# Le sens, le sensible, le réel

## Essais de sémiotique appliquée



## Anne Hénault (dir.)

*Le sens, le sensible, le réel* est le résultat de plusieurs rencontres de chercheurs qui se sont déroulées à l'abbaye de Royaumont, avec l'objectif de faire le point sur l'évolution de la pratique sémiotique, depuis la disparition du fondateur de l'École sémiotique de Paris, A. J. Greimas. Sa fameuse *Sémantique structurale* (1966) avait, d'emblée, fixé des règles qui avaient bouleversé l'approche des significations, jusqu'alors cantonnée au domaine verbal : « C'est en connaissance de cause que nous proposons de considérer la perception comme le lieu non-linguistique où se situe l'appréhension de la signification. » La sémiotique « se reconnaît ouvertement comme une tentative de description du monde des qualités sensibles ».

Plusieurs des premiers continuateurs de cette aventure fondatrice se sont associés à de jeunes chercheurs pour proposer ces « Essais de sémiotique appliquée » qui constituent la pointe avancée de la sémiotique post-structurale. Ils concernent de nombreux domaines du sensible, *naturels* ou *culturels* (de la musique à la biologie), et demeurent cependant unifiés par la théorie puissante développée par l'École de Paris.

On sera toutefois surpris d'observer comment, sous l'emprise du sensible, l'expression de ces travaux – rigoureusement fidèle à la théorie d'ensemble sans prétendre à des vues définitives – se fait limpide et sensuelle, loin des arides calculs de la sémiotique narrative.

LE SENS, LE SENSIBLE, LE RÉEL

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*Pour la sémiotique des formes signifiantes, le miroir des pierres qu'offre le site de Gavrinis aux écritures de la mer sur le sable, a valeur de question et même de démonstration.*

Anne Hénault (dir.)

avec la collaboration de Denis Bertrand, Jean-François Bordron,
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Ouvrage publié avec le concours de Sorbonne Université

Sorbonne Université Presses est un service général
de la faculté des Lettres de Sorbonne Université.

# Le sens :
# à la croisée des disciplines

# FROM LINGUISTICS TO SEMIOTICS: HJELMSLEV'S FORTUNATE ERROR

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## IMMANENCE VERSUS TRANSCENDENCE

Hans Jorgen Uldall (1907-1957) & Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965)

In the winter of 1937, the linguist Louis Hjelmslev talked to the Humanistic Society of Aarhus. His title was "Linguistic Form and Substance" ("Sproglig form og substans"). In the protocol of the meeting, kept in the archives of the University of Aarhus, I found Hjelmslev's own summary of his presentation[1]. He writes, in my English translation:

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[1] Reproduced (p. 33-34) in Per Aage Brandt, "Omkring sprogteoriens grundlæggelse – strejftog i den århusianske lingvistik", in (red.) Andre Wang Hansen et alii, *Topforskning ved Aarhus Universitet – en jubilæumsantologi*, Acta Jutlandica LXXVIII:1, Serie U 11, Aarhus University Press, 2003. My French translation of this text was published as an *Annex*, p. 205, to Per Aage

For a primitive consideration, spoken language is a mass of sound, and language in general (including writing, gesture, signals) is a sequence of movements that expresses a meaning. The movements and the meaning are connected to each other, but the meaning is not part of language itself.

This primitive consideration can be proven wrong in several ways: Language does not only consist in the actually ongoing movements (parole), but is first and formost a fund of movements, a repertory of all possible or permissible movements, and as well a fund of meanings, a repertoire of all possible or permissible singular meanings. Behind the syntagmatic phenomenon (the singular actualized permissible movement and meaning) lies the paradigmatic phenomenon (other permissible movements and meanings that could take place instead of the actualized movement and meaning). The movements are dominated by a form, and so is the meaning. In the two planes of language, the *expressive plane*, or the plane of movements, and the *content plane*, or the plane of meanings, a distinction must be made between the linguistic form and what it forms (the substances: the movements and the meaning). Both expression and content are thus parts of language itself and are interrelated indirectly through a form. Only the form, not the substance, pertains to language itself.

The study of the substances through subjectively selected forms is a priori and transcendental: such is the case in classical philosophy (transcendental theory of contents) and classical phonetics (transcendental theory of expression). Since substance can only be known through form, and since linguistic form is the only objectively given form, the linguistic method is the only method allowing objective knowledge of the substance. It follows from this, among other things, that ontology must build on linguistics. Only following this principle can science as a whole be built empirically and immanently[2].

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Brandt, "Analytique, sémiotique et ontologie dans le projet glossématique", in a special issue (ed. Romeo Galassi et alii) of the journal *Janus. Quaderni del Circolo Glossematico*, Treviso, 2013.

2  "*For en primitiv betragtning er talesproget en lydmasse, og sproget i almindelighed (indbefattet skrift, gebærder, signaler), en bevægelsesrække, der udtrykker en mening. Bevægelserne og meningen sættes direkte i rapport til hinanden, men meningen hører ikke med til sproget selv. – Denne primitive betragtning kan ad flere veje vises at være urigtig: Sproget er ikke blot de aktuelt foregaaende bevægelser (parole), men først og fremmest et bevægelsesfond, et repertorium over de mulige eller tilladelige bevægelser, og tillige et meningsfond, et repertorium over de mulige eller tilladelige enkeltmeninger. Bag det syntagmatiske fænomen (den enkelte aktualiserede tilladelige bevægelse og mening) ligger det paradigmatiske fænomen (andre tilladelige bevægelser og meninger, der kan indtræde paa den aktualiserede bevægelses og menings plads.) Bevægelserne beherskes af en form, og meningen ligeledes. I sprogets to planer,* udtryksplanet *eller bevægelsesplanet, og* indholdsplanet *eller meningsplanet, maa skelnes mellem sprogform og det, som den former (substanserne: bevægelserne og meningen). Udtryk og indhold er altsaa begge sider af sproget selv og sættes i rapport til hinanden indirekte igennem en form. Kun formen, ikke substansen, er en del af sproget selv. Studiet af substanserne gennem subjektivt valgte*

The presentation is followed by a vivid debate, as one can imagine. But Hjelmslev leaves Aarhus the same year for a professorate in Copenhagen (his student Jens Holt takes his place in Aarhus), and so does the debate, which of course will continue in the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen. According to Hjelmslev 1937[3], the study of substances is subjective, 'transcendental', and only the study of form is objective; now the only objectively given form is the form of language; so the only possible objective study of substantial things in the world is a study of their *form* as formed by language and studied by linguistics. Ontology must therefore be grounded on linguistics; all science must be grounded on 'immanent' linguistics. This is going to become the inherent philosophical stance of glossematics.

This idea is sufficiently simple to have started an extremely stubborn 'immanentism' in semiotics: since all thought is grounded in language, it is believed, linguistics is (the grounds of) the study of all thought, all possible meaning, including all possible knowledge about the world; linguistics is the ontology of science. Thoughts are meanings, and the laws of possible, or permissible (tilladelige), meanings are laws of the content plane of language, that is, since language in general is not an empirically given entity, then the content plane of *some* language, *a* language, or maybe *all* languages. If this were true, linguistics would be both *the* philosophy and *the* science of meaning: it would be *semiotics* in a new key. That is however what the tenants of the 'School of Paris', essentially the heritage of A. J. Greimas, firmly believe today. The language *in casu* is of course French. The analysis of modality in general is done in terms of the French modal verbs, for example. The analysis of temporal dynamics is done in terms of French verbs like 'devenir', 'parvenir', 'survenir', 'advenir', etc.[4].

Life-world experiences are thought to be made through ordinary language[5], so the scientific semantic analysis consists in replacing this unscientific medium

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*former er apriorisk og transcendentalt: Saaledes den klassiske filosofi (transcendental indholdsteori) og den klassiske fonetik (transcendental udtryksteori). Da substans kun kan erkendes gennem form, og da sprogformen er den eneste objektivt givne form, er den lingvistiske metode den eneste, der tillader en objektiv erkendelse af substansen. Heraf følger bl.a., at ontologien maa bygges paa lingvistik. Kun ad denne vej kan den samlede videnskab opbygges empirisk og immanent.*"

**3** We find the same philosophical (ontological) stance in *Omkring sprogteoriens grundlæggelse* [*Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*], 1943.

**4** See Claude Zilberberg, *Des formes de vie aux valeurs*, Paris, PUF, 2011; and *Raison et poétique du sens*, Paris, PUF, 1988. Both works are valuable contributions to texual semantics.

**5** A special version of this view is found in the semiotician and philosopher Jean-François Bordron, who explains that perception as such is really a language, defined by a correlation of an expression plane and a content plane; ordinary language is the metalanguage of this language of perception, and semiotics is then its meta-metalanguage, which can also replace ordinary language and become the metalanguage of phenomenology. For a very

by a semiotic *metalanguage* whose scientific terminology will then subsume the vague expressions found in everyday speech and writing. The inspiration from analytic philosophy was clear in Hjelmslev, who was influenced by the Danish Vienna circle member Jørgen Jørgensen; Carnap's influence was very strong in Hjelmslev's days (*Der logische Aubau der Welt,* 1928). The analytic philosophy of language is still alive, and is also predominant in Hjelmslevian semiotics.

## HJELMSLEV'S METALANGUAGE

A science is a language, it was thought. If linguistics is the metalanguage of languages and, interestingly, of scientific languages, then this privileged status has to be justified semiotically. So what is a metalanguage? This has to be a question for linguistics, unless there is a non-linguistic and therefore non-immanent, i.e. transcendent, definition of metalanguage that should be trusted – which would eo ipso annul the Hjelmslevian claim that linguistics is the ontology of science. Linguistics has to define 'metalanguage' itself.

Language itself is defined as an entity that can be divided into two *planes*, each organised by form over substance, one a plane of expression (udtryk) and the other a plane of content (indhold). What a 'plane' is, is an interesting preliminary problem. Hjelmslev rather treats the planes as lines, accessible to analytic division as parts of textual processes (forløb) in time. This division is necessary for his concept of form, because the analytic parts are defined by their mutual formal dependency relations. How the linguist would analyse and determine formal relations in this sense on the content plane has always remained a mystery. Content is not linear, nor is it planar; conceptual content is representational and cognitively spatio-temporal. One would ontologically think that the expressive version of the contrast between form and substance: the difference between physiological phonetics and formal phonology, would correspond on the content plane to a difference between grammatically formed content and phenomenologically or psychologically established mental processes underlying the former. However, the difference between form and substance in content is interpreted as a difference and an articulation between *signified* meaning and *referential* meaning, between concept and thing. The signified content is the form (and therefore the truth) of the referential content. The articulation of form and substance in content is epistemic.

This interpretation allows Hjelmslev to approach the metalinguistic problem, or rather to represent it as solved before it is even formulated. If the substance

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sophisticated version of this view, see Jean-François Bordron, *Image et vérité. Essais sur les dimensions iconiques de la connaissance*, Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2013.

of content is what the signified content refers to, and if a metalanguage refers to another language, then the language referred to, the 'object language', is the substantial content of the metalanguage:
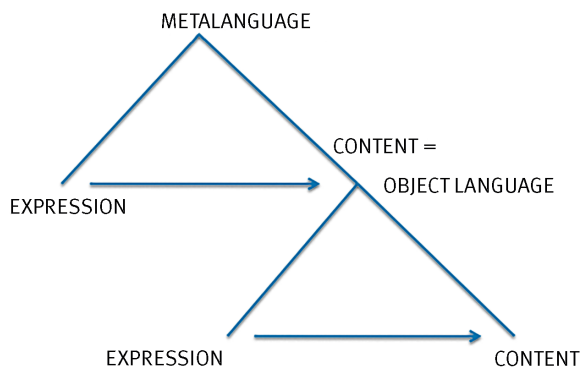


1. Semiosis in semiosis: metalanguage?

The content form of the metalanguage takes the object language as its substance, and since substance is known through form, it *knows* this object[6]. This idea is then going to define the privileged relation holding between linguistics (as til ultimate metalanguage) and the sciences (as its object languages).

We must note the ambiguity, or rather the serious *error*, in this understanding of the semiosic embedding: the object of a description is of course represented in the content of the language describing it; but being *represented* is not being *present* in that content[7]. Being represented in the content is not the same as *constituting* that content. However, this is precisely what Hjelmslev posits; in his account, the object language simply *is* the content of the language of its description. The metalanguage subsumes the truth of its object language. What it does, in my view, is to represent and to refer to an object which could be a language or whatever else, including itself (the language its utterances themselves use). But then, it is not a metalanguage, only a normal use of a language. A grammar of the French language, written in French, is not a French

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6   Hjelmslev (in his *Prolegomena*) has to specify that in order to be a metalanguage, the embedding language has to be 'scientific', that is, obey the 'principle of empiricism', that is, again, it has to be non-contradictory, exhaustive, and maximally simple. If the embedding language is a non-science language (an "*ikkevidenskabssprog*"), it is called a connotation language, not a metalanguage. Hjelmslev cannot mention the specific instance of the embedding directly and formally – the metalinguistic embedding taking place in the *content* plane, and the connotational embedding in the *expression* plane – because he would then need to be able to describe the difference between expression and content *immanently*, which he knows is impossible. This difficulty in Hjelmslev's prose has given rise to much confusion.

7   Representation is only to be considered a mode of presence if you subscribe to Spinoza's monism, in which the concepts of things are in things themselves, from where they migrate into human minds.

'metalanguage', or a text written in 'meta-French'. It is just a text in French. In dialogue, people are often speaking about each other's use of language; are they superimposing 'metalanguages' throughout their interaction? Linguistically speaking, there are no metalanguages. The notion of metalanguage may have some utility in logic, but is meaningless in philosophy of science. It is in fact just as meaningless both in linguistics and in semiotics.

If I am right in pointing out this error in Hjelmslev's understanding of the embedding of a semiosis in the content[8] of another semiosis, the entire notion of metalanguage loses its validity. Again: *There are no metalanguages*. A semiosis can in fact contain other semioses in its expression or its content, but that is not what happens when a semiosis, a 'language', refers to some object beyond its signified. Language, strictly speaking, does not refer to anything, only texts *of* a language do so. When doing so, the text builds representations of its referent, in that the speaker or writer of the text intends, i.e. *means*, in a specific situation, to represent the referent by the signified meaning. If I intend to refer to my own text, for example by using the expression "this text", or the expression "I hereby promise…", I do not thereby create a metalanguage, or even a metatext, or a meta-semiosis, I just use language the way it is built to be used. I refer to things in the world, including my expressions and my doings. Hjelmslev was led astray by logical positivism on this crucial point; the notion of metalanguage stems from logic, where 'language' does not mean language in the linguistic sense (but rather something like 'axiomatic system').

*A semiosis can contain other semioses in its expression or content*. This was the technical idea that Hjelmslev hoped would solve his problem, or save his immanentist ontology. It did not in any way solve that problem; however, it unsuspectedly and unintentionally opened a semiotic door to a new analysis of meaning.

### RECURSIVE SEMIOTICS

Content recursion is *not* metalanguage. If the content of a semiotic function is or contains another semiotic function, it just means that the signified of the first function is further articulated, not that it is 'about' the second function. 'Aboutness'—John Searle's notion—is reference, which is an intentional function of a different order; we will of course return to this important point.

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8  The distinction between expression and content is rather obvious in an intentional context; the communicative agent expresses an intention to convey a thought to some co-agent, and for this purpose uses expressions that signify elements relevant to the identification, by the co-agent, of that thought.

Recursion in the expressive instance of a semiotic function is not metalanguage either. It means that the signifier is further articulated into a semiotic function, partly or entirely.
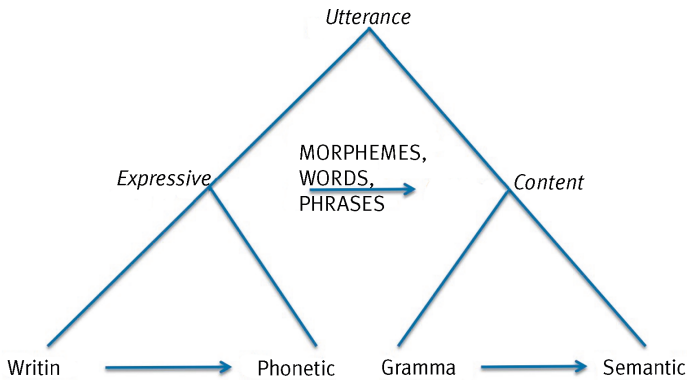
Hjelmslev's invention serves a new purpose here, namely the study of complex semiosis in language. Take a word, and you will see that the writing or the mental graphic image often is part of the semiotic event of its production; the example of homophones may suffice: *la mer / la mère*; the expressive semiosis contains a semiosis in which a specific writing (spelling), or else a co-speech gesture, signifies the phonetics of the word and identifies the word so that it can take on its meaning when heard. Ch. Trénet: "La mer / qu'on voit danser… / le long des golfes clairs"; "la mer / les a bercés…"—Here the homophony[9] even feeds the maternal metaphor in the content (the sea—the mother). Lexical signifiers are phonetic, but their sound is inherently signified by their writing, gesture, and particular pronunciation; and it is this semiotic relation holding between *produced* expression and *intended* expression that constitutes the conceptual 'form of expression' that Hjelmslev as any other linguist of the last century would acknowledge as relevant[10].

The linguistic content 'plane' contains a syntactico-semantic embedding. The phrase content has on the one hand a *grammatical* structure and on the other hand a *semantic* meaning which can be phrased differently, variably (this is especially evident if it includes a metaphor). This means that in the utterance content, the grammatical content signifies the semantic content; which again means that the utterance content, like the utterance expression, contains a semiosis. We are thus in the presence of a triple semiosis representing the embeddings, or recursions, that may define core functions in language, whether considered as *parole* or as *langue*, in so far as the semiotic architecture (**fig. 2**) of uttered, received, and simply possible language remains stable. Note that in this conception, the Hjelmslevian distinction between form and substance becomes a semiotic distinction, namely between produced and intended expression, and between produced syntax and intended semantic meaning. Substantially, the semantic contents signified by grammatical structures are mentally given entities, shaped by the cognition of speakers and hearers, writers and readers, involved in the communication that frames the flow of utterances constituting

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**9**   Is it the phonetic syllable /me:r/ or this syllable plus the written forms *mer* versus *mère* that signify 'ocean' versus 'mother'?

**10**   However, Hjelmslev had to consider written and spoken expressions as equivalent, not as semiotically related, as signifier and signified. Otherwise, he would have had to identify the embedding in the linguistic signifier. Derrida (*De la grammatologie*) likes Hjelmslev's view, which appears to oppose phonocentrism.

the reality of language. The semiotic function of an utterance[11] comprises
two embeddings: an expressive semiosis and a content semiosis. The semiotic
structure of language may therefore be the following (**fig. 2**):

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                          Utterance


                      MORPHEMES,
          Expressive   WORDS,         Content
                       PHRASES




     Writin        Phonetic   Gramma      Semantic
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2. Basic semiotic recursions in language.

However, there are more semiotic functions involved in linguistic structure
than the ones implied by this triple semiosis. We will consider two superordinate
functions, enunciation and rhetoric.

Firstly, an utterance (French: énoncé), with its recursive semiotic structure, is
the content of an act of *enunciation* (French: énonciation), by which the first-
person subject of the utterance, the 'utterer', signifies the mode of the meaning
of the utterance. Is it 'meant' as a promise, as a declaration, as an assertion, as
a request? Is it a quotation, a joke, a common-knowledge element, or a report
from the utterer's own experience or thinking? Is it part of a fictional narration?
Is the emotional temperature of the utterance ironic or empathic? Etc. Those
are questions for an enunciational analysis of the utterance mode.

Secondly, the utterance has a contextual and referential meaning, in so far
as it expresses an intention to accomplish something in a situation, namely
the situation of its performance. It constitutes a *rhetorical* act; in classical
rhetoric, the situation in question pertains to a genre, e.g. judiciary, political
or celebrative, and the style of the utterance, incl. the shaping of its syntax,
the rhythm of its prosody, the choice of its vocabulary and its metaphors etc.,
depends on the situational genre of the communication and expresses a

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**11**  Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* is not respected in this analysis. A given
'utterance' is a *possibility* in a *langue* and a *fact* in its *parole*. Language as a system of
possibilities, however, both as a particular *langue*, and as *langage*, language in general, must
constitute a system of mechanisms for language use, (Danish: **"***et \*sprogbrugssystem***"**, *pace*
Hjelmslev), unless we remove empirical knowledge of language from its conceptual realm.

possible active intention within this genre. In a broader social context, the pragmatic parameters of institutionalized discourse and of informal, conversational dialogue may be understood along the same lines. *Reference* is to be understood as a rhetorical (pragmatic) sub-function, in the sense that the 'internal' semantics of an utterance only becomes 'externally' meaningful if the connotations, implicatures, and schematic relevance-makers caused by the situation of communication is taken into account. The projection of the utterance and its *conceptual meaning* onto a situational frame is what creates *referential meaning*. For example, a strongly ritualized context can modify utterance meaning to the point of almost erase it, as it happens in ceremonial uses of preset language.

And thirdly, enunciation and rhetoric establish a super-superordinate semiotic function, in that the enunciational subjectivity expresses the rhetorical subjectivity—confirming it, questioning it or negating it: it lends its voice and modes to the act that 'lands' meaning in the human world. We may call this phenomenon *discourse*. This definition will let the term keep essential traits of its modern meaning (in expressions such as: political discourse, religious discourse, scientific discourse, etc.).

The semiotic architecture resulting from the addition of these superstructures to the basic structure is as follows (**fig. 3**).

3. Complex semiotic recursions in language
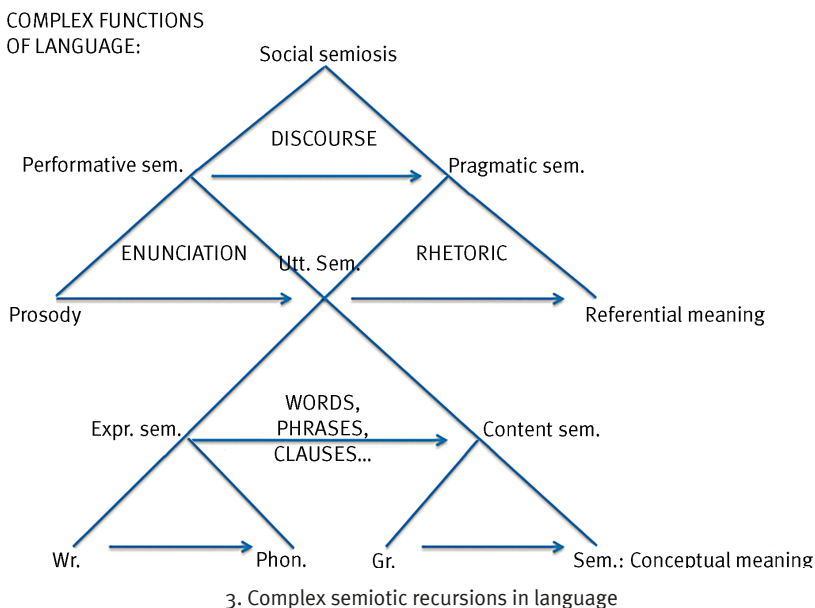
As the graph shows, we now have six distinct semiotic functions to account for when analyzing linguistic events. The inferior (threesome) complex is connected

to the superior (threesome) complex by the central instance of the utterance[12]. The most important immediate consequence of this model, especially in the context of a critical discussion of Hjelmslevian semantics, is to support the distinction that has to be made between conceptual meaning and referential meaning, the latter being represented as a fact of rhetoric.

## HYBRID SEMIOTICS

The recursive model facilitates the understanding of semiotic practices involving other forms of communication than language. We will briefly consider some examples.

### Singing

Our first observation is that musical phrasing replaces spoken phrasing. In a song, melody replaces prosody. When singing a song, a text, we keep the linguistic structure active, except for this substitution. The text is then typically a frozen, framed piece of language. It often takes a correspondingly frozen, ritual setting to sing it; so when singing, the voice can no longer freely commit speech acts, because the referential meaning of the text is determined by the cultural community to which the text is a discursive given, as well as the musical text and its melodic profile—the voice—belongs to that community, rather than to the performative instance of a singular speaker-singer.

The core difference between a song and a poem[13] is, precisely, that the song belongs to the community knowing it, and its text is a theatrical line in a presupposed drama; the first person entity in the song is not the singer but a character in that drama. To sing "I love you, Porgy" is not to love Porgy but to play the role of Bess in an imagined story. To sing is always to play a sort of operatic role. The implicit opera, we might say, is the standard condition of singing.

The semiotics of opera is complex. Theater, music, narrative and language are integrated in a structure that has an intelligible format, which we can attempt to characterise in our terms of hybrid or polymorphous semiosis. The outline may look like the following architecture (**fig. 4**):

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12  The lower, basic functional triad could be called the *immanent* level of language semiotics, while the upper level (enunciation, rhetoric, discourse) would be the *transcendent* level of language semiotics, the one that Hjelmslev excluded from glossematics.

13  We will discuss poetry *infra*.
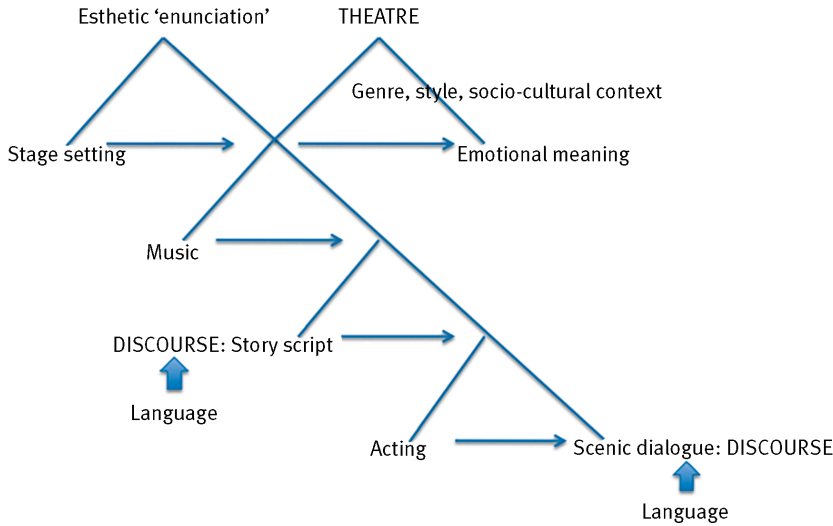
4. Complex semiosis involving language: opera

The upper stage of this structure comprises the two functions we recognize from language: 'enunciation' and 'rhetoric', if we accept to use these designations for the esthetic signature of a theatrical production and the institutional medium, respectively. We could then further have added an 'operatic discourse' on top of the structure.

The music itself first signifies the narrative space-time of the opera. It does so by letting the sound-based, articulated, emotional space-time[14] coincide with, or describe, the articulated space-time of the story: the whole and the sequence of scenes shaping its drama. As indicated, the story as such has its own discursive source. Since the story contains and imbeds dialogue, namely the text of its libretto, we also have to account for this text: the dialogue performed in the acting of the singers, which is equally a manifestation of discourse, though not necessarily the same as that of the source discourse of the story. The narrative may be mythical[15] (cf. Don Juan; Faust…), while the libretto is authored and has singularized enunciation. The music is therefore involved in two distinct operations simultaneously: shaping the 'objective' emotional space-time and atmosphere of the story and shaping the singular, multi-'subjective' singing occurring *in* that space. This double condition, and the creative conflicts it

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14  We develop this part, the musical space-time semiosis, *infra* and in "Weather reports. Discourse and Musical Cognition", in Keith Chapin & Andrew H. Clark (eds.), *Speaking of Music. Addressing the Sonorous*, New York, Fordham U.P., 2013.

15  The linguistic status of a myth is problematic; there is a semantic pattern of some constancy, including some acts and agent, and a corresponding set of proper names, but no authoritative text, only an open corpus of anonymous or authored variants.

allows, may be essential, creative, and dynamic factors in composing music for opera. My claim is that when simply composing a song, the artist is in principle mobilizing the entire operatic structure; the music of the song may likewise reflect the double semantics of story and role.

### From painting to poetry

Unlike prehistorical cave paintings, later figurative representations on surfaces are *framed*. They unfold within the format of a figurative 'window' inviting the viewer to make sense of what is shown inside a well-defined geometrical shape. This frame could be compated to the stage in theater, while the former is in two dimensions and the latter in three; it cuts out a privileged portion of space—or of time, in music—reserved for signifying contents that are intended to be perceived as distinct from the surrounding experienced reality. A content, mainly figurative, such as a landscape, a still life, a portrait, expressed through strokes or sprays of paint, defines a picture; pictures, paintings, can be non-figurative, of course, showing instead through its strokes or sprays some state of a conceptual (diagrammatic) space-time. In all cases of painting in this sense, the basic function is an iconic semiosis, comparable to the main utterance function in language. The superstructure in the model of language will still be relevant here, while the infrastructure does not apply[16]. The stance of 'enunciation' is the semiosis represented by the framing (hence the frame-dependent 'composition') and the painter's signature (if absent, the style of strokes and chromographie will be a 'signature[17]'). The rhetoric and the pragmatics of the painting is the gesture addressing a particular context in which the painting, marked by its genre, takes on a cultural emotional meaning. So the result is a *semiosic* complex as the following (**fig. 5**)[18]:

Modern example: Manet...

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[16] The embedding of a semiosis in the main signifier and in the main signified, as it occurs in language, also exists in other *symbolic* practices. Example: mathematical writing. But in painting, the main signifiers and signifieds are 'ultimate', singular, unique—and this is precisely what makes them *iconic*. However, icons often become symbolic; they then typically change from being esthetic to assuming deontic social functions. Example: advertisements.

[17] The painter, as an 'enunciator', 'points to' the events happening within his frame, invites the 'enunciatee' to attend to them; the enunciative gesture is thus a deixis, not outwards, towards the context world but inwards, to the figurative or 'abstract' meaning to be shared.

[18] The neologism 'semiosic' means: structured in terms of instances of semiosis.

$f_d$: *deixis*—the function connecting Enunciation and Enuciated meaning.
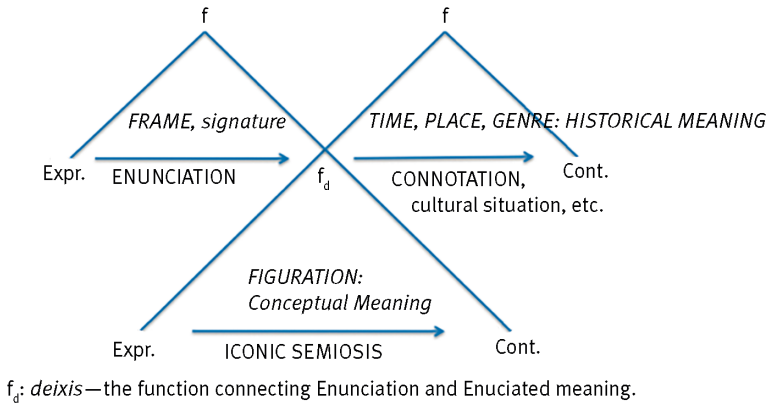
5. The semiotic structure of a painting

Images in general basically follow the same schema as paintings. They appear inscribed in an infinity of co-semiotic contexts but constitute in themselves such semiosic molecules: enunciation, figuration, rhetoric. This triple constellation may in fact be the simplest semiosic architecture that materialized signs in human cultures can have. Only corporel signs may be simpler: groans, moans, sighs, laughter…: enunciation, rhetoric. Below this level, we may dig into zoo-semiotics.

The 'pictoriality' of painting spills over into the particular use of language we call poetry. In poetry, the metric schema or simply the unchangeable line form of a free-verse poem adds a freezing *frame* to its ordinary enunciational function. In this sense, poems have *double enunciation*. The first-person signifiers in poetic texts now signify subjectivities objectified by the superordinate enunciator. The rhetorical stance correspondingly moves upwards to the level of the framing function; what could have been (or has been) the text of a love letter now becomes an esthetic object offered by a gesture to a cultural community and takes on a distinct artistic meaning in exchange for the direct emotional meaning it loses. Example (Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1918):

> My candle burns at both ends;
>     It will not last the night;
> But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
>     It gives a lovely light!

Here, the three instances of 'my' are frozen into the strong rhythmic format; the standard metaphor is turned around by the composition, and we are invited to develop the implied recommendation.

Poetry is painting with language. The immediate effect is therefore *iconisation*. The embedded semiotic function in the main *expressive* instance disappears[19], and writing becomes the sole signifier, not the (subordinate) signifier of a phonetic signifier: this is the radical meaning of *écriture* in the strong French sense of esthetic expression.

Correspondingly, the content of the main function no longer embeds an open semantic semiosis in which grammar variably signifies a semantic conceptual meaning, but instead freezes into a unique syntactico-semantic event. The way something is written is now understood as the *only* way it could be written. The conceptual meaning is frozen into the singularity of the syntax that expresses it ("it says exactly what it says", the writer would say, tautologically, if asked).

The structural result of this 'poetogenic' mechanism (**fig. 6**) is a hybrid between pictorial and linguistic semiosic complexes.
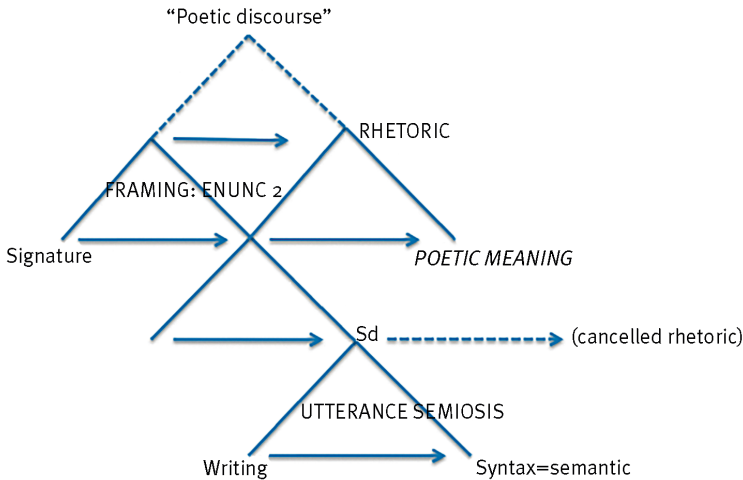
6. The complex semiosis in poetry (« *Ut pictura poesis* »[20])

I am aware of the fact that this analysis is non-standard and may cause surprise. However, it explains at least three well-known but less well understood effects in poetry: its singularisation of expression and content, its emphasis on expressive frozenness, and the half-fictionalisation of the 'I', making the first person an

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**19**  It disappears, or rather, it is neutralized, which is often testified by the strange phonetics of reading-aloud: not like speaking, not like singing, but a certain 'chanting'—using a non-existent, a-prosodic voice from the grave, *d'outre-tombe*.

**20**  "Poetry should be like painting"—though not in the sense intended by Horace (*Ars Poetica*). In the semiotic sense, poetry *is* like painting, structurally.

element of the content (ENUNC 1) without cancelling its enunciative role (ENUNC 2).

## Music?

In "singing" (*supra*), we referred to music as a simplex semiosis in singing, and more prominently, in theatrical singing, opera. However, the analysis above may help us elucidate certain features of music as it exists in itself besides any relation to singing and language.
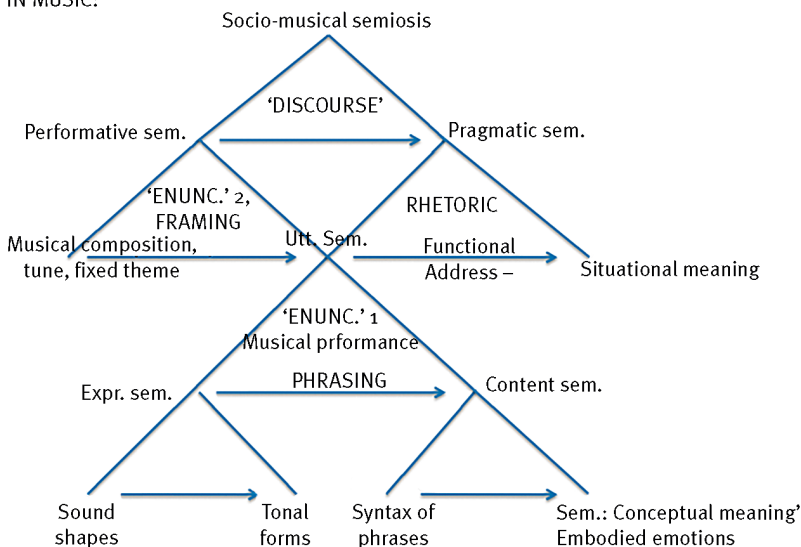
The principle of *double enunciation* appears to work in the same way: personal performance by the musician would be the primary and subordinate instance, while the secondary and superordinate semiosis would be the instance of freezing and framing that makes us think in terms of singular (frozen) *pieces* of music, tunes, themes, compositions that precede and survive their occasional performances and makes the latter appear as their interpretations. 'Playing' a piece of music is taking on a role in the 'text' of the piece.

Furthermore, the rhetorical and pragmatic dimension of music is culturally important, since music is required for many celebrative or ritual circumstances where it expands the socially shared ceremonial moment into a period of symbolic transformation from one shared state of affairs to another. It can also be enjoyed as an autonomous period of existential and emotional immersion.

However, the core function in music, instrumental performance, playing, is not a simplex semiosis. It forms sounding *tones* into meaningful *phrases*; in fact, these tones are themselves entities signified by the sound shapes that express them through specific instrumental handling; and the phrases (which in general show particular prosodic affinity to linguistic, syntactic phrases[21]) in their turn signify certain emotionally meaningful body movements or dance steps, which we do not need to execute physically in order to feel and mentally identify them. In this sense, musical phrases inherently express emotional content. This analysis yields a multi-semiosic display strikingly similar to that of language (**fig.** 7):

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21  As discussed in Aniruddh D. Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain*, Oxford/New York, Oxford U.P., 2008. Cf. Stephen Malloch & Colwyn Trevarthen (eds.), *Communicative Musicality. Exploring the basis of human companionship*, Oxford/Toronto, Oxford U.P., 2009, and Michael A. Arbib (ed.), *Language, Music, and the Brain. A Mysterious Relationship*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London, MIT Press, 2013.

COMPLEX FUNCTIONS
IN MUSIC:

Socio-musical semiosis

'DISCOURSE'

Performative sem.                                    Pragmatic sem.

'ENUNC.' 2,                          RHETORIC
FRAMING
Musical composition,      Utt. Sem.      Functional
tune, fixed theme                        Address –          Situational meaning

'ENUNC.' 1
Musical prformance
PHRASING
Expr. sem.                               Content sem.

Sound            Tonal        Syntax of                 Sem.: Conceptual meaning'
shapes           forms        phrases                   Embodied emotions

7. The semiotic structure of music

Here, *Enunciator 2* is the stipulated composer, whereas *Enunciator 1* is the
'interpreting' performer of the framed 'piece', or composition, whether it is a
score or an unwritten traditional tune or theme. One might wonder why, in
this semiosic graph, the performing enunciation would be subordinate to the
'composing' enunciation; the paradox is that a performance is an 'execution' of
a superordinate program signed by an 'author', whether a person or a tradition,
an implied authoritative instance *actualized* by the playing. No playing is 'free',
since it has to be framed, even if the framing theme can be minimal, as it is in
jazz music. To play is always to reanimate a framing (signing) 'spirit' and to be
under the spell of that 'spirit'. This is why music so readily takes on a religious
or magical meaning. All music-making is a sort of 'spiritual' reanimation, due
to its semiosic structure.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *semiotic* modelling of specific linguistic, esthetic, and other communicative
practices, using the *semiosic* principle we have considered here, should make it
possible to obtain viable local overviews of the involved functional architectures,
and to further explore the specific properties of each of these.

In the phenomenology of communicating subjects, the semiosic architectures
of given discourses of course precede instances of ongoing communication and
are shared as prerequisites for communicating. Both production and reception

take place according to the disposition characteristic of the 'discourse' they are 'in'. So for example, in the discursive realms of spoken language we do not need to wonder if there is, in a given utterance, a grammatical structure, even if we do not immediately manage to identify a 'construction'; there sill also be an enunciative mode; the format stays stable, so the semiotic mind only needs to heuristically fill out the slots that perception may fail to supply.

Developing a general semiotics from linguistics, as Hjelmslev had intended to do in order to support his grandiose philosophical claim, as we have seen, did not turn out to work. The erroneous understanding of the meaning of semiotic content embedding, reference, and 'metalanguage' stopped the initiative. However, an alternative understanding of the very same embedding, suggested by Hjelmslev, the general structural recursivity of semiotic functions, opens a new horizon of semiotic analysis, especially of the complex constellations that fill the institutional and cultural life of modern societies, and may even shed some light on the origin of the human communicative mind[22]—by stimulating a search for the factors that may have caused or supported the cognitive emergence and stabilization of certain complex semiosic architectures that made such an adventure of meaning possible.

22  Cf. Line Brandt, *The Communicative Mind. A Linguistic Exploration of Conceptual Integration and Meaning Construction*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars, 2013.

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