Semiotic Perception and Dynamic Forms of Meaning

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Introduction

What is meant by *semiotic perception*? Why should the concepts of *perception* and *expressivity* be reinterpreted within the framework of a theory of semiolinguistic fields and forms? What would be the links between these concepts and the notion of form, which remains fundamental for thinking about language activity? What consequences - epistemological, ontological and descriptive - can be foreseen as soon as we approach the latter as the focus of the expressive life of the speaking animal? This book aims to provide answers to these questions by opening up avenues of research on how to understand the linguistic and semiotic dimensions at work in the constitution of experience, both individual and collective.

More specifically, the challenge of this book is to reflect on the deep compatibility of two fundamental characteristics of meaning, namely its *perceptibility* and its *dynamicity*. It is assumed that the reality of meaning must be related from the outset to symbolic forms and activities that continuously redirect interactions and drive the formation of values and utilities. Correlatively, meaning is never separated from a search for expression, concomitant with the formation of various semiotic mediations, and founding the possibility of the repetition and evaluation of experience (conformity, deviation). The aim here will be to examine the ways in which signs and forms that we perceive appear, stabilize and perpetually alter, as well as the subjectivities that are inscribed in them.

Indeed, since the relative eclipse of the structuralist moment in the human and social sciences, the problematics inherited from structural theories and analyses in the field of language theory and semiotic anthropology have been profoundly rethought within more dynamic, even dynamicist, frameworks. Several linguistic theories (including cognitive grammars, enunciative theories and, more recently, enactive linguistics) have developed on the basis of what can be called perceptivist postulates. In particular, the last three decades have seen the emergence of a set of proposals, often stemming from Californian cognitive linguistics, but also from authors of Guillaumean inspiration.

In particular, cognitive linguistics has focused its attention on the relationship between experience, cognition and the construction of linguistic forms, thematizing the idea of a continuity between perception (visual and spatial) and language. In opposition to the computational paradigm, it posited the need to understand the semantics of natural languages in their perceptual and bodily roots, *i.e.* in a supposedly originary bodily experience. In so doing, we moved from the question of expressing certain spatio-temporal frameworks of experience in language to that of detecting a grammatical layer of semantics, of a perceptual-cognitive nature.

From there, a general analogy between the construction of the perceptual field and the construction of meaning was elaborated, supported by some form of schematism, reminiscent of Kantian thought. And undoubtedly the intention was to recognize that sound and meaning must be perceived, before they can be logically or conceptually resumed. But it was thought that this could be achieved by relying on a pre-semiotic and pre-predicative concept of perception. The links to a perception and to actual practices, culturally and semiotically marked, become very tenuous. And there is nothing in the linguistic device to account for the continuity and cohesion, primarily practical, figurative, expressive, of habitus, that texts and activities involve.

A diagnosis, and thus a remedy, is proposed: rather than seeking to found language in perception, we have sought to nourish an originary semiotic theory of perception, which can serve as a commonplace and a passage; an interpretative perception, therefore, formed in the exercise of semiogenesis, and in which the chiasmatic structure - as Merleau-Ponty would have said - that it maintains with language can be realized. Such research does not separate

the theory of perception and semiolinguistic theory, as if one could be the prerequisite of the other.

In this perspective, the activity of language and its forms must be thought of in the mode of perception (of sound as well as of meaning), involving a specific activity of constructing forms. We should therefore question the fact that, during a given language interaction, we *perceive* what is said even before we conceptualize and logically articulate it. So what happens when we perceive a statement, for example? What layers of memory, imagination and sensitivity do we mobilize as speaking subjects? In what forms and in what phases are these strata deployed? In other words, the questions of perception and expression will be placed here from the outset at the heart of the general movement of semiosis, which is conceived as the vital process of forming "signs" on various scales.

By virtue of this above all epistemological choice, it seems to us necessary to conduct a re-examination of the very concept of perception, in the Merleau-Pontian sense of a primary mode of existence: a mode of constructing forms, both social and individual, animal and human, as well as a mode of moving and co-living in environments. Such a re-examination, however, is not limited to a philosophical and speculative enquiry, but *resonates* theoretical research with modelling, description and analysis of phenomena, especially semiolinguistic phenomena. In this sense, the place of perception in theoretical models and in the details of analyses is questioned.

It is hoped that this will provide a theoretical and descriptive framework suitable for the restitution of both individual experience and the public dimension of speech. Thus, we understand the importance of starting from an adequate theory of perception seen as perceptive praxis, in order to hope to arrive at an arrangement of comparable construction, which would be that of a linguistic perception, a practice involving acoustic, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic dimensions, that is to say also normative and imaginary. It is to this, to the perceptual theme in the activity of language, to its repercussions in linguistics and semiotics that the book is devoted.

A special place will be given to semantics, which we would like to see closely linked to a study of the norms of expression. A panoply of attentional, perceptual, praxeological and normative modalities is called upon from the outset to provide an essential account of the processes of sign morphogenesis. Meaning" is not simply a matter of constructive or compositional procedures of minimal units, as some supporters of formal theories seem to believe even today. Moreover, it is not identified with the result of an application or a simple "repetition" of resources supposedly stored in "dictionaries" or "encyclopaedias" (as a caricature of certain cognitive grammars would have it).

On the contrary, meaning emerges through the mediation of a specific process, that of the resumption and reactivation of the resource. Here, the word resumption is understood in the Merleau-Pontian sense of a repetition in perpetual variation or alteration. The resources are constantly reactivated in the fields of forms and semiolinguistic interactions, and thus reworked by the speaking subjects at different levels of recognition, evaluation, memorization, storage, etc. The entire semantic dimension is thus traversed by a set of strategies and tactics linked to normative constraints (adherence/refusal), attentional thrusts, and the affinities of the desire to express oneself through operations of social tuning and enunciative synchronization. Thus, in its most original fund, the linguistic expression is not separable from a normative diversity not simply unifiable, in grip with a certain spontaneity of speech, where aesthetic and ethical perspectives intermingle.

At the same time, and as was said above, it is indeed a question of perception and semiotic praxis: the activity of language appears and must be understood as the perception of an

interweaving of sound and meaning, engaging a specific activity of construction of forms. The heart of the problem is to manage to explain the forms of this experience in such a way as to take charge, from its earliest phases, of cultural or social determinations, valid as much in the sensitive register as in the other registers of meaning, and likely to reflect all the nuances of this "feeling", going from the impersonal to the personal. It therefore seems important to acquire thoughts, models if you like, that support such a continuity between the intimate moment of situations and the social moment of the renewal of roles, practices and institutions: thoughts and models of the semiogenesis, that we will be able to develop then according to these diverse perspectives without ever relating them to some intentionality or subjectivity or corporality *separately* constituted.

Working thus from a certain fund of philosophical resources, and in a constant back and forth with a series of works centered on the sciences of language and their epistemology, the encounter with an author like Merleau-Ponty is, we think, inevitable: When properly read -- in contrast, in particular, to readings that are far too narrow and that make the counter-sense of looking for the premises and justifications of a mentalist, cognitivist, and too simply 'embodied' vision of speech -- Merleau-Ponty's work proves to be conducive to the program outlined here. It develops indeed an 'expressivist' phenomenology of the sensible encounter and of the institution, and presents from the start this sensible as a tissue of solicitations and - let us say - of regimes of semiotizations born within a kind of generalized dialogism (at the same time sensible, expressive, intersubjective). His reflections on language and speech, which take up in an original way the Saussurian conceptions, are also decisive in our eyes: as well as, for example, his effort to relate in their invoices and their stakes these two semiotic regimes that are the spoken language and the painting. It is by starting again (among other sources) from these Merleau-Ponty conceptions, that we have undertaken to elaborate further the social and semiogenetic dimensions, and that we have been able to find in this author a better foundation and enrichment of certain more specifically linguistic works (theoretical and descriptive) to which we have previously contributed. Through this interdisciplinary circulation, it is also phenomenology itself that is questioned in return, and encouraged to become more originally semiotic, while remaining attached to the Merleau-Pontian principle of a primacy of perception (Bondi, Piotrowski, Visetti 2016).

How then can we reach the theoretical and descriptive preoccupations proper to the sciences of language, starting from the general philosophical and epistemological positions we have just mentioned? Common to all the chapters of the present work is the *dynamicist* idea: the idea of *dynamic constitution*, through which the characteristic forms of such or such field of phenomena differentiate and individuate, passing through more or less stable or unstable states, plays an essential role in the scientific setting up of the defended problematic. We theorize in this way transforming activities of a field, activities oriented by "attitudes" and pursuing themes, activities conditioned by genres and semiotic games, thus related to a dynamic and linguistic general model of the fields where they are exercised.

The first chapter thus presents a theoretical framework that seeks to meet the needs of a textual and interpretative linguistics, while opening up to a phenomenological-style description of linguistic value operated within the framework of a *theory of semantic forms*. The principle adopted is always to describe semantic formations as deployments and stabilizations of forms in a field (which does not stop at the boundaries of the statement!). The theory of these semantic forms is then presented as a continuist and dynamicist theory co-articulating several phases or regimes of meaning. It is organized around generic and unstable phases (called motifs), which are differentiated within the framework of profiling and thematization operations concerning other phases of meaning, co-active in the microgenesis of the thematic

field. In this context, questions of lexicon (polysemy, figures, idiomaticity) and of the semantics of proverbs are addressed. The chapter focuses on this type of linguistic formants, but in fact many other formants (from text to sub-morpheme) can be apprehended and described - expression as well as content - in a unified framework, where an original semiotic notion of motif, extended and diversified, plays a key role.

The second and third chapters are devoted to some theoretical and speculative aspects of the semiogenetic and expressivist perspective for the analysis and description of meaning construction phenomena. This perspective emphasizes the intrinsically expressive dimension of experience and describes language activity (*i.e.* 'the act of speaking') as a stratified perceptual action and as a 'system in permanent genesis'. The basic idea - which defines the contours of the term 'semiogenesis' - is to make it explicit that language activity unfolds through a heterogeneity of concomitant and dynamically coordinated registers and dimensions, and that semiosis is traversed by a field of stresses that govern and deform its various stages of construction. This entails the adoption of a genetic and reconstructive 'look' at the phenomena of meaning to be analyzed: a look capable of showing that the thematic punctuality of any enunciative production constitutes the outcome of a myriad of interacting local processes, the consequences of which cannot always be predicted a priori. This is a 'phenomenological view', which aims to reconstruct the general lines of constitution and motivation of an emerging form, while at the same time attempting to indicate the lines of flight, but above all the possibilities of explication, resumption, resemantization and re-use. The term semiogenesis, used here with reference to the context of linguistic semiosis, refers to the emergence of moments that produce micro-differentiations in the enunciative flow: and this is due as much to different formants (morphemes, syntagmatic groups, larger textual portions) as to the indecision of the boundaries between units, which contribute to varying the equilibrium between signifier and signified (thus, far beyond the classic scheme we have inherited from tradition). It is indeed this "first plane of semiotic appearance" and its "expressive stakes" - as attempts, or 'launches', or 'proposals' of improvisation - that constitutes the core of interest of the semiogenetic perspective. A plane in which the emergence of forms, expressive stakes and socially unified normative diversity are inseparable; a plane in which the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the construction of meaning are still profoundly mixed. The challenge of a semiogenetic perspective - and of a phenomenological look at the activity of language - is then to try to restore, in the very appearance of language (*i.e.* in the 'word' as 'praxis'), the play of these modalities. For this reason, as mentioned earlier, signification is to be described as a complex phenomenon, which simultaneously manifests and unfolds the constitution, realization, as well as the circumscription and metamorphosis of forms. Consequently, the idea of semiogenesis implies that of a 'constant exercise' (bodily, affective, emotional, but also ethical, political, etc.), aimed at the incessant production of value-forms subjected to heterogeneous regimes of capture and differentiation, which modulate forms and their changes: regimes of recovery, repetition, innovation, desire, conflict, etc. In this way, the expressivist and semiogenetic approach makes it possible to center the perimeter of the re-flexion by framing the relations between language activity and languages in a different way, through the readmission of the 'word flow' as the object of a profoundly dynamic linguistics and semiotic anthropology.

In the fourth chapter, the aim is to overcome both the aporia of objectivism and the inconsistencies of subjectivism (solipsism): we shall endeavor to establish a connection between, on the one hand, the sciences of language, considered as empirical disciplines and therefore subject to the epistemological conditions of the natural sciences, and, on the other hand, the individual experience of expression, from the viewpoints of transcendental and existential phenomenologies. Further on, by mobilizing the morphodynamic apparatus, we will be able to characterize in part the dynamic and emergent modalities of the connection

between the sign as perceived and the sign as conceived, in other words, between the lived experience of the sign and the objectivity of the sign.

Chapter I
Perceptual Models and Semantic Forms

Linguistics seen as a Modal Aesthetics of the Fields of Speech[1]

Y.-M. Vɪsᴇᴛᴛɪ

I-1.   An analogy between language activity and perceptual activity?

In linguistics, various proposals (coming primarily from 'Californian' cognitive linguistics but also, previously, from Guillaumeian linguistics in France as well as, occasionally, from enunciative linguistics) have been made to support a general analogy between the 'construction of the perceptual field' and the 'construction of meaning.' These proposals have been based upon one form or another of schematism, in a manner reminiscent of Kantian thought. No doubt, the intention was to recognize that sound and meaning must each be *perceived* – one as the other, one by the other – regardless of what should follow. However, it was thought this could be accomplished by relying on a *pre-semiotic* concept of perception, with the result that the links to effective perception and practice, both culturally and semiotically marked, become very tenuous. Nothing in the proposed linguistic apparatus makes it possible to account for a certain form of continuity and cohesion – primarily practical, figural, habitual, expressive – that subtends texts and practices of reading and of speech.

We thus distinguish a historical layering of questions or approaches:

- The expression in language of certain frameworks - especially spatial - of sensory experience, as well as even the participation of languages in the construction of such frameworks
- The isolation of a perceptual-cognitive layer of semantics intended to fulfill a central grammatical function (*i.e.* cognitive linguistics)
- A general analogy between 'construction' of the perceptual field and 'construction' of meaning, both seen as the construction of *forms*.

In sum, and more radically: Occurring through an expressive form from which it cannot be separated (this in accordance with the undivided nature of the linguistic sign), meaning must be *perceived* before being (eventually, and by way of this perception) logically and conceptually elaborated. But in what sense are we to understand this perceiving? According to what perceptual praxis, what specific perceptual montage? This chapter intends to propose the beginning of an answer, while also summarizing a general theoretical approach, which is limited, however, to the *semantic side* of the semiotic flow. Under the name of *Theory of Semantic Forms*, we will therefore find here a general descriptive canvas, inseparable from the singularities of linguistic expression as well as from the objectives of a semantics, both

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[1] The following chapter essentially resumes descriptions, analyses, and theoretical considerations that emerge from a long collaboration with my colleague and friend, the linguist Pierre Cadiot (deceased in 2013).

discursive and textual; a 'perceptivist' canvas that can fit into the broader perspective of a *semiotic anthropology* that would respond, in various fields of study, to the *phenomenological principle* of the *primacy of perception, this latter itself being semiotically refounded*.

There is, therefore, a necessary passage through the phenomenological literature (philosophical as well as scientific), a decisive passage, depending upon what one decides to take up, if one intends to elaborate a theory of fields and forms (here of gestaltist and microgenetic inspiration), and to understand the displacements that it calls for in order to become part of a perceptivist and properly semiotic theory. An examination, even a brief one, of a few major texts (Husserl, Gurwitsch, Merleau-Ponty) thus makes it possible to specify certain phenomenological "theses" on perception and action, the message of which has been simplified and degraded by Cognitive Linguistics, even as this latter (Lakoff and Johnson, in particular) has proposed to make it a foundation for linguistics. Our proposal is different. We will return to the phenomenological literature because we read therein that to perceive means much more than to be the seat of a simple sensory and motor structuration. Perceiving is identified with a primary sense of existing and knowing, with a dimension that traverses all the registers of existence. It is not, therefore, a question of invoking under this name a 'process' qualified as 'peripheral', and whose function would be to attach a set of 'sensory data' to a system of schemas or naturalized categories. Rather, at stake are the essential elements of *a mode of access to what exists*, that is, *that which comes to exist by announcing itself to us*. It is a mode of access on the basis of which there is a unit that exceeds the sensible properly speaking. There is a 'generality' of the perceived, in the sense that, as Merleau-Ponty says, "everything is perception, the mode of access to being that is present in perception is everywhere". And so: "all that we are is implicated in our manner of perceiving" (SWWP, pp. 9-10).[2]

Perceiving is from the outset a semiotic activity. It is based on the immediate grasp of qualities and horizons, which cannot be reduced to the identity of sensory-motor schemes, nor to the blueprints of a diagrammatics. To perceive is always to outline a meaning, which only unfolds in a committed journey, in an activity of *thematization* by which identities are made and unmade. Even if it means forcing the issue, we will say that to perceive is already to exercise a kind of semiology based on sensitive indices that are organized into planes of manifestation. But these indices are not *sense-data* that constitute the starting point of a process of inference; rather, they are *dimensions* that characterize the deployment of forms that *express* in their very way of appearing a *mode of existing* - indistinctly theirs and ours - and, ultimately, our *relation to a "field",* our way of accessing it, of orienting ourselves in it, and of transforming it.

It is on this basis, that is, on the basis of the familiar, the remarkable, and the strange, such as they are signaled in the different layers or *phases* of perceptual appearing, that it is necessary to address the question of the *value* released in this or that semiotic practice: that is to say, indissolubly, the question of *the recognition and repetition of the forms that carry value*, and, consequently, the question of the types of *genericity* that correspond to those forms, according to the different phases or levels of organization.

One thus finds resources – and this is decisive for what we propose – to oppose the restrictive conceptions of *linguistic genericity* ordinarily favored in semantic analyses, whether this genericity be conceived in a categorical-referential mode, in which it is judged to be characteristic of the denominational function, or in a schematic mode, of a grammatical variety. For the proponents of either of these two conceptions, a rupture is immediately

[2] Merleau-Ponty, M. *The Sensible World and the World of Perception,* trans. Bryan Smith. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 2020.

accomplished between genericity, on the one hand, and figurality and idiomaticity, on the other.

I-2. Perception – but semiotic perception!

We have thus conceived of the full importance of the perceptual/praxeological models promoted to the rank of generic models capable of accommodating a linguistic *semiosis*. Even before any explicit consideration of language activity, a practical/expressive milieu, considered 'proto-semiotic', will be seen as consisting of recurring signifying 'morphologies' that are inseparable from practical dispositions, indications of acts to be undertaken, 'destinations,' and evaluative dimensions. In parallel, action will be understood as a flow of interpretations that are formed by the habits and norms of a culture. To perceive/to act is already to attach oneself to traditions that are themselves already semiotically configured, and which have an enabling force *because* they are normalizing. Any increase in semiotic load – any semiogenesis – presupposes the election of privileged configurations, which take consistency in what then becomes a plane of manifestation. Styles, characteristic of a social *ethos*, at once cognitive and practical, leave their mark on the whole.

Perception – the immediate access to 'things' – is therefore inseparably the perception of the semiotic milieu itself. It is access to practices as well as, simultaneously, access to forms of semiotic mediation. It is access to the addressees (recipients) and jointly access to the forms, the semiotic apparatuses, that enlist them.

In parallel, the activity of language is seen as access to the perceptual/practical milieu as well as, at the same time as a work of language on itself[3]: any semiotic form appears as a *moment* in the differentiation, transformation, and (creative) anticipation of a set of other forms, whether actual or virtual. We need a general model of perceptual activity and of doing that allows a permanent symbiosis with the deployment of linguistic forms, and which would represent their close kinship, within a structure of co-generation.

Let us summarize these considerations by appealing to the Merleau-Pontian figure of the chiasm: it speaks of the entanglement and reciprocal dependence of two existential dimensions, unfolding one through the other, and thus requalifying each other mutually. Thus, we can propose three *constitutive chiasms of semiotic perception*:

perceptibility of the sign ↔ expressive/semiotic dimension of any perception

semiotic interpretation & production as practices ↔ all practical fields seen as semiotic

sociality of signs & perceived meanings ↔ perception as standardized and instituted[4]

We insist therefore on the importance *of a perceptual theory of the field and of forms* which is, at the same time, *a theory of thematization in constant contact with semiotic mediations*, in the variety of their hermeneutic regimes. This is crucial when it comes to the activity of language: signs only individuate and present value with the help of and by way of other signs; it is therefore vain to hope to resolve the movement of their making-sense by falling back on

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[3]We will not deal with the fundamental questions of intersubjectivity and enunciation as utterance, destination and assumption of saying, confrontation with the linguistic norm, role-taking and participation in established genres or games; in our study on proverbs and common sense, however, we have included a reflection on gnomic and deontic modalities, enunciative modalities and tones, which represents a first step in this direction.

[4] This last point is crucial if it is a question, between linguistics and the semiotics of cultural forms, of crossed studies that seek to integrate the perceptual and practical conditions of an articulation. It is thus essential to have conceptions of experience that are able to take charge of cultural or social determinations, even in the early phases of their microgenesis, and which are just as valid in the sensible register as in the other registers of meaning.

a content taken from an independent substance (or from a separate diagrammatic imaginary, as in cognitive linguistics), content which would then be assigned to each sign taken one by one. Fields of meaning cannot be conceived in the manner of a result that would be made accessible in a detached way, separately from a global semiotic apparatus which in reality only appears and is perpetuated in the form of a two-sided flux, an undivided mixture of signifier and signified. Thus, a signified – which is, if you will, the power recognized in such a sign to induce contents through its incidence in a given flow of speech, and against the background of the language as a whole – can only be sustained and can only be distinguished by its articulation with other signs, virtual or actual; it is, in a way, only a singular way of co-appearing against the background of the whole of the resources of language, by contrast and coordination with other signs, and thereby opening onto other expressive forms that serve as beacons for possible trajectories of meaning allowing that it makes itself explicit, that it rectifies and renews itself – at the same time, of course, that our practical and thematic preoccupations, as well as our positions as speakers, are determined with the activity of language. In other words, there is meaning only insofar as it takes relief against a background, and these backgrounds are always peopled with multitudes of semiotic formations (which are themselves, let us insist on this again, inseparably content and expression), necessary for any taking of value, for any making explicit, even if it would appear to be that of a single sign. To gloss a signification is therefore not to seek for it this or that schema representative of an effective exit towards 'the world,' it is first of all to find the semiotic forms (according to a multiplicity of *formats*, relating to various states of language) which are the most closely related to it, the most immediately necessary, the most interdependent, or which best re-express certain directions of meaning, depending on the levels of organization or the phases considered in a linguistic montage. A theory of semiotic forms, therefore, should present each meaning as part of a dynamic of creation and relaunch of a whole network of semiotic resources, explicit or tacit, which cannot be reduced to the function of an instrumental mediation allowing to reach targets outside the forms of language. There is thus no lexical item, for example, whose meaning is resolved in the designation of a referent, or in such an experiential schema, or in such a diagram that one would like to believe emancipated, by its nature, of the linguistic treasury and its expressive forms.[5] And so, it is this that we must try to capture first: *the dynamic reconstitution, the deployment of a whole adjoining semiotic milieu – expression as well as content – in any semiogenesis (which is local only in appearance) of a word or a morpheme, a construction, a sentence, or a longer passage* [6].

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[5] We could then say: a diagrammatics, why not – but as a figuration, which we know is always partial, always biased, of an imaginary that remains the implicit carrier of a whole language device. A semiogrammatic material, therefore, which comes in support of the analysis, and which is never more than a means *of evoking* a certain *arrangement of language* in which the taking of signification would consist, at the same time as certain schematic-imaginary counterparts, which may, in fact, be of interest, are represented.

[6] Hence our criticisms of cognitive linguistics (Cadiot & Visetti 2001, Visetti & Cadiot 2002, Visetti 2004c), which can be brutally summarized in the following list: immanentism of linguistic value, despite the proclamations in favor of a linguistics of usage; unification of lexical values in a single scheme (or else in a directory of prototypes); almost non-existent dynamicism (no notion of dynamic phase of meaning, no concept of instability); frequent topological and spatialist reduction of meaning, carried out in the name of a certain idea of grammar (schematism, icons); experientialist and, on this basis, neural conception of meaning; no model that would be both linguistic and perceptual of the thematic field, beyond a certain idea of the sentence; and, by force, a semantics of texts of a logical-pragmatic and informational orientation (Fauconnier & Turner), disconnected from the perceptivist problematics that were initially proclaimed (e.g. by Lakoff & Johnson). Not to mention a somewhat simplistic naturalism (*embodiment*), which makes it difficult to integrate the sociality and historicity of meaning in relation to the figures and fictions produced by the various cultural forms.

I-3. A theoretical approach – at the limits of phenomenology

Our approach initially consisted of a critical return to the historical schools of Gestalt, and at the same time to phenomenological philosophy, traversed along an axis that stretches from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty, passing through A. Gurwitsch. We have developed on this basis a phenomenological mode of theorization, quite distinct from formal modes, even if a certain type of mathematical modeling (in terms of dynamic systems) has served as a springboard. We have thus *used* these various phenomenological sources to construct an objective discourse (or, more precisely, an 'explicitating' discourse), which brings into play the bodily and practical "Being-in-the-World", as well as certain structures of the field of consciousness (forms and structures of thematization), the role of a general model, universally transposable.

Let us underline that it is not a question, in so doing, of applying this or that model of constitution that is already available in the philosophical corpus. Instead, we will speak of a kind of critical reprisal and transposition intended to serve the linguistic analysis. It would of course be difficult to conceive of an interesting notion of form (here, semiotic form) without having to return to philosophies which have also been very concerned with consciousness, and with subjective and expressive experience. However, we are radically deviating here from the intentionalist conceptions defended in the Husserlian corpus, such as the 'experientialist' conceptions of meaning that have sometimes been recommended. A relevant notion of *semiotic form* cannot be reduced to 'subjectivist' bases: being by nature a *social form* , it only has value and circulates on the condition of lending itself to an indefiniteness of modalities of explanation, articulated to norms and social interactions, and, in a more reflective framework, to methods that allow manners of apprehending that we will call objectivating (and in this way we join the public hermeneutics specific to the sciences of texts, culture, society). The 'meaning' or the 'value', from a semiotic point of view, is thus not 'in' the experience of this or that protagonist, but rather must be understood to emerge 'through' the activity of language, and more generally any semiotic activity, insofar as such activity is (necessarily) repeatable and social. The experience of the speaking being that we are is defined by the fact of being able to 'hook onto' such a modality, both perceptible and social, of form-meaning.[7]

Thus, the development of a theory of *semantic forms* does not refer to a reductionist program (e.g. of a cognitivist orientation), but to the possibility of *transposing* from one register to another the 'same' theoretical and descriptive modalities. We thus stand in the two-way passage between an *expressivist (and already hermeneutic) phenomenology* and a *linguistic hermeneutics* of a phenomenological style, the theory of forms acting as a mediator between the two. In other words, it was a matter of constructing a theoretical framework suitable for a phenomenological-style description of linguistic value (in its continuity with sensible and practical experience), and which can, at the same time, satisfy, in a general manner, the needs

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[7]Hence the importance of a critical dialogue with the expressivist conception of perceptual consciousness deepened by Merleau-Ponty in the 1950s. At the same time, the privilege accorded here to descriptions inspired by Merleau-Ponty's Being-in-the-World, certainly does not mean that we intend to reduce the question of linguistic meaning to that of pre -linguistic conditions relating to feeling-and-moving. The Being-in-the-World alleged here is not a natural origin, nor even, as far as the foundations of a semiotics are concerned, a primary phenomenological stratum, but rather an *emblem*, and something like a transposable generic model, because it is itself already marked by the various semiotic games instituted in cultures and by languages. Thus, the experience of the body, if it must be evoked in semantics, does not refer to a causal pre-determination, but to a sensitive and semiotic constellation integrating affects, gestures, postures, atmospheres, roles and social practices (whether fictitious or not, whether past or present), which have become *emblematic* for this or that dimension of linguistic meaning, and constituants of a *shared imaginary* .

of a textual and interpretative linguistics. We have therefore proposed a global theoretical alternative, intended to give the concept of *semantic form* the desired general scope [8].

From this perspective, it is essential to introduce beforehand a notion of *form*, inseparable from a notion of *field*, that: (i) is not conceived either in a simply sensualist mode or according solely to a model of morphological abstraction; and that, (ii) avoids the pitfall of Kantian schematism (immanentism, the separation between understanding and imagination), as *a fortiori* that of logical formality. A relevant model of description and gloss – linguistic analysis shows this – will thus necessarily refer to a global vision of the experience, in which praxeological, qualitative, thymic, and empathic anticipations[9] – *found in the figure conferred on them by the semiotic apparatus* – play an eminent *heuristic role* and function as an *emblem*. The theoretical and experimental corpus that we have privileged in this perspective is that of the gestaltist school of Berlin, supplemented by the contribution of the schools linked to *microgenesis* (mainly H. Werner)[10]. We were also inspired[11] by the theory of the field of consciousness of the phenomenologist A. Gurwitsch, with his conception of the thematic structure of the field in particular.

It is by confronting this heritage with a specifically linguistic reflection on the deployment of signification that we have retained the idea of a *dynamic* constitution of fields, and proposed an original model of *the thematic field* and of the *thematization* that rests upon the *co-existence* of several *phases*, or regimes of meaning, called-upon *motifs*, *profiles*, and *themes*. It is, in reality, the phase of the *motifs*, and the structure of motivation, placed at the heart of the overall dynamic organization, that constitutes the principal originality of our proposition, which is, moreover, attached – beyond a linguistics of the sentence – to reformulating within this framework certain key elements of textual semiotics.

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[8] See our works cited in the bibliography (our first book was published in 2001). These works were preceded by those of Cadiot & Nemo (1997), which went in the same directions, remaining more linked to pragmatic perspectives and nominal categorization.

[9] A remark – far too brief – is necessary with respect to the notion of anticipation that is used in this chapter. Here we follow in the wake of Husserlian phenomenology: there is no experience that is not the immediate opening of a meaning; and no meaning without "anticipation". But "anticipation" here does not mean plan or prediction: rather, we must adopt a genetic perspective, even microgenetic, and return to the *dynamic modalities of the constitution of a field of experience*. Active before any stabilization, and not determinant alone, anticipation responds neither to the model of the cause, nor to that of logical reason: it is first of all *motivation* playing within a field in the making, and jointly *protention* (inherent in all actuality) towards a yet undetermined future. Transposed into a scientific problem of modeling spirit, anticipation plays like a condition, or a recurring factor, in the dynamics of constitution of a plane of existence (of its forms, its organization). Analyzed as a "resource" integrated into a dynamic montage, it adjusts itself and develops as part of an ever-widening deployment that encompasses it; this is how it bears its effects.

[10] Cf. in H. Werner the notion of *common sensorium* which *reflects* this primordial unity of the senses (this "between-expression"), and at the same time redefines it in objectivating, subjectivating, or enveloping modalities, such as *ambiances*. Even if it means insisting here on the activity and the experience of one's own body, it is appropriate to highlight its self-centered, synesthetic and anticipatory character, considered, not in a naturalizing mode, but as represented by languages. We will think, in French for example, of a whole series of verbs, such as: to *touch, to resist/to give in, to (re)tighten, to maintain, to break, to insert, to adjust, to bury, to drown, to cover, to camouflage, to get rid of, to stick to, to (un)block* , or nouns, such as: *softness, fluidity, harshness, roughnes* . We see in these exemplary cases of a *perceptual-hermeneutic circle*: since what seems to be in an intimate relationship of reciprocal constitution/institution with languages is a social and cultural *Lebenswelt* , which refers to a semiology and a socialized imaginary of sensation (to 'embodied fictions', if you will), to a *cultural being-in-the-world* , which could not exist, be fixed, or evolve, without a concomitant linguistic practice.

[11] For a short presentation of these various sources, see Cadiot & Visetti 2001, Visetti & Cadiot 2002, Visetti 2004, Rosenthal 2004.

I-4. Phases of meaning in the Theory of Semantic Forms (TFS)

As we have just said, the approach that we adopt is that of a *dynamic constitution* of fields, capable of accommodating a diversity of *anticipations* that are co-active in different *phase states*.[12] In a first formulation (2001), which was of a lexicological orientation, we proposed to distinguish three phases, or "regimes of meaning", called *motifs*, *profiles*, and *themes*, which co-exist in semantic organization and interpretative activity.

Motifs, principles of morphemic character (that is to say, involving a generic semantism analogous to that of morphemes stricto sensu), are engaged in the formation of lexical and grammatical units.[13] They appear as the "germs" of signification[14], or principles of unification, emerging and/or recurrent, unstable, and transposable to an indefiniteness of semantic domains.

Profiles (or *profilings)* refer to the dynamics of the differential stabilization of lexemes, which inter-define on the basis of lexical fields, semantic domains, and, correlatively, in a syntagmatics (partially recorded, whether it is a question of grammar, idiomaticity, frames or discursive sequences). Profiling therefore includes all the operations, lexical as well as grammatical, that contribute to the articulation (segmentation, individuation), to the hierarchical composition, to the chaining, and finally, to the enunciative anchoring, of *synoptic complexes of* semiotic forms.

These stabilization dynamics depend constitutively on a *pathway of thematization* that is inextricably linguistic, pluri-semiotic and situational. As a result, it is necessary to reject any confinement of the play of anticipations in the immanence of a "system", in order to conceive the dynamics of constitution as fundamentally linked, on the contrary, to the possibility of slippage and innovation; to an overcoming, then, of the opposition between language (*langue*) and discourse.

From a directly linguistic point of view, the following profiling frameworks can be mentioned:

- modulation of specific differences against a generic background: a lexical class thus appears as a semantic region allowing the distribution of traits between backgrounds and forms;
- mereological and metonymic elaboration;
- semantic neighborhoods (antonyms, synonyms); hyperonymy

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[12]We have indeed played on the analogy, both spatial and temporal, of phases of matter that together compose a physical environment within which they develop and interact.

[13]We had focused our first presentation of 2001 on the lexical level within the thematic field. But in reality, the proposed apparatus goes much further: it concerns the lexicon in an extended sense (complex lexies, phraseologies, idiomatic expressions, proverbs), as well as the lower levels of the morpheme or the ideophone, as well as other linguistic or thematic formats, including those spread throughout speech, in a more or less diffuse or articulated way. Potentially, all levels of activity and discursive structures are likely to be reached, the perceptivist approach adopted also facilitating closer links with perspectives of semiotic anthropology and phenomenology of language.

[14]The term 'germ' should be used with caution. It could suggest a circumscribed and autonomous source, immanently controlling the modalities of its own deployment. But it is nothing of the sort. The term *sketch* would perhaps be appropriate, if we decided to see it as a gesture, both motivating and motivated, taken in the very movement of speech. Or even a bundle of such gestures, the singular beginning of a disposition to act in and through speech: singularity recognized each time as the same, because immediately open, in its own way, to a variability, an alterability. Note that all types of linguistics recognize such behavior at the level of what is classically called 'morpheme': but most believe that once the level of the word is attained, or the level of the syntagm, this 'phase of meaning' disappears entirely, to give way to the categorical-denominational regime. We think, quite differently, that we refind the same kind of 'phases of meaning' at a variety of levels, and following numerous semiotic formats, from the submorpheme to the entire text (with the fundamental example of *isotopies*).

- inscription within paradigms with a scalar structure (*//a little, a lot, too much//; //icy, fresh, lukewarm, hot, burning//*); with a qualitative diversification of semantic zones: thresholds of acceptability, paragons, generic terms;
- argumentative chains;
- division between process and actants, and distribution of cases or roles;
- lexico-grammatical categories (nouns, verbs…);
- grammatical constructions and functions;
- quantifications, determinations;
- aspects, times, modalities;
- developments by *thematic types* memorized in the lexicon.

Through this process of dynamic structuration (with coexisting phases of meaning, as we've said), 'words', which can initially be considered with all the 'morphemic openness' of their *motifs*, become lexical units indexed on lexical classes, with more stabilized and individualized meanings.[15] The plasticity of motifs, with respect to profiling, is a key point. Some functions can be completely neutralized, or on the contrary made salient. In many cases, certain features are, so to speak, *virtualized*: they remain as a possible aspect inside the dynamics of construction, without being explicitly integrated in the constructed forms. Nevertheless, they are, as it were, reserved, and can come back to the foreground if the discourse subsequently requires it. One of the reasons for these processes of virtualization is that, by entering into a specific semantic domain in order to contribute to the formation of a lexical unit, a *motif* functions as a simple *motivation*: its proper contribution can be superseded by other afferent features, which are more important in this context. These features are either recorded in the lexicon, as a particular use of the word, or indexically integrated on the spot. But let us underline that even if these modulations of meaning are already registered in the lexicon, it is always the global dynamics of stabilization in the current sentence, or in a larger co-text, and the peculiarities of the ongoing topic, which determine what exactly will be taken up from the lexical inscription. Let us also underline that profiling is a *differential* process, which happens by way of contrasts and coordination between *several* inter-defining lexical units, which are the results of *reciprocal* stabilization pathways.

Themes and frameworks of thematization. The *profiles* are still only faces, sketches, *characterizing* an 'about' that remains to be identified. Access to *thematic identities* requires taking into account other textual structures (e.g. actors, actions, scenarios, narrative functions), as well as other norms, more or less imperative: rhetorical, stylistic, dialogical, typical of textual genres, domains of discourse, and socially established practices.

The logics of categorization, the denominational uses, the 'properties' of referents, can be understood at this level, that is to say, on the basis of appropriate frameworks of thematization. To seek a clear line of demarcation between deployment of meaning and referential depth, here, would be in vain. We will therefore distinguish not so much between meaning and reference (an opposition that tends to substantialize these two poles, and therefore to mask their temporal, perceptual and praxeological constitution), but between various strata of the activity of thematization, of what builds and encounters – notably in the language environment in which this activity is practiced, and which it unceasingly elaborates as well. This activity can be considered as an access to the point of view of its narrowly linguistic effects, and as a global means of access to other less directly linguistic 'layers': conceptual,

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[15]Not all words, however, possess a specific motif. Numerous technical terms are actually words indexed in a unique specific domain, which more are very rarely used in a figurative meaning (examples chosen at random in a dictionary: *galvanoscope, gastritis, gasoline*). Of course, speech can always unlock the semantic game, and invent new meanings, which imply the creation of new (most of the time transitory) motifs.

imaginative, perceptual or pragmatic. These layers can be staged by taking into account increasingly wide circles of all relevant semiotics, available in the physical, social, or cultural surroundings of the subjects. In so doing, one never completely detaches oneself from the linguistic conditions of a thematization considered through and through as a semiotic process, and not as a process directed towards some prior and external ontology.

More fundamentally still, we emphasize that an essential mode of cohesion and continuity of the thematic field, as it is given in the word or in internal discourse, is connected to the perception of rhythmic and 'melodic' semantic forms structuring the flow of language. These forms can be described, at first sight, as bundles of *isotopies*, of which the same recurrent characteristics can be distributed according to the different phases of meaning that we have distinguished.[16]

The constitution of semantic forms is thus akin to a microgenesis, *simultaneously* comprising more or less stable phases, and giving rise, from one phase to another, to differentiation, stabilization, development. Each *phase* has the value of a plane of discourse, placed under the dependence of a macrogenetics (texts, genres, enunciations, incidence of speech situations), and susceptible of modifications, metamorphoses, innovations. It is therefore a question of describing, in its linguistic conditions, a composition made up of co-existing phases, which anticipate one another, without any of them developing autonomously. We thus reject systemic-immanentist conceptions, which present thematization as no more than the exploitation of a pre-determined linguistic potential, left intact at its level.

On these first bases, we develop a non-fixist and non-essentialist conception of *linguistic anticipations*, stratified in *phases of meaning* that are differentiated and unequally stable, and replayed over the course of a discourse. We thus go beyond the conception of a lexicon reduced to a repository of acquired knowledge (internal to the language system or fixed in a lexical memory). At the various levels of the text, we find these same layers of meaning at work at the heart of the thematic organization, where they function like workplans and therefore constitute objects for linguistic analysis.

I-5. A lexicological model: the notion of lexical-morphemic motif

We thus deviate here from the grammatical schematism of cognitive linguistics, and we also oppose the primacy of categorical / denominative models frequently observed in lexical semantics.

The concept of *lexical-morphemic motif* is therefore proposed as a principle of unification and of the redeployment of variation, which notably makes it possible to present in a "polysemic" mode a whole variety of common uses of lexical or grammatical units. Breaking with attempts to identify types (schematic forms, or kernels of meaning) whose inherent deformability would be at the origin of the observed variations, the problematic of motifs is based instead on a non-mechanical principle of *reprisal* and continuity, possibly transversal to any thematic domain (neither replica, nor instantiation, nor parameterized deformation). The unification then proceeds from the establishment of a continuity of values (i) under a principle of

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[16]The concept of isotopy was introduced by A. Greimas in the 1960s to designate any form of recurrence, throughout a text, of 'elements of meaning' (called *sèmes* in French). This recurrence, observable at any level, from the syntagm to the entire text, represents a fundamental form of cohesion and rhythm, bridging the globality of the text and the locally perceptible lexical values (if we describe them as conglomerates of semes). Initially coming from a discretizing theoretical framework (in solidarity with a structuralist approach), the concept of isotopy can however lend itself to a continuist recasting (e.g. Missire, 2005, 2022), largely compatible with our apparatus. See below the section: *Isotopies, rhythms*, *diffuse forms.*

'physiognomic' affinity, and not from the recognition of an invariant [17], (ii) within a space of variations, dependent on domains of observation. We can, if one wishes, speak of *recognition*: but on the condition of understanding that such an – essential – form of recognition and reprisal does not pass (at the level of *motifs)* through any *arrested identity*.

The description of unities is therefore refocused around *a different form of genericity*, called *figural genericity*, which cannot be separated from a constitutive instability.[18]

To at least convey the originality of the notion of *motif* placed at the center of our theory, let us recall the example of the French preposition *SUR*, which opens onto a principle of definition-delimitation of two 'segments' or 'moments' by way of their 'putting into contact'. Here are some illustrations: *les enfants jouent sur le trottoir (*the children are playing on the sidewalk*); Pierre travaille sur Paris/sur cette question* (Pierre works in Paris/Pierre is working on this question)*; une menace plane sur la ville* (a threat hangs over the city)*; condamner sur de faux témoignages* (to condemn on false testimony)*; payer l'impôt sur le revenu* (paying the tax on income)*; fixer son regard sur quelqu'un* (to fix one's gaze on someone)*; être sur le départ* (to be on the go)*; agir sur un coup de tête/sur le champ (to act on a whim/on the spot),* without forgetting the value of enchainment in *sur ce, il a disparut à jamais* (with that, he disappeared forever). Instead of treating directly spatial uses as primary (*le livre est sur la table/*the book is on the table), and also instead of seeking a schematic characterization of a purely topological variety, we endeavor to explain, in their variety, the main dimensions that come into coalescence within a *prepositional motif* that is available in the common language, and located by definition below the particular profilings – in fact, of an indefinite number – of the preposition in use. Whether below or beyond its developed dynamic value, such a motif indeed includes the possibility of a static acquisition which is like a side effect or a stabilized variant (location, seat, support), but it is fundamentally an aspectual and intentional motif of aim and approach, at the same time as a motif of exploitation, of valorization of contact by a certain work (support, rebound, working-through between the two 'phases' which nevertheless remain external to one another). Hence, the values of the objective, of imminence, of achievement, of incidence, of enchainment. Its configurational expression, when fully deployed, includes an 'axial' tracking of momentum dynamics, another 'transverse' tracking for the contact zone, and the maintained exteriority of the two 'phases' thus delineated. The terms mobilized by this work of explanation ('support', 'aim', 'momentum'…) are to be taken with all possible openness of meaning, their polysemy remaining here suspended at the level of their own motifs: there is absolutely no question of a metalanguage, we gloss a motif in making explicit affinities it maintains with others, which can be said to intersect or merge therein (thus defining specific modalities of response to the solicitations of a milieu).

The same would apply to the analysis of a verb like *MONTER*.[19] Far from favoring the so-called spatial meanings of the verb (*monter une valise/au grenier/sur une chaise - to bring up a suitcase/to go up to the attic/to get up on a chair*), we will pay just as much attention to those in which space only intervenes in the background, as in such idiomatic expressions as '*monter la mayonnaise'* (to rile up/to throw gas on the fire), '*monter une maquette'* (to build a model), or is even absented entirely, as in '*monter un project'* (to put together a project), '*monter un coup'* (to devise a plan/to hatch a scheme), '*monter le son'* (to turn up the sound). We will

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[17]We are thinking here of an open mode of unification, not soluble analytically, nor on the basis of an invariant, as proposed for example by the Wittgensteinian model of family resemblance.

[18]A lexicological approach which, in the following examples, is limited to small-format units, and which makes the assumption of a common lexicon welcoming the observed variation. For many other examples, see in particular Cadiot & Visetti 2001a, ch. 3; 2002. Cadiot 2002, 2003. Visetti & Cadiot 2002. Visetti 2004.

[19]For a detailed analysis, cf. Cadiot , Lebas & Visetti (2004).

also recall the particular interest of employments that are sometimes referred to as 'subjectivized' such as '*la route monte*' (the road climbs/goes up). We will thus discern the main dimensions of profiling, more or less united and valued by each employment, such as: upward movement, boarding, growth, assembly, combination, artifice. A motif – a principle of unification that is non-fixist, non-essentialist, always partial and inherently uncertain – could then be proposed, consisting of a requalification of the aim of *elevation* along the axis of the oriented and organized activity of the subject: anticipation of a term (an essential form of telicity, without intentional imputation or guarantee of achievement), an 'upwards'polarized state, becoming arranged, sequentialized and cumulative trajectory. It has been thought that there is no way to bring together under a unified formula such a set of dimensions, compatible with a whole set of perspectives, which range from a panoramic view to various forms of fictitious paths, or internal constitutions.

What, in short, is the general perspective illustrated through these two examples? In summary, we advocate:

- No privilege for spatial or physical usage of words (as conceived, for example, by current trends in Cognitive Linguistics), and consequently no doctrine of the metaphorical transfer of meaning, going from the spatial and/or physical uses towards more 'abstract' ones (as is currently conceived by the same linguistics);

- The search for *motifs*, which are ways of giving/apprehending/displaying, immediately available in many (if not all) semantic domains, without any analogical or metaphorical transfer stemming from more specific values, allegedly conceived as the primitive ones;

- The rejection of purely configurational versions of those *motifs*: on the contrary, a *motif* is an unstable, and at the same time a strongly unified, means of building and accessing semantic forms; it ties together, and defines a kind of transaction between many semiotic dimensions and resources which cannot be dissociated at the level of the motif, but only at the level of *profiling* inside more specific semantic fields;

- The rejection of an 'immanentist' explanation of the variety of uses, based upon an identification of the *motif* with some kind of 'autonomous' potential; indeed, depending on the specific use, some dimensions of the *motif* can be further specified, enriched with other dimensions, or on the contrary virtualized, even completely neutralized. The parameters controlling the profiling dynamics are not an internal property of the *motif*: the relation between a *motif* and a particular profile has to be considered as a *linguistic motivation*, because profiling a *motif* consists of recovering it within other dynamics, brought about by the co-text and the context, that is, by an ongoing hermeneutic perspective;

- A conception of the *motifs* as highly unstable 'germs of forms' which can be stabilized only by interaction with the other constituents of surrounding syntagms, or even by more distant elements of the co-text: as we have said, this stabilization is not a 'simple' instantiation of the *motif* but a reprisal by other non-immanent and more global dynamics giving rise to a variety of *profiles*.

Let us give some examples, then, in nominal semantics. Recusing once again the strategies aimed at identifying a proper or primary meaning, of a denominative and referential nature, we seek, well upstream of the logics of classification of referents, or of categorization of belonging, *motifs* conceived as transposable relational complexes, or, if one prefers, as generic modes of access: relations, or accesses, which are indissolubly, according to the two constituent dimensions of semiolinguistic valuation, relations and accesses to other signs at the same time as to themes. Glossing these motifs requires a particular descriptive style, and in no way constitutes an attempt to reduce linguistic semantics to anything (ontologies, concepts, mental structures, etc.) that would no longer depend upon the ensemble of semiotic resources. The few characterizations proposed therefore do not aim to exhaust motifs that are in essence inexhaustible (since they are unstable, *i.e.* always dynamically open to an increase in or a revival of semantic investment); rather, they seek only to outline a few main

dimensions, presumed to be available in a sufficiently common language, which turn out to be enlightening for the question of polysemy and figurative meanings.[20] Thus:

ARBRE ('tree') : fruit tree (*'arbre fruitier'*), genealogical tree (*'arbre généalogique'*), syntactic tree (*'arbre syntaxique'*); as well as some uses considered as more figurative: 'tree of life' (*'Arbre de Vie'*), 'tree of knowledge' (*'Arbre de Connaissance'*). A possible motif for ARBRE unifies a branching process with a specific coherence stemming from the root, and giving rise to a perspective of growth, generativity, accompaniment. Depending upon the specific use, some of these dimensions are salient, others are pushed into the background, or even vanish. The important point is that language offers the *possibility* to simultaneously grasp all these aspects, because they are put into transaction with each other, and blend together, giving rise to a kind of coalescence. At the same time, language offers the *possibility* of dissociating this same unity (up to a certain point), and of enriching it (if needed), in order to give rise to a variety of *profiles*.

CLEF/CLÉ ('key'): English key (*'clé à molette'*), keystone (*'clé de voute'*), key of success (*'clé du succès'*), key to the mystery (*'clé du mystère'*), keypoint (*'point-clef '*), keyword ('mot-clef'), field key (*'clé des champs'*), as well as the French *clé de bras* (in martial arts, a grip used to immobilize the adversary, *i.e.* an 'armbar']. One can propose that a motif of KEY unifies 'exclusive access, (un)locking, and precision. One can see that the French word CLEF can evolve according to a mainly perceptual and functional model (*clef anglaise, clef de voûte*), or according to a more explicitly intentional and practical model (searching/finding a specific way of accessing: *point-clef, keyword, mystery key*).

MUR ('wall'): brick wall (*'mur de briques'*), Berlin Wall (*'Mur de Berlin'*), to hit one 's head against a wall (*'se cogner la tête à un mur'*), to run into a wall (of incomprehension) (*'se heurter à un mur d'incompréhension'*), wall of hate (*'mur de haine'*). These examples show that WALL (*'mur'*) integrates in its motif 'to separate, to stand erect, to surround, to protect, to hit, to build/to destroy…'. It is to be emphasized that an agonistic dimension is already immediately present in this motif, and not subsequently inferred (though of course it is neutralized in many denominative uses)

TABLE (table de cuisine, table des matières, table des élément [en chimie], tables de la loi: kitchen table, table of contents, table of elements [in chemistry], tables of the law) integrates direct access, visibility, availability, plan or support of activity (all dimensions found in the blackboards (Fr. tableaux) that were once in schools, or in the computer software called tableur in French (spreadsheet).

Other words give access through their motifs to a certain general 'quality of sensation' (that is, a linguistic qualification, not a bare sensation!), or to a certain 'norm of evaluation', which can be applied to an open set of entities, situations, states, etc., that are impossible to determine *a priori*. These *linguistic qualia* have, of course, very important perceptual and emotional correlates, which are like their emblems. But, being *linguistic*, these qualia are something other than these sensible emblems: they are transposable to many kinds of experiences. Here are some examples, about which we shall not try to sketch a *motif* (except for the first example). We shall only underline that these conjectural motifs are neither concrete nor

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[20]Translator's note: The following series of examples are taken originally from the French language. Though many can be given close correlates in English, the line of argumentation developed by the author obviously relies heavily upon idiomaticity and the constellation of words and phrases pertaining to a particular motif within a particular language. I have offered translations where possible, some of which are idiomatic in English and others more forced, and retained the original French expressions in parentheses in most cases for clarity.

abstract, being totally entangled, as generic qualia, between physical, psychological, and axiological aspects:

- NUIT ('night') : a possible basic motif here tends to split into two sub-motifs, which nevertheless remain linked; the first evokes darkness: *the night falls* ('*la nuit tombe*'), *the night of ignorance* ('*la nuit/les ténèbres de l'ignorance*'), *the night of time* ('*la nuit/les brumes des temps*')*; the second evokes a period of rest: *spend a good night* ('*passer une bonne nuit*')

- BOUE ('mud'): to sink into the mud ('s'enfoncer dans la boue'), drag someone/someone's name through the mud ('trainer quelqu'un/le nom de quelqu'un dans la boue')

- FOUILLIS ('mess'): your room/ your paper is a real mess ('ta chambre/ton article c'est un vrai fouillis')

- NUAGE ('cloud'): rather than defining a motif, it is better to delineate it through the specific phraseology of the word (idiomatisms), of which it is a unifying principle. For example *: clouds are gathering ('les nuages s'accumulent':* in French, it applies to many kinds of situations where a threat is looming, like in English 'to be under a cloud'); *to have one's head in the clouds* ('*être dans les nuages*'); *a cloud of sadness passed on his face* ('*un nuage de tristesse passe sur son visage*'); and conversely, one can speak in French of *a happiness without clouds*, *i.e.* 'a perfect bliss,' ('*un bonheur sans nuages*').

In this search for *motifs*, the lexicalized figurative significations play a very important role. Indeed, they do not function as heavily analogical mechanisms, but on the basis of an *immediate promotion* of a corresponding motif, which therefore appears as a general access principle, a qualitative relational index, immediately available in a variety of domains.

What we call 'word', then, is in fact only a compromise formation: *a bundle of anticipations* staged between the status of morpheme and the status of lexeme, and going of course to the status of thematic identifier within discourse – discourse thanks to which all these anticipations are put into play (and possibly replayed!). A *lexical entry,* then, is only a grouping of various regimes of anticipations, concerning various phases of meaning and levels of thematization that are placed in a certain continuity of motivation but are not deducible from one another on the basis of a signification, nor from a parameterizable program (there is therefore no metalanguage, but according to each case a variety of definitional genres). Depending on the phases, as well as the levels of thematic integration, the constitutive solidarity of the item studied with certain networks, groups, or lexical classes carrying the relevant anticipations, varies. In terms of textual analysis, it becomes possible to find these same layers of meaning at work at the heart of the thematic organization, and to integrate them all the better into linguistic analysis (a simple and foundational example being that of the so-called 'figured' meanings).

As we've said above, the logics of categorical membership and classification, the denominational uses, are thus understood according to the strata located the most 'downstream' in this movement of reconstruction. Let us emphasize once again that all the anticipations envisaged authorize immediate displacements in discourse (although of a different nature according to the phases). This is in accordance with a conception of the activity of language according to which the possibility of innovation must be part of the linguistic system itself. And that, on the other hand, the question of lexical anticipations is part of a diversified vision of the forms of genericity, wherein one distinguishes at least one form, domanial and categorical-denominational, from another, figural and trans- domanial.

I-6.   *Figural genericity*

Far from being reduced to an abstract mechanism of compromise between the disparate requirements of thematization (for example, from one domain to another), or even to a

theoretical idealization of generative principles internal to the "system" of the language (*la langue*), the **figural genericity** placed at the heart of our notion of motif is precisely what is promoted and elaborated by certain remarkable uses, called, for example, figurative or metaphorical. It takes shape just as well on the occasion of innovative bridging between constituted domains (*i.e. virus* - between biology and computer science), or even in the process of constitution as an emblem of a domanial figure (*i.e. still waters/des eaux dormantes*, of which we must be wary). More generally, it can come in support, or as an index, in a process of the constitution of entities, outside categorial logic - for example, within the framework of mechanisms of physiognomic recognition, or qualification (*i.e.* animal figures: *bear, wolf , sheep* …).

The example of figurative meanings thus illustrates in an exemplary way the established link, and the identity of 'texture', which unites the most ordinary linguistic genericity to that, felt as more singular, which is manifested on the occasion of textual figures. This is a crucial point, which distinguishes our theory from those that invoke, at the origin of variation, some notion of schema or schematic form.

Linguistic genericity being thus constituted as co-extensive with discourse, it becomes possible to revisit the question of the relationship between language and discourse in terms of an interaction between linguistic motifs and thematic developments. *Contrary to any linguistic essentialism or immanentism, we are thus committed to analyzing the variability of the generic-figural level itself, by treating it as a workplan directly deployed in discourse.* Thus, linguistic motifs are defined as open and sensitive, *at their own level*, to the vagaries of thematics: places of shifts, inventions, metamorphoses, *constituted by sets of collocations, idiomatisms, phraseologies, partially lexicalized constructions*. This property of *immediate sensitivity*, in resonance with a diversity of phases of meaning, clearly distinguishes our perceptivist problematic from others that are currently active in the sciences of language, as well as in the cognitive sciences.

As it has appeared in the few examples given above, the figural approach to genericity breaks with any classifying or categorical/denominational approach (derived from ontic properties). Nor does it consist of an iconic generalization of spatiality (as in the schematism of cognitive linguistics). The *figural texture of the motifs*, if one had to look for *correspondences* or *correlates* at the level of a sensible perception, would rather be found in the synesthetic, praxeological, and affective coalescences, on which the gestaltist and microgenetic schools have insisted so much. To gloss a semantic motif is therefore necessarily to explain anticipations participating in these various dimensions, identifying the figures of a semiolinguistic imaginary; and at the same time, to put oneself in a position to identify the expressive resonances in certain physiognomies of the sensory world, promoted thereafter to the rank of emblems for these same motifs.

I-7.   *Motivation and polysemy*

We consider, then, that the phenomenon of polysemy – defined as the existence of distinct meanings felt as related through the occurrences of a 'same' unit – finds itself totally trivialized here. This is not to say that we claim to have resolved the enigma. Simply, we have converted it into an originary given, immediately reflected in a device where it has complete liberty to manifest itself. The question of polysemy indeed becomes that of a distribution of anticipations, and of the effects of use, on the different phases of postulated meaning. In this way, we reject any attempt to account for it by identifying the units in terms of 'schemes',

'kernels of meaning', 'schematic forms', or even 'potentials', the intrinsic deformability of which would explain the variation of collected values.

This has several consequences for what we call *motifs*. On the one hand, the equation 'a word = a motif' should be immediately rejected. A word – in the languages where this notion seems relevant – should rather be considered as a *workshop of motifs*, if indeed we want to recognize in it a kind of unity (which is always doubtful). On the other hand, motifs have no immanent generative power to qualify themselves, by themselves, into usage. The relationship between motifs and other more definite phases of meaning (in lexicon, in statement, in speech) is a *relation of motivation*. It is certain that the lexicon systematically registers these relationships, so that a number of values in context seems *to result retroactively* from deformations/stabilizations of a sort of potential intrinsic to the word. In our approach, this effect of systematization does not proceed from the immanence of a functional core of the language, but refers, in speech and in diachrony, to other principles of organization, more global and certainly unpredictable on the basis of the individuality of motifs. This does not prohibit playing the game of polysemy, that is to say, trying to relate certain variations to a certain form of unity – on the condition, however, of not seeking, for the purposes of unification, a *generative* principle of *categorical subsumption*, but rather attaching to the quite different principle of a *motivating genericity*.

Finally, let us recall that semantic innovation, and the diversification of genres of discourse, can affect *all* the levels revealed by the analysis. The motifs evolve; their identity is never fixed. As the example of morphemes, which involves time scales of the order of millennia (possibly passing from one language to another), shows, alteration can be permanent – and besides, properly unassignable – without the impression of a rupture ever emerging. This apparent perennity – carried by an anonymous and endless process of sonorous and figural recognition – is based on principles of recovery and continuity, and not on fixed identifications. *Recognition without identity*, then, which stems from a form of *diacritical and non-thetic knowledge* (according to a formula borrowed from Merleau-Ponty), and which implies referring to other strata of the thematic – those in which identities are profiled – the function of registering the effects of categorical rupture, conflicts, and more generally the 'torsions' of systems, which constitute the horizon of the classical rhetorical concept of *figure*. Our conception of the *figural*, therefore, is as follows: not necessarily a modality of meaning that comes with systemic transgressions, but first of all a semantic layer that is fundamental for the most ordinary linguistic habitus.

Moreover, the indefinite diversity of lines of transmission and sanction opposes any attempt to circumscribe a primary lexicon, placed at the origin of all speech. However, it remains possible to envisage, as a heuristic, a notion of *common lexicon*, that would be widely and spontaneously accessible, and valid as a common reference, while also having a limited scope.

It is thus at the level of profiling that a majority of polysemic variations are collected, in our apparatus. These variations can be attributed to units that we will always assume related to a certain corpus of variation: a variety of meanings, indexed on the same form of the plane of expression, are attached to what at the same time becomes a *unity*, defined as the effect of a dual process of unification-deployment.

The organization of lexical fields can then play on two principles of variation recorded at the level of the profiles. On the one hand, it can play on the plasticity of the motifs and cause the modes of reprisal (virtualization, highlighting of lines) to vary; and on the other, as is classically recognised, it can play on mereological or metonymic principles that are specific to semantic domains. Polysemies of a synecdochic type are reformulated in a simple way in

a language of the theory of fields and forms[21]: any resource, in order to be profiled, must be distributed between background and form, showing or hiding one aspect rather than others, presenting a *relief*, a more or less focalized access perspective, which is an integral part of the accessed form. Consequently, the same resource, by the possible variety of these distributions, is intrinsically, prior to any more advanced installation within a thematic, a potential source of displacements, which can be translated into synecdoches or metonymies.

This far too brief presentation may give the impression that the distinction between these two types of polysemic shifts is clear cut. In reality, many examples present a gradation of cases, and associate a polysemy pertaining to the transposition of motifs (from one domain to another), and a polysemy pertaining to synecdochic or aspectual profiling (within the same domain).[22]

I-8.   *Idiomaticity, phraseology.*

From the perspective of a *linguistic and textual theory* of semantic forms, the analysis of so-called figurative meanings, extended so as to take into account the fundamental role of idiomaticity and phraseology, has proven to be a decisive relay in making what we refer to as *linguistic motifs* evident. As we said, our first concern, in developing this concept, was to give form to what we consider to be *an essential solidarity between genericity, transposability and figurality*. Playing like an "operator of phenomena" (Bachelard), the concept of *motif* valorizes the symptomatic interplay of collocations, phraseologies, and more or less fixed constructions, thus making it possible to understand it as an institution and implementation of singular motifs that are not not necessarily assigned to a particular domain.

Let's give another illustration with the French lexeme *'fleur'*. Beyond its floral emblem, which one will perhaps think of first, one will find: *fleur de lait,* which refers to a type of milk cream (cf: It. *fior di latte) fleur de l'âge,* which refers to 'the prime of life' (*i.e.* a state of maturity, before old age begins to set in), *fine fleur,* which refers to a group of people considered the elite of a social class (*i.e. la fine fleur de l'aristocracie*), *à fleur de peau,* which designates an extreme sensibility, *faire une fleur,* to do (someone) a favor, *arriver/se poser comme une fleur,* to arrive, to position, or to conduct oneself with innocence or insouciance.[23] In order to understand such variations, which are inscribed in the lexicon, each one playing on a *transposability* that is open to new re-qualifications, should we not also pay attention to verbs such as *fleurir* (to blossom)*, affleurer* (to arrive at the surface, to 'become or make flush), *effleurer* (to touch lightly, to brush), *déflorer* (to deflower), *fleurer* (to emit a pleasant odor), as well as the noun *fleuron* (a small, flower-shaped ornament or decoration), all of which include the same morpheme? Indeed, it is thanks to the links between these terms that there emerges a motif composed of the 'finest, most delicate, most exposed', which presents singular modalities of emergence on the surface and on contact; even a kind of halo, a mode of diffusion that we find first in *fleurer* [diffuse emergence/emanation, with positive value, since in collocation with 'good']. Two etymological phyla merge here: the first goes back to *flor/florem*, and the second to the popular Latin *flator* then to the old French *fleur* – 'odor, exhalation' (cf. *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, p. 804). This first analysis could be extended by taking into account expressions such as *jeunesse en fleur* (the flower of youth), *couvrir de fleurs* (to compliment or flatter excessively), *fleurs de rhétorique*

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[21]Langacker does the same in his *Cognitive Grammar.*

[22]Many examples of French commented on will be found in our 2001 book, pp. 93-112, 165-175.

[23]TR.: flower of milk, flower of age, delicate flower, on edge, on edge of water, to make a flower, to arrive/ arise like a flower…

(rhetorical flourishes), even *caché sous des fleurs* ('hidden in flowers', along the lines of 'a wolf in sheep's clothing') *,* in which /freshness [and hence perishability]/ is more marked, as well as /brilliance/ and /vain ornamentation/, potentially in contrast with adverse values, such as /darkness/, or /harmful underside/. We will also note the possible reinforcement of certain evaluative or axiological dimensions, emblematized in certain social practices such as *offrir des fleurs* (to give someone flowers)*, faire une fleur* (to do someone a favor)*, le dire avec des fleurs* (to say something peacefully/with care). Then, perhaps moving away from the common language, we could take an interest in literary motifs, such as the topos of *la fleur au bord de l'abîme (the flower on the edge of the abyss)*, studied by M. Riffaterre (1983) in which certain values polarized on 'flower' can remain close to those we have just mentioned.

It is thus a natural continuation of the lexicological model already in place: to direct the study towards *idiomatic expressions*, considered as morphemic-lexical blocks, whose internal articulations cannot necessarily be read as assemblies of detached constituents. Idiomaticity is characterized in particular by the fact that the 'profile' phase of semantics is only perceived at the level of the encompassing syntagm, recaptured as a whole, in a holistic mode. The fact remains that at the level of the internal articulation, a certain perception of the encapsulated lexical motifs is not entirely obliterated.

It is therefore a question of finding, at the foundation of the use of these expressions, or in any case as the key to their particular 'flavor', the same principle of figural genericity, which (as in the so-called figurative meanings of lexemes) never completely detaches itself from a certain *figurative charge*, in its function as an emblem. This figurative charge does not proceed from an ordinary categorization of domanial situational data, but it uses these resources to compose a stereotyped scenography, imprinted with affects and physiognomic games, and converted thereby into a trans-domanial *cliché*.

It is possible in certain cases to analyze the overlappings, or the resonances, of the semantism of the global expression, with motifs that can be said to be internalized by some of their keywords. We could then speak of *hermeneutic micro-circles*: the whole expression being all the better motivated if we locally perceive in it a morphemic-lexical motif already encountered elsewhere; this same motif, reciprocally, is reconfirmed by allowing itself to be discerned and integrated in a cohesive way. Thus, an encompassed lexical-morphemic unit functions not as a detachable part but as an index of cross-checking with a part of the semantics *carried by other expressions where this same unit appears.*

(cf. *Motives and Proverbs*, 2006, pp. 105-112):

fleur (flower) ↔ *être à la fleur de l'âge* (to be in the prime of life) *, à fleur de peau* (to be delicate as a lfower)*, se poser comme une fleur* (to act with innocent*)*

racine (root) ↔ prendre racine (to take root), prendre les choses à la racine (to get to the root of things), avoir des racines (to have roots, origins…)

pont (bridge) ↔ *couler sous les ponts* (the passage of time)*, jeter des ponts* (to build bridges, *i.e.* between people)*, couper les ponts* (to burn one's bridges)*, faire un pont d'or* (to offer lucrative compensation)

In most cases, however, the idiomatic expression engages an original mini-scenario, which is absolutely not anticipated in the separate parts of its lexical components. But here again, we note the possibility of hermeneutic micro-circles operating at the level of a figural genericity. This does not, of course, explain the conventional semantism of the expression, but it sometimes makes more intelligible, from a micro-stylistic perspective, the quality of the impression.

In parallel, a lexical motif may appear as a singular point of intersection for certain semantic dimensions, which thus find themselves revealed, so to speak, in a form that is pointed each time in a certain direction by *a set of lexical collocations, idiomatic expressions, and characteristic phraseologies, all of which it relates in the manner of a cross-checking index* .

Yet another lesson can be drawn from the phenomenon of idiomaticity. Just as the analysis of the so-called figurative meanings could serve as a relay on the way to our lexicological model, so the attention paid to idiomaticity, as well as to the phenomena of routinization and fixity, leads to renewing the analysis of predicative structures. The study of idiomatic expressions forces us to recognize a diversity of co-present phases of meaning *in correlation with a variable differentiation and an individuation of the variables of syntagmatic components*.

We are, for this reason, committed to developing the theory of semantic forms in such a manner as to include a general theory of predication, in which lexical classes are seen as networks anticipating different *phases* of meaning, and different structures of thematization, carried by associated predications; and where, likewise, the constructions organizing the predicative complexes are seen as directly supporting this same diversity of phases of meaning.

I-9.   *Phases of predication: towards a theory of constructions?*

We propose here a somewhat renewed analysis of the structure of predications, one that begins by questioning the idea of an acquired exteriority between predicate and arguments, such as is found at the base of most sentence models.[24] By understanding constructions as dynamics of constitution that traverse a plurality of phases of differentiation and individuation (notably of the constituents, going as far as a holistic approach of the analyzed ensemble), we open onto a game of possible decompositions, delimiting constituents that are fused to varying degrees. This allows the resorption, to varying degrees, of the actantial roles in the predicative whole: actoriality and action properly speaking withdraw, in favor of a simply descriptive diathesis, with an accentuated holism of the sentence, correlated with various defects (of time, mode, aspect, determination, anaphorization), and sometimes leading to a kind of global "capture" of sentence phrases in idiomatic expressions.

The principle of an internal variability of the structure of predication, valid as a support for metaphors and metamorphoses, thus proves to be decisive in the analysis of certain semiotic genres, such as metaphorical proverbs (2006). It is first of all by rejecting the solely categorical-propositional interpretation of predicative structures, including in the "sensitive", "concrete", and "practical" fields, that one can understand that the metaphoricity of a statement, far from being a violence done to a primary state of language, originates on the contrary in an immediately available state of predication.

But let's start with a few simple examples, attesting to different degrees of fusion, or deep integration, between subjects and predicates [25].

(i) Geographic" or "weather" type statements:

The plain extends to the south; the torrent rushes down the mountain; the river weaves its way through the woods; the road climbs until the summit (la route monte jusqu'au sommet).

The wind blows; time passes; night falls.

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[24]Let us recall the usual distinctions between sentence, logical predication and judgment, which are part of the partition between grammatical, logical and referential dimensions of the "proposition". For our part, we take the term predication in an all-encompassing and unmarked sense.

[25]Most of the examples and analyzes mentioned here can be found in Cadiot 2004, 2005.

Let us note the double interpretation of, for example, *the road climbs,* which we will consider for the sake of our demonstration as the French '*la route monte'*. This statement can be considered as the effect of a subjective projection in a virtual route; or again, as the effect of an internal constitution of the panorama, with a road merging with its actualization as a dynamic *imprint*.

Let us underline the defects with which this example is accompanied:

? la route a monté jusqu'au sommet (the road climbed until the summit).

? la route est en train de monter (the road is climbing).

Several consequences can be drawn from this: lexemes like *road*, *path*, *staircase*, etc., incorporate essential "predicative aspects", which are specified in terms of perspectives of movement, access, trajectory, and that a syntactic montage articulates in subjects and predicates (similarly, the roads, paths, stairs of our practical world do not present themselves as "objects" disjointed from these same perspectives). But one must be careful: the 'road' in this case is constituted by integrating its predicate. It cannot be posed in any form of spatio-temporal extension independently of this integration. Correlatively, the articulated structure of the sentence cannot be understood, on the semantic plane, as the pure and simple assemblage of dissociated components. It would rather be preferable to imagine – this is still only the beginning of a hypothesis – that a global, holistic motif, of *la-route-qui-monte*, a still unstable "diagram-motif" unfolds *via* the lexemes *route* and *monte*, and which comes with them to profile itself, to articulate itself further in the contours of a very simple construction, wherein a lexico-grammatical silhouette is ultimately perceived.

In a similar register, we can cite:

The night promises/promised to be long (La nuit promet/promettait d'être longue)

The night promises that it will be long (La nuit promet qu'elle sera longue)

The night (has promised + will promise + should promise) to be long (La nuit a promis + promettra + 'devrait promettre) d'être longue).

All these examples show that it is when the mutual exteriority of predicates and arguments is pushed too far that the statement becomes impossible – unless this exteriority is perceived as the manifestation of a status of actor to be constituted within the discourse (a 'night' to some extent personified). It is well understood that a fusion of the predicate and the arguments within the dynamics of constitution is a source of blockage in the temporal variations, as in the attribution of an actantial value to the components of the predication.

Correlatively, we can emphasize the holistic nature of theticity, which does not necessarily make entities the source of the activity attributed to them, nor does it individuate and position said entities separately (except in personifying 'the wind', 'the night'…). These become aspects of the globally targeted scene, a bit like in the impersonal constructions (*il lui arrive de gros ennuis/'heavy trouble befalls him')*, and no doubt in the so-called intransitive constructions that are interpreted along the inaccusative axis (*the curtain falls*, and even *the clock ticks*).

(ii) <u>Fixed or semi-fixed expressions that are constituted in complex lexies by what we will call a predicative fusion, simultaneously affecting a 'modalized' verb and 'internalized' nominals:</u>

to go to the woods, to go to the restaurant, to die in the hospital, to cut with an axe, to be at home, to go to the sea, to be at the piano, to have (something) in hand, to be in prison

Depending on whether it is fixed at the level of the substantive [*the woods*], of the prepositional syntagm [*to the woods*], or of the complete verbal syntagm [*to go to the woods*], the nominal argument (as it will be designated from a syntactic point of view) evolves between a status: (i) of actant, instrument or target, (ii) of framework or domain, and (iii) of modality of being

or modality of potentially transposable doing. We note, at the same time, the pivotal role of the shift in status of the definite article, comparable at the end of the course to an associative anaphora.[26] Even without a perceptible passage towards metaphoricity, there is hardly any project of individuation or empirical reference here. The association between predicate and noun is effected "from the inside", prior to any exteriorization, by blocking the possibilities of autonomization and of determination or situational specification.

This mechanism, which seems innocuous in that, in appearance, it manages the actantial and denominative identities received, as well as the continuity of the associated thematic impressions, is in fact the basis for a kind of "ascent" towards figural genericity that accompanies idiomaticity and that lends itself to all forms of metaphorical transpositions and promotions. We thus pave the way for a theory of constructions that takes into account the principle of a superposition of phases, acting as so many divergent modalities of unification of the constituents. We naturally reconstruct, on a continuous basis, the multiple values conveyed by idiomatic expressions, more engaged in metaphorical rigidity, such as *servir à la louche, couper à la hache, casser des oeufs, ménager sa monture, accuser le coup*, etc[27]. We find this same phenomenon, but in a much more complex form required by the proverbial genre, through sententious formulas such as: *Qui vole un œuf vole un bœuf, Quand on a un marteau en main, tout ressemble à un clou , Qui veut noyer son chien l'accuse de la rage , La faim fait sortir le loup du bois , Qui se fait brebis, le loup le mange, Pierre qui roule n 'amasse pas mousse, Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps, Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu, Tout ce qui brille n'est point or , Qui sème le vent récolte la tempête, etc.* [see below].[28]

At the risk of repeating ourselves, we would say that predication can be described as an internal genesis, a play of differentiation and diagrammatization of the sentence, possibly unfolding various phases of meaning, while constructions can be described as ensembles of aspects (profilings) carried by these dynamics of constitution, by way of a plurality of phases of differentiation and individuation (notably into constituents, thus offering a structural reading, among other possibilities). It does not seem to us that we should seek to understand the constructional facts by *identifying* constructions, in an absolute manner, in the form of previously determined *types*. Nor does it seem appropriate to us to attempt to attribute to expressive forms constructional structures conceived on a univocal actantial or argumental model. Classification programs – except when employed for heuristic purposes – also seem

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[26] As in to park the car, to close the door, to walk the dog.

[27] Translator's Note: The idiomatic expressions that serve as examples here can be parsed as follows. *Servir à la louche*, literally, to serve with a ladle, means 'approximately,' as in, 'not precisely measured'. *Couper à la hache*, literally, to cut with an ax, means 'to split or divide something without much concern for subtlety or detail'. *Casser des oeufs,* literally, to break eggs, derives from the expression '*on ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des oeufs'* (you can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs), and thus suggests a certain risk, cost, or sacrifice to be assumed. *Ménager sa monture*, literally, to care for one's mount (*i.e.* horse, donkey, etc), comes from the expression *'qui veut voyager loin ménage sa monture'* (whoever wishes to travel a long distance must care for the horse that they ride), and thus refers to the necessity of conserving energy or provisions for a long-term or difficultly obtained objective. *Accuser le coup,* literally 'to accuse the blow', means to demonstrate that one is affected by something.

[28] Translator's Note: These proverbial expressions will be considered more closely in a subsequent section ("Proverbs and Common Sense"). They can be translated approximately as follows. *Qui vole un œuf vole un bœuf:* who steals an egg steals an ox*; quand on a un marteau en main, tout ressemble à un clou:* with a hammer in hand, everything looks like a nail*; qui veut noyer son chien l'accuse de la rage:* who wants to drown his dog accuses him of rabies*; la faim fait sortir le loup du bois:* hunger brings the wolf out of the woods*; qui se fait brebis, le loup le mange:* who makes themselves a sheep will be eaten by a wolf*; Pierre qui roule n 'amasse pas mousse:* a rolling stone gathers no moss*; une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps:* one swallow does not make the spring*; il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu*: there is no smoke without fire*; tout ce qui brille n'est point or:* all that glitters is not gold*; qui sème le vent récolte la tempête:* who sews the wind reaps the storm (*i.e.* you reap what you sew).

useless to us. Our approach to grammar would rather bring it closer to a stylistic of the sentence, or in any case would integrate this type of perspective. This would imply in turn complexifying the unitary diagrams presumed to underlie the constructions by a perspective that entails the *composition of forms*, in an aesthetic rather than a logico-syntactical sense of the term: multiple intricate predications, grafts of 'communicational fragments', weavings of phraseologies, multi-phasal perception of a 'same' phrasal assemblage. Such a theory of constructions, which we call for, remains to be attempted.

It has already proved possible, however, to rethink a whole variety of other structures in the semiolinguistic field in the same spirit, and thus to extend our analyses to other levels of discursive/textual organization. The following sections provide an overview.

I-10. *Isotopies, rhythms, diffuse forms*

If the concept of the thematic field remains for us fundamentally linked to that of order by stabilization, it presents itself at the same time as a diversification of this order. It entails, in an essential manner, a variety of levels of stabilization (whatever meaning one intends to give to this latter term), *the function of which does not necessarily consist in marking an ascension towards more stable levels that would have the function of target.* The most adequate image in this case is indeed that of phases that together compose a material milieu within which these phases themselves are co-differentiated, while undergoing a variety of interactions and transitions. Let us insist on the continuity of the milieu, as well as on the correlated notion of discontinuity (excluding any autonomous grasp of discrete levels).

To each such phase correspond indices that are more or less spread out across or diffused within the field of expression, a fundamental heuristic postulate being to bring together, in their generic mode of composition, compact expressive forms (more or less unstable and coalescing on their semantic side), and other more extended or diffuse expressive formations (like textures, rhythms, ambiances), which engage floating, durative-imperfective seizures, sometimes promoted, sometimes reabsorbed into a background. Between the two, metabolic relations, or relations of re-expression, are naturally established, the former being equivalent to compact and condensed versions of the latter.

In other words, the genericities characteristic of a spread or diffuse formation in a text (sequences/repetitions) are treated in the same way as the genericities linked to a compact formation (itself possibly recurrent: what is called lexicon). This again shows the interest of the metaphor of phase states and their transitions for an adequate theory of the semiotic field, apprehended first of all as a field of perception: realizing thereafter that this variety of phase states (among which the 'motif' type phases) is realized in a variety of formants that are more or less spread or compact, diffuse or articulated.

This opens up the possibility of more precise parallels between our continuist/dynamicist concept of linguistic motif, and the originally structural (therefore discretizing) concept of *isotopy*, introduced by A. Greimas (1966). The concept of isotopy was then systematized and re-elaborated by various authors, in particular F. Rastier in his *Interpretative Semantics* (1987), still under this same discretizing approach, linked to the correlated notion of *seme*. We will mainly cite here the work of R. Missire (*e.g.* 2005, 2022). Missire effectively pleads for a continuist rereading of the notion of isotopy, comparable then to a linear structure (thread, ribbon) extended over a portion of text, the *semes* of the discrete classical theory appearing therein as points of condensation or of local degrees. It shows the interest of postulating a genericity similar to the figural genericity (that of the motifs) of our theory of semantic forms in order to apprehend certain isotopies, which are then comparable to diffuse

forms of motifs spun through the text.[29] A comparable reflection on the notion of *rhythm* is also proposed, which attempts to recapture this fundamental dimension of all perceptual life within the framework of a theory of fields and forms similar to that evoked in the present text.

In relation therefore to various but closely related notions of *motifs* (not as regards the formants that bear them, but as regards their type of genericity and semantic opening) we see that it is possible and legitimate to approach linguistic phenomena and dimensions of meaning that are situated at very different levels of differentiation and integration (from the morpheme to the text). The semantic concept of *figural genericity* (transposability, instability, perceptibility), taken up at all these levels, then appears as an essential key to the opening of such a perspective.

I-11. *Metaphors: suspension of signification and modalization*

To metaphorize implies attitudes and values, and not only – or necessarily – the intention to conceptualize. The speaker is a stylist, who does not aim to inform, but to affect, by their enunciation, both the addressee(s) and the plane of expression itself. This leads us to a reflection on *the modal, or modalizing, status of motifs* – thus reviving the dimension of 'force' easily accessible in the French terms *motif* and *motivation*.

The point of view of corpus linguistics has enabled certain researchers to criticize in an interesting way the mentalist and conceptualist theses of the cognitive linguistics of Lakoff, Johnson, Fauconnier and Turner (disregarding here the nuances that separate these latter from one another). We refer the reader, for example, to the articles by A. Deignan , or else by L. Cameron, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (R. Gibs , ed .). "Corpus linguistic research suggests that a mental mapping theory of metaphor is not in itself sufficient for the patterns found in language" (Deignan , p. 287).

These authors thus criticize the false paths taken by cognitive linguistics when it relies, in the case of "metaphors of everyday life", on notional intuitions independent of attested linguistic facts (cf. the counter-analysis of the famous ANGER IS HEAT, by Lakoff & Johnson[30]). They also cast doubt on the conception, widespread in linguistics as in psychology, of figurative meanings as secondary meanings, implying longer or more complex treatments than the supposed primary meanings.

Examining the effective transposability of collocations, or idiomatic expressions, they note defects that cannot be explained by a cognitive theory of metaphor as conceptual analogy. Certainly, there are many observable transpositions in metaphorical functioning: but the fact is that there is also, according to the domains and the textual genres, a specificity to the semiotic arrangements in which the transposition is realized (the actorial structures, in particular, with their lexicalizations, do not always transpose freely).

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[29]Missire thus directly uses our concept of morphemic-lexical motif to "find a lexicalization of isotopy, able to carry a motif capable of subsuming the diversity of profiles of a large number of places in the text". One of the examples given is that of isotopy which he calls *softness* (which passes through 'dream', 'caress', 'stroll', 'laziness', 'distracted', 'swoon', 'cushions', 'breasts', 'soft avalanches'…), and which he brings out in his analysis of Baudelaire's sonnet *Tristesses de la lune*.

[30]Lakoff indeed wanted ANGER to allow itself to be metaphorized from a synesthetic /thermodynamic complex of the heat/pressure type. A corpus analysis including a wide variety of predications adjoining the lexeme 'anger' rather reveals semantisms of the ignition/propagation type (*inflame , ignition, sparks fire ,wildfire ,fanning the flames*), bearing not so much on individual affect or private life, but primarily on collective emotions, raised by wars and conflicts.

Contrary to theories that are too simply analogist, the authors think that the so-called 'source domain' can *be reconfigured according to issues deriving from the target* (issues of which it then becomes, in a creative way, a new and original emblem), which compromises the theory of a transfer from source to target (such as Lakoff maintains) or even that of a selective homologation of structures taken from pre-assigned domain models (e.g. the *blendings* of Fauconnier & Turner**).**

These observations are in line with what we ourselves have promoted in our study of proverbial semantism (see below) – more generally in the functioning of linguistic patterns of various formats. So, we would rather say that the 'source domain' of the metaphorical complexes finds itself reworked as a plane of expression: it eventually only lends sensitive forms, screenplay-style sketches, as scenographic resources immediately invested by new stakes, new actors and narrative motifs, new topoï motivated by the singular perspective taken on the target. Novelty, here, does not mean rupture, but shifting of the gaze, change of tone and perspective through the evocation of source-components thereby rearranged into *emblems*. We understand, then, that the motifs and topoï conveyed by the metaphor may turn out to be incongruent with the supposed domanial 'source', and that one does not, or only rarely, use (as these same authors quite rightly remark) certain associated idiomatic forms even as one thematizes, quite rightly, pertinent phenomena from their supposed domanial source (except in the case of producing an effect of ironic quotation: for example, in French, the famous *On ne tire pas sur une ambulance*[31] is hardly if ever used in a real combat situation).[32]

The impact of these adequate corpus studies remains limited, however, as long as they have not been linked to an adequate conception of the perceptual nature of semiogenetic activity, in its constant relationship to an imaginary which is like its flipside or lining. Thus lacking, for example, a concept of *isotopy*, these different approaches – cognitive linguistics like their logicist adversaries – cannot recognize an essential type of cohesion and suggestion that supports speech nor, more generally, the semiotico-semantic rhythms that are interwoven in a text. The same schools often put forward a certain notion of encyclopedic or pragmatic knowledge as the principal regime for developing and fixing linguistic signification. Conceiving this "knowledge" in a utilitarian or naively empirical mode, they remain totally reluctant to invoke a linguistic and semiotic imaginary that would prevail over any domanial partition, and that would play with realist-empiricist as well as logico-analytical conventions.

The responsibility for this lies in the last resort with the perceptual and praxeological models placed at the foundation of language activity, as well, no doubt, as that of all other semiotic practices. The entanglement between perceptual access and imaginary horizon, just like the essentially expressive nature of perceptual appearing, remain ignored. Anything that stems from immersion in an inherited tradition, and thereby from a dependence of perceptual activity on performances and norms that are themselves always already semiotic, only becomes more incomprehensible.

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[31] Translator's Note: Literally, "one doesn't shoot at an ambulance" means, approximately, that one doesn't attack or criticize a person in a vulnerable position (it is unfair and… no more necessary!).

[32] The very concept of domain would also call for criticism, insofar as it tends to assign to the thematic structure of the fields a categorial homogeneity that is in reality unfindable: there are almost always, in fact, fluctuations in the 'focal' adopted, fluctuation of uses between denomination and figurality, and enrichments by thymic/evaluative or mythical dimensions, which make up a procession of associated impressions. This situation has nothing secondary or derivative; in fact, it is primary. We then understand that the concept of 'encyclopaedic knowledge', still in use in cognitive semantics and pragmatics, also calls for a substantial overhaul, if it is to be a question of accounting for our ability to *evoke* the practices, roles, and scenarios that constitute so-called 'domains'. To speak of a more or less socialized *semiotic imaginary* would seem to be a better starting point.

Consequently, with respect to the fabrication of metaphor, these approaches (even when they claim to be committed to a perceptivist orientation) cannot understand the radical suspension of the logical requirement, nor the importance of tone and tempo in the realization of a singular expressiveness which otherwise would be missed (with for example a scansion of the utterance which forms a block, at the same time as a resistance of semantism to any possible completion is manifested). If one dwells on the metaphorical complex, it is not in fact to decant it by turning it into a logical and informational structure, but ultimately for an affective flavor, for the quality of a lexical and idiomatic grasp that is realized, in a given discursive genre or universe, as a 'marked' level of predication (intensity, heterogeneity) and contrasted with others, supposedly representative of a neutralized and homogeneous basic level. There is something like an evanescence of the metaphor, and a quality of its strike, which stem, not from an a-temporal and a-semiotic logic of the concept, but first of all from harmonic and rhythmic models of semiosis: presenting as fluctuating states of meaning, partly articulated, partly coalescing and unstable, having the value of *motifs* for affective/cognitive *dispositions* (that play upon thymic, axiological, physiognomic dimensions), for enunciative modalities, and (possibly, but not systematically) for narratively and logically developed thematic structures, which then represent it as a *counterpart* or a contextual *coinage* (recordable in a socialized memory). The perception in play is therefore first of all a perception of motifs and motivated counterparts, and not a perception of instances categorized by types. It cannot be accounted for from fields pre-constituted on the basis of notional intuitions; rather, it is necessary, each time, to summon a set of very specific semiolinguistic resources.

I-12. *Proverbs and common sense*

Common sense. But why proverbs? Despite its marginalization in the modern context (especially in the French space since the 17th century and the Academy), the proverb remains part of a *common sense* (to be understood as possibly diverted, even parodic), of which it has been and remains a crucial element, a flagship, in many societies. It represents a joint request (a *claim,* to use here a term from S. Cavell) of common sensibility (*koinè aisthesis*) and of common attitude or opinion (*doxa*). *Aisthesis* and *doxa* are, already in Aristotle, primary dimensions of *common sense*: and we conceive that the proverbial genre offers itself as a privileged object for a linguistics careful to fit into a larger anthropological framework, integrating, in its primary questioning, perception, semiotic play, and communities of meaning. Of course, we do not have the space here to go into the detail of the analyses and theoretical proposals gathered in our book *Motifs et proverbes* (2006 – see also 2008, 2010). Nor will we be able to discuss the cultural variation of the forms and statuses of the proverbial enunciation. We would just like to mention some of the main aspects of *the proverbial phenomenon* to which we were able to make room in our work, precisely insofar as, according to us, they called for the development of a *perceptivist linguistic problematic* of the kind that we we advocate (with, in particular, the importance given to a *figural conception* of linguistic genericity, opposed to other conceptions deemed restrictive). More than results, therefore, this section presents a set of challenges that we have attempted to address.

Let us first note that we consider here *common sense* as an overt cultural disposition, distributed in explicit forms and in solidarity with the social groups under consideration. According to the anthropologist C. Geert, the notion should be understood, not necessarily from particular contents, which vary from one culture to another, but rather from stylistic and tonal characteristics that are apparently more universal: natural evidence; practical aim; sobriety and clarity of principles; absence of systematicity (the example of the proverbs that Geertz

puts forward pertain to this latter); universal accessibility, despite an unequal distribution of talents (thus echoing the always unequal sharing of the *common fate*, or *fatum*).

The proverb would thus be a form par excellence of common sense recaptured in its linguistic form. Far from this common sense being reduced to a background for ordinary conversations, even less to non-verbal knowledge, of an operational or instrumental type (know-how, practical sense, empirical common sense), it is based on the practice of highly marked forms, claimed as the paragons of a common experience of language and life, which can go so far as to take on a fateful dimension. Forming such a *community of meaning* necessarily passes through a set of strongly modalizing discourse techniques, subjecting to their interpellation speakers thus led to share common topics, at the same time as a *common lexicon* (taken in the broad sense: words, phraseologies, idiomatic expressions, also conveying a certain *doxa*). The search, or even the request, for an agreement between speakers, thus passes through a formal ritualization, which calls for the recognition of an indissolubly gnomic and deontic necessity (*i.e.* intimately mixing knowledge and prescription), at the same time as the attachment to a linguistic and social identity. However, in the moment of the proverb, the mutual adjustment and commitment do not proceed from adherence to beliefs, nor from the observance of institutional rules, but from a certain linguistic game which associates formal rigidity and figurative perception of meaning.

Presentation of proverbs. How then to characterize the proverb? It is a question of a *micro-genre*, in the sense of a brief form (possibly citational), relating to a *genre* (in the sense of a poetics), without being discursively closed (because essentially valued as a resource, and a remarkable scansion, serving other discursive purposes).[33]

It represents, if you will, a popular level of the hierarchy of sententious genres, with some of which it maintains a sort of cooperative rivalry: scholarly and literate traditions (*auctoritas*), or discourses of moral or legal inspiration (*sententia*), which sometimes treat it with condescension and sometimes, on the contrary, find in it an anonymous confirmation, drawn from the wisdom of nations and anchored in the collective memory (through a targeted repertoire).

The proverb is also singular vis-à-vis other microgenres of speech: prayers, apologies, elegies, greetings, riddles, nursery rhymes, slogans. And even if it presents a certain formal elaboration (rhythms, assonances, lexical choice), it is intended to remain within the framework of a generic and common semantism, possibly transposable to any discourse.

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[33]Here is a mini-corpus in French, with literal translations into English: *Qui vole un œuf vole un bœuf:* who steals an egg steals an ox ; *A plaider contre un mendiant, on gagne des poux*: in suing a beggar, one only wins lice ; *Quand on a un marteau en main, tout ressemble à un clou :* with hammer in hand, everything resembles a nail ; *Un clou chasse l'autre*: one nail chases the other; *Il faut déshabiller le maïs pour voir sa bonté:* corn must be undressed for its goodness to be seen; *Qui veut noyer son chien l'accuse de la rage:* who wants to drown their dog accuses it of rabies; *La main qui donne se fatigue:* the giving hand tires; *La faim fait sortir le loup du bois :* hunger drives the wolf out of the woods; *Qui se fait brebis, le loup le mange :* who makes themself a sheep will be eaten by a wolf*; Pierre qui roule n'amasse pas mousse :* the rolling stone gather no moss ; *Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps ;* a single swallow doesn't make the spring ; *Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu :* there is no smoke without fire ; *Il faut semer qui veut moissonner :* who wants to reap must sew*; Il faut battre le fer quand il est chaud :* one must strike the iron while it's hot ; *Il ne faut pas acheter la corde avant d'avoir le veau :* you must not be the rope before you have the calf *; Il faut garder une poire pour la soif :* you must keep a pear for thirst ; *Il faut mettre de l'eau dans son vin:* you must put some water in your wine*; Qui a bu boira;* who has drunk will drink; *L'habit ne fait pas le moine;* clothes don't make the monk; *Il n'est pire eau que l'eau qui dort:* there is no worse water than sleeping water; *Tout ce qui brille n'est point or:* all that glitters is not gold…

In our study, we are mainly interested in the so-called *metaphorical proverb*, which presents itself intuitively as a narrative and topical micro-montage that aims to draw the lines of force of a situation in a "concrete" and/or figurative manner, while also aiming for a strong genericity, taking on thereby the value of law for human affairs. It is a question, in the proverbial enunciation, of typifying a situation insofar as it is recruited in a project that is both aesthetic and ethical, which implies relating it to a norm that is both gnomic and deontic: a certain "knowledge" is delivered in a sketch of a small concrete scenario, and is valued *ipso facto* as practical morality, partly recoverable in the form of logico-pragmatic glosses, or maxims. This permanent oscillation between gnomic and deontic modalities (one can think of a message as simple as the French proverb *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermé/A door must be open or closed*)[34] is further complicated by the fact that the outcome of the proverbial prophecy always seems somewhat uncertain, despite the necessity it proclaims; the imposed figure of a destiny (*fatum*) still avoidable, but which concerns us all. Finally, it is the variety of adjoining interlocutory modalities that should be underlined: call to order, advice, suggestion, warning, invitation to fatalism, complicity... And likewise that of tones: irony, gravity, joke, resignation...

We also note that formal ritualization is not to be confused here with cliché or stereotype. However significant the idea may be that certain proverbs only have a perfectly fixed, determined and conventional meaning, it is advisable to observe, on the contrary, the plasticity they demonstrate by entering into resonance with the theme targeted by the discourse. In fact, the proverbial genre involves transcending the commonplace to metamorphose it into a vicarious object, capable of presenting an indefiniteness of nuances at each utterance.

This is what we see with the *somewhat anarchic diversity of interpretations* by maxims, or by logico-pragmatical topoï, which we can try to offer by way of explanation of the metaphorical proverb (a possibility that is certainly constitutive of the genre, but which we only rarely realize, especially for listeners who would not have grasped the play of metaphor). The same proverb can be translated in an indefinitely variable way, without it being possible to set a precise level of genericity. This multiplies the topics in question and highlights the ability of each proverb to be drawn towards various conclusions – often difficult to detach from one another. Here are some examples, taken once again from the French language.

Lorsqu'on a un marteau en main, tout ressemble à un clou (With hammer in hand, everything looks like a nail) can be paraphrased in a more or less abstract way: the instrument invades the agent, restricts the vision, reduces the purpose of the action to its proximal point of application; to have an instrument or an operation is to engage in a world of adjoining representations; we always see the world in the image of what we want to do in it; one confuses one's own limits with reality, etc.

Qui vole un œuf, vole un bœuf (Who steals an egg, steals an ox): Minor offenses prepare for more serious ones; when one commits to something new, telling oneself that you will only sample it, there is a serious risk of being drawn into uncontrollable horizons; the little prepares the lot / the less generates the more.

A plaider contre un mendiant, on gagne des poux (*In suing a beggar, one wins only lice*). To oppose someone or something is to risk being contaminated by it. It is useless to seek profit where there is nothing to be expected but paltry trouble. It is necessary to use appropriate means in the confrontation, and not to "idealize" the adversary [incongruity between the

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[34]Whether or not it bears explicit marks ("it is necessary that", "it is better", and of course the implicative structures), any proverbial statement is thus signaled by an equivocal modal composition, never definitively stopped.

judicial sphere and the 'beggar' actor].[35] One must not compromise oneself with someone lower than oneself: one gains either nothing, or more or less vexatious troubles.

Not only does each of these proverbs not present a univocal topical value, but more obviously still the corpus as a whole cannot be reduced to a moral systematics that would constitute itself in a coherent network of maxims. There is no foundation other than the doxa, with the degree of anarchy it entails. It is certainly a matter of thematizing an experience by joining its major anthropological dimensions, but here, by definition, based on characteristics that remain unique. Each proverb, then, amounts to something like a *little myth*, without it being possible to speak of an encompassing *mythology*. In any case, proverbs do not open onto a grid of well-defined types; they do not constitute an organized corpus of truths to be said, categorially or narratively coherent as an ensemble, but function above all as instruments of singularization, largely independent of one another.

Fluctuations in lexical values. At the same time, the proverbial genre is made up of idiomatic forms, fairly fixed, whose link to the language and to the common lexicon is meant to be immediate.[36] With such a common lexicon, the proverb maintains an essential relationship insofar as banality, authority and singularity are combined. Singularity passes largely through a use that is never fully marked in terms of its lexical meaning, which has implications at all levels of semantic play. Sometimes, therefore, the proverb takes up idiomatisms and values that are commonly found elsewhere, while sometimes it appears as their sole bearer. In any case, it presupposes the reopening of the most massively common values, not to revolutionize them, but to manifest their *plasticity* and *depth*. The strength of a proverb thus resides in the fact that it *keeps the zone of doxal values in a stretched and fluctuating state*, while nevertheless circumscribing it in a form of simple exactitude which belongs uniquely to it. This directly echoes its status as a flagship of common sense, at once spontaneous emanation, intensification, and doctrinal relief of a so-called "wisdom of nations".

For example, in *Il faut semer pour favoriser (It is necessary to sow to collect/One only reaps what one sows)*, the features of /dissemination/, even of /dispersion/, relating to 'sow', can be virtualized , to the benefit of those of engendering, of launching a production; in other cases, they may, on the contrary, be put forward as inevitable, constitutive dimensions of a harvesting project which, it is argued, cannot go completely without hazards (hazards taken to their peak in '*Qui sème le vent récolte la tempête (Who sows the wind reaps the storm)*'). It is impossible, then, in this restitution of lexical values, to make an operational distinction between necessary traits and contingent traits. In '*A plaider contre un mendiant, on gagne des poux',* the interpretation takes advantage of the polysemic play that inhabits common language, in particular, with '*contre'* (/opposition/ and /assimilation/) as well as with '*gagner'*, for which we will propose a series of all possible values: "to prevail over" (in a reciprocal agonistic schema); "to catch, to acquire" (in a transitive scheme of profit/increase, *i.e.* of a positive object); "to join" (junction). In parallel, this fluctuation of values also affects actantial semantism: the *'on'* that appears as agent in a first value of the predicate ("to prevail

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[35]A Manchurian proverb similarly says, in a warlike register: *One should not unsheath his sword against a louse* (*RDPD* , p. 558).

[36]We emphasize that *common*, in this case, should not be confused with *general* . To speak of a general lexicon would imply attaching all values to a single matrix supposed to generate them, whether by direct instantiation or by derivation. However, we know that the different levels and sectors of the lexicon do not depend on unified lines of interpretation, transmission, or sanction. To qualify certain values as common is therefore in no way to say that they impose themselves as a starting point for any discourse, but simply to lend them a presumptive status of an always possible community, which passes through the notoriety or the centrality of certain regimes of meaning and types of discourse.

over"), is rather valued as the recipient of a profit in the second value ("to acquire"), and finally with the third value of the predicate ("junction") is little more than a simple locator for 'the lice' (which, inversely, locate it). In short, even if the proverb does not aim to subvert the linguistic order, and thereby seems to directly convey a common doxa, the fact remains that of these established orders, it translates the fluctuations, to the point of showing itself on occasion to be paradoxically equivocal. Hence, a margin remains for a feeling of strangeness and, as it were, the impression of enigma, in this reminder of a meaning that wants to be common without being definitively acquired, since it must always be reconfirmed, revived, readjusted.

Neither empiricism nor logicism. It is also appropriate to reject the exclusive reduction of the dimension of "law" of the proverb (often manifested, on the textual level, by a binary structure of the type Time1 →Time2 or even: protasis →apodosis), on formulations that are too simply logical, temporal or causal. Even from the sole point of view of logical articulation, plurivocity remains the rule. Thus in '*Qui vole un œuf, vole un bœuf'*, where the connection between 'stealing an egg' and 'stealing an ox', seems in a first moment to homologate exactly logical implication, causal necessity, and incrementation of effects, in a second, it has rather the status of a qualitative topos, imposing the "transformation" of one predication into another, without any causal engagement or even characterized logic; in a third, it then represents a sort of equality posited between two predications, from which all temporality is elided.

In reality, with the proverb it is a question, first of all, of transmitting *a fundamental rhythm* of the semiotic-phenomenological manifestation, an attentional rhythm, if you will, and a scansion of hermeneutic time. Thus, in '*Il faut battre le fer quand il est chaud (One must strike when the iron is hot)',* the logical structure (the iron is hot →so you strike the iron) is reversed into a specific attentional rhythm, based on the fact of mentioning the triggering circumstance second. The 'strike the iron' ends up being confused with its condition (the 'hot'), and even precedes it semantically and tactically, as in the proverbial text. One begins to 'strike the iron' opportunistically, and eventually creates, or maintains, the conditions for timely intervention (the heat comes from striking, so to speak). We are therefore very sensitive to the relation of conversion between sign and cause, and to the denial that it possibly brings to a purely logical placement. To be sure, the cause is supposed to precede or to found what manifests it, but it is, above all, semiotically consubstantial with it. In '*Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps (A swallow does not make spring)'*, the *swallow,* for example, becomes an emblem of the *spring,* which could cause it. Despite the proverbial denial, spring tends to be confused with the promise of the first swallow – and besides, what is spring if not first a promise?

A final remark: the metamorphisms of actantiality in the interpretative course of a metaphorical proverb tend, as is the case for many idiomatic expressions, to reabsorb the actants in a holistic montage, which fits very badly with the principle of a primary fixation in logico-syntactic and/or propositional terms. Thus, there is hardly any *ladle*, when one *distributes* compliments *with a ladle*, hardly any *foot*, when it is a question of *raising the foot*, hardly any *bridge*, when one seeks to *build bridges*, hardly any *water*, when everything *falls into the water*.[37] Similarly, is there still an *egg* or an *ox* (metaphorically) discernible in the thematic target when one declares thereof '*Who steals an egg steals an ox'*? And do we always find well-identified correspondents of the *hammer* and the *nail*, when we say that, *With hammer in hand, everything looks like a nail?*

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[37]Translator's note: These examples derive from the following proverbial expressions, which have been introduced and considered above: *servir à la louche, lever le pied, jeter des ponts, tomber dans l'eau.*

In short, we cannot propose any static translation into a core of primary meaning – in reality unfindable – that would remain invariant through the discursive and domain migrations of one and the same proverb. The type of defining transposability of the proverbial genre scrambles any tracking of a logico-syntactical type, as it does any reference to classifying ontologies. And the singularities of the proverbial "logic" limit in an absolute manner the possibility of a reduction to the discursive logical forms that are valued by both empiricist and formalist traditions.

I-13. *A model of the proverbial dynamic*

A metaphorical proverb naturally presents itself as a (brief, compressed, defective) sketch of a narrative motif and of a topos. To understand its semantism, it is necessary to take into account from the outset structures relating to various levels of textuality: actors and agonists, roles or functions.

We have thus been led to specify the relations between our first morphemic-lexical concept of *motif* and those, homonymous, of folkloristics, narratology and literary studies, which concern semantic formations clearly more articulated on evental (*narrative motif*) or evaluative/argumentative (*topoï*) planes. If these formations satisfy, to a certain extent, constitutive semantic norms (on the basis of which they are identified), they nevertheless remain highly variable in their expression, which necessarily involves a complexity at the level of the sentence.

To rethink these structures in our theoretical framework, we had to: extend to complex levels of organization our critique of logicist-type models, such as conceptualist or referentialist versions of lexical meaning; deepen the opposition between categorization/denomination and figurality by seeing in it not only two modes of genericity that traverse lexical semantics, but more generally two regimes of constitution active within discourses and texts, comprising an indefinite variety of intermediate states, and concerning a wide variety of formants (hence the attention initially paid to the phenomena of routinization and freezing); support in this way a conception of predicative and enunciative structures that accords with a holistic and continuist approach of the discursive as well as perceptual field; to rethink in this context the traditional dissociations between predicates and arguments, and the way in which roles and thematic functions of various levels are invested in them (grammatical actants, narrative actors and agonists of textual semiotics).

We were therefore able to rethink the motifs and topoï of discursive studies as "unities" that are more or less stable or unstable, more or less merged or articulated, and more or less freely transposable from one thematic field to another. Thus making a junction with our initial notion of morphemic-lexical pattern, we trace a perspective which goes from the morpheme to the complex sentence (and back), and which integrates formations of highly variable complexity and specificity. The concept of figural genericity (characterized by transposability, instability, perceptibility), taken up at all these levels, then appears as an essential key to the realization of such a program. Taken, for example, in the sense of narratology or of a literary topic, a motif or a topos, without being constrained *a priori* as concerns expression, is understood to include a share of predicative, narrative and/or modal structure, which is already acquired, or at least normalized; whereas a morphemic/lexical pattern, in the sense previously introduced by us, is a less elaborate and very open structure, approached on the basis of a very reduced set of canonical forms – a word, for example – considered as the singular focus of an open set of solidary forms (and therefore other solidary motifs), which the analysis seeks to redeploy, in particular through a specific repertoire of constructions, collocations, and revealing

phraseologies. By thus extending our theoretical device, as well as the very concept of motif, to various levels of integration and various levels of the thematic, we remain nonetheless on a linguistic ground. Our investigation is indeed indexed here on collected and recurring forms on the plane of expression (words, complex lexies, phraseologies, then proverbs) – out of step, in other words, with the concepts of narratological origin, which are defined above all *on the plane of content*.

From there, a semantic model of metaphorical proverbs has been proposed, centered on a concept of *proverbial motif* conceived as a pivot of transpositions operating between various strata of meaning, understood as *phases* co-present within the proverbial dynamic. More precisely, our model articulates four phases:

- *Phase* A: a scenography: a sensitive figurative layer, constituted as an emblem; a narrative montage fundamentally involving *actors*, and already traversed by evaluative, argumentative and modal perspectives. Neither literal meaning nor simple empirical notation is supposed, but evaluative perception and stylization, sketch of a scenario-emblem, already with a crisis of ontologies.
- *Phase* B: the metamorphic phase of figural genericity (foyer of the proverbial motif), with conversion of the figurative actors of the scenography into transposable agonists, distributed between very few agonistic poles (only one, sometimes).
- *Phase* C: principles of moral and practical generality, explicable in the form of maxims, or abstract or trivially empirical topoï. This logico-pragmatic component, however necessary it may be in principle, only represents a particular coinage of the proverbial meaning, and cannot define its main issue.
- *Phase* D: target-theme and intervention in situation.

The proverbial motif (of which Phase B constitutes the heart, or the pivot, according to the image which one prefers) appears as a highly metamorphic generic formation, declining immediately in variants, and not distinguishing itself, ultimately, from a space of variation comprising more or less stable and differentiated "zones" (both in terms of predicative articulations and in terms of the lexical fields concerned). It is a proverbial motif that could therefore be requalified as a *diagram-motif,* an unstable arthrological structure, traversed by a diversity of regimes of genericity, and an undecided alloy of figurativity (scenography, invested as an emblem) and figurality (the so-called figural genericity, highly transposable, characteristic of metaphorical proverbs). This is crucial in the fabrication of *proverbial motifs*, and it forbids conceiving of them as stable types of forms. Rather, we suggest seeing in them sketches of roles and interactions, networks of transposable values, which we expect to respond to the fluctuating and necessarily modalized genericity of proverbs. Finally, let us underline that in this very particular state of phase, normativity is the rule, but also that the norms themselves are not already determined; they remain ambivalent. For example, in the case of the proverb *qui veut noyer son chien l'accuse de la rage* (see above) is it a question of being the interlocutor who refuses to *drown his dog* (and therefore to *accuse him of rabies*), or the cynic who drowns his dog, and who perhaps in this case is the one who best understands the scope of the proverb? Likewise, the exact force of gnomic-type necessities is not clearly assigned, although it is clear that a demand for truth residing in the very mode of givenness of entities is at play.

We emphasize the paths of conversion of actantial structures, which, in parallel with a shift in the value of predicates, recast the actants and their roles, thus defining at the narrative level what we have called *agonistic poles*. One of the standard cases of conversion consists in the incorporation of the object or the instrument into the predicate, followed by a transformation of the action value of the predicative syntagm into the qualitative attribution of a subject actant which, in parallel, passes from the agent case to a simple nominative. Taken at the most generic level, this subject actant therefore profiles an agonist, who polarizes an entire functional and actorial zone. We will give once again the very simple example of '*Qui vole*

un oeuf vole un boeuf': the whole topical-narrative complex converges, and allows itself to be absorbed by a single agonistic pole, corresponding to the actor '*qui'*, whose entire device, at the limit, no longer does anything but articulate self-transformation . Together, '*oeuf'* and *'boeuf'* engage in a journey of incorporation into the function '*voler'*, of which at this stage they are no more than attributes placed in series; in the continuation of this same course, they can, merging with '*voler'*, be no more than a qualification distributed in two stages of the agonist 'who', in which quality is then confused (he is a thief) and actoriality: he steals – he is in short a thief – and we only see that of him – no need therefore for an underlying narration, nor for an implicative logical structure, there remains only a montage in two strokes revealing his true nature. In this course of condensation towards a single pivot-agonist, the motif of 'stealing' (stealth, intentional preparation, speed, violence, disruption of order, abduction/kidnapping, predation) is preserved, without prejudging the traits that will be taken up in situation, nor the lexemes under which these traits can manifest themselves in the continuation of the discourse.

If we then reconsider the resonances between lexical morphemic motifs and global proverbial pattern, we find ourselves in a position, within this theoretical framework, to get out of the impasse linked to the classic notion of idiomaticity, which very often leads to abandon any semantic analysis. We can thus say that the effectiveness of *Qui vole un oeuf vole un boeuf* also feeds on the traits of inchoativity, germination, and simplicity, which are easily attached to *oeuf,* as is evidenced by all sorts of idiomatic expressions (*sortir de l'oeuf, tuer dans l'oeuf, simple comme un oeuf [comme l'oeuf de Christophe Columb]*). *Un clou chasse l'autre* consonates harmonically with the seriality, triviality, or monotony easily evoked by the nails (*ça ne vaut pas un clou; des clous!*). Even a proverb like *Qui a bu boira,* which could simply be understood as a "generalization" of the scenario of alcohol addiction, in reality puts characteristics (repetition, dependence, captivity) into resonance that the common lexicon also disposes of in other expressions such as *boire tout son argent, boire de l'encre* [buvard]*, boire des yeux/ les paroles/la vie/la lumière/le petit lait*, in which, independently of the alcoholic scenario, processual and resultant traits are found, such 'to absorb', 'to imbibe', 'to be riveted', 'to be fascinated'.

I-14. Results.

Just as for our initial lexicological model, our contribution to a problematic of common sense and doxa passes through the promotion of a notion of figural genericity (at the level of the lexicon as well as that of predicative structures), which in this case echoes the genericity of the proverbial meaning. A layering of *phases of meaning* then emerges, including a certain transdiscursive level, of a mythical type [38], which deepens and generalizes the fusion between the sensible and the doxal. This tiering, which we consider to be transmitted to the intimate structure of common sense, has undoubtedly not been sufficiently perceived until recently,

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[38]We know that the traditional question of a mythical foundation of language found one of its major developments in the work of Cassirer (e.g. 1953). Even before seeing the myth as a macro-structure (whether it is a matter of emphasizing its narrative dimension, or recognizing in it a coupling matrix between different cultural "codes"), and far from making it a superstructure, Cassirer sees in it first of all a founding principle, and almost an infrastructure of language, always intervening from within the very composition of languages, at the same time as it is a product of them. The anthropological question of a common sense proceeding from the singularity of languages and cultures and constituting a fundamental structure for the human mind, could therefore only be addressed on the condition of taking into account the relations constitutively maintained by the various forms of the mythical at the heart of language activity: infrastructure of languages, on the one hand, doxal codifications and narrative rituals, on the other.

permitting a reduction of the phenomenon to the psycho-social dimensions of opinion, prejudice, or stereotype, and, linguistically and rhetorically, to those of the cliché or the commonplace. Conversely, we modify the accent that is placed upon a double stretching of semantism: on the one hand, along an axis that we can simply call perceptual, which would go from the sensible to the figural, passing through the physiognomic and the emblematic; and on the other hand, along an axis that is more strictly doxal, which would go from opinion or belief to a form of diffuse and generic anticipation, which is of the order of a capacity of the imagination, rather than that of a representation already assumed. Such a capacity defines a pivotal-level of linguistic competence, which stands prior to or beneath logical and pragmatic levels, as well as categorical levels that are indexed to established domains of experience, and generally set back from any ideological commitment already affirmed, or any already constituted representation. The modal register itself very often only intervenes in thymic, dispositional, physiognomic, axiological forms, prior to or beneath specified enunciative or sociological modalities. It is at this level first, or also, that we suggest looking for the linguistic principles in question, traces and functors of a *community of sense*, which are likely at the same time to allow the revival of categorical oppositions and disputes.

Thus, we were able to link, within the framework of a theory of semantic forms, descriptive traditions and theoretical questions coming from the linguistics of enunciation, the semantics of texts, as well as from a phenomenology reconsidered in a semiotic framework. In the same movement, we were able to further explore the conditions for linking semiotics to the continuist and dynamicist conceptions that are found elsewhere, in the natural as well as in the human and social sciences. And we have done it – very partially – by developing a theory of semantic forms that responds to this requirement for continuity (chiasmatic, Merleau-Ponty would have said) between the perceptual field and the discursive field. The term *motif* has held the place, in so doing, of a theoretical leitmotiv, declined across various levels of linguistic semantism, ranging from the morpheme to the text, and rethought within our framework.

Finally : it is possible to *generalize to other semiotic fields* the linguistic notion of *motif* that we've presented here. Starting from similar principles, we could consider, following Husserl in *Ideen II*, the relation of *motivation* as a fundamental law of the flow of experience, and find in the infinity of the *motifs* which express it and give it (semiotic) form, a quite general structure of perception and action, which would thus make it possible to better account for the interlacing between a variety of semiotic praxis and the activity of language, and, ultimately, to propose theories of semiotic forms (plastic, musical, gestural), conceived in the same spirit as that which has been demonstrated here in the linguistic realm. But this is the subject of another work[39].

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[39] For a sketch, see Visetti 2019. For related notions of *motifs* in the fields of music or dance, see Rojas 2015, Kim 2019, De Luca 2021. For a general approach to semiotic facts in the line of Saussure, Merleau-Ponty, Cassirer, and on its epistemological consequences, see Rosenthal & Visetti (2008, 2010); Bondi (2012); Piotrowski & Visetti (2014, 2015, 2016); Bondi, Piotrowski, Visetti (2016).

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Chapter II
The expressive animal: between experience and semiotic perception

A. Bondì

II-1. Introduction

Studies on languaging in the field of enactive linguistics (Bottineau 2017a) and contemporary biosemiotics have made it possible to pose in a novel way some problems of a philosophical nature, to which the more classical approaches in the sciences of language (structuralist, generative, enunciative, and cognitive) have failed to give satisfactory answers. In particular, in this contribution, we will inquire into two aspects. First, we will investigate the process of constitution and individuation of what we can call a *speaking agent*, in other words, a subject who actively participates in the operations of linguistic co-instantiation and the fabrication of more or less inhabitable worlds. Next, moving from the ecological role of the concept of a *speaking agent*, we will focus on the *active mediation force* that languaging plays in human symbolic development.

Indeed, according to the theorists of enactive linguistics, semiolinguistic interactions are based on a *recursive consensual coordination* phenomenon called *languaging* (Maturana 1988; Bottineau 2017b; 2018; Cowley 2011; 2012; 2019; Bondì 2017). One can define it in terms of a vast network of *cooperative social systems*. Through this network, subjects co-occur in their mental and sensory experiences. Through *languaging*, speakers engage in interactions, both factually and simulated.

As some scholars argue, the concept of *languaging* does not require categorical explanatory systems, nor does it require pre-established forms of schematism to explain its dynamic and collective nature (Piotrowski, Visetti 2014; Thibault 2020). Rather, it refers to the contingent dimension of the fundamental bodily implications and shows how they fit into social life (Bottineau 2012b; Cowley 2014; Cowley, Vallée-Tourangeau 2017; Kravchenko 2020). Consequently, from an epistemological and philosophical point of view, there are two main consequences that our article intends to discuss critically. Both derive from this general approach that enactive linguistics proposes.

First, the concept of *speech action* (*parole*, or *semiolinguistic performance*) undergoes a profound metamorphosis. We can no longer conceive it as a set of acts identifiable by isolation within communicative practices, subsequently reorganized according to theoretical and linguistic reference models. On the contrary, linguistic forms and units emerge thanks to the structuring role of *languaging* to the subject. Indeed, the subject finds himself recruited and mobilized as a *speaking agent* and simultaneously as an *evaluating subject* of his linguistic action. In other words, as Didier Bottineau (2012a; 2012b; 2013) has argued, *speech* action is a modification of the body, a specific bodily doing or set of conducts, through which any subject can at any time actively intervene in the context of his or her interaction with others. Likewise, according to Bottineau (2018), a word is an embodied pattern of interactive phonatory action with emergent semantic effects, continuously exposed to self-observation.

The second aspect concerns the reversal of perspective about the relationship between perception, world, and language. If some classical view makes perception a purely passive and reactive moment in front of environmental stimuli, and the language an intentional and active moment, which intervenes *a posteriori* on what perception has previously schematized, enactive linguistics proposes a different hypothesis, which directly recalls the phenomenological tradition of Merleau-Ponty. *Saying* and *perceiving* must be taken under observation together, as activities of synthesis at once active and passive, and in which the central actor, but not the only one, is the body as sentient-speaking-listening (Bondì 2015; Bondì, Piotrowski, Visetti 2016; De Luca 2020).

To support this thesis of a *semiotic perception*, we will refer to a review of M. Malafouris' *Material Engagement Theory* (Malafouris 2013; Ihde, Malafouris 2019). According to the archaeologist, expressions *materialize* language in social practices, reinforcing and opening up to epicyclic feedbacks its imaginary potential. Imagination and fabrication are two coexisting poles of the structural and dynamic coupling between the talking animal and its semiotic niches of coexistence. From this point of view, following Malafouris, *languaging* theory confronts us with the need to rethink the role of the *forces* and *forms* of *mediations* that characterize the anthropological tendency to the semiotic production.

II-2. The "phenomenological challenge" of enactive linguistics

Language activity, and more generally semiotic activity, can be conceived as a particular species of highly complex dynamic activity. Some philosophical and linguistic orientations have qualified this activity as a highly specialized *biocultural praxis*[40]. These kinds of approaches have been particularly interested in the examination of semio-linguistic action[41], which presents itself and unfolds from a temporal viewpoint as a *thick present*[42]. This thickness of the enunciative present finds justification in two elements. On the one hand, the assemblage of enunciative resources rests on a more or less obscure and more or less dense *background* of anteriority (semantic, cognitive, domanial) from which it emerges. On the other hand, linguistic action emerges as a projection in time of the imminence of saying, and in parallel in time of the different temporal regimes of discursive posterity (Rosenthal, Visetti 2010). Each of the linguistic resources engaged in the present of enunciation emerges from the interaction and conflicts between its historical stratification (which constitutes its dynamic background[43]), and its temporal unfolding - an actual unfolding or an *appearance of linearization*. Thus, in every *speech action*, however singular, there is a constant tension between the actualization of available linguistic resources[44] and the dynamics of their re-virtualization.

That happens because the expressive opening, as well as any search for thematic construction of meaning, takes place through a plurality of well-calibrated and appropriate semiotic mediations, which do not necessarily coincide with the formal determinations of linguistic

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[40]We think of Ludwig Wittgenstein's anthropological interpretations of the philosophy of praxis and language games. See Laugier (2010). In linguistics, we recall *praxematics*, which rethought praxis from an epistemological and descriptive point of view. Cf. Lafont (2004).

[41] By semiolinguistic action we refer to any kind of enunciative production, which in the Saussurean tradition was called a *speech act* (or *parole*).

[42]See Rosenthal, Visetti (2008), pp. 179-180 & 203-204.

[43]See Visetti, Cadiot (2006).

[44]When we talk about available language *resources*, we use the term in Tim Ingold's sense. The resource should be understood as a *tool* and a *material*, whose depth depends on a plurality of dynamic, motivational, fictional, practical, imaginary, normative modes and registers. See Bondì (2014).

units. From this point of view, the perspective that we are outlining here places at the very heart of linguistic action a dialectic of *iteration*[45] and *differentiation*, which is staged and takes place by following the different regimes of stabilization, reception, and routinary adherence, which in turn capture and normalize uses, institutionalize and distribute them. In this first part of our study, we try to pursue a philosophical reflection on the concept of *appearance* (and *morphogenesis*) of the sign (independently from the format and the invoice that delimits it). It is about understanding and focusing on the main complex feature of the phenomena of semiosis: "sense-forms" are based on a dialectic of present and absent (or actual and virtual) resources; at the same time, these forms are "governed" by a plurality of different and heterogeneous semiotic mediations (at least in terms of registers, means, tactics, enrolments, historicizations, etcetera).

Therefore, speaking about *morphogenesis* of the word is tantamount first of all to highlighting a fundamental characteristic of the sense, namely the *indeterminacy* that constitutively inhabits the speech action. The word — as a resource or as a document of bio-cultural interaction — can never be fully absorbed in the anticipation of potential presences typical of the forms, well defined in their contours. On the contrary, it is an indetermination in the strong sense of the term. As we have said elsewhere, by indetermination of speech action we mean "not an exclusive expectation of determination, but above all openness towards other signs, which in turn open, without a necessary horizon of convergence, towards other determinations" (Bondi, Piotrowski, Visetti 2016: 24).

From our point of view, such an approach, which we have elsewhere called phenomenological and morphodynamic oriented[46], allows us to respond to the philosophical and epistemological challenges that enactive linguistics has recently posed. In particular, according to Didier Bottineau, the main theoretical challenge that the enactive paradigm poses to the language sciences concerns what he calls the "merleau-pontization" of the linguistic object (Bottineau 2013: 23). Indeed, phenomenological issues in linguistics and semiotics represent an essential ingredient of studies on *linguistic praxis*, at the moment when it is conceived as a *social and socialized practice*, at once embodied and distributed, that incessantly modifies the semiotic and social space, as well as that of the subjects acting and inhabiting that space.

The epistemological consequence from a descriptive point of view was the integration of the biomechanical fact into the study of language[47]. In this way, as Bottineau wrote, the "experience and meaning of the lived experience and not only the factual manifestations from the external point of view" were taken into account (Bottineau 2012: 44). Hence the idea that certain phenomena that are not directly observable, such as "inner speech (or endophasia), as well as the psychologically experienced nature of the meaning of words and phrases, addressed to oneself or others," should finally find themselves elevated to the rank of "empirical facts of cardinal importance" (Bottineau 2012: 45). This perspective presupposes a critique of those approaches that have argued for the autonomy of linguistics from other related disciplines, and aims to bring together under a denominator several related theoretical themes:

> The relationship between gesture and speech, the neurobiological anchoring of lexical production, the implication of experienced or simulated motricity in the production of a conscious acoustic image at the moment of an auditory interpretation of linguistic signals, the anchoring of syntax in motricity [...] are all theoretical problems that concretely

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[45]With the term "iteration" we translate the concept of "reprise" of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Cf. Bondì, De Luca (2016).

[46]Bondì (2020).

[47]Cowley, Moodley, Fiori-Cowley (2004).

> connect the experience of articulation and motricity to acts of sense production; in this way, they will be able to produce analyses that can be applied to particular languages and thus form a full part of linguistics. (Bottineau 2012: 44).

This epistemological challenge introduced by enactive linguistics emerges as a consequence of a renewed approach "regarding the nature of meaning and the role of interactive, socialized, distributed corporeality in its *occurrence*" (Bottineau 2013: 23, emphasis added). Indeed, the epistemological goal is to interrogate the emergence of the word in the sense of a reiterated practice at every unprecedented/original occasion, founded therefore on a constantly alterable repetition. Such reiterated social practice stages the paths of *externalization* of language around the world, that is paths of thematization[48] and correlatively the constitution of the perceptive, existential, intersubjective, and social fields that allow and realize its circulation, transmission, metamorphosis. This correlation sets in motion what we might call an economy and ecology of more or less shared values, *i.e.* a dialectic of stabilization and instability, determination and indetermination of every value, which profoundly amplifies the temporal stratification and semantics of each resource.

Then, speaking of language activity as plural and plurivocal praxis, we intend to identify the different levels that compose or articulate it: from the movement of thematization that is inherent to the enunciative action, to the field of praxeological and perceptual activity. To do this, we will start in the next section from an examination of some elements of an empirical nature that define the space of interlocution and focus in particular on the operations of emission and reception that are performed by speakers and co-speakers[49].

Two reasons are at the origin of this choice. First, we estimate that one of the fundamental elements of enactive grammars consists in the reconsideration of speech action as "a system of action through which the subject makes intellectual and psychological experiences happen through actual or simulated interactional engagement" (Bottineau 2013: 11). Second, such a focus allows the epistemological suggestions of enactive grammars to converse with the idea —of morphodynamic origin— of *semiotic perception*. By semiotic perception, we mean a general activity of the living and, in the case of human semiosis, a perception that is immediately expressive and "practical". This perceptive activity is crossed by heterogeneous lines of force that structure its constitution, differentiation, and dynamic stabilization, putting into action a plurality of registers and modalities, both fictional and practical, social, technological, and these characterize every semiotic encounter or game.

II-3. *The field of the speech action as embodied form*

Before examining the concept of *semiotic perception*, let us quickly evoke some empirical aspects of emission and reception in interlocutory practices, which we will observe under the lens of enactive linguistics. That will allow us to highlight that interlocutors' body resources constitute the *support* of sophisticated linguistic operations through which a *relational form* emerges that coincides with the space of interlocution as such. Francesco La Mantia (2015)[50] has keenly observed that enactive linguistics has followed two tracks to look at the operations and the interlocution space as a condition of the possibility of any dialogical interaction: the study of *phonatory gestures* and that of the experience of *self-reception*[51].

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[48]See Cadiot, Visetti (2001).

[49]Our reconstruction will rely on the crucial work of La Mantia (2015).

[50]See La Mantia (2020a).

[51]More recently, La Mantia has proposed an original reconstruction of the relationships between enactive grammars, enunciation theory, and psychoanalysis. See La Mantia (2020b).

Concerning the study of phonatory gestures, the starting idea is: the bodily endowment of an empirical actor during interlocution is constantly bound to a more or less heterogeneous set of semiotic constraints that structure the interlocutory space itself (or manifest themselves in its inner perimeter). In some way, the speaking subject makes *available* his or her body to the significations, circulating within the space of the interlocution fragment. For this reason, as the linguist and choreographer Jean-Rémi Lapaire (2013) has suggested, the linguist's description must take into account the repertoire of all the expressive resources available to the individual: postural, mimic, neuro-muscular, and proxemic resources. Lapaire affirms that the possibilities and needs of meaning construction according to the heterogeneity of contexts depend radically on this *experiential field*, at the same time physiological and cultural, that it is possible to catalog. For this reason —writes the linguist— "postures, attitudes, points of view and distances of a physical, affective, social, mental nature are integrated synchronously within an observable bodily game". In other words, enunciation, as an observable linguistic game, can be defined in terms of a bodily inscription of the space of interlocution: consequently, it becomes necessary to invert the point of observation, since "the subject lends his or her body to the meanings it fabricates and stages, bodily acting out the symbols and operations on the symbols" (Lapaire 2013: 51).

As a consequence of these indications, we can define emission and reception as semiolinguistic operations performed in the presence of other's bodies. As linguistic-discursive operations, they should not be treated as *independent objects*, but as "actions that continuously modify the world of interlocution. They are eminently common actions. In this sense, one can say that agents do not 'communicate', but 'communicate-act'" (Brassac 2000: 224). As a *discursive fact*, the space of interlocution cannot, therefore, be reduced to encodings or decodings of signals, nor to a set of interpretations that utterances convey. On the contrary, it is a matter of conceiving both the interlocution space and the operations that support it as real generators of "material, social and cognitive transformations" (Auchlin, Filliettaz, Grobet, Simon 2004: 220- 225):

> Within a framework at once praxeological and experiential, discourse is defined as a form of empirically attested experience, linguistically dominant but equally mobilizing other semiotic supports, and presenting itself to the analyst with a double status: a) through traces of intra- and intersubjective experience left by the interactants; b) the experience of the encounter between the analyst and the traces left by the discourse (Auchlin, Filliettaz, Grobet, Simon 2004: 220).

According to Auchlin et alii, who are fully within the scope of enactive pragmatics, discourse is defined by its complexity and by its dialogical nature. Emission and reception, then, are the operations that allow us to unveil this dialogical and discursive complexity, which cannot be understood as the result of a combination of utterances, but can be glimpsed through an overlap of heterogeneous and multiple systems, which produce different planes of the organization[52] (simultaneously linguistic, textual, pragmatic, etc.). Auchlin and colleagues are even more explicit in defining the dialogical nature of both discourse and linguistic operations:

> Discourses are necessarily *oriented* and project in this way an image of their instances of production and destination; they are in some circumstances co-constructed and result from situated collaboration; discourses appear as necessarily *polyphonic* in Bakhtin's sense, insofar as they 'respond' to voices *that have already made themselves heard*. They take their cue from the quest for an internal balance between the different instances of the involved word, through an 'inner agreement' (Auchlin, Filliettaz, Grobet, Simon 2004: 221).

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[52]Or *planes of manifestation*, if we adopt a more classical semiotic terminology.

Through the reconsideration of the instances of enunciation, enactive grammars integrate into their procedures of description the crucial experience of self-reception or, in other words, the experience of hearing oneself speak. This is a crucial experience in the process of sense-making. Indeed, since the locutor is always also the recipient of the proffered fragment of discourse, two different receptors are co-present in it. The coexistence of these two types of receptors, according to Bottineau, has produced a radical change in the modeling of the topology of enunciation. Indeed, two quite different receptors coexist in the enunciative production, "both perceiving the message." However, the conditions and modes of perception of the message diverge, to the extent that the "acoustic and semantic conditions" of perception may prove to be strongly contrasting" (Bottineau 2003: 210-211)[53].

On the one hand, the emitter of the discursive fragment coincides with the "internal" locutor, who "perceives himself in the phonatory instance". It is an "internal receptor" since the discourse uttered does not intend to target him, it does not address him. However, the locutor or internal receptor "equally perceives the utterance and interprets it, playing an essential role in the regulation of oral improvisation" (Bottineau 2003, 211). On the other hand, however, we observe what Bottineau calls the *allocutor*, namely the "external receptor, identified as a target by the two partners in the interlocution and indicated as such by the locutor's mimicry, kinesics, and proxemics" (*ibidem*). Bottineau has carefully identified the qualitative gaps between the internal and external receptors, which are promoted by the repertoire of mimetic and kinesic gestures, and which allow the direction and goal of the enunciative fragment to be fixed.

However, it is also necessary to consider what La Mantia called the *modes of perception of phonation*. According to the scholar, access to phonation is exactly what makes the internal and external receptors heterogeneous from a qualitative point of view, which La Mantia defines in terms of multimodal access. If the access of the internal receptor to phonation is both tactile and auditory, that of the external receptor is auditory and visual. Without going into details[54], we can limit to underlining that the two types of receptors accumulate memory of articulations, body rhythms, and, more generally, psychic gestural traces. For this reason, La Mantia is right in concluding that it is necessary to think of the interlocutory gesture itself as a generator of multimodal experiences:

> The interlocutory gesture then takes the form of a relationship in which different multimodal experiences - each referable to one of the concrete interlocutors participating in it - activate and interface. There is the multimodal experience of the locutor who, as the internal receiver, accesses phonation through auditory and tactile means. And there is the multimodal experience of the allocutary who, as an external receiver, accesses phonation through auditory and visual means. Of course: with the possibility for each actor to activate (through switching) experiences stored in memory in the form of latent sensory endowments (La Mantia 2015: 480).

In our view, it is important to emphasize that enactive grammars thus return to analysis — but also to epistemological and philosophical discussions— a descriptive scheme that entirely revises the circuit of communication and makes the theory of semiolinguistic interaction more articulate. Indeed, in this direction, Bottineau has suggested defining speech as an *embodied cognitive technique* (Bottineau 2012a). Moreover, enactive grammars require rethinking the dialogical and social nature of each enunciative fragment. However, we believe that additional inquiry into the social dimension of meaning and the simultaneously *perceptual-dynamic* and

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[53]For a presentation and discussion of Bottineau's model, we refer to La Mantia (2020b).

[54]For a detailed analysis of the difference between internal and external receptors from an enactivist and phenomenological perspective, see Bondì (2017).

material-imaginary nature of forms (including forms of the field of interlocution) is necessary.

Undoubtedly, the analysis of the interlocutory space in the enactive framework has allowed us, on the one hand, to ask the questions related to semiotic perception and the distributed organization of linguistic values that languaging accomplishes as a biocultural practice on the other.

However, some questions remain to be asked: how to think about this experiential and cultural distribution in a dynamic framework, taking into account this ecological "enlargement" of the semiotic field? What kind of interactive agent should we conceive to support the vision of the subject that enactive linguistics has delivered to us? How to account for the dynamic interaction and structural and ecological coupling between human agents who populate different, distinct but related environments?

To answer these questions, it seems necessary to focus on the *semiogenetic model* of semiosis and speech action.

II-4. *The split between expression and meaning: critical remarks*

The semiogenetic theory proposes a model of speech action that is both phenomenological and morphodynamic. This model takes up some theoretical results of enactive grammars and deepens two aspects that these theories do not fully explore: a) the perceptive invoice of semiolinguistic forms; b) the dialogical dimension of speech, perceived against the backdrop of a thematisation of the sociality of meaning.

We have elsewhere criticised the linear models of interlocution. This has led to two consequences: firstly, the criticism of theories that conceive of socialisation as a parasitic dimension, hooked on the instrumental dimension of language; and secondly, the criticism of the alleged antecedence of communicative intentions with respect to the emergence of forms and their 'spontaneous perception' during practices[55].

Traditionally, communicative intentions are conceived as antecedent to speech, and only become perceptible when they are 'embodied' in the expressive exteriority that a particular language offers to thought. This is the assumption behind the idea that social communication is a parasitic dimension and that language is an instrument that reflects predetermined ontologies. Now, if we combine the findings from enactive grammars with a theoretical posture of a phenomenological orientation, it becomes possible to rethink two issues: a) the question of the subject of speech during speech taking; b) a definition - however minimalist - of what it means to have a 'linguistic experience' (or semi-linguistic experience). Let us focus on the first point.

As is well known, the linear models of speech conceptualize locutors as determined intentional subjects at the origin of all linguistic production. Language is consequently imagined as an individual product, which feeds on the internalization of external norms and practices. According to the British anthropologist Tim Ingold, this representation of language and locutors became widespread - from an anthropological point of view - when signification was no longer taken into account in its authentic location, *i.e.* in the 'original flow of sociality', thus underestimating the variety of forms and modes of engagement of subjects, and forgetting that 'meaning rests on the relations between the inhabitant and the elements of the

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[55]Cf. Bondì (2022).

world he inhabits'. This is a perversion of the analytical gaze on signification, which finds itself thought of as an isolable process.

Of course, an isolation that is not only epistemological, whose constraints would be linked to simple descriptive purposes. More radically, these attempts have tried to isolate constitutive and autonomous nuclei of meaning, which should be able to reveal their nature by themselves. In other words, it is supposed to be possible to grasp signification from an ontological point of view, because it would emerge from a closed and profoundly homogeneous relational fabric. This is the basic claim of the metaphysical illusion discussed above, and whose main assumption Ingold rightly disputes:

> a division between a subject, in whose mind these representations are to be found, and an objective world 'out there'. Meaning is in the mind, not in the world – it is *assigned* to the world by the subject. As I move around physically in the world, and advance through time, I carry my concepts with me – rather as I might carry a map in navigating the landscape. In different times and places I experience different sensations, but like the map, the system of concepts which organizes these sensations into meaningful patterns remains the same, regardless of where I stand[56].

This perspective makes a radical separation between the experience of meaning and the world as a set of shared meanings. It forgets that any experience of meaning can only be grasped through the forms and modes of engagement or recruitment that mobilise subjects within practices, in the course of a relentless search for expression. Moreover, it underestimates the fact that the world is composed of a set of heterogeneous habitats, traversed by an immense variety of possible and actual relations, as well as existential and conflictual stakes. These relations take place between the different actors in play, who move closer or further apart according to particular situations and different contexts.

All of these elements, according to Ingold, constitute the anthropological and ontological presuppositions underlying the radical separation between experiences of meaning and the world, and do not allow for an understanding of 'expression' as an essential dimension of the social bios and as a historical fold (contingent and at the same time necessary), which makes its constitutive interweaving perceptible, as well as the developments, co-evolutions and stabilisations of subjects, forms of expression and environments. Moreover, two important disarticulations have occurred within this framework, which have profoundly marked the history of theories of language (and writing): a) the hiatus assumed to be original between expression and conventional signification; b) the split between the volitional/intentional and emotional dimensions of expressive units.

When we speak of the rift between expression and conventional signification, we are referring to the distance carved out between the sensitive and ideal dimensions of a form. This distance constitutes the cornerstone of what Ingold calls, not without a certain irony, 'orthodox thought', which has influenced linguistics, and particularly its cognitivist and Chomskyan declination. So writes Ingold:

> Again, the orthodox account argues that meanings are shared through verbal communication. Thus, my preprepared thought or belief has to be 'encoded' in words, which are then 'sent' in the medium of sound, writing or gesture to a recipient who, having performed a reverse operation of decoding, finishes up with the original thought successfully transplanted into his mind[57].

In the domain of linguistics, the split between expression and signification has been justified through the adoption of a resolutely conventionalist approach. This approach has historically

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[56]Ingold (2000), p. 408.

[57]*Ibidem.*

relied on some rather restrictive interpretations of the theory of the arbitrariness of sign and langue found in Saussure's CLG. Since language is not identified with a simple nomenclature that would label the facts of the external world, but is on the contrary thought of as an entity organized as a system of inter-definable signs, it does not seem necessary to find the relations external to language in order to grasp the processes of signification. As psychic entities, signs would limit themselves to each other. But more radically, referential relations would only arise from a set of semiotic 'decisions', which remain inexplicable if one situates oneself outside language: they would then be profoundly and radically arbitrary. If we place ourselves in such a perspective, the concept of convention resembles something 'prefabricated'. Agreement on meaning, then, would depend on the conditions attached to the context of exchange, where the latter is conceived as a more or less institutionalised environment. On the other hand, from a more directly gnoseological point of view, the conventionalist approach imagines that there is «an agreement on the conventional meaning of words», so that ideas are faithfully transcribed from one mind to another[58].

This apparently solid argument hides a weakness. In fact, if one assumes the existence of a solidified convention in an expressive system, it is because this should be able to latch on to any kind of mental content, and consequently to any kind of reality referable to that semantic type[59]. This would happen completely independently of the fabric of relations and socially inherited forms. Saussure - and the reader may recall this - had in fact warned, in some pages of the CLG and especially in the manuscript *De l'essence double du langage*[60], against such a reading of arbitrariness as convention or contract, which in his eyes sounded like a veritable caricature. In speaking of language as a "necessary institution" (and thus arbitrary), the Geneva linguist wished to invert the entire perspective: if conventional forms are nothing other than the result of social operations of conventionalization, langue as an institution is, on the contrary, something that is imposed on subjects and that, nevertheless, is constantly "reworked" by them through the mobilisation of an undecided mass of subjects, who are relentlessly exercised in the practice of "uninterrupted speech". The points of convergence between Saussure's indications and Ingold's arguments discussed here, then, seem quite astonishing.

II-5. *The myth of the individual and the fetishism of the sentence.*

Thus, Ingold disputes any epistemological and theoretical value to the split between expression and signification. Not only are these from his point of view deeply mixed, but it would be impossible to distinguish them, at least from a phenomenological point of view. To reinforce this conviction, he returns to the problem of convention that we highlighted above. Contrary to what conventionalist theories propose, semiotic and linguistic signification is not to be traced back to a movement of linear correspondence between signals, conceptual contents and objects of reference. Rather, when speaking of conventional signification, Ingold refers to a highly articulated historical process, whose constitution dynamics and stabilisation phases need to be understood. In short, convention would not be a prefabricated mental object, but one of the possibilities for the emergence of signs. Within the process of conventionisation, according to Ingold, the prerogative of signs is to "create synthesis", or rather to synthesise a variable and rich relational complex, whose main supports are the dynamics of social use of

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[58]*Ivi*, pp. 407-408.

[59]Cf. U. Eco, *Kant e l'ornitorinco*, Milano, Bompiani, 1997.

[60]F. de Saussure, *Écrits de linguistique générale*, Paris, Gallimard, 2002.

the sign itself, as well as the dynamics of formal stabilisation perceived (and "felt") by the subjects. Thus writes Ingold:

> When we speak of the conventional meaning of a word, that history is simply presupposed or, as it were, 'put in brackets', taken as read. And so we are inclined to think of use as founded on convention when, in reality, convention can only be established and held in place through use. Thus to understand how words acquire meaning we have to place them back into that original current of sociality, into the specific contexts of activities and relations in which they are used and to which they contribute. We then realize that, far from deriving their meanings from their attachment to mental concepts which are imposed upon a meaningless world of entities and events 'out there', *words gather their meanings from the relational properties of the world itself*. Every word is a compressed and compacted history[61].

The anthropologist's conclusions converge on one of the themes we discussed in the previous chapter, namely the importance of the scriptural assumption, or the writing bias, typical of the epistemological history of the language sciences. Indeed, the split between expression and conventional signification rests precisely on a description of enunciative activity whose sources are to be sought in a scientific imaginary that claims to be able to grasp the ideal of a 'perfectly reconstructed word':

> *as if* speech: as if the verbal utterance were fully amenable to systematic analysis in terms of syntactical rules; as if the tone of voice and pronunciation were entirely dispensable to meaning; as if the utterance had an autonomous existence, independently of the context of its production[62].

For Ingold, this is a true epistemological mirage, which has not only developed throughout the history of linguistic theories, but has also represented a major obstacle to the formation of any theoretical proposal (on language and meaning) of an expressivist and phenomenological orientation, but also situated, embodied and non-conventionalist. It has prevented language activity from being conceived as praxis and experience of co-construction of the world, enhancing the disembodied and instrumental metaphysics that made language an object at the service of an abstract and pre-linguisticised subject. Moreover, this mirage produced two ideas that proved particularly nefarious for Ingold: on the one hand, the conceptual separation of emotion and reason within expressive units; on the other, the construction of an anthropological model-archetype of speech, which coincided with the 'sentence' as an ideal unit. Ingold emphasises that these two aspects are profoundly linked and that their correlation goes back to the Western ideology of the individual and the person, as Marcel Mauss had already brilliantly shown. This ideology is based on a substantialist mythology of the individual and his or her identity, which is essentially given (or constructed) as preliminary to the moment of expression or speech.

In this framework, therefore, the questions once again revolve around the generating source of linguistic action - a source surreptitiously conceived as detached and independent from its expression, and therefore completely autonomous. We have already seen the problems that this perspective poses, and, as we shall shortly see, thinking subjectivity as inseparable from the expressive multiplicity that constitutes it seems to us the most fruitful way of describing and understanding the semiotic dynamics of the construction and circulation of meaning. But how, in this framework, is the 'fact of speaking' understood as both a social and an existential action? Or do questions such as these have no place in this type of proposal?

In fact, according to Ingold, these theories (which for him should be traced back to the anthropology underlying Chomskyan linguistics) reject the very idea of being able to find the

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[61]T. INGOLD, op. cit., p. 409.

[62]*Ivi*, p. 412.

origin of speech (understood as 'action in time' and 'temporal action') in the field of the relations and dynamics of the constitution of semiotic forms. On the contrary, this can only be glimpsed in the intentional forces that are specific to the human interiority, and it is the latter that is supposed to regulate the relations between the linguistic capacity (or competence) and the word that is uttered each time. Linguistic capacity is certainly located in the brain as a psychic entity or biological organ, and so it is accompanied by the innate devices of linguistic acquisition. In contrast, speech (or performance) would be nothing more than a kind of quasi-mechanical response to the subject's innate competence. Since its status depends on the domain of the accidental and the episodic, linguistic action or speech would simply constitute the result, on each singular occasion, of the typification of a given model. Consequently, the potentially infinite repetition of linguistic types does not really contemplate the hypothesis that some kind of cultural modification or alteration might intervene to understand speech as a social and existential fact. It is, therefore, a conception of language activity that is strongly oriented towards radical rationalism. In Ingold's reconstruction, linguistics would have reinforced this scientific and descriptive viewpoint thanks to the formal and cognitivist theory of Chomsky's early work. Completely discarding the emotional dimension that runs through and constitutes the enunciative activity, rationalist linguistics describes the semi-linguistic action in terms of a simple mechanism for reproducing models. Models that would already be constructed and internalised by the 'minds' of individuals.

In this device, the reproductions that speech produces in any physical environment do not feed off the metabolic interactions with the ecological and cultural niche in which they appear. These are relational dimensions that would oblige theory to take into account the forms of 'engagement' and 'mobilisation' of speech subjects, whereas in the perspective descending from Chomsky's intuitions, these are all elements that play at best a secondary role, of an exclusively 'cultural' or 'interpretative' order. It is in fact no coincidence that in the later elaboration of his theory, *i.e.* in what is known as the 'minimalist programme' conceived in the late 1980s, Chomsky insists that semantics and pragmatics manifest themselves exclusively in the domain of the 'interpretation' of language, and do not constitute any hard core of the theory.

From these considerations, then, derives an essential question: what would be the format of linguistic action thus conceived? We have already anticipated the answer: it is the 'sentence' conceived as the unique model of speech. If we follow Ingold's reconstruction, language is responsible for the construction of its own models, and the sentence would be the only format capable of meeting these expectations. Indeed, from a phenomenological point of view, Chomskyan theory starts from the observation that subjects always express themselves 'in sentences'. But let us abstraction here from such an order of issues: let us ignore, in particular, at least for now, that this is not an authentic phenomenological diagnosis, but a construction of empirical evidence, which is based on the transfer of the logical structure of the assertion to any form of expressivity. Let us also leave aside all the problems posed by the identification of predicative operations with assertion: although this is a fascinating subject, we cannot go into this in depth. Rather, we intend to focus on an element that is of great importance with respect to what we have called 'rationalist linguistics', and which lies at the heart of the anthropological and semiotic critique we are addressing. As Ingold himself states, as patterns, sentences are "simply performed in words" [63]. The word is then conceived as the execution of a pattern, at least according to one of the possible representations of the concept of performance in Chomsky. In this way, a kind of fetishism of the epistemological itinerary and linguistic modelling is produced almost unconsciously. Indeed, speech activities are thought

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[63]T. INGOLD, op. cit., p. 411.

of in terms of the reproduction of a "coherent system" of semantic and syntactic rules deduced by abstraction from "observed behavior"[64]. Starting from this position, linguists' observations will be forced to distance themselves from the «current of discourse, focusing on speech *as* speech whilst the rest of us concentrate on what other people are telling us *in* their speech»[65].

However, the fetishism Ingold speaks of is more radical, since it does not only concern the sentence as a model, but the object of investigation as such, *i.e.* the activity of language. The mass of linguistic productions that present themselves to the eyes of 'speakers' (and analyst-speakers) under the most varied formats, are in effect denuded of the emotional relations and forms of commitment that subjects engage in before them, and that they embody and experience during their recruitment through expression. By restricting the ontological perimeter of the concept of 'speech' to only the sentence as an ideal model, linguists confine language activity to an environment or (logical) space that coincides with individual minds and their coded exchanges. The conclusion drawn by the anthropologist is, in our eyes, undoubtedly excessive, and lacks generosity towards the formidable and fundamental advances and achievements of linguistics (Chomskyan in particular). Nevertheless, it retains some interesting elements and considerations, especially from an anthropological and philosophical point of view. Indeed, according to Ingold, linguists pay a heavy price in terms of responsibility. This price consists in reducing the phenomenological and ontological complexity of language to just the linguistic aspect (sentences), which claims to be its emblem, if not its very heart. Thus according to Ingold, and with his usual biting irony, linguists:

> But they have gone on to transfer, onto the speakers themselves, their own external relationship to the object of study, imagining the abstractions derived from this 'view from the outside' to be implanted within the speakers' minds and to constitute the essence of their competence. Hence, speaking is seen to consist in the implementation of linguistic rules. Inside the head of every speaker there appears a miniature linguist[66].

In the course of these pages, we have argued on several occasions that these kinds of reductionist operations have rested on a kind of 'implicit metaphysics' that has spanned the history of linguistic thought. A clarification is however necessary: since we believe - and we have shown elsewhere - that language is a complex system (in the sense that theories of non-linear dynamical systems have given to this term[67]), certain forms of epistemological reductionism seem to us at least well-founded, if not necessary. What we emphasise is that we must not confuse necessary epistemological reductionism with fetishism of theory and models. For this reason, despite not a few inaccuracies and some often rather vague formulations, the criticism made by Ingold seemed to us to be largely acceptable.

II-6. *Distributed cognition between environmental perception and semiotic perception.*

This topic is particularly interesting for our purpose, allowing us to conclude the first part of our investigation and progressively open up on our specific proposals. Let us recall that Ingold promotes an anthropology with an ecological and phenomenological vocation: this allowed him to challenge the representation of the word as a simply intentional act. Such a

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[64] *Ibidem.*

[65]*Ivi*, p. 412.

[66]*Ibidem.*

[67]Cf. A. Bondì, Hjelmslev and the Stratification of Signs and Language. The Morphodynamical Approaches to Semiotic Complexity, in F. La Mantia, P. Perconti, I. Licata (a cura di), Language in Complexity. The emerging Meaning, Berlin, Springer, 2017, pp. 99-118.

representation has the wrong, in the eyes of the anthropologist, to erase the expressive dimensions of semi-linguistic forms: the emotional and affective dynamics, those linked to intonation or even less usual forms of speech, such as the sung word. In a rather long passage, which we quote in full for its suggestive (and not just argumentative) force, the British anthropologist states:

> In short, whether I speak, swear, shout, cry or sing, I do so with feeling, but feeling — as the tactile metaphor implies – is a mode of active and responsive engagement in the world, it is not a passive, interior reaction of the organism to external disturbance. We 'feel' each other's presence in verbal discourse as the craftsman feels, with his tools, the material on which he works; and as with the craftsman's handling of tools, so is our handling of words sensitive to the nuances of our relationships with the felt environment. Thus, far from characterizing mutually exclusive categories of behaviour – namely 'volitional' and 'emotional' – intentionality and feeling are two sides of the same coin, that of our practical involvement in the dwelt-in world. Only by imagining the human organism to be an isolated, preconstituted entity, given in advance of its external relations, do we come to regard feeling as an inner, affective state that is 'triggered' by incoming sensations. And by the same token, we are led to recover the intentional (or 'volitional') character of speech by supposing that what makes it so is that it does *not* arise in reaction to external stimulus but is rather caused by an internal mental representation – by a thought, belief or proposition pressing to make itself heard[68].

Adopting a semiotic perspective with a phenomenological and ecological orientation implies thinking differently about the 'primacy' of the environmental relations of (and with) meaning. In attempting to describe the semiotic life of expressive forms, this type of perspective is concerned with recovering, in a not unsurprising manner, precisely the instrumental metaphor examined and criticized earlier. But it does so, it should be emphasized, with a nuance opposite to the traditional one, which we have qualified in terms of "implicit metaphysics" of language. Indeed, in this context, thinking of the word as a "tool" rather means analyzing and accounting for the "double inscription" of the word: a) within the economies of values produced by all the actors participating in the analyzed language game; b) within the ecology of possible actions in which the enunciative activity is co-implicated and recruited. Moreover, two other elements stand out in the passage quoted above: on the one hand, the idea that we need to rethink the relationships between emotion and intention; on the other, the idea that the variation of forms and norms is not a simple response to perturbations, but is governed by the dynamics of a complex system, open by definition to the aleatory force of life and which pursues its own existence in order to relaunch itself and relaunch it without stopping.

To respond to this order of problems, we will attempt to outline the theoretical features of the notion of 'semiotic perception'. This notion, in fact, seems to us fruitful for thinking differently about the relations between emotion and intention in enunciative activity. It constitutes the key element for the articulation of what we call "semiotic anthropology" with a phenomenological, ecological and expressivist vocation. With its postulate of a "primacy of perception" (an expressive perception that has always been captured through specific culturally situated modes of apprehension), this hypothesis proposes a return to phenomenology in order to understand language as a praxeological activity of social co-construction of reality, without thereby committing itself excessively to a constructivist epistemology. It also makes it possible to pose the question of what it means to 'live' a semi-linguistic experience, and possibly to model its phases of construction, stabilization and transformations that we perceive directly in the forms of expression, as well as in the subjects through whom these forms circulate, constantly evaluated and normalized, precisely through the cultural and semiotic perception that the agents have (and do).

T. INGOLD, op. cit., pp. 411.

In the current scientific context, still partially dominated by the 'representationalist' vocation in the sciences of culture and cognitive sciences[69], the project of a semiotic anthropology with a phenomenological character shows its reasons for existing. As close as it is to what is known as the semiotics of cultures[70], the theoretical and epistemological goals of a semiotic anthropology are rather linked to the attempt to describe the decisive part that the cultural dimension plays in processes of cognition. This goal is to be achieved through the integration of the singularity and punctuality of semiotic events (the multimodal semiotic performances), without reducing the bio-psycho-social feedback loops to only socio-cognitive mechanisms, which would fail to take into account precisely that particularity and fragility that the singular nature of signifying acts and semiotic games entails.

As is well known, since the 1970s the debate in cognitive anthropology has focused on questioning the 'absolute' nature of the boundary (or borders) between organism and environment. Gregory Bateson wrote back in 1973 that the network does not have the skin as its boundary, but includes all the external channels along which information can travel[71]. Therefore, he continued, the feedback loops generated by the processing of data and information and involved in perception and action could never be exclusively 'internal' to the organisms' mind. Twenty years later, Andy Clark, a pioneer of the theory of distributed cognition, would suggest that the mind itself should be conceived in terms of a permeable organ, whose activity, far from being located exclusively in the head of rational agents, is rather to be understood as an aspect of a global system of relationships that co-determine and characterize the physical environment of any living creature[72].

Indeed, the hypothesis of distributed cognition takes as its starting point a critique of the two basic epistemological principles of the representationalist paradigm, namely the reduction of cognition to a purely internal system, and the belief that cognition consists of a set of cognitive processes of a strictly individual nature. Faced with these assumptions, the distributed cognition hypothesis proposes first of all a methodological necessity, namely the enlargement of the units of analysis. For Holland, Hutchins and Kirsch, it is possible to move the frontier of cognitive unity beyond the body envelop to include the material and social environment as component of a more extended cognitive system[73].

Refusing to restrict the field of analysis to internal, mental and neuronal mechanisms, and to conceive of cognitive operations in terms of informational representation processes, the social and distributed cognition hypothesis emphasizes the respective roles of social co-ordination and the artefact (or tool), which support the cognitive agent in the accomplishment of a task or job. Thus, as an embodied phenomenon, cognition itself must be conceived as 'situated', *i.e.* rooted in the interactional context between the agent, the artefacts (and tools) it must or can use, and the specific environment for the task at hand. In turn, such an environment depends in most cases on complex and sophisticated sociosemiotic contexts. A chain of feedback between cultural and semiotic dimensions and stored and diffuse cognitive operations is installed and defines cognition. This kind of consideration has been particularly explored in the field of cognitive archaeology. According to Carl Knappett[74], for instance,

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[69]Cf. J.-M. SALANSKIS, (*Herménéutique et cognition*, Lille, Presses du Septentrion, 2003, pp. 44-81.

[70]Cf. A. M. LORUSSO, *Semiotics of culture*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2010.

[71]G. BATESON, (1972), p. 236.

[72]Cf. A. CLARK, Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1997.

[73]J. HOLLAND, E. HUTCHINS, D. KIRSCH, *Distributed Cognition: Toward a New Foundation for Human-Computer Interaction* Research, «ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, 7/2, 2000, p. 175.

[74]Cf. C. KNAPPETT, Archaeology, Culture and Society. Thinking Through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

cognitive and material archaeology should not focus on material remains that are conceived as inert, but put under investigation that network of relations through which matter is integrated into an organic system, within which agentive relations can be conducted as much by organisms as by the 'intentionality proper' and expressive of objects. The relations between brain, body and things should therefore be reconstructed from the practices of 'incorporation': patterns of sequential operations that unconsciously organize and structure collective and individual actions - as is the case with speaking, walking, and what Marcel Mauss already called in 1932 the 'techniques of the body'.

The reflections and studies of the British archaeologist Lambros Malafouris - a scrupulous reader of Ingold and especially of Merleau-Ponty - on lithic tool construction are well known. Malafouris' thesis is that this type of lithic tool construction, dating back to the Lower Palaeolithic, cannot be conceived if one assumes a purely individual design or constructional intention as a starting point. The tool, in fact, is not simply the result of an internal intention of the mind, "but as an act that embodies an intention and transforms it into an external thing. It is therefore not the effect of an intention, but the intention itself in its material embodiment"[75].

By analyzing the act of carving and chipping stone, Malafouris makes a radical theoretical gesture, which forms the heart of his *Material Engagement Theory*[76]. The stone in the hand of man, argues the archaeologist, does not merely fulfil the individual's intention and cannot therefore be reduced to an instrument of execution. It entails a kind of 'bringing forward' of the engraver's intention, an imaginative capacity for anticipation that is at the heart of the semiotic construction of the object itself. If we consider the act of striking the stone in the dynamics of its continuous and irregular making, Malafouris observes that what matters is not so much where the engraver will choose to strike the next time, because he probably does not know yet; nor does the force he will exert count, whether right or wrong. None of this matters for the simple reason that these choices do not depend on internal processes of information processing. Malafouris concludes: at least partially, the intention to engrave is constituted in the stone itself, because the stone, as well as the engraver's body, are both and equally part of the intention to engrave[77].

It is thus the very conception of intentionality that finds itself being profoundly revised, because the meaning of an object and the intention to signify find themselves co-existing within a complex circuit, within a system of local and global interactions that can only and exclusively allow themselves to be discovered 'in the very act of expressing themselves'. In this, Malafouris takes up Merleau-Ponty's lesson: the complex cycle of the manifestation of an intention can only be revealed in the very act of expression and materiality[78].

If we abstract from the case of cognitive archaeology, it is important to emphasize certain elements. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the need to broaden the analysis to a type of 'organism and environment' unit, whose status is that of a dynamic system: to speak of a unit of analysis then means to select levels of reality in which properties emerge that relate to the life of the phenomenon, and relations that constitute its ecological history; a history that is not only intrinsically multilinear, but includes residues, gaps, lines of resistance, lines of escape

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[75]M. COMETA, La letteratura necessaria. Perché le storie ci aiutano a vivere, Milano, Raffaello Cortina, 2017, p. 107.

[76]Cf. L. MALAFOURIS, How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement, Cambridge (Mass), MIT Press, 2013. Cfr. V. DE LUCA, « Matérialité et développement des formes sémiotiques: de l'hyperobjet à la niche », *Signifiances/Signifying*, 4/2, 2021, pp. 66-84.

[77]For a detailed commentary on this aspect of Malafouris' approach, cf. M. COMETA, op. cit., pp. 108-111.

[78]*Infra*, cap. 3.

and phases of constitutive unpredictability. In other words, cognition as a distributed phenomenon that manifests human cognition, presents a diversity of determination mechanisms. As Bernard Conein wrote, distribution implies:

> an ecological side in which cognitive processes are distributed among an agent (or agents) and artefacts (tools, equipment, texts, symbols, etc.); a social side in which cognitive processes are distributed among several agents who coordinate by sharing the same operational location. The two sides can be conceived as human procedures to overcome the limits of individual cognitive processes. They are also a way of specifying human cognition as adaptive cognition that is co-evolved, biologically and culturally[79].

Assuming a co-ordination between external cognitive aids, the difference in nature of which depends on regimes of technical or social fabrication, theories of distributed cognition must think about «the integration of social and artificial mechanisms of distribution»[80]. However, how should distribution be conceived in relation to the two sides, ecological and social? In other words, are the relationships between agents and environments, which permanently structure the ecological distribution of cognition, to be conceived of as deriving from a social distribution or, on the contrary, is it necessary to «derive the social distribution from a previous ecological distribution»? Conein rightly asks whether «the two modes of distribution rest on a common structure or have to do with structures that are tuned from distinct mechanisms»[81].

This kind of epistemological questioning takes seriously the possibility of thinking about social interaction and placing it at the center of a conceptual device that allows us to understand the constitution of knowledge and practices by cognitive agents, and at the same time the ways in which action and perception are in coalition. This alliance between action and perception governs the construction of environmental space and determines the semiotic and cultural horizon in which we act as human animals, with its lines of flight. The question remains as to whether it is really adequate to conceive of the distributed nature of cognition, as it emerges from the juxtaposition of the two sides, ecological and social, «as a correspondence: human/human interaction according to the conversational model of face-to-face and reciprocal gaze, and human/artefact interaction according to the model of intentional affordance»[82]. Should we not, rather, seek a more encompassing model, at least at the level of its theoretical conceptualization and epistemological metaphors?

In fact, however critical it may be of the representationalist paradigm in cognitive science, the distributed cognition hypothesis remains anchored to a perspective that surreptitiously reintroduces two rather sharp conceptual separations: a) that between the coalescence of praxeological and perceptual regimes proper to expressive life and cognitive agents; b) the complex of social interactions that constitute the lives of subjects and the physical, material and symbolic environment of tools and artefacts.

This has given rise, the now familiar Ingold points out, to a kind of insoluble epistemological dilemma, which has characterized a number of scientific and philosophical attempts to think about the relationship between the human animal, its perceptual-symbolic action and the ecological niche in which it acts (and which it co-creates). Comparing Gibson's theory of perception and the Heideggerian theory of being-in-the-world, Ingold points out that these kinds of theories face a double impasse:

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[79]B. CONEIN, Cognition distribuée, groupe social et technologie cognitive, «Réseaux», 124, 2004, p. 57.

[80]*Ivi*, p. 55.

[81]*Ibidem*.

[82]B. CONEIN, op. cit., p. 66.

Recall Gibson's contention that what he calls the *open environment* – realised in the limiting case as a perfectly level desert stretching to the horizon under an empty sky – would be practically un- inhabitable (Gibson 1986, p. 33, 78). To create a space for dwelling, the open must be furnished with objects. Yet these objects, affording what they do because of what they are, remain indifferent to the presence of the inhabitant. They are supposed to comprise, in themselves, a meaningful world, into which the inhabitant arrives as a kind of interloper, probing this niche and that and picking up their affordances. For Heidegger, to the contrary, the space of dwelling is one that the inhabitant has formed around himself by clearing the clutter that would otherwise threaten to overwhelm his existence. The world is rendered habitable not as it is for Gibson, by its partial *en*closure in the form of a niche, but by its partial *dis*closure in the form of a clearing[83].

The theory of distributed cognition would not escape this problematic fate that befell the Gibsonian theory of visual perception and early Heidegger's existential phenomenology. Indeed, the theorists of distributed cognition had to forcefully reintroduce a distinction between organic and mental activity; a distinction they intended to overcome. Since cognition relies on an external aid, it cannot be separated from external components present in the environment, which constitute prostheses or extensions of the mind. The latter, therefore, is consequently defined as relational and interactive. However, Conein points out, the concept of help always remains relative to the task to be accomplished: this re-proposes the double dilemma noted by Ingold with regard to Gibson and Heidegger, *i.e.* a sort of «to and fro between delimitation and revelation», between an ecology of the real and a phenomenology of experience[84].

> In certain cases, it is possible to admit that cognition is distributed, but in other, simpler contexts, in which the agent is alone or in which it does not make use of any artefacts, cognition is not distributed, since the agent continues to perceive and make inferences without external help. Thus, to recognize the sleeping cat, I do not need to distribute or coordinate information in order to act. It can even be argued that distribution is a matter of gradation: if I am alone in a room, I use some external indices to move around or to identify a shape but these indices mobilize too weakly for me to be able to speak of distribution of cognitive processes[85].

In other words, despite the criticism levelled at representationalist computationalists, the distributed cognition hypothesis remains a victim of the same kind of confinement of cognition to the corporeal envelope, as its epistemology reveals an adherence to a reductionist model of environmental perception, which is not conceived of as being at once praxeological, semiotic and expressive. As Ingold again pointed out:

> So long as we suppose that life is fully encompassed in the relations *between* one thing and another – between the animal and its environment or the being and its world – we are bound to have to begin with a separation, siding either with the environ- ment vis-a`-vis its inhabitants or with the being vis-a`-vis its world. A more radical alternative, however, would be to reverse Heidegger's priorities, that is, to celebrate the openness inherent in the animal's very captivation by its environment. This is the openness of a life that *will not be contained*, that overflows any boundaries that might be thrown around it, threading its way like the roots and runners of a rhizome through whatever cracks and crevices afford growth and movement[86].

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[83]T. Ingold (2009), p. 149.

[84]*Ivi,* p. 150.

[85]B. CONEIN, op. cit., p. 58.

[86]T. INGOLD, op. cit., p. 149.

II-7. Towards semiotic perception: the body as medial archetype.

This paradigm shift, of which we have provided a partial reconstruction within the discussions in the field of cognitive anthropology, obliges us to reconsider the topic of environmental and semiotic perception. Following Ingold's suggestions once again, one is prompted to reason about the conditions of action formation, in the context of a so to speak 'closed' coexistence between cognitive agents, the sharing of their situated actions and the artefacts that surround them. However, almost as if he were a Merleau-Pontian philologist, Ingold argues more profoundly that 'perceiving' constitutes an authentic general function of existence, which structures the relation of the human animal to its world in a much more generalised and extensive manner than is commonly believed in the psychological and cognitive spheres.

Picking up on the idea of 'exceptionality' (haecceitas), proposed by two other philosophers dear to him, namely Deleuze and Guattari, Ingold argues that perception cannot be reduced to a representative function of the external world, nor to an albeit sophisticated form of cognitive and social cooperation. Instead, it must be understood from the action of constant 'tuning' or 'attunement' to the world, through the movements of modulation that pass through the individual and at the same time go beyond it. The exceptionalities (haecceitates), writes Ingold:

> These haecceities are not *what* we perceive, since in the world of fluid space there are no objects of perception. They are rather what we perceive *in*. In short, to perceive the environment is not to take stock of its contents but to *follow what is going on*, tracing the paths of the world's becoming, wherever they may lead us[87].

For this reason, it is now, in our opinion, necessary to try to define the notion of 'semiotic perception', as well as the language activity with which it is accompanied, and to do so we need to go beyond the theory of distributed cognition and enactive linguistics, despite their important achievements. From a certain point of view, the perspective we have called 'semiotic anthropology' does not deviate radically from the theses outlined above. One point they have in common is undoubtedly the idea that cognition can be thought of as the 'story' of a structural organism/environment coupling, which gives rise to a world of its own (a niche) for the organism in question.

However, to overcome the dilemmas that grip externalist and internalist epistemologies, the concept of "body" must be made to play a different role in the theoretical device. This must be thought of as endowed from the outset with wills, desires and drive dimensions that, as Victor Rosenthal and Yves-Marie Visetti write, "permanently motivate and evaluate our situation" [88] socio-enunciative or practical. Moving in a direction already partially traced by Ingold, and in the spirit of a reworking of some of Merleau-Ponty's intuitions, we identify with the term 'perception' a general dimension of existing, *i.e.* a mode of movement that as such is at once "territorial marking", "stabilization of postures" and "construction of forms". Put differently, what matters here is the status of the body as a medium, the guarantor of a ubiquitous mediating activity, which is such by virtue of the expressive nature of experience - to which we will return shortly. In this way, it is possible to hold together two elements that have hitherto remained separate: the medium nature of the body, which regulates all the relationships we have with the world as subjects and at the same time members of an animal

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[87]*Ivi*, p. 154.

[88]V. Rosenthal, Y.-M. Visetti, « Modèles et pensées de l'expression: perspectives microgénétiques », *Intellectica*, 50, 3, 2008, p. 107.

species; and the role of bodily (and also prosthetic) forms and supports, which define and qualify our relationship to the world as an intrinsically mediated relationship[89].

This omnipresence of mediation consists in the widespread presence of apparatuses for filtering, modifying and restoring/reprocessing flows and fragments of reality, without this presupposing the existence of a frontal and intentional type of relationship between the subject and the world (as an idealist stance would lead one to believe)[90]. As Harmut Rosa has recently argued[91], the network of relationships that body and world weave is constructed through "multimodal resonances", which are affective and emotional, but at the same time cognitive, cultural, social and strongly evaluative. This network of relationships depends on the exercise of dynamic positioning characteristic of bodies, and the mutual adjustment between the world as a mass of events and the subjects they perceive and act upon. For Rosa, the body is a veritable "constructor of postures": this enables it to activate the chains of expressive events through which it accords with situations, and opens it up to a range of mediation filters that more or less implicitly express the very modes of the relationship between subject and world, as well as the quality of the relationship. These modes take shape through the experiential codification linked to the subjects' intentionality, but also through the differential of intensity, resonance and vibration that govern them. At stake is the need to adequately understand the porous nature of the borders between the "experienced body" and the "thematised body". By the very fact of perceiving and acting, the human subject is on the one hand "its own body". At the same time, "since it is capable of referring to itself (reflexively), *i.e.* of perceiving the 'body-itself' as an object in the world', it [scil. the subject] has a body-object"[92]. If the lived body is an experiential mediator, it is necessary to identify the place of transitions and remodulations between experience and subjectivity, which "coincides" with the plurality of forms of expression, apparatuses of cultural mediation and technological innovation that man produces and in which he experiences himself.

Thanks to the expressive variety and richness of the forms of symbolic mediation with which it is endowed and to which it is socially trained, the human animal is able to distance itself from environmental pressure[93]. This is due to the definition of the body (Leib) as an integral part of the self, and because "the world exists only insofar as it is given to consciousness through this body and, conversely, consciousness itself must think of itself as embodied"[94]. As the core of the embodiment of forms, the body is the first medium that organises experience, an intermediary between the traces that events in the world leave and the forms that express this encounter. According to Rosa, "there is no world without the body" and vice versa. On the contrary, the body is an organ that allows one to "perceive and experience the world" and at the same time an "instrument through which the subject can express himself and exert an influence on the world"[95]. Consequently:

> Experience (passive) and its appropriation (active) thus both pass through the body (...).
> The body-object can then be conceived as a 'membrane' on which the world engraves
> itself from the outside and leaves traces (inscription) and at the same time expresses the

[89]This is the thesis of technical anthropology as constitutive. Cfr. V. HAVELANGE, CH. LENAY, J. STEWART, *Les representations: mémoire externe et objets techniques*, «Intellectica», 35/2, 2002, pp. 115-129.

[90]Cf. A. BONDÌ, *Experience as Mediation. The Body and the Language as prototypical medial Environments*, «Metodo. International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy», 7/2, 2020, pp. 177-202.

[91]H. ROSA, *Résonance*, Paris, Grasset, 2018, pp. 92-130.

[92]*Ivi*, p. 97.

[93] Come sostiene del resto una nobile tradizione antropologica, da Gehlen a Plessner, che lo stesso Rosa discute ampiamente.

[94]*Ivi,* p. 98.

[95]*Ibidem.*

subject's reflexive self-understanding and psychic movements, *i.e.* the personality (expression). Through the body-object, the world is inscribed in the subject and always through it the subject expresses itself in the same way in the world. The body-object does not, however, come between me and the world: it is the constitutive starting point for one and the other. As a constitutive element of the subject, it makes perception possible and, through this, the receptive experience of the world and the intentional and active relationship to the world. A non-corporeal relationship to the world is unthinkable: any intentionality, however purely mental or reflexive, can only be embodied. As an element of the world, the body appears as an object that we can observe, examine, shape, discipline but also mobilize and use (like other things in the world) and on which the influences of the world (and the traces of our confrontation with the world) can be observed. Body posture expresses the relationship to the world as a whole. While it is true that the relation to the world as such includes irrevocably cognitive, evaluative and reflexive elements that are not at all bodily in nature, the experience for this is no less embodied[96].

Rosa does not make a qualitative distinction between mental and bodily experiences: both are modes of the variable resonances in which human beings live, which reverberate in their expression. In this perspective, the body becomes the emblem, the epistemological and archaeological model of forms of mediation, of prosthetic environments or even of meaningful Umwelten. In a certain sense, the lived body is always grappling with the world and is ceaselessly modulated by the world, through a potential infinity of stimuli in the form of appeals, questions, demands, warnings, orders and cultural rehashes. As both Leib and Körper, the body is a medium that obeys two structural processes of the medial dimension: a) operating a prosthetic enlargement of the spatio-temporal potential of experience; b) creating a specific environment, which leads to and structures the totality of experience and the world as an experiential universe.

This is why we maintain that perception is in chiasm with semiosis: it is from the outset expressive and praxeological, *i.e.* traversed by heterogeneous lines of force that govern and organize its constitution, differentiation and dynamic stabilization; forces and paths - therefore - that have to do with a heterogeneity of registers and practical, social, technological, imaginary modes. In this way we take seriously the hypothesis of an originally cultural perception, in which every perceived form is always bound to its modes of apprehension, and not only to those of production. Picking up on a Merleau-Pontian adage, Rosenthal and Visetti argued that everything perceived is always a manifestation of a "style of being": "what is perceived is always by way of the expression of a certain practical disposition and an evaluation that makes sense" [97]. Perception is then immediately expressive insofar as it is semi-linguistic, and being-in-the-world is a being-for-the-language, which is embodied in a dynamic perceptual-expressive structure.

In this context, it seems important to reason about the profound correlation between expression and experience, at the heart of semiogenetic theory. From our point of view, it is in fact impossible to conceive of a theory of experience without an adequate understanding of two elements: i) the expressive mediations (technical, linguistic, medial) that structure and propagate it; ii) the dynamics in which it unfolds, *i.e.* the forces of alteration that ceaselessly vary its physiognomy.

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[96] *Ivi*, pp. 98-99.

[97] Y.-M. VISETTI, V. ROSENTHAL, *Les contingences sensori-motrices de l'énaction*, «Intellectica», 43/1, 2006, pp. 105-116.

II-8. *The expressive animal: experience as recovery*

We have so far tried to define human experience as originally embodied. The meaning in which we use the term "incarnation" is the one suggested several years ago by Charles Taylor, according to whom «the expression makes something manifest in an embodiment.

Both the key terms, 'manifestation' and 'embodiement', point to necessary conditions»[98]. Taylor's position is well known: something is 'expressed' the moment it becomes manifest. Manifestation does not by necessity imply inferential processes on the part of the subjects with whom it comes into contact: its essential character is that of being public and available, in the public eye. The Taylorian concept of 'embodiment' alludes to the direct and essential nature of manifestation: on the one hand, any attempt to separate what is expressed and what is expressed is undermined; on the other hand, attention is focused on the living, animated presence of what is expressed in what is expressed.

In this regard, Rosenthal and Visetti have argued that expression in Taylor takes the form of a paradoxical concept, in that it «announces a depth that is both hidden and directly displayed within itself»[99]. Indeed, expression would, according to the scholars, 'give its name to what is most vivid in our experience'. It would, however, suffer from a constitutive fragility, stemming from the possibility of 'stretching' the two planes to their maximum dissociation, into a manifest plane and a hidden plane of content.

For this reason, Taylor insists that we can only speak of a phenomenon as expressive if it passes through a 'physiognomic reading'[100], which «occupies a median position between the zero degree of original expression and the plane of an instituted semiosis»[101]. The examples given by the philosopher are paradigmatic: the most famous is that of a passer-by who, finding himself in front of a crumbling building, reads almost immediately 'the imminence of collapse'. This 'reading' is not nourished and does not necessarily emerge from a preliminary interpretation of an analytical or geometrical kind, but consists in a perception of the possible transitions of the object, an imaginative construction around the potential destiny of the object and its virtualities. As such, this reading represents one of the possible lines of escape from the experience of the encounter with the building. In this way, Taylor intends to oppose the most widespread and common conceptions that make expression the manifestation of an 'X', which would be placed in a preliminary manner, a sort of logical antecedent to the expressing 'Y'. On the contrary, for the Canadian philosopher it would be more appropriate to speak, if anything, of a probable antecedence of the 'expressing' dimension. We know, however, that such an antecedence does not amount to a splitting into planes: as a manifestation, "Y" does not appear unless it "profiles", thematically, an "X", *i.e.* one of its particular profiles.

If one retranscribes this intuition of Taylor's on the level of language, as Rosenthal and Visetti have proposed, one must avoid thinking of the 'Y' expressing on the model of the expression of the Saussuro-Hjelmslevian tradition but, on the contrary, as the whole Saussurian sign, where signifier and signified are inseparable. The antecedence of expression with respect to content, then, characterises the 'expressive movement', which is always a 'movement of explication' of a previous expression, that is, of a previous expressive movement, on the basis of a virtuous hermeneutic circularity. As Rosenthal and Visetti write:

> If the antecedence of Y within the movement of expression precludes making it a mere instrument of X's communication, this does not mean that one can abstract Y as a

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[98]CH. TAYLOR, *Action as Expression*, op. cit., p. 73.

[99]V. ROSENTHAL, Y.-M. VISETTI, *Modèles et pensées de l'expression*, op. cit., p. 187.

[100]CH. TAYLOR, *Action as Expression*, op. cit., p. 74.

[101]V. ROSENTHAL, Y.-M. VISETTI, *Modèles et pensées de l'expression*, op. cit., p. 188.

manifestation of X. Why? Because like X, Y is equally tributary to expression, its antecedence does not imply splitting. It is a peculiar character of expression that one tends to construct the fetish of the manifestation, almost separating it from the expressive moment and leading it back to some external side (for example when one considers it as an independent morphology). Let us say that in order to access X each time, *i.e.* to make it exist again, another expression is always necessary[102].

Verbal language, from this point of view, qualifies as an expressive-perceptual activity in this sense. Contrary to rigidly designative conceptions, we can observe that, as speaking animals, we recognize a kind of paradoxical antecedence of 'things' in relation to words within an expressive/interpretive flow. But it is this flow that brings them into existence, that is, to coexist and unfold to produce meaningful (or more banally semiopragmatic) relations with what we would call 'the facts'. Returning to the relations between experience and expressivity, one of the vectors that supports the different forms in which experience is expressed, Taylor once again argued[103], is its internal expressive engine, namely the concept of 'recovery'. In Taylor's reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, expression establishes itself in a perennial regime of 're-mediation' and 'presumption', *i.e.* a regime of explication of the unthought, the repressed, the not-yet-experienced, etc. The main character of expression is precisely that of explicating new dimensions of experience, of returning pieces of the world as yet unknown or not yet necessarily experienced, and of manifesting new ways of being in the world. As a recovery, every expression is always a new configuration, the setting in motion of two simultaneous processes, so to speak. On the one hand, other contents are captured and their transmission is amplified, based on the mediating apparatus employed. On the other hand, expression exhibits the different types of relationship between the perceptual body of the agent and the world as a set of problematic environmental stresses (in a mixture of determinacy and indeterminacy). For authors such as Taylor and Merleau-Ponty, expression then represents, as we have already mentioned, a salient feature of animality and animal cultures, including the human one[104]. Therefore, it is possible to consider it as the prototype of all processes of articulation that structure the most elementary perceptual actions.

It is at this point that the concept of expressive filming can be compared with that of medium, understood in the sense of a prosthesis external and at the same time internal to the body, while it experiences the world. Indeed, one should not underestimate the fact that, although embodied, human experience passes through and is structured by means of more complex and powerful mediation and re-mediation tools, at least compared to what we have metaphorically called the 'naked body'. These instruments or prostheses not only allow for a refinement of forms of experience, but also transform the world in a sometimes irreversible manner. We speak of media apparatuses that are certainly linked to our biology as a species and to our ergonomics, or to our lived body. However, we must not forget that these apparatuses aim at the widespread construction of a quantity of specific environments or cultural niches that cannot be defined a priori[105]. Among these 'niches', verbal language as an activity enters as a powerful mediating vector. There is a long tradition in the philosophy of language, going back at least as far as Humboldt and up to Wittgenstein and Cavell, according to which language is to be conceived as one of the most powerful mediating instruments between subjects (or

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[102]*Ibidem.*

[103]CH. TAYLOR, *Action as Expression*, op. cit., pp. 73-75.

[104]Cf. Ch. Taylor, *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*, Cambridge (Mass.), The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.

[105]This is not a new thesis, argued at different times by authors such André Léroi-Gourhan o Bernard Stiegler. Cfr. J. STEWART, *Cognition et société: l'inscription sociale de la cognition*, «Intellectica», 63/1, 2015, pp. 7-14; B. STIEGLER, *Demain, le temps des automates et la désautomatisation*, «Intellectica», 63/1, 2015, pp. 151-162.

minds) and the world. The link between the two poles is so strong that, in some cases, there is a tendency to make the human form of life coincide with the set of linguistic and semiotic practices that are expressed through a network of socially situated and defined grammars and usages. In this respect, language would not only be an instrument of social communication, but a veritable 'membrane', at once sensitive and cognitive: an individual and intrapsychic structure, which feeds on its own function as a frontier between the two interrelated poles. The assumption of this conception of the relationship between language and the world is that the two poles are in a relationship of mutual solicitation, and that this solicitation occurs through a heterogeneity of events that must necessarily acquire the status of a signal. Consequently, language is probably made to allow the translation of these heterogeneous signals, which the two poles send to each other incessantly, in order to increase the possibilities of mutual mirroring and co-modulation.

The suggestion that language can be considered as a particular type of medium that operates by constitutive 'reprise of the word on itself' then proves particularly pertinent. On the one hand, in fact, human languages constitute veritable prostheses that externalise the body's expressive possibilities. Thanks to language, we are able to economically and cognitively amplify the spaces and times of experience, as well as the range of actions and events that can be 'invented' and to which the subject can respond. Indeed, more radically, it can be argued, as the great linguistics of the 20th century, from Hjelmslev to Chomsky, has done, that the sayable is the authentic field of the possible, as the field that translates the experiential continuum into discrete forms. On the other hand, language functions as a true technical apparatus, which exists and takes place between subjects, not only because of its prosthetic force, but also by virtue of its characteristic as a discursive space that envelops us and wraps around itself[106]. It is not too far-fetched to say, as a certain ecological tradition in psychology and philosophy seems to do, that the functioning of language is analogous to that of certain environments, in which even minimal variations produce transformations of the world-environment, but at the same time of the self (or of the subjects) and of the mediating instrument itself.

Similarly, through the participation of speakers in language games, *i.e.* through the plurality of actions and interventions, the social actor and speaker not only modifies the world and himself, but language itself, understood as a set of forms in perpetual alteration, of spoken discourses, of objects that inaugurate the history of mediations around a social theme, a documentary ontology, etc., but also as a set of forms of language itself. Indeed, linguistic praxis allows speakers (*i.e.* subjects trained in language) both interaction and collective action as well as the constant differentiation of the linguistic forms in which they express themselves, and which a given society recognises without any particular cognitive effort.

This is, moreover, what certain enactive linguistics, such as Bottineau, would also seem to argue, according to which one must focus on the phenomenon of languaging: this is defined as "a dynamic process distributed over bodies and the material environment in its sociosemiotic dimension"[107]. Languaging is not identified with the words of the Saussurian tradition (an individual and singular phenomenon), but has an interactive and dynamic status, typical of any human society "in which an individual is recruited in the same way as a player in an ongoing collective sports game (...) and which manifests itself through the participatory

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[106]The reader will have caught the use of the notion of medium as a synonym for actor of semiotic perception. An idea that certainly has its origins in Uexküll's theoretical biology, but also, and perhaps above all, in Walter Benjamin's media theory. On this last point, cfr. Y. CITTON, *Médiarchie*, Paris, Seuil, 2017.

[107]D. BOTTINEAU, La parole come technique cognitive incarnée, op. cit., p. 2.

intervention of the subjects, who thus contribute to the evolution of the process that is distributed among them"[108]. Consequently, according to Bottineau:

> one no longer asks how the subject says what he or she says (as if the meaning goes without saying from the outset and as if the role of language as transcriber or transmitter of ideas according to shared conceptual formats were self-evident); on the contrary, the question is asked as to what the experience of language really consists of, what effect speaking 'does' to us as individuals and participants in a group, what the correct phenomenological construction of the languaging process as a biomechanical, motor and perceptual experience, subjectively situated and intersubjectively realized, contributes to making us as members of the human species[109].

If, by virtue of these considerations, it can be argued that human language is an intrapsychic mediating apparatus and at the same time a distributed cognitive technique, perhaps we can go further and consider it as a true emblem of the medial and expressive nature of experience. Emblem - we mean here - in the sense of proto-model in miniature: a sort of metaphorical 'fossil', which tells us about the processes of environmental construction, as well as the movements of extension of the expressive potentialities typical of a cultural niche. This is possible because, as a prosthesis and at the same time a discursive environment, language is located "between us (intermediaries and mediators of our collaborations) and simultaneously around us (as the conditioning niche of our interactions)" [110].

This idea was, after all, already clear to Saussure, who, in his years of teaching general linguistics, had devoted quite a few lectures to attempting to reject conventionalist approaches to language and languages. For Saussure, language cannot be a mere convention, *i.e.* a parasitic and arbitrary mediation, the more or less irenic result of pacts and conventions between individuals. On the contrary, every language spoken by humans is defined as a necessary institution. How can this expression, which is not without ambiguity, be properly interpreted? According to the Geneva linguist, in order to define language, one cannot be satisfied with the semiological definition alone, according to which language is a coherent and closed system of signs, aimed at communication and the transmission of information. Studying language implies taking into account two essential factors. On the one hand, it is the most 'formidable' instrument of education of individuals, an inter-psychic and social structure of subject formation. On the other hand, it is a true instinct rooted in the species. The Saussurian proposal emphasizes, in essence, that the activity of language profoundly restructures our relationship to the world, and constitutes the essential mediation that the human species entertains with the environment.

A rather important clarification must be made. When we speak of the 'restructuring' of experience and of the specific and peculiar 'mediation' that language operates, we are referring to the fact that language and languages have a series of operations for filtering experience, which are undoubtedly peculiar to languages, but whose underlying semiotic-cultural (and gnoseological) mechanism is the 'resumption', *i.e.* the constant alteration, displacement and modification (or metamorphosis) of environmental boundaries, and simultaneously of the boundaries of sense and speaking subjects. Environments, meaning, speaking subjects: these are the mobile dimensions that assemble[111] and animate the expressiveness of living beings and animal culture (and among these, human culture), through - as we have already said - a threefold semiotic operation of territorial mapping/marking, positioning and construction of bodily postures, and anticipations of narrative, fictional and identity intrigues. This

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[108]*Ibidem.*

[109]*Ibidem.*

[110]Y. CITTON, op. cit., p. 57.

[111]G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, *Mille Plateaux*, op. cit., pp. 50-67.

perspective does not entail any adherence to a constructivist ideal, as is often tend to be believed[112]. Certainly, there is no doubt that the idea of linguistic mediation as the main institution of meaning that characterizes the human, binds the globality of the gnoseological enterprise to the fabrication of concepts and events that result instead from a cut of experience that is primarily linguistic. However, it seems inappropriate to speak of idealism or linguistic imperialism, because in Saussure's case we are rather in the presence of a germinal theory of praxis, which can be read in a simultaneously materialist and ecological key. It is this passage from the *Essence double* that seems to confirm our interpretative hypothesis:

> We do not establish any serious difference between the terms value, meaning, signification, function or use of a form, nor with the idea as the content of a form; these terms are synonymous. However, it must be recognized that value expresses better than any other the essence of the fact, which is also the essence of language, namely that a form does not signify but is worth: this is the cardinal point. It is worth, consequently it implies other values[113].

According to Saussure, language is inherently capable of creating real life environments through the constant 'taking up' and mediation of given (linguistic) materials in a perpetual state of potential alteration. Singular speech itself is a resumption in the sense of an action of perennial alteration. By means of the concepts of resumption and mediation, we can group together the entirety of the processes of enhancement of forms. In short, we are talking, as we shall see in the next chapter, and as has been explicitly thematized by Merleau-Ponty and Descombes, about the set of gestures of manipulation, recognition, evaluation, use, normalization, transmission, wear and tear, etc., which make the life of language active, as a space of interactions and mediations between individuals.

In other words, language as a set of mediated gestures is structured as a device that can at the same time be transformed - in the circuit of the praxis enacted by a multitude of speakers - and yet never really negotiated to the end, since it is instituted and mediated by instances that individuals can never fully control but only strategically use for differentiated and punctual purposes.

Taking all these reasons into account, then, we can argue that language is configured as an 'archetype' or 'model' of the concept of medium, and certainly not because of its nature as an instrument of communication. On the contrary, even more so than the lived body, language rises to the role of an archaeological emblem of mediality, insofar as it filters, constrains and regulates almost integrally our relationship to the world through the plurality of linguistic games and mental gestures that color experiences and inscribe them in the furrow of intersubjective and social evaluation. In short, as a particular and at the same time exemplary medium, language is first and foremost a prosthesis capable of prolonging bodily experience through its constant evaluation. If, as Patrice Maniglier has argued, it is possible to redefine the cognitive competence of subjects as a capacity to "enter actively into the movement of permanent constitution and redefinition of cultures"[114], this implies a strong correlation between semi-linguistic theory, theory of mind and semiotic imagination. Every expressive action, in fact, unfolds in the web of relations, transitions and transactions between individuals, social evaluations and co-assessments of the signs appropriate to the contexts, of the most effective forms, of the ritualization most 'in time' and in 'accord' with the needs of the inhabitants.

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[112]Cf. M. FERRARIS, Documentalità. Perché è necessario lasciare tracce, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009.

[113]Saussure, Écrits de linguistique générale, op. cit., p. 207.

[114]P. Maniglier, Milieux de culture: une hypothèse sur la cognition humaine, in A. BONDI, D. PIOTROWSKI (dir.), Le thème perceptif et expressif. Entre linguistique, sémiotique, philosophie, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2022, p. 206.

The 'word' as 'recovery', then, means not only expression in the sense of externalization, but a true ecological experience of continuous transformation of the self and the world (and their respective sense productions). In this sense, Maniglier continues his reasoning, "languages and ecological niches have in common that they are 'modes' of constituting sets of relevant variations coordinated with one another", starting from an environment in which they do not necessarily manifest themselves as coordinates. The observation of language conceived as an ecological niche, then, allows us to once again redefine the notion of the 'cognitive agent', as a subject that dynamically enters into a system that lives and at the same time structurally co-modifies, through the constant perceptual and semiotic 'evaluation' of the signs (or artefacts) that it manipulates and that transform it.

In conclusion, we are faced with a semiotic perception and evaluation: by perceiving signs and practices, one simultaneously perceives and evaluates signs and simultaneously other agents/actors. In so doing, one participates in the unequal distribution of existential roles and stakes. And it is this participation that is the mechanism, or trans-individual mode, that seems to be one of the basic mechanisms of human culture. The dynamics of linguistic-semiotic constitution of this permanent genesis of the experience of meaning remain to be explored: 'motivation' as its underlying semantic mechanism, and 'imagination' as its semiotic and pragmatic engine.

II-9. References

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Chapter III
From form to microgenesis.

Toward a dynamic theory of language activity

A. BONDÌ

III-1. Epistemology and theory of language: the problem of form

The concept of form has been a real epistemological obsession for the language sciences. Defining the status of a linguistic form, as it presents itself to the eyes and ears of speakers, would first have allowed us to describe the phenomenon of language meaning and our experience of it in our everyday, ordinary communicative commerce. All human interaction takes place in an articulated and rich environment (Umwelt), which the language objects produced and understood by the speaking subjects contribute to the constant evolution of; an environment whose stabilization, deformation and reconfiguration is permanent and sometimes unpredictable. As speaking animals, human beings must familiarize themselves, both individually and collectively, with forms (vocal, rhythmic, phonic, etc.) that literally populate their environment - an environment that is at once physical, affective, imaginary and, more broadly, relational. Hence, the individuation of these forms represents, in the eyes of the linguist, an indispensable step for the understanding of the populations of utterances constituting the community of speakers. Following William Croft, one could say that language is like a multiform population of utterances, which can be considered as a trace of verbal interactions between listeners and speakers.

However, the status and definition given to the concept of form is not limited to the description of the phenomenon: more profoundly, it explicitly pushes in the direction of the construction of a theory capable of objectifying the observed phenomenon. In this framework, the individuation of a form is nothing other than one of the first steps of the scientific enterprise in language science. Through such individuation, the theory constructs its object and consequently formulates descriptive, explanatory and, eventually, predictive hypotheses. From this point of view, the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky share a similar epistemological approach. In Saussure's CLG, language is a principle of (social) classification of phenomena: its status is that of a form, namely a bundle of relations constituting the concrete units that take place in speech. Similarly, for Chomsky, competence is at an individual and psycho-biological level, which can be defined in terms of formal rules of composition and production of appropriate utterances. The condition for correct arrangement is thus correspondence, or better, adequacy to the form of competence, which is nothing other than the set of rules of inner grammar.

In any case, even if we do not take into consideration the divergences and particularities that characterize the theories and schools of linguistics and semiotics, we could easily say that, at least in the 20th century, all of them have tirelessly questioned the processes of formation of semiotic and/or linguistic units. Different methodologies for identifying forms have been used, sometimes in very different ways, and different theoretical apparatuses have been put in place. In most cases, semiolinguistic forms have been conceived as relational entities: they are segmented and fragmentable units and can be presented as compact and, in the final

analysis, essentially homogeneous objects. Structuralist epistemology has provided an emblematic example of such an attitude. In the semiological vulgate of structuralism, meaning is represented in its elaboration as radically discontinuous and discrete. The condition for the appearance of meaning is articulation, *i.e.* a decomposition and a new recomposition of elements, even though the latter do not constitute primitives or atoms (whether phonic or semantic). The format of linguistic elements is always compact and can be described by a logic of exchange, difference and opposition of discrete features. Component semantics was basically based on this algebraic intuition of language, which goes back to the glossematics of Louis Hjelmslev and the Copenhagen school. But such a discontinuous conception of meaning posed problems even for the conception of semiosis and language praxis. In many authors belonging to the structuralist archipelago, meaning is conceived not only as calculable on the basis of relationships between elements, but is more generally detached from expressive language praxis and situated in a global or even more encompassing semiosis process. The model of communication of Saussurean descent, but in particular the functionalist scheme of communication proposed by Jakobson, was influenced more or less directly by early cybernetics and necessarily subjected communicational complexity to an informational and proto-computational imagination.

From then on, what makes a sign, the starting point of all semiosis, is a form, namely the union of sensible and intelligible components. The semiotic and normative scope and thickness of what makes a sign remain uncaptured by the objectification of linguistic theory. Such an algebraic interpretation of the sign-form has excluded from its own reflection and its horizon of explanation not only the referential universe in front of which language works and from which it emerges, but also the operators of linguistic intentionality: the body, gestuality, the expressiveness of forms and even the principle of a dynamic of constitution that is internalized in the sign, a stakeholder of its individuation and identity.

However, a decisive turn was taken with the development of a continuistic and dynamicist reconstruction of the fundamental concepts of structural analysis. The question of form was again problematized in linguistics, under the aegis of the teachings of Gestalt, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, as well as René Thom's theory of catastrophes, the first successful inscription of the discontinuous and hitherto static notion of structure in a dynamicist problem of forms (morphogenesis). The aim of this chapter is not to propose a history or genealogy of the concept of form, but to open up avenues of reflection on this notion, in relation to three deeply interwoven poles:

> (i) the different degrees of formality of linguistic objects;
> (ii) the normativity and ritualisations that run through all speech;
> (iii) the ways in which a semiotic consciousness is constituted.

To achieve our goal, we will present the lines of an expressivist perspective on semiosis, which renews the achievements of a double theoretical heritage: that of morphodynamic approaches in semantics (and semiotics), and that of phenomenological and gestalt approaches - in other words, a perceptivist approaches. We would like to examine the notion of semiolinguistic form, based on the interweaving of three dimensions: i) the morphogenetic and dynamic dimension of sign-forms; ii) their social and evaluative dimension, which guides the dynamics of stabilization and instability of values and, consequently, their social economy; iii) the dimension of the regimes of enunciative appropriation and inscription of forms in cultural landscapes, as well as certain regimes of transmission. As soon as we place ourselves under the angle of a theory of the appearance of sign-forms, it is necessary to interweave these dimensions in order to value the constitutive tensions between the intentionality of saying, closely linked to the forms of expression and the degrees of consciousness of the speaking subjects, and the intersubjective, social, normed and instituted nature of signifying forms.

A perceptivist perspective has as its common horizon the elaboration of a theory implying a continuity of principle (or a community of nature) between the regimes of semiolinguistic elaboration and the general perceptual and praxeological regimes. This proposal is of interest for the different ways in which the inspiration of phenomenology and Gestalt problems can be brought into the field of semiolinguistics: a) by directly taking up a model of intentionality centered on a dynamic conception of the thematic field; b) by the problematic of being in the corporeal and practical world; c) by the construction of a new phenomenology of semiosis and/or language activity.

Giving a phenomenological foundation to semiolinguistic theory means thinking of language activity as perception, *i.e.* as a generic activity of relation to, access to (the world), of constant displacement of the subjects, of dialogical, pragmatic and narrative adjustment on a background that is at once expressive and perceptive, normative, social and instituted. Two are the immediate consequences. On the one hand, there is the need to focus on the primacy of perception and speech, accompanied by the individuation of the backgrounds (at the same time perceptive, enunciative and normative). On the other hand, there is the need to understand meaning in terms of semiogenesis, *i.e.* an activity of construction and constitution of concomitant meaning-forms and values, unfolding throughout a perceptive, praxeological and expressive activity. From this point of view, meaning is set up as a complex phenomenon, manifesting the constitution, realization, circulation and metamorphosis of forms. Semiogenesis also implies a constant exercise, or incessant activity, of setting up value-forms subject to heterogeneous regimes of differentiation, modulating the forms and their changes: regimes of repetition, innovation, desire, conflict, etc. Such a phenomenological approach to signification, which we call a semiogenetic approach, allows us to focus the perimeter of the reflection on the relationship between language activity and language, by re-admitting the flow of speech as the object of a linguistics that is both hermeneutic and textual. In the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his lecture at the Collège France on literary speech:

> « The meaning of a word is not just a jumbled accumulation of all the past changes of meaning (...) but there is relative unity with the present motivation of the present meaning. As long as the word appears in the language, it is inserted in the will to communicate and it is not absolutely by chance that it unites such meanings (...). The 'mystical union' is founded in reason because it is not a question of uniting concept and sound phenomenon, but differences of meaning and differences of signs, and that speech as a system in the process of differentiation can provide a diagram of meaning in the process of differentiation» (Merleau-Ponty 2013, 127).

Moreover, this semiotic phenomenology makes it possible to analyze the nature of speech in the post-Saussurian tradition in terms of an eventual device that affects certain problematic questions in the sciences of language by its very emergence: a) the relationship between the body and the speaking subject; b) the relationship between the body, experience and enunciation; c) the status of language activity; d) the status of the norm as a plastic framework for the use of a form.

Let us return to the praxeological conception of language, and deepen the idea of a community of organization or continuity between perceptual activity and semantic perception, or better still between perception and the construction of semantic forms. The question of the continuity between perception and language, or perception and semiosis, while not new, has nonetheless steered the Western tradition in the direction of an implicit paradox, namely an almost surreptitious assumption of their difference (morphological, pragmatic, cognitive) at the very moment when we are seeking to determine their continuity. It is therefore possible to focus attention on the continuity between sensible experience and linguistic experience: it is an entanglement of dynamics and modalities that unfold in a common way from the very beginning of their semiotic manifestation. Perception and language give life to semantic

Gestalten whose function is to stabilize the constitutive instability of each experience of meaning; it is by means of the tensions between instability and precarious stabilization that we aim at a phenomenological description of linguistic value in the Saussurian sense of the term. This value is to be grasped in continuity with the sensitive experience from which it emerges: the expressive experience of the world that speaking bodies and subjects experience continuously. Understanding the semiogenetic value of a linguistic unit or an enunciative manifestation (size becoming at first nothing more than a secondary problem of epistemological delimitation of the object) means describing the structuring processes of these semantic Gestalten. By having explicit recourse to the phenomenological tradition, one will be able to conceive of language in terms of a seizure of the world and at the same time a capture or seizure of the discourse of others: a practice of expression or better an expressive praxis in which the notion of experience acquires a particular status, both coming from common sense and inaugurating an original physiognomy.

III-2. A key concept: the 'semantic form'.

The notion of semantic form appeared in the fields of language sciences quite recently, within a linguistics that could be described - in a very broad sense - as textual. On the one hand, it seems to play the role of a simple descriptive tool, aiming at the recognition of forms on the basis of their mereological and melodic dimensions. On the other hand, authors such as Pierre Cadiot and Yves-Marie Visetti have made the notion of semantic form a pivotal concept in a phenomenological and dynamicist theory of language and semiosis, which is closely linked to, and yet in a dialectical relationship with, post-Wittgenstein pragmatics, textual hermeneutics and René Thom's recasting of bio-dynamic structuralism.

Among those who make semantic form a mere descriptive tool, we should mention François Rastier (Rastier 2001). In the wake of the structuralist tradition, of which he claims to be an heir (albeit a critical one), Rastier acknowledges that the problematic field of semantic form is built on the - admittedly central - theme of identification and recognition of units. How does one (re)know a form or a semantic unit? What orders or levels of description does linguistic analysis involve? What are the defining characteristics and, consequently, the processes of constitution? For Rastier, the answer lies in the development of a textualist and hermeneutic semiotics of cultures. At the basis of this proposal - to summarize the linguist's proposal somewhat abruptly - is a double gesture of theoretical refusal. First, the refusal of the idea of a universal compositionality of semantics: the meaning of a piece of text, whatever its format of linguistic manifestation, is always constructed according to contextual, genre and practical/pragmatic interpretation orientations. Meaning can in no way be conceived as a simple structure linking procedures of juxtaposition or composition of a battery of primitive elements, in turn allegedly endowed with an autonomous and defined meaning. From then on, an adequate lexical semantics can only reject any compositional hypothesis and its more or less implicit universalism, depending on the various currents.

The second rejection concerns the theoretical counterpoint of componential theories, namely the infinite encyclopedism and labyrinthine nature of meaning. Rastier has admitted in various places that linguistic knowledge can have an encyclopaedical dimension: any encyclopaedical lexical knowledge can represent a semantic interpreter. At the same time, he challenges its epistemological, conceptual and even descriptive plausibility. Linguistic meaning, as well as semantic units, could not be captured and described in terms of continuously drifting and infinitely interpretable objects, within contexts of opaque status. On the contrary, meaning is always realized in a defined context, which, while not coinciding with an assembly of primitive semantic elements, nevertheless presents itself as an open but defined class, that of

taxa, "*i.e.* the small battery of words (of semes) making up the relevant universe in the (textual, social, subjective) situation" (Salanskis 2003, 166).

For Rastier, the problem of semantic form as a descriptive tool fits in at this point: if meaning results from the intersection of a singular dynamic internal to the structural relations of languages and a plural, agonistic and dialectic (but not infinite or drifting) practical-hermeneutic activity, the concept of semantic form takes into account these two complex compositional dynamics, which are inherent to all semiolinguistic performance. In fact, on the one hand, semantic form expresses the impossibility of splitting structures and contents in textual or semiotic construction processes. On the other hand, and more broadly, the revision of the notions of form and semantic unit in an interpretative context allows us to think about the intertwining of meaning, praxis and language. For Rastier, the semantics of texts shows the contacts that interpretive paths bring into play in the different planes of language. Hence the possibility not only of affirming the solidarity between these planes, but of confronting the (age-old) prejudice that meaning is independent of languages.

A semiotic approach that is both textualist and hermeneutic must necessarily think about the concepts of semiotic form and semantic unity, taking into account the structural and partial autonomy of languages and the intimately praxeological dimension of language forms. Within this framework, a conceptual innovation seems necessary, linked to the problem of the contemporaneity of the individuation, construction, stabilization and recognition of forms. As Rastier wrote, if we observe the textual level:

> « the units result from segmentations and categorizations on semantic forms and backgrounds, which can be designated by the general name of morphologies. Their study is divided into three sections: links between backgrounds; links between forms; and above all links from forms to backgrounds, which are crucial for the study of semantic perception» (Rastier 2001, 65).

Therefore, the study of morphologies requires a methodological and theoretical inversion. If it is possible to describe units by a multiplicity of relations, processes and components that constitute it, it is also necessary to rethink the notion of form or Gestalt in a more dynamic sense. In other words: to speak of morphologies is to speak of Gestalten that fluctuate and evolve perennially, structuring themselves according to a multiplicity of elements that integrate reciprocally, but not necessarily in a hierarchical type of relationship. Morphology cannot be reduced to the sole dimension of geometric and spatial construction, as was proposed some years ago by Californian cognitive linguistics. On the contrary, unity emerges through a set of differentiated interactions of several components, whose relations are not necessarily hierarchical but rather relations of synchronicity or simultaneity. Thus, the analysis of a semantic form can go through various descriptive strategies:

(i)   paradigmatic (with insertion into a repertoire of forms);
(ii) syntagmatic (focusing on the concatenation of forms);
(iii) hermeneutic (bringing out the result of the process of constitution or reconstitution of the form);
(iv) referential (studying the relations between linguistic and non-linguistic forms).

III-3. *Emergence of meaning and dynamics of theme's construction*

The question of linguistic meaning seems unable to avoid the relationship with insertion within textual macro-dispositives on the one hand, and contextually oriented interpretative practices on the other. Rastier's reflection undoubtedly has the merit of having glimpsed the need to take up the concept of form in order to renew its epistemological and descriptive power, capable of holding together the two dimensions just mentioned (macro-textual and

pragmatic). However, it remains attached to a logic suffering from the same problems inherited from linguistic structuralism. The notion of taxemes remains ultimately linked to a compositional destiny, since its format is that of a discrete molecular element, and consequently symbolic and manipulable. Theorists of interpretative semantics may not like it: an algebraic nostalgia and an underlying computational dream persist in their perspective.

In the context of a critical revision of cognitive, textual and enunciative linguistics, Cadiot and Visetti's model focuses rather on the phenomenological dimension of language activity and is more concerned with the semiogenetic experience, namely the perceptual encounter and the dynamic encounter between the observer and the sense-forms presenting themselves in their environment. Two are the problematic nodes to be considered. Firstly, the intertwining of language, languages and semiogenetic experiences; an intertwining - as we shall see - that allows us to focus the chiasmus between perception, semiosis and the sociality of meaning. Then, a second problematic node is represented by the elaboration and description of the paths of constitution of properly linguistic forms. This theoretical framework insists on taking up themes from the gestalt and phenomenological tradition, whose explicit aim is the description of linguistic value in phenomenological style. Indeed, the idea is to grasp linguistic value in concomitance and continuity with sensible and practical experience, without forgetting the descriptive requirements of textual and interpretative linguistics.

From both an epistemological and descriptive point of view, a morphological and expressivist perspective declines together the logic of the singularity of the semiolinguistic phenomenon in its internal dynamics, with its textual/discursive, enunciative, cognitive/emotional and environmental dimensions. The concept of semantic form becomes the pole of attraction of these two constitutive tensions of linguistics: on the one hand, it is a kind of hermeneutic phenomenology of linguistic singularity (the speech act of the Saussurean tradition); on the other hand, it is destined to become a recognition of textual attestations, with its formal sedimentations, an expression of human language productivity. Such a model of language - which can be described as perceptive/constructive and praxeological - poses the need to understand the construction and constant deformation of forms through processes of individuation, identification and determination of order, throughout heterogeneous but simultaneous phases of stabilization of meaning. More radically, commenting again on Merleau-Ponty's passage quoted a few pages above, the concept of semantic form has the ambition to think the thick present (a present in the process of perpetual differentiation) of these two poles. To achieve such an objective, two passages are necessary.

A first passage consists of a critique of certain ontological presuppositions - described as immanentist - of linguistic theories. Among these presuppositions, two are worth mentioning: the hypothesis of the existence of meaning potentials, conceived as original and primitive nuclei of meaning, from which all other uses of language would derive; and the conviction that it is possible to reconstruct the activity of language on the basis of a presumed and prior ontology of linguistic entities. This second argument is particularly misleading. We are used to believing in an antecedence of reality with respect to our perceptual-language access to the world. Language would only be a reflection of this pure and primary ontology. From such a premise two alternative positions have been opposed: a realist approach, which makes language and languages systems of representations of a reality supposedly given before and independently of our cultural grasp and perception; or a radical constructivist position, which sees language as a set of purely conventional systems of meaning. A radical constructivist position evacuates any problem of relation with experience (and the world), which is readmitted only to the rank of verification or symbolic manipulation within the semiotic systems themselves already completed and determined. It is obvious that the presentation outlined here is a caricature of thousand-year-old and much more sophisticated philosophical

and metaphysical positions. The value of such a simplification becomes apparent if we look at its translation into linguistic and semiotic theoretical devices. It is assumed that certain linguistic usages - in particular denominative usages, or distinctions between nouns and verbs - are to be considered as primitives, emblems of what is original in the activity of language. From then on, meaning is identified with a mental format of representation of reality, and the theory naturalizes a clear cut between meaning and reference, between language and reality.

This (allegedly ontological) primacy of denominative use was challenged by Cadiot (2002). He argued that a thorough analysis of the "first stratum" of lexical meaning - coinciding with the literal, denominative and referential dimensions of the "lexeme" - would allow us to see the operation of epistemological naturalization of lexical meaning (at the psychological and lexicographic level). Indeed, he argues, it cannot be denied that in the lexicon, as recorded in learning and in technologies of dissemination and memorization (e.g. dictionaries), one recognizes the strength of an "immediate, intuitive, though constructed" presence (Cadiot 2002, 39). The extreme diffusion of this type of use is the most striking evidence of this. However, this observation does not allow us to deduce the general hypothesis of a lexical meaning "deposited somewhere, in a sort of primary competence, in direct access", which would leave all other uses, in particular non-immediate intuitive uses, in a secondary regime, *i.e.* in the discourse regime. To accept such an assumption would mean confusing the conventional and stabilized dimension of speech, namely the lexicon, with the moment or phase of motivation characterizing language as knowledge and dynamic environment, as well as the place of production of forms. For Cadiot, we must radically reverse the perspective and conceive of denominative uses not as primitives of language praxis, but rather as temporary stabilizations, resulting from the constant work of motivation and thematization, implemented by the semio-language consciousness. Therefore, from the point of view of language, we should not separate a priori the denominative use from the rest of the global body of language. As Cadiot himself writes:

> « even if we were able to define naming satisfactorily, this would not obviate the need to recognize that it is only one of the regimes of the names in question, which are also and remain figurative motifs (...) always liable to rebound towards other values. When we detach them from the context of their stabilization, the words are always surrounded by a surplus of meaning, which anticipates developments and prevents them from being considered detached from their figurative harmonics, "seeds" for new extensions » (Cadiot 2002, 40).

More precisely, the names would express "modes of being and/or appearing, perceptual, dynamic, praxeological and/or evaluative relationships, reciprocal qualifications of funds and forms" (ibidem). Far from being identified with external types given beforehand or put into exteriority by language, these usages sign an original transactional and analogical process, which allows words with a high figurative generosity (e.g.: abscess, spider, cell, desert, jungle, parasite, prison, raptor, etc.) to oscillate between "the (frequent) intuition of a primary meaning" and the "trans-domanial availability of these lexemes". From then on, the denominative use is only one of the possibilities of exploitation and use of the word, within a complex path (*i.e.* dynamic and of permanent feedback) between thematization and motivation, crossed regimes of meaning.

Motive can then be understood as a potential for meaning that is not immanent to form, "a perspective internal to the word that takes into account its figurative and generic vocation, independent of thematic domains" (Cadiot 2002, 49). In contrast, thematization (or theme) is more the result of an activity of contact with the world that the language consciousness sets up. It is the process of stabilization and actualization in and through a domain (both at the referential and conceptual levels). Thematization can be understood as a dynamic of construction and access to "something" that is arguably linguistically motivated and profiled.

If the motive is a perceptual perspective within the word, which outlines the unstable force of transponibility and trans-domainality of the word, it can be argued that the dynamics of thematic construction and access coincide with a linguistic position of the object and ultimately with the perceptual construction of a perspective with the object (and not simply of or about the object). This complex object, constructed by a plurality of partial accesses, is always poorer or richer for any partial access. As Cadiot and Yves-Marie Visetti write, for thematization:

> « It is a question of a global access, taken itself as a *posé*: thus a trace in construction of a set of accesses (of modes of access), with the recording of a *posé* to which one has accessed. The thematic does include the thetic, by which we mean here the exteriorization of the posited, with the modes of individuation that this may imply on each occasion. But it is not reduced to this presumed term, being first of all the themes it deploys, that is to say in the forms of its own passage in the direction of - without doubt - an exteriority of which it is impossible to say at what point it would begin exactly in this movement of exit from language» (Cadiot, Visetti 2001, 138-139).

We will take up this question in the next section, introducing the concept of physiognomy. At this point, we would like to underline some "ontological" implications of this approach and conception of thematization. Indeed, the idea of thematization that we have just uncovered must be understood both as a path of stabilization of forms and as the emergence of mixed and complex ontologies in continuous variation. Such a conception of the thematic path as a temporary stabilization is in line with a recent debate in philosophy and in contemporary metaphysical reflection. In particular, within the framework of speculative realism, some proposals have tried to overcome the opposition between cultural relativism and naive realism, by updating the relevance of the concept of perspective (perceptual and cognitive/affective) and focusing its potential for realization.

A certain conceptual elaboration of the notion of perspective, inscribed in a tradition ranging from Nietzche to Deleuze, via Dewey and Merleau-Ponty, allows us to think convincingly about the co-existence of a plurality of accesses to experiences and to the "things of the world" on the one hand, and a relative autonomy of things on the other (or at least the impossibility of integrally resorbing these objects to the modes of access). Thus, it becomes possible to think of the emergence of forms from a co-evolution of perspectives and facts, in virtue of a constitutive opening towards other determinations. This openness constitutes a necessary ontological dimension of the world as expressive. The concept of (linguistic/semiotic) thematization reflects this and at the same time describes the dynamic process of the emergence of sense-forms and objects within a global field of local, scattered and/or diffuse interactions. We believe that, from this point of view, to speak of the process of thematization - in its constitutive tension with motivation - in terms of the temporary stabilization of forms, is equivalent to speaking of an emergent perspective, at the onto-semiotic as well as the perceptual and, more broadly, the epistemic level.

But how does the notion of perspective help us to understand the thematization process? Following Emanuel Alloa's argument, we must use the example of perception to understand the dynamic potential of the notion of perspective. Indeed, the perceptive act, by aiming at a sensible object that has no independent meaning, gives it a sensible dimension. However, any sensible object "will never be absorbed entirely by it [scil. the perceptual act], but always exceeds the aiming in some way" (Alloa 2018, 159). Starting from this observation, we can note that if a perceived object is "constructed each time by the singular perspective" (ibidem), this implies a multiplicity of perspectives in conflict and con-existence with each other, as well as the existence of a dynamic flow guaranteeing the mediation proper to the experience. Consequently, there is "not one, but multiple perceived objects". As Alloa writes:

«To perceive something is precisely not to perceive everything, but to perceive something: all perception implies a selection, an operation of subtraction, which means leaving out certain things in order to better grasp others. But on the other hand, perception also proceeds to a work of intensification, since insofar as it selects, it brings forward (...), it brings out something on a background of possibilities. To perceive is then indeed always to perceive something, but also to perceive this something in a certain way, which also means that all perception is always already open to the other, to an alternative: if my perception implies that it is always in a certain way that I perceive, I must make room from the outset for the possibility of seeing otherwise» (Alloa 2018, 161).

Similarly, in semiotic/language thematization, we witness the temporary stabilization of a present (and always open to further) meaning. This is the moment when the inner perspective of the word, namely the motif as an unstable dimension, finds a domain expressive manifestation and, consequently, opens up a field of possibilities. It is a process of externalization that constrains the appearance of the form in the immediate present. The process of thematization is a process of perceptible stabilization of the semiolinguistic Gestalt, which does not completely resolve either the experience or the thing described and named, or the possibilities of semantics that the word can express. From a descriptive point of view, we will not consider identifying linguistic invariants, but rather a measure of the extension of the use of words, in order to grasp their constitutive instability, the plastic and generic openings, which make language resonate with a practical and semiotic horizon in constant transformation. Linguistic forms thus unfold against a background of unstable genericity. They stabilize while allowing themselves to be reopened to new determinations. As we have written elsewhere, with the thematization path, it is a matter of thinking of the processes of signification as determinations that open up not only to horizons of meaning, but always to new determinations in expectation.

III-4. Language activity, physiognomy of meaning and microgenesis.

The basic idea of this approach is that, during a semiotic/language interaction, we perceive what is said/done before eventually conceptualizing and logically articulating it. We therefore start from the following question: what happens when we perceive an utterance, for example? What layers of memory, imagination and sensitivity do we mobilize as speaking subjects? In what forms and in what phases are these strata deployed? In this way, we hope to have a theoretical and descriptive matrix suitable for the restitution of both individual experience and the public dimension of speech. We understand the importance of starting from an adequate theory of perception seen as a perceptive praxis, in order to hope to arrive at an arrangement of comparable construction, which would be that of a "linguistic perception", a practice involving acoustic, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic dimensions, that is to say also normative and imaginary.

Indeed, as we shall see, understanding/perceiving an utterance (or any semiotic performance) presupposes first of all capturing a physiognomy of meaning within the physiognomy of sounds, *i.e.* grasping the inner animation of a form as an expressive praxis available in a space of linguistic and practical exchanges. To perceive the expressivity and interiority of speech is not only a seizure of mental states, but on the contrary it is a construction and a journey of planes of expression as public places, where semiotic games unfold and come to life.

We have already mentioned a second, more constructive passage in the development of the model, which allows us to conceive of language activity as a perception/construction of forms, since perceptual life and linguistic life exhibit a community of organization and a constructive analogy. This passage envisages the valorization of the fact that, in the appearance of the present in which it manifests itself, all form hides not a set of stable levels recorded in languages, but rather a dynamic of unfolding and interaction between various coalescing

regimes. For this reason, we must first ask ourselves a new question: how can we understand language as a form-building activity, without reducing the concept of Gestalt - as in cognitive linguistics - to the sole topological and spatial dimension? It is necessary to take up the problem of the body as a matrix of semantic construction, in the wake of the Gestalt and phenomenological tradition, as well as the place of the union and simultaneous work of perception, action and expression.

Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, on which we are basing ourselves here, thinks of the body as always already captured in a weft of dense interrelations of meaning. Corporality constitutes an intentional weft that works by incessantly taking up what has already been thematized, by immersion in the horizons and through the motifs that are attached to it in a random, latent state, etc.

In this sense, the logic of semantic forms is a logic of expression, *i.e.* a theory of the times and dynamics of organisation, exteriorisation and resumption of verbal experience itself. This logic of expression - scandalised in three fundamental times/regimes: organisation, exteriorisation, resumption - requires first a critique of certain theoretical problems:

(i)   the tension between subjectivity of meaning and intersubjective sharing of semantics;
(ii)   the distinction between meaning and reference;
(iii)   the vision of language as a code etc.

Let us start from this last point. Contrary to the idea of language as a code (and a binary code organized by a bundle of relations between discrete elements), we seek to show that language is both a seizure of the world and a seizure of the discourse of others in the world. Language can be identified as a specific human milieu, a particular Umwelt that guarantees the recognition and belonging of individuals to groups, which co-diversify and co-evolve together. At the same time, as a medium of social registration of a bodily technology (speech), language constitutes a practice and a real knowledge, which constantly produces co-expression (*i.e.* thematic perspectives in conflict and permanent negotiation). It is in this co-expressive production that the relationship between meaning and reference is articulated as one of reciprocal extension and not of mere correspondence. In this framework, the notion of experience makes a comeback within linguistic theory itself. As Cadiot and Franck Lebas have noted:

> « not only are the phenomenological options of great compatibility with the observation of all the strata and dimensions of language, but they also deliver a general solution to the problem of the sense-reference articulation (...). The essence of this solution lies in a return to experience: the world is a constitution compatible with experience because it is constituted by experience » (Cadiot, Lebas 2003, 5).

From then on, two consequences are possible: on the one hand, the possibility of reformulating from a theoretical point of view the problem of the articulation between meaning and reference; on the other hand, the effort to think in a somewhat different way the notion of concrete discursive situation:

> « The general solution of the sense-reference articulation can then be stated with extraordinary simplicity: the objects of speech are proper to linguistic activity insofar as they are partly constituted by the language dynamic, but are also the same as those to which language refers. This ceases to be paradoxical precisely from the moment that the referent has no other essence than its extrinsic properties. There is thus, in contradiction with the 'dualist' theses, continuity between the world conceived by the language practice and the world conceived by the other practices» (Cadiot, Lebas 2003, 5).

Thus, as the authors observe, it becomes possible to resolve the meaning-reference articulation, noting that "meaning is founded in, and is founded by, the very terms of conceptualization": As a result, it can be said that key concepts of linguistic theory - the language apparatus, language and speech - undergo a considerable transformation, as "language becomes once

again a particular thought, speech an expression, language a practice" (Cadiot, Lebas 2003, 6). The focus is on the deep connection between the activity of meaning as thought, on the act of speech as expression and on language as practice. Let us clarify this aspect: if the rapprochement between language and expressive practice aims at building a linguistic perspective oriented in a phenomenological sense, it is necessary to highlight the relations between corporeality and language dimensions. This rapprochement would indeed make it possible to identify at the same time :

(a) the linguistic specificity by which to formulate a hypothesis on the relations between the language faculty and the perceptive faculty;

(b) a linguistic specificity that crosses and permeates every stratum of language, and on which to build the idea of semantic form.

How the two authors write:

« in contrast to the code-language, this conception of language sees linguistic production as a particular bodily expression, and replaces the notion of interpretation with that of a grasp of the expression of others. Meaning, by hypothesis fundamentally transposable, *i.e.* independent of an objectified support, reveals at the level of the system a generalized polysemy. Polysemy is no longer a 'defect' of the linguistic system; on the contrary, language becomes inconceivable without it» (Cadiot, Lebas 2003, 6).

What about the faculty and/or activity of language in this framework then? It would seem that the epistemological approach proposed here does not really address the status of language as a specific feature of humanity. Indeed, although mentioned, language as a human activity or faculty does not seem to have been taken into account. It is feared that by adopting the dynamic perspective outlined here we may find ourselves obliged to no longer be able to contest the opposition between attention to linguistic and cultural diversity, interpreted within the framework of linguistic relativism, and attention to cognitive and mental mechanisms, the fundamental interest of cognitivist approaches. This is a legitimate fear, but it would still be an incorrect impression. By trying to think of the construction of meaning as a process in continuity with the construction of perceptual meaning, we are positing what Merleau-Ponty called a primacy of perception. It is the idea of perception and the generality of perceiving that constitute the horizon for describing the activity of language.

Therefore, the relationship between the faculty of language and natural-historical languages is not to be understood in terms of instantiation or the application of rules. Rather, it is a matter of conceiving their relationship in terms of an intentional and dynamic relationship, which organizes the tensions between bodily activities (both constructive and synaesthetic) and the emergence of particular forms. The sense-forms stabilize and become matter in circulation: that is, materials that can always be transposed into other domains. This movement of perceptual and intentional transposition constitutes and regulates the economy of values in a given society, and at the same time participates in determining the relational life of social agents. It is in this dialectic of emergence that we deepen the problematic of the relationship between language faculty and languages. If the main object of the theory is the meaning considered in its phases of construction, it is then necessary to understand the nature of the perceptive body that can give life to this type of dynamics. Indeed, in describing the bodily and intentional dynamics of linguistic life, it is also necessary to describe what kind of perceptual process realizes this linguistic/semantic perception. The continuity established between perception and language, or rather the original chiasm between them, which allows us to think about the cognitive and bodily anchoring of linguistic activity, cannot be satisfied with spatial or spatializing perception, but must outline a complex perception, which takes into account cultural constraints, therefore encompassing temporal, synaesthetic, evaluative and praxeological dimensions. The description and definition of meaning finds its explanatory reason in the relationship between the language/praxeological activity that produces meaning

and the languages in which these meaningful forms are sedimented. It is a gestalt complex in which meaning is grasped by subjects and communities in a way that is always partial and to be reworked through heterogeneous phases of meaning.

The philosophical nodes of this question are two: i) the multimodal nature of semantic and semiotic gestalten; and ii) the question of meaning in relation to linguistic experience. It is on this second aspect that we would like to focus attention. Semiotic experience is to be seen as a process of capturing physiognomies, whose temporal structure is microgenetic. The activity of language, therefore, is seen as a perceptual-anticipatory structure. If the main interest of the theory is the description of language activity as a perception/construction of forms, the first objective is rather the identification and specification of the concept of form.

By form we mean an organized unit, constrained by certain particular properties:

(i) an organization always takes place within a field, the spatial dimension of which is not primary (nor exclusive) for its externalization;

(ii) it takes place through very variable degrees of individuation and localization;

(iii) it corresponds to qualitative and praxeological modes of unification, not only morphological and positional;

(iv) the form is differentiated according to multi-layered dynamics of constitution, organizing from within the dynamics deployed and exteriorized in space-time.

So what happens as soon as we understand a statement? Which strata are activated? Or, since we are talking about simultaneous strata, which domain appears to be more important in the understanding/production of meaning? Indeed, a perceptual-expressive perspective of language activity conceives the process of understanding an utterance in terms of a physiognomic capture of meaning.

What do we mean by physiognomy? Following Wolfgang Köhler's suggestions and Heinz Werner's reflections, we understand by physiognomy the properly expressive dimension of perceptual and perceptual-semiotic forms. To perceive a meaning means to grasp the inner animation of a perceptible form available in the external space of exchanges. The physiognomic dimension concerns the perception of the globality of the form - without being satisfied with morphological configurations - and at the same time the comprehension of the intentionality that each element carries in itself. To conceive the performative structures of linguistic exchange as animated expressions means to try to identify the internal processes of their constitution, namely their regimes or phases of organization.

But, from the point of view of the idea of semiosis that can be developed, the perception of physiognomic units, such as semiolinguistic performances, implies expressivity and animating interiority - which we have elsewhere called the intentionality of words (Bondì 2012) - as the main mode of constituting and giving forms. Semiotic perception is consequently a physiognomic perception, which requires the co-presence of a field and of practical objects generating modes of individuation of meaning, from the complex horizon of linguistic action. If we perceive fire, for example, we do not only see the thermal and luminous phenomenon of the combustion of certain substances (kinetic forces and morphological configurations), but also - and concomitantly and not secondarily - as a flow of heat, violent, destructive, generative, pulsating with dancing colours, fascinating etc. The set of active and dynamic qualities that we have described by way of simplification constitute the physiognomy of fire. It is the condition of a multimodal, synesthetic and simultaneous perception of fire: it is within this process of simultaneous perception that the dynamics of the deployment of meaning occur. Now, the perceptual activity constitutes a set of actions in which these properties anticipate each other: each action constitutes a generic motif for the other.

Any formation, therefore, anticipates latent aspects, which may (or may not) already be present at the potential level in the physiognomy. If we extend the perceptual stratum to include linguistic activity and semantic organization, we see a similar process in the constitution of the signified, which is not constructed by elementary components, nor by more or less minimal features or by supposedly primary prototypes or meanings. Rather, the signified resembles the physiognomy of the word, that is, the totality of its expressive potentialities. To use a somewhat abused metaphor, we could say that the signified is the expression of a face. The inner animation of a face takes up its genericity, anticipates the profiles and dimensions of the visual motif and, in so doing, creates a path of individuation and specialization of such and such an expression, of such and such an expressive singularity. The same is true for the emergence of the linguistic signified. It is the singularization, or rather the result of a generative process which, starting from the most generic and unstable motifs, rises towards the individuations of forms. The expressive animation of these forms, by coupling all the practical and semantic dynamics at its disposal, must remain in the shadows, or in the horizon, obtaining the status of a co-generative field of the emerging signified. Thus, these dynamics can remain operational in the construction of this perceived/signified singular. The metaphor of the face, however banal, shows the original and paradoxical chiasmus of the relationship between perception and signified: a perceptive and constructive dimension of the activity of construction and an immediate perceptibility of meaning. This chiasmus makes it possible to think about the faculty of language: far from conceiving it as a cognitive module, it becomes a polymorphic activity of symbolic constitution - emphasizing that by symbol we mean semantic forms. Semantic forms are forms whose inner expressive animation guarantees the movement, the anticipatory and transformative play, that is to say the dynamic of formative activity and at the same time of constituted environment in which the speaking subjects act. Languages, as semantic forms, have this double status of forming activity and network teeming with points of support and displacement, which guarantees the instability and stabilization of forms. This is why the language faculty cannot be a cognitive module, external to this set of morphogenetic activities.

One last aspect must be focused on to account for these discursive gestures that are semantic forms: the problem of temporality that supports the multi-layered dynamics that we have just mentioned. It is a temporality that must be understood within the microgenetic theory of the Gestalten's organizational phases. Microgenesis, as Victor Rosenthal reminds us (Rosenthal 2004), represents the development on the scale of the present of a perception, an expression, a thought or even an object of imagination. Microgenesis can be conceived as the emergence of immediate experience as a phenomenon whose antecedents proceed from a dynamic of genetic differentiation. In fact, every process of perception and expression takes place in the present time through a microgenetic process of differentiation and development (Rosenthal 2004, 16). Microgenesis describes perceptual experience no longer in terms of information flow or integration of interacting elements, but reveals the dynamic structure of the present and its intrinsic temporality. It allows us to show the nature of the progressive and at the same time immediate unfolding of meaning. Each immediate experience carries within it the seeds of what will be experienced and whose content announces itself in a latent and insufficiently determined way. Microgenesis refers to a typology of progressive unfolding that describes the path of constitution of an object of experience. It is a construction and a journey that oscillates between categorical and indefinite generality and constant specification by the different thematizations, which make the object emerge according to the typology of experience.

Hence, the concept of microgenesis describes the emergence of immediate experience in terms of development: the basic assumption, debatable but suggestive, is an analogy between the ontogenetic journey of an individual and the microgenetic journey, *i.e.* a multiplicity of co-

existing micro-temporal syntaxes in the present of the experience, regulating the very 'life' of the experience in question. As a process of dynamic construction of forms, microgenesis depends on the psychogenetic dynamics of biological processes, whose duration is extremely variable. This is why it presupposes a continuum intuition of the field of experience, and is conceived as a vital process whose dynamics generate the structural coupling between organism and environment. Microgenesis, therefore, is the constitutive temporal modality of the emergence of forms: a process of co-constitution between form and field capable of making sense. Making sense, in the perspective adopted here, is any activity proper to a cognitive/perceptual process, where form and field unfold one in relation to the other within a temporal dynamic of gradual differentiation and stabilization.

The description of organized totalities (or semantic forms) is then to be examined from the perspective of the tensions that regulate their development. In the context of a theory of language, microgenesis is a tool for understanding the aspects of solidarity between two indispensable elements of the morphological architecture of the linguistic object of experience, namely meaning and values.

In conclusion, we could say that microgenesis represents a remarkable enlargement of the notion of form, because it recovers its phenomenological dimensions, which are very little considered in language theory. Indeed, form, thus understood, invites us to consider again the relations between linguistic life and perceptual life, to retain one in continuity with the other, because microgenesis allows us to hold together the genetic dimension of experience and its structural simultaneity. A form does not carry its own meanings, but is constantly modulated by the thematic tensions of the field. Therefore, the structure of anticipation that constitutes it puts in crisis the idea of a possibility of identifying stopping points or points of beginning. We do not see the beginning and the end of a morphogenetic process in language sciences, but a morpho-praxeological continuum.

The continuous structure of microgenesis consists of a multiplicity of local processes interacting in a global dynamic. A simple utterance represents an example of this immediate process from the point of view of its perceptibility, but crossed by the imminence of the semiogenesis that haunt it and project it into the future. In fact, the multiplicity of times, rhythms and figures that constitute the microgenetic structure is translated into a modulation of forms and the individuation of units in the field. In this process, language as an activity constitutes a particular form of systemic anticipation on perception, an exceptional individuation that opens up infinite possibilities of meaning. Quoting the phenomenologist Bernard Waldenfels, Rosenthal and Visetti wrote:

> « experience is not entirely silent, since we find meaning in it; but it is not in itself eloquent, since it must be said. Now linguistic expression is a paradoxical phenomenon: it claims to rely on an anteriority of the phenomenon it signifies, but it thus antidates its process, by attributing itself entirely to a pre-language past. If, on the other hand, we admit that speech brings into existence what it utters, the non-immediately linguistic forms of experience can only be its motives, not its foundations. The local time of the experience that one seeks to express can only be articulated by integrating it into the global time of a movement of explicitation » (Rosenthal, Visetti 1999, 214).

The paradoxical nature of language activity lies in its deep continuity with the temporal structure of experience (perceptual and linguistic). The microgenetic model of experience involves a genetic logic of progression in differentiation, a gradation that allows meaning to be grasped as a highly complex physiognomy that speech constantly calls forth, evokes, anticipates, mobilizes and stabilizes. And this while remaining open to innovations that are not explicitly grasped in the motives at work in a more or less latent way. Meaning, in short, represents the animated expression of a bodily and multidimensional perceptive gestuality.

Perceptual life and linguistic life are two universes that always refer to a body-in-the-world, always woven into the intentional networks of microgenetic dynamics manifested in the phases of thematization. Linguistic life and perceptual life are therefore expressive insofar as they are based on a genetic dynamic oriented towards a future. This future is only legible in the moment of the emergence of figures, which anticipate the horizons of their metamorphoses. The emergence of figures itself becomes a horizon for new, inexhaustible expressions, which can ideally always be inscribed in linguistic practice, without being reduced to it. Semantic forms, then, linguistic forms of experience, finding themselves and moving in a semiotic environment of which they form the fabric, do not constitute assemblages of pre-determined units, but are to be understood from the integration achieved by their microgenesis, in a paradoxical genetic differentiation of the field of experience. It is Merleau-Ponty, in the *Prose du Monde*, who summarizes and opens up the meaning of the perpetual dynamics of forms and their logic of expression:

> « expression is never absolutely expression, the expressed is never quite expressed, it is essential to language that the logic of its construction is never one that can be put into concepts, and to truth that it is never possessed, but only transparent through the blurred logic of a system of expression that bears the traces of another past and the seeds of another future » (Merleau-Ponty 1984, 59).

Many questions remain open, particularly in relation to the elaboration of a semiotic phenomenology that takes seriously the structuralist challenge according to which what makes a sign is configured as a diversified relational fabric that orientates our narratives and our semantic links to the world.

III-5. References

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Chapter IV
Epistemological constraints and phenomenological issues

The morphodynamical solution

D. PIOTROWSKI

IV-1   Foreword & intentions

❶ The question to which semiolinguistics -- understood as the set of disciplines dealing with signs and meaning -- is always ultimately referred, and beyond all the theoretical systems it elaborates and the descriptions it accomplishes, is indeed that of the modalities of a legitimate recognition of its object, and more specifically, that of the form of intelligibility to which the phenomena it is interested in rightfully belong. In other words, and quickly put, what is always at issue in the final instance is how to think about this set of so-called symbolic factualities.

This question is all the more acute since the virtuous demand for rigor initiated by Saussure - a Saussure desperate, upstream, by the drifts and approximations of the linguistic discourse of his time, and, downstream, by the immense difficulties in drawing up a satisfactory conceptual apparatus - and then enhanced according to the principles of a triumphant scientificity in other domains (natural sciences), will hardly have succeeded.

For even though, in many respects (externality, systematicity, constraints, etc., cf. below), semiolinguistic phenomena seem to lend themselves to the regimes of determination, to the forms of theoretical restitution, and to the epistemological principles of the natural sciences, an examination of the precise conditions for the construction of empirical knowledge in the area of signs and meanings concludes in the negative (see below). And even if we were to concede to those who, on the grounds that it satisfies the conditions for the architecture of theories of experience (for example, and among many others, Auroux (1998) in general, Badir (2014) in relation to glossematic, or Bouquet (1997) in relation to Saussure), claim that semiolinguistics constitutes an authentic empirical science, we would be simply skeptical in view of its very disappointing productivity and efficiency.

But if semiolinguistics, in its quest for rigor and truth, cannot lay claim to the forms of intelligibility of the natural sciences - "superior" forms in that they achieve objectivity - the attempts to do so have not been in vain.

❷ Firstly, because a negative result remains a result. And that this result, when radicalized, could even interest those who oppose the idea of objectification of semiolinguistic phenomena -- on the grounds that only personal ("first-person") knowledge is possible, *i.e.* knowledge that relates the form or value of a phenomenon (movement, sound, etc.) strictly to the point of view of the subject that this phenomenon concerns (challenges or expresses) and which therefore only delivers the direct and singular image of a lived experience.

And undoubtedly, since semiolinguistic facts are always acts: the acts of a subject engaged in signifying interactions (production or perception of expressive acts) with others or the world, the order of the "for oneself" would clearly prevail over that of the "in itself".

If we were to agree with this, we could quite rightly argue that the expressive fact, as an interpenetration of the sensible and the intelligible, is effectively "recognized" as such, in other words delivered in its essential constituency, only in the moment of its practice, and therefore only from the point of view of a subject who produces or apprehends it. This means that the expressive fact, as it is exclusively a matter of immediate consciousness (*i.e.*, perceptive vs. conceptual), and therefore adherent to the subject, cannot be distanced in the position of an object; in other words, it cannot be represented.

The same is true of the holistic connections that link the elements of phrasal compositions, those so-called "internal" connections that constitutively imply the totality in each of its parts, and whose truth imposes itself on the sole originary consciousness of the speakers - for example, in that the entire utterance is recognized as present from and in its first word (cf. Merleau-Ponty (henceforth M.-P.) 1942).

Conversely, brought under the gaze of a knowing consciousness that would establish them "in themselves" and "at a distance" in their objective content, these signifying factualities find themselves dismembered and abolished - by the simple fact that in a scientific representation the various components (of phrasal or other configurations) that originarily maintain links of internality find themselves fragmented and arranged according to relations of mutual exteriority (*partes extra partes*) and their unity reconstructed by means of logical or causal connections.

In this respect, as Pos (2013) has rightly observed, it is indeed the artifice of an objective representation that, by altering the undivided unity of the sign, induces the "[...] arbitrary character of the word in relation to its meaning". Similarly, and always with Pos, while a semiolinguistic science, in the overhanging position of neutral observer, observes and reports on the diachronic evolution of signifying material, the originary semiolinguistic consciousness, this consciousness involved in the act of speaking, does not give any room to the temporal dimension: the practical consciousness of words and their meanings, in the present of their uses, is obviously untied from their historicity.

Extending this line of thought, we could also question the relevance and effectiveness of the categories and forms of objectivity "in general" in describing and explaining the multiple inter-morphemic entanglements, the various depths of meaning available, the more or less secure lexico-phrastic balances, etc., all of which a semiolinguistic intuition grasps with complete clarity from its "point of view", *i.e.* in the mode of immediate subjective recognition.

❸ But, on the other hand, the prospect of objectivizing semiolinguistic phenomena cannot be totally ruled out. For, as has been pointed out, certain semiolinguistic functionings manifest an order of necessity, which therefore legitimizes a scientific approach. However, it will be argued that the incredible number of linguistic theories produced since Saussure evokes a hermeneutic proliferation rather than a progression towards an authentic object of knowledge. But *a contrario*, once again, as pointed out in (Piotrowski & Visetti, 2017), we must recognize that the theoretical apparatuses successively produced in a "scientific" perspective, and then alternately left behind, have not become absurd. Insofar as they are considered according to the matrix of questioning that underlies them, and which echoes the problems of an era, they retain a real relevance in many respects. In other words, these theoretical approaches that are judged to be outdated are not so on an absolute scale of descriptive improvement, strictly from the point of view of their level of empirical adequacy, but with regard to their reflexive orientations, which were once judged to be outdated, but whose intelligence is still maintained, or at least worthy of interest.

❹ What emerges from these considerations, if we give them any credence, is that semiolinguistic phenomena seem to occupy a median position between - taking up the

Diltheyan distinction - the sciences of the mind and the sciences of nature. On the one hand, these phenomena, insofar as meanings are woven into them, proceed from a subject engaged in an interpretative or expressive activity, very generally: reflexive. Thus their intelligibility is a matter of hermeneutic practices: of reflective judgement and the related forms of teleology. But conversely, these semiolinguistic phenomena lend themselves, at least in part, to the principles and categories of objective recognition, and are thus the domain of determinative judgements.

This 'in-between' posture, which is rather uncomfortable and, in truth, conceptually unsatisfactory as such, needs to be questioned, investigated and, above all, established in its epistemological content, which, at this stage, is empty. It is to this task that the following pages are dedicated.

To clarify and motivate the problematic position we intend to promote, let us first recall that the question of the "gap" between the orders of the determining (judgment) and the reflecting (judgment) as well as the "passage" that would link them goes back to Kant, and that the answer he brings to it (3rd Critique) consists in recognizing the transcendental value of the teleological principle (final cause), insofar as this principle is necessary to orient thought (then guided by the "maxims" of reason) in the progress of knowledge. Thus, the reflecting draws the horizon of the determining. It is also to say that meaning precedes and anticipates knowledge. This perspective of a progressive enlargement of the domain of applicability of the determinant judgement, thus of an extension of the field of objectivation onto that of reflection where meanings are drawn, is carried in particular by J. Petitot. The latter, dealing in an extended semiotic perspective with "signifying morphologies", and within the programmatic framework of a morphodynamic structuralism initiated by R. Thom (1972, 1980), was able to "[...] transform the 'supplement' to objectivity (which Kant was therefore appealing to reason) into a 'supplement' of objectivity, [thus] tilting an important part of what for Kant was an object of reflective judgement to the side of determinant judgement" (J. Petitot, 1992, p. 46, our translation).

The perspective that we will defend is somewhat different from that of the transcendental morphodynamic structuralism mentioned above. The poles of the reflecting and the determining, between which semiolinguistic facts vacillate, are not to be considered, from above, as relating two mutually exclusive orders of intelligibility, one of which (the reflecting) would progressively give way to the other (the determining). Rather, we will see two poles that participate equally, in games of bilateral transactions, in the existence and functioning of a semiotic "reality" whose very nature would be to be, so to speak, the dynamic interface: a moment of signifying sublimation of an objectifiable ground and, reciprocally, the systemic crystallization (*sedimentation* in Merleau-Ponty's terminology) of a "speaking mass" as a ceaseless rustle of living meanings.

In order to put this conception in place, we will have to proceed by successive layers and crossings. To begin with, we will have to return to the epistemological difficulties that semiolinguistics encounters in its attempts to constitute itself as an empirical science. As this issue has been extensively discussed elsewhere (Piotrowski, 2009), we will allow ourselves a lapidary treatment of it, in order to retain only those parts that are useful to our approach. On the other hand, we will be more verbose about the questions relating to the forms of semiolinguistic phenomenality, both from the point of view of their intrinsic constitution as living expressions, and from that of their inscription and conversion within a knowledge apparatus. Somewhat out of step with the main thrust of our speech, but contributing as much to its nourishment as to its support, we will have to return to certain conceptions that inspire us about the possible entanglements between the orders of nature and culture, of matter and spirit - conceptions that we will transpose to our field of investigation.

❺ On this point, more precisely, at least three perspectives interfere. Firstly, at the source of the flows that cross the interface of the subjective and the objective on both sides, there is the Merleau-Pontian conception of the converse operations of consummation and accomplishment. On the one hand, thus, consummation of the expressive fact, by means of which speech is cancelled out in that it ultimately projects the mind into the sphere of pure ideas, and, correlatively, introducing a systematics of sound/sense relations and signifying configurations, establishes a lexicon and a syntax that lend themselves to "objectivity", and on the other hand, fulfilment in words of an intention of meaning that is woven and sought in this "rustling silence" prior to all speech.

There is also at work a logic of sampling as a modality of consummation by means of which a purification of the signifying mass is established as one of the intelligible forms that possibly resides there, without being reduced to it. This is the case, for example, with perspective in relation to spontaneous vision (see below). Finally, in order to characterize the connection between the "for oneself" and the "in themselves" of signs, we will have to resort to a phenomenology of a transcendental nature, namely Husserlian phenomenology. We will thus be on a homogeneous problematic level in that the subjective facture of the sign is objectified (transcendental phenomenology) in order to constitute, as an extension, the empirical material duly established as "data" in view of a conceptual determination with an objective value, and thus with a similarly transcendental character.

From this point of view, and supporting the gnoseological point of view defended here of semiotics at the interface of subjectivity and objectivity, it will then appear, on the one hand, that the forms of semio-linguistic phenomenality are assimilated to those of its objectivity, and, on the other hand, from the point of view of living speech, that the forms and regimes of semiotic objectivity contain the principles of a transgression of the laws that constitute it in its own right - thus opening up a semiotic universe of incessant adjustments and overruns. In order to do this, we will return to certain previously acquired results, namely a morphodynamics of the Saussurean sign, whose functions we will therefore highlight precisely relate the life of signs and meanings at the interface of the "for oneself" and the "in itself", of reflexivity and objectivity, of immanence and transcendence.

IV-2 Initial epistemological considerations

❶ What the empirical sciences have in common is that they are concerned with "phenomena", that is, with factualities which are assumed, on the one hand, to be "external" to the knowing subject -- in the sense that they are configured in their manifest forms and arrangements independently of the ways in which they are thought, said more directly: they are not mere emanations of the mind - and on the other hand, they are assumed to be delivered to the subject (or to be accessed by the subject) in the mode of an immediate knowledge, which is called intuition.

Thus, unlike knowledge by concepts, which is mediate and generic, and which alone institutes authentic objectivity, the phenomena of an immediate knowledge are approached in the mode of evidence and singularity. The Kantian definition of the phenomenon synthesizes all these characteristics: "The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called [phenomenon]" (Kant, 1998, p. 155) -- where indeterminacy precisely relates to the absence of conceptual qualification, and where intuition designates the mode by which a knowledge relates immediately to its object: "In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them […] is intuition". (Kant, 1998, p. 155).

This staging of two epistemic modalities, which can be found at work in contemporary epistemologies (cf. below), is principally part of the solution to the problem of knowledge - namely, the problem of resolving the gap, which is nonetheless constitutive of them, between the mutually external positions of a subject and an object.

For under the abrupt hypothesis of the existence of a world posited in itself, endowed with an order of its own, and therefore external to the thinking subject who approaches and reflects on it, all knowledge proves impossible. Simply because to know would then mean to grasp in full consciousness, and thus to establish "in myself", an order of things "in itself", in other words, to produce in the format of human thought those same patterns of necessity which regulate the world in its hypothetical objective existence - "objective" understood here in the naive sense of an "in itself" independent of the subject. Now, except for an improbable harmony (Leibniz), we cannot see how or why such a circumstance would be possible.

And since the knowledge of an object is based on the fact that its forms are produced in the same way in the recognized object, which, reciprocally, is internalized in the mental apparatus, this is simply saying that knowledge poses its object. Indeed, "How is one to acquire knowledge regarding an object one did not posit? How is one to know that which, by its very existence, does not depend upon oneself?" (Philonenko, 1989, p. 16-17). For thought, whether it is a labile psychic flux or a categorical device, always remains enclosed, respectfully, in its fabric of subjective experiences or in its system of proper forms: "How [then] are we to understand the fact that the intrinsic being of objectivity becomes 'presented,' 'apprehended' in knowledge, and so ends up by becoming subjective?" (Husserl, 2001a, p. 169).

But this necessary coincidence of the forms of a knowing consciousness with those of its object generates its share of trivial difficulties, namely: if consciousness sovereignly produces its object, how can it be distinguished from other fictions?

The Kantian answer, as mentioned above, is initially based on the distinction between mediate and immediate knowledge, which is then overcome by the demonstration of their necessary articulation.

❷ In a way, it is a matter of recognizing, between the empirical plane of a "matter" as an unorganized sensory manifold, and the plane of concepts as principles and units of the syntheses of the material manifold, an intermediate plane of forms (of intuition) through which the encounters of the empirical world are configured, in other words the intermediate plane of the forms of phenomenality. Thus the empirical world is no longer originarily encountered as a dispersion of sensory impressions, directly and unconditionally delivered to the operations of synthesis under various concepts which, dually, would institute empirical objectivities.

Let us note in passing (and we will come back to this at length) that it is precisely this epistemic configuration, in which the conceptual apparatus operates directly on the amorphous plane of the facts in order to constitute them as "data", that hinders the development of semiolinguistics as an empirical discipline. For if the qualification of empirical factualities is a condition, which is then satisfied, for the possibility of confronting them with a theoretical device, the fact remains that in this case, where the data is constituted "directly" under the aegis of the aforementioned theoretical system, this data cannot have a contradictory scope: by construction, they are only empirical replicas of the theory's concepts, which, as such, they necessarily support. Thus directly attached to the order of facts, theoretical systems always tell the truth, and fall into tautological vacuity. What has just been recalled here is very common and widely shared. For example, summoning here some linguist concerned with epistemology, Milner (1989) characterizes the empirical sciences on the criterion of the

synthetic character of the statements they produce: it is thus to prohibit any subsumption and direct administration of the concepts on the world of phenomena, because if this were the case, the empirical truth could be analytically drawn from the concepts of the theory, precisely in that these concepts would determine it without remainder.

By recognizing the existence of forms of intuition (*e.g.* time and space), *i.e.* forms calibrating the appearance of empirical phenomena, in other words by recognizing the plane of immediate knowledge, we gain two things: on the one hand, we escape the inanity of categorical syntheses capable of producing ad libitum their own empirical realities, and on the other hand we specify the question of the possibility of knowledge as being that of the unity of the forms of intuition and the forms of understanding. The Kantian answer is well known: transcendental deduction shows that time is secreted in the operations of synthesis of the imagination performed under the aegis of concepts, and transcendental schematism, which is a temporalization of the categories, exposes the modalities of the 'construction' of the said concepts in the forms of intuition.

From such considerations, however broad and general, it is clear that all empirical knowledge presupposes an 'intuitive' foundation: it is through and in the forms of an intuition, specific to each empirical field, that data are originarily 'encountered', in the double capacity of 'observed' and 'formatted', before being thought.

But the forms of intuition, as defined in the Kantian perspective, are not without ambivalence, which should be noted. For, as we have said, intuition has a double function: on the one hand, facts are "delivered", *i.e.*, brought as present and effective to the consciousness of a subject, and on the other hand, they are "formatted", *i.e.*, configured according to specific relations (space and time) which thus produce a first determination. Let us note that this primitive determination, unlike the conceptual determinations which are not discussed at this stage, has an intrinsic value, since it conditions the very existence of phenomena, as Petitot reminds us: "Phenomena are obviously necessarily and a priori in conformity with the conditions of their appearance that are the forms of intuition" (Petitot, 1992, p. 61).

❸ But in so doing, by assimilating the forms of donation of phenomena to the forms of their intrinsic determination, transcendental philosophy, so to speak, disembodies the said phenomena, or at any rate installs them in a world other than that of spontaneous perception and merely lived experience. Moreover, the forms of phenomenality such as they belong to the empirical sciences (for Kant, precisely mechanics), therefore insofar as they legitimately fit the categories of understanding, are indissociable from the latter. This means that the phenomenon of a transcendental philosophy is ultimately a phenomenon constituted in the absolute: configured with respect to a universal constitutive consciousness that subsequently grasps and concentrates the totality of its characteristics in a single moment of thought.

In this sense, the forms of space and time here have a gnoseological role close to that of the 'data models' of contemporary epistemology or the 'auxiliary components' of Popperian epistemology (see below). Ultimately, it is a theoretical device, with an observational vocation, which differs from the 'main' theoretical system in that it is recognized as having greater credibility or reliability. It follows that phenomena, in the Kantian approach, do not belong to an authentic phenomenology, in the sense that this discipline is interested in the forms and regimes of manifestation, not from the point of view of their inscription in a knowledge device, but such as they weave the living encounter: "effective and spontaneous", of a subject and his world.

❹ The fact remains that this ambivalence of Kantian phenomenality, which we will have to overcome, offers a way out of the aporia of objectivism that is set up as soon as the break with the qualitative and signifying world (the subjective world) is consummated. For how can the

objective universe be connected to lived experience when the determinations we bring to it are situated in the ideal matrix of a constitutive consciousness? We know that this would require conferring on subjective sensible qualities the status of effects of material causes which alone can be said to be real. But in so doing, the subjective qualities that science must overcome, or at least get rid of, are reinserted into the order of material objectivity. As Petitot notes, "one cannot, on the one hand, liquidate the appearing in order to found physical objectivity and, on the other hand, postulate that this objectivity causally explains the appearing" (Petitot, 1992, p. 23).

And since it is perception, as a first-person experience, that gives us a world to practice, to think about, and, if need be, to know, the objective determinations that we produce from it must remain anchored in it in one way or another. As Merleau-Ponty insisted, "Science is not devoted to another world but to our own; in the end it refers to the same things that we experience in living." (M.-P., 1973, p. 15). And if one can reasonably accommodate the idea (then Idea of Reason in the Kantian sense) of a universe of objects constituted "in themselves", apart from any actual encounter, and interacting for their own ends and according to their own laws, in the case of signs and meanings, the thesis of "objective" symbolic functioning in the sense that they would be accomplished in their own sphere according to rules defined in and for themselves, this thesis, therefore, does not go without at least offending common sense.

For, in this case, signifying activity should be thought of as a process and not as an action, in the sense that "it [would] not manifest the inner possibilities of the subject" (M.-P., 2012, p. 180), whereas intimate experience, as revealed by phenomenological analysis, certifies that speech, and more broadly signifying activity, is internally animated, and that language, before being a regime of intelligibility, is a living reality. Thus, speech acts are intrinsically carried by a "muffled" intention to signify, an intention that is still "mute", in search of the words or their overcoming that will accomplish it and dually reveal it to itself.

Also, overcoming the aporia of objectivism, we must recognize that "[…] the phenomenon of expression belongs both to the scientific study of language and to that of literary experience, and that these two studies overlap. How could there be a division between the science of expression […] and the lived experience of expression?, […] the theory of language must gain access to the experience of speaking subjects." (M.-P., 1973, p. 15.

The ambivalence of spatio-temporal determinations, which are partly objective because they belong to the transcendental subject, and partly subjective because they must be recognized as having a certain practical value, or at any rate a certain relevance in accounting for the environments of action and the things that are in them - we will come back to this - this ambivalence, therefore, makes it possible to link the orders of the immanent and the transcendent, of the "in itself" and of the "for oneself ", and, consequently, to go beyond the aporia under discussion. Of course, this is more of a subterfuge than a solution, but the ambivalence that presides over it deserves to be considered and its components and articulations deployed.

To this end, and in order to recognize a phenomenological relevance to the three-dimensional Euclidean space which, according to Kant, characterizes the intuition, let us recall some elements of the Husserlian theory of the perceptual noema.

We know that with Husserl there is a need to distinguish between appearing and appearance (already in *fifth Logical Research*). In simple terms, the appearing (or 'sensible scheme') designates the object as a consciousness spontaneously elaborates it through an act of perception, namely as a body provided with a three-dimensional spatial extension.

But it is clear that the spatial object is not fully apprehended in a single moment of perception: it does not reside fully and currently in the instantaneous experience of a perceptive

consciousness. In fact, the spatial object only gives itself "by successive adumbrations" (its "appearings"), in a logic of "fragmented and progressive revelation" (Ricoeur, Note 1 in (Husserl 1993, p. 132)) and, dually, constitutes the pole (noema) where the series of aspects that it unveils in turn converge and are linked (noetic synthesis). Thus, unlike "appearings" which are effective and immanent contents of a perceptive consciousness (experiences of consciousness), the perceived object is of a transcendent nature (unity of synthesis).

However, the perceived object remains linked to living consciousness, precisely in the mode of 'intentional aiming' by the principle of which it is "[…] included in the experience of perception as a non-real component' (Petitot, 1992, p. 71).

To sum up, it is therefore necessary to distinguish "between the components proper of intentive mental processes and their intentional correlates" (Husserl, 1993, p. 213), *i.e.*, between, on one side, what consciousness actually contains, *i.e.*, what resides there immanently, and, on the other side, what rigorously speaking constitutes the object of consciousness, *i.e.*, "[…] the thing which appears (that seems to stand before us in propria persona)." (Husserl, 2001b, p. 83) and which "[…] is not conscious in the 'real' sense of the term, that is, in the sense of a real inclusion within consciousness, as one of its constituting moments.'"" (Benoist 2001a: 34).

The distinction between what appears and appearings (adumbrations) having been established, we must now turn our attention to the second term, which is not without ambiguities that need to be resolved.

First of all, it should be noted that adumbrations are "experiences of consciousness" and as such are not the objects of a perception, for example visual: "The adumbrating is a mental process [*i.e.* an experience of consciousness]. But a mental process is possible only as a mental process, and not as something spatial [*i.e.*, as what appears]" (Husserl (1993), p. 203), and more generally, as Husserl insists, "The adumbration, though called by the same name, of essential necessity is not of the same genus as the [object] to which the adumbrated belongs" (Husserl (1993), p. 88), and vice versa: "[…] Objects […] appear and are perceived, but they are not experienced.'"" (Husserl, 2001b, p. 105).

To say that the adumbrations are "experiences of consciousness" is to say that they are present in consciousness as actual and effective constituents: the adumbrations "as belonging in a conscious connection." (Husserl, 2001b, p. 83). And while the experiences are present in consciousness, the perceived objects, to which these experiences refer as one and the same thing, are present only for consciousness: "Intentional experiences have the peculiarity of directing themselves in varying fashion to presented objects, but they do so in an intentional sense. An object is 'referred to' or 'aimed at' in them." (Husserl, 2001b, p. 98).

To take the examination of adumbrations a step further, let us consider the case of visual perception. On the one hand, there is the object perceived as a volumetric composition in front of consciousness, and on the other hand, in consciousness, the adumbrations as intentional experiences whose ordered flow constantly refers to the said object. These adumbrations are roughly the projection on the retinal surface (as immanent experiences) of the "apparent faces" that the object successively delivers to a gaze that explores it. The apparent faces are thus what the object taken from different angles shows of itself, or conversely what we see of the object from these angles.

A first answer consists in retaining only what is actually seen, *i.e.* in subtracting from the object as it appears (the body volume) what is not constitutive of its actual appearing. What remains is a sort of two-dimensional spatial envelope, namely the portion of the "left-hand" surface covering the visible part of the object.

How then can such "apparent faces" be described faithfully?

But taken literally, this geometric abstraction is phenomenologically irrelevant. For it is obvious that we do not simply perceive apparent surfaces, in this case pure two-dimensional extensions as floating in an all-embracing three-dimensional space, but we perceive surfaces of spatial objects, *i.e.* surfaces insofar as they participate in an integrated connection to a volumetric totality which is never more than partially given but to which the apparent faces constitutively refer.

This means that a faithful description of apparitions recognizes in them an intentional character: the apparent faces are perceived as signifying, that is, as referring to the object, just as a signifier refers to its signified, in the semiotic mode of a "non-real inclusion": "[as] Each part announces more than it contains, [any] elementary perception is already charged with a sense" (M.-P., 2012, p. 5). This conception of apparitions is notably defended by Merleau-Ponty, who, discussing the "perspectival character of knowledge" (M.-P., 1963, p. 186), underlines that "The profiles of [a thing] are not given to direct knowledge as appearances without value, but as "manifestations" of the [thing]" (M.-P., 1963, p. 186). In other words, the thing, as a synthetic unity of its adumbrations, is not reached by consciousness as the outcome of a logical deduction, of a causal chain or of a psychological association, one or the other initiated in each of its appearings: spontaneous consciousness recognizes the very presence of the object in its various adumbrations: "[things] are embodied in their apparitions " (M.-P., 1963, p. 187).

In this semiotic approach to perception, adumbrations (profiles) are fully part of the perceived. For while naive consciousness clearly distinguishes the perspective appearance from the thing itself, it keeps them indissolubly linked within the same phenomenal unity: "I grasp in a perspectival appearance, which I know is only one of its possible aspects, the thing itself which transcends it." (M.-P., 1963, p. 187). In other words, the appearing, as constitutively pregnant of what appears, does not belong to a cognitive moment separate from the perceptive consciousness. On this point, the divergence between an existential phenomenology and a transcendental phenomenology is flagrant, because, for the latter, as we have seen, the adumbrations, as lived experiences, are never perceived.

We know that this divergence results from fundamental gnoseological presuppositions which it will not be useless to return to, insofar as they will allow us to better understand in what sense and in what way in transcendental phenomenology perspective views are elaborated as lived experiences distinct from perceived experiences.

❻ Merleau-Pontian's position is fully expressed by the title of one of his early works: 'the primacy of perception'. It is a question of recognizing the act of perception as doubly originary and irreducible, and, in so doing, shifting the epistemic barycenter from the pole of the "in itself" to that of the "for oneself ", while nevertheless maintaining the possibility, in an "existential" mode, of their linkage (which is discussed in these pages).

Merleau-Ponty's argument includes numerous analyses (from *Structure of Behviour* to *Phenomenology of Perception*) that attempt to establish the evidence of an originarily semiotic world, *i.e.*, a world whose phenomena, prior to any reflexive exercise and any intention to know, are present and encountered (delivered to practice) insofar as they signify (versus a world of mute sensory impressions coordinated and unified by way of associations or under the aegis of a constitutive consciousness): Thus "There are not these impersonal forces [*i.e.* associations or conceptual syntheses], on the one hand, and, on the other, a mosaic of sensations which they would transform; there are melodic unities, significant wholes experienced in an indivisible manner as poles of action and nuclei of knowledge. […] Nascent perception has the double character of being directed toward human intentions rather than

toward objects of nature or the pure qualities (hot, cold, white, black) of which they are the supports, and of grasping them as experienced realities rather than as true objects." (M.-P., 1963, p. 166) -- or again "we observe that science only succeeds in constructing a semblance of subjectivity: it introduces sensations, as things, precisely where experience shows there to already be meaningful wholes" (M.-P., 2012, p. 11)

Additionally, Merleau-Ponty brandishes an almost unstoppable gnoseological argument: the perceptual act cannot be problematized and objectified by the sciences because it is not a phenomenon "of nature" to which the categories and principles of empirical knowledge are legitimately applicable. And if perception cannot be considered as an "[…] an event in the world to which the category of "causality," for instance, might be applied" (M.-P., 2012, p. 214) it is because perception is a blind spot of any intellection, understood that it is through it that a world of experience is established. Thus prior and therefore external to the field of reflective activity, it cannot be "known" or objectified: "All knowledge is established within the horizons opened up by perception. Since perception is the "flaw" in this "great diamond," there can be no question of describing it as one of the facts that happens in the world, for the picture of the world will always include this lacuna that we are and by which the world itself comes to exist for someone." (M.-P., 2012, p. 215)

The principles and categories of a knowing posture "[…] belong to a higher dialectic" (M.-P., 1963, p. 166) which apprehends the objects of perception [*i.e.* phenomena] no longer as realities immediately experienced in terms of what they mean "for oneself ", in terms of action or value (vital, social...), but as the subject of a work of objectivation that establishes them "in themselves", outside the experienced world, under the aegis of a transcendental Ego (or constituent universal consciousness), as units of conceptual syntheses.

The "scientific" attitude applied to perception will thus already involve the primary gnoseological notions of form and matter (cf. obviously Kant and, in a semiolinguistic perspective, Hjelmslev). Thus, just as the concept is the unity of the syntheses of phenomenal diversity, "Sensuous Data present themselves as stuffs for intentive formings" (Husserl, 1993, p. 204). Correlatively, we will appeal, in their different species, to the generic concepts of an empirical objectivity (categories of the understanding), and furthermore to the principles ("Ideas") that orient the reflection.

Thus, and in particular, the organism will be represented as a physico-chemical system subjected to stimuli of the same nature that causally cause "sensations". The said sensations are introduced, on the one hand, as matter whose diversity is delivered to conceptual syntheses, and, on the other hand, (cf. M.-P., 2012, p. 46) to explain that what we feel is not exclusively the product of ourselves, in other words to anchor the "for oneself " on a layer of "in itself" external to the subject (at the risk of reactivating the aporia of objectivism).

❼ Returning then to the question of the adumbrations, a transcendental phenomenology, which composes with the categories and principles of the empirical sciences, will then be led to recognize in the phenomenon of perception (i) a part which comes under the biochemical support of an organism and the complexions which are realized there under the title of a perceptual process, (ii) a part that comes under the activity of consciousness insofar as it mobilizes the complexions of the previous level, and (iii) the part that comes under consciousness insofar as it poses its object through an intentional aim.

In this tripartition, the "experiences of consciousness", which designate the immanent states and activities of consciousness, are to be located at the first two levels. On the one hand, there are the organic correlates, which are "real" components (neurobiological and/or biochemical) in the material sense of the term, of the states of consciousness, and, on the other hand, the

effective intentional acts (noetic acts) that "animate" the said material components so that, through them, a particular object is aimed at by the consciousness and, dually, perceived.

It is clear that the configurations of the first level, understood as pertaining to a physico-chemical objectivity, are never perceived. And the same is true of the effective intentional acts that animate them and that by essence redirect consciousness towards an object as perceived. Thus, and tolerating for a moment the notion of sensation (as a subjective impression correlated to a stimulation of receptor organs), "Sensations, and the acts 'interpreting' them or apperceiving them, are likely experienced, but they do not appear as objects: They are not seen, heard or perceived by any sense. Objects on the other hand, appear and are perceived, but they are not experienced." (Husserl, 2001b, p. 105).

Whereas the object presents itself to the subject's gaze as a succession of adumbrations, the three-dimensional thing to which each of them refers as an intentional unity contains a share of transcendence that allows itself to be promoted into the object of a universal consciousness, *i.e.*, into a thing seen simultaneously from all sides, or, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, seen from nowhere - the thing then being the ideal unity of a law regulating the synthesis of the multiplicity of its partial views, and correlatively, the unitary principle of all of its appearings.

This transcendental phenomenology has benefited in recent decades from the advances of morphodynamics and, downstream, from the mathematical theory of singularities. And, on this basis, the intentional acts through which an object of perception is constituted could be established as laws. Very schematically (cf. Petitot, 1992, p. 69), the "data of sensation", as the materiality of a perceptual fact (first level cf. above), are qualified as apparent contours (adumbrations, or appearings) resulting, more or less directly, from the projection of a spatial body on the retinal surface. These apparent contours have complex geometries, and, in particular, specific distributions of singularities of different types. In this problematic framework, the intentional experience, which animates the various cellular or biochemical states and by which consciousness relates to a spatial object, is then approached as an "inverse problem", namely as a problem of reconstructing a (three-dimensional) spatial object on the sole basis of its apparent (two-dimensional) contours. Important mathematical results show that certain (generic) contours concentrate in their singularities information that allows this "ascent" towards a three-dimensionality, which, in return, constrains the series of its "appearances".

Thus, the intentional object of a spatial perception, *i.e.* the object posed and aimed at by consciousness as a unit of the flow of its adumbrations, is objectified as a three-dimensional reconstruction consistent with the ordered series of its adumbrations, the latter being approximately considered as the apparent outlines (apparitions) obtained by projections of the object onto the two-dimensional surface of the retina.

Thus a part of the noetic-noematic act is, through mathematical laws, established and determined in its order of necessity: these laws, which have an objective value, relate, with regard to a transcendental Ego, the mode of constitution of the perceptive noema, namely as "[...] object=X, pole of identity and unity of the synthetic rules and connections of appearances" (Petitot, 1992, p. 84).

❽ To conclude and prepare for.

What is important for us here, in this context of a discussion of the modalities of entanglement of the immanent and the transcendent, is that the Husserlian phenomenological analysis takes up the three-dimensionality of the object not as an immediate knowledge (as it is with the Kantian spatio-temporal intuition) but as an intentional object. This means that Euclidean space is no longer an originary device for the constitution of phenomena with transcendental value, but a space produced in an act of the perceiving subject, according to specific noetic

modalities. The intentional act of a subject thus installs a spatial object in its three-dimensional form in front of his consciousness, and the unmistakable subjective truth of this appearing is then transferred to the plane of perceived objects, thus fulfilling "The claim to objectivity made by each perceptual act" (M.-P., 2012, p. 287).

Through this rapid examination of visual perception, a way of approaching the articulation between the immanent and the transcendent is outlined.

As close as possible to living experience, and therefore to first-person knowledge, we can recognize with Merleau-Ponty the expressive character of originary experience. At this level, the subjective inhabits the objective in that "The perceived is grasped in an indivisible manner as "in itself" (en soi), [….] and as "for-me" (pour mot), that is, as given "in person" through its momentary aspects." (M.-P., 1963, p. 186). In contrast, the three-dimensional space of Kantian intuition (correlative, let us recall, of the concepts of mechanics) constitutes a framework of determination with an exclusively objective vocation. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is then situated in a median position: the perceptive act is objectified in that, approaching it according to primary gnoseological categories, its forms and matter are revealed. The object of perception is then the product of a synthesis operating on a hypothetical sensory hyle organically instantiated and animated by a formative act (noetic-noematic) which, in a morphodynamic approach, is expressed through geometric laws (cf. above).

We will proceed in the same way with regard to semiolinguistic factualities: The aim will be to approach the entanglement of the "in itself" and the "for oneself", not in its originary form, which, being a matter of perception alone, escapes all empirical knowledge, but in an intermediate position in which the subjective (phenomenological) characteristics receive a formal (objective) determination in order to constitute themselves as "observable" phenomena of a higher level of empirical knowledge, a knowledge that aspires to the recognition of the laws that govern the functioning of the considered phenomena.

We have seen that this progression, at the level of visual perception, has three stages: (i) that of the existential incorporation of the transcendent into the immanent, (ii) that of a determination of the forms of elaboration of the spatial object as perceived, and (iii) that of a promotion of these forms to the rank of a transcendental space-time involved in objective empirical knowledge.

In the case of semiolinguistic factualities, we will see that this tripartition is intrinsically disrupted, thus testifying to the particular nature of symbolic objects. It will be shown that the forms of semiolinguistic phenomenality coincide with those of its objectivity, thus rediscovering, in a sort of loop, the originarily expressive character of the semiolinguistic fact, and also opening up an existential understanding of semiolinguistic activity -- precisely as an activity that reflexively tends to undo or adjust its own laws of operation - this echoes the Merleau-Pontian intuition that "What defines man is not the capacity to create a second nature—economic, social or cultural—beyond biological nature; it is rather the capacity of going beyond created structures in order to create others." (M.-P., 1963, p. 175)

IV-3 Resumption

❶ The question formulated in the foreword, and which runs through and motivates these pages, thus concerns the forms of intelligibility of semiolinguistic factualities. Another formulation, broader, could be: what is "knowing" about language and, more generally, about signs and meaning?

In this question, which intertwines many lines, we will distinguish from the outset a few "classic" sub-questions, namely: is knowledge about language possible? and within which we will make the distinction between a generic component, namely: are the conditions for knowledge in general verified when it comes to languages? and a particular component, which concerns the construction of theoretical systems: do semiolinguistic theories satisfy the architectural conditions of theories of experience? But formulated in this way, these last two questions have an obvious bias. For they presuppose the nature of the knowledge they question, namely empirical knowledge, and, by default, in its supreme form: as it is elaborated in the natural sciences.

But on this preliminary point, about the empirical or other status of semiolinguistic knowledge, there are many contrasting positions, and the debate remains open.

Thus, according to some or others, linguistics would be an empirical discipline, in that it states synthetic propositions (see above) or, conversely, in that its data are acquired in the mode of "encounter" (Milner), which amounts to saying that they cannot be "deduced"; or an experimental discipline, which approaches the laws and principles of its object through the manipulation of examples; or a formal discipline, as Itkonen defends, or a "Galilean" discipline in the sense that it principally elaborates a "truth-coherence" in the generic form of a conceptual apparatus that produces a "non-contradictory and exhaustive" description of the facts that interest it (Hjelmslev). For others, still, semiolinguistics would be a hermeneutical discipline, which questions the principles and methods through which meanings can be legitimately attributed to symbolic data which, dually, are denied any intrinsic, *i.e.* objective, semantic determination; or again, a normative discipline... etc. All of these gnoseological options can be found exposed and situated in Sylvain Auroux's (1998) "epistemic parallelepiped".

Our intention in these lines will not be to relaunch this debate "afresh", but to take up the question of semiolinguistic knowledge with regard to a conflict that runs through it, whatever the gnoseological content that may be acknowledged.

For, when it comes to signs and meanings, and in all naivety, we can question the legitimacy of a scholarly intention, whose more or less assumed horizon remains that of objectifying determinations.

Indeed, and if it were necessary, let us recall that all knowledge is accomplished in and through a double rupture with the empirical subject: on the one hand, the object is placed at a distance from the subject, and on the other hand, it finds itself overflowing its view. For objectivity is elaborated with regard to an impersonal and universal point of view, namely the transcendental constituent consciousness. The object is thus distanced from the subject with which it originarily has a trade and shares a practical intimacy, and, as a result, the relations of interiority that will have been engaged between the subject and its object are broken and replaced by a relation of exteriority that is that of a detached gaze on an object that is then "mute" and that it is a matter of requalifying "as in itself". Moreover, the aforementioned gaze, initially empirical, is itself abolished in that its situated character, and therefore partial and fragmentary, gives way to a universal gaze, a gaze that simultaneousises all effective gazes and thus establishes a point of view from nowhere.

❷ However, if the phenomena that semiolinguistics is interested in seem to be able to be posited at a distance from the acts that produced them (e.g., Hjelmslev's "the text") and thus delivered to the analysis, and even if, by broadening the field of phenomena, we take into consideration certain dimensions of such acts (as is the case in enunciative approaches), the horizon of an objective recognition of semiolinguistic factualities leaves no room for the expressive intention which is authentically its source and crucible.

With a framework of determinations and laws of its own that would establish its objective reality, and whether it is conceived as a combinatorial or a dynamic, the semiolinguistic system could then function on its own account.

Of course, conceived in this way, such machinery is not autonomous in its empirical reality: its implementation (performance) is factually controlled by certain states or projects and carried out by certain psycho-cognitive dispositions of authentic subjects. But as we have already noted (cf. above), in this case the semiolinguistic device is thought of as a "process" and not as an "action" (M.-P., 2012, p. 180 *sq*), in the sense that semiolinguistic acts are triggered by external factors rather than expressing certain positions taken by a speaking subject in a world of meanings.

In fact, as we shall recall later, even if it is formatted according to one theoretical a priori or another (*e.g.* awareness of grammatical or semantic admissibility), the inner consciousness of language activity in its living practice cannot be excluded from the semiolinguistic knowledge apparatus. This is on the principal grounds that the phenomena of signification, like those of life (and of perception), are accomplished according to relationships of "interiority" (cf. M.-P., 1963) correlative of a teleology that has the value of animation - unlike physical facts, which maintain "external" relationships (*partes extra partes*).

We can easily be convinced of this by superimposing the body and the verb in their respective exercises: I have an intimate awareness of the gesture I perform, which cannot be seriously described as the trajectory of a limb in a spatio-temporal framework, *i.e.* as the succession of positions occupied by this limb, precisely because the movement of a living body is permeated by internal relations correlative of its animation.

Indeed, the gesture is at its end at the very moment of its initiation "From its very beginnings, the […] movement is magically complete; it only gets under way by anticipating its goal" (PhP/L 106). It is correlatively to say that each fraction of the gesture is inhabited by a current of animation which crosses it, conditions it and links it internally to the other fractions, and especially to its end where the finality and the meaning of the gesture is concentrated. In other words, what animates my gesture and of which I am intimately aware insofar as I perform it for some purpose, is retranscribed in the gesture itself in the form of the relationships of interiority between each of its moments.

The same is true for speech: I have an intimate awareness of my verbal action in that it unfolds as a composition of morpholexical units linked internally, in such a way that they determine each other in order to fulfil, each in its own way, the intention of meaning that runs through them all and animates the speaking subject. This is why, in particular, "The first words must already have the kind of rhythm and accent which is appropriate to the end of the sentence, which is nevertheless not yet" (M.-P., 1963, p. 87)

More generally, such "inner" relations are at work in holistic structures (organic, perceptual or semiotic) - that is, structures in which the totality is present in each of the parts in that it configures and binds them under the aegis of its "Idea". In the same way, the expressive fact proceeds from an "inner" relation by which the sensible and the intelligible are present in each other, and in such a way that in truth these two aspects "[...] cannot be separated even by thought" (Merleau-Ponty).

Thus, without distorting them, we cannot detach from semiolinguistic phenomena that part of animation which runs through them, which is realized through relations of interiority, and which a semiolinguistic consciousness intimately grasps -- in this regard, and about to verbal consciousness, Husserl speaks of a consciousness which "inhabits" its object.

The fact remains that there are grammars and lexicons, in other words, that there are lexical units, grammatical categories and combinatorial rules, and that as such certain sentences are recognized as incorrect, deviant or inappropriate, etc. Thus, in language, a certain systematicity and certain forms of regulation can be observed. This suggests that semiolinguistic factualities are subject to recognition from the point of view of their internal order, and furthermore according to methods and principles that tend towards the establishment of an objective truth, neutral and, in the circumstances, free from all existential thickness.

But it should also be noted that the ordering of semiolinguistic data, their reasoned collation, and the descriptions that have been made of them and, even more so, established in particular technical devices, are all part of the life of languages: their evolution (divergences or stabilization) and their interactions (cf. Auroux, 1998).

This is the fact: the devitalized part of languages, the one resulting from the various descriptive practices and systematization projects, and whose horizon is that of a conceptualization having objective value, paradoxically finds itself participating in the life of language. In truth, this observation is not at all original, since it extends and converts into a theoretical sphere the rather banal observation that "metalanguage is in language" (Harris 1971), or, with more nuance, that all language activity mobilizes an "epilinguistic" component (Culioli, 1990, 1999), the seat of a living reflexivity in the sense that it accompanies the course of speech rather than detaching itself from it to take on the height of a knowing consciousness.

If one accepts the broad outlines of the picture that has just been painted - outlines which, it must be said, trace not the contours of a truth but the axes of a questioning - the question initially formulated begins to make sense.

Indeed, in view of the foregoing, and independently of any theoretical elaboration, and therefore independently of conceptual options that are always debatable, the knowing attitude towards signs and meaning seems to be permeated by a paradox, namely that a hypothetical objective determination of semiotic phenomena and productions, a determination that would enunciate their laws and forms "in itself", necessarily appears to be corrupting, in that it alters the structural modalities of which semiotic reality proceeds.

But, on the other hand, such conceptual characterizations, even if they are distorting, can be found at work in semiotic life. It is as if the devitalized reduction of semiotic phenomena, *i.e.*, their systemization, finds its place and function in the living reality of signs and meanings.

These circumstances, as approached in (Piotrowski & Visetti 2017), lend themselves to a problematic of "sampling", as sketched by Merleau-Ponty in his discussions of geometric perspective - that is, a problematic in which conceptualized or formally determined forms proceed from a design, a kind of survey by abstraction, of the tensions, lines of force, whirlpools, and torments that animate the practiced world -- in our case: the "speaking mass" -- a conception that we will quickly evoke.

❸ Discussing perspective representation, M.-P. first insists that it is not a copy of spontaneous vision: "it is certain that classical perspective is not a law of perceptual behavior. It derives from the cultural order, as one of the ways man has invented for projecting before himself the perceived world" (M.-P., 1973, p. 51). However, perspective representation seems to be naturally self-evident, to the point of "imposing itself" as a form of sensibility.

But perspective representation is never more than one mode of geometrisation of spontaneous vision, a representation that draws on it but without replicating it. This point is essential: perspective is neither the truth of perceived space, nor conversely an arbitrary and unattached reconstruction: it is simply a geometric rationalization that lived and practiced space accepts

as a legitimate interpretation: the rules of perspective "[…] form an optional interpretation [of spontaneous vision], although perhaps more probable than others—not because the perceived world contradicts the laws of perspective and imposes others but rather because it does not demand any one in particular and belongs to another order than these rules" (M.-P., 1973, p. 51)

In its principle, the transcription of the world of lived vision into the format of perspective is an operation that muzzles the expressive spontaneity of objects and their positioning, an expressive spontaneity that constitutes their originary form of appearing. Thus perspective conversion brings together in a homogeneous space and in a common measure the multiple and mutually irreducible signifying values that weave the appearance of a world whose things challenge the gaze.

Thus, for example, "In spontaneous vision, things rivaled one another for my look and, being anchored in one of them, I felt the solicitation of the others which made them coexist with the first. Thus at every moment I was swimming in the world of things and overrun by a horizon of things to see which could not possibly be seen simultaneously with what I was seeing but by this very fact were simultaneous with it. But in perspective I construct a representation in which each thing ceases to demand the whole visual field for itself, makes concessions to the others, and agrees to occupy no more space on the paper than the others leave it." (M.-P., 1973, p. 52)

Thus, too, the free and abundant diversity of things that offer themselves to be traversed in time and according to an order that is in no way imposed, is distributed on the same plane of simultaneous existences and where a bundle of concurrent lines administers without rest a gaze that is then globalized. It is also the aggressiveness of the near and the lost character of the far that is erased, always to the benefit of a (geometric) order reigning without sharing over a universe that is thus homogeneous and coherent, where each thing holds its place and receives its qualities from a system of unequivocal relationships.

But, let us insist, this reconformation of the perceived world, if it is phenomenologically denaturing, is not for all that phenomenologically inconsistent: by relating natural vision to the format of a geometry, one does not break with all spontaneous visual reality - simply one suspends its vital principle in order to retain only one of its possible forms, only one of the ways in which it lends itself to being represented, that is to say: simultaneously conceived and perceived. This is how geometric reason retains an authentic visual content, or at least a content sufficient to give the illusion of replication.

What this overview of the links between perspective representation and spontaneous vision teaches us is that the latter is not intrinsically reducible to a specific order of determination, but that the phenomenal field (here visual), where the signifying values of a world (precisely, a "milieu") instituted with regard to the vital exercise of a subject (which it thus "inhabits") are configured, this phenomenal field, therefore, beyond the practical meanings that are woven into it, lends itself to various phenomenological reconfigurations that relate the conceptions it induces about itself. In other words, the originary phenomenal field is capable of reconfiguring itself (here: of producing itself as a specific phenomenology) according to the principles of order or regimes of functioning by which it allows itself to be conceived.

This problematic situation can be directly transposed to the field of semiolinguistics: theoretical determinations are all modes of grasping a living semiolinguistic reality, which is never reduced to it, which picks out specific configurations and brings them to the fore in the format of knowledge, and which therefore remains attached to it insofar as conceptualizations emerge from it. This explains the paradoxical position of semiolinguistic theorization: it is relevant because it draws on the "speaking mass", but always at the cost of a distorting systematization.

❹ In any case, we can see that the gnoseological question in these matters of signs and meaning goes beyond the strict perimeter of an examination of the formats and conditions of possibility of knowledge about them. For what is questioned here is the fact that a semiolinguistic conceptualization, which distances itself from the speaker subject and establishes the language fact in an absolute set of laws and forms, finds itself a contrario supporting, or even vectoring, innovative verbal activities that are constantly reconfiguring themselves. It is therefore necessary to admit an interpenetration of the orders of, say, objectivity and subjectivity. Or at least, as Merleau-Ponty defended, a link between the two: "As soon as we distinguish, alongside of the objective science of language, a phenomenology of speech, we set in motion a dialectic through which the two disciplines open communications [...] the 'subjective' point of view envelops the 'objective' point of view [and reciprocally]." (M.-P., 1973, 15)

From then on, the cardinal question of "knowing" in semiolinguistics is no longer so much about the ways in which phenomena of this nature are determined, and thus more or less about the forms of objectification of a certain empirical field, but about the fact of an enigmatic entanglement of the semiotic material and its denaturing recognition.

So, if there is a meaning to "know" in semiolinguistics, it is in that this knowledge will reveal the logic, principles and circumstances that make the always unfinished and reductive products of a more or less assumed objectifying attitude participate in the unfolding of a living speech.

This epistemic situation, which is set out here in very general terms, is revealed quite easily through semiolinguistic specifications and operations that are generally accepted and that provide an empirical translation.

Indeed, we have already mentioned the intrinsic reflexivity of language behaviours. Let us now add that this reflexive aptitude is based on a recognition of signs that we know is based on at least three dimensions, that of an act of "filling in", by means of which a given content, actual counterpart of the signified as a merely intentional object, is installed in the speaker's consciousness, that of the "materiality" of the signifier, where a certain concrete identity is fixed, and that of "sedimentation", as a systematization of signs in the form of a lexicon (a table of connections between sounds and meanings) or in grammar (regularities and combinatory constraints).

This will be our perspective: to install and instruct this epistemic conjuncture, first by situating it in an all-encompassing problematic of expressivity and of "being in the world", and then by characterizing the functional articulations of the semiolinguistic systems that respond to it.

In practice, we will proceed in successive layers. First, we will take up in more detail the considerations set out above, developing some of the problematic dimensions that are related to them and placing them in an encompassing view. Then, using the example of formal grammars, we will discuss and illustrate one of the major obstructions of the semiolinguistic sciences, at least in their objectifying intentions. Then, we will introduce morphodynamic structuralism, arguing that it "technically" configures an "exit" from expressivity, and, correlatively, an order of reflexivity.

IV-4 Epistemological considerations - Part 2

❶ The epistemological situation of semiolinguistics, and more broadly of the disciplines dealing with signs and meaning, remains uncertain, even fragile - this as regards both their status and their foundations.

Already, if we concede to these disciplines the position of empirical science, which many of them (especially the sciences of language) claim, and if we examine them in the light of the epistemological requirements to which they then belong, In the light of the conditions and principles of the constitution of empirical knowledge, we must recognize that these disciplines are built at the double and constant risk of vacuity (inconsistency) and subjectivity (relativism) - risks whose motives and circumstances we will recall later.

Undoubtedly, seizing upon the traditional opposition between the sciences of nature and the sciences of the mind, in other words, between the sciences that approach phenomena from the perspective of their objectification versus the hermeneutic sciences that are interested in the modalities of an interpretation of their data, or, in Kantian terms, between the orders of the determining judgment and of the reflecting judgment, and noting the inadequacy of the semiolinguistic sciences to the principles of empirical knowledge, some might choose to settle their fate by indexing them to the register of the sciences of the mind.

But this is not the state of affairs that we are dealing with here, because the semiolinguistic approaches in question unambiguously claim an empirical content coupled with a determining intention, precisely in that they intend to account for the properties of their objects and the laws of their functioning. And it is necessary then, even if their epistemic failings are not remedied, to connect them, in ways yet to be discovered, to the intentions of the empirical sciences. Moreover, as we have seen (cf. foreword), the demarcation between the objectivist and interpretive perspectives is not immovable.

Moreover, the epistemological shortcomings of the semiolinguistic disciplines, which are otherwise obvious, do not hinder their development and progress - at the very most, they could explain their rapid renewal.

And above all, even if these disciplines are based on sand, it must be recognized that the conceptual devices they develop in order to account for (describe and explain) the phenomena and events that interest them provide a real intelligibility.

The picture offered by the language sciences is spectacular in this respect: structuralism in its various forms, the innumerable varieties of formal grammars (generative, categorical, tree, unification grammars, etc.), cognitive grammars, construction grammars, corpus linguistics, or even more singular models such as psychomechanics or functionalism, all of these approaches undoubtedly say something true about languages: Through specific principles, methods and concepts, they each reveal a part of reality whose objectivity they correlatively establish. Each in its own way unveils some character of its object while at the same time elaborating it, the relevance of which is difficult to deny: each brings to light some specifications which certainly do not exhaust the phenomenon nor deliver necessary and definitive characters, but which convince in that they clearly give access to a part of its intelligence, in that they open a window on its authentic reality, as living and practiced.

Of course, it is not the number, frequency and distribution of lexical units that make up style, but these numbers, properly understood and correctly presented, are capable of orienting the gaze on stylistic facts, are capable of preparing and supporting the correct recognition of a certain way of saying or writing. In the same way, the diagrams proposed by cognitive linguistics do not show the meaning of a sentence in all its dimensions, but they do highlight and intelligently convey the dynamics of the connections that are expressed in it. The same could be said for rewriting grammars or categorial grammars which relate, according to logics of subsumption or operators, certain hierarchies of constituents within the sentence. And so on...

We thus find ourselves in a situation that is not without analogy with the one that transcendental philosophy set out to clarify: for Kant, the fact of science (in this case Newtonian mechanics)

raised a question of law, namely how is empirical knowledge possible? Similarly, it is legitimate to ask what the relevance of the conceptualizations that the various semiolinguistic approaches set up is based on - with the additional difficulty that, as we have said, the primary epistemological conditions are not respected here.

In order to move forward in dealing with this "legal" issue, we need to take a closer look at the obstacles that semiolinguistic knowledge faces. In this respect, we will proceed in successive layers and depths, taking up the same questions at progressively more elaborate levels of analysis and detail.

❷ First of all, there is the problem of 'epistemic insularity': for although these different approaches bring an intelligibility to their object, this remains local and isolated. Without doubt, the fact that the intelligibility delivered by a theoretical apparatus is only partial does not pose any particular problem - this is the case in the natural sciences where the same material factuality is subject to various illuminations, for example from mechanics, thermodynamics or chemistry.... But in this case, these approaches are crossed, and it is precisely in this crossing that the positivity of the sciences is established. Now, when it comes to the sub-disciplines that make up the sciences of language, each one, obviously, according to the light it chooses to project on its object, highlights certain dimensions and facets that it retains and correlatively elaborates as objectivity, but without these dimensions covering those retained by other approaches, or articulating them.

We will return to these questions in more detail, but for the time being, and at this stage of the discussion, we will observe that the sciences of language appear as an archipelago of theoretical islands, each producing, at least for each major family of theories, a specific object that is irreducible to other views (cf. Piotrowski, Visetti, 2017b). The immediate consequence of this situation is that the trap of the epistemic circle closes: theories are inconsistent in that they are self-consistent: as they produce their own objects, these objects reciprocally validate the conceptual apparatuses from which they are derived. Thus, theories always tell the truth about their object, simply because they are the source of it. And the danger of vacuity is therefore obvious: if everything can be said, nothing is ever said.

But this picture, too quickly painted, is incomplete and even distorted. For, paradoxically, a second peril (of subjectivity) counterbalances the first (peril of emptiness).

This is because, as we have already pointed out, even if the theoretical frameworks of semiolinguistics are inconsistent in terms of certain criteria, this does not mean that they are irrelevant: they do indeed contribute, each in their own way and from their own angle, to revealing the truth of their object.

But this observation is obviously open to criticism from subjectivism, and in turn needs to be substantiated. In order to move in this direction, and insofar as we give it credence, we will initially admit that it proceeds from a kind of semiolinguistic awareness on the basis of which, therefore, it would be possible to recognize, or even to support, perhaps even to establish, the relevance of various theorizations. In any case, it must be admitted that the speaking subject has an inner knowledge of the language materials, and with regard to which, then, the relevance of theoretical analyses, insofar as they reveal what was only sensed, insofar as they qualify and put into thought what was only contemplated, is likely to be recognized.

It is therefore difficult to dispute the reality of a semiolinguistic consciousness to which certain features of the phenomena it apprehends are fully evident. Moreover, there is an element of tautology in this. For it is necessarily in and through semiolinguistic perception that phenomena of this nature are encountered, precisely in the mode of immediacy, singularity and evidence. The existence of a regime of semiolinguistic perception, which, as perception, constitutes a mode of immediate knowledge correlative to a phenomenal field, cannot

therefore be denied. What is thus asserted, moreover, is the empirical character of the sciences of signs and meaning, precisely in that these disciplines deal with phenomena, namely "indeterminate objects of empirical intuition" whose objectivity must then be established by delivering the appropriate determinations.

But semiolinguistic perception goes beyond simply noting the presence of a certain symbolic material, more or less well defined and articulated (this point of primary importance is examined below), or even its composition (thus when the reader is at the stage of epilinguistic activity) or the connections and influences between its constituents (which then engages a metalinguistic awareness), Semiolinguistic perception, therefore, has access to certain characteristics of conformation, allure or effect, and this over a very wide range of qualities such as correctness, cohesion, correctness, balance, appropriateness, efficiency, clarity, elegance...

Of course, and talking of correction, grammatical or semantic admissibility is part of this palette, but before considering it from the point of view of the function and status to which it has been promoted by the current of formal grammars, and since there is nothing to authoritatively certify its objective scope, it must be kept in the vague set of appreciative judgements that proceed from a semiolinguistic perception -- a vague set that therefore remains under the threat of relativism. and subjectivity.

❸ Moving on to the chapter of generalities, and to prepare for other considerations, we will observe that what is at stake here from the outset is the possibility of conjoining, on the one hand, what belongs to the "for oneself ", namely that order of things of which I possess an "inner" consciousness in that the bill of said things is woven into the relations I maintain with them : In my way of undertaking and dealing with them, and, on the other hand, what belongs to the "in itself", namely what belongs to an impersonal consciousness: the constitutive transcendental consciousness under the aegis of which the objectivity of the world of experience is elaborated.

Formulated trivially, the question discussed here is whether "it is possible to say what it is without being there"; where "what it is" relates to the truth of an empirical object distanced from all subjectivity, and "being there" relates to a consciousness "inhabiting" a sphere of experience in that it possesses its "inner" law.

Note: we must be careful to distinguish the subjectivity of the "in oneself " from that of the "for oneself ". While the states of the subject that fall under each are equally accessible through a reflexive consciousness, the first (the subjectivity of the "in oneself ") is attached to the "empirical self": the subject is interested in the incessant and sometimes chaotic flow of his own states (emotions, sensations, moods, etc.), on the characters and sequences of which he will then reflect empirically. This subjective consciousness of the "in oneself " is accomplished in the immediate observation of various feelings, and is therefore not the place of any "legal" knowledge. This is in contrast to the subjectivity of the "for oneself ", which also concerns directly accessible contents of consciousness, but this time with regard to what these contents comprise of necessary a priori (cf. the positions of Frege and Husserl on logic as a theoretical and not a psychological discipline), and this especially in the forms and modalities that institute them in the quality of "appearing", that is to say that make them refer "intentionally" to an object of the world of experience. We can then understand in what sense phenomenology is interested in the "objectivity of subjectivity".

Taken literally, this contradictory tension between the "for oneself " and the "in itself" -- a tension that concerns the whole of the humanities and social sciences (for an answer to this, see for example the hybrid solution of "participant observation") -- seems insurmountable, and this for quasi-analytical reasons.

For "to be there", in other words, to have an inner consciousness of one's world, is to "adhere to it" on the grounds, therefore, that the world in which the subject primarily resides is instituted with regard to its own rhythms and potentialities, and in the exteriorized play of which it necessarily finds itself. Thus, the subject inhabits his world in the strong sense that the world echoes him -- all things that have been deeply explored by Merleau-Ponty and to which we will return in more detail.

For the time being, let us simply recall (repeating what we have formulated elsewhere: cf. [Piotrowski & Visetti]) that in the Merleau-Pontian perspective "All begins", to put it as such, with an interested and interrogative meeting between a bodily schema and an environment of solicitations, one which directs towards a constitution made of the crossings of body and world, and having, from the onset, a value as co-expression. Thus, M.-P. emphasizes motor projects, the rhythms of existence, the solidary differentiation of sensible things and sensorial modalities, to posit the body as the central actor of an "expressive saga", inasmuch as it outlines through each of its gestures a world of signifying presences. So at the beginning there is one's body as a carrier and performer of a certain life force and a hazy environment which "vaguely solicits", a sort of "poorly formulated question" with which I will attempt to syntonize and the effect of which will flourish into sensible qualities. Perception will then primitively and fundamentally be this aptitude of receiving solicitations and, dually, of syntonizing with them so as to establish them within a world of objects and of qualities which are the expression, the living meaning, of this successful coordination: "the subject of sensation is a power that is born together with a certain existential milieu or that is synchronized with it." (M.-P., 2012, p. 219). In short, "[…] a sensible that is about to be sensed poses to my body a sort of confused problem. I must find the attitude that will provide it with the means to become [some] determinate [quality]; I must find the response to a poorly formulated question. And yet, I only do this in response to its solicitation. My attitude is never sufficient to make me truly see blue or truly touch a hard surface. The sensible gives back to me what I had lent to it, but I received it from the sensible in the first place." (M.-P., 2012, p. 222).

In any case, and limiting ourselves to the previous considerations, there is thus continuity between the subject and his world, from which he proves to be indetachable. We understand then that we cannot "say what it is" without "being" in it, since if no one "is" in it, there is nothing more "that can be". In other words, the installation of a world whose things are insofar as they signify to a subject or are synchronized with him, the installation of such a world, therefore, in rupture with the living subject and under the detached eye of a pure universal consciousness, is a contradiction in terms and cannot be accomplished -- which does not fail to revive the caesura between the sciences of nature and mind.

Let us note at this point that if in the order of the "in itself" the sense of object proceeds from a transcendence, namely the categories of the universal constitutive consciousness (more precisely: the concepts of the understanding) as a principle of unity of the diversity of phenomena, in the order of the "for oneself " the meanings are immanent to the phenomena: the phenomenon configures itself in its appearing in what it means "for oneself ". This means that the world "for oneself " is a world of "expressions". We shall return to this at length.

But there is nothing irrevocable about this rupture between the "for oneself " and the "in itself", even if it seems so, as when, in the face of a few scriptural marks of an otherwise totally disappeared civilization, any effort to decipher them seems vain.

For the world "for oneself " is not a private theatre. Without doubt, the spectacle of the world as it constitutes itself to me concerns me first and foremost -- simply because it emanates from me as an appropriate response to a merely interrogative diversity, *i.e.* without qualities or

fixed forms, which thus receives a "corporeal existence" --, but it is also a shared spectacle in that it responds to the norms of a species and, even more so, for the higher species, to the norms of a culture. Thus, for example, perception by adumbrations, which has only lacunar manifestations of its object, nevertheless accesses it in that each of them contains the multitude of views of which this object is complementarily susceptible, and, dually, contains a multitude of other views that thus confer on the object of perception an intersubjective existence (M.-P., 1963, Chap. 4). This is to say (again) that there is a "claim to the objectivity of each perceptual act" (M.-P., 2012, p. 277).

With cultures and their artefacts, this claim to objectivity takes another step forward. In place of the objectivity that arises from the interweaving of views, there is an objectivity with a material component, which gives cultures, their values and their systems of meaning, an existence beyond the present of the acts of consciousness that have shaped them. In other words, with cultures, an "in itself" is constituted beyond the volatile intersections of "for oneself ". For the products of industry and the arts are semiotically formed, meaning that their concrete characteristics are instructed by the meanings which, in their original cultural context, gave rise to the creation of these products, and according to which they were then configured from the triple point of view of their appearance, their construction and their uses, that is to say as signs or levers of specific universes of values and practices

The smallest photophore, in its construction, its proportions, in the way it is presented to the eye and to the hand, and also in its relationship to other artefacts, incorporates indications of the universe of meaning and perception in which it was conceived and made. Not, of course, that the photophore 'in itself' contains and renders in all clarity and precision the way in which the individuals of a civilization thought, perceived and practiced it. But the civilization expressed itself in this object, not in the form of a material encoding of its values and principles, which would then be lost when the said civilization disappeared, but in that the design of this lamp espouses and concretizes the lines and modes of meaning of the culture of which it is part. Indeed, this photophore, or any other artefact, considered from the point of view of its morphology, that is to say, from the point of view of the relationships between its parts and the totality that they compose, from the point of view of the distribution of its ranges of colour, texture, form... its balances and instabilities, the distribution of its lines of force... all characteristics that are part of an immanent structure and through which a function of meaning is established, this photophore, therefore, manifests a commitment to meaning in directions that are certainly indeterminate but which, coordinated with those traced by multiple other artefacts, contribute to drawing the contours and the main veins of the culture at their source. Let us recall in this respect what Merleau-Ponty wrote about the artefacts of Egyptian civilization: "[Egypt] is an idea, a signification common to an ensemble of molecular facts, which is expressed by all the facts and which is not contained completely in any one of them." (M.-P., 1963, p. 143)

❹ These previous considerations call for some comments:

Firstly, what we have approached here is the fact of an entanglement of the "for oneself " and the "in itself", an entanglement already mentioned, which we will find at work in semiolinguistic systems and whose principles and intelligence we will have to question.

Secondly, and dually, what is fundamentally in question here is the process of semiogenesis, through which the exit from expressivity is accomplished, namely the overcoming of a pure "for oneself" by crystallizing within it a layer of "in itself", and which leads to the sign and its fillings. For, as we have said, the pole of the "for oneself" is precisely that of a world of pure expressivities, a world where meaning is tangible, where the sensory component of the perceived is not separable from the signification which is thereby shown and which

constitutes it in its specific qualities. But this world of expression, which is therefore exclusively "for oneself", is a world in which the subject, in osmosis with its environment, finds itself subjected to it. It is a world in which the prevailing point of view, which inwardly binds the subject to his environment, prohibits the variation of actions. In this respect, it may be useful to recall that Merleau-Ponty thematizes this situation under the title of "concrete" as opposed to "abstract", and applying it to gestures (bodily action) as well as to speech (verbal action).

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty calls 'background' (of movement) the geometry of meanings that one's body, as a vital power, institutes as a "milieu" ("the background of movement is not "a stock of sensible qualities, but by a certain manner of articulating or of structuring the surroundings" (M.-P., 2012, p. 117).And in the "concrete" movement the gesture and its background form a whole: The movement and the situation become one, the gesture institutes an environment and a geometry of objects as signifying presences and these, in return, canalize the action of which they express the unfolding—thus, the affected person only succeeds in performing the movements "on command" "[only] on condition of placing himself into the spirit of the actual situation" (M.-P., 2012, p. 107). On the other hand, abstract movements are free from conditioning by any more or less assimilated situations. The abstract movement is "on command" and "[is] not directed towards any actual situation." (M.-P., 2012, p. 105)

In order to break this osmotic connection of the subject to the environment, to free the subject from the context with which it finds itself in resonance, other perspectives of action must be instituted, and therefore other points of view must be put in place. In short, it is necessary to escape the expressive structure that internally connects the subject to his environment. And it is indeed this overcoming of expressivity, which characterizes the higher species, and which presupposes the inverse and aspiring polarity of a world "in itself", which must be accounted for in its possibility and its principle.

❺ But before approaching the semiolinguistic disciplines in the light of an articulation of the "for oneself " and the "in itself", and as much to enrich and illustrate this problematic as to prepare for the considerations to come, it will be useful to recall in a few words how, according to Merleau-Ponty, this articulation takes effect within a living body.

In the passages we have selected, this question of the coordination of "for oneself " and "in itself" is examined from an angle that is not without semiolinguistic resonance. Indeed, considering the psychosomatic disturbances of anosognosia and of the "phantom limb" type, M.-P. is confronted with a problem similar to that of the "consubstantial" unity of the two sides of the sign, or at least to that of their necessary "internal" connection, one being deemed concrete, the other ideal -- in the case of a living organism, the difficulty being to conceive of the modalities of a "[…] junction of the "psychical" and the "physiological." (M.-P., 2012, p. 82)

Indeed, in the two pathologies considered, it is necessary to recognize the reciprocal effects between psychological and physiological factors. Thus "[…] the phantom limb disappears when the sensory conductors that run to the brain are severed." (M.-P., 2012, p. 79). Conversely, "A phantom limb appears for a subject not previously experiencing one when an emotion or a situation evokes those of the injury" (M.-P., 2012, p. 79) or, inversely, the phantom limb can disappear "in accordance with the resignation of the patient to accept his mutilation." (M.-P., 2012, p. 79). It would therefore be necessary to imagine "psychical determinants and […] physiological conditions [that] gear into each other " (M.-P., 2012, p. 79).

Obviously, these planes of experience being radically external to each other, no overlap is conceivable:

"it is difficult to see what might serve as the common ground between "physiological facts" (which are in space) and "psychical facts" (which are nowhere), or even between objective processes, such as nervous impulses (which belong to the order of the in-itself), and cogitationes, such as acceptance or refusal, consciousness of the past, or emotion (which belong to the order of the for-itself). [such] A mixed theory of the phantom limb […] is fundamentally obscure." (M.-P., 2012, p. 79).

To overcome this obstruction, we must return to the first moments of the co-constitution of a body and its world, namely the moment when a "being in the world" is established.

As has already been said, the living subject resides in a world of expressions in that he himself "[…] projects the norms of its milieu and establishes the terms of its vital problem » (M.-P., 2012, p. 80). In other words, the living subject "elaborates" its stimuli by conferring, with respect to its power and vital principles, a "bodily existence" (let us say sensitive qualities and form) to a halo of solicitations that originarily questions or worries it: "The organism's function in the reception of stimuli is, so to speak, "to understand" a certain form of stimulation » (M.-P., 2012, p. 77). Also, being in the world "[…] anchors the subject to a certain "milieu,"" (M.-P., 2012, p. 81). But then, since "for a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein." (M.-P., 2012, p. 84), the body becomes inseparable from its milieu which constitutes an extension of it and which in turn obliges its actions.

But it is necessary to break this functional confinement correlative to the fusion of a body with its environment. And in order to escape the conditioning and imperatives of the world "for oneself ", it will be necessary to elaborate a world of the "in itself", a neutral universe, freed from any living meaning that is equivalent to an injunction, and which the living subject will be able to invest in new and unconditional ends. It will thus be a question of putting the body at a distance from its environment, an environment thus promoted into a "universe" as a shared framework of the multitude of perceptions and reflections: "If man is not to be enclosed within the envelope of the syncretic milieu in which the animal lives as if in a state of ecstasy, if he is to be conscious of a world as the common reason of all milieus and as the theater of all behaviors, then a distance between himself and that which solicits his action must be established" (M.-P., 2012, p. 89).

It will therefore be necessary to add to the "actual" body, that is to say, to the body related to a milieu that engages it totally, a bodily thickness detached in its modalities of functioning from the imperatives that the milieu enunciates. Such is the "habitual" body, emancipating interface of the vital orders, carnal periphery preserving the subject in that "external stimulations must only touch him with "respect"; each momentary situation must for him cease to be the totality of being, and each particular response must cease to occupy his entire practical field." (M.-P., 2012, p. 89)

The 'usual' body, even if it is objectifiable in the sense of the empirical sciences, cannot be separated from the actual body in which a living consciousness is accomplished. Of course, it can be approached as a coordinated set of more or less localized, elementary and autonomous physico-chemical processes. But such organic modules, which belong to the "in itself", and independently of the fact that they are in practice inseparable from the living totality in which they participate, find their intelligibility only in connection to the order of the "for oneself ".

For if "it is as though our body comprises two distinct layers, that of the habitual body and that of the actual body" (M.-P., 2012, p. 84), these layers exchange mutually: between them, there is not a break but porosity. And if we have to situate a bodily behavior it will not be at one of the two poles but in an intermediate position on an axis that links them. The example of reflex

behavior is enlightening on this point. Without doubt, the patellar reflex is a matter of "in itself": the experience that we can have of it certifies that the motor act that is accomplished in it is foreign to the field of consciousness: "[…] reflex movements, either sketched out or already accomplished, are still merely objective processes whose development and results can be observed by consciousness, but in which consciousness is not engaged?" (M.-P., 2012, p. 84). Let us consider the ocular fixation reflex, on the other hand: from the point of view of its execution, it is just as (almost) imperative as the patellar reflex. I cannot help but turn my gaze towards the luminous point that appears in the lateral part of my visual field. But unlike the patellar reflex, which I notice "from a distance" and not without astonishment, the ocular fixation reflex is accompanied by an intimate awareness of its reason: I turn my gaze to the point of light because it has aroused my interest, because it "attracts" my attention and my eye with it, etc. Thus my action is carried by an intention of which I know the motive internally. It is clear that the ocular reflex assimilates the orders of the "in itself" and the "for oneself ", and that it is very difficult to distinguish the respective parts.

The relationship between the "in itself" and the "for oneself " must therefore be conceived in the mode of a conversion, and all the more so since it is this logic of conversion that can give meaning to the quasi-mechanical systematics of the processes that are accomplished in it in the form, therefore, of causal chains. For the meaning of this or that reflexive device lies in the organism where it is executed. In other words, it is the vital meaning that prevails, precisely in that it subsumes and synthesizes its functional parts. We must therefore think of the habitual body as a quasi-modular systematization and autonomation of certain species-specific behavioral rhythms and attitudes.

Thus the body as an organic entity fixes in biochemical format certain elementary vital activities elaborated in earlier phases of living interactions, and in return, as if by projection, the world "for oneself " is distanced in that the forms and qualities through which it was configured "for oneself " are now governed by a bodily device (organ or circuit) operating partly on its own account. For example, what was merely "manipulable for me" (M.-P., 2012, p. 84), becomes, by and in the usual body, "manipulable in itself." (M.-P., 2012, p. 85), and thus "A margin of almost impersonal existence […] appears around our personal existence, which, so to speak, is taken for granted […]" (M.-P., 2012, p. 86)

It can be said that the habitual body integrates, in separate parts and away from any consciousness, fragments of behavior that a living body originally developed as an adapted response to its environment. This 'habitual' layer registers, so to speak, certain existential specializations of a body-world couple. In this way, what was 'for oneself is partially converted into 'in itself'.

In the Merleau-Pontian perspective, there is no longer any reason to approach the unity of the "in itself" and the "for oneself " in its various specifications (soul-body, physiological-psychological, signifier-signified, nature-culture...) in the mode of an improbable fusion, or of an incomprehensible meeting of "[…] the order of causes and the order of ends." (M.-P., 2012, p. 90). In such a perspective, the "in itself" does not constitute an absolute position but the horizon towards which a consciousness progresses in order to break the confinement of the environment where it originarily takes shape. The order of objectivities is inserted in the perspective of a living consciousness, so that "The union of the soul and the body is not established […] is accomplished at each moment in the movement of existence" (M.-P., 2012, p. 91).

The polarization of 'in itself' and 'for oneself is thus distended, and organisms, depending on their more or less integrated nature, are positioned at varying distances from one or the other pole. And whatever position they occupy on this line of tension, they are constituted there as

a possibly mobile frontier, as an interface capable of evolving, *i.e.* of moving towards one or the other pole, either by converting practical meanings into organic devices or conversely by promoting purely physiological processes or morphologies into values and objects of culture, in other words by crystallizing the "for oneself " into an "in itself" or sublimating the "in itself" into "for oneself " meanings: "[…] through an imperceptible shift, an organic process opens up into a human behavior, an instinctive act turns back upon itself and becomes an emotion, or, inversely, a human act becomes dormant and is continued absentmindedly as a reflex." (M.-P., 2012, p. 90).

We can therefore distinguish in an organism that part of itself which it relegates to the laws of nature, to the order of a causal determinism, and that part which it maintains under its animation, which remains under the aegis of its vital power turned towards a world with which it is constantly trading. In an organism, therefore, two regimes of structure are intertwined. On the one hand, that of a material compositionality, *i.e.* conceived and known partes extra partes and where the totality proceeds from a synthesis, under the unity of laws and concepts, of parts that are prior to it, and on the other hand, holistic regimes, where the totality prevails over the parts in that, constituting the final cause (the idea) that determines the co-ordinations, the contours and in fine the synthesis, it is present in each of them, and, dually, each of them expresses it.

The organism thus composes, in a mobile equilibrium, a set of processes and modules (organs), which, on the one hand, function "blindly" in separate parts and autonomous circuits, and on the other hand, find themselves at every moment invested with the purposes and commitments of the totality they accomplish, and integrated into the interactions with the environment in which the said totality forms a body. The existence of such autonomous functional circuits is manifested in the reflex arcs, notably conditioned ones, where the action of an excitant determines a reaction without involving the organism as a whole, in other words without the meaning of the excitant as it is configured to the living organism in a given global situation being taken into account.

Such reflex circuits prevent the organism from being overwhelmed by the world, in that the interactions of this organism with the world are thus compartmentalized and do not affect the totality of its 'being in the world'. In particular, "[…] each particular response [to this or that stimulus] cease[s] to occupy his entire practical field." (M.-P., 2012, p. 89). This autonomation of organic processes, and particularly of the elaboration of percepts, is characteristic of the superior species, which thus free themselves from the environment that originarily prolongs them: "[…] in general, conditioned reflexes are all the more perfect as the cerebral development of the species considered is more advanced" (M.-P., 1963, p. 123-124) Conversely, "Inasmuch as it is a phenomenon of disintegration we will not be surprised to find the conditioned reflex more often and more easily "in children than in adults, in younger children than in older ones, and, at an equal age, in the retarded rather than in the normal." (M.-P., 1963, p. 123)

❻ These considerations and the problematic grid that they outline can be directly transposed to the field of semiolinguistic phenomena.

For language is neither a combinatorial or other symbolic calculation, nor a process, but an action in the sense that speech is not triggered, as, for example, if it were a matter of converting ideas into words, but animated by the "intention to say" of a subject inhabiting a world of signs and meanings and within which he engages and takes a position. In this sense "Speech is a gesture, and its signification is a world." (M.-P., 2012, p. 190) and, Merleau-Ponty insists: it is not a metaphor (M.-P., 2012).

To support this view, let us simply recall that gesture and verbalization share common and essential structural features.

Already, just like the gesture which, in its accomplishment and in its general allure, has an expressive value, the word carries its meaning internally: "The operation of expression when it is successful [...] makes the meaning exist as a thing at the very heart of the text" (M.-P., 2012, p. 188. In other words, verbal gestuality, like the gestuality of the body itself, generates its meaning: "[...] the sense of words [is] induced by the words themselves" (M.-P., 2012, p. 184-185).

Like gesture, too, speech anticipates its end and engages the totality of its meaning from its first moment. In other words, gesture and speech both have a holistic and finalized character. On the side of speech, in fact, it is a given that the utterance is not a summative succession of words, but rather an integrated totality fulfilling a certain intention to signify. On this point, which is central in linguistics, let us simply quote Benveniste: "a sentence constitutes a whole, which is not reduced to the sum of its parts; the meaning inherent in this whole is distributed over all the constituents", and even more: "rather than contributing to it, the words realize the meaning of the sentence". Thus, the speech act bears its term and therefore its totality from the moment of its first word.

And the same is obviously true of bodily movement: "[T]he originality of movements that I execute with my body: my movements anticipate directly their final position [...] I do not find [my body] at one objective point in space [like an object] in order to lead it to another, [...] I have no need of directing it toward the goal of the movement, in a sense it touches the goal from the very beginning and it throws itself toward it." (M.-P., 2012, p. 96-97)

But it is from the point of view of their practice that the parallel between gesture and speech is most obvious. For just as the empirical world arranges and delivers things according to a geometry and a set of qualifications that express their immediate relations to a certain capacity for action of the one's body, so language delivers a world of words and verbal arrangements insofar as they "[...] constitute a certain field of action held around me" (M.-P., 2012, p. 186).

To speak therefore amounts to moving through speech within a world of words: "I relate to the word just as my hand reaches for the place on my body being stung. The word has a certain place in my linguistic world [...]. The only means I have of representing it to myself is by pronouncing it." (M.-P., 2012, p. 186). And likewise that the body knows its world on the mode of a "power to do", speech knows words on the mode of a "power to say", which is therefore "power" by virtue of words: "[K]nowing a word or a language [langue] does not consist in having available some preestablished neural arrangements [or some verbal representations] [...] the words that I know [...] are behind me, like the objects behind my back or like the horizon of the village surrounding my house; I reckon with them or I count upon them, but I have no 'verbal image' of them" (M.-P., 2012, p. 186), or: "Likewise [for movement], I have no need of representing to myself the word in order to know it and to pronounce it." (M.-P., 2012, p. 186).

In other words, just as I do not have an explicit awareness, a determinate present representation of my limbs -- which are present to me in the mode of open availability and as such immediately mobilizable to ends to which I inwardly know they are appropriate -- so words are not present to my mind in the format of a representation but as available means of living verbally in a world of meaning.

Finally, as mentioned, the analogy between speech and gesture is further reinforced by the existence of common pathologies. Thus, certain language disorders affect the ability of subjects to use words outside their "concrete" contexts of use. Thus, just as patients whose capacity for "free" movement is affected can only perform certain gestures if the environment

invites them to do so (cf. above - the movement is then said to be "concrete" because it "adheres to its background"), so some patients find themselves unable to say words other than those of a verbal reaction to the situation: "The same word that remains available to the patient on the level of automatic language escapes him on the level of spontaneous language." (M.-P., 2012, p. 180).

❼ This problematic angle is quite appropriate for the examination of semiolinguistic disciplines. Indeed, we observe that their whole is polarized by this tension between the "for oneself " and the "in itself" and where intermediate positions are to be considered.

Thus, on the side of the "in itself", there are approaches that prohibit (or claim to prohibit) any recourse to the linguistic consciousness of speakers. Distributional linguistics (Harris, 1960) would be a typical example: rejecting any semantic dimension and limiting itself to considering the supposedly "positive" data that are the scriptural marks, it claims in fine to deliver a compositional objectivity.

Corpus linguistics is also related to this pole, albeit more loosely, since the selection and colligation of texts, which presupposes an overview and qualification of the textual material, is the loophole through which linguistic consciousness seeps in, thus weakening the epistemological consistency of such approaches.

It should be noted, however, that distributional linguistics have similar flaws: the collation of their data is not without a priori considerations. Moreover, they are obliged to apply, at one level or another of their analyses, criteria that are "for oneself ". For the systematic processing of their data, if not accompanied and restrained by a linguistic awareness, leads, when carried out blindly to its conclusion, to a classificatory dispersion (each item defines its class). In order to avoid this, it is therefore advisable to suspend the analysis procedure at a level that satisfies the intuition that one has of the material (Harris) - a necessity since, as R. Martin (2002) reminded us, the segmentation of a sentence and the recognition of its constituent units is an operation which is not without presuppositions and decisions. Thus, even in the most positivist perspectives, the data of semiolinguistic are in some way inseparable from a field of linguistic awareness, which, it should be emphasized, mobilizes dimensions other than that of the simple scriptural or phonic materiality of signifiers.

Between the pole of "hard" objectivist approaches and its opposite, the hermeneutic approaches, we find, almost in the middle, formal linguistics. These approaches approach language data at a "logico-algebraic" level of analysis and, inspired (for reasons explained above) by the theory of models, conceive of languages in terms of a symbolic calculation. The empirical relevance of these models with a determining aim is then evaluated in relation to the values of admissibility attributed to the data resulting from the calculations. And it is obviously through this corner that the "inner" linguistic consciousness is reintroduced: that of the correction or of the norm, whose possible objective scope must be estimated and understood.

Considering the line drawn between these two poles, it will be possible to position the theoretical approaches according to the presence and degree of involvement of factors pertaining to a linguistic consciousness. Thus, cognitive linguistics, which appeals to a diagrammatic intuition of meaning, or which shows the play of forces established between various actants, would be placed halfway between formal linguistics and the hermeneutic pole. Glossematic (Hjelmslev), which fundamentally resorts to intuitions of dependence far removed from the consciousness of meaning or even the consciousness of admissibility, would be situated between corpus linguistics and formal grammars... The pragmatic and enunciative currents, on the other hand, are fairly close to the hermeneutical pole.

In any case, this gap between the "for oneself " and the "in itself" must be bridged. For the "fact" of the semiolinguistic disciplines challenges it, and as we have seen, a kind of continuity

can be established between these two poles. This is the Merleau-Pontian project in line with which these pages are situated, namely the search for a solution of continuity between two forms of recognition of symbolic facts, which could therefore be considered mutually exclusive.

On the one hand, then, there is an epistemic pole with an objectivist claim, which is supposed to give an account (describe and explain) of a selection of observables that constitute its empirical field, and whose model in its superior radicality is that of the triumphant natural sciences. On the other hand, a subjective and interior experience of signs, of their constitutive forms, of their significant amplitudes and of their latitudes of functioning, such as they reveal themselves in the depths of their practices, and of which an existential phenomenology gives us some of the most manifest characteristics.

To support these views, let us recall the passage already quoted (cf. foreword) by Merleau-Ponty: "[…] the scientific study of language and [the] literary experience (…) overlap. How could there be a division between the science of expression […] and the lived experience of expression […]? Science is not devoted to another world but to our own; in the end it refers to the same things that we experience in living. […] Ultimately, […] the theory of language must gain access to the experience of speaking subjects." (M.-P., 1973, p. 15).

❽ The challenge, then, is to bring together an "inner" awareness of semiolinguistic activities, in their various kinds of accomplishment, with a structure of knowledge, aimed at similar objects, and whose theoretical forms and epistemological principles are ideally those of the natural sciences.

To achieve this, and necessity being the law, we will choose an oblique path. Our intention, in doing so, is to approach the question from an angle where tight reasoning can be conducted -- in this case by having recourse to a secure epistemological foundation and framing and also by mobilizing meticulous theoretical, conceptual or formal devices.

Firstly, we will support the diagnosis previously made regarding the lack of consistency of semiolinguistic theories when they are set up as empirical sciences (§xxx). As a complement, and keeping to this epistemological angle, we will argue for the need to introduce a genuine phenomenological component.

For the purpose of illustration and also to prepare the next steps, we will devote some pages to the case of formal grammars. It will be a question of distinctly exposing the workings of the gnoseological bias that affects such approaches. Specifically, we will show how their theoretical presuppositions condition the recognition of phenomena on a particular level of verbal awareness, both in terms of their constitutive forms (taken from the theory of models) and their metalinguistic qualifications, namely the judgements of admissibility which we know constitute the touchstone of such approaches.

Following this, we will turn to Saussurean structuralism, first of all on the grounds that, in response to the requirement previously formulated, it "frontally" takes charge of the phenomenological characteristics of its material, in the sense that the description it delivers, in its specific forms of appearance and existence, is not biased by the presuppositions of an arbitrarily chosen level of formal analysis (in this case, the logico-algebraic level). We will also, and above all, have recourse to Saussurean structuralism insofar as it constitutes a "complete" theory (in Curry's (1963) sense), *i.e.*, a theory that defines in its own device all the functions that operate in it. Thus, in particular, the predicate of admissibility occupies a clearly defined position in the Saussurean device, from the double point of view of its determination and its function.

To achieve this, we will propose a rapid morphodynamic reconstruction of the Saussurean theoretical apparatus. On this basis, it will then be possible to take up the phenomenological question, precisely by recalling how the morphodynamics of the Saussurean sign replicates, characterizes and enriches the Husserlian analysis of verbal consciousness. But above all, returning to the questions initially posed, we will be able to highlight, in such a theoretical framework, from the point of view of its operative forms and logic, what had been sensed with regard to the overlap of the forms of semiolinguistic objectivity and phenomenality, in other words, with regard to the participation of the "in itself" in the sphere of the "for oneself ".

Thus, in particular, it will appear that semiolinguistic forms as simply perceived (*i.e.*, their appearance) are in fact configured by a certain culturally determined idea of what signs are intended for, by certain decisions, collectively assumed, about their functions in social life and the life of the mind, for example, with respect to the semantic "yields" that are expected of them. Finally, among other things, we will see how, similar to the habitual body that frees the actual body from the "milieu" that assimilates it (cf. above), the Saussurean sign, by instructing a functional dissymmetry between the signifier and the signified, administers a release from the "expressive envelope".

IV-5 *Epistemological obstacles*

5.1   Generalities

In these lines, we will allow ourselves a few brief and very overarching considerations on the gnoseological situation of "modern" semiolinguistics, let us say from Saussure onwards.

First of all, it should be noted that during this period, epistemological questioning was an integral part of the main theoretical undertakings of semiolinguistics, albeit in different forms and in different ways.

This is particularly true of Saussure, who poses the very general question of the mode of existence and constitution of his object of study, of Hjelmslev, who for his part develops an epistemology specific to his objectives, but integrating certain fundamental presuppositions of classical epistemology (namely the form/matter articulation), and Chomsky, as well as almost all the works developed in his wake, who retained the Popperian epistemology of refutation as a standard of scientificity.

Contemporary semiolinguistics has not been left behind on these fundamental issues, and even though they are no longer dealt with head-on, these questions persist as if in the background, only to reappear in the form of warnings as soon as certain "classic" difficulties arise, particularly concerning the epistemic circle and the biases in the constitution of empirical data.

For, in the almost unanimous opinion of linguists, the sciences of signs and meaning are elaborated accompanied by a risk of circularity.

So, to cite only the most illustrious: Hjelmslev (who almost replicates the Saussurean formulation: "does the object determine and affect the theory, or does the theory determine and affect its object?" (Hjelmslev, 1969, p. 13) ; "as long as the method has not been applied, no so-called obvious facts will exist (those which some philosophers of language like to use as a starting point by appealing to naive realism, which, as we know, does not hold up to scientific examination" (Hjelmslev, 1985, p. 72). Likewise, Benveniste (1971, p. 119): "[D]escription first of all necessitates specification of adequate procedures and criteria, and that, finally, the reality of the object is inseparable from the method given for its description" (Benveniste, 1971, p. 101).

Closer, O. Ducrot (1995) recognizes that "it is not possible to distinguish the hypotheses serving for observation from those serving for explanation. To put it shortly, linguistics creates its object at the same time as it observes it", or R. Martin (1978, p. 5) who states while discussing the case of generative grammar, that "not without any reason whatsoever, the pitfall of tautology appears [...]: the 'ideal speaker-listener' is located at the starting point but also at the end point of the model". Let us cite Culioli (1999, p. 162) again, who, after having established the levels of representation involved in linguistic analysis, signals the existence of level-to-level interactions, hence "the risks of circularity and the illusionary explanations which support themselves upon that which is already the product of a buried operation." And when it comes to corpus linguistics, Dalbéra (2002) reminds us that "The corpus can only be a construct and [...] its construction forms an integral part of the theoretical lens through which the linguist intends to apprehend reality."

It would be easy, but tedious and probably useless, to multiply the quotes on this point. This being acknowledged.

This epistemological "anxiety" that gnawed at Saussure ("there is not a single term used in linguistics to which I attach any meaning"), in addition to, as we have seen, feeding on real difficulties (to which we will have to return in greater detail), also emanates from the gnoseological picture that semiolinguistics, through the plurality of its approaches, gives us to see.

For, as has already been pointed out, and as we (Piotrowski & Visetti, 2017b) have been able to write, what characterizes this picture is the proliferation of theoretical currents, their constant renewal, and, within the same currents, the diversity of descriptive devices. But what is most striking is the mutual disconnection of these different theoretical perspectives: the field of objects that each one installs, in a gesture that simultaneously establishes the data and their qualifications, is disjointed from those elaborated by other perspectives that are supposed to be competitors in that they would deal more or less appropriately with the same things. Confrontation then proves impossible, and the theoretical postures, mute to each other, can only be superimposed while waiting to be undone by age and institutional games.

No doubt, as we have already mentioned, these approaches can be recognized as having a certain amount of 'truth', at least in that each one delivers enlightening insights (even if partial) that none of the others render with the same acuity. But this partial 'truth' is thus distributed without any other facets being added to or opposed to it. At the same time, each of these approaches can boast a certain methodological rigor, in that it makes explicit types of constraints or regularities, which, when the descriptions are disproved (by the only data it allows itself), can lead to some rearrangements, generally limited to the conceptual periphery (cf. the 'safety belt' of theories)

This rather unsatisfactory situation reflects something essential to language, and which directly affects the question of its legitimate knowledge. For there is something of a paradox here: all these competing problematic, which often ignore each other, claim to produce a certain form of truth, from a position that is nevertheless fundamentally autarkic, incapable of entering into the interweaving of perspectives, problems and factualities that, in the natural sciences, characterizes 'positive' knowledge and the possibility of an empirical truth..

5.2   Popperism

We will now turn our attention to the 'dominant' gnoseological line, in the sense that it is used, more or less implicitly, in the empirical sciences as practiced in laboratories. This line, developed by Popper, is that of "refutation", and it is advisable to follow it not because it has a certain and absolute value, which is far from being the case (It has been criticized for leading to skepticism and, more importantly, its practicability is questionable), but because it carries

the values of intellectual probity, in the sense that it organizes the court of experience and the possibility of an unfavorable verdict on the theoretical views then put to the test - all things that are well summarized by (Boyer, 2000, p. 166): "most philosophers appear to now be persuaded that there exists no universal criteria of scientificity [...] though it is not uncommon to hear the same people complain that a theory [...] is not clearly testable, which presupposes that they accept the idea that if testability does not represent a necessary and sufficient condition of scientificity, it constitutes at least a desirable methodological ideal [...] testability being a virtue, and irrefutability, a vice" (Boyer 2000, p. 166). The Popperian frame of reference is therefore legitimate, and all the more so as its unequivocal conformation lends itself as a basis for epistemological analysis.

The principle of Popperian epistemology, namely falsification, has been in the making since the advent of classical thought. With the abandonment of a hermeneutic of the world (Foucault 1966), it is no longer a question of making things 'speak' but of 'giving them voice' and recognizing that this voice has an effective weight, in the sense that what 'the world says' is capable of contradicting the representations that we give ourselves of it.

Reality" is thus what the faculty of knowledge and its theoretical elaborations confront. Since, for obvious logical reasons (cf. below), this confrontation cannot conclude with the unconditional validation of the theory, it will only ever operate in the mode of denial. Reality is therefore to be taken as a capacity to invalidate the intellectual constructions that claim to account for it, and the architecture of theories of experience will be precisely that which ensures that systems of knowledge meet the world, or conversely give voice to the world, in its power of refutation.

As for the first point, namely, the negative significance of empirical reality, as incorporated in logical thought and constituted as an instance of evaluation, the matter is fairly obvious. This is because experimental results or observational data are always limited to the affirmation of themselves and therefore do not open up any universal truth. Also, "Theories are […] never empirically verifiable." (Popper, 2002, p. 18): the validity and falsity of a theory are not equally accessible poles, and only the falsity of theoretical apparatuses can actually be acquired. Precisely, the only deductive connection that can be established between premises relating to empirical observations, *i.e.* "[…] singular statements […] which apply only to the specific event in question" (*Ibid.*, p. 38), and theoretical statements of a higher level of generality, is the modus tollens, *i.e.* an implication establishing the falsity of a (universal) hypothesis H from the asserted negation (noted "~") of one of its (particular) conclusions C: "Such an argument to the falsity of universal statements is the only strictly deductive kind of inference that proceeds, as it were, in the 'inductive direction'; that is, from singular to universal statements." (*Ibid.*, p. 19) - that is: $((H \Rightarrow C)\ \&\ {\sim}C) \Rightarrow {\sim}H$.

It then remains to determine what architecture ensures "[…] for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience." (*Ibid.*, p. 18)

To do this, we must return to the very classical problem of the self-satisfiability of theoretical systems. At the outset, and this is an irrefutable fact of modern epistemology, there is the fact that the encounter of a theory with facts cannot be direct. As Frege pointed out, "The covering of a thing by a representation would only be possible if the thing were also a representation" (Frege, 1971, p. 172). But this is not the case: facts are 'dumb': they do not 'speak' any language, they do not carry any conceptual determination. And their promotion to the format of a "statement", by which only they are logically related to other statements, cannot be "neutral": the connection of "facts" to a conceptual system requires an instruction and a conformation of the said facts in the determination framework of the said system. Thus, the 'observational statements' postulated by logical empiricism, hybrid entities expressing

experience 'directly', without 'external' conceptual distortion, turned out to be chimeras. In the end, the 'data' with which the sciences deal is never 'raw', but always calibrated and synthesized under the unity of specific and systemic concepts.

But then the trap of self-satisfiability arises: since the possibility of a connection between empirical reality and theoretical forms presupposes (i) a qualification of the factualities (ii) through descriptive terms belonging to the theoretical apparatus used, then, inevitably, we fall into circularity. For when the data of experience are only ever the concrete replicas of the concepts that calibrate them, then the theoretical apparatus is necessarily 'right': nothing factual has the power to contradict them, since these, therefore, are the source of what can be confronted with them. In this radical epistemic configuration, the empirical world is analytically accessible, and experiential knowledge 'tautologizes'.

The answer to the problem of self-consistency, in its most basic form, is to articulate an overall theory T in (at least) two theoretical substructures, one 'turned' towards the phenomena as merely manifested - this will be the empirical substructure which is "[...] directly comparable] to the results of the various experiments expressed in the form of 'data models'" (Bitbol, 1998, p. 52); the other aims to account for the properties of the 'objectivities' that are manifested through these phenomena - this is the ontological substructure, which 'specifies the class of entities on which the experiments are considered to be carried out, and the relations supposed to exist between them' (*Ibid.*). We will call 'auxiliary' the theoretical component which relates the states and behaviors of the factualities studied, and which therefore operates as an observation system, and 'principal' the theoretical component where are formulated the concepts supposed to explain the observable functioning according to the prism of the auxiliary theory. Above all, and this is what preserves the circle of self-satisfaction, the descriptive apparatus of the auxiliary component, although combined with that of the main component to form a unitary theoretical system, must be independent in its principles from those of the main component.

At this stage, then, the articulation of a theory into two partially autonomous components ensures the possibility of a confrontational connection between, on the one hand, the concepts of the main device, and, on the other, the data of experience as accounted for by the auxiliary system. The problems of a connection to the empirical are thus entirely deferred to the auxiliary system -- problems that must now be examined in more detail

For if the two components (main and auxiliary) hold distinct gnoseological roles, the statements they produce are always theoretical statements. And, given the impossibility in principle of 'neutral' accounts of observation, how could it be otherwise? Popper admits this unambiguously. Thus, when he points out the absence of sharp demarcations between so-called gross observations and theoretical qualifications: "Almost every statement we make transcends experience. There is no sharp dividing line between an 'empirical language' and a 'theoretical language': we are theorizing all the time, even when we make the most trivial singular statement." (Popper, 2002, p. 443).

However, the auxiliary component will be given more credibility than the main component. This is because the statements under it (called "basic statements") are recognized as being "the most easily tested intersubjectively" (Popper, 1985, p. 62) - where the notion of intersubjectivity refers to the fact of an accepted consensus or convention as to the description of certain experience data. Basic statements are thus "[…] statements about whose acceptance or rejection the various investigators are likely to reach agreement." (Popper, 2002, p. 86) or "Basic statements are accepted as the result of a decision or agreement; and to that extent they are conventions." (Popper, 2002, p. 88)

In short, "basic statements" are empirical propositions formulated according to the categories and relations of a certain "auxiliary" theoretical prism and recognized, at a given moment of investigation, as being self-evident, or at least as having sufficient guarantees to be valid as touchstones. This is why the basic statements "tend to have" a phenomenological content, as attested by the central place that Popper gives to observation in space and time, *i.e.* to a qualification according to the forms of external and internal intuition :"Basic statements are therefore […] statements asserting that an observable event is occurring in a certain individual region of space and time." (Popper, 2002, p. 86). Thus, when it comes to semiolinguistic facts, we understand that the question of the forms of their phenomenality is an absolutely central issue.

5.3   The case of formal grammars

❶ It is agreed that with generative grammar linguistic knowledge has made a major advance: previously discursive and speculative in nature, it has been elevated, by the double imposition of a formal writing and a defined relationship to the empirical, to the rank of an authentic science: the formal writing being a guarantee of the univocity and stability of the theoretical notions as well as of the demonstrative sequences, and the relationship to the empirical being conceived in such a way that the facts can contradict the theoretical apparatus (Popperian conception).

Thus, Chomskyan linguistics, in its intention to constitute itself as a true science - and even if the conditions of a mathematization of its phenomena and the modalities of a confrontation with the empirical are only superficially treated (see discussion below) - can legitimately claim to integrate, in its very set-up, considerations and requirements of an epistemological nature.

It should be remembered, however, that epistemological questioning, insofar as it is a search for the principles and foundations on which to build authentic knowledge, did not wait for the "Chomskyan revolution" to find its place in reflection on the language fact and the development of knowledge about languages.

For the difficulty of producing a consistent discourse on languages, and more generally on signs and meaning, was felt very early on, as well as, as if in mirror image, the need for a clarification of the principles that would establish the foundations and provide the guarantee.

Let us recall that Saussure, troubled by the conceptual approximations of his contemporaries and the descriptive extravagances of his predecessors, and above all anxious to find the modalities of a rigorous way of thinking about the fact of language, a way of thinking that would reach its objective truth, introduces an epistemological dimension into his theoretical reflection, albeit without thematizing it or bringing it to a conclusion.

At the heart of Saussure's founding concerns is the question of the "point of view", *i.e.* the assimilation of the theoretical system to the object it is about. Thus, in all lucidity, and at the risk of weakening his discipline, Saussure observed that the "point of view" is introduced into the object it illuminates and thus participates in its reality, in other words, in more contemporary language, that all data is "impregnated" with theory: "Far from it being the object that antedates the viewpoint, it would seem that it is the viewpoint that creates the object" (Saussure, 1959, p. 8)

In truth, this is a question that goes far beyond linguistics, a classic question that contemporary epistemology has dealt with in various ways (*e.g.*, the Popperian solution, see above), but which remains critical in the field of semiotics and linguistics, even to the point of

jeopardising their claims to produce objective knowledge, or at least knowledge that satisfies the expectations and requirements of empirical science.

To establish, clarify and illustrate this point, let us briefly review the main key moments of the Chomskyan approach, and its impasses.

❷ It has thus been said that Chomsky, with the intention of establishing linguistics as a genuine empirical science, calibrates his theoretical apparatus according to the principles of the dominant epistemology in the natural sciences, namely the Popperian epistemology of refutation. And we know that the architecture of 'theories of experience' is based on the combination of two components, one main, the other observational (auxiliary)

But it happens, linguistic theories do not have an auxiliary component, *i.e.* an independent observation apparatus, and are therefore trapped in the circle of self-consistency - a situation we are now examining through generative grammar chosen here as a paradigmatic case.

As is well known, at the foundation of generative grammar are the notions of competence and performance. The notion of competence refers to the pure faculty of language conceived as the capacity to 'generate' a potentially unlimited number of 'sentences'. Two remarks immediately follow.

First of all, and to avoid any ambiguity, it should be stressed that the terms "production" or "engendering" are not to be taken in an "event" sense, *i.e.* that of an actual realization, but in the sense given to them by the theory of formal systems, *i.e.* as a principle of formation.

Secondly, concerning the notion of sentence. As it has been introduced, the notion of "sentence" is simply a synonym for "product of competence" or "product of the faculty of language". If we limit ourselves to this, this notion is only a denomination and therefore of little interest. In fact, its interest and its problematic depth are to be found in the articulation between competence and performance, which we now examine.

To a first approximation, the relationship between competence and performance can be seen as that between type and occurrence: a relationship of abstraction. Thus the sentence is to be taken as a linguistic datum considered independently of the material, contextual or subjective circumstances of its realization.

Whereas competence is a principle of formation of the linguistic object itself, performance refers to the contingent diversity of characters in which, and acts at the end of which, a language event is actually accomplished.

From this point of view, sentences are therefore "abstract" linguistic products: removed from the world in which they concretely occur and freed from the vagaries of their execution. A sentence is therefore like a pure "sample" of language: a "test statement", to which only the faculty of language can have access.

But the relationship between performance and competence is not simply one of abstraction, it is also and above all one of effectuation. For competence, as a pure faculty, requires to be put into action, and thus to be grasped by particular expressive intentions: the sentences administered by the faculty of language are not ideal entities floating all together in a strictly linguistic universe: they have a facticity, and especially in that they are related to specific dialogical purposes: they occur appropriately in this or that circumstance of the individual's psychological and social life, more or less disturbing, and also in correlation with all sorts of cognitive activities, which are not without interference either... All things that do not go without inducing numerous variations, alterations and even distortions on the effective product of the language faculty.

Competence thus has two facets, depending on whether it is opposed to active performance (effective and purposeful use of the language) or whether it is retained as a generic principle of language formatting.

If we focus on the first aspect of the relationship between competence and performance, the language data, which are then promoted to "sentences", are "dematerialized", distanced from the speaker subject, in other words, they are given a kind of autonomous existence. From this perspective, competence establishes sentences as "third person" elements of a universe of objects arrayed before the linguist, and thus as elements "in themselves" delivered as such to the gaze of the linguist -- the latter being understood as an instance of pure linguistic awareness, *i.e.* of competence, which alone is able to grasp them.

If we now consider the relationship between performance and competence from the point of view of effectuation, we must broaden its functional meaning. From this point of view, competence is "mobilized" by performance in the elaboration of a finalized language composition. Thus, even if the result does not conform to the principles of competence due to the disturbances induced by the performance, the latter, as if by "inheritance", is still involved in this altered production, which is thus provided with a linguistic identity and status.

This explains the paradoxical linguistic content or consistency of lexical or morphemic configurations judged "inadmissible" - configurations which, even though they fall outside the field of linguistic objectivity, precisely because they exceed its laws, nevertheless retain a linguistic relevance. This singular conjuncture, which has of course already been noted (for example Bach[115], can be explained directly by what has been said above, but deserves to be discussed in order to shed more light on its epistemological significance and scope.

First of all, it should be noted that in such a functional picture, competence will not only be a faculty for generating sentences, which are then "well formed" in principle, but also an ability to discriminate between admissible sentences that satisfy the rules of formation that is competence versus those that do not.

Secondly, as we have seen, if an inadmissible sentence nevertheless has a linguistic status it is because it undergoes a distortion. It follows that an inadmissible sentence is not an absolute empirical datum, isolated and to be treated as such, but a relative datum: it is the manifestation of a certain alteration of a sentence that conforms to the rules of competence. We can understand why, for linguists, the empirical data are not the sentences, admissible or inadmissible, but the "differential pairs".

Now it turns out that these mechanisms of distortion, insofar as they must conform to the principle of a competence as conceived in its first kind of relation to performance -- namely as a regime of constitution of autonomous objects, *i.e.* detached as much from the speech acts that are at their source as from their contexts of realization -- are expressed in terms of a syntagmatic and paradigmatic crossing : where the paradigmatic is the axis of variations according to which, by substitution of a more or less licit component, an alteration of the syntagmatic chain is made possible.

We thus see the epistemic loop being tied up. For the variational modalities, which are a reprise of the methodology of the Baconian tables, and by means of which linguistic objectivities are instituted and determined, are discovered here to be conditioned by the a priori notions of

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[115]After recalling that the objective of a linguistic theory lies in that it "characterizes and provides for all sentences of language and only them", Bach (1973, p. 25) observes that "the instruction 'all and only them' is almost a tautology, a bit like the proposition 'an adequate physical theory must account for all physical phenomena' (and not for theological phenomena, etc.).")

competence and performance, which themselves participate in the elaboration of linguistic data.

In fact, through the prism of the competence-performance articulation, linguistic factualities are profiled as autonomous objects that form a tableau for a speaker-subject, who is then in the position of observer, and thus acquire a specific mode and forms of appearance, in short a particular way of being present to a linguistic consciousness conceived precisely as competence. This is to say that the competence-performance pair determines the empirical facture of language data.

But that is not all. For such a regime of existence and constitution of linguistic data, combined with the modes of variation to which they are subject in this format (syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes) and in particular in rupture of enunciative acts, is correlative of a quite specific awareness of admissibility.

Indeed, by variational means, the decoupling of an awareness of grammaticality and an awareness of semanticity will be recorded, in short the decoupling of syntax and semantics, each carrying its order of admissibility.

And since it is precisely the terrain of the possible in language, of its systematicities and its functioning, and whose limits are revealed by variational procedures, that the linguistic laws squared, we can thus clearly see the exact overlap of the categorical articulation of competence-performance, of the empirical configuration of data (or form of presence to a linguistic intuition), and the regimes of linguistic objectivity.

And it is indeed a completely different awareness of admissibility, correlative of another form of linguistic objectivity, which would have been put in place if the dimension of variations retained were, for example, of an enunciative nature. In the latter case, as Antoine Culioli (1990, 1999) has revealed, an utterance such as "a dog barks", perfectly correct at the grammatical level, is recognized as ill-formed when apprehended from the point of view of discursive activity.

With regard to generative grammar, the situation is thus as follows. Without doubt, the competence-performance articulation induces a linguistic object consciousness where the structure of the phenomena (the format of the data), the experimental methodology (variational procedure) and the regimes of legality (grammatical vs. semantic admissibility, in particular) overlap each other, thus plunging the Chomskyan model into the circle of self-consistency. But it would be unfair to limit the picture of generative grammar to this epistemological failure alone, however acute it may be. On the one hand, this difficulty is shared by all approaches to semiolinguistics (*cf.* Milner's quotation below), and on the other hand, at its own level of analysis and qualification, the generative model presents a remarkable coherence that should also be mentioned, and above all that should be integrated into a more comprehensive perspective in which the problem of self-consistency, which affects semiolinguistic knowledge, can be resolved.

❸ To this end, let us first recall that the Chomskyan theoretical edifice was conceived in such a way as to restore the main functional and structural features induced by the categorical opposition competence-performance, namely, essentially, on the one hand, the decoupling of the syntactic and semantic planes (cf. *supra*), and more specifically of phonology, in the second place, the handling of 'incorrect' configurations with respect to the rules of good linguistic formation, and finally, as a central point, the expression of competence as a set of rules governing the production of 'correct' configurations, namely 'sentences'.

The problematic of formal systems and model theory satisfies exactly these requirements: a formal system, as such, is a device administering the assemblages of pure formal units as well

as the connections by which they acquire an identity of a relational nature. A formal system thus captures the idea of an abstract syntax of categorical terms and relations that can be matched to sets of values, semantic or phonological, which are then taken care of in terms of "models".

Considering the set of "well-formed expressions" (in the sense of the theory of formal systems, *i.e.* the set of suitable assemblies of elementary terms) and attributing a linguistic status to them, it will then be a matter of distinguishing between those that are licit and those that are illicit from the standpoint of linguistic legality.

We can already see that the set of "well-formed expressions" that groups together licit and illicit compositions in language allocates a place to the latter within the theoretical device. As for the demarcation between the possible and the impossible in language, it is rendered in the framework of formal systems by a choice of axioms and rules of inference which we know generate a subset of well-formed expressions (then said demonstrable and called theorems) and which we will require to coincide with the set of expressions admissible in language.

In the Hilbertian project, it was a matter of relating truth (mathematics) to demonstrability, in the Chomskyan project, it is admissibility (in language) that is to be related to demonstrability. And since the awareness of admissibility is coextensive with linguistic legality (what is admissible is what conforms to the laws and what is inadmissible is what contravenes the laws), in this perspective, linguistic legality takes the form of a set of axioms and rules of inference.

It should be noted that this theoretical perspective leads to a conventionalist conception of the linguistic sign: the two sides of the sign, namely the signifier and the signified, belong to distinct universes and are constituted for themselves independently of each other. The principle of their connection is that of an arbitrary and conventional correspondence. Using here Curry's concepts and terminology (Curry, 1963), we should indeed distinguish between the formal object itself, its presentation, and its representation. The formal object ("unspecified object") is a pure ideal atom, indeterminate in the sense that its identity proceeds from the only relations it contracts with other formal atoms, which relations are defined in the so-called "theoretical" part of the system, namely a choice of axioms and rules of inference. For obvious practical reasons, these formal atoms are given a graphical "presentation" (in general) and an "interpretation", *i.e.* they are made to correspond to an element of a certain universe of objects (the model) whose formal system is precisely supposed to make the order and systematizations explicit.

In this problematic framework the signified of a sign is then an "interpretation" and the signifier can be taken either as a "presentation" or as an "interpretation" in a universe of perceptual items.

❹ What must be retained from all this is first of all the impeccable epistemological consistency of the Chomskyan approach.

Already, the formalization is not a writing device: a kind of shorthand intended to give a formal existence to the concepts of the theory.

For it is the same conception of structures and objects which, on the one hand, is accomplished at the level of analysis (logical-algebraic) and in the formal devices (model theory) chosen, and which, on the other hand, is induced by the competent-performance categorical opposition at the basis of the Chomskyan perspective.

Thus, on both sides, the same principle of object constitution is already at work: they are pure formal atoms, univocal although undifferentiated, and whose identity is established through the relations they contract. Further on, the sign is conceived in the mode of a correspondence

between its phonological presentation or interpretation on the one hand and its semantic interpretation on the other. Furthermore, the articulation between formal system and model overlaps with that between syntax and semantics. Further on, the demarcation between the possible and the impossible in language is reinvested in terms of demonstrability. Finally, and this is where the generative approach takes advantage of the epistemological principles of the empirical sciences: insofar as language data are differential pairs, *i.e.* sequences assigned with a value of admissibility, positive or negative, the testing of theoretical analyses will be carried out with respect to this distribution of the possible and the impossible in language. Very clearly, an analysis will be refuted when the calculation establishes as admissible data which, on observation, are recognized as non-admissible.

But even with this high epistemological consistency, the generative perspective has two major flaws that cannot be ignored.

On the one hand, the variational dimension that links correct sentences with their inadmissible distortions within differential pairs is lost here: both admissible and inadmissible sequences are mutually isolated and independent elements of the large class of "well-formed expressions".

On the other hand, let us recall that the data of the theory are configured according to the same principles that regulate its objectivity. We have seen that the competence-performance articulation determines the form of the phenomena, namely a certain way of being present to linguistic consciousness, and dually determines their character of admissibility, which is a direct expression of a linguistic legality. Hence a circle of self-consistency, in other words, in Saussure's words, it is the theory that creates its object.

This last failure is undoubtedly of a redhibitory nature, and it will certainly be necessary to diagnose the causes in order to overcome it.

However, the generative approach does not lack empirical relevance, and it must therefore be recognized that it is partly independent of its theoretical framework and categorical foundations. For we did not wait for theorizing the opposition between competence and performance to see an awareness of grammaticality in operation. This means that the point of view on linguistic phenomena that is deployed in the generative framework has, so to speak, a natural existence: in the sense that it is not suspended to the elaboration of a conceptual apparatus with a determining aim.

Rather than denying generative theory, without another trial and without opening up a wider discussion, any claim to tell an empirical truth, on the grounds that it creates its object from scratch, it will be more reasonable and useful to recognize the fact of an awareness of grammaticality and, giving credit to the principles that establish it and to the structures that underlie it, to recognize "retroactively" the existence of a certain level of language, of a certain plane of linguistic reality where the forms of objects and functionings that generative theory exposes have an empirical truth. In short, it will be a matter of conceiving linguistic factuality in the mode of a dynamic or a flow that sees different phases of organization succeeding one another, one of which is that which the generative approach relates, namely a sign conceived as an association of a symbol and a meaning, a syntax as a calculation and hierarchical composition of units, and an awareness of grammaticality vs. semanticity.

Correlatively, it will be necessary to correct the first failure, mentioned above, of the generative approach, namely the independence of admissible and inadmissible sequences: It will be necessary to draw a theoretical framework that takes into account not so much the fact that incorrect sequences proceed from undue twists on correct sequences, but more fundamentally that in language incorrectness is logically linked to correctness, or in other words that the

possible and the impossible in language are linked in that they participate in one and the same dynamic of object formation.

5.4   Phenomenology as a recourse

In the framework of an epistemology of refutation, and as we have seen above, the solution to the problem of circularity consists in interweaving systems of qualification (within a unitary theoretical framework), and in assigning to one (called 'auxiliary component') the role of observation post, and to the other ('main component') the position of theory to be tested.

This solution to the problem of a (constitutive) assimilation of the theoretical forms with the empirical data has been reformulated by J.-C. Milner (1989, p. 127) in the following terms:

> "in order for an instance of refutation to be possible, the experimental resources [that is, following the preceding formulation, a protocol for manipulation and description that is regulated in function of the concepts of T_2] should enjoy logical independence from the propositions being tested [that is, the propositions of T_1]. This independence would of course be ensured if there existed raw observations implying no theories. [...] Let's concede, however, as it seems to have been established by epistemology and even more by the history of sciences, that there is no such thing as a raw observation, that there is no observation which is not itself founded upon a theory. [Therefore,] independence in the second degree would suffice: It is only necessary for the propositions of the theory which serve as foundations for experimentation [that is, T_2] to be independent from the proposition being tested [that is, T_1]."

The question is to determine whether linguistics satisfies such a coupled configuration in coordinating an observation device (T_2) that is independent from the "main" theoretical system (T_1). Regarding this point, the proposition by Milner (1989) is clear. Here is the essence of his argument:

> "It is most probable that the manipulation of linguistic examples has the properties of experimental manipulation [but] these examples [and their variational manipulation] all incorporate a minimal grammar. It is possible [...] to treat this minimal grammar as an instrument for observation, [...] but doing so would be a simplification [which needs to be rectified]: a minimal grammar [...] is still a grammar, [and it therefore constitutes] an embryonic linguistic theory. The consequence of this is that the instance of observation [minimal grammar] cannot be made fully independent from the linguistic theory itself" (*Ibid.*, p. 128). "Also, circularity can never be fully eliminated: Any example of language, as it enables linguistic reasoning, already supposes linguistic reasoning" (*Ibid.*, p. 129). "In short, in linguistics, there are experiments, but there are no pure observations, [that is,] what is deemed an observation always includes a fragment of a linguistic theory [...], and this means exactly the following: that linguistics has no other recourse than itself for establishing the distinction between linguistic possibility and impossibility —it does not enjoy such a thing as the instance of independent observation provided by the structure of the spatio-temporal event. [...] Now the boundary between linguistic possibility and impossibility constitutes a concept in itself. Hence the circularity [already] described" (Ibid., p. 130). "Linguistics [is] scientia unica: [...] it cannot base itself on any science which is logically prior and locally independent while constructing its modalities of observation and there is no other science than itself which talks about the data that are relevant to it" (*Ibid.*, p. 131). Never does a synthetic proposition of linguistics take into account [...] any particular proposition from biology [or from any other science]" (*Ibid.*, p. 133).

Unable to address its phenomena otherwise than by making them comply with the principles it endows itself with, linguistics would therefore be condemned to the vacuousness of self-consistency. It goes without saying that this thesis has been contested, but one must also acknowledge that the counter-arguments put forth (*e.g.* Auroux (1998) or Lazard (1999, 2001, 2006)) are far from convincing.

The aforementioned obstacles to the elaboration of an authentic linguistic science are very real and seem difficult to overcome. But it would be too hasty to conclude that they represent a definite impasse: There exists indeed at least two other paths for overcoming the obstructions stemming from the apparent "isolation" of the linguistic sciences.

The first, oriented towards the most recent advances in the neurosciences, is that of connecting the linguistic qualifications with the neurobiological correlates of linguistic processing— correlates of which the observation is, at least in part, independent from any linguistic hypothesis, and which should therefore provide the angle of observation which the linguistic sciences may have lacked until now.

We will not explore this path here, but it should be emphasized, in order to prevent any triumphalism, that, leaving aside the many technical and methodological difficulties raised by the observation of neurobiological processes, nothing allows us to presume that it will lead to the empowerment of a linguistic system (with a descriptive vocation) satisfying the architectural conditions of theories of experience (in the sense of refutation). Indeed, other outcomes are possible, and in particular (Piotrowski, 2017) the one where the neurobiological basis will lead to the validation of theoretical perspectives that do not account for the empirical facts of language in their properties and functioning but for the processes at work in the constitution of the said facts as signifying phenomena. We will say no more about this, devoting our attention to the second path, which is that of phenomenology.

Situated within the framework of an epistemology of refutation, it will be a question of proceeding to a descent, from theoretical level to theoretical level, up to the ultimate base of the series of connections between "principal" and observational ("auxiliary") components that articulate scientific scaffolding, in order to reach the level of phenomena as intuited objects and the constitutive forms of their manifestation, which we know hold a privileged status in the methodology of the empirical sciences: "in a last resort, it is always on the basis of phenomenological statements that theories are rejected or accepted" (Boyer, 2000, p.181).

During the process of the construction of linguistic knowledge, the determination of the forms of the linguistic phenomenon thus represents an issue of utmost importance: Following the same relation as kinematics with respect to dynamics, they are likely to constitute the first angle of observation on the basis of which the determinations resulting from the theoretical devices are to be confronted.

We will emphasize that, furthermore, the phenomenological question overlies the issue of theoretical architectures inasmuch as it proceeds from the liminalities of any empirical investigation. Indeed, it is the job of any science concerned with facts to clearly delimit the field of factualities it endeavors to study: If the ambition of the linguist is "to constitute the descriptive framework for any possible language, [it can only be accomplished] once the facts of experience it opts to consider as defining its domain have been retained" (Granger, 1979, p. 200).

But if the question of the regimes of constitution of linguistic manifestation is eminently crucial, it is apparent that it remains open—at least if we refuse, in order to maintain the essential character of linguistic phenomena, to reduce the signifier to the format of the symbol, that is, to see it as a simple concrete marking (graphical or acoustic) of which the identification proceeds from a type/occurrence relation, or if one contests any reduction of the sign as manifested to the forms of spatio-temporality - a rather astonishing conception, in truth, but one that may have been defended because of a confusion between intuition and perception and, consequently, a reduction of phenomenality, as "being there", to spatio-temporal existence.

For example, reflecting upon the sense to be given to the expression "to encounter" when it is a question of linguistic occurrences, and while discussing what an empirical proposition may be in linguistics, Milner (1989, p. 50) asserts that: "the answer is apparently clear: the fact in language X is to be encountered [or not] in time and space." But he continues by acknowledging that "we do not really know what to encounter means at such a time"—or, at least, that since it is a matter of linguistic data, the [expression] "to encounter" does not take exactly the same meaning as it does in the natural sciences. Likewise, Auroux (1998, p. 113) who, admitting that "sooner or later, the fundamental question must be asked: What exists in terms of language?", continues by noting that "[if] in the ordinary sense of existing, there only exists that which is located in time and space [then] in terms of language, the problem is to know whether this ordinary sense of existing is sufficient", following which he furthermore recognizes, without providing an answer, that "the hypothesis of insufficiency is probably the most widespread among both philosophers and linguists."

This being acknowledged—and to conclude: The phenomenological question rightly occupies a cardinal position within the landscape of issues pertaining to the linguistic sciences. The recognition of the forms of linguistic manifestation is essential inasmuch as it delivers a frame of determinations to which all theoretical devices must refer, following one mode or another (assimilation, confrontation), and this in order to serve, as it operates as an absolute reference for linguistic knowledge, as much as a touchstone for empirical evaluation than as a bedrock for intersubjective evidences.

It is noteworthy that the path indicated here is not a fallow one: the question of the phenomenological structure of the linguistic sign has been deeply worked on by Husserl since the first *Logical Research* until, at least, the 1908 *Lessons on the theory of signification*. We therefore have a theoretical apparatus that accounts for the phenomenal structure of the sign, and, insofar as the epistemological deficiencies previously recorded are admitted and remedied, it will be up to linguistics to have recourse to this support by combining it with the systems of qualification that it will have developed elsewhere.

But a doubt remains: if, from a Popperian perspective, the phenomenological determination of semiolinguistic material is required as an observational component of an empirical theory, there is no guarantee that the forms of semiotic manifestation that will be derived from a phenomenological analysis will be suitable for this functional role. And this is precisely the situation we are about to face.

IV-6 The Saussurean perspective

As we had announced, we will now turn to Saussurean structuralism, precisely in its morphodynamic formulation. This choice is largely motivated by the possibility of a "complete formalization" (in Curry's sense), *i.e.* a formalization that integrates into its device the totality of the operators that the theory uses. What is essentially in question here is the differential of admissibility.

We have seen that the Chomskyan approach makes use of admissibility predicates but does not integrate them into the computational system: the admissibility predicate is not a concept taken in charge and determined in the theoretical framework in the strict sense (set of symbols, expressions, relations, or axioms and theorems), but a notion that functions on a metatheoretical level. Precisely, let us recall: the opposition admissible-irreceivable in language is translated by the differential demonstrable-non-demonstrable, thus by a distinction whose terms are not predicates of the theory (unary relations) qualifying objects (combination of terms) but metatheoretical predicates in that they relate the possibility of conducting or not conducting a calculation (demonstration) leading to their object.

It is easy to see that a semiolinguistic theory that includes the notion of admissibility must account for it (determine it) in its own terms, in order to guarantee the authentic presence of metalanguage in language. However, let's insist on it, this is not the case with formalist approaches simply because the admissibility judgment is not characterized as a concept of the theory that determines its objects, but as the possibility of "generating" (producing by means of inferences) the object in question.

Thus, while in language "being admissible" is claimed (or not) by a sentence in the same way as "being an adjective" is claimed (or not) by a word, in the formalist perspective "being admissible" corresponds to "being computable" which is not a constitutive predicate of the theoretical device as such and thus carried by an expression but a (metatheoretical) judgement about the functioning of the theoretical system, namely about its capacity to produce such or such an expression. It follows that such a judgement is in no way guaranteed by the system it relates to - and indeed, the question of the computability of a given expression does not always have an answer -- this is in radical contrast to the judgement of admissibility that a speaking subject is always able to assign (by his "competence"), and even more so: to specify or to nuance.

Now, to integrate the admissibility judgement into the "system" of language is to give it a nomological value. This is not to say that other values cannot be assigned to it, but from the perspective of this paper, the admissibility judgement must be placed in a gnoseological perspective that aims to determine semiolinguistic objects through the laws (of their functioning) that constitute them. In line with Bach's observations, for example, the question of admissibility is directly related to existence and non-existence in language. And correlatively, joining Husserl's views, it is to say that the laws that regulate the linguistic system have the character of laws of essence.

On this point, let us recall that Husserl distinguishes between the "senseless" ("or nonsensical") and the "absurd" ("or counter-sensical"): It is necessary to not confuse "the true meaningless […] with another quite different meaninglessness, *i.e.* the a priori impossibility of a fulfilling sense." (Husserl, 2001a, p. 202). Whereas the first (nonsense) concerns the true forms of linguistic objectivity, that is, the regime of meaningful intentions and the laws of their complexions which condition the very existence of meanings, the second (absurdity) concerns the intuitive or imaginational correlates by which the intended meaning takes the form of an actual representation within consciousness. In the first case, what is in question, thus, is the very existence of an object of meaning.

Thus, confronted with a random assortment of words, "it is apodictically clear that no such meaning can exist, that significant parts of these sorts, thus combined, cannot consist with each other in a unified meaning" (Husserl, 2001b, p. 67), and that the apodictical consciousness of the impossibility of such an assortment attests to essential laws of meaning, in other words, "[to] laws governing the existence or non-existence of meanings in the semantic sphere." (Husserl, 2001b, p. 68). Also, the expression which would be "nonsensical", inasmuch as it contravenes to linguistic regimes of legality, would be devoid of any intentional capacity, and, therefore, would be devoid of linguistic existence: "nonsense" is the annihilation of any form of linguistic object.

In the second case, the expression complex presents an absurd character which does not put into question the existence of a meaning, but expresses the impossibility of fulfillment, for example, by an illustrative explicitation: The absurdity, or countersense, is the impossibility of conferring to an existing meaning a "mental image" which actualizes it. The absurd expression round square "really yields a unified meaning, having its mode of 'existence' or being in the realm of ideal meanings, but it is apodictically evident that no existent object can

correspond to such an existent meaning" (Husserl, 2001b, p. 67): "the sense of an absurd expression is such as to refer to what cannot be objectively put together." (Husserl, 2001a, p. 209).

As we shall see in what follows, Saussure structuralism makes it possible to satisfy these two requirements: on the one hand, to integrate the admissibility differential into the functional order of the semiolinguistic system, and on the other hand, to give the laws that administer admissibility the status of laws of essence.

IV-6.1 *Morphodynamics of the Saussurean sign*

We report here in summary form on a set of works developed in Piotrowski (1997, 2009 and 2017).

6.1.1 *Introduction*

Supported by the work of R. Thom and J. Petitot, particularly the latter's schematization of structural categorization, the "morphodynamics (henceforth MD) of the sign" proposes to establish the functional architecture of the Saussurean sign in an "adequate" mathematical writing in the sense that the mathematical notions retained express precisely the formal content of Saussurean structural intuitions.

To do this, we will proceed in two stages: first, we will uncover the functional architecture of the sign, as well as the formal meaning of its main components and articulations, and then we will produce the appropriate mathematical expression.

6.1.2 *The functional architecture of the sign*

The nodal points of Saussurean thought, where all the information on the structural configuration of languages is concentrated, are essentially three in number. First, there is the principle of arbitrariness, and then there are what we might call the two "fundamental equations" of Saussurean structuralism, namely two equivalences with a definitory scope: on the one hand, the equation "opposition = differences + syntagmatic/paradigmatic relations", and on the other hand, the definition of value: "value = relation of comparison + relation of exchange". It is these last two "equations" that will be the focus of our attention here.

6.1.2.1 Opposition and difference

In a passage from *Cours* II (Godel, 1969, p. 193), where he discusses and compares the "principal characters" of graphic and linguistic signs, Saussure makes a distinction between the regime of differentiality, which he then equates with negativity, and the regime of oppositiveness. In order to establish the specificity of each of these regimes in strict compliance with Saussure's letter, we must consider Saussure's definition of opposition, namely: "difference in conjunction with a relation" (Godel, 1969, p. 200) - bearing in mind that there are two kinds of relations: the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic - which we will note by the equation "Opp = # + S&P" (Opp for opposition, # for difference and S&P for syntagmatic and paradigmatic).

Contrary to what this formula might suggest, the opposition is not homogeneous to the difference. The latter is not simply the former plus S&P connections, and their fields of application are quite distinct. Indeed, while oppositions concern signs in their entirety, differences operate separately at the levels of substances of expression and content in order to establish signifiers and signifieds respectively: "two signifiers or signifieds are different, two signs are opposed" (Saussure *in* Godel, 1969, p. 153). The incompleteness of relations of

difference is thus affirmed: although they participate in the elaboration of semiolinguistic identities, they are not sufficient to constitute them.

In this equation, the "relational" dimension (the "S&P relations") thus appears as a principle promoting differences into oppositions: S&P relations inscribe differences into the order of the (sign) system. More precisely: the play of S&P relations accomplishes the structural conversion and connection of the regimes of differentiation that operate at the planes of substances to produce signs as oppositional identities.

It will then be necessary to explain precisely how this systemic conversion of difference takes place, *i.e.* how the equation "Opp = # + S&P" is effectively implemented. And to do this, we must begin by specifying the nature of the relations of difference on the planes of expression and content.

6.1.2.2 Differences in content plane (signifiers)

On this point, everything has been said: the Saussurean intuition of the differences that configure the substance of content into signifieds is a topological and dynamic intuition: difference is thought of as a system of discontinuities (a network of boundaries) that categorizes a supposedly homogeneous substrate space (of content) into adjoining sub-domains (the signifieds in relationships of reciprocal limitation). And this topological intuition is coupled with a dynamic dimension. For the network of boundaries dividing the substrate space into signifieds is fundamentally the actualization of an equilibrium configuration to which underlying dynamics, expressed spatially as expansionist propensities, reach by reciprocally limiting themselves.

Here again, Saussure's descriptions of the relationships between signifieds leave no place for doubt, particularly in the passages on synonymic relationships: "[A]ll words used to express related ideas limit each other reciprocally; synonyms like French *redouter* 'dread,' *craindre* 'fear,' and *avoir p*eur 'be afraid' have value only through their opposition: if *redouter* did not exist, all its content would go to its competitors" (Saussure, 1959, p. 116), or: "[I]f, by any chance, we had chosen only two signs to begin with, all meanings would have been distributed among the two of them." (Saussure *in* Godel 1969, p. 199).


6.1.2.3 Differences in expression plane (signifiers)

As far as the differences between signifiers are concerned, the matter is more complex: Saussure recognizes the differential character (in the topological and dynamic sense) of phonemes (which are "oppositive, relative and negative entities") but he does not recognize that signifiers have the same formal nature: the relationships of difference between signifiers are not topological and dynamic, but algebraic. Precisely, according to Saussure, signifiers are to be differentiated with regard to the number, quality and order of the units that make them up (phonemes).

In this way, signifiers have identities (specific arrangements of phonetic components) which are not conditioned by their mutual differences but, on the contrary, are based on them (in terms, therefore, of number, quality and order). At the level of the substance of expression, the differences between signifiers are therefore not productive but resultative. The transition from substance to form (semiolinguistics) will then consist in retaining and promoting the relational fact alone (of differences) and correlatively reducing the signifiers to the rank of polar terms of this relationship. The signifiers will then be referred to as "distinctive" differences (vs. "negative" differences between the signifieds).

6.1.2.4 Structural consequences

With these details on the relations of difference, we can usefully reconsider the Saussurean conception of a language: "[…] as a series of contiguous subdivisions marked off on both the indefinite plane of jumbled ideas (*A*) and the equally vague plane of sounds (*B*)" (Saussure, 1959, p. 112) - a conception illustrated by the famous schema of two undulating masses whose meeting is administered by a differential principle (vertical lines) symmetrically instituting signifieds and signifiers, each elaborated at its own level according to reciprocal relations of limitation.
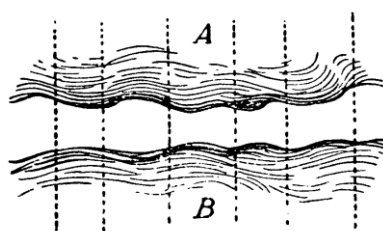
Let us then note by "#" the "distinctive" difference relation (between signifiers), by "/" the negative differentiation relation (reciprocal limitation), and by "↔" the functional connection between the differences of signifiers and signifieds. We have thus moved from the scheme of a "correlation of differential relations operating on two amorphous masses", *i.e.* the formula "$sia_1/sia_2 \leftrightarrow sié_1/sié_2$", to the formula "$sia_1\#sia_2 \leftrightarrow sié_1/sié_2$".

This clearly breaks the symmetry of the sign, as it is set out in many passages of the Course - a symmetry that is, moreover, called into question by Saussure himself, notably through a radical modification, in the third course, of the diagram of the sign, where the double arrow (between signifier and signified) is replaced by a single arrow (from the signifier to the signified - which we will note as sia→sié), and correlatively, through the concept of value, which introduces an oriented "relation of signification" (or "exchange" relation, noted Rs) between the signifier (thought of as value) and its "material" counterpart (external to the system, whose items are noted here as *a, b, c...*).

6.1.2.5 Functional architecture

All of the above information acquired can then be collated into the following three-formula system:

(1) $sia_1\#sia_2 \leftrightarrow sié_1/sié_2$

(2) $sia \rightarrow sié$

(3) $sia \rightarrow [Rs] \rightarrow$ *a, b, c…*

Three formulas which, with a few arbitrations and adaptations, can be quite naturally integrated into a system. To do this, it is sufficient to

- orientate in (1) the correlation between differences in signifiers and signifieds,

So (4) $sia_1\#sia_2 \Rightarrow sié_1/sié_2$

- observe that the data in (4) and (3) allows us to deduce (2) which can therefore be removed.

The resulting block diagram is then as follows:

Notations:

- signs α/A and β/B (following the signifier/signified pattern);

- *a, a', a"... b, b', b"...*: counterparts in substance of α and β (*via* Rs);

- the dotted line notes a differential relationship (boundary) categorizing the substance of the content into adjoining sub-domains.
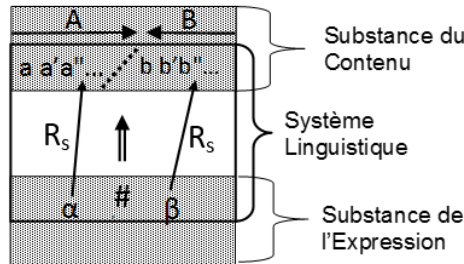
To complete the set-up, three steps remain to be taken:

- (i) to provide a mathematical determination of the differential relationships in the plane of content;

- (ii) to account for the double arrow "$\Rightarrow$";

For the first point, the solution is delivered to us "turnkey" by the MD device, which precisely accounts for the processes of differential categorization (installation of boundaries) of a substrate space. Let us come to this.

6.1.3   MD characterization

Very briefly, what the MD model teaches us is that the boundaries *K* categorizing a homogeneous substrate space *W* are to be thought of as the trace in this space of the instabilities of an internal space *F* of qualitative dynamics (potential functions f_i) which determine mutually competing states (m_i) and which these substrate units "control" (field σ).

In other words, the units A, H, B of the substrate space, here of the substance of the content, are to be considered as control parameters of dynamic forms, respectively f_A, f_H, f_B, each determining a certain actual state (the absolute minimum) in opposition to other then virtual states (the relative minimums). And the 'border' units H in substrate space are precisely those that determine unstable dynamics, especially dynamics where several states equally claim (equality of the relative minima m_1 and m_2) to be realized. The following figure (case of the "cusp" singularity) provides an illustration.
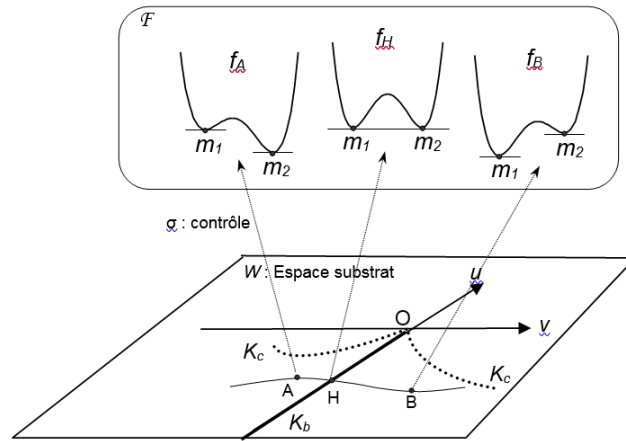
In order to give a precise and adequate account of the emergence of differential relations (topological and dynamic) installing signifieds in a substance of content, it will therefore suffice to assign to the occurrences of substance the function of a parameter of control of dynamic forms, in other words to consider the substance of content as an external space W of control of dynamics - which is what the following diagram provides:
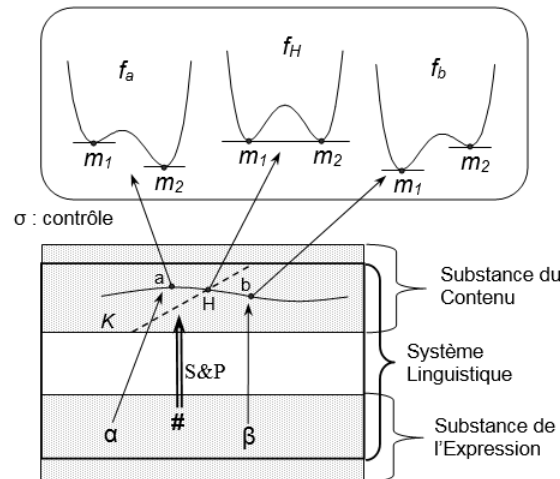
In this functional architecture, the exchange relation "$\rightarrow$" (between α (resp. β) and a (resp. b)) is then promoted to the role of a control, which we will call "primary". Precisely: the exchange relation between a unit of expression, for example α, and the unit a of content substance that it points to is in fact extended by the field σ from W to F. Now it turns out that by the effect of the functional composition "σ o $\rightarrow$", and with regard to the processes of categorization that constitute its structural outcome, the relation "$\rightarrow$" receives, in a logic of status feedback, the functional position of a control, which is then "primary".

In this way, the term α (of the plane of the expression), through its exchange relation with the content unit a, happens to determine, *via* the secondary control σ from W to F, a dynamic f_A whose state m_2 is actualized in a context of competition (for realization) with a state m_1, which would be actualized if the control happened to be commanded by the expression unit β - which is expressed by a differential structuring (boundary) of the content substance.

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Before addressing the previous point (ii), which will lead us to consider the MD not of the isolated sign but of the S&P interactions between signs, it should be noted here that the functional scheme set up does justice, very directly indeed, to the undivided (albeit dissymmetrical) unity of the sign. Simply because the units of expression, insofar as they control the emergence of boundaries in the substance of the content, in other words, insofar as they determine the production of signifieds, are directly concerned by the differences in meaning that they administer. Conversely, since the existence of the signifieds is entirely dependent on the control of the signifiers, the signifieds are inconceivable outside the functional connection that institutes them, thus achieving an undivided unity of form and meaning.

It should also be noted that the MD device has a phenomenological meaning, which we present below in its most rudimentary form.

IV-6.2   Phenomenological signification

Let us first recall that to account for the phenomenological characteristics of the word-sign (the "secondary" or "accessory" character of the signifier with respect to the signified, which in turn "captures" consciousness) Husserl appeals to the structure of an attentional field. It is then the positions that the objects of the perceptual and significant aims occupy in relation to each other in this organic structure that give them the phenomenological qualities and the respective statuses of signifier and signified.

The structure of the attentional field is articulated according to four modalities of "directedness": the "backdrop" mode, the secondary "noticing", the primary "noticing", and the "thematic aim". For what concerns us, primary noticing is the mode of "paying attention" which directs consciousness towards and object in order to confer it some privilege.

There is another way to be attentive than in the manner conferring a more or less great privilege to the object. Specifically, a separation must be established "between the fact of being oriented towards and object and the fact of being occupied by it." So, when consciousness is fully involved with the object as it focuses, when it invests its inner horizon and, as it were, 'inhabits' it, then what we have is "thematic" directedness

The constitution of the sign then proceeds from the modulization of the intentional objects of sound and meaning, initially defined according to specific and separate acts of consciousness, under the unity of the attentional field of consciousness. Specifically, the act of semiolinguistic intention institutes the initially distinct consciousnesses of sound (of word) and of meaning in the interdependent positions of objects of primary (perception) and thematic (meaning) focus.

These positions exhaustively expose the phenomenological characters of the signifier and the signified and account for their doubly fusional and dissymmetrical unity. They also explain the phenomenological ambiguity of the signifier, because the word's sound constitutes itself as an object of primary noticing (perceptive), therefore as a sensible phenomenon, but being intrinsically bound to an object of a thematic aim, it gives itself to be seen, in its full phenomenal identity, as compelling consciousness to divert from it in order to rather invest itself in its structural counterpart in the attentional field, that is, the signifier as an object of a thematic intending.

We then observe, quite directly, that the MD of the Saussurean sign, which thus exposes the forms of linguistic objectivity, coincides in part with the complex structure of semiolinguistic intentionality as described by Husserl.

Firstly, similarly to semiolinguistic intentionality which conjugates two orders of "directedness"—one being of a perceptual nature and the other of a signifying orientation—the MD of the sign articulates two object planes which are in part unlinked although they are functionally conjugated: On the one hand, there is the plane of signifiers, taken as phonematic arrangements, and which therefore stem from a simply "perceptual" grasp, and, on the other hand, the plane of signifieds as differential identities of meaning.

Second, and more essentially, we observe that in the infrastructure of the Saussurean sign, the signifiers and signifieds hold, by their functional positions, structural significations which are by all means similar to those of the primary and thematic objects of the attentional field, respectively.

Indeed, the signifiers, as being "simply perceived", are involved in the MD structure of the sign as control parameters for the constitution of signifieds. Now, it is clear that from the standpoint of "structural economy", what is significant in the MD performance is the process of differentiation which unfolds in a substance of content to install signifieds. Because the system as a whole, as in its final reason, presides over the genesis of signifying morphologies and thereby constitutes only the machinery in which is outlined, at the forefront, linguistic existence and non-existence. Which amounts to saying that the configurational moments which prevail in the internal logic of the dynamic architecture of the sign, those which Husserl calls "themes" in the sense that they occupy a higher position on the scale of consciousness investment, are precisely the signifieds, as differential values.

It follows that, correlatively, and with respect to the horizon of functioning of the system which mobilizes them, the signifiers appear to be somewhat incidental: They are but "intermediaries", in all likelihood required in functional terms, but secondary with respect to the stakes. The signifiers indeed find themselves to be engaged in the control of emergent forms, but as these occupy the forefront of the "MD scene", they are met with "disinterest" from the very moment they are mobilized, inasmuch as, intrinsically, in their functional signification, they orient towards the signifiers to which they are, so to speak, devoted.

It must also be noted that in the MD apparatus, the necessary connection between the signifiers and signifieds is a dissymmetrical and dynamical relation, in which the signifiers therefore have a functional role at the service of the emergence of differential identities of meaning, which then count in priority for consciousness.

before returning to the functional architecture of the sign, let us emphasize that the phenomenological significance of the MD device goes far beyond this initial correspondence between, on the one hand, functional and structural positions (*i.e.* control parameters and differential quantities) and, on the other hand, phenomenological determinations (*i.e.* the primary and thematic objects, respectively); we will take up this point in §xxx.

IV-6.3   MD of the sign: completion

Considering the initial MD schema, we must now account for the double arrow "$\Rightarrow$". In doing so, and essentially, it will be a matter of moving from an (unfinished) MD of the isolated sign to an MD of the interactions between signs, as they are thus established according to the syntagmatic and paradigmatic modes.

6.3.1   S&P and differentiality

Let us first observe that differentiality and S&P relations are "functionally linked", precisely in that the relations of negative difference at the level of content condition the very existence of signs: the disappearance of a boundary in the substance of content has the consequence of bringing into continuity, *i.e.* homogenizing, the two sub-domains (the signifieds) which it

institutes according to relations of reciprocal limitation. Such a structural "collapse" thus affects the existence of the signifieds, and at the same time that of the signs that imply them.

This means that the "⇒" arrow (which governs the installation of boundaries in the substance of content) is functionally involved in existence versus non-existence in language. Moreover (as soon discussed), it is in the syntagmatic and paradigmatic as variational axes that the modalities of existing and non-existing in language are brought into play and meet. More precisely, the S&P relations, insofar as they administer the variations of a given syntagm, constitute an operative structure that deals with the possible and the impossible in language. This is the case, for example, with differential pairs, which are constantly used in linguistic analysis, and which precisely and methodologically stage the exit from linguistic legality, in other words the exit from the sphere of existence in language.

It should be emphasized that we are not dealing here with a global, one-piece legality, but with a local, stratified legality, which makes it possible to conceive of punctual distortions in the form of alterations of boundaries, in a logic of adjustment, reconfiguration and negotiation of meaning in speech.

We will therefore retain that the relation of determination "⇒", which governs at its end the existence and non-existence in language, refers structurally to the order of S&P relations. It remains then to produce a precise MD determination of this "⇒" relation.

6.3.2 Stabilization paths

To do this, we must emphasize the emergent character of differential structures: they are not static morphologies, but are the result of a process of stabilization of an originary singularity where all their structural information is, so to speak, concentrated. To illustrate, let us consider the example of the "cusp" singularity. It is a dynamic shape (located in O) which concentrates three critical points (minima or maxima of the potential function) in a single point. Through different stabilization paths, these "superimposed" critical points will be "separated" and give rise to distinct minima (corresponding to attractors) and maxima (separating attractor basins). The following diagrams shows various stabilization paths, all originating from the original 'cusp' singularity, which at the end of the process establish specific differential relationships, precisely those of qualitative and privative oppositions

The G/S (for Generic/Specific) path, illustrated in the following figure, consists in "exiting" from the origin O (three critical points together) while remaining on K_c boundary, line of instability (of conflict) where the separation of the originary critical points gives rise to two attractors M_1 and M_2 of equal value and in competition at the actualization (the third critical point separates the two basins of attraction), then, "leaving" K_c at α and reaching β, to give advantage to M_1 (actualized) at the expense of M_2 (then virtualized) □

From the point of view of actualizations, we thus pass from a state to which the "degenerate" minimum of the original dynamics in O refers, *i.e.* a state envisaged independently of any opposing connection, to, in the first instance (in α), two states of equal "weight" in opposition, then, in the second instance (in β), to a single current state M_1 acquired by virtualization of a competing state M_2. Thus, we have moved from (i) an unstable and relationally indeterminate form (the degenerate minimum of the original dynamics has no relation with other 'attractive' states likely to oppose it) which relates the undifferentiation of a substrate W (of expression or content), to (ii) a "conflict" type dynamic which establishes (in α) a genuine competition between two attractors (with equal weight for the actualization) and, finally, (iii) to the resolution of the conflict by actualizing one attractor at the expense of the other.
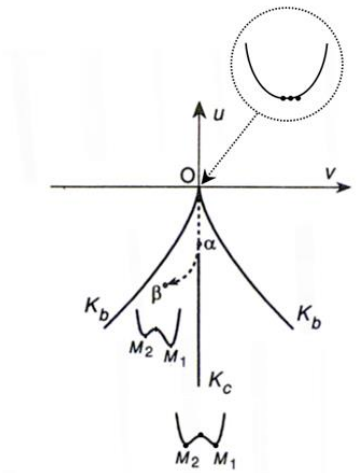
The G/S pathway thus appears as a process by which an originarily undifferentiated state is articulated at its end according to the principle of a qualitative opposition. Through the G/S pathway, we thus pass from a unity of genus, *i.e.* a generic term, to two identities of species: two specific states in polar opposition. In other words, the G/S pathway schematizes the generic/specific relationship.

E/I pathway. The E/I pathway relates the construction of the extensive/intensive (or marked/unmarked) relationship - a relationship of an eminently topological nature which is known to designate the contrast "between a precise term and a vague term" (Hjelmslev 1985, p. 34). Where the "precise" term, also called "intensive", is a term that tends to "concentrate" its meaning in one semantic region, while the "vague" or extensive term is characterized by "the fact that it can occupy any part of the area" (*Ibid.*, p. 41). The French lexeme pair *jour/nuit* illustrates this: *day* (*jour*) is an extensive term in that it can refer to the daytime part of a day (then in opposition to *night*) as well as to the day as a whole, whereas the intensive term, which focuses its meaning on the nocturnal fraction of the day, is *night* (*nuit*).

The E/I ratio is schematized by a path that starts in O, runs along K_c, then through β and, after crossing the K_b boundary, reaches γ (see fig.).
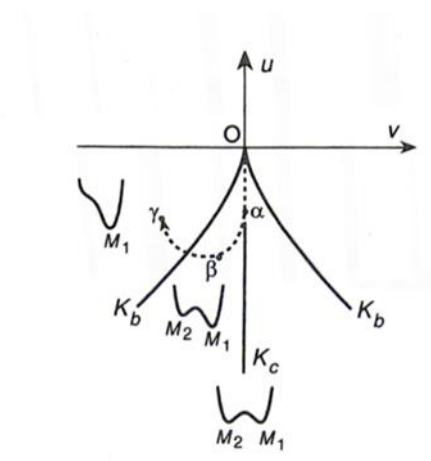
As in the G/S path, the E/I path, in its first phase, determines an actual state M_1 in polar opposition to a virtual state M_2. Following this, in a second phase (from β to γ) during which the K_b boundary is crossed, the relative minimum M_2 disappears in favor of the single M_1. In

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γ, the dynamics presents only one attractor, and thus does not institute an opposing articulation in the substrate space. But this undifferentiation of the substrate space is not the same as the one delivered by the unstable germ at the beginning of the stabilization path. Indeed, the indifferentiation relative to γ is not originary: it results from a fusion of opposing attractors and thus from an overlap of terms previously constituted in their relational identities. The dynamic form relative to γ relates therefore to the enlargement of the field of determination of M_1: until it overlaps M_2.

We can thus see that the E/I path reconstructs the mode of the extensive/intensive relationship. The "extensive" term, *i.e.* the term which tends to "generalize" its field so as to designate both the totality of the category and one of its polar values, is the term M_1 - the "intensive" term, which focuses its meaning in its opposition to the extensive term, being M_2.

6.3.3   Morphodynamics of S&P relations

Having the stabilization paths at our disposal, it is now possible for us to deliver a MD determination of the double arrow "$\Rightarrow$", which we know governs at its endpoint the existence and non-existence in language, and thus refers structurally to the order of S&P relations.

Let us recall that in the MD device, the presence or absence of a system of boundaries in the substance of the content translates the existence or non-existence of signifieds. Consequently, the modalities of instantiation of the boundaries are functionally correlated to the set of S&P constraints (to be considered more generally as a set of variational (or transformational) procedures) in that the S&P relations administer access to the values of the possible and the impossible in language, *i.e.* administer the statements of existence or non-existence in language

Let us then consider, to begin with, a paradigmatic variational scheme B-B' operating on the sequence AB and the following admissibility clauses: AB and *AB' (the asterisk notes the inadmissibility of the sequence). We agree that the opposition of the vocables B and B' is not a current and intangible fact of the language. Indeed, this opposition, which is encountered on the occasion of the transformation of AB into AB', would have been neglected if the speaker had had in mind the opposition of B with, say, B" through the variation AB-*AB". Thus, the differentiating forms in language, those forms which establish the signifieds in their oppositional identities, must be considered not as established forms, definitively distributed forms, but as forms produced and renewed on the occasion of language activities. From this point of view, we will characterize the clauses AB and *AB' by the fact that they have (i) a singularity and (ii) a stabilization path. Let us examine this.

The vocables B and B' delimit (via the "exchange" relation *Rs*) a certain sub-region of the substance of the content, which by means of σ takes the place of a control space. This substratum space is not, as such, invested with the boundaries that characterize the opposition that B and B' contract: it lends itself to a multitude of categorizations that realize the most diverse oppositions. Thus, the opposition between B and B', which will be instantiated on the basis of the instructions provided by clauses AB and *AB', must be conceived, not as an opposition in presence, but in power: as a differential germ actualized by linguistic activity. In other words, the clauses AB and *AB' contain the information of a singularity, *i.e.* a potential of actualization of the opposition between B and B'. Let's move on to the second point: the stabilization of this singularity.

It is now a question of characterizing the dynamic processes determining (i) the actualization of B in opposition to B' when AB is produced and (ii) the 'suspension' of boundaries when *AB' is produced.

It is known that the realization of oppositions takes place along stabilization paths of the singularity-origin, which, in our case, characterizes the clauses AB and *AB'. Also, the actualization of B versus B' is directly qualifiable by a stabilization path. For example, if the vocable B points by the exchange relation, and in its (qualitative) opposition to B', to the units of the zone presented in grey in the figure below (note: in this figure, for simplification reasons, we "crush" the levels *W* and *F*), then the actualization path of B triggered by the production of the syntagm AB, on the basis of the clauses AB and *AB', will be given by the path *C*. Recall that this path "takes over" an unstable qualitative opposition between attractors (also noted B and B') and resolves the instability to the advantage of B (which becomes actual as opposed to virtual B'): very exactly, it is a dynamic form determined (*via* σ) by the substance units pointed to by B that is actualized.
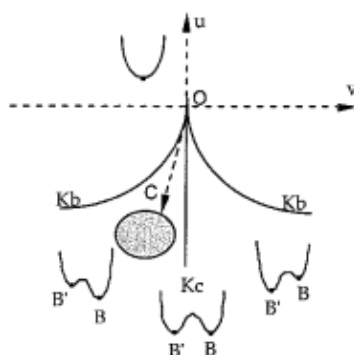

Thus, the functional connection between S&P relations and the plane of signifieds (content substance categorized by differential regimes) is based on the following principle: the admissibility predicates attached to variational data (*e.g.* AB and *AB') determine a singularity of content and prescribe a stabilization path oriented towards the actualization of a dynamic form associated (by the σ-control) with the variably processed vocable present in the admissible construction (*i.e.* B)

In order to establish this scheme in a more complete form, it is necessary to consider crossed variational pairs, *i.e.* correlations of differences - such as grammatical number oppositions which correlate the morphological alternations of a determiner and a word family (le, *la/les* ↔ *cheval/che*vaux, *canal/canaux*…). In this case, the stabilization path prescribed by the variational pair (le + *cheval/*chevaux*), which determines the actualization of "cheval" in its constituent opposition to "*chevaux*", is completed by the pair (*le/*les* + *cheval*), which retroactively determines a stabilization path oriented towards the actualization of "*le*" in opposition to "*les*" (next figure).
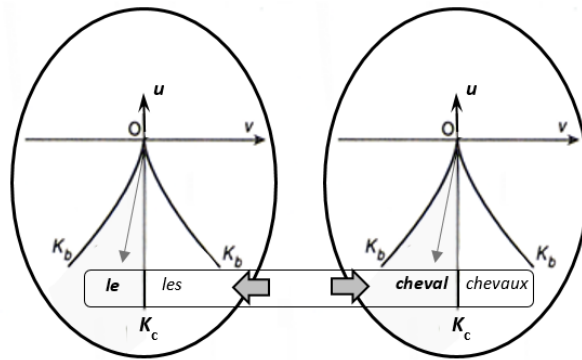
Let's now examine what happens if a speaker produces a "deviant" syntagm, for instance *AB'. In such cases, the production of *AB' determines a stabilization trajectory; we will say that it "forces" a stabilization trajectory, which tends towards the actualization of B' at the expense of B which is then virtualized. Indeed, the utterance of B' confers it an effective presence and forces the linguistic system to take the direction of its actualization. Also, the dynamic configuration is the following:
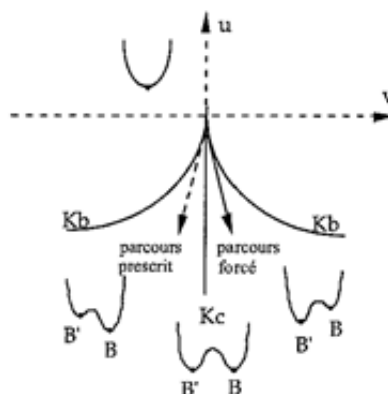
Two incompatible stabilization paths affront one another, each aiming to actualize an oppositional pole. In principle, this conflict has no solution: Taken between two tendencies, the path will remain at the boundary K_c ($v = 0$), either in a position of instability ($u < 0$), or eliminating any form of opposition ($u > 0$). In both cases, no stable opposing value is actualized, and no signified is promoted into existence. Also, linguistic impossibility (S&P level) indeed relates inexistence in language (level of the forms of content).

The fact remains that such structural "collapses" are proportionate to the coverage of the opposition sets involved. Thus, the violation of a number grammatical opposition, as in the previous example - an opposition which involves a very vast semiolinguistic territory - will give rise to a structural degradation of great amplitude, which in turn will result in an assured judgment of inadmissibility. In the opposite case, if the violation only concerns limited parts, the foundations (generally grammatical or morphological) of the system remaining unharmed, the collapse, which is well circumscribed, is not prohibitive and rather opens up a field of interpretation.

IV-6.4   *Contributions of a sign MD*

As we have seen, the MD architecture of the sign holds a phenomenological meaning. A closer look at this architecture reveals additional layers of verbal consciousness to those recognized by the Husserlian analysis. Let us indeed consider this functional architecture by focusing on its different components.

We will only retain the simple position of the control parameter, mainly attributed to a phonic. The verbal consciousness which corresponds to it is a simple consciousness of the availability for meaning: The signifier is only grasped as likely to participate in an upcoming verbal configuration, and in total ignorance of the role which it will play within. The consciousness of availability is nothing more than a consciousness of the singular moment of an "opening towards…" without any determination whatsoever regarding the orientation of such "opening". This represents a first state of semiotization, where the concrete object, at first limited to itself, abandons so the speak what is of "concern to its own self" and presents itself as a "window onto" something beyond, but without regards to the field to which it potentially gives access nor to the function it will receive in a global semiotic configuration for which it declares itself to be available. For example, it is to this stratum of verbal consciousness that the syllabic portions pertain, such as they are primarily perceived in the progress of a discourse, that is, as they are still in the uncertainty of the semiotic function that will be incumbent upon them (thus, as a morpheme or as a simple part of a broader term). The notion of "word-sound", which is more than a "sound" but not yet a "signifier" (Husserl, 1995) covers this stratum of verbal consciousness and the subsequent one.

At a higher functional degree, and supported by an underlying consciousness of availability, we will take into account the connection of control, but from the sole point of view of its existence (abstraction made of its own identity, that is, its reference to such or such region of content). The object of consciousness thus retained proceeds from a simple consciousness of involvement (in meaning). We find here Benveniste's (1971) plane of "semiotic signification", a plane solicited in the trials of "lexical decision" in which it is a matter of recognizing a stimulus in its simple quality as a word or as a logatome (pseudo-word).

We may indeed recall that, from Benveniste's point of view, natural languages combine two regimes of signification: the signification stemming from the linguistic system and the signification such as is accomplished through discourse. What essentially distinguishes them are the modalities, serving as criteria, according to which these two regimes of meaning let themselves be apprehended. Whereas the signification of a semiotic unity appears only under the prism of the presence/absence opposition, that which emanates from discourse is suitable to being "understood", hence grasped in its specific identity.

In other words, since we are considering the sign as an entity of the linguistic system, "it is not question of defining the meaning […]. On the plane of the signified, the criterion is: Does it signify or not? To signify is to have a meaning, no more" (Benveniste, 1971, p. 222) and "in semiology, it is not a matter of defining what the sign means." (*Ibid.*) On the plane of discourse, on the other hand, when it is a matter of "language in use and in action", meaning resides in "what was intended" in the act: in what to speaker means to say. In other words, the sense of the sentence is in "the linguistic actualization of [the speaker's] thought" (*Ibid.* p. 225) or in the "idea it expresses." (*Ibid.* p. 64). That is to say that in this case, it does not suffice for the sign to simply be "recognized" (Ibid, hence, to be grasped as having a signified, without any mention other than this signified's existence. Discourse calls to be "understood", and this involves a semantic apprehension having hold, beyond the simple presence of meaning, over a specific identity of meaning. It is precisely the stratum of "semiotic" signification (in the sense of Benveniste) that the consciousness of involvement accounts for:

A form of expression is recognized as being an authentic signifier with respect to the existence or not of a functional connection of control, which therefore attests to its own involvement in a world of meanings.

The next stratum solicits the functional connection of control in its specific identity (reference to a particular sub-domain of the substance of the content) but without a consciousness of meaning, which is the responsibility of the next stratum, being already established. We are thus at an intermediate level of meaning formation: beyond the consciousnesses of availability and involvement, but below a full consciousness of signified, or even of filling. A qualification of this intermediate state of access to meaning is given to us by the concept of *motif* elaborated by (Cadiot & Visetti, 2001).

The following stratum of verbal consciousness is, so to speak, the focal point of the morphodynamic apparatus, in that it restitutes an act of signifying directedness. At this level, a consciousness of the signified is elaborated as a consciousness of a differential structuration instituting negative identities of signification.

Let's finish our journey through the depths of verbal consciousness by addressing the consciousness of fulfillment (or, in Merleau-Pontian terms, consummation) which is not explicitly situated in the MD schema, but which nevertheless constitutes the logical though unnecessary continuation of the consciential thickening of the sign: It is a question, in the act of fulfillment (cf. III.2.7), of carrying a negative and simply intentional object (the signified) to a higher degree of positivity and of effectivity, through, for example, the actualization of a mental representation, through a categorical determination, or yet through the reference to a referent. This extends beyond the semiolinguistic field.

IV-6.5   *To conclude*

As we have seen, the functional system of the Saussurean sign establishes and explains the undivided unity of the sign. But while the signifieds cannot be conceived separately from the signifiers, the same cannot be said of the signifiers themselves: the provision of signifiers (as control factors) is, always by construction, a functional prerequisite for the establishment of signifieds. Signifiers and signifieds are therefore not the symmetrical poles of an integrated unity. This internal dissymmetry reveals its functional meaning as soon as we examine the principle of integration of the signified with the signifier in more detail.

For, as we have seen, it is precisely insofar as they participate in contrastive S&P relations, which prescribe paths of stabilization from a "structural germ" to certain differential distributions in content substance, that signifiers determine the actualization of signifieds, and that the units of expression are then invested with the differences in meaning that they control and thus institute.

But the "prescribed" paths are dually linked to "forced" paths that are like the structural reverse of possible meanings in language. The differential meaning assigned to a signifier in discourse proceeds, in a completely oppositional logic, from the exclusion of other signifiers from the syntagmatic place it occupies. Thus the possibility of a meaning carried by a signifier rests, through paradigmatic variations, on the possibility of assemblies that are impossible in language.

We can thus understand the functional meaning of the sign's dissymmetry. For if the signifier and the signified shared the same status and function, in other words, if they had equivalent roles as constituents of the sign, the annihilation of one would entail the annihilation of the other, and vice versa, and it would then be impossible to imply syntagmatic configurations in language that go beyond linguistic legality, for the purpose of semantic construction.

But this is not the case, as is shown by the 'maintenance' of the signifier even when no signified is actualized: when the process of content differentiation fails as an echo of a violation of linguistic legality, thus annihilating all semantic existence in language, the face of the signifier nonetheless remains to a linguistic consciousness as a phonetic or graphemic complex, thus opening up to a void of meaning.

The dissymmetry of the sign is thus in part the functional correlate of a system which, via S&P relations and insofar as these functionally bring into play the impossible of language, incorporates the modalities of its own transgression at the same time as it makes possible alterations, adjustments, and reconfigurations of these "available" significations that Merleau-Ponty calls the spoken speech (*versus* speaking speech), and which are recorded in dictionaries and grammars.

We have seen above all that the forms (the MD of the sign) which institute the sign as an undivided connection of a signifier and a signified, on the one hand, hold a phenomenological significance, in that they regulate the manifestation of signs, and, on the other hand, participate in the constitution of a linguistic objectivity, in that they regulate the differential distribution of the possible and the impossible in language - a correlative distribution of an order of linguistic legality.

Thus the forms of empirical knowledge of a certain class of phenomena - that is, a certain conceptual apparatus suitably qualifying the said phenomena insofar as it accounts for their observable functioning - are discovered to be part, at least partially, of the very constitution of the phenomena (as objects of intuition) whose objectivity they produce.

From this perspective, the practice of signs, *i.e.* their actual and reflected commitments in the accomplishment of acts of expression or communication, acts regulated according to the principles and modalities that a semiolinguistic science claims to reveal, appears as incorporating into and conditioning the form of their occurrence. In other words, the way in which the sign configures its effective presence, *i.e.*, constitutes itself as a phenomenon, is the manifest expression of the categories and laws according to which the said semiolinguistic phenomena are thought of -- if not in their objective being, then at least according to the modalities of "making language" and "making sense" that are favored within the overall framework of a cultural project.

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