

TUULI PERN

Affective-imaginative
modelling in semiotic context:
A Vichian perspective



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	7
INTRODUCTION.....	8
A. Aims and context	9
B. Research questions.....	10
C. Methodology and structure	11
1. VICO IN SEMIOTICS.....	13
1.1. Main interpretations of Vico in semiotics.....	13
1.2. Vichian semiotics in relation to other interpretations of Vico	16
2. A NOTE ON VICHIAN METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY	17
2.1. Methodology	17
2.2. Terminology.....	18
3. MAIN FINDINGS	21
3.1. Modelling.....	21
3.1.1. Modelling as a concept.....	22
3.1.2. Primary and Secondary Modelling Systems.....	24
3.1.3. Umwelt and modelling	25
3.1.4. Iconicity in Modelling.....	26
3.1.5. Bilingualism and Meaning Generation as Translation	27
3.2. From affective processes to imaginative universals.....	29
3.2.1. Feeling is sense: affective semiosis.....	30
3.2.2. Sense, memory and imagination: operating with identity and differentiation	31
3.2.3. Creative imagination in culture: Imaginative universals as affective-imaginative models.....	33
4. AFFECTIVE-IMAGINATIVE MODELLING AT WORK.....	35
5. SHORT SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THE DISSERTATION	38
I “Vico and Lotman: poetic meaning creation and primary modelling”	38
II “Vico’s Potential in Semiotics: The Imaginative Universal and its Bodily Roots”	38
III “Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sensemaking to culture”	39
IV “Interpreting Giambattista Vico for a new psychological science: Towards a semiotic imaginative approach”	39
CONCLUSION	40
REFERENCES.....	44
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	51
PUBLICATIONS	55
CURRICULUM VITAE	141
ELULOOKIRJELDUS.....	143

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- I Raudla, Tuuli 2008. Vico and Lotman: Poetic meaning creation and primary modelling. *Sign Systems Studies* 36(1): 137–165.
- II Raudla, Tuuli 2014. Vico’s potential in semiotics: The imaginative universal and its bodily roots. *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 9(1): 264–270.
- III Pern, Tuuli 2015. Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sense-making to culture. *Culture & Psychology* 21(2): 162–184.
- IV Pern, Tuuli 2019. Interpreting Giambattista Vico for a new psychological science: Towards a semiotic imaginative approach. *Culture & Psychology* 25(4): 470–483.

INTRODUCTION

Trying to understand the deep roots of war, Albert Einstein corresponded with Sigmund Freud in 1932 (Einstein, Freud 1933). As recently shown by Ruthrof (2020), their correspondence pointed to the heightened tension between imaginary and perceptual worlds as the cause of self-destructive choices, such as war. This example illustrates the force of imagination from its destructive side, and the question of *why war?* is sadly still very relevant today. Therefore, understanding the working of human imagination – in both its constructive and destructive capacity – is an important task for today’s humanities.

In the field of semiotics, there exists no general theory of imagination. The topic has instead received interest from various specific angles, for instance from the perspectives of cognition (West 2013, Chien 2015), sociology (Cossu, Fontdevila 2023), economy (Porsfelt 2022), religion (Pietropaolo 2021), possible worlds (Matthiessen, Veloso 2023; Luckinger 2023), music (Turino 1999), aesthetics (Melaney 2021), creativity (Nesterov, Demina 2020), subcultural communication (Burgh-Woodman, Brace-Govan 2008), architecture (Medway, Clark 2003), linguistics (Itkonen 2018), etc. The broader question, that of how imagining relates to other kinds of human semiotic activities, remains largely unanswered. In this dissertation my goal is to offer a semiotic perspective on imagination – one that hopefully contributes to the formation of a general semiotic theory of imagination.

In this endeavour I have chosen Giambattista Vico’s (1668–1744) understanding of imagination as the starting point. Although Vico is not the most prominent thinker in the history of Western philosophy to try to conceptualise imagination, his views on the topic are undoubtedly very much in accord with semiotic thinking. The compatibility of Vico’s views to Lotmanian semiotics was first pointed out by Marcel Danesi in his article “A note on Vico and Lotman: Semiotics as a ‘Science of the Imagination’” (2000). There are several aspects to Vico’s ideas that make him highly relevant for creating a semiotic theory of imagination: the crucial role of imagination in generating universals and thus contributing to the formation of civilisation (see Tateo 2020: 28–29); the implicit awareness of the semiotic mediatedness of the human world, whereas imagination is an important counterpart to other forms of understanding in this mediation (see Cornejo 2017; Markova 2017); and seeing the fact that human understanding is tied to the human body, with its capability of perceiving and acting in the world, not as a hindrance, but a source of its power (see Raudla 2014). Vico defended the epistemic value of imagination with impressive conviction. As Danesi noted: “the idea that rationality is sustained by, and embedded in, a more elemental mode of mentality, specifically in the *imagination*, was first introduced into philosophy and science by Giambattista Vico” (1995c: xi).

A. Aims and context

The dissertation concerns the specificity of imaginative and affective processes in human meaning making in semiotic context. Drawing mainly on Giambattista Vico's writings on imagination, Lotmanian semiotics, and semiotic cultural psychology, the thesis develops the notion of **affective-imaginative modelling**. Affective-imaginative modelling is human modelling activity that involves a high level of creativity and experimentation and relies on affective and imaginative relating to the world which can be seen as pre-verbal articulation.

As well as the present framing article, the dissertation includes the four research articles listed above. The aim of the framing article is to contextualise, clarify and integrate issues raised in the articles, and set out the findings of the dissertation as a whole. A further objective is to formulate affective-imaginative modelling as a concept applicable in future research.

The theoretical basis for the dissertation is the Vichian notion of **imagination** – as described in Giambattista Vico's *magnum opus* *The New Science* (1744) – and its interpretations in today's semiotic and cultural psychological research. Vico's role in semiotics has changed over the years – in 1980s and 90s Marcel Danesi (1993; 1995c; 1996) actively promoted Vico's ideas, especially the concept of imagination. However, over the last 20 years there have been relatively few new developments in Vichian semiotics (recently: Viana 2017; 2015). Vico's notion of imagination has been more actively analysed within cultural psychology by Luca Tateo (2015c; 2017; 2020). Giambattista Vico's contribution to the semiotic understanding of human meaning creation and culture is described in more detail in section 1.

In alignment with Vico's concept and taking into account Luca Tateo's (Tateo 2015c; 2015b; 2017) elaboration of the Vichian understanding, the term imagination is understood here as a mental capacity in its own right, not a (by)product of rational thought. Imagination is a term that has a large variety of meanings even in everyday language, and it has also been extensively studied in various fields of social sciences and humanities. To present a comprehensive general overview of research currently done on imagination remains out of the scope of this dissertation. Just to list a few research areas, however, imagination is studied by the history of ideas (Cocking 2005), philosophy of science (Stuart 2023; Sepper 2013) cognitive and social psychology (Byrne 2007; Pelaprat, Cole 2011; Zittoun, Cerchia 2013), literary studies (Pettersson 2016; Richardson 2015), as a general philosophy of imagination (Kind 2017; Brann, Sepper 2016), and in numerous other fields. Although it certainly has points of contact with other understandings of the term, in the present thesis I will concentrate only on the specific Vichian idea of imagination and its interpretations in semiotics and semiotic cultural psychology (e.g., Tateo 2017; Danesi 1993; 2000; Verene 1995).

Imagination is not restricted to the domains of life commonly associated with imagination – artistic endeavour, daydreaming, creative thinking etc. Indeed, it is continuously involved in human thought processes, its prevalence varying according to the situation. Throughout our daily lives we use imagination almost

constantly. For example, planning activities for the day or reacting emotionally to interactions with our family necessarily involve imaginative processes. As noted by Luca Tateo, the role of imagination may well expand to fields that have traditionally been considered “rational” (Tateo 2015a; 2020).

One of the essential characteristics of the Vichian notion of imagination is its connection to the human body. This trait that underlies much of the ways the term is useful in semiotic context will be discussed in the dissertation through the concepts of **affective semiosis** and **umwelt** – both terms are used in the present analysis in the context of specifically human meaning making, acknowledging that the umwelts of other species, such as higher mammals, also involve comparable imaginary and affective processes – these, however, remain outside the purview of the present analysis. The link between imagination and affective semiosis – the latter notion described originally by Jaan Valsiner (2014, see also Valsiner 2020: 3) – was established in publication III and will be further examined here.

Affective processes underly image formation – we start imagining (and therefore remembering, structuring, differentiating) when we relate to something affectively.¹ As described by the cultural psychologists Sergio Salvatore and Maria Francesca Freda (2011: 126), “affect gives value of life to the world”. In the terms of Uexküllian semiotics it means that we relate to the world through/as an umwelt – the dynamic subjective world of an organism is made up of elements meaningful to it/them: elements that have value of life.

Previous research in semiotics, psychology and philosophy has not presented a systematic analysis of the connection between Vichian imagination and affective processes. The cognitive psychologist Robert E. Haskell (2000) coined the term “affective identification” in relation to the Vichian model of meaning creation but did not discuss the affective component specifically, nor did he develop the notion in detail. Marcel Danesi’s (1993; 1995c; 1996) and Donald Phillip Verene’s (1991; 1995) explorations of Vichian semiotics were similarly more focused on the cognitive operations of the human mind, leaving the affective aspect out of focus.

B. Research questions

The dissertation synthesises the Vichian concept of imagination with the notion of affective semiosis as the psychological basis for relating to the human umwelt. The analysis is made in the context of Lotmanian semiotics, describing **modelling** as the semiotic activity that involves said imaginative and affective processes.

Affective processes enable us to structure the world we encounter. This structuring would be primary modelling in Lotmanian terms. Affective is understood here as a primary quality of our experience of the world – not as a clearly differentiated and innerly described/understood emotion. In the framework of the

¹ Following the cultural psychologists Salvatore and Freda, I understand affect here as “the embodied, undifferentiated basic level of activation triggered by the encounter with the immediate environment” (Salvatore, Freda 2011: 122).

present dissertation, primary human modelling is seen as a process that is largely guided by imagination and affect. The way the world provokes us as living beings, eliciting an affective response; the way we make sense of that provocation as humans, using human imagination is what drives the modelling.

The concept of modelling used here is Lotmanian: it is the activity of model creation, whereas a model is a sign that substitutes its denotatum “productively in the process of perception or organization of an object” (Lotman 2011: 251). Lotman has described language as a primary modelling system; however, based on the argumentation in publication I (Raudla 2008: 151–53), in the context of the present work I describe affective-imaginative modelling as primary in relation to verbal modelling. Affective-imaginative modelling is based on what Vico termed poetic logic and Lotman mythological thinking (or mythic, according to Donald 1991), a way of making sense of the human world that relies not on rational logic and abstract linguistic concepts, but instead on imagination and affective response to experience.

Drawn from these notions, my research questions are:

1. What is the role of imaginative and affective processes in human semiosis on the level that relates as primary to verbal language?
2. What are the defining features of **affective-imaginative modelling** and how it co-functions with other human semiotic processes?

Affective-imaginative modelling is not the only type of modelling used by humans on preverbal level; it functions hand-in-hand with zoosemiotic modelling. In addition, in life situations affective-imaginative modelling acts also in cooperation with verbal modelling. In the present dissertation, affective-imaginative modelling is not seen as a completely independent activity but rather as an essential aspect of human modelling in general. Apart from Danesi’s extensive work on Vico, the concept of imagination has not received due attention in the field of semiotics. Developing the notion of affective-imaginative modelling is a step towards filling that gap. The dissertation also contributes to the development of a more complete understanding of semiotic modelling as such.

C. Methodology and structure

The dissertation draws from various disciplines and areas of research to present a coherent description of affective-imaginative modelling. The analysis presented herein juxtaposes different models of meaning creation – those developed in the works of Giambattista Vico and Juri Lotman, as well as in cultural psychology and semiotics based on the theory of *umwelt*. The dissertation analyses focal concepts tied to the respective models of meaning creation: modelling, modelling systems, models, iconicity, imagination, affective semiosis, and imaginative universal.

The framing article consists of five main sections besides the introduction and conclusion: (1) a short overview of Vico's significance for semiotics, (2) a note on Vichian methodology and terminology, (3) an explication of main theoretical findings from publications, (4) a discussion of the functioning of affective-imaginative modelling based on a real-world example, and (5) short summaries of the included publications. Sections three and four carry the theoretical weight of the framing article. Section three covers Vico's relation to, firstly, relevant notions in Tartu semiotics – modelling, bilingualism, umwelt, Lotman's understanding of iconicity of models – and, secondly, to Thomas Hobbes's ideas of imagination, sense and memory leading to discussion of affective semiosis and imaginative universals as affective-imaginative models. Section four describes the functioning of affective-imaginative modelling, drawing on an example to further explain the working of imaginative universals as affective-imaginative models. Added to the framing article is a summary in Estonian that provides a general overview of the dissertation.

1. VICO IN SEMIOTICS

1.1. Main interpretations of Vico in semiotics

Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) worked for decades on the ideas eventually presented in *The New Science* (*La Scienza Nuova*, 1744), his most extensive treatise. In the history of philosophy Vico is considered a controversial figure – his work has inspired a multitude of responses, ranging from admiration to contempt. He was an unconventional and ambitious thinker, so the controversy is probably to be expected. Vico had hopes of reinventing the humanities, of influencing deeply the scientific thinking of his contemporaries – but the first edition of his *New Science* (1725, known as *Scienza Nuova Prima*, *The First New Science*) received little attention at the time of its publication. Vico continued work on his masterpiece, despite being at times discouraged by the reception of the *First New Science*, the second version was published in 1730 and at last the final version posthumously in 1744. Later, Vico’s work was “discovered” multiple times by European and non-European scholars. Since the second half of 20th century the part Vico plays in the history of ideas in general has been discussed and reassessed in many excellent publications (Badaloni 1968; Tagliacozzo, White 1969; Tagliacozzo *et al.* 1976; Tagliacozzo 1981; 1990; Berlin 1980; Lilla 1994; Miller 1993, 1996; Robertson 2005; Pompa 2010; Campagnola 2010; Marshall 2011; Ivanova, Lomonaco 2014; Berlin, Hardy, Israel 2016; Malî 2018; Marshall 2022).

Vico became first renowned primarily for his ideas related to the philosophy of history: his theory of knowledge is largely oriented towards the explanation of history; he tries to understand consciousness in order to elicit knowledge from and find the laws of history. The fourth and fifth parts of *The New Science* are essentially dedicated to describing the laws that guide the course of history.

The workings of human consciousness are touched upon sporadically throughout the *New Science* but the entire work is imbued with Vico’s unique approach to knowledge. For Vico, “science” (Italian: *scienza*) signifies the creation or human making of the world – every discipline recreates the world for itself through narrating it (Vico 1984, para. 349). According to Vico knowledge starts from looking at mediation:

And they [scholars] should have begun with metaphysics, which seeks its proof not in the external world but within the modifications of the mind of him who meditates it. For since this world of nations has certainly been made by men, it is within these modifications that its principles should have been sought. (Vico 1984, para. 374)

This principle, known as the *verum–factum* principle, places Vico in the semiotic paradigm (see Danesi 1990: 96). *New Science* bases its explanation of the origin of language and the development of symbolic thought on myth interpretation and word etymology. Vico’s methodology, as well as his theoretical model, is based on the *verum–factum* principle: he analyses what is made, and the process of making,

in order to arrive at the truth. In other words, Vico sought to understand and elucidate the workings of the human mind by analysing the meaningful or semiotic world that the mind creates.

This methodology has inspired numerous semioticians to interpret and build upon Vico's ideas, and to define his significance in the history of semiotics (as discussed in Thomas A. Sebeok 2001; Raudla 2014). Notably, Max Harold Fisch, a dedicated Vichian scholar and the English translator of *The New Science* (with Thomas G. Bergin) and Vico's *Autobiography*, was also a renowned Peircean scholar, and in 1975 appointed the first general editor of the Peirce Edition Project at Indiana University (Ketner, Kloesel 1986: viii). Fisch has analysed the connections between the two great authors in his intellectual life in the essay "Vico and Pragmatism" (first published in 1969). He concluded that both Vico and Peirce held views approximating these:

The mind is no more given for introspection than the world is for extrospection. Nor does it shine out through human faces, least of all from our own in the glass. It is known by hypothesis and induction from human doings and makings, in large part the same as those from which the world is known. The doings and makings by which world and mind are known enter into the making of both mind and world. If the human mind could be given at all, it would be in nothing short of the history of human institutions; but that history, like the history of the natural world, is a laborious, secular, incompletable construction. (Fisch 1986: 223)

On the same page, Fisch also expresses anticipation for a more detailed comparison of Vico's and the pragmatists' ideas, saying: "I hope some reader may be moved to undertake it" (1986: 223). It took a while, however, before Vico became more widely known among semioticians.

Semiotic interest in Vico's ideas was probably highest around 1990s, when Marcel Danesi published the monographs *Vico, Metaphor and the Origin of Language* (1993) and Giambattista *Vico and the Cognitive Science Enterprise* (1995c), as well as numerous articles (1988; 1991; 1995a; 1996; 2000). Danesi also edited the collective volume *Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American Science* (Danesi 1995b) which aimed to present an integrated perspective on Vichian understanding of meaning making. This compendium included valuable contributions from semioticians and researcher from adjacent fields and had an extensive introduction by Danesi. In one of the contributions, "Vico and current work in cognitive linguistics", Frank Nuessel notes that, for example, George Lakoff's approach to metaphor, language, and imagination is essentially Vichian, even though it is not directly influenced by Vico's work (Nuessel 1995).

Aside from this collected volume edited by Marcel Danesi the integration of Vico's work into semiotics has been somewhat sporadic, lacking a real quest for synthesis. Therefore, if some kind of tradition of interpretation can be observed at all it has to be traced back to Marcel Danesi. For example, Robert E. Haskell's contribution to Vichian semiotics (Haskell 2000) in "Semiotics as a Bridge Between the Humanities and the Sciences" builds on Danesi's work on the topic.

Also, a special issue of the journal *Semiotica* on the semiotics of metaphor features Augusto Ponzio's article "Metaphor and Poetic Logic in Vico" which explicitly refers to Danesi's "appeal to examine Vico and his 'new science'" (Ponzio 2006: 234). A more recent publication, Amadeu Viana's "Vico, Peirce, and the issue of complexity in human sciences" contributes a new aspect to the discourse, Viana does not merely compare Vico's and Peirce's views on meaning creation, he sees the two authors as proponents of extensionalist view of the human mind: "history turns out to be revealing as the human mind realises and manifests itself in signs and actions. We are transformed by what we are doing, as the pragmatic argument has it" (Viana 2017: 15).

The German philosopher Jürgen Trabant's contribution to Vichian semiotics stands somewhat outside this vein of research. His monograph *Vico's New Science of Ancient Signs: A study of Sematology* (in German 1994, English translation 2004) contains, in addition to Trabant's interpretation of Vico's semiotics (which he terms *sematology*), a comparison of Vico's concepts of imagination and language with those of Humboldt, Rousseau, Derrida, Herder and Hegel. Trabant's use of terminology and analysis considerably diverges from the discourse of current dissertation as Trabant bases his take on Vico largely on Humboldt's concept of signs, symbols and language. Jürgen Trabant's more recent monograph on Vico, *Poetische Charaktere* (2019), is sadly not yet available in English. An analysis of Vico's earlier work *De antiquissima sapientia* from the point of view of semiotics can be found in David L. Marshall's monograph on Vico's innovatory influence on rhetoric in the chapter "Rhetoric and Semiosis" (Marshall 2010). Semiotics and sign conceptions of the early Modern period and Vico's work in this context is described, for instance, by Trabant (1998), and by Karla and Pern (2022).

Publications included in this dissertation, especially "Vico and Lotman: Poetic Meaning Creation and Primary Modelling" (Raudla 2008) and "Vico's Potential in Semiotics: The Imaginative Universal and its Bodily Roots" (Raudla 2014), are tightly linked with, and in some respect contest, Danesi's interpretation of Vico's work in semiotic terms. The dissertation also ties in with interest in Vichian concept of imagination in semiotic cultural psychology as explored in the special issue on Vico of the journal *Culture and Psychology* (Tateo 2015c; Zittoun 2015; Brinkmann 2015; Rojas 2015; Shotter 2015; Granatella 2015) and the compendium *Giambattista Vico and the New Psychological Science* (Tateo 2017).

The other two publications included in the dissertation, "Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sensemaking to culture" (Pern 2015) and "Interpreting Giambattista Vico for a new psychological science: Towards a semiotic imaginative approach" (Pern 2019) integrate the semiotic interpretation of Vico with that of cultural psychology.

1.2. Vichian semiotics in relation to other interpretations of Vico

Around 60 publications per annum in different languages and fields of study are published on Vico (see bibliographies: Scognamiglio 2012; Pompa 2002). In other words, there is a myriad of works on Vico and many of them interpret Vico's ideas in hugely diverse ways. The semiotic interpretations of Vico are in constant interplay with work done in other areas of Vichian scholarship. As it would be impossible to list all these connections, only the most relevant for the dissertation are noted below.

Isaiah Berlin's understanding of Vico's work as presented in the monograph *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (1980 [1976]) and the essay "Giambattista Vico and Cultural History" (2013 [1991]) is in some agreement with Vico's semiotic interpretation. Berlin acknowledges that for Vico, imagination plays a dominant role in the archaic consciousness (Berlin 1980: 103–104) and the imaginative power behind it is something that the humanity needs (Berlin 1980: 112). Philosopher Donald Phillip Verene's (1976; 1991) elaboration on the Vichian concept of imagination has been very productively incorporated into the semiotic paradigm, as is evinced in Marcel Danesi's work – in his 1993 (Danesi 1993) monograph and elsewhere he cites Verene extensively – and Verene's contribution to the compendium edited by Danesi (Verene 1995).

On the other hand, Benedetto Croce, one of Vico's earliest and for a long time most influential modern interpreter, presents a view in his *Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (Croce 1913) that has been criticised from a philosophical point of view (Verene 1991) and remains mostly alien to the semiotic interpretation of Vico. Croce considers Vico's concept of imagination-based generalisation, the imaginative universal, to be erroneous. He argues that the particular on one hand, and the universal concept that arises from imaginative intuition on the other hand, cannot coexist, leaving a gap in the thought process (Croce 1913: 57–58). As a result, he believes that Vico's argumentation in describing the imaginative generalisation process is inadequate (Croce 1913: 65–67). Verene observes that Croce criticises Vico's imaginative universal because it lacks the form of concept, the rational generalised category, as found in Hegel's system and Croce's own idealism (Verene 1991: 69).

Croce was probably not the first, nor the last to attempt framing Vico as a part of their specific school of thought. Vico has been described as anti-modern (Lilla 1994), anti-Cartesian (on Vico's polemic with Descartes, see Mazzotta 1999: 18–23), and a critic of his own time (Berlin, Hardy, and Israel 2016). In his review article "The Current State of Vico Scholarship", David L. Marshall concedes: "The only way to deal with Vico is to dive into the multiplicity of plausible interpretations and find in them the makings of a new line of inquiry" (Marshall 2011: 141).

2. A NOTE ON VICHIAN METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

2.1. Methodology

“Instead of seeking regularities and patterns out in the world, we need to work in terms of feelings and sensings occurring within our meetings with the others and othernesses around (Shotter 2017: 120).

In publication IV, “Interpreting Giambattista Vico for a new psychological science: Towards a semiotic imaginative approach”, I proposed some principles for a Vichian methodology which will be restated here concisely. Vico’s approach to his subject matter is at times difficult to follow but at the same time highly insightful. Therefore, I strived to adopt some of the facets of his method in the dissertation. Firstly, as noted by Ivana Markova, Vico’s approach to humanity is steadfastly holistic: “It incorporates agency, language, social knowledge, cultural history, imagination, and ethics into a comprehensive framework of common-sense thinking, knowing, and acting” (Markova 2017: 189). Vico strived to include all aspects of being human into his account of what a science of humanity should be like. In addition to the features listed by Markova, Vico explicitly stressed the importance of the human body with its senses and passions as constitutive in the creation of the human world (see: Vico 1984, para. 699; Raudla 2014).

Secondly, Vico was open to noticing and analysing types of human understanding that were distinctly different from those prevalent in his own cultural context. He approached archaic texts and etymologies with a rare openness to finding mechanisms of meaning creation that functioned differently from contemporary forms of understanding. Vico claimed that “we can now scarcely understand and cannot at all imagine how the first men thought who founded gentile humanity” (Vico 1984, para. 700). Thus, his exploration of their mode of thinking was accomplished by being acutely aware of its otherness. Vico described the tendency to reduce all forms of knowledge to derivatives of rationality as “conceit of the scholars” (Vico 1984, para. 127). Vico’s principle of openness and respect towards different forms of sensemaking – essentially an implicit acceptance of the heterogeneity of semiotic systems – enabled him to develop his original and insightful understanding of archaic thinking.

Thirdly, for Vico, human understanding is a process, a part of the continuous making of the human world. It is implicit in the canonical quotation: “this world of nations has certainly been made by men” (Vico 1984, para. 374), and explicit in his understanding of the cyclical course of history (Vico 1984, bk. IV, V). Vico directs our attention to what is going on, the processes of understanding and making the world, rather than fixed entities.

I have aimed in my work to adhere to these principles and therefore paid attention to occurring processes rather than try to create fixed categorisations, aspired for a holistic view of human meaning creation, and heeded the need to preserve otherness (see more: Pern 2019: 11).

2.2. Terminology

Vico's concepts are often intertwined with each other, his ideas forming an organic whole rather than a strict hierarchical system. To make it easier to follow the discussion in the next sections, I will concisely explain here the most relevant Vichian terms and their relatedness to each other.

Vico describes the primordial human way of understanding the world as **poetic** logic of the first men. On one hand, "poetic" refers to the imaginative nature of the sensemaking processes Vico describes: poetic logic is governed by rules that are distinct from logic based on rational thinking, creating its own type of generalisation, the imaginative universal. On the other hand, "poetic" is tied to Vico's "first men" and "gentile nation", referring to the primordial and archaic nature of the processes he describes. In that regard, poetic could be understood as mythological (see also: Raudla 2008: 139; Pern 2015: 173; 2019: 473). According to Verene, "In Vico's view the poetic, or what in more modern terms we would call the myth, is the beginning of knowledge" (Verene 1995: 203). However, it would be a mistake to think Vico saw the poetic forms of knowledge as something that exist only in archaic cultures. Rather, Vico stresses the ever-important ability to rely on imaginative thinking when abstract reasoning fails to help us make sense of something (see: Vico 1984, para. 402). Therefore, in Vico's own view, as well as the point of view of the present dissertation (see section 3.1 below and (Raudla 2008: 146–158; Pern 2015: 173; 2019: 473), the processes described as poetic are seen as part of human meaning creation as such, not limited to specific phase of cultural development or historical period.

The poetic logic Vico describes relies on **imagination** as the force that knits the world of humans together. Vichian imagination is a complex notion that comprises image creation, identification, and recollection. It is often described through the three facets Vico mentions twice in *The New Science*: *fantasia* (imagination), *ingegno* (invention) and *memoria* (memory). In the chapter "Poetic Physics", Vico explains the threefold nature of imagination:

Imagination, however, is nothing but the springing up again of reminiscences, and ingenuity or invention is nothing but the working over of what is remembered. [...] since the human mind at the time we are considering [...] had not developed its powers of abstraction by the many abstract terms in which languages now abound, it exercised all its force in these three excellent faculties which come to it from the body. (Vico 1984, para. 699)

Later in the book, in the chapter "The Discovery of True Homer", Vico employs this trio of concepts to elucidate the distinctive imaginative nature of early poetic texts. In this passage it is memory rather than imagination that assumes the role of the overarching term tying together imagination, invention, and memory as its different facets:

[M]emory is the same as imagination, which for that reason is called *memoria* in Latin [...]. Imagination is likewise taken for wit or ingenuity. [...] Memory thus has three different aspects: memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them – and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship. (Vico 1984, para. 819).

In a sense, Vico also merges *fantasia*, *ingegno*, and *memoria* together as the art of inventing (see also: Vico 1984, paras. 494–498) in his discussion of their role in the lives of his first men:

All three appertain to the primary operation of the mind whose regulating art is topics, just as the regulating art of the second operation of the mind is criticism, and as the latter is the art of judging, so the former is the art of inventing, And since naturally the discovery or invention of things comes before criticism of them, it was fitting that the infancy of the world should concern itself with the first operation of the human mind, for the world then had need of all inventions for the necessities and utilities of life.(Vico 1984, para. 699)

Thus, in Vico's own text the notions of *fantasia*, *ingegno*, and *memoria* do not function as strictly defined terms. He describes them together, stressing one or the other in different places. Overall, the functions of Vichian imagination can be concisely describes thus: *fantasia* – for image creation (imitates); *ingegno* – for establishing relations between images (gives things a new turn); *memoria* – for returning to previous images (the springing up again of reminiscences). *Fantasia* has been extensively analysed and elaborated by Verene (see Verene 1991). Danesi has described it as the essential aspect of Vichian imagination: “The *fantasia*'s image-making capacity is a primordial power of the human mind that makes cognition itself possible” (Danesi 2000: 103). The main conclusion to be drawn here is that Vico sees the functioning of imagination as the unity of these tree capabilities (see Raudla 2008: 141–45; Pern 2015: 170–72; 2019: 474–77, and 3.1.3 and 3.2.2 below for further analysis). In addition, Vico explicitly mentions their bodily origin: “It is true that these faculties appertain to the mind, but they have their roots in the body and draw their strength from it” (Vico 1984, para. 819). Therefore, the Vichian notion of imagination is essentially dynamic, multifaceted, and embodied.

In Vico's view imagination is responsible for forming the first generalisations: **imaginative universals** (*universali fantastici, generi fantastici*).

[T]he first men [...] not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is, imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them. (Vico 1984, para. 209)

Vico's imaginative universal can be understood as a type of metaphor that is created through the process of identification (see: Haskell 2000; Verene 1995), Haskell terms the mechanism “a primordial sensory identity” (Haskell 2000, 354).

Individual images relate to an imaginative universal not as parts to whole and not even through resemblance but through identification: every instance *is* the universal (see: Raudla 2008: 147–49).

The basis for the universals is, quite naturally, the human body; “When men are ignorant of the natural causes producing things, and cannot even explain them by analogy with similar things, they attribute their own nature to them” (Vico 1984, para. 180). Thus, according to Vico the human interpretation of the world began with attributing a bodily nature to the surroundings – firstly to the thundering sky, which became the first imaginative universal, Jove (Vico 1984, paras. 377–381). “Jove as an imaginative universal is the first expression of “isness” – something now is where before only momentariness reigned. Jove both *is* in the sense of being something and *is* in the sense of being related to something” (Verene 1995: 206). The hypothetical first men experienced thunder and the experience stayed in their memory not as merely a passing point in the flow of experience but became identified as another body, a powerful, angry, and frightening one. The experience and the created universal are tied by sensory identity, they feel the same and for the purposes of making sense of the world, creating a human world, they are the same (for more, see sections 3.2.3 and 4 below).

Vico urges scholars to look at “the modifications of our own human mind” in order to find the principles of the human world (Vico 1984, para. 331). Vico’s holistic approach indeed incorporates both into its method and subject matter passion, imagination, and the dynamic nature of human understanding. To form a fruitful, accurate description of how we create the meaningful human world, it is important to acknowledge that our own humanity is always present in the terms we use, questions we raise, and how we choose to answer them.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

Although the dissertation is based on four previously published articles, this section mainly focuses on publications I and III which carry the theoretical weight of my research. In these two publications I analysed and developed the ideas on imagination and modelling. Publications II and IV on the other hand deal with contextualizing Vichian ideas in today's research and therefore contributed mainly to the above discussion on Vico's place in semiotics (section 1) and Vichian methodological principles (section 2.1).

I have chosen to begin this section with a recap of the main theoretical insights from publication I. This is not merely for chronological reasons but to outline the semiotic theory in terms of which the latter discussion on imagination is to be understood. My research draws from different research areas, but its disciplinary background is Lotmanian semiotics. I wrote the first publication included in the thesis, "Vico and Lotman: poetic meaning creation and primary modelling", mainly relying on Lotman's theory and to some extent biosemiotics. Therefore, I have built my discussion here around the Lotmanian concept of modelling, but also relate it to Umwelt theory from Uexküllian biosemiotics. Conclusions from publication I also form the background for the adoption of the term *affective-imaginative modelling*. In the article, I use Vico's notion of the *poetic* to characterise primary modelling. The roots of this notion are in the human body and passions. The term *poetic*, however, has a rather wide range of connotations extending from everyday language to philosophy and literary studies; therefore, the Vichian passion- and imagination-based modelling I termed *poetic modelling* in publication I will be termed *affective-imaginative modelling* in further discussion.

In publication III, "Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sense-making to culture", I took a closer look at the concept of imagination itself and the ways it can be described as a process related to bodily-sensory experience and affective semiosis. Lotmanian semiotics is less explicit in publication III, but it is still there as a frame that guides the way the research questions are formed and the issues approached: how meaning is created in culture, what processes can be distinguished in and around the act of meaning creation. Comparison with Hobbes's concept of imagination delineates Vico's account as decidedly semiotics-oriented.

3.1. Modelling

Modelling as an activity plays a crucial role in understanding and coping with the complexity of the world. Both its manifestations and theoretical descriptions are multi-layered and with varying complexity. On one hand, modelling can be described quite narrowly as the conscious and directed human activity of creating a model of a discreet object or certain process (e.g., creating a working scale model of a steam engine, mathematical models of economic processes). On the other hand, modelling may be seen as a basic cognitive operation that enables humans

to communicate and think about the world we inhabit. In this broader perspective, which is also supported by the present thesis, modelling is viewed as deeply intertwined with human cognition, feeling and imagination.

3.1.1. Modelling as a concept

According to Lotman's definition, a model is an analogue of an object that substitutes it in the process of perception. He gives the definition of model, modelling activity and modelling systems in a concise way that bears citing in full:

1.2.1. From the multitude of definitions of *model*, the most general one will be used here: a model is an analogue of an object of perception that substitutes it in the process of perception. /.../

1.3.0. *Modelling activity* is human activity in creating models. In order that the results of this activity could be taken as analogues of an object, they have to obey certain (intuitively or consciously established) rules of analogy and, therefore, be related to one modelling system or another.

1.3.1. *A modelling system* is a structure of elements and rules of their combination, existing in a state of fixed analogy to the whole sphere of the object of perception, cognition, or organization. For this reason, a modelling system may be treated as a language.

1.4. It is useful to call those systems that have natural language as their basis and accumulate additional superstructures, thus creating second order languages, secondary modelling systems. (Lotman 2011: 250)

It is noteworthy that Lotman only explicitly talks about *human* modelling activity. This does not exclude the very clear possibility that modelling may also be described in other species (see, for example: Sebeok 1979). That, however, remains out of both Lotman's and the present work's scope. Lotman consciously set himself the goal of elucidating *human* modelling in order to reach new insight into the nature of artistic sign systems. With Lotman, we find ourselves in the realm of human culture when discussing modelling (see also Salupere 2022). As Katre Pärn puts it in her discussion of the Lotmanian modelling concept: "Models and modelling were seen as the fundamental elements and mechanisms of cognition and behaviour that are essential for the intelligent functioning of any semiotic subject from the individual to culture as a whole" (Pärn 2022: 179).

It might be tempting to conclude from the above that all human thinking can be equated to modelling. Indeed, Lotman describes natural language as *the* primary modelling system. Immersed as we humans are in language, how would one separate linguistic modelling from thinking in general? Still, it may be argued that not all human-specific semiotic (anthroposemiotic) activity is wholly tied to language, and that it is also possible to distinguish processes that involve either more or less modelling activity within language use. In terms of the Uexküllian concept

of semiosis, Kalevi Kull has described three possibilities for an organism to work out the relation between perception and action: “either just executing a habit, or using representation, or modelling anew” (Kull 2009: 47). The functional cycles that constitute an organism’s *umwelt* therefore may involve modelling, but they can work also on the basis of habit (in the Peircean sense) and representation. Moreover, formal algorithmic inference can be executed completely unrelated to modelling. A similar understanding of the space of heightened creativity is reached by Luca Tateo in his recent monograph *A Theory of Imagining, Knowing, and Understanding* Tateo states: “People make sense of their *Umwelt* through the work of all psychic functions (thinking, imagining, remembering, feeling, communicating), but when it reaches the limits of the personal bubble, on the edge of *Umgebung*, the hierarchy of functions changes and the role of imaginative work becomes even more important” (2020: 60). Thus, at the border of the *umwelt*, when reaching out towards a new meaningful connection with *Umgebung*, the given world, modelling – involving imaginative work – is at its most active.

To further throw light on the notion of human modelling, it is useful to focus on processes where modelling has a crucial and explicit role. It is possible, although only in theory, to discern two extreme states of experience in relation to modelling: one is stable, the other unstable. The theoretical stable state would mean that the subject’s *umwelt* is complete: it has already modelled the environment sufficiently to overcome any adversity and sustain itself so there is no need to create new models, as the previously created representations and formed habits take care of all needs. The *umwelt* in this case already incorporates all significant phenomena and behaviours. The unstable state would then be an *umwelt* in the midst of change where the subject is confronted with the need to constantly create new models to overcome rising adversities and try to fit to the changing world. Most probably any state of actual life experience falls onto a scale between these two extremes.² My discussion focuses on situations falling towards the *unstable* end of the scale where modelling is more prevalent.

The concept of poetic modelling described in publication I is precisely related to situations where the creation of new models is intensified: Vico’s archaic humans struggle to make sense of the world, they are in the process of creating human institutions, their language is young and lacks abstract concepts, so imagination plays a crucial role in their modelling processes.

² In the case of psychological trauma, the human ability to model may be overcome, so the response to the new situation is not the creation of new models, but instead a near complete inability to engage in any imaginative activity. Valsiner describes the situation where imagination processes are blocked as complete “muteness” of a person (2021: 161). In ecosemiotics, the situation, where an organism’s *umwelt* is no longer functioning in changed environmental conditions, can be described as *umwelt collapse* (Maran 2023).

As Vico says,

man in his ignorance makes himself the rule of the universe, for in the examples cited he has made of himself an entire world. So that, as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them, this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by *not* understanding them; and perhaps the latter proposition is truer than the former, for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them. (Vico 1984, para. 405)

Modelling becomes active when something new appears: it needs to be cognised, organised, acted upon. All the aforementioned processes are (at least in humans) complex – and therefore realised via modelling systems. A new object cannot just be independently assigned a meaning, and not just because the meaning only exists in the context of the semiotic system – the process of creating the meaning also necessarily involves the whole semiotic system. The human body with its senses and passions is turned into a model for the world. When faced with change and new experiences, humans approach them with the entirety of their semiotic repertoire, utilizing all their senses, feelings, knowledge, and capabilities as resources for modelling. Hence the anthropomorphic world of ancient narratives and bodily basis of metaphors (see also Raudla 2014).

3.1.2. Primary and Secondary Modelling Systems

Modelling is a fundamental human endeavour that enables us to make sense of the world and overcome the adversities and contradictions we encounter. In publication I, I described imagination-based poetic modelling as the first level of specifically anthroposemiotic modelling, thus defining poetic modelling as primary modelling in relation to verbal language. I diverged somewhat from the original Lotmanian distinction where the primary modelling system is natural language and secondary modelling systems are cultural and artistic texts. However, Lotman does not actually hold that natural language is the only possible primary modelling system, nor even that it cannot be in the position of secondary modelling system. I thus maintained, along with Winfried Nöth (2006), that the opposition between primary and secondary modelling systems is relational (Raudla 2008: 152–53). Therefore, if natural language is primary in relation to artistic text, it may at the same time be secondary in relation to imagination-based poetic modelling.

Lotman's description of natural language as primary modelling system was criticised for excluding non-verbal sign systems by Thomas A. Sebeok (1988; Sebeok, Danesi 2000). Eventually Sebeok and Danesi proposed, following Peirce's categorisation of sign relations into *firstness*, *secondness*, and *thirdness*, a categorisation of primary, secondary, and tertiary modelling systems where language would figure as a secondary modelling system (2000: 10). This is a fixed and finite hierarchy that ties the analysis of modelling systems to the Peircean typology of signs. As I concluded in publication I, this approach is problematic and

unnecessarily limiting (Raudla 2008: 152). It is more fruitful and closer to the original Lotmanian view to analyse modelling systems as relational pairs. This approach enables us to observe/describe human modelling systems and their relation to each other in an open-ended way. Poetic logic, the archaic modelling systems that Vico describes, is in many ways like language and different from zoosemiotic signs systems. At the same time, it is not verbal language. Affective-imaginative modelling functions between the bodily and sensory processes on one hand and language-based reasoning on the other. It is primary anthroposemiotic modelling that gives rise to the creation of the human *umwelt*.

3.1.3. Umwelt and modelling

Vico considered the world of humans to be our own creation that should be studied taking into account the nature of human creativity: “For since this world of nations has certainly been made by men, it is within these modifications that its principles should have been sought” (Vico 1984, para. 374). The process of this *human making* was described in publication I using the Vichian terms *fantasia*, *ingegno*, *memoria* on one hand and Lotman’s concept of text as a meaning generating mechanism on the other (Raudla 2008: 141–45). Both theoretical frameworks focus on the mediatedness of the world, the need and ability to form images, establish relations between them and remember them. This view corresponds to the Uexküllian understanding of the relation between an organism and the environment:

Organisms make the world. Umwelt does not mean just a recognition of objects in the world, nor is it confined to remembering (including all forms of memory) – it is just as much a manufacturing of the world. The objects are not only sensed and perceived, or represented and imagined; the objects are also produced. (Kull 2009: 46)

John Deely has noted that human beings have a specific relationship to the sign systems they use: the ability to describe the sign-relations from a metalevel leads to understanding them as arbitrary and thus free to play with: “the mind can, with a little cleverness, turn every element of experience and discourse into a plaything *ad infinitum*” (Deely 1991: 561). But underneath that freedom there is still the basic state of being human: living with the evolutionarily developed human senses and abilities. The zoosemiotic level is never absent in anthroposemiosis. Likewise, Vico described humans as “characterised by imagination, which he understands as a capacity to remove oneself from the contexts of the here and now – but only partially” (Marshall 2010: 130). When speaking about the semiotic freedom of human sign systems, it is crucial to remember that they are at the same time motivated, i.e., they are never fully arbitrary (see Kull 2023). In other words, freedom is gained through moving away from the relatively stable, habit-based functional cycles prevalent in the *umwelts* of other animals towards a metalevel where the subject is able to describe the sign-relations that constitute the *umwelt*.

In publication I, I claimed that imagination intervenes in the human-environment interaction:

For all organisms, the contact with external reality is mediated and selective as such. The selection is determined biosemiotically, but in case of humans, imagination interferes in this process – as it forms poetic meaning, creating connections between some perceptual images, thus multiplying their importance, and declares some images nonexistent. (Raudla 2008: 155)

On one hand, the human *umwelt* becomes freer; on the other, the poetic logic that arises from imagination puts its own constraints on the ways the human experience is created and lived.

3.1.4. Iconicity in Modelling

In discussions of modelling in the context of semiotic theory, the question of iconicity cannot be avoided. Models, in essence, possess an iconic aspect. They reflect the structure of their objects in some way. In the Peircean system iconic signs are defined as signs that signify based on similarity between object and sign vehicle (Peirce 1931, para. 2.276) (Peirce 1931, para. 2.276). “Peirce was aware that it would be hard, if not impossible, to find any pure instances of icons and indices. Rather, he began to suspect that icons and indices were always partly symbolic or conventional” (Atkin 2023). Therefore, when addressing the question of the iconicity of models, the aim is not to determine what type of sign a model is in the Peircean typology. Instead, it is important to delineate how iconicity functions in models, that is: what models owe in their functioning to iconic processes.

Lotman touches upon this topic rather briefly. He states that in a sense, only iconic signs “may be equated to models” (Lotman 1967: 131). The statement serves to delineate the importance of iconicity in models. It bears noting that *iconic signs* do not mean *pure icons* or even *icons*; they should instead be understood as signs that have a significant iconic aspect. Lotman claims that “[a] model differs from a sign as such in that it does not simply substitute a denotatum but substitutes it in a useful manner in the process of cognising or organising the object” (Lotman 1967: 131). Whether Lotman generally understood iconic signs in a strict Peircean sense is up for discussion. However, Lotman’s equation of iconic signs and models cited here bears important resemblance to Frederik Stjernfelt’s understanding of diagrammatic icons.

Following Peirce, Stjernfelt proposes an operational definition of icons. Essentially, an icon is a sign that is able to reveal new information about its object. In the words of Stjernfelt, “the decisive test for its iconicity rests in whether it is possible to manipulate the sign so that new information regarding its object appears” (Stjernfelt 2000: 358). Stjernfelt identifies the diagram as the one among Peircean typology of icons that depicts its object via relations: “As an icon, the diagram is characterised by its similarity to its object – but while the image represents its object through simple qualities and the metaphor represents it through a similarity

found in something else, the diagram represents it through a skeleton-like sketch of relations” (Stjernfelt 2000: 358). Stjernfelt’s observations are relevant in two respects. Firstly, they show how Lotman’s view of models as icons is compatible with the Peircean operational definition of icons: namely, that the sign must yield some information about the object to be seen classified an icon. Secondly, if we move on to the archaic models on the level of culture, Vico’s imaginative universals – the fables, heroes, monsters, etc. – could be said to be diagrammatic in nature, i.e., iconic based on relations/structure. Imaginative universals are sketches of relations which reflect the experience of human life.

Living in a world means near-constant use of models, signs that we manipulate to obtain knowledge about the world. Seen in this way, it becomes once again apparent how general the process modelling is. Kalevi Kull has thus described how modelling as the basic sign process of an organism is at the same time tied to the experience of the organism and the object it represents:

to a certain extent, each sign (= sign process) is a modelling. It models, on the one hand, via the inclusion of an organism’s experience, which is built into the organism’s individual structure. On the other hand, the existence of the object in the sign makes the model correspond to the object. Relatedness to experience makes the sign (and its meaning) plural, whereas relatedness to an object makes it one (singular). (Kull 2009: 48)

Models are signs that we create and use to organise and understand experience. This is made possible by the fact that as diagrammatic icons they reflect the relations inherent in the object and can be manipulated to yield information about the said objects. Going further into the Lotmanian description of how information is generated, it becomes apparent that it is not a question of manipulating single models but a translation between different modelling systems.

3.1.5. Bilingualism and Meaning Generation as Translation

According to Lotman, integrating at least two sign systems coding external reality in different ways is necessary for the functioning of a meaning-generating unit. “Individual human mind can be seen as a text. It is at least bilingual semiotic monad” (Lotman 1997: 10). Meaning is produced when texts are translated from one modelling system to another, and the differences between these systems make the translation approximate and imprecise, which is where creativity emerges. “The asymmetrical relationship, the constant need for choice, make translation in this case an act of generating new information and exemplify the creative function both of language and of the text” (Lotman 2001: 14–15). Meaning is created at the intersection of at least two codes, often involving the interplay between discrete and continuous texts, although the opposition may be based on other types of differences. Here I aim to describe the first anthroposemiotic level of double articulation, which marks the stage where humans began making sense of the world through processes that led to the development of verbal language.

Affective-imaginative modelling operates primarily with images, feeling, affective impressions – the type of semiotic flow/units that are continuous in their essence (see section 3.2 below) However, some segmentation of meaningful units is also required also on the level of affective-imaginative modelling. Augusto Ponzio addresses this issue of pre-verbal segmentation of meaning in his description of syntactics (distinguished from syntax). Syntactics allows for the combination of elements in infinite ways on a pre-verbal level, generating new meanings with each combination. Ponzio refers to this as *writing*: “To signify with the same elements through different positions is already writing, and articulation of verbal language and through verbal language (secondary modelling) takes place on the basis of this type of signification through position.” (Ponzio 2006: 241). Based on Ponzio’s description of pre-verbal articulation of human experience and Lotman’s model of meaning generation, I described the primary poetic modelling thus:

Poetic meaning creation process is based on metaphorical identity. The meaning units arising from this identification can in turn be identified with each other. In order to identify two units so that a new meaning arises, there has to be some dissonance between them – it need not be the opposition of discrete-continuous. The creativity of primal metaphors lies in the fact that they juxtapose two or more independent elements that could not have been connected without using imagination. In a state where the fixed associations are scarce, almost all acts of identification have to be metaphorical and creative. (Raudla 2008: 159)

In publication I, I did not use the term *affective-imaginative modelling*, adopting instead the Vichian use of the term *poetic* to describe primary modelling that has its roots in the human body and passions. Leaving aside the choice of terms, though, I described in publication I a type of modelling that was essentially affective and imaginative: modelling that stems from the body-based experience of the world at moments when we encounter something new, and enables us to form a meaningful image of it, and position it arbitrarily in relation to already existing models through metaphoric identification.

3.2. From affective processes to imaginative universals

“Imagination is the active force of sensemaking, tied to the environment by the affect and kept in contact with its past states by memory” (Pern 2015: 172)

In publication III, “Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sensemaking to culture”, I compared the Vichian concept of imagination to Thomas Hobbes’. The comparison serves to clarify the concept of imagination. More specifically, I analysed the relation of imagination to sensory perception and affective processes³ on one hand and to cultural phenomena on the other. Although the two authors are near contemporaries – Vico lived from 1668–1744; Hobbes 1588–1679 – and Vico polemises with Hobbes in his works (for example Vico 1984, para. 179), I did not set out to trace Hobbes’ influence on Vico or the historical connections between the authors (this has been covered for example in Ratto 2000; Sergio 2010; Franchini 1988). The broader aim of the article was to move towards a description of imaginative and affect-based sensemaking. In the analysis I found that according to both authors imagination and affective processes are intertwined and, to rephrase in contemporary terms, function hand-in-hand in anthroposemiosis.

I used the term **sensemaking** while describing anthroposemiotic meaning creation processes and their affective and imaginative aspects. Sensemaking is a prevalent term in semiotic cultural psychology when describing human semiotic processes and is described as an example of Peircean interpretive process⁴ (Salvatore 2012: 245; Salvatore, Valsiner, Veltri 2019: 29; Salvatore *et al.* 2022). Sensemaking can be understood as the psychological process of creating and organising one’s meaningful world, making the various experiences and ideas fit together and thereby being able to overcome obstacles and contradictions. Modelling, as discussed above (section 3.1), is narrower in meaning than sensemaking, referring more specifically to semiotic activity that takes place in situations that are less directed by habit and require coping with new information.

The cultural psychologists Sergio Salvatore and Maria Francesca Freda (2011) describe the primary subconscious level of affective sensemaking which essentially involves the same affective-sensory processes that, as shown below, Hobbes and Vico both sought to illuminate/depict. In the analysis below I relate the processes discussed in the publication to the concept of affective-imaginative modelling.

³ Affective processes are here understood based on the understanding in cultural psychology that defines „affect as the embodied, undifferentiated basic level of activation triggered by the encounter with the immediate environment“ (Salvatore, Freda 2011: 122).

⁴ Sensemaking as Peircean semiosis – see Salvatore (2012: 245); sensemaking as interpretation – see Salvatore, Valsiner, Veltri (2019: 29).

3.2.1. Feeling is sense: affective semiosis

Vico and Hobbes both assign a crucial role in the human meaning creation to sense or the senses. Sense perceptions form a foundation for imagination (see: Pern 2015: 164). As both Vico and Hobbes express the view that sense is intertwined with feeling, the focus of the analysis was on affective processes and framed in the concepts of semiotic cultural psychology. Thus, I did not discuss ties of sensory perception and imagination in terms of cognitive psychology. Affective and imaginative processes function together, although theoretically they can be described separately, in human experience they are intertwined (see Salvatore et al. 2022).

The perspectives of Hobbes and Vico regarding the role of affect in the process of sensation have much in common. The terms they use vary: Hobbes speaks of **endeavour of the heart; appetite and aversion; delight, fear, pain** (Hobbes 2008: 9, 36; 2013: 29), **Vico on the other hand about passion** (see section 2 above and Vico 1984, paras. 34, 186, 219, 378). In Hobbes' description the "conceptions we have immediately by the sense", as well as "imaginings after sense" are the various affective states: delight, pain, fear, etc. (Hobbes 2013: 29). In a living situation, feeling delight, pain, appetite or fear is indistinguishable from sensation, and also from imagination. Vico also suggests that perception involves an affective component from the very beginning, as the first human images of the world are "formed by feelings of passion and emotion" (Vico 1984, para. 219). For both authors affective involvement plays a crucial role in transforming sensation into retained images in memory. They highlight the intertwined nature of affective, sensory, and imaginative processes. (Pern 2015: 165–69)

How to understand primary modelling that involves endeavour of the heart or passion in the terms of today's research? I found that it has remarkable affinity to the concept of **affective semiosis** developed in cultural psychology. The term has its beginning in the work of the cultural psychologist Jaan Valsiner, he describes humans' relations to the world as processes that are essentially affective and sign mediated:

[H]uman psychological life in its sign-mediated forms is affective in its nature. We make sense of our relations with the world, and of the world itself, through our feelings that are themselves culturally organised through the creation and use of signs. (Valsiner, 2007: 301)

The human world is mediated not objectively, but affectively – human beings relate to the world with feeling: we perceive and model affectively. Affective processes are not merely a background to cognitive processes, they are the very basis for discerning an object of perception in the first place (see Tateo 2019). Salvatore and Freda use the term **hedonic value** to describe the differentiating process "that generates the object as a mental fact, a source of further semiotic activity" (Salvatore & Freda, 2011: 126). Their description of the relation between sensory and affective processes – namely: "[T]he hedonic values as well as any other content of experience are made identical to each other – a hedonic tone *is* an idea, a movement just like an act *is* a hedonic tone" (Salvatore and Freda 2011: 126) – strongly

echoes the above cited passage by Hobbes (2013: 29). Sensation *is* the hedonic tone or passion: delight, pain, fear etc. A sensory image/unit is differentiated from the flow of experience precisely because it is affective, and as a differentiated semiotic unit it can enter into further interpretive relations:

[T]he semiotic standpoint looks at affect not merely as a reactive embodied activation but as the use of this activation as a basic form of meaning, that is as the first interpretant motivated in the interpreter's mind, in turn triggering further interpreting signs. For this reason, affect is to be considered in terms of process rather than of state – affect then, as affective semiosis. (Salvatore, Freda 2011: 122)

Affective semiosis runs alongside human imagination in the meaning creation process. I propose that on the anthroposemiotic level affective semiosis is the most important counterpart to imagination in the process of coping with and orienting ourselves in reality, being in the *umwelt*, creating and changing it. Affective-imaginative modelling acts inextricably together with processes of affective semiosis. The embodied affective activation is used imaginatively: “the body is projected on the world of meaning, as an object and at the same time a medium of signification” (Salvatore, Freda 2011: 134). From the Vichian perspective, imagination is precisely the mental function that enables such double connectedness, thus bringing forth the imaginative universals: primary generalisations that are formed based on imaginative modelling (see section 3.2.3 below). Without affective involvement, the human *umwelt* would cease to function. Our primary relation to the world is largely affective and therefore we cannot ignore affective processes when describing general anthroposemiotic processes, in this case – modelling.

3.2.2. Sense, memory and imagination: operating with identity and differentiation

The human relation to the world is affective, and as shown above affective processes have a crucial role in forming images of the world. How are these primary units/images involved in understanding and relating to the world? What is the role of imagination in those processes and what other faculties are involved? Vico and Hobbes both connect imagination and sense with memory.

In his discussion of sense, imagination and memory, Hobbes seems to be setting up a hierarchy – through sense the mind gains images, but imagination is described as *decaying sense*. As if the moment of sensation itself has more value and integrity than the images retained in the mind (see Verene's interpretation of Hobbes; 1991: 103). On the other hand, Hobbes does not seem to construe the *decaying* aspect of imagination as derogatory – instead he equates it with *memory* (Hobbes 2008: 12). So *decaying sense* is at the same time *imagination* (retains images gained through sense) and *memory* (the image is accessible again later independently from perception). Hobbes also stresses that sense is tied together

with memory – the latter enables comparing and distinguishing of images (*phantasms* in Hobbes' words) (Hobbes 1839: 393). The parallel sense–memory process described by Hobbes “implies an awareness of sameness or similarity, and of difference” (Barnouw 1980: 122).

The question of sameness/identity and distinction/differentiation relations is also central for understanding Vichian model of meaning creation. Vico's concept of imagination involves three aspects: *fantasia* as the ability to create images, *ingegno* as the ability to form connections between said images, and *memoria* as bringing back and reintegrating past images (Vico 1984, paras. 699, 819; see also section 2 above).

The parallel to Hobbes is at once visible: both see memory and imagination as an integral part of meaning creation and both speak of the first operations the mind can carry out with the images: comparing and distinguishing (Hobbes 1992: 393), placing images “in proper arrangement or relationship” (Vico 1984, para. 819). The language of the authors differs in the latter point, but essentially both include a form of differentiation and identification in the process of image creation.

The aspect of identification in Hobbes' work is mentioned by Jeffrey Barnouw (1980: 122–23) who terms it *sameness or similarity*. In the same vein, in his interpretation of Vico, Verene (1991: 82) describes *identity* as the operating principle on this level of meaning creation. Barnouw does not differentiate here between sameness and similarity. Verene, however, argues that the first images are formed by establishing sameness not similarity, the identity of the images as existing being the fixed point in the flux of sensations. Verene's description also encompasses differentiation: the fixed point can only be established if it stands out from the flow of experience. Here, the discussion ties in with two previously discussed topics. Firstly, taking into consideration what was said above about affective semiosis, it bears repeating that the primary differentiation is affective: “the basis for the first differentiations is the differentiating hedonic connotations” (Pern 2015: 172). The fixed points are fixed by the way we feel in a moment, the hedonic value of the moment. Secondly, considering again signification through position, termed writing by Ponzio (2006: 241; see section 3.1.5 above), it can be said that imagination and memory enable it – imagination gives the affectively formed images enough distance from the flow of experience to be identified with other images retained in memory: to be set into new arrangements, where they acquire new meaning. For this relationship between affective values, sense and imagination to actually function as a process, it needs to involve memory.

We create dividing lines in the stream of experience by differentiating hedonic values, forming images and then use imagination and memory to maintain their connectedness to experience (the aspect of iconicity) and form connections to other images. Meaning in lived human experience emerges in the context of remembered and anticipated time. What the process of primary differentiation and identification enables humans to create are affective-imaginative models, or imaginative universals as Vico termed them.

3.2.3. Creative imagination in culture: Imaginative universals as affective-imaginative models

I have so far mostly offered abstract descriptions of affective-imaginative modelling and related affective processes. However, what I examine here is part of everyday human experience, even though the imaginative processes may not be easily discernible or even part of conscious thought. For Vico, the most tangible expression of the imaginative processes in culture were **imaginative universals** (see also section 2 above):

[T]he first men, the children as it were of the human race, not being able to form intelligible class-concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters, that is, imaginative class-concepts or universals, by reducing to them as to certain models or ideal portraits all the particular species which resembled them. (Vico 1984, para. 209)

Imaginative universals are archaic class concepts that organise the realm of human understanding based on affective-imaginative modelling. As they are constructed based on principles different from rational logic, they are the things that seem most illogical and contrary to modern humans when confronted with archaic texts. Imaginative universals are formed based on recognition and identification of whole objects or their parts, distinct from rational categorizing that is based on the assessment and comparison of the properties of the objects (see more: (Pern 2015: 174; Raudla 2008: 145–49). Vico describes how the imaginative universals take the form of fables (paras. 460, 429), metaphors or other tropes (para. 407), and mythological creatures (para. 410). He also discusses how heroic characters functioned as imaginative universals: for the Greek the hero Achilles represented valour, quick temper, implacability and other heroic properties as a personified universal, carrying with it all the narratives about Achilles, every particular deed and characteristic and at the same functioning as a generalisation (Vico 1984, para. 809). In the words of Verene: “The first men, for Vico, created order in experience, not by abstracting a property held in common by a collection of particular entities, but by creating an ideal portrait. This portrait took the form of a fable, a description of a particular reality” (Verene 1991: 75).

Imaginative universals can thus be seen as particular kind of models. They serve to organise the experience, to represent the object in a useful way, to use Lotman’s (2011: 250) phrasing, and can be used to gain further information about the object they represent (iconic aspect of models, see section 3.1.4 above). The affective-imaginative model acts rather like a magnet,⁵ it attracts meanings – the subjects in culture attach their experiences to it based on their affective relating to those experiences. The result is a thick multi-layered field/dynamic unit that

⁵ D. P. Verene has described Vico’s own method when writing *The New Science* with the phrase: „We find not Occam’s razor, but Vico’s magnet“ (Verene 1991: 106).

enables organising new situations: situations where logical inferences and organisation do not work because the experiences are too sensorially or affectively intense, unfamiliar either cognitively or psychologically.

Vico had a unique ability to accept otherness: the strange fables, monsters, etc. did not elicit disdain in him, he understood them as imaginative modes of generalising. Vico sees them as essential for the way archaic societies created meaning and were able to build a society: by employing the imaginative capabilities and forming their own class concepts. They created imaginative universals by necessity and made them thus the basis of their culture and institutions. Whatever emerges from our imagination, when we seek to give meaning to the unknown, it ultimately aids us in living more fully in the world and actively engaging with it.

Interestingly, imagination has also been treated as the ability to disengage (Kull 2023, third level of semiotic freedom). And it is true that we need to be able to disengage from the flow of experience to describe and organise it – create human models of this flow. But this is not a one-way process. We disengage and then re-engage. Models created on the basis *of* previous experiences in turn become models *for* new ones. Image formation needs the distance providing capacity of imagination, but imagination also brings the world into human *umwelt*, helps us see ourselves situated in the world, engaged and active, making and knowing the world.

4. AFFECTIVE-IMAGINATIVE MODELLING AT WORK

“Every subject is the constructor of its Umwelt” (Uexküll 1982: 87).

Affective-imaginative modelling is an aspect of human meaning creation in general and it functions together with other forms of modelling (zoosemiotic, language-based, artistic etc). As such, it is essential for human semiosis, providing the mechanisms for relating to changing environment and coping with new situations. Vico’s imaginative universals are an example of affective-imaginative modelling on the level of culture. However, affective-imaginative models may also function as *ad hoc* creations that spring up in a person’s mind in moments when they are striving to make sense of something seemingly unfathomable. I will discuss one such instance below and relate it to Jaan Valsiner’s description of levels of affective semiotic fields.

Looking at recent history, it is not hard to find events that have forced a big part of humanity into a position where they had to struggle to make sense of their experience, much as Vico’s “first men”. The Covid-19 pandemic with its devastating global impact, in particular, shifted the world of men, making us invent a new normal, to rethink many models that had become taken for granted. Reading the autoethnographic accounts from the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 (Lee 2021; Davis 2021), they struck me as descriptions of disconnectedness. Not only did they describe physical isolation from other humans but there was also a sense of struggle to grasp the situation, to form any satisfactory description of it that would enable moving forward. This was expressed with remarkable precision by Karen V. Lee: “Isolating, I look out the window. But no sun, life is none. The ground turns, my insides burn as I try to move to improve” (Lee 2021: 229). Lee’s feeling of isolation and anxiety is so intense it causes physical discomfort.

How is one to overcome such a situation, to make it comprehensible and acceptable as part of one’s life? Lee’s account offers a brilliant example of forming an *ad hoc* affective-imaginative model, which enables taking a step towards adapting to the situation, integrating it into one’s *umwelt*. She describes going for a walk, still enveloped by the feeling of anxiety and disconnectedness: “I stare at the ground and forget where I am. Bring on wilful amnesia to forget the pandemic. Deaths and more deaths. Isolation and recovery. I try to remember a working world, but it’s a mess” (Lee 2021: 229). The standstill is, however, suddenly broken: “With heavy feet, I lift one shoe and look. Yup, it’s dog shit. My laugh calms me. As much as I want to forget, I’m in deep shit.” (*ibid.*). Stepping in a dog turd becomes an *ad hoc* affective-imaginative model for the whole situation: “I’m in deep shit” functions as a generalised description. The feeling of isolation lifts somewhat, a new functioning meaning has been found. Although it is a decidedly obnoxious and disagreeable one, the situation is no more outside her ability to process. Suddenly, she is able to relate to the surroundings, to notice something comforting and familiar: “Again, I laugh and walk. A crescendo of air leads me on a path of dare.

Smelling, there are pink blossoms. Spring could be awesome. Could be a delight. A familiar spot, I see a parking pillar by the church” (*ibid.*).

The example cited above is a rather poignant illustration of how affective-imaginative models are formed. Sitting at home, looking out of the window, and thinking: “I’m in deep shit” would have been unhelpful: this would have amounted to a simple repetition of stereotypical metaphors – something of little value in finding new meaning. To facilitate the creation of a new affective-imaginative model, the description had to be anchored in a lived experience with its hedonic value (disgust) so that imagination could work in tandem with affective semiosis and form the generalising identification. The incorporation of the embodied affective experience into the modelling activity enable the feeling of release, the changed relation to the surroundings. Although the model is expressed through verbal language, it is essentially formed on the level primary to language, where Lee’s general state of mind is identified with a feeling of disgust toward the dog mess. This process can also be described in terms of levels of affective fields proposed by Valsiner (see figure 1).

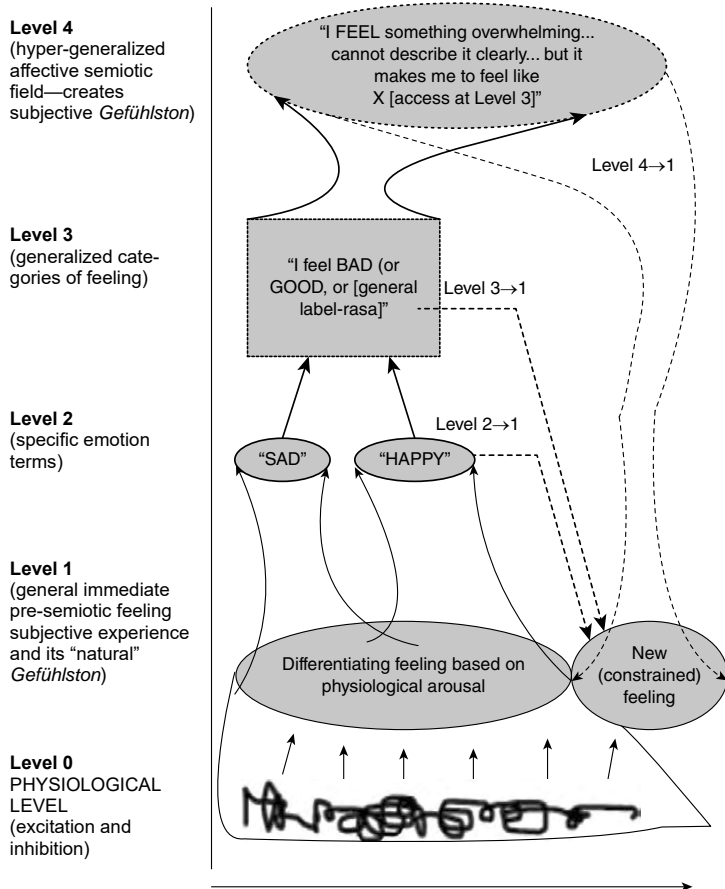


Figure 1. Levels of affective semiotic fields (Valsiner 2014: 126).

The general feeling of disconnectedness, isolation and anxiety belongs to level 4, it is a hyper-generalised feeling that colours the entirety of Lee's experience. To find some release, she needs to be able to describe it – that means reach levels 2 and 3. She can do that when she encounters the level 1 feeling – disgust – in response to the dog turd and identifies the experience with the hyper-generalised feeling. The connection between level 1 and 4 makes the situation tangible and open to further description. Forming affective-imaginative models is a way towards being able to handle the hyper-generalised affective fields, constrain and relate them to other levels. This feature is vital for the flexibility of the human *umwelt* in situations where a hyper-generalised affective field has the effect of suspending necessary meaning creation – as Lee's anxiety and sense of disconnectedness was making her unable to relate to and function in the situation of the pandemic.

Affective-imaginative models can exist in collective cultural universals that we are able to relate new situations to, but they also exist as *ad hoc* models that we form in struggles to overcome adversity. As such, they are highly adaptable forms of meaning creation, and also powerful in restructuring subjective meaning because of their groundedness in affective responses. Valsiner notes in a recent work that the challenge before cultural psychology's methods is precisely this: "Capturing this constant movement between microgenetic, mesogenetic, and macrogenetic spheres of meaning construction and its corresponding move between bodily, verbal, and hyper-verbal (not any more verbalizable) experiences" (2021: 159). Developing a semiotic description of affective-imaginative modelling serves the same purpose – moving towards an open and dynamic description of human meaning creation.

5. SHORT SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THE DISSERTATION

I “Vico and Lotman: poetic meaning creation and primary modelling”

The article analyses the concepts of Giambattista Vico and Juri Lotman pertaining to archaic forms of thinking – termed poetic logic by Vico and mythological thought by Lotman. The analysis demonstrates the complementary nature of the respective concepts. Vico’s understanding of imagination as the basis for archaic human meaning creation is essentially similar to Lotman’s description of the meaning-generating principles of mythological texts. This conclusion is reached through a comparison of various theoretical concepts of the two authors. Firstly, the article juxtaposes Lotman’s notions of *text* and *memory* with Vico’s description of imagination as a three-faceted capability including *fantasia* (image creation), *ingegno* (invention) and *memoria* (memory). Secondly, Lotman’s understanding of mythological identification is compared to Vichian description of metaphorical identification as a basis for poetic logic. In addition, the described functions and processes are placed in the context of the modelling systems theory originating in the Tartu-Moscow semiotic school. The article contests Thomas A. Sebeok’s classification of modelling systems and proposes poetic meaning creation as primary modelling activity in relation to verbal linguistic meaning creation. Overall, based on the common points found in the analysis of Vico’s and Lotman’s work, I proposed *poetic modelling* as a unifying concept.

II “Vico’s Potential in Semiotics: The Imaginative Universal and its Bodily Roots”

Aiming to draw attention to the essentially semiotic ideas of Giambattista Vico, the article focuses on his theory of knowledge and the imaginative universal as a concept that is based on bodily experience. To begin with, a brief overview of the interpretation of Giambattista Vico’s work in the field of semiotics is given, discussing the relevant work by Marcel Danesi, Thomas A. Sebeok and my own contribution in relating Vico to Tartu semiotics. Turning to Vico’s *opus magnum* “New Science” itself, the article then discusses Vico’s claim that we can draw conclusions about the world of humans by looking at the modifications and different expressions of the human mind. As for Vico, the whole sphere of consciousness is an extension of bodily existence, it is evident that his theory of knowledge bears affinity to the modern concept of embodiment. The parallels to Lakoff and Johnson’s understanding of primary metaphor in Vico’s ideas of imaginative universal and poetic logic are pointed out in further discussion. The article highlights the need to make use of Vico’s ideas to facilitate a comprehensive and embodied understanding of the primary level of human meaning creation.

III “Imagination in Vico and Hobbes: From affective sensemaking to culture”

The article analyses the concepts of imagination in the works of Vico and Hobbes. Both authors approach the human meaning creation process starting from the notion of sense or the senses, but they give somewhat different descriptions of how the perceived experience is further integrated in the sensemaking process. Both build on the concept of imagination, making imagining or operating with and creating of images the core of human thought process. In addition, both authors describe the connection between sensing and what in modern terms can be termed affective processes. Therefore, the parallels in Vico’s and Hobbes’ ideas are contextualised by the concept of affective semiosis from cultural psychology. In addition to the analysis of imagination in connection to sense, memory and affect, the article also discusses the expression of imaginative thinking on the level of culture. For Vico, the primordial mind is expressed in culture as imaginative universals – poetic tropes, monsters, heroes etc – that are essential to the build-up on the human world. Hobbes, in contrast, sees such creations as mere superstition that has no positive function in society. It can be therefore concluded that although both authors assigned an important role to imagination in the working of the human mind, concerning the cultural level Vico was more open to understanding the primordial forms of knowledge.

IV “Interpreting Giambattista Vico for a new psychological science: Towards a semiotic imaginative approach”

The aim of the article is to outline methodological principles based on Vichian semiotics that would contribute to formulating a new methodology in cultural psychology and humanities in general. Firstly, the connections Vico’s work has to semiotics and cultural psychology are briefly discussed, concluding that it would be most fruitful to Vichian semiotics to integrate approaches from cultural psychology. The article proposes the collection of articles “Giambattista Vico and the new psychological science” (Tateo 2017) as the starting point for the dialogue. In addition to an overview of the compendium, the concepts of *fantasia* (Cornejo 2017; Danesi 2017), metaphorical identification (Ponzio 2017) and common sense as human action (Markova 2017) are discussed in detail. Following the incentive proposed by John Shotter (2017) for formulating a new understanding of being human, the article lists principles for a new methodology from the perspective of semiotics: awareness of the nature of human umwelt (rootedness in bodily being and practical needs); the heterogeneity of sign systems and the limits of their translatability; historic, social and processual nature of human phenomena and last but not least: putting human rational thought in a context – of the human body, feeling and imagination.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from the dissertation are in their origin firmly based on Vico's notion of the imaginative universal and Vichian methodological principles. Vico's inherent acceptance of semiotic heterogeneity as an essential principle of human meaning creation, expressed in his concept of archaic thinking and imaginative universal, makes his work highly valuable for semiotics. Without the benefit of modern semiotic terminology, Vico's work manages to highlight an important distinction in anthroposemiosis: the existence of pre-verbal imaginative thinking as a distinctive form of human meaning creation that needs to be understood in its own terms and cannot be reduced to a primitive or incomplete form of rational thinking. Thus, Vico created a theoretical space for in-depth semiotic consideration of imaginative processes – their origin in the human body and passions, relation to other forms of human meaning creation, semiotic principles of functioning and role in culture. Vico's approach to humanity is characterised on one hand by distinct awareness of the mediated and thus essentially semiotic nature of the human world, and on the other hand groundedness in our embodied experience. Throughout the dissertation, I have strived to highlight the relevance of Vichian concepts and principles for modern semiotics; and to apply them in creating a comprehensive semiotic description of affective-imaginative meaning creation. Previous research on Vichian semiotics has not provided a thorough discussion of Vico's work in relation to Tartu semiotics including Lotmanian and Uexküllian ideas. Therefore, the main contribution of my dissertation to semiotic theory is integrating Vichian concepts with those of Tartu semiotics in two areas: firstly, semiotic description of human modelling, and secondly, the holistic understanding of human umwelt.

To sum up, the dissertation tied together four previous publications and the current framing article in order to develop the concept of affective-imaginative modelling, juxtaposing the work of Giambattista Vico with semiotic theory, with a special focus on Lotmanian and Uexküllian semiotics and semiotic cultural psychology. Publications I and III provided in-depth theoretical analysis of different aspects of Vico's concept of imagination. Conclusions from these articles formed the basis for the discussion on the concept of affective-imaginative modelling in the framing article. To reiterate, the main contribution of publication I to the dissertation was the description of Vico's concepts of poetic logic, imagination and imaginative universal in semiotic terms and defining poetic modelling as primary in relation to verbal modelling. In addition, it described the mechanism of poetic modelling as a bilingual system that necessarily involves iconicity as an aspect of its functioning. Publication III provided further analysis of the concepts of imagination and imaginative universals, through a comparison with relevant ideas of Thomas Hobbes, bringing to the fore the ties between imaginative and affective processes. It also highlighted how Vico's imaginative universal is an essential part of his understanding of the functioning of culture.

Publications II and IV sought to bring out the potential of Vico's work for developing contemporary semiotics and semiotic cultural psychology, contributing to the contextualisation and positioning of the dissertation within human and social sciences. Publication II described Vico's ideas as compatible with the theoretical stance of contemporary Tartu semiotics and stressed the role Vico assigns in the New Science to the human body as the basis for meaning creation. Publication IV offered a set of principles for a Vichian methodology in dialogue with works presented in the compendium "Giambattista Vico and the New Psychological Science" (Tateo 2017), stressing the need in human and social sciences to pay attention to semiotic heterogeneity and the nature of human umwelt to reach a holistic understanding of the processes involved in creating and inhabiting our subjective and intersubjective realms.

The aim of the framing article was to overview the findings from publications included in the thesis and present them as a coherent theory of affective-imaginative modelling, with potential for future development and applications. To that end, I set out with two concrete tasks: firstly, to define the role of imaginative and affective processes in anthroposemiosis on a level of modelling primary in relation to verbal language. Secondly, to distinguish and describe affective-imaginative modelling as a specific process and its relation to other anthroposemiotic processes.

I believe Gregory Bateson has hit strikingly accurately upon the nature of the domain of human understanding I sought to enlighten in my dissertation: "An interesting intermediate between the iconic coding of animals and the verbal coding of human speech can be recognised in human dreaming and human myth" (Bateson 1987: 301). As a researcher, I have always been drawn to explore the domains of human life that are somewhat out of reach of purely rational analysis: children's literature, the concept of play, myth and of course, imagination. With Bateson, I would now say that all of these fall into the category of "an interesting intermediate", the space where verbal linguistic and logical thinking is less advanced, leaving space for imaginative thinking. However, having described it as a liminal space, I maintain that at the same time it is essential for human specific semiosis and a constant counterpart to other types of human meaning creation (language, art, science etc). It functions at the intersection of the embodied experience of being in the world on one hand, and the human ability to distance ourselves from the moment, to create images and use them with some freedom, on the other.

Although conscious human thinking is intertwined with verbal language, it is possible to distinguish affective-imaginative modelling as a, in its essence, pre-verbal semiotic activity that is also distinct from zoosemiotic mechanisms. Based on the discussion above, I conclude that affective-imaginative modelling takes place in situations where humans are for some reason unable to use verbal modelling satisfactorily – Vico's archaic first men with their lack of linguistic concepts or any one of us at moments when we feel overwhelmed – and the zoosemiotic repertoire is inadequate for the situation. In these cases, we create models using imagination based on our affective responses. Admittedly, there is a world

of difference between whether a person is for a moment in a situation where “words fail her” or they exist in a state where abstract linguistic concepts are still a step away in cognitive evolution. However, the reliance on imagination and affective relating to the world are general characteristics of anthroposemiosis, they appear as affectively motivated imaginative modelling wherever humans strive to fit their *umwelt* to a new situation.

Drawing on the discussion in the previous sections and the results from the included publications which analyse Vico’s work and connect it with subsequent semiotic research, affective-imaginative modelling as human pre-verbal articulation can be described by the following features:

- It is based on the embodied experience of sensing and acting in the world, creating and relating to one’s *umwelt*.
- The experience is constituted through affective processes, hedonic values being the primary differentiation in the flow of experience.
- Imagination enables the necessary detachment from the flow of experience to form images that can be used relatively freely in further semiotic activity. Sense, imagination, and memory function alongside in this process.
- Images are related to other images, affective fields, and other semiotic complexes through identification. The bidirectional activity of differentiation and identification provides the necessary bilingual structure of a meaning-generating semiotic mechanism.
- Affective-imaginative modelling is highly flexible because imagination enables the use of any previous instance of experience that is retained in memory as an image to be used as a model for a new experience, provided that there is sufficient affective motivation to bring them together.
- Affective-imaginative modelling creates models that are different from strictly rational models and universals (Vico’s imaginative universals and *ad hoc* affective-imaginative models described in the example in section 4).

Both imaginative universals and personal *ad hoc* affective-imaginative models are highly relatable – created on the basis of human affectivity, they organise psychologically essential aspects of life and can therefore be understood and adopted by others. Vico’s imaginative universals – gods, heroes, monsters – as well as the *ad hoc* affective-imaginative model created in a crisis – stepping in dog mess identified as one’s general situation in life – function as sign complexes that offer release from the universally human feelings of uncertainty and disconnectedness.

The application of the concept of affective-imaginative modelling opens up a new perspective for the semiotic analysis of situations that require a high level of experimentation and flexibility. To name some of the currently most relevant ones, these include: the adaptation process of people displaced by war or climate change, the process of coming to terms with a crisis in the society or any other rupture that leaves us striving to make any sense of our experiences.

Defining affective-imaginative modelling as a specific semiotic activity is also an important step towards developing a comprehensive semiotic understanding of imaginative and affective processes. In addition, in the context of general semiotic theory it serves to advance the study of modelling as one of the focal concepts of the discipline.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Afektiiiv-kujutuslik modelleerimine semiootika kontekstis: Vicolik perspektiiv

Töö kaante vahele koondatud nelja varasema kirjutise ja neid ühte siduva raamartikli eesmärgiks on siduda Itaalia filosoofi Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) töid semiootikateooriaga, keskendudes eriti Juri Lotmani ja Jakob Uexküllli semiootilistele teooriatele ja semiootilisele kultuuripsühholoogiale, et luua neist lähtuv afektiiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise kirjeldus. Publikatsioonid I ja III esitavad teoreetilise süvaanalüüsi Vico kujutusvõime mõiste erinevatest tahkudest. Nende artiklite tulemused saavad ühtlasi aluseks afektiiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise mõiste käsitlemise raamartiklis. Publikatsioonid II ja IV püüavad omakorda avada Vico loomingu potentsiaali tänapäevase semiootika ja semiootilise kultuuripsühholoogia edasiarendamisel ning aitavad kontekstualiseerida ja positsioneerida kõnealust temaatikat humanitaar- ja sotsiaalteaduste väljal. Järgevad lõigud võtavad lühidalt kokku publikatsioonide sisu.

Publikatsioon I. Artikkel „Vico ja Lotman: poeetiline tähendusloome ja primaarne modelleerimine“ analüüsib Giambattista Vico ja Juri Lotmani käsitlusi arhailistest mõtlemise vormidest, mida Vico nimetab „poeetiliseks loogikaks“ ja Lotman „mütoloogiliseks mõtlemiseks“. Analüüs toob nähtavale nende arusaamade komplementaarsuse. Vico käsitlus kujutusvõimest kui arhailiste inimeste tähendusloome alusest sarnaneb olemuslikult Lotmani kirjeldusele mütoloogiliste tekstide tähendusloomeprintsipidest. Selle järelduseni jõutakse läbi kahe autori teoreetiliste mõistestike võrdluse. Esmalt kõrvutab artikkel Lotmani *teksti* ja *mälu* mõisteid Vico käsitlusega kujutusvõime kolmest tahust: *fantasia* (kujutiste loomine), *ingegno* (leidlikkus) ja *memoria* (mälu). Teiseks võrreldakse Lotmani arusaama mütoloogilisest samastamisest Vico kirjeldusega metafoorsest samastamisest kui poeetilise loogika alusest. Kirjeldatud funktsioonid ja protsessid asetatakse seejärel Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkonnast välja kasvanud modelleerivate süsteemide teooria konteksti. Artikkel polemiseerib Thomas A. Sebeoki modelleerivate süsteemide klassifikatsiooniga ning pakub välja arusaama poeetilisest tähendusloomest kui primaarsest modelleerivast tegevusest verbaal-keelise tähendusloome suhtes. Kokkuvõttes pakutakse Vico ja Lotmani tööde analüüsi tulemusena välja toodud ühisjooni kokku siduva katusmõistena välja poeetilise modelleerimise mõiste.

Publikatsioon II. Tõstmaks esile Giambattista Vico ideede olemuslikku semiootilisust, on artikli „Vico potentsiaal semiootikas: kujutuslik universaal ja selle kehalised juured“ fookuses Vico teadmusteooria ning kujutuslik universaal kui kehalisel kogemusel põhinev mõiste. Artikkel algab lühikese ülevaatega Vico loomingu tõlgendamisest semiootikas, keskendudes Marcel Danesi, Thomas A. Sebeoki jt töödele ning siinkirjutaja käsitlusele Vico ja Tartu semiootika seostest. Seejärel liigub artikkel edasi Vico peateose „Uus teadus“ juurde, lahkamaks Vico väidet, et inimmaailma kohta on võimalik teha järeldusi inimvaimu modifikatsioonide ja selle erinevate väljenduste vaatlemise pinnalt. Kuna Vico jaoks on

teadvuse sfäär tervikuna kehalise kogemuse laiendus, siis evib tema teooria ilmselgeid sarnasusi tänapäevase kehalisuse (*embodiment*) mõistega. Edasine arutelu toob ühtlasi välja vicoliku kujutlusvõime põhise modelleerimise ja poeetilise loogika käsitluste paralleelid George Lakoffi ja Mark Johnsoni arusaamaga primaarsest metafoorist. Artikkel rõhutab vajadust rakendada Vico ideid kõikehõlmava ja kehapõhise käsitluse väljatöötamiseks inimese tähendusloome esmasest tasandist.

Publikatsioon III. Artikkel „Kujutlusvõime Vicol ja Hobbesil: afektiivsest mõtestamisest kultuurini“ analüüsib kujutlusvõime mõiste kasutust Giambattista Vico ja Thomas Hobbesi töodes. Mõlemad autorid lähenevad inimese tähendusloomeprotsessile taju (*sense*) või tajude mõiste kaudu, kuid esitavad mõnevõrra erineva nägemuse sellest, kuidas toimub tajulise kogemuse edasine lõimimine tähendusloome protsessi. Nii Vico kui ka Hobbes võtavad appi kujutlusvõime mõiste, asetades kujutluse või kujundite kasutamise ja loomise inimese mõtlemisprotsessi keskmesse. Mõlemad autorid kirjeldavad ühtlasi seoseid taju ja tänapäeva mõistes afektiivsete protsesside vahel. Paralleele Vico ja Hobbesi ideede vahel aitab seetõttu kontekstualiseerida kultuuripsühholoogiast pärinev afektiivse semioosi mõiste. Lisaks kujutlusvõime seoste analüüsimisele taju, mälu ja afektidega võtab artikkel ühtlasi vaatluse alla kujutlusliku mõtlemise väljendused kultuuri tasandil. Vico vaatepunktist avaldub arhailine mõtlemine kultuuris kujutluslike universaalide näol – näiteks poeetilised troobid, koletised, kangelased jne –, mis on inimese kultuurilise maailma ülesehituse olemuslik osa. Seevastu Hobbes peab sedalaadi vaimusünnitisi pelgaks ebausuks, millel puudub ühiskonnas igasugune positiivne funktsioon. Seetõttu võib öelda, et kuigi mõlemad autorid omistavad kujutlusvõimele inim mõistuse toimimises olulise rolli, oli Vico avatum kultuurilisel tasandil arhailisele teadvusele omaste vormide mõistmisele.

Publikatsioon IV. Artikli „Giambattista Vico tõlgendamine uue psühholoogia-teaduse jaoks: semiootilise kujutlusliku lähenemise poole“ eesmärgiks on visandlikult sõnastada vicolikul semiootikal põhinevad metodoloogilised printsiibid, mis aitaksid liikuda semiootilisema metodoloogia sõnastamise poole kultuuripsühholoogia, aga ka humanitaarteaduste kui selliste jaoks. Esmalt antakse seetarvis lühike ülevaade Vico tööde seostest semiootika ja kultuuripsühholoogiaga, mis viivad tõdemusele, et vicolikust vaatepunktist oleks nende kahe lähenemise lõimimine äärmiselt viljakas. Head lähtepunkti nende dialoogiks nähakse artiklilogumikus „Giambattista Vico and the new psychological Science“ (Tateo 2017). Kogumiku ülevaatliku käsitluse järel võetakse lähemalt fookusesse *fantasia* (Cornejo 2017; Danesi 2017), metafoorse samastamise (Ponzio 2017) ja argitarkuse (*common sense*) kui inimtegevuse (Markova 2017a) mõisted. Tõukudes John Shotteri (2017) esitatud põhjendustest uue inimolemise käsituse vajalikkuse kohta, toob artikkel välja taolise uue metodoloogia mõningad põhialused semiootilisest vaatenurgast: inimese maailma (kehalisusest ja praktilistest vajadustest välja kasvava) olemuse teadvustamine; märgisüsteemide heterogeensus ja nende tõlgitavuse piirid; inimnähtuste ajaloolisus, sotsiaalsus ja protsessuaalsus; ning ratsionaalse inim mõtte asetamine inimese keha, tunnete ja kujutlusvõime konteksti.

Raamartikli ülesandeks on esitada ülevaade doktoritöösse koondatud publikatsioonide põhilistest järeldustest, siduda need ühtseks afektiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise kirjelduseks ja vaadelda selle edasiarenduse ja rakendamise võimalusi. Seetarvis sai sõnastatud kaks lähteküsimust:

1. Milline on kujutuslike ja afektiivsete protsesside roll inimsemioosis – verbaalse keele suhtes primaarsel tasandil?
2. Millised on **afektiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise** kui kujutuslikel ja afektiivsetel protsessidel põhineva tähendusloometegevuse kesksed tunnused ja kuidas toimib see koos inimese teiste semiootiliste protsessidega?

Doktoritöös esitatud järelduste vahetuks vundamendiks on Vico kujutusliku universaali mõiste ja vicolikud metodoloogilised printsiibid. Vicole iseloomulik semiootilise heterogeensuse aktsepteerimine inimese tähendusloome olemusliku alusena, mida väljendavad tema arusaamad arhailisest mõtlemisest ja kujutuslikest universaalidest, teevad tema tööd semiootika vaatepunktist üliväärtuslikuks. Isegi ilma tänapäevase semiootilise terminoloogia abita jõudis Vico siiski ühe antroposemioosi jaoks olulise eristuseni: selleks on eelverbaalse kujutusliku mõtlemise esinemine inimese tähendusloome distinktiivse vormina, mis nõuab iseseisvat lahtimõtestamist ja ei ole taandatav algeliseks või mittetäielikuks ratsionaalse mõtlemise vormiks. Teisisõnu on Vico valmistanud ette teoreetilise pinnase kujutuslike protsesside rikkamale semiootilisele käsitlusele, mis hõlmaks nende lähteid inimkehas ja -tunnetes, seoseid inimese teiste tähendusloome vormidega, semiootilisi toimeprintsiipe ja rolli kultuuris. Vico inimesekäsitlust iseloomustab ühelt poolt selge arusaam inimmaailma vahendatusest ja seega olemuslikust semiootilisusest, teisalt aga selle väljakasvamise meie kehalisest kogemusest. Olen doktoritöös läbivalt püüdnud tuua esile Vico mõistete ja põhimõtete olulisust tänapäeva semiootika jaoks ning rakendada neid afektiiv-kujutusliku tähendusloome põhjaneva semiootilise kirjelduse väljatöötamiseks. Varasemad Vico semiootilised käsitlused ei ole kuigivõrd põhjalikult vaadelnud Vico tööde seoseid Tartu semiootikaga, sealhulgas Juri Lotmani ja Jakob Uexkülli arusaamadega. Doktoritöö põhiline panus semiootikateooriasse seisneb niisiis Vico mõistete lõimimises Tartu semiootikaga, seda kahes vallas: inimmodelleerimise semiootiline kirjeldamine ning holistiline käsitlus inimese maailmast.

Raamartiklis esitatud käsitlust ning doktoritöösse koondatud Vico töid ja nende seoseid tänapäevaste semiootiliste arusaamadega analüüsivaid publikatsioone aluseks võttes võib afektiiv-kujutuslikku modelleerimist kui inimese eelverbaalset tähendusloomet iseloomustada järgmiselt:

- Afektiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise aluseks on kehaline maailma tajumise ja tegutsemise, isikliku maailma loomise ja sellega suhestumise kogemus.
- Nimetatud kogemus sünnib afektiivsete protsesside tulemusena, milles kogemusevoo esmase eristamise aluseks on hedooniline väärtus.

- Kujutusvõime loob võimaluse kogemusevoost kõrvale astumiseks ja edasises semiootilises aktiivsuses võrdlemisi vabalt kasutatavate kujundite loomiseks. Taju, kujutusvõime ja mälu osalevad selles protsessis kõrvuti.
- Kujundid seostuvad samastamise kaudu teiste kujundite, afektiivsete väljade ja muude semiootiliste kompleksidega. Kahesuunaline eristamis- ja samastamisprotsess moodustab semiootilise tähendusloomemehhanismi jaoks vajaliku kakskeelse struktuuri.
- Afektiiv-kujutuslik modelleerimine on äärmiselt paindlik, kuna kujutusvõime võimaldab kasutada mis tahes varasemat mällu talletatud kogemust uue kogemuse mudelina rakendatava kujundina, tingimusel, et nendevahelise seose loomiseks eksisteerib piisav afektiivne motivatsioon.
- Afektiiv-kujutuslik modelleerimine loob otseses mõttes ratsionaalsetest mudelitest ja universaalidest selgelt eristuvaid mudeleid (Vico kujutuslikud universaalid ja 4. peatükis esitatud näites kirjeldatud *ad hoc* afektiiv-kujutuslikud mudelid).

Gregory Bateson on sõnastanud hämmastava täpsusega inimõtte sfääri olemuse, mida olen püüdnud käesolevas töös avada: „Loomade ikoonilise kodeerimise ja inimkõne verbaalse kodeerimise huvitavat vahevormi võib näha inimese unenägudes ja müütides“ (Bateson 1987: 301). Teadlasena on mind alati köitnud inimelu sellised sfäärid, mis jäävad puhtratsionaalse analüüsi jaoks mõneti kättesaamatuks: lastekirjandus, mängu, müüdi ja kujutusvõime mõisted. Võin siin koos Batesoniga tõdeda, et kõik need asetuvad „huvitava vahevormi“ kategooriasse, ruumi, kus verbaalne keeleline ja loogiline mõtlemine on vähem esil, jättes ruumi kujutuslikule mõtlemisele. Kirjeldades seda küll liminaalse ruumina, olen aga siiski seisukohal, et tegemist on samas inimsemioosi olemusliku osa ja inimese muude tähendusloome liikide (keele, kunsti, teaduse jne) alalise kaaslasega. See on ühelt poolt kehalise maailmas viibimise kogemuse ja teiselt poolt inimese hetkest kõrvale astumise, kujundite loomise ja nende teatava vabadusega kasutamise võime lõikumispunkt.

Afektiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise mõiste kasutuselevõtt avab uusi perspektiive paindlikkust nõudvate olukordade semiootiliseks analüüsimiseks, millest aktuaalsemate hulka kuuluvad näiteks: sõja- ja kliimapagulaste kohanemisprotsessid, ent ka mis tahes kriisi või katkestusega toimetuleku protsessid, mis sunnivad otsima viise oma kogemuste loovaks mõtestamiseks.

Afektiiv-kujutusliku modelleerimise eritlemine semiootilise tegevuse eriliigina on ühtlasi oluliseks sammuks kujutuslike ja afektiivsete protsesside üldise semiootilise käsitlemise väljatöötamisel. Üldsemiootilise teooria kontekstis panustab see modelleerimise kui semiootika ühe keskse mõiste sisustamisse.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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2010–2023 University of Tartu, doctoral studies, Semiotics and Culture Studies
2007–2010 University of Tartu, master's studies, Semiotics and Culture Studies, MA
2003–2007 University of Tartu, bachelor's studies, Semiotics and Culture Studies, BA

Study visits at other universities:

2005 September – 2006 January
Università degli Studi di Bari, Facoltà di Lettere, Italy, BA exchange student
2007 September
New Bulgarian University, Bulgaria; Early Fall School of Semiotics
2012 September – December
Aarhus University, Centre for Semiotics, visiting PhD student

Career:

2018–... University of Tartu, Department of Semiotics, international relations specialist
2014–2015 University of Tartu, Department of Semiotics, academic affairs specialist for international curriculum

Research-related managerial and administrative work:

2013–2015 editorial assistant of international research journal Sign Systems Studies
2013–2014 academic writing consultant at University of Tartu, Centre for Academic Writing and Communication
2007–2008 member of the editorial board of student research journal Hortus Semioticus

Research topics:

Vichian semiotics, semiotics of culture, semiotic cultural psychology, semiotic modelling

Publications:

- Raudla, Tuuli 2006. Nukk: oma ja võõras. *Hortus Semioticus* 1: 75–84.
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2003–2007 Tartu Ülikool, semiootika ja kulturoloogia eriala bakalaureuseõpe (sotsiaalteaduste bakalaureus)

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2012 september – detsember Aarhusi ülikool, semiootikakeskus, külalisdoktorant

Teenistuskäik:
2018–... Tartu ülikool, semiootika osakond, välissuhete spetsialist
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Muu teaduslik ja organisatsiooniline tegevus:
2013–2015 toimetuse assistent rahvusvahelisele teadusajakirjale *Sign Systems Studies*
2013–2014 akadeemilise kirjutamise konsultant Tartu ülikooli akadeemilise väljendusoskuse keskus
2007–2008 toimetuskolleegiumi liige üliõpilaste teadusajakirja *Hortus Semioticus* juures

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