

## **Intercommunication: Editors' comments**

The meaning of semiotics is to provide theoretical insights and to develop the means of analysis for the whole area where sign systems have a significance. This includes a vast region of our world, and a great part of scientific inquiry. Thus, the importance of this domain of knowledge cannot be changed by fashion, and whatever shifts may occur in popular words or fashionable research, this is no more than a further subject for research in sign systems.

The current volume of *Sign Systems Studies* marks several noticeable events.

The inside-outside communication of the Tartu school of semiotics has been (re)established in a mode which gives us the confidence for multilateral communication, and a responsibility in the continuation of the oldest regular publication in the field of semiotics, as established by Juri Lotman in 1964. The signs of this are, on one hand, the publication of *New Tartu Semiotics* (Bernard *et al.* 2000), and, on the other hand, the regularity of publication and the authorship of *Sign Systems Studies*. In addition to the series *Tartu Semiotics Library* (cf. Andrews 2000), since this spring, *Dissertationes Semioticae Universitatis Tartuensis* has been born. The formation of Finno-Ugric 'semiotic league' (Randviir & Voigt & Tarasti, this volume) is left as last, but this is not the least to mention.

The year 2000 denotes the importance of Thomas A. Sebeok's impact on the semiotics of the last half century. The biosemiotic part of this volume is in its entirety, although indirectly, initiated by him.

With the following comments, the editors would like to draw a few additional parallels in order to help the readers to find the interconnections which might be useful both for better understanding of the subject and for further endeavours in this field.

First, we continue publishing works on theoretical and general problems of semiotics. The papers by J. Deely and J. Hintikka both emphasise the importance of mutual reacquaintance between semiotics

and philosophy, although approaching this from different sides. F. Stjernfelt demonstrates the use of it via his analysis of mereological concepts.

F. Stjernfelt's paper on mereology will be interesting to interpret in the context of the distinction made by S. Meyen between taxonomy and meronomy and, accordingly, between taxon and meron. 'If taxonomy operates with taxa, then meronomy with merons (parts). The concept of taxon means a set of objects, united by common traits. The concept of meron means a set of parts, belonging to these objects and having some common traits, i.e., the concepts of meron and trait are different' (Meyen 1977: 29; cf. also Schreider 1983, and Kull's paper in the current volume). Some of the background of the Russian biological structuralism, from where the concept of meronomy originates, has been described by P. Sériot (1995). The topic of holism is also analysed in the ('Tartu') paper by S. Brauckmann in this volume.

When M. Danesi in his article states that, 'In my view, the integration of Vico and Lotman will allow semiotics to develop a truly powerful investigative method for unravelling one of the greatest conundrums of all time: How did the mind, language, and culture come into existence?'; this seems to mark a strangely creative field. And when W. Nöth discusses with U. Eco about the placement of the semiotic threshold, then this is also a discussion with J. Lotman in a direction that would certainly have enchanted him.

Thus, second, or better to say 'the first', is our endless and central interest in the semiotics of culture, both elsewhere or here, on the spot. The intersemiotic space, which draws together the terms of J. Lotman and J. Kristeva, is structured, here, via the approaches of P. Torop and D. Goriée. The semiotic theory of poetic text reaches its next chapter via the article by M. Lotman, and the semiotics of literature is advanced by J. Sanjinés, T. Huttunen, M. Grishakova and I. Avramets. The oriental theme, as a traditional topic in *Sign Systems Studies* since its first years, is represented by our old author L. Mäll. T. G. Winner admits the intercultural aspects.

Mixing and fusion of the borders and boundaries in the contemporary world goes hand in hand with the seeking of identity and with the need for borders. However, it is not easy to recognise the borders which appear in the course of the interaction of these two tendencies. Here, semiotics of culture has its advantage. The controversial cultural experience is characterised not only by its reality, but also by texts of culture.

Semiotics of culture is suitable for joining different disciplines which are studying culture, operating as a base science for them. Since no integrated science of culture exists, the onus falls on cultural semiotic studies to develop both the empirical analysis and methodological research of culture. Both of these topics make up the section of 'semiotics of culture' in our journal, now, and in the future.

Ecosemiotics is also an important field of attention in regard to the current trends in semiotics on the pages of *Sign Systems Studies*, or for representing a developing link between the semiotics of culture and the semiotics of nature. It has been started in volume 26, and will certainly have a follow-up in the next volumes. Here, the contribution by D. Schmauks gives the first review about artificial animals in a semiotic context. It is interesting to refer, here, to a short paper by J. Lotman (1978), in which a somewhat analogical topic has been discussed. R. Posner's more general approach provides a starting point for studies in semiospheric pollution.

The collection of papers on biosemiotics, included here, represents the first attempt to review the important chapters of the history of biosemiotics proper. In this context, Cimatti's paper about Giorgio Prodi, and Turovski's one about Heini Hediger, give the first accounts of these two figures who laid the basis for biosemiotics. A large special issue of *Semiotica* about Jakob von Uexküll is forthcoming. According to T. A. Sebeok (2001), it was namely Uexküll, Hediger, and Prodi, who first developed biological semiotics and laid a valuable foundation for it. Besides these three, and Thomas A. Sebeok himself, of course, there are many other figures in the history of biosemiotics who deserve attention. Thus, the chapter also includes analyses of the works and views of G. Evelyn Hutchinson (by M. Anderson), Gregory Bateson (by S. Brauckmann), and Martin Krampen (by K. Kull) in respect to their impact on the development of biosemiotics.

A remark may be made about the incompatibility and (un)relatedness of the concepts of *Umwelt* and *niche*. Hutchinson's concept of 'niche' seems to be in a way analogical to Richard Woltereck's concept of 'reaction norm'. Namely, both of these, attempting to explicate a formerly fuzzy biological term, have given a precise definition which includes an extension to the  $n$ -dimensional space of the environment, whereas  $n$  happens to be uncountable. With this, both concepts have been extended beyond the limits of a methodology of natural science, and have started to drive (probably without such a conscious intention by their authors) towards bridging biology with semi-

otics. Thus, an additional argument for including the paper on Hutchinson into the current issue.

*Ab actu ad posse valet illatio.*

## References

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