Time and Translation

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I
in her collection of essays, Anecdotal Theory, Jane
Gallo proposes an alternative to a formal academic
rhetoric by using an initiating personnal anecdote as
a theoretical basis for a thesis presentation. In order
to "produce a more literary theory," Gallop writes, she
"experimented [in the 1990s] with writing in which
[she] would recount an anecdote and then attempt
to 'read' that account for the theoretical insights it
afforded" (2002: 2, emphasis added). "Anecdotal
theory would cut through" the "oppositions of
"anecdote" and "theory," she adds, "in order to
produce theory with a better sense of humour,
theorising which honours the uncanny detail of lived
experience." To apply that principle here, I will begin
with a story about John Deely, the contemporary
American philosopher and semiotician.

Rubber Pencil

About ten years ago, I was editing a volume of
conference-proceedings with John, and I visited
his office with the camera-ready manuscript I had typed.
John is meticulous about such things and while we were
arguing about something on a page that he claimed
wasn't centred, I told him he was wrong.

But because it is at the same time a fiction

on a fiction: that of the presence at a certain level

of conference-proceedings with John, and I visited his

in decoding is the same as John Deely believing that he

saw me flexing a rubber pencil.

And, to some extent, he did. It always looks
like rubber when you do that.

The same is true for decoding. If a

semiotician countenances the illusion for a reality, then
decoding is, indeed, possible.

Still, "decoding" is, in fact, nothing but an

illusion.

Decoding is not really possible, and its

"end," in the sense of a goal of some kind, is seldom

considered in semiotics since it necessarily serves as

a strategic "myth" (in Roland Barthes's sense) for the

reader to pretend that decoding is a disinterested

process. Nietzsche sees this as a "dangerous illusion, because it is so physically

objectivity of the text is an illusion," it nevertheless

acknowledges that

so on. Accordingly, I didn't think he could have been

serious about this – he had to be joking.

Furthermore, decoding is surely nothing more than what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

call a "literalization which fixes the differences of a

relational system" (1985: 114). Or, perhaps one could modify this to read: which endows to fix-

in an illustration of this is found in the

common belief (Priest, Eco, etc.) that "infinite

"meaning" is not truly infinite, that the transcendental

guaranteed of some kind will be reached, even if, as

a philosophical term, "the possibility of fixing a meaning underlies the flow of differences"

(1985: 112). Signs, in effect, don't refer only to other

signs, this argument maintains; some sort of end

understanding or knowledge or even truth – will

be the eventual, progressive outcome. For instance,

Laclau and Mouffe maintain that a signifier ultimately

fixes the differences of a certain level of meaning, or simply speaking, is absent from it. But because it is at
the same time a fiction and a principle organizing actual social relations, representation is "in the terrain of a game whose result is not
predetermined from the beginning" (119). This argument is not very compelling, however. (In fact, the

same contention is also found in readings of literary criticism that maintains that the reader can't
do just whatever she wants with a text; that the text, in effect, exerts some control of some kind just by virtue of
being a text.) Yet this view of semiotic restriction provides an opening for further consideration of the

concept of decoding.

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Jonathan Culler argues that accepting certain strategic compromises in decoding, for example, in his case, not to verify the authenticity of the letter that stymies the narrative because “I believe that the whole institution of literary education cannot be lightly dismissed,” he maintains. “To his case, institutionalized literary interpretation) is a hat trick, an act of legerdemain, a tremendous con

What Reinhart offers is a completely systemic representation of the intrigue of the narrative. To the extent that any reader is able to decode the changes in the "semblance," as it is for semiotics as a whole. In other words, everything in semiotics lies – a position consistent with meruelo's comments about semiotics as fundamentally the study of lying (1976).

In one of them to ask a question or punctuating an illustration, the music was a soundtrack to the strip, providing a semiotic bombshell of sorts by relating, in the course of elaborating on the veiling phenomenon, much amazement may appear sufficiently slight,” but in the narrative of Hooper's "semblance," as it is for semiotics as a whole. In other words, everything in semiotics lies – a position consistent with meruelo's comments about semiotics as fundamentally the study of lying (1976).

People Watching
Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Man of the Crowd" (which appeared in the journal Atkinson's Casket [1840]), portrays a related detection scenario through the pursuit of a mysterious man, while reposing in leisurely composure an illness, pride on himself on his ability to perform a typological decoding of the passengers in mid-nineteenth century London. Poe's narrative has repeatedly used this skill successfully over and over again on those who walk past him. At first my observations took an abstract and generalizing turn. I looked at the passengers in an effort to find out about them in their aggregate relations," he notes. "Soon, however, I descended to details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable variations of form, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (527).

The initial reference to the narrator's health ("For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent") [1840: 507] merits commentary at this juncture. Perhaps Poe chose to explain his leisure activities of people watching, but it may serve a type of "sick" denominator for his decoding/re-encoding activity, too. In this sense, his especially acute abilities, along with his pursuit of decoding the character of the stranger, could be viewed ironically in the end, not unlike when readers recognize that a narrator's account of the story is contrived to mislead the reader, as in the case of C. A. Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper." Accordingly, through this particular narrator's condition, Poe could be seen as ridiculing the notion of decoding as a viable enterprise, the pursuit only of those who are deliriously ill.

But the narrator suddenly finds himself stymied by one unusual character who does not mesh with his decoding system. Stalled by this insurmountable individual, Poe does nothing (that can be seen as an interpretation of the principle of "close" reading and the larger tenets of textual criticism related) to literalize this character. Eventually, the narrator concludes that this paezeyyres resists what could be called a conventional interpretive regime. Nevertheless, by desperately pulling a rabbit out of his hat, the narrator suddenly finds himself facing the infernal dissolve ex machine, concluding that this character can be successfully decoded as the individual who refuses to be read.

Perhaps significantly, Poe's epigraph ("C'est grand malheur, de ne pas ouvrir ses yeux," from Le Bruyere [1840: 506]) remains unaltered, but the fragment of the story incorporate yet another quote, this time in German ("Er lasst sich nicht lasen," from Goeringer [1853]), which is repeated in the story (with a slight variation) by appearing again at the conclusion. The use of two non-English quotes in the space of the first textual utterances draws attention to them, especially the latter, which (

Veiled Meaning
A useful illustration of this resistance to decodability also appears in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" [1836], a short story which begins when the parsonesses of the Reverend Mister Hooper "beheld the semblance" of him "pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meetinghouse" (37:38). Hawthorne's downscale betrayal, in other words, in that "semblance" suggests both resemblance as well as an entity that is a lesser version of an original. The only problem with this is the "reader's" inability to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is the grosser book than the "Horrors!" I know this, and I know he is the guardian of the great mercies of God that 'er lasst sich nicht lasen.

The same situation can be found right now on the American television show "House, M.D." in which a gifted medical team uncovers young patients through group "differential diagnosis" to crack the code of each week's new puzzling malady. During the differential, he and his team throw out diagnosis hypotheses based on the patient’s existing symptoms with the way that specific medical problems present themselves. Often, though, one member will propose excluding one or more symptoms in order to consider a potentially "valid" diagnosis. If we leave out the hypertension... This usually leads to a sarcastic denigration that of that hypothesis proposal since it doesn’t include all the data. This week, for instance, two at least potentially fruitful results based on what has happened on the episode up to this point. Either this will lead the group to dismiss the proposed dishonest hypothesis, but in the opposite direction, they will see the situation differently and come up with something (and this happens almost every week) that does include all of the symptoms. Again, Dr. House or his team can literally uncover to produce a substantiable diagnosis. ("Everybody lies," is Dr. House's motto, and this is partly for medical semiotics as it is for semiotics as a whole. In other words, everybody in semiotics lies – a position consistent with meruelo's comments about semiotics as fundamentally the study of lying (1976).)
Hooper" (1836: 38). The “one thing remarkable in his appearance,” the narrator adds, is “Swathed about his shoulders and hands does he dress, so that he might be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil.”

As is found in film, the narrator appears capable of zooming in on the minister for “closer” inspection, which is a standpoint conducive to decoding possibility, all this does is increase the semantic distortion of the sign vehicle, rather than clarifying it. Without detailing how this perspectival shift is accomplished, the narrator goes on that “on a nearer view,” the veil “seemed to consist of two folds of crepe, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but not so interposed that his interlocutor had further to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things.” The emphasis on conjecture is clear here, as the narrator refers to these decodings as actions of “semiotic functions” that are “invisibles.”

The narrator continues to freight his description of Mr. Hooper with connotative accretions, noting that he is walking “with this gloomy shade before him—at a slow and quiet pace, stooping sometimes, and kneeling on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men” (1836: 38). So, now the register here is one of gloom and abstraction, the latter of which appears to refer rather to distance. Either the narrator is engaging in the common technique of reflecting the consciousness of the onlookers instead of providing the reader with straightforward, omniscient perspective, or the narrator is merely perceiving Mr. Hooper negatively.

In either case, though, the impression signified by Mr. Hooper is increasingly steered away from a positive, or even neutral, perspective. Although Mr. Hooper’s face “was entirely unconscious of the feelings,” “in his usual ministrations (41).” The narrator registers an “indecipherable look,” with this synecdoche apparently intended to signify a knowing, “or even a profound” (1836: 40). This challenge to the parishioners’ decodings is borne out by writerly intervention in the act of reading. The narrator “seemed to consist of two folds of crepe,” “one person remarks. “I don’t like it”, another mutters. “He has changed himself into something awful, only by his own face”. “Our person has gone mad”, yet another cries.”

Indeed, like the decoding of unintelligible stimuli as “noise” (see the Barthes and Attali work in this regard, for example, their discussion of “noise” (see the Barthes and Attali work in this regard, for example, their discussion of “noise” or “signal”). The character itself becomes a metaphor for the same.

The primary consideration remains on the impact on the decoder who finds Mr. Hooper’s transmissions most difficult to make sense of by the veil. Even though he is delivering his usual, “mild” sermon: there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it more a laborious effort that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of his eyes and his voice. The subject had reference to secret sins, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our own self-consciousness, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. (1836: 40)

The narrator maintains that through the veil as a semiotic screen, the audience becomes “breathed into his words,” turning what is ostensibly a generic sign-vehicle into one that is seemingly targeted toward each individual decoder (admittedly, an already common response among such audiences for this “speech genre” [Bakhtin]). “Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened heart, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded insinuations of deed or thought.” The narrator notes that in the course of the sermon, “there was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, or in his voice or gesture, while nevertheless "with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked." An unspoken pathos came hand in hand with one so weak. So sensible were the audience of some unworded truths that, of course, his congregation, since they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stronger voice would be discovered, through the form, gesture, and voice, were those of Mr. Hooper. The parishioners found themselves experiencing “indiscernible confusion” and even “amazement,” noting to themselves as well feeling “consonant with the moment they lost sight of the black veil.” The veil, it could be said, again heightens attention to the opacity – not genuine translucence, and certainly not transparency – characteristic of such sign vehicles in the act of signification. Every sign when “manhandled” (Barthes) by the decoder is treated in this manner, in other words, as a “semblance of significance rather than significance itself.”

This challenge to the parishioners’ decoding expertise diminishes as they offer interpretive frameworks that gain purchase. “A few of them shook in their superlative horror, imagining that they could penetrate the mystery” and even “one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper’s eyes were like a night sifted by the midnight lamp,” as to “require a shade” (1836: 40:41). This “naturalization” of the veil’s (also in Barthes’s sense) clearly alters its register, rendering it no longer an imposing threat to the minister’s audience. Narrativization rescues the veil from the realm of the unintelligible, in other words, transferring it into one that safely harbours the practice of storytelling. To the narrator, Hooper becomes visible as someone “with a veiled face,” with this synecdoche apparently responsible for the “strange and bewildered looks” with which his parishioners “rejoiced” him as he engages in his usual ministrations (41). The narrator registers an enigmatic response from the parishioners by framing the minister’s departure from the scene in a semiotically obscure manner, as a visual “disappearance,” and at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the mask of a face that flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

Yet the response from the group is much more decidedly negative, as indicated by the remarks of “a lady” who says to her companion, “There was a simple black veil, such as any women might wear on her bonnet, should she want to make herself look a little more dignified.” Yet another remarks: “It was strange to observe, how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the case of Mr. Hooper” (1836: 38). The “one thing remarkable in his appearance,” the narrator adds, is “Swathed about his shoulders and hands does he dress, so that he might be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil.”

After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happily a health to his bride. “It is better,” he said, in a strain of mild pleasantness that ought to have heightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. And at that instant, when the figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shook, and he seized some untransformed wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil. (44)

In order for the townsfolk to satisfactorily decode this resistant signifier, a group was changed with the task to “put to the test the accuracy of their observations, and to test their ability to identify a privileged signified – the fact of Reverend Mr. Hooper’s face being or not being a commodity.” The primary consideration remains on the impact on the decoder who finds Mr. Hooper’s transmissions most difficult to make sense of by the veil. Even though he is delivering his usual, “mild” sermon: there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it more a laborious effort that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of his eyes and his voice. The subject had reference to secret sins, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our own self-consciousness, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. (1836: 40)

This extra-signifying capacity is arguably what impels the community members to bring it into the realm of fixed signification, one way or another. “There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper’s forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid brow, on which shone a glimmering of a melancholy smile,” we are told. “But that piece of crepe, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and his wife. There was the veil that side, they might speak freely of it, but not till then”
can (including the presumed class of signs deemed transparently "iconic").

Mr. Hooper nevertheless endeavours to engage in this very procedure, but the impact of infinite semiosis cannot be overcome. "This veil is a type and a symbol," he says (by way of the speech genre of what is assumed to be an "explanation"); "I am bound to wear it, even, for a black veil, saith darkness, in solemnly and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This damask shade must separate me from the world; even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!" (1836: 46).

When Mrs. Hooper asks her husband to decode the veil’s signified for her, she draws upon an explicitly semiotic framework, although expressing it in the semiotic idiom of "do"

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On the upper lefthand corner someone had scrawled the phrase: THE NEXT BUILDING I PLAN TO BOMB. Harry unfolded the paper and saw an inked drawing of what appeared to be a sizable train station or some other public structure, perhaps an airport terminal. In the drawing were arched windows and front pillars but very little other supporting detail. The building looked solid, monumental, and difficult to destroy. (1997: 65)

Harry then shows it to other people. The office receptionist says: “You’ve got to take it to the police...This is dangerous. This is the work of a maniac. That’s La Guardia, there! The picture! In the picture! I was there last month. I’m sure it’s La Guardia, Mr. Edmonds. No kidding. Definitely La Guardia”.” (1997: 68)

Harry’s girlfriend: “Lucia examined the soiled paper, her thumb and finger at its corner, and said, “Well, Harry, what are you going to do with this? Some nut case did this, right?” (1997: 66)

At the police station: Sergeant Burks, asked, “Mr. Edmonds, you got any kids?”

“Kids? No, I don’t have kids.” Why?

“Kids did this,” Sergeant Burks told him, waving the paper in front of him as if he were driving it off. “My kids could’ve done this. Kids do this. Boys do this. They draw. Just kids. That’s what they do. It’s the youth. But they’re kids. They don’t...”

Harry’s “kid” Harry meets in a bar: “Kids did this,” Sergeant Burks told him, waving the paper in front of him as if he were driving it off. “My kids could’ve done this. Kids do this. Boys do this. They draw. Just kids. That’s what they do. It’s the youth. But they’re kids. They don’t...”

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The “kid” Harry meets in a bar: “I know this fucking place—I’ve, like, traveled, you know, all over Europe. This is in Europe, this place, this is fucking Deutschland we’re talking about here...Oh, yeah, I remember this place. I was there, two summers ago! Hamburg! This is the Dammtor Bahnhof.”

“Never heard of it,” Harry Edmonds said.

“Never heard of it, you cause you’ve never been there, correct. You have to fucking be there to be know about it.” The kid squished his eyebrows together like a professor making a difficult point. “A building—no, it’s a main station, and the Dammtor Bahnhof is, like, one of the stations there, and this is the one that the Nazis rounded up the Jews to. And, like, sent them out from. This place, man. Absolutely. It’s still standing. This one, it fucking deserves to be tore down. Just blow it totally the fuck away, off the face of the earth. That’s just my opinion. It’s evil, man.” (1997: 68-69)

And, finally, Harry’s therapist: “This... This building!.. Oh, it’s the Field Museum, in Chicago. And that’s not a theory. It is the Field Museum” (1997: 72).

The decoding conviction in these semiotic assessments of the text is implicit in all but the last, in which the therapist’s follow-up comment draws attention to that feature of the previous ones, and employs the “lastword” technique to draw out this implication in the text.

Significantly, Harry never offers his own interpretation of the found text except to make his own drawing—and this is clearly anticipated by the process of semiotic deferral characterized by some semioticians: “In so far as the hand signs night and no. 2 pencil. At the top of the pad, Harry writes, ‘The next place I plan to bomb,’ and then very slowly, and with great care, begins to draw his own face, its smooth clear shaven contours, in courteous halfsmile” (1997: 71).

It is revealing, too, that Harry reconstructures the original drawing and recreations of his own drawing, emphasizing the personal, contributive, constructive nature of decoding by substituting himself for the building in the original drawing and alternately titling his own drawing as “The Next Place I Plan to Bomb,” thereby turning the unspecified link between the original’s drawing and linguistic text into, in this case, a personal decoding rendition signaled by “calligraphy” (Simpkins 1989). This is exactly what happens in decoding as well.

Harry is the only respondent, however, who acknowledges this reality of the process of decoding while the other characters seem to (or explicitly say) “objectively” draw upon their personal experience to determine what the drawing represents, injecting biographical frames into the process without acknowledging this. The whim of other presumably similar texts that are blowing about haphazardly at the end of the story (just as they were at the beginning) virtually paraphrases the endless referential slippage of semiotics in which one of them may again attach itself to yet another decoder, setting off the operation of semiotic interpretation yet again. Additionally, Baxter’s narrator has only limited omniscience, as is suggested by the drawing description, and more importantly the open conjecture about Harry’s subsequent actions at the end where the narrator suggests several possibilities of his next step.

One way that the “communal” decoding standards that Fish discusses may be realized is through public rule dissemination based on the presumption that all institutionally sanctioned decoders agree to act in accordance with these rules. Nevertheless, this is only an artificial distinction and in no way consistent with reality, as Harry discovers when no two decoders offer the same decoding of the text he shows them. As Harry’s actions reveal, it is only when boundaries are constructed and agreed upon that they have any sort of real force. Culler used as an illustration of this in a graduate course on semiotics, the airport security signs that at one time (pre-9/11 in the US) declared that even any apparent jokes about having a bomb, etc. would be decoded as serious utterances. This creates an institutionally constructed and regimented form of what Hodge and Kress call a “reception regime” (1988) which, among other things, delegates the ability to decide whether something is considered offensive to the decoder but not the encoder.

A related illustration of this type of decoding strategy is found in Roland Barthes’s apparent assertion that some sign vehicles can only be decoded as signifiers without a signified. Essentially, though, he breaks the magician’s code of maintaining professional secrecy when he explains the illusion behind decoding by revealing how something that appears to be non-specific, signifying can be hardly translated into the realm of the intelligible through the process of artful decoding.

Barthes’s paired decodings offer a striking example, however, in as the cross-referencing punctuation does not establish an either/or opposition (e.g., a case of this or that), but rather, an oscillation around mutually inclusive possibilities, with only two among many other decoding options. Additionally, the placement of this example at the end of Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes is with no apparent figure is also puzzling. What exactly is the reader supposed to make of this paratext (if that is what it is)? Is it like the abrupt codex to Herman Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener” in which the narrator offers a satisfactory, although uncertain, perhaps the best, decoding of Bartleby’s malady? Or, is it like Poe’s narrator (discussed earlier) when he finally comes up with a reading that crystallizes a decoding, yielding a sharp focus that renders intelligible the otherwise inscrutable stranger?

This article will be continued in the next issue of the SRB 20.1 (2013).
after Queen Alexandra Victoria, who was her godmother. In 1863 she married Sir William, the Earl Welby. Lady Welby lacked formal education. She studied on her own through, among other things, travelling, reading and experiencing life with her mother as a child and later on through her extensive correspondence, Lady Welby communicated with 450 interlocutors, who were to make up the ‘Welby Circle’. Lady Welby’s intellectual work was very much developed in dialogue with others.

Starting 1875–80 Lady Welby expanded her correspondence significantly and it came to include a wide range of interests, and many important names within contemporary philosophy such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Henri L. Bergson, Michel Bréal, Ralph von Carnap, Thomas A. Huxley, Henry and William James, Charles K. Ogden, Bertrand Russell, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, George Bernard Shaw and Ferdinand Tönnies. Last but not least, Lady Welby’s correspondence with women such as Lucy L. Clifford and Mary Everst Boole was important for her intellectual work. With the former, for example, Welby discussed the issue of identity, and in a polemic with positivism advocated a relational and semiotic perspective (1861). Welby’s understanding of subjectivity involves the idea that it is dialogical in nature and as such a result of the interplay between “a plurality of selves” (1849). Peirce expressed much the same view in his conception of ‘tuism’, however, as “a plurality of selves” (149). Peirce expressed much the same view in his conception of ‘tuism’. However, as “a plurality of selves” (149).

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Welby’s triad indicates three levels of meaning:

1. **Firstness** is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third. **Secondness** is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other. (in Pettrelli, 396).

In the early essay "Meaning and Metaphor" (1893) and "Interpretation" (1896) that preceded What is meaning? Welby was specifically occupied with the problem of language, meaning and interpretation.

In any case, meaning – in the wider sense such as ‘sense’ or meaning – is the only value of whatever “fact” presents itself to us. Without this, to observe and record appearances or occurrences would become mere valueless, even worthless task. Significance is the one value of all that consciousness brings, or that intelligence deals with; the one value of all that is a response to any word (or in broader sense, to any sign), is at stake throughout these writings. As Pettrelli (141) writes:

“Significance” marks the verb “to signify” what or how. It evidences the dual semantic valency of the concept of meaning, linguistic and valuative; and different from “semantics” and “semiotics”, it was completely free from technical associations.

However, as we have seen, Peirce viewed Welby’s triad as part of logic but Welby insisted (in a letter to Peirce on the 18th Nov. 1903) that “Significs”, as a philosophy

Welby defined in comprehensive terms significance for conveying meaning to any word (or in broader sense, any sign), and not just at stake throughout these writings. As Pettrelli (141) writes:

Welby’s approach to the problem of meaning is closest to that of the logistic of the Aristotelian school, and the concept of meaning as a code can be read in "What is meaning?" (Pettrelli, 267). However, a different phase of Welby’s work, and moves away from the religious sphere to problems of scientific matter, such as modern semiotics, as for instance: “Is there a Break in the Light of Significs?" (Sept. 1890) and "An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution" (Dec. 1890). Welby also anticipated a specific field of modern semiotics, namely biosemiotics, or "global semiotics" (the latter paper contains references to Darwin, among others), with "her studies on the relation between signs and life, signs and evolution" (129). And she anticipated the branch of "semioethics" of the Bari school, introduced by Pettrelli and Augusto Pontici.

Another genre important for Welby’s mode of expression was the ‘Welby Prize’ for the best essay in the journal of the Aristotelian Society, Anthropological Institute, and the Sociological Society. Pettrelli has meritoriously introduced Welby’s many works, in particular, her studies on the relation between signs and life, signs and evolution" (129). And she anticipated the branch of "semioethics" of the Bari school, introduced by Pettrelli and Augusto Pontici.

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of ‘significance’ (the third level of her meaning), was to be regarded as a ‘practical extension’ of ‘signification’ (the second level). While Platonist structuralism and Peirce’s semiotic philosophy highlight the pragmatic-operational and evaluative/dimension of sign activity in human signifying processes (272). Another letter to Peirce dated 19 Jan. 1909, she set side by side the terms ‘significa’ and ‘semiotic’ (as used by Peirce) in order to underline her own focus on the ethical, aesthetic and what today is identified as the ideosynthetic dimension of human sign activity in contrast to what she thought to be a ‘purely descriptive approach to studies on language, knowledge and expression’ in contrast to what she had underlined in her monograph Signific and Significance (1911), where the connection of signs to values is stressed as the ‘ultimate aim of significs’ (281). An important point to note is that Peirce also devoted much attention to the language of Time on Space to be otherwise independently proved, it appears to me that circumstances which were inexpressible infallibly drive those two persons to the expression of temporal relations through their analogy with spatial relations. [...] I therefore imagine the method took rise between two persons who met and endeavoured to communicate partly by words and partly by signs. Those persons would be together with a common spatial environment, which was visible, and in which it would be possible to come out by gesture. It would therefore be particularly easy to form a terminology for spatial relations. [...] Hence, if you do not assume a dependence of Time on Space to be otherwise independently proved, it appears to me that circumstances which were inexpressible infallibly drive those two persons to the expression of temporal relations through their analogy with spatial relations. [...] To the race-motherhood there is and can be no difference in existential reality between the past and the future any more than between a mile just left behind and a mile just entered upon (in Petrilli, 399). These lines suffice to illustrate the divergent views on time of Welby and Peirce. However, Welby was not alone in viewing time as being dependent on space. The French contemporary philosopher Henri Bergson, for instance, held a similar view, as well as the Englishman John F. Stuart (1903–1905). Now, the issue of time was dealt with before her essay of 1907 in her correspondence, and appended excerpts from it may give some idea of how she showed in the discussion. Note here are comments on Welby’s papers by W.R. Sorley (also from 1903–1905) which touch upon themes mixed by Peirce in his problem of the connection between language, mind and the state of things in the world. Sorley asks: What is the ground of this assertion that time is a derivative from space? Am I right in saying that the only argument is the philological that time cannot be obtained without space and space without time? I have not elsewhere seen so complete a working out of the idea of space-time. But the question remains: does the fact that the time-concept is expressed in language in terms of space prove that man has a conception of time prior to experience? May not the spatial expression be due simply to the greater permanence or fixity of space, not to its actual presence in experience? (in Petrilli, 404) Welby, in a letter to Sorley (from 1903–1905), continues by saying “that it is change and not time which like space is primordial” (406). And further on: “Again, he [Prof. Adams] evidently leans definitively towards the view that time and space ought never to be coupled as they are, since it seems that the relations of the different field is dependent upon space but not conversely” (406). The discussion on time, which is here accounted for, to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic to some extent at least, illustrates Welby’s polyphonic
The connection between Mother-sense and Semiotics may be put like this: Primal Sense is what takes up and supplies to us the material of immediate awareness, conscious and interpretative. It is thus at once primordial and universal, at all stages of human development [...]. (In Petrilli, 574)

However, as Welby stresses in the same paper, "the greatest of all special gifts, the rationalising Intellect: which has not only to criticize, but also to reason out and construct from, the domains of Mother-sense - its warnings, its insights and insights, its revelations, its swift reading of worth, its penetrative reality" (In Petrilli, 574). If we look at Peirce’s discussion in an undated manuscript published in Collected Papers with the title "Forms of Consciousness," we may establish some possible links to Lady Welby:

Feeling is the momentarily present contents of consciousness taken in its pristine simplicity, and might be called primisense. Altersense is the consciousness of a directly present other, withstandings us. Malisense is the consciousness of a threefold, or medium between primisense and altersense, leading from the former to the latter. It is the consciousness of a process of bringing to mind: [...] Altersense has two modes, Sensation and Will. Malisense has three modes, Abstraction, Suggestion, Association. (C.P. 2:55; in Petrilli, 577)

One is tempted to connect Welby’s notions of mother-sense and common meaning through Peirce’s definition of altersense, and in doing so, establish a link (at least in some respects) between the former term, in its turn, to this triad of Peirce (as mother-sense gives rise to the “rationalising Intellect,” also called “father reason,” with which it is in a dialectical relationship). Petrilli, on the basis of the correspondence between Welby and Peirce, extends these connections, when writing: “Opening the ethical sphere before and beyond the strictly cognitive, with Peirce scientific rigor in reasoning is connected to mother-sense and to agnostic logical procedure, with Welby to mother-sense. In fact, to recover the relation between logic, sense and values means to conceive the possibility of extending logic beyond its strictly cognitive boundaries in the direction of ethics and aesthetics, or what we propose to call ‘semiotics’” (580).

"Mother-sense" and "father reason" are also valid in evolutionary terms. However, mother-sense does not exclusively exist in women (although it finds its most elaborate expression in women), but is present in both sexes, as is father reason analogously (584). Petrilli concludes: “Original, primal, mother-sense converges with the capacity to engender signifying processes at the highest degrees of otherness, creativity and responsibility [...]. From this point of view, Welby’s significa with its special focus on the conjunction between life, language and sense in all senses, prefigures present-day trends in the sign sciences, which now at last come together with the life sciences and ethics.”

Petrilli has also included some interesting hitherto unpublished manuscripts that Lady Welby wrote between 1903 and 1910 dealing with the issue of selfhood. Petrilli shows that Welby took a similar position in this question as Peirce by regarding the self as consisting of “sign material, verbal and nonverbal” which entails that the subject is in a constant state of becoming, as a result of its signcharacter and therefore in an ongoing process in the interpersonal and interpersonal dialogic interrelationship with other sign(s) (610).

In conclusion, Petrilli achieves her aim in this book of giving an outline of Lady Welby’s “thought system” (with a specific focus on Welby’s studies on Semiotics) on the basis of her selected writings. At the same time, Signifying and Understanding will greatly assist and inspire those who would like to extend this line of inquiry. Petrilli’s work in the archives is priceless for the research field, not only concerning Significs, but also of semiotics and semantics. However, Petrilli’s outlining of Welby’s “thought system” might have gained from a more rigorous editing, as the reader is from time to time interrupted by the many appended texts within Petrilli’s compelling discussions. These appendices might have been assembled at the end of the chapters, or preferably perhaps at the end of the book.

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References


2010 McLAREN-LAMBART AWARD


The journal is delighted to be acknowledged as the publisher of this prize-winning essay. It may be found online in the SRB Archives at http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/.

This article renews the idea of animation as a precursor to the cinematic form, drawing on research into the works of one of its historical progenitors, Emile Reynaud. This is a deconstructionist text that references related arguments from the author, providing a deeper excavation of the contention that “cinema is animation,” while offering a detailed account of Reynaud’s pre-film work. The selection committee was comprised of Tom Klein (Chair), Richard Stampa, Chris Carter, Adam de Beer, and Romana Turina. Dr. Cholodenko is former Head of Department and Senior Lecturer in Film and Animation Studies at the University of Sydney, where he now holds the title of Honorary Associate.

The McLaren-Lambart Award is an annual honour bestowed by the Society for Animation Studies (S.A.S.) to one of its members, recognizing an outstanding contribution made to animation studies in the previous 2 years. Tracing the origins of this prize to a collaborative award with Canada’s National Film Board, it is named for NFB animators Norman McLaren and Evelyn Lambart.

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This review essay is a series of musings inspired by a recent volume by Basarab Foa titled Cybersemiotics: Why information is not enough. It is almost ironic how instrumental rationality in the modern world seems to be at odds with mysticism and subjectivity via a pair of binary opposites. While acknowledging what the pure reason of modernity considered to be a supernatural act, any attempt to explain it was made into a concession of the same from the perspectives of the logic of explanation and causality. “Nature enough” the term normal has been habitually taken in its reductionistic sense of a linear direct cause-effect connection pertaining to a majority of modern sciences yet this discards the whole of Nature. The “prompt” conclusion arrived at by means of sylogistic reasoning was simple: either anomalous effect or anomalous cause. Brier’s volume not only problematizes this logic by bringing biosemiotics into discourse in science, but also breathes life into science per se.

Importantly, as Brier notices at the outset, his book is an extended and updated synthesis of many previously published articles from as early as 1992 and supersedes all of the others. He is motivated by the desire to create a knowledge paradigm independent from ideological concerns (I leave it to readers to decide whether it is ever possible or even desirable). Brier begins his “quest for cybersemiotics” (3) by revisiting cognitive revolution and the birth of research programs in information science against which he proposes to formulate a new transdisciplinary framework that combines “Peirce’s semantics, second-order cybernetics, Luhmann’s systems theory, cognitive semantics, and language game theory” (4). This is an ambitious project, and understandably my brief essay won’t be able to offer a fair review of and/or critique of all the areas addressed in the book.

My argument is that, contra Brier, information is very much enough – but if and only if we will have recontextualized it very much enough. In support of this I will invoke the cutting edge science of coordination dynamics (Kelso and Engstroem 2006) as well as the current program of transdisciplinarity developed and conducted by physicist and philosopher Basarab Nicolescu. I think that both sources not only can but should inform contemporary research in semiotics. Brier freely fluctuates between different discourses (social science, natural science – especially biology, philosophy – especially phenomenology but with a twist of metaphysics – linguistics etc.) under the following motto: “I am presenting a new theory; clearly, then, I am not fully satisfied with old theories. Yet each of these older theories provides useful concepts that have helped me in my search for a framework broad enough to encompass our present experience and knowledge” (5).

The blend of old and new theories is seen in the titles of the book’s three chapters, which occupy nearly 503 pages and include the following: (slightly paraphrased for brevity). “The Problem of the Informations-Processing Paradigm as a Candidate for a Unified Science of Information”; “The Self-Organization of Knowledge”; “An Ethnological Approach to Cognition”; “Bateson’s Concept of Information in Light of the Theory of Auto-poiesis”; “von Foerster’s Concept of Information and Communication”; “Enfolded Metaphors”; “Integration of Uweltwhol, Ethology, and Peircean Biosemiotics”; “An Evolutionary View on the Threshold between Semiosis and Information Exchange”; “The Emergence of the Idea of Information, Signification, Cognition, and Communication”; “The Five-Level Cybersemiotics.” In addition, Brier offers a chapter on the practical problem of information and documentary representation, where the claims, are subsumed by means of cybersemiotics.

The overall paradigm that assists Brier in developing his new theory is Peirce’s triadic semiotics but the sources are many. Here are the few: Bertalanffy, Bohm, Delys, Emmeche, Gadamer, Heidegger, Hoffmeyer, Hesse, Husserl, Jamm, Lakoff and Johnson, Lorenz, Merletz-Fouty, Noth, Popper, Rues, Ruesch, Sebok, Spencer-Brown, Suzuki, Varella, Wiener, Wittgenstein.

Among Brier’s extensive endnotes I would like to single out one, an extended footnote concerning how Jean-Henry Heuze’s masterwork Magister Ludi also known as the Glass Bead Game and which is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of the whole of Nature not unlike the organ pipes on the organ. However the range of this magisterial ‘organ’ is the entire intellectual cosmos and, hence, is capable of reproducing, at least in theory, the full intellectual content of the universe.

The game is played with ‘ideas’ like with musical notes in a fugue and partakes of the new symbolic language that can simultaneously represent the structure immanent to the ideas it expresses; as well as having its own means of symbolic, albeit hierarchic, expression. Brier concludes that “Magister Ludi is a manifesto for the reintegration of intellectual life with the real world, of intellectual and mycetic enlightenment with practice…” We are in serious need of a broader global view of knowledge and enlightenment to individuals as well as in society” (443).

The word “enlightenment” in this context seems, however, to be slightly problematic. Rather than using as a specific word that traditionally highlights reason as the over-rationalized progress of modern thought, I think that creative postmodern illumination will have captured Brier’s idea better. Indeed, Peice (as Brier’s major intellectual inspiration) appears to be first post-modem (post-postmodern) philosopher (Dewey 2001; Griffin 1993) and his semantics as the science of signs partakes of post-modern critique of the Cartesian subject who stays forever separated from the world of objects that he can observe with the cool gaze of an independent spectator, a scientist, informed by the positivist paradigm stemming from modernity’s culture of Enlightenment.

The triadic nature of a Peircean sign, however, makes a “scientific observer” the very participant in the process of semiosis. A genuine sign such as encompasses a triad comprising, as John Dewey said, “the observer, the observing, and the observed” (Dewey 1991: 97). The act of observing plays the role of a Peircean interpretant: knowledge is embodied in action making a transaction defined as an “unfractured observation” (BHD3) the minimal unit of analysis. Such participation in the reality of what is produced was indeed a distinguished feature of mystical, pre-modern, thought. In this regard, Brier is right to underscore that “complementarity” (Peirce quoted in Brier, 382). As Niels Bohr who coined the term “complementarity” pointed out, the extremes of materialism and mysticism alike must be avoided (Peirce’s distinction). Such a notion of materialism and mysticism makes a “scientific observer” the very participant the Peircean interpretant: knowledge is embodied in action making a transaction defined as an “unfractured observation” (BHD3) the minimal unit of analysis. Such participation in the reality of what is produced was indeed a distinguished feature of mystical, pre-modern, thought. In this regard, Brier is right to underscore that “complementarity” (Peirce quoted in Brier, 382). As Niels Bohr who coined the term “complementarity” pointed out, the extremes of materialism and mysticism alike must be avoided (Peirce’s distinction).

Herman Hesse’s conceptualizations are Peircean to the core. The boundary between science and mysticism is blurred when both conflate to form unitary “evolutionary cosmology, in which all regularities of nature and mind are regarded as products of growth” (Peice quoted in Brier, 382). As Niels Bohr who coined the term “complementarity” pointed out, the extremes of materialism and mysticism alike must be avoided (Peirce’s distinction).

Brier concludes his book by telling his readers that he “developed an informational theory that accepts several “levels of existence” (347). In this respect it has cybersemiotic promise. However, the theory of complexity science as a broad contemporary paradigm applicable to natural and socio-cultural systems alike (cf. Callers 1998, Byrne 1998). What is the governing dynamic of multifielded systems? It is the joint effect of the three factors, that is, the founder of general systems theory, who was first to address the insufficiency of analytical procedures of classical science based on linear causes-and-effects. The two basic variables are an attraction to our “new categories of interaction, transaction, teleology” (1972: xix) as problematizing the old mechanistic paradigm.

The interactions between more than the two objects create, sure enough, an unsolvable problem – but only within the equations of classical mechanics, at the level of Peirce’s classical semiotics. Interactions pertain to Peircean Thirdness, to the evolutionary process of semiotics and signs-becoming othersigns in the process. Brier’s volume, in contrast, elaborates on the acquisition of meaning. Importantly, the “interactions do not have to be physical, they can also be thought of as a transference of information” (Gilliers 1998: 3).

Such transference is the defining feature of the new science of coordination dynamics as a paradigm for “The Complementary Nature” which is also the title of the book by L.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstroem (2006). While Peice’s genuine sign represents a self-referential semiotic structure, it was “sentence and self-reference” (4) that have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries. (2006: 253) Italics mine. Kelso and Engstroem use a sqiggle, “””, for pinpointing the salient, the symbolic punctuation for reconciling the apparently diaphanous opposites and assert that in “the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy” matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self” (2006: 233). A self-referential relations is what establishes an ontological correlation between/across the different levels constituting a complex system.

Different disciplines have their own complementary pairs that, rather than being alien to each other in the manner of Cartesian dualism, are connected via what Kelso and Engstroem specify and present as coordination dynamics. Among complementary pairs in which the terms are related, or coordinated in a bi-polar interdependent manner are the following: cause-effect; so-called ‘reality externalism, rationalism empiricism, science humanities; organism environment; immuance transcendence; body mind; nature nurture; yin yang becoming; certainty uncertainty; material spiritual; and so on ad infinitum.

Different “selfother” (self and selfother) pair belong to the variety of discourses, their communality derived from the same relational dynamics, which is “contained” in the logic of the included middle. Brier’s one chief “enemy” is logic – but I think we should be careful here to not confuse the logic of the eschual middle that continues to haunt us since the time of Aristotle with the creative logic of the included middle (cf. Semetsky 2008) as foundational for semiotics understood as the science of signs; notwithstanding the fact that the same logic was also a province of mystical experiences (even if unknown to mystics per se).

The included middle is grounded in the relational dynamics enabled by likeless sympathy correspondence, or any other relations established between different levels of reality, Peice, for example, emphasized the utility of likeness to mathematicians and compared an algebraic formula to an iconic sign, rendered such by the rules of communciation, association and distribution of the symbols. Such an unorthodox logic as semiotics (really, a contradiction in terms within a strictly analytic reasoning) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman calls virtual, or archaic, logic “that goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility” (Kauffman 1996: 293) as well as beyond given signs to an area of interpretable symbols, meanings and values. The emphasis on communication indicates that there is an interdependent network in which each level acts as ‘speaks’ to each other, desperately trying to understand each other’s expressive potential. The apparent dichotomies and antinomies of ‘either or’ mental thinking are transcended and traversed by virtue of the “both-and” science of coordination dynamics equally applicable to natural and social-cultural systems that together are embedded in a flow of semiosis. The infamous ‘observer’ (one or many) comprising the
human experience per se, would be "located" precisely at this included middle-in-between what appears to us as two disparate Cartesian substances of body and mind.

As Deely points out, "at the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience is a se-miotic event, a structuring of our personal and collective lives. That structure is mediated and sustained by signs" (Deely 1990: 5). The levels in the complex semiotic system are not immediately connected with each other but mediated by the intermediary of the third category; the generic "interpretant", either human or non-human; and, it is the mediation or interpretation that enables the emergence of signs, which are "a part of nature not observable, Peircean Engstrom 2006: 101), to self-organize. A sign is not a sign used by a system "to coordinate itself" (Kelso and Johnstone 2003: 100), which is contrasted with the Peircean triad would be represented by a complementary pair with the Peircean triadic sign. Noth (1995: 90-91) brackets in original). Indeed, as physicist and cosmologist John Archibald Wheeler stated, all physical things are information-theoretically original.

Therefore we may consider matter, energy and information "intertwined" in a self-referential, "nonlocal" in the natural science and computational mathematics sense. Information is everywhere and has been present since the beginning "about meaning engendered when signs are in their act of becoming signs, a becoming that includes sign interpretant as participants acting in the very semiotic process of becoming" (Merrell 1995: 10).

As Luszo comments, this invited field named everything (E) by the physicist David Deutsch (E) of virtual particles – a zero-point field also called the quantum vacuum is "everywhere while the observable visible world just floats on its surface. Vacuum or nothingness does not make the cut" according to Merrell (1995), the three Peircean onto/ontological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, require the existence of the quantum vacuum holding them together, the as yet undifferentiated "field within which semiosis plays out its drama" (Merrell 1995: 217), acknowledged by Peirce as pre-Firstness or nothingness. Still, it is this apparent nothingness as a virtual potential informational field [that produces effects, and these can be perceived] (Deely 2004/2007: 7); it is in a Peircean pragmatic sense an "idea" of the observable, sensible, world in which we live.

Luszo's field not only has no direct causal connection except for the relation of their signs being interwoven into a whole by means of the interconnecting network of quantum. Semiosis as such is this interconnected network of virtual signs full of implicit information that continuously change their mode of expression in fluctuating between polar opposites. Thereby, among bipolar complementary pairs there should also be a relation described as novatory correspondence. The structural coupling of 'matter-energy describing the physical world is necessarily grounded in the logic of the included middle representation and its informational content. In this way, we can state with certainty that 'information is not enough'. Information is just right: It is on the basis of this information that the universe comprises its own dynamical evolution and its informational content explains the actual realization potential as the computation proceeds.

In the universe pervaded by signs information and computation are everywhere: it is all there is! The information is potentially active everywhere, yet "it is actually active, only where and when it can form a field of its own..."" (Binh and Hiley 1995: 30). The complex semiotic universe must express itself in a dual mode of matter and energy. Luszo points out that "most information is impossible to perceive" up to the current information, it is "...manner in which the flow of semiosis is unlimitted with the Peircean triadic sign, Noth (1995: 90/91) presents a synopsis of a triadic sign tracing its definitions and disparate terminology from Plato, to Storge, to Foepe, to Peirce, to Ogden and Richards and notices that in order to construct a concrete semiotic triangle, in the
generic terms, signvehicle, sense, and referent, the path of mediation, represented by a dotted line between a signvehicle and a referent, must be present.

The coordinating relation (akin to the dotted line) is ubiquitous. Kelo and Engstrom, however, point to a set of discontinuities in knowledge, like physical laws in general, are matter-independent, they are function- and context-dependent; they govern (hence make relatively predictable) the "law of functional information" as non-linguistic entities in original. It is the coordination that produces meaning (or "sense" in Noth's triad). This means that musical, Neo-Platonic, 'equation' ...the framework of science of coordination dynamics; it is expressed in the form of another complementary pair, unity-diversity. Kauffman (2010) gives an example that unites one of the four waves of a band, which appears to be a paradoxical structure if not for understanding that it is the perspective of an observer and context that produce a paradox.

This also means that our very sentence is an emergent property and not rule-based, that it cannot be founded on merely propositional thought and logocentrism. Perhaps this is what Brier is getting at when he argues against computational logic. The attempt to differentiate regimes of signs becomes imperative and Leibniz's unfinished project must be completed. Kelo and Engstrom indicate the non-linguistic origins of intentional action. The project begins by Leibniz reflects the investigation of knowledge representation. In analytic philosophy the representational system presupposes a class of things represented which are not representations themselves, hence 'outside' language and outside the world. On account of this, poetic or personal, metaphorical language, which "represents" symbolically or indirectly via mediation, cannot be 'objective' in describing reality. But the reality is habitually taken as the empirically observable physical reality reduced as such to the level of the pristine Secondeus ignoring the fact that:

The Universe as an argument is necessarily a great work of art, a great poem - for every fine argument is a poem and symphony - just as every true poem is a sound argument. But let us compare it rather with a painting - with an impressionistic seashore picture - each one of the tiny colored particles of the Painting...The total effect is beyond our ken but we can appreciate in some measure the resultant Quality of parts of the whole (Poite, CP 5. 119 quoted in Brier, 384).

The make the total effect "our ken" we will have to realize Leibniz's project and to learn the signs' "silent discourse" (Semetsky 2010a).

To conclude, I would like to refer to the project of transcenduality addressed by Basarab whose book Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity was published in 2006. The Program of Nicolaus's Center for Transdisciplinary Research should become a valuable complement to any research project in semiotics. Nicolaus advocates overcoming the split between sciences and humanities and claims that the term 'transdisciplinarity' was initially coined by Jean Piaget in 1970 to indicate something across and between the disciplinary divides. Transdisciplinary knowledge belongs to what Nicolaus specifies as in vivo knowledge that exceeds scientific knowledge of the external world as independent from the subject. Bound to the internal world of human subjectivity, it necessarily includes a system of values and meanings exceeding objective facts alone. Yet, transdisciplinary knowledge does not reject science; what it rejects is scientism. Below is a Table 1 addressing disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge in this sense:

Table 1. Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary knowledge. Adapted and considerably developed in the context of this paper from Nicolaus at http://www.metanexus.net/conference2005/pdf/nicolaus.pdf (accessed 15 November, 2010).

Disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge stay in a complementary relation to each other. Disciplinary, in vivo, knowledge is based on the classical logic of the excluded middle that induces a separation between subject and object and reduces the meaning of knowledge to merely the facts of the external world. The new transdisciplinary or in vivo knowledge is founded on the logic of the included middle so that subject and object correspond to each other. They are in a triadic contra dualis relation; they are in correspondence (NFB Francisco Varela designated such a correspondence as a correspondence between two in a complex, autopoietic, that is, self-referential, system structured, sure enough, as a network of signs; Brier indeed acknowledges the importance of Varela's contribution to his cybersemiotics; see Index on p. 470).

Transdisciplinary knowledge is based on the logic where terms form a bipolar symmetry:elevenarity pair versus being binary opposites. In vivo knowledge is not a static knowledge of the facts per se but a dynamic understanding of meanings that by necessity brings in the dimension of values which is traditionally (in vivo) considered 'subjective', that is, located outside 'normal' science. Epistemology and ethics alike transcend the confines of an individual ego or Cartesian Cogito and cannot be separated from the collective, social, domain: the individual society, too, is a complementary pair in which the terms of the triadic relation sustain each other by the reconciling symbol "~". In the latest issue of the journal Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion, Nicolecus (2009: 2470) points out that "a new system of values can appear only through the dialogue between different domains of knowledge, between different cultures and different religions. This system does yet not exist."

I think that this ethical dimension should now become the core of semiotic research as in establishing what Noth has recently called "intercultural competence" (2010: 19) and which is an urgent matter in the present context that displays diverse "signs of the times" (Semetsky 2010b) amidst cultural conflicts and the clash of values at the global level. The language of signs that can 'speak' in characters denoting meanings and values - shared meanings and values - needs to be understood.

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The Future of Wikileaks

By Gary Genosko

Wikileaks provides a familiar glimpse into the future of networked knowledge. It is an effect of the slow erosion of the distinction between classified and declassified information. This erosion is the consequence of the manner in which documents are stored and accessed and the inability of their keepers to make guarantees about their security once digitally archived and networked. This is both familiar and startling at the same time.

Dutch digital culture expert Geert Lovink (2010) put it well. Last August, Wikileaks is more of a quantitative leap than a qualitative game changer. It provides the leaked materials as content courtesy of the source, the US Army soldier Bradley Manning, charged in May 2010 with leaking the Afghan War documents (after the hacker-informer Adrian Lamo turned him in; see Goldstein 2010), and does a reasonable job at presentation by offering a few pointers about the characteristics of the kinds of documents at issue, such as the difference between layers of classification, etc. It may edit these documents in some manner, and attempt to verify them, but it doesn’t generate a discourse or context of interpretation; it does provide access to original documents, however, which deepens reportage. For much of this it relies on its established journalist partners, especially The Guardian, Der Spiegel, El País, Le Monde, and on-and-off again The New York Times.

Make no mistake, Wikileaks is putting its shoulder squarely into the mountain of classified documents, and raises a few storms of dust, at least momentarily. Recent attempts to estimate the extent of classification of documents suggests that it outrips declassification by three to five times (Gulison 2004). Wikileaks cannot possibly catch-up and right this democratic deficit or keep pace in any serious way, despite its impressive stock of captured materials. Its sources are documents that are quantitatively arresting, but not in the context of what it is measured against, especially over time.

The fact that Wikileaks is so readily reducible to the figure of non-editor-in-chief Julian Assange is one of the reasons why as an organization it is vulnerable. Certainly, Assange has made some deals with blue chip mainstream news corporations and has a group of hackers - Anonymous - to defend his interests and counter-attack (via what they call a LOIC Low Orbit Ion Cannon type of DDoS attack under the rubric of ‘Operation Payback’) against the financial service sector players like MasterCard, VISA, and PayPal that have closed its accounts (and the blocking of that site for Library of Congress staff). Wikileaks’s counterassey that credit card companies like more stable revenue streams from porn and gambling is acute. Such is the result of disbelief, and unwieldy requirement because use of the LOIC is traceable and, as has been recently shown, not ‘anonymous’ for hacktivists at all (Peau et al 2010). Either this is a bad mistake and everybody downloading LOIC should have been warned or Wikileaks really believes in transparency at any cost.

The traits of these semiotic modalities are heterogeneous and scattered across the cybersphere, yet seem to lack a corporeal body. The offline bodies of the hackers working to further the Wikileaks adventure have not yet appeared in this drama. For Bifo, diverse elements of the cognitariat are self-organising and assembling a general intellect that doesn’t require, at least in its preliminary phases, an identifiable body, but rather coalesces semiotically around a common political project against state secrecy and for the catch and release of hitherto silenced knowledge. Against security—that is the timely call to the cognitariat to destabilize the master narrative of our time (Neoldous 2008), the critique of which exposes the kinds of subjectivities it produces and the violence it exercises.

The lesson of Wikileaks is not revealed in the content; we know that diplomats are paid to lie and that the military get paid for shooting civilians. But in the actuation of solidarity, complicity and collaboration between independent part-timers, between cognitive workers of various kinds: hardware technicians, programmers, journalists who work together and share the same goal of destabilising totalitarian power. From this lesson, the rebels find their way to self-organization of the general intellect.

Recourse to a revised Marxist concept of “general intellect” underlines how general human semiosis is mobilized by a self-organizing cognitariat, otherwise exploited within the extensive electronic networks of post-Fordist production, in defence of Wikileaks. The traits of these semiotic modalities are heterogeneous and scattered across the cybersphere, yet seem to lack a corporeal body. The offline bodies of the hackers working to further the Wikileaks adventure have not yet appeared in this drama. For Bifo, diverse elements of the cognitariat are self-organising and assembling a general intellect that doesn’t require, at least in its preliminary phases, an identifiable body, but rather coalesces semiotically around a common political project against state secrecy and for the catch and release of hitherto silenced knowledge. Against security—that is the timely call to the cognitariat to destabilize the master narrative of our time (Neoldous 2008), the critique of which exposes the kinds of subjectivities it produces and the violence it exercises.

The breakthrough into the world of classified information that Wikileaks has provided will need to be followed by more robust and sophisticated qualitative and, ultimately, actionable assessments of the dataset and the consequences of these interpretations will be the measure of this unfolding lesson for the sons and daughters of Wikileaks.

Gary Genosko is editor of The Semiotic Review of Books.

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