

## SIGNIFICATION AND OBJECTS

The difference between the universe of objects and the universe of signs epitomizes the idea of the unfolded boundary between the inside and the outside, of a threshold which belongs to both, of signifying itself and signifying another. It exemplifies the impossible temporal fissure between the becoming of an object and the becoming of the sign: as soon as an object begins to signify itself, it immediately falls into the openness, or potentiality, to signify more. As I have pointed out elsewhere, it is possible to differentiate now between two crucial moments of cultural semiosis: between the emergence of a cognizable object on the one hand, and the transmutation of that object into a sign, i.e., its entrance into the repertory of a signifying system, on the other. Those two moments are, in fact, two fundamental thresholds separating the unnameable from the meaningful.<sup>1</sup>

The first threshold consists in the emergence of an object from the undifferentiated stuff of substance (in the Spinozian sense). The transition through that first threshold involves the following movements. As an effect of the relation between certain properties of environment, a certain fragment of that environment achieves cultural value which makes it both possible and necessary for it to demand representation in order to enter cultural reality as a cognizable object. A simultaneous process of individuation and totalization codifies the object as an entity distinct from the rest of the environment. The social and cultural legitimation of the object is effected through an act of nominalization, whereby the object achieves discursive reiterability. These three different developments are not exactly stages of a process, but rather its intertwined aspects: the question of their mutual anteriority or posteriority is not really of significance. What is important is that they all combine to make possible the crossing of the threshold between the culturally non-existent and the cognizable.

Having accomplished a relative completeness in signifying itself, the object is now immediately open to another, more adventurous task - that of signifying the absent other. This inherent potentiality to signify is characteristic of any object, just like occurrence in states of affairs is its ontological necessity. In brief, the entrance into the realm of the objectual is simultaneously an entrance into the realm of semiotic potentiality: the object is potentially a sign. With one move, it crosses one threshold of signification - that of cognizability - and enters another: that of semiotic functionality. In the case of the first threshold, semioticity is turned upon itself, it is self-reflexive and self-founding: the object has to determine itself as a cognizable; with the emergence of a culturally distinct entity the crossing of the first threshold is complete, while the crossing of the second has only begun. Having achieved its identity, the cognizable reaches now beyond itself, and becomes a sign vehicle which seeks multiple meanings rather than the univocality of an object. The principle behind the first threshold is that of actuality and determinacy, whereas the principle behind the second emphasizes potentiality.

I now want to illustrate the different kinds of relations between the two thresholds of signification as they are manifested within the confines of a cultural object. Those different ratios of the objectual and the signifiatory produce different kinds of objects which might be grouped into four distinct categories that fill up the semiospace. My categorization, however, is only in part meant to be a contribution to the economy of objects from yet another perspective. More importantly, it is meant to demonstrate that irrespective of the ratio of inwardly and outwardly directed semioticity, semioticity itself is never merely a contingent factor.

A. *POTENT OBJECTS*, i.e., *objects which, having become cognizable and independent entities, have also acquired external signification, and now function both as objects and as signs (literally: as sign vehicles)*. Generally, the denotative value of words depicting such objects is culturally as significant as their connotation, if we were to use this imprecise dichotomy. The majority of the objects we encounter in the practice of everyday life belong to this category and include both natural and man-made things (like spring, lion, or heart on the one hand and champagne, arrow, or book on the other hand). The ratio of their potential signifiatory value to their actual objectual value may differ substantially: even if such objects have not yet achieved culturally codified signification, as many of them have not, they are all capable of such signification, and their potentiality in this respect is determined by certain predispositions<sup>2</sup> which characterize them. To illustrate the double potency of such objects I have chosen very explicit examples: that of a *knot* and *pearl*, as individual objects, and *tears* as an interesting instance of an object which develops its own self-contained communicative subsystem within a culture.

The knot, as both object and sign, illustrates the power of iconicity in generating symbolic value. There are no sources informing us when - in the history of its existence - the knot actually took on the culturally legitimized role of a sign, but obviously its essential ability to express the concept of binding endows it with great semiotic potential and has made it particularly prone to annexation by magic and folklore. Some of its traditional meanings have now been marginalized or obliterated, but the magic power of binding, for example, still finds actual application in the practices of fishermen in the Shetland Islands who believe they can control (bind) winds by means of knots (Cirlot 1971: 172).

Focusing on the "morphology of ties and bonds in the practice of magic," Mircea Eliade distinguishes two main groups of knots in their symbolic function: "(1) the magic 'bonds' employed against human adversaries (in war or in sorcery), with the converse operation of 'cutting the bonds'; and (2) beneficent knots and bonds, means of defense against wild animals, against diseases, witchcraft, demons of death." (1969: 110) Among the first category, for instance, he mentions the cord buried near the house of an enemy or hidden in his ship to make it capsize; knots bringing about various ills; the magical snares employed against enemies etc. In the second group, examples include bandaging any diseased part of the body as a remedial measure or protecting oneself against evil spirits during the time of childbirth (1969: 110-112). What is interesting is the semiotic ambivalence of the knot reflecting the ambiguity of the iconic value responsible for what we have called "predispositions" in its signifying potential:

Knots and strings are used in the nuptial rites to protect the young couple, though at the same time, as we know knots are thought to imperil the consummation of the marriage. But *ambivalence of this sort is to be found in all the magico-religious uses of knots and bonds*. The knots bring about illness, but also cure or drive it away; nets and knots can bewitch one, but also protect one against bewitchment; they can both hinder childbirth and facilitate it; they preserve the newly born, and make them ill; they bring death and keep it at bay. On the whole, what is essential in all these magical and magico-medical rites, is the orientation that they give to the power that resides in any kind of binding, in every act of "tying". And this *orientation* may be either *positive* or *negative*, according to whether one takes the opposites in the sense of "benefic" or "malefic", or that of "defense" or "attack". (Eliade 1969: 112)

By embodying ties, the knot may also be expressive of "an unchanging psychic situation, however unaware of his predicament the individual may be: for example, that of the unliberated man who is 'tied down' by the Uranian god. This is why the *Flamen Dialis* of the ancient Romans could not wear knots in his habits; and this is also true of the Moslems on their pilgrimages to Mecca" (Cirlot 1971: 172, following Frazer). Contrary, however, to the idea of tying, if associated with the figure of 8, the knot manifests the idea of infinity (the "endless knot" is one of the emblems of good luck in Chinese Buddhism signifying longevity; Cirlot 1971: 173).

The iconic qualities of *pearl* are less obvious, but its semiotic potentiality certainly equals that of the knot. The iconic qualities generative of symbolic value are contained in the structural enclosure of the pearl in the shell rather than in the pearl by itself. It is the hiddenness of the pearl with its implied moment of uncovering and revelation that accounts for its association with wisdom or Truth, or its function as a symbol of the Soul or Spirit encased within the human body (Bayley 1968: 220). As an illustration of the latter, Bayley quotes Plato's Phaedrus: "There was time when we were not yet sunk into this 'tomb,' which now we bear about with us and call it 'body,' bound fast (to it) like oyster to its shell" (Bayley 1968: 221). In Chinese symbolism, the effect of enclosure connoted by the pearl signifies "genius in obscurity" (Cirlot 1971: 251). The role of the shell as an essential determinant of the significative potency of the pearl is particularly visible in this anonymous poem quoted by Bayley (1968: 221 n. 1):

Living friends, be wise, and dry  
Straightway every weeping eye. What ye lift upon a bier  
Is not worth a single tear.  
'Tis an empty sea-shell, one  
Out of which the pearl is gone;  
The shell is broken, it lies there;  
The pearl, the all, the soul, is here.

In a more sophisticated way, in psychoanalysis, the pearl has been read as a representation of the mystic Centre and sublimation, "as the transfiguration of an infirmity, or of some abnormality" (Cirlot 1971: 251).

The pearl also very distinctly exemplifies the changing significative potency of an object, its movement on the spectrum of potentiality from semiotic multivalence towards univocality. Here, this movement accompanied the secularization of the sacred-symbolical value of the pearl and turned it gradually into a commodity: an object of economic investment. Mircea Eliade describes the change "from the pearl that was an emblem of absolute *reality*" to the pearl "of our days" in the following way:

The history of the pearl bears [...] witness to the phenomenon of the degradation of initial metaphysical meaning. What was at one time a cosmological symbol, an object rich in beneficent sacred powers, becomes, through the work of time, an element of ornamentation, appreciated only for its aesthetic qualities and its economic value. (Eliade 1969: 144)

If the pearl's trajectory represents an extended cultural process consisting of several stages - of a slowly falling plateau of potentiality - *tears* exemplify a cultural trajectory of ejaculation: within the span of only one century their semiotic value rises suddenly and then abruptly decreases. What is even more interesting is that during this period of intensified potency, the object manages to evolve its own communicative code by drawing to itself and petrifying various contexts and behavioural modes. As a secondary semiotic system, the "liquid economy of tears" in the literature, letters, and memoirs of the eighteenth century embodies the belief that "the language of tears was supposed to have a universal significance" just as cries and exclamations were considered to be natural signs pre-existing language (Vincent-Buffault 1991: 32, 66). As Vincent-Buffault observes in her systematic and perceptive study, "these tears shed without moderation described a movement which was not arbitrary"; rather, "the rhetoric of tears was evidence of a logic of tearful communication" (1991: 15, 18). Not only did "the tears of a child [...] [constitute] the first step towards his incorporation into the social order" (1991: 47); also

by crying, a relationship was established, a reply was expected. [...] Tears shed at home distributed rights and duties in their own way. Love, which made tears flow was the occasion for tender expression of emotion, but it also caused unshared tears which were on the scale of the tragedy lived out by lovers. One sympathized with strangers, cried with them [...]. At the height of emotion, *they* [lovers] *cried together, they shared their tears*, and even more, *they mixed their tears* with those of others. These expressions were part of an ideal encounter thanks to the liquid element, despite the irreparable separation of the bodies. [...] This movement, this exchange of tears is also expressed by recourse to an economic analogy: *one gives tears, one owes tears* to another or even *one pays one's tribute of tears, one buys with tears*. The worst would probably be *to cost someone tears*. [...] Respect, love, or simply the feeling of being part of humanity invited everyone to keep an account of what had

been expended. By making someone cry a debt of tears was contracted. Novels developed a strange management of the ebb and flow of the liquid commodity. (1991: 15-17)

In the writings of Stendhal, Benjamin Constant and Germaine de Staël, "the deciphering of tears became a central consideration as though access to them was no longer assured but was subjected to several interpretations. In this tears were not to be shared in the immediacy of a delicious moment but were observed, and decoded in a constant fluctuation of meaning" (Vincent-Buffault 1991: 115-116).

Before the economy of tears lost its market in the present century - devalued by the likes of Verdun, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Sarajevo - the system had undergone a process of moderation and refinement in the fiction of the nineteenth century: rather than obtrusive imposition, tears now became subtle signs that had to be "deciphered by the expert eye of the narrator or the author" (Vincent-Buffault 1991: 168). The transformation concerns not only the genre, but also, as Vincent-Buffault observes, a "social ethic of restraint":

Torrents of tears and shared tears became rare: literary texts proposed different types of exposition. The vocabulary that was used was singularly diversified and the established code of the signs of expressions was dismantled in favour of a relatively wide palette of expressive nuances. The eyes could be damp, the glance veiled, a tear could be furtively wiped away or suppressed, a sob could be smothered. Deep suffering led to rare and burning tears. (1991: 167)

In Balzac, rather than tears themselves the reader is shown their traces which now should be read "like hieroglyphics" as for example the Père Goriot's swollen inner corner of the eye, or the "red rims [that] appeared to weep blood"; likewise traces on the face of an old adulteress "bore eloquent witness to those tears which, devoured by her heart, never fell to the ground" (Balzac, *La Femme de trente ans*, quoted after Vincent-Buffault 1991: 150). Symptomatic of a public tired of the excessive use of tears, a critic of *Atala* calls the Père Aubry a "lachrymophile" (Vincent-Buffault 1991: 108), a name whose pejorative connotation obviously signifies a change of the code.

B. What Baudrillard calls *BYGONE OBJECTS*, i.e., *objects which went through the stage of double potency in the sense of (A) above, but lost their objectual value, and serve now only a vehicular purpose* (connotation entirely took over the denotative function). Baudrillard describes them as

the whole category of objects [which] seems to fall outside the (functional) system [...]. They seem inconsistent with the calculus of functional demands in conforming to a different order of longing: testimony, remembrance, nostalgia, escapism. [...] We already saw that the cigarette lighter was mythological in its reference to the sea, while still serving a purpose - the bygone object, however, is purely mythological in

its reference to the past. It no longer has any practical importance, but exists solely in order to signify [...] it epitomizes the disavowal of primary functions. (1990: 35-36)

Baudrillard is right in saying that what such a bygone object ultimately signifies is time, or rather the cultural indices of time: in a sense the process to which the bygone object has been subject is a *reversal* of the process of de-symbolization of the pearl or knot.

The object which perfectly epitomizes such a reversal is the *mace*. In terms of utilitarian value, there could hardly be an object of a more unequivocal purpose: *Encyclopedia Britannica* depicts maces as the first known implements designed purposely as defensive weapons, already in the Chalcolithic or early Bronze Age. The mace was "a simple rock shaped for the hand and intended to smash bone and flesh, to which a handle had been added to increase the velocity and force of the blow" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1993: 530). At the same time, the mace has always been a sign:

A determinative sign in the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs, governing the ideas of creative Word and achievement. It is related to the oar, the sceptre, the staff and the club, all of them symbolic instruments of one morphological family. In Egypt the oar was also linked with the idea of creating. As a weapon, the mace denotes a crushing blow or utter destruction and not simply victory over the adversary; it is therefore used as the insignia denoting the annihilation of the subjective, assertive tendency in Man, and also of the monsters symbolizing this tendency; for the same reason it is the attribute of Hercules. (Cirlot 1971: 195).

As Cirlot points out, mace belonged originally to the same family of symbols as staff and oar, but while the latter two retained their objectual value, mace - once a primordial object - has now become *only a sign*. Mace has undergone a radical metamorphosis from a barbaric weapon to an *insignum* whose purpose is purely symbolic. In the West Australian Parliament, for instance, "a crude weapon of war in ancient times, the Mace is the symbol of authority of the legislative Assembly and is the ensign of the Speaker's Office. The Sergeant-At-Arms carries the Mace before the Speaker at the start of each day's proceedings. The Mace rests on the table of the House when the Speaker is in the Chair" (*The Parliament of Western Australia*). The mace is the epitome of a bygone object: it has entirely lost its original utilitarian purpose, and if it happened to be used as a destructive tool (for example, in a murderous attempt by a fiercely agitated speaker against some disorderly opponent), that use would occur *against* its present value, and would be purely incidental to it.

As if to illustrate how difficult it is sometimes to draw a line between the utilitarian and the symbolic, particularly in warfare, this radical transition of values within an object involves a well-punctuated moment in which both its functions coalesced. In Mediaeval times, the mace was used in battles by bishops who were not allowed to shed blood with the sword (de Vries 1976: 308): applied actually as a weapon crushing the skulls of enemies, the mace at the same time represents the power of the office. In fulfilling both purposes, it also affords us a truly Nietzschean insight into the the hypocrisy of mankind.

C. *QUASI-OBJECTS*, i.e., *cognizables which only pretend to be objects, but which never had any other value apart from signification, or vehicular* (connotation is contained in denotation). If bygone objects have lost their utilitarian value and have retained only significative potency, the intrinsic value of quasi-objects has always been only signification. For them, the crossing of the first threshold of signification is entirely subordinate to the significance of the second threshold. While being cognizables - i.e., culturally legitimized entities in their own right - quasi-objects never achieve objectual value: in other words, their utilitarian purpose is identical with their semioticity. Of various types of quasi-objects such as letters of the alphabet, trademarks, heraldic signs etc., the one which I have chosen as an example demonstrates an impressive range of semiotic potential: the *swastika* - despite its recent horrendous connotations - is a symbol of truly universal scope.

Since the ancient times, the swastika has been common in a number of mutually remote areas: in Elam (south-western Persia, in Asia Minor, in the Aegean and Danubian archaeological "culture areas" (Mackenzie 1926: 2). It appeared early in Central, Western, and Northern Europe, in China, Japan, and was known in pre-Columbian America (today's Tennessee, Ohio, and Arkansas), in Brazil and Paraguay, in what today is Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and in India where it became "an auspicious and greatly favoured symbol among the Buddhist, Jains and worshipers of Vishnu" (Mackenzie 1926: 2). Among areas where the swastika appeared later (the delay probably caused by the dominance in those places of the winged disc), Mackenzie mentions Egypt, Algeria, and Ashantee.<sup>3</sup>

The origins of the symbol are not known: while some historians believe that it appeared "spontaneously" and independently in different places, others attempt to trace it back to some common geo-cultural ancestry. Mackenzie quotes a fragment from a book on Hitties published in 1888, which describes ornaments adorning the garment of the priest of Ibreez, among which there was

the curious symbol usually known as the "swastika", which has become so famous since the excavations of General di Cesnolla in Cyprus, and of Dr. Schliemann at Troy. The symbol recurs times without number on the pre-historic pottery of Cyprus and the Trojan plain; but no trace of it has ever been found in Egypt, in Assyria, or in Babylonia. Alone among the remains of the civilized nations of the ancient East the rock sculpture of Ibreez displays it on the robe of a Lykoanian priest. Was it an invention of a Hittie people communicated by them to the rude tribes of the Asia Minor, along with the other elements of the cultural world, or was it of barbarous origin, adopted by the Hitties from the earlier population of the West? (Sayce 1888: 142, quoted in Mackenzie 1926: 5)

Even more interesting is what Mackenzie says in a supplementary comment: "About a quarter of a century after these words were written, Edmund Pottier found the swastika on a painted vase at Susa, which he regards as proto-Elamite of the earliest period" (1926: 5).

My purpose in quoting this material is not simply anecdotal. What illustrates my case and what is genuinely striking - given its expansive distribution - is that *nowhere does the swastika appear to have an objectual, non-signifying function*. In other words, the swastika had never been an object in its own right which only later acquired a symbolic value: it had never been an object which would serve some purpose other than symbolic. Not only does it from the outset "appear to have expressed an idea, or rather a group of complex ideas" (Mackenzie 1926: 13); it also never has any other function but to express those ideas. As an object - or rather a quasi-object - the swastika emerges as always already a sign of religious or magico-religious significance:

It has been referred to as a phallic symbol, a symbol of the female principle, a symbol of conception and birth, an ancient trade mark, a mere ornament, a symbol of fire, a symbol of lightning, a thunderbolt, a symbol of water, an astronomical symbol, a symbol of the four castes of India, a religious or military standard or flag, a bird in flight, a representation of the argonaut or octopus, a cross (as in the French terms "croix gammée" and "gammadion" -- the cross of four "gammas") as a "fylfot" (a Teutonic compound meaning "many footed") etc. (Mackenzie 1926: 2)<sup>4</sup>

Related both to the sun and to the moon, both to the circle and the square, to the male and the female aspects (through its clockwise and anticlockwise directions), to the centrifugal and centripetal forces in the movement of life, to inbreathing and outbreathing, to the Alpha and Omega, to beginning and end (Cooper 1984: 27), the swastika never means just itself as an object capable of not signifying: its objectuality has been from the start annihilated by its significative potency.

D. *NON-OBJECTS*, which are identifiable as totalities, but have no name and therefore no pretence to pass as legitimate (and legitimized) cultural objects. Here belong entities on the verge of autonomous cultural existence which have not undergone the process of nominalization. They fall roughly into two groups: those which merely aspire to emerge as potent objects, and those which already (like quasi-objects) point to themselves as signs, and already possess reiterable meaning (the distinction between denotation and connotation collapses because there is no formal ground for denotation).

This latter group is especially interesting since they are the only kind of entities which definitely reverse the sequence of accomplishing the two thresholds of signification, and in fact never fully complete the first (objectual) threshold. A particularly good example of cognizables making up this category are behavioural modules which convey culturally coded significations, but have no name and therefore have never entered the lexical repertoire of a culture. The ever open doors of academics' offices at American universities signify "look how busy and diligent I am," (or sometimes perhaps, with a puritanical bent, "look, I have nothing to hide"). Fashion systems are a mine of such ephemeral non-objects whose life span is often limited to the brief period of their popularity and appeal. The body - an object of desire or scrutiny - is a fertile site of similar "parasitic" significations. As Jan Bremmer observes, already "in the ancient Greek culture the body served as an important location of self-



identification", and various ways of sitting, standing, and walking - never named as isolated gestural "entities" - were nevertheless crucial signs within social semiosis. Standing in a certain manner conveyed glory; sitting, in the proper context, was associated with mourning; while walking manifested socio-economic position: those males, for instance, "who did not comply with the rules of the proper gait were designated as effeminate and passive homosexuals" (Bremmer 1991: 27). In Medieval times, apart from their communicative and symbolic role in political or sacramental rituals, gestures "were considered expressions of the inner movements of the soul, of feelings, of the moral values of individuals" (Schmitt 1992: 64).

The contemporary knowledge of "body language" - at least since Marcel Mauss's 1936 essay on the "Techniques of the Body" - provides numerous examples of cognizables which have never become fully fledged objects legitimated by an act of cultural nominalization, and whose only function is signifiatory. Each of the gestures listed in the passage below exemplifies such a non-object: "When one woman at a gathering wants to get a man into an intimate situation where the two of them can form a closed unit [...] she utilizes body language that includes flirting glances, holding his eyes, putting her head to one side, rolling her hips, crossing her legs to reveal part of her thigh, putting a hand on her hip or exposing her wrist or palm. All of these are accepted signals that get a message without words." (Fast: 98) None of them, however, possesses objectual value in itself.

The borderline between quasi-objects and non-objects may be osmotic, particularly in the case of gestures. Many gestures legitimized as cultural objects do actually belong to the former category (e.g., a handshake, a kiss, clasping, etc.; cf. Firth 1973, Bremmer & Roodenburg 1991); many others, however, are not yet fully legitimized by nominalization and thus belong to the latter. That may vary diachronically within a culture (a non-object is culturally baptized and becomes a quasi-object) as well as inter-culturally: what in one cultural system is only a non-object may function as a quasi-object in another culture. This, for example, is the case with a rather wide-spread obscene gesture imitating male masturbation: "The right or left hand is held out in a diagonal position in front of a chest or somewhat lower, fingers slightly bent towards the palm as to leave an opening, the hand being pumped vigorously a number of times" (Driessen 1992: 248). While in most Occidental cultures the gesture is clearly recognizable as a codified iconic sign but has no special name, in Andalusia it has actually been given the name of *puñeta* (from *hacer la puñeta*, to masturbate). This nominalization may have its source in the richness of signifiatory value of *puñeta* in that cultural area. The gesture

carries at least three different meanings depending on the context. It may be used as a gross rejection *vis-à-vis* outsiders. It also conveys a sexual insult or threat by forcing the person to whom the *puñeta* is made into an inferior sexual position. When used among drinking companions in the bar setting it may carry an opposite meaning, i.e., laudatory comment on sexual vigour, or, more generally, praise with regard to something powerful and pleasurable like the act of sexual penetration and intercourse as seen from the Andalusian male point of view. (Driessen 1992: 248)

\* \* \*

The four categories discussed in this section exhaust the possibility of cognizable entities. As I have already suggested, they reflect the fundamental semioticity of the world. Not only is it necessary for each of the categories to involve inchoative semiotic potentiality, but - in the case of the first two - objectuality itself must be seen as a semiotic concept. Pansemioticism then is not so much an ideological inclination or preference as it is a necessary consequence of the analysis of the relation between cognition and reality.

## References

- Baudrillard, Jean, 1990, *Revenge of the Crystal: Selected Writings on the Modern Object and Its Destiny, 1968-1983*; ed. and trans. Paul Foss and Julian Pefanis; Pluto Press, Sydney.
- Bayley, Harold, 1974 (1912), *The Lost Language of Symbolism*. Ernest Benn, London and Tonbridge; Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey.
- Bremmer, Jan/Roodenburg, Herman, (eds.), 1992, *A Cultural History of Gesture*; Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.
- Cirlot, J. E., 1971, *A Dictionary of Symbols*; trans. Jack Sage; Philosophical Library, New York.
- Cooper, J. C., 1984, *Symbolism. The Universal Language*; The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.
- Driessen, Henk, 1992, "Gestured Masculinity: Body and Sociability in Rural Andalusia", in: *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg; Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 237-252.
- Eliade, Mircea, 1969 (1952), *Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet; Sheed & Ward, New York.
- Fast, Julius, 1971, *Body Language*; Pocket Books, New York.
- Firth, Raymond, 1973, *Symbols: Public and Private*; Allen and Unwin, London.
- Guénon, René, 1975 (1958), *Symbolism of the Cross*, trans. Angus Macnab; Luzac and Co, London.
- Mackenzie, Donald. A., 1926, *The Migration of Symbols and Their Relation to Beliefs and Customs*; Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- Sayce, A. H., 1888, *The Hittites: The Story of a Forgotten Empire*; London.
- Schmitt, Jean-Claude, 1992, "The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries", in: *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg; Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 59-70.
- Vincent-Buffault, Anne, 1991, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France*; Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Vries, Ad de, 1976, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*. North-Holland, Amsterdam, London.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I have discussed this issue in "Two Thresholds of Signification", forthcoming (1997) in a volume dedicated to Jerzy Pelc. Here I only briefly recount the main points.

<sup>2</sup> Those predispositions are not properties construed in an absolutist or objectivist sense: they are rather a resultant of the properties of the object and the cultural context which brings them to the fore.

<sup>3</sup> As to the nazi adoption of the symbol, René Guénon has this to say: "the artificial and even anti-traditional use of the *swastika* by the German "racialists", who have given it the fantastic and somewhat ridiculous title of *Hakenkreuz* or "hooked cross", and quite arbitrarily made it a sign of anti-semitism on the pretext that this emblem must have belonged to the so-called "aryan race". (1975: 54n)

<sup>4</sup> René Guénon, however, points out that "the denomination *crux gammada*, which is often given to the *swastika* in the West on account of the resemblance of its branches' shape to that of the Greek *gamma*, is [...] erroneous; in reality the signs anciently called *gammadia* were quite different, although sometimes in fact found more or less closely associated with the *swastika* in the first centuries of Christianity." (1975: 55n)

## Inhalt

<b>Udo Bayer/ Juliane Hansen/ Karl Gfesser</b>	5	Grußwort / Foreword
<b>Ottomar Hartwig</b>	7	Ein Bildzeichen für Elisabeth Walther-Bense zum 75. Geburtstag
<b>Gérard Deledalle</b>	8	Peirce, les Catégories et les Signes
<b>Rosemarie und Fried Alstaedter</b>	23	An Elisabeth
<b>Frieder Nake</b>	24	Der semiotische Charakter der informatischen Gegenstände
<b>Georg Nees</b>	36	Die Blindschleichen, das Eisenerz und die Zeichen. Semiotisch/kybernetische Erinnerungen und Vorahnungen
<b>Wil Frenken</b>	49	Für Elisabeth. PRO CAPTU LECTORIS HABENT SUA FATA LIBELLI
<b>Elisabeth Emter</b>	52	<i>Augenblick</i> . Eine Zeitschrift wider die metaphysische Behaglichkeit
<b>Armin Mehling</b>	60	Geburtstagsgruß
<b>Wojciech H. Kalaga</b>	61	Signification and Objects
<b>Betty Leirner</b>	71	espássaro
<b>Jan Peter Tripp</b>	73	<<Pauline>> (Noch 'ne Blume für E.)
<b>Dinda L. Gorrée</b>	74	Translation: Between Imaging, Modeling, and Manipulation
<b>Angelika Jakob</b>	84	Semiramis der Semiotik
<b>Hans Brög</b>	85	Am Rande der Semiotik
<b>Karel Trinkewitz</b>	91	Bernard Bolzanos Haus in Prag als angeblicher Tatort eines Mordes im Jahr 1848
<b>Dušan I. Bjelić</b>	94	The Levitational Physics of Icons and the Gravitational Theology of Newton
<b>Lee Lichterloh</b>	113	Komposition mit Schwarz
<b>Rudolf Haller</b>	114	Das Fortschreiten der Erkenntnis. Zur Verwendung semiotischer Zusammenhänge durch Benedictus de Spinoza
<b>Frue Cheng</b>	118	Neue Darstellung der Zeichenoperationen
<b>Angelika Karger</b>	128	Zeichenwirkung als philosophische Aufgabe
<b>Jens-Peter Mardersteig</b>	145	Faul im August
<b>Udo Bayer</b>	147	Zur Semiotik der Gartenkunst
<b>M. Drea</b>	165	Le monde en miniature

<b>Karl Herrmann</b>	167	Anwendung semiotischer Vorstellungen zur Erzeugung erkenntnistheoretischer Modelle
<b>Thomas Gil</b>	181	Der Zeichenbegriff in John Lockes empiristischer Erkenntnistheorie
<b>Solange Magalhães</b>	189	S/ Título
<b>Magdolna Orosz</b>	190	"Du kannst nur denken durch den Mittler Sprache." Vermittlung und zeichenhafte Welt in der deutschen Romantik
<b>Reinhard Döhl</b>	203	zuerst wurden die poetiken außer kurs gesetzt - dann kam der reim abhanden - schließlich fehlten sogar die worte. aprélude
<b>Helmut Kreuzer</b>	209	Hiršals Jugendwelt. Oder eine "ungewohnte Form" der Autobiographie
<b>Almir Mavignier</b>	215	Konvex/Konkave Linie
<b>Ilse Walther-Dulk</b>	216	Auf der Suche nach der Philosophie Marcel Prousts
<b>Xu Hengchun</b>	232	Eine Skizze von Kulturuntersuchung
<b>Vera Molnar</b>	238	Variations Ste.-Victoire 1989-96
<b>Barbara Wichelhaus</b>	244	Der kreative Aufbau von Bedeutungen durch Malen und Zeichnen im Kindesalter
<b>Engelbert Kronthaler</b>	259	Du sollst Dir kein Bild machen ...
<b>Karl Gfesser</b>	274	Vorbemerkungen zu einer semiotischen Textanalyse
<b>Maria Heyer-Loos</b>	297	Montierte Landschaft
<b>Alfred Toth</b>	298	Auf dem Weg zur ersten semiotischen Grammatik
<b>Hariss Kidwaii</b>	311	Die Basistheorie der Semiotik und die Kleine Matrix
<b>Wolfgang Kiwus</b>	318	Computergrafiken
<b>Herbert Heyer</b>	320	Über asymptotisch fehlerfreie Übertragbarkeit von Information
<b>Josef Klein</b>	335	Über Intention und Intension in Ansehung des Aufbaus der deontischen Modalitäten - Zur normsemiotischen Kritik des Extensionalismus
<b>Gerald L. Eberlein/ Angelika Karger</b>	345	Semiotische Analyse eines sozio-kulturellen Phänomens am Beispiel von UFO-Gläubigkeit
<b>Anita Kernwein</b>	355	Bibliographie der Schriften Elisabeth Walthers