates a situation defined in Vytautas'

decree. However, in case of psychoses neither Christian moral values nor regard for Vytautas' authority or other national symbols work.

In the *Forward* chapter of the novella, the blood hunter crowd of spectators is ironically paralleled with the view of a cemetery on the other side of the road. The national heroes Darius and Girėnas who flew over the Atlantic in 1938 and were shot down by Germans, are buried in that cemetery.

And next to the cemetery fence, memorials to dead pilots, stone monuments decorated with propellers. The propellers were stuck into the ground like crosses and draped with withered flowers. The flowers had been timidly replaced during the Bolshevik era, but now, during the German invasion, they were forgotten. (Škėma 2001: 17)

According to Škėma's ironic interpretation of the tragedy, watching of the killing of the Jews was also a betrayal of the Lithuanian nation, an insult to the Lithuanian identity and self-esteem. This was so because in the Lithuanian national mentality the death of the two heroes has always been associated with the fault of Germans (the word fault also means guilt in Lithuanian). Lithuanian patriotism proves to be a childish system of symbols devoid of a historic self-consciousness and personal as well as moral sense of responsibility.

Škėma's novella written 40 years ago was a powerful sign testifying to the important changes taking place in the Lithuanian self-consciousness, getting away from the mythological interpretation of history and the comfortable theory of the two cases of genocide — putting a mark of equality between the holocaust and the Soviet terror — thus eliminating the guilt. As it is obvious from media coverage, this theory is popular in Lithuania today. It has been repeatedly revived by a chain of court procedures and the image of a Lithuanian Jew killer escalated in the world. Therefore, the novella remains important not only because of its artistic quality, the ambitious attempt to penetrate the transcendental remnants of crime (Venclova 1991: 147), but also because of the topicality of its theme. To put it in Hegel's terms, in this ironical novella laughter loaded with contempt gives more freedom to the spirit.

The novel *Šešėliai* (Shadows) by the winner of the last year's Lithuanian National Award Leonardas Gutauskas published in 2000, focuses on an even more complicated issue of the relationships between Russians and Lithuanians. The plot consists mainly of the

conversations carried out between a dying Lithuanian, a former prisoner of a deportee camp in Siberia, and the ghost of a murdered soldier. Both characters have no names and are devoid of any individual features. They function as symbolic figures representing the values of their respective nations.

The continuous tension is retained by the opposition *own – alien*. The mechanism of repentance is geared to dissolve the opposition by way of finding a common basis in terms of values. The author looks for it in childhood that is portrayed as an heaven on earth. The two characters who both grew up on banks of different rivers share their memories about the childhood fishing and hunting experiences, reliving the sacredness of the nature. Nature is interpreted as a space common to everyone, in the background of which the common essence of all human beings that does not depend on a socio-cultural context becomes evident. Nevertheless, both characters display culturally marked attitudes towards nature. In this case, however, culture is something that unites rather than divides the representatives of the two nations. The common cultural code is Christianity and the Holy Scripture, as the grand narrative legitimising the world order. "Fish has united us, says the Russian. Water that, according to the Holy Scripture, gave birth to everything. There was water and the Spirit of God floating over the waters" (Gutauskas 2001: 62). The nature represents the holy order that embraces the world of a human being and abides by the principles of harmony. The example of such a harmonious co-existence of a human being with nature in Gutauskas' novel is the agricultural community who observes Christian traditions. In this community, the human being is considered to be the creation of God responsible for the nature entrusted him, rather than its master. For example, the Lithuanian remembers the sense of guilt he experienced having killed a small animal and the metaphysical fear that someone or something invisible can punish him. The frozen animal eyes become a metaphor for conscience, a reference to the supreme addresser that can determine the concept of human guilt.

According to the model of three moral systems: freedom, order and harmony, proposed by an Anglo-Austrian anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1995), the authentic Christian community can be considered to be the system of freedom, because each individual makes a personal decision on the extent of his or her moral obligations, whereas the concept of sin implies a voluntary approval of evil. This theory suggests that the moral structure of freedom is

opposed by a system of rules that focuses on a community rather than on an individual, the individual guilt, included (Kavolis 1996: 224–226). In the novel under consideration, the system of rules and the whole alien reality is represented by the Cossack cultural tradition. The Russian proudly tells the Lithuanian about his family descending from the free Cossacks, who followed Yermak to Siberia later on and thus retained the dynasty of warriors.

The Lithuanian, however, keeps asking questions deconstructing the Cossack myth. Having looked at the conquering of Siberia through the eyes of the representative of a small nation, the Russian takes on the collective guilt.

Apologising for what I have done, I would like to apologise in the name of all the Cossacks, I tell you, we really didn't know what we were doing, we slashed without even thinking [...] no matter where the Czar would send us. (Gutauskas 2001: 102)

The two characters do not blame each other personally for the tragedy that took place thirty-five years ago. On the contrary, they keep asking each other for forgiveness. They both admit that Stalin is the one to blame together with the totalitarian system he created, the roots of which may be traced in the Russian history, that is, in the Cossack raids that implemented the Great Russian chauvinist politics as well as in the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. The same power structure based on the principle of blind submission to an earthly authority is recognised in the Gulag in Siberia.

The beginning of this principle as well as system in which rules dominate is reconstructed in Gutauskas' interpretation and is identified with the split of the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century. The Holy Russia and its loyalty to the heavenly order is represented by the moral value system of the Old Believers (the Russian word *Staroobriacy* is used in the text). The Lithuanian Staroobriacy village embodies the above-mentioned value system. Sukiniai is called the proper Russian village, maybe even more so than any other village in Siberia, as the latter are all Orthodox (*pravoslavy*), already (Gutauskas 2001: 72).

The way Lithuanians and the Staroobriacy live side by side is presented as an ideal model for different cultures to co-exist. The uniqueness of the two cultures is preserved and there is no reason for tension or guilt to emerge between them. Lithuanian literature usually portrays the Staroobriacy in a positive perspective. However, their



culture is often identified with the alien realm, especially in the texts reflecting childhood experiences. Gutauskas' novel does not interpret Staroobriacy community as alien, furthermore, they are rendered as an example of solidarity and morality that surpasses even the idealised Catholic Lithuanians whose peacefulness is constantly opposed to the interests of the expansively minded Orthodox monarchy.

The author seems to suggest that Russians should return to their spiritual roots by way of abandoning the system of rules in favour of the morality of freedom. The start of this turning point would be a reconsideration of history and conscious acknowledgement of guilt. The third model of moral value system is created at the end of the novel, that is the morality of harmony when the attempt is made not to find the guilty or the innocent, but to reconcile. The expression marking reconciliation is a cross erected by the Lithuanian in memory of the murdered Russian and his own suffering in Siberia. The wooden cross combines the realms of nature and culture, with emphasis on the cultural code common to both nations. The cross is decorated with one of the most powerful Lithuanian religious symbols, a copy of the Gate of Dawn Madonna, which is further decorated with blue, white and red flowers, reflecting the colours of the Russian flag. In order to expiate guilt, repentance is not enough, there has to be a ritual recreating the world order. Erecting the cross and the creation of the cosmogony myth in the *Epilogue* perform the function of this sort of ritual. The main ideas of the novel are repeated in a condensed way in the story about a fight between man and a dragon. The role of the cultural hero is played by a boy from the Lithuanian Staroobriacy village, while his mother's voice crying *Vasia Vosiliok* reunites the Lithuanian and Russian banks that had been symbolically divided by the river of blood.

The novel under consideration refers to the archaising tendency of culture modernisation. According to the culture theoretician Kavolis (1996: 243), archaic thinking seeks to revive the sense of community and is based on the concept of the whole in which everything has its own meaning. Both the modernising and archaising tendencies blend in the common realm of humanisation. Gutauskas' archaism is a positive phenomenon signifying that Russo-phobia and the complex of eternally oppressed nation are being gradually defeated. Škėma's novella may be related to the trajectory of modernisation in a different way. The processes of conscious guilt acknowledgement and forgiveness undertaken from different directions are necessary for personal and cultural emancipation.

Both analysed novels came as a surprise in the context of the Lithuanian prose. Škėma, who lived in exile, in an environment protecting national innocence, where the topic of guilt against Jews was considered to be a strict taboo, had the courage to take up the topic. Gutauskas touches upon a 'delayed action mine', one of the most painful issues in the Lithuanian history, the guilt of the Russian people. He offers a way of forgiveness, which might be interpreted as an insult to the suffering of the Lithuanian people. In conclusion, let me refer to Lotman's (1992: 122) idea that unpredictability of art is both the cause and effect of unpredictability of life.

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## Семиотика вины

(на основе анализа двух текстов литовской литературы)

Идея статьи навеяна теорией Ю. М. Лотмана о двух семиотических механизмах: страхе и стыде. Публикуемая статья основана на анализе двух литовских литературных текстов, в которых обнажены механизмы вины и покаяния.

Повесть "Исаак" (Izaokas), созданная писателем литовской эмиграции Антанасом Шкемой, раскрывает трагедию литовца-интеллектуала, страдающего от комплекса вины, возникшего по той причине, что во время войны он убил еврея. Покаяние не приводит протагониста к внутреннему очищению, а напротив, превращается в

манию преследования, из-за чего он становится пациентом психиатрической клиники и совершает новое убийство. Анализ основных фигуративных изотопий в дискурсе позволяет автору статьи воссоздать скрытую концепцию повести. Истинной причиной убийства оказываются не противоречия идеологического или культурного плана, а двойственность самой человеческой природы, которая в кризисных ситуациях становится неподконтрольной силам социума. Ответственными за убийства евреев являются не отдельные индивиды, а анонимная масса наблюдателей, в присутствии которых разыгрывается трагедия в каунасском гараже “Летукис”. Создавшаяся ситуация и побудила бывших жертв НКВД к мести в то время, когда они случайно оказались в кровавой толпе и узнали своих палачей среди пленных евреев. Шкема демистифицирует “золотой век”, который якобы существовал в культуре независимой Литвы в 1918–1940 гг., обнажая в ней систему пустых знаков, неспособных защитить от массового психоза.

В романе Леонардаса Гутаускаса “Тени” (*Šešėliai*) рассматриваются сложные взаимоотношения между русским и литовским народом. Основой сюжета для автора стал диалог умирающего литовца с убитым им двадцать лет назад советским офицером. Оба персонажа действуют как символические фигуры, олицетворяющие ценности, свойственные двум культурам. Постоянная напряженность в дискурсе создается оппозицией “свой”/“чужой”, в которой природа и христианские заповеди являются объединяющим партнеров разговора звеном, а имперская политика России и Советского Союза рассматривается как неизбежная причина их смертельного конфликта. Анализ текста выявляет три нравственные системы, которые представлены в романе.

Систему индивидуальной вины осуществляет архаический агрокультурный социум, парадигматической моделью которого является старообрядческая нравственная традиция. Переход к коллективной ответственности происходит во времена раскола Русской Христианской Церкви, в котором автор усматривает начало нравственной катастрофы. В конце романа создается утопический проект третьей системы, системы гармонии, объединяющей человеческие ценности со знаковостью.

Оба произведения раскрывают два механизма попытки освобождения от вины путем покаяния и осмысления исторических ошибок и иллюзий, бытующих в культуре. Вместе с тем они обнажают и основные болевые точки в литовском самосознании.

**Süü semiootika**  
**(kahe leedu kirjandusteksti analüüs)**

Artikli idee sündis Juri Lotmani teoriast kahe semiootilise mehhanismi — häbi ja hirmu — kohta. Analüüsitakse kahte leedu kirjandusteksti, kus paljastuvad süü ja patukahetsuse mehhanismid.

Jutustus "Isaak" (Izaokas), autoriks leedu emigrandist kirjanik Antanas Škema, avab leedulasest intellektuaali tragöödia, kes kannatab süükompleksi all, kuna sõja ajal tappis ta juudi. Kahetsus ei too endaga kaasa sisemist puhastumist, vaid vastupidi, muutub tagakiusamismaaniaks, temast saab psühhiaatrihaiglas patsient ja ta sooritab uue mõrva. Diskursuse erinevate figuratiivsete isotoopide analüüs võimaldab artikli autoril välja tuua jutustuse varjatud kontseptsiooni. Tõeliseks mõrva-põhjuseks osutuvad mitte ideoloogilised või kultuurilised vastuolud, vaid inimolemuse enda kahelisis, mis kriisisituatsioonides väljub sootsiumi kontrolli alt. Juutide tapmise eest on vastutavad mitte üksikindiviidid, vaid anonüümne pealtvaatajaskond, kelle juuresolekul toimub tragöödia Kaunase garaažis. Škema demüstifitseerib nn "kuldaega" (iseseisva Leedu riigi ajal aastatel 1918–1940), paljastades massipsühhoosi ees võimetute tühjade märkide süsteemi.

Leonardas Gutauskase romaanis "Varjud" vaadeldakse keerulisi suhteid leedu ja vene rahva vahel. Süžee aluseks on sureva leedulase dialoog tema poolt 20 aastat tagasi tapetud nõukogude ohvitseriga. Mõlemad tegelased tegutsevad sümbolsete figuuridena, kehastades väärtusi, mis on omased kahele erinevale kultuurile. Diskursuses luuakse pidev pinge opositsiooni "oma"/"võõras" pinnal, kusjuures loodus ja kristlikud tõesed on vestluspartnereid ühendavaks lüliks, aga Venemaa ja Nõukogude Liidu impeeriumipoliitikat vaadeldakse kui konflikti vältimatut põhjust. Teksti-analüüs toob välja kolm romaanis esindatud väärtussüsteemi.

Individuaalse süü süsteemi teostab arhailine agrokultuuriline ühiskond, mille paradigmaatiliseks mudeliks on vanausuliste moraaliprintsipiidid. Üleminek kollektiivsele vastutusele toimub Vene Õigeuskirikuga lõhenemise ajal, milles autor näeb kõlbelise katastroofi algust. Romaani lõpus antakse kolmanda süsteemi utoopiline projekt — see on harmooniline süsteem, mis ühendab inimlikud väärtused märgilisusega.

Mõlemad vaadeldud teosed avavad kaks võimalikku süüst vabanemise mehhanismi: kahetsus ja ajalooliste vigade ning kultuuris eksisteerivate illusioonide mõtestamine. Ühtlasi paljastavad nad ka leedu eneseteadvuse valupunkte.

## **Strange, very strange, like in a dream: Borders and translations in 'Strogij Yunosha'**

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**Abstract.** Semiotics applied to translation studies produces an original approach that is generating scientific texts of high interest. On the other side, the notion of "translation" in a broad sense appears very important within semiotics itself, as in Ch. Peirce's and J. Lotman's thought. Distinguishing between translation studies' influences on semiotics and semiotics' influence on translation studies becomes increasingly difficult. In this article a synthesis is tried: the Soviet film 'Strogij Yunosha' is analyzed using the tools of both disciplines. At first the concept of "strange" is analyzed from a semiotic point of view, looking also for etymological reasons to classify strangeness as simple difference or as inimicality. Then cultural implicit is considered as the problem of mediation between Self and Other, both in a collective and in an individual (psychological) sense. The ways of relating to the Other are then considered in the light of a systemic approach to the cultural polysystem, in which the least unit or subsystem is the individual. The film is then decomposed in many "worlds", and their borders and relations are viewed in the light of the aforementioned approaches. Such translational analysis of the film allows to hypothesize why it was banned from the Soviet regime.

### **1. An interdisciplinary method to analyze a film**

*Strogij Yunosha*, 1936 (director Abram Room, screenwriter Yuri Olesha, Ukrainfilm), is a film crossed by many borders, inhabited by many worlds. Hence, it is possible to study its dynamics as if it were a set of translations. This is my thesis. I'll try to build a borderline analysis around this black and white (and white) film that is almost seventy years old, on the borders between cultural studies, gender studies, translation studies and psychology.

## 2. Strange?

I'll try to deal with this film, elusive to an easy cataloguing, starting from Giovanni Buttafava's definition: "the most insane film of the Thirties" (Buttafava, quoted in Piretto 2002: 79). If you want to define "strange", you need first of all to decide which canon you use as your reference. If you want to analyze a film in terms of translation semiotics, you need first of all to see what the borders within the film and outside the film are, and where they pass, and then see how the various translation processes work in relation thereof. Buttafava refers, implicitly, to the canon of Soviet cinema in the Thirties. Since, however, the film in the Soviet era didn't have any history of criticism or audience, Buttafava's criticism, as the other Western researchers' criticism, starts from an altogether different chronotope: the chronotope of the post-Soviet era, of Western-European culture, of translation studies /cultural studies /gender studies:

After the expansion of the paradigm of postcolonial and the related field of gender studies into translation studies, the border drawn between culture studies and translation studies has become fuzzier, yet at the same time, a visible complementarity has emerged. On the one hand, since the turn of the century, the understanding of the cultural value of a translation text has grown deeper, especially in respect to the importance of translations for the identity of the receiving culture. On the other hand, culture theory, particularly in the area of cultural studies, has again begun to value the concept of identity through culture. Due to the activity of the topic of globalization and the opposition of the global and the local, the understanding has been reached once again that no society wishing to enact its specificity can escape the consideration of cultural identity. (Torop 2002: 593–594)

It is also very interesting to establish the "strangeness" of *Strogij Yunosha* for the Soviet canon contemporary to the film, since such strangeness has evidently induced authorities to lock it in a storehouse, preventing its circulation in the cinemas. This kind of strangeness (and, probably, of dangerousness) is the most interesting for the researcher of Soviet culture.

From a semiotic-translational point of view, I wish to establish how, within a culture, difference is perceived. In brief, we can say that different images can be associated to diversity within a culture.

(1) *Diversity as rule*. Let us think of a culture like in New York City, where the quantities and qualities of people from different

cultures is such that one finds hard realizing which one is the dominating canon, i.e. WASP. In such a context, diversity is the rule.

(2) *Diversity as eccentricity*: a culture in which, unlike the previous case, a different individual stands out, and is considered an eccentric, such a difference goes without being connoted either in a positive or in a negative way (there is only registering of differences).

(3) *Diversity as an evil to be persecuted*: in this culture the different individual is persecuted, or at least indicated as a negative model. In most cases, it is a totalitarian society, in need of a unique model in order to preserve its cohesion. This is what Bruner says related to works produced in such a society: "the rhetorical overspecialization of narrative, when stories become so ideologically or self-servingly motivated that distrust displaces interpretation, and 'what happened' is discounted as fabrication. On the large scale, this is what happens under a totalitarian regime [...]" (Bruner 1990: 96). As I'll try to show, in this third category falls the film that is analyzed here, 'persecuted' just because it is not predictable at all.

### 3. Etymology and cultural implicit

That a culture (in this case a collective culture, a society) synthetically a priori judges the different token can also be interpreted as a cultural criterion for translating the other. The criteria for translatability of the different individual are then dictated by the cultural system, and the 'different', the 'deviant', is not simply perceived (after Kant, can still we be so naive as to think that 'pure perception' exists?), it is also pre-translated into something else; and in a totalitarian society, this something else is a well established something.

Etymology is one of the registers through which implicit values in a culture can be reconstrued. The vision that a system has of itself and of others (cultural implicit) works as a *translational filter* through which all that comes from without passes. Referring to Renate Lachmann's research, consider the origin of some words in Russian meaning difference, in order to reconstruct what lies behind them:

*drugoj* other  
*drug* friend

From such a semantic splitting it is evident that the notion of "friend", that can be defined as "a person whom one knows well and is fond of; intimate associate; close acquaintance; a person on the same side in a struggle" (Websters), originates from the notion of other, of different. In the moment when the Self is differentiated from the Other (*drugoj*), in the etymology the ambiguity is preserved whether such an Other is to be considered a friend (*drug*) or simply a different person, almost a stranger. Another pair stressed by Lachmann is:

*strannyj* strange  
*stranà* (other's) country

In contemporary Russian, *strana* doesn't mean "other's country", simply "country". On the contrary, as Piretto suggests (personal communication), there is a key song of the Stalin era that sings: *shiroka strana moyà rodnaya*. Etymological dictionaries however indicate the shared root of *strana* and *storona* (part), and consequently also of *postoronnyj* (stranger). The Dal' dictionary gives this definition of *postoronnyj*: "storonnyj, ne svoj, chuzhdyj, chuzhoj, so storony" (Dal' 1882, 3: 346), while for *storona* he indicates: "prostranstvo i mestnost' vne chego libo, vneshnee, naruzhnoe, ot nutra ili ot srediny udalennoe" (Dal' 1882, 4: 331), while the first definition of *stranà* is just "storonà" (Dal' 1882, 4: 335). Hence also the *strannik*, the pilgrim, the one who travels, and that is strange, in the sense that he is literally out of (his normal) place. Something similar happens in Italian too, with the etymology of "strano" and "straniero".

#### 4. Individual Self and collective Self

Recognizing the other's difference is a fundamental step for being aware of one's Self. Realizing that there are different individuals (cultures) means also realizing that one's way of being (one's culture) is not universal, that, therefore, in the perception-judgment of others, different criteria can be employed from those usually applied to oneself. Recognizing the other's difference to be able to recognize one's Own peculiarity is a notion on the border between culturology and psychology, because it can be seen, (a) in individual terms (formation of the Self), and (b) in collective terms (formation of one's culture identity). One's culture identity depends on the acknowledging



of different cultures. Depending whether a culture negates or acknowledges its specificity, enables or disables its acceptance of a different, stranger culture as a culture on equal terms with one's own (*stranger* but not *strange*). Thinking that what holds true in one's own culture has a universal value devaluates the different cultures, because as *chuzhye* (other), they also are *chudovishchnye* (monstrous). Not recognizing one's own specificity means applying One's criteria to the Other: the Other comes out then as inadequate. Devaluating the Other has a precise psychological function (both individual and social): the strengthening of *one's own* identity.

### 5. Culture as pre-judgment

Any culture contains within itself the view that that culture has of itself and of the other cultures. The prejudice towards the other cultures is also encoded in a culture's DNA, i.e. the 'translational filter' through which the cultures-other pass even before being perceived. It is a translation problem. Every time there is a passage between Self and Other, i.e. every time a border is crossed between two systems that are part of the semiosphere, there is a borderline culture, or translational culture: "the semiotic border is the sum of the bilingual translational 'filters', the passage through which translates the text into a language (or in more languages) other than that are *outside* the given semiosphere" (Lotman 1992: 13). The ways to translate an outer culture to the inside are many, and it is upon these that the perception of a system from without depends.

From a theoretical point of view, there is no difference between individual systems (persons) and super-individual systems. I think it is necessary, therefore, to investigate the Self/Other relations, to truly appreciate, beyond the contributions made by cultural studies, also the contributions of systemic psychology, of the systemic psychological school originating in Palo Alto. The systemic view focuses, rather than on the single individual or event, on interactions and inter-relations. Culturological and psychological-systemic approaches share the top-down approach (they start from the system of cultural inter-relations in order to descend to the single micro-system/text/individual), unlike the bottom-up approach, focusing on the single micro-system/text/individual, that is studied as an isolated system.

Since, from a semiotic point of view, an individual is a text and is a system as well, to increase the applicability of this reasoning to individual or super-individual situations from this point on I won't use the formula "micro-system/text/individual", I will simply say "text", implicitly referring to the three concepts in an interchangeable way.

## 6. System, translation, interference

Even-Zohar has defined some regularities characterizing the relations between systems calling them "general principles of interference". Even if the Israeli researcher refers above all to literature, and such principles are part of his view of the "literary polysystem", I think that they can be extended to any cultural polysystem (semiosphere), therefore I propose them here as tools that will serve for the translation-oriented analysis of *Strogij Yunosha*. I will transpose here Even-Zohar's principles modifying the references from "literary" to "cultural" and assuming full responsibility.

- 1 cultural systems are never in non-interference
  - 2 contacts will sooner or later generate interference if no resisting conditions arise
  - 3 interference is mostly unilateral
  - 4 a source cultural system is selected by prestige
  - 5 a source cultural system is selected by dominance
  - 6 interference occurs when a system is in need of items unavailable within itself
  - 7 an appropriated repertoire does not necessarily maintain source culture functions
- (Even-Zohar 1990: 59)

Even-Zohar, moreover, lists some determinant factors for a culture to be easily subject to interference by other cultures it contacts, and easily influenced, and therefore easily renewable thanks to other's items:

- (a) when a polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is "young", in the process of being established; (b) when a literature is either "peripheral" (within a large group of correlated literatures) or "weak", or both; and (c) when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature [...] translated literature is not only a major channel through which fashionable repertoire is brought home, but also a source of reshuffling and supplying alternatives. (Even-Zohar 1990: 47, 48)

## 7. Different modes of encompassing the Other (translation)

Such other elements are encompassed in one's own culture in a different way according to many factors. In brief, the foreign element can be metabolized as other's element coexisting as a different item within one's own culture, or as an appropriated element, which makes it lose the features that make it recognizable as other (it is therefore offered as own, even if it isn't). To explain these dynamics I turn to Toury (1995: 56–57): “whereas adherence to such norms determines a translation's *adequacy* as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its *acceptability*”.

In a case of 'acceptable' translation, it happens that the specific features of the other's text are transformed into 'normal' features on the target culture: “in translation, source-text textemes tend to be converted into target-language (or target-culture) repertoireemes” (Toury 1995: 268). This means: features that in the original are describable as typical of that text (textemes) tend to be transformed into typical traits not of that (meta)text, but of a repertoire (repertoireemes), i.e. of a set governed by systemic relations. It is the description of a tendency of translations to refer to text systems of the target culture, that can be formulated also in this way: “in translation, textual relations obtaining in the original are often modified, sometimes to the point of being totally ignored, in favor of [more] habitual options offered by a target repertoire” (Toury 1995: 268).

These are the theoretical notions, borrowed from culturology, translation studies, systemic psychology, that in the following I would like to apply to the analysis of the film *Strogij Yunosha*.

## 8. Systems and borders in *Strogij Yunosha*

The text *Strogij Yunosha* presents itself as “insane”, according to Buttafava. The notion of “insanity”, as “strangeness” and “diversity”, presupposes a norm, a canon. Moreover, it is a polyphonic text, because within it many different worlds or systems coexist.

The first world that is encountered has very little to do with the Soviet Thirties. A naked woman voluptuously bathes in the lake, while her husband's assistant dozes in front of their luxurious villa. There is a finely laid table, porcelain and crystal, fine linens, exquisite decanters, flowers; an organza curtain veils the lens's vision. The

assistant, Tsitronov, is plagued by not very Communist feelings, like sexual desire and adulterous urges. Luxury and lust, in fact.

This world is delimited by a very elegant border: wrought-iron fencing that is often shot at length, sometimes the only object of the frame (nearly an absolute border), sometimes to signal its function as the limit of the little world within a bigger world. In such a microcosm, life goes on as if the history of the macrocosm had no influence whatsoever on its inside. The great surgeon Stepanov after the revolution is still a great surgeon and still has all the privileges he presumably had before the Soviet era.

The second world is that of the Soviets. There lives Grisha, the hero, together with two symbolic figures: Diskobol, Devushka... This world has mostly two "seats": the stadium and Grisha's apartment. The stadium is the symbol of Soviet power: the athletes' bodies, partially naked, very muscular and well formed, are the symbol of young power, strong, efficient, ready to reproduce itself (probably, in the stereotype, much less ready to enjoy; Piretto 2002: 83) and to be launched into the rarious future. It is a world that, in many ways, echoes the Roman classical world: chariot races, discus throwing. The Soviet empire recalls illustrious precedents that it hopes to equal (but the myth of the Roman empire goes back to the pre-Revolution era: Raffaello Giovagnoli's *Spartacus* Russian translation is of 1899).

This world is at the climax of a phase of self-definition: the Kom-somoltsy are taking care of the rules that the life of their neighbors will have to follow, which shows that it is a new system non yet provided with a strong (authoritative) inner canon. The locker room scene is exemplary: the young men discuss rules while on the background there is a bas-relief with the 'fathers' of Communism.

The third world is represented by the West, and London in particular where professor Stepanov must go. This world is so important that, when a Soviet citizen is invited to it, the day before his departure a special party is organized to celebrate the event. Another element that indicates a special world used as a model is the moment when Stepanov has a drink after the operation, and with his colleague boasts he is a member of a British scientific association (implicitly he thinks that it is far more important than being member of a Soviet association). Since this world has a mythical quality, you can never see it. A language is spoken there that only Stepanov knows. (Stepanov therefore stands out as a bearer of the borderline culture, as a 'translator'.) For the young and beautiful wife Masha, her being

included among the most important co-workers at an assembly of British scientists and of other countries is a very special privilege (in Stepanov's opinion, at least). The Western world appears also in the dream where the party is placed in a Hollywood-type scene.

## 9. Applying translational principles to the inner worlds of the film

By applying the laws of interference to these exchanges between the three worlds, we have a series of consequences.

The world of luxury and lust is the one to be translated into the proletarian world of rules: in the proletarian world they speak a lot of the world of the villa, but not the reverse, "interference is mostly unilateral".

"The source cultural system is chosen on the basis of its prestige and dominance". That implies that a lot of prestige is attributed to the 'ancient' world of the villa, with all its contradictions as compared to the notions of parity and equality. When genius and privilege are discussed, two different positions emerge: (1) socialist canon: we must fight for equality, and eliminate the different individual (Stepanov) who, since he is a genius, is dangerous, and he perpetuates the exploitation of man over man; (2) capitalist canon: genius is useful for competition (to production and well-being). The rule that is bent to adapt to the other is the Socialist canon: a genius can and must exist also in the equalitarian society (and, obviously, he has a right to a notable series of privileges: villa, car, staff, assistant, a beautiful woman etc.).

"Interference occurs whenever a system needs elements that are not found within it": if Soviet censors had, for the sake of argument, had the suspect that such a rule existed, that would have made it a very uncomfortable text. Because, literally, it would seem that the quantity of elements not found within it is multitudinous. Room and Olesha suggest (from the standpoint of the regime, it is a grave suggestion) that the world of reference is that where there is a beautiful lonely villa, luxury, lust, or maybe Western world, as in the scene where Stepanov organizes the party for his *komandirovka* abroad.

### 10. *Strogost'* and closed text

Both in psychology and in text semiotics, rigidity, severity, closure are faithful indicators of frailty. One who busies himself drawing and defending limits, borders, demonstrates his uncertainty in being able to recognize those limits in a more 'natural' world. *Strogost'* characterizes, in the child and the teenager, the process through which autonomous moral principles are being constituted; the formation of the Super-Ego is a sign of the progressive emancipation from the parents' outer conscience. Rigidity and closure are in this stage a physiological phenomenon, because the borderlines are newly traced, and the essential is, for the time being, to learn to recognize them. Only later, if the evolution takes the most usual course, the individual learns to recognize limits and borders in a more spontaneous way, and to transgress them.

In text semiotics, something similar occurs with closed and open texts: as a first definition we can state that by 'open text' we mean a text that can be interpreted in many ways. But texts that are *strogie* (closed, aimed obsessively at producing a given reaction) actually end up being more open still to "shot in the dark" decoding:

Those texts that obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less precise empirical readers [...] are in fact open to any possible 'aberrant' decoding. a text so immoderately 'open' to every possible interpretation will be called a *closed* one. (Eco 1984: 8)

Let us see an example of the textual closure of the film. Grisha Fokin does not have a precise notion of border: he falls in love with Masha, who is however married to the genius-surgeon that is part of the other world. Of such a situation, two translations, two readings are made:

1. Masha loves Grisha, and it is right for him to take her away from her husband, to 'free' her, because she is a prisoner of a criminal that works against the parity and equality of Socialism. 2. Socialism is compatible with the existence of geniuses, and competition exalts Socialism: Masha is untouchable because she is 'property' of a genius.

In both cases Masha is a pure commodity without will nor intelligence (is this Socialism in one gender?). Moreover, a comparison between the Socialists' and luxury worlds, in such a translation, disconcerts the former, not the latter. For this reason doctor Stepanov can afford to

say to Grisha shut in the closet: "A member of the komsomol should have a sense of humor". A sense of humor can be afforded only by a consolidated, not inflexible, system.

From that we also gather that, in terms of adequacy/acceptability, the western world is translated into the Soviet one according to adequacy criteria: the otherness of the Western world is not hidden, its elements are easily introduced into one's own, where they function as nearly unobtainable models.

Interference does occur, and it is a one-way influence, as Even-Zohar states: no member of the British Academy of Science would ever dream of bragging to be a member of the homologous Soviet academy.

## 11. A dangerously interpretable symbolism

Peirce holds that signification occurs through a triad of sign, object, and interpretant. This means that the relation that is developed between sign and object is a mental entity, and therefore a subjective relationship depending on the experiences that an individual had with a given object, and a given sign. The interpretant is a result of the individual experience with a given sign and/or a given object. As Fornari states, it is a relationship of affective signification (Fornari 1979). The possibility for communication between individuals arises out of a compromise that anybody makes to try to be understood and to understand, despite the intrinsically affective and eminently subjective nature of expression.

Moreover, Peirce distinguishes three kinds of sign: icon (low interpretability), index (medium interpretability), and symbol (high interpretability). *Strogij Yunosha*, with its high symbolism, is a text that has a very high rate of subjective interpretability. Many different translations can be made out of it. The top level of symbolism is in the passage of the party dream, where to the symbolism present in other parts of the narrative is added the symbolism intrinsic in oneiric language.

For all these reasons, *Strogij Yunosha* lends itself to innumerable translations. Despite the closure of some characters that animate it, on the whole it is a text open to many readings, and this is a defect for a narrative text in a totalitarian regime (Bruner 1990). As if it weren't enough, many of these possible readings lean towards accepting the

two non-proletarian worlds in the text — the luxury world and the Western world, that, in part, coincide — as positive models to which the proletarian world should inspire itself. This fact connotes the text as strongly anti-Soviet.

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### Странный, очень странный, как во сне: границы и переводы в фильме “Строгий юноша”

Использование семиотики в науке о переводе является базой для выработки нового подхода, который порождает множество интересных научных текстов. С другой стороны, применение понятия “перевод” в широком смысле оказывается весьма важным и для самой семиотики, как, например, в работах Ч. Пирса и Юрия Лотмана. Становится все труднее отличить влияние переводоведческих штудий на семиотику от влияния семиотики на переводоведение. Данная статья пытается синтезировать средства обеих дисциплин (семиотики и переводоведения) при анализе советского фильма “Строгий юноша”. Прежде всего понятие “странный” анализируется в семиотическом



аспекте, при попутном разыскании этимологических оснований для определения “странности” как простого “отличия” или “враждебности”. Имплицитность культуры трактуется в качестве проблемы посредничества между Я и Другим как в коллективном, так и в индивидуальном (психологическом) плане. Способы соотношения с Другим объясняются в свете системного анализа культурной полисистемы, наименьшим элементом или подсистемой которой является индивидуальное. Затем фильм как бы раскладывается на несколько “миров”, границы и соотношения которых рассматриваются на основании вышеупомянутых подходов. Подобный переводоведческий анализ фильма позволяет выдвинуть гипотезу о том, почему данный фильм был запрещен при советском режиме.

### **Veider, väga veider, nagu unenäos: piirid ja tõlked filmis “Strogij Junosha” (“Range noormees”)**

Semiootika rakendamine tõlketeaduses on aluseks uudsele lähenemisele, mille tulemuseks on väga huvitavate teaduslike tekstide tekkimine. Teiselt poolt on tõlke mõiste avar kasutamine osutunud oluliseks semiootika enda jaoks, nagu näiteks C. Peirce’i või J. Lotmani käsitluses. Üha raskem on eristada tõlketeaduse mõju semiootikale ja semiootika mõju tõlketeadusele. Käesolev artikkel on katseks sünteesida mõlema distsipliini vahendeid nõukogude filmi “Range noormees” analüüsimisel. Kõigepealt on oluline vajadus lisada semiootiliselt analüüsitavale mõistele “veider” ka etümoloogiline võimalus määratleda veidrat samasuse või erinevuse kaudu mõistega “kahjulik”. Kultuuri implitsiitsust on võimalik vaadelda vahendusena Enda ja Teise vahel nii kollektiivses kui individuaalses (psühholoogilises) mõttes. Suhestumise viise Teisega seletatakse siis süsteemse lähenemise kaudu kultuurilisele polüsüsteemile, mille väikseimaks elemendiks ehk alaosüsteemiks on individuaalne. Tulemusena eritletakse analüüsis filmi erinevaid “maailmu”, millede piire ja seoseid vaadeldakse semiootikast ja tõlketeadusest lähtudes. Filmi taoline translatoogiline analüüs võimaldab oletada, miks antud film nõukogude režiimi poolt keelati.

## **Mimesis as a phenomenon of semiotic communication**

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**Abstract.** The concept of mimesis is not very often used in the contemporary semiotic dialogue. This article introduces several views on this concept, and on the basis of these, mimesis is comprehended as a phenomenon of communication. By highlighting different semantic dimensions of the concept, mimesis is seen as being composed of phases of communication and as such, it is connected with imitation, representation, iconicity and other semiotic concepts.

The goal of this article is to introduce possibilities for understanding and using the notion of mimesis in connection with some semiotic concepts and views. In everyday use, the word 'mimesis' is mainly understood in connection with the terms 'representation' or 'imitation'. *The Concise OED* explains 'mimesis' as

1. imitative representation of the real world in art and literature;
2. the deliberate imitation of the behaviour of one group of people by another as a factor in social change;
3. *zoology* mimicry of another animal or plant.

(Pearsall 2002: 905)

Under this surface of meanings there is the myriad of connections and connotations which engage 'mimesis' to many historical layers of culture, making it quite difficult to define.

As a concept, mimesis originates from Antique philosophy. Through the course of history different schools and authors have used it, thus making 'mimesis' one of the classical concepts of Western philosophy. The meanings and uses of 'mimesis' have varied remark-

ably, although 'mimesis' was probably not a notion with a single meaning even in the times when first mentioned in the literature. Therefore it is quite superficial to refer to it today as a single category. Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf have also accepted in their profound overview "Mimesis: culture, art, society", that it is not possible to give a unitary definition that would cover all common uses of the notion in different traditions and fields (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 2).

Likewise, the author of this article can not endeavour more than to offer one possible view of the range of subjects that have been described by Gebauer and Wulf almost as a cornerstone of Western thought.

What is remarkable in the history of mimesis is that it was already a theoretical problem very early on in the European tradition, that throughout the whole of its history it has always been a simultaneous object of theoretical reflection and aesthetic and social application. (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 7)

In this article I will attempt to explain the notion of mimesis by explicating its meaning structure. Thereby I seek an answer to the question whether the notion of mimesis should be more actively engaged to the dialogues of the contemporary theory of semiotics or whether it should be abandon altogether due to its historic overuse and inconsistency.

Understanding the concept of mimesis becomes an important background for anybody who works with one of those notions with different meanings, which have directly evolved from the concept. Memetics, which describes culture as composed of multiplying units, and which has actively striven to become an independent field of study in the last decade (Blackmore 1999; cf. Deacon 1999); the notion of mimicry in its biological meaning (Wickler 1968; Maran 2000; 2001) and mimic gestures as studied in psychology (see, e.g., Zepf *et al.* 1998) are suitable examples of the magnitude of the field of meanings into which 'mimesis' reaches as a conceptual foundation. That field is rich with antagonistic standpoints and traditions, although there are also loans and rediscoveries that could transcend millennia. In his classification of mimicry, for instance, Georges Pasteur distinguishes Aristotelian mimicry (among other types) by referring to a passage from *Historia Animalium*, in which Aristotle describes how a brooding bird may pretend to be wounded if it encounters a dangerous creature near its nesting place (Pasteur 1982: 190).

The reasons why mimesis is not so much used in semiotics are partly historical, originating from the times of the formation of semiotics as an academic discipline. Both the understanding of Ferdinand de Saussure about the arbitrariness of the relation between signifiers and signifieds as well as the concept of the sign by Charles Sanders Peirce consisting of object, representamen and interpretant may be seen as a withdrawal from the mimetic approach to the relations between language and the world (Bogue 1991: 3). Mimetic perspective, according to which objects of nature and their representations correspond one-to-one, was especially popular in the period of the Enlightenment. At the same time, it would be wrong to exclude the concept from the semiotic dialogue solely due to its historic background, without considering and taking account our contemporary understandings about sign systems and processes of communication.

The present paper does not by any means claim to be the historical overview of the concept of mimesis, especially because the historical formation of the notion has already been analysed thoroughly by several authors (Gebauer, Wulf 1995; Melberg 1995; Halliwell 2002). I include the historical aspects of the concept as much as is necessary to understand the nature of mimesis and the possibilities for linking it with semiotic terminology and theories. In addition, I cannot analyse the works of many well-known scholars such as Gotthold E. Lessing, René Girard, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida in any great detail. These authors have fundamentally influenced our present-day understanding of the notion of 'mimesis'. However, 'mimesis' has had a structurally important place in their philosophical systems, and therefore the views of each and everyone of those need to be studied much more profoundly from the viewpoint of mimesis as would be possible in the pages of this paper.

### **Mimesis as a living concept**

As a starting point for the following argumentation, it is important to understand that mimesis has never actually been a determined and clearly definable concept. In the earliest written works of Ancient Greece that contain the notion of mimesis, it has been used in quite diverse contexts to indicate the particular characteristics of the object or the phenomenon. For instance, in the extant fragment of Aeschylus's tragedy *Edonians*, the sound of musical instruments has

been described as mimetic, resembling the voices of roaring bulls (Halliwell 2002: 17). In the time of Plato and Aristotle, 'mimesis' emerges at the centre of various philosophical debates concerning metaphysics, moral issues, arts and human nature, etc., and that has ensured the idea a place at the heart of Western thought for centuries. The works of Antique authorities later become a common source to refer to when using the notion of mimesis, and also today Plato's *Cratylus*, *Republic*, *Sophist* and *Laws* or Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* have quite often been taken as the point of departure in historical overviews and even in conceptual analyses.

Secondly, in order to understand the nature of 'mimesis' and its different interpretations, it is important to emphasise the historical link between 'mimesis' and actual performative and artistic activities. 'Mimesis' has not always been a pure theoretical category. For instance, Gebauer and Wulf describe the link between mimesis and practical embodied knowledge as the first of their twelve dimensions of mimesis. They emphasise that mimesis originates from practice, and therefore it is in the nature of the mimesis to overcome any theoretical restrictions and structural frameworks. The roots of mimesis lie in the oral tradition and as such it is the essence of mimesis to be dynamic and to include body-related motions, rhythms, gestures and sounds (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 316). The decreasing of that dynamism and the coalescence of the notion of mimesis in Western thought is primarily connected with the advancement of literary culture.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is possible to distinguish different levels of meaning in the concept of mimesis. The notion as a theoretical category is younger and narrower than 'mimesis' as a word expressing the representative or artistic activity; which itself is younger and narrower than mimesis as a means of human perception and activity in the world. Mimetic perceptions and actions have been characteristic of human cultures since prehistoric times. They have, for instance, appeared in the ritual objects resembling various creatures and objects of the world and in the ways these objects have been used to influence reality through magical practices, as has been described by James C. Frazer under the name homeopathic or imitative magic (Frazer 1981). Although

<sup>1</sup> By analysing studies of Homeric poetry, Egbert J. Bakker argues that the performative aspect of mimesis, which is directly connected to the oral presentation of poetry, is much undervalued in contemporary studies (Bakker 1999: 3).

mimesis as a word and concept originates from the Mediterranean, mimetic practices are also widespread beyond the borders of European culture. Michael Taussig describes diverse roles of mimetic practises among native American tribes, demonstrating also how mimetic loans can occur between different cultures (Taussig 1993). According to Stewart E. Guthrie, anthropomorphic imitations in material art can already be observed in Neolithic cultures (Guthrie 1993: 134–136).

One may also find approaches that link mimesis as a capability for imitation directly to the rise and growth of human culture. Michael A. Arbib, for instance, considers the capacity of imitation to be the very trait that distinguishes humans from their predecessors. At the same time, he sees that unique quality to be the major underlying force for the development of human culture. Michael A. Arbib writes: “imitation plays a crucial role in human language acquisition and performance, and [...] brain mechanisms supporting imitation were crucial to the emergence of *Homo sapiens*” (Arbib 2002: 230; see also Webb 1995). When turning back to Antique philosophy, it is worth repeating here the well-known citation from Aristotle, who formulated a similar thought in different words. “First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons [...]” (Aristotle Poet. 4.1448b5).

As mentioned before, in Antique philosophy the notion of mimesis has a relatively substantial role, although not as a singular category but rather as an open concept used to describe many different activities and phenomena. Summarising pre-Platonic literature, Stephen Halliwell distinguishes five groups of phenomena in relation with which the notion of ‘mimesis’ was used:

First, visual resemblance (including figurative works of art); second, behavioural emulation/imitation; third, impersonation, including dramatic enactment; fourth, vocal or musical production of significant or expressive structures of sound; fifth, metaphysical conformity, as in the Pythagorean belief, reported by Aristotle, that the material world is a mimesis of the immaterial domain of numbers. (Halliwell 2002: 15)

Halliwell sees an idea of correspondence or equivalence between mimetic works, activities or performances and their real-world counterparts as a common thread running through these otherwise various uses.

In works of Plato ‘mimesis’ appear in connection with issues of ethics, politics, metaphysics and human nature. Gebauer and Wulf

distinguish three basic meanings with which Plato uses the notion of mimesis in his early writings:

1. Mimesis as the imitation of a concrete action. Mimesis designates the process in which someone is imitated in regard to something [...].
  2. Mimesis as imitation or emulation. Presupposed here is that the person or object being imitated is worthy of being imitated [...].
  3. Mimesis as metaphor. Something is designated imitation which was not necessarily meant to be.
- (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 31, 32)

Later, in the *Republic*, metaphysical and ethical considerations also become more clearly observable. Like Plato, Aristotle also uses the notion of 'mimesis' in quite different contexts, although for him the primary one is the role and appearance of mimesis in the various arts, especially in poetry, paintings, sculpture, music and dance (Aristotle Poet. 1.1447a13–28; Halliwell 2002: 152).<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of that ancient semantic diversity, the modern uses of the word 'mimesis' also vary to a great extent. By analysing the ideas of mimesis in the writings of Plato, Cervantes, Rousseau and Kierkegaard, Norwegian literary theorist Arne Melberg has regarded 'mimesis' as a moving concept. According to his view, the meaning of the original notion is broader than any possible translation could grasp, and thus various translations such as 'imitation', 'mirroring', 'representation' or the German versions *Nachahmung* and *Darstellung* explicit different potentials of the 'mimesis' (Melberg 1995: 18). Depending on the chosen narrower translation at the time, attention has been paid to some specific aspects of the concept.

The exact meaning of the notion of mimesis also depends on the field and context of use. In oral poetry or acting, where the performing artist creates a mimetic situation by his direct activity, the connection of 'mimesis' with body-related motions and temporality is emphasised. In literature and paintings, on the other hand, the potential of 'mimesis' for representation is expressed. By understanding 'mimesis' more generally as the capacity of humans that makes it possible to perceive similarities in the surrounding world, as is done for instance by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1999b), the perceptual side of mimesis is accentuated. The metaphysical use of the notion will draw our

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<sup>2</sup> The Aristotelian approach to mimesis has been studied and compared with contemporary semiotic terminology by Alain Rey (1986).

attention to the possible concordances and structural analogies existing in the world.

Due to its diversity of possible uses, the ancient concept has become a point of departure for many contemporary cultural theorists. I will confine myself here only to two explicit examples. In the post-modernist tradition Jacques Derrida uses the elaborations of mimesis to describe relations between texts. The notion of *différence* embraces differences as well as similarities between the wording, style, ideas etc. of the text under observation and preceding ones, and is thus intrinsically connected with the tradition of mimesis (Derrida 1978). If Derrida in his approach seeks the liberation from strict and logical frameworks of description, then the deterministic extremity of mimesis is probably hidden into the theory of memetics arising from the positivistic tradition of biology. This approach describes culture as being composed of constant units, which multiply and compete with each other in a manner similar to genes. These units, so-called *memes*, preserve the similarity with their precursors when multiplying in the human mind, although at the same time they also change or 'mutate' to a certain extent (Dawkins 1985; Blackmore 1999). The direct connection between the concept of *meme* and the Antique root of mimesis is also announced by the author of the theory — Richard Dawkins (1989: 192).

On the basis of the above-mentioned examples of the extent of the possible field of meanings, it is probably not correct to speak of mimesis as a single concept, but rather as a constantly changing, transforming and as it were 'living' family of concepts (accordingly to Wittgenstein's definition of "family resemblance", Wittgenstein 1976: 32). Different parties, engaged by the family resemblance, cannot be clearly distinguished or defined under any single criterion, although intuitively and by different characteristics they still seem to belong together. 'Mimesis' together with its translations, the meanings of which partly cover the 'mimesis', at the same time constraining and interpreting the notion, seems to form such a family of concepts.

As members of that family of concepts I shall distinguish in this article first 'representation' and 'imitation'. As a parallel and partly overlapping notion, 'mimicry' is also used by some cultural theorists.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Graham Huggan, for instance, makes a distinction between mimesis and mimicry in the framework of anthropological and postcolonial discourse. He considers mimicry to be an aggressive or disruptive imitation that is used to disturb, ridicule or subordinate the imitated object or phenomenon (Huggan 1997: 94–95).



Emphasising the temporal dimension of the 'mimesis', Arne Melberg connects 'mimesis' with Kierkegaard's notion of 'repetition' (Danish *gentagelsen*, Melberg 1995: 1, 4–5). The expressional activity in 'mimesis' is described by the notions of 'depiction' and 'performance'. At the metalevel, the properties of 'mimesis' that arise from the relations between the original object and the mimetic work are indicated by the notions 'correspondence', 'reference', 'similarity/difference' and 'resemblance'. In semiotics 'mimesis' is also often associated with the concept of 'iconicity'.<sup>4</sup>

Belonging to the same concept family does not mean that it is not possible to distinguish different concepts therein and describe the relations between them. It does, however, mean that instead of solid definitions and logical deduction, a more intuitive and descriptive approach is necessary, just as it would be if one were describing the relations between different people and generations in a real family. Recognising the ambiguity of the concept of 'mimesis' and its interwovenness with the entire Western philosophical tradition, I will not attempt to define mimesis here. However, for structuring different uses and aspects of the concept I will suggest some dimensions of 'mimesis'. In doing so, I am still aware that any such attempts cannot be absolute, that they are valid only in regard to the given point of view, and in the extent they help us to better understand the concept family of mimesis and its inner structure.

### The semiotic dimensions of 'mimesis'

The presupposition and starting point of this approach is the opinion that mimesis is primarily a communicative phenomenon. That does not mean that I would altogether exclude various postmodernist approaches — for instance the social aspect of 'mimesis' as it is understood by René Girard (1965). He sees 'mimetic rivalry' as a characteristic of human nature and as a basic cause for the overwhelming competition and struggle in society, politics and economy in our modern age, which has intensified especially since the beginning of the 19th century. "If one individual imitates another when the latter appropriates some object, the result cannot fail to be rivalry or

<sup>4</sup> Several authors have also understood biological mimicry to be an example of iconicity in living nature (Nöth 1990: 163; Sebeok 1989: 116).

conflict" (Girard 1978: vii). Mimesis as a socio-cultural phenomenon has also been analysed in the framework of postcolonial cultural studies. For instance, using the British colonial system as an example, Homi Bhabha describes how the political, religious and cultural manners of the mother country have been imitated in colonies and ex-colonies to build an identity of their own (Bhabha 1994: 85–89).

By reducing mimesis to a communicative phenomenon I see a possibility of finding the conceptual clarity from which it would further be possible to comprehend more specific uses of the concept in literary theory and philosophy. My starting point is thus a conscious return to the basic connection between the notion of mimesis and poetry, painting and stagecraft, where mimesis as practise is concrete and processual phenomena by its nature. The framework of description that comprehends mimesis as composed of phases subsequent to each other may prove to be the right tool for organising and analysing this rather complex family of concepts.

I hereby distinguish the creation of mimesis as the first phase and the receiving of the outcome of this mimetic creation as the second phase. The latter, which consists of the perception and apprehension of the outcome of that creation (hereinafter *mimic*), as mimetic also presumes the participation of the second partaker — the *receiver*. The first phase is further divided into the recognition of the mimetic potential of the perceived *object*, situation, event, phenomenon or person by the *creative subject* and secondly, into the activity of expressing, revealing or performing this potential mimetically.

For instance, when one observes how it is possible to imitate birdsong in human language, one may distinguish several phases: (1) recognition arising in the hearer of the birdsong that it is possible to express this sound mimetically by means of human language; (2) actual verbalised expression of the bird song in human language; (3) reaction of the hearer of the mimetic expression and his/her comprehension of the relation of the verbal imitation to the original birdsong. Those phases may be clearly distinguishable from one another and also have a distinct temporal nature, although they may also be bound by interconnections and feedback cycles.

Such a view is somewhat similar to the ideas of Paul Ricoeur, who, in his analysis of the relations between time and narrative, understands mimesis as consisting of three features. Ricoeur distinguishes pre-understandings as mimesis<sub>1</sub>, which makes it possible to elicit activity, its structure, symbolic sources and temporal nature; practical creation

of the organisation of events as mimesis<sub>2</sub>, which by containing fiction, conventions and rules, controls and makes representation possible; and mimesis<sub>3</sub>, as connection between the mimetic world of text and the world of the reader by which the temporal nature of mimesis appears and is realised (Ricoeur 1984: 53–55; see also Flood 2000).

In my opinion the precondition for mimesis is the recognition arising in the creative subject that there is potential for mimetic expression in the object. This is the cognitive dimension of mimesis, which is directly connected with the attentiveness, perceptual structure and orientation of the creative subject in its surrounding environment. As a philosophical category, Wittgenstein has expressed this feature as 'seeing as', the capacity of humans that presupposes the involvement of perception as well as cognition, i.e. rational substance (Wittgenstein 1976: 197). Walter Benjamin has also written in greater depth about the perceptual preconditions of mimesis. He considers hidden correspondences in Nature, which are partly conceived by humans and partly unconceived, as a cause that motivates and awakens the mimetic capacities in humans (Benjamin 1999a; 1999b; see also Bracken 2002).

According to Benjamin, in our contemporary logo-centric culture such correspondences are mostly withdrawn, but they are still observable in children's games or in the deeper layers of language, where they connect meanings with words and written language with speech, thus making the entire language onomatopoeic by nature. In particular, many magical and mystical doctrines of language have endeavoured to comprehend such *nonsensuous similarities* concealed in human language (Benjamin 1999a: 696). In Benjamin's opinion those natural similarities and correspondences still form the basis of the worldview of many traditional cultures, where different elements and creatures of the world are described through magical relations. Mimetic perceptions and typologies of the world also appear in the strangest traditional folk classifications, as they are often described by structural anthropology (e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1990; Berlin 1992).

In the cognitive dimension I would also include mimesis as a metaphysical category, as it is understood for instance by Plato in describing the relationship between man's comprehension of reality and reality (*ta onta*) itself. I would also, however, include here searches in medieval philosophy for appearances in physical nature that would correspond and therefore be connected with the divine source (Nöth 1998: 334–336). The peculiar absoluteness of the

mimetic worldview is hidden in the biblical comprehension of the creation of man: "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (*Genesis* 1: 27). That sentence could also be interpreted in the sense that man acts and looks as if he has emerged through the imitation of something external; that he does not belong or fit into the flow of natural phenomena. To put it in other words, perceiving the world or some of its elements as embodying a particular inherent structure or regularity and seeing that that regularity is somewhat similar to the outcome of human mimetic activities, it is easy to reach the conclusion that the world or its elements as we perceive them are imitations of something that lies beyond the reach of our senses. Here I would like once again to refer to Stewart E. Guthrie, who emphasises that it is in the nature of humans to presume that in the case of certain type of similarities there should also be a creator. If there is no perceptible source of the similarities, the origin of those will be assigned to a divine, supra-natural or otherwise extraordinary creator. For instance, there are plenty of creation myths in many cultures about the forms of land relief with strange shapes resembling various living creatures (Guthrie 1993: 83, 117–118).

Thus in the cognitive dimension of mimesis, the potential for mimetic expression is detected on the basis of the symbolic world of the creative subject. Perceived objects find their places, properties and connections in the Umwelt of the creative subject, and it is precisely here that the inspiration to create mimetic performance can occur. The emergence of that inspiration, however, is the essential for triggering the creation of mimetic performance. Mimesis is the outcome of the human's creative activity and cannot occur without the recognition by the creative subject that it is possible and worth to express the perceived object mimetically.

The cognitive dimension of the mimesis is followed and contrasted by the performative dimension, where mimesis becomes recognisable, operative and thus functional. In the performative dimension, mimesis enters into an act of communication, and will be enriched there by the artistic and communicative aspiration of the creative subject. Here the intents of the creative subject to forward information, influence the reader, hearer or viewer and his/her attitude about the mimic or the original will be expressed. Some authors, for instance theatre theorist and semiotician Tadeusz Kowzan, consider that intentionality to be a criterion distinguishing mimesis from all natural similarities and correspondences (Kowzan 1992: 70; Rozik 1996: 191).

The performative dimension of mimesis is also emphasised by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who in his classic work *Laocoön* sees mimesis as a possibility for artistic creation, and describes thoroughly the differences between the possibilities of sculptors and poets in representing their objects. After cognising the possibilities concealed in an object and the means of expression offered by the specific branch of art, the artist then has the opportunity for and freedom of self-realisation. To fulfil this freedom, he or she maximises the artistic potential of the object and materials used by making the right creative choices (Lessing 1874: 143; Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 187). The techniques with which sculptors and poets present their object are, however, quite different, even in the event the object is one and the same; because figurative art and poetry offer fundamentally different possibilities for creative expression.

The second axis of the conceptual family of mimesis is, in my view, constituted by the notions 'imitation' and 'representation' (Fig. 1). Stephen Halliwell regards the period when 'mimesis' was translated into Latin and '*imitatio*' was chosen as an equivalent to be the decisive turning point in the history of the concept. Later on, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 'imitation' and its parallels in other languages were used to indicate the concept. Halliwell argues that translation changed the nature of the concept considerably, reducing it for centuries to mere imitation with negative connotations. He writes:

No greater obstacle now stands in the way of a sophisticated understanding of all the varieties of mimeticism, both ancient and modern, than the negative associations that tend to colour the still regrettably standard translation of mimesis as "imitation", or its equivalent in any modern language [...]. Although it cannot be denied that the greater part of the history of mimeticism has been conducted in Latinized form (i.e., through the vocabulary of *imitatio*, *imitari*, and their derivatives and equivalents), it is now hazardous to use "imitation" and its relatives as the standard label for the family of concepts [...]. (Halliwell 2002: 13)<sup>5</sup>

The most extreme removal from the classical meaning of 'mimesis' is probably the way in which the notion of 'imitation' is used in contemporary cybernetics and electronics when discussing robots that are capable of imitating (Breazeal, Scassellati 2002). Here the repre-

<sup>5</sup> Here Halliwell refers mainly to the narrow definition of the mimesis as it is understood in the aesthetics of art under the slogan "the imitation of Nature".

sentative or signifying participation of the creative subject is completely absent, and thus we are dealing with so-called “pure imitation”.<sup>6</sup>

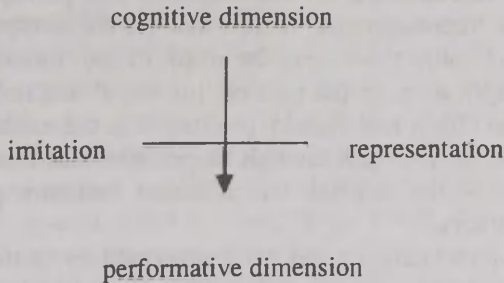


Figure 1. Basic dimensions of mimesis.

The representative aspect of mimesis is especially noticeable in the Auerbachian approach to the topic (Auerbach 1988). By concentrating in his journey through Western literature on the stylistic features of different works and their connections to the wider historical and social background, Auerbach shows how in different ages reality is manifested by the written word. Even the title of his book “*Mimesis: dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*” demonstrates Auerbach’s endeavour to connect mimesis directly with representation (see also Blanchard 1997). The Auerbachian approach to the concept of mimesis is often intrinsically used as an allusion to the mimetic or referential function of the texts (see, for instance, Walsh 2003).

Depending on the context of usage, mimesis may thus tend to be more imitation or representation, with the difference lying in the nature of the relation between the mimic and the original. In representation, the relation between the mimic and the original is primarily meaning-relation and the creation of the mimesis here basically means the interpretation or reconstruction of some aspect of the original

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<sup>6</sup> The notion of mimesis has been also used in the natural sciences to describe biological adaptation in which an organism resembles a nonliving element in the surrounding environment (Pasteur 1982: 183). Such an approach appears to differ remarkably from the use of the notion in the humanities, especially in cases where the resemblance occurs in the innate physical structure of the organism and the organism does not show any individual activity in the appearance of the adaptation.

using similarity and difference as tools of sign relation.<sup>7</sup> 'Imitation', on the other hand, refers more to the superficial reproduction of the original, where the creative subject does not express a semantic relation, but resemblance on the basis of the perceptible characteristics. Thus 'representation' relates more to the interpretation made by the creative subject, whereas the result of the 'imitation' is rather copying or duplication. In the case of 'imitation' it is not necessary to understand the object and thereby position it in the existing structures of one's Umwelt. It is just enough to perceive and to transfer exact characteristics of the original, which makes imitation quite close to biological mimicry.<sup>8</sup>

A similar understanding has been expressed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who distinguishes so-called 'high' and 'low' mimesis. Lessing writes:

Bei der ersten Nachahmung ist der Dichter Original, bei der andern ist er Kopist. Jene ist ein Teil der allgemeinen Nachahmung, welche das Wesen seiner Kunst ausmacht, und er arbeitet als Genie, sein Vorwurf mag ein Werk anderer Künste, oder der Natur sein. Diese hingegen setzt ihn gänzlich von seiner Würde herab; anstatt der Dinge selbst ahmet er ihre Nachahmungen nach, und gibt uns kalte Erinnerungen von Zügen eines fremden Genies, für ursprüngliche Züge seines eigenen. (Lessing 1874: 143)

At the same time, imitation and representation should not be considered as opposing phenomena that exclude each other, but rather as edges of the sphere in which the construction of the mimesis becomes possible. Imitation and representation can combine with each other in many ways, as there are also numerous possibilities for expressing the similarities and differences between the original and the mimic. Through interaction between similarities and differences it is also

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<sup>7</sup> I understand the term 'representation' in a more narrow sense than usual, defining it as the referential presentation in the course of which the creative subject expresses the sign relation (cf. Nöth 1990: 94).

<sup>8</sup> I have defined the term 'mimicry' as the similarity between the original and the mimic, which continues throughout the generations, not as much due to the activity of the creative subject but due to the choices of the receiver. By its selection, the receiver eliminates imitations, which it will recognise as imitations and only those that are exact enough to delude the receiver will remain and carry on to the next generations. Mimicry is miscommunication where constant feedback mechanisms are involved in the metalevel, and as such it is an example of the processes in which semiotic activity can partake of the evolutionary processes of nature (Maran 2001).

possible to convey many symbolic meanings, as is done for instance in caricatures or cartoons. Furthermore, the meaning assigned to the mimic may arise from its relations to the context, from connotative references, from the intentions of the creative subject concealed in the mimesis or some other semiotic aspect.

The position of the particular case of mimesis on the axis between imitation and representation depends also on the relation between mimesis and the sign system in which mimesis occurs. In principle, the original and mimic may appear in one and the same as well as in different sign systems or mediums. If the original and the mimic share the same sign system, mimesis may appear either in the form of the imitation or representation as described above. In cases, however, where the original and the mimic exist in different sign systems, i.e. where the mimetic activity is inevitably connected with the translation process from one language to another, the similarity will give way to correspondence, and the imitation tends to be replaced by representation.

### **Mimesis, communication, and iconicity**

As a result of the performative dimension the mimic is created, and by being perceptible and interpretable by the receiver it can then be matched and compared with the original or the 'real world'. Gebauer and Wulf write:

In mimetic reference, an interpretation is made from the perspective of a symbolically produced world of a prior (but not necessary existing) world, which itself has already been subjected to interpretation. Mimesis construes anew already construed worlds [...] Mimetic action involves the intention of displaying a symbolically produced world in such a way that it will be perceived as a specific world. (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 317)

As such, mimesis is by nature communicative, i.e. it has been created with the intention of participating in the communication. Many features characteristic to mimesis appearing only in the course of that communication, through the interpretation and feedback of the receiver. Only here the intention, aspiration and purpose of the creative subject, as well as the interpretation of the receiver could become embodied and thereby influence the particular communicative situation as well as the sign system being used for the communication.



In mimesis the position of the receiver is in some respects opposite to the position of the creative subject. The role of the receiver is to (re)establish the correspondence between the mimic and the original, to (re)create the meaning relation between those in the terms of 'similarity', 'difference', 'resemblance' — an activity that quite closely corresponds to the definition of semiosis.<sup>9</sup> In the earlier phase of the creation, characteristics of the original are selected by the creative subject and conveyed through the different measure of rendering (from imitation to representation), and therefore the mimic shares many perceptible features with the original. Thus the receiver could establish the sign relation between the mimic and the original on the bases of their similarity or difference. Such a sign relation meets the requirements for being an iconic sign according to the typology of Ch. S. Peirce.

At the same time, the receiver is independent enough to interpret mimetic performance according to his/her own previous knowledge, convictions and aesthetic preferences, and thus mimetic representation, like every other communicative act, may acquire quite a different meaning to the receiver than the creative subject had intended. Mimetic presentation could be interpreted as a symbolic semantic relation, just as a receiver has the freedom to interpret iconically every sign regarded to be conventional by the sender.<sup>10</sup> By analysing different views of the relations between iconic and conventional signs, Jerzy Pelc has suggested iconicity, indexiality and symbolicity not be spoken of as absolute sign categories excluding each-other but rather as different uses of signs (Pelc 1986).

On the basis of cybernetics, Myrdene Anderson has described deception as sender-receiver relation by distinguishing three phases: coding, decoding and feedback; and different possibilities for interaction according to the type of deception — intentionality, truthfulness and believability (Anderson 1986: 327). In the case of mimesis the number of different possibilities appears to be much larger,

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<sup>9</sup> The reaction of the receiver probably cannot be described as semiosis in cases of perfect deception, where the receiver believes that the mimic is the original. Such a situation may also occur in cases where the competence of the receiver to distinguish mimic and original is very low.

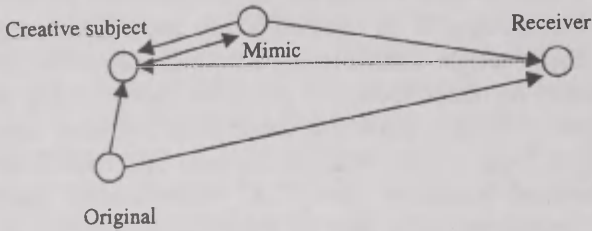
<sup>10</sup> The most beautiful example of such a misinterpretation that I know is the true story about the Englishman who interpreted the Estonian word 'öö' (night) figuratively, as an icon of two children who have their mouths open from surprise while looking at the stars in the night sky high above their heads.

because the scale of intentions and interpretations may vary from purposeful deception to straightforward message and from absolute sameness to conventional symbolicity. For instance, nearly perfect imitation created to deceive may for the receiver turn out to be just an apparent resemblance, if its competence to distinguish originals and mimics is high enough. Therefore the mimetical act of communication should instead be understood as a plausible and adjusting process of communication. Such a frame for description has been suggested by psychologists Luigi Anolli, Michela Balconi and Rita Ciceri (2001), who understand imitation, deception, informational manipulation, non- and misunderstanding and all other non-direct acts of communication in terms of communicative freedom, chance and probability.

One reason to consider the creation of mimesis and the perception of the mimetic performance as two different phases lies also in their temporal independence. The creation of the mimic and its perception may be two sides of the same activity, as is the case for instance in the theatre or in performed music. However, the temporal distance between the creation and perception of the mimic may also extend back hundreds of years, as is the case for instance in classical literature or paintings. Whereas the essence of mimesis is the specially established relationship between the mimic and the original, the interpretation of the mimesis by the receiver may also change considerably if either the properties of the original or the mimic alter over time. As a hypothetical example, an age-old theatrical performance that has been created as a conscious imitation or farce may forfeit its mimeticity in the eyes of the contemporary audience, because the original from which the imitation is derived has been forgotten over times. More than anywhere, such alteration of mimeticity into documentality seems to take place in photography.

Thus we can conclude that the balance between similarity and difference, which has been considered by Arne Melberg (1995: 1) to be a substantive feature for mimesis, can appear only if interpretation of the mimic has been carried out by the receiver (Fig 2). In other words, mimesis cannot acquire its full mimeticity before being perceived as such by the receiver. This viewpoint is also shared by Gebauer and Wulf, who exclude similarity as the criterion for defining mimesis when describing relations between the mimic and the original, but say at the same time that similarity is the result of the mimetic reference. "Only once reference has been established between a mimetic and another world is it possible to make a comparison of

the two worlds and identify the *tertium comparationis*” (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 317).



**Figure 2.** Mimesis as an act of communication.

The question whether or not ‘similarity’ and ‘resemblance’ could be taken as a criterion of the mimetic relationship is thoroughly argued in art theory in describing the relationship between object and artwork. Nelson Goodman, one well-known critics of that view, claims that it is not possible to demonstrate universal similarity proceeding from the features of an object or from an artwork itself and whether the relation is established or not, is always up to the viewer and depends on his/her experiences and preferences. Therefore, according to Goodman, it is naïve to describe the relation of the artwork and its object in terms of similarity. “Denotation is the core of representation and is independent of resemblance”, he writes (Goodman 1985: 5).<sup>11</sup>

In this paper I tend to share the position of Stefan Morawski, who has studied the mimetic relations between artwork and its object from the semiotic point of view. According to his approach, the grounds for searching for similarities should not be any abstract physical features of the objects but rather ‘our own’ perceptual and conventional reality. That reality is both stable and changing at the same time: it is fixed to the many perceptual constants but will also change when constructed by different individuals, social groups, races and historical epochs. This common reality partly given and partly constructed is, however, solid enough to form a basis for similarities, resemblances and all mimetic phenomena. Morawski writes: “Mimesis is predicated on a constancy of perception anchored to anthropological principles, to a

<sup>11</sup> For reflections of the Nelson Goodman’s views, see for instance David Blinder (1986) and Goran Rossholm (1995).

treatment, that is, of the objective world angled to the recurrent modalities whereby people enter into active intercourse with the world" (Morawski 1970: 47).

Probably the clearest distinction between the creation and perception of mimesis is made by theatre semiotician and theorist Tadeusz Kowzan. He calls the first phase of the process 'mimesis', considering the actor's intentional performance as its criterion, and the second phase 'iconicity'. Iconicity, according to Kowzan, appears when a spectator draws the connection between the mimic and the original. The iconic aspect of the signs may also emerge in the cases of natural signs, although mimesis is inevitably connected with artistic signs.

Le caractère iconique d'un signe se manifeste à l'étape de la réception et de l'interprétation [...]. Le caractère mimétique d'un signe se détermine à l'étape de la création et de l'émission, seuls les signes créés et émis volontairement, ayant un sujet producteur conscient, donc seuls les signes artificiels sont susceptibles d'être mimétiques. Le même signe, à condition qu'il soit artificiel, peut donc avoir un aspect mimétique et un aspect iconique, et cela dépend de sa position dans le processus de sémiotique [...] il peut avoir ces deux aspects simultanément, les deux — aspect mimétique à la création, aspect iconique à la réception — sont parfaitement compatibles. (Kowzan 1992: 71)

Such an interpretation seems to correspond to Ch S. Peirce's definition of the iconic sign. Peirce writes of the relations between an icon and its object as follows: "The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply so happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them" (CP 2.299). The term 'likeness' used here seems to me more closely connected with the 'mimesis' than the latter substitution 'icon'. The 'iconicity' is understood by Peirce primarily as the property of the sign, whether the 'likeness' could also indicate a certain kind of cognitive involvement. For instance, Peirce argues that an artist may use 'likeness' in its creation: "another example of the use of a likeness is the design an artist draws of a statue, pictorial composition, architectural elevation, or piece of decoration, by the contemplation of which he can ascertain whether what he proposes will be beautiful and satisfactory" (CP 2.281). Thus Peirce's 'likeness' seems to be quite a dynamic category that could be involved in various processes where correspondences are created on the basis of resemblance.

Kowzan's approach does not mean, however, that mimesis and iconicity should always inevitably appear together. It is possible for either phase to occur separately, as it is possible that different mimeses follow each other such that the performative dimension of the one mimesis becomes the perceptual dimension of the other, thus constituting a chain of mimetic occurrences. In this case we can speak of mimesis as cyclical communication that brings us closer to post-modernist approaches to mimesis. An example of the applications of the infinite mimesis in postmodernist thought is Jean Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum. According to his views, in our time representational signs are substituted by successive simulations that do not have any connection whatsoever with reality. The existence of those simulations, on the other hand, is enough to conceal the loss of the connection with reality (Baudrillard 1988).

The approach offered here, which focuses on communication and the role of the creative subject, is universal in the sense that it allows us to study either mimesis in the form of single representations of reality or as a cyclical phenomenon where different imitations follow each other. I believe that like semiosis mimesis is also a universal phenomenon that could occur in the case of very different mediums, sign systems and participants, at the same time remaining dependent on them by representing the characteristic features of the situation it emerges from. As Gebauer and Wulf write: "In each case the mimetic world is possessed of its own particular right in relation to the one to which it refers; by virtue of its characteristic, mimesis is fundamentally distinct from theories, models, plans and reconstructions" (Gebauer, Wulf 1995: 315).

However, I would like to emphasise the role of the creative subject in mimesis much more than is usually done, e.g., by Gebauer and Wulf. Whether the creative subject participate in the mimesis as an active interpreter or just as a copier of the perceptible features of the original also determines the possibilities for the uniqueness or repetitiousness of the mimesis. Imitation, where the creative participation of the subject is small or absent, may easily become cyclical repetition.

By altering the locations of the creative subject and receiver in the mimesis, one could also derive some special types of mimesis. For instance the schema, where the creative subject imitates the properties that belong to the receiver and constitute part of its identity, corresponds to the process of identity formation in social and cultural

groups. Automimesis could also be considered a special type of mimesis. In that case the creative subject and the receiver of the mimesis is one and the same. Such a situation has been described in postcolonial cultures, where certain features of the culture of the colonists' motherland is imitated in order to see oneself as a subject and to build one's own identity (Bhabha 1994: 85–92).

### **Conclusion: Mimesis and semiosis**

Although an ambiguous and dispersed notion, mimesis has played an important role in European cultural tradition since Antiquity. Nowadays mimesis as a concept has more often been used in literary theory, philosophy, psychology and postmodernist studies. According to the approach proposed in this article, mimesis lies in the region between imitation, representation, perception and performance. Binding the perception of an object with conscious performance, mimesis inevitably presupposes the existence and participation of human creative forces. Mimesis is an active process in which something new is created, even if it is based on what is previously known, and thus mimesis and creativity are very closely connected.

The aspiration to understand mimesis from the viewpoint of semiotics thus inevitably directs our attention to the concept of creativity in semiotics; to the views of how sign systems arise and change in the course of semiotic processes (see Mikita 2000). The scarcity of such approaches in semiotics and the overall importance of the subject to literary and art theory is in my mind the main reason why the notion of mimesis has so far generally been dealt with by the latter. For semiotics the problem of mimesis raises questions about the formation of new structures by semiosis as well as the development and changeability of semiotic systems.

Furthermore, it seems that there is a certain parallelism that can be perceived between the notions 'semiosis' and 'mimesis'. Charles Morris defines semiosis as a sign process consisting of three basic components: "that which acts as a sign, that which the sign refers to, and that effect on some interpreter in virtue of which the thing in question is a sign to that interpreter" (Morris 1970: 3). Could we not then summarise this paper by claiming, like Morris, that mimesis is a kind of intentional process of sign creation, where something new is created on the bases of the perceptual properties of the existing object

or phenomena in such a way that the outcome acts as a sign for the interpreter. As shown above, the mimic is usually created for communicative purposes, and therefore mimesis can be considered the process of giving semiotic output to the cognitive category perceived by the creative subject. But if so, then whether or not the notion of mimesis finds use in contemporary semiotics, the theoretical problem indicated by the longevity and diversity of the concept family of mimesis should be also under the continuous attention of semiotics.

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### **Мимесис как явление семиотической коммуникации**

Понятие “мимесис” не столь часто используется в современном семиотическом диалоге. Настоящая статья ознакомит с разными интерпретациями этого понятия и, исходя из них, мимесис рассматривается как явление коммуникации. При выделении разных измерений значения мимесис понимается как состоящий из этапов коммуникации и соотносится с понятиями имитации, репрезентации, иконичности и др. концептами семиотики.

### **Mimees kui semiootilise kommunikatsiooni nähtus**

Mimeesi mõistet ei kasutata tänases semiootilises dialoogis kuigi sageli. Artiklis kirjeldatakse erinevaid vaateid mimeesi mõistele ning lähtuvalt neist vaadeldakse mimeesi kui kommunikatsiooninähtust. Erinevaid tähendusdimensioone esile tuues mõistetakse mimeesi kommunikatsioonietappidest koosnevana ning säärasena seostatakse ta imitatsiooni, representatsiooni, ikoonilisuse jt semiootika mõistetega.

## Lotman on mimesis

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**Abstract.** The article considers some basic notions of semiotics of mimesis by Juri Lotman, such as model, similarity, and relations between an object and its representation. The way Lotman defines and interprets these notions is compared with definitions given by adherents of the “semiotics of the transcendence” (German and Russian romanticism and Neoplatonism, Russian symbolism, theory of mystical symbol). A certain typological proximity of some important theoretical statements ensures the necessity to revise the traditional image of Tartu semiotics as a purely positivistic school of thought.

From the diverse variety of Juri Lotman’s writings on art some constant “favourite” ideas can be extracted. Among them we find the concept of a piece of art being a specific model of reality and an intent interest in reciprocal interrelation between “life” and art. The problem of borderline between *what* is presented and *how* it is presented was addressed in the very early Lotman’s works on general problems of visual art. In this contribution I dare to revisit some of the early theoretical statements on the matter.

What is Lotman’s attitude to mimesis in art and semiotics?

Visual art here sets a starting point but also becomes a point of destination. Writing about the problem of mimesis, Lotman did not use this very term explicitly, but he was constantly engaged in the problem of the borderline between art and life, sign and non-sign. He also showed a vital interest towards the mechanism of mirror and text in text. Still he seems to be permanently avoiding the question of the primacy of patterns. He proves in his works that theatre influences individual behaviour and everyday life, that folk pictures have no strict borders separating them from reality, that periphery phenomena (non-signs) can be transformed into signs in the course of cultural

evolution, and so forth, but he never makes any statements of the late Wittgenstein's kind. Thus, we deal with a rather complicated picture resembling the Möbius strip with no beginning and no end of mimesis. This question, however, seems to be still inevitable even in an implicit form. To remind of the notorious paradox with egg and hen: although nobody can give a solution to this very local task, being philosophically expanded this problem is solved by humanity in quite a few, yet antagonistic, ways. Either we follow the evolutionary theory or religious doctrine, or agnostically refuse to solve the problem because of the lack of information.

The evolution of the scholar's thought concerning the question of primacy of reality and representation is to be seen as a way of searching for the next paradox in turn.

In his early article "The problem of similarity of art and life from the point of view of structural approach" (1962), Lotman attempts to give a dialectic solution to this basic question. His main idea is that evolution of similarity between art and life is subjected to reductive strategy. This statement is proved with several examples and even algebraic formulas. Essentially, he states that the higher is the degree of metonymy convention the higher is the extent of characteristic individuality of the represented thing. To quote his words:

The more in a represented phenomenon is "taken out of brackets" [...] the more sharply will the phenomenon's specifics be stressed. "The scarcest is the most characteristic" — has nothing of a paradox, but a mathematical truth.<sup>1</sup> (Lotman 1998: 385)

Although it is stated that it is not, it is an evident case of dialectic paradox, one of which semiotics is based upon.

This statement apparently makes a link to Juri Tynyanov's notion of the "density of the verse line" ("The Problem of Verse Language" [1924] — see: Tynyanov 1981) which also arises in the context of the problem of mimesis. It is not a secret that Russian semiotics thoroughly studied and widely used theoretical heritage of Russian formalists; this heritage is generally recognised. In his works Tynyanov discusses the notion of what he calls the "equivalents of

<sup>1</sup> "Чем больше в изображаемом явлении "вынесено за скобки", чем меньше то, к чему приравнивается вещь, тем резче подчеркнута его специфика. "Чем скупее, тем характеристичнее" — совсем не парадокс, а математическая истина" (Lotman 1998: 385).

meaning". This notion presupposes high mimetic quality of the language of verse. Lotman in the wake of Tynyanov's thought emphatically insists on the concept that the "density" directly determines mimetic quality of the poetic language. Thus, the situation of representation is described in a paradoxical way: the less similar (more reduced or sublimed) occurs as the most similar. This kind of logic also refers to the dialectics of Christian exegesis (compare — "many who now are last will be first" Matt. 19:30) and Hegel. Here we can detect another paradox — already of socio-political nature — we see that Russian semiotics, although always considered by Soviet officials as standing in the definite opposition to them, follows the same left-oriented line in philosophy as French structuralism and, especially, post-structuralism. In the climax point of such kind of reasoning we find ourselves submerged into the so-called apathetic strategy of definition. Silence is the extreme form of the "scarcest" description, isn't it? So we approached too close to Wittgenstein's claim at the very end of the Tractates: "Of that whereof we cannot speak, we must keep silence". Lotman does not proclaim anything of this kind. One can immediately notice a certain contradiction in placing Lotman's formula and Wittgenstein's words together. Lotman does not discuss the nature of what is represented as it appears by Wittgenstein. But it is clear that such a reductive definition of means of expression turns this formula into a reciprocal one. Silence means silence, because whereof is nothing to say mostly occurs to be nothing.

It can be noticed as well that this theoretical point on mimetic qualities of reduction proceeds from the definition of the model which is given in another Lotman's work — "Art among the other modelling systems" (1967): "Model is an analogy of a perceived object which replaces this object in the process of the perception" (Lotman 1998: 387). It is clear that a model is a kind of reduction. Still it seems that this notion of model is more ambivalent (also in Juri Lotman's works) than in this formulation. The main question that arises immediately from this definition is — at what moment is the object replaced by a model and then by a piece of art? A series of problems follows: where does the borderline between these three different logical notions lie? Up to what extent can we speak of a "real" object and then of its model? Is a model equal to a piece of art, *i.e.* dependent on its signified object?

This set of logical riddles can be perfectly illustrated with examples delivered by Ernst Gombrich in his famous work written on a very close topic — “The Mask and the Face: the perception of physiognomic likeness in life and art” (Gombrich 1972: 1–46). Gombrich places the problem of likeness between two poles of interpretation suggested by two great painters:

One is summed up in the answer which Michelangelo is reported to have given when someone remarked that the Medici portraits in the *Sagrestia Nuova* were not good likeness — what will it matter a thousand years’ time what these men looked like? He had created a work of art and that was what counted. The other line goes back to Raphael and beyond to a panegyric on Phillipino Lippi who is there said to have painted a portrait that is more like the sitter than he does himself. The background of this praise is the Neo-Platonic idea of the genius whose eyes can penetrate through the veil of mere appearances and reveal the truth. (Gombrich 1972: 2)

The first cynical quip of Michelangelo stresses conventionality of the notion of similarity in painting. The second, on the contrary, extols art as an instrument of unveiling a higher truth which is more “real” than “reality” itself.

Solving the problem of interdependence of art and life, Lotman manages to encompass both poles of this dichotomy. From the one hand in multiple theoretical works he stresses conventionality and theatricality of any art language. But from the other hand sometimes his position seems to fit more into the second mentioned “Raphael’s” approach. The above quoted definition of the model implicitly assumes that a piece of art being a reductive model deprives “reality” of accidental features and reaches the essence of it. This concept belongs also to archetypal ones, at least in European cultural mentality. One can think of the Russian symbolists’ art theory (this Neo-Romantic school in Russian literature is far-fetched to Neo-Platonic school in philosophy) which considers art to be a perfect if not unique instrument for unveiling the true order of things, *i.e.* mostly regarded as Beauty. Lotman studied both Russian romanticism and its close connection to German philosophy and literature and Russian symbolism; therefore, it has nothing of a simple coincidence that he made use of this concept in his own constructions.

In the program work of Zara G. Mints, Lotman’s wife, colleague and co-author, “Symbol by Alexander Blok”, we find a clear and accurate description of the symbolists’ understanding of the semiotics of the transcendence:

Poetry of V. Solov'ev [...] is inseparably connected with such a symbolicalness that naturally arises from the Platonic romantic "dvoemirie" ("bi-worldness") and with the understanding of the *symbolic, sign nature of the very mundane life*. At the same time dialectic character of Solov'ev's Weltanschauung allowed him to recognise not only the otherness within material world, but also to see it as an inevitable stage of the evolution of the Universal Spirit and to understand the higher meaning of the earthy world, human's life and history. That is why the ideas of Platonism are realised in his works in two ways. "This world" is represented sometimes as a "heavy sleep" of the mundane pseudo-being [...] and sometimes as a set of signs of the same ideas but filled already not only with the other's but also with its own meaning, not "ill-wresting" the initial harmony of the world but introducing a new, supplemental melody into it.<sup>2</sup> (Mints 1999: 337 — emphasis is mine, J. G.)<sup>3</sup>

For Tartu scholars Symbolism in literature and philosophy was foremost a subject of studies, and in their works they distanced themselves from representation of such thoughts and ideas. But at the same time it is difficult to separate symbolists' fiction from their theory, and the theory of art already affected modernists' meta-thought including formalists' one. We cannot exclude for example writings of Andrei Belyi on the theory of verse from the history of analytic prosody. The same can be said about his writings on the theory of symbol manifestly based on V. Solov'ev's philosophic statements. This period in art history in Russia is strongly marked with the tendency to meta-creation.

<sup>2</sup> "Поэзия Вл. Соловьева, мистическая, мистико-эротическая и мистико-утопическая в своей основной мировоззренческой и эмоциональной основе, нерасторжимо связана с той символичностью, которая естественно вытекает из платоновско-романтического "двоемирия" и из представления о *символической, знаковой природе всей земной жизни*. Вместе с тем диалектический характер мировоззрения Вл. Соловьева позволил ему увидеть в материальном мире не только инобытие, но и неизбежный этап развития мирового духа, понять высокий смысл земного, посюстороннего мира, человеческой жизни и истории. Поэтому идеи платонизма реализуются в его творчестве двойко. "Этот" мир предстает то как "тяжелый сон" земного псевдобытия, как "тени" и "отзвук искаженный" истинного мира вечных идей [...], то как знаки тех же идей, однако наполненные не только чужим, но и собственным смыслом, не "искажающие" гармонию миров, а вносящие в нее новую, дополняющую мелодию. Отсюда и два пути символообразования" (Mints 1999: 337).

<sup>3</sup> On the tradition of germetism and mysticism also in the form of the kabbalah numerology by Russian Symbolism see also Silard (2002).

In this connection another name must be introduced. It should be mentioned that symbolists' theoretical approach has very much in common with the analytic practice of Pavel Florensky and, what especially interests us, with his work on visual art "Iconostasy" (Florensky 1993; on connection between Florensky and Belyi — see Silard 1987).

Pavel Florensky in his turn was one of the most important thinkers for the semiotic school in Tartu. Florensky's works were re-discovered and published anew in "Semiotics" after a long period of soviet silence (Florensky 1967). It is not a casual point in my reasoning that Florensky was under the most powerful influence of the tradition of kabbalah symbolism (this is evident from his theological tractates "Pillar, or Confirmation of the Truth"). This fact must be stressed specifically since Florensky's anti-Semitism was detected. He was ambivalent and discrepant in his theory and ideology — apparently using the tradition of Jewish mysticism he forced this fact out from his ideology. However, in his theoretical studies Florensky still must be considered as the closest source of the Tartu branch of Semiotics. Here is a quotation from his article "Reversed Perspective" (1919), that was first published in Tartu: "The perspective truth, if it only exists, if it is really the veracity, is true not because of the exterior similarity but because of the deviation from it, *i.e.* due to its inner sense, — it is true because it is *symbolic*"<sup>4</sup> (Florensky 1993: 239; emphasis by Florensky). From this point we can see links both to Tynyanov's notion of the density of artistic text and Lotman's idea of reduction being the best means of similarity.

Then what is the symbolic in the Florensky's perspective?

Thus a picture, no matter what principle of correspondence between the represented and the representation it follows, inevitably only *signifies, points at, hints, turns at* the idea of the original, but by no means reproduces this image in some copy or model. There is *no* bridge from the real to the picture in the sense of similarity: here is hiatus that is jumped over first by a creative mind of an artist, and then by an intellect that re-creates a picture in itself. The latter, I repeat, is by no means a duplication of reality in its wholeness, but, moreover, is unable to give even geometric similarity of the skin of things. It is necessarily a symbol of a symbol, because the very skin is already a symbol

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<sup>4</sup> "Перспективная правдивость, если она есть, если вообще она есть правдивость, такова не по внешнему сходству, но по отступлению от него, — т.е. по внутреннему смыслу, — поскольку она *символична*" (Florensky 1993: 239).



of the thing. The beholder moves from a picture to the skin of things, and from the skin to the thing itself. (Florensky 1993: 252; emphasis in the original)

This description could be included in a natural way into C. S. Peirce writings and simultaneously seems to fit accurately into the positivistic semiotics of Lotman. What makes here the difference, is that Florensky does not regard the notion of model to be a symbol, so he seems to be less a symbolist than his follower is.

In fact, Florensky was not very consistent in his terminology. Some of his statements concerning the problem of mimesis lead to a distinct understanding of the connection between “what” and “how” of signification. This seems to be determined by the general ambivalence of the theory of “*dvoemirie*”, which Zara Mints commented on referring to V. Solov’ev’s reasoning. Florensky distinguishes two different types of representation: false naturalistic and true symbolic ones.

Moving from the real into the imaginary naturalism proceeds in a sham image of reality, empty double of an everyday life; the inverse art — symbolism — embodies *another* experience in real images and thus what is given by it becomes the higher reality.”<sup>5</sup> (Florensky 1993: 19–20; emphasis in the original)

Then he adds: “The same happens in mysticism” (Florensky 1993: 20). So here we see an apparent connection to the philosophy of Symbolism that also made use of the parallel between the true language (symbolic signification) and revelation of the truth. We even can observe here that a sign (symbol) appears as the highest reality, *i.e.* replaces naturalistic everyday reality with itself. Orthodox icons and the temple as a whole are analysed in “Iconostasy” as such symbols-models of the higher reality. It can be stated that this strategy of defining symbol is compatible with the notion of model by Juri Lotman. Again the difference between mystic semiotics of Florensky and positivistic semiotics of Lotman lies not within formal aspects but rather in the sphere of evaluation. Whereas Florensky uses generously such words as “higher, highest, false, improper”, Lotman thoroughly

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<sup>5</sup> “Идя от действительности в мнимое, натурализм дает мнимый образ действительного, пустое подобие повседневной жизни; искусство же обратное – символизм – воплощает в действительных образах иной опыт, и тем даваемое им делается высшею реальностью” (Florensky 1993: 19–20).

avoids this language mode. My question is — whether this is enough in order to stay a true and consistent positivist?

Here I would like to deliver a long quotation from A. Losev's writings, the most faithful and successive disciple of Florensky, concerning the problem of defining the notion of symbol, in order to demonstrate the result of a candid following the mystic dialectic concept of the process of signification.

Within *symbol* "idea" introduces something new into "image", likewise "image" introduces something new, unprecedented into "idea"; and "idea" is equated here not with the simple "imaginary" but with the *identity* of "idea", as well as "image" is equated not with the simple abstract "idea" but with the *identity* of "idea" and "image". It is "indifferent" within a *symbol* what to start with; it is impossible to see in it neither "idea" without "image", nor "image" without "idea". Symbol is an independent reality. Although it represents an appointment of two aspects they are given here in a complete, absolute indivisibility, so that it is already impossible to know where is an "idea" and where is a "thing". It does not mean, of course, that "idea" and "image" cannot be distinguished from each other within a symbol. They differ obligatory because otherwise symbol would not be an expression. But they differ in such a manner that a point of their absolute equivalence is clearly seen.<sup>6</sup> (Losev 1991: 48; emphasis in the original)

This definition could be used for illustration of the dialectics of form and content and at the same time is a precise description of transcendent symbolism. Losev concludes in a natural way: "In *symbol* the very fact of the "inner" is equated with the very fact of the "outer", *it is not simply semantic but substantial, real identity between "idea" and "thing"*" (Losev 1991: 49; italic and bold font by Losev).

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<sup>6</sup> "В *символе* и "идея" привносит новое в "образ", и "образ" привносит новое, небывалое в "идею"; и "идея" отождествляется тут не простой "образностью", но с *тождеством* "образа" и "идеи", как и "образ" отождествляется не с простой отвлеченной "идеей", но с *тождеством* "идеи" и "образа". В *символе* все "равно", с чего начинать; в нем нельзя узреть ни "идеи" без "образа", ни "образа" без "идеи". Символ есть самостоятельная действительность. Хотя это и есть встреча двух планов бытия, но они даны в полной, *абсолютной неразличимости*, так что уже нельзя сказать, где "идея" и где "вещь". *Это, конечно, не значит, что в символе никак не различаются между собою "образ" и "идея"*. Они обязательно различаются, так как иначе символ не был бы выражением. Однако они различаются так, что видна и точка их абсолютного отождествления, видна сфера их отождествления" (Losev 1991: 48).

Losev was not able to state openly that this understanding of symbol belongs to the mystic tradition because of his publicity in Soviet time. Compare the above description with the one made by the most authoritative researcher in Jewish mysticism Gershom G. Sholem in the book "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism":

In mystical symbol reality which has no visible form or image for a man, becomes clear and as-if-visible by means of the other reality that couch its content with visible and expressible meaning, that can be exemplified with Christian cross. (Sholem 1989: 52)

So we must state that seemingly positivistic definition of symbol is not in contradiction with the definition of symbol in true mysticism at all. Christian cross is one of such symbols-models that apparently "replace" the object in the process of perception. Use of the cross in all its objective materiality can cardinaly change symbolic reality of everyday mundial life. People become brothers or sisters by exchanging crosses. In this process the cross replaces consanguinity. The cross means blood. Reading Lotman's works on relationship between reality and representation from this "symbolists'" point of view, one can discover that they, to a great extent describe exactly this "magic" kind of situations. That is, a situation when model or "second reality" or "secondary modelling system" becomes as significant as the object itself.

At the same time Lotman's model is of a specific hierarchical character and can work in a rather complicated regime of interplay between different levels of "reality". He demonstrates the mobile nature of the borderline between model and representation and model and reality in different kinds of visual art: in folk pictures ("Artistic nature of Russian folk pictures" 1976), still life ("Still life in semiotic perspective" 1986), portrait ("Portrait" 1993). The last mentioned work, "Portrait", shows the evolution of Lotman's position towards a very complicated and refined picture of interplay between different levels of art and reality and even their mutual transformation when both can swap the roles. This situation can be defined as "theatrical" behaviour of artist and his model. We may state it was precisely Lotman's works on semiotics of theatre (see Lotman 1973a; 1973b; 1978; 1980; 1989) that influenced his approach to static forms of visual art. Theatre becomes a metamodel for any kind of art and gives a perspective to all investigations into artistic text. Nevertheless, this whole witty and intelligent construction makes the problem "*what is a*

*model of what*” even more complicated than one could have expected at the starting point of the reasoning. The language ambivalence of the word “model” (model as a person or object of representation, model as a representation itself) stays unconditioned. This situation reminds us of the specific ambivalence of such notions as “beginning” and “end” (in the Sanscrit proto-language they have common radical), “birth” and “death”, “father” and “son” within mythological mental world-picture.

Let us analyse this article more rigorously. The article is so important and demonstrative because it belongs to the very last works of Juri Lotman, showing, therefore, in the upshot the result of his thought.

Lotman starts his consideration of the genre of portrait in painting with one of his beloved paradoxes: “We dare assert that portrait fully verifies more general truth: the more obvious, the less comprehensible” (Lotman 1998: 500). He fills this paradox with concrete content of mimetic function and internal of portrait. Thus, from the one hand, he points at magic quality of representation, that makes an image able to replace a person. This corresponds to the definition of a model given by Lotman himself, or definition of symbol by mystical semiotics, or indexical sign in Peircean comprehension. In this aspect a piece of art (portrait in particular) is compared with a proper name. The latter notion is described in fully mythological way as the identity of a name and a person: “A word of language is given to a man as something ready-made, meanwhile a proper name seems to be created each time anew, specially for a concrete person” (Lotman 1998: 501). Remarkably, this was written in Russian, whereas in the Russian tradition the set of proper names is, in fact, quite limited. Moreover, the other widely spread tendency for classifying proper names, forming groups which ascribe common characteristics to them, even numerological generalisation which appears both within esoteric practices and, equally, in the mass culture, seems to be simply omitted by Lotman here. It must be noted, that the whole study is written from the positivist distant position, describing the cultural mentality as an object and not a personal outlook. But still this personal ideology or position of the scholar can be extracted from this objective, external exposition. The selective approach towards cultural phenomenon serves as a checkpoint on this way here.

From the other hand, similarity between a person and his/her image is considered as a result of pure convention, i.e. cultural agreement.

According to Lotman, portrait as a genre of art is much less subjected to this convention than “technical” photo, and he is inclined to consider it mainly within this “model-symbolic” paradigm.

Portrait in its contemporary function is a result of the European culture of modernity with its idea of value of individuality in man, that the ideal does not contradict the individual but is realised in and through it. But the individual in such comprehension occurs to be inseparable from the corporeal, on the one side, and from the real — on the other. [...] In a system of cultural values full identity of the real and the ideal results in the effect of annihilation. A unit must constantly be reminiscent of the possibility of separation. (Lotman 1998: 502)

Here the reader deals again with the dialectic of the transcendence because what is considered here is the notion of the ideal and its realisation. “Reality” in this construction is much less stable, intensive and even vivid. In the extreme point of this reasoning the author even states that the absence of any realisation within a representation as well (i.e. absent, negative representation) is more vivid, more expressive than its presence. This paradox is supported with the example of missing portraits from the “Gallery of 1812” of the Hermitage. Here Lotman mentions the words of Lavater who spoke of reflection as “intensification of existence”. It can be added that the above quoted statement of Rafael’s fits into the same idea. According to Lotman, some very important deviations still can be followed — not reflection or visible image itself but their absence increases, intensifies the existence of a “non-represented” person. This corresponds to the famous term of Lotman — “minus-method”, but in historical perspective points at the semiotic of the transcendence or romantic idealism that proclaimed the negative characteristics of the world to be the most valuable.

The reflected and reflection stand in conflict with each other. But the borderline between these opposite to each other entities is mobile and unstable. So the binary opposition is transformed into hierarchical or multidimensional construction. Analysing Pushkin’s poem Lotman writes: “So we approach to the borderline between a portrait and a man represented by it” (Lotman 1998: 507). And next to this: “The relation “picture–reality” gains complex vividness and multidimensional conventionality. This seems to constitute an overture to even more complicated comprehension...” (Lotman 1998: 507). The complicated is growing into more complicated. “By this an important

artistic method is exposed: text is running out of its own borders, as if an open space is drawn inside artistic text, that transforms incompleteness into an element of meaning expression" (Lotman 1998: 508). This statement indicates that incompleteness, mobility, dynamics, temporality are attributed to a piece of art. But all these are traditional distinctive features of the positivistic understanding of reality which are in the opposition to complete, stable, spatial, bordered nature of an artefact.

Further Lotman introduces some more intermediary stages within the situation of signification or rather with the process of likening, making similar. These are intermediary models such as pets incorporated in a portrait and compared with their masters. This is a very important moment in the discussion on mimesis, because such figures introduce additional mirror-effect in a piece of art. Actually the whole genre of still life painting is based on this mirror effect of inanimate, static objects reflecting in different ways a man in absentia.<sup>7</sup> Lotman, in his turn, analysing this genre from the position of semiotics states that it is not the direct similarity of a thing with its representation that is a subject and aim of still life, but mainly representation of illusion of the similarity, i.e. of illusion of the second or even higher degree. This is really a break into infinite perspective of illusionist reflections: "Summarising, the matter concerns here not the illusion of naturalness but rather the semiotics of such illusion" (Lotman 1998: 497). As always with Lotman, this kind of signification can be complementarily paired to another type, i.e. belonging to cultural conventions: "A counterpart of this kind of still life [...] is allegoric still life, the peculiar top of which become the Vanitas type" (Lotman 1998: 497). We see that in the case of visual art both kinds of signification have for their signified nothing of the "real object". In the first case the very procedure of signification itself is signified or represented, in the second case — a cultural tradition or convention. The question of what stands beyond the semiotic phenomenon is even not mentioned.

Still life seems to be the most evident and simple case of signification. The same situation is projected to the genre of portrait and even in a more extreme variant.

I think I must explain here my position on what can be called extreme in semiotics. From the one hand it is everything concerned

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<sup>7</sup> This statement on certain parallelism of still life and portrait was studied by Danilova (1998) and Grigorjeva (2003).

with the situation of the “mouse-trap” of text in text, when a text points always at its textual mirrored double, and from the other hand, this extremity characterises all magic aspects of manipulating with symbols. The latter case can be also formulated as using Peircean symbol for the symbol of the transcendent semiotics of kabbalah and of that ilk.

This is exactly the method of semiotic description of the situation of similarity, mimesis by Lotman:

Portrait constantly oscillates on the border between artistic duplication and mystic reflection of reality. That is why a portrait is a mythogenic object in its essence. [...] Exactly due to its genre portrait seems to be destined for embodying the very essence of a human. Portrait is located on the half way between reflection and face, between what is created and what is not made by hands. (Lotman 1998: 509)

This problem’s field is already quite close to the main philosophic question on the origin of man and mind. And it could be predicted that the question of mimesis would lead to the question of transcendence and divinity. So Lotman points at the representation of Christ being an archetype of portrait as such. And in this connection the notion and idea of the so-called “*bogochelovechestvo*” is mentioned:

En face image of Christ represents in itself the highest manifestation of the idea of portrait, divine and human at the same time. This ambivalence as a matter of fact reveals the nature of portrait as such. [...] At the same time the problem of “*bogochelovechestvo*” is concentrated in the image of Christ. (Lotman 1998: 510)

A discussion on the term “*bogochelovechestvo*” (usually poorly translated as Godmanhood), which was one of the most important in the philosophic system of V. Solov’ev, one can find in Judith Kornblatt’s article “Vladimir Solov’ev on spiritual nationhood, Russia and the Jews” (Kornblatt 1997: 158–159). Remarkably, Lotman describes this semiotic case with the term of the godfather of Russian symbolism.

The fact that Lotman’s thought was linked to the Neo-platonic one with multiple ties can also be supported by a minor adoption and allusion. For example, one can find a certain similarity between the attitude to the museum practice shown by Lotman and by Florensky. Florensky (1993: 287): “The task of a museum is precisely tearing off [отрыв] an artistic piece that is falsely understood as a thing that could

be taken anywhere away and that could be placed anywhere, i.e. annihilation of a piece of art as an alive entity"; Lotman (1998: 517): "There is nothing so monstrous and alien to real movement of art than contemporary museum practice. In Middle Ages an executed offender was cut up into parts that were hanged out along city streets. Contemporary museums remind us of something similar". It must be also stressed that Florensky writes about sacral space-time of religious ceremony in orthodox temple, so all his claim concerns with is keeping and preserving not only artistic wholeness of the celebration but its mystic transcendent character above all. Lotman applies the same claim with comparable pathos to the problem of art in general. Of course, this replacement is done in a strict academic manner, so the "synesthesia" of temple ceremony is transformed into "cultural and historical context", but the content remains quite close to that of the symbolic art theory. "A piece of art never exists as taken apart in a clear-cut of its context: it constitute a part of life, religious ideas, simple non-artistic life and, finally, of the whole complex of diverse passions and aspirations of contemporary reality" (Lotman 1998: 517). We can make an obvious conclusion from this statement, that art, being an inevitable part of reality, has a potency to give the fullest and the most complete picture or reflection of it.

At this point we are again facing the question of the teleology of art by Juri Lotman. This question opens a key text on art analysis "Structure of artistic text" (1970). The reasoning starts with confirming the idea that art is a form of knowledge, gnosis, but of a specific nature. Here Lotman argues the words of Hegel that art is too reduced, bordered in its form which determines its content, to represent truth in all completeness (Lotman 1998: 15). Lotman suggests another picture of the cognitive value of art. According to his position, art forms a sphere for semiotic experiment, i.e. semiotic range of transforming some hypothetical "reality" into signs and forming sign systems (languages). "Art is perfectly organised generator of languages of special kind" (Lotman 1998: 17). Then the "reality" imitated, duplicated by art is also a mechanism constantly generating languages and messages which should be read and deciphered. I give here a long quotation because of the crucial importance of the content:

Life of any being is a complicated interaction with its environment. An organism incapable to react to external impulses would perish inevitably. Interaction with the environment can be interpreted as receiving and deciphering certain information. A man is inevitably involved into an intensive process: he



is surrounded with flows of information; life sends him its signals. But those signals will stay unperceived, information will not be understood and important chances in the struggle for surviving will be missed, if the humanity does not keep up with constantly increasing needs to decipher and transform those flows into signs which are ready for communication among the humans. At the same time it proves to be necessary not only to increase the number of various messages in the already existing languages (natural, scientific), but also to increase constantly the number of languages, which can be used for translating flows of the environmental information appropriating them for humans. Humanity has a need for a special mechanism — a generator of an enormous mass of “languages” which could serve its need for knowledge. And the problem concerns not only the fact that creation of a language hierarchy is more compact in storing information than endless multiplication of messages in one language. Certain kinds of information can be stored and spread only by means of specially organised languages. Thus, chemical and algebraic information can claim to a personal (distinct) language, which is the most suitable for this particular type of modelling and communication.<sup>8</sup> (Lotman 1998: 17)

On this way of treating the whole universe as a set of languages and messages in them Lotman points out his predecessors who happened

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\* “Жизнь всякого существа представляет собой сложное взаимодействие с окружающей средой. Организм, не способный реагировать на внешние воздействия и к ним приспособляться, неизбежно погиб бы. Взаимодействие с внешней средой можно представить себе как получение и дешифровку определенной информации. Человек оказывается с неизбежностью втянутым в напряженный процесс: он окружен потоками информации, жизнь посылает ему свои сигналы. Но сигналы эти останутся не услышанными, информация — непонятой и важные шансы в борьбе за выживание упущенными. Если человечество не будет поспевать за все возрастающей потребностью эти потоки сигналов дешифровать и превращать в знаки, обладающие способностью коммуникации в человеческом обществе. При этом оказывается необходимым не только увеличивать количество разнообразных сообщений на уже имеющихся языках (естественных, языках различных наук), но и постоянно увеличивать количество языков, на которые можно перевести потоки окружающей информации, делая их достоянием людей. Человечество нуждается в особом механизме — генераторе все новых и новых “языков”, которые могли бы обслуживать его потребность в знании. При этом оказывается, что дело не только в том, что создание иерархии языков является более компактным способом хранения информации, чем увеличение до бесконечности сообщений на одном. Определенные виды информации могут храниться только с помощью специально организованных языков, — так химическая или алгебраическая информация требуют своих языков, которые были бы принципиально приспособлены для данного типа моделирования и коммуникации” (Lotman 1998: 17).

to be Baratynsky and Pushkin as representatives of the Russian philosophic romanticism. Lotman especially stresses the lines of Pushkin from "insomnia verse": "Я понять тебя хочу, / Смысла я в тебе ищу..." ("I want to understand you, I am looking for a sense in you"), which were transformed by Zhukovskiy into "Темный твой язык учу..." ("I am learning your obscure language..."). These lines were of major importance also for Russian symbolists guiding their interest towards germetism and occultism (see Silard 2002). It seems to be impossible to deny that the idea of the universe that can be read in the languages of signs and symbols belongs to the most ancient mystic tradition which includes cognitive mysticism of the Gnosticism and kabbalah. But at the same time this idea constitutes the very basis of Semiotics in all its branches and manifestations. The disciples of this discipline count among them Thomas Sebeok, who proclaimed the genome being the basic cipher providing us with a key to the mystery of life, and Umberto Eco, who gives the perspective of links from kabbalah to computerising of the universe in his novels.

Art according to Lotman's semiotics is a model of life in its semiotic activity. In this formula a very important difference with the transcendent semiotics should be traced. This difference concerns the ontology of the two mutually reflecting entities. Whereas the transcendent semiotics is considered as the borderline between the natural and supernatural (God), positive semiotics is believed to observe the interrelation of the natural and artificial. In fact, the situation is rather different from this ideological expectation. The situation of the totality of semiosis that is depicted by Lotman's reasoning does not leave any space to something that would not be subjected to the process of signification. The whole universe seems to work as a mechanism producing languages and composing messages in them. Art simply models this mechanism, repeats it for the reasons of training practice to keep humans ready for all possible information the world would deign to share with them. This logic naturally leads to the later notion elaborated by the scholar, i.e. what he calls semiosphere. The problem which remains and which seems to be avoided by Lotman's thought, is the following: is if language is a model, then a model of what is this language activity of nature?

In other words, we can describe the situation as the problem of the authority for generating language. Who or what is responsible for generating the primer language in this process? Another aspect of this problem can be formulated as: does the fact of permanent linguistic

and semiotic activity of the humans give a strong enough evidence for proving that language is organised as a model? And another question: does the fact that the humans are involved in what is called by intellectuals a semiotic activity allow us to expand this notion onto all the processes and elements of the universe? Is nature already codified in itself or is this code implicated by a man? In the way of Lotman's reasoning I see the only consistent answer (although not formulated by him) that nature is already "written" in multiple languages, which already provide situation of a dialog, and a man only makes use of this natural phenomenon consciously. So the difference between human language and languages of natural communication is important but not essential.

I guess that exactly this concept of biological nature of sign and signification (and thus — primacy of "consciousness" in nature) underlies Lotman's theory of semiosphere (see Lotman 2001). Although again he never allows himself to assert this explicitly. This kind of argumentation can be described as the replaced responsibility: semiotics of communication, i.e. of dialogue in asymmetric systems, starts simultaneously with life itself, so let biologists and scientists decide the problem of its origin. Evidently, Lotman erects his theory of semiosphere on the basis of "biosphere" by Vernadsky and, moreover, makes frequent parallels to Vernadsky's writings, but avoids direct causative conclusions.

Communicative act can exist only in semiotic space. To come into a dialog participants must already possess some skills and language of communication. Life gives birth to life, semiosphere to language. A culture is preceded by a previous culture. In his lectures and presentations Lotman used to repeat that even archaeological data show that each settlement is found at the place of a previous settlement. There are no voids in culture.

While the biosphere is a cumulative and organic unit of the live entity, the semiosphere is a result and condition of the cultural evolution. Lotman extends Vernadsky's statement, that life on Earth is lived in a special space-time continuum, which life itself creates:

Conscious human life, i.e. life of culture, also demands a special space-time structure, for culture organizes itself in the form of a special space-time and cannot exist without it. This organization is realized in the form of the

semiosphere and at the same time comes into being with the help of the semiosphere.<sup>9</sup> (Lotman 2001: 133)

Here we see that similarity between life and culture is clearly expressed. Perhaps, the next step can be done and life itself can be proclaimed to equal semiosis.

The most important difference between the biological information and the cultural one mentioned by Lotman relates to the different character of memory they possess. The third part of the book “Universe of the Mind” (or, in the Russian version, “Inside the Thinking Worlds”) contains the special chapter on memory — “Cultural memory, history and semiotics”. Lotman clarifies the distinction between the two types of memory. Culture retains memory which can be activated after an indefinite period of time, while the biological memory fails:

Evolutionary development in biology is connected with dying out of species rejected by the natural selection. The only objects which are alive are synchronous to the observer.<sup>10</sup> [...] In the history of art a piece which originated in a far past époque of culture still actively continues to participate in the cultural evolution as a factor which is still alive. (Lotman 1999: 253)

This statement can be argued, because the genetic memory seems to maintain its validity to not a lesser extent than culture itself. But this argument, in its turn, can be criticised if we involve the factor of individuality or personality in our scope. In this sense bio-information will always be identical but never the same. The precedent with cloning that it made possible to activate genetic information or genetic memory demonstrated with evidence that the sameness is still unattainable here. And what is irreproducible by the means of cloning is first of all the symbolic, conventional content of a reproduced brain. Yet we can never be sure whether what we see or read in art is equal to what it was thought to be by the artist or contemporaries. Lotman’s works on history of Russian culture give by themselves the best example of analysis of such deviation. Thus, this set of reasons leaves

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<sup>9</sup> “Сознательная человеческая жизнь, то есть жизнь культуры, также требует особой структуры “пространства-времени” Культура организует себя в форме определенного “пространства-времени” и вне такой организации существовать не может. Эта организация реализуется как семиосфера и одновременно с помощью семиосферы” (Lotman 1999: 259).

<sup>10</sup> “Живет лишь то, что синхронно исследователю”.

us again in the situation of impossibility to discern culture and nature. It seems that they are homogeneous from the point of semiosis. So we cannot discuss the problem of model-representation for the nature-culture pair in the semiotic terms.

Real opposition and real distinction lies in another sphere.

The functioning mechanism of semiosphere, its evolution, and thus, perhaps, its origin, is explained by Lotman by the asymmetry and exchange between central and periphery realms. It is possible that exactly this productive dialog between the center and the periphery can give us a clue to the paradox of model and representation. Something in culture is reserved for being a model and something for being a representation of it, and then they can change their roles in a complicated and non-predictable mode. The same principle can describe the situation of interdependence between nature and culture: something that was beyond signification and reflection is included into human's culture and something is else dissolved in the non-semiotic spheres. If we admit the equality of life and semiosis, then this situation of de-semiotisation can be called death. And death is the strongest moving power of a new cycle of semiosis. This idea was developed in one of the latest Lotman's works "Death as a problem of plot" (Lotman 1994). Lotman again quotes the words of Pushkin on "vague language of nature" and then states: "What has no end — has no sense" (Lotman 1994: 417). Non-semiotic nature of death was emphatically insisted upon by Lotman's close friend, great Russian philosopher Alexander Pyatigorsky in his plenary lecture on the Congress dedicated to 80th Anniversary of Juri Lotman on March 2, 2002, in Tallinn Academy of Sciences: "Death is not a sign". But Lotman has gone further, he has demonstrated that meaning proceeds from non-meaning, that this no-sign state of things is inevitable condition of each case of meaning-production. To accomplish this thought, it can be stated that each sign inevitably contains non-sign component and only with this premise can mean something. It reminds us of a basic chemical or physical composition, but translated into the language of culture and consciousness those components will gain names of memory and forgetting or, rather, information and entropy. Yet this regularity demonstrates its total homogeneity and compatibility with the natural stuff of things at least as traditionally described by positive European natural science. This statement can be reverted, so we can speak of language nature of the universe in all its manifestations. But language is always a communicative vehicle.

Then who communicates with whom by codifying a program of phylo- or ontogenesis with genes? To stay within positivistic dialectics (however it is really problematic here) we can only say that the sphere of signs communicates with the sphere of non-signs although we can judge nothing of the latter.

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### Лотман о мимесисе

В статье рассматриваются некоторые базовые понятия семиотики подобия по Ю. Лотману. В первую очередь, такие как модель, сходство, соотношение объекта и репрезентации. Трактовка этих понятий по Лотману сопоставляется с определениями представителей “трансцендирующей семиотики” (немецкие и русские романтики-неоплатоники, символисты, теоретики мистического символа). Определенное типологическое сходство основных теоретических положений убеждает в необходимости пересмотреть традиционное представление о тартуской семиотике как об исключительно позитивистской школе мысли.

### Lotman mimeesist

Vaadeldakse mõningaid mimeesi semiootika alusmõisteid Juri Lotmani töödes. Eelkõige selliseid nagu mudel, sarnasus, objekti ja selle representatsiooni suhe. Nende mõistete tõlgitus Lotmanil suhestatakse “transsendentse semiootika” esindajate (saksa ja vene romantikud-neoplatoonikud, sümbolistid, müstilise sümboli teoreetikud) määratlustega. Teoreetiliste aluste teatud tüpoloogiline sarnasus veenab vajaduses vaadata üle traditsiooniline ettekujutus Tartu semiootikast kui puhtpositivistlikust koolkonnast.

## **Pragmatic approaches to intercultural ethics: The basis for fostering communication among nationalist groups**

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**Abstract.** This research is part of a more extensive programme that deals with intercultural ethics from different perspectives. All of them share a common inspiration sprung from UNESCO's Intercultural Ethics Project. The main goal of this paper consists in offering pragmatic/theoretical tools in order to analyse a cultural and political issue which is currently very important in Spain: the confrontation between those promoting Spanish national culture and those promoting the Basque one. I approach this confrontation in terms of discursive praxis, reaching the conclusion that only if both groups are capable of self-understanding will they be capable of reciprocal-understanding, and only then will it be possible to maintain peace in our country.

This essay is part of a research project inspired by some prominent initiatives of UNESCO on ethics and intercultural dialogue in the globalisation framework (Unesco 2001).<sup>1</sup> It also expresses my interest in the world present from the perspective of the semiotics of culture, analysis of speech acts and political thought.

In the first phase of this project, while reflecting upon the need and the real possibilities of grounding an intercultural ethics, history reminded me of the innumerable occasions when the West has contacted other peoples, which has yielded relevant fruits: on the one hand, domination, but on the other, encounter, thought and institutionalisation of ways of intercultural communication (Llera 2000a). Later

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<sup>1</sup> See also <http://www.unesco.org/opi2/philosophyandethics/> (The Universal Ethics Project).



on, the analysis of globalisation in its economic aspects, and the urgency of setting out ethical basis for development, led me to investigate the speeches of some international financial institutions (mainly, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). In them I discovered not only power interests, but also signs of reasonableness which I interpreted as a token of a minimum consensus, although precarious, in the realm of values (Llera 2000b). In the third phase of my project, some months before the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, I decided to undertake a study on the role played by religion in the international political context, carrying out a critical reading of Samuel P. Huntington's book upon the clash of civilisations. Actually, my goal was to discover what could have avoided such a disaster (Llera 2001). In the fourth phase of my project, where this essay is included, I am intending to offer a set of adequate pragmatic/theoretical tools to analyse a cultural and political issue which is currently very important in Spain: the confrontation between those promoting Spanish national culture that draw together the Spanish State above the peripheral nationalist groups and those who adopt the inverse position. Concretely, I will focus on the defenders of the Basque nationalist culture.

Since the issue has a textual character, it will be approached from the semiotics of culture and contemporary political thought. Thus, the first section of this paper elucidates the most interesting interpretations of the notion "culture" that illustrate the academic debate. Subsequently, the genesis of the concepts "nation" and "nationalism" is briefly reconstructed in order to understand the nature of cultural nationalism and its relation to political nationalism. Upon these bases, the most significant guidelines of the Spanish and Basque nationalist speeches are drawn in reference to their respective historic origins: political, economic, social and cultural. The issues posed by such speeches are leading me to interpret them from a dialectical point of view as an expression of a disjunction between the universalist and the communitarian position that characterises contemporary political thought. In order to diminish the conflict — or at least to integrate it in the framework of a deliberative democracy — I suggest various approaches which are the result of the most recent investigations in intercultural communication. Finally, I am going to carry out a critical evaluation and sketch some pertinent conclusions.

## 1. Concepts of culture

History has welcomed the twentieth century as one of enormous scientific and technical progress. However, it is not usually considered that the importance of such achievements stems from its cultural and social expanse, its capacity to improve human life while cultivating it. Our time should also pass into history as the Century of Cultures (in plural). The discovery of other cultures — intercultural encounter and communication — has been a kind of contemporary event as — or even more — important than scientific discoveries. Nonetheless, this dynamic has not only been influenced by positive factors; in the roots of such phenomena, besides an unprecedented development of new communication technologies, a boundless political and economic ambition on the part of the States and the large financial corporations has been manifested. Colonial imperialism, fostered by capitalist requirements, has transformed the world into a global whole, an asymmetrical system of interrelation, exchange and interdependency, which is structured according to the dominion “logic”.

Nevertheless, the same factors that have given rise to a relationship of domination have also left some chances for a relationship which respects both equality and difference, making a true encounter possible. The homeostasis of the colonial system itself has fostered striking breakthroughs in anthropological, ethnological and social sciences since the beginning of the twentieth century as the contributions of Émile Durkheim (1960a; 1960b), Franz Boas (1938; 1955; 1965; 1982) and B. Malinowski (1923; 1948) have shown, to cite just a few outstanding names. With these authors the West began to deal with non-Western peoples and their cultures not only as objects of economic exploitation, but also as objects/subjects of scientific research, humanistic reflection and social preoccupation. At the same time, cultural studies started to develop from semiotics, mainly the structuralist one following the trail of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958; 1962; 1964–1978; 1967), as well as that of Louis Hjelmslev or Juri M. Lotman (1996; 1998). Simultaneously, the School of Birmingham<sup>2</sup> and the School of Frankfurt (Marcuse 1969; 1972) established the basis for all further investigation in this field.

Currently, the background of the afore-mentioned contributions and the extension of global communication networks, are bringing

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<sup>2</sup> Cultural Studies and Sociology Department.

about an increasing number of essays and systematic investigations on the concept of culture with reference to multicultural contemporary societies which are connected through the media. All those studies provide a range of definitions of "culture", and we are going to highlight some of them as analysis tools.

First of all, let us recognise that every culture can be approached from a speculative or an empirical perspective. In the first case there is a possibility for a prescriptive and an ethical processing. In the second one, a descriptive point of view and a positive scientific method prevail. However, as it is not easy to avoid an ideological bias in describing cultures, it is harder to avoid it in analysing and criticising them. The manipulation of historical-cultural studies in order to promote an ideological position is not just frequent, but normal, from the premise that there is no culture without ideology (Habermas 1982) and consequently every ideology is a cultural expression or vice versa (Barthes 1957). "There is no way out of the game of culture" (Robbins 2000: xi). Every appearance of neutrality becomes hypocrisy or fiction, which is as legitimate or illegitimate as the ideological fiction itself, supposedly rejected by neutrality.

The ideological meaning of culture is usually linked to a *mythical* concept and therefore to collective imagination, legend or literary creation. Culture amounts to memory, the *past*. The arcane and legendary past. Or perhaps *historic*, verifiable: lived *experience*. Perhaps, *self-consciousness*.<sup>3</sup> In any case, culture is remembrance heritage. It lives thanks to *tradition*, it coins custom, it implies continuity.

But every tradition is mediated in a hermeneutic way; it is fed by *interpretation*, through which it is connected with the present, providing it with a meaning which is aiming at the future. Thus, culture becomes actual as *a collective way of life, organisation, thought*. It is a fact. Or a concept? It is *reality*, but also *representation*, and even *invention*... It is the discovery of specific objective structures which are actually there, as well as their always on-going reconstruction. Cultures are discovered; this implies that they exist as a matter of fact but also as a result of creative activity, since every discovery is invention. Moreover, cultures have to be brought up to date, in order to keep on existing. That is to say, to stop existing as they were, to

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<sup>3</sup> "A nation is a community of people who consider themselves to be a nation" (Seton-Watson 1977: *Nation and States*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press). Cited by Heiberg 1989: ix.

change them, to adapt them constantly to the times. A culture which is not able to adapt, dies.

In this way, culture is *power* and *liberty*. Imposition, control.<sup>4</sup> Creativity and genius: it is *Volksgeist*, the spirit of a people. But a spirit... which is materially conditioned. Every culture is a product and works as an exchange value: as *merchandise*. Since it is bought and sold, it is not just intangible: it can be consumed. It has an instrumental dimension; so it is a means. Actually, there are cultural industries. And also cultural policies, either liberalising or protecting, because culture must be protected as an expression of *identity* or substantial essence. But in this sense, culture is an end, it may not be reduced to a means category; it may not be marketed. This is precisely why is one of the State's responsibilities.

Every culture shapes *values*, mints *norms*, proposes *ideals* and is embodied in *institutions*. It represents a collective *position* which involves its respective *opposition*: it draws its own borders, it *differentiates* itself from otherness. And this is exactly why it relates to otherness. Talking about one's own culture implies talking about alien ones; to be defined as a member of a cultural community means to be referred to others, to those from whom oneself differentiates. Every culture is open in some way, it is *permeable*, *hybrid*. To affirm a "pure culture" is a contradiction in terms.

Culture integrates all that has been represented, *said* and *thought* in a social framework. But it also consists of the hidden or concealed things, the *non-said*, the *non-thought* background upon which speech and reasoning are shaped. Culture is simultaneously *conscious* and *unconscious*; therefore it becomes impossible to be translated, it is immeasurable. It can never be completely submitted to the control of the will. However, in itself it is a necessary condition for a people's willing self-determination. According to this, every culture justifies itself as an expression of liberty; nobody has the right to judge it from the outside. Nevertheless, it always includes some self-destructive — and therefore illegitimate — aspect.

The nature of culture, as that of every human thing, is complex, dialectical. It can be conceived in very different ways. My explanation has

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<sup>4</sup> "To create a nation involves a dramatic substitution of diversity with uniformity. [...] People who felt themselves to be culturally distinct and distant must be transformed into a community bound by cultural affinity and solidarity. (...) An array of divergent traditional loyalties must be ruptured, reshuffled and redefined in order to fuse neatly around the boundaries of this community" (Heiberg 1989: ix).

intended so far to underline such plurality, paradoxically connecting opposite perspectives and weaving a dialectical but coherent discourse.

## 2. Nation and nationalism

According to the specialists, nationalism is a typical product of Modernity (Habermas 2001b: 621) linked to Enlightenment philosophy, bourgeois revolutions and Romanticism (De Blas 1997).<sup>5</sup>

However, the term “Natio” means birth (Suárez 2000: 15) and dates from classical Antiquity, naming “communities of origin geographically integrated because of settlement or neighbourhood, and culturally integrated because of a common language, customs and traditions, but not yet politically unified in a State organisation” (Habermas 2001b: 622).

During the Middle Ages, “nation” expressed both belonging to a specific community and the place of origin. This meaning was spread in the emergent universities, which grouped the students according to their origins (Suárez 2000: 15). This is why the word points to a political structure: that of Kingdom or Crown.

As we said previously, in the Modern Age the term “nation” acquires its current meanings, linked to either State nationalism or peripheral nationalism, self-determining or secessionist.

Since the French Revolution, the pre-political meaning of the word was put aside, coming to designate a constituent element of the citizens' political identity in a democratic community (Habermas 2001b: 622).

In the Romantic period, this new sense inspired Ernest Renan's famous sentence: “Une nation est donc une large solidarité, [...] elle se résume par le consentement, le désir clairement exprimé de continuer la vie commune. L'existence d'une nation est un plébiscite de tous les jours”.<sup>6</sup> Renan did not affirm that the essence of a nation lies in a community of descent, of ethnic-cultural links, but rather in a political community of citizens actively engaged with their self-government. However, both meanings live together in the German mentality.

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<sup>5</sup> See the articles “Fichte”, “Herder”, “Revoluciones liberales y nacionalismo”, “Romanticismo y nacionalismo”.

<sup>6</sup> Renan, Ernest 1882. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Paris. Cited by Gellner 1989: 19.

Herder, Fichte and Hegel enlarged on that concept, marked by the influence of Kant's doctrine on self-determination.

Herder (1966; 1967; 1975; 1979) was one of the first defenders of the rights of a nationality which is determined by linguistic frontiers. This constitutes a patrimony of wisdom both in civilised peoples and in the badly-named "barbaric" peoples, which have cultivated natural religion and poetry instead of rationalism. The relation among the collective spirit of a people, its thought, its feeling and its language inspired every romantic requirement of cultural nationalism from Herder on, even encouraging criticism of colonial imperialism.

Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1938; 1971) has fostered radical German nationalism, based on a metaphysical conception of the "Germanic" as a distinctive essence of their people, where language plays a main role. From that essence derives the universal mission of the German nation, which has revealed their spiritual greatness by building a State which fits in it and grounds its law upon the right to equality of liberty that is possessed by every citizen. Therefore, the German nation does not stem from politics, on the contrary, it is itself who gives birth to politics.

According to Hegel (1982), universal history unfolds in a spiritual realm which reveals the Idea and the self-consciousness constituting an individual whose character is at the same time universal and concrete, namely, constituting a people. In history, spirit is *the spirit of the people*. Its being, objectivity and substantial reality is always becoming. Spirit is essentially the result of its self-constituent activity, of being known to itself. Spirit is produced and carried out according to its knowledge about itself; it aims what it knows about itself to be carried out. Moreover, it tends to focus on itself and to exist for itself. That is liberty, spirit's main aspiration, which is reached by denying continuously every threat against it. Universal history comprehends the whole of this process and includes the spirit of all different historic peoples, because the fruit of every people's life is not to remain in it. On the contrary, it requires its annihilation, so that other peoples be born, assuming and overcoming the particular being towards the universal being.

### 3. Cultural nationalism and political nationalism

K. Meinecke was one of the first authors to explicitly clarify the distinction between the concepts "cultural nation" and "political nation" (De Blas 1997: 337–339). The former is tied to ethnic-linguistic characteristics; the latter, to the State construction. A cultural nation is original, is spontaneously born from a historic community of race, language, territory, traditions and life. A political nation is the fruit of a desire for power, a controlling and homogenisation strategy. All political nations adduce some cultural roots to be legitimate; most of cultural nations claim political power and in the long term their own State. Consequently, the relation between cultural nationalism and political nationalism is both contrasting and complementary.

An attentive study of modern and contemporary nationalism reveals the impossibility of recognising a cultural and ethnic homogeneity from the basis of the non-Western States born from decolonisation. But strictly speaking no State, even European, can be free from criticism since a great diversity, a cultural plurality of nations lies at the roots of every national State. This is a matter of fact even though that plurality fits inside a common national culture. In short, we should be aware that the political factor never remains on the margin of culture construction and in this sense every nationalism has political roots.

### 4. The spanish nationalist discourse

Against the more and more frequent reduction of Spain to the State category, solid arguments are supporting Spain as a nation in a pre-political sense, such as claimed by cultural nationalism (Real... 2000). Its roots date from the age of Roman domination, where the diocese of Hispania constituted an ever-increasing political unity, until its emancipation was achieved by the Visigothic monarchy, which in the fifth century A. D. consolidated the political unity of the territory for the first time in history.

The Islamic invasions split up the Hispanic monarchy, establishing Al-Andalus. However, for 500 years the Reconquest expressed "a tightened vital and spiritual bond during the whole of the Middle Ages, a common sensibility and emotional capacity. The idea of unity

is present in all writers of the Middle Ages” (Rumeu de Armas 2000: 245).

From the ninth century four Christian kingdoms were established in the Iberian peninsula: León, Castilla, Navarra and Aragón, besides the County of Barcelona. Barcelona later joined the kingdoms of Aragón and Valencia, although in a federative framework because of their linguistic, institutional, and historic differences.

The final union of the distinct kingdoms was performed between the centuries fifteenth and sixteenth, once Castilla and Aragón were unified through the marriage of Isabel and Fernando. The conquest of Granada and the annexation of Navarra perfected that unity. The colonisation of America consolidated and extensively projected that nationality. Since the War of Independence, most scholars apply the concept of nation to Spain as a singular entity. “A nation is a reality which can be verified and perceived in itself” (Rumeu de Armas 2000: 246). “A nation is a matrix whose political structure is a State” (Rumeu de Armas 2000: 247).

At the end of the nineteenth century the liberal State of the Restoration (Jover 2001: 350–358) was promoting a central nationalism to cope with the incipient peripheral nationalisms, affirming the sovereignty of the Spanish nation and the equality of liberties and rights against regional particularities.

Since then the Spanish State has been defined as a Nation-State according to the modern political paradigm. The second Article of the Constitution currently in force makes this statement: “The Constitution itself is grounded on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible country of all Spaniards; recognising and guaranteeing the right to autonomy for nationalities and regions that are integrated in it, as well as solidarity among all of them”.

However, during the genesis of our Constitution, the debates that developed in the Constitutional Commission threw into relief the problematic character of this formulation defining the Spanish nation from extra-constitutional patterns: “A nation exists before and above the Constitution” (Cotarelo 1992: 195). That is to say, the Spanish nation is treated as a matter of fact which is previous to constitutional law and, consequently, as a cultural nation rather than a political nation.

On the other hand, “the right to autonomy is recognised and guaranteed”. But this autonomy should be interpreted in the framework of the national unity, which has just been stated. It should not be mis-



understood as the sovereignty that belongs only to the Spanish people, from which the powers of the State are emanating, according to the first article of the Constitution in its second paragraph. Therefore the Spanish people are not described in any way as an aggregate of ethnic-cultural communities, but as an aggregate of individuals, of citizens.

The Constitution is not placing the Spanish nation at the same level as the autonomic nationalities. The Spanish nation is considered a cultural historic community that supports and legitimates the State's political organisation, including the Constitution itself. It is a unique and original social structure, holding sovereignty<sup>7</sup> that is affirmed as indivisible. On the other hand, the autonomic nationalities are described as parts of the Spanish nation showing off autonomy in the framework that was designed by the constituent power. Thus, the statutes of autonomy do not recognise any political-legal regional power to have an original character, but just to be drawn from the State. Besides the nation which is supporting it, the State is the common political space that covers all the regional communities, as well as the prevailing object of the political loyalty (Solozábal 1997: 339–341).

However, nowadays it is clear that the development of the Constitution has led to an “evident disparity among the diverse cultures of the different communities” (Lafín 2000: 253). Such appreciation, together with the affirmation of the Nation-State as a “prevailing object of the political loyalty” has recently induced the Spanish Government to promote a “constitutional patriotism”. Thus it is expressed by the title of one of the papers which was presented at the fourteenth National Congress of the Popular Party,<sup>8</sup> provoking more expectation and polemics.

The politicians who were responsible for the paper — the PP President in Guipúzcoa, María San Gil, and the Secretary of State, José Piqué — declared to offer “a positive concept of patriotism, passionate for liberty and tolerance, praising the value of living together despite profound feelings of belonging”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> On this point the debate on the differences between national sovereignty and popular sovereignty is not taken into account, since the Constitution states that “national sovereignty resides in the Spanish people” (Article I, paragraph 2°).

<sup>8</sup> Held in January 25–27, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> All quotes are taken from the web site of the Popular Party: [www.pp.es](http://www.pp.es) (December 2001).

The paper did not combat peripheral nationalism, but it strove to achieve “reconciliation” after the “failures to meet up” that have been provoked by a concept of Spain from which “only those who reckon their confrontation to Spain to be the reason for their existence may be excluded”.

José Piqué, anticipating the content of its intervention, affirmed that Spain is “a magnificent platform for all to live together despite profound feelings of belonging, and respecting the value of liberty”. It is clear that the plurality of Spain cannot be contemplated just as a “problem”, but as something that is “constituent”.

According to Piqué, constitutional patriotism is a feeling of pride that is “rational and critical, not based on myths of the past, ethnic purity, romantic feeling or rural mysticism”. It reaffirms the full force of the constitutional pact, through which “we came to an agreement establishing the basis of living together in liberty”.

## 5. The basque nationalist discourse

In spite of its respective divergences, *foralism*<sup>10</sup> is often founded in the origins of Basque nationalism.

Throughout the centuries *foralism* has meant an effort to defend the Basque province’s institutions and historic privileges against the central power. Such prerogatives date back to the Early Middle Ages, when the Crown of Castilla offered the *hidalgúa* to all Basques, giving rise to a unique social class and an equalitarian society in that respect, although economic differences among its members always subsisted.

Some interpreters think that such a historic situation expresses the Basque people’s original sovereignty, willingly delegated to make an agreement with the Crown. On the contrary, other authors state that this shows the secular roots of the subordination of the Basque people regarding a superior political entity, that would become Spain later on.

Dispensing with such debate, it seems reasonable to affirm that the defence of the statutes supposed a form of pre-nationalism, developed by clergymen and lawyers from a theoretical perspective. This posi-

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<sup>10</sup> This comes from the word “*fueros*”, which names the whole of the historic laws, privileges and particular institutions belonging to certain Spanish provinces since the old ages.

tion was shaping a political sub-culture throughout the centuries until a common tradition was forged, reinforced by the singularity of the Basque language. Such tradition, whose roots were rural, referred to archaic and religious values, drifting in some way towards fundamentalism. *Foralism* minted its own myths reflecting the Basque people's aristocratic, heroic or biblical genealogy.

However, fighting for *foralism* was usually compatible with a feeling of belonging to a superior political entity until the Carlist defeat in 1872–1876 war, which questioned this attitude. Then the Spanish Monarchy revoked the Basque statutes, which had been recognised through the Vergara Agreement at the end of the first Carlist War. Such abolition provoked a sharp feeling of aggression. Moreover, a social crisis arose because of the progressive industrialisation of Vizcaya and the exploitation of the Somorrostro mines, causing the massive arrival of immigrants coming from other Spanish regions. The modernisation and the growth of towns, as well as the increasing liberalisation of customs began to deeply transform the society. Thus, the Basque people turned back upon itself, giving rise to its cultural Renaissance at the beginning of the twentieth century.

From then on, manifold associations and cultural magazines designed for the promotion of the Basque culture were born. In this way, an idyllic image of rural life and traditions was arising against modernisation and liberalisation, which the most conservative people thought as moral degeneration, uprooting and loss of identity. In addition, at that time an epic story was diffused about the Basque people struggling for their rights and patrimony against the Spaniards, who were considered as foreigners.

The rejection of industrialisation and the desire for maintaining and revitalising the Basque traditions, as well as its language, were to give birth to the foundation of the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP) by Sabino of Arana-Goiri in 1895. Arana was brought up in a *foralist* and Carlist atmosphere. Although he soon rejected it, he always remained linked to it in diverse ways, as illustrated by his motto: *Jaungoikoa eta Lagizarra*.<sup>11</sup>

The evolution of Arana's ideology is usually analysed according to three different phases.

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<sup>11</sup> Jaungoikoa means "God". Lagizarra means something more than just the Basque statutes, it includes the whole of the Basque institutions, written and unwritten law, customs, race and language (Fernández Sebastián 1997: 182).

The first one (1893–1898) is aggressively traditionalist, fundamentalist and contrary to Spanish centralism, liberalism, socialism, industrialisation and modernisation. Arana praises the Basque people because of their race and religion. He does not hesitate deforming the historic reality in order to exalt liberty and sovereignty of the Basque nation against Spain, and to claim its independence.

The second phase of Arana's evolution (1898–1902) is characterised by pragmatism. Arana is elected as a Vizcaya deputy, and this is why he becomes more realistic, less fierce in his criticisms of industrialisation,<sup>12</sup> more open to Basque autonomy, which was previously rejected. At that time, Basque nationalism was split forever because of the divergence between those struggling for independence and those struggling for autonomy: the former were radical *aranistas* (many of them coming from the ranks of fundamentalist Carlism); the latter, *euskalerríacos* (moderated bourgeois or liberal *foralists*, members of the Bilbao Euzkalerria Society).

The last year of Arana's life (1902–1903) was characterised by a U-turn, defending the widest autonomy for the Basques inside the Spanish State.

The first BNP National Assembly was held in 1906, publishing a manifesto programmed with its own marks of identity, which would be maintained until 1966. It emphasised the objective of reaching a full *foral* reintegration, maintaining and reshuffling the Basque traditions, language and racial identity. The goal of independence was never mentioned, despite Arana's proposal at the beginning of his ideological evolution, since the pragmatic or moderate sector led by Ramón Sota and Engracio Aranzadi Kizkitza achieved dominance. In this way the project of a Statute of Autonomy inspired by Catalonian nationalism was forged.

In 1916 the BNP was transformed into Nationalist Communion, expelling all its members who opted for independence. Shortly, an *aberriano*<sup>13</sup> BNP was to be born from the expelled group, led by Eli Gallastegi and Manu Egileor. In 1930, at Primo de Rivera's fall, the party reunification was achieved, with the exception of a progressive sector — left wing, not *aranista* — that would give rise to the Basque

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<sup>12</sup> Actually, the BNP consolidation was achieved thanks to the support of Ramón Sota, an important industrialist from Vizcaya, who contributed part of his fortune to the Basque nationalist project.

<sup>13</sup> Which is expressed through the weekly magazine *Aberri*, whose meaning is "homeland".

Nationalist Action. In 1931, the BNP was provisionally allied with the *carlistas*, but promptly broke with them to fight for the Statute of Autonomy. The dissidents gathered round the weekly magazine *Jagi-Jagi* claimed for the independence, but they did not achieve sufficient support to constitute a Basque National Front aiming at that goal. In October 1936 the Statute of Autonomy was approved by the Second Republic Government, at the *franquist* rising.

In 1966 when the BNP renewed its political programme for the first time since its foundation as a party, the thesis for independence kept on being marginalized. Then the goal was going to be the restitution of the Statute of Autonomy<sup>14</sup> which was revoked by the *franquist* dictatorship, declaring illegal the BNP public activity and encouraging indirectly the reaction of a radical nationalist sector: the *abertzale* left wing derived from the *Jagi-Jagi* group. The terrorist association ETA was born from this political movement in 1959.

The transition from Spain to democracy after the death of Franco in 1975 allowed the BNP to be rehabilitated by the Madrid Government, who favoured it to the detriment of the *abertzale* left.<sup>15</sup> Since then, the PNV has showed off the hegemony of Basque democratic nationalism, despite Eusko Alkartasuna's split in 1986 and the harassment of the radicals.

A great deal of the BNP's success has been achieved thanks to its controversial policy of alliances, lacking ideological coherence. Its objective has been to reach maximum power. According to certain sectors, this manifests a common will "to liquidate the political project of the *abertzale* left" fighting for independence, shared by the governments of Madrid and Paris.<sup>16</sup> According to others, it is not the case, but just the contrary.

<sup>14</sup> From <http://free.freespeech.org/askatasuna/docs/pnv.htm> (December 2001).

<sup>15</sup> During the democratic period the *abertzale* left wing was split into two different sectors: one of them abdicated to the armed struggle and approached reformism and the Statute option, giving rise to Euskadiko Ezkerra; the other one kept on justifying violence on behalf of the independence struggle. Herri Batasuna, linked to military ETA, comes from the latter.

<sup>16</sup> From <http://free.freespeech.org/askatasuna/docs/pnv.htm> (December 2001).

## 6. Universalism vs. communitarianism

In the previous sections we have reconstructed the historic origins of the Spanish and Basque nationalist discourses, which revealed a contrast to be analysed through some concepts of contemporary political thought: universalism and communitarianism.

Every universalist trend of thought affirms the existence of principles, norms or values going beyond every specific border, both individual and communitarian, to express the nature of human reason, the dignity of its personal being or some other basis not to be reduced to contingent conditions (Apel 2000; Habermas 1999; 2000; 2001a; 2001b).

On the other hand, the communitarian focus their attention precisely on those conditions, because they consider that principles, norms and values are related to particular historic communities that provide them with meaning through their hermeneutic and discursive praxis (Rorty 1989; 1991; 1998; 2000).

Since universalism states those principles which form the foundation of the democratic-liberal State of Law and communitarianism claims the particularities of a specific cultural tradition, it can be supposed that the Spanish nationalist discourse is universalist, while the Basque nationalist discourse is communitarian.

However, we have just explained that Spanish nationalism does not have just a political character, but also a cultural character. Moreover, Basque nationalism, basically cultural, has become a political nationalism, above all with the arrival of democracy.

Due to this, some coincidences may be glimpsed in the same areas where only confrontation seemed to be present. Besides, it can be noticed that those coincidences are manifested even through mistakes, because there are indications that neither the Popular Party nor the Basque Nationalist Party are sufficiently aware of the implications and the theoretical-practical extent of their respective discourses. The former does not keep in mind the dialectical and complex character that has cultural nationalism being used as a means for self-legitimation. In addition, the Popular Party should go more deeply into the political theory about "constitutional patriotism". The BNP does not sufficiently respect the social-cultural diversity of the community that it represents, playing too much with ambiguity and underlining what is separating the Basques from Spain more than what unites them.

The limitations of Spanish nationalism date back to its origins, in the age of the Restoration. At that time the Spanish Government did not know how to carry out an efficient project to strengthen Spain as a Nation-State due to a poor articulation in the political, cultural, and economic fields at a national level. The regional imbalances, of structural character, hindered a complete and coherent modernisation (Jover 2001: 353; Uriarte 2002: 109–132).

Currently, the Spanish nationalist discourse about “constitutional patriotism” is requiring more theoretical explanation. This concept has been the object of a complex elaboration in Habermas’s work, concretely in his theory upon the deliberative politics in a post-national society.

In Habermas constitutional patriotism “does not need to be supported in any way by a cultural, linguistic, and ethnic origin common to all citizens”. “A state with a homogeneous national population has always been a fiction” (Habermas 1998: 91) which has been fed by the instrumental use of the historic sciences to satisfy the need for legitimisation. “The national State itself is the one which engenders those autonomist movements in which oppressed national minorities are fighting for their rights. Submitting the minorities to a central administration, the national State is contradicting its own self-determination premises” (Habermas 1998: 91). Actually, constitutional patriotism “sharpens the sense of plurality” (Habermas 2001b: 628) recognising the different communities’ particular claims.

Habermas thinks that at present a significant break between citizenship and national identity is happening, which shows that “the classical form of the national State is dissolving” (Habermas 2001b: 620–621) and that it is necessary to develop new collective identities of post-national character.

In this context, constitutional patriotism guarantees a commitment with the fundamental rights, values and principles of the democratic-liberal State of Law, which have not just a national, particular or communitarian extent, but a universal one. “Suffice it to remember the European integration, supra-national military alliances, interdependency in the world economy [...]. There is no longer any alternative to the universalist valuing orientation” (Habermas 1998: 117).

Nevertheless, this commitment to universality will have to be translated into the particular traditions of the communities accepting it (Habermas 1998: 111–121). Each community of citizens should consider the value of its own tradition as relative from the perspective of

other traditions, in order to critically appropriate its own tradition and integrate it into a common cultural framework at a supra-national level (Habermas 2001b: 628).

On this point the possibility of connecting the communitarian claims with the universalist claims may be noticed. In the same way the State has the ethical obligation to recognise national particularities, which are expressed in its territory, so nationalist communities should be capable of transcending their own limits to recognise a universal horizon that could precisely guarantee their particularities. At least, not to fall into the trap they are denouncing: the imposition and annulment of differences, since no community is culturally homogeneous.

## **7. Intercultural communication**

After having found a link among the different positions which have been presented in this essay, let us develop some premises that allow the diverse nationalist cultures living together in Spanish territory to understand each other. We are going to take a look at some recent investigations in intercultural communication (Rodrigo 1999; Silveira 2000; Kymlika 1996; Bartolomé 1998).

The first section of this article reviewed the most interesting forms of understanding the term "culture", showing its complexity and manifold meaning, and even its contradictory, dialectical character.

Every culture represents a way of existing, an idiosyncrasy, a specific identity, but at the same time, a relation with everything from which itself differentiates. To say it another way: there is no culture without intercultural communication.

At the roots of every culture there is a relation with other cultures, in their most diverse modalities: learning, adaptation, acculturation, assimilation, hybridising, racial mixing, integration... The limit of that relation comes from the capacity to maintain the cohesion of the group whose identity is being defined.

This is why the definition of one's own cultural identity should be understood rather as an intersubjective need for sense than as an unquestioned and objective reality. Every collective group affirms its identity in order to legitimate, to reinforce its power or to resist an alien power, to be existentially projected, to be appropriated of its roots and to redefine them; but that praxis, which has mainly a



discourse character, is valid only in a relative way, deriving from its functionality.

Certainly, there are no exclusive and pure identities: a plural set of identities lives together in every collective group, to be harmonised according to value scales through a democratic consensus. At the roots of such a consensus there should be not just tolerance, but the conviction that diversity is enriching and therefore that the disappearance or the alignment of any culture diminishes all the others.

Any perspective should be recognised as limited and should remain open to other possible angles, integrate them or at least carry out a continuous self-critical review. This task requires accepting certain levels of distortion and ambiguity in the communicative exchange, setting just a minimum for understanding.

Multiculturalism is a fact in every society and in every State. Interculturalism is a challenge. To cope with it, a specific type of communicative praxis is necessary, which is not dominated by the "logic" of power, but by the rationality of reciprocal understanding.

## 8. Critical balance and conclusions

This essay has examined the conceptual and historical basis of nationalist groups, both those that intend to legitimate the modern State and those confronting it for the rights of some particular community. Concretely, Spanish and Basque nationalism have been focused on.

The main conclusion of this essay is that the current conflict between both nationalist groups requires a deeper self-understanding on both sides. Only if each nationalism is able to understand its own premises, will it be able to understand the other and to communicate. The on-going academic reflections upon intercultural communication may be extremely useful in this respect.

Recognising the semantic ambiguity, complexity and even dialectics which characterise the diverse concepts currently in force using the terms "culture" and "nation", as well as studying the historic evolution of Spanish and Basque nationalism, may show that none of them has the right to adopt a dogmatic or exclusive attitude.

The investigation carried out so far demonstrates that both Spanish and Basque nationalism share common features, even if the former has mainly a political character, while the latter emphasises the cultural dimension. Spanish nationalism, which is promoted by the State

institutions, appeals to an ethnic-cultural realm that includes linguistic, historic, territorial... and traditional aspects. Basque nationalism, which is ethically and culturally rooted, has always striven to open political ways to its requirements. Therefore, both types of nationalism meet from inverse but complementary positions.

Their complementary character may be noticed in a clearer way if their universalist and communitarian dimensions are considered. Values, principles and norms ruling the democratic-liberal State of Law have a universal extent but they acquire a concrete meaning only from the cultural traditions of the communities accepting and putting them into practice. This is why they are reciprocally necessary; hence the effort of the Spanish State institutions to affirm the existence of a legitimising national community and the parallel need for the Basque nationalist community to consider their own demands as relative and to submit them to universal values, principles and norms.

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**Прагматический подход к межкультурной этике:  
Основные черты развития коммуникации между  
национальными группами**

Статья является частью более обширной программы, которая занимается различными аспектами *интеркультуральной* этики и основывается на принципах Проекта интеркультуральной этики ЮНЕСКО (Intercultural Ethics Project). Цель автора — предложить прагматические средства для анализа актуального для Испании противостояния между пропагандистами испанской и баскской национальных культур. Указывая на исторические корни возникновения этих разных типов самоидентификации, автор приходит к выводу, что как

“чистая” культура, так и “чистое” национальное государство являются иллюзорными понятиями и что не существует культуры без идеологии (Хабермас). Основной вывод исследования: разрешение конфликта требует от обеих сторон более четкого самоопределения. Только в том случае, если каждая национальная группа способна к четкой самоидентификации, она способна и понять другую группу и вступить с ней в коммуникацию. Если мультикультуральность является фактом современного общества, то интеркультуральность является *вызовом*. И чтобы с ним справиться, нужна коммуникационная практика нового типа, которая опиралась бы не на логику власти, а на рациональность взаимопонимания. Именно основы этой новой логики межкультурной коммуникации автор пытается выявить в данной статье.

### **Pragmaatilisi lähenemisi kultuuridevahelisele eetikale: Rahvusgruppide vahelise kommunikatsiooni edendamise põhijooni**

Käesolev artikkel on osa laiaulatuslikumast programmist, mis tegeleb kultuuridevahelise eetika erinevate aspektidega ja mis sai algtouke UNESCO Kultuuridevahelise Eetika Projektist (*Intercultural Ethics Project*). Autor on seadnud eesmärgiks pakkuda pragmaatilisi vahendeid analüüsima Hispaanias aktuaalset kultuurilist ja poliitilist vastuseisu hispaania ning baski rahvuskultuuri propageerijate vahel. Püütakse selgitada vastasleeride identiteedi ajaloolist teket ja jõutakse järeldusele, et nii puhas kultuur kui ka puhas rahvusriik on illusoorseid mõisted ning et kultuuri ilma ideoloogiata ei eksisteeri (Habermas). Uurimuse põhijäreldus on, et konflikti lahendamine nõuab mõlemalt rahvusgrupilt sügavamast enesemääratlust. Vaid juhul, kui kumbki rahvus on võimeline selgelt iseennast piiritlema/määratlema, on ta võimeline teist mõistma ja temaga kommunikeeruma. Kui multikultuurilisus on igas ühiskonnas fakt, siis interkultuurilisus on väljakutse, millega toimetulekuks on vaja uut tüüpi kommunikatsioonipraktikat, mis ei toetuks mitte võimuloogikale, vaid teineteisemõistmise ratsionaalsusele. Just uue kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni loogika aluseid püüabki autor käesolevas artiklis esile tuua.

## The myth of the nation of poets and mass poetry in Lithuania

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**Abstract.** There are two problems discussed in the article. The first one is the phenomenon of mass literature and semiotic approach to it. According to Lotman, mass literature of the 20th (and 21st) centuries is not so much an object of semiotics as of sociology. However, it is possible to consider mass literature of earlier times as an object of semiotics of culture. Lotman discusses Russian mass literature of the 18th and 19th centuries as such an object in the article "Massovaya literatura kak istoriko-kulturnaya problema". Considering mass literature a dynamic factor of the semiotic system, Lotman distinguishes its main features: a high degree of automatization and syndrome of retardedness. In the second part of the article the author discusses the phenomenon of mass poetry in contemporary Lithuania. This kind of mass literature is much more similar to the phenomenon discussed by Lotman than to the mass literature of the postmodernist epoch. Lithuanian mass poetry employs the codes of national romanticism (the end of 19th century) and considers itself an ignored part of high culture. This sort of poetry unknown to Western societies exhibits archaising tendencies in the modern postsoviet culture.

In the article "Mass literature as a historical-cultural problem" Juri Lotman (1993: 380–383) defines mass literature first of all as a socio-logical problem rather than an object of textual semiotics. The discussion concerning this problem focuses not on the structural characteristics of different texts, but on the ways in which a text itself functions in the system of texts constituting culture. In this respect Lotman adopts the standpoint of a cultural semiotician that is criticised by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. According to him, cultural theoreticians who take the semiotic point of view and "seek in the literary system itself the principle of its dynamics", forget

that the existence, form and direction of change depend not only on the “state of the system”, that is the “repertoire” of possibilities it offers, but also on the balance forces between social agents who have entirely different interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or other prevail. (Bourdieu 1994: 54–55)

Bourdieu describes this strategy as a “position taking in the field of cultural production”. Lotman, however, believes that the aspects enumerated by Bourdieu are crucial in the analysis of mass literature. Lotman’s article states that “the concept of mass literature is first of all defined by the attitude one or other community has towards a certain group of texts” (Lotman 1993: 381). What Bourdieu refers to as a “social agent” and the “position taking in the field of cultural production”, Lotman in turn calls a community and attitude of community. Lotman’s remark is important as it shows him having recognised the limitations of the analysis based on, as Pierre Bourdieu keeps pointing out, a “phonological model”. It is not that this model would be impossible to apply but a different model (in this case sociological) may be more fruitful for the analysis of certain objects. Lotman’s article implies that mass literature is one of those objects.

It is true, however, that there lies some sort of contradiction. Lotman distinguishes two types of mass literature: the mass literature of earlier times (the 18th and 19th century Russian literature) which he discusses from the historical-cultural point of view; and the mass literature as a phenomenon of the 20th (and, we can add, of the 21st) century as well as an object of sociology. The author distances himself from the latter and focuses on the former (that is the mass literature of earlier times) as on a dynamic factor of the semiotic system (that is, he investigates the relations between texts and other texts rather than between texts and social “agents”).

In Lotman’s opinion, mass literature as a part of the semiotic structure and a historical phenomenon stands out due to a high degree of automatization (clichés). It is characterised by the syndrome of retardedness:

The most different ideological artistic systems of the past epochs continue functioning in mass literature as a live body. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, mass literature resembled an enormous reserve where animals familiar to a well educated reader from museum exhibits only, lived and procreated in natural conditions. (Lotman 1993: 386)

This witty remark precisely defines the mass literature produced in Lithuania these days. From a typological point of view, this phenomenon is far closer to the one Lotman discusses than to contemporary mass literature. It is not related to, or little related to mass media, nor is it orientated to commercial success. The publication of the bulk of this sort of poetry books is funded by authors themselves, the editions are limited, as in the case of the so-called elite poetry, and the works are most often distributed among the authors' friends and acquaintances. The term 'mass poetry' is reflected not in the number of editions but in the number of titles — statistically they are more numerous than the titles of poetry books published by the prestigious publishing houses and even popular genres of prose fiction such as detective and love stories.

This throws some light on the situation in Lithuanian literature that had started to emerge since the beginning of its formation: there has always been more poetry than prose in Lithuania. Furthermore, in terms of proportion, there has always been more aesthetically valuable poetry than prose. According to the young poet and literary critic Mindaugas Kvietauskas, it is only in this literary kind that Lithuanian literature feels equal to Western literatures (Kvietauskas 2001: 93). Traditionally, such factors as high ranking poetry and the prestige of poetic activity are characteristics typical of a nation that created the national state late and is constantly daunted by insecurity. In such a nation, the poet plays the role of a charismatic voice and conscience of the nation. The creators of mass literature still find this role extremely attractive. Very often, however, the reception of the so-called maniac poetry, the critical attention crucial to its legitimisation as a part of literature, is minimal. The preparation of the *Encyclopaedia of the Lithuanian Literature* (2001) by the Institute of the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore raised a slight concern: What should be done with the heap of books mostly published by provincial publishing houses? Should they be considered to be literature or simply graphomania? What if there are real talents among the authors of those abundant books? The literary critics who wrote the *Encyclopaedia* were given the right to make a decision, thus, granted the power of legitimisation. They were not very compassionate. As a result, a lot of versifiers were crossed out from the list of "high" literature.

In the post-modernist epoch, mass culture tends to reflect itself as massive; it implants its manifestations into the elite literature in all possible ways, thus seeking to eliminate the boundaries between the



two types of culture. In this way, it starts functioning as “resistance activity” in relation to the elite culture. In terms of Lithuanian mass poetry we face a slightly different case. The inner contradiction mentioned by Lotman defines this literary form best. According to Lotman, there have to exist norms and attitudes in a society that would regard this sort of literature as being of low quality and ignore it. But a certain community would consider this sort of literature as having full cultural value and displaying characteristic features of high culture (Lotman 1993: 282).

The norms and attitudes of the “high” literature are represented by the literary critics mentioned above and the creators of elite culture themselves, most often identified with the Lithuanian Writers’ Union (LWU). It is this Union that serves as an example for creating parallel organisations such as the Independent Writers’ Union and the Lithuanian Rural Writers’ Union. The title of the latter would imply some sort of regional distribution: the Lithuanian Writers’ Union represents the city, first of all Vilnius. “Other” and “different” kinds of literature are produced in the countryside (this word should be interpreted as a synonym of the word “province”). In this case, the second largest city of Lithuania, the former interim capital Kaunas falls into the category of province. From the statistical point of view Kaunas’ citizens make up the largest part of city inhabitants among the members of the two organisations in question. Furthermore, this fact confirms the fact that there is a huge cultural and economic centralisation in Lithuania: at present Kaunas is lagging behind Vilnius and Klaipėda in both aspects.<sup>1</sup> As the literary critic Donata Mitaitė observes, the title Independent Writers’ Union hides a contradiction — “independent but, however, gathered into a union” (Mitaitė 2001: 2). Reading the autobiographies of the Union members published in a separate book, one clearly sees that independence in this case primarily means an independence from the Lithuanian Writers’ Union. When I mentioned the parallel organisations that were being created, I avoided the word “alternative” as there is no alternative spirit or revolt here. A considerable part of this union members mention their attempt to join the Lithuanian Writers’ Union and being asked to provide things like reference letters, critical articles on their works, finally, different editions of their works. They attempt to use

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<sup>1</sup> By the way, literary critics are talking about such a phenomenon as the “Klaipėda school” in contemporary Lithuanian ‘elite’ poetry.

political arguments in a manipulative way, as if some sort of political affiliations were required. In this case, they probably refer to the Soviet years, although the phenomenon in question thrived after the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania. There are two main reasons for this: political (censorship minimised) and economic (market economy eliminated the monopoly of the state funded publishing houses). Nevertheless, the former chairman of the Independent Writers' Union Bronius Jauniškis explains the way in which he found himself in this position: he says he had waited as a candidate to join the Lithuanian Writers' Union with the help of reference letters from celebrities for a long time (*Lietuvos nepriklausomieji rašytojai* 1998: 3). Thus, writers belonging to the category we are focusing on, the majority of whom are poets, regard their own work as a part of "high" culture but undermined and underrated by the so called "literary monopolists". However, for some of the "independent" writers, belonging to a "monopolistic organisation" and taking part in its activities and events remain one of the main aims, or to put it in terms of A. J. Greimas' semiotics, an "object of value". Having failed to gain it, a "shadow" activity is launched (organising similar poetry feasts, establishing prizes, even writing monographs, etc.). Should we have to reconstruct an invariant "independent" writer's biography, we would necessarily have to mention them having been introduced to "famous" writers, that is, representatives of the elite culture. An invariant biography of such a writer would also contain some information on the relations of his or her output with the country's history. Most of these writers reached maturity during the Soviet period. Almost all of them highlight the fact that they were persecuted by the Soviet Government, KGB, participated in the resistance movement. A big number of writers penning the poetry in question are really former deportees. There are quite a few cases, though, in which participating in Soviet structures is presented as resistant activity. Almost all of them started writing poetry at elementary school and sent it to wall newspapers, regional and school press. Later, the hardships of life, daily routine (in the autobiographies of women most often marriage is mentioned as an obstacle) suppressed the need to write, which was followed by the Independence Movement *Sąjūdis* and the Lithuanian rebirth (the year 1989-90). Sentences of a similar kind appear in probably ninety percent of the autobiographies: "When Lithuania was surged by the wave of rebirth, I spread my wings" (Valentinas Vytautas Navickas, in: *Lietuvos*

*nepriklausomieji rašytojai* 1998: 1973). "The period of the country's rebirth awoke in free thought, opened up a new page of history, turned our hearts and minds towards a new cognition of the world. [...] the new poetry array was also replenished and enriched by new themes and colours" (Janina Brazauskienė, in: *Lietuvos nepriklausomieji rašytojai* 1998: 49).

However, the new themes and colours are about one hundred years old. The codes of the Lithuanian national romanticism that flourished at the beginning of the 19th century may well be attributed to this poetry. Maironis, the most famous Lithuanian national romantic bard is most often mentioned as the highest authority. Bernardas Brazdžionis who wrote the poem "*Šaukiu aš tautą, GPU užguitą*" ("My Call to the Nation Oppressed by GPU") in 1941 and has a reputation of being the herald of the nation is put next. Justinas Marcinkevičius, an outstanding poetic and public figure of the soviet period occupies the third position on the list<sup>2</sup>. The above listed poets wrote multi-layered poetry but the writers in question focus exceptionally on the aspect in which linguistic power relations are displayed. They rely on the authority of the poetic discourse itself that intensifies during politically unstable, marginal periods, when poetry really "goes out to the masses", is read at meetings and demonstrations thus combining functions of both sacral and political discourses. It is noteworthy that the biographies of the writers under consideration give a thorough account of their public, readings, meetings with readers, participation in different events, in short, everything that helps to establish the authority of a poet as an exclusive cell of society. The orientation towards collective, public readings is justified by some of the formal peculiarities of the texts — this sort of poetry is dominated by quatrains, oratorical sonority, syntactic constructions characteristic of folklore.

Erotic love would provide some sort of competition to the love for the native land (which is a conflict common in the Lithuanian literature at the beginning of the last century). The latter is portrayed using the repertoire of romantic poetry. In this field, authorities are different. They are neo-romantics who used the poetics of romance as a possibility for irony and playfulness and combined it with the

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<sup>2</sup> Justinas Marcinkevičius is the winner of the Baltic Assembly award in 2001.

elements of the avant-garde thus marking the renewal of Lithuanian poetry in 1940s.

Alas, irony is the last thing to be found in the poetry under discussion. One of the basic characteristics of this literature is an enormous seriousness in the light of which any problem is tackled. The introduction to the book *I Versify with my Heart, Sing with my Lips* by the poetess under the pseudonym *Pievų Smilga* (Bent Grass of Meadows) says: "Let it [the book] not be opened by people who expect to find new ways of expression. Let those who love the motherhood sky, childhood roads and their mother press it to their heart" (Pievų Smilga 2000: 3). As in the case of the poetics of socialist realism, the topic is considered to be something much more sublime and important than form. In this way, repetition and cliché are not regarded as drawbacks (it is mentioned in the introduction quoted above that the poetess is not afraid of repetitions), if only it helps to express true feelings. Sincerity in this type of poetry is rated as a super-value that helps to line up in sequence and present a very clear moral value system that is only illustrated by verse. Therefore, moralising and didactics replace irony, the inseparable aspect of modern literature that does not ensure this sort of moral security.

The biographies of the poets whose poetry is being discussed, often recount injustices and hardships they have suffered. The former system is the first to blame, then come those who failed to recognise and understand this sincere poetry propagating and declaring "high" moral values. The latter are first and foremost referred to as "literature monopolists".

One of the reasons why those two participants in culture fail to understand each other is probably their radically different position in the field of culture. In more than ten years, professional writers who produce the so-called elite literature have left behind the advantages granted by the Aesopian language, have more or less put up with the different status of poetry and a smaller audience. In other words, they are turned to the present time, the current situation. The creators of the type of poetry we conditionally called mass poetry remain faithful to the romantic illusion that the poet is the herald of the nation, its informal leader. It is an illusion that was reborn for a short while around the year 1990. This sort of poetry exhibits archaising cultural tendencies, a non-critical, unreflective relation to history that is being mocked by Lithuanian television humour programmes also belonging

to the mass culture. However, the relations between different types of the mass culture would be a different topic.

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### Миф народа поэтов и феномен массовой поэзии в Литве

В статье обсуждается проблема массовой литературы и семиотический подход к ней. Юрий Лотман согласен с социологами культуры в том, что современная массовая литература является объектом не столько семиотики, сколько социологии культуры. Однако схожее явление в более ранние эпохи может быть исследовано как объект семиотики культуры. Пример такого исследования приведен в статье Лотмана "Массовая литература как историко-культурная проблема". В контексте этой проблематики рассматривается феномен современной литовской массовой поэзии. Исследования показали, что эта поэзия гораздо более похожа на феномен, обсуждаемый Лотманом, чем на современную массовую литературу. Она открыто использует коды национального романтизма и воспринимает себя как часть элитной культуры. Этот тип поэзии неизвестен на Западе и он свидетельствует об архаизирующих тенденциях в постсоветской культуре.

### **“Poeetide rahva” müüt ja massikirjanduse fenomen Leedus**

Vaatluse all on massikirjanduse olemus ja sellele semiootilise lähenemise võimalikkus. Juri Lotman nõustub kultuurisotsioloogidega selles, et kaasaja massikirjandus on mitte niivõrd semiootika kui kultuuri sotsioloogia objekt. Kuid taolist fenomeni varasematel aegadel võib siiski käsitleda kultuurisemiootika objektina. Just sellise lähenemise näiteks on Lotmani artikkel “Massikirjandus kui ajaloolis-kultuuriline probleem”. Antud problemaatika kontekstis vaadeldakse leedu kaasaegse massiluule fenomeni. Uurimused on näidanud, et see luule sarnaneb tunduvalt rohkem Lotmani poolt kirjeldatud nähtusele kui tänapäeva massikirjandusele. Massiluules kasutatakse avalikult rahvusromantismi koodi ja ta väljendab end eliitkultuuri osana. Selline luuletüüp ei ole Lääne kultuuriruumis tuntud ja annab tunnistust arhaiseerivatest tendentsidest postsovjetlikus kultuuris.

## **Semiotics of culture and New Polish Ethnology**

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**Abstract.** The paper deals with the contemporary state of semiotic ethnology in Poland (connected with New Polish Ethnology group), its internal and external influences, its specifics, subjects and its reaction to the other theoretical propositions. The "neotribe" of New Polish Ethnology was established by few younger scholars, ethnologists in the early 1980s, in an opposition to the dominant stream of positivistic ethnology. Today they have become classics of Polish anthropology, masters that have educated a new generation of their students, and lead some anthropological institutes. The most inspiring set of theories that influenced the group and its heirs was taken from Soviet semiotics of culture (Lotman, Uspensky, Toporov, Ivanov), and French structural-semiotics (Levi-Strauss, Barthes), but there are some individual differences also. On that basis they have developed a specific scope, aim and methods of interpretation with as its key terms myth and mythical thinking. They have explained many cultural events (relation we-others, body image, commercials, and anthropology itself) within the framework of mythical thinking, making it the most productive and attractive frame of interpretation within Polish humanities and social sciences. In the 1990s they had to face critical ethnography, deconstruction and postmodern anthropology and they did it with perfect flexibility that even strengthened their project, because the potential of reflexivity and self-consciousness lied within semiotics from its beginning.

Contemporary Polish ethnology is divided into theoretical and thematic monads or into rather different styles of doing ethnography, because we are dealing here more with styles of thinking than with rigorously delineated methodological orientations (a situation well known in the humanities generally). We are dealing with attachments to some traditions of thinking and ways of understanding the weight

and place of fieldwork in the scholarly practice (here the difference between realism and reflexivity comes to the fore), to the style of interpretation and explanation of the cultural phenomena, as well as to the circle of people sharing the views on the ways anthropology should be done.

I have to make a short remark that is necessary for understanding the core of the New Polish Ethnology (NPE, the Polish abbreviation is NEP — sounds like *Nowaja Ekonomiczeskaja Politika*, and in the context I will talk about it is, I suppose, of some significance). Until the mid-1970s Polish ethnology was dominated by the modernist or positivist research paradigm within which the role of ethnography was reduced to mere recording and describing of the data, especially to describing observable changes in the folk culture. In the context of the political system then in power, the so-called “people’s democracy”, the pressure was to valorize folk culture as the storage and carrier of truly human and national content (Buchowski 1995). At the same time ethnography was understood as a science of an unmediated experiencing of material, social and spiritual phenomena, where direct observation and informants’ “testimonies” gave crucial evidence to the authenticity of facts, that were “only described”, as it was believed, facts.

A group of younger scholars started to fight against this official trend at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. They were affiliated with structuralism, semiotics of culture and phenomenology. They called their “neo-tribe” New Polish Ethnology and the group remains the most interesting, unique and inspiring phenomenon in Polish ethnology to date. The term “neo-tribe” is not coincidental here — I use it because it means a voluntary belonging, flow of members, relative ephemerality of shared views, no rigorous power centre, in general, it is the most suitable term to characterize the cohesiveness of the group (Buchowski 1995).

There have been two directions within the NPE: (1) structural-semiotic, and (2) phenomenological-hermeneutic; the first one (which is at the same time the subject of my presentation) stresses especially the mythological nature of thinking and the role it plays in everyday life and history; it refers to the theoretical traditions of French structuralism and semiotics (Levi-Strauss, Barthes, New History), British structural anthropology (Leach, Douglas, Turner) and to the semiotics



of culture developed by the Tartu School (Lotman, Uspensky, Toporov, Ivanov, Piatigorskij and others).<sup>1</sup>

Scholars involved in this *coup d'état* took over the leadership of Polish ethnology, becoming not only chairs of academic institutes but also classics of contemporary Polish ethnology.

We can read in the programme manifesto of this group from the beginning of the 1980s that these scholars:

1. Abandon positivistic and post-positivistic orientation in ethnology in favour of systemic depictions derived from the native categories of thinking and not imposed by the cognitive/research methods of the researcher.
2. Will use a coherent and consistent conceptual and methodological apparatus which emphasizes the semantic aspects (significance) of cultural phenomena.
3. Will aim in their research at the so-called mental culture system (ritual, religion, mythology, folk literature, problems of cultural identity etc.), because they assumed that it is in the domain of the mentality, "spirit", in the ideational sphere of culture mechanisms determining cultural phenomena and behaviour should be sought.
4. Will give up contingent descriptions of cultural phenomena, so far exerted by formal pseudo-classification (disassociated from the way culture is classified by its members), and will concentrate instead on synthesizing and interpretive works, aimed at unravelling the structures of *long duree* (regardless of the fact whether they exist in reality, they do become manifest as common rules in culture), the grammar of culture — a base set of oppositions on which cultural practice is built (this grammar for Polish 19th century folk culture was reconstructed by Ludwik Stomma).
5. Advocated interdisciplinarity conceived as multi-sided use and assimilation of contemporary achievement of related disciplines, especially history, semiotics, sociology of religion, linguistics and literary studies. (Benedyktowicz *et al.* 1980–1981: 47)

Nowadays they underline the interpretive (description = interpretation) character of ethnologist's work — which means, among other things, that an ethnologist does not only work with the text of culture, but also that they realize the fact an ethnologist constructs his own data (carries out a semiosis of the examined culture) with the help of his own cultural tools, including those provided by professional/expert anthropological knowledge. As a result, ethnology emerges as a kind

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<sup>1</sup> We can enumerate here members of the group and their heirs: Zbigniew Libera, Małgorzata Maj, Krzysztof Piatkowski, Czesław Robotycki, Ludwik Stomma, Ryszard Tomicki, Jerzy Wasilewski.

of cultural criticism (it is not axiologically neutral), but, in contrast to American scholars, the scholars from the semiotic ethnology group do not fetishize this fact, which means, they do not yield to "moral hypochondria" (according to Geertz's or D'Andrade's formulation) whose main symptom is that the author is more engaged in the "writing self" than he is in what was supposed to be the proper object of research and interpretation.

"Ethnography of ethnography" is for them solely a necessary element of an epistemological debate within the discipline and it does not obfuscate research. For example, Libera comes near "ethnography of ethnography" in his research on cultural taboos connected with "the bottom". The subject seemed inappropriate to such an extent that it was guarded off by a unique inner censorship eliminating from research all topics considered "inelegant". The process was based in fact on a mechanism of projecting the obvious in one's own culture onto the language of ethnology, without an awareness that this is being done.

The group is interested mainly in contemporary phenomena, among others in popular culture which uses mythic structures of thinking to reinforce its power of persuasion, and in the way it functions in the collective common consciousness (in advertising, film, popular literature, literature for children, school manuals, music and architecture, for example). However, they also do stimulating research on folk medicine, body as a social and cultural construct, gesture, history as the area of continuous semiosis, as well as the mythicized consciousness of ethnology itself. Their object of investigation is, among others, the way norms and stances are entangled in worldviews and beliefs; the cosmological and ritual vision of the universe; cultural mythicizing in the self-other relations (here the research on AIDS, old age and illness joined a more traditional discourse on local and national difference); as well as the problem of stereotyping and mythicizing of culture itself, a process which involves both people who deal with culture as amateurs, as well as professionals (museums, academic institutions) (Robotycki 1995: 231-232).

Methodological directives recognized by the group largely derive from all the structural and semiotic traditions mentioned above: (1) translation of culture by culture (Libera 1995b: 17) leads to the search for an inner logic of culture; This logic, however, once discovered, often serves as a subsequent justification of theses assumed in the

work or explanations developed (Libera 1995b: 18); (2) they keep underlining the classificational and descriptive character of the natural language, that is why linguistic data still play an important role in their research, especially data concerning semantics, as they allow for the reconstruction of cultural classificational schemes and of the social function of phenomena investigated.

At present they do not, however, get attached to the notion of the primary and secondary semiotic systems and their work is developed more in the spirit of Lotman's "semiosphere", though none of them mention the fact. But, on the other hand, they assume in a series of texts on the body (Libera, Brocki), especially concerning the problem of the body as a microcosm, after Toporov and Zoltariev, that in the relationship between human being and the world, man and human body still remains the modelling factor.

They also creatively approached the base concept of *text* and *myth* developed by semiotics of culture. In his newest work Czesław Robotycki revises, under the influence of deconstruction, the concept of the text of culture substituting it for the concept of *narration*. The reason behind this substitution is very straightforward: the other term is more suggestive of a situation in which "the world does not try to tell us anything", it is a narration without any objective frames which would limit its reach (which is the case of the text). Such frames are culture's artefacts. As Robotycki writes: "This is us who endow history with sense" (Robotycki 1998: 11), and the word "history" can be exchanged for anything yielding to the process of semiosis. Apart from this, the term *text* becomes a platitude, exploited and abused in so many contexts that we have difficulties in recognizing it as text. It turns into an intellectual fetish in these contexts — the best example to quote is my friend's dedication to his book on reflexive anthropology, which reads: "To my wife, who is reality, reflection, and text".

The concept of myth and mythic thinking is similarly undergoing modification at the moment, although it still remains a universal explanatory category, the most efficient interpretive tool of a wide range of cultural phenomena, a category belonging to the realm of certitudes within professional anthropological culture. Ludwik Stomma remains the keenest advocate in Poland of Roland Barthes' thesis that "myth is stronger than facts" or that "myth strives to accord with sense and not with sensually conceived reality", and Zbigniew Libera (1995a: 11), in contrast, modifies this thesis in his writings on folk medicine and anthropology. Stomma writes that "products of

mythicization neither refer to reality, nor can reality verify them", "the empirical has an inferior significance than myth and has to give way to it", and he indeed quotes examples proving his theses. Libera, in turn, shows on the example of "folk medicine" that the efficiency of many medical interventions is not a pure coincidence, as Stomma's thesis about the priority of logic (abstracted out of the everyday life praxis) over praxis would imply, but has also its own empirical source. Medicine cannot be reduced to myth, because the experiments of myth are not the same as experiments of folk medicine, as the latter do not happen in the abstracted space of purely intellectual operations. If this were so, one could treat any illness with any means, as long as it conformed to the requirements of the logic. He postulates inclusion of relations of practice and convictions from the range of a discernible semantic cultural domain (here Libera remains faithful to the concept of the "text of culture") with the simultaneous recognition of their mytho-logical basis, so that the field is seen as an element of a larger, sense-endowed and coherent whole, which comes down to, basically, the world view of a given collectivity (it resembles Bourdieu's theory of practice, but Libera developed it independently). This allows, in turn, to put forth a thesis that diverse texts of culture realize the same paradigm of sense, that they have the same storage of meanings, which, however, does not simultaneously mean that semiotic systems are synonymous, as they always retain a certain level of autonomy (Libera 1995a: 12).

The principle that remains unchanged in the concept of myth says that myth involves substituting the order of nature for the order of culture — showing social, ideological, historical products as natural etc. — and, on the other hand, representing direct products of cultural and social relations and moral, aesthetic, class, ideological problems as emerging out of themselves, naturally, which, in turn, leads to their recognition as "good laws", "the voice of the public", "norms", "laudable principles" — as inborn, necessary givens (Stomma, in: Benedyktowicz *et al.*: 48). On the basis of this definition of myth Polish semiotic ethnology still carries out efficient interpretations of many complex phenomena of contemporary culture (for example: advertising, political, economic, historical and scientific discourses). The NEP ethnologists, pointing at the symbolic character of culture, diverse ways of conveying semiosis (history, tradition, local and regional identities etc.) and antinomies emerging in the process, antinomies which are always present and always overcome, not only

represent semiosis as a continuous process not knowing a simple reproduction of patterns, but they also find the main source of overcoming and reducing the unlimited potential of semiosis in myth itself. A member of culture dealing with texts inviting various readings tries to neutralize (or mask) the effect of paradox by mythicization of reality. An anthropologist, in turn, demythicizing this text (an objective of semiotic anthropology that, for the NEP, equals with unravelling the rules governing a given text of culture), recodes the content of mythicized fragments of culture into the terms of his own practice, within the frames of professional anthropological culture. Here we can see the symptoms of the "moral hypochondria" mentioned above, which is immediately reshaped under the auspices of the NEP into an element of control for the current practice. Scholars from this circle do not share the modernist or positivist view contained implicitly in the "moral hypersensitivity" that translation is to reflect and copy the original; quite the reverse — it has to reshape and deform in order to make possible the understanding of what the object of translation is. One can only reconcile with it and go on with interpretation. Otherwise we would be sentenced to an incapacitating moral anxiety paralyzing all action, or to the restoration of myth of "science as the mirror of nature", even worse — we would abolish the distance between the researched and the researcher, the very fundamental division of anthropological knowledge. But, so far, the NEP people do not manifest any suicidal tendencies.

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### Семиотика культуры и новая польская этнология

Статья посвящена современному состоянию семиотической этнологии в Польше (связанной с группой Новая польская этнология — *New Polish Ethnology*), ее внутренним и внешним влияниям, ее специфике, ее представителям и ее реакции на иные теоретические положения. Группа *New Polish Ethnology* была основана в начале 1980-х годов молодыми этнологами в качестве оппозиционной по отношению к доминирующему течению позитивистской этнологии. К настоящему времени они стали классиками польской антропологии, которые обучили новое поколение польских этнологов и руководят несколькими институтами антропологии. Наибольшее влияние на группу и ее последователей оказали такие теории, как семиотика культуры Тартуско-Московской школы (Лотман, Успенский, Топоров, Иванов) и французский структурализм (Леви-Стросс, Барт). На этой теоретической основе они выработали свой, специфический угол зрения, поставили свои цели и развили собственные методы интерпретации, используя термины “текст”, “миф” и “мифологическое мышление” в качестве ключевых. Они объясняли явления культуры, на первый взгляд находящиеся далеко друг от друга (как, например, отношение “мы – другие”, имидж тела, реклама, сама антропология), в рамках мифологического мышления, создавая таким образом самую продуктивную и атрактивную интерпретационную систему в польской гуманитарной и социальной науках. В 90-е годы, противостоя натиску критической этнографии, деконструкции и постмодернистской антропологии, они выстояли и даже укрепили свой проект, поскольку потенциал рефлексивности и самосознания уже был заложен в той семиотике, с которой они «стартовали».

### Kultuurisemiootika ja uus poola etnoloogia

Vaatluse all on semiootilise etnoloogia olukord tänapäeva Poolas (seotud rühmitusega Uus Poola Etnoloogia/*New Polish Ethnology*), selle sisemised ja välised mõjutajad, eripära ja reaktsioon teistele teoreetilistele seisukohtadele. Rühmituse *New Polish Ethnology* asutasid 1980ndate alguses noored etnoloogid vastukaaluks positivistliku etnoloogia domineerimisele Poolas. Tänapäeval on neist saanud poola antropoloogia klassikud, kes on välja õpetanud uue põlvkonna ja juhivad mitut antropoloogia instituuti. Teooriatest mõjutavad seda gruppi kõige enam Tartu–Moskva kultuurisemiootika (Lotman, Uspenski, Todorov, Ivanov) ja

prantsuse strukturalism (Levi-Strauss, Barthes). Sellel teoreetilisel baasil arendasid nad välja oma, eripärase vaatenurga, oma eesmärgid ja tõlgendamismeetodid koos võtmeterminega — “tekst”, “müüt” ja “müütiline mõtlemine”. Nad seletasid kultuurinähtusi (esmapilgul justkui üksteisest eemalasuvaid, nagu “meie-teised” suhe, keha imago, reklaam, antropoloogia ise) müütilise mõtlemise raamistikus, luues nii kõige produktiivsema ja atraktiivsema interpretatsioonisüsteemi poola humanitaar- ja sotsiaalteadustes. 90ndatel, seistes vastu kriitilise etnograafia, dekonstruktsiooni ja postmodernse antropoloogia survele, jäid nad püsima ja isegi tugevdasid oma projekti, kuna refleksiivsuse ja eneseteadlikkuse potentsiaal oli juba olemas selles semiootikas, kust nad alustasid.

## Umwelt ethics

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**Abstract.** In this paper I will sketch an Umwelt ethics, i.e., an ethics that rests heavily on fundamental features of Jakob von Uexküll's Umwelt theory. In the course of an interpretation of the Umwelt theory, a number of concepts are introduced. These include *ontological niche*, *common-Umwelt*, *total Umwelt* and *bio-ontological monad*. I then present an Uexküllian reading of the deep ecology platform. It is suggested that loss of biodiversity, considered as a physio-phenomenal entity, is the most crucial aspect of the ecological crisis, which can be understood as an ontological crisis.

*The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves.*

Næss 1993: 197

*Das gesamte Universum, das aus lauter Umwelten besteht, wird durch die Funktionskreise zusammengehalten und nach einem Gesamtplan zu einer Einheit verbunden, die wir Natur nennen.*

Uexküll 1928: 221

An Umwelt ethics can be vaguely defined as an ethics that rests heavily on fundamental features of Jakob von Uexküll's Umwelt theory. Admittedly, in principle there can be several, conflicting Umwelt ethics. My approach will be to sketch an ethics that, in addition to the Umwelt theory, draws from deep ecology, as advocated by Arne Næss (e.g., Næss 1989). The outcome will be an Uexküllian



interpretation or specification of The Deep Ecology Platform (Næss 1993: 197).

By the Umwelt theory, I understand Uexküll's thinking on the nature of signs, phenomena and living beings, as expressed in texts such as *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (1909; 1921), *Theoretische Biologie* (1920; 1928; cf. 1926), *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen* (Uexküll, Kriszat 1956 [1934]; cf. Uexküll 1992) and *Bedeutungslehre* (Uexküll, Kriszat 1956 [1940]; cf. Uexküll 1982). "The expanded Umwelt theory" might be a more appropriate designation (a more refined classification of Uexküll's philosophically infected biological thinking is found in Pobojevska 1993a; 1993b). Furthermore, one might say that rather than simply interpreting the Umwelt theory, I elaborate some of Uexküll's ideas. If so, my use of Uexküll's ideas can be termed *The Umwelt ontology* (cf. Tønnessen 2001; 2002: 9–12, 50–53).

Whereas the Umwelt ontology and its application in a reading of the deep ecology platform will be the subject of the second part of this paper, the first will be devoted to the biosemiotic and historical context of Umwelt ethics. It will encompass a review of biosemiotics and the environmental crisis, Jesper Hoffmeyer's justification of attributing moral status and Uexküll's dealings with ethical and political matters.

## I

A common view amongst biosemioticians seems to be that the ecological crisis can be regarded as a large-scale, real-life falsification of mechanist, reductionist biology. Or, if that is too bold a statement, at least there is not much doubt, in the mind of biosemioticians, that the success of such a scientific program is one of the reasons why the crisis has escalated. Thure von Uexküll, for example, claims that it is the predominant scientific thought that has led us to bring nature into its present desolated state (J. v. Uexküll 1980: back page)<sup>1</sup>. Jesper Hoffmeyer (1993: 162) similarly conceives of the common scientific view as "a paradigmatic view of nature which supports the rationality

<sup>1</sup> He comments on "der modernen Naturwissenschaft [...] und die damit verbundene Geisteshaltung [...] die dazu geführt hat, daß wir unsere Welt in kaum hundert Jahren in einen so desolaten Zustand gebracht haben".

of that homogenizing and simplifying human practice which is the very core of the ecological crisis". "While nobody should deny the triumphs of the reductionist program in science", he claims, "it has become increasingly visible that big, important, and perhaps chronic lacunas remain in the epistemological basis of modern civilization" (Hoffmeyer 1993: 153–154). Luis Emilio Bruni (2001: 294), as well, considers the ecological crisis mainly an epistemological crisis. He regards the ecological crisis as the logical outcome of "mechanistic biology, genetic reductionism, economical determinism and neo-Darwinian cultural and biological perspectives" (Bruni 2001: 298–299).

As Riste Keskpaik (2001: 313) observes, "in the context of the deepening environmental crisis [...] a semiotic approach opens a new perspective for identifying the origin of the problem in our mind/culture rather than in nature". In line with common bio- and ecosemiotic thought, Winfried Nöth (2001: 76) holds that the roots of the ecological crisis "are in a Cartesian dualism between culture and nature, which has opposed humans to the rest of the natural world for centuries". Referring to "the manifest failures of action taken within the existing rubric of scientific, technological, economic, and political rationality", Max Oelschlaeger (2001: 220) claims that ecosemiotics, the study of sign processes that relate organisms to their natural environment (Nöth 2001: 71), can "facilitate *the sustainability transition*" (Oelschlaeger 2001: 220).

In spite of this seemingly widespread eco-political motivation, not many biosemioticians have dealt explicitly with topics of normative ethics. Kalevi Kull, in "Biosemiotics and the problem of intrinsic value of nature", is primarily concerned with descriptive ethics, establishing that "the origin of value can be seen as a problem of [...] biosemiotics" (Kull 2001: 355). In an interesting passage, however, he notes that "the necessary turn to a biocentric view [...] may mean that the valuing process is extended so that the experiential world of any living being is included" (Kull 2001: 356).

### Signs of value in the biosphere: Hoffmeyer

The first systematical exploration of biosemiotics' relevance for environmental ethics is found in Jesper Hoffmeyer's 1993 article "Biosemiotics and ethics" (cf. Hoffmeyer 1996: 129–146). He argues

(1993: 173) that by admitting interpretative processes to be a core phenomenon of life in general, one can reach the conclusion that living creatures should be considered as moral subjects, i.e., subjects that deserve moral consideration.

Hoffmeyer's justification of the attribution of moral status is inspired by the Norwegian philosopher Jon Wetlesen, for whom Spinoza's definition of subjecthood acts as a point of departure. According to Spinoza (1951: Pt. III, Prop. IV), "everything, in so far as it is in itself, endavours to persist in its own being". Wetlesen (1993) argues that all non-human individual organisms and supra-individual wholes that resembles moral agents by showing self-determination, or striving, can be regarded as subjects with a moral standing. Hoffmeyer's equivalent of the Spinozean perseverance is his own concept code-duality (Hoffmeyer 1993: 165). Organic code-duality, a property common to all living beings, can be understood as the semiotic interplay between the analog (cell) and digital (DNA) versions of a living being (cf. Hoffmeyer 1996: 44). In conclusion (Hoffmeyer 1993: 173), "all living systems deserve to be considered as moral subjects, but some of them more so than others". As a parameter that might eventually be used for grading among moral subjects, he suggests semiotic freedom, i.e., the level of richness or depth of meaning that a being is able to communicate. Hoffmeyer (1993: 172; cf. 1996: 139) attributes true subjectivity, and, consequently, moral status, at the individual level to all animals possessing a complex nervous system. Primitive organisms, on the other hand, such as amoebas or mealworms, are moral subjects only at species level.

A premise for this judgment is that human beings are "perfectly capable of identifying with any entity that might occupy positions similar to those we occupy ourselves in the bio-logics of nature" (Hoffmeyer 1993: 172). In Hoffmeyer's interpretation, this means that we are capable of identifying with "*umwelt*-builders in the broadest sense of this term, i.e. even species of lower level organisms lacking neural systems but which, *qua* species, nevertheless create a kind of (genomic) *umwelt* through their evolutionary incorporation of ecological niche conditions into the future" (Hoffmeyer 1993: 172).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As this passage exemplifies, Hoffmeyer departs from Uexküll's understanding of the *Umwelt* concept. In an Uexküllian setting, it makes no sense to talk about "genomic *Umwelten*", since each and every *Umwelt* is in fact the privilege of the subject in question. Consequently, although evidently founded on biosemiotics, Hoffmeyer's ethics cannot be regarded an *Umwelt* ethics.

While Hoffmeyer (1993: 172, cf. 1996: 133) explicitly adopts Næss' definition of identification, his usage of the term is not by far as flexible as Næss'. Næss (1990) defines an identification process as "a process whereby another being's interests are instinctively responded to as though they were one's own interests". Næss explains:

Through identification, higher level unity is experienced: from identifying with 'one's nearest', higher unities are created through circles of friends, local communities, tribes, compatriots, races, humanity, life, and, ultimately, as articulated by religious and philosophical leaders, unity with the supreme whole, the 'world' in a broader and deeper sense than the usual. (Næss 1985: 260)

Although he admits that mountains are not alive in a strict scientific sense, Næss himself claims that he identifies with Hallingskaret, where he has a cottage. Identification, as Næss conceives of it, has no natural barrier, and is not an inter-subjective, but a subjective phenomenon.

To Hoffmeyer's credit, his criterion for deciding which entities we are capable of identifying with is so vague that it allows for a certain flexibility. This vagueness, or flexibility, however, is not mirrored in his conclusion. If we are capable of identifying with any entity that might occupy positions similar to those we occupy ourselves in the bio-logics of nature, then why not a mountain, or an individual mealworm? And, more generally: if interpretative processes are to form the basis of attribution of moral status, why should code-duality be considered the relevant property? In what way is organic code-duality related to the actual well-being of a creature or a living system, in the same sense as self-determination or perseverance is?

### Uexküll and the German morals

Before I turn to the Umwelt ethics and its foundation in the Umwelt theory, I will give a brief account of Uexküll's personal ethical and political views. Noteworthy, only in one sense can Umwelt ethics be said to be an ethics in the spirit of Uexküll: namely, that it is founded on an interpretation of the Umwelt theory.

Baron Jakob von Uexküll was a true aristocrat. In *Staatsbiologie* (Uexküll 1920: 18), he argues, by way of biological analogies, that the monarchy is the only natural form of government. In contrast, the idea

of democracy is just as absurd as if “in our body [...] the majority of the body’s cells were to decide in place of the cortical cells, which impulse the nerves should transmit” (Uexküll 1920: 46<sup>3</sup>; translated in Harrington 1999: 59). One month after the declaration of the democratic Weimar Republic, Uexküll wrote, in a private letter to race philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain, that a revolution “is always cancer, that is, the growth of individual cells, and the destruction of the organs that goes hand in hand with that” (translated in Harrington 1999: 58<sup>4</sup>). In another private letter to Chamberlain, Uexküll summarized what he conceived of as the greatest threats of the time in two sentences: “When the machine rules, the personality perishes. The bolsheviks have no personality, nearly all of them are soulless jews”.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, anti-semitism has no place in the Umwelt ethics that is the topic of this paper. An account of Uexküll’s views on The Weimar Republic, jews and national socialism is found in Harrington (1999: 35–71).

In “Darwin und die englische Moral”, the only text to my knowledge in which he deals explicitly with animal ethics, Uexküll (1917) contrasts the German morals with the English, and Kant’s example with Darwin’s. “The German imperative of Kant”, Uexküll holds (Uexküll 1917: 225,<sup>6</sup> translated in Harrington 1999: 55), “requires every individual to be an autonomous lawgiver on moral issues”. In contrast, the ethics propagated by Darwin, and typical for the English, rests on the social mechanism of praise and criticism (“Lob” and “Tadel”).

According to Darwin (1882), in the course of cultural development, man’s moral sensitivity is refined, so as to embrace an ever-expanding group of human subjects, eventually even animals. “Darwin’s position”, Uexküll comments, “can be briefly summarized in the

<sup>3</sup> “Es ist somit ein Zustand eingetreten, der auch in unserem Körper eintreten würde, wenn an Stelle der Großhirnzelle die Mehrzahl der Körperzellen zu beschließen hätte, welche Impulse den Nerven zu übermitteln sind” (Harrington 1999: 231).

<sup>4</sup> “[Revolutionen] ist immer Krebs, d.h. das Wuchtern der Einzelzellen und damit Hand in Hand gehend die Zerstörung der Organe” (Harrington 1999: 230).

<sup>5</sup> Partly my translation. “Wenn die Maschine regiert, geht die Persönlichkeit zugrunde. Die Bolschewisten haben keine Persönlichkeit, sie sind fast alle zugenlose Juden” (Harrington 1999: 65, 233).

<sup>6</sup> “Der deutsche Imperative Kants macht jeden Einzelnen zum selbstherrlichen Gesetzgeber im moralischen Dingen.”

following way: The bigger the herd, the higher the morality".<sup>7</sup> He claims:

It is not, as Darwin holds, an artificial barrier that is an impediment to the extension of moral consideration to all peoples and to the animals, rather, the ethics that is founded on praise and criticism is itself the barrier for the extension to fellow creatures whose praise and criticism one neither hears nor takes any note of. (Uexküll 1917: 224)<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, Uexküll does not suggest an alternative strategy of justification, nor does he discuss whether attribution of moral status to animals is possible within a Kantian framework (cf. Kant 1997).

## II

### The Umwelt ontology — a conceptual framework

An ontological subject can be defined as someone for which something appears. According to the Umwelt theory, all reality is subjective appearance (1928: 2), and — as Thure von Uexküll (1992: 285) formulates it — “all living organisms, including cells, behave as subjects, responding only to signs and — for as long as they live — not to causal impulses”. Through semiotic agency, all living beings are sign utilizers, and therefore ontological subjects, i.e., subjects of the phenomenal world.

However, while Uexküll (1928: 62) clearly states that all living beings are surrounded by an individual phenomenal world, it should be noted that the statement quoted in the motto of this paper is not really accurate. Phrased in modern terminology, Umwelten can be attributed to protists, bacteria and animals (including the animal that does not want to be an animal, i.e., man), but not to plants and fungi (Uexküll, Kriszat 1956 [1940]: 111). Instead, they have *Wohnhüllen*,

<sup>7</sup> “Darwins Standpunkt kann man kurz dahin zusammenfassen: Je größer die Herde, um so höher die Moral” (Uexküll 1917: 223, translated in Harrington 1999: 55).

<sup>8</sup> My translation. “Es ist keine künstlerische Schranke, wie Darwin meint, die sich der Ausbreitung seiner Moral auf alle Völker bis auf die niederen Tiere in den Weg stellt, sondern die Moral, die sich auf Lob und Tadel aufbaut, ist selbst die Schranke für die Ausbreitung über Mitgeschöpfe, deren Lob und Tadel man weder hört noch beachtet.”

in which the objects of *Umwelten* are replaced by meaning-factors. These must, along with *Umwelten*, be understood as a category of individual phenomenal worlds.<sup>9</sup> While only *Umwelt*-carriers take part in functional cycles, plants and fungi, as well, partake in contrapuntal relations, i.e., subject-object-relations characterized by a mutual correspondence between the two entities. There are at least two kinds of contrapuntal relations: Relations between two meaning-utilizers (e.g. a flower and a bee, or a predator and its prey), and, more generally, relations between a meaning-utilizer and a meaning-carrier or meaning-factor in its phenomenal world (e.g., an eye and the sun). Functional cycles can be regarded as special cases of contrapuntal relations. The known phenomenal world, therefore, consists of *Umwelten* and *Wohnhüllen* that, through the interconnectedness that the various contrapuntal relations result in, comprise what we call nature.

In this intricate web — of life, of semiosis, of world — we occupy an *ontological niche*. The ontological niche of a being can be defined as the set of contrapuntal relations that it takes part in at a given point of natural history.<sup>10</sup> The ontological niche of a being delimits the “area” that this being occupies in the phenomenal world. Simultaneously, through its ontological niche, the phenomenal world of a being is intertwined with other phenomenal worlds, thus integrating this being into the society of phenomenal subjects.

Although the diverse phenomenal worlds at some points are intertwined, each and every individual phenomenal world remains the property of the subject in question, and its phenomena appears to this being only. In case of contrapuntal relations between two meaning-utilizers, each of the two subjects appear as an object or factor in the phenomenal world of the other, but they don't share phenomena. This holds true for human beings as well. However, while one cannot share *Umwelt*, one can take part in a *common-Umwelt*.<sup>11</sup> By a common-

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Uexküll, Kriszat 1956 [1940]: 111: “Die Pflanze begegnet den äußeren Wirkungen nicht mit Hilfe von rezeptorischen oder effektorischen Organen, aber dank einer lebenden Zellschicht ist sie befähigt, aus ihrer Wohnhülle die Reizauswahl zu treffen.”

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Hoffmeyer (1996: 140): “The character of the animal's *umwelt* is what defines the spectrum of positions that an animal can occupy in the bio-logical sphere, its semiotic niche”.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hoffmeyer (1996: 112): “Through speech, human beings broke out of their own subjectivity because it enabled them to share one large, common *umwelt*”.

Umwelt, I understand a particular part of a group of Umwelten, belonging to a group of subjects that have certain *schemata* in common. In these Umwelten, the same kind of perceptual or conceptual objects appear to the subjects as the same kind of meaningful objects. One example of common-Umwelten is Umwelten of professions (“Berufsumwelten”; cf. Uexküll 1910: 126<sup>12</sup>).

A different type of abstract phenomenal entities can be termed *total Umwelten*. By a total Umwelt, I understand the sum total of the manifold phenomena appearing in the Umwelten of a particular group of subjects. An example that is mentioned by Uexküll (1928: 181) is the total Umwelt of a species.<sup>13</sup>

Noteworthy, according to Uexküll, the subject and its phenomenal world are not separate entities, but, as illustrated by the functional cycle, together make up one unit.<sup>14</sup> One could call this belief *ontological holism*. To signify this unified entity, Friedrich Brock (1934) introduced the term “Tier-Umwelt-monade”. However, Uexküll’s ontological holism is not restricted to Umwelt-carriers, and I therefore suggest to replace Brock’s term with the more general expression *bio-ontological monad* (for my usage of the term “bio-ontology”, see Tønnessen 2001: 684). While a bio-ontological monad is a being and its subjective world considered as an inseparable whole, the expression bio-ontological entity can be taken to designate, even more generally, the union of a biological entity and its phenomena, or — in the case of lower level entities — signs. Relevant biological entities are cells, organs (lower level entities), species, ecosystems and the biosphere (higher level entities). The phenomenal counterpart to the biosphere, i.e., the sum total of all living beings of Earth, is the known phenomenal world. Taken as a bio-ontological entity, it represents the inseparable whole of life and world. In lack of a better designation, it might be called *the bio-phenomenal sphere*.

<sup>12</sup> “In ihm Gegenstände unterschieden werden, die anderen Berufsklassen ganz gleichartig erscheinen”.

<sup>13</sup> “Wenn wir die Funktionskreise aller Einzelwesen einer Art zusammenbauen könnten, so würden wir die gemeinsame Umwelt der ganzen Art enthalten, und diese würde entsprechend den Abweichungen der Einzelwesen größer und reicher sein als die Umwelt der einzelnen.”

<sup>14</sup> Uexküll (1909: 196) holds that “die Natur und das Tier, nicht wie es den Anschein hat, zwei getrennte Dinge ist, sondern daß sie zusammen einen höheren Organismus bilden. [...] Die Umwelt, wie sie sich in der Gegenwelt des Tieres spiegelt, ist immer ein Teil des Tieres selbst, durch seine Organisation aufgebaut und verarbeitet zu einem unauflöselichen Ganzen mit dem Tiere selbst.”



Even though human beings are bio-ontological monads like everybody else, we do possess some distinctive features. In an Uexküllian language, these can be summarized in seven points.

1. Humans are capable of perceiving their own actions. This has the effect that in the case of human Umwelten, Merkwelt and Wirkwelt are not clearly separated entities (cf. Uexküll 1922: 181).
2. The number of *schemata* that a human operates with is flexible and has potential to grow as it gets familiar with, or invents, new objects.
3. Human Umwelten are characterized by a high level of individuality. This has the effect that one human Umwelt can differ substantially from another.
4. Participation in different common-Umwelten (cultures, subcultures) are of crucial importance to human Umwelt experience.
5. In addition to the four main types of functional cycles (cf. Uexküll 1928: 101), humans engage in specifically human functional cycles. One of these is the functional cycle of the moral subject.
6. Every human has, as part of its Umwelt, a *conceptual world*, incorporating concepts of language as well as, in a vaguer sense, concepts, simple or complex, of art, religion etc. The conceptual world has its roots in sensory perception, and its concepts are meaningful only by reference — direct or indirect — to concrete objects of perception (cf. Uexküll 1928: 334–340).
7. The perceptual objects of humans are under most circumstances colored, imprinted and structured by various concepts. Consequently, humans can be said to have a *conceptualized Umwelt experience*.

### Deep ecology

The deep ecology platform was originally formulated by Arne Næss and George Sessions in the mid-eighties.<sup>15</sup> In one of its versions, it reads:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth).

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<sup>15</sup> Although Næss (1936, cf. particularly 64–70) makes use of the Umwelt theory in his doctoral thesis, he has not, to my knowledge, referred to Uexküll in the context of deep ecology.

These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
  3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
  4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life *requires* a smaller human population.
  5. Present interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
  6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
  7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
  8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.
- (Næss 1993: 197)

### *1. Biosemiosis and the well-being and flourishing of life*

In a biosemiotic context, a moral agent can be defined as someone who stands for itself as one who is required to act according to certain moral standards, i.e., a being who takes part in the functional cycle of the moral subject. When this functional cycle comes into use, the moral subject, i.e., the object in the subject-object relation, has a moral tone. In other words, the moral agent experiences a call for moral treatment. The object in question can be concrete or abstract, a particular being or living system that is encountered by the moral agent, or an abstract (though real, ontological) entity, such as "wolves", "nature", "life".

According to Næss (1993: 198), the first point in the deep ecology platform "refers to the biosphere, [...] individuals, species, populations, habitat, as well as human and non-human cultures". Næss also mentions landscapes and ecosystems. Given an Uexküllian framework, all of these must be understood as bio-ontological entities. A culture, for example, can be defined as a certain common-Umwelt that allows for a certain total Umwelt. The fact that the flourishing of human life rests on the flourishing of concepts should result in politi-

cal and cultural tolerance. As for ecosystems and inhabited landscapes, one could probably reach a bio-ontological definition by way of the concepts of contrapuntal relations and total Umwelt. A habitat might be regarded as the subjective space, or perhaps *Heimat* (home), of an individual or population.

The reason why it makes sense to regard all semiotic agents, i.e., bio-ontological monads, as moral subjects, is that in respect to these entities, our actions make a difference. Only for semiotic agents can our actions ultimately appear as signs that influence their well-being. In capacity of meaning-utilizers, all semiotic agents, be it the simplest creature, are able to distinguish between what they need and what is irrelevant or harmful to them. As Kull (2001: 361) says: "Everything alive has needs *per se*, not so the lifeless nor the dead". Wherever there is semiosis, there are needs, and even though actual moral treatment is also a question of practicability, attribution of moral status is a principal one.

But why regard higher-level bio-ontological entities as moral subjects? Because a living being is not an isolated incident. In a profound sense, a subject is what it relates to. The contrapuntal relations that it takes part in do, largely, define what being this subject is all about. The individual self branch off into the society of phenomenal subjects and into the phenomenal world, it is already social, already worldly, already more-than-individual. You cannot really value a subject without at the same time valuing the web of contrapuntal relations that it takes part in.

## 2. *Biological, i.e. physio-phenomenal, i.e. behavioural diversity*

The second point has one empirical and one normative element. First, that "life itself, as a process over evolutionary time, implies an increase of diversity and richness" (Næss 1993: 198), and second, that the diversity and richness of life forms have value in themselves. In the context of an Uexküllian ethics, diversity of life forms reads as physiological and phenomenal diversity, and is accompanied by behavioural diversity. This interpretation is consistent with Uexküll's statement (1928: 198) that each appearing functional cycle (understood as a steady, vital contrapuntal relation between two subjects, or a subject and an object, that has not previously been connected) founds a new animal species. The belief that not only living beings or

systems have value in themselves, but also the diversity and richness of life forms, stresses the value of the flourishing of the bio-phenomenal sphere, a flourishing of life and world alike.

### *3. Vital needs — or: Can one eat a moral subject?*

The third point states that humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity of life except to satisfy vital needs. In light of the value of the individual beings' flourishing and well-being, it is reasonable to interpret this principle as valid both on an individual and an ecological level, relevant for animal ethics as well as eco-ethics. What counts as a vital need, however, remains to be specified. At the ecological level, human interference with the ontological niches of other species and populations could serve as a starting point. Human societies have no right to disturb those of the contrapuntal relations of other life forms that are vital for the survival of a species or a population, except for the sake of cultural survival.

On the individual level, the actual moral judgment will probably rely on the moral agent's empathy or ability to identify with others, and what counts as a vital need will be interpreted in this context. As your empathy grows, or comes into use, you realize that there are habits you can do without. I, for my part, am liable to state: the greater the empathy, the better — as long, that is, as it is compatible with ones' own well-being.

Empathy with animals might lead to vegetarianism, which in most cases must be considered to be compatible with satisfying one's own vital needs. However, vegetarians, and especially radical ones, such as vegans, might face some paradoxes. For example: In a world of vegans — with no animal products consumed nor produced — what would be the fate of domesticated animals? Many of them could not possibly survive on their own, since, in the course of breeding, man has become a vital counterpoint in their ontological niches. In a vegan world, we would be left with two alternatives: Either we could keep them in zoos or as a sort of pets, or we would have to let them go extinct. What the vegan should ask herself is: Is an animal that depends on human beings for its pure existence really better off not existing? If we chose the other alternative, the number of animals that we would be able to hold for the pure pleasure of their company would not be likely to even come close to the present number of

domesticated animals. And if it did, the vegan society might end up being just as energy- and land-consuming as the present meat-based society, thus worsening the conditions for wild animals. The moral of the vegans paradox is that veganism motivated by the well-being of domesticated animals is likely to be mislead. A different motivation, such as opposition against excessive human interference with the animal kingdom, makes more sense.

#### 4. Population and diversity

According to the fourth point, the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population, whereas the flourishing of non-human life requires a decrease of the human population. The belief that even with a substantially smaller human population it is possible to preserve cultural diversity implies that a decrease of population is compatible with preservation or further development of human phenomenal and behavioural diversity. The richness, diversity and flourishing of the human total Umwelt is not dependent of the present population size.

#### 5. The ontological crisis and its cause

The fifth point states that present interference with the non-human world is excessive, and that the situation is rapidly worsening. I find it appropriate to portray the ecological crisis as an *ontological crisis*, i.e., a crisis of the known phenomenal world characterized by a sudden, significant loss of phenomenal diversity. In this sense, the ecological crisis is truly a crisis of world scale — a world event indeed. Due to the complexity of the biosphere, and the ability of some creatures to survive under comparatively extreme conditions, there is not much chance that life as such will cease to exist in foreseeable future. So, it is not the end of the world. Nevertheless, it is the end of many a being's world. As life forms go extinct, so do their Umwelten or *Wohnhüllen*. The world is no longer perceived or approached in that way — or, as far as the phenomenal world is concerned, the world *is* no longer like that. The world has lost in richness.

The present loss of physio-phenomenal diversity is the work of an ever-expanding economy that is complicating and simplifying by nature and in constant conflict with the complex structure of natural entities. "When the civilizing process extends to Nature's own 'self-organizing' systems," Claus Emmeche (2001: 247) notes, "it may have catastrophic consequences when another developmental logic is imposed on natural systems. Natural systems have natural barriers. The nature of capitalist civilization is breaking down all barriers for the sake of free exchange of 'goods' and resources." The latest manifestation of the centuries old growth economy is economic globalization, i.e., the drive toward global capitalism, "the ecosemiotic effect of which is to extend the symbolic domain of exchange value into new areas of the semiosphere" (Emmeche 2001: 242). Since globalization can also be depicted as "the transgressing expansion of the Western way of life" (Emmeche 2001: 242), cultural diversity is also at stake, thus adding to the loss of phenomenal and behavioural diversity (cf. Emmeche 2001).

The current trend towards loss of worlds is not likely to be reversed until some fundamental measures are taken. In the meantime, the policy of proponents of global capitalism, such as The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization, should be resisted. Instead of adopting the Western model of development, it would be a positive contribution if emerging and transitional economies indulged in alternative models of development. So should the industrial countries.

*6. The watershed in human self-comprehension —  
or: Why I am not a revolutionary*

According to the sixth point of the deep ecology platform, policies that affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures must be changed, and the resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. In one sense, there are no simple solutions, i.e., the changes will have to be fundamental and affect several aspects of modern society. In another sense, however, there is nothing but simple, i.e., non-complicated solutions. Whereas a "complex" technological approach will involve the usage of a manifold of small-scale, low-energy, non-hazardous technologies, technofixes will be out of the question.

One recent proposal, endorsed by George W. Bush, is to inject carbon dioxide into oilfields, gasfields, coalbeds or deep saline aquifers, and store it underground. As Diss and Muttitt (2001: 28) note, “if it proves unsuccessful, after say a 25-year development time, it could be too late to start tackling the patterns of production and consumption that are at the root of the problem.” Moreover, “if large volumes of stored CO<sub>2</sub> were suddenly to leak, severe climate change would occur without even the limited time we have now for mitigation or adaption” (Diss, Muttitt 2001: 29). One might add that if a large-scale leak from these soon to be established storages appears in a distant future, the result could be a second human-inflicted ecological crisis.

As Oelschlaeger (2001: 221) observes, “the ecosemiotic thesis points toward a watershed event — a paradigm shift — in human self-comprehension”. In a time to come, one might regard this paradigm shift as the start of a new civilization. But a new civilization cannot be brought about through a shift of government, or through a political revolution. What the post-crisis society will look like is hard to imagine in detail, and any ready-made, full-detail vision should be regarded with a great deal of suspicion. Two elements of a new civilization, however, might be a new attitude, or none at all, to property and territory. The idea that the land, beings and resources of this planet belong to man is in my mind not compatible with true morality.

### *7. Economic growth*

The seventh point states that there should be a shift from adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living to appreciating life quality. Although I am not sure I agree with Edward Goldsmith (2001), the founder of *The Ecologist*, that economic growth is no longer an option, I am convinced it is a path we should no longer pursue. Now, one could of course argue — as many have — that the problem is not growth in itself, but its content. However, any sustainable economy — i.e., an economy that is compatible with the long-term co-existence of human culture and a richness and diversity of life forms comparable to that of today — has to meet one basic requirement: It must not have further complication of the global ecosystem as a sought, calculated or unexpected consequence. If there can be such a thing as sustainable growth, it will not have much in common with the growth of the

present economy, nor will it be tied to its logics. It will have to rest on a serious redefinition of the concept of economic growth.

### 8. An obligation

The final point of the deep ecology platform states that those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. According to Arne Næss, the frontier of the environmental crisis is long and varied, and there is a place for everyone. In this context, biosemiotics and ecosemiotics has a role to play. As Oelschlaeger (2001: 226) notes: "If ecosemiotics is to be more than academic entertainment, then an outline is in order, however provisional or elliptical, of how the ecosemiotic thesis facilitates intentional cultural change".

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### Этика умвельта

В данной статье я пытаюсь начертить принципы этики умвельта, т.е. такой этики, которая бы в своих фундаментальных признаках опиралась на положения теории умвельта Якоба фон Юкскулла. При интерпретации теории умвельта определяется ряд понятий: *онтологическая ниша, общий умвельт, тотальный умвельт, биоонтологическая монада*. Во второй части статьи предлагается, исходя из теории Юкскулла, понимание платформы глубинной экологии. Утверждается, что исчезновение биологического разнообразия (как физио-феноменного свойства) является главным аспектом экологического кризиса, и что это можно рассматривать как онтологический кризис.

### Omailma eetika

Artiklis püütakse visandada niisuguse eetika põhimõtted, mis olulisel määral tugineks Jakob von Uexkülli omailma teooria seisukohtadele. Omailma teooria tõlgendamisel määratletakse rida mõisteid: *ontoloogiline nišš, ühine omailm, totaalne omailm, bio-ontoloogiline monaad*. Artikli teises osas esitatakse süvaökoloogia platvormi tõlgendus Uexkülli vaatekohast lähtudes. Väidetakse, et bioloogilise mitmekesisuse (kui füsiofenomeense omaduse) kadu on ökokriisi kõige peamisem aspekt, ning seda tuleb mõista kui ontoloogilist kriisi.

## Rothschild's ouroborus

Review: Friedrich Salomon Rothschild, *Creation and Evolution:*

*A Biosemiotic Approach*. 1994. Mevasseret Zion, Israel:

J. Ph. Hes, C. Sorek, iv+366 pp.

Translated from the German

(*Die Evolution als innere Anpassung an Gott*;

Bonn: Bouvier Publishing Company, 1986) by Jozef Ph. Hes.

### *Myrdene Anderson*<sup>1</sup>

German-born Israeli Friedrich Salomon Rothschild (1899–1995) left behind a wealth of psychiatric-pragmatic, empirical-neurological, and exploratory-philosophical works, much leading to theory and much of that theory integrated into his final book, *Creation and Evolution*, translated from the German (1986) to English in 1994. This semiotic tome resists reviewing in any conventional sense; what seems imperative, though, is to provoke as many readers and reviewers as possible by breaking the symmetry (*pace* Spencer-Brown 1969) of our collective ignorance while indexing the ripples from an earlier discoverer of Rothschild's, Kalevi Kull (1999).

Kull dubbed Rothschild an "endemic semiotician", as Rothschild was quite aware that semiotics grounded and synthesized his own work in psychology, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, embryology, neurobiology, theoretical biology, and philosophy (and theology!), although his most intense interactive discourse community must have sometimes been limited to himself alone.

Thomas A. Sebeok was wont to identify certain prescient thinkers (e.g., Jakob von Uexküll) as "cryptosemioticians" if their work had been only unconsciously motivated by semiotics, while "protosemioticians" are those groundbreaking ancestors of the field (terms summarized by Rauch 1984). Throughout the 1980s, John Deely organized a series of symposia for the Semiotic Society of America to unpack a host of "neglected figures" in semiotics, and this commodious category has space for any and all of these species of semioticians.

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Rothschild's oeuvre towers over many of those neglected figures and cryptosemioticians, and warrants the inauguration of a renewed series of symposia to dust off the deeper roots of each of those earlier semioticians, as well as to uncover more pioneers still lurking in every imaginable field. It will be particularly fascinating when we can detect any cross-talk, any choruses, with or without the participants being aware of their syncopation. If a future semiotics can digest Rothschild's physical-cum-metaphysical turn — wherein signs also thrive in inorganic realms and where the paranormal is normalized — that putatively possible post-everything, punctuatedly-transformed semiotics might point back to Rothschild as a protosemiotician, if not *its* protosemiotician. Rothschild triangulates ordinary biological evolution through *deep time*; organismal internal integration of significant exteriors in space and time through the experience of sensation, perception, intuition, and cognition in *shallow time*; and finally the role of creation beyond all spatiotemporal realms.

Hence, Rothschild deserves to claim recognition for much besides his coining of "biosemiotics" in 1962, a year before Thomas A. Sebeok put "zoo-semiotics" on the map of our minds (Sebeok 1963). Rothschild later specified the biosemiotic as "the psychophysical nexus within the central nervous system and in other structures possessed of psychophysical functions within organisms" (Rothschild 1968: 163; see also Nöth 1990: 148). While Rothschild frames biosemiotics more narrowly — in fact being indifferent to some of the animal kingdom and other biotic realms — he nonetheless plows, sows, tends, and harvests his restricted concept more deeply than typifies other usages; one might say more devotedly as well. Keep in mind that, while he construes biosemiotics almost anthropocentrically, Rothschild's overarching semiotics is ecumenical, and recognizes sign behavior in inert as well as in living realms, even in psychokinesis and in telepathy.

Like other neglected figures choreographing the subtexts, and subversive texts, of the 20th century, Rothschild eschewed the dominant positivist paradigm(s) — paradigms that denatured the mystery and history and prehistory, that is, evolution, of ontologies; that reduced nonlinear complexity to flat complication; that sought deterministic narratives. Eerily, Rothschild celebrates creativity as did Bachelard (see Anderson 1986 for this "neglected figure") (p. 8); joins Jaynes (1976) in positing an evolution of our species' inner experience (p. 110); parallels Hutchinson (see Anderson 2000) in pursuing the negotiated configuration of insides and outsides (p. 137); anticipates Bateson (1972) in emphasizing the indivisibility of relations (p. 92); resonates with the markedness theory in linguistics (Waugh 1982) and in propositional logic (Spencer-Brown 1969) (p. 291), and dramatically adumbrates contemporary cognitive science and philosophy about body-cum-mind (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) (p. 16). But these citations to pagination in *Creation and Evolution* are superficial ones, since Rothschild probes all such themes throughout his densely-populated book.

Rothschild does not cite any of the particular neglected figures above, although he could well have encountered them, as he ranged widely and wildly in the literature. Prominent among the neglected and not-so-neglected semioticians he does cite, however, are: Klages, von Weizsaecker, Peirce, von Uexküll, Dilthey, Teilhard de Chardin, Fromm, Erikson, Buber, Whorf, Koestler, Waddington, Jantsch, Ricoeur, Chomsky, and Prigogine — but especially the phenomenology of Klages (e.g., 1921). Despite the voracious appetite of Rothschild, and despite his scattered resonances with still other thinkers, he has rendered a cosmology unto itself. I leave others to discuss the consonance of a creator-god together with psychokinesis in semiotic theory, or theories. Rather, I will nibble on smaller crumbs that suit the capacity of my interpretive organs.

But first, even a less ambitious reviewer would point out some “rich points” (Agar 1996), or are they glitches! The above-cited full title, starting with the super-title, *Creation and Evolution*, appears on the book’s cover, whereas on the title page the subtitle is missing: *A Biosemiotic Approach*. The subtitle seems less than necessary, yet more than appropriate, and very helpful in English, especially for its prime audience. Immediately one notices that the original German title was quite different, referring to “inner adaptation” and “God”. Indeed, a page showing this German title translated into English appears *between* the title page and acknowledgment pages, *and* the table of contents followed by the introduction (only there does pagination start, with p. i) — reading “Evolution as Inner Adaptation to God: On the symbolic interpretation of the structure of the brain and the philosophy of biosemiotics”. This review will touch on the former (inner-adaptation), and also on outer-adaptation, but not on the latter (God). Note that pages prior to the introduction are not incorporated into any numbering system, but that will not handicap this review.

In addition, the English volume’s table of contents indicates no titles for the book’s three parts, which captions are nonetheless made explicit leafing through the text, and prove useful to the reader. Part One is “The Role of Inner Adaptation in the Biosemiotic Theory of Evolution” (p. 1), containing chapters 2 through 16. Chapters 17 through 27 comprise Part Two, “The Inner-Adaptation Between Sign Systems” (p. 97); and chapters 28 through 52 make up the final Part Three, “Inner-Adaptation in Religion and History” (p. 175), almost half of the book. The appendices cover a list of abbreviations, a glossary, a bibliography, and the index—an essential touchstone for a book whose contents spiral and swirl from head to tail. “The carpet too is moving under you”, a 1960s lyric from Country Joe and the Fish, came to the rescue of my mind as I tried to meet Rothschild by going only half way.

The glossary of 18 items will not bail out the reader; in fact, some entries attribute a notion *to* Rothschild, suggesting that the glossary was composed and appended by someone else. Compared with the glossary, the index is much more generous on the surface, yet if one consults “fertilization”, the

only reference will turn out to be late in the chapter on Yoga, and the first reference for “pole” sends one to the glossary. This aside, if there is any real impediment to surfing in this book, it would be the absence of figures. Well, there is an unlabeled table on the penultimate page of the book, characterizing in two columns “inner-adaptation” and “outer-adaptation”, corresponding to bodily left and right, and ending with sacrifice and conquest, respectively. As to the absent figures, perhaps Rothschild very cleverly left that for us to complete!

The 52 chapters are uniformly slender, which is fortunate, although they might with benefit have been structured to maximize our cognitive proclivities and capacities (referring to Miller’s [1956] “seven plus-or-minus two”), especially as the subject matter so often dwells on cognition and the central nervous system (CNS)! The bite-sized chapters lure the reader like a serpent, but if the chapters’ contents are apples, it is the apples which digest the reader, rather than vice-versa. Unlike with McLuhan, the medium is not the message, or is it: perhaps the structure and content of *Creation and Evolution* induce a mind-set receptive to issues of spirit, spirits, and the spiritual? It is certainly the case that Rothschild’s notions grow like ganglia and tangle recursively about and throughout the text, inviting the uninitiated to explore in a nonlinear fashion.

Consequently, I will browse, not graze, on certain *other* topics of immediate interest to me as an anthropologist, linguist, and general-purpose semiotician. So many of Rothschild’s central themes thread throughout virtually all the chapters, so systematic and exhaustive grazing will not be called for or even feasible. Given Rothschild’s own early research into morphological and physiological lateralization throughout much of the animal kingdom — culminating in his observations about human brain lateralization — asymmetry is a theme that decorates most of the discussion about the human CNS.

Peeling off from this theme of the brain-mind-spirit-soul-CNS, is the body itself (pp. 282–284), which of course is also asymmetric and implicated in the functions of the CNS.

Finally, from the asymmetries, Rothschild draws some ethical implications for the state of the earth and its populations (pp. 9–12, 280–281, 322–326), which I can summarize, and some resolutions, which I cannot. All asymmetries organize around communication, particularly through hierarchizing bootstrappings of insides and outsides, fertile sites for the playground of the structures and meanings of signs.

### **Asymmetries all the way down, and up**

Rothschild’s complaint with Darwinism *cum* Neo-Darwinism is that it allows for no distinction between “inner and outer adaptation” (p. 3). This is where

he asserts his first cut, an asymmetry, and many other asymmetries cascade in turn: from cerebral hemispheric lateralization to bodily asymmetries, the latter much less acknowledged but at least as compelling, and more so if one takes into account that lateralization of all bodies antedates that of the human brain (pp. 282–284). Rothschild was a pioneer in this research dating from the 1920s, inasmuch as he published results on the subject already in 1930.

Let's then visit the body. "The left body side is open to the world" (p. 282). The left is endowed with some sort of nonlinear topology providing a matched impedance with the substrate. "It is built in such a way as to fuse with the world's influences and capable of transforming itself to obtain an inner adaptation to the essential characteristics of the environment" (p. 282). It seems that the bodily left corresponds to the brain's right — which indeed is open to pattern rather than linear logic. Of course, this discussion stereotypes the left-right asymmetries most typical within brains and within bodies, especially regarding hands. It is, however, an empirical question how dedicated that linkage is between brain and body, or between brain and hand and balance of body, and worth exploring briefly.

We know more about brainedness and handedness, or think we do, than about the body generally. Besides the ambi-minded and ambidextrous, there are at least four configurations, not just two: first the by far most numerous left-brained/right-handed and second the seldom right-brained/left-handed. There also occur more than incidentally the left-brained/left-handed and the right-brained/right handed. Our terminology sadly labels one pole of the asymmetries "dominant", a pretty muscular word, and the complementary pole "non-dominant". Regarding cerebral hemispheres, dominant refers to some "language centers" typically in the left hemisphere, and these actually index temporal, syntagmatic, linear *speech* production, not spatial, paradigmatic, nonlinear *language* storage. Communicating between and contributing to those hemispheres is literal connective tissue, the *corpus callosum*, found among mammals and birds, which orchestrates the increasingly specialized, or lateralized, "functions" attributed to each hemisphere throughout early ontogeny. Moving to the hand, "dominance" refers most often to the one preferred for writing (should one live in a society with written language), or for eating (unless otherwise proscribed). This terminology masks *other* roles for the "dominant" hemisphere and hand, and *all* the roles of the "non-dominant" but equally essential organs.

Rothschild understandably enough simplifies his discussion to the stereotypic "functions" and their locations (p. 289), resorting with few reservations to the notion of "dominance" (pp. 73, 283). Although he outlines how reversals between dominance and non-dominance come about, he is mute on its incidence, which may well also vary across populations. Rothschild also fails to address two questions already lurking in the literature: (1) can handedness be a proxy for the asymmetry throughout the rest of the body; and (2) how dedicated *or* uncoupled are the brain and body, or the brain and hand

and balance of body? He mentions only in passing (p. 77) that Penfield and Roberts reported cases of nonalignment of left-dominant brainedness with right-dominant handedness. In spite of this relative silence, Rothschild's discussion of the body deserves top billing — and this research started 75 years ago! His work integrated opportunistic naturalistic observation and quite radical experimental procedures (the latter of course not with humans), together with scientific results and philosophical musings reported in the literature from around the world.

Rothschild provides hints to some of these somatic puzzles. "The right side is more tuned to self-assertion" (p. 282); this certainly could apply to the hand, confirming a link between the body generally and the hand. The left side of the body and its communication systems are in tune with the "creative intentions" of the whole, being more "divine", while the right side of the body attunes to outer adaptation (p. 317). I took careful notice of the following associated with the left side: the stomach, blood and blood circulation, heart — all left — "[...] nutrients and oxygen [...] reach the body via the left atrium and left ventricle" (p. 282). Numerous circulatory vehicles in a number of phyla originate ontogenetically on the left, and in a counter-clockwise pattern. These details reveal Rothschild's embryological roots.

Polarization is not confined to left and right, but can also be between up and down. "In addition to the decussion between the sides of the body, there is an inversion of above and beneath in the human cerebrum compared to the localization of the mid-brain roof" — such that human lower appendages connect to the CNS above and the head on the bottom of the cerebral cortical gyri (p. 317).

Most people have become aware of the odd double-wiring of each eye, to which research Rothschild contributed; in fact, he carried out a "comparative semiotic analysis" of the optical structures in arthropods, cephalopods, and vertebrates, published in 1950 (p. 117). The "signs of foreign bodies" are absorbed in the "own body" and represented as alien, leading to two centers. When the two centers collaborate, Rothschild terms that "fusion". Interestingly, bilaterally symmetric (well, almost symmetric) creatures move horizontally and their vision is geared to communication of the contrast between their own bodies and others in motion (p. 119). He also remarks on the inner tension that flows from the upright posture and gait of humans, situating the CNS's noetic system above much in our significant outer world (p. 140). This also leads him to consider sleep and wakefulness, termed a stressful vigilance. Among other conditions scrutinized are play, miming, laughing, smiling, and crying, including the lateral movement of the mouth in the latter activities. Rothschild would no doubt be delighted with some very current research on the babbling of babies, wherein slowed videotapes revealed which utterances were genuine nonrandom babble with semantic meaning — these initiating with movement on the right side of the mouth (and presumably the left side of the brain).



In inspecting other asymmetries in the wider animal kingdom, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, Rothschild finds many examples of morphological skewing. He goes on to observe asymmetries in locomotion, but falls shy of answering the specific questions I pose below.

Asymmetry has long fascinated me, and one puzzle has been the tendency for humans to veer counter-clockwise in *open* territory; well, at least in the northern hemisphere! No, we would be surprised at a Coriolis effect when we're dealing with a single significantly asymmetric species. Then there are reindeer, again in the far northern hemisphere, who consistently circulate counter-clockwise in *enclosed* space. I had a hypothesis about humans, just considering the placement of the heart and the possibility that the right leg might swing a bit farther, pivoting on the more heavily rooted left. Then it seemed that the different size of the two feet could vary by sex—particularly since mothers holding babies on the left and near their heart eventually expand the width and length of the left foot. The variables were multiplying. Some 30 years ago I took this matter to my mentor, G. Evelyn Hutchinson, who said that the Victorians pondered some of these questions and that the issues were probably overdue for being pulled onto a front burner. Reading Rothschild now does not resolve matters, which are much too interesting just to cancel out by answering them, but Rothschild does permit sharpening some of the questions and generating many more.

For instance, Rothschild would concur that the left foot, on average, would be more "rooted", and attuned to the earth. Sure enough, he notes that in a canoe, the right side will be more strongly moved along than the left (p. 283). No mention of humans in open territory or of reindeer in confined landscapes, nor of canoes propelled by left-handed (but only right-brained?) individuals! Anecdotal evidence from several semiotician-colleagues in Tartu confirms my suspicion that the body may not be so indelibly polarized from hand to foot. For example, young athletes may be quite aware of giving each foot an equal opportunity to develop a proper kick; this empirical process argues against any correlation with handedness. Among Saami children, too, I observed both boys and girls trying out both right and left arms in throwing a lasso, before settling on one, and this was not predictable from handedness. These children went even further and experimented with hanging the lasso from each shoulder before settling on a habit. The tossing of a fishing line did not correlate with the casting of a lasso, either. Careful observation in naturalistic settings could provide a sleugh of puzzles to freshen our curiosity. Even here, Rothschild beats us to the punch and ups the ante:

It would be an interesting biosemiotic exercise to describe the life cycle of an anthropoid, say a chimpanzee, and to compare it with a human in order to emphasize the difference between an animal with a dominant neural system and an "animal" with a dominant noetic system (p. 78).

Not to limit himself to humans or to the macroscopic, Rothschild does note that water-dwelling micro-organisms screw themselves along to the left, and flagellates and infusoria larvae preponderately move leftwards, indicating that the right side is the stronger.

Rothschild could have mentioned, and perhaps has (it's a very detailed book), that asymmetry flourishes with counter-clockwise spirals at the molecular level as well. Not surprisingly, there are exceptions, just as there are at the organismal level, and these exceptions, when noted, receive attention.

Perception associates with the left hemisphere, originating with resistance to the outside, leading to verbalization, logic, sequence, control; intuition associates with the right hemisphere, the realm of whole pictures, analogy, receptivity, appreciation for holistics. Flexibilities built into the system of lateralization of the vertebrate body carry over to the brain as well, in reverse. Somatically, the assertive right side resists perturbation, but damage to the left side is serious as it is so embedded with its environment. When the left side of the body is damaged, it is transformed into the right and the intact right side becomes the left (p. 283). In the case of human brains, too, damage to either cerebral hemisphere before lateralization does not interfere with their functioning given a similar plasticity.

### From syntax to communication

Biosemiotics transcends ordinary science through its attention to communication, a nondeterministic open process of self-realization. "Biosemiotics investigates the relationship between life and matter, soul and spirit by means of the complementary application of methods originating from the natural as well as from the behavioral sciences. [...] Biosemiotics shows how to respect the values and truth of science but also to supplement what is lacking" (p. 8). Rothschild both compares and contrasts biosemiotics with cybernetics (p. 105), structuralism (p. 111), and generative grammar (p. 84). His tri-phasic ontogenetic model of experience-*cum*-communication finds productive analogies at different levels in the system. Entering at the level of either body or brain, the first phase describes fusion of stimulus with its repercussions; fusion focuses on the bodily left and the brain right. The second phase entails polarization, as the stimulus-receiving system asserts itself while the intruder becomes its own pole; assertion is evident by the bodily right and the brain left. The third phase ensues as the two poles complete each other, and the system is able to act. These processes of polarization into own- and opposite-pole are general to all communication systems (p. 317), as well as to all processes relative to experience (p. 288).

"Communication presupposes understanding, and understanding presupposes similarity, relation, resonance, and analogy [...] mediators of a fore-knowledge" (p. 101). Rothschild does not quake before ontologies.

One cannot simultaneously study — without emphasizing their complementarity — the mutually dependent forces of "spirit and matter, appearance and place, movement and body, quality and intensity, intuition and perception, fusion and alienation, image and drive, soul and body" (p. 30). All the first-mentioned can reinforce each other, and despite their codependency with the second-mentioned, they also stand in opposition to them. Drawing on Freud, Rothschild associates the Eros principle with communication and compounding of units; the Thanatos with the disruption of communication between units; but he does not concur that Eros looks to previous stages and Thanatos to the still previous stage before life, or death (pp. 31–32). Rather, Rothschild posits that Eros must create life before it can repeat itself, and then that Thanatos determines its singularities and completions and meanings (pp. 32–33). These adapted notions Rothschild uses for his own purposes. For instance, a haploid bacterium without the membrane separation of nucleus and cytoplasm essentially realizes itself in monologue, a sentence, so to speak, even though metabolism integrates Eros and Thanatos. Eros creatively absorbs foreign material, assimilates nutrition, grows, while Thanatos devotes itself to maintenance, regression to previous stages, and division (p. 49).

In contrast with haploidy, diploidy — with more information from the environment as well as that coursing between nucleus and cytoplasm — can have real dialogue. Also associated with diploidy is morphological differentiation into various organs throughout the organism's early development (pp. 49–50). Diploid syntax follows, or anticipates, the tri-phasic stages in cognition. First, Eros predominates as the system is open to information and experience; structures relax and disturbances expand. Second, Thanatos leads to structural resistance. Haploid stages end here, while this second stage for diploids results in polarization, the separation of poles, and the differentiation of environmental and cytoplasmic information in the nucleus, and, of course, vice-versa. These sequences match those in the fertilization process. Given polarization, a third phase of completion realizes itself in the digestion of that information.

The diploid cell can communicate with other cells beyond its own membrane; it possesses the syntax to create many more "sentences" (p. 51) than a bacterium. Rothschild emphasizes here (p. 50) and elsewhere the semiotic significance of membrane, border, edge, as mediator. The cell "expands symbolically into its environment not less than the environment invades the cell". Rothschild chooses to quote from his first biosemiotic work (1962) here (p. 50): "The world does not act primarily as a confrontation, but acts within the organism, just like the whole manifests itself in the parts". In summary, "Eros opens the possibilities — Thanatos decides on units and

structure" (p. 56). Life dances not between love and death, but love and death dancing is life.

Another contemporary developmental biologist and semiotician, Stanley N. Salthe (1993), has managed to use a less embellished vocabulary to discuss development and evolution. While Rothschild frequently and in great detail focuses on ontogeny, he is more apt to cite evolution and phylogeny only in passing. That is, evolution is often mentioned abstractly, without analysis, and without any tight relationship with its dialectic complement of development. Evolution for Rothschild seems more a *fait accompli* through stacking of ontogenetic processes than the nonlinear accumulation of individuating information of Salthe's evolution, and furthermore, there is lurking in Rothschild a tendency for a teleologic evolution, even when he distinguishes his approach from that of Teilhard de Chardin (p. 34).

While Rothschild's preferred subject matter, concerning humans, compels him to attend first to cerebral hemispheres, then mammalian morphology, then to other bilateralities among invertebrates, then to nonbilateral arrangements in the animal kingdom — he does tend to construct his argument in the opposite, developmental and evolutionary, direction. Also, humans are not "just" animals in Rothschild's theory. Although plants and other life forms are not crucial to his model, when he does mention them he has very interesting observations to make. Consider:

The differentiation between inner and outer systems and self-pole and opposite pole form the basis for the differentiation in plants and animals. If the self-pole subordinates to the information of the opposite pole and starts interacting with its environment, we see the development of the lifestyle of plants. Animals and man, during sleep, regress to this plant-like style. From our studies of sleep and dreams, we learn a great deal about the accomplishments of passivity.

No living creature illustrates so well the meaning of the cosmic dialogue than the plant with its flowers and leaves, its stem and its roots. The phase of communication through pictures reaches its zenith in the life of the plant. (p. 57)

The plant and the unicellular animal, without motility, learn little about space and time. Its world is limited by the circumference of its cells (p. 58). One might argue with this, but perhaps Rothschild would be ready with riposte.

### **Negotiating the CNS in space and through time**

In terms of embryological stages, humans share those developmental antecedents of cellular morula, of invertebrate gastrulation, and of vertebrate neurulation. First came the ovum cell, utilizing its physical system as signs; then the outer body serves as its gastrular system, and the CNS as its

neurulation. With caution he revisits Haeckel's biogenetic law (p. 68); re ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny — "[...] in light of biosemiotics, it is once again meaningful". Indeed, the algorithm for evolution in his theory is the "superimposition of layers of sign systems" (p. 138). The secret ingredient in humans is the intentioning ego (pp. 65–66). Rothschild refers to this noetic dimension as transcendental subjectivity, or TS. This links up with the sheer spiritual, if one wishes to follow him there. One is further curious whether these profound ontogenetic stages, from gastrular to neural to noetic, for example, could profitably be distinguished as having distinct modeling systems.

Underways Rothschild does not neglect more substantive issues, for example, neoteny — described but not so labeled (p. 67). Humans develop dramatically in the first years following birth, differentiating in body and especially in brain more than simply growing larger. The CNS situates a new inner system, and one which communicates also with itself. With hemispheric lateralization, cognitive and speech capabilities situate typically to the left, becoming a function of the ego. Rothschild in several places (pp. 76, 138) provides evidence against vulgar assumptions about localization of function in any part of the brain, or by extension, presumably of the body as well.

Always the psychiatrist as well as embryologist, Rothschild comments that:

From the point of view of biosemiotics, the noetic system assimilates the cellular mode of intentionality in the oral phase, the gastrular mode in the anal phase, and the neural in the genital phase. In the latency period, the noetic mode of intention determines the ego and its development. (p. 79)

The neural system transcends the body, permitting relations in outer space. Biosemiotics can unpack the collaboration between the neural and noetic systems (p. 84). In the intentionality of the noetic system — acting not vis-à-vis the world but acting to experience the world through the neural system — the ego emerges as an endless stage of learning-for-the-sake-of-learning, what Bateson recognized as learning to learn, or deutero-learning (1972). Not surprisingly, Rothschild does not ignore the structures and roles of human language in this regard. Noetic communication rests on language and intellection. Communication takes on a wider meaning when it is regarded as the basic relation in — if not constituting — the cosmos, including in the big bang (p. 284).

In the decussation process which initiates the communication between poles, Rothschild misses a chance to extend the paired intersections along a midline in decussation to the metaphor of "crossing over", so criterial of meiosis. Similarly, while his three-stage model of fusion, alienation, and transcendence applies to fertilization of egg as well as to all other communication systems, the reader may not know which came first in the

ontogeny of Rothschild's ideas! It would also appear that Hegel might be foregrounded a bit more. Overall, though, the internal coherence and consistency of Rothschild's theoretical constructs are impressive.

Rothschild appears comfortable with the work of Prigogine; no doubt, ideas about the dynamics of far-from-equilibrium systems and dissipative structures circulated in embryonic form long before Prigogine's Nobel Prize of 1977. Rothschild can take issue, however, with some of the early interpretations and interpreters of Prigogine, including Erich Jantsch (pp. 310–315). However he does quote Jantsch, in a narrative I have several times unknowingly independently invented in my description of G. Evelyn Hutchinson's unfailing good luck in negotiating the uneven flagstones between his office and the Yale library:

One could think [...] of a man, who stumbles, loses [sic] his balance and keeps the upright position only because he continues stumbling. The end result of dissipative structures is particularly appropriate to explain the connection between the live matter of the organism and the dead substance of the inorganic. (Jantsch, quoted in Rothschild 1994: 313)

### **Some limits of science and the prognosis for life**

Our languaging habits serve creative and destructive functions. They entail judgments (p. 83) which might lead to conflict. In conflict situations, there can be a heightened consciousness, again, providing a seed for possible resolution.

Rothschild made place in this tome for his voice as a concerned scientist and human being. Humans have not integrated their full potentials in drawing on their asymmetries. He believed that understanding humans biosemiotically would help address scourges ranging from population explosion (p. 102), industrial waste (p. 17), and weapon manufacturing (p. 320), to war (p. 9) and total self-destruction (p. 281). The problems arise “[...] because mixing up inner adaptation and outer adaptation increases the danger for self-destruction of mankind” (p. 316). Rothschild repeats that the four elementary qualities to consider are “[...] the inner- and outer-adaptation by means of respectively inner and outer intra-organismic communication systems and the asymmetry of the left and right side of the body as well as of both cerebral hemispheres [...]” (p. 316) — a mindful to be sure.

Reviewing a number of historical periods, cultures, and religions, Rothschild concludes that their many natural sciences and technologies tended increasingly to stress outer-adaptation, manifested in extroversion, utilitarianism, and “conquest of facts” (p. 102). This happens more and more at the expense of creative, communicatory, inner-adaptation.

Laughing and crying contain the elements of creative freedom of man: laughing in its relation to the spontaneity of play and crying in the surrender of the self, which prepares the acceptance of a new meaning or a new idea. (p. 174).

Right-brain and left-body experience can be contagious. Perhaps by individual and collective re-breaking of the symmetry of our preference for the other pole, reversing the state of the world may not be so utterly unattainable. Underdeterminedly so, but feasible. The status quo alternative, pathologically overdeterminedly so, cannot be our option; this has already led us into trouble "[...] because one focused only on facts, and in that way nothing can be learned [...]" (p. 283). Allowing Rothschild the final word:

[...] the more we are related, cognate with others, the more we are open to their inner life. This holds for fellow man as well as for nature (p. 291).

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