Interpretări şi aplicaţii semiotice

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The Virtues of Semiotics:
Attempts at a Descriptive Definition

Abstract. "What a chimera, then, is man!" wondered Blaise Pascal some time ago. We can state more explicitly such a question, as: "Why are humans human?" or "Why is human a «being of light»?" Methodologically speaking, in order to give a pertinent answer to the questions above, which are "language-objects" (fields of reference / philosophical interests) for a general theory of human beings' signs, we should necessarily define a "metalanguage" (namely a perspective / method within which to formulate our answers). With these considerations in view, we can appreciate that, at the interface with philosophy, the discipline corresponding here to the above-mentioned specific and main question is *semiotics*.

Keywords: semiotics, functional virtues, theory & methodology, philosophy, synergy.

1. From the "logic of heart" to the "logic of mind"

For a complete novice, we could define semiotics as the art of the human being to read, interpret and know two types of signs:

● those that allow us to find out what is hidden behind a tear or behind a smile, what the heart's faster or less fast beatings mean, what is the meaning of the paleness or blushing of the human face, and so on;

● those which reveal the causal reality existing behind the visible phenomena of the great and of the little cosmos, which elucidate the mystery of the possibility of communication of people with other people, with the world at large and, last but not least, with God.

By an even more suggestive detailing, we can say that semiotics is the science of humans' ability to recognize and associate, in the terms of a logic of the heart and / or of the mind, meanings adequate to the images of the world, of their fellow human beings and, finally, of their own faces.

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The aspiration to set up such a formal science that should be neither "cold" nor "rigid" has a precedent in Lady Welby's preoccupations, and results from a letter to Charles Peirce: "We need a word that could express the combination of logic and love. This is what I tried to express under the name of *sigmatics*" (cf. Deledalle, in Peirce 1978, 19). When attached to semiotics, this second name points out one of its reference characteristics: that of oscillating "between heart and mind" in its significance.

Resulting from this oscillation, the human being's images of the world are reflected in one and the same "magic mirror": that of understanding / (re)signifying the world. Apparently, the mere recognition of its own face reflected in water required whole millennia of epistemological struggle for human beings. Other millennia passed before the human being could understand the special virtues found in the instrument which revealed the world to him, before understanding that the "magic mirror" was susceptible of reflection itself. It is only at that moment that the human being truly became "*sapiens sapiens*", capable of understanding the sense of two myths that humans themselves created:

● *the myth of the cave*, describing the world as a dual, partly hidden, partly apparent reality that the human being can know only indirectly;

● *the myth of parallel mirrors*, according to which any image of the world has another one behind it, and then another one, and so forth.

Consequently, humans and world, humans and God reflect each other in an endless succession of false and ever more blurred images.

Each of the problems brought up by philosophy and considered here have benefited from the implicit and the explicit presence of semiotics, understood both as *theory and integrating methodology*[1]. The fact that semiotics has appeared in all discourse (communication) types, from casual conversation to scientific exposition, from the generic didactic approach to the specific philosophical dialogue, with which humans have operated historically, was not accidental at all. This happens because semiotics is equally characterized by a series of strengths and

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[1] This specific methodological opening comes from the entire experience of the author, acquired from work with the disciplines taught at the Faculty of Philosophy of "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iaşi, during the last years: the philosophy of creation, semiotics and applications of the semiotics' methods, the hermeneutics of the symbolic forms and the fundamentals of the symbolic communication, metaphilosophy and philosophical logic, the methodology of teaching philosophy, strategies of persuasive communication and publicity, etc.

weaknesses, which project it more and more to the center of debates in the scientific or / and philosophical community.

We present them briefly in the following, by valorizing the ideas already developed into another context (Stănciulescu 2004, 189-197).

2. Essential functions of the signifying process

The virtues shown by a careful and objective research in the world of signs using semiotic discourse result both from the very special importance of the tackled subject and from the special functions that semiotics assumes in its theoretical or / and applicative attempts to explain the cosmic and the human world.

2.1. The function of semantic representation

The quality of *homo significans* of the human being is statutory when applying the status of *sapiens*, *faber*, *loquens*, etc. In other words, we could not speak about human wisdom, its creative competence or its analytical virtues, outside *the human signifying capacity* to represent with sense, to denominate and to define basic sequences of the exterior and interior world. Or, more specifically, we could function only in particular forms of "thinking without language" (Stănciulescu 1996, 34-38), since *the symbolic and the semiotic function* (the capacity to represent something with sense) is compulsory when distinguishing the "consumable matter" (food, shelter etc.) from the "communicable matter" (tools, gestures, sounds, faces, words). As Wald remarks: "Human being is the first being not pleased with the assimilation' of nature and begins its «changing». Animals cannot transform the centers of interest their impulses come across into objects. For them, there is no difference between «object» and «subject», because, lacking language, they cannot distinguish space from time. For any animal, a thing that suffered modifications is *another* thing. Animals are capable of spatial detours, but not of temporal patience. Their intelligence does not allow them to retire in time and to discover what is constant in the variability of one thing" (1970, 7).

Animals act through trial and error, exhausting the variants for action until they solve the problem through an effort almost always allowed by their physical constitution. In contrast with these limits (but as possibilities as well) of animals, we can understand the virtues acquired by humans as beings that grew beyond animal nature, in the moment when humans acquired the signifying capacity (of the world / word). That

was the moment when the power of spiritual information (as a form of manifestation of negentropy) was really established over physical substance (submitted to natural entropy).

In summary, the appearance of sign as a paradoxical duality of a signified / physical substratum with a signifier / informational content represents the moment of inflection of the passage from animal to human.

This is not the context in which to analyze how this process was triggered, whether we prefer to think it through an internal evolution process (which does not seem to be able to restart / continue) or by an outer intervention. The sure thing is that this "gift" that the earthly or cosmic nature, or perhaps God, made to a being still incapable of conscious (self) knowledge, equals its baptism as a *human being*. This is why we can feel that we are not wrong when *we identify the moment of the apparition of consciousness with the apparition and control of the semiotic (symbolic) function*. By formulating such an identity, we define in fact the very core of semiotic discourse: *the possibility of the human being to generate "situations of semiotic communication"* (semioses). Because, as John Deely points out, "our whole experience from its simplest sensorial origins, to the most refined accomplishments in the field of understanding, is a network of relations among signs", "a mediated interpretative structure of signs and based on them" (1997, 5, 11). In other words, at the moment when humans were able to generate signs, we also used them in a communicational situation, either implicitly or explicitly.

As a corollary to the competencies for which the semiotic function accounts, we can mention now the human capacity to *act with sense*, that is rationally, and to *act efficiently,* by praxiologically orienting action for the purpose of the "work well done". Concluding that there is no absolute separation between intellectual and physical work, one implying the other, Tadeusz Kotarbinsky notes that: "In either case it is recommended, among others, *to plan in advance the stages of the action*, and in either case it is good to *realize from 'one move'* what someone less skilled succeeds in doing in a greater number of impulses" (1976, 22). Or, neither "planning" with anticipation, nor efficient "control" of actions is possible in the absence of signs:

- the intellectual plan is a mental (macro)sign of action;

- physical ability is the consequence of some previous (theoretical) informational and applicative accumulations, which could not be formulated, transmitted and preserved in the absence of a sign complex.

As a consequence, we can assess that *human performance in all its forms is a result of the human competence to efficiently generate and operate with signs*, and to operate semiotically.   In an unconditional sense, *any semiosis has a certain finality* as it becomes "referent" starting point for a new semiosis thus forming what Peirce called "endless semiosis" (1990). We shall continue by illustrating this cardinal conclusion with some other referential functions.

2.2. The function of the cultural signification of nature

By learning to translate the objects of the world into signs, human beings managed to give *a cultural significance to nature*. This performance was made possible by the most general sign system: *the language*. There is nothing that can be done and be human outside language, be it interior, implicit language that is often ignored or explicit language exteriorized into articulate words (verbal language), into gestures, plastic or musical representations (nonverbal language).

Let us consider the mutations of a history frustrated by the word: Babylon would have lacked the greatness of the tower that brought its fame, the "Greek miracle" would not have aroused the admiration of the generations to come, and the world would have probably been destroyed by a third world war. For these reasons, maybe we should give credit to the *creative dimension of the word*, which required the ancient magi to keep secret the names filled with divine power, and only whisper them once a year. If the *power of the word* to recreate the world by the mere reiteration of the cosmogonic scenario could be considered back then as an expression of magical thinking, nowadays it should be understood as a product of rational thinking, able to consciously shape new forms of existence by valorizing the creative valences of language. Without *the word* humans would have never become what we are; we would never have come close to our fellow humans by *will*, *sensitivity* and *reason*.

Since it is capable of such performances, the modern heuristic spirit returns to itself, to answer, in the terms of semiotic discourse, many questions of philosophy, such as: Where do the multiple forms of the "power of the word" come from? On what "heuristic bases" does language found its multiple performances? What is the mystery of the synergy of the 'creative languages' and what is the explanation for the feedback among the human creative means of expression, i.e. the spirit and the body? What are the reasons that stand at the basis of the efficient transformation of competence into performance, and what are the heuristic strategies meant to stimulate such efficiency?

2.3. The function of creative signification

The questions with philosophical connotations formulated above can be seen as spawn of Wittgenstein's famous assertion: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world" (1991, 102). His assertion refers, above all, to a certain dimension of the (verbal) language that only semiotics can explicitly detail: that of the *creativity of the language* as a sign system. We mainly refer, in this context, to verbal language, thinking of the decisive role it accomplishes within the signifying process of the world:

- on the one hand, through its virtues, it is responsible for the manifestation of the multiple forms of the literary-artistic, philosophic or scientific language;

- on the other hand, it is able to translate in its own terms – through "plurimediality" (Wienold, cf. Plett 1984) – any other type of creative expression.

Synthetically, the creative dimension of (verbal) language appears in the following positions (Stănciulescu 2006):

• it ensures the passage from image to imaginary, from nature to its signification, from biological to psychical, from the consciousness of representation to the consciousness of its (re)signification;

• it responds to the need to give things (the world) an original name;

• it satisfies the social need for linguistic communication, for storing and transmitting the (cultural) spiritual values made by humanity through time;

• it allows humans to oppose the tendencies of entropy in nature (of disorder and uniformity) through the knowledge-transmitting power of language, as an essential instrument of culture, thus contributing to its 'creative' transformation (not always beneficial, we must admit) and transforming itself.

2.4. The cognitive function

Humankind's relatively early discovery of the fact that *the world can (must) be assumed in the terms of its signs*, through an adequate reading (decoding, interpreting), led to the forming of the semiotic act into an independent discipline since *illo tempore*. Its dignity to permit the indirect knowledge of the world through signs, implicitly gave it the authority of *sacred knowledge*: reading the destiny in the stars or the

future in the entrails of the hunted animal, for instance, were only timid human attempts to control the unpredictable, invisible and transcendent.

This virtue of semiotics to assume some realities often impossible to tackle directly made it represent, under different names, a privilege of the 'chosen ones'. For the learned theologian on the one hand, or for the common believer, the knowledge of God can only be made in a 'semiotic' manner: that of knowing the signs allowed (transmitted) to us by divinity. According to the "humility argument" formulated by Peirce, if these signs would not be manifest God would not exist, as a sign is always the reflex of something which exists in reality or, virtually, in somebody's consciousness. Let us consider, for instance, the sign of light through which the genesis of the world became visible, and the sign of the light-love, respectively, the grace of which divinity transmitted to humanity as a legacy. The intuition of a First Semiotician, the original source of the "light sign" which marks the primary creation, can be found both in the consciousness of primitive humans and bearer of myths (Stănciulescu 1995) or of the modern creator: "When the Unseen gave a sign, a sea and a gale of light appeared in one moment…" (*The Light*, Blaga 1974, 48). On the other hand, the scientist tries to grasp the hidden meanings of the realities of the world (or of its laws, describable only through semiotic relations), by researching their indirect signs. For instance, "the image of the star that died", the "shining ray" of which "only now […] / Unfolds to this our sight" (Eminescu 1978, 45) represents for the researcher, who is accustomed to 'reading in the stars', a priceless source of information. Or, going back in time, 3K remnant radiation, recently discovered by astrophysicists, confirms Steven Weinberg's image for the initial moment of the Big-Bang: "In the beginning the whole universe was full of light…" (1984, 22).

This way of assuming the truths of the world identifies with an obsessing need of historical humans to know reality. Such knowledge starts from the phenomenal, or, in the terms of the chomskyan grammar (Chomsky 1965), passes from the "surface structures" of the "(natural) language of the world", through which the world describes itself and / or is described, to the "deep structures" preserved by often ignored laws of this language.

2.5. The unifying function

The considerations above suggest another valence of semiotics, that is: to allow *a common approach of different types of discourse*

through which humanity tried to appropriate the realities of the world (magic, mythical-ritual, religious, philosophical, scientific, artistic, etc.). Indeed, one of the paradoxes of human knowledge is having related to the same reality with the cognitive instruments (means) of some relatively distinct disciplines. Such an approach submits from the very beginning to the partiality of all disciplinary explication. As a consequence, intersecting the languages through which the world has been described in time, in a multitude of positions, and highlighting the intersection and differentiation areas, presently appears as a necessity. Semiotics, now placed in a close complementarity with hermeneutics, is now granted the honor to play a part in *building a new image of the world*, an image, with a fundamental step closer to reality, which will have to be assumed by the humanity of the third millennium. This dignity has major importance in associating some other key attributes to semiotics:

- the quality of being both *a study of signs and of the interpretive processes* (Ducrot, Schaeffer 1996, 140);

- the possibility of *operating in the field of interdisciplinary knowledge*, as a common area of the different perspectives regarding the signs of the world;

- the opening towards a *transdisciplinary analysis,* through the use of some paradigmatic concepts (present at the level of multiple discourse types) and by recovering their deep meanings.

The virtue of suggesting or building unifying paradigms (such as, for instance, the one of the *information-energy*, and of *light* as a 'potential sign', carrier of both energy and information), allows semiotics to participate as a mediator in classical disputes, still unsolved, such as between materialism and spiritualism, or realism and idealism (Stănciulescu 2006). The quality of the sign having a material component (the signifier) and a spiritual one (the signified), together with the premises that all the phenomena of the world represent materializations of the duality between substance and energy, information and field, represent the premises of such mediation.

The creation of such paradigms at the intersection of the individual disciplines, on the one hand, and their interpretation according to the present needs of knowledge, on the other hand, assign to semiotics, besides the attribute of being a *theory of signs*, that of being a *method* (organon) of unitary reading of signs specific to different categories of languages. Two perspectives define, in this context, their complementarity (Szepe, Voigt 1985, 143-144):

● *the centripetal perspective*, defined by the unifying aspiration of semiotics, mostly in its theoretical position;

● *the centrifugal perspective*, coming from the relatively recent involvement of semiotic methodology in the research (redefinition) of some branch domains, having as a consequence the appearance of some 'special semiotics', such as zoosemiotics, phitosemiotics, physio-semiotics, anthroposemiotics, etc.

The two perspectives (centrifugal – centripetal) are thoroughly complementary, meeting the duality between theory and application. They argue, on the ground of modern thinking, a pansemiotic vision, shaped over a century ago by Peirce, a vision that has only recently started to enjoy its full scientific relevance. "I could never study anything", noted Peirce, "if it were mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, gravitation, thermo-dynamics, optics, chemistry, compared anatomy, astronomy, psychology, phonetics, history of sciences, man-woman relationship, wines, metro-logy, in a different way than as a semiotic study." (Peirce 1978, 56). The recovery and the justification of such a perspective gives more credit to John Deely's conviction that, among the humanistic sciences and, we could add, the natural sciences, semiotics appears as a unique presence, being "a study which has as an object *the matrix of all sciences* and highlights *the central place of history* (*the world*, my note, TDS) for the process of understanding as a whole" (Deely 1997, 63).

2.6. The methodological function: a still ignored instrument of power

The major goal of this subchapter is to make the explicit remark that, although they do not admit it, *the representatives of all the types of cognitive discourse about the world operate, in fact, with the instruments of semiotics.* The theologian uses the signs of the divine revelation to give credit to his religious conception. The believer founds her / his beliefs on the experiential living of the manifestations of God (see love as a sign of divinity, for instance). The cosmologist, the physicist, and the chemist study the 'messages' of nature through semiotic reading, to reveal its contents (law-causes), and use quantitative techniques to obtain some qualitative relations. The geneticist studies the information of DNA as signs of a long history of the human species; the biologist dissects the tissues of the biological organism in order to explain its functionality; and, the allopathic researches the exterior, palpable symptoms of the disease to find its generating cause. The specialist in generative grammars

reveals the deep linguistic structures in order to research the surface ones, while the psychologist uses the results of the projective tests as signs of the human personality, and the psychoanalyst researches symbolic dreams or irrelevant acts of the human subject in order to penetrate into the subconscious. The psycho-sociologist follows the different categories of indicators to highlight different tendencies of social evolution; the archeologist follows the historical relics in order to say something about the evolutionary level of a given society; and, the ethnologist and the hermeneut interpret the symbolism of the myth in order to understand the cultural beginnings of humanity. The philosopher tackles the physical phenomena of the world with logical-deductive means in order to infer its metaphysical dimensions, etc.

Why is the unifying presence of semiotics not recognized / known in the process of all these types of discourse? Perhaps because – not to excessively proclaim its virtues – semiotics is relatively unknown to the representatives of other disciplines. Or perhaps because they would consider their field of activity threatened by the presence of 'semiotic imperialism'. Or, again, because an insufficient maturity of semiotics itself has not provided the virtual beneficiaries the exact instruments they could use with the desired efficiency. Finally, perhaps because, being present everywhere on the ground of human knowledge, semiotics is considered to be an implicit reality, which does not have to be mentioned as an explicit virtue of human knowledge. But, in the end, who knows?

However, from these considerations, we can conclude the existence of probably the most important theoretical-applicative virtue of semiotics. Semiotics offers a *useful methodological framework* (organon) for all the categories of natural and humanistic sciences, *a unifying framework for structural and historical methodology, for synchronic and diachronic research.* This is accomplished by the manifestation, within the limits of some particular types of discourse, of the main *methodological possibilities offered by semiotic exegesis.*

A brief presentation in this context of some of the methodological instruments used by semiotics to (de)code the (macro)systems with which the human being operates in different contexts is justified by the fact that:

- some of these instruments have been implicitly or explicitly used in this paper to interpret different discourse / text hypostases;

- others (among which the method of "hexadic analysis" or of the "semiotic graph", for instance), appear as relatively new instruments and, consequently, can become reference sources for a series of other applied semiotic researches;

- the presentation of some of the attributes specific to (macro)signs (texts / discourses) permits the implicit definition, in this paper, of the "object language" of semiotics: the sign and the semiosis;

- the explicit mentioning or / and the implicit use of the methodological guiding lines offered by semiotics represent an impulse for the scientists who do not acknowledge them yet, to reconsider their perspective, for an enrichment of the analyses specific to their disciplines (whether sciences of nature or of society / humanity) with the contributions of the semiotic approach.

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In the present appendix we shall introduce several considerations regarding the way in which signs should be researched, regardless of their nature, for an optimal use of signs in the process of communication: verbal signs (words, phrases, clauses, sentences, texts) or nonverbal signs (gestures, plastic or musical representations, etc.).

The major purpose of this chapter is a methodological one, that is:

- the stimulation of the communicative competence of the trainee, who, as a receiver of the present message, acquires the position of taking and interpreting on their own the general information of the course, in order to be able to formulate / think strategies for optimizing their own communicative discourse;

- the possibility of the interested person / specialist to make a structural-functional analysis of a text specific to a certain communication;

- gaining the independence of the methodological competence for the trainee to optimally structure any personal communicative approach that they should perform, regardless of its context of manifestation.

It should be kept in mind that:

- an efficient communication means the optimal adaptation (structural and functional) of the sign / signs to the contextual parameters of the situation of communication;

- what is efficient in one context can be totally inefficient in another context.

That is the reason why this chapter is built on the principle: *do not offer the reader many particular solutions* and then only as examples, *but mainly strategic principles (know how).* Because, as in the old Chinese saying: "If you offer someone a fish, you feed them for a day. But, if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for a lifetime".

3. Semiotics and philosophy, a fertile synergy

At the beginning of the 20th century, when modern semiotics / semiology was in its early stages, Saussure wrote: "Semiology will have a lot of work to do, even if only to find out which are its boundaries" (Cf. Carpov 1987, 7). Following Eco (1982), we have seen that there are three dimensions that we could associate in this context to the idea of boundary: *political, natural, and epistemological.* The analysis of each of them brought out the fact that, in reality, there are no limiting boundaries that semiotics cannot overcome, either directly or indirectly.

The situation of semiotics at present, as it results from the above-mentioned facts, allows formulating a few imperatives for its future development:

- overcoming the difficulties that semiotics has already faced and that we have mentioned (most of them), and to which we have suggested a principal solution;

- formulating a set of difficulties that semiotics might face in the future and to which attention should be paid even at present;

- the emergence of new problems of content or method, as a consequence of the progress of human knowledge, adequate to new territories of the reality that can always be discovered, will bring an enriched approach to some of the aspects of semiosis.

Let us retrace, in a final synthesis, the main openings that the three directions mentioned above allow for and require of a semiotics of the future.

1) *To find mediating solutions to confrontations still unsolved regarding the present status of semiotics* has been a constant issue in this paper, as we have done in the subchapter about the tensions that semiotics still faces.

2) Among *the difficulties that semiotics might face in the future* some need to be formulated, under the mark of the following questions:

- What will be, in the future, the poise of the theoretical dimension of semiotics as compared to the methodological dimension and the applied dimension? We estimate that at least for some time hence, the major poise of semiotic analyses must cover the field of applications, but in parallel with necessary methodological refinements. In order not to become, though, a simple "history", semiotic theory will have to constantly optimize, in its turn, the content, by means of a continuous assumption of the conclusions formulated by research applications.

- How will semiotics adapt its "traditional" instruments to the modern methods and procedures of computer technology and to the formalization that it implies? We cannot, of course, exhaustively evaluate yet the possibilities for semiotic methodology to evolve in this direction, but we can suggest some of the possibilities of optimization of analytical semiotic applications, by their "standardization":

- constructing the reference grid on which any type of semiosis is founded, by mentioning / comprising all known structural parameters and, as they appear, new alternatives and their analyses by means of logic-mathematical procedures (the graph method, matrix analyses, the division method, etc.) and semantic procedures (the extension and intension method, the semantic tables method, the structural method, etc.) (Enescu 1985, 215-240);

- defining clearly the specific relationships between these parameters and their formalization in the terms of deontic logic, of praxiology, etc.;

- determining the logical and semantic (grammatical) procedures able to efficiently allow the passage from the surface structures to the deep ones, in consensus with the Chomskian generative-constructive grammars and with their corresponding programming languages.

In *the category of singular problems that might appear in the future*, able to generate re-considerations of the signification / communication process, we could mention:

- the emergence of new data related to the cerebral mechanisms of representation / signification, by means of which the semiotic function itself is manifested, as a consequence of the contributions that recent developments such as bio-photonics could formulate (Stănciulescu, Manu 2002; Stănciulescu 2010, 41-54);

- imposing a new explicative theory based on the physics of information (the theory of informational fields) (Stănciulescu 2006), able to reveal new ways of signification (at the level of semantic fields), of unconventional transmission / communication of messages (e.g. tele-pathically), etc.;

- the progress of computer technology that might suggest singular possibilities for reading semiotic actions;

- the emergence of new fields of knowledge (of reality) susceptible of semiotic assumption, etc.

All these directions, as well as many others that we still ignore, are meant to suggest *the construction of a semiotics that could also integrate problems of the future even from the present.*   In consensus with this

perspective, that Constantin Brâncuşi synthesized in the above-mentioned words of wisdom, we can affirm that *the future has already started to confront semiotics with the imperative of development on its own*, even (or all the more) when our vision of the world is about to change. Through this, as John Deely wrote, "the semiotic point of view gets to include the whole phenomenon of human communication – not only the language – and then, as a consequence, the cultural phenomenon, both of them as elements that incorporate the phenomena from nature, and as elements different from those" (1997, 15). An even briefer and, at the same time, more extended definition of the interest field of semiotics, which projects itself, through the "mirror metaphor", on the never-ending shapes of objective and subjective reality, could not, in our opinion, be formulated.

All the above-mentioned aspects have imposed and will continue to impose the need for a moderated elaboration and use of a methodology (itself pertaining to semiotics) that intends, within the limits of a theoretical discourse (self-referential, meta-semiotic), to reconsider all the parameters that are specific to a virtually new "semiotic situation": that which *the future status of semiotics* has already begun to define. The readers themselves can decide to what extent this study has tried and succeeded in answering such an imperative project.

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If we try to synthesize our considerations so far, we shall have to notice that, through the multiplicity of historically constituted positions, semiotics defines *the concern of the human spirit to reveal its reality and to establish its position in the world.* And – why not concede it? – this is after all the main problem of philosophy. When we study philosophy, we implicitly study semiotics, because language, the instrument of philosophical thinking (analytical par excellence), implies the unmediated presence of signs, in the same way that the object of philosophical reflection, reality as a whole, can only be assumed through the activation of its signs, through semiosis. If the reality of the world were captured in another manner, let us say, experiential-holistic, as the ancient people used to do, we could no longer speak of a rational knowledge (philosophical or scientific), but of a purely intuitive one, actually mythical-religious.

Under these circumstances, we have to note that the problems of the language regarding its quality of being the most general among the

others systems identifies with the main progressive moments of philosophy itself. For, by means of its thinkers, every historical epoch has resumed in one form or the other the main controversy of the birth and the becoming of the language (sign / word, system of signs / language). Thus, in the philosophical horizon appeared the first theoretical speculations concerning the sign, the seed for a future conceptual becoming of semiotics as a general theory of signs. The history of this controversy brings us face to face with the more or less direct meetings of the world's spiritual horizons. We note the antique ones, such as oriental and western, and the modern, such as the European and American traditions. These meetings have always resulted in both widening human knowledge and enforcing the position of *homo significans* in the world's universe of signs.

On the one hand, perhaps semiotics' virtue of surprising the sensible reality (described by its signs' signifier) and the unseen reality as well (suggested by its signs' signified) will offer in the future the horizon for recapturing the two "royal ways" of human knowledge – the intuitive and the rational. This may be the horizon in which "the visual / virtual human" of modern times will find "the visionary human". Let us remember that by means of the nature of the semiotic act and of the sign as its instrument, the visual / virtual and the visionary are two inseparable faces belonging to the same reality.

On the other hand, by certifying the fact that semiotics is basically studying the human subject as an "actor of semiotic practice" in the profound "urge of signifying" (Eco 1982, 380, 382) we once more qualify its dignity, as also signaled by Peirce. In this regard, semiotics is a cosmological science and equally a neological one, a theory of knowledge and interaction having direct practical implications and empirical applicability (Oehler 1979, cf. Marcus 1985, 68). Developing this point of view, Morris writes: "Semiotics offers us the fundamentals for understanding the main forms of human activity, and their interdependency as well for all these forms of human activity and dependency find a certain way of expression by means of signs which are the activity factors. By making this understanding possible, semiotics promises the fulfillment of one of the functions that is traditionally considered as philosophy. Philosophy often sinned by confusing in its own language with various functions undertaken by signs. Therefore, according to the old tradition, it is possible to associate philosophy with the theory of signs and with the unification of the sciences and respectively with the general aspects of pure semiotics and descriptive semiotics" (cf. Schaff 1969, 56).

A certain autonomy or neutrality must be rendered to semiotics in relation to philosophy, without being exaggerated as some semioticians try to imply: "semiotics itself doesn't belong to any particular philosophy and doesn't suppose the necessity of such a philosophy. The science of signs speaks as little in favor of "empirical" or "non-empirical" philosophy as it does regarding "natural" or "supernatural" religion" (Schaff 1966, 57).

We could undoubtedly conclude that the common roots of philosophy and semiotics are as certain as they can possibly be. Defining itself as a philosophy of signs, and anchored in fact in natural or cultural reality, semiotics validates the quality of being "the most general science", a quality that Pierce derived from the premises that "all thought is in the signs" (Oehler, cf. Marcus 1985, 65-66). In other words, the maximum generality of the "science of signs" comes from the fact that thought – and implicitly practice – is in signs.

Such an opening justifies the attempts to touch some special domains of philosophy such as ontology, gnoseology, epistemology and logic, axiology and aesthetics, etc., by means of the terms offered by semiotic methodology. Such applications suggest once more the possibility that in the future philosophy will gain (back) a more obvious semiotic orientation, as semiotics will be put into contact with the different systems of scientific world interpretation. An enthusiasm perhaps increased by the subjective implication of the author in the horizon of semiotic research could give in the future the chance to mediate a long awaited reunion of philosophy with science. It is certain that such a reunion should avoid, as Anderson notes, "the collision with the philosophical empire, interposed sometimes by an understanding made by force between realism and idealism, as if this exclusive dichotomy could finish all the possibilities of interpreting the human experience" (cf. Deely 1997, 5).

Precisely such a collision will be avoided by a semiotics capable of mediating a millenary conflict which however seems to have finished the possibility of dichotomously explaining existence. By means of the sign concept, understood as a duality between a physical significant (material) and an informational (spiritual) significant, the queens crowned by Aristotle in order to rule the kingdom of human knowledge for millennia – physics, metaphysics, science and philosophy – but drastically divided by Kant over two hundred years ago, could be found again under the rule of one and the same crown: that of semiotics. In the future this could define the space of a (re) united "metaphysical physics" of which

humankind has a fundamental need in order to achieve a spiritually richer advance into the New Millennium.

Beyond any method or methodology used here, this discussion doesn't fit: this happens because the bet with philosophy and its questions implies a certain freedom that only the power of the essay can assure. In other words, we do not avoid for a single moment the fact that when we draw close to philosophy we do it with emotion, which can often inhibit the presence of reason. For, as the Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu has noted, *philosophy is indeed an act of living*, an act of life that brings sensitive reality back close to the subjective needs of the human personality, which often deforms reality in order to make its own ego stronger and more resilient to the shocks of reality itself. It is in this reflexive strength that the power of philosophy resides.

The entire history of philosophy verifies this essential virtue of "philosophical living". Why must we always go back to a thing that is already a truism? Why waste so much energy learning books since the great privilege of philosophy stand in "experiencing the spirit of the book"? This question should not be misunderstood as a covert plea in favor of giving up the academic and rigorous learning that is the basis of the professional horizon of the specialist in philosophy. We find here a clear distinction between the philosopher as such and the one who "experiences philosophy" and the professor who earns a living through philosophy, by means of teaching the philosophical disciplines.

The ideal for the ones who are educated "for philosophy" would be to optimally unite the analytical spirit with the intuitive one and the creation of others with their own creation. This does not imply a dichotomy. We are not to choose mostly the channel with a strictly analytical, logical, systematical and scientific course, thus clearing the way for those who maintain that the time of intuitive "romantic philosophy" has passed so that only the masters of strictly analytical deduction can reach out to the "ultimate truths". Nor are we to exclusively deploy the projection of the thought of the intuitive, emotional, affective and volitional support / significant. Once more, the unity of the structural duality of the sign as significant and signified stands for an outstanding example of the "unity" and "illumination" of the whole world philosophical position.

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