

Unlimited semiosis and heteroglossia (C. S. Peirce and M. M. Bakhtin)

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Abstract. The article draws parallels between Bakhtin's literary theory and some of Peirce's philosophical concepts. The comparisons with Bakhtin go beyond the theory of heteroglossia and reveal that related notions were implicitly originated by Dostoevsky. The elaboration of the concepts of dialogue, "self" and "other" continue into the ideas of consciousness, iconic effects in literature, and the semiotic aspect of thought. Especially important in this chapter is the aspect of Peirce's theory concerned with the endless growth of interpretation and sign building, or *unlimited semiosis*. Peirce's discussion of unlimited semiosis is not among the less elaborated ones. Quite on the contrary, it is one of the most important of his ideas of sign. As a semiotic notion it is widely exploited in many related areas. However, it is not often used as an analytical tool to examine literature or to other works of art. Here, we will employ this notion in conjunction with Bakhtin's doctrine of *heteroglossia*.

Iconicity and polyphony

In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* (1929), M. M. Bakhtin first popularized the theses of *dialogism* and *polyphony*, which deal with the harmonizing and autonomy of characters' voices and emphasize contextual relations. These theses, along with *carnivalization*, derived from the work of Rabelais, became crucial for Bakhtin. (In fact, polyphony and carnivalization are manifestations of the broader phenomenon *heteroglossia*). Subsequently Bakhtin often clarified and redefined these terms, rendering them more precisely. More and more he

delved into the plurality and independence of “many-language-ness” of artistic discourse.

Bakhtin’s preoccupation with Dostoevsky’s novels is understandable in that Dostoevsky is not only a novelist, but also a moralist and a great thinker. It is quite possible to talk about Dostoevsky’s philosophy or even his literary criticism, although they are often unsystematic and sometimes self-contradictory. The same can be said of Bakhtin’s theses, the formulations of which can be identified in Dostoevsky as artistic principles. What Bakhtin actually did was to calibrate more systematically ideas about the *different voices*, *otherness*, and *polyphony* already inherent in the novels. Bakhtin, as a zealous reader of Dostoevsky, was engaged in a constant dialogue with the latter’s heroes. Like Bakhtin, Peirce defines and redefines his basic terms, elaborating the formulae of the sign, sign-process and other key theses.

Let us start with Bakhtin’s widely adopted term *polyphony*. For Bakhtin polyphony is an umbrella-term over all interactive processes among the characters in artistic discourse. The individual speeches, genres, and languages with their own voices in a literary work strive for harmony, which unites the structure of the whole. A more abstract term for this interaction, one that embraces the notion of harmony as well, is “heteroglossia” (literary: ‘different voices’). Sometimes dialogue is used in a comprehensive sense, but it will be more precise in taking heteroglossia as a theoretical model and dialogue as a practical manifestation. Among the numerous explanations of polyphony given by Bakhtin, is this one:

An idea here is indeed neither a principle of the representation (as in any ordinary novel), nor the leitmotif of representation, nor a conclusion drawn from it...it is rather the object of representation. As a principle for visualizing and understanding the world, for shaping the world in the perspective of a given idea, the idea is present only for the characters, and not for Dostoevsky himself as the author. (Bakhtin 1984: 24)

The semiotic aspect of this statement concerns the idea as represented by its iconic part, i.e., by its resemblance or similarity to other ideas. A set of iconic signs, like a system of mirrors, can reveal “the idea as an object of representation”. Iconicity in text will generally mean different viewpoints, unguided by the author. Dostoevsky’s novels, although deeply philosophic, are penetrated with iconicity. In every

character's speech, visions, hallucinations and nightmares dominate the narrated stories or thoughts.

If we carefully follow the plots, we will see that each monologue is preceded by something similar to the setting of a stage: a cascade of pictures prepares the reader for hearing a prophecy rather than a story. Then the same happens in the next chapter: the narrative continues like an endless preparation for something more important that will come later, but instead only a new stage has been set, or rather a new system of mirrors. The plot lines are split, the ideas are vague, although they seem like they will be clarified in the next paragraph. But this expectation remains unfulfilled until the last sentence. This method can be compared to the developing of a photographic negative. The process continues until the new image appears only the outcome looks different from what was expected. Seeking a final meaning of a story by Dostoevsky resembles opening a series of Chinese boxes (or, a "Matryoshka"-set).

For Bakhtin a sign can live as a sign only if it appears as something other than itself, only in a dialogue with another sign of the contextual relations. Bakhtin speaks for an interior dialogue that is micro-dialogue in every sentence. Furthermore he finds a dialogue even at the level of the single word, a double-voiced word. As David K. Danow claims: "The word [...] is conceived as a sign not only bearing meaning, or having a referent, but as being potentially engaged in continuous dialogue" (Danow 1991: 24).

For Peirce too, there a sign exists only if it is mediated by its interpretant: i.e. there is no sign without the other sign, which interprets it. Each time this occurs, the interpretant in its turn becomes another sign. The identity of the sign (its meaning) lies in the field of mediation between the sign and its interpretant. It may be rather surprising to recognize in the following sentence Peirce's (not Bakhtin's) thoughts: "And the existence of a cognition is not something actual, but consists in the fact that under certain circumstances some *other* cognition will arise" (CP 7.357).

Seeing and listening

The roles that iconicity plays in dialogue can be best explicated from Peirce's argument on this topic where he adopts the medieval scholastic view. According to Peirce, to recognize something as being "red" means to interpret actual cases of seeing the color as similar to

other possible occurrences of the sighting of red, and hence as a sign of the quality of red in these other possible occurrences. Or, in Peirce's words:

Two objects can only be regarded as similar if they can be compared and brought together in the mind [...] It is plain that the knowledge that one thought is similar to or in any way truly representative of another, cannot be derived from immediate perception, but must be a hypothesis. (CP 5.288)

The idea here is that seeing is not a kind of passive registration of sets of pictures. It is rather a process comparable to reading. To see something as red, green, gray does not mean that all occurrences of red, green, gray are equal each time we see them, but that our minds have produced series of comparisons (hypotheses, according to Peirce). Only the final result of this thought-like process could be named seeing something as green, which means recognizing the greenness. So, what we see as green depends, in fact, on our experience of greenness. Now, in order to stick closer to Peirce's idea here, we have to take a step further and to conclude along with his hint that our perception of "this green" relies on our thought. Or, as Murray G. Murphey argues:

For Peirce, then, color is a concept, which is applied to the manifold of impressions as an explaining hypothesis; it is not therefore an impression itself. The term 'impression' is thus restricted to the instantaneous neurological stimuli, which occasion the concept and are related by it. (Murphey 1961: 71)

This means that color is similar to an expression, or even to a thought rather than being seen as a singular element. Murphey goes on to quote an unpublished draft of a Peirce's manuscript where the same judgement is made. Peirce compares the simplest color to a piece of music — the perception of both depends on the relations between different parts of the impression. The impression of color is not repeatable each time we see the same color. Peirce saw differences between colors as differences between harmonies; a new impression has to be harmonized with a previous experience of the same perception. To comprehend the differences between the colors we must be conscious of the elementary impressions whose relation creates the harmony. The conclusion is that the color is not an impression, but an inference.

Such an understanding can explain why a particular human mood is expressible in music with relative accuracy, but a color is not. Why, for example, can a musical tone sound cheerful or, sad, but cannot depict redness, or blueness? If we follow Peirce, we may answer that the perceptions of color are complex and cannot be harmonized in only one tone. For Peirce perceptions or sensations are mental representations determined by a series of comparisons grounded in the previous experience. Those comparisons are represented in the mind, and with each subsequent appearance their details are less sharply defined. But how can one differentiate among the manifold sensations? What differentiates the perception of music from that of color, or of literature?

We are thus approaching the medieval question of the “images in the mind”, but from an unusual perspective. If comparison and reflection are the only mental tools for recognizing the impressions, how can we know which are the tools and which are the results? In this paper we will try to outline the process of transformation of the signs by which we recognize our thoughts. But how can we be sure that we are not confusing impression with perception and sensation?

We have seen that for Peirce color is an explaining concept, thus it is not inseparable from itself, but a result of a complicated process of comparison. What the color seems to contain is an element of generality that is found in all instances and in the final impression. According to Peirce, the universal conception that is “nearest to sense is that of *the present in general*” (CP 1.547). It is a conception, because it is universal. However, the present in general does not seem to be inseparable from itself. It is, rather, a general relation.

If we return to a more strict version of Peirce’s terminology as well as an “atomic” level of analysis, we could say that a quality is not just the sensory data of a particular thing, but a unit, separable and extractable from its occasional occurrence, which can be shared by more than one object. What follows is that every sign, conveying some information about the quality of its object, must involve, at least in part, a “qualisign”, or a sign of an iconic nature. As already mentioned, if the quality “redness” depends on our experience — in other words, is in our thoughts — it follows that it grows and changes, that is, the iconic is subject to interpretation. In a footnote Peirce says:

I am not so wild as to deny that my sensation of red today is like my sensation of red yesterday. I only say that the similarity can consist only in the physiological force behind consciousness — which leads me to say, I recognize this

feeling the same as the former one, and so does not consist in a community of sensations. (CP 5.289)

But how can the iconic sign be subject to interpretation, if iconicity means a full similarity? How can an iconic sign keep its generality, and hence, its interpretability, if it is absolutely equal to its object? Does it follow the same rules as any other sign-interpretation? Are these rules cognizable? If “yes”, can they be used by the authors purposely in varying artistic discourses?

Signs and silhouettes

That which gives rise to growth is the self-generative power inherently existing in the sign. Semiosis is a continuous process of interpretation. The infinity of the sign-interpretation results from the triadic definition of a sign. There is no other way for Peirce to define a pure icon, except as a “possibility” or a monadic quality. The quality has to be one and the same in both, sign and its object, in order to be recognized as a pure icon. If there were a monadic quality, it would act as a sign of itself while retaining its identity; in other words, it would become the same old Kantian “thing-in-itself”. Peirce overlooks this problem, accepting that even an idea, except in the sense of a possibility, or Firstness, cannot be an Icon. “A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its quality; and its object can only be a Firstness” (CP 2.276).

Furthermore he applied the same solution to words. In order to refer to an individual and still retain their generality, all words have to be *legisigns*. But at the same time, they are *symbolically* related to their objects, that is, they are interpreted as related to their objects. Only by conveying some information about the quality of its object, can any sign take part in semiosis, in communication and in extending of knowledge, in other words, can it be a sign. (A sign has to carry information and to be able to communicate this information). To do that, any sign, which contains some new code, has to convey a nucleus of something known, an iconic similarity, which will enable its understanding. This is the only reason why, when speaking about words and meaning, one must mention icons. Of course, words are not icons, but they are *capable of producing iconic effects*. Words in literary texts can produce iconic effects, by virtue of which we recognize signs. When we read we do not see icons, indices or

symbols before our eyes. What we read is a set of legisigns, as already mentioned; what we interpret is quite another thing. It is surprising to what great extent our readings are similar. We follow similar patterns to read and interpret signs, as if they were live pictures, a kind of coded “pay-per-view”. In our consciousness we decode those pictures and classify (or store) them in different programs such as: “important to remember”, “less important”, “archive”, etc.). We lay these categorizations down into the tracks of the effete mind.

All this is possible because the signs reproduced in consciousness, being only silhouettes of the virtual pictures from reality, have looser relations to their “grounds”, and similarly, to their objects. This is so because of the different way of establishing a meaning of the sign in each consciousness (seeing something as red depends on our individual case of a first recognition of red, as very young children, and on the following generalization of this individual act). But the way of establishing meaning in the mind takes time. As already mentioned, each sign inherently possesses a kind of generality, which in its turn means that its interpretation demands continuity. Peirce understood continuity as a real generality, which should not to be reduced to a set of its actual instances. Seeing pictures from reality means recognizing the signs represented in consciousness, in other words, reading them. The latter is a process that occurs in time and occupies time.

As a next step, creating a meaning would mean establishing an inner dialogue in which a triadic relation is to be set. For Peirce, as for Bakhtin, meaning is essentially a three-term relation. A sign relates to a particular object but the latter can never exhaust its meaning, because this relation is “in-some-respect” only, that is, a sign is endlessly interpretable. This unlimited interpretation occurs in a dialogue, often an internalized one, when a person communicates with himself, taking on the part of the other.

In order that the fact should come to light that the method of graphs really accomplishes this marvelous result, it is first of all needful, or at least highly desirable, that the reader should have thoroughly assimilated, in all its parts, the truth that thinking always proceeds in the form of a dialogue — a dialogue between different phases of the ego — so that, being dialogical, it is essentially composed of signs, as its matter, in the sense in which a game of chess has the chessmen for its matter. (CP 4.6)

At a higher level of abstraction, interpretation might be considered as a translation and a sign could be transposed to another level of identification not only by similarity, but also by hypothetical resemblance

(for instance, pure icons). A sign may adopt another image and it will not be a result of necessary contiguity. In that case it will no longer be able to obtain its identity — it will be an invented or inspired sign like an invented image from a science-fiction movie or a computer-created graphic.

The logic of seeing

Thus the question about the identity of the sign arises again but as already mentioned, it is to be sought neither in the interpreted sign, nor in its object, nor in the interpretant, but in the circulation field between them. The represented object, i.e. the immediate object, is a construct of thought, a product of a sign process, and a part of semiosis. It is not the real object, or, it is always an incomplete object. No sign gives us facts from reality unchanged by interpretation. Hence, being only a part of a system of producing meaning, no sign can convey to us the whole meaning; consequently there is only a transitional meaning, which is, in other words, a set of viewpoints. The fact that seeing means making hypotheses has a solid base in language: for example, the expression *point of view* is used both as a visual and mental concept. A different point of view is at the same time a different angle of seeing and of thinking. Bakhtin says: “Dostoevsky — to speak paradoxically — thought not in thoughts but in points of view, consciousness, voices” (Bakhtin 1984: 93).

We may further deepen our knowledge of seeing by exploring its purely biological sense. Thomas Sebeok writes:

The olfactory and gustatory senses are likewise semiochemical. Even in vision, the impact of photons on the retina differentially affects the capacity of the pigment rhodopsin, which fills the rods to absorb light of different wave lengths, the condition for univariance principle. Acoustic and tactile vibrations, and impulses delivered via the thermal senses, are, as well, finally transformed into electrochemical messages. (Sebeok 1991: 15)

It would seem that this account does not have much in common with the making of hypotheses, although it confirms the semiotic nature of seeing. Seen as such, it can be found that there are signals (or, “sinsigns”), which convey outside information and bring it to the mind for further consideration. The entire process starts by activating semiosis from pure iconic indeterminacy to forming hypotheses in the consciousness.

Peirce considers the logic of seeing in “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities”. There he makes several remarkable suggestions, which are proofs for the creative role of the mind in vision. He claims: “We carry away absolutely nothing of the color except the consciousness that we could recognize it” (CP 5.300). Then he goes a step further:

I will now go so far as to say that we have no images even in actual perception. It will be sufficient to prove this in the case of vision [...] If, then, we have a picture before us when we see, it is one constructed by the mind at the suggestion of previous sensations (CP 5.303).

We can move even deeper in our sensorial life, taking this time a contemporary thesis. In an article called “A modified concept of consciousness”, R. Sperry writes:

As we look around the room at different objects in various shapes, shades, and colors, the colors and shapes we experience, along with any associated smells and sounds, are not really out where they seem to be. They are not part of the physical qualities of the outside objects, but instead, like hallucinations or the sensations from an amputated phantom limb, they are entirely inside the brain itself. Perceived colors and sounds, etc. exist within the brain not as epiphenomena, but as real properties of the brain process. (Sperry 1969: 535)

Seeing defines a semiotic process, which takes only the “idea”, the pure indeterminate iconicity, from the outside world and brings it to the mind for further treatment and recognition. In other words, shapes, shades, colors, etc., can be considered as hypothetical devices of consciousness, which uses them as examples for comparisons it makes constantly. Perhaps our sensations could be taken as immediate objects. In other words, starting as rhematic-iconic-qualisigns, they attain their identity as sinsigns or legisigns in the mind.

In general, a sign is not a sign until it is interpreted, that is, until it becomes a part of a triad which includes an interpretant; consequently, the only way an iconic sign can refer to an individual is by being at the same time indexical. But Peirce also hints at the idea that “a sign may be *iconic*, that is, may represent its object mainly by its similarity no matter what its mode of being” (CP 2.276). (Here he speaks of *hypoiconic*, and further he proposed that the iconic to be divided into three types: *images, diagrams and metaphors*).

To recapitulate briefly, the formation of hypotheses by the iconic does not flow continuously as in the reading of words. We do not

recognize ‘redness’ as continuity of syllogistic premises and consequences, i.e. syntagmatically, but as a result of mosaic-like associations, paradigmatically. Something is red because our cognition of redness tells us so, and because another instance of red has been activated in our consciousness, which interprets what we have seen. What is meant here is that the identification of a sign does not flow as a chain of mechanical synonymous substitutions. It involves inferences of all three types: deduction, induction and abduction. The sign’s identity is attained not because it is recognizable as fixed and definite, but on the contrary, because of its instability, which forces it to appear as something other in order to be itself. This is similar to what our seeking Self does in order to merge with our personality.

Thirddness and otherness

Both Bakhtin’s and Peirce’s theses agree on this point. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, like Peirce’s, does not presuppose two, but three elements. Michael Holquist writes:

...it will be helpful to remember that dialogue is not, as is sometimes thought, a dyadic, much less a binary phenomenon. But for schematic purposes it can be reduced to a minimum of three elements having a structure very much like the triadic construction of the linguistic sign; a dialogue is composed of an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two. It is the relation that is most important of the three, for without it the other two would have no meaning. (Holquist 1990: 28)

This sounds too Hegelian if not Marxist, with its unspecified emphasis on the relation only. In any case it is still a dyadic explanation, which precludes the dialogue between two elements that can be transformed into each other, but cannot interpret each other so that the result is something third. It would be more correct to say that in Bakhtin there is a creative “self” which implies “other” as a replica of an “I-other” construction, called, at a higher level of abstraction, “otherness”. (Let us here recall Peirce’s internalized dialogue.)

Likewise, by reading a story, which is “other” to us, we are not outside of it as one element in dialogue with it. The story tells us its events as it tells them to all the other characters; it takes our emotion, anticipation, expectation, objection, vision; we become involved in the whole process of structuring the system of producing meaning. Our

“searching self” becomes a sum of many “dialogue-oriented” relations. It becomes an ever changing-self. Here is Bakhtin again:

Meanwhile our underground hero recognizes all these perfectly well himself, and understands perfectly well the impossibility of escaping from that circle in which his attitude toward the other moves. Thanks to this attitude toward the other’s consciousness, a peculiar *perpetuum mobile* is achieved, made up of his internal polemic with another and with himself, an endless dialogue where one reply begets another, which begets a third, and so on to infinity, and all of this without any forward motion. (Bakhtin 1984: 230)

In Peirce one can find almost the same thought:

It should never be forgotten that our own thinking is carried on as a dialogue, and though mostly in a lesser degree, is subject to almost every imperfection of language. (CP 5.506)

Peirce’s term Thirdness corresponds to Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue. In Bakhtin’s philosophical system “dialogue” is not two-sided, but rather a polyphonic concept engaged in a potentially endless inquiry. Through dialogue we are questioning nature or another mind in order to acquire further knowledge. In this sense the dialogue relates to silent effects of the text, to the reader’s expectations, to the aesthetic values, or to yet unspoken words. For Bakhtin “dialogue” is the actual reality of the text, like Thirdness is the objective reality of sign-action (semiosis) for Peirce. This is a direct consequence of Bakhtin’s and Peirce’s general understanding of meaning as a three-term relation. But if our entire thinking is in signs, how does a sign become dialogized in the language? Some scholars equate a sign with a Third. However, this equation cannot be the whole truth. What Peirce calls “a sign in itself” (or a qualisign), according to his ten-class division, is a shapeless flash of light before being embedded. A sign becomes meaningful *by virtue* of the Third, which fulfills its triadic structured relation. Thirdness is a category, which brings into life the process of growing and interpretation.

Thus, Thirdness closely resembles the category of Otherness by Bakhtin. Let us start with the concept of “other” and then to approach the category of Otherness. In the already quoted “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art”, Bakhtin speaks of “other” not simply as a counterpart of a dialogue, but as a substance of discourse. It is a necessary condition in starting the process of narration. “Other” may be embodied into another voice, another consciousness and even another discourse.

This concept could be compared with Peirce's concept of the "ground": something, which is inside the sign and provides the essential quality of any sign.

Although not so specifically determined, "other" can be found at any level of the author's own voice, from the single word to the whole story, as an inside substance of the narrative process. Without cognition of the "other" no cognition of the "self" would be possible, but the relation between self and other is not binary. Both parts should not be considered as opposed to each other, but rather as including one another. Correspondingly, the category "Otherness" is not simply alien to, or a mirror of the self, but is rather a distant prospect from which the narrator's "I" approaches the fictional truth. It is not only a theory of the other's presence in the author's own vision, but also of the common vision in the author's own presence. It is exactly that "perspective" which becomes a locus, or "a place of events" for the transforming and continuity of qualities. In other words, it is the context of a possible relationship. It is the category that furnishes meaning to the different points of view.

The perspective of "other" is the crucial idea of a theory of a dialogue. The category "Otherness" determines most of Bakhtin's concepts, such as "chronotope", "dialogue", even "heteroglossia", the last of which signifies the presence of more "voices" on the entire scale of the discourse. In turn, the explanation of the non-dyadic nature of dialogue can be found in the continuity, unfinished-ness and interpretability of "Otherness". Bakhtin also considers the word as wholly dependent on the context: hence, it cannot convey a meaning other than a transitional one, a meaning determined by previous contextual usages of the particular word and by its further intentions to complete its ever-incomplete object. There must always be something else, an "other" sign, and an "otherness" to affect the chain of interpretation. There is no meaning unchanged by interpretation, hence the dialogue is also a process of interpretation. However, interpretation is not a chain of continuous succession, like a domino effect. Better is to speak of a transitional discontinuity. It grows, covering and surrounding the interpreted object, affecting other signs and causing new sign-processes. The original sign can be reproduced in another sign-context, in another code, even in another "language" by iconic or hypothetical similarity.

The frozen semiosis

Let us take an example from Dostoevsky's work. At first sight the novel *Poor Folk* is narrated in a traditional manner, that is, descriptively. The narrator is not the author, but a young woman; she writes a letter to another character, telling about an incident from her life. She tells about a young student who suffers from tuberculosis. He needs books for his studies and gives private lessons in order to earn money. His father is an alcoholic who loves his son and would very much like to help him. The father dreams of buying books for his son, but he himself desperately needs money for drinking. Throughout the story there are repeated appearances of one image: books. At the beginning and at the end books appear merging with another intrusive image, that of mud. The discourse is typical for Dostoevsky — expressive, breathless, rapidly building to a climax. Only when the narrator remembers a small episode, which occurred in the student's room, does everything change. The beginning of the passage functions like the setting of a stage. The reader is, literally, seeing a small room; the eye casts about the room and focuses on the shelf with many books. In a brief scene, which follows shortly thereafter, the narrator accidentally pushes the shelf and the books fall down.

As the story continues, the student dies, the father cries in his son's room. A few days before that, he had managed to buy several books for him and put them in his pockets. The funeral scene follows. Again, everything has disappeared: there are no houses, no people on the streets. There is only a hearse with the coffin, and the father running after it. They take up the whole field of vision. There is no speech, no author's voice, no dialogue, only details: the running father, the raindrops pelting his face, his coattails, and the books falling from his pockets into the mud. There is a hint at the end of another impending death, that of the narrator's mother.

What we have here is a play of iconic effects, produced in the reader's consciousness by the iconic signs. This is a process of systematic reduction of the dialogue by which heteroglossia and interpretation have been minimized to a few words, unrelated to one another. A strong impact is achieved by increasing the role of details. The few remaining details persistently refer to some previous, vivid associations: for example, the books falling from the pockets of the father's coat. This approach represents a total iconization of the narration, which turns back the process of interpretation, interrupts it,

or stops it. Similar scenes exist in all Dostoevsky's novels, for example, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Netochka Nezvanova*, *Double*.

This technique could be described as an effect of *frozen semiosis*. Dostoevsky "freezes" the interpretation by tightening the chain of associations, calling our attention upon one, already familiar detail (the falling books). The few signs relate only to a few details, which, in turn, have already been components of a similar picture. At the end, the mud in which the books have fallen takes up the whole visual field. But, in fact, even this is not the end. The end of the scene is the wide white space, like a blind spot, with which the printer has set off the section. Again, what we see here blocks the associative interpretation by augmenting the iconicity, which, in its turn, means creating different viewpoints.

The "many voices" have been gradually limited to a single one, which is, as much as possible, neutral. Well-orchestrated polyphony is silenced to a single tone like the silence in music that reigns when the conductor's baton is raised, before a new theme explodes. This is meaningful silence. In the wholeness of the discourse it is of an iconic type; something certain, but "other", something contrapuntal will occur when it lasts. It is an activated, *loaded silence*. More abstractly, it could be said that in the effort to liken reading to seeing, Dostoevsky uses a method, which can also be named "*intensification of nothingness*". "Nothingness" means the empty spaces of the pages, and the entire disturbance of the associative process. It can be described also as the opposite of polyphony, interpretative discontinuity, or, as dialectic of a dialogue.

In this case semiosis flows like the process of seeing, from the indeterminate polyphony, where all sign-processes occur, to the organized silence of the blank space, which acts as a qualisign. As it has been mentioned above, Dostoevsky is trying here to compare the reading process with the visual one. Between the two there will always be a gap, which can be overlooked only imaginatively, like the small space a spark needs in order to jump to the other pole.

Dostoevsky tries to overcome this gap by augmenting iconicity, i.e. by multiplying the signs that act as icons. The empty spaces between paragraphs are the very gaps where the intensification of nothingness occurs. There are all the processes of freezing the flow of the semiosis: gravitation around the single detail, return to the similar association, the sudden beginning of a different story without any transition. M. Holquist writes:

Dialogism begins by visualizing existence as an event, the event of being responsible for (and to) the particular situation existence assumes as it unfolds in the unique and constantly changing place I occupy in it. (Holquist 1990: 47)

After being classified in the consciousness, the qualisign attains a determined meaning. It begins to point to something, which is not a full analogue of its iconic origin. It becomes a sinsign. In the “in-between-space” of the blank page the sinsign has also made “a leap” into a new semiosis. In terms of literary theory, it has become metaphoric. The blank space (the shape of emptiness) acts like a more general Emptiness, that of a human life. A more precise comparison of this transition would be again a musical one, when the conductor’s baton serves as the sign of rhythm. And indeed, white spaces between sections are signs of the inner, ongoing rhythm of representation.

Moving silence

The sign of silence is of iconic nature. This might appear paradoxical, but because the written text is soundless, the “sound-effects” are achieved by virtue of the iconicity. This does not mean that there are icons or pictures in the text, which “resemble” sounds, although the hypothesis of synaesthesia was alien neither to Peirce nor to Bakhtin. Rather “the pictures of signs” in consciousness create sound/silence by combining many different signs. For instance, there is a silent effect when after a scene of a quarrel the narrator depicts a single detail. *Silence is produced through icons*. This is an evoked silence: it is produced as all voicing signs in polyphony fade away, so that from the indeterminate manifoldness only a few “tones” remain, only single details. The silence reigning immediately after is *a mere feeling*, that is, it may be seen as a rhematic-iconic qualisign (qualisign). But when we recognize (or, hear) it through intensification of icons, it becomes a rhematic-iconic sinsign (sinsign). Here we may recall Peirce’s remark that there are no actual iconic qualisigns. In other words, in the process of muting the polyphony, the rhematic-iconic qualisign (the feeling of a silence) becomes an iconic sinsign, that is, a sign of a silence, which points to both — the final chord of the previous polyphony and to an anticipated leap toward another discourse (see Fig. 1).

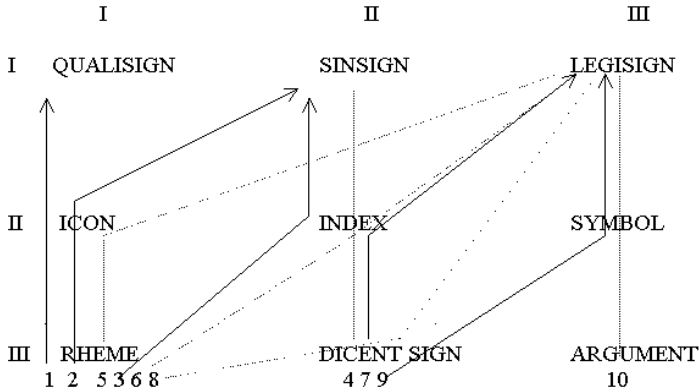


Figure 1. Peirce’s ten-fold-division of signs — loading the silence.

The fading away of polyphony simultaneously acts as a process of *loading the silence*¹. (To follow this process, just take a look at the solid line of the scheme). With the inclusion of all the additional effects, such as the play with the blank portions of the page, the sudden finishing of the chapter, reducing the heteroglotic narration to one or two voices, it might be considered as a process of completing the sign, that is, a movement to a complex sign, involving both an icon and an index. Further speculations can be made as to how the moving silence attains a symbolic character. In this case, according to Peirce, a sign must relate to its object by virtue of law, rule or habit, i.e., a word must be a sign of a class or a law.

Let us go back to the end of the scene from Dostoevsky discussed above. The whole field of vision is occupied by mud. In the blank spot of the page, mud, through which the pathetic funeral procession makes its difficult way, has been transformed into a *sinsign*; it points to itself and to desolation. The empty space is a locus where the semiosis flows and freezes at the same time, a moment when a new association is involved in the process of interpretation. It is a very complicated play of iconicity; the opposition “white space/mud” animates a whole chain of basic associations.

¹ For the notion of “loading the silence” I am grateful to Professor Nathan Houser of the *Peirce Edition Project* at Indiana University — Purdue University at Indianapolis.

As polyphony dies away to a single symbol, the process of loading the silence is achieved. Its sign has been related to its object by virtue of likeness (qualisign and sinsign), and then by virtue of its interpretant (symbol). We can now take a more general look at the same process, considering the entire phenomenon of “frozen semiosis” as a sign. When it becomes recognizable through its frequent appearance in the whole of the novel, or even in different novels, we can speak of dicent-indexical-legisign.

This new sign is accomplished by abduction, which means that the nature of the relation between premises and conclusion is of the “iconic type”, as mentioned by Augusto Ponzio (1985: 25). In fact, the sign (life-death) is invented *ex novo*. Concentration on a few details, the “mirror-play” with the previous associations, directing the sight to the mud, the emptiness of the space, all of these inevitably create an open connection to a new semiosis. We can carefully start to speak about dicent-symbolic legisign. (The whole process can be also represented by numbers of the signs: 1→2→3→7→9.)

We need some examples to clarify the last claim. We know that ever since movies were screened they were accompanied by music. Why is this so? Music takes away tension, or builds suspense. Music gives hints about the next scene, or suppresses the development of the plot. On the other hand, why is an art exhibition only rarely accompanied by music? In some of their most frequently used clarifications musicologists would probably say that music is a condensed silence, a defrosted feeling or a drifting thought. We could further ask why film music as a rule is not intrusive? Why it is the exception rather than the rule that a person talks convincingly of music, without using practical examples?

By their mutual interaction both music and pictures borrow devices for increasing their effects from each other. Music and picture together carve deeper grooves in our past experience, *both acting as seeking Selves*. The purpose of such action is to awaken the “effete mind” (i.e. an explanatory text) as much as possible. When both drop onto the effete mind the process of drawing relations intensifies. The sound of music generates more iconicity from the memories where these combinations occur. The iconicity induces sharpness in the effete mind by shining brightness on any single representation. It is an effect comparable to an unexpected discovery of a bundle of old letters that brings to mind nostalgic memories. As time passes, the events from the letters, similar to the representations in mind, lose their freshness. What remains is the sentimental feeling that seizes us. (We confuse

these moments by saying that something is gone, when in fact, it has arrived. Now it is possible to store these feelings in a track of the effete mind, a sensation which serves as a relief from the de-actualized present that has until now accompanied us).

We have to keep in mind that we are talking about signs whose appearances are somewhere beside those evoked by the immediate reading of the text. The impact of the former is built up next to the images and pictures that emerged as a result of following the narrated signs. The signs we are discussing were silently layered in our mind, turning our emotional memory in a direction different than the one created by the events of the novel. Using the play of iconic effects, an author could make its reader feel inexplicable nostalgia while imagining, for example, a luxury ship heading somewhere deep in the night. Thus another paradox arises: the combination of music and pictures increases the effects of silence by which the implementation of signs is fulfilled. From the undefined mass of emotions to the sharpness of particular memories, the process continues until actual thoughts emerge. Such is the effect of loading the silence.

The turn of a kaleidoscope

The effect of unlimited semiosis and heteroglossia may be compared to playing with a kaleidoscope: with a turn of a tube, a very few elements create endless new figures. Or, in a more sophisticated view, to looking at a broken mirror: all pieces reflect the same object, but in a refracted way. And even if someone sums up all the pieces, they still show the object as a manifold of different images.

We can also describe the whole process from a reverse perspective, as a “visualization” (projection) of an idea into the realm of words (symbols), through the effect of the “broken-mirror-world” that occurs in the play of an “unfinished dialogical consciousness”. Bakhtin speaks of “an image of the idea” (Bakhtin 1984: 89); Peirce discovers its representation as a complex sign. Any time a picture of an idea arises in a consciousness, it interrupts the semiosis. But, on the other hand, this sharper image is refracted into many “broken pieces” and what we have before us is “just another sign”, requiring further interpretation, which is essentially the technique of dialogue. The purpose is a “different-like” sign, established in semiosis, which slows down the interpretative process and guiding it to the effete mind. But instead

of stopping it, it affects another interpretation chain in another meaning-spectrum.

Bakhtin believed in both the ingenuity of silence and its potentiality for playing with sign-effects, as well as in the growth and inexhaustible creativity of dialogue. The last sentence of the essay “Discourse in the Novel” states:

For, we repeat, great novelistic images continue to grow and develop even after the moment of their creation; they are capable of being creatively transformed in different eras, far distant from the day and hour of their original birth. (Bakhtin 1981: 422)

The two discussed ideas of C. S. Peirce and of M. M. Bakhtin both have strong potential of serving as analytical tools to explain many old phenomena. This has always fascinated artists: to create an image through the play of a broken mirror, a “live” product of consciousness. This image then would be centered, as by an illusion, somewhere *before* the mirror-pieces, outside of the mind. For a very brief moment it would represent *the thought, the sign, or the searching Self*.

What characterizes Bakhtin’s efforts in his theory of heteroglossia is the constant attempt to explicate “inner speech” at any level of human communication, from the single word to philosophical discourse. One of his many definitions of heteroglossia states: “*Another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way*” (Bakhtin 1981: 324).

Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. The special emphasis on dialogue always emerges when Bakhtin proclaims that language is the basis of all human communication and that language is always dialogic in its nature. Formulated repeatedly in an unequivocal manner, that view relates very closely to essentially similar thoughts of Peirce’s, for example, the frequent postulate that “All thinking is dialogic in form” (CP 6.338).

But that which links the philosophic efforts of the two thinkers is the demonstration of how the sign constantly escapes from its “final” meaning, striving for an “openness” and “unfinished-ness”, by which alone reality can be approached. The common perspective of both theories is to see the sign in one more meaning-dimension through an *unlimited dialogue* and a *hetero-interpretation*.

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Безграничный семиозис и многоголосие (Ч. С. Пирс и М. М. Бахтин)

В данной статье вводятся параллели между литературной теорией М. Бахтина и некоторыми философскими понятиями Пирса. Сопоставления с Бахтиным основываются на его теории многоголосия и выявляют тот факт, что аналогичные идеи имплицитно содержались уже у Достоевского. Выработка понятий диалога, “себя” и “другого” продолжается у Бахтина в идеях о сознании, иконических явлениях в литературе, о семиотическом аспекте мышления. Из теории Пирса для нас особенно значима та часть, которая касается безграничного роста интерпретации и знакопорождения — *безграничный семиозис*. Понятие *безграничного семиозиса* одно из наиболее разработанных у Пирса и широко используется в настоящее время. Тем не менее это понятие не так часто применяется в качестве аналитического инструментария при изучении литературы и других произведений искусства. В нашей статье понятие *безграничного семиозиса* применяется вместе с учением М.Бахтина о *многоголосии*.

**Piiritu semioosis ja heteroglossia
(C. S. Peirce ja M. M. Bahtin)**

Artiklis tõmmatakse paralleele M. Bahtini kirjandusteooria ja mõnede Peirce'i filosoofiliste mõistete vahel. Võrdlus Bahtiniga toetub tema heteroglossia-teoriale ja toob välja ka fakti, et sarnased ideed sisaldasid implitsiitselt juba Dostojevski teostes. Mõistete dialoog, "mina" ja "teine" üksikasjalik väljatöötamine Bahtinil jätkub ideedes teadvusest, ikoonilistest efektidest kirjanduses, mõtlemise semiootilisest aspektist. Peirce'i teoriast on siin eriti oluline see osa, mis puudutab tõlgenduse ja märgiloome lõputut kasvu ehk *piiritu semioosist*. Peirce'i *piiritu semioosise* mõiste näol on meil tegu tema ühe olulisima märgiga seotud ideega, mis on leidnud laialdast kasutamist. Siiski ei kasutata seda kuigi sageli analüütilise tööriistana kirjandus- või kunstiteoste uurimisel. Käesolevas artiklis rakendatakse *piiritu semioosise* mõistet koos M. Bahtini *heteroglossia* doktriiniga.