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Signs: language in semiotics

by

Peter Lesetar 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

Department of Linguistics

Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract

Signs: language in semiotics investigates the place of language science within the general theory of signs, semiotics. Starting with classical antiquity (Plato and Aristotle), the thesis examines the development of the concept of the linguistic sign in semiotic thought up to the present (Eco) and contrasts the two sciences. The linguistic sign is revealed here as not being the representative model for a general sign theory.

The attributes of the sign are identified in the following: 1. the sign is the *coded unity* of a content and an expression, 2. the sign-meaning has only a *conventially* constituted relation to its vehicle, 3. the purpose of a sign is to connote something *outside* itself, 4. the referent, if there is any, has *no natural relation whatsoever* to the meaning of the sign, 5. the *meaning* of the sign is *established in language games*, 6. a sign always functions only *in a system* of signs. Meaning is implicative and is always more than the mere denotative dictionary definition (content).

The categorical divisions of reality into such fundamental dichotomies as subject v. object and doer v. deed are analyzed as the redefinition of language categories as philosophical categories. Far from seeing language as a secondary system of nomenclature merely denoting prelinguistic ideas of a transcendent mind and of a priori external objects, language is proven here to be *the very possibility* of the emergence of both the world and of the very self experiencing that world, the subject. Finally, to provide a practical example of all previous argumentation, the manipulation of sign systems for political purposes is considered.

Dedication

If there is any merit in this work, I offer it to the World, wishing that it may become boundless and spread on all beings, to help them become free of suffering and share the only lasting Joy, the knowledge of their True Self:

Γνωθι σεαυτον:

***

"... Hiszek Magyarország feltámadásában"

Acknowledgments

It would be utter hybris to claim private authorship for this work. It is a wave in the labour of an eon. In this work I pay homage to my Parents, who only gave and gave to their child, to my Teachers, among others Prof. Dr. Alexander Rot and Prof. Dr. János Zsilka, who taught and taught their disciple without looking for reward, and to my Friends, among others Hillu and Joseph Scharfenberger, who helped me along the way.

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I.

Introduction

Ci sono dunque in biblioteca anche libri che contengono menzogne...

Umberto Eco: *Il nome della rosa*[1]

The aim of my present work is to introduce *language* as a *semiotic* system and the very *possibility of knowledge*. *Semiotics*, 'the study of signs and signifying practices', began early in the 20th century with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. According to semiotics, our knowledge of the world, and even of ourselves, is mediated by signs. It is the sign structures which we build up through experience which we take as *reality*. Both Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of general linguistics, and Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of modern semiotics, envisioned language as belonging to a more general study, that of signs.

The origin of the word *semeiotic* is σημα (sema). Among others, it had the following meanings: 1. sign from heaven, omen, portent, 2. sign to do or begin something, 3. sign by which a grave is known ..., 4. mark to show the cast of a quoist or a javelin, 5. token by which any one's identity or commission was testified, 6. constellation, heavenly bodies. These meanings later abstracted to the general *sign*, *mark*, *token* (Liddell-Scott 1940). The word is the root of σημαντικος (semantikos, *significant*), and of *sem*antics and *sem*iotics.

While linguistics tends to regard language as a system of labels for things, and forgets about the speaking subject, the perspective of semiotics is broader: Semiotics includes in the process of signification not only the signals commonly recognized and treated by language studies but argues that even the *subject* of signification and the external *world*

[1] "So in the library there are also books containing falsehoods..." (*The name of the rose.* English translation by William Weaver, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983:37).

emerge to us within sign processes. A further difference between linguistics and semiotics is that while linguistics takes the sign to be the *mere equivalence* of the two sides of same (*content* and *expression*), semiotics favours the *implicational model* where the whole (linguistic) sign stands for some further meaning in the *encyclopaedic knowledge* of the speaker of the world. How is this meaning of signs established? By other signs, synonyms, pointing with an index finger etc.. "The implicative classical model is not only more interesting than the equivalence model, but it is even more 'modern'. The most recent research in sign theory is in fact attempting to go beyond 'dictionary' semantics ... to focus rather on an 'encyclopedia' semantics (which functions according to the implicative model)" (Manetti, 1993:xiv).

There is much controversy about what is exactly a *sign* and how the different fields of language study are related. Consequently, in this thesis, after giving a historical overview (in Chs. II.-V.), (1) I try to outline the attributes of the (linguistic) sign (in Ch. VI.), (2) I argue for the necessary *hierarchy of the subfields of linguistics*, and also for (3) *linguistics' place* in semiotics (Ch. VIII/1.). In conclusion, (4) I point at the necessity to give much more consideration in our approach to language to *the human speaker* if linguistics ever wants to leave the blind alley of formalism it is stuck in. My investigation is decidedly semiotic in its perspective. In refuting the naïve view that the sign (word) is a mere label for the object it represents, I call for the inclusion of the world and the speaker in the inquiry of the phenomenon of signification. I argue that all thinking of the self and about the entities of the world also takes place in signs. As a direct consequence of this, language studies must be integrated in semiotic investigation.

The human speaker, or more generally, the self, is the most enduring issue of philosophy. In the illusion of personal self, an infinitesimally tiny part of the world has, through reflection on itself, become *consciousness*, and this consciousness tries to grasp and explain itself as something different, apart from the world. In this dialectic of world and self, the things of the world become things-as-such for this mind in the process of recognition. Before that recognition, they do not even exist for this mind. Here language plays a central, divine role: in the creative segmentation of the 'primeval chaos' by way of

language signs a whole universe emerges, with things different, identifiable, interrelated. Words, therefore, are not mere labels attached to prelinguistic things but the very tools we use to constitute our world.

The inner world of humans is infinite, just like their outer world. When we explore the abyss of the soul, it is called depth-psychology. When we study the external world, it is physics, (study of) nature. But whatever we do, we do it *via words and sentences*. Language is not something apart, not a secondary system of notation. It is *the mode of existence of the human consciousness*. This is why my view of language is *existential*.

Absolute knowledge, high above the state of the average mind filled with a multitude of colorful impressions, words and concepts, is the realization of the non-identity of consciousness with everything else (the Vedic *neti-neti*: 'neither this, nor that') and the thorough exclusion of any such identification. The remaining *knower* cannot be known: ultimate self-reflection is not possible. But the conceptless and wordless knowledge of all other things remains a possibility. It is the silent, monumental background of all the rambling of this life.

How are language and the world related? Language is typically conceived of as *representing* the world. In this way *truth*, expressed in language, emerges. But what is that truth? In Western Philosophy, truth for two millenia has been defined as the *mirroring* (in the mind) of external facts in statements: "... affections [in the soul] are likenesses of actual things" (Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 16a 3-8); "... not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity" (*De Interpretatione*, 16b 33). I challenge any such approach that operates on the assumption of the prelinguistic existence of external facts. Let us consider this mirroring of facts through the analysis of the word *truth*. The *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1992) gives the following definition of the very word 'truth': /what is *true*/. /*True*/, in turn, is defined here as /in accordance with *fact* or *reality*/. /*Fact*/, then, is a /thing that is known to *exist* or to be *true*; *reality*/. And /*reality*/ is defined as the /state of being *real*/. /*real*/ is /actually *existing*/. But and again, /*to exist*/ is /to have a place in objective *reality*/.

In this vicious circle *real* defines *true* defines *existing* defines */fact* defines *real*, also drawing in other word-signs in this mega-tautology. In fact, all these are not definitions but only paraphrases. It is by social usage, *by custom*, that we can replace one of these signals with another, in certain settings. Each word of a language is defined, equated by some others. Carried to the extreme, all word-signs define one another. For the items of a language to mean, to be *'vehicles'*, *carrying meaning*, it is not necessary to refer to 'ultimate' */fact/* or */reality/*. The objective reality in its *an sich Sein* is not available to us immediately, anyway, but only through signs. The *referent* is never *meaning* and no matter what sophisticated technical tools the human being ever uses to extend his *perception*, he must ultimately *interpret* the representations provided by instruments, and that *interpretation* takes place in signs, in language. We are framed by our language.

There is a further point: *lies* are /known to *exist/*, and */fact/* is a /thing that is known to *exist/*, therefore lies are facts. Since */true/* is /in accordance with */fact/*, depending on what 'accordance' is, lies at least support facts, if they are not truth themselves! This is the complete breakdown of the typical linguistic analysis which does not go beyond dictionary meaning. All the above words are, however, successfully used in communities. This proves that there must be some sign function *conventions* according to which they are used. We must abandon the shallow dictionary meaning in favour of the ocean of signification and turn our attention to the illeity of social practice. "Truth then becomes a matter, on one side, of the adequacy of the expression to the intended sense and on the other of its adequacy to the object referred to" (Kerby 1991:74).

Naïvely, however, truth is still considered to be the equivalence of states of mind to 'mind-external' entities. This dogma about representation sits like a succubus on the chest of the philosophy of language ever since classical antiquity. If I can reveal the fallacious nature of this tenet, the goal of this treatise will have been achieved.

Contemporary language science is in crisis. In the crisis of aimlessness. In the crisis of being uprooted. Contemporary linguistics has lost connection with its own historical development. "The intellect acquires sharpness by familiarity with different traditional views. What conclusions can be reached by him who only runs after his own reasoning?"

(*Vaakyapadiiya*, 489), asks Bhartrihari, the greatest poet of India. A millenial Western process of the negation of the real nature of language is proving its emptiness in this fin-de-siècle cacophony. Most linguistic investigations have been nominalist and language has been thought of as a set of labels attached to and merely representing external objects and preexistent ideas. Saussure, who *again* brought about the Copernican turn of the science of language by destroying the nomenclaturist view, could achieve the purification of linguistics only at the cost of losing sight of the speaker and the language-external world completely. His *langue*, detached from reality, paved the way for the barren, rigid, and isolated systems of structuralism.

In vain did Karl Bühler warn that "it is impossible to constitute the concept of sense without appeal to goals and to [social] subject-relatedness" (1965:132). In vain did he emphasize the *abstractive relevance* of the functioning of language, in full agreement with Saussure. Exactly this *material derailment* feared by Bühler took place through the extraction of the word from the Platonic dialogue, its natural habitat, in its submission to a l'art-pour-l'art interstellar isolation which via the Hjelmslevian algebraization culminated in structuralism (of which, admittedly, Saussure himself was one of the main causes) and in the subsequent all-pervasive spread of computer-prejudiced generative grammar. While Bühler's *abstractive relevance* was far from disregard of meaning, Chomsky in his programmatic *Syntactic Structures* (1957), banishing *meaning* and *semantics*, bluntly pontificated an inherently castrated language model in stating that

> The fundamental aim in the linguistic analysis of a language L is to separate the *grammatical* sequences which are the sentences of L from the *ungrammatical* sequences which are not sentences of L and to study the structure of the grammatical sequences (Chomsky 1957 2.1.).

Though Chomsky does not give a clear definition of his '*grammatical*', he believes that

the notion 'grammatical' cannot be identified with 'meaningful' or 'significant' in any semantic sense. Sentences (1) and (2) are equally nonsensical, but any speaker of English will recognize that only the former is grammatical.

(1) Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
(2) Furiously sleep ideas green colorless (Chomsky 1957:12).

In reality, neither of these sentences is grammatical, since neither has a *content* established by the *code* we call *grammar*. The only difference between (1) and (2) is that the expression side of (1) is constructed according to prevalent syntactic rules, while (2) breaks even those rules. Chomsky, who promoted American structuralism, disregards both the *content side* and the *code* which relates the content side to the expression side in declaring that "... grammar is autonomous and independent of meaning" (Chomsky 1957:17), while, of course, he tacitly uses them. Horribile dictu, meaning fell victim to the generativist anathema and an inert, inane and empty language model was autonomized. "Despite later gestures toward semantics, ... transformational grammar remains saddled in its sterile origins ..." (Hirsch 1991:193). This is how generativism rose to omnipotence. However, "even the least concrete syntactic rules cannot be explained or even set up without the consideration of semantic and pragmatic relationships" (Bentele-Bystrina 1978:136-7).

Mesmerized by the signifier side of the linguistic sign, and especially by its material carrier, parallel to the general materialist decay of our world, most current linguistic research is bound too much by what is going on in the physical organ *lingua* (tongue) and is bogged down in the raw physical medium of language and in air-castles of epiphenomena. Today the satellite fields, viz. the phonetic, morphological, and syntactic subdomains claim autonomy as distinct fields of study and research has lost sight of the whole. A potent indication of this is the sparse occurrence of semantics courses in the curricula of North-American universities and the virtual absence of pragmatics as an area of linguistics. The more this type of research expands and presumes to cover an ever-increasing territory, the more the human speaker, the sine qua non of any language, is

excommunicated in this veritable windmill-fight, thereby reducing language to the original, literal *grammar* (study of letters), even below common grammar, the lowest of the mediaeval *septem liber artes*. This brave new world of Huxley is also the heyday of the bokanofskified production of new phonological theories. Yet all such research is just an arbitrary, at its best, economical tour de force of the brain in the description of a mere s-code (a *s*ystem of expression in itself), a modest peripheral limb of language. Raising, arming, equipping, and moving are "as relevant to fighting as the skills of the sword-maker were to the art of fencing" (Howard 1994:197-8). Just the same, sounds, the bare material costume of language, and even syntax, are only as relevant to the essential domains, namely *semantics* and *pragmatics*, as they serve the functioning of the latter: "... though phonemes *are* values ... , they do not *have* values, since they signify nothing" (Holdcroft 1991:122). Meaning can never be deduced from these. Meaning and signification, however, are the very font that gives life to all these subordinate fields. It might appear that each area of linguistics focuses on some aspect of the two-sided linguistic sign. This, however, is an illusion. Semantics and pragmatics deal with the content side of signs, contextually and circumstantially, whereas all the other subfields handle the expression-side only. If a different syntactic arrangement of identical elements distinguishes one meaning from another (as in *Boys love girls.* vs. *Girls love boys.*), this can happen only via a *type-based semantic code*, which coordinates meaning differences with formal differences (Eco 1976). In so far as such differences affect meaning, they are part of the *semantic code* of that language. To study the inferior domains in their own right quickly becomes a blunt, shallow, and self-defeating approach. Neither wisdom nor even insight, it is materialist technology, Chomskian 'linguistics', where language is reduced to bare information theoretical signals in places like the Department of Modern Languages and Research Laboratory of Electronics (sic!) at MIT. What use is it to linguistics to study of sounds from a purely physical perspective? What use is to the science of language the formal (that is, *not actual*) study of semantics?

In the linguistic community and beyond, typical is the unquestioned belief that the conceptual side of language is filled with *preexistent ideas* which later immerse into language to find their expression in a sound-catenation. The functional and cognitive

grammars of today do not examine these *allegedly ontogenetically innate concepts* but take them as given and only start with their combinations. All such views miss the fundamental fact that language *constitutes reality*. With Wittgenstein's words, "... eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen" (1960:296).[1] To approach our topic, it is indispensable to first examine the historical development of the concepts we use today. As we will see, all inquiry revolves around the relationship of *language*, *mind*, and *reality*.

Our perspective must be aligned with *the question of meaning and signification*. Largely forgotten, this is not a novel approach, though. It is only our profound ignorance of past authors and the hybris of our technoperplexed era that makes us think we are far ahead of the classics. For twenty-five hundred years, the European and Asian cultures have been labouring on *signs*, but *always in the framework of semiotic investigation*. Unlike in contemporary linguistics, but very much like in modern philosophy, "... the debate on signs and on their nature and classification took place at the very highest levels of philosophical speculation" (Manetti 1993:xvi). Already in the first fully survived European treatise on language, Plato's *Cratylos*, the issue of how the word (language *sign*) is related to its *referent* is raised. Already in his earliest semiotic definitions, Peirce placed the sign between its *object* and its *interpreter* (1960, 2:228). In Eco's *Opera aperta* (1962) too, the text, being *open*, gains meaning through the active role of the reader. There is no point in language without its speaker.

The whole traditional view of language and even the typical perspective of today in the linguistic community can be found condensed in Aristotle:

> Now spoken sounds (τα εν τη φωνη) are symbols (συμβολα) of affections in the soul (των εν τη ψυξη παθηματων), and written marks (γραφομενα) symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all peoples, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs (σημεια) of – affections of the soul [παθηματα] – are the same for all; and what these affections

[1] To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.

are likenesses ('ομοιωματα) of – actual things (πραγματα) – are also the same (*De Interpretatione* 16a, 3-8).

The spine of my work is the gradual refutal of Aristotle's above claims, widespread in language research, and the promotion of the semiotic approach as a viable alternative to current linguistics. In Ch. II., I survey semiotic studies from their beginnings to the Modern Age and their interconnections with language study.

In Chapters III.-V., I discuss the development of semiotic investigations in the 20th century and the recognition of the symbolic nature of language. In Ch. III., I present how the logical tradition deals with language, and introduce Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, the two giants at the cradle of semiotics. Ch. IV. discusses Charles Morris' continuation of Peirce's work, the development of (Saussurean) semiotic ideas in structuralism, the role of *symbolization* in language, as exemplified by the works of Ernst Cassirer, Karl Bühler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the reinterpretation of the Saussurean sign model in the psychology of Jacques Lacan. Ch. V. starts with the presentation of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's semiotic work in which a parallel between social production and linguistic sign production is drawn, followed by the discussion of Sebastian Shaumyan's return to a unilateral sign model. Following this, Umberto Eco's semiotic conception of language is contrasted with the 'post-semiotic' trend (John Stewart). Finally, I discuss the approach of hermeneutics (Hans Lipps, Paul Ricoeur) to language.

In my choice of semiotic authors, I try to present all the main lines of development of European and American semiotics and their interconnections with language studies within the broad framework of different isms (positivism, structuralism, modernism etc.). In my discussion, I attempt to see beyond the labels the diverse trends use to call themselves: I find that several schools which do not call themselves semiotic are, in fact, semiotic in their perspective. On the other hand, certain so-called semiotic schools cannot be taken seriously. This fact together with my focus on *the connection of language study and semiotics* explains why I leave out several 'semiotic schools' from my investigation.

Chapters VI.-VIII. deal with three central issues of language on the semiotic foundation of the previous chapters. In Ch. VI. I establish the attributes of the language sign. Here, I also refute the age-old misconception of the primacy of the spoken word over the written medium. In Ch. VII., I challenge iconicity, the alleged similarity of sign and referent. In Ch. VIII., I point at the central role of language in all epistemy of the world and of the subject. Here the use of codes is presented on the example of the manipulation of language for political purposes.

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II.

Semiotic predecessors

Die Einzelwissenschaften wissen oft gar nicht, durch welche Fäden sie von den Gedanken der großen Philosophen abhängen.

Jakob Burckhardt[1]

1. Signs and language in the ancient world

The turn to language, or indeed to *semiotics*, in every culture was motivated by some very *pragmatic* necessity of life. Whether it was the need to explain the Vedic hymns, to maintain the Egyptian bureaucracy, or to have outstanding translators for Kubla Khan, the underlying motive was always mankind's effort to *interpret a message* correctly and to be *understood: to overcome an obstacle in communication*. Thus inquiry into language already in its earliest stages has been *hermeneutical*, that is, driven by the wish to understand. Another source of attention to language was people's amazement at the power language had to *grasp the world*. No wonder language was revered as a supernatural force.

In China linguistic work began with the exegesis of ancient texts. The logograph was considered a triple unit of sound, character shape, and meaning. One of the main questions here was whether a word (name) had some natural link to its referent. Xun Zi (cca. 250 BC.) in his *Zheng ming* (*On rectifying names*) established that "Names have no intrinsic appropriateness" (Lepschy 1994 I:4).

[1] Often, the individual sciences are not aware at all of how they depend on the ideas of the great philosophers.

Grammatical interest in India stemmed from the importance of correct pronunciation of the hymns chanted in Vedic ritual. Paanini's *Astaadhyaayii* (cca. 400 BC.), a sentence grammar, starts with an insuperable catalogue of sounds. In the treatise on verbs bases, stems, and affixes are distinguished. Contrary to its Greek contemporaries, Paanini's grammatical endeavour "is intended to account for an entire language system, not merely for a particular corpus of text ..." (Lepschy 1994 I:38). This grammar described usage through *derivations*. The *vaarttikas* expounded what is said, what is left unsaid, and what is possibly wrongly said in the sutras. Contrary to the linguistic traditions in the Hellenic and Western world, "grammar in ancient India evolved independently of logic, with which it came to interact" (Lepschy 1994 I:50). It was this healthy attitude that saved Indian language study from the vicious circles of Western linguistics in which, following Aristotle, the 'essence' of language is thought to be the *logical core of propositions*. Bhartrihari also realized the paramount place of language in *epistemology*: "There is no knowledge in the realm of wordly intercourse that is not accompanied by speech" (Vaakyapadiiya I.131). Brahman, the supreme existence, has *the property of being speech* (Lepschy 1994 I:49).

In the Western tradition, the origin of the word *grammar* itself is γραμματικη, from *gramma*, 'letter of the alphabet'. The Greek alphabet, the first one to have independent letters for vowels and consonants, was established around 800 BC. Plato's τεχνη γραμματικη, 'the craft of grammar', is about the classification of letters. Grammar later meant philology or criticism. Dionysios Thrax (2nd. c. BC) defines it as 'the study of literary usage'. To Quintillian (1st c. AD) it means 'correct usage, *enarratio* (expounding) of authors'. The beginnings of language study are characterized by a preoccupation with writing and philology.[2]

However, Western culture also was familiar with the tremendous importance of language, as exemplified at the inception of the gnostic gospel:

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[2] Source: Giulio Lepschy (ed.) *Storia della linguistica*. English. (*History of linguistics*). London; New York : Longman, c1994. v. 2. Classical and medieval linguistics.

> In principio erat uerbum, et uerbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat uerbum. Hoc erat in principio apud deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt : et sine ipso factum est nihil : quod factum est in ipso uita erat : et uita erat lux hominum : et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt (John I:1-5).[3]

While language studies were busy with the description of items building a single proposition, semiotic investigation started with full messages (verbal and other). The earliest speculation about the *nature of signs* took place probably in Mesopotamia. Here the *protasis* (antecendent, omen) was taken as the sign of the *apodosis* (consequent, oracle): if p then q. In this inference of *causes* from *effects* conjectural abduction plays a central role. The sign was understood as the relationship not between isolated lexical units but between *full propositions* functioning in an abstract scheme of relationships. Gradually, vast *codes* were created on basis of oppositions and abstract rules. Later, the apodosis was reduced to the *favourable/unfavourable* dichotomy (Manetti 1993:14-49).

The use of signs first consolidated in Greek divination. The soothsayer (mantis) possesses superhuman wisdom and interprets the obscure riddles, the challenging signs of the gods sent to humans. Human language is transparent and immediately decipherable; divine language is the very opposite. This arcane knowledge can be matched by only the highest philosophical knowledge. *Semiotics* develops to interpret divine language where the sign-text corresponds to events. Σημαινειν (to signify by signs sent by the god to humankind) is in contrast with τεκμαιρεσθαι (to make human conjecture) in the texts. Accordingly, the modes of interpretation are enigmatic vs. literary. If humans take the literary meaning, they fail. The cradle of dialectic appears to be divination because in divination an obscure meaning must be extricated from the obvious signals present. This extrication can only happen in successive steps of revelation, typical of the dialogue in which the speakers, rather than try to convince each other of their view, jointly arrive in

[3] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

their conversation at an opinion new to both of them, at the end of which *truth* (α–ληθεια, the un-hidden) shines forth. Thus *truth and meaning are not obvious* but must be found via *interpretation*. Using both inference and induction, the by itself *insignificant* observed ('ηκαστον) is identified as sign (σημειον), the inferred, and sometimes even taken as proof, irrefutable sign (τεκμηριον). Abductive/hypothetical inference is only probable whereas deductive inference is proof.

The relevance of language to epistemology was recognized by both language studies and semiotic reflections. The divine nature of language was seen in contrast with its everyday aspect in several independent major cultures. This opposition of divine and human language is found also in Plato, in the ideal vs. real language states.

2. Plato: Cratylos

Plato (427-348 B.C.) was the first thinker to have a semiotic view of language. For him, the interpretation of messages in a language goes beyond the evocation of the dictionary meaning of words upon hearing them and *reveals* more through *implication*.

Plato's main treatise on language, *Cratylos*, deals with the correctness of names. Both Cratylos and Hermogenes, the two protagonists along with Socrates, consider *naming* the dawn of language. According to Cratylos, "[names] are *natural* and not conventional ... there is a truth or correctness in them which is the same by nature for all, both Hellenes and barbarians" (Plato 383). For Hermogenes, however, naming is *by convention*, on the basis of a preliminary knowledge of things, limited to the agreeing members of the linguistic community: HERMOGENES: "... [I] cannot convince myself that there is any principle of correctness in names other than convention and agreement; ... there is no name given to anything by nature" (Plato 384).

"Socrates forces Hermogenes ... to state that anyone can effect ... change of names ... . This explodes Hermogenes' conventionalism into total subjectivism ..." (Manetti

1993:59)[4], while Cratylos, in driving iconicity to its extreme, loses the ability to distinguish the referent from its sign. Socrates, however, argues for the middle way: The name is neither totally natural (iconic), nor absolutely arbitrary. How does naming take place, then?

Actions (πραξεις), like things (πραγματα) are objective entities (οντα). Actions are also a class of being. There is a properness of action: "the *right* way is the *natural* way" (Plato 387). Naming is a sort of action, too; the name is the result of intentional activity. Therefore, "names ought to be given according to a natural process", "... that which has to be named has to be named with something" (Plato 387). "... a name is an instrument", "of teaching and of distinguishing *natures*" (Plato 388). Even though "Protagoras ... says that man is the measure of all things and that things are to me as they appear to me ...", things still "have their own proper and permanent essence", says Plato (386).

Names provide a taxonomy of reality and also "communicate this taxonomy" (Manetti 1993:60). "... [W]ho gives us the names which we use?" (Plato 387), Plato asks. Whoever gave names to things, must have had a preliminary knowledge of things. SOCRATES: "But if things are only to be known through names, how can we suppose that the givers of names *had knowledge*, or were legislators, *before there were names at all*, and therefore before they could have known them?" (Plato 438). The nomothetes (arbiter of names) must have been a pragmathetes as well since there are no prelinguistic concepts.

Plato, while admitting the *actual language state*, also argues for its *ideal nature*: "[N]ot every man is able to give a name but only a maker of names" (Plato 388-9), "who looks to the name which each thing *by nature* has (Plato 390). "Just as the maker of shuttles looks at the *ειδος* (form, idea) of the shuttle, so the namer (νομοθετης) looks at the "name in itself", that is, the ideal form of the name (Plato 389b, 390a), in order to make the name." The ideal name, this latent *force* would be the immutable and universal essence, while the phonic form differs from language to language. Still, "... [T]he business of a name ... is to express the nature" (Plato 396).

[4] The italics in the quotations of Plato are mine.

Plato also raises the following question: "[H]ow do the primary names which are not founded upon others show the natures of things ...?" (Plato 422). According to Socrates, "... objects should be imitated in letters and syllables, ... there is no better principle to which we can look for the truth of first names" (Plato 425). SOCRATES: "we should *imitate* the nature of the thing; the elevation of our hands to heaven would mean lightness and upwardness" (Plato 423). Socrates' words seem to give way to iconic gestures, but the naivety of iconism is made transparent by Plato already in the following ironic statement: "ρ appears to me to be the general instrument expressing all motion" (Plato 426).

In *the ideal language situation*, the name attributes to things that which belongs to them and it is like them. SOCRATES: The first mode of assignment I call right, and when applied to *names* only, *true* as well as right; and the other mode, whereby that which is unlike is given or assigned, I call wrong, and in the case of *names*, *false* as well as wrong" (Plato 430). In an abstract way, "... the correct name indicates the nature of the thing (Plato 428), even if to it letters are added or taken away. However, images and names are not exact counterparts of the realities they represent because

> SOCRATES: If they [names] were always made like them [things] in every way! Surely we should then have two of everything, and no one would be able to determine which were the names and which were the realities (Plato 432).
>
> SOCRATES to CRATYLOS: Have the courage to ... acknowledge that the thing may be named, and described, so long as the *general character* of the thing which you are describing is retained ... (Plato 432).

Plato makes it salient that if Cratylos were correct, total iconism, that is, complete identity, would be necessary for words to represent things. To reflect the essence of the thing, the *name* must join the *token* or individual occurrence of a thing to its *type* (genus). The name thus already has a *predicative function*. By the mere utterance of a name for a referent, we already predicate that a thing (token) belongs to a class (type). In this semantic theory of Plato about the *ideal language*, the name is the list of the properties of

the referent, in an iconic identity of the linguistic structure with the logico-ontological structure. However, Plato sees that the *actual/real language situation* is rather different:

> SOCRATES: No more could names ever resemble any actually existing thing, unless the elements of which they are compounded bore, from the first, some degree of resemblance to the objects of which the names are an imitation: And the original elements are letters?" (Plato 434)

No, they are not. But letters and sounds are used in language to represent everything else because simply "there is no better principle" (Plato 425). It is precisely the limitation of the matériel of sign-vehicles of natural language which makes the extensive use of convention indispensable:

> SOCRATES: ... still the word is intelligible to both of us; when I say σκληρος (hard), you know what I mean.
> CRATYLOS: ... the explanation of that is *custom*.
> SOCRATES: And *what is custom but convention* (συνθηκη)? ... the correctness of a name turns out to be convention, since letters which are unlike are indicative equally with those which are like, if they are sanctioned by *custom* (εθος) and *convention* (Plato 435).

Names, being different from their objects, are signs. To Plato, the *semeion* is *distinctive sign*, "grasping also the reason (λογος) of this object" (Manetti 1993:55). *Imitation* (mimesis), if it reveals this essential nature of the thing, is *semiotic*. In language it is sounds that represent everything. Therefore, the establishment of *semeia* (signs) can happen only through abstraction. Signs, in turn, institute a taxonomy of reality. This taxonomy is always already a *subjective* representation of the world.

Cratylos also raises the problem of talking about something non-existent: "how can a man say that which is not? — say something and yet say nothing?". In his view,

"[Falsehood may be] neither spoken nor said. ... his words would be an unmeaning sound like the noise of hammering at a brazen pot" (Plato 430). This view was held because a true statement was seen holistically about '*that which is*' " (Lepschy 1994 II:27; my emphasis). Its opposite, therefore, would be about a *nonexistent*. However, it is possible to utter false and yet meaningful judgements. The truth value of utterances is independent of their meaning.

Plato has two theories of language: one about the *ideal*, another about the *real, actual* state of language. Plato settles the debate on signs with two main conclusions. First, there is no natural but only a *conventional* bond between name and thing. *Convention* belongs to the actual, deteriorated state. Second, expressly on basis of the conventional nature of language, there arise meaningful but not true propositions (lies). Language, to mean, does not need any referent to be present. "Nor has the Cratylean side of the argument, [the iconic identity of name and thing], which Aristotle appears to discount without further discussion, had any reputable modern successor" (Lepschy 1994 II:24).

Plato produced no elaborate sign-theory but his theory of language is *semiotic* because messages even in the actual language state still *reveal*, not just *communicate*. The perceptible sign refers to a *non-manifest* (αδηλον, αφανες) *object*. Σημαινω ('manifest by signs') alternates with δηλοω ('reveal'), ονομαζειν ('give name') with λεγειν ('utter') in the Platonic dialogue. In the Saussurean sign model, the *signifié* is mechanically evoked by the *signifiant* in a close association circuit. In Plato's semiotic view of language, however, the revelation about the object takes place because messages are *interpreted*, based on a changeable code of *implication* rather than expiring in the mere equation of *expression* and *content* at the dictionary level.

Of course, Plato's views on language are embedded in his philosophy. There the essence of things is the *idea* which has *reflections* in the material word: "I quite agree with you that words should as far as possible resemble things ..." (Plato 435c). On this note, Plato appears to be a naturalist. Itkonen presents his understanding of Plato in the following:

> [W]hen the mind is thinking, it is simply talking to itself, asking questions and answering them (Theatetus 189E in Itkonen 1991:172).
>
> ... Plato postulates a general 'imitational' similarity between language, thinking, and reality. ... [The first meaning of *logos* is] giving overt expression to one's thought [*dianoia*] by means of vocal sound with names and verbs (*Theatetus* 206D). *Mind is primary with respect to language* (since the latter expresses the former). Language is used to make distinctions between aspects of reality (*Cratylus* 388C). It follows that *mind must already have made those same distinctions*. Plato's terminology for the "language-mind-reality' triad is the following:

logos ('language')	⎫		⎧	ousia ('being')
	⎬	dianoia ('thought')	⎨	
onomata ('names')	⎭		⎩	pragmata ('things')

(Itkonen 1991:172; italics and translation added)

I disagree with Itkonen, who mistakenly classifies Plato as a naturalist. First, by the statement "[W]hen the mind is thinking, it is simply talking to itself ..." Plato stresses the dialectical nature and affinity of *thought* and *speech*, in accordance with the original meaning of Greek *logos*. Plato points out that *thinking already is a dialogue* and that thought is inseparable from language. Second, even if "[The first meaning of *logos* is] giving *overt* expression to one's thought ..." (Plato, *Theatetus* 206d), it does not follow from these two statements that "mind is primary with respect to language" (Itkonen 1991:172). Language expresses the mind, but it also structures that same mind. "Language is used to make distinctions between aspects of reality" (Plato, *Cratylus* 388c). In Plato's passage there is no mention of a ready-made reality available for labeling by words. In consequence, it does not follow from what Plato states that "mind must *already* have made those same distinctions" (Itkonen, ibid.; my emphasis). Rather, it is in the process of making those very distinctions between aspects of reality, in the "asking questions and

answering them" (Plato, *Theatetus* 189e), that reality itself becomes attainable as opposed to "the plane of vague amorphous thought" (Saussure, CLG:156) of the prenarrative level.

Plato's views on language rest on the fundamental contrast of his philosophy between the *world of ideas* and the *actual, relative world.* For Plato, human language is good for communication and as a means of attaining relative philosophical knowledge, but absolute truth is in things beyond words, in the world of *ideas*. Plato's agnosticism with respect to the non-ideal, real language is ultimately rooted in his epistemology. Goodness and beauty, the main platonic ideas, have permanent nature. Mortal language, being part of the impermanent material universe, cannot lead to this realm of ideas. Words are but pointers at perennial reality: SOCRATES: the [ultimate] knowledge of things is not to be derived from names (Plato 439).

At the relative level, Plato, via discussing naturalism and conventionalism, successfully disentangles the *name* (or sign) from the referent and proves the *thetic* (given, codified) nature of language. The name in itself is already a predication and an instrument to distinguish natures. The arising *subjective* taxonomy enables the speakers to access the world. Plato is the first linguist to have a semiotic understanding of language: for him, *interpretation* is central.

3. Aristotle

Between Plato and St. Augustine, the theory of signs and the theory of language develop without any interconnection. The theory of the sign is marginal already in Aristotle's philosophy. Replacing divination with rationalism, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) breaks with the semiotic view of Plato and initiates a rigid terminology of *parts of utterance*. The term *utterance* still shows the pragmatic approach to language, to be abandoned more and more as language became seen in itself. In the *Peri Hermeneias* (*De Interpretatione*) Aristotle introduces a naive 'realism' which continues to haunt philosophy and language study to our day:

> Now spoken sounds (τα εν τη φωνη) are symbols (συμβολα) of affections in the soul (των εν τη ψυξη παθηματων), and written marks (γραφομενα) symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all peoples, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs (σημεια) of – affections of the soul [παθηματα] – are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses ('ομοιωματα) of – actual things (πραγματα) – are also the same (*De Interpretatione* 16a, 3-8).

The passage leaves a number of crucial questions unanswered. What are affections of the soul? Thoughts, expressions, or images? How are they *likenesses* of *actual things* (sic!)? How is the spoken sound a symbol? Is the *written sign to spoken sign relation* the same as the *spoken sign to affection relation*? Why is writing secondary to speech? We will return to the relation of speech to writing in detail in Ch. VI. 3.

Now, let us consider the actual things and their affections. Since even written marks and spoken sounds are not the same for all peoples, on what basis could their significata be the same for all? Different men do not meet the same things, be they tokens or types, nor do they have the same thoughts. According to Aristotle, the *passive* faculty of the soul receives sensory impressions from objects of the outside world, these in turn are 'compared' to the *pathemata* (affections; passive impressions). This formulation by Aristotle suggests that the pathemata are somehow *earlier*, preexistent to perception, and the passive faculty only identifies them with sensory impressions. However, in my view, there are no such preexistent pathemata and the eminent role of language is to create them *within* linguistic signs. "No ideas are established in advance, and nothing is distinct, before the introduction of linguistic structure", says Saussure (CLG:155). There is no obvious knowledge whatsoever through the senses. In consequence, *perception* cannot be used in any way to verify, prove or defy, that knowledge.

How affections (παθηματα εν τη ψυξη) are likenesses ('ομοιωματα) of actual things also remains unexplained. Psychic entities would be mere *copies* of the objects (originals). But for Itkonen, a vehement contemporary representative of the mirror-theory,

"It follows that the relation of signification between mind and reality, being based on similarity, must be in some sense natural" (1991:174). If they were complete likenesses, then false statements or nonsense statements would be impossible. But with that, truth, too, would be eradicated! Aristotle subscribes to the principle that "what is in speech corresponds to what is in the mind" (*De Interpretatione* 23a, 30). Yet, it does not follow from this sketchy remark of Aristotle that the relation between mind and reality is actually based on *similarity*. What Aristotle said was 'corresponds' and not 'is isomorphic', as Itkonen programmatically reads into him, in the following: "If Aristotle does not distinguish more carefully between the different levels [i.e. language, mind, reality, and logic], the reason must be that he views them as generally isomorphic" (Itkonen, 1991:180). Nor does Itkonen explain how he believes that relationship to be *natural*.

For Aristotle, the theory of the sign is somewhere between rhetoric and logic. His sign is *a strictly logical instrument of knowledge*. Aristotle does not distinguish between meaning and thought. Ogden and Richards (1936:37) will do the same. Thoughts are denied reality in that they are not recognized as *actual things*: "It is not true to say that what is not, since, what it is thought about, is something that is; for what is thought about it is not that it is, but that it is not" (*De Interpretatione* 21a33). However, I hold that although it is not an external (material) object, a thought nevertheless exists and can be talked about. It is not true that "what is thought about it is ... that it is not". It must exist in some sense for its 'external' existence to be deniable.

Even what 'spoken sounds' (τα εν τη φωνη) mean is not defined closer. For some, it is the Saussurean signifier at word-level, for others it is onoma, rheema, logos (*name, predicate, language*) (Manetti 1993:73). Though Aristotle argues for the symbolic nature of language, his symbolism is at two removes from reality because the word represents an impression, which itself is an impression from an object. In the whole line of thought, the *similarity* of letter, sound, impression, and object is a tacit assumption, never defined.

According to Itkonen, "... Aristotle's view of the 'language - mind - reality' triad is expressed analogically: written language/spoken language = spoken language/mind = mind/reality" (Itkonen 1991:317). Itkonen is deeply wrong: Even if written 'sounds' are

similar to spoken ones on the one hand, and the affections (pathemata) to things (pragmata), on the other, from this it does not automatically follow that spoken sounds are similar in any way to the affections! Nothing refutes more sardonically what *'natural'* analogy between written and spoken language exists, than the complex code of English spelling or the reading of pictograms.

Together with non-signifying sounds, written and natural signs also are excluded from Aristotle's sign theory, as are all the non-propositional sentences (eg., prayer):

> Every sentence is significant (not as a tool but, as we said, by convention), but not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. ... The present investigation deals with the statement-making sentence; the others we can dismiss, since consideration of them belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or poetry (*De Interpretatione*, 16b33ff).

Aristotle defines falsity and truth as incorrect and correct mirroring of external facts, respectively: "Falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation" (*De Interpretatione*, 16a 9ff.). *Predication* makes the semantic content revealing (apophantic). Truth (or the absence of it) is approached through existence: "true is what exists".

Applying the key terms of logic, the *name* and the *predicate*, to language, Aristotle violently sets up the *non-statement - word* vs. *statement - sentence* dichotomy. But we have seen in Plato that the single name, when put to use, already is a predication. Aristotle disregards one-word utterances and the role of *implication* in signification. However, the shortest sentence, just as the longest one, is built on implication and unlimited semiosis, where signs in turn are interpreted by other signs. The word is always already a predicate, segmenting totality, making a part of it accessible to us. Further, ever since Aristotle, in the Occidental search for truth, the non-statement-making sentences were dismissed as marginal, as elliptical corruptions of the statement-making sentences. Unlike many of the writings of the church-extolled Philosopher which reentered European thought only via translations from the Arabic around the millenium, the *Peri Hermeneias* was always available and thus had a decisive influence over the ages. Aristotle gravely distorted the

nature of language by promoting *propositions* at the expense of all else; such a sacrilege in our age is only paralleled by Chomsky's unexonerable expulsion of meaning from language. Both approaches claim to cover all language but only deal with a small segment of it.

Aristotle correctly stresses the conventionality of signs:

> A *name* is a spoken sound significant by convention, without [expressing] time, none of whose parts is significant in separation. ... I say 'by convention' because no name is a name naturally but only when it has become a symbol. Even inarticulate noises (of beasts, for instance) do indeed reveal something, yet none of them is a name. (*De Interpretatione* 16a, 19-28)

However, even if beast noises were *articulate* and revealing, as names are, they still would not be names, for lack of *convention*. Voice (φωνη) is emitted by an animate being and it has meaning (*De Anima* II, 420 b). On the contrary, animal sounds (ψοφοι) are non-conventional, non-segmentable, and also non-combinable (αγραμματοι). They are *symptoms* which *reveal* something. Not articulation but *symbolization* sets man apart from beast. The original meaning of the word *symbolon* is "each of the two halves of a purposefully broken coin etc. for being later proof" (Manetti 1993:73). Since the two pieces match perfectly, they are completely reciprocal in that each is needed to prove the other, they are *equivalent*. A symbol in language works in the same way: " ... [A] previously established agreement (συνθηκη) ... guarantee[s] the correctness of the name [for this or that affection]" (Manetti 1993:74). This same image recurs in the Saussurian speech circuit diagram (CLG:27-8) where, however, the signifier, uttered by one speaker, *mechanically evokes* the signified in the memory of the other, *without revealing* anything more and beyond, very much like the ringing of the bell triggers the secretion of saliva in Pavlov's dog experiment.

For Plato the name is revelation (δηλωμα) of the essence (δυναμις). For Aristotle, however, "the name is spoken sound significant by convention (φωνη σημαντικη κατα συνθηκην). Aristotle's meaning is no longer based on *implication*, by which a given content serves as expression for a further meaning, and thus *foreshadows a non-semiotic linguistics*. In Aristotle's thinking the sign is relevant only as long as it helps inferential reasoning, reaching *causes* from *effects* in scientific investigation. The sign (σημειον) in *Prior Analytics* coincides with the second term of *logical* implication, *q*: 'if *p* then *q*' and since *q*, therefore *q* is the sign of *p*. The implicative relationship is about facts (pragmata). "On the other hand, the sign is conceived of as a proposition in that it can be the premiss on which a syllogism is developed ..." (Manetti 1993:78). Aristotle identified three types of syllogism:

1. A is B, and B is C, therefore A is C.
2. A is B, and A is C, therefore B is C.
3. A is C, and B is C, therefore A is B.

While 1. is necessarily true (deduction), 2. and 3. only *may* be true (induction). In all three types of syllogism the sign is the middle term, but in 1. the sign is "also the intermediate term from the point of view of the extension of the syllogism" (Manetti 1993:81). Thus it is a necessary, irrefutable sign (τεκμηριον). In 2. and 3., syllogisms work inductively from the particular to the universal, therefore their conclusions can only be occasionally true. The sign here is an extreme term and only probable (σημειον).

Aristotle's conception of science is grounded in deduction and prefers to do away with hypotheses (induction). Forming hypotheses, however, is the very basis of semiotic knowledge: "Eco draws attention to the very pertinent fact that the effort required to explain hypothetically *why* a phenomenon is as it is, by constructing a strictly deductive form, in reality differs not at all from what Peirce calls *abduction*" (Manetti 1993:91). Aristotle refuses to recognize but tacitly uses the abductive level that underlies all his syllogistics.

Aristotle, in his rationalism, considered signs as *logical instruments of attaining knowledge*. In his model, *facts*, *thoughts*, *words*, and *written marks* correspond to each other, the first two being universal in all communities, the second two being accidentals of this or that language. The correspondence of these to one another begs an explanation. Aristotle considered language to be the disguise of logical propositions and valued words and, more generally, signs, only insofar as they served in logical statements. He discarded the written medium and all non-statement making aspects of language from his treatment of language. Through emphasizing the conventionality of signs, where the sign only means what has been agreed on earlier, Aristotle marginalized the role of implication in the functioning of signs and set language study on a non-semiotic track.

4. Stoics and Augustine

Stoicism likewise differentiates among language (σημαινον, the signifier), thought (σημαινομενον, the signified), and reality (τυνχανον, external object). The ontology is centered on the material object. Images of objects give rise to true perception if they mirror truthfully those objects. The Stoics regard the *utterance* as the conjunction between the signifier (σημαινον) and the signified (σημαινομενον). This is not the probable sign (σημειον), though, since it does not *imply*. The Stoic sign is the *lekton* (λεκτον, 'the said'). Only complete *lekta* (full assertions) about a state of affairs are true or false. While Aristotle assumes universal pathemata (affections) located in the mind, the Stoic synthetic lekton is located in language. The Stoics are nomenclaturists and for them "Understanding, ... consists precisely in the perception of the connection between the spoken word and the object to which it refers" (Manetti 1993:95). The difference of irrefutable sign (tekmerion) and probable sign (semeion) disappears.

In the Roman world, semiotics formed the central part of judicial rhetoric. Cornificius' *signum* seeks to demonstrate guilt or innocence: here the unknown agent of the known action is sought. While for Aristotle the logical basis of reasoning must be maintained even

in rhetoric, in Cicero's *De Oratore* (55 B.C.) rhetoric, the use of persuasive signs, becomes the quintessence of philosophy. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (A.D. 95), "a complete program for the training of an orator ... contains a whole section on signs" (Manetti 1993:151). We will have a closer look at the persuasive use of language in Ch. VIII.2.

St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) reunifies the theory of signs with the theory of language. For Augustine, the *verbum* or *signifier* signifies the *signified*, and the signified, in turn, *signifies something else*. In this case, the *verbum* becomes *dictio*. From the starting point of Stoicism, Augustine extends the *sign* to language: "We call sign in general everything that means something, and among these we may include words too" (*De Magistro*, 4.9 cited by Manetti 1993:157). Because signification does not cease at one part of the sign evoking the other part within the same sign, Augustine's verbum functions *by implication*, which says more than what is said literally. In Augustine's oeuvre, the *lexis* (articulated signifier, with or without meaning) again becomes a carrier of *partial* meaning and "the word now takes on the functions which were formally attributed only to the utterance. Most importantly, the word can now be a sign. ... Plato is the only thinker prior to Augustine, who had a semiotic conception of language" (Manetti 1993:159). But language is such an elaborate sign system that it overwhelms all other systems: "I could express the meaning of all signs of the type here touched upon in words, but I would not be able at all to make the meanings of words clear by these signs" (*De Doctrina Christiana* II, III, 4). Language is seen as the *lingua franca* of all sign systems and the best at that: it becomes the semiotic system *par excellence*. Alas, by the time this semiotic model achieves complete autonomy in Saussure, the *implicative nature of language* has been completely abandoned in favour of the *dictionary model*, in which the relationship between a word and its content is seen as mere *synonymy*.

Augustine, in a Platonic move, inverts the relationship between the sign and its object: the sign becomes the more essential existent, and the object its mortal attire, just like *Logos* (the Platonic *idea*, later Christos Pantokrator) appears in the *created world*. The inner *thought* is the *prelinguistic word*, immanent knowledge from God. Augustine

correctly identifies the sign as a *function* of objects: "The sign is a thing (*res*) which above and beyond the impression it produces on the senses of its own account, makes something else come to mind" (*De Doctrina Christiana* II, I, 1). While for Aristotle the main difference between natural and conventional signs resides in *conventionality*, for Augustine the presence or absence of the *intention* to communicate is the pivotal difference. How is the meaning of signs established? By other signs, very much like in Peirce's unlimited semiosis, where each sign is interpreted by other signs and the final mega-sign is the whole semantic network of signs. "This conception of meaning is possible only if the *equational* model of the symbol is abandoned in favor of the *implicational* model of the sign which Augustine uses" (Manetti 1993:167).

Augustine's sign theory, which includes verbal and non-verbal signs, for a brief period reconnects the linguistic and non-linguistic sign research in a unified semiology. In a pragmatic approach to signification, Augustine anticipates Wittgenstein's language games in which the *meaning* of a term is defined as its *use*. Augustine's theoretical achievement, however, falls into oblivion for 16 centuries before Saussure revives it in his *semiologie*.

5. The sign in the mediaeval philosophy of language

For the philosophy of language, first influences came from Plato, Aristotle (especially through Boethius' commentaries), Stoicism, the Bible, Donatus, and Priscian. According to Isidore of Sevilla "grammar is the first of the liberal arts and is the origin and foundation of all later acquisition of knowledge" (Etymologiae I. 2,5 - 272). Platonism is prevalent: because "God called things into being and named them ... names have an ontological consistency which makes them equal to things" (Lepschy 1994 II:273). According to Thierry of Chartres, names are not only connected with but the very foundation of things! In the 13th c. the anti-universalist Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia* concludes that the diversity of languages is beginningless, its causes are the influence of heavens, custom, and the diversity of human nature. Figures of speech necessitate logical analysis. They take the

speaker's intention within the *speech act* into consideration. Thus *circumstance* emerges as a vital factor in semantic investigation (Lepschy 1994 II:276 ff.).

The possibility of universal grammar emerged and the grammatical categories were redefined from a functional point of view. Reevaluation of Aristotle and Arabic influences are felt in the Modists' grammar (12th-13th c.). Their starting point is the hypothesis of a common sensible universal behind the particular datum:

> "[A]lthough they are different among different people, the *voces* grammar deals with are the same for everybody ... in relation to the *intellectus* which they bring to the listener's knowledge; but not only the *intellectus* are common to all men (Aristotle *De interpretatione* 16a 6-7), but also the *modus ordinandi* ... is the same for all languages" (Lepschy 1994 II:289).

This is what universal and generalized phrase structure grammar say today. The basis of the Modist theory is Aristotle's realism tying object, intellect, and language with one another. Grammar thus should deal with the universal features only. The intellect knows and signifies things. These essences (concepts) are in the first articulation associated with sound into a word. Voice is the best tool to express thought. The modes of being (*modi essendi*) thus become modes of understanding (*modi intelligendi*) and are attributed to speech as modes of signification (*modi significandi*) due to the second articulation. Meaning corresponds to Aristotle's ten categories of being. "Things are the object of real sciences (sic!) and grammar in itself does not deal with them ..." (Lepschy 1994 II:292). The three modi are isomorphous. The intellect in its active play can combine the modi significandi into an unreal word (eg., mermaid). Modist semantics deals with *sense* (formal meaning) only.

The critics of the Modists remind us that the modi are not natural existents, but mere fiction, with "grammatical traits ... transferred to the mental level ..." (Lepschy 1994 II:303). In this theory, *language* is still subordinated to the preexistent *idea*. Mediaeval philosophy of language is characterized by a decided Aristotelianism: object, intellect, and language are related by modes. What is common in languages, namely the *modi essendi*

and *modi intelligendi*, is considered part of universal grammar, the *modi significandi* being accidentals.

6. Locke: a semiotic initiative in the Modern Age

With the discovery of new continents and missionary work done there (translation of the Bible), an astonishing variety of new languages was discovered. This led to the abandonment of the obsession with universal grammar. Interest again turned to concrete usage and traditional authors enjoyed a renaissance. In the new age, Étienne Condillac (1714-1780) was the first to come up with the radical statement that thought is not pre-existent to language, but language is a precondition of thought. Such an inquiry was enhanced by the gradual discovery of the amazing manifoldness of languages. This, dialectically, raised anew the search for the lost pre-babelian language which soon resulted in the works of Old Grammarians, leading to the establishment of the Proto-Indoeuropean mother language.

Confidence in intuitive self-knowledge, as exemplified in René Descartes' (1596-1650) *cogito ergo sum*, underlay much of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Western culture. The development of the philosophy of the mind and of language since then is the slow, reluctant, and recalcitrant realization that self-knowledge is more than an inward glance and that *language has a constitutive role in the formation of human consciousness and in the creation of the world as we live it.*

In Descartes' conception, the rational soul is an entity distinct from the body: "I here say, in the first place, that there is a great difference between mind and body, inasmuch as body is by nature always divisible, and the mind is entirely indivisible" (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* VI.). For Descartes, physical bodies exist extended in space, with depth, width and breadth. However, minds are entirely immaterial and nonspatial. Material things perish, the soul is immortal. Descartes explores the concepts of self, God and mind by doubting the senses. But, he concludes, we cannot doubt our own existence. The foundation of Descartes' system was the intuitive certainty of his own

consciousness. Hence the famous "cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). This 'I' is not a physical self, it is an immaterial mind that is identified by 'I'. Descartes' arguments on the difference of mind and matter, just as the immortality of the soul, are unwarranted assumptions. Chomsky let himself be heavily influenced by Descartes (see Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics*, 1966) and his conception of language is not less rigid than Descartes' view of the human being.

Descartes' conception of the *mind* as a fixed container of thoughts, feelings etc. is an awkward fiction. The mind itself is not an ontological existent but the ephemeral constellation of several factors. Above all, it is consciousness self-reflecting. Everyone experiences the constant changes of moods, sleep and alert states, enthusiasm and despondency: these are only as real as the shadows on the wall in Plato's cave. Although most humans vaguely realize that they are not their physical body, it is a scary thought that their *individual* mind, the, alas, cherished foundation of the (Cartesian) *ego deception*, is also but an illusion. If one digs deep enough in this self-reflection, one finds that there is nothing individual and special in one's ego. Often dramatic shocks are necessary for such a reconfiguration of perspective. But the mind is not a container, it is always identical with whatever there is 'in it'.

The Cartesian dissection of the *human creature* into *mind* and *body* was not shared by all contemporaries. Baruch Spinoza (1632- 1677) regarded mind and body, ideas and the physical universe as different aspects of a single substance, which he called alternately God and Nature. Charged with spreading heretical thought and practice, Spinoza was excommunicated from his synagogue in 1656, whereupon he latinized his first name to Benedict. He escaped the stake only because he lived in liberal Amsterdam, not in bigot Madrid. Spinoza was a forerunner of semiotics in that he denied causal relations between the mental and the physical spheres (image and referent).

In the modern age, the first tentative step towards a general theory of semiotics as a theory of all knowledge was made by John Locke (1632-1704). His starting point is the Cartesian thought, the internal objects of his mind are the external objects as mediated by perception. Descartes took 'basic ideas' (eg., substance, cause), to explain the mind,

without critically examining them, let alone realizing that they are *already given in language*. To Descartes, truth is the knowledge of distinct ideas and of their combinations.

Locke takes over the teaching about the ideas as objects of knowledge from Descartes but he investigates the mind's capacities to deal with those ideas. Thus, the *Essay concerning human understanding* (1690) is an elaboration on the origination of the Aristotelian passive *pathemata* (affections). Since the ideas are objects of knowledge, Locke's teaching on ideas is a theory of knowledge. He sets out by denying all *innate ideas*, the very foundation of scholasticism and Cartesianism. In the Second Book of the *Essay*, Locke expounds that the mind originally is a *tabula rasa*, which later becomes impressed by *ideas* of *sensation* and *reflection*, neither true nor false, leading to the formation of complex ideas: "Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from Experience ..." (Locke 1978 II. 1. 2.).

"[T]he things the mind contemplates, are none of them, besides itself, present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it: and these are *ideas*" (Locke 1978 IV. 21.). The ideas of sensation are atomistic simple ideas:

> Though the qualities that affect our senses are, in the things themselves, ... united, ... the ideas they produce in the mind enter by the senses simple and unmixed (II. 2. 1.). Simple ideas are only to be got by those impressions objects themselves make on our minds by the proper inlets appointed to each sort (Locke 1978 III. 4. 11.).

As for complex ideas, "though ... it be the mind that makes the collection [of simple ideas], it is the name which is, as it were, the knot that ties them fast together" (Locke 1978 III. 5. 10). According to Locke, complex ideas like *existence*, *unity*, and *power* are *suggested to the mind* by the simple ideas. Locke reveals himself as an impure, 'idealist empiricist'. The mind, says Locke, knows itself intuitively but it knows other things only mediately, through ideas, which, however, are known immediately. Since only ideas are

available to the mind, it is impossible to verify the conformity of ideas to 'real objects' in this reflection theory.

The pursuit of gnoseology was what occupied Locke in his *Σημειωτικη*, the study of signs. He realized that human knowledge is intimately bound with language. Though an antagonist of Aristotle's speculative ontology, Locke introduces *signs* into his theory of knowledge by almost replicating Aristotle's definition:

> Man ... had by nature his organs so fashioned as to be fit to frame *articulate sounds*, which we call words. ... It was farther necessary that he should be able to use these sounds as *signs of internal conceptions*, and to make them stand as *marks for the ideas within his own mind*, whereby they might be known to others (Locke 1978 III. 1. 1., my emphases).

Locke's *real essence* is the *Ding an sich* (the Kantian *thing in itself*), which we cannot know. The *nominal essence* is the perceptual unit (*Vorstellung*, *imagination*), leading to the cultural unit (*Begriff*, *concept*). In this model, *perception* is the basis of *idea*-formation; ideas, in turn, are signified by words. To understand the use of language, Locke raises these two questions: "First, to what it is that names, in the use of language, are immediately applied. Secondly, ... what the *species* and *genera* of things are ..." (Locke 1978 III. 1. 6.). Locke answers his first question in these words: "The use of words is to be sensible marks of *ideas*, and the ideas they stand for are their proper and immediate signification" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 1.; my italics). And his answer to the second question: "This whole mystery of *genera* and *species*, which make such a noise in the schools [of Scholasticism], and are, with justice, so little regarded out of them, is nothing else but abstract ideas, more or less comprehensive, with names annexed to them" (Locke 1978 III. 3. 9.).

To Locke, language has two roles: enabling *understanding*, "for the assistance of [men's] own memory" and *communication*, where "[t]he use of words is to be sensible marks of ideas" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 1.).

Locke critiques the *unum nomen - unum nominatum* (one name for one thing) tenet: "All things that exist [are] particulars" whereas "[t]he far greatest part of words, that make all languages, are general terms ..." (Locke 1978 III. 3. 1.). That language consists of general terms has a reason: to allow for the grasping of the concreta, to avoid the embarassment that would arise "had every particular thing need of a distinct name to be signified by" (Locke 1978 III. 1. 3.).

There is only a vague reference made to the creative power of language: "[I]n the beginning of languages, it was necessary to have the idea before one gave it the name ... But this concerns not languages made" (Locke 1978 III. 5. 15.), where the words are learnt before the idea. In the use of words without knowing the idea they stand for, implicit is the possibility of *de facto* signifying, without the intention to do so.

In Locke's view, science, the whole human experience, consists of three parts: *Physica*, or *natural philosophy*, "the knowledge of things as they are in their own proper beings" (Locke 1978 IV. 21. 2.), *Practica*, ... *ethics*... the seeking out of those rules and measures of human actions which lead to happiness ... (IV. 21. 3.), and "*Σημειωτικη*, or *the doctrine of signs*, the most usual whereof being words, it is aptly enough termed also *Λογικη, logic*" (IV. 21. 4.). Even the study of natural philosophy is most intricately tied with the *doctrine of signs*: "since the things the mind contemplates are none of them, *besides itself* [my italics], present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it: and these are *ideas*" (IV. 21. 4.).

How Peirce revived and developed Locke's ideas on semiotics in the 20th century, and especially, how *even the mind comes to be seen as sign process*, is the topic of the next chapter.

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III.

Twentieth century sign theories:

1. Semiotic glances

Alles Denken beginnt mit Begriffen von mittlerer Allgemeinheit und entwickelt sich von ihnen aus nach zwei Richtungen hin: nach Begriffen von immer höherer Abstraktheit, welche ein immer mehr Dingen Gemeinsames erfassen und hiedurch ein immer weiteres Gebiet der Wirklichkeit umspannen; und nach dem Kreuzungspunkte aller Begriffslinien hin, dem konkreten Einzelkomplex, dem Individuum, welchem wir denkend immer nur durch unendlich viele einschränkende Bestimmungen beizukommen vermögen, das wir definieren durch Hinzufügung unendlich vieler spezifischer differenzierter Momente zu einem höchsten Allgemeinbegriff 'Ding' oder 'etwas'.

Otto Weininger: *Geschlecht und Character*[1]

1. Peirce's *sem(e)iotic*

Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* and his division of sciences had a formative influence on the broadest approach to signs since Augustine, the *semeiotic* of

[1] All thought begins with conceptions to a certain extent generalised, and thence is developed in two directions. On the one hand, generalisations become wider and wider, binding together by common properties a larger and larger number of phenomena, and so embracing a wider field of the world of facts. On the other hand, thought approaches more closely the meeting-point of all conceptions, the individual, the concrete complex unit towards which we approach only by thinking in an ever-narrowing circle, and by continually being able to add new specific and differentiating attributes to the general idea, "thing" or "something". (*Sex and character*. Authorised translation from the sixth German edition. London: William Heinemann, 1907)

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Peirce's sign theory is in fact the general theory of meaning. Disregarding *context* and even more so *circumstances* as factors, the limited *meaning* linguistics operates with leads to the 'progressive' isolation of language from human experience. Peirce's general theory of signs is broader and better founded than anything produced in linguistics (e.g. Saussure, Hjelmslev), with the analysis of language signs couched in his *pragmatic* semeiotic. By integrating linguistic and non-linguistic meaning, Peirce set semiotics on the track to account for the interaction of language and the world outside language. *Semeiosis* is the comprehensive term for the general process of signification because all words (λογος and *verba*) are signs, but not all signs (σηματα) are words (verba). Peirce, in the wake of Locke, considered semeiotic as the absolute science since, he argued, everything that happens in the human mind happens in signs. The different sciences are but subsystems in this semiotic universe.

Signs are not mere substitutes for objects, nor pointers aimed at them. Only certain signs have referents but all signs signify. Therefore, says Peirce, signification is the main role of signs. "[T]he condition that a Sign must be other than its Object is perhaps arbitrary" (Peirce 1960:2.230) but in so far as any object is the sign of itself tautologically, the sign must be the sign for something that is not comprehensible immediately from the situation. For example, if you see splashes on the sidewalk but you do not see the rain, then the splash may be the sign of the rain. If, however, you see the rain clouds and the raindrops, then the splash is not a sign but merely an accompanying observation. In Peirceian *semeiotic*,

> A sign, or *representamen*, is [1.] something which stands [2.] to somebody [3.] for something [4.] in some respect or capacity (Peirce 1960: 2.228).
>
> [The sign] creates in the mind of that person [the addressed] an equivalent sign ... , [this] I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object* ... not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have ... called the *ground* of the representamen (Peirce 1960:2.228).

Something can be a sign only in virtue of a *grounding* in an object. With the ground being the point of view, any sign inherently carries a *perspective* and *intentionality*. The triadic sign-relation of Peirce consists of the *object*, the *representamen* (i.e. sign-vehicle), and its *interpretant*, another sign, which is realized in the *interpreter* (the person). For *signification* to occur, there must be an *object* which *functions* as a sign of another object, determining an *interpretant*. The *object* can be not only a material *denotatum* but any imaginary or cultural unit. The object, to have the sign function, does not need to signify perpetually, it is enough if it is *codified* for such use: The sign is durable. The *dynamical object* is the Kantian *Ding an sich*, the *immediate object* is the dynamic object as represented by thought-signs.

To function as a sign, an object must be given sign function. Anything, any thing existent or produceable may be endowed with *sign function*, and no sign is a sign only and not some object as well. Indeed, anything can signify, and most of what science tries is to establish *valid symptoms*, general modes of signification. To be a sign is to be a *relation* between an object and an interpretant. Thus, *signs do not have a discrete ontology*. What is more, one object can have several distinct sign functions.

The *interpretant* is the *effect of the representamen on the interpreter*: The *meaning* of a sign is its actual, pragmatic *function*. This interpretant can be *emotional* (a feeling), *energetic* (a physical act), *logical* (a habit of action, a thought), but it is a representation of a sign by *another sign*. *Interpretation*, established by *habit*, which is convention, is the key term for an object to be taken as sign.

As the sign is "connected with three things, the ground, the object, and the interpretant, the science of semiotic has three branches. The first ... We may term it *pure grammar*. ... The second is logic proper. The third ... I call *pure rhetoric*." (Peirce 1960:2.229). Peirce, while reaching back to the names of the trivium (three roads) of classical education, uses the term *logic* in its Lockian, thoroughly *belanguaged* (logosic) sense, not limited to *formal logic*: "Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for *semiotic* (σημειωτικη), the ... formal doctrine of signs" (Peirce 1960:2.227). Peirce's sign theory is diametrically opposite not only to Descartes'

dualism of mind and extra-mind, but also to Locke's nominalist fallacy where language is seen as a basket of labels for external objects.

Peirce developed three trichotomies of signs (2.243ff.):

A. Depending on the token/type ratio, 1. a token which is freely replicable is a *sinsign*, 2. a token which is somewhat unique is a *sinsign which is also a qualisign*, 3. a token which is at the same time the type is a *sinsign which is also a legisign* (Eco 1976:179).

B. The sign function of its object can be 1. a symbol - linked to its object by convention, 2. an icon - similar to its object, 3. an index - physically connected to its object. This classification speaks about the *origination* of the sign function of the object and has nothing to do with the object's function as sign once it is coded as such. The object-related triad can, of course, apply to only such signs that have a referent.

C. With respect to the nature of the interpretant, the sign can be a *rhema* (term, word), a *dicent* (statement, sentence), or an *argument*.

Peirce argues that not only do we not have any immediate perception of the external world, but also that our mediated understanding of that world takes place in signs. "A *Sign* is a representamen of which some interpretant is a [product of] cognition of a mind" (Peirce 1960:2.242). In this rather Byzantine definition the representamen is a sign, and so is the interpretant. Therefore, what Peirce says is that *the interpretation of signs in a mind also takes place in signs*.

For Peirce, thoughts are internalized verbal signs. Since thinking itself is a sign-process, the *interpretant* itself is a sign which needs another interpretant and so on, potentially *ad infinitum*. Signs interpret signs. "Thus the very definition of 'sign' implies a process of *unlimited semiosis*" (Eco 1976:69). The final mega-sign is the whole semantic network. Thus semeiosis can be applied to the analysis of consciousness, but *consciousness does not exist without semeiosis*. Thinking, too, occurs in signs. *The sign system creates a view of the world*, enabling perception. *When the subject of the signs interprets himself in and by language, the self emerges.*

Signs are mediators between one another, constituting for us the world and the human mind. Peirce's approach could not be more contrary to the Cartesian mind-matter dualism.

There is a point which is striking for our quest: the very proof of the mind Descartes comes up with *is grounded in language*, it is a linguistic utterance!: *Je pense. Donc je suis.* This is Peirce's revelation: the self-recognition of the speaking animal happens *in signs*.

The extremely versatile Peirce never systematized his views on semiotic, though, and his writings are a jungle where it is possible to find the opposite of nearly every statement. Incomplete and fragmentary, what is valuable in his thoughts hardly found its way into 20th century philosophy. Peirce's general semiotic theory covered language signs, too. Another initiative to integrate language study in semiotics came from the founder of general linguistics, Saussure.

2. The linguistic sign in Saussure's *sémiologie*

> Far from the object preceding the point de vue, one would say that it is the point de vue that creates the object, and otherwise there is nothing to tell us in advance that one of these manners of examining the case in question is anterior or superior to the others.
>
> Ferdinand de Saussure

1. The Copernican turn

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) died only one year before Peirce. Both programmatized the inclusion of language science in a general semiotic theory. Neither left more than unedited notes to posterity. While Peirce included language as one among the semiotic systems, it was Saussure's achievement to autonomize language study from other disciplines. He did not develop a semantic theory, and his semiotic quest remained a program only.

In the historical orientation of the 19th c. the explanation of a word led into infinite regress. The method was comparativism, the reigning ideas were the organicist view of language ('a language lives like a plant') of August Schleicher (1821-1868) and nomenclaturism in which 1. words are thought of as mere labels and their meaning is the extralinguistic object, 2. this object (or idea) has logical and ontological primacy over the sign. A classic account of nomenclaturism is found in the Old Testament, where Adam gives names to creatures which are distinct already before the name-giving act:

> So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all ... (Genesis II:19-20)

But most words are not names and do not have referents. Saussure challenged the notion that "the core of any language comprises an inventory of names designating things, persons, properties, and events *already given to human understanding in advance of language*" (Harris-Taylor 1989:190, my emphasis). In developing William Dwight Whitney's (1827-94) view that *language is a social institution*, a product without design, resting on *convention*, Saussure revolted against the whole nomenclaturist tradition. He intended to set up a unified discipline, linguistics, based upon a single, clearly defined concept: *the linguistic sign*. In his program the object of linguistics was "to delimit and define linguistics itself" (CLG:6)[2] synchronically and establish its *autonomy* from logic and nomenclaturism. But he never said the sentence inserted by his editors at the end: "the true and unique object of linguistics is language (la langue) studied in and for itself" (CLG:317). It was this statement that paved the way to structuralism. A further goal of Saussure's, contradicting the autonomy of linguistics, was the incorporation of linguistics into *semiologie*. The founder of general linguistics, Saussure imagined that "Linguistics is

[2] CLG is the abbreviation for Saussure's *Course in general linguistics.*

only one branch of this general science. ... a science *which studies the life of signs within society*. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeion*, 'sign') (CLG:33).

It was the views of the 'criticism of science' movement that Saussure in the beginning applied to linguistics. His theses in this respect are the following: 1. "the point of view creates the object (linguistic fact)" (CLG:23), 2. a decision of identity from a particular perspective creates the object out of 'raw material', 3. the relation of identity precedes the things and serves to determine them. Although it is as idealistic to propose a relation of identity prior to things as to believe in prelinguistic thoughts, Saussure's *point de vue* turned the attention to the fact that *a perspective is inherent* in every object. Saussure's communication model suffers from the following implicit assumptions: 1. it suggests that *language is for communication only* and neglects its expressive and representative functions; 2. in the Saussurian speech-curcuit *the processing of signals is passive*; 3. Saussure's psychologism: It is true that language involves psychological processes. But the *content* of psychological processes is not the same as the *processes themselves*. Language is a semiotic system of social conventions for representing reality. Therefore, semiotic systems are independent of the psychological processes that take place in their functioning.

Saussure (CLG:97ff.) critically summarizes the nomenclaturist tenets *applied to language* in three points: 1. there are prelinguistic ideas, 2. it is not clear whether names are vocal or mental, 3. the link of name to thing is obvious (Harris 1987:56). But "it seems possible to be a nomenclaturist and yet escape scot free on all three of Saussure's charges" (Harris 1987:57). The three objections pave the way to the 'Copernican' revolution of language study: "... [L]anguages themselves, collective products of social interaction, supply the essential conceptual frameworks for men's analysis of reality and, simultaneously, the verbal equipment for the description of it" (Harris' Introduction to the *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1986).

Saussure added three claims to those of the 'criticism of science' movement. First, in surpassing the age-old view, according to which the sign simply stands for an object (*aliquid stat pro aliquo*, 'something stands for something'), Saussure declared that both parts of the linguistic sign are *mental*: not a *thing* and a *name* but a *concept* and a *sound-image* are connected in the sign. The concept is "not just an internal visual image" (Harris

1987:61). But a linguistic item cannot simply be considered as sound, either, which is only its material instrument. Both *sound*, or better said, its image, and *concept* belong to a system. The concept becomes a concept and the sound becomes language-sound only through a positive act, upon entering the linguistic sign. Of the Saussurian tenets, only the *definition of the sign* can be considered truly Copernican.

Second, Saussure stated that the relationship between the *signifié* and *signifiant* is *arbitrary*, a positive operation of the spirit. *Arbitrariness*, in 'the *convention* of name and referent' version has been known ever since *Cratylos*, and Saussure himself, as we soon will see, took *arbitrary* in a special sense. Third, Saussure postulated the linearity of the *signifiant*. The principle of *linearity* testifies to Saussure's latent scripticism: it would be the reflection of writing in the sound-image. Let us turn to Saussure's sign.

2.1. The parts of the linguistic sign

There is an incredible obstinacy even in linguists when it comes to give up the naive label theory of language. It is typical to think, as Harris does, that "Saussure only "transpose[d] both terms of this duality [viz. the *thing* and the *name*] into the mental sphere" (Harris 1987:62), i.e. only mentalized the mediaeval *aliquid stat pro aliquo* (*something stands for something else*). No wonder that "... even Saussure's major theses are poorly understood in the English-speaking academic world" (Harris 1986:xiv). Ironically, this statement is from Harris himself.

Physical sound is not a signifier in itself, but only a *token* of the *type*, which belongs to the *system* of signs. The signified is not the referent, either. Even if there is a referent, the signified means more than merely postulating the referent. The argument for the inclusion of the referent also runs aground on the fact that most words simply do not have a referent but are meaningful, nevertheless. Even colloquially, one says "it makes sense" and not "it makes reference". If nothing else, these realizations alone should guarantee Saussure a statue in the pantheon of great(ly) misunderstood linguists. Saussure argued that a sign system has no need for any referent in order to function. Yet, Ogden and Richards

introduce the referent again, and conclude that "[Saussure's theory of signs,] by neglecting entirely the things for which signs stand, was from the beginning cut off from any contact with scientific methods of verification" (Ogden and Richards 1923:6). The verification of the sign is its use, not any 'scientific' checkup. The Ogdenite fallacy recurs in the nomenclaturism of Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949), who maintains that meaning is the referent:

> In order to give a scientifically accurate definition of meaning for every form of language, we should have a scientifically accurate knowledge of everything in the speaker's world. ... the statement of meaning is, therefore, the weak point in language study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond its present state (Bloomfield 1933:139-140).

I have objections. Bloomfield mistakes the conventional meaning the ordinary speaker uses with scientifically accurate knowledge. And even the advance of the scientific knowledge of some people would not mean the advance of all human knowledge. Is that, however, an obstacle to human intercourse at present? Bloomfield, focusing on 'scientifically accurate knowledge', forgets that meaning is *meaning for a speaker*, who, like a child or a layman, does not necessarily need scientific knowledge for his words to mean. What meaning is is established not in a scientific definition, which already would have to presuppose language use, but in language games. Thus '*salt*' is meaningful for the cook even though he does not have the knowledge of the chemist.

Benveniste, in his arbitratory analysis of "The nature of the linguistic sign" (1971), also runs afoul of Saussure. Initially, Benveniste explains the signifier as sound image, the signified as concept (1971:43). Quoting Saussure, he writes:

> "... the linguistic sign is arbitrary" [p. 67]. By "arbitrary," the author [Saussure] means that "**it** is *unmotivated*, i.e. arbitrary in that **it** actually has no natural connection with the **signified** (p. 103 [p. 69]; my boldface, my underlining).

As is clear from the second quotation, the word '**it**' refers to the *signifier* or *signal* and not to *the whole sign*. But, according to Benveniste, "he [Saussure] meant by "signifier" the *concept*" (1971:44), the *signified*. (On p. 45. Benveniste reverts to his, or better said, Saussure's, original definitions, only to abandon them on p. 47 etc. again). Benveniste identifies the signifier with *the whole sign* in his second step of the distortion of Saussure's sign theory. The last step is the equation of the *signified* with what would be only "an unconscious and surreptitious recourse to a third term ... . This third term is the thing itself, the reality" (Benveniste 1971:44). We are back at the *referent*. For Benveniste, "the problem is none other than the famous φυσει or θεσει? and can only be resolved by decree" (1971:46). Now, Plato did not resolve it by decree but by scrutiny. Throughout, Benveniste is juggling with the terms *concept*, *sound*, and *referent*. His *signifier* is the *concept* and the *signified* is the *referent*. Saussure, however, clearly stated that the unity of *concept* and *sound-image* is the *linguistic sign*, and the referent had no place in his system.

Benveniste also fails to see that Saussure's theoretical discussion of the linguistic sign is not the same topic as his own about the sign's functioning in communal life. Saussure was aware of the difference: "We shall see later that the individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in a linguistic community" (Saussure cited by Benveniste 1971:68). Still, for Benveniste, "The concept (the Saussurian "signified") *boeuf* is perforce identical (sic!) in my consciousness with the sound sequence (the "signifier") *böf*" (1971:45). Benveniste *declares* the identity of the *concept* and the *sound image*. But this identity is exactly what is *instituted, established* in the sign. Though it may be a *discovery* for an individual, it is an *invention* in the whole of language, "a positive operation of spirit". "For the speaker there is a *perfect equivalence* between language and reality" (ibid., my emphasis), Benveniste adds. This absurd statement finally washes away all remaining differences between the *sound, concept*, and *referent*. Not only is the sound sequence not identical to the concept even to a layman, but, if it were, then this identity-consubstantiality would render any differentiation impossible, whether

between the referent and (any part of) the sign or between the two sides of the sign. Consequently, a new signifier would be necessary! Benveniste's whole approach also runs counter his very own argument in his *Categories of thought and language* where he blames Aristotle for equating verbal and mental categories.

2.2. The referent and the linguistic sign

Plato's *Cratylos* opened up a millenial debate on the link between the *sign* and its *denotatum*. At the core of the physei-thesei problem stands the philosophical problem of identity. For two entities, a sign and its referent, to be identical there has to be one third standard entity that is identical to both, measured against which these two prove to be identical. Otherwise the identity is not verifiable. But how could we verify this supposed identity unless there is a gauge to verify the identity of the sign to its standard, and another gauge to verify the identity of the referent to that same standard? And so on, ad infinitum. There is no such standard that we could have recourse to. "... there is simply no plausible basis for an alternative principle of non-arbitrariness" (Harris 1987:66). Hence, the relationship, by necessity, can only be arbitrary and this is the end of the physei-thesei argument.

The denotatum is not necessarily a referent (το τυγχανον), but it can be, by ostensive definition. As the Indian philosophy of language puts it, we do not find the name beside the object and so the connection is not natural. Hermogenes supported not conventionality but absolute anarchy: "whatever name you give to a thing is its right name" (*Cratylos* 384D). His words are not conventional signs as long as they have not been recognized by a community, but signs in an idiolectal code unknown to the community.

The referent is not an intended concept of Saussure but he allows it to creep in at several points. Thus onomatopoeia and exclamations are ill-chosen topics since they bring the referent, and with it, *nomenclaturism* back into the linguistic system. It is adventitious, however, that Saussure deemed onomatopoeia and exclamations marginal. They "do not

conflict with the principle of *arbitrariness* however interpreted. ... The natural connexions to which they bear witness are contingent, not essential. There is no sense in which the cuckoo had to have a name which echoed its characteristic call, or exclamations had to mimic natural cries" (Harris 1987:65-6; my italics).

> [T]hat it [the idea of 'sister'] could be represented equally by just any other sequence is proved by the differences among languages and by the very existence of different languages: the signified 'ox' has as its signifier *b-ö-f* on one side of the border and *o-k-s* (*Ochs*) on the other (Saussure, CLG:100).

But how do we know that *the same animal 'ox'* is signified by *b-ö-f* and *o-k-s*? The signified 'ox', belonging to two autonomous codes, is actually two different signifieds; the establishment of their interchangeability being a separate topic. Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) correctly observes that the two referents do not necessarily coincide. If they did, the word would stand for the referent. Such an explanation would mean lapsing back to nomenclaturism, where the meaning of the name is the thing. Still, this is exactly what Jakobson (1978:111) commits later, and, forgetting that Saussure does not use the referent in his argument, Jakobson ends up supporting Benveniste's horrible claim that *the connection [within the sign] is between the sign and its referent*, and that it is *necessary*. In truth, nothing is necessary:

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet" (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 43).

3. Arbitrariness or motivation?

"No one disputes the fact that linguistic signs are arbitrary" (CLG:100), 'wrote' Saussure in 1916, also postulating their linearity. "The link between signal and signification is arbitrary" (ibid.). Saussure's choice of the word *'arbitraire'* (*arbitrariness*, Germ. *Willkür*) is a rather poor one in that it is suggestive of the Hermogenian absolute relativism. A better definition, perhaps, is to say that the linguistic sign is *unpredictable* and rests on convention. Whether it is motivated has to do only with its nascence, but not with its role in signification.

Saussure's principle of arbitrariness soon fell under increasing criticism. In his *Quest for the essence of language* (1971), Jakobson defines his iconicity and contiguity principles: "1) The *icon* acts chiefly by a **factual** similarity between its signans and signatum... . 2) The *index* acts chiefly by a **factual**, existential contiguity between its signans and signatum ... (1971:347, my boldface)". In the wake of Jakobson's contiguity and iconicity principles, L. R. Waugh believes that "general linguistics and semiotics still labour under the shadow of de Saussure (1959 [1916]), even though throughout the 20th century there have been repeated demonstrations that *arbitrariness is quite limited*" (Waugh 1994:55; my emphasis). Its antipode, *iconicity* is supposed to work not only within the elementary linguistic sign but at the syntactic level as well.

Arbitrariness with reference to the linguistic sign may mean at least three different things: (a.) that of the signifier *in se*, (b.) of the signified *in se*, and (c.) of their *connection*. Regarded in themselves, the functives that within the sign are termed *signifié* and *signifiant* are arbitrary. Words are triply arbitrary. On Saussure's example, 1. there is no reason why *s-ö-r* should be a signifier at all, 2. there is no compelling reason why 'sister' should be a concept (and in some languages there is no such word), 3. "The idea of 'sister' is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds *s-ö-r* which serves as its signifier in French" (Saussure, CLG:100).

It is a fact that letters and sounds are used in language to represent everything else, although I do not agree that "there is no better principle" (Plato 425). The *substances*

(sounds, letters) are, very broadly, 'given', somewhat limiting arbitrariness. This, nevertheless, *does not mean motivation*. However, it is precisely the limitation of the sign-vehicles of natural language that makes the extensive use of convention indispensable. And once the convention has been established, there is no need for the referent to be present in signification (other than in giving an ostensive definition). Saussure, discarding the referent from his linguo-semiotic model, limited arbitrariness to a., b., and c. above, especially (c.). But further arbitrariness is thematized in (d.) the relation of the *signifiant* and (e.) of the *signifié* to the referent. (c.) and (d., e.) are not infrequently confused and some linguists think that Saussure's arbitrariness is a version of 'nomoi' conventionality between the *word* and the *referent*.

Saussure's postulation of arbitrariness rejects the potential of individual choice. But for him, the linguistic sign is not the choice of the community, either. For Whitney language is a social institution, and thus, like any social institution, it is arbitrary. Saussure goes farther: language is more arbitrary than any other social institution because all other institutions "deal with things already interconnected, directly or indirectly, in a variety of non-arbitrary ways" (Harris 1987:67). However, the signifier and the signified are not pre-connected in this sense at all. If, however, the sign is arbitrary *a priori*, how are the signifier and the signified linked to each other? "No one disputes ..." (CLG:100), i.e. even the nomenclaturist agrees that the parts of the sign are connected by arbitrariness (Harris 1987:65). There must be a connection between the signifier and the signified if the one should represent the other in any sense. But non-arbitrary ('necessary') only means that language-users have to accept the signs, and the language they speak, as it is. It does not say what the nature of the connection must be. Lévi-Strauss' formulation sums up the difference of viewpoints: "the sign [and the social system] is arbitrary *a priori*, but non-arbitrary *a posteriori*".

For Saussure, only the simple sign is completely arbitrary, and complex signs would be governed by relative arbitrariness. He does not discuss the syntactic rules composing complex signs, which are also arbitrary. But the complex sign is not less arbitrary than the simple sign since there are several ways of generating it from the simple ones. Further, there is no need to express a particular sign by a combination of simple signs. For instance,

the integer *11* is expressed in different languages in different ways: 1. as a non-composite number: *eleven* in English, *Elf* in German; 2. as *'on ten one'*: *tizenegy* in Magyar; or 3. *'one-(on)-ten' odinnadsat'* in Russian, *undici* in Italian, *onze* in French. "... [T]he concept of relative arbitrariness rests on a confusion between the idea of motivation and that of linguistic system" (Holdcroft, 1991:56). I will return to the crucial questions raised here in Chs. VI. and VII.

It was Saussure's curse, karma, and charisma to liberate language study from its subservient role in the philosophy, psychology, and philology of the 19th century and to found an independent general linguistics. It was his remarkable intention to place this new study into semiotic investigation right at the outset. It was his lasting merit to *refute nomenclaturism* and to *exclude the referent* from the sign system, to construe the *sign* as the *arbitrary unity* of a concept and a sound-image, and to reveal that there is a *perspective inherent* in every sign.

Although, as we have seen above, there were efforts from both language study and semiotics to consider language as a system of signs, and to approach each other, most thinkers still considered and consider language as the accidental robe of logical statements. The distortion of language in its subjugation to logic is the topic of the next section.

3. The logicians' yoke on language

The Greek λογος (logos) means *speech* and *reason* at the same time. While, as noted in the Introduction, "grammar in ancient India evolved independently of logic ..." (Lepschy 1994 I:50), in the Western tradition the unity of thought and language was skewed early in favour of thought, with logic gradually claiming to be *not only independent of* but even usurping the role of *being the essence of language*. This is why Aristotle's definition of man, ξωον λογον εχων, (*being who has speech*) could be mistranslated as *animal rationale* (*the thinking animal*). In *rationale* the rich meaning of λογος is lost. Yet, even a 'rational' logical system is a sort of language, so long as we define language as *a system of*

signs and of rules for the use of these signs. What are the main characteristics of this logic-language, then?

The logical approach, ever since Aristotle, is committed to three misconceptions: 1. the Cartesian transcendental *ego*, 2. the existence of prelinguistic thoughts, and 3. the belief that language is a neutral tool of expression. Further, logic adopts referential semantics: "In a proposition a name is the representative of an object" (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 3.22). From this three problems arise: 1. Words without a referent would not have meaning. Thus, for example, we could not speak of *the Olympic Games of 2048* because there is no referent to it till June 2048. Nor after. But we could not speak of *the Olympic Games of 1996*, either, because it has no referent any more; 2. different terms have the same referent (eg., *Sun* refers to the same as *the center of solar system*), yet their meaning is clearly different: "identity of things referred to does not entail sameness of meaning" (Harris, 1987:58); 3. Abstracta (eg., *Beauty*) never have a referent, so they would not be names. But they do occur in discourse. In consequence, they could only be predicates. Then 'Beauty is eternal' would be a predication about another predication.

Since there are many more words which do not have a physical referent, than those which do, according to logic, most expressions are just embellishments, or even disturbing factors in language. In consequence, the task of the logical approach would be to eliminate this redundancy and to establish the 'core meaning'. But what are core sentences? Detached, formal texts? Those are only an exiguous part of language.

Predicate logic is concerned with the *term* and the *predication* in the indicative mood. "A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign" (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 3.26). In this logical proposition the *term* has no truth value while the *predication* is *true* or *false*:

> Falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation. Thus names and verbs by themselves ... are neither true nor false. ... even 'goat-stag' signifies something but not, as yet, anything true or false ... . (Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 16a 9ff.)

The truth functions are: negation, conjunction, alternative ('or'), implication/conditional ('if A then B), equivalence/biconditional. The truth of a composite predication depends on the truth value of its parts, the elementary propositions as well as the functors. This kind of logic does not investigate the nature of elementary propositions but solely their truth value. This is why it is called *formal*.

Implication in logic is defined by the respective truth values of the chart of implication. Logical implication completely contradicts our language intuition. Even a correct conclusion can be drawn from a false premiss: *Ex falso sequitur quodlibet* (anything follows from a false premiss). The paradoxical nature of the implication is especially conspicuous if we replace p and q with sentences *which have no semantic connection*. With logic disregarding contentual restrictions, the only false implication in logic is that of a true p implying a false q.

(1) If it is raining, then all men are mortal. (p false - q true)
(2) If it is not raining, then all men are mortal. (p true - q true)
(3) If it is raining, then all men are immortal. (p false - q false).

The above three propositions are all nonsense to a normal speaker, but they all fulfil the requirements of logical implication to be true. This puzzling fact proves that formal logic is a very limited approach. It simply does not have the capacity do deal with meaning in language. "In order to understand the true nature of the sign, the strictly logical sphere must give way to the more generally epistemological sphere" (Manetti 1993:104). Beyond correctness of logical construction, for communication in language to be of value, there must be an increase of knowledge in the speakers as they build a dialogue. "How can signic inference be analytic [derived from the propositions] ... yet simultaneously provide new knowledge ... ?" (ibid.). The looming question of how truth value is established is not answered. Thus logic is able to apply the truth of, for instance, "It is raining" to other propositions but it is not capable of establishing the criteria of validity of this statement. Thus it begs the help of 'empirical' verification. That verification, however, is expressed in language. More than that, 'rain', as cultural unit, does not exist before language. Therefore,

what appears as verification presupposes the *segmentation of the world by language*. Both the perceptual unit //It is raining.// and the statement "It is raining." are based on language. There is a strong tautology in using a state of affairs that is based on the language in which the statement was made for verification of a statement made in that language. Since our perception, concepts, and words are all grounded in language, even a dis-verification of a state of affairs relies on language. Since perception itself is language-driven, the divide between *factual*, observable, empirical *truth* (eg., I see that "It is raining".) and *encyclopaedic truth*, accepted by the community without the chance to observe (eg., "Alexander the Great conquered the world") is negligible. In fact, the two worlds of factual and encyclopaedic truth are intermingled.

In practice, every logical operation starts with 'ready-made' terms, which, nevertheless, are taken from natural language. Thus every logic is plagued with the inability to account for the production of these terms outside natural language. Logic abhors the unprecise nature of natural language with its vagueness and inconsistency (e.g. homonymy, -phony, -graphy). Logic disowns language, its mother. If logic were completely different from language, it could not be explained how its rules may apply to natural language. Human communication is not at all possible in the calculus-language. Faithful to Aristotle, logic still dismisses several sentence types of natural language (question, adjuration, command) . Logic also abstracts from the concrete situation of the utterance, from the speakers and listeners. And yet, logic claims universality.

In any ambiguity, the grammatical form is the same, but the logical form is different. The logical form cannot be deduced from the grammatical. What puts the veneer of science on logic, even at the expense of language, is a very simple technical detail: the contemporary computer-obsessed technology is based on the possibility of replicating logical functions by two-position switches ('0-false vs. 1-true'). Such a decision in information theory is called one *byte*. But the concept of *information* in modern information theory (cf. Shannon and Weaver 1949) is infinitely narrower than *communication* because it is concerned solely with the *transmission of data* with optimal efficiency in a noisy channel, not with the *interpretation of the transmitted signals* (Eco 1976:42-4). Even in logic, only the *interpreted* calculus makes sense.

We have seen that logical truth is too narrow for language. How is truth expressed in language at all? To Aristotle, truth is adaequatio: "not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity (*De Interpretatione*, 16b 33). 'Truth' (or the absence of it) is approached through existence (or its absence). Since "true is what exists", a proposition is true if it corresponds to reality.

But what are *proposition*, *truth*, and *reality*? The truthfulness of a statement cannot be based on its referent, as many statements do not have a referent at all. Consider the antinomy of the liar: In uttering "I am lying.", the *sentence* contradicts the very *situation* to which it *refer*s. But the sentence is meaningful. For an antinomy to arise, a language must have expressions and the semantic term 'true'. Such a language is semantically closed, in it empirical premisses of an utterance can be formulated. Truth refers only to the *utterances* of this limited object language. However, *the expressions of truth* are stated in the metalanguage. The antinomy can be overcome only via *differentiating between object language and metalanguage*. But if, in turn, we want to define these expressions of truth, we need a meta-metalanguage, and so on ad infinitum. A satisfactory definition of truth is possible only in a metalanguage that is much more complex than the object language. However, there does not exist a much more complex language than our colloquial language. Any man-made abstract language is ultimately convertible from/into human language. Thus, the exactness of formal languages is ultimately based on natural language. Not only the concept of *truth* but also its logically consequent usage is impossible outside natural language. While logic relies on all language, it is capable of describing only a fraction of the langue-part of language. The conception of language which drives logic is unsatisfactory because it utterly misses the self-reflexive property of language.

If there is no transcendental-referential truth, *where does the correctness ('truth') of statements come from*? From actual usage! Resting on convention. But the primacy of the pragmatic aspect of language has never really been recognized until Wittgenstein. Logic clearly belongs to the abstract realm of syntax. However, natural sciences, too, are social sciences as far as their method is concerned. "In order to have signs, propositions must be formulated, and the propositions must be organized according to a logical syntax which is reflected and made possible by the linguistic syntax" (Eco 1984a, 31-2). Unfortunately,

even linguistic syntax supresses the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of semiosis and stresses the barren logical-grammatical structure of language, that is, only the bare syntactic dimension of semiosis. Charles Morris' (1901-1979) included the semantic and pragmatic aspects in his exposition of the sign, however, even his stimulus-reaction scheme, with which he hoped to establish the scientificity of his semiotics, is not capable of accounting for *interpretation*. Because a real sign is never the behaviorist 'natural' stimulus but always an instituted symbol. However hard we aim at objective reality, it remains an illusory quest. Not even Kant has ever seen a *Ding an sich* (thing in itself). We only see *percepta* and we abstract *perceptual models*. These are *compared* to *conceptual models* in *interpretation*. There is still more to *interpretation*. "It is raining" is a proposition according to formal logic. *Based on convention*, it is *true* in the *denotative* sense if the observer perceives or proves that //it is really raining outside//. But what a sentence reveals is normally a *speech act*, pointing at a meaning beyond the denotational. For instance, uttering "It is raining" may call the attention of the listener to the fact that //the speaker cannot go out//, //will miss the opera//, //his newly planted scion will rot// etc.. This proves the semiotically *implicative* signification of the linguistic sign. Since the word (or utterance) means chiefly *by implication*, it necessarily breaks the unambigous sense of sterile dictionary definitions.

The original unity of *speech* and *reason* in the Greek λογος was lost very early in *logic*. In fact, logic is the storehouse of misconceptions about language. It supposes a prelinguistic self and a prelinguistic world and believes that linguistic utterances mirror this 'objective' world. The terms *subject* and *predicate*, introduced by Boethius into the description of language, prove this belief of logic about language. To verify statements, logic uses referential semantics. In its abstract formalism, logic disregards all phenomena of language other than statements. Worst of all, in its machinations logic forgets completely that it set out with the ready-made terms of a real language.

Letting itself be led by the interests of logic-minded barren linguistics, language study, too, missed the essence of language for a long time. The question of language is not about language in the isolation of abstract syntactic rules but about *what language means to*

man. In Ch. IV, after surveying the effects of the escalation of impersonalism on language, *structuralism*, I will discuss how the human subject finally reappears on the scene of language study.

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IV.

Twentieth century sign theories:
2. Structure or symbol?

1. Structuralism: Language as castrated, abstract model

Saussure's treatment of the sound system of languages was so attractive that linguists came to believe that other areas of language could likewise be described in terms of oppositions. Lost was Peirce's *interpreter*, lost the speaker and the world, soon language was regarded as "a self-sufficient totality, a structure *sui generis*" (Hjelmslev 1961:6).

Structuralism is a reaction against atomism and mechanistic views. It is latent *mentalism* because it fails to realize that the structures of observation (the binary oppositions) are as much the product of the dislocated observer as of the corpora investigated. For the unwilling forerunner of structuralism, Saussure, the form of language is a set of abstract relationships, where "Speech sounds are first and foremost entities which are contrastive, relative and negative" (Saussure, CLG:164). Extended to words, already for Saussure, the *sign* was something intrinsically arbitrary, specifiable only in contrast with coexisting signs:

> Our definition of a language assumes that we disregard everything which does not belong to its structure as a system; in short everything that is designated by the term 'external linguistics' (Saussure CLG:21).

Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965) was even more radical. To him language is not even a system of petrified signs:

> *Languages* ... cannot be described as pure sign systems. ... *they are first and foremost* something different, namely *systems of figurae that can be used to construct signs*. The definition of a *language as a sign system ... concerns only the external functions of a language*, its relation to the non-linguistic factors that surround it, but not its proper, internal functions (Hjelmslev 1961:47, my italics).

Hjelmslev's goal is to describe whatever can be called language. In his definition, language becomes *semiotic*, and semiotics becomes *metasemiotic*:

> ... [W]e have discovered a semiotic whose *expression plane* is a semiotic. ... one is prepared for the existence of a semiotic whose *content plane* is a semiotic. This is the so-called metalanguage (or, we should say, *metasemiotic*), by which is meant a semiotic that treats of a semiotic; in our terminology this must mean a semiotic whose content is a semiotic. Such a metasemiotic linguistics itself must be (1961:119-120).

However, "a metasemiotic will be (or can be) wholly or partly identical with its object semiotic. Thus the linguist who describes a language will himself be able to use that language in the description ... " (1961:121).

Structuralism is based on a set of tacit presuppositions: *A priori* models are cast before analysis and the corpus is the object of *empirical* analysis. The corpus of any investigation is seen as a closed *system* of *resemblances and differences*, set up by abstract principal essences. A *closed* system is an autonomous pattern of signs which are interrelated among themselves but not related to extrasystemic entities. "... the structure itself creates the units and their relations to one another" (Harris and Taylor, 1989:179). Meaning stems not from the content of isolated items but from their interrelationships. Thus systems of systems arise, based on the same principle.

The *phonological system*, or rather the underlying graphology[1], is assumed to be the prototype of all structures in the world, *even beyond language*. Thus Lévi-Strauss conjured forced comparisons of language, mythology, and music. It is a miscarried attempt to apply a method valid only for the very limited set of phonological items representable by sheer *oppositions* to the infinitely broad and varied semantic side.

In structuralism, synchrony means system, diachrony means process. The two are kept apart. Thus structuralism runs into Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the turtle. In the detached perspective of structuralism the human being and the context are not an object of study because man, his products, and the socio-historical circumstances do not belong to the model. With foundations similar to Newtonian physics, structuralism is barren macroatomism. Structuralism is a system of values, based on the equality, exchangeability of *different* kinds (eg., work~capital~time~money). But if language is a system of values, what is equal in it to what if the values are "determined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms" (CLG:116)? A "system is not, as Saussure suggests, a degree of arbitrariness" (Holdcroft, 1991:93). The values also make the system, not only the system the values. This happens since the items belonging to the same system must share some common characteristics, in our view, to belong to the *same* system at all.

Langue and *parole* are social facts, dependent on the *linguistic community*. If so, language is not strictly autonomous, its values are not 'pure'. The error of purism was the start of viewing language cut off from social life altogether, culminating in generative grammar.

Since Saussure's signs have no positive characteristics at all (CLG:168), in his view it is the *system*, the relation to other member signs, that endows them with value. In reality, however, the oppositions are within a *set* of *real* items and the exclusion of opposites results in a *positive identification* of one item. Were it not so, Saussure's 'relative arbitrariness', which, actually, is his misterm for *system*, would impute meaningless items only.

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[1] "It has been revealed that their [the structuralists'] notion of speech relied on notions intimately linked with the analysis of written forms" (Pettersson 1996:75).

2. Transition to life: Morris' *semiotic*

Whereas Saussure was occupied with verbal *signes* only, for Charles William Morris (1901-1979) any object could become a sign. While the Saussurean *signifiant* referred to its own *signifié* only, without any further *implication*, Morris' *sign-vehicle* referred to a whole situation. In this it was an *'advance'* towards the classical implicative theory of signification. Morris, continuing Peirce's work, set up a semiotic more realistic than Saussure's. Nor did he see any "absolute cleft between single signs, sentential signs, and languages ..." (Morris 1971:25).

Morris aimed for a *semiotic* wider than human language, one that "supplies the foundations for any special science of signs, such as linguistics, logic ..." (Morris 1971:17). "[A] comprehensive doctrine of signs ... is frequently known as semantics; we shall call it *semiotic*" (Morris 1971:80). Much like Locke and Peirce, he advocates that "metascience must use semiotic as an organon" (Morris 1971:18).

Semiosis has three dimensions, baptized as *semantics, pragmatics, syntactics* (Morris 1971:20-1). For Morris, "the[se] various dimensions are only aspects of a unitary process" (Morris 1971:23). He warns that no part of semiosis can be isolated. "The 'sign portion' of the sign-vehicle is in fact the network of semiosic relationships ..." (Rossi-Landi 1992:38). Albeit linguistics borrowed the words *pragmatics*, *semantics*, and *syntactics* from semiotics, exactly this perspective is missing from it. Logical syntax is "not interested in ... relations except syntactical ones" (Morris 1971:29).

"Semiosis is ... a mediated-taking-account-of" (Morris 1971:19). The components in semiosis are the *sign-vehicle, designatum, interpretant,* and *interpreter* (Morris 1971:19). "A sign must have a designatum; yet obviously every sign does not, in fact, refer to an actual existent object [referent]" (Morris 1971:20). If the object 'actually', that is, physically exists, it is called *denotatum* (ibid.).

Morris does not attribute an ontological status to *meaning*:

> Meanings are not to be located as existences at any place in the process of semiosis but are to be characterized in terms of this process as a whole. 'Meaning' is a semiotical term and not a term in the thing-language ... on a par with rocks, organisms, and colors ... (Morris 1971:57).

> 'Meaning' signifies any and all phases of sign-processes ... (Morris 1971:95)

In Morris' determination of meaning, however, the sign is seen as the trigger of a certain *behavioral response*. In this stimulus-response chain, which is as rigid as Saussure's associative circuit, there is no place for abstraction and symbolization. Morris' understanding of the *interpretant* is much more limited than Peirce's, for whom the *interpretant* is the actual, pragmatic *effect of the representamen on the interpreting subject*, a feeling, a physical act, or a thought.

Language, according to Morris, must be a plurality of interconnected interpersonal signs where the signs "have the same signification to the producers which they have to other interpreters", and signs have "a relative constancy of signification" (1971:113). Although in Morris' view language "is unique to man" (1971:130), his description, for lack of regard for the symbolic nature of human language, is not satisfactory to separate animal sign systems from human language.

3. Language, the symbolic condition of human life

Morris' system, in spite of its breadth, lacks depth because it does not account for the creative nature of signs. Thus man and animal are viewed on a par. It is Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945), who sees a landmark between the animal and the human world in the pivotal "images, ... the causes which prevent animals from ever achieving even the least beginnings of cultural development" (Cassirer 1944:30). He admits the role of gestures expressing rage, pleading, desire, playfulness, etc. in animal communication. But animals

only have *emotional* 'language'. Humans have a *propositional language*, too. "Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the *symbolic system" (*Cassirer 1944:24). This has two characteristics: *versatility* and *universal applicability.*

In Cassirer's vision, culture, religion, and language are all *symbols* created by the mind in an effort to *understand* reality, to *encompass* totality. The mind processes impressions into symbols which enable it to understand its world. This is how forms of knowledge emerge in human consciousness from the ocean of impressions, within and without. The categories of the consciousness of objects consist of symbols, which, then, *mediate* between perception and understanding. Cassirer stresses a point markedly different from Aristotle for whom the essential in man is that he is 'being having speech': "... instead of describing man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*" (Cassirer 1944:26).

Karl Bühler (1879-1963), just like Cassirer, emphasized the primacy of *abstractive procedures* in language, which is a sign system. He defended the *teleological sociality* of language, where the language structure is seen as 'a true ontological species' (Innis 1982:15), and defended the sui generis character of meaning against Saussure's associative circuits: "it is impossible to constitute the concept of sense without appeal to goals and to [social] subject-relatedness" (Bühler 1965:132).

Bühler's main tenets on language are the following: 1. the decisive step in meaning comes not with *articulate* speech but in replacing natural gestures with *symbolic* ones; 2. the sign-vehicle is relevant only as much as it stands for a type in the semiotic system (cf. the *phon*etics vs. *phon*ology in Saussure). Inattention to the *abstract character* of language structures leads to "material derailment", where one focuses too much on the physical matériel instead of the real sign; 3. *double articulation* is the source of *creativity* in language. Word and sentence do not have analogs in other symbolic systems. In consequence, language is not a model for a general semiotics; 4. the functions of language are representation, expression and appellation; 5. each language has its own *Weltansicht* (world view).

The relations between the objective and subjective functions are as follows (after Innis 1982:17):

	subject-related	inter-subjective
cca. parole	*Handlung* (action)	*Werk (ergon)* (work as result)
cca. langue	*energeia* (energy)	*Gebilde* (structure)

Table IV. 1. Functions of language

The subject-related functions of the speaker are realized inter-subjectively, as resulting work. As the *energeia* of the whole language manifests itself in a *structure*, so does the *action* of the individual produce a *Werk* at the social level. For Bühler, language is not a form of abstract algebra, for he always has recourse to factual knowledge (*Sachwissen*).

In *The two-field theory of language*, Bühler makes a distinction between the *Zeigfeld* (index field, the situation) and the *Symbolfeld* (the context). He discusses linguistic and non-linguistic pointers together. Index words are embedded in the perceptual and intuitive fields: thus index terms can be used without referential objects being present in the perceptual field.

Language is mediating and ordering the world: it represents the relations (it is *relationstreu*) instead of the appearances (*erscheinungstreu*). Terms in different languages segment reality differently (eg., It. *qui*, *qua* (*right here*; *here close*) 'match' Engl. *here*). Language did not grow out of a complexification and differentiation of onomatopoeia, which is subject both to the phonemic and syntactic barrier. Language is to a very high degree symbolic and abstractive. Conceptual signs (*Begriffszeichen*) involve abstraction both on the expression side and the content side. Words belong to meaning spheres (associative fields) and they often do not have sharp boundaries (cf. Wittgenstein's family resemblances).

Only the pertinent parts of a concept are represented by the signal. Bühler rejects any semiotics on a purely physical basis. Symbolic terms segment the world not into individuals but into classes. Language potentiates perception and action!

The *symbolic* view of language, developed by Bühler and Cassirer, becomes central in the autonomous *language games* of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), but not before he abandons the perspective of logic. For the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, logic has two tasks concerning *symbols*: 1. to describe the conditions for their making any sense, 2. to explain how symbols mean uniquely. "The essential business of language is to assert or deny facts" (Wittgenstein 1961:x). The ideal language is seen as the reality of the *unum nomen, unum nominatum* (*one name for one thing*) principle, with a name which "cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign" (*Tractatus*, 3.26). "A fact which has no parts that are facts is called ... a *Sachverhalt* ... an atomic fact. ... The constituents finally reached may be called 'simples' or 'objects'" (Wittgenstein 1961:xiii).

At this point Wittgenstein supposes language to be the muffled logical representation of an identical language-external reality: "[a] picture is a model of reality" (*Tractatus* 2.12). "There must be something identical in the picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all" (*Tractatus* 2.161). Words only confuse representation and "Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts" (*Tractatus* 4.112). As he takes words for facts, so does Wittgenstein consider a proposition, made from those words, also a fact: "[t]he series of words is a fact just as much as what makes it true or false is a fact" (Wittgenstein 1961:xx). Here Wittgenstein is treading Aristotelian paths in that he supposes objective atomic facts to exist, these being similar to the *actual things* (πραγματα) and the *affections of the soul* (παθηματα) in the reflective theory of the Stagirite. But he also senses that something is wrong with this mirroring:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me ... *must transcend these propositions*, and then he will see the world aright (*Tractatus* 6.54; my italics).

What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (*Tractatus* 7).[1]

It is not until the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953), that Wittgenstein arrives at a radically different conception of meaning: "What is the meaning of words? What they mean, how should I explain, except in the way they are used?" (Wittgenstein 1960:294).[2]

First, he distances himself from the referential theory of meaning: The word *meaning* is misused if we mean by it the thing to which it 'corresponds'. " ... the word must have a family of meanings" (Wittgenstein 1960:329). There is no general form of sentence and language. There are only family similarities, *Familienähnlichkeiten*, among the various phenomena" (Wittgenstein 1960:324).

Second, he abandons the nominalist theory of language with preexistent ideas:

> Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a foreign country and did not understand her language; that is he already possessed a language, only another. Or: as if the child could already *think*, only not yet speak. And 'think' here means something like talking to himself (Wittgenstein 1960:305).

Third, Wittgenstein distinguishes between the dictionary word and the word as functional in a speech act:

> Naming is a preparation for description. Naming is not yet a move in the language game. ... This is what Frege meant with saying: a word has meaning only in the sentence (Wittgenstein 1960:315).
>
> There are [...] numberless different ways of using all that we call 'signs', 'words', and 'sentences' (Wittgenstein 1960:300).

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[1] Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.

[2] Was *bezeichnen* nun die Wörter dieser Sprache? — Was sie bezeichnen, wie soll ich das zeigen, es sei denn in der Art ihres Gebrauchs?

In emphasizing pragmatics, the *use* of words *in action*, Wittgenstein rejects structural semantics and discards every formalized discipline of meaning in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical investigations*). Wittgenstein, like Saussure, uses game analogies: The speaker is seen as a player in a *self-contained* game. Language is self-contained and, in a very Nietzschean way, emerges as *constitutive of reality*: "... eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen" (Wittgenstein 1960:296).[1]

In the 20th century, the symbolic essence of language was arrived at from yet another science, psychoanalysis, whose practice proves that language plays a cardinal role not only in framing the external world of mankind, but also in coming to terms with its psyche. Analysts typically either minimize the role of language, or make it central. Linguistics and psychoanalysis have a partly shared terminology of the *symbol* which is a *signifier*, albeit there is a difference in usage: in linguistic works the detached *sign* is preferred over the motivated *symbol*. For linguistics, a *motivated sign* is unimaginable. The *symbols* of the psyche, on the other hand, are naturally motivated. In his investigations of this natural symbolism, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) hypothesizes a common source for language and the symbolism of the unconscious, a veritable *Grundsprache* (basic language). For him, the origin of language is the main problem.

Jacques-Marie Emile Lacan (1901-1981) takes over the language-metaphor of the unconscious from Freud. But in the wake of Saussure's fundamental break with traditional philosophy, Lacan claims that knowledge as a system of signifiers is shaped more by its own internal structure than by the world or the self. The field in which this fundamental turn can be demonstrated is semiotics, a semiotics which stresses that knowledge of the universe is a construction, as is the knowledge of the subject about itself. The area preceding both the subjective and the objective realm is the focus of Lacan's attention. He uses linguistic and structuralistic concepts to reformulate the Freudian theory. Lacan adopts Levi-Strauss' widening of the Saussurean structuralism to anthropology and claims that cultural meaning-systems (including religion) are solely an effect of the structure of a language.

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[1] To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.

Although Lacan borrows the expressions "signifier" and "signified" from Saussure, he completely destroys their common usage as a relation between two entities. In Lacan's interpretation, the Saussurean formula means that the signifier is *separated* from the signified, *barred* from its representational functioning. Lacan adopts the for him *meaningless signifier* as the foundation of his system. In it, the *signifier*, disconnected from the Saussurian bilateral sign, becomes the sign itself: "Lacan deletes the ellipse and arrows found in Saussure's schema, names the bar separating the signifier and signified the 'signifier bar', and marks the signifier with S, the signified with s" (Arrivé 1992:133-4). Lacan, uprooting the *signifier* from the sign and enthroning it qua *sign*, completely ignores the functioning of signs in a semiotic system. For him, signifiers only signify other signifiers. In reality, however, " 'Meaning' signifies any and all phases of sign-processes ..." (Morris 1971:95) and a signifier signified by another signifier becomes a signified.

The only signified Lacan allows is the subject. If there is nothing beyond the subject, does Lacan's famous statement, "There is no metalanguage", apply to *metalangue*, *metalanguage*, or *metadiscours/metaparole*? The metalanguage, as we also have seen in the critique of the logical approach, cannot be detached from the object language because in that case another metalangue would be needed to describe the first metalangue and so on. But even common experience proves that while langue is the same, parts of it become *metaparoles* with respect to each other in a *metadiscours*.

Structuralism regarded language as an isolated system, but also as the master pattern for all kinds of social products (myths, music, even fashion). Saussure himself contributed to this tendency by stressing that the form of language is a set of abstract relationships. In this model, the *sign* was seen as specifiable only in contrast with coexisting signs. Actual signifying practices were not considered. This self-centered speculation about abstract systems could happen also because Saussure did not leave any developed semantic theory to posterity.

While structuralism was bogged down in the *master* pattern, semiotics considered any object as potential sign-vehicle. While the Saussurean *signifiant* referred to its own *signifié* only, Morris' *sign-vehicle* referred to a whole situation. Accordingly, Morris

identified the three *dimensions*, not branches!, of *semiosis* (*semantics, pragmatics, syntactics*). Meaning in semiotics is seen not as an ontological entity typical of idealism but as the interpretation of signs. The *behavioristic* view of signification, however, did not allow for abstraction and symbolization.

It was Ernst Cassirer who accounted for nonbehavioristic, abstractive *symbolization*, which separates man from animal. In Cassirer's vision, culture, religion, and language are all *symbols* to *encompass* reality. Similar is the view of Bühler, with his focus more on language. Since language is doubly articulated, it is unique among sign systems, he said. And Wittgenstein, in emphasizing pragmatics, the *use* of words *in action*, rejected every formalized discipline of meaning.

In linguistic works the detached *sign* is preferred over the motivated *symbol of* psychoanalysis. Freud hypothesizes a common source for language and for the symbolism of the unconscious. His motivated symbol is rich in implications. Lacan takes over the language-metaphor of the unconscious from Freud, but he reformulates it, using distorted structuralistic concepts.

Sturcturalism, with its various outhgrowths, is clearly a blind alley. The essence of language is in the *symbolic*, it being also a condition of the manifestation of the self-reflexive property of language. In Ch. V. we will see how this self-reflection in language, or more generally, in a semiotic system, gives rise to the *self*.

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V.

Twentieth century sign theories.
3. Language, subject, and object

1. Homo loquens - homo faber

Disseminating American semiotics (Peirce and Morris), Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1921-) published "one of the first books in semiotics as the general theory of signs which ever appeared in Italy and possibly also in Europe" (1992:1). He developed a syncretistic system of signs in which there are perpetual transformations from being a sign to becoming a non-sign and vice versa: "... [*W*]*hen* an event or object whatsoever happens to be in the triadic network of the relationships of semiosis, *then* it becomes a sign" (Rossi-Landi 1992:39). Sign properties are neither objective, nor subjective. "*They are nonobjective properties which any object can acquire in given circumstances*" (Rossi-Landi 1992:25).

Rossi-Landi stresses the importance of the Morrisian unified approach to semiosis: "The main point was - and is - that one must not believe that *there are* semantic, syntactic, or pragmatic signs ..." (Rossi-Landi 1992:40). Yet, this is exactly what current linguistics believes and the central courses of curricula are syntax and phonology. Is this not the Lacanian deification of the signifier?

"It is precisely because 'meaning' is a quasi-synonym of 'semiosis' that no one succeeds in erasing it ..." (Rossi-Landi 1992:40). Rossi-Landi warns that "... insisting too much on the sign-vehicle could even lead to the hair-raising belief that the very substance of the sign is contained within the vehicle as such" (Rossi-Landi 1992:39), as opposed to its

relational nature. But Rossi-Landi has a definite materialist bent and thus inevitably lands in a contradiction when stressing the materiality of the sign-vehicle as opposed to the abstract character of the Saussurean *signifier*:

> The term, 'material,' takes here advantage of its own ambiguity: it refers to the notions of the materials upon which work is expended, but it also refers to the material character, or corpo-reality, of the sign-vehicle. ... it [the sign-vehicle] should not be confused with, or worse reduced to, the Saussurean notion of *signifiant*" (Rossi-Landi 1992:289).

Since sign-vehicles are made from some physical material, that is what they are as far as their substance is concerned. However, the materials applied in construing sign-vehicles are irrelevant to the functioning of the sign-vehicles in the system. In Saussurre's chess game example, whether the pawn is made of plastic or wood etc., does not change its status of being a pawn. Contrary to Rossi-Landi's warning, in fact, the greater danger is that the sign is reduced to the mere "corpo-reality, of the sign-vehicle".

Rossi-Landi sees the human being's emergence as the inextricable interaction of *work* and *sign use*: *homo loquens* (*the speaking man*) is *homo faber* (*the craftsman*). In his theory of *common speech*, he equates the two in *linguistic work*. That language is viewed in this light brings forth its *intensionality*. In Rossi-Landi's theory, verbal artifacts are the quintessential signs and the other artifacts are not signs: "While verbal artefacts are produced just and only for use as signs, ... non-verbal artefacts ... the majority of them are produced for other aims. The use-values are distributed differently" (Rossi-Landi 1992:191). The speaker would be a linguistic worker, working with and on previously made human products (i.e. the signs of language given): " ... the speaker uses the products of previous work even without being conscious of it, and usually considers these products natural ..." (Rossi-Landi 1992:193).

The higher we go in the hierarchy of language units (phonemes, morphemes, words, utterances, speech acts), the more freedom there is for the use of the extant system and for creativity *within the existing code*. Thus, while a literary masterpiece only moderately

thrives on the invention of new words or word order, let alone new letters or sounds, it is always a singular arrangement of the signs *of an already available sign system*. While André Martinet (1908-), as Karl Bühler, speaks of *double articulation* of phonemes into morphemes and morphemes into sentences, Rossi-Landi thinks there are two higher articulations in addition: the *syllogism* and *automated production of linguistic performances*. The *syllogism* is the linguistic equivalent to the *machine*:

> The first new totality built by man after the utensil is the mechanism. We shall describe a material (nonverbal) mechanism as a *machine*, and a linguistic (verbal) mechanism as syllogism (Rossi-Landi 1992:208).

Rossi-Landi's definition of the *machine*, the non-linguistic equivalent of *syllogism*, is that (1) it consist at least of two items which are in an opposition (2) that is overcome dialectically, leading to a synthesis (Rossi-Landi 1992:210). However, beside the syllogism, any other complex fulfils this first criterion, and the second criterion is not clear, except for being an obvious bow to Marx.

Above the level of the *syllogism-machine*, *self-sufficient mechanisms and total automation* would govern *material production* on the one hand, and the *automated production of linguistic performances* (lectures, books, codes, lexica, and, eventually, "all verbal sign systems of a productive unit"), on the other (1992:221).

Especially, labeling words as "finished pieces of utensils" and sentences as "simple utensils" (p. 199ff.; p. 221) subscribes to the naive view that sentence meaning is a simple composite put together from *pieces*, like a brick-wall. Words are only the abstraction of linguists - only full sentences occur in reality.

The *homology of production* means that "... material artefacts may [not] be produced without the concomitant production of linguistic artefacts" (Rossi-Landi 1992:193). This homology entails a strong parallel between the *modes of production* in the two areas of language and social production.

In Rossi-Landi's analogy, material production mechanisms are paired with linguistic production (lectures, speeches etc.) in a mechanistic materialistic world-view which,

though correctly arguing for the created, *'artefact'* nature of language, fails to explain the transition from the mechanical to the non-mechanical, symbolizing, stage of language production. In this, Rossi-Landi's theory is not qualitatively different from views that explain language as a linear development from animal sounds. His scheme is too mechanical even for material production. Important, however, is his emphasis of *collective parole* (Rossi-Landi 1992:228), a condition of linguistic exploitation, to which I return in Ch. VIII. 2.

2. Semiotics or Post-Semiotics?

While Rossi-Landi approached language from general semiotics, Sebastian Shaumyan, in *A semiotic theory of language*, argues for the semiotic nature of language from a linguistic perspective: " ... as a system of signs ... language is a social phenomenon of a special sort, which can be called a *semiotic* phenomenon" (1987:2). However, Shaumyan seeks to explain the semiotic nature of language via a unilateral sign theory. Signs have a special status, he says: "X is a *sign* of Y. ... Y is a *meaning* of X" (Shaumyan 1987:3, my italics). *Sign* and *meaning* are not substances but rather *relations* between different *objects*. Because they express relations, language signs, once recognized as such, belong to a distinct sphere:

> Languages are not psychological objects, but they are not biological or physical objects, either - rather they belong to a special world, which can be called the world of sign systems, or the semiotic world (Shaumyan 1987:xi).

Even in language, "a sign is not necessarily a sound sequence" (Shaumyan 1987:3). Examples are stress, word order, the zero morpheme. Shaumyan tries to establish the sign by the *Principle of Semiotic Relevance* which postulates that "different signs must be different in form" (1987:14). This is a most unfortunate start since the identity of the sign

is defined by only its *form* (the signifier-side), and is a plain lapse into the *unum nomen, unum nominatum* (*one name for one object*) fallacy of the Dark Ages. In reality, natural language cannot function without *homonymy* as the generalization of sounds and meanings could not be achieved on either side of the linguistic sign. Shaumyan introduces three sign models to deal with homonymy:

(1) $meaning_1$ - sign - $meaning_2$

(2) $sign_1$ - $meaning_1$; $sign_2$ - $meaning_2$

(3) $sign_1$ - sign form - $sign_2$

(1987:14, modified)

(2) displays the obviously untenable *unum nomen - unum nominatum* principle. However, both diagrams (1) and (3) are also inadequate. (1) is the one-sided (or sideless) sign model. It implies that the *sign* is only a material element, a *signifier*. But how could any signifier be a sign *of something else*, if that *something* were not part of the *sign*? *Sign form* in (3), if we apply the sense of *sign* as used in (1), suggests that there are only signs and no meanings.

I think, the correct version collapses (1) and (3) into the following: (4) $meaning_1$ - sign form - $meaning_2$. Shaumyan declares that " ... meaning 1 and meaning 2 in (1) belong to the same class of meanings ..." (1987:14) but he does not elaborate what a class of meanings would be. There are no natural classes of meaning, anyway. In a polivalent sign, Shaumyan says, the *Principle of Suspension* suspends the difference of two forms. If so, then this principle is simply another formulation of *homonymy*.

In Shaumyan's view, "linguistics does not need the notion of the sign as a bilateral linguistic unit" (Shaumyan 1987:17) and he votes for the unilaterality of the sign:

> ... it is difficult to accept [Saussure's] claim that *arbor* is called a sign because it carries the concept 'tree'. True, the expression *arbor* is a sign because of its being in a particular relation to the meaning 'tree' (Shaumyan 1987:16).

The expression *arbor* is a signal, a *signifier*, not a sign. But it can only fulfill this role if it is related to some concept, *signified*, in a *sign*. For example, the following scene of *Hamlet* is built on the difference of signal and sign:

> LORD POLONIUS: ... What do you read, my lord?
> HAMLET: Words, words, words.
> LORD POLONIUS: What is the matter, my lord?
> (...)
> LORD POLONIUS: I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.
> HAMLET: Slanders ...
>
> (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II, ii)

As Polonius sees Hamlet reading in a book, he asks about the content. Yet, Hamlet takes the question literally and answers so. Then Polonius reiterates his question, using a different signal (*matter*). Upon this, Hamlet turns to content. So much so, that in saying *Slanders* he voices an implied, interpreted content. The words themselves in the book need not be slanderous, it may be their use that makes them such.

According to Shaumyan, to be the 'sign of' and to be the 'meaning of' an object are different things: "[t]he relations are asymmetric: the sign communicates the meaning, but the meaning does not communicate the sign" (Shaumyan 1987:17). This statement is in contradiction with another of his about "... the constant struggle of individuals to adapt linguistic form to the thoughts they want to express" (Shaumyan 1987:31) Which side triggers the other? Shaumyan gives no response. He cannot give one because it misses his attention that concepts, expressions, and even percepta, are all signs of one another. Disregarding all possible disambiguating factors, Shaumyan rejects *homonymy* and

proposes the *polyvalent unilateral sign* in reverting to the primitive *unum nomen - unum nominatum* (*one name for one object*) principle.

Lexical semantics, a *contradictio in adiecto*, does not fare better, either, in its account of signification. Jerrold J. Katz' *Semantic Theory* (1972) vividly exemplifies the limitations of the lexical semantic trend. The theory, as Umberto Eco critiques it, is the resuscitation of the idealistic ontological categories of Aristotle (*genera, species*). For Katz, the meaning of a word is the set of its semantic markers. The theory assumes a finite set of semantic universals all *sememes* are composed of. There are two clear fallacies here. First, there is no reason to postulate one preferred semantic universal over another. Second, if only a few semantic universals are instituted, they are necessarily very vague. But if many universals are introduced for the sake of accuracy, they can hardly mark differences between sememes: each sememe would need its own 'universal'. This is actually what Katz opted for when he instituted the *distinguisher*. The distinguisher is a *description of the referent* to which the sign applies. This description consists of several signs and these signs again are constituted by *markers*. Katz' model is a close dictionary theory of meaning, and, as such, it fails to account for connotations and disregards contextual and circumstantial factors in determining meaning. In reality, however, "semantic markers are ... *interpretants*, so that semantic representations of the words /red/ and /cherry/ must include among their branches the image of a sense datum" (Eco 1976:104). Katz' model is limited to the verbal and categorematic.

The interplay of concepts, expressions, and percepta in signification, however, is the very core of Umberto Eco's (1932-) sign theory. He aims at a general theory of semiotics, a sort of metalanguage, which comprises all types of interpretants (such as sign-vehicles, a foreign word, a picture, a gesture, a definition, or a connotation) in a global semantic network that includes also human language.

Eco's starting point towards the *theory of signification* is the exclusion of the *referent*: "an expression does not, in principle, designate any object, but on the contrary *conveys a cultural content*" (Eco 1976:61). The *denotation* is not the referent. Even a shifter (such as *you, there, before*) does not get its meaning from its referent. For instance, the

overworn expression 'the present king of France' is not a mention of a referent but is meaningful. It is neither true, nor false. Statements can be meaningful without ever being verifiable extensionally. Meaning is a *function* of the sentence, *mentioning* or *referring* is the *use* of the sentence.

Further, Eco denies the separate ontology of signs. The 'sign' is a fictitious term, to be replaced by 'sign-function'. There are only objects which may have *signification as their function*. The objects can be either from a natural source (eg., a pebble), with the *imposed task to signify*, or they can be produced for signification by a sender (eg., a smudge). Either way, the objects acquire sign-role via *human intention*.

The sign is the unity of two functives: the expression and the content. The expression side and the content side are given a form in segmentation. Signs arise via coding which creates more or less stable correlations between these functives. The code does not arrange the actual sign-vehicles (the material carrier of the abstract signifier) themselves but accounts for the sign-generating rules which establish *types*. "... the codes, insofar as they are accepted by a society, set up a 'cultural world' which is neither actual nor possible in the ontological sense ..." (Eco 1976:61). The code also provides combinational rules for the signs.

For the theory of codes it is irrelevant whether a sign arose *arbitrarily* or *by motivation*. These are only ways of its genesis, not, however, properties of the sign. The modes of sign production are as follows: *recognition*, constituting the object as a sign (this object is a whole text rather than an isolated sign, eg., taking a depression in the soil for being a footprint); *ostention*, when the object is shown as the representative of its class (eg., pointing and uttering: *This is a hinny.*); *invention* of produced signs (eg., traffic signs, the coinage *serendipity*). A part of the referent may become the sign-vehicle but this 'natural' object must be *recognized* as sign. Even a *motivated* sign must be *conventionalized* in order to be included in the code.

The *meaning* of a signal in the sign is *denotative* or *connotative/implicative*. The *denotative* meaning of a sign-vehicle is a semantic/cultural unit within a semantic system (code). Such a cultural unit consists of different semantic markers. *Connotative* meanings arise in reliance on denotative markers, as other meanings become associated with the

denotative meaning, in a more or less subjective code. In connotative - implicative semiotics, the *expression plane* that corresponds to a content plane in a code is *another code* which consists of a content plane and an expression plane of its own (Eco 1976:55, modified):

$expression_2$		$content_2$
$expression_1$	$content_1$	

Table V. 1. Denotative and connotative meaning

The distinction between denotation and connotation, in fact, stems from the 19th century: Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) in his seminal paper *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* (*On Sense and Denotation*, 1892) first suggested that the expressions of language have both a sense (*Sinn*) and a denotation (*Bedeutung*).

A content can be an expression of a further content, as, for example, the //red light// in the highway-code means 'stop', but, in a crossing, yet not in a tunnel, it also means *by connotation* that 'traffic may be moving in a perpendicular street'. Similarly, an expression, like 'short-long' in Morse-script, may be just an expression for another expression (the letter 'a' in this case), here the second expression is also a content, an interpretant. "... in cultural life every entity can aim at becoming independently both meaning and sign-vehicle" (Eco 1976:72). As they refer to each other within the sign, the signifier is a signified as well, and the signified a signifier, even within the range of denotation.

Moving from elementary signs to complex ones, "The discourse, which is in the content plane, corresponds to the text in the expression plane" (Eco 1976:187). There are two ways of creativity in the code. In rule-governed creativity the content-plane is modified, while the expression-plane is left intact (eg., Chomsky's 'colorless green ideas'). In rule-changing creativity, however, a new content-type is introduced (Eco 1976:188).

There are countless different codes overlapping more or less, in language and other semiotic systems. Locke, just like Aristotle and Saussure, assumes the complete *identity of*

codes of the speaker and hearer: "[men] suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men with whom they communicate" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 4.). Eco, however emphasizes that, apart from some very trivial and common cases of de-coding, there is *always* some uncoded element in the message. It is here that creative *interpretation* steps in and sets up a Peircean abductive hypothesis. This Eco calls *undercoding. Overcoding*, on the other hand, assigns additional meanings to a (complex) sign (at the same time deleting the original meaning). All stylistical and rhetorical rules (eg., the difference between *horse* and *steed* or *Do you know the time?* meaning *What time is it? Tell me!*) belong here. Extra-coding is the extension of the code with new items. The final semiotic mega-code is the 'sum' of all subcodes.

The code can be conventionally used or subjected to innovation. In *conventional use*, that is, semiotic/analytic judgment, semantic markers are predicated of a content "*according to a preestablished code*" (Eco 1976:159). In *innovation*, or factual/synthetic judgment, however, semantic markers are predicated of a content that was *never predicated before in an existing code*. In this dialectic, the codes control messages by offering existing conventions, but the messages innovatively restructure the code as innovative usage gradually becomes conventional. For example, *Ulysses* only meant the epic of Homer before James Joyce became introduced to the semiotic universe.

A temporary set of sensory stimuli can emerge as a sign-vehicle of *something*, in an attribution of meaning, only if there is a perceptual model in the mind *prior to the stimulation.* It is for this reason if the sign-vehicles of a foreign language or a new art style (eg., surrealism) simply do not convey meaning: the code is not possessed by the percipient. Perception is never natural or objective, it is the result of the semiotic act of setting up a code. On the basis of a previously acquired code, one then disregards 'irrelevant' properties and sees a *perceptum* and a perceptual model as the same type.

Eco successfully integrates linguistic and nonlinguistic signs in his theory. For him, the object is not a 'given': Both the *name* and the *idea* are the result of abstractive semiotic processes. The sememe is a bundle of "semantic properties ... correspond[ing] to *supposedly extra-semiotic* properties of an object" (Eco 1976:163, my italics). In sign production and interpretation, the perceptual, semantic, and expressive models must

satisfactorily match. In language, this matching is achieved by "... the copula /is/ [which] is a metalinguistic sign meaning «possesses some of the properties of»" (Eco 1976:168). In a chain of *perceptum - perceptual type - content - signal-type - signal-token* (not strictly in this order), sensory impressions are processed in accordance with the perceptual types, which, in turn, are tied to diverse contents in the code as well as to signal types. These types are then realized as signal tokens in communication.

The *world* as we perceive it, our *mind*, and *language* form an intricate complex in the semiotic code. The semiotic system (language) is not a detached structure but is in integrity with the world: "one quickly realizes that in a world ruled only by words it would be impossible to mention things" (Eco 1976:174). However, language does not reflect the world of things. A semantic field and the semantic system can change very quickly, to reflect our changed understanding of totality. "... *every semantic unit used in order to analyze a sememe is in its turn a sememe to be analyzed*" (Eco 1976:121).

Beside contextual positions, which affect the meaning of expressions, in the theory of settings external circumstances are also included. "In order to assert that objects (insofar as they are perceived) can also be approached as signs, one must also assert that even the concepts of the objects (as the result or as the determining schema of every perception) must be considered in a semiotic way ... *even ideas are signs*" (Eco 1976:166).

Conventionality is the very condition of signifying states of affairs which are unrelated to the immediate environment. But this unrelatedness has an important consequence: states of affairs can be signified which do not in fact exist. Apart from fiction and fantasy, there are *lies*. The difference between fiction and falsification is that in deliberate fiction the statement is known to mean to represent not factual but encyclopaedic truth. In this vein, to say that 'a mermaid is a sea-dwelling lady with a fishtail instead of damsel-legs' is not a lie but an accepted, coded, encyclopaedic truth. In lies, however, the convention of *representing a state of factual affairs* is purposefully broken and statements are made which in the code correspond to then absent states of factual affairs. *The practice of communication is independent of the truth value of statements made.*

While the semiotic movement established several unassailable truths about human language, John Stewart is a leader among those contemporary philosophers, linguists, psychologists, and communication theorists who promote the argument that language can no longer be viewed as a system of signs or symbols, and that a *post-semiotic account* can be developed from the recognition that language is first and foremost *articulate contact*. Stewart calls the model, according to which "language is fundamentally a semiotic system, a system of signs and/or symbols" (1995:6), the *symbol model*. He summarizes what he sees as shortcomings of this *symbol model* in the following five points (1995:6-7):

1. the dichotomy of the system of signs and the world.

2. "the belief that the linguistic world consists of identifiable units ... (eg., phonemes, morphemes, words, utterances, speech acts) that are its atoms or molecules".

3. "the claim that the relationship between these units of language and the units that make up the other of the two worlds is some sort of representational or symbolizing relationship".

4. "these ontologically distinct, representationally functioning units make up a system, the system called *language*."

5. "language is a tool or instrument humans use to accomplish their goals".

My critique of Stewart's five points is as follows:

1. *the dichotomy of the system of signs and the world.*

Stewart condemns those theorists who "postulate at one point or another a fundamental distinction between linguistic phenomena, on the one hand, and nonlinguistic phenomena, on the other" (Stewart 1995:8). However, if this distinction is not made in the methodology, then language science as such loses its legitimacy. But this is true of any other discipline: for instance, zoology postulates two distinct universes, that of animals (however defined) and of 'not animals'.

Further, a sign often does not stand for any referent. In Saussure, too, both the signifier and the signified belong to a sign system distinct from 'the world'. But verbal signs, deixis (eg., a pointing finger), and external objects can all be *interpretants* of each

other. In this way a thorough relation is established among the sign-system and the world. Otherwise it would be impossible to make any statements about anything outside the sign system itself. Also, being a *sign* is a *function* of an object. The object ought to be recognized (in the legal, not only in the perceptual sense) as a sign. This recognition segregates it from non-signs.

As we have shown above, semioticians from Peirce to Eco strive to include the world, the self, and language in a global semantic network. The world, self, and language are not seen as discrete, isolated entities. Quite the contrary, with both the self and the world emerging in course of processes of signification, only an ephemeral fluid boundary is supposed between them.

2. *"[T]he belief that the linguistic world consists of identifiable units ... (eg., phonemes, morphemes, words, utterances, speech acts) that are its atoms or molecules".*

Within common human language, it is, of course, possible to establish such types as phonemes and words. Semiotics, as far as language is concerned, is far from voting for *atomism*: Double articulation and the nexus of content and expression within the code are recognized facts. The linguistic world, signs, that is, consists also of *contents*, a crucial factor Stewart seems to forget.

Stewart, in stressing that "Efforts to explain understanding almost universally rely on the construct "linguisticality" or "language" "(Stewart 1995:3), misses the point that semioticians themselves say that language is just one among many semiotic systems, "systems [which] have various types of articulation and ... therefore there is no reason to bow to the linguistic model ..." (Eco 1976:234). Thus Stewart's use of the word *language* can only be taken *metaphorically*, to mean any semiotic system.

For Stewart, "the commitment to atomism is embodied in the decision to begin with analysis rather than synthesis" (Stewart 1995:9). He obviously forgets that synthesis is only possible if there are elements from which to synthesize.

3. *"the claim that the relationship between these units of language and the units that make up the other of the two worlds* [non-language] *is some sort of representational or symbolizing relationship".*

According to Stewart, Eco's effort miscarries because semioticians have a *representative conception of language* as a *system of signs*: "language symbolizes or *represents* real facts by *naming* them" (Stewart 1995:4). As amply discussed above, semioticians do not hold this view, especially not Eco, whom Stewart sees as the central figure of the semiotic movement.

Representational — yes, if it means *satisfactorily matching*. However, the relationship is between perceptual, conceptual, and expression types. Eco clearly demarcates his theory of codes from any involvement of the *denotation* with the referent:

> [A]n expression does not, in principle, designate any object, but on the contrary *conveys a cultural content*. ... the codes, insofar as they are accepted by a society, set up a 'cultural world' which is neither actual nor possible in the ontological sense ... (Eco 1976:61).

The semiotic universe consists of real ontological entities and cultural contents which do not exist outside the semiotic code. For example, *mermaid* does not need to be an ontological entity. Semiotics deals with signs as cultural units, not with referents. Referents, insofar as they are in the code, are also cultural units. Cultural units are the *meanings* of sign vehicles. In fact, nothing is accessible outside culture. Yes, language does have a *representational* function. Stewart's formulation, however, obfuscates the fact that this function is genealogically later than the creation of the code, which, *by systemizing the precedent, establishes the very possibility of naming*. For naming to function, a precedent of the use of the name must be set *beforehand* with respect to a selected object.

Stewart finds it impossible that a signifier and a signified be ontologically identical and that, at the same time, the one of them represent the other (Stewart 1995:22-3). This is

fully possible, however, in a semiotic code where one object, related to several others, can function as both signal and meaning, of course, in different phases of the signification.

4. *"these ontologically distinct, representationally functioning units make up a system, the system called language."*

From what was said afore, it is clear that the units are neither 'ontologically distinct', nor 'representationally functioning'. Saussure and Eco go to great lengths in discussing that the elements of the system do not exist *prior to* the system. Nor are the elements objective existents and in different cultures the 'same' semantic system is analysed differently. This is the Hjelmslevian *form of content*. Hjelmslev in his famous example, comparing words for colours, concludes that Welsh *glas* covers all English *blue* and certain hues of English *gray* and *green*. As for plants, Danish *trae* and *skov* are the equivalent of German *Baum* (*tree*) and *Wald* (*forest*), respectively. However, German *Holz* (*wood*) can mean both *trae* and *skov* (Hjelmslev 1961:53-4).

5. *"language is a tool or instrument humans use to accomplish their goals"*. This is such a general statement that it cannot be but true, be it in symbol theory or against it.

Stewart makes several unwarranted assumptions about the whole symbol model, too. Although, according to Stewart, "*some version of these five commitments necessarily follows as a consequence of using "sign" or "symbol" vocabulary to describe the nature of language*" (Stewart 1995:7), 1. and 5. of the above five tenets are too general, 2. and 3. are lacking clear definition, and 4. is simply untenable. Semioticians do not hold these views Stewart attributes to them.

Stewart opposes the semioticians' coding to the hermeneutical method of truth-finding in Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900-) words, "language has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*" (Gadamer 1989:446 in Stewart 1995:116). By this citation, Stewart tries to point at the rigidity of the assumption that speakers always share a single code. The single-code assumption has been proposed already by Aristotle:

> [W]hat these [the letters and sounds] are in the first place signs (σημεια) of – affections of the soul [παθηματα] – are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses ('ομοιωματα) of – actual things (πραγματα) – are also the same (*De Interpretatione* 16a, 3-8).

This same conception recurs in Locke who suggests that "[men] suppose their words to be marks of the ideas *in the minds also of other men* with whom they communicate" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 4., my italics). The Saussurean idea of *langue* is not different or less inflexible. Such a contrast of semiotics and hermeneutics by Stewart, however, is quite inconceivable to me since, among others, Eco, discusses extensively the implications arising from the use of supposedly identical yet in reality different codes:

> ... it is clear that the Watergate model, which presupposed a common code for the sender and the addressee, is revealed as rather summary. The multiplicity of codes, contexts, and circumstances shows us that the same message can be decoded from different points of view and by reference to diverse systems of conventions (Eco 1976:139).

Eco also expands on the fleeting nature of connotational codes: "*within a given culture a semantic field can disintegrate with extreme rapidity and restructure itself into a new field*" (Eco 1976:80). Connotative codes are much more volatile than the underlying denotative code. In fact, several connotative codes may exist upon the denotative code, and upon one another. Because of this, a sign vehicle for all practical purposes of life, never stands only for the denoted content, but also for implied meanings. Let us do a test: You understand the denotation of «danger level» but what does it connote to you? Why not the level of wine in your glass? The connotations are different in Eco's example, the topic being the functioning of a sluice and not a pub: "Thus [the instituted signal] AB

denotes «danger level» and connotes both «evacuation» and «flood» — 'both' rather than 'either' " (Eco 1976:56).

Stewart's proposed remedy for the semiotic lunacy is the seemingly original invention of *articulate contact* which is the "highlight[ing of] two central features ... . First, they are events of contact, which is to say that they are [(1)] dialogic not monologic, communicative not psychological, social not individual" (Stewart 1995:119). But (1) the *dialogue* is nothing new since Plato at latest. Nor does semiotics deny the active participation of speakers 'in contact'. Eco stresses that the codes are often only *partially shared* and the messages are open to diverse interpretations. Sometimes the addressee can even code-faithfully interpret a message as something that was never intended by its sender.

"The second sense in which the events of contact that constitute language are 'articulate' is that they are paradigmatically [(2)] oral-aural. To articulate in this sense means to pronounce clearly ..." (Stewart 1995:122). No matter how elegant this formulation looks, it only says that human language is (2) vocal. No semiotician denies this fact. In Ch. VI., however, I argue that manual-ocular, writing-reading modes, or sign 'language' are just as valid as spoken language.

No special acumen is necessary to realize that if there is a *signal*, for example, *vesi*, and there is *something* it can be the sign of, this, yet, is an insufficient condition for signalization. *Vesi*, in fact, is Estonian for *water*, but as long as this information is only in a dictionary, the sign is nonexistent. It is only a sign if it is a sign for *someone*, the Estonian fisherman or whoever. Let this be realized: the *speaker*, or *interpreter* in Peirce's terminology, cannot be excommunicated from language.

But this is exactly the course of Stewart's theory, where the sign falls prey to a, he said himself!, "trivial identification with the idea of coded equivalence and identity" (1995:5). This *post-semiotic* speculation about semiotics is in reality an atavistic relapse into the thinking of ages passed by, the sombre revival of the unimaginative *speakerless* nominalism of *aliquid stat pro aliquo* as Stewart comes to the hairraising interpretation that

> [Eco's] prominent and influential effort to revise the philosophical foundation of semiotics - the concept of the sign - ultimately concludes that a sign is indeed, at its root, "something that stands for something else [aliquid stat pro aliquo]" (Stewart 1995:5-6).

Overall, Stewart's so-called *post-semiotic* philosophy of communication is lagging far behind semiotics: while dismissing semiotics and its achievements and calling the code impersonal, the theory does not say anything substantial about the role of the *subject*, which remains transcendental to him.

3. Hermeneutics' language

Interestingly, the *subject* is approached from *logic* in the work of Hans Lipps (1889-1941), who trying to overcome the limitations of traditional logic, develops *hermeneutical logic*. In formal logic the relationship of language to pragmatics, the cardinal aspect of all semiotics, is lost. However, words are not simply the expression of an internal thought but they let something more be recognized. Lipps draws attention to the difference between Aristotle's λογος σημαντικος (signifying word) and λογος αποφαντικος (word revealing by itself) (1976:7). Σημαινειν originally means 'to signify something to someone in order to ... '. In Lipps' interpretation, σημαινειν means 'to show correct action', whereas αποφαινειν is 'to reveal truth by itself'. In this way, the λογος αποφαντικος (word revealing by itself) is a limitation of the general λογος σημαντικος (signifying word) (1976:8; 1977:108-9). It is a teleology that defines what is *correct* and *true*. In themselves, "what words mean, their specific sense can by no means be constrained as some object but can only be taken as suggestion and received in such a way that man reacts to these; he considers the words or heeds their warning or lets himself be educated through them or replies to them etc." (Lipps 1976:8, original in footnote No. [1]).

[1] Was Worte zu erkennen geben, d.i. das im spezifischen Sinn gesagte, kann überhaupt nicht sachlich fixiert bzw. als Gedanke aufgewiesen, sondern nur als Hinweis vernommen und insofern aufgenommen

Here we arrive at a very praxial definition of meaning. In this way even a question, which was in earlier speculation the antithesis of a proposition, can be true, if it shows the right direction towards praxis. This hermeneutical interpretation is also truly semiotic in that truth is not considered to be simply the *adaequatio* (equation) of word to deed. There can be no simple verification of an utterance in a model of the world. The truth of the words of language is that they reveal something. Hermeneutical logic surpasses the infinitely limited truth of formal logic by taking into account the complex speech situation.

Paul Ricoeur (1913-), in his hermeneutical investigations attacks Aristotle's preoccupation with logic in dealing with language as well as his disregard of anything other than true and false declarative propositions. Aristotle disliked ambiguity, which is abundant in every language, and tried to describe the unambiguous logical core of statements made in natural language. But Ricouer accepts the ambiguity of language and his use of the term *symbol* has a new sense:

> [L]anguage itself is from the outset and for the most part distorted: it means something other than what it says, it has a double meaning, it is equivocal. ... Let us call this region of double meaning "symbol" ... (Ricoeur 1970:7).

Thus to Ricouer even what were 'obvious' terms for Aristotle become ambiguous. The 'symbolic' comes to mean the *mediated, non-obvious apprehension* of the world. The symbol is the intermediary vehicle between the content and our understanding of it. Symbolism, says Ricoeur, emerges when something cannot be expressed directly either for lack of suitable conventionalized expressions, for example the domain of poetic 'activity', or due to repression, as in the oneiric 'activity'. These both are intimately tied with language. To interpret correctly amid the ambiguities is the task of hermeneutics. "By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis ... of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text" (Ricoeur 1970:8). The

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werden, als man den Worten entspricht: sie bedenkt oder ihrer Warnung folgt oder sich dadurch unterrichten läßt oder darauf antwortet usw.

interpretation of dreams, too, is nothing else than the translation of a text from an unintelligible language into a more familiar one. Essentially, Ricoeur argues that the experience of personal identity pivots on the narrative of the speaking subject.

Twenty-five centuries ago, in the *Cratylos* and the *Zheng ming*, the main achievement was *the disentanglement of language from the grip of the referent*. In the 20th century, Sapir and Whorf's thesis proved that different languages segment the *field of content* into different *forms of content*. Thus *language gives rise to the semiotic world* we live in. The achievement of today's hermeneutics is the realization that *not only the world, but also the self, as much as we can postulate a self at all, emerges via language*:

> More and more the initial instrumentality of language gives way to a creative function that generates rather than mirrors a pregiven meaning. But expression not only generates meaning, perhaps more importantly it also generates the subject and object (qua intended) *presupposed* by it (Kerby 1991:74).

The hermeneutical critique of semiotics is that it does not account for the speakers. However, semiotics does distinguish between the subject of a statement (i.e. the grammatical subject) and the subject of an utterance, the one who speaks. Semiotics may be criticized for not focussing on the subject who creates the code but "[i]nsofar as the subject, along with some of its properties and attitudes, is presupposed by the statements, then it has to be 'read' as an element of the conveyed text" (Eco 1976:315). This view of the semiotic subject is, actually, in full harmony with the hermeneutical: "the human subject that respects its situatedness in language and signification. I will call this subject the *semiotic subject*" (Kerby 1991:101).

Animals have their own good awareness of the external world. A frog, for instance, in looking for food, distinguishes very efficiently *bug* from *non-bug*. But animals lack *self-reflection* and the rich inner world a *thoughtful* human may have. To be human is to *be aware* of one's existence. This self-awareness is grounded in the symbolic capacity of mankind. Culture could evolve only through symbolization and Aristotle himself must

have had an insight of this when he stated that the two traits that separate the human being from the animal world are the *possession of speech* and *sociality*.

The state of *being thrown into the world* can only be overcome by distancing oneself from the immediate. The self, according to hermeneutics, arises in narrative constructions, "out of signifying practices rather than existing prior to them as an autonomous or Cartesian agent" (Kerby 1991:1). The subject is not the source of language. Rather, the speaking subject may identify with the subject of speech and then the self emerges as the product of narration, as "the implied subject of self-referring utterances" (Kerby 1991:4).

Narration is always interpretation, never just mirroring. "[O]ur preexpressed, prethematic experience is already an implicit or quasi-narrative" (Kerby 1991:7), called *pre-narrative*. This level might be compared to a *drama*, which has no narrator. The narrator, i.e. the self, emerges when the drama is interpreted as *epic*. This interpretation, man's very own activity, takes place continually, without a beginning.

The *memory* of the past is indispensable for establishing personal identity in the present. "Memory ... is already operative in perception" (Kerby 1991:23). Often, we are able to remember only a fraction (icon) of the past. In the narrative of recollection, which is far from an exact replication of the memory we once had, we creatively interpret *anew* our past into an everchanging story. "Selfhood [is] self identity over time" (Kerby 1991:4).

But to have memories of any kind, one needs a significatory medium, one that enables (re)cognition. There is an essential identity between monologue and dialogue. Language always already is social. Sapir-Whorf's thesis of linguistic relativism applies not only to the different *forms of content* but to the self, too: "The 'I', the self, is an effect of language, and the status and meaning of the self will thus depend on the particular 'language game' in which it is invoked and in which it comes to play" (Kerby 1991:113).

Since language is so central to our grasping of the world and ourselves, the question of its identity demands an answer. I approach this question by an effort to establish the attributes of the language sign in Ch. VI.

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VI.

The language sign

1. The unit of language

In a stentorial voice does Manetti announce the evil of our age:

> ...Western thought may be read as a history of the elimination and repression of semiotics as a science ... . semiotics must retrace the path of history and become an archaeology of knowledge about signs. In this way it would be possible to go beyond the linguistic impasse which lies at the base of current definitions of the sign ... (Manetti 1993:xiii).

Current definitions of the linguistic sign, the basis of language, are truly a matter of controversy. In Saussure's two-element sign model, it is the union of a *signifying side* with a *signified side*. The objection of many linguists to the Saussurean model is that the *referent* has not been included.

Charles Kay Ogden (1889-1957) and Ivory Armstrong Richards (1893-1979) in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) suggested a three-element sign model, a triangle of *symbol*, *thought*, and *referent*, and go so far as to state *causal* relations between symbol and thought, and thought and referent. If, however, the two legs of this triangle were causally linking the vertices, then the relationship between the vertices of the third leg, the symbol and referent, should be causal as well. In this way, *the thought would be a sign of the referent*. However, I hold, there is no such causality!

A complete sign model showing *object, denotative and connotative meaning, psychical word* (*acoustic image* and *graphic image*), *physical sound* and *graphic word* might look like this:

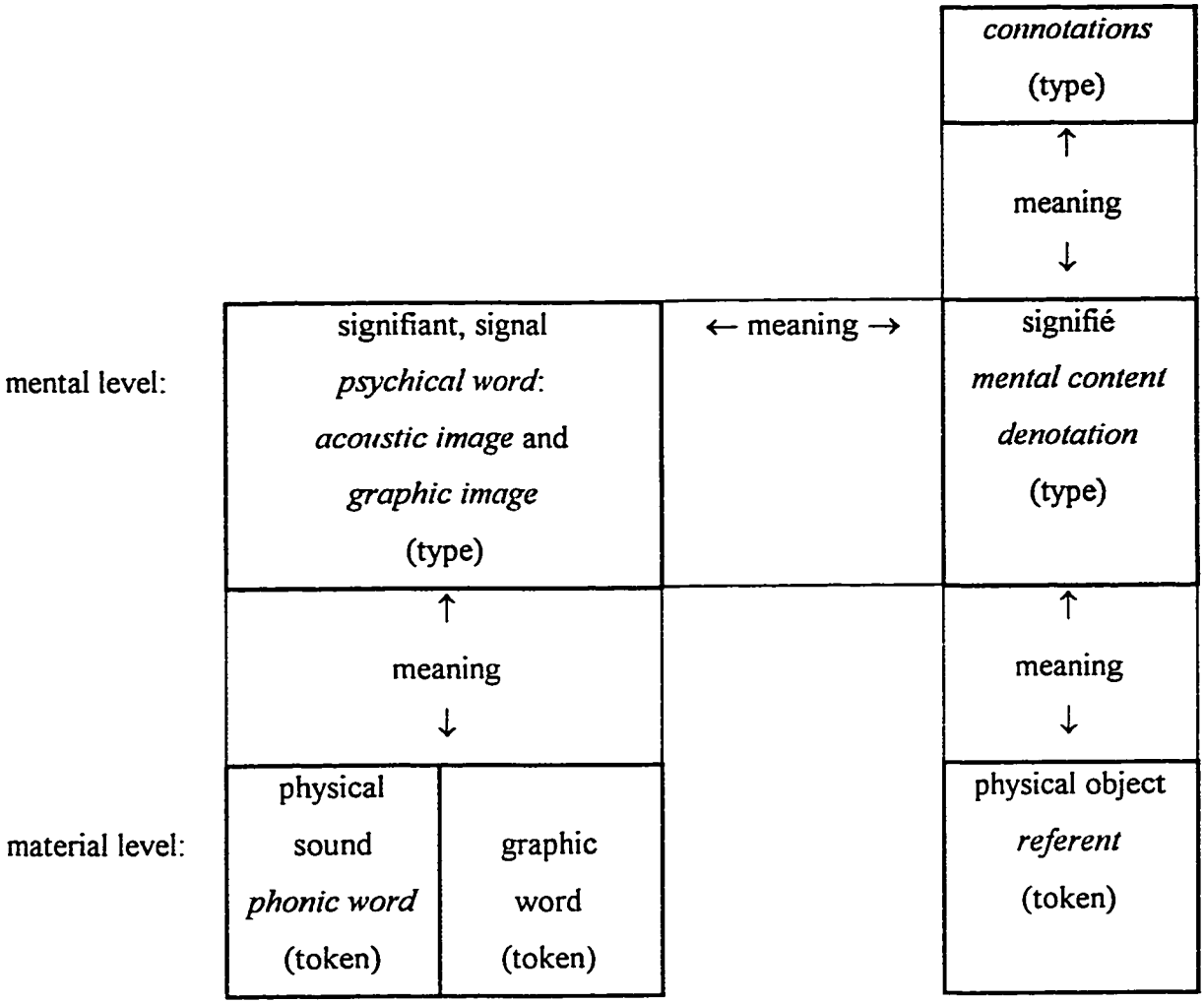

Table VI. 1. A complete model of conventional sign relations

The shaded area is the sign system. All items in the model are related to each other *only via human convention*. This conventionality is indicated by the arrows and 'meaning' in the table. Although the sign system is a *man-made institution*, the significative power of a sign usually cannot be traced to one individual person. If there were a natural relationship between signifiers and signifieds, the same signals would have the same sense

everywhere, which is not the case. Even different words can be used for the same object, conveying different *senses* of one referent. Ultimately, any word has a *natural capacity* for conveying any idea. Thus, convention (coding), in *establishing* the *meaning* of a signifier, in fact *restricts* the capacity for that word to mean. This restriction takes place via codifying certain relations in the model, with all items becoming the *meaning* of one another.

In the speech situation, the tokens of the material level *reveal* types at the mental level and vice versa. *Sphota* (from *sphut*, Sanskrt for *burst*), the *signified* (i.e. the concept) is *a single meaningful symbol*, revealed by intuition. While sphota has no time-order, physical sounds have. *Physical sound* concerns us only as long as it signals the *signifier*. In itself, physical sound belongs to physics. Saussure did not separate clearly enough the *signifiant* from its material sign-vehicle and his use of *phoneme* actually often means *physical sound*. However, as it is the *token* of the *signifier*, which is a *type*, it must be acknowledged as part of the *language system*.

The *physical object*, if there is any, is not part of the language system, either. Although it can be the *reference* (extension) of a *signifié*, what *meaning* it has in a language is determined by the *sense* (intension) given to that *signifié*. A classic example is 'the morning star' and 'the evening star': the *reference* (extension) of both of which is the same object, namely the planet Venus, but the *sense* (intension) of 'morning star' and 'evening star' is not at all the same. Saussure was quite correct in expelling the referent from his language system. If there were a *natural relationship* between sign and referent, then the word would co-exist with it. But when, for example, one says 'fire', one does not spit fire. When one says 'then' or 'star', the listener does not have to know //when//, or know //which star//, in order to understand the *meaning* of words. The words are *already* meaningful, without the presence of any referents.

This abstractive capacity, a central notion in Cassirer's oeuvre (1944), is one of the biggest differences between animal and man:

> As compared with the other animals man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new *dimension* of reality (p. 24).

No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe (p. 25).

Being much less limited by our biological endowment than animals, within those limits we develop an essentially *social universe*. This is a man-created world, unlike the environment of animals. Our universe is full of symbols that have no referent at all. Even in the presence of a referent, there is always already a *perspective* (*sense*) inherent in every utterance. This symbolization opens up the possibility of representing situations *falsely*, a possibility that flourishes in the absence of the referent.

The sign models examined above are about the *word*. Although most linguistic sign theories tacitly assume that the word is the basic unit of language, one of the universal problems of language is still the question whether the basic unit is the word or the *sentence*. Siderits (1991) presents three Indian views on the composition of sentences: 1. the sentence is an indivisible whole; 2.a. the sentence is the sum of individual word meanings; 2.b. the sentence is the sum of interconnected word meanings. The first view says that the whole is always more than the parts, in which case the meaning of the sentence cannot be deduced from the meaning of the composing words. Contrary to the atomism of the West, in Indian philosophy separate words are *but the abstract units* of language. A word means only in theory, very generally (*Sinn*), before it is uttered as part of a sentence in a historical situation, where what is stable in the relation of a form and a meaning in an abstract code is always actualized in definite circumstances (*Bedeutung*). Actual meaning is always more than mere lexical meaning. Even in the language game, " ... *the meaning is conventionally given in each situation*" (Pettersson 1996:52).

Conditions for the joining of the abstract words are syntactic expectancy, logical consistency (*yogyataa*), and phonetic contiguity (*samnidhi*). In interpretation, the words which one thinks before understanding the full sentence are mere working models. The sentence, as a whole Gestalt, the 'single integral symbol' of Bhartrihari, is the unit of speech. *Devanaagari* is a flow-script in which concatenations of words often made a continuous words-sentence consisting of more than 200 letters. Due to *samdhi*, some words, upon entering the sentence, changed their sound shape drastically. These might be

some of the motives for preferring the sentence over the root-form of the word as the unit of language in ancient India.

On the other hand, if the word is considered the primary unit, then other words must be supplied in its interpretation. If a single word is a full sentence, then it is not the part of speech it is in isolation. The only argument for the individual word being the primary unit is the direct experience of its tokens in writing and speech.

A reconciliation of these opposing views is possible: Even the *single word* uttered can only be *a full sentence*: If uttered, it expresses an idea. Thus the word already is a text. A single word, for example *yes*, may express the meaning of a full sentence and even more: our approval, agreement with the content. A whole story can be depicted by a few words if the listener gets all information necessary for interpretation on basis of the common code. It depends on the circumstances whether a word amounts to a sentence. The meaning of the whole *precedes and follows* the meaning of its *parts*, which are working hypotheses in the course of interpretation.

2. Sign-vehicles

2.1. The material of sign-vehicles

A sign-vehicle can be *any thing* that a sensory organ can receive. But sensory organs differ in their capacities. Ants can emit and receive chemical substances, which convey their 'messages'. But because of the volatility of the olfactory signals in space, man's deteriorated olfaction, and lack of organs producing chemical signals, it is practically impossible to set up an extensive human scent-language. In human communication, the eye and ear prevail over touch, smell, and taste because sight and sound carry farthest in space.

Whatever the sign-vehicle is, it always indelibly displays its own inherent physical properties too (eg., temperature, light, weight, dissonance) as a by-product of the

signification process. Becoming a sign starts precisely with *transcending these primary physical traits*. The semiotic sign has a material element, the signal, which refers to something other than itself, and only functions as part of a system.

"... a sign is, as sign, bonded with its material form in order to be an object of sensory perception" (Krampen et al., 1987:7). If the signal were not a physical object, we would need another signal to represent it, thus lapsing into the infinite regress of signification. Saussure intends to draw very clearly the boundary between the sound-image and the physical sound. But he fails to realize that the external sign-token is the manifestation of the internal sign-type and vice versa. If the linguistic signal were not nearly phonetic, there could not be an inner monologue. Micromovements of the tongue during all internal speech, as we can observe on ourselves, confirm the fluidity of the boundary between external and internal speech. I think, Saussure goes too far in his effort to purify the sign from all 'material sediments' in stating that "Linguistic signals are not in essence *phonetic*. They are not physical in any way. They are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another" (Saussure CLG:164, my emphasis)."

Many signals used in communication are outside the traditional analysis whose objects were isolated sentences only. Speech is nearly always accompanied by some body-language and gestures. Corporeal language, i.e. speech or sign language, is immediately accessible but writing requires external tools. The various media differ in their properties. Movement and sound (gestures, speech) are fleeting, letters, traffic signs (writing) are durable. They are all reproduceable.

2.2. The arrangement of signifiers: Linearity

As said above, there is a tendency to analyze the spoken form in terms of script. Saussure's second principle, that of *linearity*, is only about the signifier side of the sign. Signifiers are acoustic images, not physical sounds. But Saussure states that "The signifier, being auditory (sic!), is unfolded solely in time from which it gets the following characteristics: (a) it represents a span, and (b) the span is measurable in a single dimension; it is a line" (CLG:103). Physical sound waves are four-dimensional, expanding

in space and time. However, the acoustic image is abstract, without dimensions: it cannot be linear.

A counter-argument might be raised, based on the equivocal statements of the *Cours de linguistique générale* on the composition of the sign. Saussure sometimes takes the signifier to consist of phonemes. Phonemes, as sounds, can be analyzed into simultaneous feature-clusters. "[I]t is perfectly possible to emit several distinctive features at the same time" (Jakobson 1978:99 cited by Holdcroft 1991:58). However, "the phoneme is not endowed with any specific meaning" (Jakobson 1978:61 cited by Holdcroft 1991:58), therefore phoneme-complexity is not an argument against the linearity of signifier. The signifier is neither the sound, nor the phoneme. It is an abstract Gestalt.

Actually, linearity as a principle is borrowed from writing. The source of both of Saussure's principles is "the latent scriptism of a pedagogic tradition in which writing was taken as the model to which language must - or should - conform" (Harris 1987:78). Today the reverse is the case: speech is unduly extolled. One reason for this may be the technology available for research. This not seldom shrouds the fact that no theory can be justified by the tools it uses.

3. Speech or writing?

The relation of sound, letter, and the mental content

With writing and speech as expressions of a content, the question of priority emerges. The debasement of writing is ageless. Ironically, in performing the very act of *writing* letters, material written words to convey a content, already Plato declared that "writing is inferior to speech. It is like a picture and has only a deceitful likeness of a living creature. It is not a legitimate son of knowledge but a bastard" unlike "the speech written on the mind" which is "living and animate" (*Phaedrus* 275). Is the written word twice removed from reality and the spoken word only once? Like in Plato's mimesis where art only very inadequately represents the eternal idea?

Saussure, too, is well-known for his claim that " ... writing is in itself not part of *the internal system* of the language ..." (CLG:44; my italics). The linguistic object for him is only sounds:

> But the written word is so intimately connected with the spoken word it represents that it manages to usurp the principal role. ... a language is independent of writing. ... the *connexion* between word and written form is *superficial* and establishes a purely artificial unit, it is none the less much easier to grasp than *the natural and only authentic connexion*, which links word and sound" (Saussure CLG:45-6, my italics).

What is known about the earliest preserved written marks of mankind, undermines the above creed of *authentic connexion* between word and sound. Concerning the mnemonic systems of early Sumerian civilization, Pettersson in his *Grammatological Studies* (1996) notes that " *the writings on the tablets were not written speech* ... . the signs refer to what was to be remembered rather than indicating certain words to be read aloud" (Pettersson 1996:78; my emphasis). Manetti also remarks that "cuneiform writing is a writing of *things*" (Manetti 1993:3). In the development of writing, first written signs were used for *whole events* (registries), later different readings of these written signs led to different spoken correlates. This does not mean that there was no spoken correlate to the initial written marks, only that *it did not reflect or stand for sounds*, but rather *meaning*, and this happened without the Saussurean mediation of the so called "*authentic connexion*, which links word and sound".

Saussure admits in the *Course of general linguistics* that the ideogram is just another system to represent the spoken word (CLG:47). Then there should be two kinds of linguistic signs, with respect to the internal relation of constituents:

	ideoscript:		phonetic script:
content side:	idea		idea
form side:	ideogram (kanji)	spoken word	spoken word
			written word

Table VI. 2. The relation of sound, letter, and the mental content

The *Shuo wen jie zi* (121 AD) lists and segments 9431 logographs. Of these, no less than 7697 are phonetic compounds. Of the rest, 364 are pictographs and 1292 ideographs (Lepschy 1994 I:8). This refutes the common belief that Chinese writing is essentially 'ideographic'. It is a phonetic script. Still, there is *no* natural connection between its ideas, spoken words, and kanjis.

The constituents of a sign written in phonetic script are in the same triangular relationship with one another as those of the sign written in kanjis. The idea, the spoken and the written word, are all adequate representations of each other within a given code. Moreover, there is a connection between written and spoken word, *independently of the idea.* The proof of this is that we are able to read a word or text aloud without knowing its meaning, even in English.

Why Saussure wrote that there is a " 'natural link' between ... meaning and sound" (CLG:46), I simply do not know. Here Saussure defies his own principle of arbitrariness. If the connection of word and sound is natural, and that of sound and letter forced, why is writing still easy to grasp, though it creates a 'purely artificial' unit?

Saussure bemoans that "Writing is not a garment but a disguise. ... in *oiseau* not one of the sounds of the spoken word ('wazo') is *represented by its appropriate sign* and the spelling completely obscures the linguistic facts" (CLG:52). This lament would be justified only if the spoken word had to have the same composition as the written word. The letters 'oi' (ibid.) can be labeled 'bad representation', as done by Saussure, only if we compare the pronunciation of 'oi' with its earlier pronunciation. Seen in itself, synchronically at any

stage, it is just as good as 'oi' was in the 'original' case. In particular, Saussure here suggests that the sign is *the individual letter* and in normal 'linguistic facts' one letter stands for one sound. But in Saussure's sign model the *signifiant* as a whole represents the sign, not its individual sounds or graphic characters. It is not easy to say what is one letter, even in Saussure's limited range of phonetic alphabets. Nor is it any easier to delimit one sound from the next.

Betraying heavy traces of historical orientation, Saussure worries that "[m]ore and more dead letters will be resuscitated in pronunciation. ... the two final letters of *vingt* ('twenty') will be pronounced: a genuine orthographic monstrosity" (CLG:54)." An *orthographic* monstrosity? Only if we believe in the primacy of sound and the one-to-one correspondence of letter to sound. In fact, these are both unwarranted tenets. If '*Auscii*' is able to historically explain the pronunciation [osh], then so is '*viginti*' able to explain '*vingt*' (CLG:53). If '*vingt*' is a monstrosity, then so is '*Auch*'.

But thwarting his own principle (one letter stands for one sound), Saussure declares that "The pronuciation of a word is determined not by its spelling but by its *history*. ... This evolution is governed by strict laws. Each stage may be ascertained by referring back to the preceding stage (Saussure, CLG:53; my italics)." Another argument of historical flavour he uses is this: "... the fact that we learn to speak before we learn to write is forgotten ... (Saussure, CLG:47)." I think the order of learning to speak and write has no bearing on the relation of these two once they are used simultaneously in a sign system. Saussure uses historical 'explanation' inconsistently and his principles contradict each other.

Saussure further believes that " ... a language is in a constant process of evolution, whereas writing tends to remain fixed" (CLG:48)." But writing also changes. The difference of speech and writing lies not in evolution versus stagnation but in the difference of sign-vehicles: *Verba volant, scripta manent* (*The words fly away, the writings remain*).

The real problem is *whether and how letters represent sounds at all*. Saussure's answer to this is that, after an ideal antedeluvian stage, "... there has been an increasingly serious disparity between the language and its spelling" (CLG:49)." However, what intrinsic

disparity there is was there from the beginning. Nor was there an Edenic ideal stage of language ever. In fact, the relationship between the two kinds of sign-vehicles can never be 'natural', but only *codified.* To discard the naive *representational view*, Pettersson points out that "[t]he thought of a 'representational' relationship between different forms of expression often provides a poor picture of the complex and not seldom fortuitous interrelationships which are involved (Pettersson 1996:54)." Any writing-system is extremely *conventional.* But the same is true of sounds. After all, *how could sound, a material element, at all represent ideas which belong to a completely different sphere?*

> " ... a translation element by element into an allegedly basic form of language will not do, since we constantly have to interpret the symbols around us - we have to understand them in the medium in which they exist. Why, then, is writing secondary to speech (and sign language) historically?" (Pettersson 1996:55)."

As Saussure himself knows very well, if there is no signifier (which is not yet physical!), then there is no sign. Therefore, some signifier must be included in the sign. If there is a 'sound-image' of the physical word coupling the idea, there must also be a 'written character-image' of the written word, linked to the idea. Language is not independent of writing, nor of speech, its media. A literate's language is rather different from that of an illiterate, not the least because many language-phenomena occur only in writing. Even if we are adam ant (no spelling error!) about preserving a certain stage of it, writing, an autonomous medium, develops on its own. We must accept written language not as an ancillary to speech but as its equal. The two media are interchangeable. In the case of disabled persons, depending on their specific sensory limitation (blindness or deafness), one or the other medium becomes primary, or even the only one usable.

According to Harris, Saussure abused writing as he did because he wanted "to salvage something from the wreck of historical linguistics. ... unless writing has the status of a secondary parasitic system, which represents *langue*, he [Saussure] would be obliged to conclude that in the case of the dead languages a study of *la langue* ('the social product

stored in the brain' [p. 44]) is impossible in principle" (Harris 1987:43 cited in Holdcroft 1991:41).

I do not see why 'the social product' would not be accessible if *writing* as sign-vehicle represents the content not as a parasite but without the mediation of sound. If the sound, as in dead languages, is no longer available, *writing should especially be honored* as the only clue to content, rather than disgraced by the epithets 'secondary and parasitic'. Although historically all the different systems of writing are based upon units of spoken language, it does not follow that a written word actually represents its spoken form once a system is functional. The two means of expression are of equal rank. However, there is a tendency to analyze the spoken form in terms of script: " ... it is alphabetic writing that provides the model for language where spoken languages appear as phonemically structured. The same should hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for other alleged constituents of utterances (especially syllables and words) (Pettersson 1996:130)."

Going beyond linguistics, it is significant that the *internal speech* of Plato is also conceived of as *'written'*, that is, it is in signs which are not obvious for the mind and call for semiotic interpretation. This same metaphor recurs also in Freud. The texture of dreams is not very different from "pictographic writing [which] has the characteristic of weaving a subtle, complex web of relationships between things" (Manetti 1993:5). Internal speech, just as dreams, lends itself to different inspired readings.

In a summary of the analysis of different definitions of the linguistic sign, I suggested a complete sign model which includes the *object, meaning, acoustic image*, and *physical sound*. The *referent*, if there is any, is not part of the sign system. Although it can be the *reference* (extension) of a *signifié*, what *meaning* it has in a language is determined by the *sense* (intension) given to that *signifié*.

Physical sound concerns us only as long as it signals the *signifier*. However, as it is the *token* of the *signifier*, which is a *type*, it must be acknowledged as part of the *language system*.

All items in the model are related to each other *only via human convention* and become the *meaning* of one another. Convention, in *establishing* the *meaning* of a

signifier, *restricts* the capacity for that word to mean. This abstractive capacity is one of the biggest differences between animal and man. Being much less limited by our biological endowment than animals, within those limits we develop an essentially *social universe*. This symbolization also opens up the possibility of representing situations *falsely*, a possibility that flourishes in the absence of the referent.

Although most linguistic sign theories tacitly assume that the word is the basic unit of language, one of the universal problems of language is still the question whether the basic unit is the word or the *sentence*. A reconciliation of these opposing views is possible: Even the *single word* uttered can only be *a full sentence*.

A sign-vehicle can be *any thing* that a sensory organ can receive. In human communication, the eye and ear prevail over touch, smell, and taste because sight and sound carry farthest in space. The semiotic sign has a material element, the signal, which refers to something other than itself, and only functions as part of a system.Becoming a sign starts with *transcending the primary physical traits*.

Saussure's second principle, that of *linearity*, is only about the signifier side of the sign. Actually, linearity as a principle is borrowed from writing.

The debasement of writing is ageless. However, the idea, the spoken and the written word, are all adequate representations of each other within a given code. The question is *whether and how letters represent sounds at all. How could sound, a material element, at all represent ideas which belong to a completely different sphere?* Any writing-system is extremely *conventional*. But the same is true of sounds. We must accept written language not as an ancillary to speech but as its equal. The two media are interchangeable.

We have seen above that the *content* can have different *expressions* in a given *code*. If the relationship of contents and expressions is so fluid, what is, then, the relationship of the *sign* to the *referent*, the item excluded from the complete sign system? In the still widespread view of nomenclaturism, language is seen as a set of labels representing the external world, the referent. Many schools, for example logic, still use a referential semantics. Some of these trends argue that language reflects the external world iconically. In Ch. VII. I refute the theory of any iconicity and emphasize absolute *arbitrariness* and

independence of human language from the referent, and *abstraction*, *symbolization* as the indispensable conditions of its emergence.

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VII.

Critique of iconicity

1. Introduction

Iconicity is variously defined as (1) the 'similarity' of language-external states of affairs and linguistic utterances or (2) the 'similarity' between thought and speech, concept and expression. Itkonen points out that

> ... the iconicity (or isomorphism) thesis ... requires that the structure of language and that of reality (more precisely: of reality-as-conceived) have been identified independently of each other, before being compared with each other (Itkonen, 1991:48).
>
> ... any interesting version of the language-reality isomorphism presupposes that there is a non-circular way to identify units of the reality-as-conceptualized, i.e. that they can be identified without the help of linguistic units" (Itkonen, 1991:149).

To prove iconicity, ideas would have to preexist language! But any conception of reality takes place in linguistic signs. Therefore there can be no epistemology of reality-as-conceptualized *without language*. And the units of that reality emerge expressly in the signs of language. Prelinguistic thought is a 'vague uncharted nebula' (Saussure CLG:156). Can you name any language-independent meanings? If you can, in naming you already are using signs of language. Quasi-signifiers may exist untied to a signified content when one forgets the meaning of a *word* (its content), or one vaguely has the meaning but cannot think of the *word* (its expression). Neither a content, nor an expression in isolation is a sign yet because neither signifies, not even in Saussure's narrow sense of the association

circuit. "When I think in language, there aren't meanings going through my mind *in addition to the verbal expressions*; the language is itself the vehicle of thought" (Wittgenstein PG:161; my italics)." There is no way to trap thought outside language signs: this thwarts the possibility of proving the existence of any kind of iconicity.

Buffier (1732) first noted the simultaneous unity of thought and the linearity of speech. In spite of the foregoing, iconism is still a tenacious dogma in contemporary linguistics.

An icon – in Peirce's definition – is a sign which represents its object by virtue of a *similarity* between the representamen and the object. But just what that similarity really means remains the question. While for Radwanska-Williams, "Arbitrariness and iconicity actually are two opposite polarities of one whole" (1994:30), for Simone, "arbitrariness should perhaps be interpreted more properly as a kind of 'degenerate iconicity' " (1994:x). Both definitions assume that there is iconicity at work. I set out the evaluation of the iconicity 'principle', using Peirce's division of icons into *image*, *diagram*, and *metaphor*, to examine the levels of sound, phonestheme (i.e. submorphemic sound clusters), word, and sentences.

2. Image - Sound symbolism

The heavy-weight argument against the principle of arbitrariness is onomatopoeia, in which the signifier seems to some people to imitate a natural sound. Hinton et al. in their recent *Sound symbolism* declare that sound symbolism has been unduly neglected by research. They ground their typology of sound symbolism in the following definition: "Sound symbolism is the direct linkage between sound and meaning" (1994:1). This definition of sound symbolism, leaving open the precise nature of 'direct linkage', does not contradict Saussure's arbitrariness-principle about the relation of the two parts of the linguistic sign.

Hinton et al.'s classification distinguishes four types of sound symbolism:

1. The first type is 'corporeal sound symbolism' where sounds express the speakers' *emotional or physical state*. Now, we know that there are huge differences among the

words in different languages for 'coughing', 'hiccuping' etc. The authors themselves admit that "in this case the sound is not a true *symbol*, but rather a *sign* or *symptom*.", "[...], typically non-segmentable [...] complete utterance" (Hinton et al. 1994:2). Real exclamations are not verbal phrases like *goddamit!* or *by Jove!* but are *inarticulate* shouts in the most literal sense of the word, not composed from the phonetic raw material and therefore not part of language. Just as Saussure said!

2. The second type is *'imitative sound symbolism'* of environmental sounds (e.g. *bang, swish, knock, rap*): "... much onomatopoeic vocabulary does become *conventionalized*" (Hinton et al. 1994:3, my emphasis). *Conventionalized*, Hinton himself said, not 'naturally' imitated.

3. The third type is *'synesthetic sound symbolism'*, the acoustic symbolization of non-acoustic phenomena. "Certain vowels, consonants, and suprasegmentals *are chosen to consistently represent* [...] size or shape. [...] it is an area of sound-symbolic speech that is strongly *conventionalized* ("tame") (Hinton et al. 1994:4, my emphasis)." Here again, items *are chosen to represent*, there is no trace of any natural link between sound and object.

4. Finally comes what Hinton et al. themselves name *conventional sound symbolism*, quoting Bloomfield: "Every word, in so far as it is semantically expressive, may establish, *by hap-hazard favoritism*, a union between its meaning and any of its sounds ...". (Bloomfield 1895:409-10 cited in Hinton et al. 1994:5; my emphasis). To quote Bloomfield in this matter is suicidal: hap-hazard favoritism in practice means *arbitrariness*.

To sum it up, Hinton et al.'s four types of sound symbolism are either simply outside the range of the sounds of language, or are merely *conventional* imitations of extralinguistic sounds. Hinton et al. are rather cautious in their final conclusion, which is not even a feeble argument for iconicity: "languages around the world carry a large sound-symbolic component. Meaning and sound can never be fully separated, and linguistic theory must accomodate itself to that increasingly obvious fact" (1994:12). Already Plato and the Stoics knew that meaning and sound join into a sign in a code. "Because barbarians did not know the correlational rule", they "were able to perceive the physical sound but unable to recognize it as a word" (Eco 1984:30)." Saussure is criticized for

simply imitating the Stoics. If that is the case, Saussure at least understood and confirmed the history of philosophy. But today's iconicists seem to have no knowledge of *Cratylos*.

In 'objective' experiments, the spectrogram of a natural sound (eg., the cracking of a piece of wood), displaying duration, frequency, and volume, is never even approximated by its human 'copy'. Thus, any onomatopoeia can at best be an extremely loose approximation of the original sound. No doubt, a language picks the sounds from its inventory that are *imagined* to be the closest replica of the imitable sound. But the sounds are given. No cat ever starts its 'miaow' in its Feline 'language' with human [m], as present in eg. English '*m*iaow'. Let so much suffice about the ridiculous thought of measurable similarity between natural sounds (animate or not) and their linguistic imitations.

Do the subjective experiments bring better results, then? In Sapir's *Study in phonetic symbolism* (1929) "the subject [was] being requested to indicate in each case which of the two in themselves meaningless words meant the larger and which the smaller variety of an arbitrarily selected meaning" (1951:62). As for the method, Sapir himself admits that the simple contrasts in a set of word-pairs readily lent themselves to careless generalizations. Sapir allowed for the role of unsocialized symbolisms, but all his investigations were done in keeping in mind the fact about language that "by far the greater portion of its recognized content and structure is symbolic in a purely referential sense ..." (1951:61). "The reason for this *unconscious* symbolism [...] may be acoustic or kinesthetic or a combination of both" (Sapir 1951:69, emphasis added)." Inherent volume of vowels, tongue position, resonance chamber were the factors of which he thought.

In 90% of the languages Ultan (1978) sampled, "the diminutive was symbolized by high front vowels" (Hinton et al. 1994:4). However, we also find elaborate sound-symbolisms where a certain vowel quality is associated with *the exact opposite* of what we expect: "[i] is associated with *big* (or *enormous* if there are three levels), [a] with *small* in Bahnar. [...] ... two different languages may easily use the same phonetic variable (vowel height) to convey the same range of sensations (size), and come up with exactly opposite solutions, both being equally iconic. [...] It follows that iconic patterns [are] fundamentally

language-specific." (Diffloth 1994:110-13). Consequently, they can be no more and no less than social convention.

Most believers of sound symbolism were trying to locate the meaning-carrier in the whole word or the phoneme. But Ciccotosto, in the longest recent paper on sound symbolism, "held that the sub-phonemic unit carried meaning ..." (1991:192). He goes as far as to "attempt to show that English, like Japanese, contains a vast sound symbolic system" (Ciccotosto, 1991:106)." How vast is that sound symbolic system, anyway? "English is well equipped to provide its everyday speaker with ... a vocabulary consisting of 3% sound symbolic words" (Ciccotosto, 1991:134)." First, I would not call 3% vast. Second, the words in his lists do not corroborate the unwarranted conclusion he made: For instance, in the first line of his 1000-word list '-ab' is declared a *suffix* and the words belonging here are *stab, jab,blab, fab, dab*. I think that if there is any relation between these words, it is only because a string of sounds was *proclaimed* representative of something.

In our century statistics has been elevated to the status of objective scientific method. However, statistics, or the empirical method itself, cannot be studied statistically or empirically and ultimately we are faced with the necessity to approach issues theoretically. In all sound symbolism experiments the same design was applied. Subjects had to choose one of a pair of opposites rather than answer an open question. Thus Ertel had pairs like *schoen - haesslich* (*nice - ugly*), *gut- schlecht* (*good - bad*) (1969:123) and Fónagy likewise set up his experiments testing the validity of these revered sound-categories. Fónagy, in the grammars of very different languages, found metaphors of sounds such as *claire-sombre, aigu-grave, mince, large, féminine-masculine, rude-fin, dur-molle* (see Fónagy, 1963:3-26). But the sound *metaphors* were not any use to the inventor of the first speech synthesizer, Kempelen Farkas, who was "forcé d'aller au-delà de la métaphore, de remplacer le fantasme par des faits réels" (Fónagy, 1963:186).

Hinton et al. found that "for humans, correct judgments about the meanings of words are faster for sound-symbolic words than for arbitrary words" (1994:11). We must add a criterion: 'when there are only two choices'. In this binary experimental design subjects are

biased from the start. It would be much more revealing to ask them what springs to their mind when hearing an [e] or [a] etc.. Without the restrictions set by the binary opposites, they probably would give as diverse reactions to the stimulus-words as C.G. Jung found[1]. In *The associations of normal subjects* Jung concludes: "The most considerable variations in associations are conditioned by individual differences" (Jung, [1905] (1973:190)). The survey I conducted also confirms that a testee's *current* associations *to the content* always override the basic impact of sound-symbolism.

The validity of natural correlations is further reduced. Firstly, Sapir found that "the certainty of the symbolic distinction tended to vary with the nature of the phonetic contrast" (1951:63). Secondly, "... for many [words] it is well known that the vowel *i* is only a recent development" (Jespersen, 1922b:559) as the *i* in English *thin*, cognate with German *dünn* (ibid.). If generally, words can opt in and out of being represented by *i*, this again proves that there is no iconicity principle at work. Thirdly, 'contrary' sounds are found to 'mean' the same quality *even in the same language* , for example *big, large*, whereas *thick* and *thin* have the same vowel although the words have opposite sense.

Jakobson and Waugh (1979) in the *The Sound Shape of Language*, make their case by selecting the data and hail Jespersen (1979:182-4) and Bolinger (1979:197-9) as the temple guards of sound symbolism. Waugh (1992[2]) writes about Sapir in the same tone. What she aims at is proving the age-old *unum nomen - unum nominatum* principle in a new guise: "the famous one form - one meaning principle ... . *the assumption is that the isomorphism principle is at work unless proven otherwise*" (Waugh 1994:56, my italics). As for her methodology, it is biased to assume any principle at work before there is a reason to make such an assumption. Second, quoting Jespersen, Sapir, and Bolinger backfires since these authors expressly warn against overgeneralizations:

> In giving lists of words in which the [i] sound has the indicated [small] symbolic value, I must at once ask the reader to beware of two possible misconceptions:

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[1] See *The reaction-time ratio in the association experiment* and *The psychological diagnosis of evidence* (Jung, 1973 v.2).

[2] Waugh 1994 is just a cosmetic variant of Waugh 1992.

first, I do not mean to say that the vowel [i] always implies smallness (Jespersen, 1922b:559)

The field of inquiry is vast [...] I have limited myself to the meaning of the contrast 'large':'small' [...] (Sapir 1951:62).

... in the diminutive /i/, without much consistency in either sense of the word, there is little anchorage for meaning: it is obvious in *doggie*, dubious in *honey* and *pretty* (endearments), capable of creation in *falsie*, dead in *bully* ... (Bolinger 1965:210)[3]

The naivety of iconicity is perhaps best summed up in Ertel's criticism:

The influence of meaning on the phonetic-phonological word form is negligible, in the case of individual words it may be fully absent ... . Therefore, we think, the thesis of in principle possible and further realized arbitrariness is tenable (abridged translation, original in footnote No.[4]).

A phonetic and a semantic item are entirely different linguistic matters. There is no common element where they would meet. Sound symbolism is culturally determined. The issue is the same as in the following geometrical case: A square consists in four equilong lines but the lines are no more than a mere inventory. It is the *configuration* that makes them a square. The linguistic sound, just as the line, which being only a line, does not have any squarity or cubelikeness in itself, does not carry meaning at all. Even its meaning-distinguishing function is tied to a system. The associations [i]='small' and [a]='big' are

[3] For a good introduction on how to conjure such ridiculous analyses, see Bolinger's critical examinations in this article.

[4] Es besteht nur eine gewisse Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass in Woertern einer bestimmten (konnotativen) Bedeutungskategorie eher ein [p] als ein [b], ein [t] als ein [d], oder eher ein kurzer oder langer Vokal usw. zu finden ist. Die Beeinflussung der phonetisch-phonologischen Wortgestalt durch die Bedeutung ist gering, im Falle eines einzelnen Wortes kann sie voellig fehlen [...] . Es laesst sich deshalb, so meinen wir, die These von der Beliebigkeit als einer prinzipiell moeglichen und weiterhin verwirklichten aufrecht erhalten." (Ertel, 1969:200)

similar to the use of *sinister* (left, i.e. ill-omened) vs *dexter* ('right", therefore 'cor-rectus' and even morally 'right'), be they traffic lanes or benches in the House of Commons.

There is one area where sound symbolism is important: in the *code-creating* activity of the aesthetic work of poets and writers. "From long practice in matching and cultivating morphemes for associative effects, the poet, who knows almost instinctively that *rasp* is a rougher word than *file*, can give no little to the linguist where phonesthemes are concerned" (Bolinger 1965:226)." Poetic use of phonetic symbolism is restricted by the vocabulary available. That restriction can be overcome by new coinages based on poetic justice. For instance, Stendhal, who christened himself from Henry Beyle, gives his protagonist in *Le Rouge et le Noir* the surname 'Sorel', meaning 'spinach', to show his humble, rustic origins. All in all, the artistic use of language exploits much more the musical potential of sound (alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, anagram etc.), which is inextricably tied to a system, than it uses the elementary symbolism iconists aim at. A playwright like Shakespeare is famous primarily not for his coinages, which barely altered the English of his age, but for the incopiably original use of the *conventional* system of language *already available to everyone*.

3. Diagram - Phonesthemes

Now that it is proven that individual sounds or types do not have any cratulian-natural, or even just systematically determinable conventional meaning, let us consider whether sound clusters are any different. *A priori*, this is impossible because diagrammatic resemblance cannot be motivated without elementary resemblance. If, however, the phonesthemes meant something, this would run contrary to the established 'unprincipledness principle' which we saw at the individual sound level: It could only be by convention!

"It is generally recognized that English contains a pool of forms interrelated through rhyme and assonance ... One tempting example is the cross-patterning of /gl/ 'phenomena of light' and /fl/ 'phenomena of movement' ..." (Bolinger, 1965:218-9)." Thus there are pairs like *glitter~flitter, glow~flow, glare~flare*. Even if this were accepted, 'phenomena

of light' and 'phenomena of movement' are extremely vague and broad semantic pixels. However, even this small system is false: "*glide* refers to movement, not light, and *fleer* is a glance, not a movement" (Bolinger 1965:205). If we try to explain this by homonymy, then homonymy overrules iconicity. A principle that only works ad hoc is no principle. And what about the other phonemes of these words which do not mean anything?

4. Metaphor - Word

At the next higher level, morphemes are associated with meaning, again by convention. And every case of homonymy and homophony further bombards the iconicity 'principle'. Ertel excludes the very possibility of one-to-one reference:

> As the sound form of an individual word is a developmental product, caused by a number of different factors, it will never be possible to prove the effect of sound symbolic forms on the sound form of an individual word (Ertel 1969:115).[5]

The kinship terms can only be divided into distinctive features like *male/female, young/old* etc. by Katz and Fodor because of their high interdependence. But many lexemes are not part of such a symmetrical pattern and cannot be 'analyzed' in this way.

The metaphor, contrary to the naive iconic interpretation of Peirce's idea, is not iconic, because it, just like jokes, always refers to something nonpresent. The metaphor, in referring to something nonpresent, is only a half-diagram. Therefore the iconicist's coveted relationship between the expression side of the present sign and the content side of the sign referred to is in such cases *per definitionem* impossible. It would only be possible in the nonmetaphoric use of the same word. Also, the signifier - reference relation can never

[5] Da die Lautform eines individuellen Wortes ein Entwicklungsprodukt darstellt, an dem eine Vielzahl unterschiedlichen Bedingungen mitgewirkt hat, wird es niemals moeglich sein, die Wirkung lautsymbolisher Relationen an der Lautform des einzelnen Wortes aufzuzeigen.

be 'objective' identity because there is *ab initio* some embedded modality in it. Broadly speaking, everything is a metaphor since there is no intrinsic, compulsory, natural relationship between the two sides of any sign. The naive assumption that sounds are semantic signemes carried over into compositional 'semantics' is untenable.

Derrida, riding on an age-old recognition, is correct in that "... the sign must be the unity of a heterogeneity, since the signified (sense or thing, phoneme or reality) is not in itself a signifier ..." (1976:18). But from this Derrida concludes that the whole notion of sign is to be discarded because a sign is always a metaphor. Derrida ruminates extensively on the impossibility that a sound sequence or graphic word represent any meaning. Paradoxically, he *writes* about this impossibility. Were he consequent in his reveries, he would give up his parasitic writing and come to terms with the fact that he cannot be understood. Still, the sign functions as sign as long as it is interpreted according to a code.

5. Phrases, sentences

Now that we have established that sounds are a non-factor in the meaning of words composed of them, let us see whether larger syntactic units have an iconically grounded meaning. It is here that the issue becomes most riveting because "An iconic sign is indeed a text, for its verbal equivalent ... is not a word but a phrase or indeed a whole story" (Eco 1976:215)." Thus the term 'iconic sign' is a *contradictio in adiecto* (contradiction in the epithet).

For the iconicist, a linguistic representation is *motivated* by its *similarity* to the content it represents. *Similarity* is not enough ground to prove the truth of iconic representation. This would require that everything be an iconic representative of something else because everything is like something else in some respect. But that something else is also representative of a third item and thus every thing would represent everything in some respect. Similarity does not reside in the objective objects but its revelation is an active performance of our *vision.* "[T]he iconic text is an act of *code-making*" (Eco 1976:216).

The iconic motivation allegedly proliferates to include linear iconicity, local proximity iconicity, quantity iconicity, symmetrical iconicity, asymmetrical iconicity, categorical iconicity etc. etc. Serious problems linger in these statements: 1. Similarity *does not motivate* anything, it only happens to be there or not. The above circular argument about *motivating* is as true as Baron Münchausen's cannonball driven by the pull of the magnet held in front of that same ball; 2. It would appear that the content is the motivator. But in Waugh's account it is the individual sounds and submorphemic clusters that, before entering a word, already have meaning. It is unclear which side motivates the other. It is illogical that both would. At the same time, the expression could just as well motivate the content as the other way round!

Itkonen tries to support iconicity with this frail argument:

> The ontological difference between thing and action produces the morphological difference between noun and verb [...]. In the linguistic 'singular-plural' distinction the latter term is *more complex*, corresponding to greater ontological complexity. [...] The preferred SO word order reflects the action 'passing over' from the agent to the patient. (Itkonen 1994:39, my emphasis).

The subject orientation in European etc. languages can explain just as much about the word order. As with the lower levels we have examined, any correspondence in the swamp of iconicity can be explained just as effectively by all kinds of other arguments. The alleged temporal iconicity in Caesar's *Veni, vidi, vici* is simply no argument against the Saussurean arbitrariness. Of course, chronological and causal order are expressed in language, but not in this unrefined manner.

Itkonen states that "Our discussion so far has vindicated the traditional line of thinking (represented by Paul, von der Gabelentz, de Saussure, Jespersen, Sapir, and Bloomfield, among others) according to which both the learning of existing linguistic structures and *the creation of new ones* are based on analogy" (1994:49, my emphasis). There are two serious flaws in Itkonen's summary: 1. "An analogical form is form made on the model of one or more other forms in accordance with a definite rule" (Saussure CLG:221)." Now, *a*

priori the creation of *new* structures cannot be based on analogy, however loose the definition of 'new', because analogy presupposes a precedent case and the structure is not new if it can be copied by analogy. The structure cannot be a new system but only a *new copy* of the *old system* if analogy is the generator. Analogy does not approve or perceive but *institutes* the relation of two entities. The establishment of the identity of markers is what *constitutes* the relation. To realize this is the Copernican turn of linguistics; 2. *A posteriori*, none of the linguists' citations regimented in Itkonen's article do, in fact, speak at all about new structures, and Sapir *expressis verbis* speaks out against the very possibility of such an operation: "New words may be consciously created from these fundamental elements on the analogy of old ones, *but hardly new types of words*" (Sapir 1921:37-38 in Itkonen 1994:50; my emphasis). By this 'analogist' notion of universal grammar Itkonen reduces language to merely one instance of the *innate faculty of analogizing.*

5. Conclusion

In *Cratylos* Plato settles for the *thesei*-nature of signs, that is, conventionality. "Nor has the Cratylean side of the argument ... had any reputable modern successor" (Lepschy (ed.), 1994 I:24). Yet, the uncritical belief in the natural correctness of words and the preoccupation with the archiperfect language is an age-old human pursuit. This line is revived by Simone who believes that "... even the relentless search for perfect languages (Eco 1993), i.e. systems of signs offering *a direct perception of the intended meaning* (or even of the referent) of utterances, can be viewed as a special case of the overall struggle against arbitrariness" (Simone 1994:viii; my emphasis). First, the tacit tenet here is that the *unum nomen - unum nominatum* (*one word for one object*) principle is what makes a language perfect. Second, in any of the more advanced attempts at creating a perfect language, as discussed in Eco's *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea* (*The search for the perfect language in European culture*), "*a direct perception of the intended meaning*" was not an aim. What they aim at is the summary of *encyclopaedic*

knowledge in an artificial symbolic system (eg., Leibniz). Third, Eco's book title, *Lingua perfetta* ... , became plural, *lingue perfette*, in his countryman's interpretation. But how could there be more than one of a perfect mirroring? More than a mere typographic error, the plural cannot be but an unconscious bow toward arbitrariness. For if the signs of language would work by offering a *direct perception* of the referent, then there could be only one *total* representation and hence one *single perfect* language on earth.

Further, to believe that the 'intended meaning' resides in the signal is to assume that the intention is grounded within the signal and not in the speaker. In this trend, *physical determinism*, *depictional demand*, and the *principle of predicative effectiveness* (Simone 1994:x) would be the columns of iconicity. The (perceptual) experience corresponding to the concepts should be the same. But this is an unfulfilable requirement. Physical determinism or depictional demand may not exist between language and language-external reality. Eco (1976) writes:

> [S]imilarity is not between the image and the object but between the image and the culturally coded content of the object (p. 204).
>
> The culturally coded content is the sum of elements *deemed significant*. These are perceived, supposed, they must correspond to socially accepted properties (p. 207).

Any experience is always individual. What is common is only the social contract about calling (different) experiences by the same name. Language mediates between outside reality and the mind. This mediation, however, does not happen by 'naturalistically' mirroring the external phenomena in the mind, an alleged *tabula rasa* before perception/mirroring takes place. The reflected phenomena do not exist independently of the mind, at least they will never be available to us. What is more, they are not graspable without language. I am not denying the existence of all sorts of phenomena outside the mind. But since the inception of the 'modern age', "science believed fervently in absolute objectivity and assiduously overlooked the fundamental difficulty that the real begetter of all knowledge is the *psyche*, the very thing that scientists knew the least about for the

longest time" (Jung 1968:173-4). There is no preverbal or averbal thinking, though there can be averbal *re-cognition*. Simone's approach, widespread among motivationalists, denies the presence of the subject, the speaker, without whom this whole process is begging the agent. However defined, iconicity is an atavism, a fallacy. Motivation is a valid force but it has to be recognized in a code. Not only arbitrary but even iconic signs are *culturally coded*, i.e. conventional!

Both the content and the expression side are made possible by language. There is no preexistent meaning inserted into blank sound envelopes. It is like Schoenberg's music: "The twelve-tone technique is not a form imposed from the outside, it is the piece; that is, it is the way ideas of the piece take shape in time — at once, the content and the form" (Salzman 1967:112).

If so, "It is the evolutionary value of arbitrariness, then, that must be explained" (Hinton et al. 1994:11-2). I very much see that evolutionary value: without arbitrariness, homonymy and homophony, and in turn, metonymy and metaphorization, would not be possible. And without these the language speaker would still stagger in the bush at the level of Neanderthaler shouts. Animals do not have the capacity to disentangle themselves from their immediate environment. For humans, it is possible to dive into possible worlds (many of which are or were real for other humans). The language paradox is exactly this: conveying abstract messages by concrete sounds.[6] In *writing*, too, any development could take place only at the price of abandoning the pictographic principle: "By ignoring which particular meaning a certain character had, this part began to be used entirely for the sound it represented" (Lindqvist 1991:352).

Arbitrariness is, in fact, the most intimate and inherent condition of any abstraction, which, in turn, is the criterion of all mental development. *Arbitrariness* is not a principle competing with motivation for some limited recognition, *it is the sine-qua-non attribute of the linguistic sign.*

Symbolization is a general procedure of sign generation and use. Ultimately, every sign must be sanctified by *convention*, independently of its origin. Icons and indices are what

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[6] "La communication paradoxale - communication effective de contenus occultes - loin d'être l'exception est plutôt la façon courante de la transmission des messages dans la vie quotidienne" (Fónagy 1963:162).

they are not by virtue of their immanent nature but through having been recognized as such. No sign is a sign unless "the mind is already acquainted with its connection with the phenomenon it indicates" (Peirce 1960 8.368). Therefore, not only the so-called *symbols* but all other signs, too, are developed within symbolization: There is no *natural sign*.

This has a tremendous consequence: Language, being the substance of all our cognizance, can be subjected to code-manipulation and, as I present in Ch. VIII., become a tool in *painting an ideologically colored universe* for its speakers.

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VIII.

Language in the center of life

The separation of the 'deed' from the doer ... this ancient mythology established the belief in cause and effect after it had found a firm form in the functions of language and grammar.

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The will to power*

1. Language and knowledge

1.1. Language and other sign systems

How does natural language differ from other sign systems? There appear four possibilities of the relationship of linguistics and semiotics: complete overlap, subset, intersection or complete independence. The parochial view that human language is *the* optimal model for all other semiotic systems is deeply rooted even among semioticians. To Locke, for instance, the typical signs are words: "*Σημειωτικη*, or *the doctrine of signs*, the most usual whereof being words, it is aptly enough termed also *Λογικη, logic*" (Locke 1978:370, my underlining). Saussure imagined linguistics to become only one field in his general semiology. Yet, even to him, "it is simply the most important of such systems" (CLG:33). It was structuralism which, after deifying the phonological method for all linguistic investigation, enthroned language as the master pattern for *all* semiotic systems. Thus Hjelmslev, in the *Prolegomena to a theory of language*, tried to show that the logical structure of language fits not just language but other signs systems as well. Roland Barthes (1915-1980) even proposed that *semiotics be included in linguistics* as a branch (1988:99).

Other semioticians argue for the inclusion of language in semiotics: "... all other aspects [of language] ... are subordinated to semiotics because they make sense only as manifestations of the semiotic nature of language" (Shaumyan 1987:2). However, verbal language has discrete signals while painting, for instance, does not. Thus iconic messages are typically non-discrete. Therefore, "systems have various types of articulation and ... therefore there is no reason to bow to the linguistic model ..." (Eco 1976:234).

There is an *intersection* where non-language sign systems and language are interchangeable. For instance, several human gestures (eg., //nodding//) have a clear equivalent in language (notably, *I agree* or *yes*), but //to cock one's eye at sy// is already ambiguous. And a sculpture or other work of fine art, undoubtably meaningful, cannot be readily translated into language words. Even in a literary piece, composed of words, *meaning* is not the *plot*. Which great writer would not have been able to summarize the plot of his story on a few pages? Outside the intersection, each system is on its own within semiosis.

The reconciliation of language science and semiotics is perhaps best achieved by Eco who states that "... a general semiotics is nothing else but a philosophy of language and that the 'good' philosophies of language, from *Cratylus* to *Philosophical Investigations* are concerned with all the semiotic questions" (1984:4). Apparently, *language* here is taken figuratively, to mean *semiosis* in the broadest sense. Language science, once it turned from philological analysis to common language situations, realized the role of paralinguistic and kinetic messages (body language). These latter always accompany the messages in language. Their study is greatly facilitated by a science which is able to approach signs on a unified theoretical basis. This is semiotics. All forms of language function within semiosis, the everlasting reconfiguration of the global semantic network, which includes the subject, language, and the world.

1.2. Language and thought

The idea that *the language that people speak determines how they see the world* was stated already by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humbolt (1767-1835). Ever since the central role of language in epistemology has been realized, philosophical investigations are constantly concerned with it.

It may appear that the meaning of certain words is their referent, as, for instance, the deictic *this* in *This is a budgie*. But even *'this'* is not accessible (as in *This is this.*), unless a definition (such as *budgie*) introduces the word 'this' into language. But that definition can only be *through non-deictic words*, that is only *within* language. We have seen above that the referent *//budgie//* is not part of language. But how is the thought *budgie* related to its word */budgie/* ? Does the content determine the expression or the other way round? According to semiotics, they determine each other. The object of the sign is a sign, and the interpretant of the sign is a sign as well. The signifier side of the sign is *not subordinate* to the signified. It is not a mere clothing to the meaning. The meaning itself, in turn, is a sign ready for further interpretation. And the signifier, too, can be interpreted by other signifiers. *Content* and *expression* are only abstractions of our study. An interpreted content is, at the next step of semiosis, the expression of another content. This is Peirce's *infinite semiosis*: "continual substitution makes it possible to overcome the imperfection of the tools of knowledge" (Manetti 1993:68).

Linguistic determinism has two variants. *Weak determinism* holds that thought is merely affected by language. *Strong determinism*, however, states that language actually determines thought. The possibility of translation between languages, I think, is no counterargument against strong determinism. In translation, one signifier is replaced by another, again, according to a previously established code (the dictionary). However, this *satisfacory matching* does not mean *identity* at all. Language moulds our vision of the world:

> The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently

> similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (Sapir 1949:162)

It is important that Sapir speaks about two worlds here: both the real world (presumably physical reality) and the social reality of the group. His position was expanded by Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), who declared that:

> We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (Whorf 1956:213-14)

Ernst Cassirer also takes a similar stance. His fundamental topic is the centrality of the *symbol* in the constitution of science and culture in the broadest sense. *Knowledge* is *symbolization*, not the *reflection* of reality. Language, in an ongoing distancing from immediate perception, is the condition and expression of thought:

> Before the intellectual work of conceiving and understanding of phenomena can set in, the work of *naming* must have preceded it, and have reached a certain point of elaboration. For it is this process which transforms the world of sense impression, which animals also possess, into a mental world, a world of ideas and meanings. All theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already preformed by language; the scientist, the historian, even the philosopher, lives with his objects only as language presents them to him (Cassirer 1946:28).

The word is not only a designator but, even before that, the constitutor of reality, very much as Adam's name-giving created a *tangible* identity for the animals he named:

> And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.
> And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field ... (*Genesis* 2:19-20)

The only way to understand *Genesis* is to attribute the names to the perspective of the narrator who could not have spoken of what happened unless he had recourse to names. And these names are not given in advance but develop in cultural life. We do not consent to a language or meanings at birth, we are *thrown into the existence of a language* without being asked. People see and hear their own mental concepts, yet they think they are referring to 'objective reality'. The only escape from the world view of one language is to put on the spectacles of another language.

"For Nietzsche, it is not that we are bound by our language, but that we are in effect defined by our chains" (Strong 1984:83). Our world is approached by and in our language. Language is also the tool to deal with this language-made world. Because language fulfils this function, the false impression is created that the concepts are *natural, original,* and *ontological.* Aristotle derived even his *philosophical categories* from *the language categories* of classical Greek. However, the *universal* is but an intellectual fiction, useful only in ordering *our* concepts. Perception in itself is rather mechanical and all understanding of it is grounded in our language. Since people have allegedly similar illusions, language is a convenient tool of communication. Thus, "*Language contains a hidden philosophical ideology*" (Strong 1984:87).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) realized that the crisis of epistemology is based on three linguistic premisses: 1.: in language, and there only, the subject-object distinction appears as an *action* broken up into an *actor* and an *act.* The *subject* of action emerges in

and via language: "*der Täter ist bloss zur Tat hinzugedichtet*" (Strong 1984:93).[1] 2. The illusion of *free will*: "Without language, there would be no facts" (Strong 1984:95). The recognition of facts creates the impression of the existence of an agent having and acting with *free will*. 3. Atomizing action into *cause* and *effect*. Of course, it is astonishing that the concrete foundation of Descartes' *sum*, the *cogito*, *human consciousness* is only as real as dreary dreams of a sick sky or a watercolour painted on the surface of a rainy lake. The premisses of these phenomena, the archetypes, however, are timeless.

While for Bloomfield the semantic (or semiotic) theory must represent all knowledge of the speakers, Eco indicates that only the "*culturally* and *conventionally* recognized" (Eco 1976:110) needs to be represented. From here, Eco says, semantics can go two ways: 1. setting up logical models where *meaning* is seen as a function of an independent, transcendental ego, or 2. study *meaning* as the function of a society using signs. We have seen in the earlier chapters that there is no transcendental ego, nor universal genera and species. Rather, the experience of a self is the product of ongoing signifying practices. What remains, then, is turning to these practices in search for knowledge and the subject.

"Semiotics can define the subject of every act of semiosis only by semiotic categories; thus the subject of signification is nothing more than the continuously unaccomplished system of systems of signification that reflects back on itself" (Eco 1976:315). This comes very close to the philosophy of the Vedanta which teaches that all can be known except the knower himself. "What is behind, before or after, outside or *too much* inside the methodological 'subject' outlined by this book might be tremendously important. Unfortunately it seems to me - at this stage - beyond the semiotic threshold" (Eco 1976:317). And since we live in our language and sign systems, the 'transcendental' subject, if there is any, will remain unaccessible to mankind forever. However, "The existence of the sign is a direct result [and condition] of the nature of human thought" (Manetti 1993:108). The emergence of not only the self but even of the world is tied to an ongoing narrative: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein *Tractatus* 5.6.).

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[1] The actor is merely a fiction added to the deed.

2. The semiotic code in politics

That language *constitutes reality* is seen very transparently in politics. Aristotle gives two definitions of man: ξωον λογον εχων, *being who has speech*, and ξωον πολιτικον, *social being*. The two notions are intimately linked, each one implying the other. Political activity is essential human activity, related to the life of the *polis*, the community. There is a specialist register, the 'language of politics', but all other words also belong to the political register because all words can be uttered for such a purpose. The vocabulary of the politician thrives on natural language. Political realities (*federations*, *ballots* etc.) are created by means of language and a constitution is *constituted* in language.

The politics of language shapes the language of politics, the latter being not only the *medium* of intercourse but the very *substance* all cogitation and communication takes place in. While it would perhaps be possible to imagine the life of a solitary wood-chopper without language, the role of language is fundamental in politics because the purposes of politics are most often achieved *in and via language*, in spreading information, coming to (written) agreements, persuasion, exhortation etc.. In fact, physical activity takes the upper hand only where language fails: "*Der Krieg ist die Fortsetzung der Politik, nur mit anderen Mitteln*" (Karl von Clausewitz).[2] And the purpose of any war, at least for Clausewitz, is nothing but the *persuasion* (enforcement) of the other to abide by one's purpose. Apart from war, pragmatics in the 'referential' world, *control* can also be exercized via language. Rossi-Landi sees three moods of this:

> ... in every linguistic communicative market the ruling class privately possesses the language in the three dimensions of (i) control of the code or codes and the modalities of codifications; (ii) control of the channels, that is, of the modalities of the circulation of messages; (iii) control of the modalities of decodification and interpretation (Rossi-Landi 1992:262-3).

[2] War is the continuation of politics, only with different means.

It would appear that an ideology *builds on facts*. However, there are no facts before the facts of language: "Ideology is therefore a message which starts with a factual description, and then tries to justify it theoretically, gradually being accepted by society through a process of overcoding" (Eco 1976:290)." In fact, the 'factual description' is already soaking in ideology.

Purism (from *pure*, *good*) is an evaluative category. For most people *good* is an unreflected concept, even though "opposites acquire their moral accentuation only within the sphere of human endeavour and action, and ... we are unable to give a definition of good and evil that could be considered universally valid" (Jung 1968:267). The *overcoding* is the matching of contents with the basic moral concepts *good* and *bad*, which generally operate on the preschool-level of human psyche. This is how ideology, a system of beliefs and values, establishes definitions and makes them dominant, in service of political control. In ideology *dominant discourses* are established and the semantic universe is manipulated with a definite purpose. All ideologies choose certain very general terms like *good, freedom, healthy, young, strong, female* etc. as foci to which they relate all other terms. Equating statements establish that, for instance, 'the product one advertizes' is *soft*, *healthy*, *comfortable*, and that this is *good.*

The rulers possess *The Code*, and let others partake in it. Big Brother manipulates the semiotic universe. Publications are re-written according to the latest parole of the day. Among others, this trend is clearly demonstrated in the language colonization performed by the states and allies whose prominent language is English. Here the overwhelming factor is the technological domination and the primitive morphology of English is a secondary feature only. It is inevitable that those countries and persons, who cannot keep up with computerization so central to today's production modes, already have lost the war for territories, markets, and consumers. Less than 2% of the world's population has access to computers. This is the real face of neocolonialism. And the very *language* computer operation systems are 'written in' is a pidginized English. This in itself would not be an obstacle. However, not only is most computer literature in English, but, as the disastrous 'Windows 95' exemplifies, the code is constantly modified and access to it is restricted to well-paying subscribers in this rat-race for profit. There is an even bigger danger. As in the

past Newtonian mechanics was the model for social science in general, "the very language of computer modeling is gradually replacing the other ways of *speaking* about mind" (Kerby 1991:113).

The inventors of the Middle Ages, in their search for the perfect language, were much more occupied with establishing the perfect system of signifiers, categorizing/organizing the particulars of the world, than with re-creating the domain of the signified content (see Eco 1993). "[I]t is possible to generate new and often revealing significances by tropic transformations (metaphor, metonymy, and so on). A repressive society is one in which this expressive potential is consistently restricted or treated as renegade and antisocial" (Kerby 1991:113). One does not have to be a Marxist to see this truth: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Marx, *The German Ideology* 64). Control is exerted in two main ways: 1. formation of the code, 2. control of the use of the code in supervising the *channel* by burning books, restricting access to the Internet, censoring messages etc. Control not only prohibits, it also consists in positive action. For instance, it was "set as a target [in the Third Reich] that 70 per cent of all German households should be equipped with a radio" (Townson 1992:147). Where the regime could much less intervene was the subversive oral transmission of political jokes.

"As in *1984*, the actual fighting is interspersed with a rhetorical war, that has sustained itself, in part, by calling attention to the performative nature of language" (Feldstein 1997:10). In the Clausewitzian total confrontation, language, too, is a battlefield. Language is one central constituent of national identity: for the Greeks βαρβαροι (barbarians were those people who didnot speak Greek, '*the real language*'), the *slavs* (< slovo = word) were the ones who possessed *<u>the</u> word*, the *n'emtsi* ('mutes', ie. Germans) who didnot. A nation is an ethnic, linguistic and political entity. Thus *Sprachkritik* (criticism of language use) may be a creator of political factions. This is linguistic colonialism, even if within the same society and the same language. Screaming *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Vaterland!*, Hitler also clearly meant: *eine/DIE Sprache*!

The ideological warfare of *political correctness*, "dividing America at the end of the twentieth century", "is about a crisis in the discursive nature of symbolization" (Feldstein 1997:9, 8). "Political correctness was initially invoked by members of the Left against others who shared similar views but adhered to a rigid acceptance of "communist dogma" (Feldstein 1997:4). This was democratic centralism where the faithful party member bowed to the will of the majority. Every individual was but a drop in the sea and the opinion of the majority was carefully manipulated by the elite through perks on the one hand and threat and terror on the other. In such a community, "The individual speaker, who has no control over the codes and the channels, finds himself in a position analogous to that of the individual non-linguistic ("material") worker" (Rossi-Landi 1992:263).

A current example of code manipulation is the book *Political correctness. A response from the cultural left* (Feldstein 1997). The work apparently *describes* the phenomenon *political correctness* in the air of the *disinterested scholarship* it attacks in its Ch.3.. The book, however, is itself a clever tool of propaganda: distancing itself from the right, it constructs the enemy and expropriates the learned epithet 'cultural'. I am not interested in taking political sides here. But this book, *Political correctness*, is a good example of how what is criticized is criticized by criticizing its method. Feldstein justly denounces Sykes for his sweeping statements. For instance, "If Sykes had done his research ... he would have learnt the obvious fact: Gayatri Spivak is a woman!" (Feldstein 1997:41). Yet, Feldstein's own method is not any different from what he criticizes in Sykes. Feldstein, in his schizophrenization of semiotics into content and form, makes his case by a transparent manipulation of data. He cites Barthes out of all semiotic authors as the authority on myths and on semiotics, a Barthes for whom myth, a "mode of *communication*[,] is semiological in nature, as semiology presents *a science of forms* that allows for the study of *signification* apart from its *content*" (Feldstein 1997:58, my italics). This haphazard Barthian model, the stolen and even distorted form of Hjelmslev's *connotative semiotics*, is what Feldstein applies to the political correctness myth.

Since representation is only one of the functions of language, and even in representation there can be no objectivity, the door is open to misrepresentation and lies. German examples of deliberate code change from the war are the following: *Sozialismus* >

Nationalsozialismus, *Sozialismus* > *Marxismus*; *U-Bootführer* connotes the *Führer*, therefore it was replaced by *U-Bootcommandant*. "[T]he name *Rußland* was no longer to be used" (Townson 1992:146). But the same kind of manipulation goes on today. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* sets "Guidelines to reduce bias in language" (APA 1994:46). Labouring the obvious, it instructs the reader to "[u]se emotionally neutral expressions" (APA 1994:60) in dealing with serious issues:

> While on the one hand, *man*, *mankind*, and *manpower* are to be avoided because they are suggestive of *males*, on the other hand *woman doctor* or *male nurse* are also 'problematic' since they imply that the profession is basically practised by one *sex* only (APA 1994:55).
>
> Avoid the label *homosexuality*" (APA 1994:57).
>
> [N]ote that *Native American* may be preferred to *American Indian*" (APA 1994:58).

A *stroke victim* becomes *an individual who had a stroke*, individuals *suffering from multiple sclerosis* are termed *people who have multiple sclerosis*. The suggested variants are not only cumbersome, they also fail to express the meaning of the original. Multiple sclerosis certainly makes one suffer, and muffling it by APA style does not reduce the pain.

The methodology of ideology is the topic of *1984* by George Orwell. Written in 1948, the very title intimates that Orwell described contemporary society even then. What *was* the language of the world in *1984*?

> Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism (Orwell 1949:303).
>
> The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but *to make all other modes of thought impossible*. It was intended that when Newspeak had been

> adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, *a heretical thought* — that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc — *should be literally unthinkable*, at least *so far as thought is dependent on words* (Orwell 1949:303; my italics).
>
> Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought ... (Orwell 1949:304).

All such manipulation can be done only because the referent does not motivate the sign, because the semiotic universe is a social product. The characteristics of Ingsoc grammar all serve obfuscation, with "an almost complete interchangeability between different parts of speech" (Orwell 1949:304). Its vocabulary consists of three components: a. words for simple everyday use, without any shades of meaning, b. technical vocabulary; c. political jargon.

> The greatest difficulty facing the compilers of the Newspeak dictionary was not to invent new words, but ... to make sure ... what ranges of words they canceled by their existence. ... A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them. All words grouping themselves round the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word *crimethink* ... (Orwell 1949:308).

"Prerevolutionary literature [before Ingsoc] could only be subjected *to ideological translation — that is alteration of sense as well as language*" (Orwell 1949:313, my emphasis). With Newspeak's ever receding vocabulary (Orwell 1949:311), ultimately the heretical statement *Big Brother is ungood* "could not have been sustained by a reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available" (Orwell 1949:312). Having eradicated all *ungood*[3] words, *doublespeak*, the goal of *Big Brother* was *doubleplusgoodwise*[4] achieved. *Big Brother* and *doublespeak* have become items of our vocabulary and no longer require an explanation. The manipulation of the code, to good

[3] Newspeak for *bad.*
[4] Newspeak for *very well.*

or bad, goes on. What does all this signal to language study? I answer this question in my *Conclusion.*

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IX.

Conclusion

Quindi, se ben capisco, fate, e sapete perché fate, ma non sapete perché sapete che sapete quel che fate?

Umberto Eco: *Il nome della rosa*[1]

All our investigation has been revolving around the ideas *world*, *mind*, and *language*. Inquiry into language is originally motivated by the practical *hermeneutical task* to *interpret messages*. Contemporary language philosophy, however, realizes that even *thinking*, the coming-to-terms with the *world*, too, occurs in *signs*. A sign system *creates a view* of the world, enabling perception. When the subject of the signs interprets himself in and by language, *the self emerges*.

Already the thinkers of antiquity knew that the *referent* does not determine the *name*. They also saw the paramount place of language in *epistemology*. Truth and meaning not being obvious, *semiotics* developed to interpret divine language where the sign-text corresponds to events. Speculation about the *nature of signs* established two factors: The *protasis* (omen) was taken as the sign of the *apodosis* (oracle). The *revelation* about the object takes place because messages are *interpreted*, based on a code of *implication*. For Plato, *thinking* already *is a dialogue*, inseparable from language.

While the Greek λογος means *speech* and *reason* at the same time, the doom of Western language study was its subordination to *logic*. Aristotle introduces a naive

[1] "And so, if I understand you correctly, you act, and you know why you act, but you don't know why you know that you know what you do?" (*The name of the rose*. English translation by William Weaver, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983:207).

'realism', *equating spoken sounds, affections in the soul, written signs,* and *things.* Together with non-signifying sounds, written and natural signs also are excluded from Aristotle's sign theory, as are all the non-propositional sentences (eg., prayer). This castration continues to haunt philosophy and language study to our day. While for Plato the name is revelation (δηλωμα) of the essence (δυναμις), to Aristotle "the name is spoken sound significant by convention (φωνη σημαντικη κατα συνθηκην). Aristotle's meaning is no longer based on implication and *foreshadows a non-semiotic linguistics.* Aristotle refuses to recognize but tacitly uses the abductive level that underlies all his syllogistics.

Several centuries later, St. Augustine, on the basis of Stoicism, reconnects the linguistic and non-linguistic sign research in a unified semiology. For Augustine, the *verbum*, the *signifier* signifies the *signified*, but then, the signified, in turn, *signifies something else*. Augustine's verbum becomes *dictio*, it is semiotic and functions *by implication*. But by the time this semiotic model reemerges from oblivion to complete autonomy in Saussure, the *implicative nature of language* has been completely abandoned in favour of the *dictionary model*, in which the relationship between a word and its content is mere *synonymy*.

In the Middle Ages the Modists, in the wake of Aristotle, equate the *modi essendi* with the *modi intelligendi* and the *modi significandi*. The Modists, in fact, transfer an abstracted grammar to the mental level. Here, *language* is still subordinated to the *idea*.

In the new age, Condillac was perhaps the first to come up with the radical statement that *thought is not pre-existent to language*, but language is a precondition of thought. The development of the philosophy of the mind and of language since then is the slow, reluctant, and recalcitrant realization that self-knowledge is more than a 'direct' inward glance and that *language has a constitutive role in the formation of human consciousness and in the creation of the world as we live it.*

John Locke made the first step towards a general theory of *semiotics as a theory of all knowledge*. His starting point is Cartesianism with its intuitive certainty in man's own consciousness. Descartes used 'basic ideas' (eg., substance, cause), to explain the mind,

without critically examining them, let alone realizing that they are *already given in language*. Locke, however, denies all *innate ideas*: "Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from Experience ... (Locke 1978 II. 1. 2.). To Locke, language has two roles: enabling *understanding*, "for the assistance of [men's] own memory" and *communication*, where "[t]he use of words is to be sensible marks of ideas" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 1.). The pursuit of gnoseology was what occupied Locke in his *Σημειωτικη*, the study of signs. In Locke's view, science, the whole human experience, consists of three parts: *Physica*, or *natural philosophy*, "the knowledge of things as they are in their own proper beings", *Practica*, *ethics*, and "*Σημειωτικη*, or *the doctrine of signs*, the most usual whereof being words, it is aptly enough termed also *Λογικη, logic*" (Locke 1978 IV. 21.). Here we see the revival of the original meaning of logos.

Peirce's sign theory, perpetuating Locke's project, is in fact the general theory of meaning, with the analysis of language signs couched in his *pragmatic* semeiotic. For *signification* to occur, there must be an *object* which *functions* as a sign of another object, determining an *interpretant*. The *object* can be not only a material *denotatum* but any imaginary or cultural unit. *Signs do not have a discrete ontology*. Peirce's exposition of his sign theory is diametrically opposite to Descartes' dualism of mind and extra-mind, but also to Locke's representational fallacy where language is seen as a basket of labels for external objects. To Peirce signification is the main role of signs, expressing a *perspective* and *intentionality*.

Peirce argued that everything that happens in the *human mind* happens in *signs*. For him, thoughts are internalized verbal signs. Signs interpret signs. "Thus the very definition of 'sign' implies a process of *unlimited semiosis*" (Eco 1976:69). The final mega-sign is the whole semantic network. Thus semeiosis can be applied to the analysis of consciousness, but *consciousness does not exist without semeiosis*. Signs are mediators between one another, constituting the world and the human mind.

Saussure, developing Whitney's view that *language is a social institution*, resting on *convention*, a product without design, revolted against the nomenclaturist tradition.

He imagined that "Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. ... a science *which studies the life of signs within society*. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeion*, 'sign') (CLG:33). The main Saussurian claim is that the parts of the linguistic sign are mental: not a *thing* and a *name* but a *concept* and a *sound-image* are connected in the sign. Saussure imagined linguistics to become only one field in his general semiology. Yet for him, in agreement with Locke, "it is simply the most important of such systems" (CLG:33).

The barren logical approach to language is committed to three misconceptions: 1. the Cartesian transcendental *ego*, 2. the existence of prelinguistic thoughts, 3. that language is a neutral tool of expression. Logic, plagued with the inability to account for the production of its terms outside natural language, still claims universality. Yet even in logic, only the *interpreted* calculus makes sense. The question of language is not about language in the isolation of abstract rules but about *what language means to man*. The exactness of formal languages is ultimately based on natural language. Logic misses the self-reflexive property of language. Logic clearly belongs to the abstract realm of syntax. However, syntax supresses the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of semiosis and stresses the logical-grammatical structure of language, as the only dimension of semiosis. *Langue* and *parole* are social facts, dependent on the linguistic community. Then, language is not strictly autonomous, its values are not 'pure'.The error of purism was the start of viewing language cut off from social life, culminating in generative grammar.

Saussure himself contributed to this blindness by "disregard[ing] everything which does not belong to its [language's] structure as a system ... (Saussure CLG:40). Soon language was regarded as "a self-sufficient totality, a structure *sui generis*" (Hjelmslev 1961:6). To Hjelmslev, language is not even a system of petrified signs: "*Languages ... are first and foremost* something different, namely *systems of figurae that can be used to construct signs*. The definition of a *language as a sign system ... concerns only the external functions of a language* ... (Hjelmslev 1961:47, my italics). Here, the *phonological system*, or rather the underlying graphology, is assumed to be the prototype of *all structures* in the world, *even beyond language*.

Charles Morris, continuing Peirce's work, set up a semiotic more realistic than Saussure's. Whereas Saussure was occupied with verbal *signes* only, for Charles Morris any object could become a sign. Nor did he see any "absolute cleft between single signs, sentential signs, and languages ... (Morris 1971:25). Even the *single word* uttered can only be *a full sentence*: If uttered, it expresses an idea. Thus the word already is a text. While the *signifiant* referred to its own *signifié* only, Morris' *sign-vehicle* referred to a whole situation. This is an *'advance'* towards the classical implicative theory of signification. Morris aimed for a *semiotic* wider than human language, one that "supplies the foundations for any special science of signs, such as linguistics, logic ... (Morris 1971:17). Much like Locke and Peirce, he advocates that "metascience must use semiotic as an organon" (Morris 1971:18). *Semiotic* has three dimensions, baptized as *semantics, pragmatics, syntactics"* (Morris 1971:20-1). For Morris, "the[se] various dimensions are only aspects of a unitary process" (Morris 1971:23). He warns that no part of semiosis can be isolated. Albeit linguistics borrowed the words 'pragmatics, semantics, and syntactics', exactly this perspective is missing from it. Morris does not attribute an ontological status to *meaning*: 'Meaning' is a semiotical term and not a term in the thing-language ... on a par with rocks, organisms, and colors ... (Morris 1971:57). 'Meaning' signifies any and all phases of sign-processes ... (Morris 1971:95). In Morris' determination of meaning, however, the sign is seen as the trigger of a certain *behavioral response*. Thus Morris' understanding of the *interpretant* is much more limited than Peirce's. It does not account for the creative nature of signs. However, "Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the *symbolic system"* (Cassirer 1944:24). This has two characteristics: *versatility* and *universal applicability.* Cassirer stresses a point markedly different from Aristotle: " ... instead of describing man as an *animal rationale*[2], we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*" (Cassirer 1944:26). Karl Bühler also stressed the *symbolic* nature and *abstract character* of language. Wittgenstein perpetuates the *symbolic* concept of language in autonomous *language games*, but not before he abandons the perspective of

[2] For Aristotle the essential in man is that he is "being having speech". *Animal rationale* is a bad translation.

logic. In his early quest, Wittgenstein supposes language to be the muffled logical representation of an identical reality. Wittgenstein later abandons the nominalist theory of language with preexistent ideas and, in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, he arrives at a radically different conception of meaning: meaning grounded in use. Wittgenstein rejects structural semantics and discards every formalized discipline of meaning. Wittgenstein, like Saussure, uses game analogies; The speaker is seen as a player in a *self-contained* game. Language is self-contained and, in a very Nietzschean way, emerges as the *constitutor of reality*: "... eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen" (Wittgenstein 1960:296).[3]

Rossi-Landi, stressing the importance of the Morrisian unified approach to semiosis, sees man's emergence as the inextricable interaction of *work* and *sign use*: *homo loquens* is *homo faber*. His analogy of linguistic production is forced and rather arbitrary. Important, however, is the emphasis of *collective parole* (Rossi-Landi 1992:228), a condition of linguistic exploitation.

Eco's starting point towards the *theory of signification* is the exclusion of the *referent*. Statements can be meaningful without ever being verifiable extensionally. Meaning is a *function* of the sentence, mentioning or referring is the *use* of the sentence. In lies, the convention of *representing a state of factual affairs* is broken. *The practice of communication is independent of the truth value of the statements made.* While Katz' generativist model is a close dictionary theory of meaning, one which fails to account for connotations and disregards contextual and circumstantial factors in determining meaning, Eco aims at a general theory of semiotics, a sort of metalangue, which comprises all types of interpretants in a global semantic network that includes human language. Further, Eco denies the separate ontology of signs. There are only objects which may have *signification as their function*. In *connotative - implicative semiotics*, the *expression plane* that corresponds to a content plane in a code is *another code* which consists of a content plane and an expression plane of its own.

[3] To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.

Locke, just like Aristotle and Saussure, supposes the *identity of codes* of the speaker and hearer: "[men] suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men with whom they communicate" (Locke 1978 III. 2. 4.). Eco, however emphasizes that, apart from some very trivial and common cases of de-coding, there is *always* some uncoded element in the message. It is here that creative *interpretation* steps in and sets up an abductive hypothesis. The codes control messages, but the messages innovatively restructure the code. For the theory of codes it is irrelevant whether a sign arose *arbitrarily* or *by motivation*. These are only ways of its genesis. Even the *motivated* sign must be *conventionalized* in order to be included in the code. In sign production and interpretation, the perceptual, semantic, and expressive models must *satisfactorily match*. Connotative codes are much more volatile than the underlying denotative code. Several connotative codes may exist upon each other. Because of this, a sign vehicle never stands only for the denoted content, but always also for implied meanings.

Eco successfully integrates linguistic and nonlingustic signs in his theory. For him, the object is not a 'given': Both the *name* and the *idea* are the result of abstractive semiotic processes. "In order to assert that objects (insofar as they are perceived) can also be approached as signs, one must also assert that even the concepts of the objects (as the result or as the determining schema of every perception) must be considered in a semiotic way ... *even ideas are signs*" (Eco 1976:166).

Lipps draws attention to the difference between Aristotle's λογος σημαντικος (signifying word) and λογος αποφαντικος (revealing word) (1976:7). In Lipps' interpretation, *correct* is what leads to a *goal*. In this way even a question (which in earlier speculation was the antithesis of proposition), can be true, if it shows the right direction towards praxis. Such an interpretation is truly semiotic in that truth is not considered to be simply the *adaequatio* of word to deed. The truth of the words of language is that they reveal something. Ricoeur, in his hermeneutical investigations attacks Aristotle's preoccupation with logic when dealing with language, just as his disregard of anything other than true and false declarative propositions. Aristotle disfavoured ambiguity, which is abundant in every language. Ricouer's use of the term *symbol* has a new sense:

Symbolism emerges when something cannot be expressed directly either for lack of suitable conventionalized expressions (the domain of poetic 'activity'), or due to repression (the oneiric' activity'). Both are intimately tied with language. This is the field of hermeneutics. "By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis ... of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text" (Ricoeur 1970:8).

Early in the 20th century, Sapir and Whorf's thesis promoted that different languages segment the *Field of Content* into different *forms of content. Language gives rise to the semiotic world* we live in. The subject is not the source of language. Rather, the speaking subject may identify with the subject of speech and then the self emerges as the product of narration. The achievement of today's hermeneutics is the realization that *not only the world, but also the self, as much as we can postulate a self at all, emerges via language*: "... expression not only generates meaning, perhaps more importantly it also generates the subject and object (qua intended) *presupposed* by it" (Kerby 1991:74). The idea of the semiotic subject is in full harmony with the hermeneutical subject: "the human subject that respects its situatedness in language and signification. I will call this subject the *semiotic subject*" (Kerby 1991:101). Narration is always *interpretation*, never just mirroring. This interpretation, man's very own activity, takes place continually, without a beginning. The memory of the past is indispensable for establishing personal identity in the present. "Memory ... is already operative in perception" (Kerby 1991:23). But to have memories of any kind, one needs a significatory medium, one that enables (re)cognition: language. There is an essential identity between monologue and dialogue. Language, always already is social.

The debasement of *writing* is ageless. Already for Plato, "writing is inferior to speech. It is like a picture and has only a deceitful likeness of a living creature. It is not a legitimate son of knowledge but a bastard" unlike "the speech written on the mind" which is "living and animate" (Phaedrus 275). Saussure, too, is well-known for his claim that "... writing is in itself not part of *the internal system* of the language ... (CLG:44; my italics). In reality, the *idea*, the *spoken* and the *written word*, are all adequate representations of each other

within a given code. Writing, as an autonomous medium develops on its own. The two means of expression are of equal rank. It is significant that the *internal speech* of Plato is also conceived as *'written'*, i.e. it is in signs which are not obvious for the mind and call for *interpretation*. Saussure's second principle, that of *linearity*, is only about signifiers. As the signifier is not linear, which part of it would be iconic to the signified? Actually, linearity as a principle is borrowed from writing. The source of both of Saussure's principles is "the latent scriptism of a pedagogic tradition in which writing was taken as the model to which language must - or should - conform" (Harris 1987:78). Today the reverse is the case: speech is unduly extolled.

Iconicity is variously defined as (1) the 'similarity' of language-external states of affairs and linguistic utterances or (2) the 'similarity' between thought and speech. In this model, ideas would have to preexist language. But any common conception of reality takes place in linguistic signs. Therefore there can be no epistemology of reality-as-conceptualized *without language*. Prelinguistic thought is a 'vague uncharted nebula' (Saussure CLG:156). "When I think in language, there aren't meanings going through my mind *in addition to the verbal expressions*; the language is itself the vehicle of thought" (Wittgenstein PG:161; my italics). This already thwarts the possibility of proving the existence of any kind of iconicity.

For the iconicist, a linguistic representation is *motivated* by its *similarity* to the content it represents. Similarity does not reside in the objective objects but its revelation is an active performance of our *vision*. The creation of *new* structures cannot be based on analogy because analogy presupposes a precedent case and the structure is not new if it can be copied by analogy. "[S]imilarity is not between the image and the object but between the image and the culturally coded content of the object" (Eco 1976:204). The heavy-weight argument against the principle of arbitrariness is *onomatopoeia*, in which the signifier seems to some people to imitate a natural sound. Hinton et al. in their recent *Sound symbolism* declare that sound symbolism has been unduly neglected by research. They ground their typology of sound symbolism in the following definition: "Sound symbolism is the direct linkage between sound and meaning" (1994:1). This definition of

sound symbolism, leaving open the precise nature of 'direct linkage', does not contradict Saussure's arbitrariness-principle about the relation of the two parts of the linguistic sign. Hinton et al.'s four types of sound symbolism are either simply outside the range of the sounds of language, or are merely *conventional* imitations of extralinguistic sounds.

Motivation is a valid force but it has to be recognized in a code. Not only arbitrary but even iconic signs are *culturally coded*, i.e. conventional! There is no preverbal or averbal thinking. However defined, iconicity is an atavism, a fallacy. If so, "It is the evolutionary value of arbitrariness, then, that must be explained" (Hinton et al. 1994:11-2). Without *arbitrariness*, homonymy and homophony, and in turn, metonymy and metaphorization would not be possible. Animals do not have the capacity to disentangle themselves from their immediate environment. For humans, it is possible to dive into possible worlds (many of which are or were real for other humans). In *writing*, too, any development could take place only at the price of abandoning the pictographic principle: "By ignoring which particular meaning a certain character had, this part began to be used entirely for the sound it represented" (Lindqvist 1991:352).

Arbitrariness is, in fact, the most intimate and inherent condition of any abstraction, which, in turn, is the criterion of all mental development. *Arbitrariness* is not a principle competing with motivation for some limited recognition, *it is the sine-qua-non attribute of the linguistic sign.*

Symbolization is a general procedure of sign generation and use. Ultimately, every sign must be sanctified by *convention*, independently of its origin. No sign is a sign unless "the mind is already acquainted with its connection with the phenomenon it indicates" (Peirce 1960 8.368). Therefore, not only the so-called *symbols* but all other signs, too, are developed within symbolization: There is no *natural sign.*

That language *constitutes reality* is seen very transparently in politics. Political realities (*federations*, *ballots* etc.) are created by means of language. In fact, physical activity takes the upper hand only where language fails: "*Der Krieg ist die Fortsetzung der Politik, nur*

mit anderen Mitteln" (Karl von Clausewitz).[4] It would appear that an ideology *builds on facts*. However, there are no facts before the facts of language. The 'factual description' is already soaking in ideology, where *dominant discourses* are established and the semantic universe is manipulated with a definite purpose. Here the code, the channels, and even decodification and interpretation are controlled (Rossi-Landi 1992:262-3). The rulers possess *The Code*, and let others partake in it. A current example of code manipulation is *political correctness*. All such manipulation can be done only because the referent does not motivate the sign, because *the semiotic universe is a social product.*

We do not consent to a language or meanings at birth, we are *thrown into the existence of a language* without being asked. Our world is approached by and in our language. Language is also the tool to deal with this language-made world. Because language fulfils this function, the false impression is created that the concepts are *natural, original, ontological*. Thus, "*Language contains a hidden philosophical ideology*" (Strong 1984:87). Nietzsche identifies three traits of language that shape our understanding of the world: 1. The subject-object distinction: in language, and there only, a *whole* is broken up into an *actor* and an *act*. 2. The illusion of *free will*: The recognition of facts creates the impression of the existence of an agent having and acting with *free will*. 3. Atomizing action into *cause* and *effect*.

At this crossroads, semantics can go two ways: 1. setting up logical models where *meaning* is seen as a function of a hypothesized transcendental ego, or 2. study *meaning* as the function of a society using signs. The futility of the former is obvious once we realize the untenability of the Cartesian 'independent' ego and what remains is turning to the social use in search for knowledge.

The individual use of language is grounded in the social use: *thought* is *internal speech* already for Plato. Not only the emergence of the self but even of the world is tied to an ongoing narrative: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein *Tractatus* 5.6.).

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[4] War is the continuation of politics, only with different means.

Signs: Language in semiotics investigated the place of language science within the general theory of signs. My goal in this paper was to establish (1) the attributes of the foundation-stone of linguistics, the linguistic sign, (2) the hierarchy of the subfields of linguistics, (3) the relation of linguistics to semiotics and other disciplines, and (4) to resituate the human speaker into any approach to language.

The linguistic sign revealed here contributes to the demolition of the two following 20th century presuppositions that are not part of the classical view on signs: 1. that the linguistic sign is *the model of the general sign*, 2. that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is *equivalence* ($p \equiv q$) and meaning is considered to be "*synonymy* or *essential definition*" (Manetti 1993:xiii).

(1) The attributes of the foundation-stone of linguistics, the linguistic sign

The attributes of the sign are identified in the following: 1. the sign is the *coded unity* of a content and an expression, 2. the sign meaning has only a *conventially* constituted relation to its vehicle, which is always an object imposed by the function of being a sign, 3. the purpose of a sign is to connote something *outside* itself, 4. the referent, if there is any, has *no natural relation whatsoever* to the meaning of the sign, 5. the *meaning* of the sign is *established in language games*, 6. a sign always functions only *in a system* of signs. *Meaning*, always more than the mere denotative dictionary definition, is implicative.

(2) The hierarchy of the subfields of linguistics

"From the very beginning, Chomsky has defended the autonomy of formal grammar on the grounds that no concepts from semantics are either necessary or sufficient for the definition of syntactic structure, even as understood in the broad sense to include not only syntax but also phonology and morphology" (Graham 1981:38). This is the *non plus ultra* of the rejection of *meaning*. However, "even the least concrete syntactic rules cannot be explained or even set up without the consideration of semantic and pragmatic relationships" (Bentele-Bystrina 1978:136-7).

Morris' division of semiotics into syntax, semantics, pragmatics was only a methodological step. "The full representation of signs comprises all three points of view. It is licit and often correct to assign a specific semiotic quest to pragmatics, semantics, or syntax. In spite of this, generally it is more important to consider the whole domain of semiotics, and to join everything that can be relevant for the solution of specific problems" (Morris 1971).

Since language is a semiotic system, the purpose of which is signification, pragmatics and semantics appear as sui generis language science. All other branches of it, which merely describe a 'code as system in itself' (phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax) are subservient to pragmatics and must be regarded as no more. Even within linguistics, only a semiotic perspective can be fruitful.

(3) The relation of linguistics to semiotics and other disciplines and *(4) the resituating of the human speaker into any approach to language*

Language has been proven not to be the master pattern for all semiotic systems. By integrating the results of linguistic semantics and pragmatics with contemporary semiotic theory, I argue for a unified approach to the process of signification in linguistic study. By this I reach back to Plato's and St. Augustine's semiotic conception of language. Classical meaning theory is based on *implication* ($p \supset q$). The most recent research in sign theory is in fact attempting to go beyond "dictionary' semantics ... to focus rather on an "encyclopedia" semantics (which functions according to the implicative model) (Manetti 1993:xiv).

Since the inception of the 'modern age', "science believed fervently in absolute objectivity and assiduously overlooked the fundamental difficulty that the real begetter of all knowledge is the *psyche*, the very thing that scientists knew the least about for the longest time" (Jung 1968:173-4). Linguistics likewise disowned its subject. Hermeneutics discovers that the *subject* is not the source of language. Rather, the speaker may identify with the subject of speech and then *the self emerges as the product of narration*. Far from seeing language as a system of nomenclature denoting prelinguistic ideas of a transcendent

mind and objective external objects, I see language as *the very possibility* of the emergence of both the world and of the very self (the subject) experiencing that world.

To go beyond its impasse, linguistics must give up its self-centered, l'art pour l'art approach and become integrated with semiotics, philosophy of mind, and more generally psychology, in line with Saussure's original vision:

> It is therefore possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology*... (Saussure CLG:33)

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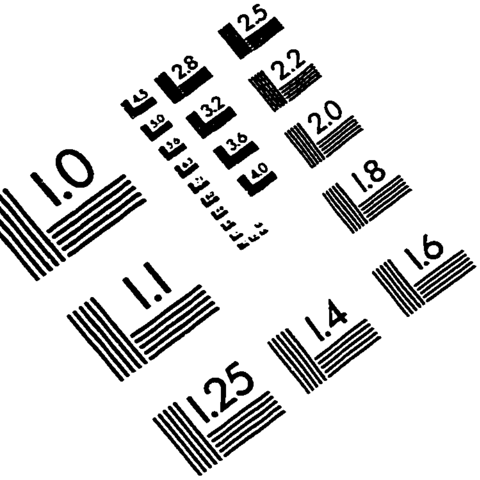

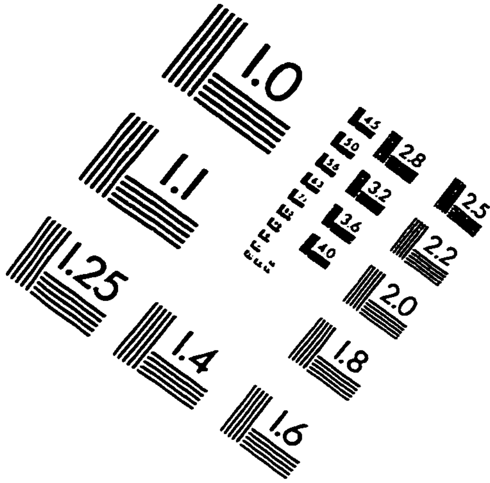

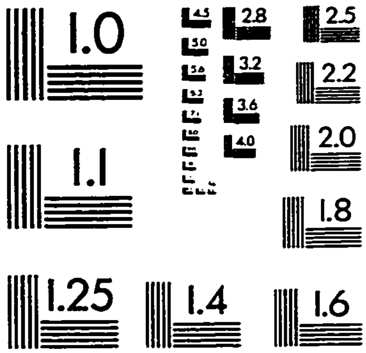

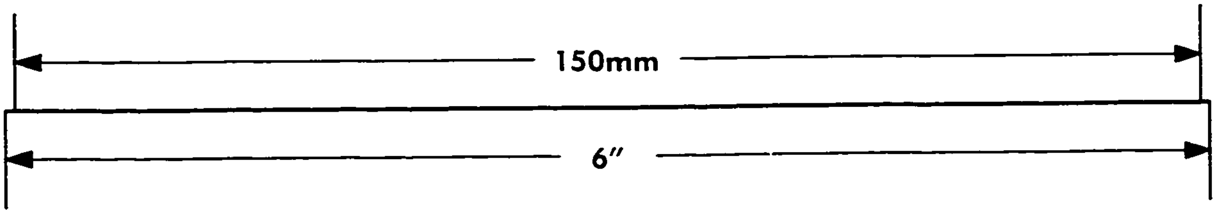

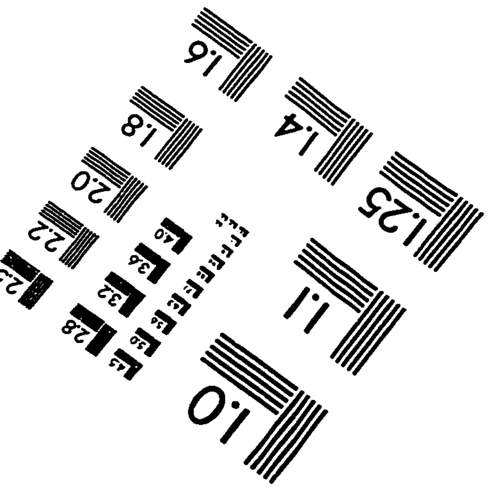

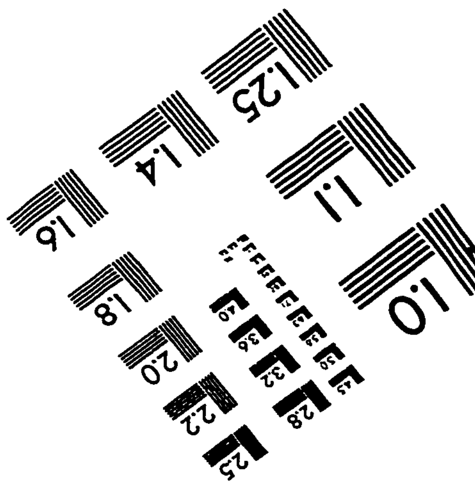

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