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Triangle(s) of Being: Linguistic (Coserian) and Semiotic (Peircean) Perspectives

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Abstract
This article envisages a possible tripartite division of (types of) being, in correspondence, one the one hand, to Eugenio Coseriu's linguistic contents (*significatum*, *designatum*, sense) and on the other hand to Charles Sanders Peirce's 'participants' in the process of *semiosis* (sign, object and interpretant). Being as *eidos/ essence,* corresponding to idiomatic *significata*, is responsible for the constitution of stabilities and/ or iterations within the otherwise perpetual flux of *cogitata*/ phenomena. Being as *actual existence or particular, intentional object* corresponds to the linguistic *designata* as they are produced through and by speech in the very linguistic act(s). Finally, being as *ecstasis* (in the Heideggerian sense of this term) or as *sense* represents the individual speaker's 'stance' in the world, at the same time 'opening' it to interpretation by the others. Also, if on the levels of *significata* and *designata* language is simply/ purely *logos semantikos*, on the level of sense the three possible intents of the speaker (*apophantikos, poetikos, pragmatikos*) can be put into correspondence to the old/ traditional naming and understanding of temporal ec-stases as past, present and future respectively.

Keywords: linguistic relativity, significatum (*signifié, Bezeichnung*), designatum (*Bedeutung*), sense (*Sinn*), eidetic intuition, intuitive filling (*Erfüllung*), (phenomenological) intentional object, (Heideggerian) ecstasis, cenopythagorean (Peircean) categories, Thirdness, *logos semantikos*

> "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John, 14:6)
>
> "Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnt der Mensch. Die Denkenden und Dichtenden sind die Wächter dieser Behausung." (Heidegger, *Brief* 313) / "Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home." (Heidegger, *Letter* 239)

The ~~Prison-~~House of ~~Thinking~~ Being

Is language a cage (for thinking), or simply (but much more generously) a dwelling, maybe even a flourishing place (for being)? For the vast majority of people, mainly interested in the everyday communication of concrete affairs and for many, maybe most of the linguists, idiomatic 'relativity' is rather a nuisance; as a consequence, a famous but really poorly translated quotation from Nietzsche makes language(s) an impediment in recognizing or expressing an already-existing being: "Wir hören auf zu denken, wenn wir es nicht in dem sprachlichen Zwange thun wollen" (Nietzsche 34). This renowned phrase from *Der Wille zur macht* was traditionally rephrased, in English, as "We have to cease to think if we refuse to do so in the prison-house of language" (qtd. in Deutscher 147); but the very author I took this translation from says (148) that it would be much more adequate to simply say: "We cease to think if we do not want to do it under linguistic constraints."

My stance here will be decidedly *relativistic* – but *not* in the Whorfian sense, in which a ('national,' ethnic) language could in any way *limit* what can or cannot be thought by its speakers. Whenever this matter is in discussion, I tend to simply quote Roman Jakobson's formula: "Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey" (236), or to go one step further by giving a more detailed explanation – Eugenio Coseriu's. From the Romanian linguist's point of view, a historical language differs from others not through what it can say (because any language, given enough time and [speaker's] intelligence, can say anything that is 'expressible' via another one), but through what it

"cannot not say," that is, through what *it obliges its speaker* to say. In Swedish, Coseriu (*Lecciones* 217) insists, we do not have one word for *grandmother*, but two – *mormor* and *farmor*, their use depending on which of my parents' 'side' the referent is situated on. As a consequence, a Swede, speaking in his/ her own native language, *cannot mention a grandmother without at the same time specifying which one it is*. So if a Swede wants to translate an English (or Romanian, for that matter) novel in which, at a given time, a grandmother (*Ro.* "o bunică") rings my doorbell, he or she *has to find out* from the development of the narrative if this character is the mother of my father or of my mother; and if the translator can't find the answer to this question, he/ she must find a way to decide on one of the two. The situation is exactly the same with one of the best known examples in the history of linguistics: Saussure's comparison between French and English, *mouton, mutton* and *sheep*.[i] And if all the talk about one *vs.* two small words and quite isolated aspects of the world might seem meager,[ii] I shall ask my reader to think about this:

If you are the native speaker of a language from the vast majority of idioms which display the nominal category of *number* (as *singular vs. plural* or in more complicated structures), you will not be able to talk about any 'substantive' entities of the world/ referential state of facts, *without at the same time stating* at least whether they appear as one *vs.* more than one. But if you are, for instance, Japanese, *you are not forced to do so*. Still, *if you want to*, *you can do it.* A language or another *forbid nothing*, as far as thinking is concerned; but any language creates strong, almost unavoidable[iii] paths for what *must be said* (*i.e.* known, thought, expressed, communicated) in each situation.

I gave all of these rather elaborate explanations for what could be called the structuralist-relativistic position on natural languages, since this truly has an *epistemological* import on what we understand being(s) to be and, moreover, *philosophical* consequences – concerning the *constitution*, in the phenomenological sense of the word, of whatever *is* (as perceived and/ or thought by humans). In this latter sense, I will also try to prove that our second *Motto*, one of Martin Heidegger's most quoted statements, but also a vague and 'poetic' one, can be motivated/ explained in quite technical

terms, in relation with concepts which are well established and with very coherent theories both in linguistics and semiotics.

An Anticipative Triad

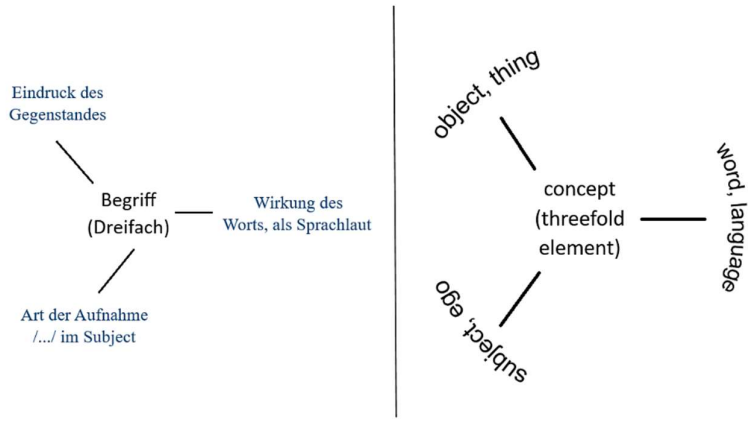
My main focus here will be on building a parallel between two conceptual triads, one pertaining, within the theory of language, to Coseriu and the other, within the pragmatic(ist)[iv] science of signs, to Charles Sanders Peirce. But before getting there, I think it may be useful to examine another such triad. It explicitly, although very briefly, appears in a redactional variant of what would be known, after 1835, as Wilhelm von Humboldt's most important work, the famous philosophical *Introduction*[v] to his *Kawi-Werk*. Very innovative for the author himself, the fragment I'm particularly interested in would be, in the end, omitted from the first published editions[vi]; below, I will mark it with (my) italics:

> Da aller objectiven Wahrnehmung unvermeidlich Subjectivität beigemischt ist, so kann man, schon unabhängig von der Sprache, jede menschliche Individualität als einen eigenen Standpunkt der Weltansicht betrachten. Sie wird aber noch viel mehr dazu durch die Sprache, da das Wort sich der Seele gegenüber auch wieder, wie wir weiter unten sehen werden, mit einem Zusatz von Selbstbedeutung zum Object macht, und eine neue Eigenthümlichkeit hinzubringt, *so daß nunmehr in dem Begriffe ein Dreifaches liegt, der Eindruck des Gegenstandes, die Art der Aufnahme desselben im Subject, die Wirkung des Worts, als Sprachlaut*. In dieser letzten herrscht nothwendig in derselben Sprache eine durchgehende Analogie; und da auch auf die Sprache in derselben Nation eine gleichartige Subjectivität einwirkt, so liegt in jeder Sprache eine eigenthümliche Weltansicht. (Humboldt, *Verschiedenheit* 287-8)

> Since all objective perception is inevitably tinged with subjectivity, we may consider every human individual, even apart from language, as a unique aspect of the world-view. But he becomes still more of one through language, since as we shall see later, by an added meaning of its own the word constitutes itself an object for the mind, and superimposes a new character, *so that in the concept we now have a threefold element: the impression produced by the object, the manner in which it is received in the subject, [and] the effect of the word as speech sound*. Via the latter, a pervasive analogy necessarily prevails in the same language; and since a like subjectivity also affects language in the same nation, there resides in

> every language a characteristic world-view. (Humboldt, *On Language* 59-60; the part in italics in my translation, DCV)

The philosophical-epistemological novelty in this small fragment is, in my opinion, exceptional: so exceptional, in fact, that the author himself preferred not to include it in the final form of his text. This stating of the *threefold* character of any 'concept' we form about facts of reality means nothing less than that our old, habitual binary scheme (subject – object, *ego* – thing) *cannot account* for the constitution of being(s), such as it/ they appear in our universe. There is a third participant (ineliminable, and with equal rights) in the very constitution of reality – that is, *words* or, to be more precise, *natural languages*.



In her *Introduction* to the Italian translation (*Della diversitá delle lingue*) of the same Humboldtian book, Donatella di Cesare (xxix) observes precisely this about the German philosopher of language: if, previously to his contribution, language was only studied (as a secondary object) in relation to (its capability to express/ communicate) thought or being, 'after' Humboldt, on the one hand, language is seen as a reality worth studying in itself and, on the other hand, *thought* and *being* are re-conceptualized as dependent on language.

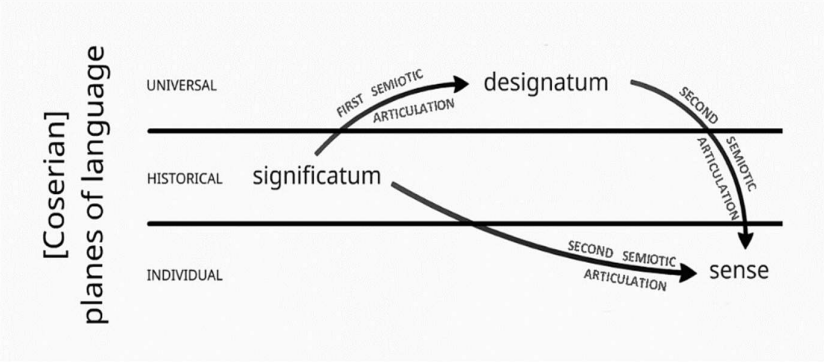
Before continuing with Coseriu's triad, I think it will also be useful to add a concept/ syntagm coined by the Romanian philosopher Aurel Codoban, in a volume (*Structura semiologică*)[vii] in which he talks about the characteristics of post-structuralism and postmodernism, particularly about the vision of the world that humanity can reach after Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*: we, as scientists, are the generation(s) who understand that there are not two ('subject' and 'object'), but three *ontological agents* continually shaping the being(s) of the world. This third agent is *language*, understood not as the universal endowment of any (normal, adult) person, but as any one of the *particular idioms* of the world.

It is these *three ontological agents* that, in the analyses that follow, I will try to define as three types, or rather three *modes of Being*; but since the discussion about 'subject' and 'object' conceived in total abstraction from language is already well known, I will treat the triad such as it appears *from the point of view* of Integral Linguistics (Coseriu) and pragmatic semiotics (Peirce).

Coseriu's Three Linguistic Contents

One of the main ideas in Coseriu's theory (and description/ analysis) of language is that there are three levels (or 'planes') to it: the plane of speech in general (regardless of the tongue/ dialect and of the concrete conditions of any actual utterance), the plane of historical (national) languages, such as English, Romanian etc. and the plane of text/ discourse, of the particular use and/ or interpretation of a spoken, written or otherwise communicated expression in specific circumstances. There are also three types of individual (speaker's) competence, respectively: *elocutional* for the *universal plane*, *idiomatic* for the *historical plane* and *expressive* for the *individual plane* (Coseriu, *Competencia* 92). Last, but not least, Coseriu talks about two "semiotic articulations" through which the speaker transforms, in an actual "linguistic act," the three types of content one into another: via the first articulation, idiomatic *significata* (contents of a historical language) are used in order to constitute a "designated" state of affairs; in the second semiotic articulation, this very state of affairs is used

to express or at least suggest the speaker's intention in that particular moment, situation and utterance (Coseriu, *Textlinguistik* 66).



The Historical Plane of Language, Idiomatic *Competence and* Significata

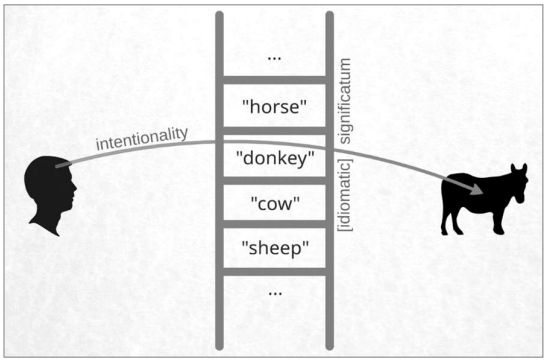
Simply put, Coseriu's *significata* are Saussure's famous *signifiés*: the content parts of linguistic signs, as they are delimited in a (historical) language and by that language itself (Coseriu, *Competencia* 96). And from a linguist's point of view, this might be sufficient: it is our job to tell how things function and not necessarily what they are. We do not need to be, and we seldom are *ontologists*.

Here is where, for Coseriu,[viii] Edmund Husserl and his transcendental phenomenology enter the stage. Seen from the linguistic/ structuralist point of view, *significata* were rather 'void(s),' the empty spaces between the threads in the tissue of the linguistic 'code'; and a particular language such as French or English could be defined as follows: "a linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas" (Saussure 120). And it is only natural for a void to demand a filling – one that is the work of an individual subject and is best described in texts such as *Ideen, I*[ix] or *Méditations cartésiennes*.[x]

Also, we need to understand that phenomenology, too, is not an ontology – to a certain extent, it was 'invented' as its very contrary; and Husserl's entire contribution to philosophy surely goes *against* the elaboration of a metaphysics. Phenomenology discusses the possibility

conditions of the manifestation (for the human subject defined as transcendental ego) of being. Still, as we can easily discover by examining Coseriu's stance, structuralism *and* phenomenology, taken *together*, can provide an understanding of the relation between *being* and *language*. The reason for this is simple: if Saussure's *signifié* is a (well delimited) 'emptiness,' Husserl's *eidos* works as an *intuitive filling, fulfilment* [*Erfüllung*] on the part of the speaker/ thinker.[xi] In other words, not only is it positive (as an act, as – if I am allowed the use, here, of a metaphor – *real-ization* of the *ego*), but it can at the same time be seen as *guided* by the empty space.

So is the *significatum* a positive (eidetic) or a negative (differential) 'thing'? From the point of view of Coserian linguistics, it surely is *both at once*. Pertaining to a historical language, being parts of one's idiomatic linguistic competence, *significata* are *virtual* entities, they simply specify the limits of possibility for reference (or, to use Coseriu's term, *designation* [*Bezeichnung*]). *It is only in concrete, actual language acts that significata operate as real 'participants' in the constitution* (on the *universal* plane of *speech*) *of the intentional objects* which Coseriu calls *designata*. A simple, perhaps even naïve, form of *figuring* how the whole process works would be the following: whenever a 'new' phenomenon presents itself to my attention, I see it *under* (or, more precisely, *via*) a concept intuitively chosen from among the ones offered by my native language, or by the historical language in which I happen to be thinking right then; and if for some reason I stop seeing the object under *that* first concept (*significatum*), I must attribute to it another 'word' or combination of 'words.'



'Being, 1'

Being as *essence* (*eidos*) or *significatum* is that which we think resides inside things or behind them, grounding them and making them be what they are. An essence makes an individual thing belong to a class or another (most often this is a class specifiable *via* a common name). Moreover, we are prone to think that even absolutely singular entities, like this woman or that man, bearing this or that proper name, (also) possess a special essence of their own, making them fundamentally different from all the others. Being as *eidos* is the answer to the first questions that pops into our minds whenever we see something or meet somebody new: *what* is this, *who* is she or he (to me)?

But from the point of view of the temporal constitution of reality, an *eidos* is something at the same time more simple, elementary and more precious: it is a stability within the flux, an island in the continuous flow of all things. This pen I am now holding between my fingers is different from the one I used this morning; but the important thing is that they both function as writing tools and that one of them is available. The Zen temple I visited yesterday was certainly made from (entirely) other wood beams than a century ago; yet it is the same temple. This friend of mine has clearly become older, her or his appearance and even behavior have changed; but not only do I recognize her/ him as this particular person, I also presuppose (or maybe postulate?) some inner characteristics which must be immutable in order for them to be themselves.

In one of Jorge Luis Borges' most appreciated short stories, *Funes el memorioso*, the main character has the extraordinary capacity of retaining each detail of each (for us, fleeting) moment of reality, and while reading this wonderful piece of literature one can think, at least in the beginning, of Funes's ability as a miraculous, eminently positive 'gift.' But there is an awful drawback to it: the man is absolutely incapable of discerning between what is important and what not, of dealing with general notions or concepts:

> Not only was it difficult for him to comprehend that the generic symbol *dog* embraces so many unlike individuals of diverse size and form; it bothered him that the dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same

> name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front). His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them. (Borges 114)

In other words, the 'phenomenological' flux of living would be a pure Heraclitian flow, where nothing ever stops or repeats itself, in the absence of the type of being we just discussed; if there are stable parts, constants, iterations in (our) real time, this happens mainly because we are capable of detaching, retaining and recognizing not only empirical facts, but especially *semantic essences*.

The Universal Plane of Language, Elocutional *Competence and* Designata

The specific content of language, in its universal plane is – according to Coseriu – the *designatum* (Ge. *Bezeichnung*, Sp. *designación*). It is the very 'thing' that most linguists, starting with Jakobson and mainly in Pragmatics, call a *referent*, but with an extremely important addition: 'fictional' referents, things which only exist in texts and via those texts, are as (*or even more*[xii]) suited to be called *designata* as (*than*) concrete, palpable, individual objects which we first encounter in the world and only subsequently 'refer' to.

To be more precise, what I just said is what we *think* we do; but language and knowledge actually work the other way around. The key to Coseriu's position in this matter is for us to understand that a (correctly formed and stated) linguistic act simply *produces, projects*[xiii] its own *designata* by using the *significata* of a certain language. It makes absolutely no difference, from the point of view of language and of Coseriu's "first semiotic articulation," whether I speak of a goat or of a unicorn. In effect, once thought or spoken, my very words/ syntagms/ phrases *bring* that goat or unicorn into a special type of existence – the one I will soon try to characterize under the subtitle *Being, 2.* And the fact that goats exist and unicorns do not (at least, not in what we usually call the real world) is absolutely insignificant as far as this stage of thinking and/ or speaking is concerned.

Imagine we are standing vis-à-vis one another, in a room and I say: "I would like us to talk about the electric socket on the wall behind you." If

you understand English, then my very utterance will make you *imagine* a socket on that particular wall that you can't see (or not yet). This socket is my linguistic act's *designatum* and you have to understand me & produce it (as that which phenomenology calls an *intentional* object) *before* turning around in order to verify whether such a socket really exists in the concrete 'spot' I just named, or not. *But in most cases we do not turn around.* When an interlocutor says to me: "I have a house in Denver and I would like to…," I normally do not stop them from talking, by saying: "prove that to me right now" – and that may be simply because, if I still feel like it, I can ask him or her for proof *after* I've listened further, in order to understand what he or she wanted to say/ wanted from me. (And these, the speaker's intention and my interpretation of it, are a matter of *sense/ Sinn*, not of *designatum/ Bezeichnung.*) Also, if and when I just started reading a very famous book, the first sentences of which are "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," it's very improbable that I stop at this point – in order to look at statistics about couples (with or without children) in today's world – and continue reading *Anna Karenina* only if my findings are compatible with the narrator's statement.

Designata are the simple answer to the very basic question: "How (and why) can we talk about things which do not exist (and doing that is *linguistically* no more difficult than talking about real facts)?" *Designata*, although actual, individualized contents of speech, are by themselves *neither true nor false*. They simply are what the speaker's linguistic act makes them be: "There once was a man from Nantucket."

In communication, *designata* can be crucial or not-that-important, depending on the point of view from which we casually or, on the contrary, scientifically characterize them. On the one hand, compared to sense/ *Sinn*, they are just means to an end: when I say or hear "it was raining cats and dogs" I know that no such pets are actually involved in the matter. Also, I can say "I like ice cream" as in English, or "Îmi place înghețata" (approximately: *Ice cream is likeable to me*), like we do in Romanian – and even if on the level of designation there's a difference of agency, the two phrases *can*[xiv] have the same meaning (sense).

On the other hand, there can be no *sense* except in relation to a designated 'state of facts';[xv] and also, one of the three main orientations of

sense in text-discourse, the scientific/ *apophantic* one, is constructed on the very correspondence between what was designated and what 'really' is. In our everyday lives, our knowledge of the world (such as it concretely, 'empirically' is) plays an immensely important role; so important, in fact, that it sometimes makes us blind to our own capacities of 1. presently imagining *other* facts and realities (Aristotle's *logos poetikos*) and 2. communicating with others, influencing them in order to act together and thus bring new realities into the world (*logos pragmatikos*). [xvi]

'Being, 2' – Being as (a Particular) Intentional Object

Being as actual existence or as *designatum*[xvii] is being as it manifests itself to us, in concrete space and time, in *individualized* objects. And here the suffix *-ized* is extremely important. This is because my attention and my perceptual acts are perfectly capable of *separating* parts of larger or more complex 'objects' – for instance, I can choose to concentrate on the left, and not on the right side of a uniformly colored surface. Even more, I can substantivize, so to say, a quality and see/ talk about '*the' red* of this and/ or this particular flower. This means that, on the one hand, there is no place where the world, its objects, *being* itself are 'more' given than here (in the realm of intentional objects); but, on the other hand, it means that only when our (subjective, mental and conceptual) focus isolates them against the background of the rest of reality, this being of things actually *is* (precisely what it then is).

Just as in Immanuel Kant's formula "Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind" (193-194), we need things to be *both* perceivable *and* intelligible. Also, just as in the case of René Descartes' piece of wax (13), it is actually *our cogito* (*inspectio mentis*/ intuition of the mind) that grants an object its identity and then maintains, changes or suspends it.

When Husserl, in his transcendental phenomenology, tries to define what he calls *the intentional object* (or *noema*), he insists on at least three characteristics which can be very interesting in the context of our present discussion: 1. they are neither true nor false (their perception and constitution is ulterior to the transcendental *epoché – Cartezianische* 60); 2.

they always appear in 'adumbrations' (*Abschattungen*) – in a temporally coherent combination of sides that are actually perceived *vs.* sides remembered, anticipated or even presumed according to the essence/ concept we attribute to that particular object (*Ideen* 86); 3. each and every 'empirical intuition' (perception and intention of an *individual* object) is doubled by an 'eidetic intuition.'[xviii] I see *this* mug of coffee here & now, on my table, and at the same time, *in it*, I see, so-to-say, (its) *mugness*; these two types of intuition (of the individual and, simultaneously, of the essence) always accompany each other.

Within his epistemological discussion of linguistics as a science of culture, Coseriu mentions Husserl in order to talk about what the Romanian linguist calls "the universality of the individual" (*Lecciones* 53). For humans, objects are never just-themselves, they are also examples and instantiations of the objectual class they pertain to. This is precisely the mental mechanism which helps us not to be lost, as Funes was, in an ocean of fleeting details: we perpetually classify and judge objects, events, even living beings, on a *functional* (*eidetic*, in Husserl's terms) rather than a material (*hyletic*) basis.

The Individual Plane of Language, Expressive *Competence and S*ense

But the "linguistic act," in Coseriu's view, does not end with the constitution of *designata*; it comprises a second semiotic articulation, through which the 'emitter' (speaker, writer etc.) manifests her or his intention(s)/ stance towards the state of facts that they just stated (on the level of the *designatum*). This very particular content of every linguistic utterance (moreover: this *asymmetric* content, which will never fully coincide at the two poles, emitter *vs.* receiver, of a communication or dialogue – *cf.* Coseriu, *Introducción* 17) is what the Romanian linguist calls *sense* (Ge. *Sinn*, Sp. *sentido*, Ro. *sens*). If *significata* pertained, ultimately, to a (virtual) dictionary present in the mind of every speaker of a language and if *designata* were individual objects of the world (whether concrete or fictional) in which both speaker and hearer need to situate themselves in order to 'understand' anything from their dialogue, *sense* is the only (type

of) linguistic content to actually bring something new to the discussion: precisely, each participant's *own* contribution. This third plane of language, in Coseriu's theory, is called "individual," of course, because it involves a particular sequence of words communicated at a particular moment in time, in particular circumstances – but these are not the main reasons for its *individuality*. It is rather the uniqueness, the singularity of the presence/ of the 'significant' manifestation, in the human world, of each and every one of us that gives their specificity to the individual plane of language and to *sense*.

'Being, 3' – as Ecstatic*/ as 'My Own' Stance in the World / as Vulnerability and Openness*

In *sense*, we are already beyond ourselves and our own world (the one we [just] constituted and, in the end, managed *via* the first semiotic articulation, as a universe of *designata*). Also, through our continuous sense production, we are also beyond 'transcendental' (Husserlian) phenomenology, in a type of existence which could, I think, be best characterized by two famous Heideggerian notions: 1. the fundamental, definitional *transcendence* of the *Dasein* and 2. its 'temporal' *ecstasis.*

The first concept simply says that the *ego* is, always and by definition, beyond both itself and the totality of its world (the "essence" of the *Dasein* is its – or, rather, his or her – transcendence).[xix] The second one, usually used as a plural (there are precisely three domains for the ecstatic being of the *Dasein*) refers to the classical dimensions of time: past, present and future, re-interpreted, in the tradition inaugurated by St. Augustine, as "modes" of the soul, rather than dimensions of the physical universe. In summary, according to Heidegger, I am always already beyond myself, *ec-static* ("standing," so to say, outside of myself and my [phenomenological] world), and the place of my transcendence is precisely *time*: I am outside of myself in 1) the re-visiting and re-interpretation of my memories (the ecstasy of what was formerly thought as the *past*), in 2) my contact and interaction with everything that concretely surrounds me (the ecstasy of what was formerly thought as the present) and 3) in my projections, hopes and actions related to what's to come (the ecstasy of what was formerly thought as the future).[xx]

The reason for which I mentioned these Heideggerian (or hermeneutic-phenomenological) ideas here is that, for Coseriu also, there are three so-called "secondary intentionalities" which can be added by the individual speaker when he or she *makes sense* (an expression which is to be understood literally: *produces* it) in the world. Coseriu (*Geschichte* 94) attributes them to Aristotle, for whom language in itself is pure(ly) *logos semantikos*, but speakers and hearers use it as *logos apophantikos, poetikos* or *pragmatikos*. Obviously, the *logos apophantikos*, the language of knowledge and science, is oriented towards the past: in order to state things such as they are (*ta onta os estin legein*), these things must already exist.[xxi] The *logos pragmatikos*, as the communicative and persuasive use of language, is oriented towards our future (towards what we want our interlocutors to start knowing and even better, towards what we want them to do with *and/ or* for us). Finally, since it actually generates "fictional" states of affairs/ imaginary worlds in poetry, prose and arts, the *logos poetikos*, as the creative use of language, relates to the *present* – not the concrete, "palpable" one, of course, but rather its productive alternative.

When we speak, write or otherwise (linguistically) express ourselves, what we actually do, besides emitting *material*, intersubjectively accessible signs, is to *insert* our contribution in the actual, real *time* of the universe and, at the same time, to *open our position/ stance* to re-interpretation, dialogue, maybe even contestation on the part of others. That which was before interior and intimate (maybe even unknown to ourselves before being thought as such) becomes public: it is now a (new) part of the universe, recognizable as such – as a bearer of *sense*.

In summary, the relation I am suggesting between Coseriu's planes of language and linguistic contents on the one side, and the typology of being proposed here on the other side, is the following:

	Levels (planes) of language	Linguistic content	Type of being
1.	universal	*Designatum* [*Bezeichnung*]	being as (an) intentional object
2.	historical	*Significatum* [*Bedeutung*]	being as *eidos*
3.	individual	Sense [*Sinn*]	"ecstatic" being

The Peircean Triad of *Semiosis*

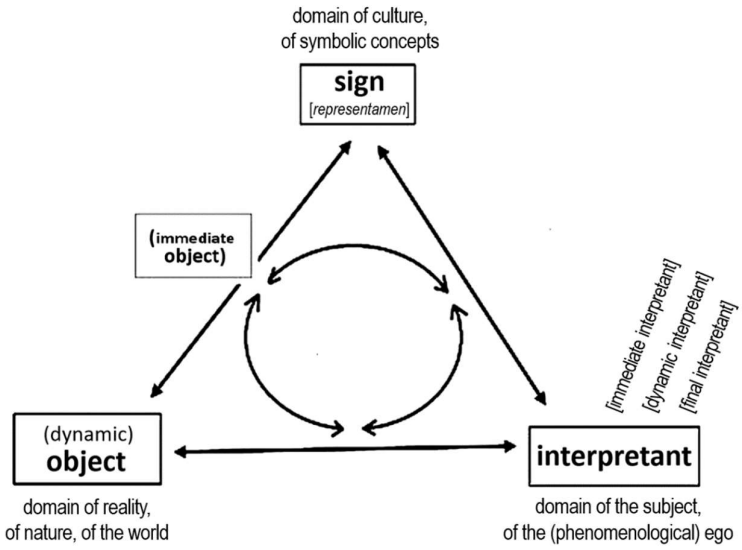
In a chapter dedicated to *Logical interpretants* from his *Survey of pragmaticism*, Peirce writes:

> It is important to understand what I mean by *semiosis*. All dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects [whether they react equally upon each other, or one is agent and the other patient, entirely or partially] or at any rate is a resultant of such actions between pairs. But by 'semiosis' I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs. (5.484[xxii])

I would like to start my brief analysis of (the structure of) Peirce's *semiosis* by stressing that for the American thinker, the existence, in the world, of semiotic processes is the best and most important example for what, inside his more philosophical/ metaphysical group of *cenopythagorean categories*, he calls *Thirdness*. Also, it is important to note that Peirce himself insisted on this particular concept as the most advanced one in his entire theory:

> I now come to Thirdness. To me, who have for forty years considered the matter from every point of view that I could discover, the inadequacy of Secondness to cover all that is in our minds is so evident that I scarce know how to begin to persuade any person of it who is not already convinced of it. Yet I see a great many thinkers who are trying to construct a system without putting any thirdness into it. Among them are some of my best friends who acknowledge themselves indebted to me for ideas but have never learned the principal lesson. (8.331)

Not only in the above-mentioned fragments, but also in many other places where Peirce takes on the problems of sign-functioning and sign effects (or rather: symbolic[xxiii] effects) in the real world – particularly, in his *Letters to Lady Welby* – an important difference seems to appear between, on the one side, the "phylogenetic" order of the domains of being involved and, on the other side, the functional order through which signs affect our universe, object by object and in its entirety.



That is: if we judge them through the criteria of constitution and at the same time within our traditional way of seeing the hierarchy from basic to complex, then the world of objects is first: we consider the material universe to be older and, so to say, more fundamental than life and any possible type, however vague or non-sentient, of subjectivity. The domain (or, within the triangle, the vertex) of individual organisms is, of course, second. And only finally, in small portions of the living world (and, most probably, infinitesimal parts of the actual universe) does intelligence, in the human sense of the word, manifest itself.

Not only that; but even if we stop thinking about order and we simply judge the cardinality ("quantity" within the whole of reality) of these types of being, using Peirce's own *phaneroscopic* triad to name them, we will have to say that the material world of qualities and self-identical objects is a Prime (*Firstness*), the manifestation of any type of subjectivity and perception/ cognition is a Second, and – as defined in the quotation above – any mental or conceptual treatment of either is to be accepted as a Third. (Or, if we want to find a more recent, more elaborated and even better

known variant of this grand theory of the Universe, we should, of course, refer to Karl Popper's tripartite ontology, with its worlds: physical, psychological and mental.[xxiv])

But since earlier I talked about another side to the matter, I must show (and insist) that things look very differently from the point of view of *semiosis* itself: here, it is the Sign which acts as a Prime; and not only is the Object a Second, but (especially when the sign is a symbol) it dissociates into the Immediate *vs*. Dynamic Object (Peirce 4.536). In this development, the Interpretant appears as a Third and, furthermore, it manifests three phases or stages – immediate (emotional), dynamic and final (Peirce 8.148). Also, since the final interpretant can also be a sign, the danger of an infinite regression appears (Peirce 1.339), meaning that the conscience of the interpreter keeps moving from sign to sign, in a perpetual stage of dynamic interpretation, without being able to break the circle and arrive to a final interpretant which is not semiotic, such as a real action or, even better, an actional habit (Peirce 5.396, 5.340). So the presence of signs (most importantly, of symbols) in the universe keeps disrupting the purely deterministic logic of Secondness and, in a certain sense, keeps us at a distance from any Firstness we live as such. In fact, each and every moment of our pure lived experience, if we could isolate it from the others and stop dissociating between subject and object, would be such a Firstness; but on the one hand the splitting I just mentioned always happens, and on the other hand change, movement, associated with memory (which together make up *time*) always intervene. This perpetually "throws" reality into (at least) Secondness and, more importantly, relegates Firstness to the supposedly deeper and more fundamental realm of *essences* (*eidae*).

But, however spectacular these Peircean ideas (already) are, it is two truly revolutionary theoretical (and also practical) consequences deriving from them that, in my opinion, are the most important: 1. From an epistemological point of view, we need to accept that we cannot talk about objects/ things without taking into consideration human subjects and signs (and, of course, this idea is valid for any of the semiosic triangle's "vertices"). Also, it is a mistake to discuss any of the binary relations (*subject – object*, for instance) leaving the third participant aside. Thus, the *triadic and dynamic* structure of *semiosis* is irreducible. 2. From a "deeper,"

ontological perspective, we need to accept that for us *Thirdness is a Prime*. (That is: the first "thing" we are dealing with, in everyday life, are *our own interpretations* of phenomena – these phenomena, in their turn, consisting from what we a) perceive, b) find out, in the sense of passively or actively getting to know, and c) hear – perceive as a sign – & "judge.")

Main Differences between Coseriu's Triad and the Other Two (Humboldt, Peirce)

First of all, both the hierarchy and the topic of Coseriu's types of content are clearly established; as a consequence, it would be a mistake to try representing them in a triangle (where we can go between the vertices A, B, C in whatever direction we choose). More specifically:

a. there is a clear, unidirectional difference of levels of generality between the planes of language: top – down, universal, historical, individual;

b. the order in which the two so-called semiotic articulations operate is also given:

> b1. The first semiotic articulation goes from (a historical) language to (universal) speech and from *significata* [*Bedeutungen*; Saussures's *signifiés*] to *designata* [*Bezeichnungen*];
>
> b2. The second semiotic articulation goes from the universal plane to the individual one and "converts" or "maps" the *designata* into/ onto *sense* [*Sinn*];

c. last but, by no means, least, there is also a hierarchy of *importance* that Coseriu himself attributes to the three types of content. *Significata*, although of course indispensable for the linguistic act, are the least important (in and by themselves[xxv]); *designata*, configuring/ "giving" a state of facts, are more important: they establish the "what (about)" of the linguistic act; but the crucial content (the very *telos*, in fact, of linguistic acts) is *sense*. Through/ in sense, an individual (*i.e.* the speaker) establishes her or his position, intention, versus the very state of facts comprised by the same linguistic act's *designata*. Sense represents the "why," more accurately the "to what purpose," the "intention" of linguistic acts and it is

only *via* sense that each and every one of us actually and actively participates in human life, society and the universe.

Secondly, among the three, this one (Coseriu's) is the only triad which remains actually *linguistic*,[xxvi] both in intention and in realization. Humboldt's triad was elaborated before the whole modern science of Linguistics, and is rather a brilliant anticipation, the announcement of a possible revolution of thought – made from a world which was only beginning to grasp the importance and role of language in relation to both objective and subjective reality. And at the other end of the conceptual and schematic spectrum, Peirce's triad is clearly intended to go *beyond* language; it actually operates in a *semiotic* frame which ultimately fails to grasp the absolutely special place that natural languages and speech occupy among all human "means of expression."[xxvii]

The Way, the Truth, the Life as Metaphor(s) of the Three Linguistic Contents

It might seem strange, or even hypocritical on my part to have chosen as a *motto* one of the most famous quotations from the New Testament, and yet ask my reader to refrain from any theological or even religious interpretations of it; still, this is exactly what I am now proposing. The way in which Jesus defines Himself (*ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή / ego sum via et veritas et vita*) to His disciples and to *humans* in general, *to each and every individual* seems to me to instantiate the same three fundamental types of being we have been discussing here.

The way (understood as a *path*/ *road*, but also, more simply as a *mode* of behavior) would correspond to the various *significata* of one or another historical language. Coseriu, following Humboldt, repeatedly insisted that the only real existence/ manifestation of (the faculty of) language is *verbal*: it is the act of someone speaking (as *Energeia*). Thus, when we, as linguists, speak about (historical) languages as objects,[xxviii] we are actually committing the fallacy of reification. *Significata* are pure virtualities (idiomatic *delimitations* of), modes of being which we as speakers use in concrete utterances, in order to constitute designated states of facts.

The truth is a type of being that/ which we recognize in (our relationship with) the universe. From the phenomenological/ Coserian point of view that we worked with here, it is not the "referential" truth we are concerned with; however important, that truth is only one of three possible (main) aspects of sense. What I am talking about, instead, is more primitive: it is the constitutive truth of the intellectual operations (the *cogitatum* of the *ego cogito*) through which we, humans, *project* our world and each of its phenomena, events, living beings etc. as *designata*/ intentional objects, *before* taking any "personal" stand towards them.

But it is only through *the life*, through *a surplus of sense* that we actually *intervene*, so to say, in the actual existence of the Universe. Of course, some may say (in a very Peircean manner of thinking) that it is not our thoughts and words which change the future, but our ("physical") actions. To those we should reply, following Kant's critical footsteps, that in the empirical universe each and every event is entirely determined by equally physical causes, and only through the free (*transcendentally* free, in the case of humans) movements of living beings something truly new can manifest itself inside concrete reality. We know very little (and nothing, really from inside: we can only speculate) about the life of plants or animals; but it would be a pity not to recognize what we know best about our own life – this continual (production of) sense which constitutes the very first layer of our universe.

Final Summary and Brief Conclusions

In what sense, then, is language the house of being, and what types of being "live" in this dwelling?

Firstly, every historical language (English, German etc.) is a depository of being(s) as *eidos/ significatum* (or rather, always and essentially in the plural, *eida, significata*). These are the essences that we tend to recognize behind or at the very foundation of concrete, individual, objects and states of facts; without them, there is nothing stable, nothing iterative, nothing recognizable and rationally manageable in the unending and forever novel flux of "empirical" phenomena. In historical languages, essences appear as more general *ways* of dealing with reality – means of

fighting, or rather resisting its "Heraclitian" (*i.e.* always fluctuating) character.

Secondly, the universal human activity of speaking (about one or another aspect of the world) is the house of being as (each and every) individual "thing." But we need to keep in mind that here what we are talking about are "intentional" objects, in the sense of phenomenology; and, more importantly, that it is the very act of thinking (as internal monologue or externalized speech open to dialogue) that constitutes *designata*. In this universal plane of language, being appears as *truth* (exclusively) in the sense mentioned by Descartes (27) when he writes: "sive capram, sive chimaeram imaginer, non minus verum est me unam imaginari quam alteram/ for whether I imagine a goat or a chimera, it is not less true that I imagine the one that the other." It is, of course, a whole different matter whether the truth "pro-posed" *by* and *in* my act of speaking coincides with the facts existing in the real (*intersubjectively* accepted) world. And, anyway, we need to fully recognize the *designata* in a linguistic act *before* deciding, on the third level of language, the individual one, about truth or falsity.[xxix]

But, thirdly, the type of being which is by far the most interesting (and the most difficult to describe) is the one manifested through and "after" Coseriu's second semiotic articulation: it is, so to say, being as the *surplus* to the already existing universe, brought by each and every subject through his or her active *living* and his or her creative (as far as we are here concerned, *linguistic*) contribution. In Coseriu's terms, it is simply called *sense* – the most evanescent, but still the most important content of language: actually, its *telos*. Going back, for the last time, to our metaphoric reading of Jesus Christ's words in John: 14.6, this is also the highest and most accomplished type of being: *life*. That is the case because, beyond both the possibility of connecting to the ensemble of reality (*significata*/ *eida*/ "the way") and the actuality of one's situation and cognition of it (*designata*/ intentional objects/ "the truth"), it is in *sense* that something truly new and personal is at the same time brought into the universe. Here, *sense* is open to discovery, interpretation and possibly (dialogical) "alteration" by others – who "hermeneutically" understand it, but are under no circumstance bound to repeat it and, in fact, could not repeat it even if

they wanted to. It is this particular type of being that Humboldt talks about, when he says:

> Die Sprachen als eine Arbeit des Geistes zu bezeichnen, ist schon darum ein vollkommen richtiger und adäquater Ausdruck, weil sich das Dasein des Geistes überhaupt nur in Thätigkeit und als solche denken lässt. (*Verschiedenheit* 26) / To describe languages as a *work of the spirit* is a perfectly correct and adequate terminology, if only because the existence of spirit as such can be thought of only in and as activity. (*On Language* 49)

This is because, at least in the human universe (or in the Universe according to humans), the birthplace for all *novelty* is *sense*. Or, restating everything in another, more comprehensive and conclusive, formula: *the world* only exists through us; but each and every one of us only exists through *sense*.

Notes:

[i] "[I]n speaking of a piece of meat ready to be served on the table, English uses *mutton* and not *sheep*. The difference in value between *sheep* and *mouton* is due to the fact that *sheep* has beside it a second term while the French word does not" (Saussure 115-116).
[ii] In the sense of a weak or isolated, unimportant argument in the grand debate of linguistic *universalism vs. relativism*.
[iii] When a Japanese says *kodomo-wa kuru*, what he/ she actually means is "as far as an indeterminate number of children is concerned, there is a *coming*" – an idea that English speakers would usually translate/ comprehend as "some children (we don't know how many, it may be just one) are coming" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxxi). So in the mind of a Japanese person, there is absolutely no need to put into opposition *one*, on the one side *vs. two, three* or *two million* on the other side. But for us as English, Romanian etc. speakers, this distinction is obligatory; we make it effortlessly, since it has always felt natural; we even tend to consider it an aspect of the world (the "jump" from one to two being, for us, much more important than the one from, say, thirteen to fourteen).
[iv] In 1905, Peirce (5.414) took the decision to rename his own theory, so as to keep it safe from "kidnappers" such as William James or F.C.S. Schiller.
[v] *Über der Verschiedenheit des menschliches Sprachbaues…*; since in the existent English translations the fragment we are discussing is simply missing, I quoted the part referring to the subject-object-language threefold from first name Steinthal's (1883) German edition.
[vi] No less than three printed versions of this text were published by Alexander von Humboldt and Eduard Buschmann in the first year after the author's death; the best known edition is *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwickelung des Menschengeschlechts*, von Wilhelm von Humboldt, Druckerei der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1836.

[vii] Translated into English, the title of this book is *The Semiologic Structure of Structuralism: The Critique of a Pure and Practical Semiology*.
[viii] Coseriu always manifested an almost-philosophical interest in epistemology, more precisely in the *constitution* of the objects of our everyday life and knowledge, as well as, on a higher level, of science.
[ix] First published in 1913, in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung* (*Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*).
[x] The first edition of this volume appeared in French, in 1931; the German translation dates from 1950.
[xi] "The experience of fulfilment is actually not just the presence of the perceptual object given in a bodily present manner but the experienced sense of the identity between what is intended and what is actually intuited. In other words, fulfilment is the experience of the coincidence between the empty intention and its fulfilling object. All perceptual experiences contain an interwoven mixture of empty and filled intentions, e.g. when I actually perceive the front side of the object, the back side is perceptually present in an empty manner" (Moran and Cohen 131).
[xii] "The Eidos, the pure essence, can be exemplified for intuition in experiential data – in data of perception, memory, and so forth; but it can equally well be exemplified in data of mere phantasy. Accordingly, to seize upon an essence itself, and to seize upon it originarily, we can start from corresponding experiencing intuitions, but equally well from intuitions which are non-experiencing, which do not seize upon actual existence but which are instead 'merely imaginative' ('*bloß einbildenden*')" (Husserl, *Ideas* 11).
[xiii] "the text is not without reference; the task of reading, qua interpretation, will be precisely to fulfill the reference" (Ricoeur 109). Of course, things are a little more complicated when we see them in a frame such as the one proposed by Coseriu – one with not only two ("intra" *vs.* "extra" linguistic), but three types of content.
[xiv] Of course, this coincidence of sense is by no means compulsory. The speaker/ interpreter is the only one to decide what she or he intends/ understands when emitting/ listening to/ reading etc. a text-discourse; and this decision is, ultimately, an act of one's freedom.
[xv] Within the second semiotic articulation, "after" having designated a state of facts, I "position" myself in regard to it, I explicitly or implicitly make manifest the *intention(s)* with which I, personally, at this particular time and place, chose to mention, against the background offered by the rest of the universe, this particular object or event. This intention of mine is *sense*; any interpretations, by others, of it bears the same name and belongs to the same realm of language: the individual plane of text-discourse.
[xvi] For a more detailed analysis of the relations between *logos* as language-in-itself (*semantikos*) and *logos* as one of the orientations that the individual speaker chooses (*apophantikos, pragmatikos, poetikos*), see Coseriu's *Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie* (80-86).
[xvii] Or rather *designata*, since we almost never deal with facts in stark isolation – usually we are surrounded by, and interact, with *complex states of things* within the totality of the world.
[xviii] "Sagten wir: jede Tatsache könnte 'ihrem eigenen Wesen nach' anders sein, so drückten wir damit schon aus, daß es zum Sinn jedes Zufälligen gehört, eben ein Wesen, und somit ein rein zu fassendes *Eidos* zu haben, und dieses steht nun unter Wesens-

Wahrheiten verschiedener Allgemeinheitsstufe" (Husserl, *Ideen I*: 12) / "When we said that any matter of fact, 'in respect of its own essence,' could be otherwise, we were already saying that it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an *Eidos* which can be apprehended purely; and this *Eidos* comes under eidetic truths belonging to different levels of universality" (Husserl, *Ideas* 7).

[xix] In Heidegger's *On the Essence of Ground* (*Pathmarks* 108) the expression "transcendent *Dasein*" is straightforwardly called *tautologic*.

[xx] "in every ecstasis, temporality temporalizes itself as a whole; and this means that in the ecstatical unity with which temporality has fully temporalized itself currently, is grounded the totality of the structural whole of existence, facticity, and falling – that is, the unity of the care-structure. // Temporalizing does not signify that ecstases come in a 'succession.' The future is not later than having been, and having been is not earlier than the Present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future which makes present in the process of having been" (Heidegger, *Being* 401).

[xxi] "conoscenza, e quindi scienza vera e propria, c'è solo del passato" (Coseriu, "Tempo" 207).

[xxii] Since the complete edition of Peirce's works I am quoting here is not organised according to pages, but to an internal-specific division into volumes and (sub)paragraphs, I adopted this notation specific to the *Collected Papers*.

[xxiii] "Inside" Peirce's famous triad *icon/ index/ symbol*, it is only the third type of sign that functions in the line of the *pragmatic maxim*: "The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol" (Peirce 5.438).

[xxiv] See, for example, Popper 106.

[xxv] Of course, as ineliminable eidetic parts of all our speaking and thinking, *significata* are in fact (and, so to say, *secretly*) crucial; but in each concrete linguistic act taken in and for itself, they only represent the material for designating intentional objects and, more importantly, for constituting sense.

[xxvi] For the relation – as it is seen/ described by the Romanian linguist – between the domains of *language vs.* "proper" *signs* (*i.e.* terms, symbols and signals), see Coseriu "Zeichen," *passim*.

[xxvii] This is precisely the place in which, for an accurate understanding of man's place in the universe, a Saussureian and "semiologic" (rather than Peirce's "semiotic" stance) should intervene: language is not one among other systems of communication, it is the very fabric from which all possible human thought (and thus, all human understanding) is made.

[xxviii] One such instance is Saussure: "Language is concrete, no less so than speaking; and this is a help in our study of it. . . . The very possibility of putting the things that relate to language into graphic form allows dictionaries and grammars to represent it accurately, for language is a storehouse of sound images, and writing is the tangible form of those images" (15).

[xxix] Moreover, this decision must be taken only in/ for apophantic texts and discourse. If the sense, on the individual level, is intended to be pragmatic or (even) poetic, judging it "under" the *true vs. false* distinction is a grave epistemological mistake.

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