We are in the world we are able to perceive
  (interpretant originated in Piaget)
We perceive the world we can enunciate
  (interpretant originated in Varela)
We enunciate the world as the socially available semiosis allows us
  (interpretant originated in Foucault)
The socially available semiosis contains all of the available possible worlds at a given
  moment and in a given society
  (interpretant originated in Peirce)
Foreword

Along this book, and his other texts, Magariños repeatedly uses the phrase “at a given moment in a given society” and he always considered that his proposal of semiotic methodology is a contribution to social science in Latin America (as he used to say: because of history and culture). I think we can consider it more broadly, as a contribution to the science in any of the Latin languages. But not out of them?

One of his projects was to translate this book into English, though not all Chapters. We begun the task at the end of 2009, and he gave me some indications as to the terminology. But now, I decided to translate it almost entirely, leaving aside only those parts that are Spanish illustrations of his analytical procedures (Chapter 9), and which would have no sense without rethinking the whole methodology in order to be applied to English texts. And the same can be said as to the comparison between two poems in Chapter 10. I have included these two Chapters in Spanish, at the end of this book, in the Annexes section.

I hesitated a lot before making this translation, wondering what value could its application have to semiotics in English speaking countries, to the social sciences constructed in that language, especially not being here Magariños, to tell me which parts of the book are worth to be read in English, and which could be left aside. But I answered to myself that the value of this translation is to show the way Juan Magariños reasoned on semiotics, his way of reasoning semiotically, as he used to say, even if we shall leave aside the concrete examples of some applications.

In this book he puts forward his re-interpretation of Foucault (The Archaeology of Knowledge), from which he has elaborated his proposal of discourse analysis through specific analytical operations (with an illustration taken from his Manual Operativo; Chapter 9 of the original, and Annex 1 here), and also his proposal of Possible Semiotic Worlds (that is exemplified with the comparison between the two poet’s works (those of Juan Gelman and Juan R. Jiménez) in Spanish; Chapter 10 of the original book, Annex 2 here). He devotes the first part, General Semiotics, to state his concept of semiotics (Chapters 1 and 3), to define the terms he uses along this work (Chapter 2), to expound the proposals of Saussure (Chapter 5), Peirce (Chapter 6) and Foucault (Chapter 9) and to develop his operational methodology in semiotic research (especially Chapters 4, 8 to 10, and in general, along the book). And he develops thoroughly his interpretation of Peirce, from whose work he has elaborated his studies and proposals in iconic semiotics (Chapters 6 and 11 to 18 on visual semiotics) and indexical semiotics (Chapters 19 and 20). The studies of Magariños on Peirce, throughout his 40 years of work in the social sciences, may be valuable for the reflection on a different look on semiotics, also for non-Latin semioticians. Finally, in Chapters 21 to 23, he refers briefly to what occupied his thoughts lately, and was the topic of his plenary lecture at the Congress of the IASS in A Coruña: the change, the borders of semiotics...the history. He begun to work on this theme, and he left an outline of it in his computer (La semiótica de los bordes II: Semiotics of the Edges II).

Perhaps with a bit of fear, because the task undoubtedly exceeds me, I finally decided to put this translation on the web, available to you. I think that perhaps this way back, from Peirce’s tongue through a Spanish semiotician, permit a new opening, to view new problems. And will allow to open a window to the work of Magariños, to those who have not yet read his works, and now decide to do it, as I hope.

The respect for the diversity of languages and their contributions to the differential construction of human worlds, that Magariños always had, and his respect for the rigor in science, deserve this effort, this humble tribute.

Maybe a native speaker of the target language of this translation be lost in possible knots of my constructions, in unclear paragraphs ... It also often happens to us to be lost with some unclear translations in the other direction, that as native speakers of Spanish are a bit difficult to disembowel. I think it is worth trying to soften the difficulties to communication, and to make an effort so to disseminate and share this valuable work.

Giovanna Winchkler
Buenos Aires, october 2011.
Acknowledgements

The revision of this translation by a native speaker would have been convenient in order to achieve a more correct result and an easier reading. But has not been possible for now. And it would also have been appropriate that an expert in semiotics read the full text. Dr. Claudio Guerri gave me part of his valuable time last summer to read together the first 10 chapters and make the required corrections. The rest was controlled only in part.

Lic. Carlos González Pérez worked in the reading of some chapters and encouraged me to undertake this task of translating Juan’s work, despite the difficulties that sometimes seemed to me overwhelming. And I am indebted also to the warm support of Archt. Carla García, Lic. Teresa Poccioni and Dr. Mirta Bialogorski. They all have been students and, later, collaborators and members of the research projects of Juan Magariños.

Professor José Serebrenik, my English teacher and friend, has supported me with his corrections and always pertinent indications, which were taken into account.

But the responsibility for any errors that could have slipped inadvertently throughout the text, especially in the more difficult parts, and in those that were not revised, is only mine. So, I would be ready to hear any suggestions for the improvement of the translation’s quality and I would also be ready to listen the objections, if there are any, on my interpretation of the original texts of the semiotics of Juan Magariños. In this case, please, email me to: gwinchkler@gmail.com.
Some observations on the translation of certain terms:

1. Following Magariños’s indications, I translated “significado” as “meaning”. However, in chapter 5, where Magariños develops the proposal of Saussure, I have followed Greimas & Courtés (1979, entries Significant, Signifié) just in those parts related with the Saussurean algorithm (French: signifiant/signifié, English: signifier/signified). So, when in the original Spanish version of the book of Magariños, he uses “significado”, here it is “meaning”, except in the chapter 5, where, when it refers to the schemes of Saussure, I translated it as “signified”.

2. Following Greimas & Courtés, (1979), and also Magariños’s indications, I translated “significación” as “signification”.

3. “Enunciado” in the Spanish version is here “uttering”, “statement” (“to enunciate”), and “enunciación”, is “utterance” or “enunciation” (according to indications of Magariños). In more general contexts, I used: to affirm, to formulate (and variants).

4. “Serie” is a term widely used by Magariños, with different precision. In an extreme, close to mathematics, it could be “set”, and in the other, more colloquial, it refers to a mere plurality of things or features. So, depending on the extreme to which it approaches, I have translated it as “set”, “ensemble”, “series”, “group”, “number” (of something) or I leave the decision to depend on the context.

5. “Configuración”, “forma” (and variants) are translated as “configuration”, or “form”: when used in a philosophical or abstract sense, I preferred “form”. But when Magariños refers to Marr, or in some of his developments in visual semiotics here, I opted for the word Marr uses: “shape”.

6. There are some words with whose translation I feel uncomfortable: “actualizar” (“actualizar” is to actualize? or may be better to materialize, realize?); “demostración”, “mostrar”, “mostración”, are the same as “to demonstrate”, “to show” (or “demostración”: “demonstration”, etc.); also “manifestación” (used in Spanish in a similar sense as these).

7. After having translated Peirce’s “respect or capacity” as “aspecto o capacidad” in the original Spanish version of this book (p. 345), Magariños modifies it to “aspecto o disposición” when applied to indexical semiotics (p. 341, 356). In the Spanish version, he defines “disposición” (p. 368-369) as “ámbito en el que existen o reproducen su significación los fenómenos indiciales” (“the ambit in which the indexical phenomena exist and acquire or reproduce their signification”). He speaks also about dispositional relations and in a long paragraph he refers to his introduction of this term (related to rhetoric) in the field of semiotics (in Spanish). That is why I have used this term here, making the return from Spanish to English, despite the original term of Peirce, “capacity”. See especially 19.1.22 and 19.1.23.

He uses this term in the following paragraphs (italics are mine): 2.1.12 (disposition of objects or behaviors), 4.7.1.1 (Compiling the corpus 2 (... verbal text or a graphic proposal or a disposition or an attitude), Compiling the corpus 13 (... texts [verbal], configurations [visual], dispositions [of actions or objects]), 5.5 (...verbal discourses and/or visual images and/or disposition of objects and behaviors), 6.1 (in some respect or capacity/en algún aspecto o disposición), 6.2.7 (disposition of a keyboard whose distribution corresponds to ...), 6.3.3.4 (dispositive expressions), 6.4.3 (habits or dispositions of that mind...), 8.6 (... formal relations: [symbolic] synthax, [iconic] configuration or [indexical] disposition.

In the remainder of this book, his use of the term is coherent with any of these. (G.W.)
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1 Concept of semiotics

1.1 Concept

I understand by “semiotics” as a discipline
an ensemble of concepts and operations
intended to explain
how and why a given phenomenon
acquires in a given society
at a given historical moment of that society
a given signification
and
what this signification may be
how it is communicated
and what may be the possibilities of its transformation.

The initial purpose of this uttering is to provide a broad and at the same time operational perspective to all those who approach our discipline. In this sense, I consider that, starting from the proposed concept, the broad perspective can settle in the proposal of studying the signification of a social phenomenon and the operational perspective in the explanation of that signification.

So, semiotics may be of interest to scholars and researchers of social phenomena, insofar as they seek to explain the signification socially attributed to such phenomena and insofar as they approach this search in a rigorous way so as to justify the conclusions they reach, and not in an intuitive way that is understood but whose rationale is unknown or without being able to establish why it is considered that this signification (or, rather, set of significations) is that which corresponds to attribute to the phenomenon and not any other.

Thus, the lawyer, the sociologist, the psychologist, the historian, the graduate in arts, the art critic, the linguist, the anthropologist, the geographer, the archaeologist, the graduate in tourism, the economist, the philosopher, the terminologist and the translator, the epistemologist, the librarian, the publicist, the communicator, the architect, the museologist, the political scientist, the graduate in health sciences, the demographer, the pedagogue, and many others in social sciences, have need of semiotics as a structuring tool for the consistency and rigor of their studies and researches.

This is because all of them have as object of knowledge of their respective disciplines semiotic objects, i.e, social phenomena, that already have assigned (without being imaginable a prior moment in which they have not yet; and be peacefully or not) a dynamic set of meanings changing with time and culture.

All of them, therefore, are potential users of semiotics, to the extent that they know that semiotics can provide the operations necessary to produce a basic explanation of the signification (plural, contradictory, competitive) that the specific phenomenon being studied has at a given moment for a given society. And to the extent that, as semiotic scholars pretending to elaborate and propose the pertinent analytic operations, we will not disappoint them.

Leaving aside, for the time being, whether the dichotomy of social and natural sciences is pertinent or not (although I anticipate that I think is not), the objects of knowledge of natural sciences are also semiotic objects, and therefore semiotics is useful in this domain too. The problem is epistemological and concerns the characteristics of the production process of the corresponding knowledge. I suggest to treat it at another time, but let it be posed already.

When stating above the concept of “semiotics”, I made clear that I was referring to semiotics “as a discipline”. This means that I differentiate it from the concept of “semiotics as faculty” and this is how I will work on them in this text. In order to clarify both directions, I will outline the last concept:

I understand by “semiotics” as faculty,
the cognitive ability that humanity have
for the production of signs of all kinds: iconic, indexical and symbolic,
to give with them ontological existence to its humanness

(see chapter 2 (Glossary): Language/Semiotic faculty)

1.2 Signs and semiotic objects. Science or methodology

What I have proposed in the first place: semiotics understood as an ensemble of concepts and operations, does not involve the identification of two different universes, but their rapport in a way that the concepts being defined as pertinent to semiotics will be the ones that allow the comprehension of the functioning of the operations that constitute its specific aim and that permit their application. Concepts and operations interact in
the cognitive process which identify semiotics: to develop analytical and reconstructive procedures allowing to formulate explanations on the production and interpretation of the meaning of social phenomena. These concepts and operations integrate a set that, ultimately, constitutes a research method.

I tend by this to reject the conception of semiotics as a science. I think that there is an important argument to do so: it cannot be accepted to be a science because of the special character of what would be its object of knowledge: the sign. From the Peircean perspective (which I follow without dogmatic acceptance; for example, because I do not agree that semiotics be a science or as Peirce says in another moment, a doctrine), everything is a sign. The concept of “unlimited semiosis” that this perspective implies is very rich:

1. It relates to the semiotizing recurrence of each part of the sign, that become, in turn, into signs and the parts of these new signs, again into signs. That is to say, the 3 parts of the first sign pass to 9, and from these to 27, then to 81, and so on, successively and, at least from a theoretical perspective, endlessly.

2. It relates to the productivity of the sign in the mind of each interpretant (who does not perceive it from some exteriority as an incidental spectator, but as a constitutive part of the sign that is not complete without him/her), where “a new sign is created” from the proposed sign, and so, for each of the possible interpretants, in the self-reflection and, or in the communication, the initial sign, which is not yet one but as many as interpretants it have incorporated, continues its transformation indefinite and creatively. But, if everything is sign, the sign cannot be object of scientific knowledge, since it has no other object of knowledge from which it can differentiate itself (or one that could be used dialectically as definitens).

But, indeed, is everything sign? Signification is a construct of humanity and we see everything we are capable to see because it signifies and we see it the way it signifies; and from there one goes on to say that everything is sign (in cognitive research, the transformation by every organism of their environment in world; Varela, 1992). But, does the fact that something signifies mean that for that reason it is already a sign?

In principle, we could say that we see everything we see (that is to say, we perceive, we know, we feel, we intuite, we dream, etc.) because it is semiotized (that is to say, because it has been the referent of at least one semiotic statement: iconic, indexical, symbolic and/or their possible combinations). By admitting that reality is required a process of semiotization as the necessary condition that makes possible the identification of the entities of our environment, is admitted the existence of two kinds of objects: those that semiotize and those that are semiotized. In other words: signs and semiotic objects. But semiotic objects are not signs, at least while we manipulate them as such; although nothing prevents them from behaving as signs if the circumstances of their way of making themselves present is modified (from being referents to be exhibited representing others (see chapter 20). Semiotic objects receive this name to indicate that they are already semiotized. Foucaultians would say that they have already been said from some discourse; I think it is preferable (taking advantage of Foucault’s contribution, but avoiding the interference of linguistics that he consents) to say that they are already constructed from some substituent semiosis: it can be not only verbal (symbolic), but also visual (iconic), behavioral (indexical), etc. With respect to those objects that are not semiotized, it is not that they do not exist (I am not posing the ontic doubt of whether our environment is perhaps “the dream of a demented in a corner of an asylum”); the question is that we cannot see them (to perceive them, to know them, to feel them, to intuit them, to dream of them, etc.), because they have no identity (as possibility of recognition by its meaning), that is to say, they lack ontological existence to us.

So, I consider that the distinction between sign and semiotic object is important in order to confer and to maintain the rigor and effectiveness of semiotic methodology. Nevertheless, it is not a substantial difference, but an occasional one, because what is sign in a moment may become semiotic object in another moment and vice versa. In the same way, for the semiotic approach nothing is definitely iconic, indexical or symbolic (a classical painting: Holbein’s Erasmus, for instance, is an icon insofar as it proposes a representation of the physical appearance of that admirable humanist and not only because of this; it is an index for the employee who has to hang it on a wall or for the curator who has to decide close to which paintings, door, corner or panel is convenient to place it and not only for him/her; and it is a symbol for the marchand who looks at it, covetous, and also for many other views). Those who approach rigorous knowledge (or scientific) with the (positivist) hope of stepping on a land definitely firm, have the habit of criticizing this mobility in semiotic concepts, pointing to it as a proof of inconsistency. I believe, on the contrary, that such mobility confirms the cognitive rooting of semiotics, the ability of our discipline to give account of the mental operations involved in the production and change of the meaning of a given phenomenon, without having to modify its basic concepts and analytic operations.

1 I use Peirce’s expression “interpretant”, to designate both the interpreter (like Peirce would prefer: without psychological connotations; for example, 4.593), and the effectiveness of the sign in the mind of such interpreter (also as Peirce proposed, as “habit” produced by the new sign; for example, 5.491).
But, going back to the distinction between sign and semiotic object, I think that the criterion for establishing it, must involve a generative vision (not in a causal sense). For something to become into a semiotic object, it is necessary that a sign (properly contextualized) utters it, and this does not occur processually but in a simultaneous or paralell mode. So, *something will be sign* when it intervenes as utterer, semantizing something different from itself. And *something will be semiotic object* when it has received its meaning from something different from itself (this occurs with everything we are in conditions to perceive, including the sign, but in this case the operation has to be designated “metasemiotics”). To say it in a simpler way: *that which utters is a sign and the uttering which results is a semiotic object*. Or also (understanding the term “substitution” dynamically and not in its specular possibility), the substituent semiosis is constituted by signs and the substituted semiosis is constituted by semiotic objects. Observe that: this text is a substituent semiosis (is constituted by signs) and the problem it refers to (what it speaks about) is a substituted semiosis (the way the problem spoken about is constructed, the way it is being said, constitutes it in semiotic object). But when somebody responds and comments what is said here, the resulting text is a substituent semiosis (insofar it is constituted by signs) and this text, which I wrote and which receives a new meaning from the text said by the other person, is a substituted semiosis (insofar it is constructed as semiotic object).

So, if it can be established that with respect to a given physical construct, which for a given subject (or for a given community of subjects) consists in an “environment where familiar life goes by” (being one of its meanings, among many other possibilities), and that with respect to another given physical construct that it consists of “a place where justice is administered” (being its prevailing meaning), etc., this will be so because that subject or that community have been interpreters of some text (iconic, indexical or symbolic or, rather, of a great amount of texts of those characteristics and their possible combinations) which proposes it in those ways. Therefore, *a house or the court building are semiotic objects* and the answer of the interviewed people (one or more), or what is written in the book/s, or what has been seen in such and such image and movie, is that what uses the *signs through which* the house acquires the meaning of representing *familiar life* and the court building acquires the meaning of representing *justice*. But if we are suddenly before a specific house with its corridors and rooms, and doors, kitchen, bedrooms and bathrooms and its coloured walls and toys on the floor and smells in the air, etc., we may ask ourselves about *what kind of familiar life is that house representing (constructing)* and, then, the house is a *sign* (strictly speaking, a discourse or context of signs) or *a substituent semiosis* and the familiar life is the *semiotic object or the substituted semiosis*. Mutatis mutandis, the same goes for the court building. This is why generally it has to be a building with some architectural solemnity, so as to construct a solemn meaning of justice, without losing sight of the fact that the architectural “solemnity” is a semiotic object too, constructed with the resources of the (substituent) semiosis of the architecture of a given society, at a given historical moment and following a given architectural school, in one way in the design and in another way in the work, constituting them in as many signs or substituent semiosis and their corresponding semiotic objects.

But this does not lead to the possible identification of the two objects of knowledge, adequately differentiated: on the one hand, the *signs* and on the other, the *semiotic objects*. In both cases we are in presence of signs, but at the different moments they are being interpreted, they perform different semiotic functions, in a sense close to that of Hjelmslev when he spoke of “semiotic function” and not of “sign” (1971/1966: 49). When we call them “signs”, we bear in mind their effectiveness to *produce* what we call “semiotic objects”; when we call them “semiotic objects” we bear in mind the result of their productive effectiveness, but, in both cases, it is about signs. That is why a *semiotic object can perform a function of sign* when it produces the identification of other semiotic objects; and a *sign can be considered as semiotic object* when we bear in mind the sign that has produced it. So, here too we have an insufficient basis to admit that there exists a science of semiotics.

This makes that such interdependence between sign and semiotic object and such necessity of the link, exclude the possibility of having two objects differentiated enough so as to speak about science when referring to semiotics or when we are faced to two functions of the same object. In this way, the conceptual universe will be closed, without the necessary alterity to constitute semiotics in science. I consider, as provisionally as every thinking that is assumed as critical, that semiotics should be conceived as a rigorous methodology, recognizing nevertheless, that to explore it, use it and construct it as a science, is also a valid option of those who prefer to do so. Methodological rigor is what allows to use semiotics to explain the relation between a given utterance and the ability that utterance has for the construction of the ontological quality specific of a given social phenomenon that would be juridical, political, aesthetic, clinical, mathematical, astronomical, etc., as an effect of such utterance. *Semiotics as a discipline* intervenes explaining the process of production of the meaning of each and every utterance, but semiotics has no meaning of its own, being a mere instrument for the explanation of the

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1 In this direction goes Hjelmslev (1971/1943: 49) when he refers to the “semiotic function” and not to the signs.

2 I prefer to enter into semiotics by diving than by hand washing. Anyway, the second chapter of this General Semiotics, consists in a Glossary in which are defined, always provisorily, most of the terms I used in this chapter without prior warning.
meanings of all knowable entities; and this is also a meaning (instrumental) that gives it its specific ontological existence. This is the argument that leads me to think of semiotics exclusively as a methodology.

When I speak of an “ensemble of concepts and operations”, as above, I do not refer to an ensemble of final operations, as substantial or procedimental truths, reached in this case through semiotics. If posed in this way, they would have a claim to universal validity, in complete opposition to what the semiotic analyses can show. I refer to the previous knowledge required to formulate the methodological criteria on which the operations relevant to the semiotic method are based. This knowledge is also provisional, like the operations that semiotic discipline uses at a given moment.

From this perspective, the methodology needs to be based on a set of well grounded concepts (but always provisionally). For example, among many others, we will need to have knowledge about the concept of “sign”, of “representation”, of “utterance”, of “value” (the latter as a generic designation of the meaning in dialectical contrast with other signs of the same system, either in its syntactic aspect, or in terms of semantics [to be a neutral noun -without gender- is a possible metalinguistic meaning of “armchair”], and in each case, retrieved by the analysis of usage). Likewise, we will need to have an operational and empirical concept of “context” (avoiding, in the semiotics of the visual image or of musical image or of the image of behavior, etc., a strictly linguistic connotation [its linearity, for example] and trying to identify the characteristics of the quality relevant to each context [for example, the four dimensions: linear, surface, volume and time involved in shaping the context as a sign]).

And as I said, of many other terms, some of which are outlined in chapter 2 (Glossary). Namely, there are concepts that acquire a specific meaning in the environment of semiotics and that are fundamental to establish the methodological effectiveness of the operations constituting the specificity of semiotics. I consider, on the other hand, that there are no concepts which would allow to identify semiotics as an autoconsistent entity in the universe of social phenomena, since semiotics acquire, in each case, the ontological quality of the phenomenon whose signification aims to explain. This is coherent with the position I assumed above: considering the semiotic discipline as a methodology of research in the social sciences.

And I add a purely dialectical annotation: I consider that the concepts and operations which consolidate and dynamize respectively, semiotics, are so provisional, that I attribute them the fate of causing their own demise, of exhausting their own explanatory power when being applied, because their success would show their own limits, that is, that of what they can not give account, but whose knowledge would only be possible (as a limit) after intervening and applying semiotics itself.

Ultimately, if we as semioticians make our task adequately, we will do away with semiotics: applying it, using it, showing its effectiveness. All of which will lead us to gain awareness of its limits, to know where it turns out to be non-applicable, where it shows to be ineffective, which questions it could not respond (today this is yet not imaginable because we do not know such question). This ignorance that semiotics will produce but that will have no possibility to resolve will be known only as a result of its own practice, its effective application.

Summing up, the fate of semiotics is to reveal the ignorance that semiotics itself can not resolve any more. And it will emerge a new knowledge, a new way of operating so to solve this limitation, which, without being known before its use, semiotics contained: the awareness of its own negativity, that will permit the construction of a new methodology. So, this new knowledge will enter too in a new process of exhaustion as to these new responses, which will show another questions which, in turn, will remain without answer, and so on indefinitely. The historical overcoming (not necessarily the progress) will be constructed thus as the constitutive character of human knowledge.

1.3. Towards a dynamic theory of social discourses

Regarding the concept of semiotics we are analyzing, I want to comment, elementarily, what I consider arises from the last two propositions: “how it is communicated (the signification)/and what are its possibilities of transformation.”

In principle, communication (as process) is the behaviour in which acquires its specific existence the signification, and it is (also as process) the behaviour by which it loses its possibility to continue existing as such due to its own need to overcoming. This can be understood considering that the fact of transforming itself is a quality inherent in any signification.

I have make clear that I understand by existence of the signification its circulation and being in force (which has nothing to do with its truth or falsity), inside a given social group.

By including the signification and the communication process of such signification in the concept of semiotics, I argue that semiotics should provide the necessary operations to identify how a given signification is proposed, in a given uttering, to the members of a given community in order to allow them to identify a given social phenomenon, how it circulates among them, and how it is interpreted by the members of that given social group.
(which is constituted as such insofar they agree to share or to discuss the validity of a given signification) who then accept it as one of the possible ways of perceiving the existence of the phenomenon in question.

In this circulation, signification changes. It means that successive interpreters modify the signs constructing new signs from the interpretation of other given signs, so that the interpreted sign is not yet the same sign proposed to the interpretation. This suggests the necessity, inherent in semiotics, of constructing a dynamic theory of social discourses (as effectively existing ensemble of semiotic constructions circulating in a society).

This theory would be dialectical (as it is the very existence of semiotics, as I affirmed above), because the interpretation of the meaning determines relations of denial and synthesis that constitute a gradient of distancing from the initial discourse until a new discourse is constructed in which the rules that had constructed the first one are no longer valid. We would then have a new semiosis or a new language; a kind of “epistemological break” in the sequence of discourses will have been produced, leading correlatively to the construction of a new universe of semiotic objects; in other words, if another semiosis circulates, other world is constructed. And this transformation is the course of history. It becomes independent of the chronological course, so that the course of history can also show itself in the coexistence, among the different parts of the same society or social group at a given moment, of subparts that would inhabit different historical times, despite their contemporaneity (we might ask which historical moment we face each time we open a door, in the course of our everyday life).

To produce research framed in this dynamic theory, able to give account of the dialectics of social discourses, semiotics needs to have available certain fundamental and rigorous operations that show how the signification of the social phenomenon under study is being produced and transformed.

As tentative designations and descriptions of the concepts corresponding to such operations I have proposed the following:

1) attribution of a value to a form (significant or representamen⁴) as the effect of the set of possibilities of its contextual integration with other forms (significant or representamens); it constructs the syntactic value of the form of each sign as belonging to a given semiosis;

2) substitution between at least two semiosis, one of them working as substituent and the other as substituted; it constructs the semantic value of the forms of the corresponding signs belonging to such semiosis; this semantic value could not be said of a single semiosis, but of the relation between the semiosis that substitutes and the semiosis being substituted, and this means accepting that in order to have semantics there must be at least two semiotics operationally linked in a substituent relation: in one of them it is proposed the sign, and in the other it is configured the semiotic object;

3) overcoming between, at least, two pairs of semiosis, so that one semiosis loses ability to substitute, that is to say, to construct the meanings of the phenomena of a given world (first pair: signs without effectiveness to generate semiotic objects), by virtue of the entry into force of the other semiosis (which substitutes the previous one) that constructs other meanings for the phenomena of a world that is no longer the preceding (second pair: new signs with effectiveness to generate new semiotic objects); it constructs the pragmatic value of the forms of the corresponding signs belonging to the semiosis involved: in the communication process they construct a given meaning and show their limitation to construct others, which then are made possible from those actually built.⁷

⁴ Magariños says in Spanish: desconocimiento, which in Spanish means: action and effect of not knowing. May be ignorance is the closest (English) word. (Ignorancia is defined in Spanish as the lack of science, information, education, etc.; DRAE online). (G.W.)

⁵ This has been the subject of the Introduction that I wrote as editor for the Revista Cuadernos, 17 (‘Semiótica 2001’), devoted entirely to collecting the multiple views of 32 Spanish-speaking contemporary semioticians (Magariños de Morentin, 2002a).

⁶ I want to make a brief comment about this mention, in a joint and equivalent way, of the pair “significant/representamen”, because it may arouse some suspicion among the devotees of Saussure and those of Peirce. Such comment refers to the fact that the perceptual aspect of the sign requires the context with others in order to acquire signification (outside, of course, of the historical meaning that its use, i.e., of its previous contextualizations, have been attributing to it). In this sense, I agree more with Peirce when he refers to the “representamen” as the “perceptual” aspect that, as datum (“perceptum”), is linked to the idea of “representation” (which will give him the possibility of propose it as similar to the link between lawyer and client), which is not yet the “perceptual judgement”. Peirce grounds on this his concept of “firstness”, in which therefore, predominates the category “form/possibility”. I am interested in this view more than when he constructs it as sign, which then appears as an entity of set, facing the other two aspects: his object and his interpretant. I consider the representamen is a form that require the context to establish its representative ability, close to the Saussurean significant, whose values, in the language (language) system (that he supposes as already given at a certain moment, not being interested in the explanation of its production process, and having limited himself to indicate one state of the system: synchrony, or to note the difference between two or more states: diachrony), are the result of its use or contextualization, in the syntax of speech. This is an ambit of knowledge that Saussure eludes and Peirce anticipates in his “dicisign”, as proposition or existential context, and in his “thirdness”, as provisional conclusion in the mental object of the semiotic process that he calls “interpretant”, offering with it an analytical ground to the current cognitive approaches of pragmatics and reception. In this sense, I consider attribution as the operation that gives a value to a form as a result of its integration in a given context.

⁷ These three semiotic operations are proposed and developed in Magariños de Morentin, 1996a.
I consider that these designations and these descriptive outlines of such operations correspond to the procedures repeatedly described by those who have constructed the theory and practice of semiotics; I only want to synthesize and abstract the manifold thinking and the multiple applications of semiotics, so that they can be made available to those who approach this discipline to know its theoretical structure and the dynamics of its applicability.

1.4 The textual base of signification. Production and inference

I do not communicate on behalf of semiotics, which would consider both pretentious and absurd, but solely on a personal basis. Indeed, semiotics, as any science, does not exist on the margin and independently of the writings that build it. It is only from a political point of view, in this case that of the search for academic power, that one could assume or arrogate to be the authorized spokesperson of semiotics, and this would mean that everything such writer says is semiotics because of the fact of being him/her who says it. I bring this up now to clarify that everything I could affirm goes under my sole responsibility and may or may not be shared by other semioticians and may or may not be useful to other researchers.

From this perspective I want to comment the scope I attribute to the concept of “meaning”, because I consider the explanation (1) of its production, (2) of the interpretation of its identifying characteristics (3) of its process of transformation, as the fundamental aspects of the analytical task I assign to semiotics.

I consider that the term “meaning” embraces all and each one of the possible aspects that can appear, as interpretation of a given phenomenon, in the construction of world’s knowledge (poetic, scientific, mythical), by a given society at a given moment of its history. I understand here “meaning” as the ensemble of interpretations, materialized in given discourses, related to given phenomena and in force at a given moment of a given society, so it is admissible the pretension of describing and explaining the production of the meaning in that given society and moment.

Semiotics tries to explain the production of that/those interpretation/s, always with the prudence of delimiting appropriately the field of study or context according to which this explanatory pretension could be considered feasible. The fundamental trait that would confer rigor to the development leading to the achievement of this aim consists in grounding the explanation on the textuality of one or more given semiosis, i.e., on the materiality of the discourses in force, not only verbal, but also visual, auditory (musical), gestural, behavioral, etc. (effectively in use and, in different measure, acceptable) in a given society.

“Textuality”, and “contextuality” are considered here as referring to the existentially effective materiality of such substituent semiosis and not to the system (social, cultural, linguistic or of other semiosis that is always considered, by definition at least, as virtual, as pure possibility. The expression “system’s virtual possibility” is understood as the possibility that any system has to become manifest (when their types and relations are transformed into utterings, in which the rules of such system are applied) through the production of the corresponding textuality, in the process of the production of the communication (or production of given substituent semiosis). As a consequence of this, is possible the retrieval of that virtual system, through an inference, by reversing the previous textuality production process; this reversion permits to access the virtual system and consists in both the process of interpretation and of research, which allow to infer from textuality (that is to say, from the substituent semiosis effectively produced and that is being perceived) the virtuality (otherwise not accessible) of the system and, therefore, they allow to understand and/or to explain the significative effectiveness that results from the production of such textuality. The retrieval of the system from the texts derived from it, permits to know the significative possibilities that has a given cognitive system as shared and diversified inside a given community (which is identified by the fact of having it), and this is an important aspect of the effectiveness attributed to semiotics.

To semiotics, or rather to semioticians, correspond the task of proposing the discourses that formulate the necessary, rigorous and explicitly defined operations, which are effective to infer, from the results obtained by them when working in the discursive materialities, the set of mental operations (in which the individuality, as occasional authorship, is specified as social, as a possibility of emergence of such individuality) available at a given moment of a given society, that concurred in the production of those interpretative discourses which by hypothesis were supposed to attribute signification to the phenomenon at study (I employ here “signification” because I am referring to the quality of the ontological existence attributed to a given phenomenon; while by “meaning” I am referring to the interpretation of the textualization of the concept that certain individuals of a given community attribute to a given phenomenon, as a consequence of the interpretation of a given uttering whose referent is such phenomenon; “signification” is said of a phenomenon, “meaning” is said of a concept).

The result, if successful, will be conceptual or purely affective or emotional or cognitive, etc., but in any case, it will require to be determined from specific (and of course, multiple) material discourses, it will have to use a set of formalized mental operations, (not necessarily symbolized, but explicitly defined) and, through them, it will have to demonstrate which mental operations, from which social force (that is to say, permitted, required or
excluded by a given state of the social rules), have led to the discourses that have constructed the meaning of the concepts with which the signification of the phenomena at study is constructed.

It is necessary to make this double reference to “operations”, because operations1, are technical operations designed to intervene analytically in social discourses, so they belong to the semiotic discipline; while operations2, are the cerebral-mental operations of representation/interpretation produced by such discourses, therefore belonging to the phylogenetical domain of the semiotic faculty which, by hypothesis, can be identified and retrieved through those technical operations.

1.5 To see we must know

There are some aspects I want to comment about this initial approach to the fundamental semiotic operations (attribution, substitution and overcoming).

I consider of special interest to know whether the operations of attribution and substitution imply that the values and forms preexist to their relation. I am interested in this because it is related to the cognitive-dialectical perspective from which I make semiotic research and methodology.

Indeed, on the one hand, it is not possible to start from nothing (every creative act involves a difference from something that already exists). One starts from the being in force of certain semiotic systems, insofar as they are effectively used to construct the respective discourses (symbolic, indexical and/or iconic) which a given social group (defined a posteriori through the verification of that being in force and not through some a priori criterion of “dry positivism”8), at a given moment, constructs the signification of all social phenomena (among them will be the phenomenon at study and, therefore, the corresponding discourse/s).

So, at a given moment, all the possibilities of attributing signification to a phenomenon are bounded by the diverse and even contradictory social semiosis (virtual systems and effective discourses) being in force in the social group at study. There is a correspondence between semiotic system and signification of a phenomenon, mediated by the discourse (or substituent semiosis) that may produce (or may come from) such system and the signification that this discourse may attribute to such phenomenon (or substituted semiosis).

It must be taken into account that there exists a pre-discursive stage (while not significative yet) that is fundamental in this set of operations and that can be identified as the stage of construction of the text as a purely syntactic result of the combination allowed by the system/s usable by the members of the group at issue. Those who are reading this text, will identify it, on the one hand, as a result of the linguistic semiosis allowed by the language system used, as a set of syntactically correct paragraphs and, on the other hand, they will redirect it to a preexisting system of concepts and try to situate the effect of sense such paragraphs are producing about, in substitution of, in contradiction to, other preexisting concepts they already have (according to which they will accept, modify or reject the concepts proposed by these paragraphs, not in a processual mode, as its description requires, but with the neuronal system working in parallel).

Only through this set of operations, the text is transformed in discourse, at least in the sense I confer to these terms, understanding by “discourse” a semantized text, and by “text” a desemantized discourse (or a syntactic development not yet semantized). These recursive definitions have as their differential axis, for the text, the focus in the compliance with the rules of contextualization of the semiosis at issue (in some cases, iconic and indexical, being very difficult to determine it, at least so far), and for the discourse, the focus in the compliance with the rules of semantization in force for that semiosis in that society, that is to say, the characteristics of the meanings or the Peircean “argument” that may be constructed with such contextualizations (usually very difficult to determine, at least so far). If everything was exhausted in this production of given discourses from given systems, the consequence would be tragic: history would not exist (which is but a clue to understand, besides its falsity, the authoritarianism and even human mind’s enslavement which is implicit in the mere idea that human history or some part of it has ended).

So far, in this cognitive-dialectic part of the relation between systems and discourses mediated by texts, are involved two of the operations I have commented: (1) attribution, that constructs texts by contextualizing, i.e., putting the forms of a given system in a given physical, material or existential relation (and I insist, these forms are either significant, if we only consider the contextualization that the very system, in itself, confers to the forms of its signs, or they are representamens, if we consider the value, provisorily syntactic, that the interpreter will give to those contextualized forms) and (2) substitution, that constructs discourses through the relation of two systems: that of signs and that of semiotic objects. This relation, along with its precisions, ambiguities and shifts, is what we call semantics, which, referred to the signs, leads to the utterings (even in the foucaultian sense; Foucault, 1969: 116) or substituent semiosis and, referred to the semiotic objects, leads to the referents (especially in the cognitive sense assigned to them by Rastier, 1991: 82) or substituted semiosis.

8 Expression used by Hanson, 1977: 26.
Another historical stage will begin when other semiosis appear in the interstices of those contextualized signs ("sound and fury..." as in Hamlet) and in the ambiguities of those semiotic objects ("entropic percept"; Denbigh, 1989) and, above all, in the intuition that generates a possible conceptual space ("blurred mind") concerning the existence of other possible semiotic objects that will be only perceived after having been constructed, repeatedly (with the consequent and progressive aging of the semiosis that includes them) the semiotic objects allowed by the systems in force (not only logic or symbolic, but also emotional, aesthetic, metaphysical, etc.; if such etc. may still fit), and whose construction these systems will gradually cease to allow (see 1.8.3).

In this dissatisfaction, the community begin to feel the need of another semiosis, so that new discourses allow the perception of other phenomena different from the previous ones. Just as the texts and discourses are no longer the same as before, but there may have appeared another semiosis which, for the lacks identified in the previous one will be accepted by the community, that community which will have been its unique and effective creator. When this occurs, and only if it occurs, it can be said that there will be history, that is to say, the intervention of the (3rd.) operation, that of overcoming, is identifiable as opening to new (effectively historical) universes, constituted by other perceptions, which are possible through other effective semiosis. Ultimately, in all cases we see what the available semiosis allow us to see and so as they make us to see it (similarly, Varela, 1996: 155, says that “to see is to believe, as practice of belief”).

1.6 The constructed signification

As to the question of considering “signification as the set of interpretations materialized in given discourses, related to given phenomena and in force at a given moment of a given society”, I do not know if I have managed to say what I wanted to.

I am avoiding the conceptual or normative signification, that is predefined from certain symbolic systems and that leads to the pretension of being able to judge whether the signification assigned to a phenomenon is correct or not. This approach leads to a dogmatic-hermeneutic analysis of texts and of the interpretations being attributed to it, because truth and falsity are established a priori. According to this, there would be some truth in the reality or in some system of beliefs that would have to comply with; so, positivism and metaphysical dogmatism are advancing in full agreement.

To claim that every text comes from a system is not the same claim as the previous one, because it belongs to the description of the cognitive process of production of behaviour which implies the realization of a possibility, but does not determine the emergence of a given content instead that of any other. I am looking for an explanation to account for the process of construction of the signification provided by the members of a community when they interpret a text and, in doing so, confer ontological existence to a phenomenon. Maybe all of them produce the same interpretation, that is to say, they assign the same content to the interpretations they are producing, but may also be (and by hypothesis, I affirm this as a rule of the symbolic behaviour of any community) that it is not possible to redirect to the unity the set of interpretations that are being produced in that community about a given phenomenon at study.

I think the fundamental task of semiotics is to provide the operations from which can be inferred the systems from which are taken the representations-interpretations (perceptual and conceptual, respectively) being produced at a given moment of a given society. And this includes their coincidences and divergences, the form of their plurality, the models or configurations of possible significations, produced and provisional (they never have a definitive point of starting or ending), which I call “possible semiotic worlds”. These can be defined as the diverse set of available options, at a given moment of a given society, so that its members construct the significations of the phenomena of their environment, and have the possibility of recognizing the creative options that break the available ones, enriching the existent semiosis (verbal languages, visual, kinesic, etc.), overcoming them.

So, the semiotic discipline does not provide the operations that allow to judge the degree of proximity or separation of the interpretations effectively produced in a given society with respect to any dogma or circumstantial hegemonic force that establishes the truth or falsity of such interpretations. Is rather a set of operations that permit to explain what are the interpretations, how are they built and which transformations they produce in the habitual way of signifying. The recording of such interpretations require a representative and adequate survey of the substituent semiosis circulating at a given moment in a given society.

1.7 Problems and divergencies

I would like to gather, for information only, some of the subjects, problems and divergent conceptions, that I consider especially important for semiotics, without pretending to exhaust or solve them.
Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that each semiosis produces a specific and untransferable effect of signification. I understand, provisorily, by “effect of signification”, the confluence of the meaning that comes from the concepts constructed in the texts of one or more given semiosis, with the signification that this allows, consisting in the attribution of ontological existence to given phenomena of the environment. Likewise, the expression “effect of signification” stresses the approach of considering signification as a result and not as a presupposition.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that no semiosis is self-sufficient to carry out such task.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that there exists a mental device (or perhaps something like the “conceptual structure” of Jackendoff, 1989: 121ff) of coordination and complement between the different significations that a phenomenon acquires as a result of the multiple formulations, visual, verbal, acoustic, tactile, kinesic, gustatory, olfactory, etc., being enunciated about such phenomenon, whose interpreters are processed in the brain of every human being capable of identifying that phenomenon; in this sense, all semiotics would be syncretic.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that semiotics studies, identifies, applies and (to a given extent) previews the effectiveness of the operations (mental, calculatory) with which each of the different semiosis attribute to the phenomena of the environment the significations that are specific to them.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the condition that semiotics must not use models with which (1) all possibility of new meaning is closed and (2) only the already known can be recognized. This is why in semiotics the option is to use operations as rigorous rules of procedure which do not imply the content of the result.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumptions that the form of the expression constructs the form of the content but not vice versa (that is why there are no substantial or universal contents) and that all of this only occurs inside the socio-historical system of knowledge from which an interpreter perceives it, in which he/she includes it, where he/she transforms it and from where he/she transfers it.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, working on the assumption that every signification is a construct and before the existence of man, no signification existed on earth.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that all semiosis have history; this imply that every substituent semiosis carries within it the seeds of its own negation (Magaríños de Morentin, 2007). This “own negation” consists in the fact that the new substituent semiosis allows to construct, at a given moment of a given society, something that was not imaginable from the previous substituent semiosis (unless there has not been a construction but a mere reconstruction). In my opinion, neither the “meaning” as textualized interpretation of the concepts that work to attribute signification to the ontic and entropically undifferenciated phenomena of the environment by constituting them in social phenomena identifiable in the interpreter’s world, nor “poetics” as semiotic possibilities of production of the meaning of social phenomena, are patrimony of linguistics, but are shared by all the available socio-historical semiosis. In this sense, each semiosis constructs its own meanings and has its own poetics.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that what identifies constitutively a social group is the usage it makes of different social semiosis in order to attribute significations to the phenomena of their environment; it is precisely this usage, which makes phenomena to be significative.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that each social group is free to use their social semiosis as they like, without having to respect metaphysical or scientifical truths, or technical efficacies of any kind.

Semiotics proposes answers to the problem of the explanation of meaning production, from the assumption that the only limitation of freedom in the use of social semiotics is the need for communication. Thus, the external...
limit of individual creativity is the interpretability by another individual at some moment; and the internal limit, the possibility of reaching at some moment, the consistency of its own interpretability. Beyond these limits, inward or outward, alienation begins: the individual must stop being himself for himself, and must begin to be himself for others; outwards, he faces the alienation that society demands to integrate him; inwards he faces the alienation that would lead him to be a self-alienated (reappears “the dream of a demented in a corner of the asylum”).

The problem of identifying the results of the usage to which the different semiosis are subjected in a given social group and at a given historical moment, with the aim of constructing the signification of the environment, is what I conceive under the designation of “possible semiotic worlds”.

It does not exist a metasemiotic reflection that gives account in a definitive and consistent way of the validity and effectiveness of all possible semiotics, because it would need a higher level metasemiotics that give account of its own validity and effectiveness (homologous reflection to that posed by Gödel about logic; see Hofstadter, 1999). This is another reason why I think that a consideration of semiotics as science is non-viable: its only possibility as such would consist in accounting for its own scientificity.

Maybe other criteria can be adopted from other semiotic perspectives I do not intend to enter into polemics, but, respecting the current criteria, I try to show the possible advantages that the adoption of the criteria developed here may offer as operational guidelines for semiotic research.

The criteria that I have summarized briefly here (a summary that is worth only as a starting point; and still requires subsequent operational developments), had successfull results (as to getting plausible explanations about the production, circulation and transformation of the socially valid significations of given phenomena) and they allowed me to keep a satisfactory theoretical coherence, since I was able to do so without contradicting myself, at least in the development of each research and/or academic text, but with the freedom to modify them when passing from one research or text to another. I keep my freedom to continue changing, from my support (never dogmatic) for the foucaultian concept of subject (Foucault, 1969: 68), that makes me feel comfortable so far.

From this perspective, I will address the analysis of symbolic, iconic and indexical semiotics and of all their variants and combinatories, trying to establish how they signify, which meaning they textualize and which significations they attribute to the environment, at a given moment of a given society.

1.8 Appendices

1.8.1 Again, what is semiotics?

I started from a static concept of semiotics which I later have decided to dynamize. I consider it valid and effective. However, following Foucault (1969: 41ff), I do not pretend a definition to construct the unique content of a discipline, but to identify a point of dispersion, from which different perspectives are displayed so that different interpretations are constructed.

Precisely, semiotics intends as one of its objectives or aims to explain from what perspective has been constructed a given interpretation, but is not reduced to that.

The different attitude of semiotics, at least in what interests me, is that it excludes the supposition of an initial situation in which a subject is confronted with an object. It excludes it because semiotics is interested in establishing the characteristics of the social instrument through which a subject is constructed when involved in the task of constructing an object; only at the end of this process it may be said that such subject is in presence of that object. And now disperse: the social instruments making that relation possible are multiple; the subjects constructed when managing each of such social instruments are multiple; the meanings which are constructed depending on how that subjects manage such instruments, are multiple; and the significations attributed to the phenomena of the environment (which, as final instance of this stage, is transformed into world), depending on how those subjects manage each of such instruments, are multiple too. In turn, this is the task that would make the objects perceivable and that will allow to perceive as many objects as significations be constructed, from the available meanings. I am thus affirming that perception is subsequent to the knowledge we have of its possibility, and is conditioned by it.

From this approach no characteristic of a given object, be it general or particular, is identifiable unless as the result of the mode in which a given social instrument is used. The identifying characteristics of the specific subject who has utilized that social instrument in that way, result from this utilization and specific application.

In my view, the semiotic discipline as an explanation of the meaning requires, when stating something about an object, (1) to make explicit the characteristics of the social instrument used to state what is stated (it includes, of course: deny what is denied of such object); (2) to make explicit both the differential effectiveness of the social instrument adopted (confronted to the effectiveness of other social instruments, possible, in force, and available at a given moment of a given society), and the specific characteristics of the use made by a given subject against
other possible uses, in force, and available by other subjects, or by the same subject at another given moment, to produce the affirmation at study; i.e., showing the dialectical contrast between the differential effectiveness of the diverse available semiosis (at least, between two of them).

What at least from my perspective is excluded from semiotics, is the supposition that the object has characteristics of its own of some kind, pretending to do without the fact that the subject is constituted as such by attributing those characteristics to him/her, according to his/her usage of a given social instrument. Such apparent “characteristics of its own” are historical and come by accumulation of the significations attributed to it through time.

It is also excluded the supposition that the subject has characteristics of its own (except its anthropological identity confronted to that of other organisms) of some kind aside from the characteristics coming from the social instruments he/she has learned to use and the way he/she uses them to attribute the characteristics which are identifiable when they are involved in the production of the signification of a given object (the quality of subject is social and historical; the quality of organism is anthropological and evolutive, without being dissociated from each other).

It is also excluded the supposition that the social instrument has characteristics of its own of some kind aside from those conferred by the subject who uses it, according to the way he/she uses it at a given moment in order to produce given significations about given objects.

It is also excluded the supposition that this task in which someone states something about some object, has characteristics of its own of some kind permitting him/her to dispense with other/s, at least one, who interprets that affirmation in a given way; and here comes a reference to Peirce, who included the interpretant in the constitutive structure of the sign. What somebody says will not be complete until the constructed meaning is integrated into another person’s mind, as a new habit.

It follows that the characteristics, general or particular, of a given object, are external to the object and depend on the social instrument used to attribute them to it; that the characteristics of the social instrument are external to that instrument and depend on the usage that a given subject at a given moment of a given society makes of it; that the characteristics of the subject are external to the subject and they depend on the learning in force in a given society to use the available social instruments and on the interpretation attributed to the using mode and to the instrument used by them.

I speak of “object” as a knowable entity; of “social instrument” as a sign (in its unity) and as semiosis (as a whole); and of “subject” as the knowing entity (it does not exclude the whole of the biological aside of the human being, insofar as it could be established some principle of social organization among the individuals of that anthropocentric marginality).

Going back to the beginning: what is semiotics?

Provisorily, with the dynamic bias that I have been sketching here and without pretending yet to remove the effectiveness of the relatively static concept proposed initially, it may be completed stating that:

Semiotics as a discipline

is the study

of how variations are produced

in the significations of everything that surrounds the man in the world;

of how variations are produced

in the instruments with which such significations are constructed;

and of how variations are produced

in the subjects who use these instruments to produce and/or to interpret them,

since man gained access to the use of the signs

and semiotics consists not only on that.

1.8.2 Concurrence and non contradiction

As I said in previous section, this dynamic concept of semiotic discipline does not intend yet to remove the effectiveness of the relatively static concept enunciated at the beginning of this work. And by “yet” I am not stating that in some moment this will not happen, but instead, I am assuming the hypothesis of variability with which I have constructed the content of my concept of semiotics. Indeed, it presupposes that at some moment, both (the static and the dynamic) are going to lose their effectiveness, establishing in this way the effectiveness of semiotic discipline, and allowing it to accomplish its task, namely, to start a new way of thinking, of discourse and of world, that would have been unthinkable before having exhausted the way proposed by semiotics itself. But as it may be misunderstood, I want to add one more reflection.
The two concepts of semiotic discipline, the one enunciated at the beginning of this work and the one I have just stated in the previous section, do not contradict but each other reflect a different look.

With the last one I believe to have referred to (at least that was my intention; ¡oh, the implicit due to the habit of the producer interpretant!) the characteristics of the variability of the operational ways (with some resemblance to a fractal process: Mac Cormack & Stamenov, 1996) that semiotics attribute to the subject, to the instrument, to the object, and to the interrelation of these three elements, as socializing practice.

With the first, I intended to describe the methodological characteristics that would be specifically applicable, in each specific situation from among the permanent variability of each one of those elements, to the task of explaining the signification of a given phenomenon. Because the research requires explain (and explaining requires a method) the specific effectiveness with which, at a given moment, a given subject applies a given social semiosis, to constitute, by the proposal of a given meaning, the possibility of identifying a given social phenomenon.

But we know that this explanation has to account at the same time (although it is displayed in an enunciative sequence) for the difference that such set of operations described in this way, establishes with respect to the effectiveness with which, at the same moment or at another given moment, the same or another given subject, applies the same or another given social instrument, in order to constitute in the same way or in another given way, the same meaning or another given meaning, of that which will be the same signification or another given signification of a given social phenomenon. That is to say, I am affirming that the semiotic research should give rigorous and rational account (i.e. explicit and, for the time being, according to the requirements of some of the academic trends in force at the moment of its application) of when, who, with what and in which way, with respect to which what is being studied goes from being a possible variation to be a possible contradiction and that, with the given requirements, is the necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of history. I posed this aspect in Los fundamentos lógicos de la semiótica y su práctica, under the name of “operación de superación” (“overcoming operation”), but in 1996 I have restricted it to the variability of the social instrument used to confer to a social phenomenon a given signification, and now I am broadening the concept proposed by the term “overcoming” to the subject that uses it, to the resulting social phenomenon and to the interrelation of the three elements which, being the same (as eventual permanence of its denomination), are not already the same (as effective transformation of its meaning).

Definitely, the current concept explores the semiotic characteristics necessary for explaining the production of the signification of social phenomena.

The previous concept explored the metasemiotic characteristics necessary for explaining the process of production of the signification of social phenomena. Neither of them contradicts the other and both concur to produce knowledge of how man constructs the meaning of the (various) semiosis he uses and how, through them, man attributes to the environment phenomena the signification of world.

1.8.3 Thought, semiosis, world

[1] Fig. 1-11

Fig. 1

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{THOUGHT} & \quad \text{SEMIOSIS} & \quad \text{WORLD} \\
\text{in the epistemic context} & \quad \text{in the discursive context} & \quad \text{in the ontological context} \\
\text{at a given historical moment}
\end{align*}
\]
"the sound and the fury"

may it not be distinguished, in the future, new semiotic forms, that now are indistinguishable and which will permit to represent what now is not representable?

"blurred mind"

may it not be distinguished, in the future, by means of the action of new semiotic forms, other differentiated ideas that could project its differentiating effectiveness?
WORLD
in a previous state

“entropic percept”

may it not be distinguished, in the future, by means of the action of new semiotic forms, antientropic rearrangements that permit to identify (give ontological existence) to new entities?

Producer subject
in a given sociohistorical context

it relies on the coexistence, at a given contemporaneity, of other semiosis and on the relations that link them

Producer

Production

New semiotic forms

it organizes possible ideas

“organizes” can be said on the thought produced from the common sense (ordinary or everyday) and about the world organized by that thought

it organizes possible entities

it relies on the history of the semiosis (its variants) and on the history of their relations
Production

New semiotic forms

it systematizes possible ideas

“systematizes” can be said on the theoretical-speculative thought (rigorous or scientific) and about the world organized by such thought

it identifies possible entities

“identifies” can be said on the ontological quality attributed, from the thought, to the entities of a possible semiotic world

Production

New semiotic forms

it identifies possible ideas

“identifies” can be said on the ontological quality attributed, from the thought, to the entities of a possible semiotic world

it identifies possible entities

Production

New semiotic forms

they project possible ideas

“project” can be said on the effective action that the variations in the system of concepts exert on the entities of a semiotic possible world

they project possible entities
1.8.4 What for, semiotics?

Introduction

Semiotics is not a science because it has not a specific meaning: there are no semiotic meaning, that is, all meaning is semiotic.

Semiotics is a methodology, because it can explain the genesis (production) and the effectiveness (interpretation) of any kind of meaning that any social discourse attributes to any phenomenon (be it originally natural or social).

The genesis and effectiveness of a given signification are always problematic, so they need to be explained.

All explanation imply the previous (implicit or explicit) problematization of the signification of a phenomenon; the content of the explanation and the process of the problematization are subjective and ideological actions.

To give rigor to the content of the explanation and reasonableness to the process of problematization, we need a methodology to work on the pertinent information by means of consistent, appropriate and decidable operations.

Consistent operations are those which do not fall in contradiction when they intervene in the given context of one and the same information; but they identify the possible contradiction emerging from the contrast between diverse contexts of one and the same information.

Appropriate operations are those that give account of the genesis and effectiveness of the meaning of a specific phenomenon at study, according to the available information.

Decidable operations are those that can establish, in a consistent and appropriate way, through the retrieval and analysis of any new information, if the information intervenes and how, to construct the meaning of a given phenomenon, at a given moment of a given community.

The fundamental operations of semiotics: attribution, substitution and overcoming, are consistent, appropriate and decidable; that is why semiotics is the basic methodology for any and all of the social sciences (and not only of them).

1

By the operation of attribution, a given textual perception acquires the value conferred to it by other concurring perceptions which allow it to be perceived (syntactic effectiveness of the context).

The operation of attribution is consistent, appropriate and decidable.

Consistency of the attribution: in the same or similar context, the value acquired by a given perceptual entity interacting with the other entities of one and the same context, will be always the same or similar.

Appropriateness of the attribution: the value acquired by a given perceptual entity in a given context, will be a necessary element for the identification of the possible meaning attributable to a given phenomenon.
Decidability of the attribution: in view of the value acquired by other given perceptual entity in the same or another context, it will be possible to establish whether it contributes or not to the identification of the possible meaning attributable to a given phenomenon.

2

By the operation of substitution, a given community, at a given historical moment, by means of a given textual perception (which has already a value attributed to it) construct the signification of a given phenomenon (semantic effectiveness of the intertextuality).

The operation of substitution is consistent, appropriate and decidable.

Consistency of the substitution: in the same or similar intertextuality, the resulting signification for a given phenomenon, will always be the same or similar.

Appropriateness of the substitution: the signification acquired in a given intertextuality, will be a necessary element to identify ontologically a given phenomenon (that is, in order to a given community acquire knowledge of its existence).

Decidability of the substitution: in view of the signification acquired by other textual perception in the same or in another intertextuality, it will be possible to establish whether it contributes or not to the ontological identification attributed to a given phenomenon (that is to say, if we are before the existence of the same or another phenomenon for knowledge).

3

By means of the operation of overcoming, there is always a given moment, when textuality₁ loses its ability to substitute significantly a given phenomenon, and so is generated a new textuality₂ with different values and different ability to substitute, that constructs a new meaning for the same given phenomenon, which is already not the same (pragmatic effectiveness of the transtextuality).

The operation of overcoming is consistent, appropriate and decidable.

Consistency of the overcoming: given a determined transtextuality, the meaning constructed by textuality₂ can not be redirected to that constructed by textuality₁, but each meaning is coherent in their own textuality. This must be so in order to be able to affirm the history of the signification.

Appropriateness of the overcoming: the new signification constructed by textuality₂ attributes a new ontological identity to a given phenomenon, at a given moment of the history of a given community.

Decidability of the overcoming: in view of the signification with which is intended to be identified a given phenomenon, it will be possible to establish whether textuality₂ is being applied and is being constructed as new or if is being applied textuality₁ and is being reconstructed as historical (differential effectiveness of the dialogical components exchanged between Sancho Panza and Don Quijote).

Ending

The semioticians, and not semiotics, are responsible for the misuse of the methodological operations of attribution, substitution and overcoming.

The problem is that, according to the postulates of semiotics, there is no semiotic discipline other than that which is constructed by the semioticians.
2 Glossary

This brief glossary is intended as a guide to the meaning attributed to some of the terms used here frequently.

There are two important observations. In the first place, these terms are very complex, so their full meaning will be acquired in the methodological reflection on the practical application of the discipline. This work is just an initial approach, so as to understand, elementarily, what we are talking about when we use them; but it is also a conceptual base that can not be modified in the development of this text, except explicitly or making mutually consistent the modified senses in each of the occurrences of the term.

The second observation refers to the fact that the meaning attributed to these terms admits a margin of variation depending on the author or scholar of semiotics who uses them. Knowledge of the theoretical sources of semiotics implies precisely the ability to differentiate the diverse usages in each of the various treatise writers. I do not intend here to develop such contrast and differentiation but to propose an option among the possible differential features. Therefore, it is advisable to consider what I say here as a terminological agreement, to better understand what we are speaking about. I will subject to constant criticism the content I attribute to the terms I use; rigor in social sciences consists either in a coherent use of its terms, without contradictions, at least inside the limits of a given text, and in the explanation and justification of the reason for change when they are being modified. As Foucault said (2007: 19): “Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write”.

2.1. Terms defined in this glossary

2.1.1 Code

We can understand by “code”, the registry, ordered by some explicit criterion decided by its author or compiler, of a given set of signs, described according to their possibilities of syntactic interrelation and to their possible semantic contents relating to a given social phenomenon.

2.1.2 Context – Cotext – Paratext – Peritext – Epitext

We understand by “context” in this text, following the most classical line of linguistic tradition, the ensemble of all signs of semiotic characteristics similar to those being studied, that are syntactically related to a given sign. This term is conceptually related with “syntagm” in the Saussurean terminology, since it designates the existential environment in which the virtual possibilities of the sign in that system (“paradigm”) are realized.

The term “cotext” is also often used, introducing a notable confusion. In verbal discourse, is used with the sense I have attributed to “context”; thus, for some authors, who redefined it in a way different of my previous formulation, “context” becomes a term similar to “situation”. I will not use the term “context” in that sense in this book, but in the more conventional sense, which is merely expanded to designate relations, not only between the linguistic signs that integrate a given text, but equally between other non-linguistic signs, insofar they are signs present at the same time in the same semiotic environment (as a set of entities linked by interacting syntactic relations).

“Context” in this book will be understood also as a given set of signs, of semiotic characteristics different than those of the sign at study, provided that they are related with it in one and the same existential communication situation. In this second sense, of entities pragmatically related in the same communicative situation, context will designate the relation of a sign with other signs of characteristics different from their own or with signs of same or different characteristics, situated in a different existential situation, but interrelated communicatively and modifying (by increase, restriction or deviation) other sign/s of a given totality. More empirically, the illustrations accompanying a literary text are context of that text (syntactic interrelations of signs of different semiotic characteristics); the illustrations of a given author accompanying a given text are context of other illustrations of other author accompanying another edition of the same text (contrasting interrelations of set of signs of the same semiotic characteristics, situated in different existential environments). The illustrations accompanying the edition of a given literary text, considered together but one by one, as a set of individual illustrations, constitute all of them the context of each of them, intervening all and each of them, in turn, as context of the written text.

A terminological difference is important insofar it allows to differentiate situations or entities that need to be distinguished. We have here two possibilities (regardless the designation attributed to them): (1) the sign is related with other signs of the same semiotic characteristics (1a) inside the same or similar existential situation or (1b) related with other existential situation; or (2) the sign is related with other signs of different characteristics (2a) inside the same existential situation or (2b) related with signs that are in a different existential situation.
These are the possible variants regarding the form of the relations between multiple signs (two or more); I will use “semiotic context” to designate, exclusively, the possibility (1a) and “communicative context” to designate the remaining possibilities (1b, 2a, 2b). I always try to make coherent the terminology I use, but I admit the possibility of other or of being modified its reference if needed. The problem is important because in order to explain why is attributed a given meaning to a given sign we must identify the relations it establishes with its environment, which depend on the characteristics and existential situation of the signs: they may be of the same characteristics or different and may be located in the same existential situation or different. It is not the same to relate forms and colours within an image (semiotic context), than to relate given forms, with the public of the exhibition where they are exhibited or with the walls of the room where they are exhibited or with the illumination that falls over them or with any other images of the same exposition or, even, with the title of the image itself, etc. (communicative context).

But there could be still more: we can speak also of the “paratext”, that Eco takes from Genette, to refer to “how many things (that initially would not be text) are around a literary work: flaps of the book, font size, typefaces, place in a collection, cover, title page, title, subtitles, press releases, dedication, headings, preface, notes, interviews, correspondence and authorial reflections a posteriori, personal diaries, posthumous [...]. [Besides, Genette] distinguishes between “peritext”, that is, all the discourses that explicitly are part of a book as a physical object (like the title and the notes) and “epitext”, that is, the discourses circulating around the text: those of the editor, those of the interviews and confidences of the author”, etc.

2.1.3 Discourse

To methodological effects, we will understand by “discourse” in this book, a text with semantics. When from a given perceptual proposal (intuitively or analytically, but the professional work needs essentially the analytical way) are interpreted the relations through which given significations are attributed to given social phenomena (iconic, indexical or symbolic), we are before a discourse, i.e., when such phenomena are identified as the referents constructed by the text, such text, as producer of that effect, no longer is a text but discourse.

2.1.4 Language (langue)

Consists in a given system (therefore virtual) of linguistic signs (the types of that system) from which, and through its corresponding replicas (the spoken or written words) are constructed the linguistic expressions with which a given community of speakers shape their environment. Each linguistic sign is unique; the number of its replicas is indefinite; there are so many as the times that the same and unique linguistic sign is realized in the speech. Language (langue) is the set of the syntactic and semantic properties of linguistic signs. All semiosis has their own system of signs though they lack a designation as overwhelming as “the language” (“la langue”) in relation to the linguistic signs. The aim of semiotic analysis is to know the relations that constitute the signs corresponding to each semiosis in their possibilities of interaction. To know the system is to know the possibilities of expression of the corresponding semiotic faculty; but knowledge of the system is the result of semiotics as a discipline. To use language (langue), as for using any semiotic system, we need not to know the rules that characterize such usage; the illiterate makes effective use of language (langue) when speaking. This knowledge is reached by inference from observable relations effectively used in the texts produced (and interpreted) from the corresponding semiotic systems.

2.1.5 Language/Semiotic faculty

Language is the name of the cognitive faculty that man has for the production of the linguistic signs. I consider that this faculty of language is included in the semiotic faculty, which consists in the cognitive faculty that we have for the production of all kinds of signs: iconic, indexical, symbolic, with which we give ontological existence to the world that identifies our humaneness. The following graph (Fig. 2) represents the relation between thought, semiosis and world, that is materialized in the semiotic faculty.
2.1.6 Linguistics, Semiology and Semiotics

Linguistics is the discipline that studies the system of signs of language (langue; verbal) and the characteristics and effectiveness of its use.

Semiology and semiotics as disciplines (I come differentiating them repeatedly from their characterization as faculty), study the system of the remaining signs (following one of the trends which we will see later) or the system of the totality of signs (following another one that we will see too) that are in force in a given society, and the rules (or the pragmatics) of their use.

The difference between semiology and semiotics lies in a certain way in their different contemporary origin. Having begun in the thought of the greek stoics, their retrieval is due in large part to the work of two fundamental authors: Saussure in France and Peirce in the United States. In Spanish reappears as semiology given its latin origin in the French of Saussure (“sémiologie”) while in Peirce’s usage is actualized as semiotics, due to its anglosaxon origin. The mainly theoretical competence of these authors, linguistics in Saussure and philosophy and logic in Peirce, leads often to emphasize the differences of the studies of both sides: they are thought of as related with literature and with a treatment in a way soft in the case of semiology, if compared with the treatment of other forms of communication (without excluding the word or other symbols), as the images, and/or the objects, and/or behaviors, and/or memories, which use to be related with an approach in a way hard and of more logical or scientific rigor in the case of semiotics. Anyway, the reason of the difference is pushed to its historical origin and it is being used more and more the term “semiotics”, maybe as one more effect of the invasion of English that accompanies technological innovation. I have started using “semiology” and today I am using exclusively “semiotics”; in my case, the change was originated in a search of rigorous connotation for my work in this discipline.

Another aspect to consider is the one related to the difference between linguistics on the one hand and semiology/semiotics on the other. The problem consists in the area covered by one against the area covered by the other. Barthes originated a position that makes of linguistics the all-encompassing discipline, in which would be included semiotics (1964a y 1964b). To Barthes, everything ends up being explained in words, thus, ultimately, it would be the theoretical system of linguistics, who would explain the production of the meaning accomplished by the action of various signs, whatever their nature: images, symbols, objects, behaviors. Criticism of this attitude consists in understanding that through the word is possible to explain how are acting the other signs outside the verbal ones, but that through the word is not possible to produce the same signification that produces each of them; they operate, therefore, according to specific and differential rules that require their
own metalanguage to explain their effectiveness. This assessment of what is specific and differential led Hjelmslev (1971a/1943: 135) to consider semiotics as the container of all other semiosis, among them the word, the image, the exhibition of objects and behaviors, etc. I adopt this approach in the methodological developments of this book.

Therefore, when speaking about a general semiotics I will refer to the set of rules of attribution, substitution and overcoming (terms whose basic concept is anticipated in 1.8.4 and, aside from their treatment in Magariños 1996a y 1996b, they will continue to be developed from diverse approaches) equally applicable in all cases to all of the signs of any semiosis being in force at a given moment of a given society.

When we talk about particular semiotics, we are referring to the set of rules of attribution, substitution and overcoming specific to the signs of a given semiosis, iconic, indexical or symbolic (terms with which we will gradually become familiar) being in force at a given moment of a given society.

2.1.7 Semiosis

Is a given system (therefore virtual) of a given quality of signs (may be of any of the three kinds usually systematized: icons, indexes or symbols or others emerging from their combination), from which are being constructed the semiotic expressions (therefore existential) with which the members of a given community shape (visually, behaviorally or conceptually) their environment.

2.1.8 Semiotic Object

Is what is known about the object or phenomenon. Therefore it designates what can be seen and known from the substituent semiosis that historically have been constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing the environment or given elements of it, in a given society. Against this, the expression “substituted semiosis” designates the novelty (or the attempt to innovate) that a given substituent semiosis aims to produce (therefore, with the quality of sign) as a new sense of the environment or of given elements of it. That is, “semiotic object” designates what we know about a given entity at a given moment because it comes constructed from a sign. This, for example, leads us to manipulate a chair without even thinking that what we are doing is a consequence of considering it as semiotic object; but after having contemplated “the chair” of Van Gogh, we have a new perspective to see and to relate ourselves with chairs; the chair seen as a reference to “the chair” of Van Gogh is a substituted semiosis or equivalently, a semiotic object while the comparative effectiveness of such vision lasts; “the chair” of Van Gogh, as an uttering that allows us to see the chairs in a different way is a substituted semiosis or, equivalently, a sign, and not only because it is painted, but because we use its proposed form in the painting as an image of similarity and contrast. Hence the effectiveness of the sign consists in attributing signification to the entities of the environment, that is, in giving ontological existence to them.

2.1.9 Semiotics

This term designates, on the one hand, a cognitive faculty and on the other, a discipline of knowledge. As cognitive faculty, is the name of the neurological-mental operational ability that man has for the production of any kind of signs (among them, from the perspective I have chosen, the linguistic ones, but not in an exclusive or preferential way). As discipline of knowledge, it designates the study of all kind of signs: basically icons, indexes and symbols tending to produce the explanation of why, how and with which effectiveness are produced, circulating and transformed the significations in force in a given social field.

2.1.10 Sign

Is the central term in the problems of semiotics. Our expositions, comments and explanations will be focused on it, and its appropriate and well grounded comprehension will constitute the base of the learning that can be expected to obtain from this book. We will see timely its explicit definitions, either that of Saussure and those posed by Peirce, Morris and others.

(I) Syntactically, we can say that the sign is an enclave in a context, from which is developed a set of given and normed relations (in an absolute way or with margins of variability), foreseen from a given system of possibilities, with the remaining enclaves of its own context. (I use the term “enclave” looking for a generic designation which permit to refer only to a given physical entity situated or being part of a given physical field; from the syntactic point of view that entity is interesting only as point of origin and of destination of the relations that can be identified between it and the remaining components of that specific field).

(II) Semantically, we could say that the sign is the smaller part of a perceptual proposal that attributes signification to something different from itself in the world. (This “smaller part of a perceptual proposal” refers to the part that has already the function of producing something that would not be in the world if it were not perceived by us in a given way from the proposal containing it; that is what points out the expression that I use frequently: “to confer ontological existence”).

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(III) Referentially, we would say that the sign is the most elementary concept that can be identified in another perceptual proposal. (This “perceptual proposal” is not already the same that the one of the previous paragraph which, from another approach, is the same that would correspond to the place of the syntactic relations, but instead it refers to what we perceive when we perceive what is different from the other two, but produced jointly by them). Namely, this is what we can find in the world after the syntactic and semantic aspects of the sign have given ontological existence to something.

That is, what is mentioned in (I) and (II) is the same viewed in two different ways, while what is mentioned in (III) is something else because it is the effective result of the combined action of (I) and (II).

These three aspects require, furthermore, of an interpreter who accept, transform or reject the referential proposal, syntactical and semantical, in which consists a given sign. If we consider the effectiveness of the sign, as is established at a given moment of a given society, regardless of the interpreter (as designation of the universe of users) who has been shaping such effectiveness, we are before a typically Saussurean argument. If we consider the effectiveness of the sign, as is established at a given moment of a given society, according to the semiotic work of the interpretant (that is not already its user or interpreter, but one of the components inherent to the sign itself) that has been shaping such effectiveness, we are before a typically Peircean argument.

2.1.11 Speech-Writing

Consists in the specific activity of production and exchange of textual linguistic expressions (therefore existential) that circulate in auditive or visual form within a given linguistic community. Their study (which Saussure thought not possible to encompass) led to pragmatics. Applying a Peircean reflection, we can say that both speech and writing are not constituted by linguistic signs but by words, not being the words linguistic signs, but replicas of linguistic signs. In Peirce’s terminology, words are not types, but instances or replicas: “tokens” of such signs (Peirce, CP 4.537 to 4.538); every time a word appears in a text we are before a specimen of a given linguistic sign, that is one, unique in the corresponding system, so the characterization of “type” corresponds to it. The relation between speech and writing is complex and it is approached from different points of view (for example, Tuchsznaider, 2006).

2.1.12 Substituent Semiosis

By “substituent semiosis”, we understand in this work, the set of perceptual configurations (phrases, images, objects and exhibited behaviors) with which (from the intention of its producer but ultimately not depending of it) their users attribute a sense to their environment (as producers, interpreters or in both functions). The effectiveness of this attribution of sense depends primarily on the physical relations (linguistic syntax, graphic configuration or disposition of objects or behaviors) which link the signs that constitute them. The qualification of “substituent” must not be taken as kind of specular relationship with the entities of the environment to which they are giving sense, but as bearer of the idea of productivity inherent to the interpretant effectiveness of the perceptual aspect of the signs.

2.1.13 Substituted Semiosis

By “substituted semiosis” we understand in this work, the sense acquired by the environment of those who use given substituent semiosis, and according to their specific use. That is, each manifestation of a substituent semiosis can produce some of the following cognitive effects when giving ontological existence to a substituted semiosis: duplication, expansion or rupture. If a substituent semiosis only produces an effect of duplication, the sense of the environment is not being modified, but instead it is ratified in its previous state. If a substituent semiosis produces an effect of expansion, the sense of the environment acquires a content that have not been constructed previously, but that responds to the possibilities of the preexisting semiosis. If a substituent semiosis produces an effect of rupture, the sense of the environment acquires contents that were unthinkable from the possibilities of the preexisting semiosis, so there are two possibilities: the interpreter either rejects such proposal of sense or the being in force of the preexisting semiosis and begins to elaborate a new semiosis, leading to configure differently the identity of the elements of that environment (see Della Volpe, 1966/1963: 99ff). From all this emerges the synonymy between “substituted semiosis” and “semiotic object”; the difference between them depends on which of them are considered: if we focus on substituted semiosis, the attention is placed mainly on the signs that gave them existence, while if we focus on the semiotic object, the attention is placed mainly on the signification that allows to include it in the world of a given community.

2.1.14 System

Is an articulation of entities (signs), whose value is constituted by the possible set of its relational functions with respect to all other entities of the same universe and by the set of its possibilities substitutive or referential, with respect to the entities identifiable in some other different universe, all of this in a virtual level. The system has no effective existence, but contains all possibilities, realized or unrealized but realizable, in order to materialize the signs in the corresponding texts and discourses. Knowing the system we can know if a given perceptual effective
configuration (a phrase, an image, a behavior, etc.) is possible from that system. Conversely, if I know a set of
effective performances (phrases, images, behaviors, etc.) relating to a given social phenomenon at study (as for
instance, the propaganda campaign of a given political candidate), I can reconstruct the system (communicative,
ideological, programmatic, etc.) from which its production started. That is, from the text, I can retrieve the
system (inferential operation); from the system, I can affirm if a given text is or is not possible (decidability).
The retrieval of the system from which emerged the possibility of materializing a given text or discourse is one
of the most important goals of semiotic analysis. A system can be designed and from it can be possible to
produce given perceptual manifestations of the corresponding semiosis; but generally, the producer of the
perceptual manifestations is not conscious enough as to have identified the system he/she is using. Semiotic
analysis allows us, for example, to retrieve (to know, to explain its effectiveness and, at least hypothetically,
replicate the productive effectiveness of) the syntactic and semantic linguistic system that Antonio Machado
used in the different instances of production along his life, or the system that Picasso applied in the different
stages of production of his configurations of texture, form and colour, etc. A system is the condition of existence
of a perceptual proposal but, as virtual, does not permit a direct access that could allow to describe it; it must be
reconstructed starting from the analysis of the relations of the set of perceptual proposals existentially configured
from the virtuality of the system. Therefore, the perceptual proposal contains the relations that were materialized
out from all the possibles that preexisted in the system.

2.1.15 Text

For analytical purposes, we will understand by “text” in this book, a discourse without semantics. Despite the
linguistic tradition of this terminology, the use I propose for this term is not restricted to the universe of the
linguistic signs. That is, when only the syntactic relations from a perceptual proposal of any quality (may be
icons, indexes, or symbols) are taken, we will say that is being identified the text of that perceptual proposal. As
opposed to the system, which is virtual, the text is a fundamentally existential phenomenon, i.e., it is perceivable.
We can never refer to it or to its components as abstractions. But its importance is fundamental, especially in the
analytic operations, so it can be accepted the validity of the maxim: there is no semantics without syntax (i.e., if
we attempt to explain the meaning we must start from the effectively existing relations in the text). Hence, also,
the importance of the semiotic relations that are called “context”.

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3 Cognitive intersemiotic integration

3.1 Difference and specificity of semiotics

More than 10 years ago, in a book entitled Del caos al lenguaje (Magariños de Morentín, 1983a), I have reinterpreted the myth of the Tower of Babel as a symbol of the birth of freedom. It went from one language (langue) (the Japhetic) to multiple languages, and if this damaged the instant communication, favored the possibility of transforming the environment in as many worlds (the creation of possible semiotic worlds), as languages (langues), one for each of them. The unique language (langue) became once more into a rationalist desideratum (the “characteristica mathematica” of Leibnitz; Dascal, 1987) which again has been suspended when reason has exploded in the many local ways of thought with which began post-modernity, each of them in their context entirely valid. The proliferation of languages has never been regarded as a punishment, with the exception of those who believe that freedom is.

In the new Babel, of which we are contemporary, is produced the multiplication of semiotics, particularly with the rise of image and music. In 1967, I pronounced a lecture in the Faculty of Law of Barcelona University, whose title was “Contra la Palabra” (“Against the Word”). Not that it contains a direct attack against the word as a sublime semiotic instrument, it was rather a text pleased with the end of its empire (in what refers to the extension of its presence, and in what refers to the absolutism of its exclusive hierarchy) and which celebrated the consolidation and availability for humanity, of many other ways of constructing other possible worlds, like those of the image, the sound, and computing (already not only verbal).

Two reflections, apparently contradictory, accompany this new configuration of the fair of semiotics: (1) each semiotics has its own specificity and (2) none can be interpreted independently of others.

Indeed, on the one hand it is necessary to separate the fields of the respective semiotics, because the effect of signification of the word does not coincide with the effect of signification of the image, nor this with the effect of signification of music; nor any of these with the effect of signification of any other semiotics involved in any other sensory perception or in the combination of several of them. This is a way of breaking the imperialism of language, as Hjelmslev (1971/1943: 129ff) did, when he placed the language in one of the regions of semiotics, instead of considering it as the inescapable space of all possible semiotics. Even if the word can explain how image or music produce their specific meaning, it can not produce nor translate such specific meanings; at the most, can transcode or transpose them, but without possibility of reproducing the specific meaning produced, visually or acoustically. Time, then, of multiplication and development of semiotics lacking of the immense history that comes accompanying the verbal. “Happy the king who has a good chronicler”, could be said of linguistics, evoking the fourth century BC’s Panini and all the grammarians and linguists who, after him, contributed to the splendor of the word; process which, to give hierarchy to the image, only starts from the Renaissance and, as to the music, the witnessing of its honor and glory began just in the last century (Fétis writes between 1860-1865, his Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie generale de la musique, in 8 volumes; quoted in Dufourcq, 1963). Let alone the senses of touch, smell and taste, despite the presence in the last of them, of the delights revealed by Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825 (see Barthes, 1984: 285-306) and the personal contribution and compilation of anonymous precursors made in the beginnings of this century by the great gastronomist Jean-Marie Parmentier (1908). Only in the 50s appear the first writings on the kinesic with hierarchy of theoretical discipline, thus opening the possibility of a semiotics of physical education (without having been designated with this name and having to raise the racist mortgage that has tainted it for years; see Amavet, 1957).

So, multiple semiosis have existed from the beginning of humanity, but only now are they available with a richness, and overwhelming immediacy never before imaginable.

But (and with this question begins the second of the apparently contradictory reflections): Each one with its different experience? With its particular effectiveness? With its isolation? With new hegemonic pretensions over the other semiotics?

3.2 Articulation of the different semiotics

There will be no authentic overcoming (that with which is constructed the effective history of semiotic faculty and, therefore, the effective history of humanity) while such multiple semiotics do not articulate according to criteria that will not reproduce the imperialist hungering of the word. And there will be no possible study of the
Theoretical and empirical characteristics of these semiotics if not approached from their mutual and human interaction (human, not as exclusive of our species, but as the ability of man to generate certain particularities of their interaction which identify him as species and which are configured as the fundamental semiotic faculty; this faculty was designated, still in the immediacy of its professionalism and asserting the hegemony of the verbal, as the faculty of language, by Saussure).

The concern I am beginning to outline refers to the abundance of semiotic and/or semiological studies focused on a given and exclusive semiotics, as if one semiotics could account for its effectiveness regardless of the others. This has nothing to do with the concurrence of the different semiotics in the production of a given communication which in this way is richer and fuller, but instead with the claim to interpret a semiotics regardless of, at least, the trace that other different semiotics have left on it.

Inevitably one recalls the claim of Condillac when he tried to give an account of what each of the senses, by themselves, provide to the knowledge of the world and to the formation of the conscience, in his artifice of “the statue” as a metaphor of the initial state of man as tabula rasa (Condillac, 1947). In his introduction to the Spanish translation (EUDEBA, 1963), Mondolfo comments that, in the fiction of the statue, “two conditions are involved, closely linked each other and equally contrary to the attainment of the mental synthesis that Condillac strove to achieve: 1) the isolation of a single sense with respect to all other, or that of the subjective senses with respect to the one recognized as objective; 2) the assumption of a soul that is original passivity, from which all spiritual activity should be engendered by the work of the sensation itself”. (Condillac, 1963: 27)

A similar criticism may raise the isolated study of each semiotics empirically existing in our cultural universe, confluent with the pretension of explaining in what contributes each of them, by itself alone, to the formation of the human conscience.

This is even more serious for two reasons, at least for those of us who consider ourselves Peircean and cognitivist: it is in open contradiction with the fundamental proposals of Peirce’s theory of sign and it is marginalized in the current developments of the so called cognitive sciences (also restrictively considered as cognitive research, according to Rastier, 1991).

I prefer to begin with a short comment about this last subject of the marginalization, since later I will continue from a position closer to the Peircean thought.

3.3 Marginalization of semiotics in the universe of social sciences

When speaking about marginalization I refer to the painful feeling I have as semiotician, when reading the writings of the most prominent cognitivists, in which usually I can not find the term “semiotics”, nor references to the developments made by the scholars of semiotics.

We should not reduce the problem to simplistic answers based on conflicts of schools or on the positivism which would impede to cognitivists incorporate the constructivist vision prevailing in semiotics.

Simply, semiotic studies do not follow, generally (but I know there are works of another kind and quality), the guidelines of rigor currently practiced in the discourse of social sciences.

We, semioticians, tend to use a discourse predominantly metaphysical, which we justify with the character of our subject, as elusive as the creation, communication and transforming of the signification. We talk of a “semiotic hermeneutics” that, in its version of the Renaissance, seemed to begin to disappear in Leibnitz’s times, but which produced yet angry attacks of Kant (Colilli, 1993: 37), existing, fortunately “at present a practice of viewing the Hermetic exegetical paradigm as being somewhat impaired; it devoids language of communicative power, as Eco speculated, because it operates on a continuous postponement of the meaning”. (Colilli, 1993: 77)

Although I position myself in the opposite extreme of these holistic conceptions, and even more if they are hermetic, I will not enter the debate underlying the alleged validity of the computational quality of the discourse of social sciences (computational, either as calculatory or informational). I merely adopt as valid this last formulation: *the discourse of social sciences has computational quality*, because the instrumental character of informational technology is more and more forcefully prevailing, which leads to assess the theoretical proposals of social sciences, according to their possibility to engage in (or to their possibility to being transformed into) a computational program. I quote as examples of this kind of reflection, the works of Minsky, 1986; Lévy, 1990 and 1994; Thagard, 1988 and 1992; and Hofstadter, 1995. This is the social demand to which we, semioticians, seem not to attend or that we even refuse. Hence the mentioned silence or marginalization of the semiotic work by the authors of that line.

Nevertheless, I consider also that the contribution that semiotics can offer to the remaining universe of social

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2 The fragment of Mondolfo’s Introduction to Condillac is my translation. (G.W.)
sciences is of such fundamental importance, that social sciences will not achieve the goals they have set, until knowledge elaborated from semiotics has not been incorporated to them. The requirement for us, semioticians, will be to make the fundamentally methodological contributions of semiotics in an operable computing language, being conscious that there exists a semiotic knowledge which, by the moment, is computationally unattainable, but trying to comply with the criteria formulated by Peirce (2.219 to 2.226), as far as we can. I think firmly that, after being collapsed the myths of mathematics as the unique formal language of all science, and the language of logic as the final form of the internal mental language (in the style of the “mentalese” of Fodor, 1984), semiotics is the basic methodology specific to social sciences, and I am working in this direction from more than 25 years. I am focusing a development of semiotics that does not isolate each semiotic system and that does not expect to explain the production of the signification from one or the other of such systems only. That is why I will draw the attention to the need of developing rigorous intersemiotic analyses, as an unavoidable critical attitude for the production of the methodological contribution that is responsibility of semiotics in the history of sciences. By studying in some detail the works of the main current researchers in the field of perception, image production and construction or production of the referent, we can see that this place is available at the crossroads between different semiotic systems whose chaotic dynamics (Van Eenwyk, 1996: 330) also has to be reconsidered and retrieved for the general semiotic theory.

Rastier (1991: 91), one of the few researchers with real semiotic training in this area registers the claim of Jackendoff (1983, 1989; repeated in 1993) about the description of the architecture of information and the correspondence process that links, in the conceptual structure, the information coming from our body senses, taking out semantics from the exclusive domain of linguistics and turning it into a result of the harmonic interaction of the conceptual components constructed with the information coming from such multiple senses. On this ground Jackendoff is able to speak about the referent as “projected world” (1983: 23).

And for this Jackendoff follows Marr (1982), in whom he founds the basis for establishing which levels of the perceptual fulfill a role in the visual (and be very clear the importance of the difference, despite the outline of coherence) homologous to that fulfilled by the levels of the phonetic, the syntactic and the semantic, in the generative explanation of the linguistic (and be very clear the importance of the difference, despite the outline of coherence).

In fact, Marr pointed out the effects of the primary outline, the 2½-D outline and the representation of the 3-D Model, as the interactively added instances to achieve the identification of objects in the world, that are not primary and intuitive data for perception (Marr, 1982: 295ff), but the result of including perceptions of surface, edge and profoundness (constitutive of the primary outline) in visions centered in the observer (pertinent to the 2½-D outline) in such way that they permit the production of perceptions centered in the object (representation reached through the 3-D Model; Marr, 1982: 37). To Jackendoff (1989: 193) this sequence in the mental organization of images of the world are close to phonetics (the primary outline), to syntax (the 2½-D outline) and to semantics (the 3-D Model), however, as I already noted, he values more the differences than the similarities (I leave open to criticism this correspondence, because there is a different relation between language (langue) by the one hand and pictorial images by the other, with the representation/interpretation processes of the respective referents).

But Jackendoff (1989: 194) says, “the translation between language and vision should be specified by a set of correspondence rules between one or more visual levels and one or more linguistic levels. Ideally, the two faculties should interact via those representations whose units come into closest correspondence and whose functions are most closely related.” (1989: 194). This relation between two levels is just an outline of the task to be performed to integrate two sources of information: “these two levels of representation constitute a central core accessed by a number of different peripheral faculties including visual perception, language, haptic perception, body perception and action.”

Letting aside the arbitrary restriction to “two levels” (since in this central core are also equally involved those semiosis whose raw material come from other senses), the postulate of the Conceptual Structure Hypothesis is: “There is a single level of mental representation, conceptual structure, at which linguistic, sensory, and motor information are compatible” (1983: 17).

3.4 Specificity of semiotics to elucidate correspondences and divergences between the visual and the linguistic

Is it possible, from semiotics, to provide a specific knowledge that permit, either to identify the process which meets this compatibility, or to describe the rules of correspondence between the visual and the linguistic or to explain the behaviour of the set of operations that establishes the way of representation by which the informations supplied by the diverse senses are being interpreted? Besides, only from the semiotics can be provided that knowledge? I think plausible, though not immediately grounded, to answer yes to both questions.
As a working frame or general framing of the problem, I can formulate a hypothesis complementary to Jackendoff’s proposal of “Conceptual Structure Hypothesis” (1983: 17), which I would call tentatively Inter-Semiotic Hypothesis of Conceptual Structure: There is a single level of mental representation, the inter-semiotic conceptual structure, in which iconic, indexical and/or symbolic representations of linguistic, sensory and/or motor information are compatible, permitting to produce interpretation. That is, identifying the most basic features of this inter-semiotic conceptual structure, along with the process of the inter-semiotic relations generating it, is possible to use them in order to respond to a given problem, at a given moment and place, about the confluence and interactivity of the texts (of any semiotic raw materials) which have produced each of the prevailing significations attributed to a given social phenomenon. We should have investigated or should investigate both aspects, that which establishes the minimal semiotic processing of representation and transposition (or transduction) applied to the information being received about such phenomenon, as necessary condition for its storage, and that which relates to the minimal semiotic architecture that configures the storage of such information, as necessary condition for its contrasting and availability.

The production of semantics (which we place in the mental space of the “interpretant” coinciding with Jackendoff’s “Conceptual Structure” and our “Inter-semiotic conceptual structure”) occurs as a consequence of the relation of the “representamen” aspect of the signs constituting a text with the “ground” aspect of the signs constituting a referent.

In this task and focusing on the visual, Marr’s work aims to establish the necessary steps for the identification of objects; these would be considered semiotic objects (although Marr does not attribute to them this designation) depending on the success of that task. For Marr (1982: 3) “Vision is therefore, first and foremost, an information processing task”, so he rejects “a theory in which the main job of vision was to derive a representation of shape” (1982: 36), because for him, as for Gibson (1979: 22), in perception do not pre-exist objects but surfaces; Marr’s aim is to establish the rules of a given calculus that, through a series of processes done by different and progressively more complex levels, will permit him to “understand how descriptions of the world may efficiently and reliably be obtained from images of it” (1982: 99).

Apparently, following the 3-D Model, Marr obtains the representation of objects of the world by processing visual information without any other textual reference; but however, this is not what he performs. The modular organization that proposes comes from “The modular decomposition of description used for recognition [...] allows one to build up a description that captures the geometry of a shape to an arbitrary level of detail” (1982: 305-306). The description of a shape, necessary to recognize it, implies to attribute to it a given identity, which is a semantic predicate. Marr could not reach his known diagram of decomposition of human image, if not from a “representamen” constructed by geometry as substituent semiosis (and, as such, another effective textual reference). Therefore, the identity of human being, as the identity of different animals with which he constructs his 3-D Models Catalog (1982: 319), is the semantic result (in a “Cognitive Structure” as “Interpretant”) of a relation between two semiotics: that which he uses as substituent (representamen), which for Marr would be truncated cones or generalized cones (as it is also the case of Biederman’s geons, 1995: 12) and that which is configured as substituted (ground), which for Marr would be shape, perceived as a result of a perceptual process from the primary outline and through the 2½-D, but never as a result of naive perception. By interaction between both, will emerge the identity of the object inside of what I have been calling “Inter-semiotic conceptual structure”. This is the same process I characterized in another work (Magariños de Morentin, 1990: 10), as “the semiotic dilemma: one semiosis must cease to be what it is ‘in itself’ (perceptual judgement: a phenomenon of language (langue)), so that another semiosis come to be, not as what is ‘in itself’ (perception: a sensorial phenomenon), but as that in which the first semiosis constitutes it (referent: a semiotic phenomenon and, as such, significative)”.

This Inter-semiotic conceptual structure has the configuration that, in principle, may correspond to the configuration proposed by Peirce in his analysis of the Interpretant: a qualitative aspect (the Immediate Interpretant or, mutatis mutandis, Emotional and also, then, a Firstness of that Thirdness which is the Interpretant); an effective interpretation (the Dynamic Interpretant or, mutatis mutandis, Energetic and also, then, a Secondness of that Thirdness which is the Interpretant) and a differential result or change of habit, as a new sign produced in the mind of the Interpretant (the Final or Ultimate Interpretant - it is what it is, only for a specific and instantaneous interpretation process- or, mutatis mutandis, the Logical Interpretant and also, then, a Thirdness of this same Thirdness which is the Interpretant) (Peirce, 5.470 to 5.493 and 8.314, 8.315).

That is why, although Marr’s task is indispensable for the semiotician -because it reconstructs the “calculatory” process according to which visual information is processed up to the 3-D perception of objects of the world-, we can say that in that moment Marr is insufficient; it is semiotics who requires the intervention of another universe (Marr refers consciously to geometry as such, but without recognizing its specific effectiveness or, even less, semiotic quality) to produce the identity of such objects, as a semantic value added and produced by the intervention of that representamen (which in Marr is no other than geometrical). From a geometric representamen, is this and no other, the modular representation obtained. Prior to knowledge of geometry by
humanity, human being’s representation by “truncated cones” according to a given contextual syntax, would have been unimaginable (and even unrecognizable, if some advanced martian would have proposed it to us).

Note also that the raw material of a semiotics is not constituted by icons, indexes and symbols, but by the materiality of information (in the hjelmslevian mode of “the substance of expression”) coming from any of the senses by which we relate ourselves with the environment: so, this data is visual, acoustic, tactile, olfactory, tasty, body sensing (kinesic), etc., and let’s leave open the repertoire with this “etc.” to the inclusion of other possible informations. What the icons, indexes and symbols allow is to constitute in signs that raw material itself, when the iconic, indexical or symbolic aspect of such raw material is utilized to meet the semiotic process possible informations. What the icons, indexes and symbols allow is to constitute in signs that raw material itself, when the iconic, indexical or symbolic aspect of such raw material is utilized to meet the semiotic process of taking something of the ground as the object and to propose it to an interpretant. As a result of this task, the iconic, indexical or symbolic effectiveness of the relation established between a semiotics (visual, acoustic, tactile, etc.) and the representation of given perceived images (visual, acoustic, tactile, etc.) is the very space of semantics, because such effectiveness depends on the construction (eventual change-of-habit) performed by the final interpretant, and this will be preceded by the dynamic interpretant’s performance of the actual effect of interpretation, according to the feeling aroused in him by the selected quality as immediate interpretant.

Let us return now to the other direction, proposed for this expansion, which explores the succession of interpretable semiotic levels.

3.5 Transpositions and intersemiotics

This is the phenomenon of transposition whereby the semiotics, with which was produced the significative construction of a given referent, is taken as a new ground so that another semiotics formulate it, according to a new significative construction (reformulating, in turn, the first ground, but in a distant and indirect way).

The typology of transpositions has been studied for the assumption of permanence inside a given semiotics which is specifically linguistics. So, Parret (1983: 75), starting from certain references of Landowsky and Greimas, recovers the “metalanguage/description/paraphrase” triad, which he interprets as corresponding to “three types of production of forms, the scientific, the semiotic, and the linguistic, respectively”.

Transposition of sense may occur also when switching semiotics, although this may result not a transposition (that supposes variation in the margin of certain permanence) but another sense production, and this will require to speak of translating (inter-semiotic, not inter-linguistic) or of another type of identifiable and definable operation.

Cognitive studies, both cognitivist (more or less close to the chomskyan line, as the works of Jackendoff I quoted above) and connectionist (more linked to Varela and Maturana, 1984/2003, to Langacker, 1987, 1991 and to Smolensky, 1988), are important because their operational hypotheses about the rules organizing the behaviour of mind (cognitivists) and descriptive hypotheses about the routes and neuronal connections (connectionists) whith which they propose plausible explanations as to storage and interrelation of sensory information; also because of their original framing of mind-brain dualism, which incorporates theory of chaos and fractal metaphors (Prigogine, 1996; Mac Cormac & Stamenov, 1996). They are important also because of their use and/or programming of computational instruments and artificial intelligence for the representation of this architecture and the processing of sensory information; there exist important rethinkings from this approach in epistemology (Thagard, 1988, 1992), in the study of images (for example, Barlow, Blakemore & Weston-Smith, 1990), in semantics (for example, Dubois, Ed., 1991), in possible worlds (Sture Allen, Ed., 1989) and in most fields of social sciences.

But all these studies have, generally, a limit: they give not a satisfactory explanation (perhaps they not even intend to do it) about possible interpretations and, consequently, production of social significanition of the phenomena they study.

The pretention to neglect knowledge of the theory of signs in the study of social phenomena, can only respond to a strict segmentation of the research field, based on certain theoretical criteria that are already historical or due to an attitude originated in an unbelievable intelectual blindness (Could something be social without being already sign?; see Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 250-252). Or, third possibility that should not be ignored: we, scholars of semiotics, have some responsibility in this.

I think that now we have an intellectual and interesting space available, in which semiotic and cognitive studies associate. Some approaches are being made (Rastier, 1991; Gardin, 1987a, 1987b, 1991; Vignaux, 1992; Danesi, 1993; Santaella & Nöth, 1998, etc.). I think that there exists an important challenge that allows to outline the bases of an interdisciplinary task or of a syncretic theoretical approach with a broad field of experimental work. It is a cognitive semiotics in which the richness of semiotic research based largely on the operational reading of Peirce’s texts, is associated with the rigor and a calculatory view of the cognitive methods. From this cognitive semiotics can emerge a knowledge of social phenomena that makes semiotics to become the basic
methodological instrument of social sciences; and social sciences to become protagonists in the expansion of humanistic knowledge over the next millenium’s beginnings.
4 Basic guide for the design of a research project

I consider convenient to reflect on the design of those research projects where semiotic methodology is being used in a rigorous way, because it can help to understand some relatively complex expressions to be used in the presentation of this methodology. I will therefore propose the steps I consider necessary to elaborate a Research Project with semiotic methodology. Generally, they coincide with the requirements of most of the forms for filling academic scholarship projects or thesis of diverse kind. What is specifically semiotic has to do with the particular focus that from our discipline receive each of those steps and my proposal consists in trying to state precisely their peculiarities and if possible, to advance my answer to questions that would formulate those who decide to work with this methodology.¹

As a basic design of a Research Project, I propose the following:

4.1 Description of the subject matter and proposal of the problem

There is no research without a problem to which find an explanation; that is, we have to identify the contradiction or conflict or divergence between interpretations that disrupt the signification attributed to a given social or natural phenomenon. To begin with, a problem suitable to apply semiotic methodology, must be a problem about the signification of that phenomenon.² But I think indeed that every problem in social sciences, is about the production, communication and/or transformation of some phenomenon’s signification. It is convenient to reflect on the possibility of finding falsation for this last assertion. It is a challenge I propose to you and to myself: is there any aspect of a phenomenon that has nothing to do with its signification? Of course, it depends on the content attributed to the concept of “meaning” or of “signification”. As applied here, this content is very broad as is materialized in the textualized interpretation that a given individual, belonging to a given society, at a given historical moment, attributes to a given uttering or to a given social or natural phenomenon. In that textualized materialization can emerge contradiction, conflict or divergence of possible significations, i.e., the problem; either in one single interpretation or between two or more interpretations in force in a given society or in different societies, and between interpretations in force in the same or in different historical moments.

4.2 Building up the appropriate theoretical framework

In principle (being possible to find other nuances), the author of a research project establishes epistemological paradigms or recognizes current trends in the discipline when writing the theoretical framework, as appropriate for the treatment of the topics and related problems described and identified fulfilling the requirements developed in the previous section. The researcher should state which aspects will take from each of this trends and paradigms² and, as well, should redefine according to his/her criterion, the theoretical terms he/she considers fundamental, when starting from the definitions in force in those paradigms; that is why is appropriate to include a Glossary to discuss, adjust and define such terms, attributing them the meaning the researcher commits to maintain consistent during the research. The theoretical framework is also the space available to show the originality of the research he/she intends to perform, depending on the bibliography proposed, which must be as comprehensible as possible. Here, the semiotic approach will serve as a critical guide to evaluate paradigms and current trends and to justify the researcher’s options.

4.3 Formulation of the theoretical hypotheses

Through concise statements (preferably made according to the structure of a conditional, by virtue of which, if given antecedents are valid [which has to be proven], then given consequents would result validated), the researcher will anticipate the explanations he/she considers appropriate to the problem/s described in the first section. We will consider such statements as theoretical hypotheses (unlike the ones we will see next and which are better considered methodological or working hypotheses) for the current project. These hypothetical statements will have, in Peirce’s terminology, character of abductions; that is, assertions resulting from theoretical knowledge and from the personal experience (social and professional) of the researcher, and they have to be proved, being this the main work of the projected research. This is a fundamentally ideological moment in the process of building up a research project, which will be transformed in rigorous or scientific through the proof of the corresponding explanatory proposal (and this is one of that aspects which support the contention that there are no science without ideology).

¹ I suggest to complete this scheme with my Esbozo semiótico para una metodología de base en ciencias sociales (Magariños de Morentín, 1996a: 247-300).

² “A problem is specified by giving its starting conditions and its goals to be accomplished. A problem solution is a set of steps, simulated or actually carried out, that leads from the starting conditions and its goals to be accomplished.” (Thagard, 1993: p. 45).

³ Taking into account, for example, the eclectic position of Feyerabend (1974).
4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 Theoretical methodological framework

Should be made explicit here the theoretical grounds justifying the application of the semiotic methodology to the research which will be developed. Should also be explicit the trend of semiotics and the corresponding operations that are to be used, for their consistency with the resolution of the problem in question.

4.4.2 Corpus

It consists in the determination of the social field from which will be selected those data (which should be differentiated from the information to be identified in them by appropriate operations) that are considered useful to justify the explanation proposed in the hypothesis. A research with semiotic methodology needs a corpus consisting in social discourses, with the broad differences this expression may encompass: basically, they could be symbolic semiosis (mainly verbal, being spoken or written), iconic semiosis (mainly visual, being static or dynamic) or indexical semiosis (mainly behavioral or objectual) or a combination of the preceding ones, and this will be the most common. The identification of the corpus will have also character of hypothesis, in this case methodological or working, because the adequacy of the corpus to prove theoretical hypothesis may be false, that is, the selected corpus may not contain relations necessary to achieve the intended explanations (see 4.7).

4.4.3 Operations

In this section we will give account of the semiotic operations to analyze the corpus. Through such analysis would be identified in that corpus the information needed to establish the intended explanation. It is no enough to point out the main lines of intervention, as “discourse analysis” or “rhetorics of image” or “behavioral ecology”, etc., since it should be specified which of the operations corresponding to these eventual trends are going to be used effectively, and must be provided the explicit definition of such operations, either referring to the author from which they are taken or according to the transformation proposed by the analyst and future researcher. The formulation of these operations will have also character of hypothesis, that in this case, as in the previous one, is methodological or working, because the ability of such operations to intervene in each of the social discourses constituting the corpus and to make emerge the relations considered as necessary information, may be false, that is, they may have no ability to show the relations which construct the intended explanations. In this case, if we assume that the remaining aspects are acceptable, we should select other operations permitting to retrieve and to show how is constructed and which would be the content of the basic information, in order to prove the previously posed hypotheses.

4.5 Bibliography

All that has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, and which necessarily comes from the contribution of the author of the project and from several other authors, should be properly referenced and registered in the bibliography.

4.6 Conclusions

The research project ends with a paragraph about the intended scope of the work proposed. As to the hypotheses, this scope will be limited in this project to note that all the hypotheses of the research, the theoretical as the working ones and those related to methodology (about adequacy of the corpus and capacity of the operations) have been proved, or, if not, should be established that they have been falsified, and in which extent (all or some of them), and in this case they must be rejected. As to the consistency of the research project, the scope will depend on which hypothesis or hypotheses have been rejected. In addition, the conclusions can anticipate the transference that the research results are supposed to have, that is, what would be the social policy that in its corresponding area, can be adopted according to the research results, or what are the results that can be diffused academically or professionally, as supported by the performed research.

So far, this is a basic outline of the steps leading to the building up of a research project using semiotic methodology. Each point create doubts and gaps that have to be answered or filled and, even the mere fact of its enunciation, permits to disagree with the suggested content of such steps or stages and to pose others, more adequate to a semiotic research approach. This would be an overcoming of the methodology, in a specifically semiotic sense, which is the more desirable destiny of every theoretical or methodological proposal.
4.7 Appendices

4.7.1 About the corpus

4.7.1.1 Compiling the corpus

Compiling the corpus

One of the first steps when organizing a research intended to be developed with *semiotic methodology*, is the establishment of the appropriate corpus.

Perhaps due to historical influence of positivism, this subject is not considered a problem: it deals with the collection of data constituting the phenomenon to be explained and the researcher has to be careful in being objective, truthful and comprehensive. Besides, semioticians seem affected by the intellectual vice of problematizing everything. Precisely, I want to suggest the need to not leaving the topic on the intuitive level, and to reflect on what we intend to do when we propose to *collect the appropriate corpus* for our research; and on whether it is as simple as unproblematic to be objective, truthful and comprehensive when compiling the corpus we need. It is not mere caprice problematizing what, before falling into our hands, was simple. Much of the semiotic reflection focuses on the *obvious*; what require being questioned and analyzed to establish its acceptability is admitted as valid *a priori* without discussion, that is, what we propose here as debatable is what we must give as valid, what we have been taught because is essential to begin to research and even to begin to think. And, inevitably, this recalls the image of Descartes, whose philosophical task was to *put in question the obvious in thought*. But, instead of doing philosophy, our pretension is to produce rigorous explanations about the social phenomena of our environment (including ourselves). That is, the question (complex) to which we need to respond precisely and effectively, would be:

*Given a problematic signification (contradictory if compared to others or constructed with mutually inconsistent contents), what corpus do I need to have available in order to apply the semiotic operations which will permit me to explain why a given social phenomenon has a given problematic signification, from where comes this signification, how is interpreted and when and why will be transformed?*

The content of the corpus is the *information* on which I will work when I choose a given social phenomenon as my object of study; but its identification and the establishment of its specific characteristics, are not so simple as the concept of *datum* was to the positivists, although its fundamental characteristic is still the same: *the corpus is the given*. Therefore, once identified and accepted as valid, is necessary to apply analytical instruments to show its effectiveness to make evident how that corpus contains the material and conceptual relations (I would say “syntactic and semantic”, but I mention this only marginally to avoid being locked into the problem of linguistic metalanguage), involved necessarily in the social production of the meaning of the phenomenon at study.

This has a large amount of implications needing to be clarified, so it will generate a large amount of questions that should be responded by the each researcher. But I want to leave stated (which does not mean it is unquestionable) that the corpus needed to respond to a semiotic hypothesis about the characteristics of a given signification of a given phenomenon at a given historical moment in a given society, would be the one that *constructs the specific signification of the phenomenon under study*. So, the central question to which will respond the characteristics and the identifying criteria that permit to select the *necessary corpus of information* will be:

*Which text (or better: which set of texts of the same or multiple semiotic characteristics [symbolic, iconic or indexical, or combination of these]) will construct the specific meaning one society (or each social sector of the totality, specifically identifiable by the fact of conferring differential meanings to the same phenomenon whose signification is being studied) attributes at a given moment (unlike those attributed in other historical moments and posing contradictions that will differentiate them from those of other future times), to a given phenomenon (in contrast to those it attributes to other phenomena that share its existential environment)?*

I rewrite again this question without the parentheses:

*Which text will construct the specific meaning one society attributes at a given moment to a given phenomenon?*

Each one and the totality of the texts so identified, i.e., all those having that foundational quality, comprise the *necessary corpus* (hypothetically) in order to explain the problematic signification of a given phenomenon to which that texts refer (therefore, it is the first empirical task that should be performed after being identified the hypothesis proposed to explain the problem under research).

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4 This material come from the messages I sent to the semioticians forum during the months of january, february, march and april of 2005. Other members of this list participated with important comments and observations; all these messages can be seen, with the identification of their authors, in the semioticians forum and in http://www.archivo-semiotica.com.ar/taller.html; messages 19 (9/01/2005) to 82 (10/04/2005).
Each researcher should take into account the quality of the phenomena that are objects of the study (may be law, psychology or psychoanalysis, sociology, history, philosophy, literature, politics, anthropology, etc.) and should try to establish which are the texts (or, in a broader sense, the semiosis) that confer to such phenomena the specific signification or the conflict of significations that constitute the problem under study. If the identification and compiling of such texts is clear and evident, the better; but I would doubt it and distrust of such simplicity. Fundamentally, because I consider that we have mis-learned (with our formation, based first on encyclopedic grounds and later on positivist ones) to see the world as a gathering of phenomena given by themselves which we only need to see (or to understand) correctly. The fundamental semiotic position establishes something very different, which would approximately consist in saying (I want to leave the door open to a possible modification of this enunciation) that the phenomena constituting the world are not given by themselves, but instead we identify them by adapting them to our possibilities of designation; nor they contain in themselves their rationale, but instead we project it according to categories available in our conceptual structure; nor are they seen (or understood) as they are, but as our modality of enunciation makes us to see them (or understand them), in the corresponding perceptual environment.

Compiling the corpus 2

Therefore I will work on a conception of the corpus that identifies it as the set of perceptual proposals that support the semiotic effectiveness that makes to arise before our mind the existence of the phenomena of our environment. It implies to accept as “signification” the ontological character attributed to the phenomenon to which it applies. The concept of sign, as a perceptual proposal through which something different to the own sign acquire sense, permits to affirm that every corpus materializes in a set of signs (or of utterings, in the foucaultian sense). This does not contradict, but specify, the definition of “corpus” of linguists, and leads us to identify them by adapting them to our possibilities of designation; nor they contain in themselves their rationale, but instead we project it according to categories available in our conceptual structure; nor are they seen (or understood) as they are, but as our modality of enunciation makes us to see them (or understand them), in the corresponding perceptual environment.

So, the corpus whose compiling will interest us will be that which is constituted by the ensemble of senses constructed through the interpretations that we could have perceived by their communication, a perceptual proposal through which something different to the own sign acquire sense, permits to affirm that every corpus materializes in a set of signs (or of utterings, in the foucaultian sense). This does not contradict, but specify, the definition of “corpus” of linguists, and leads us to see (or understand) correctly. Therefore I consider the corpus as a body of necessary information so that the hypothesis can comply its function of explaining the problem. But this does not suffice to identify the corpus. The various aspects that may present a problem have a necessary relation with the signification of the problematic social phenomenon. I have said this on many occasions and I repeat it once again: every phenomenon is social (properly understood, can be said that there are no exclusively natural phenomena, in the same way and following the same reasoning by which, despite it contradicts Morris, it can be affirmed that there are no natural signs) because what interests us of any phenomenon (as well as of any sign) is how it is interpreted, either in the social community in an unspecified way (we could say “how the people interpret it”) or restricted to specific social spheres (how politicians, academicians, unionists, artists, etc., interpret it). It is not possible to interpret a phenomenon without the intervention of a subject, but is not the internal or private activity of a single subject what interest us; interpretation is interesting insofar is externalized when being communicated (that is, we work on explicit interpretations) through a verbal text or a graphic proposal or a disposition or an attitude, in an exhibition or in a ritual, respectively. The interpretation of a social phenomenon constitutes, in principle, an act of attribution of sense, and not the picking up of some (im)possible original, natural or essential sense; at a second moment, the ensemble of senses constructed through the interpretations that we could have perceived by their communication, constitute the signification we attribute to it (as you have seen, I use “sense” as “atom of signification”, designating as “signification”, the ensemble of all the “senses” effectively in force in a given community, about a given phenomenon, and whose mutual inconsistency will allow the emergence of the diverse possible semiotic worlds in force in the community under study). And this signification, whose circulation can be seen at a given moment of a given community, may consist in a single proposal shared by all the members of such community or may diverge to clearly contradictory proposals. So, the hypothesis is a proposal of explanation of this unanimity (seldom) or of this divergence (most habitual). The corpus will be constituted by that compilation of texts (or to designate them with more methodological precision, of substituent semiosis, that may be symbolic or iconic or indexical, or semiotic material resulting from combination of these) where that interpretation is materialized through its enunciation.

A research cannot begin compiling a corpus. Before addressing this task, there must have been, at least two previous steps: (1) that of the identification of a problem, and (2) that of the formulation of a hypothesis being proposed as possible explanation of that problem. Without having formulated the hypothesis it would be impossible to know what should be collected to validate an explanatory inference; the main part of the research will address the task of verification of that hypothesis.
these ways of existence the ones that constitute its signification: we do not see the existence of a phenomenon but its signification, which attributes to it a given mode of existence, through one or multiple kinds of texts. We can not speak about its essential existence, because anything that we could say is already an attributed signification and not pure existence affirmed (or, even, is signification as affirmation of its existence). Hence, from semiotic viewpoint, the question of establishing a corpus that will permit us to evaluate the validity of a given hypothesis is the raw material with which is constructed a different and specific dimension of the world, not in itself, but for knowledge.

I do not consider that I have been able to say clearly what I propose and in a way that I will not need a retractation later, but it is a way of begin to redirect the semiotic explanation of social phenomena towards the knowledge that interprets them, by constructing them or constituting its existence as it is knowable from the mind of a particular human being, as configured in a given time and through the specific human interaction that this human being establishes with a society and with what in the environment in which he/she intervenes is already interpreted. And I call “corpus” the conceptual universe that produces that knowledge.

Compiling the corpus 3

I will focus now on the availability of a concept of corpus, semiotically useful as a tool for research. But I will first make a brief unavoidable reflection about the diversity of criteria available to establish the difference between “sense” and “signification” and “meaning”, although the issue remains without a final agreement (see here chapter 23). For example, is very broad the difference in approaches between Frege (who introduced the concepts of denotation and reference with a very close signification, hence they were identified in numerous translations as meaning)\(^9\), Vygotsky (who chooses sense as the subjective understanding, and meaning as that what is verbally enunciated, among other different nuances) and Ducrot and Schaeffer’s Dictionary (1972/1995) which tends to retrieve the Saussurean concept of meaning as value, i.e., that the relations of a (linguistic) sign with all the others of its system of language (langue), result in a negative concept of meaning; what all those other are not (or what they leave as a residual possibility of being); while, as to sense, this dictionary seems to have used Strawson’s conception, concluding, quite provisorily, that to understand the sense of a sign is to have a method to determine, in each occurrence of that sign, what such occurrence refers to, that is, its occasional referenciality.

So, my only comment on that question is to say that I have decided to choose a criterion to define, with rigor and effectiveness, the conceptual field I am attributing to the terms “sense” and “meaning”. From this point of view (at least in this thematic development about the corpus), I consider as sense a given and punctual explicit interpretation of a phenomenon, as is constructed from a given perceptual proposal (text, icon, exhibition, ritual) referring to that phenomenon. One and the same phenomenon will acquire, then, different senses, each of them coming from each one of the substituent semiosis that construct it. One of the analytical tasks of all research should be, therefore, the identification of the different senses of a given phenomenon in force in a given community. This is the aim of the analytic operation designated as “contextual definition”, that is developed in my Manual Operativo (Magariños de Morentin, 1998; and see here 9.2).

I include the ensemble of the different senses relating to the same phenomenon in force at a given moment in a given community, in the concept of meaning, which then is established as the possible semiotic world (from now on, PSW) of all explicit interpretations, that a given phenomenon at study receives (the concept of possible semiotic world is close to that of discursive formation of Foucault [1969: 44f]), with the difference that he restricts it to an architecture constituted exclusively by verbal utterings, while the PSW embraces all the possible semiosis effectively used in a given society.

Therefore, here the sense is an atom of the meaning, opposed to the conception of sense as generic and global signification of a phenomenon or text. And the meaning is the complex net of relations that can be identified among the diverse (all, insofar they could be retrieved) senses effectively in force in a given community, that is to say, the ensemble of all the explicit interpretations that receive the phenomenon at study, which can also be designated the possible semiotic world constructed about such phenomenon.

I do not consider myself the owner of the truth, not even the maker of the best possible option in this disjunction between sense and meaning. Simply, this is the approach adopted, tentatively, to develop this topic of compiling the corpus, necessary to explain how and why a given phenomenon acquire a given signification at a given moment and in a given society. That is why, as I said above, I perhaps will introduce signification to refer to the specific sum of the identified senses, directing the meaning towards the conceptual result of that sum. I think

\(^9\) Magariños wrote it in Spanish, and possibly he refers to the Spanish translations of the work of these authors. But he does not study here the differences in the sense of those words, but merely presents a state of the art, in order to develop his own arguments. I think it will suffice to know his criteria as to those terms, and their coherent use by him in this book. (G.W.)
also that we have surpassed the epoch in which we pretended to reach a complete and exclusive theory as explanatory model (that preforms the world, without leaving me to perceive more or anything other than that what is already formed), and we are now closer to the search of operations whose rigor and well groundedness depend on the situation at analysis and on the proposed aim (that is, I am differentiating the work with models, an attitude with which I do not agree because is repetitive and excludes creativity from the work with operations, I recommend the latter because of its constructive effectiveness and lack of preconceptions). So, an explanatory theory would have currently a proposal of reflexive and inferential rigor, but it would change with the transformations of the rationality in force. That is why we can not expect that a scientific explanation be predictive in addition to be explanatory. To be predictive, nothing would change in time or space, and this is as absurd as a denial of history; there are no models that explain the world, whatever the historical circumstances it goes through; there are operations that, provisorily, propose to us ways of intervention according to the rationality in force.

**Compiling the corpus 4**

I continue with the task of establishing the criteria that allow to select those data relative to the interpretation of a given social phenomenon which can be considered as the necessary corpus to explain its meaning.

A phenomenon is designated with a given name, is perceived in a given way, is described through a given discourse. The name of a phenomenon is associated with a given concept; the way of being perceived a phenomenon is associated with given images; the discourse describing a phenomenon is associated with a given interpretation. A concept identifies a possible existence; an image identifies a possible perception; an interpretation identifies a possible meaning.

The ensemble of semiosis (symbolic, iconic, and indexical, or their combination) constructed by concepts, images and interpretations with which is attributed each of the possible meanings of the phenomenon at study, integrate the corpus we are trying to identify.

Therefore, it makes no sense to speak of registering perceivable reality. Data does not come from reality nor are retrieved in registries. The data we want to register are those that construct reality, as it present itself to human perception, and this way of presenting themselves is multiple depending on individuals (restricted by the variability due to the need of communication), societies (restricted by the variability imposed by the risk of struggle, often underrated in competitive societies), and historical times (restricted by the variability imposed by the character necessarily transformable of history), all them corresponding to the situation in which the registry is done.

With this, yet so hard and abstract, we should explore what corresponds to register (I understand by registry, the construction of the corpus, with the characteristics I am attributing to this) depending on the quality of the phenomenon at study and on the identification of the individual, the society and the historical moment in which we try to explain the meaning of that phenomenon.

**Compiling the corpus 5**

To explain the meaning/signification is not to try to establish its truth identifying which would be the true meaning/signification of a given social phenomenon, nor to say whether the correct meaning is the one uttered by one or by other/s.

To explain the meaning is to establish, in a reliable, rigorous and well grounded way, from where come and how are used the utterings in force, with which such signification is being constructed at a given moment in a given society. This would be the only truth critically acceptable, since it is a non causalist but cognitively constructive way that explains each answer and their diversity.

To accept one or other of the answers and to repudiate the remaining is not a matter of science but of ideology, i.e., of faith, which is the proper and relevant field to the statement of truth (and in some variant of which all of us need to believe, but which should not be confused with its effective explanation).

To compile the relevant and necessary corpus to explain the meaning of a given social phenomenon require to have available (developing it, until it becomes acquired) in the research, the ability to identify the pan-semiotic text/s which attribute that specific meaning to that particular phenomenon.

I will make a terminological reflection that I consider appropriate. When I mention in its simpler meaning “text”, I refer to the existential and perceptual of a substituent semiosis, in its predominantly and/or provisorily syntactic character, retaining the concept that “a text is a discourse without semantics” (so the idea of text implies the one of a lack or incompleteness or of a result obtained after an extraction). Furthermore, I always had interest in including under the designation of “text” diverse possible semiosis available in a given community, without leaving the term become trapped by an exclusive and exclusionary linguistic reading, that would limit it to the perceptual materiality (acoustic or visual) of the verbal. I am using as a broader designation so to avoid
that linguistic closure, the expression “substituent semiosis”, which I think is appropriate, although unfamiliar and capable of misleading readings (for example, is not a mirroring substitution, but a dynamic and transformative one). I have also used this expression “pan-semiotic text”, which seems to me equally appropriate and may be easier to understand, to transmit the concept of a perception effectively existing in any of its semiotic characteristics: as icon (images), index (exhibition of objects and/or the practice of ritual behaviors) and symbol (conventional forms, verbal, graphic, gestural, etc.). It also allows to contrast “text” and “discourse”, by considering that “discourse” is “a text with semantics” and so, make reference to a “pan-semiotic discourse” to transmit information about semantic content constructed by semiotic quality (icon, index or symbol) of the text at study. Therefore, this proposal of adopting appropriate criteria to comply with the task of compiling the corpus, contains the claim to be interpreted as the need to identify, in order to explain the meaning of a phenomenon, the existential and perceptual materialities (as texts) involved, through their intentional social usage, in the attribution of multiple specific meanings (as discourses) to such phenomenon at a given moment of a given society. Another terminological aspect I want to settle is that I will not use in each case the expression “social phenomenon”, restricting myself to the use of “phenomenon” because, as I mentioned in my semioticians forum (Magariños de Morentin et al., 1999, until march, 2007) recently, every phenomenon is social, not being conceivable purely “natural” phenomena, because, as they are already known, they belong to the social sphere (although this may require a debate). So, unless otherwise stated, when I mention “phenomenon” I am referring to “social phenomenon”, as I said in the statement with which I began that message, and with which I now will continue it.

To identify the pan-semiotic texts from which come exclusively the signification of a phenomenon and in order to analyze its expressive effectiveness, which is directly linked to its syntactic characteristics, is necessary to register the texts preserving their respective semiotic specificities (depending on whether they are icons, indexes, symbols, or their complementary interaction) and then to analyze the particular relations of their parts (neither the parts nor the relations are the same, it depends on whether they are icons, indexes, symbols), from which come such effectiveness.

This is related to what I proposed earlier, regarding the operation known (especially in the so called “observational methodology” of behaviorism) as “the recording of perceivable reality”, expression that I reject, to focus the eventual research being performed on the task of building a corpus of data not pertaining (they can not) to the reality, but being part of the pan-semiotic discourse with which humanity gives meaning (that is, knowledge of its existence or knowledge of its reality or, also, ontological existence) to its environment.

In this regard, and for an indexical analysis of behavior, I am interested in the segmentation, integration and interaction of gestures, expressions, look, mimicry, etc., that can contribute to record the information we interpret when we look. For example, how is constructed the meaning of what the police says sometimes: “he/she was in a suspicious attitude”? What sees the police, to attribute this meaning to a particular person’s behavior? That is, “suspicious attitude” is a possible meaning which is socially in force (at least for the police), attributable to the behavior of a person or a group of persons, generally small, and occurring in the street. Obviously this proposal came up thinking about examples of situations of what we began to plan as the university of street (Magariños de Morentin and collaborators, 2005-2007)⁶. Of course, when a police attributes a meaning to a given social behavior, what he/she sees and what he/she has seen before joins, either as to normal behaviors (which is also an attributed meaning), or to behaviors previous to the commission of some crime, or also to what he/she has been said about how to see, i.e., the way of seeing learned.

Behavior, gestures, attitudes and expressions of a group are a semiotic text (in this case, indexical) that should be included or recorded as corpus to attribute a meaning to that given behavior (this meaning is no longer behavior, but something alien added to it or considered as being built by such behavior). That behavior produces the meaning (social, as all meaning) that somebody (generally, a police) interprets as “suspicious attitude”, or “unreliable” (without giving up the possibility that one or more interpreters assign another meaning to the same behavior perceived; their explanation will nevertheless follow the same analytical sequence I am exposing, but from other pan-semiotic texts). The suspicious is another addition, is an object constructed by the police observing the behavior, i.e., the other to whom remits necessarily the sign function as such. Analytically, as researchers, we should identify and analyze the gestural relations constituting that behavior, in order to see how emerges from it such content, that is not inherent in the behavior (is not its reality), but is built when somebody (the indispensable interpreter) perceives it and decides to intervene interpreting. And in this interpretation, intervene other semiotic texts different to the one constituting the observed behavior. That is, there should have been other behaviors, already interpreted, allegedly similar to the one being perceived and whose criminal results

⁶ But after delivering the original to the editor, Magariños kept writing in semioticians, until march 2010, and his project “La Universidad de la Calle” (The University of the street) (II) were delivered to the UNJU short before his death and was authorized some months later. Now it continues at UNJu.
allow to attribute to the latter the character of signal. The experience allowed the identification of given attitudes as signal of the fact that a person was going to commit a crime (technically, the signal is a type of sign that anticipates a result, that is why, while the result has yet not been produced, a given behavior can signify, i.e., can be a signal of the fact that such result will be produced). That is why I have said that in order to interpret a given behavior, i.e., to attribute a meaning to it, the interpreter must have performed (behavioral quality of the text), must have seen (perceptual quality of the historical semiotic text now actualized), or must have been told (symbolic quality of the historical semiotic text now actualized), how should be interpreted a given ensemble of behavioral relations.

Therefore, the corpus to be collected will consist not only in the behavior that is being perceived, but also in those other texts, whatever their constitutive semiotic quality, that need to be realized in order to interpret in the way is being interpreted the text perceived. That is what I mean when referring to the need of having available a rigorous and appropriate concept of corpus.

Compiling the corpus 6

Two comments:

First, about the necessity of the ritual character in order to consider a behavior as sign from an indexical semiotics. Here is involved the difference between semiotic object and sign: ritual character is not necessary in order that something be a semiotic object; every behavior, be ritual or not, is already a semiotic object, because there has been already attributed a meaning to it, from another semiosis which enunciates it. The difference is that as semiotic object, receives the effectiveness of all the discourses (or the ones the interpreter knows) that have been referring to it (in its particularity and in its general character of behavior). As sign, it has its own effectiveness to construct a given meaning, which it will attribute to another phenomenon. The semiotic object receives; the sign, gives.

Indexical semiotics works with 3 kinds of representamen (in the Peircean sense of what we see, when we consider that what we see is a sign): objects, behaviors and memories. I am not interested now in the latter; as to the objects and the behaviors, they can be viewed from one of this two perspectives: they are semiotic objects, so we should establish which pan-semiotic texts have received the quality with which they were perceived, or they are signs, so they are indexical texts able to produce the meaning of something different from themselves. “Suspicious attitude” in the behavior of somebody is the reading that another person (the police) makes of that behavior, because he/she sees it as semiotic object and attributes to it the meaning that he/she learned or was taught to attribute to it. From the theatrical, or religious, or military behavior, to the pragmatic anaphora, deictic gestures or table manners, all these cases deal with ritualized behaviors insofar they are identified conventionally and socially to intervene as signs that attribute meaning to another entity or phenomenon, different from the specific behavior that is being produced/perceived (which occurs so that other entity acquire a particular meaning). Similarly, the objects we use: chair, papers, pencils, apples, keyboard, windows, car, etc., are semiotic objects that we have learned to interpret and, therefore, to use. But when the same objects are in the shop window or in a museum, etc., they become signs, because they refer to those others which they designate.

The second, is to clarify the sense in which I am saying that every phenomenon is social. In principle, I have said this considering that in order to be understood, every phenomenon must be interpreted and this interpretation come from the possibilities of interpreting phenomena of the environment offered by each society to its members. Any interpretation or attribution of meaning (there are not the same concepts, but independent from each other) come, explicitly or implicitly, from the social imagery that surrounds us and leaves us no gap to escape. Identity is a result of a given combination of elements (in the broader sense and including its materialization in the social context) of imagery. From my viewpoint, the question of which facts cease to belong to a private history to become history of life and social phenomenon, has no answer, because I think that there are no facts that, at some point or instance, belong exclusively to a private history. Private history of each of us is constructed by the social phenomena we reinterpret and appropriate through our manipulation of other social phenomena, which we relate, in turn, with other social phenomena that are other aspects of our identity.

Anyway, the scope of my reference to the question that all phenomena are social phenomena is shorter: is merely my conviction that there are no natural phenomena whose meaning could be explained by physical laws completely marginalized from social events, because the explanation of the meaning of every phenomena can be find in social discourses (may be scientific, may be magic, but without doubt, ideological) in force at a given moment and even in a given space, although stated in a language with a given symbolic level and a given history. That is, the so called “physical laws” are an explanatory construct, resulting from a given social discourse (changing in time and space [at least, in the virtual space of scientific societies]), so they are conventional utterings about social phenomena. Finally, both private life and knowledge of natural sciences, are social phenomena (that is why I reject also the category of “natural signs” of Morris [1946: 5] when referring to the clouds [as natural signs of rain]). This is what I think, without turning it into dogma; I still have not found a situation of falsation that discredits it or that advises me to leave it.
Compiling the corpus 7

It may seem excessive what I stated in the preceding paragraph, according to which the signification of a (of all, of any) social phenomenon comes exclusively from a given ensemble of pan-semiotic texts. It should be clarified in order to specify what we mean by the corpus relevant for proving the hypotheses of a given research.

It is as if, apparently, had been committed a trap by proposing a nominal expression: “pan-semiotic text” that, given its desire for universality, pretends to redirect all the aspects in which lies the meaning of any imaginable phenomenon, to one of the variants encompassed by that expression. Then, first danger: is as if we had established a designation, whose domain is the ensemble of entities (in the broader sense which we can give to the term “entity”) that concur so that the meaning of any phenomenon consist in them. And I am writing “concur” so that the meaning of any phenomenon consist in them”, precisely so that it can be read from a view (alien!) substantialist (phenomena have a meaning!) and positivist: all we can do is to verify if what we say is the meaning of a phenomenon is effectively of that phenomenon (that is, the truth or falsity of the assigned meaning would come from the phenomenon), before and independently of the intervention (and even of the existence) of human thought.

However, I reaffirm that the “desire for universality” of the expression “pan-semiotic text” has effectively the intended scope (second danger: if the expression has an universal domain, then it would be a metaphysic expression, not useful for scientific or rigorous knowledge). However, it does not overlap with reality, but instead it attributes to everything that man can know (hence their desire of universality) the transformation (without possibility of access prior to it) resulting from their way of knowing (a process of cumulative transformation partly sequential and partly parallel, of perception, emotion and thought, in the way and with the operations that are possible at a given historical moment of a given society). This is the universality of the expression “pan-semiotic text”.

I am therefore affirming the need to collect the corpus containing the physical-existential aspects (in this sense, “text”) that constitute the elements and relations (in this sense, the text as syntax) in which materializes the way human beings express what they perceive, what they feel, and think (and in this sense, the text as “pan-semiotic”) when they confer a given meaning to a given phenomenon. This is the semiotic raw material that allows to explain the signification of the phenomenon confronted. Everything else is mere appearance; appearance of reality and appearance of truth or falsity. The explanation of signification must start from the way in which human beings express how that phenomenon has come into their world of experience. They express it uttering it and enters their world when interpreting the utterings (pan-semiotic) of their learning. The utterings produced and the learned utterings are the corpus necessary to support any research that seeks to explain the meaning attributed to the phenomena of human being’s environment.

Compiling the corpus 8

Phenomena (although some use to say “meaning of phenomena” if they admit that view; but: What would remain of phenomena if we deprive them of their meaning [from that multiple and even contradictory meaning that a given society attributes to them at a given historical moment?]!), are constructed by us, that is, we give them ontological existence; we construct them ontologically naming them and uttering them or representing them. We give ontological existence to phenomena by uttering them. I exclude the ontic; what we produce is existence of the phenomenon for knowledge. That is, only what is enunciable is known (bearing in mind that “enunciable” is not only equivalent to the verbalizable, but that it encompasses all form of semiotic enunciation, be it through icons, indexes or symbols, from where emerges the “pan-semiotic text”).

To explain why a phenomenon has, in a given social sector of a given society and at a given historical moment, a given signification (or more than one), we need to know (1) from where came such signification/s and (2) why the text which produce it/them are interpreted in that given way and not another. So, (1) Which texts\textsubscript{1} create a given meaning? (the meaning we intend to explain as a result of our research) (2) According to which other texts\textsubscript{2} (i.e., how) are those texts interpreted? (so that it be understood the production of that interpretation and not of another); and of course, (3) How do we retrieve and differentiate texts\textsubscript{1} and texts\textsubscript{2} and attribute specific effectiveness to them?

These are the three basic questions to which we should answer when we say that we make semiotics, because these are the ones that can provide the basic information from whose analysis will emerge our explanation; if not, there will be no semiotics, or no rigor, or no research.

Compiling the corpus 9

The issue just raised is not meant to enter into the field of philosophy, but to finish the profiling of a methodological need: What corpus is needed to explain the signification of a given phenomenon? and In what consists to explain the signification of a given phenomenon?
1) Although everything is involved in the analysis leading to the explanation of the meaning (or better, of the meanings) of a given social phenomenon, I think it is important to differentiate (now and regardless of other differences arising in other problems) between the theoretical texts that propose processes and conceptual relations to systematize the characteristics of the meaning of a given type of phenomena and those other utterings with which the members of a given society attribute meaning to a concrete phenomenon. The former constitute in a research the content and the object of analysis and selection of the theoretical framework; the latter is the corpus itself. They should be separated because each of them need a different kind of approach. The theoretical framework implies a work of systematization and grounding of abstract constructs. The researcher has to show, discuss and contrast the explanatory proposals enunciated by the diverse authors which are taken into account about the meaning of the phenomenon at study, and should structure in a progressive and well grounded way his/her own thinking, by contrast with the proposals of those other authors. In the theoretical framework’s evaluation, is not focused the concrete phenomenon but the category of phenomena in which the researcher considers the phenomenon at study can be included. In the corpus are recorded all those utterings considered as being in force at a given moment of a given society, with which the signification of a concrete phenomenon is constructed. That is, to explain the signification of a given phenomenon is necessary to have available all the theories of plausible rationality in the academic domain and at the moment of the research, and these constitute the theoretical framework; and in addition, is necessary also to have available all forms of utterings in force in a given society about that phenomenon at that moment of that society, and this constitute the corpus.

Here, as corpus, we need a broad sense of “utterance”, so that it encompasses any semiotic possibility of reference to the phenomenon at study: not only words, but also images, exhibition of object and effective performance of behaviors (in a ritualized or ritualizable way) that have as referent the phenomenon at issue, in the sense of entity of the projected world from the conceptual structure of the subject (and the society) enunciating it (Jackendoff, 1989: 121ff) as referent. Therefore, while in the theoretical framework is selected, discussed, modified and resetted the system of thought (relevant to the domain of a given scientific discipline) with which is going to be approached knowledge of a given kind of phenomena, in the corpus are involved, segmented, integrated, related, mutually interpreted, the specific pan-semiotic texts referring to (a) given phenomenon (phenomena), identifying it (them), configuring it (them), valuating it (them), and attributing to it (them), its (their) character and modality of existents in that given social environment. The universe spanned by what I consider “corpus” includes, therefore, the texts giving account of the way of saying it, of perceiving it, of manipulating it, of being integrated in it, of feeling it; ultimately, the way of living it. But we should not begin with this ending, to construct texts about personal experience, that is already a summary of all the precedent ways of giving account of it and that may begin the path of metaphysics or of poetry, forms of knowledge of utmost importance, but that are not the ones we are dealing here (except as texts about the phenomenon that are integrated into the corpus but which, in any case, are not those which the analyst should have to construct but analyze). Is important to differentiate properly the texts that construct the contents (explanatory hypotheses and their corresponding validating proposals) of the theoretical framework, from the texts that construct the contents (senses and meanings) of the corpus, because they are different problems, so that the researcher should perform different cognitive tasks.

2) Another possible access to understanding the role of the corpus in the development of a research, may come from the answers we are giving to a set of intuitive questions that were being formulated in the imagination of each of you while reading the preceding paragraph, and to which you will inevitably attribute a sound mental answer. I will now verbalize my own answers so that each of you can accept or reject them.

a) Do not have ontic existence social phenomena prior to their interpretation, while the ontological existence is always after the enunciation of an/any interpretation? Yes, if we understand the attribution of ontological existence as a possible knowledge about phenomena that is acquired by interpreting them. There are no knowledge which is not the result of interaction with the context (or with “the world”, in a sense close to that proposed by Francisco Varela, 1992), there are no existing cognizable entities for humans in a context that is not the result of this same interaction.

b) Is the text what gives existence to knowledge of the social event/phenomenon? Yes, if we understand the existence as one of the qualities of the event/phenomenon.

c) Is possible the existence of social phenomena without a corresponding interpretation and subsequent granting of meaning by the corresponding enunciation in some text of a given semiotic nature? Not as existence for knowledge.

d) Is a social phenomenon not prior and necessary condition for its interpretation and meaning? No. After having learned (i.e., having available utterings that register our specific interaction with the environment, enabling us) to hear, to see, to feel, about a given phenomenon, we will be aware retrodictively of its presence, and this would not be possible without the perception of the interpretation which attributes meaning to it. That is,
The perception of the existence of the phenomenon is a possible extension of the conceptual system of the subject; never inversely. To be perceived something, it has to be a semiotic object, i.e., it must have been the referent of a semiotic uttering.

e) Can we speak of only one possible interpretation? Of only one meaning? Each interpretation constructs a meaning. Is difficult to imagine a society in which only one uttering exists, repeated indefinitely, constructing a unique interpretation of a given phenomenon and, consequently, a unique meaning for such phenomenon. Keep in mind that a certain uttering that circulates in a society proposes in the communicative intent of the author, one interpretation for a given phenomenon, but that uttering is capable of receiving as many interpretations as perceivers are. Therefore, the phenomenon will receive as many interpretations as those the uttering receives intending to attribute to that phenomenon a given interpretation. Besides, the utterings which at a given moment of a given society circulate proposing their corresponding interpretation of the phenomenon at study, are usually several (or multiple).

f) Is not possible the existence of different possible meanings according to the values, cultural environment, codes, etc., used in the interpretation of the phenomenon studied? What happens in such case with the identity of that phenomenon? Of course, there exist different meanings coming from different interpretations, from different social groups or from different sectors of one social group, or resulting from the contradictions inherent to one sector of one social group, but, in each case, the phenomenon constructed will be different: i.e., when we believe we are perceiving the same physical phenomenon, because we share its name or designation, different subjects may perceive different phenomena, and the referent identified by the different interpretations of the utterings that construct it, is not the same. Something similar to what according to Wittgenstein (1953: 273) happens with the identification of colours: the name of the colour and its deictic use, which are socially learned, are the same, but nothing guarantees that what is neurologically constructed (the relation of organism and its world, the ontological identity) be the same.

g) Is the representation of the social event/phenomenon a condition prior to its own manifestation? Cross-examining: What is the difference between representation and manifestation? If “representation” is external to the phenomenon as constructed by the uttering that has it as its object, but is not the object, and manifestation is the possible way of perceiving it, then of course, the representation will determine the characteristics of its manifestation. (We could not free ourselves from the effects of the discourse that constructs the representation of the earth as something fixed and central, around which everything else revolves in such a way that, at a colloquial level, sunrise and sunset continue being manifest as the output of the sun and the setting of the sun, respectively) [Beware! because a third discourse that imposes from science and especially from society another way of representing the earth in relation with the universe, could make us see in a third manner (?) the manifestation of the phenomenon that relates the sun with the horizon. In this sense have I affirmed above the reproduction that retrieves the presence of the phenomenon according to the interpretation that a given meaning attributes to it. We can see what we can enunciate and in the way in which we can enunciate it. (Remember the pan-semiotic character I attribute to the text constructing such enunciate).]

h) With statements like these, are we not turning all possible interpretations of social reality into theoretical speculations? “Social reality” is not “real” nor “social”, until is interpreted and is no more than that in what interpretation constitutes it. And this is not theoretical speculation, but an attempt of explanation about how knowledge is produced and about the plurality of such knowledge, leaving aside the unity of the ontic, whose character is exclusively metaphysical. [The challenge is to find a cognitive situation in which everything I have been developing here, can be falsified].

Compiling the corpus 10

I will continue to reflect on this contrast between utterance and existence, affirming that the utterance precedes the ontological existence of the phenomena and not the reverse. This is basic to understand what are we looking for when compiling the corpus that will contain the information which should prove the hypotheses able to explain the constitutive problem of a given research.

(a) “From my study’s window, I see a plane going down quite low in the distance, until it disappear behind the buildings”.

My perception in this case can be viewed as a semiotic object: something about which I know what it is and what happens because I apply a set of pan-semiotic texts that I have learned to interpret and to use in order to see when looking; as Marr says (1982: 3) “What does it mean to see?... To know what is where by looking”. In my associative memory, a set of attractors are brought up, allowing me to establish the affinity between the images I see and others, with which I am familiar, after having perceived them along my life. In my conceptual structure

7 Maybe it should be clarified that behind those buildings there is the local airport! (G.W.)
associate semantic concepts, visual perceptions (without exhausting the components), kinesic experiences, which allow me to construct, with the perceptions I could assimilate in this situation, a projected referent which I interpret, being able to say what I wrote about it at the beginning of this section (α). I know what I see because I have situated it as the actual object of other representations (as representamens or signs) which I have already the habit of interpret and which, in this situation, I use analogically or differentially to interpret my perception. I am not interested now to go beyond, my perception is like a wall or a limit or a point of arrival. What is perceived is then characterized as semiotic object.

(β) “From my study’s window, I see a plane going down quite low in the distance, until it disappear behind the buildings. I realize that the strike of aviation personnel is over”

Having added this last task, which leads me to understand that the strike of aviation personnel ended, I have broken the wall; I do not remain in the limit or the arrival point, but I use what I perceive to infer something I am not perceiving, but which is inferred by my perception. What I am seeing is no longer (only) a semiotic object, but it is constituted in a sign of another thing to which I accede as an interpretation of what I perceive. What I perceive is characterized now as sign (and no longer as semiotic object).

How can I explain the meaning (“the strike of the aviation personnel is over”) attributed to the social phenomenon perceived? (“From my study’s window, I see a plane going down quite low in the distance, until it disappear behind the buildings”)? I call “social” the phenomenon I have described, with full intention.

I should collect the corpus that, as researcher, I consider necessary in order to establish the relation between my perception (“From my study’s window, I see a plane going down quite low in the distance, until it disappear behind the buildings” and my inference (“the strike of the aviation personnel is over”). I should do it applying to the corpus the analytical and contrasting instruments I choose and whose effectiveness I should describe, going explicitly through the process by which I have interpreted the entities composing such corpus. Therefore, I have to demonstrate that the interpretation of a given corpus (information about an aviation personnel strike+information current or historical about what happens [or what does not happen] when this kind of strike occurs+information current or historical about what happens [or what does not happen] when this kind of strike is over) endorses my interpretation of the fact that what I perceive, is a representation with which I can construct the phenomenon I do not perceive.

As the object of a sign is that other absent, that is different from the utterance of the sign (of the Saussurean significant and, mutatis mutandis, of the Peircean representamen), who intervenes as interpreter must be able to relate what perceives from the sign with its meaning. So, we interpret the totality of entities of the environment and their relation. This is the functioning, conscious or inconscious, of the semiotic faculty (for when the development came to homo sapiens), phylogenetic and already innate, which does not ensure that the semiotic operation actually accomplished is the one that the system of possible utterances available at a given moment and society, recommend to apply, considering the relation asserted as plausible, i.e., nothing ensures that, in its time and society be established the relation between what is perceived and the attributed meaning. That is: we can make mistakes.

And the researcher must do the task of explaining how and why some interpreter can construct that meaning from what has being perceived, and must provide the interpretational texts which establish and/or justify the relation between the perceived and the inferred, and must demonstrate that the interpreter effectively knew those texts (or, which of them are not known, and so the meaning constructed fails to correspond with the one that is being constructed by the rest or a given part of the society in which the researcher lives, when facing similar phenomena). This is the specific work of semiotic discipline, whose use by the researcher is assumed to be based on the desire of acceptability of the explanation reached by part of the contemporary scientific society/societies (plausibility of the explanation offered and no necessity of truth).

Compiling the corpus 11

Metaphors are artistic and also scientific creative instruments; especially in the beginnings of language of science, when it needed to borrow terms from other disciplines (Ortony, 1979). But we must recognize that metaphors can also be the deceitful appearance of a satisfactory response, that can hide a lot of ignorance or a sharp ideological attitude or a way to avoid an industrious explanation and that when one of this metaphors is used (our semiotic jargon is not alien to this responsibility), one of the most disturbing aspects of social science research’s quality appears.

That is what happens with the expression that supposedly would throw us reality: “they talk about me”, as the way of showing up a phenomenon to our attention. I think it has no sense; I will pay attention to what interests me or disturbs my peace or causes pleasure or damage to me (I say this being conscious of the fact that “me” is a nonexistent without the corresponding social integration), not as a demand (to knowledge) of some entity, but as interpretation (for knowledge) of an event.
To suppose that the phenomenon has a meaning in itself (except that what is historically attributed to it by those societies which had been constructing, transforming, eliminating it, from the being in force [transient] of their respective discourses) require the idea of a god who attributes it, so, except of god (for those who believe in god) only man (and in that varying degrees and nuances of semiotic function that, undermining the pride of our supremacy, we may well discover also in animals) can give a meaning to the phenomena of their environment. But my opinion is falsifiable, and therefore, scientific: if somebody can provide testimony about a meaning that has not been placed by man, my statement would be falsified; and the same would occur if, after having eliminated all possible meanings, a phenomenon would subsist.

We can think of the phenomenon that have not yet been thought of, only as empty of meaning, what makes impossible to think of it. If I feel myself attacked by the phenomenon (if I feel cold or a flame burning me or I was injured by a stone falling from above) is me (and/or my fellows) who qualify (with a dangerous metaphor) the accident as “attack”. Because personification through syntax of objects and phenomena enunciated as possible subjects of verbal expressions that imply human behaviors (for example, to say that “this image represents the port of Buenos Aires” is a dangerous metaphor; images neither represent nor signify; the human interpreter is who attributes a given representational effectiveness to an image or who constructs a given signification from the perceptual proposal of a given image [even beyond of the expressive intention of the eventual author of such image] (see here, chapter 16)).

But that presence of the phenomenon is imposed to me only if I admit it as a thinkable object, that is, with the possibility (actual or historical, and even future, if my language [semiosis] is creative) of being enunciated; and then it is already social insofar I attribute to it a meaning. Peirce had a reason (despite his ambiguities in the consideration of the “dynamic object”) to assert that, for when we perceive something, it is already a sign, because if it were not, we could not perceive it, nor begin to know its existence. Because we can not know something that has not yet received the meaning of “to exist”, which is the smallest indispensable meaning that the human being must begin to construct in order to speak about “something”.

Compiling the corpus 12

Three short comments:

a) Verbal language disturbs and semiosis, generally, perverts. Is there a way to make contact with phenomena, not betrayed by the mediating instruments? Then, (α) are there a true reality, (β) immediate knowledge of the world and (γ) authentic information, in which we could trust because it corresponds to such reality and is able to give us authentic knowledge? If we distrust of (the various) semiosis (among them, that of the word) it is because we still believe in the old positivist myth that truth is in reality.

b) The space that separate us from reality is the place where we construct our humanness.

c) Metaphors about reality are creative instruments for identifying entities of all kind that, if not designated by them, would not exist to us. Their field of manifestation is poetry, and there is no poetry insofar the colloquial language is not transformed so to allow us the discovery of the hidden (or the yet not-nonexistent). I have said elsewhere (see also here, chapter 21) that Adam (metaphor of the first poet of humankind), by giving names to things (i.e., substituing things by their names), has delimited them, identified them and situated them in existence for knowledge. But in science (except when it bubbles) metaphoric thought has little to do; usually, covers what can not be justified and brightens dark areas or rigorous thought. I know that we semioticians use metaphors, and there is evil!, at least from the view of someone (that is, me) looking for the possibility of developing a semiotics (boring/rigorous) whose basic function is to organize methodologically the explanation of the meaning of world’s phenomena (external and internal).

All this is not intended as a set of metaphysical propositions, but instead as an attempt to ground the building up of the corpus needed to perform a given research. It should be established for each pan-semiotic text/discourse/uttering, what it refers to, whether it proposes a description of a given phenomenon or attributes some absent or not evident value or effectiveness to it, from where are obtained the resources to achieve it, and who and for what uses it, along with many other nuances I am trying to sift while attempting to move forward.

Compiling the corpus 13

What follows are some notes with which I attempt to strengthen the task of compiling the corpus, essential to all research.

To summarize:

What we observe can be: semiotic object or sign.

Semiotic object is what we recognize because it has been yet semiotized and we recognize it in the way it has been semiotized.
Sign is an instrument for the semiotization of semiotic objects.

For example: a landscape is a semiotic object; a garden is a sign. My grandfather is a semiotic object; his photography is a sign. Argentine is a semiotic object; a map of Argentine is a sign; a book of argentine history is a sign; a study about argentine politics is a sign; a turistic brochure is a sign; Argentina’s Constitution is a sign; all the tangos and each of them are signs, etc.

If something is not semiotic object, nor sign, we are not able to perceive it. The sign says us what, how and with which meaning can we perceive “something”. Nothing preexists the sign (just the nothing preexists the sign, or not even that, but if so, the nothing already had a name, then is a sign). Before beginning to use signs, the world did not exist for humans, because there were no humans.

A semiotic object can be transformed into a sign; for example, animism of a tree; a sign can be transformed into a semiotic object; for example, when I walk in the garden thinking how would I speak about it in this book or, for example, when it is uttered from some metalanguage: I visit a nursery to select certain bush that would give a “wild” character to a side of my garden, or, in another field, the syntactic analysis of a poem; or the contextual definitions extracted from the discours of an informant.

We can therefore speak of a first level of corpus or “corpus 1”: it would be the texts (that are already signs) that inform about the semiotic object; for example, utterings constructed by given symbolic languages (mathematics, formal logic, chemistry formulas) used predominantly in the so called natural sciences; verbal utterings (or pictorial, musical, ritual, etc.) that register the sequence of transformations through which a given meaning is reached in the so called social sciences; creation of an existent (poetic effectiveness), or explanation of a concept (analytical effectiveness). These signs are not the semiotic object to which them refer, but they configure it in a peculiar way to knowledge; without them, there would be no semiotic object, because it would not be identifiable (antientropically differen-tableable).

“Corpus 1” is “object language” (which does not confer reality to that object).

“Corpus 1” does not overlap with “reality”.

“Corpus 1” does not retrieve what is real in “reality” (is not intended to know the truth, nor testifies that history of knowledge is the path that leads us away from error and brings us closer to truth).

“Corpus 1” generates the necessary space for constitution of humankind.

Passage to “corpus 2”:

[I use the example of the garden. The garden is already semiosis (as a text constructed with signs) that selects given meaning/s attributed (by other multiple, concurring, heterogeneous pan-semiotic discourses) to landscapes (or panoramas), to reproduce them with the peculiarities that stand out in the design of such garden; that is, the garden is an uttering able to attribute new meanings (nonexisting before) to landscapes (or panoramas). The description of a garden is the description (therefore, “corpus 2” as metalanguage or metasemiosis) of a sign, the garden, which is the “corpus 1” (as object language) of a semiotic object: the landscape, whose meaning (or smaller aspects of its meaning) the garden attempts to retrieve or reconstruct. We could perform a research trying to explain which would have been (at a given moment and culture) the meanings being attributed to landscapes. The hypothetical explanations would be controlled by analyzing and identifying the meanings humankind has been (or is) able to construct when designing the diverse gardens of their diverse epochs and cultures. That is, a garden is a sign whose object is a landscape; landscape is a semiotic object with a given meaning that was being attributed to it (among other verbal, pictorial, behavioral, etc., signs) by a garden which is, to this effects, its “corpus 1”.

Second level of corpus or “corpus 2”

Such would be the texts, which are already signs, either metasemiotic (constructed with signs of the same semiosis; hence the relation between landscape and garden) or of an external language (constructed with signs of a different semiosis: such the relation between the pictorial representation of a garden and the garden, or its verbal description and the garden as it is constructed in that description) that informs about the sign (I take this difference between metalanguage and external language, that I found very useful on many occasions, from Desclès and Guentcheva Desclès, 1977); that is, they constitute a semiosis (text, image, ritual [with objects and/or behaviors]) about (that describe/interprete) a “corpus 1”, in such way that a metalanguage, as an external language:

-retrieves, that is, allows or favours interpretation about: (α) how was “corpus 1” constructed; (β) from where come the terms, entities, expressions (or texts [verbal], configurations [visual], dispositions [of actions or objects] used in its production; (γ) what alternatives were excluded; etc. (or, it retrieves the information about what semiotic events have intervened effectively, and being the effectiveness of this intervention that what a research should have to demonstrate).
-identifies the universe of conceptual possibilities ("culture", "ideology", etc.) realized in such "corpus 1".

Therefore:

| "corpus 1"   | → | I intervene in it; is the object of knowledge; we can not know a more elemental level |
| "corpus 2"   | → | I intervene in it; is the instrument of knowledge |
| "theory"     | → | at a given moment of a given culture, is the record of everything that "corpus 2" permits to explain about "corpus 1" |
| "methodology"| → | is the set of operational characteristics that, at a given moment of a given culture, can be identified as available as "corpus 2" to intervene in "corpus 1" |

So: it is essential to differentiate in a research two kinds of corpus (1 and 2) and to explain the effectiveness that, at a given moment of a given society (or social group), has corpus 2, so that corpus 1 can acquire the specific sense it projects on the referents it constructs.

4.7.2. Asking and answering from semiotics

4.7.2.1. Framing

The general subject I am proposing is:

1) What can we ask to semiotics?

and 2) What answers are we looking for to what questions?

So I begin to construct some questions, whose answers may be coincident or divergent with respect to my proposals; any question may be criticized or substituted by other more appropriate; this would be the reflexive work I propose to my readers. The starting point is to consider semiotics as a research methodology.

When applying semiotics, we try to get the better results from it.

What result is expected from semiotics?

Suppose that to apply semiotics there must be a problem needing explanation. But, from the view of semiotic work: There has to be effectively a problem?; What is a problem?; In which kind of problems intervenes semiotics?

Suppose that when we identify a problem that we are attempting to solve, we move in the direction that the hypothesis, which should contain the explanation to the problem, shows us. But: from the view of semiotic work: Must we effectively have any hypothesis available when beginning to work?; What is a hypothesis?; Which kind of semiotic explanation provide a hypothesis?

But also: Does semiotic work consist in explaining something? What is to explain? When can be considered that something has been explained semiotically?

Suppose that, when beginning to research in order to solve a problem, that is, to prove the validity of the hypothesis/hypotheses we have formulated (conjecturally, as corresponds to a hypothesis), the first thing we have to do is to identify and collect the corpus of information whose content ensure that the proposed explanation for a given problem is effectively the corresponding one. But, from the perspective of semiotic work, Is necessary to collect information in order to prove a hypothesis?, What is a corpus of information?, How is established the relation that permits to associate semiotically a given corpus of information with a given hypothesis?

Suppose that afterwards we have to identify, describe and justify the methodological operations with which we will intervene in the corpus of information collected, supplying analyses and relations that satisfy the requirements of the hypothesis proofing. But, from the view of semiotic work, Must we use semiotic operations?, What is a semiotic operation?, Are there in semiotics analytical operations, syntetic operations, contrasting operations and, if so, what are they?

Suppose that with the obtained results we construct the possible semiotic worlds in which the initial problem finds its sense and explanation. But, from the view of semiotic work, Does each problem arise only in a given possible semiotic world different and specific?, What is a possible semiotic world? What is the dependency between a given explanation and a given semiotic world in which that explanation is possible?

Suppose that the explanation effectively proved allows to identify the signification in force (or the set of meanings in force) of a given phenomenon which thus is no longer problematic. But, from the view of semiotic
work, To establish the explanation of a phenomenon is to provide its meaning?. What is or in what consists the meaning of a phenomenon?. Does any hypothesis, once proved, become the meaning of the phenomenon whose problematic interpretation has been solved?

There would be many more possible questions. But I am interested in (1) following the steps of a research project, which is, from my semiotic perspective, the specific field of application of semiotics as a methodology; and (2) showing how semiotics can become a valid instrument to confer rigor and relevance to any research that takes place in the field of any discipline, social or natural. That is, I keep trying to give answer to the more gratuitous, superficial and essential question: semiotics, what for?

a) I focus on the question of the problem:

As a first approach to this complex question, which is not possible to be defined in a hurry, we could say that problem is something that admit alternatives or indeterminacy when interpreted. That is, the problem is not in “something” but in its interpretation. This includes it in the operative field of semiotics. An event is not a problem, the problem arises when, while interpreting, emerges or is noted the being in force, at a given moment and in a given society, of concurrent interpretations, of versions and meanings, different from each other.

Semiotics is present, in relation to the concept of problem, in its two dimensions: as faculty and as discipline. As faculty, because the interpretation of any event (existential [the falling of a tree], evaluative [solidarity] or conceptual [a road sign]) is produced by formulating one or multiple utterings, constructed as materialization of that faculty, from a single semiosis or from several semiosis, simultaneously. That is, the problem arises when something is being formulated, socially or individually, without attributing uniqueness to it, allowing multiple alternative interpretations that can not be admitted (from a view logical, psychological or social) as effective simultaneously, what makes them problematic. Semiotics is present, as a discipline, because its aim is to give account, identify and contrast the utterings that concur to produce (and which then can allow to explain) those alternative interpretations or that indeterminacy in the interpretation that appear as the problem at study (logic, psychological or social).

This in what makes the role of semiotics in the identification of a given problem. If there were no problem, would make sense to resort to semiotics? Semiotics as a discipline intervenes when a situation of multiple alternatives or indetermined interpretations should be explained. Semiotics as faculty may be used to produce an uttering (with some kind of signs: icons, indexes or symbols) that attributes an interpretation to an event; therefore it intervenes when there is still no problem. But this non problematic situation ends when that uttering becomes available, along with other utterings, to a number of interpreters, who are able to choose among a set of possible interpretations that are simultaneously alternative or indetermined. Then the problem appears. On the semiotic discipline will depend to explain it, but not to solve it, except the authoritarian imposition of one of such utterings, which does not depend on any semiotics, either as faculty or as discipline.

And with this, the semiotic work has barely begun, because now will come the formulation of the hypothesis, that proposes a given explanation to a given problem, the recording of the corpus, that will provide the necessary information to elaborate such explanation, the semiotic operations which will intervene analytically in the information of that corpus, in order to reconstruct the characteristics of the possible semiotic world in which is produced the interaction of the alternative or indetermined interpretations, that eliminate or impede to construct the signification of the phenomenon proposed as object of knowledge for semiotic methodology.

b) I focus on the question of the hypothesis:

Suppose tentatively outlined the response to the question of the relation that can be established between semiotics and the problem inherent to a given research.

Now I will continue developing the answer to the topic of the hypothesis as I have formulated it in the Introduction: “Suppose that when we identify a problem that we are attempting to solve, we move in the direction that the hypothesis shows us, which should contain the explanation to the problem. But: from the view of semiotic work: Must we effectively have any hypothesis available when beginning to work?, What is a hypothesis? Which kind of semiotic explanation provides a hypothesis?”

Frequently is omitted the requirement of enunciating some hypothesis in the forms of the research projects in universities and other academic institutions. There are three perspectives from which this omission is usually justified:

(1) The requirement of enunciating some hypothesis may hinder the research, making it difficult unnecessarily because may be that is possible to enunciate the objectives proposed as result of the research, without having to anticipate at the beginning an explanation of a problem that still may not be clearly identified. That is, the concept of the aims of a research substitutes the formulation of the problem and the hypothesis. It is curious that it is accepted that an action can have objectives, without having to establish the reasons that make necessary achieving them.
(2) The requirement of enunciating some hypothesis would imply to beg the question, because, if already is known the possible explanation, then the identification of a problem is not needed, since it is already solved. As Peirce says on abduction: it formulates an explanation; the only obstacle is that its relevance should be proved (5.171). Here the possible is equated with the necessary; transformation that, if successful, will result from the specific work of research.

(3) Frequently the aim of a research is to propose or carry out a modification that improves something in the social context or in its interpretation. Here, the assumed objective is the effectiveness of a beneficial change that would not exist until the research ends and, once done, is assumed that its effect would eliminate something considered harmful. Effectiveness attributed to the aim is based, in this assumption, in a complex ideological valuation of a given situation: (i) something that is harmful exists; and/or (ii) something occurs in a way that is considered harmful; (iii) something that would be beneficial to exist, does not; and/or (iv) something is not occurring in the way it would be beneficial; (v) this is about transforming the harmful in beneficial.

The need of having some hypothesis available when beginning a research, is based, aside from what arises “a contrario sensu” in the 3 points above, in the need of having available some (one or more) guidelines that establish, tentatively, what information will lead to what explanation of what problem.

That is, the hypothesis formulates a possible explanation of something that have been considered a problem. Nothing is necessary, but if provisorily the researcher admits that something is a problem, and that something would explain it, then he/she can assume that it exists some information with whose interpretation he/she would be able to construct the explanation of the problem at study. And so the research is been captured by semiotic methodology.

A hypothesis is proved making it to correspond with a possible interpretation of a given information; which, based on the rationality in force (at a given time and community), would permit to understand the indeterminacy or the alternatives of the meaning attributed (in that time and community) to one and the same given social phenomenon.

Said in another way again, the information has the character of corpus of semiotic texts (icons, indexes, symbols or their combination) whose analysis would permit to retrieve possible interpretations attributable, from those semiotic texts, to the phenomenon at study, and so to reconstruct each of the diverse possible semiotic worlds where each of such interpretations acquire validity (i.e., where they are used). To know which information we have to register conducive to the elaboration of such interpretations, we need to have a hypothesis where we formulate abductively the possible interpretations whose production will need that information.

Hypotheses, therefore, anticipate interpretations. The researcher, in order to get these, must collect information which, analyzed with appropriate semiotic operations, will lead effectively to the configuration of those interpretations abductively proposed (as emerging intuitively, but empirically impossible to prove).

c) I focus on the question of the explanation:

Is immediately linked with the topic of the hypothesis as I am proposing it.

To formulate a hypothesis with respect to a given problem, is to propose an explanation that will solve it, and this is a task characterized as abductive, i.e., it results from the experience and is produced by the system of values of who formulates it. Therefore, in order to solve a problem is not enough to formulate a hypothesis to explain it.

To solve a problem we have to demonstrate that the explanation proposed in the hypothesis is valid. And this does not consist in attempting to prove that it actually occurs in the reality of the phenomena, but in displaying or making evident the effective being in force of the interpretative possibilities that produce the indeterminacy or of that possibilities from which come the contradictory alternatives attributed to the uttering and that make it problematic. To demonstrate that an explanation is valid is to show that the discourses in force at a given moment in a given society contain the utterings with which are constructed the indetermined or contradictory (giving that they are problematic) meanings attributable to a given phenomenon, and to show the possible semiotic worlds implied or required in order to that utterings acquire semantic effectiveness in their logic, psychologic and political field, that is, be accepted as possible interpretations.

This require to admit that there are no problematic phenomena; there are problematic utterings about phenomena. This does not exclude that we could know politically incorrect or aberrant phenomena. Ultimately, what is explained is not the phenomenon but the utterings that attribute meaning to it.

As semioticians, we have to know (1) how to identify utterings that would be appropriate to produce the explanation proposed by the hypothesis, that is, how will we retrieve the information for the corpus, and we have also to know (2) how will we interpret them, that is, to which semiotic operations we will submit that corpus of information, so to affirm that they are used to reconstruct the hypothesis with which a problem is effectively
explained. This would “demonstrate” (i.e., establish as possible) that those utterings circulate effectively in a given society, and that the conflictive significations identified as problems are constructed with them.

Ultimately, from the possible semiotic worlds among which, by effectiveness of the analytical and constructive operations applied, the information recorded is distributed and systematized, we must be able to materialize the texts corresponding to the diverse meanings constructed by the utterings in force at a given moment of a given community, which confer ontological entity to a given phenomenon (that is, they attribute existence to it for knowledge). Each possible semiotic world is an interpretative environment that can be inferred from a set of discourses in force and exclude others whose set will, in turn, construct another given interpretation, that will allow to infer the being in force of another possible semiotic world, synchronic with the previous (one or more) and of whose ensemble will come the possibility of circulation of such discourses in the same community. The displaying and evidence of the coexistence of this synchrony of differences and even of contradictions, will explain the problem (but it does not mean to solve it).

d) Summary

I come reflecting from the beginning of this section, about the themes arising from a couple of questions that I considered relevant to understand the central function of semiotics as methodology. They were: (1) What can we ask to semiotics?, and (2) What answers we seek for what questions? I will summarize what I have proposed until here:

The first what appeared was the process that constitutes the work of research, when using semiotic methodology, with its possible questions and desired answers, which require: (1) to identify a problem inherent to the meaning or set of contradictory meanings attributed to a given phenomenon at a given moment of a given society; (2) to formulate the hypothesis with which we attempt to explain the synchronic being in force of alternatives to such meaning or meanings; (3) to understand what we are seeking when we speak of explaining; (4) to build the corpus of information necessary to ground the explanatory validity of our hypotheses; (5) to identify, define and describe what are and how are working the semiotic operations with which would be advisable to intervene in the corpus we have built, so that the explanation proposed in the hypothesis can be excluded or formulated in another way; (6) to construct possible semiotic worlds in which (in each of them) the initially identified problem would disappear by internal coherence of each interpretation attributed to the phenomenon at study, but among all of which would appear at the same time, interpretations that could be alternative, indetermined or contradictory, constituting the multiple and dialectic character of the society in which they are in force; and (7) to understand the meaning of the phenomenon at study as the contrasting result, as semantically differential, of the interpretations received by such phenomenon at a given moment in a given society.

I outlined some ideas around the questions and answers of (1) the problem; (2) the hypotheses; and (3) the explanation.

Being aware of the need of further study in these topics, I believe that it would correspond now to speak of another, (4), relative to compiling the corpus of information necessary to ground the explanatory validity of our hypothesis/hypotheses. But this is what I have been developing from 4.7 on (and see especially note 4).
5 The four signs
Design of the fundamental operations in semiotic methodology

5.1. Introduction

The research on the production, the interpretation, the contrastation and the overcoming of the meaning of social phenomena, allow us to reach, through the semiotic methodology, consistent, rigorous and well grounded conclusions which could explain the empirical problem at study. Consistent, insofar they show no explicit or implicit contradictions (allowing, however, their identification when they occur in a given social environment), well grounded, insofar each analytical step and each concept’s definition are made explicit, and rigorous, insofar they follow criteria of rationality, without pretending to be absolutely true or universal, but merely complying with the relations of derivation previously established and, therefore, able to be objectively assessed. To do so, the researcher must comply with all the requirements inherent in these three features as possible and desirable for investigación.

In these few paragraphs, I will refer to some of our usual semiotic operations, showing their ability to meet the proposed requirements and articulating the dynamics of their different processes, as their value depends finally on the integrated and aware use (or, at least, trying to prove a validity that I hypothesize) of the specific effectiveness that their joint application will provide to reach the proposed goal. This will be focused always on the attempt to explain the production and/or interpretation, and/or contrasting, and/or overcoming process of the significations that a given phenomenon has at a given moment in a given society (or, better, at a given moment in a given sector of a given society) and on making evident their dispersion and differential value (Foucault, 1969: 31-43).

May be advisable to begin with a group of operations or, better, a complex operation that has been mentioned in some of my books but which, perhaps because of its repeated pedagogical exposition and application in research, has been modified (showing so its power and limits, demanding its own overcoming) both in the terminology used in its description and in the identification of its domains of effectiveness. This operation is heterodox because of the two authors involved and is heterodox also because of the fact of involving them: Saussure and Peirce. This complex operation and the algorithm that is being constructed dynamically to represent it, is known as “The 4 signs”.

5.2. The research process and a Saussurean return

I begin the development of the 4 signs as an operational proposal that is specifically semiotic.

In principle, must be taken into account that when we are ready to apply a given semiotic operation of analytical character, much of the research has been already done.

Previously, a social phenomenon has been selected, in whose signification (in the process of production or in the contradiction observed between the different formulations of such signification in force at the same time at a given moment in a given society) a problem has been detected, and a given hypothesis or set of hypotheses have been formulated to explain it, and a given corpus of information to prove them, has been selected. // From the analysis of this information we expect to get, afterwards, the proof that the anticipated explanation is correct or, in case of not being so, we expect to formulate another hypothetical proposal that could be considered as the one that will result effectively proved.

I believe I have summarized in this paragraph the kind of situation to which semiotic methodology can be applied. Observe that what is before the double slash (“//”) is what already has been done effectively; what is after that double slash (“//”) is what remains to be done, which begins with the analysis of the corpus selected.

To perform this analysis we will apply diverse kinds of analytical operations, available from the developments corresponding to the specific semiotics to which belongs the corpora at study: symbolic (for example, verbal texts), iconic (for example, material visual images) or indexical (for example, objects or exhibited behaviors).

These possible operations must be able to demonstrate (through the analysis that they produce) the existence of given relations (effectively present, but not in an evident way, so that they must be inferred) inherent to each part of the corpus at study and from which will come the possibility of producing a given and no other signification. The hypothesis previously formulated will prove or reject what has been inferred in this way.

The proposal we want to establish in these paragraphs aims to formulating the conditions the specific operations must comply with. That is, what I am calling “The 4 signs” is a metatheoretical discourse that identify the

relations and the effectiveness to which must conform those other operations, specific to each possible semiosis (iconic, indexical, symbolic) that will be the ones to be effectively applied.

I think it is important to retrieve some aspects of the basic Saussurean proposal (Saussure, 1945) in order to mark the origin of this reflection about the large classes of operations involved in the semiotic analysis of the elements which build the corpus.

First, the well known algorithm representing the relations of the Saussurean sign: signifier (“S”) over signified (“s”), that is:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S \\
S \\
S
\end{array}
\]

[Scheme 1]

I am aware that I am taking the order suggested by Lacan (1966: 253): above the bar the signifier, because it is where we enter the analysis (by the effectively said, in Foucault’s terms) and below the bar the signified, because that is what is retrieved or inferred from the perceptual proposal of the signifier. Both in the task of psychoanalytic clinics as in the methodological task of semiotic analysis, we enter by the perceivable and we infer the virtual or evaluative or meaningful.

But Saussure relates the sign with another element that was fundamental for his construction of linguistics as a scientific or rigorous proposal; this element is value; that is, the set of relations linking a given sign with the remaining signs of the system to which it belongs (Saussure, 1945: 191-206). I will take that part of value that affects the relations of a given signifier with the remaining signifiers of the system. I believe this will help to make possible the identification of the set of syntactical relations which, finally, identify the sign in the set of the whole (open or closed, depending on the semiosis at study; we will not be confined to verbal language) of the remaining signifiers. And I propose to identify this relational aspect, with an “s’”; i.e., a “lowercase prime s” that represents the set of the syntactic relations that can relate a signifier with the remaining signifiers of its system (or set membership). This “s’” might represent therefore he metasemiotic meaning of the signifier in its own system. Then (and here begins the heterodoxy), every signifier would have two meanings: (1) the traditional meaning that is part of the concepts of the world (“s”) represented by such signifier and (2) that which is part of the value of the sign and identifies the syntactic possibilities (“s’”) of the signifier at study. So we would have:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S
\end{array}
\]

[Scheme 2]

With this we would have outlined at least two signs:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S
\end{array}
\]

[Scheme 3]

\[2\] As to the terms of this chapter (and others), see Some observations... at the beginning of this book. (G.W.)
it is the well known Saussurean sign, that I propose to call in this scheme, “mediating sign” and:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S'
\end{array}
\]  

[Scheme 4]

a particularly analytical sign, that I propose to call in this scheme, “metasemiotic substituent sign” or, more simply, the sign of substituent semiosis.

5.3 First identification of the 4 Signs

To continue with the enunciation process of the operational set I identified as “The 4 signs”, we need to establish the presence of a new element. Although is the more obviously perceived, is also the more poorly (if any) developed: the form of the objects (or, better, entities; or, even better, semiotic objects) of the world, to which the signs refer; any person has some knowledge (effective or imaginary) of such form.

Here it is worth to recall a theoretical reflection from Peirce:

“But if there be anything that conveys information and yet has absolutely no relation nor reference to anything with which the person to whom it conveys the information has, when he comprehends that information, the slightest acquaintance, direct or indirect -and a very strange sort of information that would be- the vehicle of that sort of information is not, in this volume, called a Sign.” (2.231).

That is, what we see, what we imagine, in which we think, is already sign, before being transformed in another sign, in which constitutes it the intervention of a new sign.

I rewrite the above paragraph, adding (in brackets) some expansions for a critical reflection:

That is (and I consider that this is the minimum and essential semiotic process for the production of the signification), what we see, what we imagine, in what we think (regardless of, but produced by, the way we have learned to see, to represent through images, to formulate with words, etc.) is already sign (which in another texts I have identified, and I continue to do so, as “substituted semiosis”), in what constitutes it the intervention of a new sign (which in another texts I have identified, and I continue to do so, as “substituent semiosis”; Magariños, 1996: 25).

That is, apart from the word “elephant”, which is a symbolic signifier (in this example, belonging to English language), or apart from the material image (for example, photographic) of an elephant, which is an iconic signifier (in this case, visual) or of the elephant that is in the zoo (unfortunately) or in a wild life reservation (less unfortunately), which is an indexical signifier (as an object that represents the other absent elephants), apart from all them, is the elephant as a known shape, which is already a sign and, as such, is available to know that we are before elephants, if they are elephants (and insofar they are) the ones we are seeing. (There is a bad joke about somebody asking to other “Do you know what is the difference between an elephant and an umbrella?” “No ...” says the other, who assumes that some kind of acute response is expected, and the first says “Be careful, be not that when going to buy an umbrella they sell you an elephant”).

This sign of elephant (carried in memory as an attractor) available to us (disregarding for the moment, the required explanation about how came to be so and about the changes that it could undergo, which in another moment will interest us especially), in a Saussurean view, has a signifier and a signified.

The new element that I referred to in the beginning of this section: “the form of the objects of the world” (the form of the elephant) is therefore also a signifier, but located in a different layer than that of the form of the word “elephant”. It is the signifier of another semiotic object, that we already know is an elephant.

To symbolize that form of the semiotic objects of the world in their signifier aspect, I propose the use of a “S’”, i.e., an uppercase “S”. As to their meaning, that is, as to the meaning of the forms of the world, it continues to be represented by “s” (a lowercase ess), that we already know from the Saussurean algorithm:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
S'
\end{array}
\]  

[Scheme 5]
With this and considering what we have developed above, we have another algorithm:

\[
\begin{align*}
S' \\
S
\end{align*}
\]  

[Scheme 6]

that represents the relation of the *forms* of the world or *signifiers* of the world (“S’”) with their *signified* (“s”), which is not an *itself* or substantial content of the things, but the same that is being constructed by the *signifiers* of the language (langue) and/or the semiosis used.

Summarizing the elements we have until now:

(A) Independent elements (or arbitrarily isolated):

1) “S”: “uppercase ess”: *signifier of some substituent semiosis* (language (langue), image, object or exhibited behavior, etc., used in its function of representing something else; observe that, without having expressed it explicitly, I am expanding the Saussurean algorithm so that it makes room for the Peircean triad: symbols, icons and indexes).

2) “s”: “lowercase ess”: *signified of some substituted semiosis* (value or concept or relational norm attributed to some entity of the world).

3) “S’”: “uppercase prime ess”: *signifier of some substituted semiosis* (perceptual form of some entity of the world, i.e., of that what we see as semiotic object or as meaningful, due to the action of another semiosis that, because of this effectiveness, we can call “substituent”).

4) “s’”: “lowercase prime ess”: *signified of some substituent semiosis* (value or concept or relational norm used in its function of representing something else).

(B) Related elements constituted in signs:

By combination of the precedents, we have the following algorithms of the corresponding signs:

\[
\begin{align*}
S \\
S'
\end{align*}
\]  

[Scheme 7]

that is read as: “uppercase ess /over/ lower case prime ess”, that is: a *signifier of a substituent semiosis /over/ the signified that possesses the same signifier inside the system of the substituent semiosis to which it belongs; meaning that consists therefore in the set of its syntactic possibilities. We can denominate this sign as “metasemiotic substituent sign”; it attributes to the corresponding signifier the set of its *relational possibilities with other signifiers of its own semiosis and in its own function as substituent, i.e., is the sign that represents the syntactic possibilities of the signifiers at study.

\[
\begin{align*}
S' \\
S
\end{align*}
\]  

[Scheme 8]

that is read as “uppercase prime ess /over/ lowercase ess”, that is: a *signifier of a substituted semiosis /over/ the signified that acquires that signifier inside the system of the substituted semiosis to which it belongs; the meaning consists therefore in the set of its conceptual possibilities. We can denominate this sign “metasemiotic substituted sign”: it attributes to the corresponding signifier the set of its *differential conceptual characteristics with respect to the other signifiers of its own semiosis and in its own function of substituted; i.e., is the sign that represents the evaluative or meaningful possibilities of the signifiers of the world at study.
that is read as “uppercase ess /over/ lowercase ess”, that is, a signifier of a substituent semiosis /over/ the signified of a substituted semiosis. We can denominate this sign as “mediating sign” (or “Saussurean sign”): it attributes to a given absent signifier (the “S” from some substituted semiosis) a set of conceptual characteristics as a result of the effectiveness of the present signifiers (of some substituent semiosis), i.e., is the sign that allows to interpret the world viewed from a language (langue), image, object or behavior, etc., used in its function of representing something else.

But there is a 4th. sign, which despite being seemingly nonsensical, is basic in the explanatory process of the construction of signification.

that is read as “upper case prime ess /over/ lowercase prime ess”, that is, a signifier of a substituted semiosis /over/ the signified of a substituent semiosis. We can denominate this sign “ideological sign”: it attributes to a given present signifier (the “S´” of some substituted semiosis) a set of conceptual characteristics that are not inherent to that signifier but the result of the effectiveness of relational possibilities (the “s´” of some substituent semiosis) that relate effectively the signifiers of that given substituent semiosis. We can denominate it “ideological” because it will make to be perceived the forms of the objects, or the entities, or the semiotic objects of the world (the signifiers of the substituted universe: “S´”) according to the syntactic relations (the relational signifieds belonging to the substituent universe itself: “s´”) effectively used in the construction of the corresponding substituent semiosis. That is, all semantics come from a syntactics.

5.4. Example, with elephants, of the 4 Signs

Having spoken about elephants, I will try to illustrate with them the entities and the relations to which I have referred.

Entities:

1) “S” represents the word “elephant” (signifier of a substituent semiosis). Also a statuette representing an elephant or an elephant exhibited in a circus ring.

2) “s” represents the values of the concept of elephant: mammal, quadruped, vertebrate, proboscidean, ungulate, etc., depending on a given text of zoology or on dictionaries, etc.; or the particular elephant (enraged, friendly, working, etc.) that is constructed in a literary work (signified of a substituent semiosis). Also the meaning of giver of good luck that has the domestic statuette of an elephant; or the meaning of the control man has on the behavior of an elephant exhibited in a circus.

3) “S´” represents the form or mental image of the elephant, such as each of us has it stored: is the mnemonic attractor that accepts or rejects the identification as elephant, of that what is incidentally constructed when reading a given text (signifier of a substituted semiosis). Also the acceptance or rejection as elephant, of that what is represented in the domestic statuette; or of what is exhibited in the circus.

4) “s´” represents the grammatical values of the word “elephant”: noun, not conjugated, admits adjectives, may be subject of a verb, etc.; or the rhetorical values coming from a given textual construction (the meaning, as relational possibilities of a given signifier belonging to a given substituent semiosis). Also, the position with the trunk raised of the elephant statuette (syntax) and its placing in the direction of the door of an apartment or house (syntax), or the position of the leg almost raised of the elephant (syntax), under which there is a woman (syntax) while the tamer remains with raised arms (syntax).
Relations:

\[
\begin{align*}
S & \rightarrow S' \\
\text{[Scheme 11]} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

represents the syntactic possibilities of the use in speech of the word “elephant” (sign of a substituent semiosis). Also, the possibilities of representation of an elephant’s body parts in a statuette and the diverse possibilities for the location of such statuette in a house, or the various attitudes that we can get from an elephant in a circus or the various relations that may be established between the elephant and persons and objects in the same circle of the circus.

\[
\begin{align*}
S' & \rightarrow S \\
\text{[Scheme 12]} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

represents what we know conceptually about such entities whose forms we identify as elephants (sign of a substituted semiosis). Also, that the elephants can be associated with good luck or with obedience.

\[
\begin{align*}
S & \rightarrow S \\
\text{[Scheme 13]} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

represents the meaning we attribute to the elephant, as we interpret it when we hear or read phrases in which appears the word “elephant” (mediating sign between the forms of a substituent semiosis and the meanings of a substituted semiosis). Also, auspicious meaning we attribute to the elephant, as is interpreted when we see the attitude represented in a given elephant statuette, placed in a given spot of a house, or when we see it obeying the tamer’s commands in the circus.

\[
\begin{align*}
S' & \rightarrow S' \\
\text{[Scheme 14]} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

represents the intervention and effectiveness of the syntactic possibilities of the way of talking about elephants so to propose a given conceptual image and not another of the elephant of which we speak (ideological sign that uses the syntactic meaning of a substituent semiosis to form the semantic meaning of the signifier of a substituted semiosis). Also, the effectiveness of a given way of relating the body parts of an elephant when constructing a statuette that represents it and the location of such statuette in the house, or the effectiveness of the location of the elephant with respect to the persons who interact with it in the circus; all of so that we could see the elephant in a given and not another way: in the first case as bearer of good luck and in the second case, as subjected to the power of man. In this sense, and perhaps to transmit this idea of effectiveness and specificity of syntax, is easy to understand that the statuette does not makes us see the elephant as subjected to man’s power, nor the attitude it takes in the circus and its interrelation with people makes us see the elephant as a giver of good luck; that is, each syntax tends to the production of a specific meaning, at least, while social conventions be still in force. Such the decisive role of the interpretant that is, at the end, who decides to interpret what it sees in one way or another.

To continue reflecting in the field of a Saussurean heterodoxy, bear in mind that:

A) This entities and relations are functions, that is, they depend, among other things, on another external entity which give them sense: the interpreter.
B) This entities and relations relate processually, that is, they are being produced following a sequence that directs from “S” (signifier of a substituent semiosis) to “s” (signifier of a substituted semiosis), having passed through “s’” (meaning of the signifier of a substituted semiosis) and through “S’” (signifier of a substituted semiosis).

\[ \begin{array}{c}
S \rightarrow s' \\
S' \leftarrow s
\end{array} \]

[Scheme 15]

C) As I tried to show, these entities and relations are valid (mutatis mutandis) for any of the three existential semiosis: icons (images of elephants), indexes (elephants of the circus) and symbols (the word “elephant”).

5.5 Operational development of the analytical proposal

Corresponds already, in this work on The 4 signs, to focus on the operational development of its analytical aspect, that is, to draw the empirical consequences which arise when we consider them as the theoretical frame of specific operations of research.

In this sense, its characteristics, which I tried to specify above, should be interpreted as a set of instructions to guide the work of the analyst who use semiotic methodology.

I situate myself on the sequential development outlined in the scheme 15 above. Once interpreted those symbols as indicators of the empirical entities taken by the researcher, they can be read in the following way:

“Given a perceptual proposal (“S” or forms of a given substituent semiosis) considered as appropriate because it is assumed by hypothesis that intervenes in (is used socially for) the production of the meaning of a given phenomenon, is necessary to identify the relations (“s’” or syntactic values of the same substituent semiosis) that link the units of that perceptual proposal, in order to know in which way such perceptual proposal intends that an eventual interpreter accept that a given social phenomenon (“S’” or forms of a given substituted semiosis) has or is acquiring or could acquire a given meaning (“s” or semantic values of that substituted semiosis”).

That is, a researcher asserts as working hypothesis, that in a set of substituent semiosis effectively available (verbal discourses and/or visual images and/or exhibition of objects and behaviors) there will be given relations between the signs effectively used in each instance of such substituent semiosis (verbal discourses and/or visual images and/or disposition of objects and behaviors) that have effectiveness so that a given social phenomenon be valued in a given way; which has to be proven as conclusion of the research.

Consequently, the first thing to do is to identify the raw material (“S”) to work with. This raw material, when the methodology of the research is semiotically oriented, will consist of a given substituent semiosis. The selection of this material will depend on the specific problem it attempts to explain (“s”), and this, in the case of a research with semiotic methodology, will face the task of determining what is (or what are, and in this case, in what contradict each other) at a given moment of a given society, the meaning (or meanings) that is/are assigned to the social phenomenon at study.

The working hypothesis will state (abductively, as a conjecture) that, in the specific relations (“s’”) identifiable between the constitutive parts of the pieces of that raw material, is the key that explains what is the social consideration of such phenomenon (“S’”) (it has to be stated explicitly in this hypothesis what will be the characteristics of the assumed consideration); this task will be denominated: critical reading of the meanings in force, with respect to a given social phenomenon (as occurs, for example, in the case of the analysis of the competence in advertising, or in the case of the discourse of the opposition in politics, or in the case of the analysis of aesthetic forms overcome in artistic creation, etc.).

May be also that the researcher wants to determine what relations (“s’”) should be established between the different elements (“S”) he/she can incorporate into a new perceptual proposal, so that the eventual interpreters begin to approach a given social phenomenon (“S’”) from a given perspective, i.e., as bearers of given values or meanings (“s”); this task will be named: creative proposal to establish the being in force of new meanings with respect to a given social phenomenon (as occurs, for example, in the case of analysis of the competence in advertising, or in the case of the discourse of the opposition in politics, or in the case of the analysis of aesthetic forms overcome in artistic creation, etc.).
What finally arises is that the work in semiotic research may have one of these aims: (1) to make a critical reading of the meanings in force with respect to a given social phenomenon, or (2) formulate a creative proposal to establish the being in force of new meanings, with respect to a given social phenomenon. Between both aims there is of course a range of predominances or of combinatories, but the field of semiotic research would remain bounded between both main tasks.

5.6. Peircean retrieval

The unnamed (or barely named) absent in the preceding paragraphs about the 4 signs, is the interpretant. However, what was said there is not consistent with itself but insofar as it constitutes in the mind of the interpreter another sign more developed (and I am paraphrasing Peirce: 2.228). Because of this, the Saussurean scheme is not enough to give account by itself alone, of the process of production of signification; its effectiveness is limited to (or shows to be effective to) establish, at a given moment (synchronically) some of the meanings effectively in force at a given moment of a given society, or to compare (diachronically) the meanings effectively in force in two different moments of the same society (between two synchronies).

What the researchers using this instrument of semiotic methodology are intending to retrieve, the inference they want to ground about the existence of given social habits of interpretation (also Peirce: 5476 passim), is the process by which given representamens or substituent semiosis

\[
\frac{S}{S'}
\]

[Scheme 16]

(verbatim texts, visual images, exhibitions of objects or behaviors) have effectiveness to build in one way and not another, even if there are many diverse ways, the semiotic objects or (in their perishable creative state) emerging substituted semiosis:

\[
\frac{S'}{S}
\]

[Scheme 17]

With this I am advising that is not enough to analyze a substituent semiosis (eg, a political discourse), but it is required an oppositional contrast (also Peirce: 5477) that the substituent semiosis establishes with the remaining substituents semiosis simultaneously in force in a given society.

So I am satisfying the condition that a given semantic construction (or attribution of a given meaning to a given phenomenon) not only depends on the syntax of the text, image and/or exhibition that are proposing it, but its effectiveness comes from the syntactic differential that provides (or uses) with respect to the other substituent semiosis in force at the same time (and so, available), with which are produced or could be produced other divergent semantic constructions.

Differential specifies the social value of the meaning produced by each substituent semiosis. Is representing (through texts, images and/or exhibitions) what the other substituent semiosis in force at the same time does not represent, and is not to represent what is effectively represented by the other substituing semiosis (and I am almost paraphrasing Foucault in his texts about the “uttering” and the “discursive formations”).

In the positivist procedures of statistical testing, there is a necessary minimum in the extension of a sample, that is established according to the dimension of the universe one is about to investigate, and this is a result of certain mathematical operations. To semiotic methodology, there is also a minimal extension of the necessary corpus to establish the characteristics of a given meaning, in force in a given society. Such minimum is constituted by that amount of data (texts, images and/or exhibitions of objects or behaviors) that permit to assess that an inconsistency has been produced in the set of the characteristics of the meaning at study. That is, when some (as minimum) contradiction in the analyzed ways of constructing such meaning is found (is a necessary condition, but may be not sufficient and, in general, is not). Without contradiction is not possible to know what is being denied nor, consequently, the limits that define what is affirmed. For semiotics it is not a question of amount, but of the contrasting qualities identified in the sample. That is why we can say not only that there is no semantics without syntax, but, in addition, that every semantics is differential, insofar something signifies, because its difference from something other, signifies.
So, semiotic analysis will allow to identify how, at a given moment of a given society, are constructed the systems of interpretants which represent, in turn, the social habit of interpretation effectively in force. From these different and contradictory systems of interpretants (with all the possibilities included in the distancing gradient that separate them, and that is to be determined) will be constructed, through the set of substituent semiosis circulating in them, the different and contradictory meanings that always and in every society, are attributed to one and the same and given social phenomenon (as to this paragraph, is specially interesting: 3. Logical Interpretants: 5.470-5.493, from the Chapter 1: A survey of pragmaticism, Book III: Unpublished papers in Volume V: Pragmatism and Pragmaticism, of the Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce).

And as to the net of relations representing the final state of a research that fulfill the conditions I come referring to, I have denominated it, in other work (Magariños, 1996: 427-460; 1999), possible semiotic worlds, as representation of the contrasts between the meanings attributed to a social phenomenon by the interpretative habit of the different social interpreters.
6 Charles Sanders Peirce¹:

Semiotics, logic and cognition

6.1 The Sign. Introduction

In theory of signs, the classificatory and relational criteria and concepts of Charles Sanders Peirce are fundamental for the systematic organization of semiotics as a discipline and for the empirical research derived from it. Given the brevity of these pages, it would be impossible to develop the theoretical reason that justify completely that statement. I will seek to comply with a more humble objective, namely the brief presentation of those basic ideas that are especially realizable from Peirce’s thought.

We need to start with his concept of sign. Throughout his immense work, there are multiple, and not always consistent, definitions of sign (Marty (1996), collects 76). I take, for now, the most commonly used: “A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce, 2.228)

This definition is the hinge on which turns Peirce’s theory. It says the less possible so to construct about it the more possible. Jakobson (1963) would qualify it as “aphasic” because the syntactic places that should have been occupied by substancial concepts, are merely indicated by pronouns: “something”, “somebody”, and again “something”, and by the adjective “some”, so prone to be transformed in a pronoun. Nor what is qualified by this “some” offers much content; can be accepted more synthetically, “relation” (in its broad sense and not -at least yet- in a specific logico-mathematic sense). Closing the structure of the definition, he uses the verb “to stand for”. That is, “to be in place of”; there is even preferable “to be for”, because this is the more empty sense of representation, which is, in short, what is at stake. So, a little later, in 2.273, Peirce himself tooks care of establishing the sense he is interested in: “To stand for, that is, to be in such a relation to another that for certain purposes it is treated by some mind as if it were that other”. So he managed in getting that the initial definition be harmonized in an isotope context with the freedom gi ven by the pronouns that constitute it. The verb could have remained implicit, due to the vigor of the prepositions “to”, “for”, and “in” that articulate such context. Reducing it to a schematic format, we would have the following scheme of sign:

(A)

\[
\text{Something} \quad (1) \quad \text{to} \quad \text{somebody} \\
\text{(2) in} \quad \text{some} \quad \text{relation} \\
\text{(3) for} \quad \text{something}
\]

The same 2.228 mentioned above, says: “It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. The sign which it creates, I call the Interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have called the ground of the representamen”. In principle, the whole of the sign, whose scheme is presented in (A), is being directed to somebody and creates in him/her another sign: the interpretant of the first one. It deals with a phenomenon that is characteristic of all language (as semiotic duplication) to whose effectiveness is needed the production of two signs: the representamen, proposed by the emitter, and the interpretant, elaborated by the receiver (although in the Peircean proposal, unlike Saussure’s conception, the latter completes the sign, not to be alien, but integrated into its own structure: there is no sign until it is interpreted). Anyway, this semiotic process, in which the communication emitter-receiver is only one case, should be depersonalized. All communication process is also a relation between representamen and interpreter; in this case the representamen is the uttering, for example, scientific (or may be better, the utterance) directed to a theoretical system where, transformed into interpretant, that is, in a logical place, receives its significative value. From the graphic (A), its complement, according to what I have said is:

(B)

Something (1, 2, and 3) \hspace{1em} \text{interpretant:}

\[
\text{that is also a sign,} \\
\text{that is, something (1, 2 and 3)}
\]


² See Some observations on the translation of certain terms... at the beginning of this book. (G.W).
Secondly, all sign (A) is a substitute for something, what it denotes its object. Until here, Peirce builds the sign as capable of substituting its object, from which he can only say that is “something”. This concept coincides with the intuitive one that in semiotics is chaos, as something we can point out (logically) but that is unspeakable. I studied the theme of chaos in semiotics, from diverse angles, in my initial work Del caos al lenguaje, from 1983. Almost 25 years after, I return to the issue starting with the difference between entropical environment (the most similar to chaos) and semiotic world, working out its transformation from the proposal of Varela, 1992 (see here, chapter 22). Nevertheless, Peirce wants to say something more about that object and so he affirms that the substitution of it by the sign, does not encompass it as a whole, but only one part of its substitutive possibility, a given kind of idea, that he denominates “ground”. In what consists the idea that the sign cuts something from the object and become substitute for it? Peirce was concerned to free such term of the different philosophical senses that can evoke and chooses its everyday meaning, clarifying it through some examples: when “...one man catches another man’s idea, ... when a man recalls what he was thinking of at some previous time, ... when a man continues to think anything..” (2.228). The examples show that the idea taken by the sign from the object, is not in the object but in the thought (of a man or as proposition in a theoretical system). It means that there would be two theoretical possibilities: the sign substitutes the object as chaos, saying it by the first time (supposition excluded explicitly by Peirce: 2.231), or the sign substitutes, through a new way of saying, something that has been already said (or thought) about the object. In this last case, we can perceive how chaos goes back towards a supposed primordial object: the ontic, inaccessible to knowledge, after having been unmasked, and demonstrated that it was already said: the ontological and, therefore, perceptible. In short, what is the object of a sign?; that is, what is its referent (using the more controversial term)? Chaos or another sign: tertium non datur. As chaos is unspeakable, if there would be a sign pointing it out, this would be the last accessible level of the object. As this is not logically possible, because if it is a sign, it has to have as ground something that can be said (the “idea”) about the object (there is no sign that could not be reduced to another sign), it follows that a sign will always have as its object, another saying, that is, another sign. We arrive then, to this new scheme:

(C)

(2) Representamen:       (1) Interpretant:

Something (1, 2, 3)       that is also a sign, that is, something (1, 2, 3)

(3) Ground:

that is also sign, that is, something (1, 2, 3)

The addition of the term “representamen” in this graphic is perfectly justified, since Peirce offers it as synonym of the term “sign”, for it indicates the existence of the perceptual form in which consists the sign (close, then, to the Saussurean “significant”). Clearly, this closure of the sign, both as regards the interpretant, to which he attributes the character of sign, and as regards the ground, which he establishes equally as sign, implies a recursion in the structure of the grammar of the signs (Peirce calls the book whose paragraphs are we commenting, Speculative Grammar) that is currently a requirement of formal grammars in their recursive definitions (see, among others, Carnap, 1958, p. 164; Quine 1969; p. 174; Chomsky 1971; p. 13 and 229 –entry “Recursiveness”- and also Chomsky 1974; p. 39). This closure and the correlative expansion of the sign in its instances of interpretant and ground is not a result of an actualization, nor has it demanded an epistemological derivation of their concepts, but instead it was something expressly seen by Peirce.

As to the interpretant, in 2.303, he defines the concept of sign, from the viewpoint of its interrelations, as “Anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on ad infinitum”.

A little more implicitly he admits the closure of the sign with respect to its object, because the object is also a sign, at least “in the case of a Sign that is a part of a Sign”; 2.230). This is exemplified with, among other things, a supposed situation that is a structure on the best style of conceptual art: “On a map of an island laid down upon the soil of that island there must, under all ordinary circumstances, be some position, some point, marked or not, that represents qua place on the map, the very same point qua place on the island” (ibidem). In the next paragraph is expressly established the quality of already known, that is, the quality of being already a sign, inherent to the object of every sign. I think convenient to fully transcribe the 2.231, despite its extension, because of its interest to researchers and critics: “The Sign can only represent the Object and tell about it. It cannot furnish acquaintance with or recognition of that Object; for that is what is meant in this volume by the Object of a Sign; namely, that with which it presupposes an acquaintance in order to convey some further information concerning it. No doubt there will be readers who will say they cannot comprehend this. They think...
a Sign need not relate to anything otherwise known, and can make neither head nor tail of the statement that every sign must relate to such an Object. But if there be anything that conveys information and yet has absolutely no relation nor reference to anything which the person to whom it conveys information has, when he comprehends that information, the slightest acquaintance, direct or indirect -and a very strange sort of information that would be- the vehicle of that sort of information is not, in this volume, called a Sign”. That is, from chaos (as a supposedly primordial object) can not arise knowledge. Knowledge has always as its object another knowledge and never the reality in its pretended purity of not having been modified by thought. Therefore, if the object of any sign must be something already known, then it also is a sign. This recursive sense of the concept of sign is one of the more fruitful contributions of Peirce to contemporary epistemology. For instance, from here arises the possibility of affirming that a unique sign is unknowable (Magariños de Morentín, 1975; p. 57) as a limit to the multivariate and more or less implicit pretensions of the current trends of substantialism and nominalism (being that none of the three constituents of the sign, the ground, the representamen, the interpretant, have sense by themselves). The sign, which appears through the representamen, is, in any case, a structure whose interdependent elements are the interpretant and the ground. This is one of the aspects that made Popper (1974; p. 198) exclaim with enthusiasm that Peirce is the greatest American philosopher. It would be difficult to determine how excessive is this exclamation.

Without going into the criticism of other triadic structures, like the one mentioned above, of Morris (1938), or those of Ogden and Richards (1923), or of Ullmann (1996), is clear the structure resulting from Peirce’s proposal:

[3] (D)

The sign is produced in a semiotic environment, which is the logical condition of its existence. Thus, the theoretical framework in which semiotic research can be based, requires the establishment and adjustment of such logical semiotic field, in whose interior, the sign is the structuring structure as the smallest unit of analysis: there is no sign until it is not established the semiotic field that generates it, but when it has been correctly identified an appropriately bounded semiotic area, can be recognized simultaneously, the corresponding particular sign, with its 9 constituent relations.

The richness inherent to the aphasic character of Peirce’s definition of sign can be comprehended through relating the scheme (D) with the scheme (A). This definition must have contain the possibility of relation in the three aspects that require its existence: “for something”, “to somebody” and “in some relation”. Through the first of them, the sign will capture knowledge (the ground) of the object in which it is interested; through the second, it will establish to itself as perceptual form and substitutive support (representamen) of such intervention; and, through the third, it will provide the possibility of modification that, in a given system (interpretant), affects knowledge or [unknowledge] (but not no-knowledge) of such object. This interpretation of the concepts of
firstness, secondness and thirdness proposed by Peirce, is sufficient in my approach to the foundations of semiotics; They have led to excessive and too gratuitous metaphysical speculations on their aprioristic character and to few epistemological reflections on the contribution of rationality and methodology they have provided to the theory of sign.

It has been traditional to see the sign as a replica of the object; this was the referent of the sign and the sign was the symbolization of such referent. The foundation of the science of linguistics was possible breaking this dependence. The couple signifier-signified of Saussure emphasizes the third aspect, to be such and such for somebody or for some knowledge system, insofar as any perceptual form can be the conveyer of a concept (to somebody). This makes the biunivocal link (name to thing) between sign and referent to be no longer a scientific problem; the relation has been rethought as the determination of the logical place corresponding to each of them in their respective system (of interpretants and grounds). From another perspective, Hjelmslev is interested in the qualities of the sign derived from its characteristics as representamen; the forms connecting sequences of interdepening forms with which he delimits the concepts of sign and non-sign in linguistics, are syntactic forms and direction problems. This leads him to conceive of each element of language as a given category, defined by certain possibilities of combination and by the exclusion of others (1971b; 47). Banishing the substantial aspect of language (langue), Hjelmslev establishes Glossematics as the study that emphasizes the form (representamen) and situates linguistics in the frame of a general semiotics (or semiology) (1972; 49); giving a formal definition of semiotics as a hierarchy, any of whose components admits of a further analysis into classes defined by mutual relation, so that any of these classes admits of an analysis into derivates defined by mutual mutation (1971a; 135). On the other hand, the dynamic side of the sign, considered in relation with the interpretant, has led to the praxiological trends of linguistics, that take into account especially the communicative aspect in their definition of language. In general, they derive from the third concept of Morris, characterized as “the pragmatic dimension of the semiosis”, posed as a definite sense of biological information: “The interpreter of a sign is an organism; the interpretant is the habit of the organism to respond, because of the sign vehicle, to absent objects which are relevant to a present problematic situation as if they were present” (1971/1938; 109). This led him to propose the relation with the “designatum” (what Peirce denominates “ground”), as a “real taking into account, in the interpreter’s behaviour, of a given kind of things by virtue of the response to the vehicle sign, and that such things taken into account are the designata”. I am incurring in this glimpse of expansion into other structures of sign, despite my good intentions, because I have touched one of the more sensitive points in semiotics systematization as methodology for the explanation of production of signification, that is intimately dependent on the concept of sign that one adopts. The wealth of existing works on the concept of sign shows that the sign is the defining problem of this discipline and establishes the need of enunciate it from axiomatic foundations, so to give the epistemological place that corresponds to semiotics.

The scheme posed in (D), that is no other than the graphing of each of the elements of the sign considered, in its turn, as sign, permits to go inside the next aspect exposed in the Speculative Grammar of Peirce and which is his proposal of classifying the signs; this classification includes implicitly the axioms of a scientific semiotics, to which I referred above.

In a strictly logical development of the initial definition, he formulates three trichotomies that provide nine classes of signs. I will not analyze here the process by which, through the determination of three triadic relations and three correlation relations (or correlates) he formulates such trichotomies. I will substitute it by an almost didactic explanation that allows the reader not familiar with Peirce’s thought to understand, elementally, the quality of each of those nine signs. Progressively, throughout this text, I will develop other enriching aspects for the comprehension of the effectiveness and possible interrelations between these nine classes of signs. The starting point is to assimilate the structure of the sign and that of the three already identified components.

a) for something
b) in some relation
c) to somebody

We have seen how this involved the presence, as semiotic environment, of a structure of three components that, in turn, are signs and that correspond to the elements stated in the following way:

(E)

a) for something.................................................................Ground
b) in some relation............................................................Representamen
c) to somebody...............................................................Interpretant
The relation stated under (E) in a) is a relation of *performance or presence*. That is to say, it establishes a relation whose determinant reason is the *fact* of delimiting, by the sign, the particular aspect of the object (ground) that is of special interest to a given communication.

The relation stated under (E) in b) is a relation of *comparison or quality*. That is, it establishes a relation whose determinant reason is the *possibility* of materializing, by the sign, a presence of semiotic nature (representamen).

The relation stated under (E) in c) is a relation of *thought or conventional*; with it is established a relation whose determinant reason is the *necessity* that gives consistency, by the sign, to the system of the interpretant.

Each of this determinant reasons of the respective relations of correspondence, can be enunciated also as: a) of *existence*, b) of *form*, c) of *law*. This brings up the following table of equivalents:

(F)  
A) for something .............. ground .................. performance ........... fact .................. existence  
B) in some relation .......... representamen .......... comparison .......... possibility .......... form  
C) to something .............. interpretant .......... thought ................ necessity .......... law

that shows the different logical relations inherents to each element of the structure of the sign.

It remains to consider a characteristic of the sign that has been constantly present above: each *element of the structure of the sign is, in its turn, a sign*. Therefore, if the ground, the representamen, and the interpretant, in addition of being three constituent parts of the sign, are each of them a sign, then each of them contains three elements that constitute the structure of the sign. Thereupon:

(G)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) The ground sign possesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a') its own ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b') its own representamen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c') its own interpretant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b) The representamen sign possesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a'') its own ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b'') its own representamen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c'') its own interpretant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c) The interpretant sign possesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a''' its own ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b''' its own representamen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c''' its own interpretant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which is corresponding, as utterings, with the graph (D) as constituent spaces of the semiotic environment pertinent to the sign.

With this, we have generated recurrently, from a’ to c’’’, nine signs which are the primary base of all semiotic classification. Of course, as Peirce said, in 2.303, the generation of other possible signs continues “ad infinitum”. The limit depends on the needs of each scientific discipline or particular research. The ones produced by this law of semiotic transformation, are successive levels of metalanguage from each of the aspects or elements inherents to the structure of the sign. We could say, provisionally, that this allows to identify (with especial usefulness in the so called “human sciences”) the right epistemological place corresponding to each of the utterings of a given scientific discipline, because we can establish with formal rigor, what has been used as object language [(constitutive of] the material object of a science), what as first metalanguage (or formal object, that gives account of the precedent object language) and what as eventual second, third, etc., metalanguages (epistemological levels or utterings coming from other systems in which they possess different metalinguistic or, more generally, metasemiotic level). With this perspective of analysis can be eliminated many of the aporias that frequently undermine systematics, clarity and explanatory power, especially in human sciences, and the respective utterings can be submitted to the diverse contrasting proofs of verification, falsability or confirmation.

To their better identification, these nine signs are displayed with the denominations Peirce attributed to them and with the constituents that originate them, in the next double-entry table, following the distribution of the schemes (D), (F) and (G):
In principle, and more as a guide than as methodological criterion in the practice of research work about the meaning of each sign, is instructive (facing the need to classify a given sign appearing in a given discourse or the need to produce a given sign for its inclusion in a given discourse) to read the entries for each row and column, corresponding to the sign to be produced and also to locate the sign that identifies the desired clarification. So, for example, an index is the “existence” of a “ground”, or the “fact” of an “existence” or the “performance” of such “existence”, etc. Instead, an argument is, for example, the “interpretant” of the “interpretant” or a “law” of the “thought” or a “necessity” “to somebody”, etc. I repeat that it is just an expressive trial or didactical practice to find the uttering which allows better meet the conceptual or empirical need in a specific moment of the research. This does not infringe anything and, instead, uses as analytical instrument the very structure of the sign.

In the columns there are the correlates formulated by Peirce: 1st. Correlate, is constituted by Qualisign, Sinsign and Legisign; it identifies the formal aspect (to some extent, similar to the Saussurean “signifier”) of each level: formal strictly speaking, existential and legal. The form has form (qualisign); the existent has form (sinsign); and the necessity (logical) has form (legisign); such the sense of the three signs of this first correlate. The 2nd. Correlate is constituted by icon, index and symbol; through them can be identified the existential aspect (the specific and real presence of the sign) of each level. So is alluded the existence of the form (icon), the existence of the existence (index) and the existence of the law or the system of social or theoretical conventions (symbol) (note the specific sense that takes in Peirce the otherwise controversial and ambiguous term “symbol”). The 3rd. Correlate is constituted by rheme, dicisign and argument. With them enters the legal aspect of the form, for example, in the sense of the possible systematical relations between qualities (rheme); the legal aspect of existence, for example, in the sense of the syntactical relations of a specific context (dicisign); and the legal aspect of the legality itself, in the sense of the theoretical reason giving consistency to a system (argument).

To complete this vision, I will transcribe the definition of each of such signs offered by Peirce, accompanying them with a short comment. I will follow also the development of the nine signs through a double example: 1st.) as a conceptual example, the localizations originated by the possible signs discernible in the paradigm of the sign “substitution” (I take this example because is the foundamental concept of all semiosis and of semiotics itself as rigorous methodology); and 2nd.) as an empirical concept (which is in addition a specific realization of the sign “substitution”), the “morse alphabet”.

### 6.2 The 9 classes of signs

#### 6.2.1 Qualisign

"Is a quality which is a Sign" (2.244). *Is a sign that takes from the object and transfers to the interpretant the mere formal aspect of such object. Is the form of the possibility (“tone”), extracting this operationally from the system constituted by the rheme, because such form is one of the types or elements constituting it, so its value will be found also in the rheme.*

Example 1: “The possible form of substitution”. By this is indicated the repertoire of qualities by virtue of which an object may be in the place of another. That is, if we suppose the substitution is the hypothetic object of the sign studied, the *qualisign* takes as its own ground (i.e., the aspect of the object that it wants to represent) the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 SIGNS (or classes of signs)</th>
<th>In some relation REPRESENTAMEN</th>
<th>For something GROUND</th>
<th>To somebody INTERPRETANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Qualisign</td>
<td>2. Icon</td>
<td>3. RHEME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sinsign</td>
<td>5. Index</td>
<td>6. DICISIGN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In some relation REPRESENTAMEN</th>
<th>Comparison Possibility FORM</th>
<th>Ground Performance Fact EXISTENCE</th>
<th>To somebody INTERPRETANT Thought Necessity LAW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Qualisign</td>
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<td>5. Index</td>
<td>6. DICISIGN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
repertoire of variants through which the substitution can be produced: replacement, displacement, elimination (which actualizes that which the removed had been hiding), evolution (in which the prior one stops being, giving rise to another that comes from it), subdivision, assembly, etc. Therefore, this repertoire of possible forms of substitution (with special emphasis on the quality of “possible”) is a repertoire of qualisigns and is indispensable as foundation for the implementation of any substitution or for the interpretation of any substitutive perception.

Example 2: The object of substitution, in the case of the Morse alphabet is verbal language. The qualisign takes from verbal language the possibilities that the qualisign itself has of being substituted, and offers in this way, the paradigm inside which the Morse alphabet must have to occur so as to become a specific way of substituting the verbal language from which, here, in the qualisign, appears as mere possibility (as the “inspiration” that had Samuel F.B. Morse when he imagined the possibility of normalizing the phonemes of language (langue)). This implies: i) existence of a verbal language that is to be substituted (correlating the spoken and written, with variations between sound and graphics); ii) existence of perceptual aspects in speech and in writing, whose systematic collection can be substituted by perceptual aspects of another languages with characteristics that can be verbal (translation from one language to another), or as in the case of Morse, non verbal (gestures, colours, drawings, electrical impulses, etc.); iii) a verbal language can not be substituted by a non-language, except at the cost of stopping to be a language. The elements mentioned in ii) are the qualisigns of verbal language, i.e., those aspects that refer to the qualitative aspects of the sign-object “verbal language”, which are related in a specific way to the qualitative aspects of the semiotic system containing the representamen-sign of the Morse alphabet.

6.2.2 Icon

"Is a Sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not" (2.247). Is a sign that takes from its object and transfers to the interpretant the possibility that a given form exist in that object. Is the existence of the possibility of the form, that is obtained integrating the previously selected qualisigns.

Example 1: “The possible existence of substitution”. That is, before a given proposal, its possibility or not of substitution is established and, where appropriate, the form of substitution that could be applied from the repertoire of qualisigns to the supposed in presence. From the substitution as object of an icon, this takes as ground the sector of the paradigm of substituent possibilities that would be realizable at a given moment. This occurs when we want to capture from the object by means of the corresponding sign its identification as possibility to individualize it, either in the presence of such object or in its absence; that is, when the substitution tends to produce a representative replacement. In order to produce it, a graphic form or an acoustic form or a tactile form, etc., is selected. This form will or will not belong to the same object it wants to substitute; it may retain similarity with given perceptual or conceptual aspects of the object; or it will disclaim all physical or intellectual relation with the object; in this case, it should be based on an option (individual or collective) randomly established but conventionally accepted. The form, under these conditions and characteristics, is the representamen-sign icon of the sign-object substitution.

Example 2: The icon, in the Morse alphabet, implies the election in the repertoire of qualisigns, of one of the possibilities marked in ii) [from the Example 2 of Qualisign]. So a new range of possibilities enclosed in its environment is bounded. And, the iconic aspect of Morse is constituted by the characteristics of a non verbal language, able to substitute a verbal language. It proposes as its own problem the selection of the quality of the non-verbal that should substitute the verbal. Gestures will lead, for example, to the language of the deaf-mute or to mimicry as theatrical genre. Colours will permit the substitution of verbal language through, for example, the alphabet of international code of maritime signals. Electrical impulses can lead to Morse by being reproduced in a differential form, acoustic or graphic. Connection between intensity and frequency of electrical impulse and sonorities of verbal language is arbitrary and conventional. This means that the icon of Morse retains none of the perceptual characteristics inherent to verbal language, but comes from a merely conventional attribution of perceptual forms produced by electrical impulses, as representative replacements of perceptually differentiable forms of verbal language.

6.2.3 Rheme

"Is a Sign which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of qualitative possibility, that is, is understood as representing such and such a kind of possible Object” (2.250). Is the system of the possible forms, in force at a given moment in a given community, and from which the producer draw the qualities with which will produce the icon, and to whose knowledge turns the interpreter (associative memory) to understand and valuate the icon the producer proposed.

To designate this logical place of his partitional structure of the signs, Peirce adopts the denomination (rheme) with which is being identified from Plato on, the verbal component of an uttering, and which Dionysius Thrax considered as the enunciation of the possibility of a performance or process that yet has not happened. From another viewpoint, not appropriate to develope here, he indicates the possibility that a given theoretical system
receive (or produce or find a logical place to) a sign that is not previewed originally by the system. Indicates the possibility of expansion or development of a system. Is the possibility of a system to transforming itself from (and without breaking) the legality (or the interpretant) of such system. Is a sign that takes from the object and gives to the interpretant the possibility that a given form confer a given value to such object, when being included such form in a specific system.

Example 1: “The value of the possibility of substitution”. By this, the qualisign that showed its range of possibilities and the icon that delimited it by conditioning it to the function that will be attributed to it, are both subjected to their acceptability in a given system. So, if there are possible graphic, audible or tactile icons to the production of the substitution, through the rhyme will be taken from the object, as ground, the value of the resulting substitution when, in the absence of the object only are taken into account the representative replacements having the formal quality which has been chosen. This internal relation in a system of substitutes, as for example, graphics or accoustics or tactile, with the ability of substituting because of its own laws of interrelation, is what constitutes them in the representamen-sign rhyme of the sign-object substitution.

Example 2: Morse’s alphabet as rhyme implies the evaluation, as system, of its ability to substitute a given universe of elements that, in this case, belong to verbal language. The composition based on to two differentiable signs (“dot” and “dash”, in their graphic representation); the recurrence, from any of the two signs, in combination with itself or with the other and being repeated any of them so many times as is needed to achieve the identification of each configuration; the pause to differentiate each configuration in sequences; the economy and antithropy as criteria to differentiate the configurations; the semantization of certain configurations as “beginning”, “ending”, “received”, and “error”; all of these are guidelines to evaluate the aptitude of the consequent system as interpreter of verbal language (the response to that questions of verbal language that must be represented by each configuration of Morse, is not the problem of the rhaema but of the legisign, and should be analyzed with the latter).

6.2.4 Sinsign

"(Where the syllable sin is taken as meaning 'being only once', as in single, simple, Latin semel, etc.) is an actual existent thing or event which is a sign. It can only be so through its qualities...” (2.245). Is a sign that takes from the object and transfers to the interpretant the formal characteristics that may exist in such object. Is a specific possibility to the existence of a sign; that available raw material (“token” or specimen) in the context (or world) of its producer, that will intervene (or has intervened) effectively in the production of the sign at study.

Example 1: “Existence of a substitutive form”, as specific reality of the possibility of substituting by a perceptual form the qualities existent in a given object, without relating to any temporality: it may yet have occurred, may be is occurring or will occur in the future. Is the possibility based on the relation existing between the actual qualities of the object-sign going to be substituted and the ones of the representamen-sign that may substitute it. A kind of spade of Damocles to each specific object of the universe.

Example 2: The sinsign referred to Morse’s alphabet specifies the availability, at a moment like this, here and now, in which is not being used, of its specific characteristics. Each of the configurations of elements (the fact of knowing, for example, that the following configurations are codified forms of the Morse: “.”, “-” or “-.” or “- - - -”, or any other) is a sinsign, because in its system they exist, as sequences of “dots” and “dashes” willing to capture from the corresponding sign-object “elements of verbal image”, the aspect that interests to substitute in order to transform it into another: the representamen-sign of Morse.

6.2.5 Index

"Is a Sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object” (2.248). Is a sign that takes from the object and transfers to the interpretant the specific material existence of such object. Is the effective real existence of a sign, constructed with the corresponding sinsign/s.

Example 1: “Real existence of substitution”, as specific participation in a prior existence of a given object and, at the same time, in the result of the next transformation produced in such object (that is, the substituted is not yet in the object that has been substituted, but it depends on the fact of having been produced such substitution; and is already in the substituting object with the new quality that confers to it the fact of being in the place of the substituted). This sign indicates the full current existence of the sign as sign.

Example 2: The index sign referred to Morse’s alphabet is one of its accepted configurations when materialized at a given moment and in a given place. So, when we now write: “- - - - - - - -”, we have materialized indexes of Morse (or, more precisely, as we will see next, its corresponding graphic replicas). The index participate of the existence of the sign-object and effectively, the perceptual representations we traced are Morse and letters (“m”, “a”, “n”, “o”), as constitutive elements of the graphic representation of the verbal language.
6.2.6 - Dicisign or Dicent Sign

"Is a Sign, which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of actual existence". (2.251). Is the valuation that achieves a given sign when is being perceived as materially integrated to a given context, according to whose environment, the producer will evaluate the materiality of the qualities he will attribute to the index, and to whose knowledge the interpreter will resort in order to understand and value the index proposed by the producer.

In the previous paragraph, extending the denomination of the dicent sign Peirce says: “that is, a proposicion or cuasi-proposition”. Is a dangerous and even equivocal aspect that require a slight adjustment. A proposition (leaving aside the problems involved in the use of this term, which can be seen, for example, in Quine, 1973: 21ff) can be a sign when is intended to be integrated with other propositions to form a more complex structure of these (for example, a paragraph or a book). But when Peirce says that the dicent sign is a proposition, what has to be interpreted is that the value of sign of this sign comes from its aptitude for integrating a proposition or uttering, but it is not exactly in being one. More adjusted, but without adding clarity, would be to say that is a “cuasi-proposition”; i.e., something that already contains all the necessary conditions to become so. And this is important because indicates the end of all sign, in the sense of becoming part of a context: the unique way by which this sign can be actualized. While the theme indicates the entrance door to a system, as it is the possibility of transforming itself in a value logically structured according to the legality of the system (but is not a system), the Dicisign indicates the exit door of the system, by which the signs of such system are in conditions of being present, or of existing, in a proposition or uttering or discourse (not being already signs but replicas of such signs). That is, it refers to the value, given that we are in the column of the interpretant, but as actual or existent value, given that we are also in the row of the ground. Finally, is sign for a context and with the characteristics attributed to it by that context (but is not a context). So, is a sign that takes from its object and transfers to the interpretant the identification of such object in the existential context to which it belongs (and that, by virtue of its delivery to the interpretant, organizes itself as syntactic identification in the respective semic context).

Example 1: “Existence of a value of substitution”, as concrete existence of the sign that can produce (or could have produced) the substitution of the object and that assumes the relative correlation between the relations of the sign-object in the context in which is perceived and the relations of the representamen-sign in the semiotic context substituting the precedent, to which is redirected.

Example 2: The totality and each configuration of Morse’s alphabet, considered as dicisign, are situated as elements of a broader context consisting in a given process of communication. Emitter, receiver, message, channel and referent, are other contextual signs along with which takes on sense or value the presence of the Morse signs. The circumstances of relative distance between emitter and receiver and between economy and effectiveness facing other communication media, make a second contextual level that affects the value of each contingent presence of such signs. So the difference between the amusement of a couple of lovers saying goodbye at night from their respective windows by flashing lantern lights, using Morse alphabet, and an information about the passage of the trains between two train stations, lies in the different quality of dicisign that acquires in each case the Morse alphabet.

6.2.7 - Legisign

"Is a law that is a Sign. This law is usually established by men. Every conventional sign is a legisign (but not conversely). It is not a single object, but a general type which it has be agreed, shall be significant" (2.246). Is the norm, rule or law that confer the possibility of conventional valuation that can acquire a sign, becoming a symbol, taking them operationally from the system identified as argument, because is one of the normative types or elements composing it, so the argument will be also the place where it will find its valuation.

Example 1: “Value of the form of substitution”. Is acquired inside some system of signs valid for the production of signification. That is why they require a given convention and, consequently, is a social production of a particular system of substitution. That is, it assumes the existence (for now, logic) of a language. We could study the six precedent signs in relations that did not exceed the system itself that organized them. The three remaining signs in our analysis, and which correspond to the row of the interpretant, require the “other” system (the one they substitute), because their value result from intersystemic relations. The precedents organize the “concept” of substitution; these fix the characteristics of the “relation” of substitution. Therefore our example needs to be specified with respect to a type of language. Be it the verbal. That implies that such “value of the form of substitution” become possible by the existence of “a place in a verbal paradigm”. A possibility of identifying a differential morphemic form that, by belonging to a system, that of the speech, is linked through intrasystemic laws with semantic elements which, in turn, link it in paradigmatic form, to other semantic elements belonging to other semiotic systems. The paradigms constituted in this way, morphemic and semantic respectively, will generally have a relative homology, in the sense of a structural similarity; they would never be identical, because they are assumed to be composed of a different semiotic material, nor could they be totally heterogeneous, because thought require to attribute to the places they occupy in the respective paradigms a homogeneity at least conventional, in order to permit reciprocal substitution. (I remained somewhat uneasy about my introduction
without previous advice, of the expression “semiotic material”; is an allusion to that what forms the respective signifiers and what determines, to some extent, the respective legality). In the same paragraph Peirce exemplifies the legisign: "...The word 'the' will usually occur from fifteen to twenty-five times on a page. It is in all these occurrences one and the same word, the same legisign". This general character affecting, yet, the legisign, is a consequence of the components that concur in this sign as logic place in the system of the nine signs we are studying; is the form of a law but is not yet an existent law. Consequently, is a sign that takes from the object and transfers to the interpretant a core of relations appropriate to the object of its own universe. In the same paragraph in which Peirce discusses the concept of legisign (2.246), he introduces the concept of “replica” that we alluded previously. The name appears loaded of platonism, because the real of the sign is reserved both to that general law that identifies it as such, and to the concept of “symbol” in which, as we shall see, is materialized its existence. “Replica” is the contingent reality manifested by each real presence of the sign in a context. "Every legisign signifies through an instance of its application, which may be termed a Replica of it". So, the analysis of a given context or observational situation, has as its object replicas of legisigns. And this is the thesis of the study about chaos: any object, if known (and any object that can be perceived is already known, that is, any perception require a prior enunciation that makes it perceivable (see chapter 21)) is already a sign. There exists a system (that could be mythical, poetic, scientific, vulgar or ritual) from which it acquire a specific legality (that makes it known and, therefore, perceivable). If something is purely real, as existent in the world (ontically existent), but is a replica without legality, then it can not be perceived, because nothing leads us to its presence (this has occurred with certain colours “discovered” not long ago, that existed, but could not be perceived) and so it is chaos.

This semiotic consideration about perception is a base to the criterion that rejects reality as a valid resource for contrasting a given scientific theory and supports the criterion that restricts the value of inductive processes for the formulation of general statements. Either that reality is already replica of some precedent legality (and therefore is not “real” in the sense attributed by the extreme empiricists, but interpreted perception) or is chaos and, as such, is entropic environment absolutely useless as foundation or proof of any theory.

Example 2: The legisign of the Morse alphabet consists in the regularity of the selected combinatorial. Such regularity is based on convention and on the effectiveness of the differential transmission of electrical impulses. We can try a combinatorial based on progressive transformations starting with a dot and a dash, with additions of these same signs that allow to differentiate them with the greater economy. So we would have:

```
(e) .  (i) .  (t) -  (m) - 
(a) . -  (u) . -  (n) -  (g) - - 
(r) . -  (f) . .  (k) . -  (q) . - - 
(w) . . -  (s) . .  (d) . .  (z) . . - 
(l) . . -  (v) . . .  (y) . . -  (o) . - - 
(p) . . .  (h) . . .  (c) . . .  (ch) . . . 
(j) . . .  (x) . . . 
(b) - . -
```

Regularity in the combinatorial produces the dot and dash configurations used in the Morse alphabet. But they does not match the letters of conventional alphabet. Nor the disposition of a keyboard whose distribution corresponds to a legisign and is due to the rationalization of statistic frequency of use (in English) and its correspondence with the fingers of both hands. Probably the legisign of Morse relates to the identification and differentiation of electric impulses in such way that its entropy in the transmission of information is being reduced to the minimum possible. Instead, as to the numbers, is possible to establish a legisign based on the ordered transformation of five elements, starting with a dot and four dashes to the “1” and one dash and four dots for the “6”, substituting progressively each dash by a dot in the first group and, inversely in the second, till the “0” as tenth element.

```
(1) . . . . . - - - - (6)
(2) . . - - - - - - (7)
(3) . . . . . - - - - (8)
(4) . . . - - - - - - (9)
(5) . . . . . - - - - - (0)
```

Not pretending anything else than to show what is the legisign with reference to the Morse alphabet, I will not deal with its remaining signs.
6.2.8 Symbol

"Is a Sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object... Not only is it general itself; but the Object to which it refers is of a general nature. Now that which is general has its being in the instances which it will determine. There must, therefore, be existent instances of what the Symbol denotes, although we must here understand by 'existent', existent in the possibly imaginary universe to which the Symbol refers" (2.249). Is the existence of the convention incorporated to the sign, and is obtained integrating the previously selected legisigns.

Is a sign that takes from the object some level of generality in which it can be known and gives to the interpreter the value of such generality so that exist in the corresponding system a logic place that fixes it and have it available for when is required to be used. The concept of symbol in Peirce is of extraordinary richness and the complexity of the uttering with which he defines it is however no less clear. The table H shows the fundamental parameters that must be taken into account: the symbol appears in the crossing of “existence” and “law”, being by its order of enunciation, “existence of law”. The symbol is, therefore, the sign that permits to affirm the correlation between the law existing in the object and the law existing in some interpretant. If both laws exist, then is possible to produce a sign that correlate them, and that sign will be the symbol. Symmetrically, if we want to classify a sign as symbol, we must prove that it is the point of convergence of the legality of two systems; the one that identify it as object and the one that gives to it the value of concept. That is why, when developing the nature of symbols, Peirce can affirm as to the relation of the symbol with its interpretant that “a symbol is a Representamen whose Representative character consists precisely in its being a rule that will determine its Interpreters. All words, sentences, books, and other conventional signs are Symbols” (2.292). The enumeration with which ends the quote helps to understand the sense in which Peirce uses the term: it encompasses the totality of the conventional signs; and effectively, by the fact of having been object of an explicit or tacit agreement, arbitrary or based in some kind of relation, they become representamens (as perceptual aspect of such signs) bearers of the law of correlation inherent to some ordered pair of specific places, belonging each of them to a different semiotic system. And again, going directly to the problem of chaos and its distance from knowledge, Peirce anticipates some guidelines when studying the relation of the symbol with its object: "A Symbol is a law, or regularity of the indefinite [insofar is willing to be used in any situation not previously established] future. Its Interpreter must be of the same description [as future and not specified availability of the corresponding logical place of the conceptual system]; and so must be also the complete immediate Object, or meaning". (2.293). Needless to say, what is in brackets is my contribution. Peirce shakes the reader suddenly when he gives an implicit and unexpected definition of “meaning”. Let’s leave aside the question of the opportunity of bringing up here the problem of the meaning; in our course of 1975: 18, we have proposed that the signification is an effect in the object, whose producer instruments are the signs integrated in discourse; when the signs are merely available by their articulation in a system, as in the repertoire of signs we are analyzing, the effect that any of them can produce should be denominated showing, because it merely indicates the logical place corresponding to the object in the system which is pertinent to it; but does not add to it; the addition (or its possibility) is indispensable to delimit the concept of meaning. But may be more disturbing in Peirce’s uttering the linking of the meaning with the full immediacy of the object, because this would contradict not only the development of our text by the supposition that a sign has the possibility of accessing the object as such, not already modified by some knowledge, but even the development itself that Peirce is doing. But the expression we discuss does not refer to an ultimate reality of the real; a footnote eliminates the doubts when saying, in terms more expressive as ever, the quality of the sign that is inherent to the objet of every sign: "There are two ways in which a Symbol may have a real Existential Thing as its real Object. First, the thing may conform to it, whether accidentally or by virtue of the Symbol having the virtue of a growing habit; and secondly, by the Symbol having an Index as a part of itself. But the immediate Object of a Symbol can only be a Symbol and if it has in its own nature another kind of Object, this must be by an endless series". A stone, as real existential thing, can be symbol of itself when, for example, is on the table of a court because of having been used by somebody to kill somebody (first case of the first way); a phone, a radio, a TV device, a written letter, as real existential things, are in themselves symbols of the human communication; with independence of the symbols effectively transmitted by them, because of being the communication a particularly expansive symbol (second case of the first way); a compass, as real existential thing, receives its symbolic value from the fact of containing, as a part of itself, a magnetic needle which is an index (second way).

Example 1: In our development beginning with the Qualisign: “possible form of substituting”, here, as symbol, we will have “the value of an existent substitution”. To particularize the example, we can say that “morpheme” is the existent verbal form whose legality in the language (langue) system is homologous to the legality of an existential form that is said through it. So, the individual semantic value of every morpheme is affirmed.

Example 2: Symbol in Morse alphabet is each particular configuration of this because they represent each written form of verbal alphabet. We should note that the letters are not symbols in the language (langue) system (neither are the phonemes); they even are not signs of that system (but they are, in the system of its graphic
representation); they are what Hjelmslev calls “non-signs” that do not originate yet, in the course of language, relational phenomena as the ones that are said bearers of signification, to which the operational name of “figures” has been proposed (1971a: p. 58). On the contrary, each letter of the Morse alphabet is not only a sign, but also a symbol (and, besides, belonging to a metasemiotics). Their function as representamen-signs, is exhausted in the capture of each letter of the verbal alphabet, that are their sign-objects. So the letters, that are not verbal signs, are transformed in signs as object or fundament of the Morse’s signs. This is useful to understand the semiotically changing quality of any proposal of knowledge as depending, in any case, on the system from which it is viewed. This identification of the different levels in which a proposal can be presented, permits the elimination of many fallacies and even theoretical errors that we have already mentioned, inherent to the current moment of social sciences, and this is the main task of semiotics applied to philosophy of science and to the critical analysis of the methodology of very diverse disciplines. As to the more complex structures (words, phrases) that can be produced using the Morse alphabet, their quality of symbols is not depending on this, but instead, they follow the inherent legality of the literal structure of the substituted language.

6.2.9 Argument

"Is a Sign which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of Law. Or we may say that a Rheme is a Sign which is understood to represent its Object in its characters merely; that a Dicisign is a sign which is understood to represent its Object in respect to actual existence; and that an Argument is a Sign which is understood to represent its Object in its character as Sign". (2.252). Is the system of conventional norms or values effectively in force in a given community, from which the producer takes the conventions to identify them as the legisigns with which he/she will produce the symbol, and to whose knowledge will the interpreter turn (associative memory) to understand and valuate the symbol proposed by the producer.

Before beginning the analysis of this sign, I reproduce also what Peirce says in his next CP, 2.253: "The Interpretant of the Argument represents it as an instance of a general class of Arguments, which class on the whole will always tend to the truth". Paraphrasing the rhetorical structure of the first of this references, can be said that so as we affirmed that the rheme is the door of entrance of the signs in a system because it indicates the possibility of attributing a value or a legality to a sign (as a collection of qualities of its own) in a given system, and that the dicisign is the exit door of the signs of the system because it indicates the conditions of a sign to acquire (as existent) the legality of a given context and, therefore, to show itself in it as a current existent, so we can affirm that the argument is the sign which orders a system towards its own interior. That is, the Argument, as sign, takes from the object and transfers to the interpretant the basic concept which, attributing to the sign a place in the system of logical necessities that are the very structure of the interpretant, confirms the legality of the sign as belonging to that interpretant and validates in each instance of recognition or production of signs, the non contradictoriness of the logical structure of the interpretant itself. To identify a sign as argument or to identify the argument aspect of a sign or to produce a sign that could actualize the argument of a given system in a context, being very different operations, have in common that this identification or production is that of a perceptual form (representamen or signifier) which is able to show the ordering principle or the relational constant that attributes coherence to a given knowledge ensemble. The possibility of establishing among a number of proposals being analyzed (objects, concepts, images, etc.), the quid by virtue of which a totality can be analyzed in an homogeneous sense, depends on the possibility of attributing them an ordering constant that relates and ranks them; they become argument signs as bearers of such constant. Obviously each object is affected by a number of arguments, which are actualized one at a time, when is being used as a sign coming from a given system, and is included in a particular context. In an example of insufficient generality, a “parcel of land”, in order to be actualized as sign in the possible multiple contexts, economic, aesthetic, chemical, political, etc., needs to be identified in the specific aspect that makes possible its participation in each of the corresponding systems, given its compliance with the ordering principle (argument) of each of that systems; i.e., it should be determined that such “parcel of land” can be considered, either according to its value, or to its beauty, or to its composing elements, or to the ownership or employment relation, etc. Such the arguments of the respective systems, but in addition, such is the characteristic inherent to “parcel of land” which should be highlighted by the semantic structure of the specific context in which is used.

For all the above can be understood, too, that in his quoted paragraph (2.253), Peirce make the general class of arguments tend towards the truth. The argument as sign poses a relation of endorsement between the ordering principle of the system of representamen-signs and some aspect of the ordering principle of the system of object signs that are the ground of the former. Truth which therefore tends to assert itself both inside each of the systems through an appropriate accomplishment of its particular conditions of well-formed languages, and through the constitution of an appropriate model of interpretation that allows the process of substitution of the object-signs by the corresponding representamen-signs. “Tendency”, and not plenitude of such truth, because of the historicity of scientific knowledge as inexhaustible development of correspondence between two languages.

The necessary particular relations identified by the legisign are the modern structure of such argument; as sign, identifies the object from some of that relations. For example, the legisigns of “change” and of “production”
identify the “parcel of land” inside the argument “value”, which is the organization of the economic view of such object. A given “parcel of land” becomes a symbol, in its quality of particular object generalizable to a plurality of particular objects that so become homogeneized (or covered by a general law), when it turns representative of some of that legisigns, for example, that of “production” in its quality of particular generalizable law that finds its specific place inside a structure ordered according to the argument of the “value” identifying the economic system. This kind of reading (amazing semiotic architecture proposed by Peirce) is another basic contribution of Peirce and corresponds to the developments he formulated in 2.254 to 2.264, which I will analize shortly later.

Example 1: The concept of substitution developed here, ends as argument in the “value of the substitution values”. In verbal language this argument materializes in the match of the legality of verbal language with the legality of the ordered universe of object-signs which are being enunciated. The object of linguistics is to establish such argument, and so can be adopted, for example, Chomsky’s proposal as to the rewriting rules constituting his transformational grammar. The object of an empirical science (on condition, of course, that it is not about the dry empiricism, as Hanson says, 1977: 45) will be, similarly, to establish the argument permitting to enunciate norms of relative generality referred to the universe of objects at study. As this must be fulfilled by a language other than that of the object-signs studied by the respective discipline, we should find or produce the argument in which the legalities appropriate for both languages (that of the object-signs [or material objects] and that of the representamen-signs [or formal objects]), be synthetized.

Example 2: The argument of Morse´s alphabet is of the most simplicity. Is the establishment of a conventional combinatorial of the pair of elementary constituents (“dot” and “dash”) with the possibilities we have indicated when developing the legisign, in such way that it is implanted as interpretive model able to substitute the universe of elements composing the written alphabet.

6.2.10 Illustrative scheme

Is advisable to summarize in a table the development of the two examples referring to the 9 signs of Peirce´s scheme. The conceptual example (“substitution”) is marked by the number 1 and the empirical example (“the Morse alphabet”) with the number 2. I have added a sequence marked with the number 3, with the examples of object-signs, independent of each other, in each of which is highlighted a quality that allow to put them in the place they appear here. I will give a very basic explanation. I have added a progressive sequence with one more example, indicated by the number 4, referred to the instances composing the concept of “map”, and I leave the reader the reasoning about it, being sure he/she understands it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALISIGN</th>
<th>ICON</th>
<th>RHEME</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Possible form of the substitution</td>
<td>1. Possible existence of the substitution</td>
<td>1. Value of the possibility of substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Possible form of the substitution</td>
<td>2. &quot;dots&quot; and &quot;dashes&quot; (. - )</td>
<td>2. Sufficiency of the combinatorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The green</td>
<td>3. A realistic painting</td>
<td>3. A necessary axiom for the fullness of a calculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interpretability</td>
<td>4. A model</td>
<td>4. Its effectiveness to show the relations of a structure</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINSIGN</th>
<th>INDEX</th>
<th>DICISIGN</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Existence of a substitutive form</td>
<td>1. Actual existence of the substitution</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Availability of the Morse alphabet</td>
<td>2. (- - - - - - - - - - - - ), etc.</td>
<td>2. The alphabet in the context of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Specific characteristics of some place</td>
<td>4. A given map</td>
<td>4. The localization of that map on another (for example, on a wider world map)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explanation of the examples under number 3:

3. **Qualisign**: *The green*. Is a quality than can be applied to something, but, in itself, is a mere possibility.

3. **Icon**: *A realistic painting*. Is a painting of *existing forms*; perceived in the environment or imaginary or combination of both.

3. **Rheme**: *A necessary axiom to the fullness of a calculation*. If missing, is a shortage *of a fundamental quality* that is shown by the mechanic performance of such calculation, whose procedure is made difficult by this absence and demands its incorporation.

3. **Sinsign**: *A caricature*. As *uniqueness* of the represented individual, but nevertheless is not such representation, but a display of a form of the possibility of being such individual.

3. **Index**: *A bank note*. As *material existing object, of paper, inks, etc.* in it are the *existing things* that can be bought. *Is* not such things, but represents them. We should avoid to confuse the bank note as index (that is, in immediate relation with purchasable things) with the same bank note as symbol (that is, its value referred to an economic system). In its use in this example, refers to the moment in wich it operates for a given procurement: handing it over one gets a pack of cigarettes. If these are “expensive” or not, that depends on the value (as symbol) of such bank note. But the possibility of getting the cigarettes depends on the handing over of the bank note (as index).

3. **Dicisign**: *A hut*. Because it needs to actualize a rural *context*. Similarly to as “a floor” requires to conceive it as a part of an apartment building, unless the verbal context retrieves the sense of “soil”; for example, “that room has a mosaic soil”.

3. **Legisign**: *“Singular”*. The concept so named is part of a binary logical structure along with “plural” (or ternary, considering also the “dual”); then it names an aspect of the *legality* of a system.

3. **Symbol**: *“Horse”*. By convention, is the name of a concept (that is why is quoted; it does not refer to the animal but to the word). Its place as sign in the system of language (langue) *represents* its place in the system of knowledge. Instead: “Juan”, as name of a concrete person, is an *index* because of its existential linking with such person. An index must have, in a way, an *ostensive* designation. But “Juan” as proper name in Spanish to denominate some individuals of the gender male, is a symbol, because is a linguistic form representing them.

3. **Argument**: *“Contiguity”*. In the sense attributed in semiotics, as *ordering* criterion of the observations related to the animal language which, in principle, does not perform a function of substitution, but will produce the contiguity of the referent and the eventual sign representing it, so that the latter does not substitute the former, but prolongs it. In the same way, also *substitution*” is an argument, as a synthesis of the basic algorithm of semiotics that gives internal coherence to the considerations made from the perspective of this discipline about human language.

This incomplete contribution permits an elementary reading of Peirce’s theory of signs for the incipient formalization of semiotics and, consequently, for that of social sciences, to the extent it would be possible. I restricted myself to the exegesis of a few fragments of the *Speculative Grammar* [CP, 219-444], so to offer a brief view of semiotics as scientific discipline.

The attempts to rationalize axiomatic foundations of *semiotics* take up the legacy of Saussure contributing to outline the structure of *semiology*: “a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life ” and which teaches “the nature of signs and the laws governing them” (1986/1972: 15). This is joined with what Peirce said at the time of Saussure, independently of him: “... the woof and warp of all thought and all research is symbols,
and the life of thought and science is the life inherent in symbols; so... it is wrong to say that a good language is important to good thought, merely; for it is of the essence of it” (2.220).

To Peirce, our discipline is identified with logic: “Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for semiotics (σημειωτική) the quasinecessary, or formal, doctrine of signs” (2.227), and we can consider it now almost that way, especially as logic or cognitive metatheory of the theoretical structure of social sciences. His dynamic concept of sign, considered as a perception (or representamen) that takes an aspect of the known (or ground) and presents it (reworked so to include it in a context) to the consideration of a receiver (or interpretant), offers a suggestive proposal to solve the difficult crossroad of the Escila et Caribdis that pushes the concept of “culture” into either structuralism’s immobility or the vortex of dialectics. According to Peirce, in the structure of the sign is its own history: representing the known, projects itself to original forms of knowledge, transformation process that is accomplished by including the sign into a text along with other signs that show, or could show, the unknown possibility such sign possessed. Peirce not only developed the yet not enough explored logic of relations and introduced in the language of propositional logic the concept of quantifier, invaluable contribution to the formalization of scientific language (Tarski, 1977/1937: p. 37), but he also left us a dynamic conception of the sign, from which we can expect important revenues in social research and in history of sciences. By focusing the structure of the sign in the task of the interpreter and, especially, by including the interpreter as a constituent of the sign so that without its participation such sign would not exist, and by not admitting to relegate it to the role of a mere external observer who interprets when the sign is already constructed, he includes semiotics in the field of cognitive sciences.

This has nothing to do with the banal use often attributed to semiotics and which is due to literaturization of theoretical proposals that fail to consolidate and does not acquire the expected explanatory and predictive effectiveness. Semiotics is not a fashion nor an amusement. The originality of its view allowed ingenious developments which has been seized by dilettantism. Semiotics is not parlor reading; the easy and perishable glare as ingredient of social conversation or the pseudo-deepness in highly obscure texts, are not semiotics. Is a difficult methodological discipline, that demands to abandon deeply-rooted intellectual habits and that, only after a thorough exploring of its more elementary proposals, begins to show to the scholar its possibilities of illumination and rationality as contribution to other disciplines. For now it is a promise that does not assure what the hurried people think that can already use, but that assures the highlighting of new problems or, better, may be the indication of which are the true problems or where to find them, in order to lead the researcher towards them, which is a way of resolving them.

6.3 Appendices

6.3.1 Questions to the 9 signs of Ch. S. Peirce

Identification of the problematic entity for the foundation of a research project.

The Peircian scheme would help the researcher facing the need to identify the problem which would allow to systematize with rigor a research project, to focus a given situation. If the researcher is interested in explaining the signification of such situation at study, he/she can try to find an answer to the question generated by each of the 9 signs.
1/ Qualisign
What perceptual characteristics would make possible its appearance?

2/ Icon
What is the combinatorial of that perceptual characteristics that would make possible its appearance?

3/ Rheme
From what available system of perceptual characteristics could the analist take (selecting and excluding) the ones considered appropriate to make possible its appearance?

4/ Sinsign
What is the raw material (material or conceptual) intervening in its existential realization?

5/ Index
What is the result of the combinatorial of that raw material, that materializes its existence?

6/ Dicisign
What is the contextual environment of other existents in which is included (by integration, difference or rejection)?

7/ Legisign
What are the conventional rules or norms involved in its valuation?

8/ Symbol
What is the conventional valuation attributed to it?

9/ Argument
From what system of rules or norms, culturally in force in a given society at a given historical moment, the researcher takes (selecting and excluding) the ones considered effective for the production of each interpretation attributed to it?

### 6.3.2 Instrumental-operational development of the scheme of the 9 Peircean signs

#### [7]

#### I General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Selection of qualitative components for …</th>
<th>(2) the configuration of a perceptual proposal …</th>
<th>(3) interpreted in the complete or current system of its formal possibilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) Existential identity of…</td>
<td>(5) a given material phenomenon…</td>
<td>(6) interpreted by its contextualization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Norm, order, explanation, advertence, etc., constitutive of…</td>
<td>(8) a conventional proposal …</td>
<td>(9) interpreted from a given system of norms in force.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### II Illustrative (a map)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) A given selection of possible qualities permits to configure…</th>
<th>(2) the design of an effective model…</th>
<th>(3) to give account of the constitutive relations of a given perceptual system.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) The possibility of identifying the geographical characteristics of a place require the existence of…</td>
<td>(5) a given map that acquire its full value…</td>
<td>(6) if interpreted in relation with the marks of another map which contains it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) The laws of projection permit to realize…</td>
<td>(8) a conventionally specific representation …</td>
<td>(9) according to the interpretative criteria of cartography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.3 Displaying Peirce’s 27 signs

Exploring the analytical components that can be identified applying the scheme of the 3/9/27 signs to given entities of the world: 1-Museum; 2-Architecture; 3-Cemetery; 4-Law.
6.3.3.1 Peirce–Museum

A–textual development

1 Iconic level:

1.1 QUALISIGN - FORM OF FORM: possible idea of the form of the building (x 3 = (1) selection of possible forms; (2) mental configuration of that forms; (3) valuation according to the style or to the breaking of styles)

1.2 ICON - EXISTENCE OF FORM: planes or design of the building (x 3 = (4) type of stroke or drawing selected; (5) the concrete result drawn; (6) context for presenting that result: to whom and how, paper planes deployed on a table, projections, projector, etc.)

1.3 RHEME - VALUE OF FORM: expressive effectiveness of the planes (of the form selected to represent the future building) (x 3 = (7) design rules which have been used to allow the receiver to construct a mental picture of how will be the building; (8) visual impression to be conveyed; (9) representation valuated in the system of the culture in force)

2. Indexical level:

2.1 SINSIGN - FORM OF EXISTENCE: choice of materials for the building (x 3 = (10) possible, appropriate and optimal materials to realize the design; (11) possible and available materials in the market; (12) constructive

3 Without compromising him with my own writings applying the schemes of Peirce to the concept of architecture, I can not fail to mention the important work on this subject made by Claudio Guerri (2003, and in a number of other texts).
characteristics of the selected materials)

2.2 INDEX - EXISTENCE OF EXISTENCE: construction resulting from the application of the materials to execute what the planes propose (x 3 = (13) possible assembling of the materials as composing that building work and not other; (14) specific result of having used that materials and not others for that building work and not other, in the building work already done; (15) combined result of all parts of the building work, according to the characteristics (perceptual, resistance, etc.) of the materials used, that is, internal context of the diverse parts of the building work itself)

2.3 DICISIGN - VALUE OF EXISTENCE: relation of the building already constructed with its urban, building, etc., environment, only as to the physical environment (x 3 = (17) given a specific choice of a given urban environment, the value acquired by the building according to such environment and the value the building gives back to the environment because of being in it; (18) accessibility of users to this building due to being located in that place and not in other, according to the cultural criteria of mobility in force in that culture at that given historical moment)

3. Symbolic level:

3.1 LEGISIGN - FORM OF VALUE: possible valuations (and even “meanings”) that a given society at a given moment attribute to the building work in which the design have been materialized (x 3 = (19) minimal possible rules with which a community can organize at a given moment the legality of its “possible ways of sharing the space”; (20) rules specifically available or being in force due to historical tradition, ideological predominances, “taste”, etc., as to the possible way of sharing the space at the moment the building at study was designed and constructed; (21) possible relations of that rules with the remainder of that society’s aesthetic culture at that moment of its history)

3.2 SYMBOL - EXISTENCE OF VALUE: constitutive relations of the “habitability” at a given moment of a given society (x 3 = (22) valuation of the space delimited in a building work as its habitability or possibility of sharing in a given way, faced with other ways of doing it; (23) specific habitability “imposed” by the constructive aspect in which is materialized a given architectonic building work´s design; (24) valuation of these rules of habitability imposed by the building work at study, according to their coherence or the easy/difficult assimilation of the habits or rules of other forms effectively in force as to the ways of sharing the space at work, at leisure, etc.)

3.3 ARGUMENT - VALUE OF VALUE: meaning of that form of inhabiting in the culture in force (x 3 = (25) possibility of being a habitability form in process of disappearance or which follows the values in force or which announces a new form of inhabiting yet not completely explored; (26) valuation or symbolic effectiveness that this form of habitability transfers to those who receive by inhabiting the building at study, its symbolic effectiveness: from status, prestige, leadership, in a gradient that goes to their opposites; (27) systematic relation of the values inherent of such form of habitability with the remaining values related to the variants constituting the community’s culture: arts, sciences, ideologies, etc.)

B - Diagrammatic development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 ICONIC LEVEL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 FORM OF THE FORM: possible idea of the building’s form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1.1.1] selection of possible forms</td>
<td>[1.1.2] mental configuration of those forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 EXISTENCE OF THE FORM: planes or design of the building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1.2.4] type of stroke or drawing selected</td>
<td>[1.2.5] result specifically drawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 VALUE OF THE FORM: expressive effectiveness of the planes (of the form selected to represent the future building)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexical Level</td>
<td>Existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 INDEXICAL LEVEL</td>
<td>2.1 FORM OF THE EXISTENCE: choice of materials to construct the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.1.11] possible materials available in the market to its realization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.2 EXISTENCE OF THE EXISTENCE: the building work or construction resulting of the application of that materials to materialize the proposal of the planes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.2.14] specific result in the work realized, of the use of those materials and not others, for that and not other realized work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.3 VALUE OF THE EXISTENCE: relation of the work already constructed with its urban, building, etc., environment, i.e., the PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.3.17] given a specific option for a given urban environment, the value acquired by being in it and the value given back to the environment because of being situated in it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2.3.19] valuation of the space of a building work delimited as its habitability, or possibility of a given way of sharing such space, faced to the other possible ways of doing it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[3.2.23] specific habitability “imposed” by the constructive aspect in which the design of a given architectonic building work is materialized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.3.3 Peirce – Cemetery

La Plata’s cemetery. Semiotic analysis

To access the perception of “the real”, human beings need mediators according to which they construct the meaning of everything perceived and it is even due to the mediators that they are able to perceive what they perceive.

Mediators are social discourses available in each community at each historical moment.

A social phenomenon like the cemetery, acquires a given meaning thanks to the social discourses which refer to it at a given historical moment of a given community.

But also, the cemetery itself is a social discourse that constructs the meaning of something that is no longer the cemetery but what the cemetery represents: life, death, and the passing from one to another.

Common sense and our own social learning permit us to understand what a cemetery means.

Something very different is to explain why a cemetery means what it means.

Semiotics offers some criteria and analytical operations that permit to approach an explanation of such meaning.

I will not expose here the way to get the semiotic schemes I am using here, instead, I will apply Peircean semiotics to systematize the diverse aspects involved in the construction of the meaning of a cemetery. I will give an Analytic 1, developing the three elementary parts of a cemetery as sign (and which propose, therefore, a first inquiry into the 3 initial signs); Analytic 2 develops 9 parts, multiplying (analytically) by 3 the aspects previously identified (and which propose, therefore, a route through 9 signs); finally, Analytic 3 multiplies by 3 the 9 previous parts to get the 27 identified aspects (and proposing, therefore, the possible content of 27 signs).

One of the aims of this work is to show the heuristic ability of the Peircean conception of sign to generate research possibilities that explore analytically the various aspects of the selected subject, in this case, the problem of social representation of death through the indexical discourse of cemeteries, particularly that of La Plata city and its vault sector.

Peirce - Cemetery - Triadic Sign

[Analytic 1: the 3 parts of the sign - form, existence, value]

1.2 existence of the form: the icon
[5] design adopted to transfigure death in a given cemetery
2.2 existence of the existence: the index
[14] the concealed body
3.2 existence of the value: the symbol
[23] interpretation of death
---------

[Analytic 2: the 9 signs (3 - form, existence, value- for each of the three previous ones]

1. Iconic level:

1.1 form of the form: qualisign
[2] possible design of a given cemetery
1.2 existence of the form: icon
[5] design adopted to transfigure death in a given cemetery
1.3 value of the form: rheme
[8] representative effectiveness of the design adopted for a given cemetery

2. Indevalxial level:

2.1 form of the existence: sinsign
[11] concrete presence of the exhibited elements constructing the concealment of the body
2.2 existence of the existence: index
[14] the concealed body

2.3 value of the existence: dicisign
[17] value acquired by the concealed body according to the route

3. Symbolic level:

3.1 form of the value: legisign
[20] possible interpretations the visitors of a cemetery are able to construct

3.2 existence of the value: symbol
[23] interpretation of death

3.3 value of the value: argument
[26] dialectical value of the interpretations produced in the mind of the visitors of a cemetery

---------

[Analytic 3: the 27 signs (3 - form, existence, value- for each of the 9 previous ones)

1. Iconic level
1.1 form of the form: qualisign
[1] form of the qualisign: formal qualities selected for the possible design of a cemetery
[2] existence of the qualisign: possible design of a given cemetery
[3] value of the qualisign: system of culturally available forms for the possible design of a cemetery

These three components allow to outline the following research topic: Are there documentation permitting the retrieval of the cognitive attitudes of late nineteenth century designers?

1.2 existence of the form: icon
[4] form of the icon: perceptual characteristics of the formal qualities adopted for the design of a cemetery

Research: Which material or stylistic elements of graphic design were used in the late nineteenth century, and disappeared afterwards, ceasing to be used in graphic design, in the planes of La Plata’s cemetery?

[5] existence of the icon: the adopted design for the transfiguration of death in a given cemetery

Research: What traits appear in the design and planes of La Plata’s cemetery intending to rework the overwhelming presence of death in that place in the late nineteenth century?

[6] value of the icon: social image associated to the design adopted for a given cemetery

Research: What is death’s social image in La Plata’s community in the late nineteenth century, viewed from the designs we could find, related to the cemetery and its vault zone?

1.3 value of the form: rheme
[7] form of the rheme: value expressing the formal qualities adopted for the design of a given cemetery

Research: How can be established the value that express colours, strokes and forms of the design of places or motives of La Plata’s cemetery, insofar they were anticipating the meaning of what were being constructed?

[8] existence of the rheme: representative efficacy of the design adopted for a given cemetery

Research: How the La Plata’s community of late nineteenth century represented in their vaults and graves the image they had of death?

[9] value of the rheme: differential meaning of the design adopted for a given cemetery

Research: How La Plata’s community of late nineteenth century, constructed their difference and identity through the design of this space?

2. Indexical level:

2.1 form of the existence; sinsign
[10] form of the sinsign: perceptual characteristics of the exhibited elements that constitute the concealment of the body

Research: Is possible to assign functions different from the ones specifically related to burial, to the elements appearing in the vault zone of La Plata’s cemetery?

[11] existence of the sinsign: specific presence of the exhibited elements constructing the way of concealing the body
Research: Which elements appearing in the vault zone of La Plata’s cemetery are directly related to burial?

[12] value of the sinsign: symbology of each element exhibited constituting the way of concealing the body

Research: In which way the symbology accompanying burials is intended to sublimate the event of individual death?

2.2 existence of the existence: index

[13] form of the index: elements exhibited substituting the concealed body

Research: How the individual death appears?

[14] existence of the index: the concealed body

Research: How is being concealed the individual death?

[15] value of the index: meaning acquired by substitution and concealment

Research: How is retrieved the individuality of the dead?

2.3 value of the existence: dicisign

[16] form of the dicisign: value of each element exhibited according to their localization in the route

Research: Do different routes attribute different meanings to different burial places?

[17] existence of the dicisign: value acquired by the concealed body according to the route

Research: Do different routes attribute different meanings to individuals buried in different places?

[18] value of the dicisign: social participation in the value assigned to the route

Research: Has the social valuation of the diverse places of localization of burials changed? If so, which social changes have contributed to it?

3. Symbolic level:

3.1 Form of the value: legisign

[19] form of the legisign: different interpretive relations that can be proposed to the visitors of the cemetery

Research: Does each vault, grave, pantheon, propose relations between writing, images, and behavioral possibilities leading to specific interpretations?

[20] existence of the legisign: possible interpretations the visitors of the cemetery can construct

Research: What margin of difference may exist between the interpretations of the visitors about the identifiable proposals in the cemetery?

[21] value of the legisign: interpretative habits available for the visitors of the cemetery

Research: Which cultural variants provided by the visitors can change the possible interpretations proposed from the buildings of the cemetery?

3.2 existence of the symbol: value

[22] form of the symbol: each established interpretative relation

Research: Which interpretative variables arise from the perceptual proposals identifiable in the cemetery?

[23] existence of the existence of the symbol: interpretation of death

Research: What are the meanings of death identifiable from the ornamental motifs of the cemetery?

[24] value of the symbol: new interpretative habit proposed

Research: Is the visit to the area of vaults of La Plata’s cemetery, providing some variant to the way death is interpreted from the visit to other cemeteries or other areas of the same cemetery?

3.3 value of the argument

[25] form of the argument: the socially cognitive value of the interpretative relations proposed to the visitors of the cemetery

Research: What norms, rules or usages proposes La Plata’s cemetery as elements from whose interrelation may arise other interpretations of death?
existence of the argument: dialectic value of the interpretations produced in the mind of the visitors of the cemetery

Research: What other thoughts about life or about other ways of being after death, are the interpretations provoked by the tour around the vault zone of La Plata's cemetery contrasting with?

value of the argument: overcoming of the prior interpretative habits of the visitors of the cemetery

Research: Does the visit to La Plata's cemetery provide specific and differential information that leads to construct the every day life in another way? or, Have there been changes that make the interpretation of the current visitor differ from the interpretation of the visitors of late nineteenth and beginnings of twentieth century? or, Could be possible to establish how many changes in the social interpretation of the cemetery have occurred since the time of its opening?

The cemetery: Diagrammatic development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICON</th>
<th>form</th>
<th>existence</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>form</strong></td>
<td>1 form of the qualisign: formal qualities selected for the possible design of a cemetery</td>
<td>2 existence of the qualisign: possible design of a given cemetery</td>
<td>3 value of the qualisign: system of forms culturally available for the possible design of a cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>existence</strong></td>
<td>4 form of the icon: perceptual characteristics of the formal qualities adopted to design a given cemetery</td>
<td>5 existence of the icon: the design adopted to transfigure the death in a given cemetery</td>
<td>6 value of the icon: social image associated with the design adopted for a given cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>value</strong></td>
<td>7 form of the theme: expressive value of the formal qualities adopted for the design of a given cemetery</td>
<td>8 existence of the theme: representative effectiveness of the design adopted for a given cemetery</td>
<td>9 value of the theme: differential signification of the design adopted for a given cemetery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX</th>
<th>form</th>
<th>existence</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>form</strong></td>
<td>10 form of the sinsign: perceptual characteristics of the elements exhibited that construct the way of concealing the body</td>
<td>11 existence of the sinsign: the concrete presence of the exhibited elements that construct the way of concealing the body</td>
<td>12 value of the sinsign: symbology of each of the exhibited elements that construct the way of concealing the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>existence</strong></td>
<td>13 form of the index: the exhibited elements substituting the concealed body</td>
<td>14 existence of the index: the concealed body</td>
<td>15 value of the index: meaning acquired by concealment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
<td>16 form of the dicisign: the relational value of each element exhibited, depending on the route</td>
<td>17 existence of the dicisign: the relational value acquired by the concealed body depending on the route</td>
<td>18 value of the dicisign: social participation in the relational value of the route</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>form</th>
<th>existence</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>form</strong></td>
<td>19 form of the legisign: different interpretative relations that can be proposed to the visitors of the cemetery</td>
<td>20 existence of the legisign: possible interpretations that the visitors of the cemetery can construct</td>
<td>21 value of the legisign: interpretative habits available by the visitors of the cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>existence</strong></td>
<td>22 form of the symbol: each interpretative relation established</td>
<td>23 existence of the symbol: interpretation of death</td>
<td>24 value of the symbol: the new interpretative habit acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>value</strong></td>
<td>25 form of the argument: socially cognitive value of the interpretative relations proposed to the visitors of the cemetery</td>
<td>26 existence of the argument: dialectical value of the interpretations produced in the mind of the visitors of the cemetery</td>
<td>27 value of the argument: overcoming of the prior interpretative habits of the visitors of the cemetery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The cemetery as indexical sign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>designation</th>
<th>indicative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>objects and behaviors</td>
<td>unique object: one in different semiotic worlds: treatment of individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prototype: one similar to the others of the same collection: treatment of corporeity</td>
<td>indication: retrieves: icon: in which way he/she lived; index: what did he/she lived; symbol: who lived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replica: one that actualizes a possibility in a system: treatment of the position (familiar, social, institutional)</td>
<td>symptom: evidence: icon: being in force of forms and styles; index: existence of the others; symbol: being in force of an ideology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.3.4 Peirce – Law

#### [11] 3 signs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM/POSSIBILITY</th>
<th>OF THE JURIDICAL</th>
<th>THE LAW</th>
<th>ICON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXISTENCE/EFFECTIVENESS</td>
<td>OF THE JURIDICAL</td>
<td>THE SENTENCE</td>
<td>INDEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALUE/EFFICACY</td>
<td>OF THE JURIDICAL</td>
<td>THE SOCIETY</td>
<td>SYMBOL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 9 signs:

1. QUALISIGN
Concrete qualities of the Legislature at a given moment of a given society

2. ICON
THE LAW

3. RHEME
Normative system in force

4. SINSIGN
Effective decidability available by the Judiciary at a given moment in a given society

5. INDEX
THE SENTENCE

6. DICISIGN
Consequences of the social modifications originated by the possible resolutions

7. LEGISIGN
Characteristics of the juridical interpretations that configure the society

8. SYMBOL
THE SOCIETY

9. ARGUMENT
Overcoming of the precedent interpretative juridical habits, as possibilities of social transformation

#### 27 signs:

9 related to

#### FORM/POSSIBILITY/ICON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM/POSSIBILITY</th>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete qualities of the Legislature at a given moment of a given society</td>
<td>The Legislature</td>
<td>Systems of possible qualities attributable to the Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legislature</td>
<td>THE LAW</td>
<td>Its context of interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of enunciation</td>
<td>THE LAW</td>
<td>Normative system in force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional expressions</td>
<td>Applicability of the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4 The 10 Peircean signs

I will make now, as I have said, an elementary analysis of the last step. We will follow Peirce’s Theory of Signs in this short summary. After applying the analysis to decompose the sign and after using this decomposition to produce with deep rationality his classification of signs, he has shifted to a synthetical work and has generated a new level of signs which permitted him to achieve a new classification in which semiotics, “the quasinecessary, or formal, doctrine of Signs” (2.227), is ready for use as methodology in the theoretical structure and in the empirical research of social sciences.

Peirce develops the topic in 2.254 to 2.264. As we know, the law he uses for the formation of the new signs (which, by the combinatorial developed from his scheme of 9, results in 10) is simple: a) each row (in [12. Scheme I]) is organized hierarchically with respect to the others (each lower row contains the upper ones) so that the lower can be articulated with elements of the upper, but not inversely; b) from each row should be taken no more than one element by column, without repeating columns, and none can be lacking, because the sign is being reconstructed, integrating to it its elements: representamen, ground and interpretant; and c) so, the order of selection of the elements of the respective columns will always follow the sequence of form, existence and value, when integrating each sign.
Through deduction, can be obtained from the 9 basic signs a unique exhaustive collection of derived signs applying the transformation rules just stated.

So these signs can be obtained:

1) Rhematic-iconic-qualisign
2) Rhematic-iconic-sinsign
3) Rhematic-indexical-sinsign
4) Dicisign-indexical-sinsign
5) Rhematic-iconic-legisign
6) Rhematic-indexical-legisign
7) Dicisign-indexical-legisign
8) Rhematic-symbolic-legisign
9) Dicisign-symbolic-legisign
10) Argument-symbolic-legisign

If understood the fundamental structure of the sign in this triadic nomenclature, then is clear that the first part of each of such denominations correspond to the quality the representamen of the sign must have; the second, to that of the ground; and the third, to that of the interpretant. The usefulness of this synthetical classification can be appreciated reading the examples given in the section 6.2.10 Illustrative scheme, [5], numbered 1, 2 and 4 (I leave aside the number 3 because it is about independent examples, while in the other cases, this Peircean scheme shows the 9 results of the analysis of one and the same theme: in 1, the semantic effectiveness of the word; in 2, the communicative effectiveness of written Morse language; and in 4, the representative effectiveness of a map). I will make a short reading of the 4th. example, leaving the remainder to the reader. Note that the syntactical writing can compel to change the enunciation order of the components; however, the logical analysis shows the correct integration of such elements.

1) \textit{Rh-Ic-Q (1-2-3):} All possibility of interpretation supposes the existence of a model effective to show the relations of a structure.
2) \textit{Rh-Ic-Ss (4-2-3):} The possibility of identifying the specific characteristics of a place require the existence of an effective model to show the relations of a structure.
3) \textit{Rh-In-Ss (4-5-3):} The possibility of identifying the specific characteristics of a place supposes the existence of a given map showing the relations of a structure.
4) \textit{D-In-Ss (4-5-6):} The specific characteristics of a place, identified in a given map, acquire their full value when relating them with the ones indicated on another map containing the first.
5) \textit{Rh-Ic-L (7-2-3):} The laws of projection permit the possible existence of a model able to show the relations of a structure.
6) \textit{Rh-In-L (7-5-3):} The laws of projection materialize in a given map the relations of a structure.
7) \textit{D-In-L (7-5-6):} The laws of projection permit to relate a given map with the characteristics of a larger one that contains it.
8) \textit{Rh-Sb-L (7-8-3):} The laws of projection confer specific representativity to the map of the relations of a structure.
9) \textit{D-Sb-L (7-8-6):} The laws of projection confer specific representativity to a given map related with a larger one that contains that representativity.
10) *A-Sh-L (7-8-9)*: The laws of projection confer specific representativity to a given map according to the criteria for interpreting cartography.

Each of the 10 resulting signs require a specific logical treatment due to the nature of the semiotic components concurring to their production, so what is said about each of them, can not be said automatically of the others; the identification of the analytical specific instruments and the establishment of specific laws of transformation for the conceptual path of the levels involved in each sign, are required.

6.4.1 Presupposition of the 10 signs, in the Peircean proposal:

1] 2.254 RHEMATIC ICONIC QUALISIGN
For example, the feeling of “red”
A QUALISIGN is (its REPLICA is) necessarily an ICON
A QUALISIGN can only be interpreted as RHEME

2] 2.255 RHEMATIC ICONIC SINSIGN
For example, a concrete diagram
Presupposes (its REPLICA is) a QUALISIGN
A SINSIGN con only be interpreted as RHEME

3] 2.256 RHEMATIC INDEXICAL SINSIGN
For example a a spontaneous cry
Presupposes (its REPLICA is) an ICONIC RHEMATIC SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an INDEXICAL SINSIGN (DICISIGN)

4] 2.257 DICISIGN INDEXICAL SINSIGN
For example, a weathercock
Presupposes (its REPLICA is) an RHEMATIC ICONIC SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an RHEMATIC INDEXICAL SINSIGN

5] 2.258 RHEMATIC ICONIC LEGISIGN
For example, a generic diagram
Its REPLICA is a SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an RHEMATIC ICONIC QUALISIGN

6] 2.259 RHEMATIC INDEXICAL LEGISIGN
For example, a demonstrative pronoun
Its REPLICA is an RHEMATIC INDEXICAL SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an RHEMATIC ICONIC QUALISIGN

7] 2.260 DICISIGN INDEXICAL LEGISIGN
For example, a street cry
Its REPLICA is an DICISIGN INDEXICAL SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an RHEMATIC INDEXICAL LEGISIGN

8] 2.261 RHEMATIC SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN
For example, a common name
Its REPLICA is an RHEMATIC INDEXICAL SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an RHEMATIC INDEXICAL LEGISIGN

9] 2.262 DICISIGN SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN
For example, a habitual proposition
Its REPLICA is an DICISIGN INDEXICAL SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an DICISIGN INDEXICAL LEGISIGN

10] 2.263 ARGUMENT SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN
For example, a syllogism
Its REPLICA is an DICISIGN INDEXICAL SINSIGN
The INTERPRETANT is represented as an ARGUMENT SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN

6.4.2 Analytical illustration applying the development of the 10 Peircean signs

6.4.2.1 Peirce - 10 signs about: “Number”

From the analysis of the concept “number” constructed following the route of the 10 Peircean signs: What components are involved in the (iconic) configuration/referentiality (indexical)/operational ability (symbolic) of numbers?

Perceptual operations: iconic relations *[possibility of representation of quantities]*.
**Rhematic iconic qualisign**: possible (as opposed to impossible) forms for the design of numbers

**Rhematic iconic sinsign**: existent and socially available forms of specific numbers.

**Rhematic iconic legisign**: forms of numbers with relational valuation (order of succession) conventionally differentiated

**Referential operations: indexical relations** [existential sets, as they can be represented by a number]

**Rhematic indexical sinsign**: form of the quantity of an existential set.

**Dicisign indexical sinsign**: presence of the quantity of an existential set, among other existential sets or individuals.

**Rhematic indexical legisign**: valuation of the form of the quantity of an existential set.

**Dicisign indexical legisign**: differential valuation of the quantities of (at least) two existential sets.

**Conceptual operations: symbolic relations** [conventional construction (normed) of the concept of quantity].

**Rhematic symbolic legisign**: conventional quantitative value differentially attributed to each of the components of a system of possible number forms.

**Dicisign symbolic legisign**: conventional quantitative value referentially attributed to each existential set.

**Argument symbolic legisign**: quantitative conventional value attributed as operation and result by combinatorial among the components of a system of number forms in force.

6.4.3 Peirce’s 10 signs in the genesis of particular semiotics

As I said above, the subject developed by Peirce and collected in 2.254 to 2.264, permits to make an analytical interpretation, relatively heterodox, attempting to explicit the involved semiotic-cognitive relations which allow its use to explore and systematize the features that identify each of the particular semiotics: iconic, indexical and symbolic, as the graphic associations can show ([13] Scheme 2) superimposed to the Peircean scheme itself (2.264).

[13] Scheme 2

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\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{scheme2.png}
\end{figure}
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So we will have:

**For an ICONIC SEMIOTICS**

3 possible signs, depending of the ICON:

[14] Representamen/Object/Interpretant
1 - RHEMATIC ICONIC QUALISIGN [1-2-3: perceptual proposal interpreted exclusively for its qualitative components] For example, visual images (e.g. a work of Kandinski) [2.254. For Peirce, a feeling of “red” is “any quality in so far as it is a sign”]

2 - RHEMATIC ICONIC SINSIGN [4-2-3: perceptual proposal interpreted as constituting an identity] For example, figurative visual images (e.g. a work by Holbein) [2.255. To Peirce, an individual diagram “is any object of experience in so far as some quality of it makes it determine the idea of an object”]

3 - RHEMATIC ICONIC LEGISIGN [7-2-3: perceptual proposal interpreted as norm, command, explanation, warning, etc.] For example, symbolic visual images (e.g. Neurath’s isotypes) [2.258. To Peirce, a diagram, apart from its factual individuality, “any general law or type in so far as it requires each instance of it to embody a definite quality which renders it to fit to call up in the mind the idea of a like object”]

ADDENDA
THE ICON

Diversifies by characteristics of the representative perception:
- in (1) as tone or perceptual quality
- in (4) as replica or existential identity
- in (7) as type or norm-rule-instruction

Unifies in the interpretant system that redirects the perceptual diversity:
- in (3) to exclusively qualitative keys

In addition to its differentiation with respect to the index (5) and the symbol (8), it excludes the dicisign (6) from its semiotic composition, as cognitive context already-existent, and the argument (9), as conventional valuation system external to the form.

For a larger development of this three classes of iconic signs, see here chapter 13.

For an INDEXICAL SEMIOTICS

4 possible signs, depending on the INDEX:
[15] Representamen/Object/Interpretant

4 - RHEMATIC INDEXICAL SINSIGN [4-5-3: individual material object interpreted through its perceptual qualities] (For example, the sound of a musical instrument, or of a phone call, etc.) [2.256. For Peirce, a spontaneous cry “is any object of direct experience in so far as it directs the attention to an Object by which its presence is caused”]

5 - DICISIGN INDEXICAL SINSIGN [4-5-6: individual material object interpreted through its contextualization] For example, a door (as possibility of entrance or exit, so it differentiates from a window as possibility of looking or receiving the light through it, which also would be 4-5-6) [2.257. For Peirce, a weathercock, “is any object of direct experience in so far as it is a sign, and, as such, affords information concerning its Object”]

6 - RHEMATIC INDEXICAL LEGISIGN [7-5-3: individual material object interpreted as normatively effective due to its perceptual qualities] For example, a semaphore [2.259. For Peirce, a demonstrative pronoun, “is any general type or law, however established, which requires each instance of it to be really affected by its Object in such a manner as merely to draw attention to that Object”]

7 - DICISIGN INDEXICAL LEGISIGN [7-5-6: individual material object interpreted as normatively effective due to its contextualization] For example, a wire fence delimiting a field [2.260. To Peirce, a street cry, “is any general type or law, however established, which requires each instance of it to be really affected by its Object in such a manner as to furnish definite information concerning such Object”]
ADDENDA
THE INDEX

Diversifies the work of ontological reconstruction of the environment transforming it into world by the quality of its own proposal of representative perception:
- in (4) as replica or existential identity
- in (7) as type or conventional identification

Diversifies this representative perception according to the interpretant system to which redirects it:
- in (3) as qualitative keys
- in (6) as contextual keys

It has no unifying effectiveness apart from the attribution of ontological existence to the ground (constructed referent) that has as object.

Besides its differentiation with respect to the icon (2) and the symbol (8), excludes of its semiotic composition the qualisign (1), as cognitive pre-existent identity and the argument (9), as conventional valorative system external to existence.

Given that indexes are signs constructed from “things”, we should bear in mind that such “things” can be, in the Peircean retrieval, objects, behaviours or memories. But, considering the difference between signs (with a function that is designative or indicative of something different to itself) and semiotic objects (as referents of such function, whose ontological existence is identified by the action of some sign), we can conclude that not every object, behaviour or memory is an index, but only that one which represents another object, behaviour or memory different from the one being perceived.

A larger development of these four classes of indexical signs can be seen in chapter 20.

For a SYMBOLIC SEMIOTICS

3 possible signs, depending on the SYMBOL:
[16] Representamen/_object/interpretant

8 - RHEMATIC SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN [7-8-3: conventional proposal with designative effectiveness attributed from a system of differential qualities] For example, the flag of a country, a national anthem [2.261. For Peirce, a common name..., what logicians call general term, “is a sign connected with its Object by an association of general ideas in such a way that its Replica calls up an image in the mind which image, owing to certain habits or dispositions of that mind, tends to produce a general concept, and the Replica is interpreted as a Sign of an Object that is an instance of that concept.”]

9 - DICISIGN SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN [7-8-6: conventional proposal with designative effectiveness attributed from its contextualization] For example, a compass, a weathercock (for Peirce the weathercock is a indexical dicent sinsign, but with symbolic value, that is, conventional) [2.262. For Peirce, an ordinary proposition, “is a sign connected with its object by an association of general ideas, and acting like a Rhematic Symbol, except that its intended interpretant represents the Dicent Symbol as being, in respect to what it signifies, really affected by its Object, so that the existence or law which it calls to mind must be actually connected with the indicated Object”]

10 - ARGUMENT SYMBOLIC LEGISIGN [7-8-9: conventional proposal with designative effectiveness attributed from a system of norms] For example, a word or a number [2.263. For Peirce, “is a sign whose interpretant represents its object as being an ulterior sign through a law, namely, the law that the passage from all such premisses to such conclusions tends to the truth”]

100
ADDENDA
THE SYMBOL

Diversifies by the characteristics of the interpretant system:
- in (3) as qualitative keys
- in (6) as contextual keys
- in (9) as normative keys

Is unified by the normative quality or (7) type of representative perception

Apart from its differentiation with respect to the icon (2) and the index (5) excludes from its semiotic composition the qualisign (1), as pre-symbolic cognitive tone and the sinsign (4), as existential replica external to the valuative convention.
From general semiotics to particular semiotics

7.1 General Semiotics

[17] The Peircean sign

Peirce’s dynamic construction of the sign provides the logical scheme of the necessary and sufficient relationships that make up the General Semiotics and which remain constant through each of the 3 grand variants of the Particular Semiotics; these, in turn, have characteristics that are specific to each of them, implying different cognitive behaviors.

I say “dynamic construction” because the elements involved in the configuration of the sign are characterized according to the relations through which they are linked to each other. The identification of a sign does not depend on the perceptual possibilities provided by the representamen, or on the existential characteristics of the object or on the conventional habits of the interpretant taking each of these aspects in an independent way, but on the specific process through which a given representamen places the representation of a given object in the cognitive system of a given interpretant. Every representamen takes something from its object (its ground) and transfers it with given characteristics to an interpretant. The corresponding object of the environment acquire ontological existence depending on what the representamen takes from the object and according to the way each interpretant reworks it. And, in this task, and under these conditions, also the interpreter acquires its specific identity, being the sign the ultimate result of such interrelations, by which it acquires its conventional effectiveness insofar they are adopted and shared by a given community at a given historical moment.

From the variation introduced in every representamen by the conceptual system in which it is involved through its transformation into interpretant, arises one of the variants of what Peirce considered as expandible “ad infinitum” (2.303) and we, less boldly, can consider as “unlimited semiosis”. That is, the inexhaustible possible variations as elements of the phaneron, considering as phaneron a first version of the process of transformation of the environment into world (see Varela, 1992), that depends exclusively of its possibility of enunciation, i.e., of its previous transformation into signs (1.291). Another variant of the unlimited semiosis arises from the Peircean hypothesis that “everything is sign”, whereby each part of the sign be a sign; so the triadic scheme is transformed into 9 possible signs (or into three tricotomies: 2.243) and these into 27 signs (see 6.3.3), without being this number a limit because nothing prevents to deepen the analysis to 81 or to new triple multiples of this, if the researcher is interested in. The logic of the 66 signs is a another one because it takes into consideration 10 tricotomies and even another different is the logic of the 10 signs, which I work widely in this same text. All this shows that a numeros clausus which delimits the number of possible signs can not be considered possible. As in Gödel’s logic, the semiotic system is essentially incomplete because there will always be a semiotic level that may account for the levels of previous signs but it will need a higher level to demonstrate its own validity. This is a rich topic, so in its formally logical aspect (Nagel & Newman, 1970) as in the cognitive suggestions involved (Hofstadter, 1979).
7.2 Three particular semiotics in the Peircean expansion

7.2.1 Iconic semiotics

7.2.1.1 Visual semiotics

(See III Iconic semiotics)

7.2.2 Indexical semiotics

(See IV Indexical semiotics)
7.2.3 Symbolic semiotics

7.2.3.1 Verbal semiotics (orality)

[20]

I (in some relation)
CONSIDERED AS REPRESENTATION
BY CONVENTIONALIZATION OF THE
PHONETIC SEQUENCE

(Something)
PHONIC
SEQUENCE
AS POSSIBLE
AUDITORY
PERCEPTION

II (for something)
INTENDED TO THE PRODUCTION,
CONFIGURATION OR ACTUALIZATION
OF A REFERENT

III (to somebody)
WHO INTERPRETS THE PHONIC SEQUENCE
ATTRIBUTING TO SUCH REFERENT
A GIVEN CONVENTIONAL QUALITY

(See II Symbolic semiotics)
8 Semiotics as methodology

8.1 Introduction

The thesis supported and developed in this work is that semiotics provides, in these moments of the history of scientific (or, simply, rigorous) knowledge, an approach and an ensemble of instruments that situate it as a precise and effective method for explaining the processes of production, communication and transformation of the meaning in the field of social sciences (and not only of them). The qualitative aspects of social sciences can not be reduced to mathematics via an inappropriate demand of precision, and neither logic can account for the diversity of discourses with which the strategies specific to each of them are constructed (Jackendoff, 1983: 57). But semiotics, as a third discipline along with mathematics and logic, complete the operations fundamental to explain the construction of knowledge, for it has enough richness and consistency to accompany the production and interpretation of the diverse theoretical and empirical aspects of knowledge in social sciences. On the minimal condition that it not remain in metaphysical speculation (I do not exclude its need but I reject it as exclusive) and that formalize its cognitive operations so to make possible its use for other researchers (reasoning in 3rd. or, at least, 2nd. person; see Dennett, 2005: 49) interested in diverse fields of knowledge. I differentiate between “formalize”, which I consider corresponds and is to have rigorous cognitive operations available through the definition and permanence of such definitions along the research work (with the right to change, as Foucault claimed, 1969: 28); and “symbolize”, which I think does not correspond and that is to translate the utterings at study, into other language (not the metalanguage of the one that is being used, but a language external to it; see Desclès et Guentcheva Descles, 1977), possibly more rigorous in its operations and not ambiguous in the referentiality of its terms, but whose syntactic-semantic structure is not compatible with the language of the corresponding social discipline. Now, there are rigorous cognitive operations in semiotics?

8.2 Rigor in operations of semiotic methodology

I think that we should try to agree as to what we understand by “rigor” when applied to the cognitive operations in social sciences.

I understand by rigorous operation that whose practice can be shared with other researchers and that, if empirically applied to the same object at study (text, image, behavior, etc.), the result obtained is the same. I understand by rigorous operation that whose practice can be shared with other researchers and that, if empirically applied to the same object at study (text, image, behavior, etc.), the result obtained is the same.

We can speak of rigor also in an argumentative development. Here, the evidence of rigor will be in the rational and explicit logical derivation of the discoursive process. That is, if admitted certain initial assumptions (for example, axioms) or if starting from certain registry of information, and if admitted certain syntactic rules to the construction and transformation of the utterings and given substitution rules in order to pass from these discoursive utterings to the referents enunciated by them, and if we comply with the rules in such way that the process leading to their production can be retrieved from any uttering, the conclusion reached would be well grounded.

All this is intended to lead to the establishment and determination of the rationality of the analytical discourse by means of which is identified the process of explaining the meaning that each social science (and not only these) attributes to its specific object of knowledge in the diverse situations of the research performance. So, rationality here is not equivalent to some substantial and universal criterion of validity of reasoning, but simply to the explicit demonstration of each step leading from a given uttering to the next (or from one proposition to the next) and so on until the last conclusion. This means admitting the popperian criterion that a discourse is rational when falsifiable, that is, when it gives account of the transformation process of each instance of its own development, so that allows to prove the validity of the transformation.

So, rejection of a rigorous argumentation requires: 1) to reject the initial assumptions and/or the initially registered information, 2) and/or to reject the rules for the construction and/or transformation of the utterings used, 3) and/or to reject the rules of substitution between the enunciated terms and the referential entities identified. This is sufficient while operating in the specific historical instance of a given semiosis (see chapter 23). An agreement about these levels of rules is very unlikely. Therefore, rigor is admitted if, primarily, the producer of a given argumentation formulates explicitly the rules corresponding to those three levels and, secondly, complies with them, even if there where no coincidence with the rules an eventual interpreter would admit (in this case, the development of this argumentation would be still rigorous, but it would belong to another possible semiotic world, contradictory to the one of the interpreter). To meet both requirements: formulation of the rules and their compliance, is not easy nor common but if we want to produce rigorous explanatory texts in the field of social sciences, it is necessary. We have to bear in mind that not all knowledge is scientific, and that scientific knowledge is not superior to other; aesthetic knowledge or emotional knowledge, do not need such requirements and nevertheless they are knowledge. That is, the outlined criteria are not essential to the production of all kind of knowledge. But we are speaking here about knowledge specific to social sciences, not about essays or literature, which though also produce knowledge, this is not scientific. Instead, knowledge about knowledge, produced by essays or literature, is again an object of social sciences’s knowledge and as such, needs
I have in mind these simply outlined aspects of rigor when I say that semiotics can be an effective methodology (maybe at this moment of history of knowledge, the most effective of methodologies), able to be applied to explain the production process of signification in the field of social sciences. I think semiotics has rigorous argumentative developments and applies analytical operations which can be considered rigorous and which, when accounting for the production of the effects of sense originated in various categories of discourses (symbolic, as for example the verbal; iconic, as for example the visual; and indexical, as for example the behavioral) satisfy also the methodological requirements of diverse social sciences.

Therefore, I modify my initial question about the existence of rigorous cognitive operations in semiotics (to which I answer yes) adding to it another, about which could be those argumentations and semiotic operations that we could consider cognitively rigorous.

8.3 Operations but not models

Another fundamental requirement so that semiotics may become research methodology in social sciences is to work with operations, not models.

We should bear in mind that the aim of applying semiotics is to explain the socio-cognitive process of production of signification (or significations in force) of a given social phenomenon. While models circumscribe the possibilities of exploration in such a way that we can find in the world only the relations that a model proposes, which are only possible among the categories of entities that the model proposes too (that is, a model does not permit to explain something different to what it proposes), operations do not propose previous collections of entities or configurations between such entities, but instead, working in a way that does not imply its results, they allow to leave open all possibilities resulting from their application. So, they fulfill the constructive aim whose discussion I will develop later.

On the other hand, operations permit a relatively objective work as less linked to the analyst’s subjectivity, because they must satisfy the requisite of being transferable, so that another researcher can learn to use them so that by means of using them, the same results could be achieved, if applied to the same semiotic object (whose signification the researcher attempts to explain) and/or to the same sign or uttering (the scientific, poetic or common social discourse with effectiveness to construct or participate in the construction of the signification society attributes to a given semiotic object/phenomenon). So, they comply with the goal Peirce demanded for every research that intends to be rigorous, as for establish a “conclusion to which every man would come who should pursue the same method and push it far enough.” (Peirce, 7.316).

The model assumes the previous acceptance of an explanatory structure which is founded on a given theory. The model knows what has to look in order to explain the meaning of a given social phenomenon or the formation process of such signification, or its interpretation and transformation process. The model will never see in the world more than what is already registered by its components and the predefined relations that link such components. The model is the materialization of a system (or of one of its parts), in so far as it specifies what in the system are relational possibilities. All model implies the acceptance of given preexistent types in a given system, linked according to a given legality; as its character, the model is a replica (or actualization) of such types and its relations, as is established by Peirce (without leading to the critical aspects of a specific methodological instrument, as the ones I am formulating) when he develops the relations between “legisign” or “type” on the one hand and “sinsign” or “token” or “replica”, by the other (2.246; 8.363ff).

The operation explore the organizational possibilities of a ensemble of contextual relations, identifiable between the physical entities composing a given social phenomenon, and the possible relations of such phenomenon with other phenomena of its social and historical environment. The operation starts from a syntactical base, identifying possible relations (in the bounded universe of a given moment in the historical development of a discipline, ideological constituent of all thought) between the physical entities (iconic, indexical or symbolic) recordable as composing the phenomenon whose production, interpretation and transformation of signification is studied. According to the principle I mentioned in diverse occasions (see chapter 9) that “there is no semantics without syntax”, from this retrieving of syntactic relations, by operations of contextualization (as broad as the explanation of the problem demands), the production process (attribution), the conditions of interpretation (substitution) and the possibilities of transformation (overcoming) in which the explanation sought will consist, will appear without having been predefined and requiring the less number of previous conditions for its formulation.
That is, the *model* allows to find what was already preconceived by the concepts it used and the relations linking them. Methodological working of the model is specular: it finds what it knows how to see; this would be the process by which everyday knowledge works (in its common and non creative aspect, as everyday knowledge, it also has a strong creative power).

In contrast, the operation allows to discover previously unknown concepts, which, although possible as their relations were available, were not established explicitly. The methodological work of the operation is processual: it allows to find what was not known how to see, it provides the explanation about the semiosis available in a society so to perceive it, it identifies the possible changes that will prevent to keep perceiving it and it will propose new perceptions with which the history of the interpreter and its society will be constructed (see chapter 21). This would be the process according to which creative knowledge, so scientific as aesthetic and common, works (and these would be the limits and conditioning of all creativity; nothing is created out of nothing, everything is created as transformation of what preexist).

Following this criterion, the fundamental semiotic operations (Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 31ff) are that of *attribute* (of a value to a form; *identifying a semiotic object* by its syntactic or contextual relations), *substitution* (or interaction between a substituent semiosis and a substituted semiosis; *semantizing a semiotic object* by its differential contrast) and *overcoming* (of the contradictions evidenced by the application of the preceding substituent and substituted semiosis, with the possible emergence of a new language; *historicity of the semiotic object* in terms of the pragmatics of its enunciation (see chapter 23).

### 8.4 Materialist base of semiotics as methodology

The *materialist base* of semiotics contributes to its effective intervention as research methodology in social sciences. The information we have about the “external” world is composed cognitively by mental images organized from the sensory perceptions and according to the enunciative forms in force at the moment and in the society at study. Such would be the materialist base of semiotic research. When contrasted with the requirement of capturing the reality of that external world, the possibility of obtaining a rigorous knowledge from the mentioned instances: *mental images, sensory perceptions* and *enunciative forms*, seems to be rather weak. But the contrast is not proposed as to a *reality*, understanding by this the entities and processes assumed to exist and to occur independently of whether they are objects of human knowledge, but as to the *cognitive configurations in force*, understanding by these the entities and processes known (or, better, assumed) to be involved at a moment and in a given society, in the production of knowledge. In this last sense, the risk to the rigor of knowledge process developing at a given moment is the uncritical acceptance of mental images, sensory perceptions and enunciative forms worked out by and individual, if they are not contrasted with the characteristics required for these images, perceptions and forms in order to be socially accepted (scientific, poetic or common acceptance, depending on their origin and domain of effectiveness).

Reality’s ontological existence is constructed by humanity and has a history, which is that of reality’s knowledge; the ontic side of the reality is out of the possibility of being known by humanity and its permanence or transformation or even the applicability of these terms to the reality, can not be object of knowledge. As members of humanity, we know what our sense organs allow us to know and *in the way as* they allow us to know it; *what our neuronal systems allow us to process and in the way as they allow us to process it*; and *what the available semiosis allow us to enunciate and in the way as they permit us to enunciate it*; all of these varying with the history of their transformations until now and with the society from which we are knowing them, and all of these is socially debated at each moment and in each society in the struggle for hegemony of knowledge’s production processes validation.

### 8.5 Constructivist approach of semiotics as methodology

Another aspect of semiotics whose discussion I consider critical to support its methodological effectiveness in the field of social sciences research would be the *constructivist approach*. The *substantialist* approach is the one opposing it. That is to say, Is man constructing signification through their discourse (in the broad Peircean sense: iconic, indexical, symbolic), or is the signification inherent to each entity of the world and man merely discovers it?

I mean a constructivism in the sense of Foucault (1969: 31ff), when he raises the question of what gives unity to the discourse and rejects the large synthesis: *the object, the subject, the concepts and the theme*, as entities and assumptions whose definition seem to be socially agreed, perhaps related to the maintaining of security and stability of coexistence, whose recipients advise not to discuss them, but with weak support when they are related to the explanation of discourse’s effectiveness in its pretension to attribute signification to the phenomena of the world. From another approach, very different but semiotically concurrent as explanation of the process of attributing ontological existence to entities of environment, I refer to the constructivism involved in the research proposals coming from the so called “sciences of cognition”, some of whose titles are explicitly expressing this approach (for example, Hoffman (1998) *Visual Intelligence. How We Create What We See*).
This cases are about questions whose answer will come from the texts in which each of that entities: (1) object, (2) subject, (3) concept and (4) theme, acquire existence for knowledge and by which the interpretation, therefore, is constructing their meaning, contrasting the assumption that they exist prior and independently of that texts production. The text analysis (which I consider as the basic instrument for semiotic work, with its necessary scope in temporal and social contextualization), applied to the verbal, the visual, the musical, the behavioral, or to whatever quality of the involved semiosis, (1) is what would establish the meaning, that is not preexisting to the discourse, acquired by the object (the substituted semiosis which exists only ontologically as such), that is being spoken about. This semiotic object (or semiotized) is one of the corns of the following semiotic dilemma, being the other one the discourse: “is necessary that a semiosis (substituent, as discourse) stops to be what it is ‘in itself’, so that another semiosis (substituted, as semiotic object) come to be, not what it is ‘in itself, but what the first one makes of it’” (Magarínos de Morentin, 1996a: 26), that is, nothing is ontically knowable or knowable “in itself” or in its own reality, so we could be the dream of a demented in a corner of an asylum. As we would be for a martian (profiting the chomskian metaphor) who sees and interprets from its world, perhaps completely different to ours, this same environment.

This textual analysis (2) will be able to establish the meaning of the plural subject that does not exist prior to the discourse and that is being constructed in such texts, where it is identifiable through its discursive modes, so is rejected the idea of a transcendent subject, and that of the fundamental unity of the subject, which, on the contrary, Foucault pluralizes, based on the dispersion of discursive formations in which it participates.

This textual analysis (3) will be able to establish the meaning of the concepts used in the corresponding texts and that does not exist prior to the discourse, rejecting its eventual character of permanent ideas and considering them lexems whose significative effectiveness come from the context in which they appear (like the “dicisign” that Peirce exemplifies through the proposition, as a context defining each of the symbols that compose it), legitimizing the task of discourse analysis and rejecting that of hermeneutics as content analysis already established and dogmatic referent which decides the truth or falsity of an interpretation. On the contrary, the researcher can only establish whether the meaning attributed to a concept at a given moment in a given society is in force; this is objective relativism, another of the methodological aspects involved in the semiotic research, which I will refer to frequently in the developments that follow.

Such analysis (4) is also the instrument that will permit to establish the meaning of the themes, which, from this perspective, does not exist prior to the discourse but are constructed in it, being the result of the strategy of the discourse’s producer. Who, by his/her own decision, goes away from a possible derivation, choosing another (a possible diffraction) with which is able to construct a given identity to a given theme to the detriment of another possible identity which would construct another theme through another strategy, and who decides while advancing the construction of discourse (I repeat: verbal visual, musical, maybe palatable [like that delightful introduction to semiotics of the taste written by Brillat-Savarin circa 1825] or whatever its semiotic quality), what are the theoretical options to leave aside and what are those to be adopted in order to continue with his/her work, according to “already not discursive” practices (whether something not discursive is imaginable; I say this as a respectful limit to Foucault’s Saussureanism).

When not reduced to a phenomenological projection, semiotics provides the necessary instruments with the rigor demanded by contemporary epistemology to realize in its methodological practice the constructive proposals I assign to it, which are close to those of the research program formulated by Foucault. My attitude before a theoretical proposal that I consider successful (this happened to me with many authors, like Eco, Rossi Landi, Rastier, Sonesson, Groupe µ, apart from Foucault himself and, of course, Saussure, Peirce, Althusser, Barthes, etc.), after trying to understand conceptually that proposal as well as possible, is to start thinking how I can apply it or, which is quite similar, how could I reach this conclusion or other similar, starting from the analysis of social phenomena in the study of which I am interested. Of course, my interest is not speculative (in the best sense of metaphysics), but epistemological and methodological. I want to know how I can intervene to verify what gives me that proposal and confirm its validity to interpret the meaning of the phenomena composing the social universe I inhabit. This is because I think that theoretical concepts, although they are bright and appear logically well-founded, have only the validity that provide its eventual corroborations in the analytical practice, which I consider the core of semiotic practice. And there are no positivist residue in my usage of the term “corroboration”. Moreover, all these make sense to allow to understand why I choose the opposite path. I am not interested in corroborating (although always must be possible), I am interested in constructing. To construct theoretical concepts whose components (shortly, the definitional terms that identify them) I have had to find previously contextualized in the social discourse of a given community (as I already said, be the discourse scientific, artistic or common). I approach the social discourse in which I am interested with a kind of abductive attitude to see if, analyzing it, I achieve a consistent and effective explanation as to what are the meanings in force of the phenomenon that, by hypothesis (that I will have to prove), I suppose is being constructed in such discourse and about such phenomena, not as an universal or definitive truth, but as the evidence that in that way (with that words or images or behaviors, in the way they are semantized or, more
operationally, defined in the contexts that include them) is being constructed the meaning of that social phenomenon, at that moment of that community. From this constructive perspective, the concept, the idea, is posterior to the uttering that formulates it (constructs it) in each circumstance, textual and/or of utterance, depending on the places where it appear (explicitly, rhetorically, or implicitly) named and of the semantics that its multiple contextualizations attribute to it. Because is also foucaultian (and so I adopt it) to consider that we should not shut away ourselves in a single text as a purportedly enough document, but to see such text as a monument, changing, with losses, aggregates and subsequent interpretations according to the social and historical context in which is perceived; that is, its necessary complement will be found only in other and different texts, on which it depends in order to be constructed some acceptable understanding of it. According to this, every text (symbolic, iconic or indexical) receive its interpretation in the context of other texts (whose indexical, iconic or symbolic quality does not have to correspond to that of the text at study), so the semiotician who make the analysis is challenged to establish which would be such texts, to select them and formulate a hypothesis from this collection under his/her exclusive responsibility. And so, having succeeded to prove that such are the specific meanings of the terms at study and that such are the specific texts in which such meanings are constructed, both the terms with which are constructed the cultures struggling for the hegemonic validity and the terms with which are constructed the multiple marginal cultures, and even the meaning of the more negligible (at least in appearance) examined lexem, the researcher will have achieved to prove also the validity of his/her method and his/her hypothesis.

8.6 Possible semiotic worlds

There are some remarkable and enlightening works about possible semiotic worlds in relation to semiotics. I confine myself to mention Eco (1989a), also Vaina, Runcan and Roscau (1977).

But not any possible world is a possible semiotic world (PSW) and we need to profile their differences and specific operativity. I think we can begin setting up what will be an important semiotic instrument, in the service of social sciences (see chapter 10).

The logical stages leading to such PSWs would be these:

(1) Application. The signification is produced applying a given pansemiotic text to the production of the signification of a given entity or phenomenon (and, once again, I remind you that the expression “pansemiotic text” proposes to include in its designation all textual raw material: symbols [like for example, words, numbers, letters of propositional logic], icons [like for example, visual images] or indexes [like for example, ritualized behaviors or objects exhibited in museums and shop windows, and even animals in a zoo]). This text is not a single one, since there are a plurality of texts competing for hegemony as to what pansemiotic text will be imposed as being in force because of the greater support of interpreters. No entity or phenomenon has signification in itself; the signification attributed to them comes from the history of the texts that had them as referent and from the dispersion of texts that have them as referent at a given moment.

(2) Circulation, transformation of an observable text in a mental interpretation and projection of this interpretation on an entity or phenomenon of the world. This pansemiotic text (one or more, but in each case, analyzable in its singularity) circulates at a given moment among the members of a given community, who interpret it so that they attribute to the entity or phenomenon that is its referent, one or more interpretations which are the significations in force of such entity or phenomenon.

(3) Plurality of interpretative mental schemes. The mental system available to which each interpreter send the pansemiotic text for its interpretation, is supposed to be different in each interpreter but relatively homogeneous in the whole of interpreters sharing the same socio-cultural environment. This supposition (“illimited semiosis”) allows to infer that groups of interpretative schemes relatively homogeneous among themselves (that is, they admit differences but without being contradictory) are identifiable against other groups of interpretative schemes also relatively homogeneous among themselves, but contradictory with the first ones, without being possible to establish a priori how many contradictory groups will be identified.

(4) Materialization of the mental interpretation in an observable text. What happened in the mind of each interpreter, and therefore the formation of given groups relatively homogeneous among themselves and contradictory with other given groups relatively homogeneous among themselves and in regard to the interpretative schemes used and its results, is completely indiscernible, except its externalization in a new text from among the pansemiotically available (for example, through words and/or images and/or behaviors) and according to the form it externalizes. Hence we can say that the meaning is a metaphysical entelechy until it is materialized in an observable text.

(5) The text produced by the interpreters materializes the signification attributed to the entity or phenomenon of the world. The meaning attributed by each interpreter and by each group of interpreters to the entity or phenomenon that is the referent of the text, can be known from the pansemiotic text produced by each member.
of each different group of interpreters relative to the interpretation they attributed to the observed entity or phenomenon.

(6) If the distribution of this 5 stages of the process of attribution of meaning to an entity or phenomenon is a valid assumption, semiotics should give account of what analytical and constructive operations provides to the researchers who intend to explain the process by which a given signification was attributed to an entity or phenomenon.

The whole of such operations and the results achieved by their intervention, are what I called “possible semiotic worlds”.

To summarize with the criterion that the summary enrich, by condensing it, the text initially expanded, we can say that the following results should be obtained:

(1) Proposal of the producer of a text to apply it to an entity.

(2) The interpreter’s acceptance of that text as generator of the interpretation that attributes a given signification to the entity at study.

(3) Dispersion of the interpretative schemes available at a given moment in a given society.

(4) Externalization of the interpretation, through a new text produced by the interpreter.

(5) Knowledge, by a third party, of the meaning attributed to the entity, through knowledge of the new text produced by the interpreter.

(6) Retrieving of the result of each consistent sequence (internally non contradictory) of the process, as configuration of a given possible semiotic world.

Until here, 6 steps or stages have been identified, corresponding to the analytical task of semiotics trying to explain the process of production of a given signification, the process of its communication and the process of its transformation.

Clarification: (a) the assertion that there should be 6 steps is merely tentative and counts as an approach to the description of the task that would correspond to a specific semiotic analysis; (b) the content of each step, its sequentiality and the result obtained at the end of each, is also tentative and exploratory; (c) is advisable to take into account the difference I establish between the semiotic faculty and the semiotic discipline. These 6 steps and their contents correspond to the discipline; that is, I am not trying to formalize the task of explaining the process of production of the signification (as performance of the semiotic faculty), but I am trying to explain how is justified that a given signification has been attributed to given entities of the world (as product of the operations whose identification, process of performing and effectiveness, is the object of knowledge of the semiotic discipline).

I will try now in the same tentative and exploratory way, something that corresponds to the last aspect; that is, I will propose the identification, performance and effectiveness of the semiotic operations involved in the process of explaining the meaning attributed to a given entity, according to the way this acquires the quality of existing to knowledge (that is, how it acquires its ontological quality) at a given moment in a given society (or social group belonging to that society, or individual belonging to that social group). When focusing the operations, we need to bear in mind that they act upon a class of information, so, the pansemiotic texts of the corpus involved in the production of the signification at study should be identified, and as well, such involvement and belonging should have been justified. I will work in this direction on the synthetic formulation of the 6 steps posed, without forgetting what I said in the development before the 6 steps, not so synthetically.

So, we would have:

(1) Proposal of applying a text to an entity.

**Appropriate corpus:** collection of historical texts that have had a given entity as referent.

**Operation:** identification of formal relations ([symbolic] synthax, [iconic] configuration or [indexical] disposition) that could project a possible semantics on a given entity at study in such historical texts.

(2) Acceptance of that text as producer of the interpretation that attributes a given meaning to the entity.

**Appropriate corpus:** historical texts, contemporary to those mentioned in (1), in whose formal relations can be identified their correspondence with the formal relations of the specific texts mentioned in (1). (Or, identification of formal structures in the discourse of the community similar to those of the texts applied in an assumed initial moment (or in a yesterday that should be determined) to the entity at study. That is, the community used similar structures to refer to such entity as the ones used by those who established them as referent of their discourse).
Operation: confirmation of the similarity between the formal structures identified in the original texts and in those used by the community at that moment.

(3) Dispersion of the interpretative schemes available at a given moment and society.

Appropriate corpus: collection, in the time that the research is interested in (usually currently, because the meaning attributed to the entity at study is interesting in a today that should be determined), of the texts produced in an amount sufficient to identify the presence of formal structures with enough degree of difference to lead to contradictory semantic interpretations. This serves as criterion for the dimension of a given sample in a semiotic research: this is not a probabilistic operation of quantitative dimension; it has to register at least one contradiction (as a logical minimum) in the semantic interpretation of the formal structures at study; to the extent that there are no contradiction registered, the sample is insufficient, because it can not account for the plurality inherent in any society.

Operation: inference of the diverse interpretative schemes in force, from the identification of the diverse social discourses, bearers of divergent social structures as to the generation of contradictory semantic interpretations.

(4) Externalization of the interpretation through a new text produced by the interpreter.

Appropriate corpus: the same of the step above, (3).

Operation: reading the interpretative schemes achieved by the operation applied in step (3), by selecting the collection of formal structures having as referent the semantic interpretation of the entity at study.

(5) Knowledge, by a third party, of the meaning attributed to the entity, by knowing the new text produced by the interpreter.

Appropriate corpus: the previously established.

Operation: from the identification (syntactic) of the ensembles of non contradictory formal structure used, to identify (semantic) the conceptual categories applied to the attribution of sense to the entity at study. This operation should be repeated in each ensemble containing formal structures that are contradictory with the remaining ones.

(6) Retrieving the result of each consistent (internally non contradictory) sequence of the process, as the configuration of a possible semiotic world.

Appropriate corpus: the formal-conceptual structures indentified in the last stage above.

Operation: systematization by similarities and differences, of the semantic components identified, as non contradictory ensembles and differentiation of each ensemble, by the presence of contradictory components in symmetrical spaces of each of that systematizations.

These proposals are similar to those applied in chapter 12 and also correspond to the method applied in the example of [80] Fig. 1, in chapter 24.

8.7 Cognitive approach of semiotics as methodology

Following the methodological discussion, is convenient to reflect on the cognitive approach of semiotics. For the current cognitive reflection we can find, from the Peircean view, two directions. The proposals which identify 3 classes of signs, then 9 classes extensible to 27, 81 or, as multiples of 3, to as many as the researcher is interested in exploring (Peirce, 2.219-2.314; Guerri, 2003; Magariños de Morentin, 1983b [and here, chapter 6]), or the other combinatorial that relates and reconstructs 10 new and complex signs [see also here 6.4.3 and 20.1], or even another in which 66 semiotic possibilities are identified (Peirce, 2.243; Marostica, 1998), all of these emerging from the 3 original categories: form, existence and value. We should not fall into the simplistic prejudice of believing that Peirce constructs a taxonomy, but instead we should understand his inexhaustible proposal of exploring the production of signs as the identification of an open ensemble of operations, mental, relational, constructive and applicable to the interpretations of phenomena of the world. First aspect from which Peirce`s thought is retrieved today for its consistency with the current requirements of cognitive sciences.

The inclusion of the interpretant in the structure of the sign, is another of the features permitting to understand the contemporaneity of Peirce`s proposals. He does not consider that who perceives is receiver or interpreter of a sign like somebody who perceives, receives or interprets a sign that already preexists as a whole before that mental task of deciphering or semantizing, but instead, that the sign is not such until that mentioned mental task of deciphering or semantizing is not fulfilled. The process of knowledge is included into the concept of sign, and defines its differential characteristics.

The methodological perspective of the semiotics I am proposing intends to (1) be rigorous, (2) work through operations and not models, (3) be based on material textuality or positivity of discourse as postulated by Foucault, (4) construct the meaning, without taking it for granted (or using the semiotic method to question the
hegemonic proposal that intends to establish what is the right meaning of the entities of the world and what is the wrong and false one, as the rediscovery and the refoundation of semiotics by the French scholars in the 60s: Althusser, Barthes, Pécheux, Badiou, Karsz, among others, and (5) to work out the possible semiotic worlds to account for how are constructed the diverse, dispersed and contradictory significations of social phenomena of each time and society. All of this is consistent with a cognitive treatment as an epistemological perspective of the semiotic methodology, because it must account for the way the mind of each interpreter is operating (with the instruments their culture provide from the phylogenetic neurological structure) in the configuration of the corresponding signs, whose enunciation will attribute ontological existence to the aspects of the environment which in this way are to be perceived and interpreted.

8.8 Research with semiotic methodology

The first reflection I propose is that the task of semiotic method is not to produce the signification of social phenomena, but to explain how such signification has been produced or how have been produced the multiple significations that at a given moment of a given society a given social phenomenon acquires. The semiotic path leading to this explanation needs (at the mere level of hypothesis that must be proved at the end of the research) to identify the social environments where the diverse social sectors involved in the attribution of signification to such phenomena, produce the discourses which effectively realize them, and in which will be involved the various mental operations of symbols, icons and/or indexes (in other words, not only verbal discourses, but also of images and/or attitudes or behaviors and/or objects exhibited to give account of absent entities). Once identified (hypothetically) the social environment/s and selected (hypothetically) the discourses issued from such environments in relation with the phenomenon at study, should be established the analytical operations to use in relation with the textuality of such discourses, in order to (hypothetically) give rise to the mental operations by which was attributed signification to the phenomenon at study from that social environments. These analytical operations must be specific to the involved semiosis. The metalinguistic analysis (in the strict sense of operations which reflect with words on words) does not work for the analysis of images, and not all or any kind of images can be analyzed with the same operations; analysis of figurative images (or iconic legisigns) is different from analysis of plastic images (“plastic” in the sense of the Groupe µ, and “plastic images” as the Peircean iconic qualsigns) and from analysis of the conceptual images (or iconic legisigns) (see chapter 13). We have not sufficiently formalized operations (i.e., operative and explicitly defined) to apply to the analysis of all these semiosis. Although it can be done in a much greater extent than we could think, the need of further research in order to adjust the existing operations and/or find new ones that permit to do it, can not be excluded.

One of the main aspects is that of the interpretation. There is interpretation (1) in the producer of a text which has as referent a given entity of the environment and which is intended to establish the signification of such entity so it can be perceived as ontological existent. There is interpretation (2) in the person who interprets that text assigning an effective signification to that entity. There is interpretation (3) in the person who perceives that entity as bearer of the signification attributed to it by that text. There is interpretation (4) by the interpreters of other semiosis, who compete to give to the entity at study other different significations, even contradictory with the previous one (from the interpretation (1b) that other text proposes to the same entity; and from the interpretation (2b) from that other text; and from the interpretation (3b) that generates the perception of the same entity [that is already not the same] provided by that other text). This multiple set of interpretations is the set of possible semiotic worlds available at a given moment in a given society competing to attribute a given signification to a given entity. The identification of such set of PSWs and the explanation of the interpretation processes originating them form the main goal of semiotics as research methodology, since its result will (in the case of a success, which I think is always partial and only valid for the moment and society in which is being studied) explain the signification attributed to the world from which a given individual and/or a given society get their identity and will allow to know what is such signification.

Schematically (meaning that there are much more to say), semiotic methodology is an instrument to explain the interpretations which, at a given moment in a given society, receive a given phenomenon. That is, I am saying (schematically) that our methodology does not aim at producing the social interpretation of a phenomenon, but to explain it. Of course, if it is true that we can explain, we could also say in a quasi positivist sense of scientific explanation, that we then can predict, which is not the same as produce, but is very tempting to whom, knowing how to do one of these, attempt to do also the other.

What do I intend to say when I state that we can explain? (1) That we can give account of which other discourses have been involved in the production of given discourse/s that made to circulate given interpretation/s of a given phenomenon. (2) That we can give account of what other discourses have been excluded, ignored or rejected by the producers of discourses when they produced those that have established the interpretations in force, from the hegemonic to the marginal, of the phenomenon at study. (3) That we can give account of the blend of discourses, so the consistent as the contradictory, and also that we can make evident, point, denounce, proclaim this kind of qualities of the blend and we can show its origins, its alleged consequences, its desired effects and the hidden ones, substituted, blinded by the evidence of the exhibited ones, overshadowing that blindness and advising.
about the hidden consequences to which the acceptance of the proposed interpretation leads, in the permanent struggle of interpretations as indispensable instrument for the conquest of power.

By denying that we can produce, I do not mean that we can not do it as semioticians, but as users of social discourse, as any other “homo loquens” of our society; to produce is a consequence of the semiotic faculty, and to explain is consequence of the semiotic discipline. This is like to take sides in the question of whether knowing helps to create. I do not believe that it helps specially, and this “specially” means that to know more does not mean creating better. Now, the person who knows, can explain the creation, beyond what the creator says, since he speaks from his experience but not from the discourse or the social time where his work is or is not recognized as a creation but from where speaks the analyst and so, also we as semioticians. To be able to apply semiotic methodology means that we have an instrumental equipment for analytical reasoning, but reasoning is not an appropriate and necessary instrument to produce. At least, as instance prior to creation, though it may be very useful to a posterior operation, when already is possible (and very easy!) to explain the creation. I know that I come and go between the terms “production” and “creation”, which are not synonymous (anyway, synonyms does not exist, they are insipid fruits of generalizing minds, those vilified by Foucault). I use the word “production” with a richer semantic content than usual and the word “creation” with a poorer semantic content than usual. What I am saying, finally, is that one need not to be semiotician to produce (this is related to textuality) nor to propose (this is related with communication) one interpretation of a phenomenon that satisfies some social sector, and I also say that does not help being semioticians to create (this is related to the discredit of preexisting libraries, galleries, etc., in the way as a new law cleans out law libraries), nor to set up (this is related to the transient peak in the spin of the wheel of fortune) a new discourse which implants a different interpretation of old phenomena.

8.9 Semiotics as methodology and epistemology

The function of semiotics in social sciences is specified by its contribution as epistemology and as methodology. Indeed, I think that semiotics is providing (and/or will provide) appropriate and effective instruments to support (i.e., to justify rigorously according to the available knowledge) the explanation of the signification that, at a given moment and society, can be attributed (as a proposal for the future and as criticism of the thought performed) to a given social phenomenon (“social” insofar it is realized on social discourse, irrespective of the natural or social quality of its origin), being for all that, a methodology.

I also think that semiotics is providing (and/or will provide) appropriate and effective instruments to identify, describe and evaluate the grounds, consistency and rationality of the process by which, at a moment of a given society, was attributed (as retrieval of the past and as availability in the future) a given signification to the social phenomenon at study, being as such, an epistemology.

In order to avoid that the darkness inherent to the term “signification”, turn what I come to write into a fragment of some metaphysics, I consider this term (as I have said in various occassions) as designation of the discursive materialization of the interpretation which one or more interpreter/s attribute to a given phenomenon (I call “meaning” the concept originated by the interpretation of a sign; its enunciative textualization or materialization is necessary to be used in a rigorous methodology, as semiotics intends to be) for being in force in a given society. I call “signification” the result of attributing a meaning to a semiotic object (or significative entity of the world); this social task is made by that enunciative materialization. The meanings are constructed in the mind and are unknowable until materializing in discourses (symbolic, iconic or indexical). These discourses or texts (it depends on how we view them, that is, with or without semantics) show, propose and produce meanings which confer signification to entities and phenomena of the world. The question about where a given meaning is produced, lies in the interpretant (but is a merely speculative indication, unless it has been materialized in a semiosis); the question about where a given meaning become evident lies in a sign or enunciation (or text or discourse); the question concerning which entity of the environment is ontologically identified when a signification is attributed to it, lies in the semiotic object. That is, the signification is neither a private interiority of a subject, nor an entity based on the mind of a given society’s members, but a representation of a specific social phenomenon materialized (or materializable) through a given semiosis (as perceptual proposal about the possible form of its existence, directed toward the community) which confer a given cognitive existence to such phenomenon. The resources to realize this materialization are multiple, ranging from the use of the conventional codes collectively available, and the transformation of the conventionality of its rules, to the enunciative externalization, more or less hermetic, of the individual experience. So, to explain the signification attributed at a given moment in a given society to a given semiotic object, we need to identify the text in which the signification proposed by a given interpreter to be assigned to the semiotic object at study, is materialized.

All this tends to be like an inescapable constant and points to the necessity of formulating in each research, expressive and explicitly, the identification and description of the functioning of the semiotic operations, as methodology, to provide effectiveness and rigor to the research intended to explain the production of signification and, as epistemology, to establish the grounds, consistency and rationality of such explanation. I
think that achieving and updating this concern permanently, according to the history of the state of knowledge of both disciplines, is our main responsibility as semioticians.

8.10 Methodology and historical analysis of the semiotic change

[21] History of the semiotic systems II.

This is the second development of the scheme [2] 2.1.5, which, in turn, is completed in [81] chapter 23.

Reading the scheme [21].

From the interaction of three basic elements (organizers but insufficient): Thought, Semiosis, World, the methodology require to account for the following aspects, if we want to establish the history or the change in the state of being in force of a given semiosis (and no complete study of the construction of an entity’s signification, can dispense with its history):

1) Identification of the producer subject of a given current semiosis, applicable by hypothesis to the entity at study.

2) Identification of the interpreter subject who perceives and interprets, in a given present, the semiosis enunciated by the producer subject.

3) Identification of the semiosis effectively produced and interpreted, which appears in the discourse (symbolic, iconic, indexical) in force at a given moment of a given society and which by hypothesis is producer of the referential entity at study.

4) Identification of Edge 1 of the semiosis selected by the researcher, containing the new signs and the new grammaticality (iconic, indexical or symbolic), which now are available but were not available at an earlier moment.

5) Identification of the transformation produced by that new signs and/or new grammaticality and by which can be perceived (as “X”) what until then was not perceivable (“?”).

6) Identification of Edge 2 of the semiosis selected by the researcher, lacking of the previous signs and grammaticality (iconic, indexical or symbolic), now obscured and not available, but that were available at an earlier moment.

7) Identification of the transformation produced by the lack of availability of those signs and grammaticality and by which can no longer be perceived (“?”) what until that moment was perceivable (“Y”).

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8) Designation as “entropic environment” of what exist ontologically but can not be perceived now (“?”) because it can not be enunciated, given the lack of the necessary signs and grammaticality.

9) Designation as “world: semiotic object” of what exist ontologically and can now be perceived (“X”) because it can be enunciated given the availability of the necessary signs and grammaticality.

10) Identification of the double effect produced by the availability of every new semiosis: a) acquisition of the possibility of perceiving new entities configurating a new “semiotic world”; and b) at the same time, loss of the possibility of perceiving entities returning to the “entropic environment”. In summary, every change in a semiosis (and semiosis is changing constantly; this is the historical quality of humanity) opens and closes possibilities of knowledge. This also implies that all knowledge depends on the semiosis from which is known.
II

SYMBOLIC SEMIOTICS
9 Epistemological keys and basic methodological operations

9.1 Michel Foucault. Reinterpretation from The Archeology of Knowledge

To read and comprehend the Foucaultian proposals are fundamental to establish the goals and the operations coherent with them, when envisaging the accomplishment of a study or research in the field of symbolic semiotics.

Remember that we mean by symbolic semiotics the research methodology aimed at explaining the meaning of given social phenomena when its representation/interpretation has been socially produced by symbolic texts. In the Peircean sense, “symbolic texts” refers predominantly to speech and also to any other semiosis whose signs tend to have the conventional aspect (that is, their interpretation require, centrally, knowledge about the social convention that gives to them the state of being in force) and, consequently, they constitute a virtual system of strong, or at least relative, formalization (that is, the relations between signs follows stable and identifiable rules).

This is why Foucault’s contribution has been decisive for the organization of the criteria and operations of the Discourse Analysis School. Its application to other semiosis, like the iconical and the indexical, needs to make changes and adjustments so to avoid distorting the specific effectiveness and rules of production of those semiosis.

Foucault wanted to show the characteristics of the entity he called “uttering” (far from its more widespread meaning, he redefined it throughout his work) which, in a very peculiar way, build the meaning of that to which it refers. Maintenance or differentiation (and even contradiction) of the rules involved in their production, will be fundamental to identify each of the “discursive formations” (or, as I call them in my methodological works, “possible semiotic worlds”) in force at a given historical moment of a given community and to attribute, to each of them, their respective effectiveness in the struggle for the hegemonic acceptance of their proposal of attribution of meaning to the environment.

The archeology of knowledge is a text of epistemological reflection, in which Foucault formulate a research program, without specifying methodological operations, but fixing the characteristics and conditions which these must comply with. Is a critical document with respect to certain habitual practices in the academic tasks of texts research, in which Foucault points out cognitive traps, lack of explanatory effectiveness, implicit deviations hindering and even preventing to achieve an explanation of the production of meaning, which is the aim of text analysis.

Such is at least one of the possible readings of this work; I say this with full awareness of not exhausting its conceptual wealth, and also with the awareness of having taken some independence that sometimes comes to the heterodoxy, always aiming to retrieve the methodological power of his suggestions. Therefore, this is the reading I propose, so to ground the characteristics of the methodological rigor with which I think semiotics needs to work in order to meet its analytical possibilities and avoiding to fall in the easy banalization that so much has damaged it.

Foucault’s proposals are applicable and useful in the various fields of social sciences. Should be noted that its reference to history, to economy, to linguistics, to anthropology, to medicine and psychiatry are, at least for us, illustrative views permitting to focus the problems he has been developing. Do not assume them as an obstacle (as an eventual distance from our immediate academic interests), but as an operational bridge toward the concrete application of the proposed concepts.

Next, I will formulate, in my own words and following my own interpretation, some keys of Foucault’s thought, that are advisable to keep in mind while reading the text of The archeology.

Keys (and appropriation) of Michel Foucault’s thought:

1. The entities (objects, concepts, social phenomena) about which we spoke are constructed through the production of discourses. How they are represented intends to induce how they are interpreted-identified.

2. The construction of the meaning of given entities occur from the textual materiality of the discourse that represents or interprets it. This grounds one of the main axioms of semiotic methodology: there is no semantics without syntax.

3. The unsaid in a text (but read or perceived “between lines” by the interpreter) is said elsewhere (the methodological work consists in identify and retrieve it contrastingly).
4. To establish the signification of a social phenomenon is not to show a synthesis in which its meaning would consist. Knowledge does not consist in showing what the diverse phenomena has in common, but instead, the dispersion of interpretations that a phenomenon receives when is constructed from a given ensemble of discourses.

5. A research must give account also of the struggle for hegemony in the use of one or other of these discourses for constructing the signification at study.

6. From here comes another axiom of semiotic methodology: all semantics is differential, that is, in order to establish its value or effectiveness, it must be differentiated from another semantics built from another discourse.

7. Meaning comes from the “outside”; importance of identifying the “trihedral of knowledge” in social sciences (economics, psychology, and linguistics) by the “decentering of the subject”, proposed from their respective disciplines and with their specific characteristics, by Marx, Freud and Saussure. Identity comes from attributing ontological existence to the entities of the environment, which afterwards condition it.

8. All of this implies an objectively relativist attitude, as it means that it does not exist one unique and true meaning that be the purpose of the search through the investigation.

9. So, the meaning retrieved by social discourse (in the plurality of its manifestations) analysis, is that which is in force (or, better, constituted by the ensemble of meanings in force) in a given society (or social group) and at a given moment in that society’s history. So, and finally, a research does not prove what is the true meaning, but what is the one in force in a given society and at a given moment of that society’s history.

9.2 Operational handbook\(^1\) for the development of “contextual definitions” and “contrasting networks”

9.2.1 Introduction

The biggest challenge of a research project is to find the appropriate methodology to its aim. For several years we have developed our methodological guidelines related to our project on the Semiotic Analysis of Political Discourse, whose title is “¿Cuál es el futuro de la democracia en América Latina?”.

We have developed a first methodological line in La semiótica de enunciados, which is included currently in Los fundamentos lógicos de la semiótica y su práctica (Magaríños de Morentin, 1996a). The application of this text showed the need for some explanation about the specific operations permitting a full use of the methodology proposed for the discourses at study. A fortunate situation demanded us a more practical response to such issues. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Argentine Delegation, requested our methodological counseling, along with the analytical support of two researchers of our team: Teresa Poccioni and Nancy Fernández, for the project “Equidad de género en la dimensión socio-emocional de la calidad de atención en salud”, that was being developed under the direction of Lic. Patricia Pittman in Argentina. From this need emerged the “Manual Operativo” on which this section is based. The examples are taken from interviews in the field of health, in urban-marginal sectors; but the methodological treatment is homologous to that we applied to the analysis of the political discourse, be it discourses of politicians, or documents (as we did when analyzing the Viña del Mar Statement, emerging from the VI Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held on November 1996), or articles by journalists or politicians in their interviews with the community, in order to find in the every day usage a contrast to the concepts of the specifically political level texts. The method goes beyond political analysis and is proposed as an important instrument, although never as definitive, for comprehending how are produced the contents of signification in the field of social sciences.

9.2.2 Suppositions and disciplines

The methodological operations proposed and described here come from a synthesis between cognitive semiotics and discourse analysis. They are based on the view that social researches are scientific researches and that the object of knowledge of such researches are the social discourses by which a given community represents/interprets the phenomena of their environment. That is why the quality of the analysis about such discourses will be that of a metalanguage\(^3\) specific to the same discourses, and its scientific value is the identification of the rules by which, in the specific case of the corpus at study, the community produces the representation/interpretation of the phenomena about which they speak.

\(^1\) This work was published in Signa. Revista de la Asociación Española de Semiótica, N° 7, 1998; ps. 233-253.

\(^2\) “What is the future of democracy in Latin America?”. Research project (1998) at FPyCS, UNLP, not published. (G.W.)

\(^3\) As I have said in another work (Magaríños de Morentin, 1996a: 271), “to the degree that any metalinguistic proposition relating to natural languages is analytic” (Lyons, 1977: 292), the character of the operations (analytic) constitutive of social sciences methodology is metalinguistic“.
Cognitive semiotics provides the formulation of 3 fundamental assumptions: 1) there is no semantics\(^4\) without syntax\(^5\) (which is not to assert the equivalence between both); 2) everything what has been effectively said, is corresponding with one preexisting possibility of saying it (this amounts to affirm that every text comes from a pertinent system which, at least from a logic viewpoint, precedes this text), so, from what has effectively been said, can be inferred the syntactic-semantic system from which it comes, and 3) this possibilities of saying are not individual but shared with the community to which belongs the producer of such text (as the producer of any text shares at least some, but generally several, “discoursive formations”\(^6\) in force in such community). The retrieval of these “discoursive formations” is one of the main objectives of the semiotic methodology we are proposing here.

As to discourse analysis, it is a qualitative methodology whose objective is to establish the semantic content of the concepts corresponding to the terms effectively used in given texts, whose analysis is considered interesting. It comes, on the one hand, from the United States’ structuralism through followers of Harris (1954) and, on the other, of the french school of discourse analysis, originated in the linguistic works of Pècheux (1969, 1975) and in Foucault’s epistemological reflections on history and his criticism of discourse (1969, 1971), all of it followed by linguists, sociologists and political scientists linked to Langages. In its most current aspect, is based on the cognitive linguistics developments of, among others, Jackendoff (1983, 1989, 1990, 1993), Langacker (1987, 1991), Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987).

Fundamentally, differs from content analysis\(^7\) by not admitting a priori knowledge of any kind as to the semantic content of language; instead, it aims to explain the way each term constructs such content or signification according to its usage in the context, material and positive, in which appears. The meaning is a construction of whose raw material is the effectively said in the discourse, without lawful resort to knowledge that can be taken of the history of ideas or culture of a given community (unless providing the corresponding texts).

9.2.3 Analytical operations

The following are some criteria for the adoption of certain decisions the analyst have to take when working in La Semiótica de Enunciados (Magariños de Morentin et al., 1993; Magariños de Morentin, 1996a). They came from the analytic experience of researches done during the last 7 years. The work has been based on texts originally written or on written transcripts of texts originally produced in oral form.

From the perspective of the Semiótica de Enunciados, the first analytic operation on a text is segmentation. However, especially in case of texts being originally transcripts of oral form, is necessary to make certain previous normalization, within the strict limits and under the strict conditions described below.

9.2.3.1 Normalization

Requires special care in order to avoid (or to note when applicable) addition or deletion in the text at study, of terms or expressions considered justified or unjustified respectively, according to the (semantic) interpretation realized by the analyst.

This normalization must not transform the text and adapting it to a given model coming from some normative grammar, so to establish a “correct” form. With this proviso, normalization may require two kinds of interventions: 1) retrieval, which will be predominantly of anaphoric or cataphoric correspondences, or syntactic implicits (elided subjects or other resources of the economy of speech); and 2) processing of incomplete syntactic constructions (truncated expressions, grammatical changes, etc.).

The analyst’s intervention can be strictly syntactic or can contain some semantic inference which, although having syntactical base, involve an appreciation that includes in the text a term or expression whose effective syntactic necessity is his/her responsibility. These situations must be differentiated by the appropriate metalinguistic graphic marks. I suggest the following: the syntactically justified additions will be included in

\(^4\) By semantics is understood here the study of meaning, with all of the problems carried by the term “meaning” regarding the relations between words and things or between words and certain theoretical entities (for example, the “designata” of Carnap; see Lyons, 1977: 117ff).

\(^5\) By syntax is understood here (in a way very similar as in Lyons; 1977: 375), a set of rules giving account of the distribution of lexems through the sentences of language (langue), as such rules establish their permissible combinatorials.

\(^6\) A discursive formation (in a way very similar as in Foucault, 2002/2007: 41) can be identified when, between a given number of statements identifiable in a corpus of discourses produced in a given community, could be established a regularity in the construction of objects, types of statement, concepts and thematic choices.

\(^7\) The guiding hypothesis of content analysis affirms the existence in a text or a corpus of texts, of indicators (operationally, “keywords”) with the character of interpretative a priori categories, by whose identification is achieved a contrasting characterization of the producers of such texts (Gardin, 1987a: 55).
rounded brackets: “(...)”; terms or expressions that the analyst believes that lack of economy or inadvertent omission of the producer of the text, but which have no effective syntactic justification, will be included in square brackets: “[...]”.

With these two kinds of brackets, we can reflect different degrees of criticism: using square brackets this possibility is greater then that of the use of rounded brackets, which can reflect effective syntactic likelihood. Faced to the semiotic phenomena: linguistic, graphic, etc., the analyst in no case moves in the space of necessariness, nor in that of the absolute arbitrariness; but, as we intend to achieve the utmost rigor and criticalability of the analytical steps until reaching the conclusions, the analyst should document, more close to textuality or depending on some kind of interpretation, the changes made to the original text. The reader who assesses the analitical process must be able to accept or reject such changes in each of the steps of the analysis, even that of the initial normalization. Finally, normalization is only permissible if the basic comprehension of the text analyzed require it, which imply to complete in each segment whose identification is intended, the syntactic structure of the expression at study.

9.2.3.2 Segmentation

Segmentation aims at having available those parts of a text that are considered basic or elementary (not minimal, in the precise semantic sense, because the minimal parts are the “utterings”; see Magariños de Morentin et al., 1993, p. 9) to construct the signification. The immediate intuitive criterion (which we exclude) to establish the initial and final cuts of each segment is based on the idea of producing a semantic unit. The risk of following this criterion is the subjectivity involved in the identification of a given textual sequence as that semantic unit. As every segment is included in a larger semantic unit, and has supposedly relations of contiguity, continuity, coherence and semantic cohesion with the whole, to establish the beginning and ending of the segment at study could reach dimensions that damage the analytical task, because they would depend, in case of adopting the semantic criterion, on individual decisions of the analyst, that not always (or rather in few occassions) are intersubjectively shared.

This makes that the adoption of a syntactic approach provide a more objective basis, although is not free of problems. The syntax (which can be identified following any current recognized grammar) guarantees objectivity as it pertains to a different discipline than the one/s involved in the research (except in the case of a metalinguistic analysis, which we provisorily exclude); so, the cut will not be influenced by the preconceptions that the handling of the diverse disciplines can induce in the analyst. This does not contradict what we have said about the rejection to take some normative grammar as a model, in order to establish the correct form of a given text. To analyze the presence and effectiveness of given grammatical categories according to a given syntax, which is what we are proposing, is not the same as to correct sentence structures supposedly malformed according to some grammar of an ideal speaker-hearer, which is what we are rejecting.

The syntactic criterion is endorsed almost unanimously by the scholars of semantics who consider that syntax is the ensemble of necessary but not sufficient relations for the construction of meaning (Jackendoff, 1983: 57). To apply syntactic criterion to identify the basic textual segments with semantic value implies to leave aside provisorily the analyst’s subjectivity and to count with the acceptance by him/her, of the effectiveness of an operation to which he/she applies rules that are objective, formally stated, and independent of his/her eventual interpretation of the text at study.

The syntactic criterion of segmentation can be formulated in the following terms: the beginning and the ending of a textual process containing a basic sentence and its modifiers (if any) should be marked (in the hjelmslevian sense). By “basic sentence” we understand the textual minimum which we can represent as NP+VP[V=V+NP].

To this basic sentence will be added the modifiers affecting any and all its syntactic components. This means that starting from a structure of the type (if it is complete): NP+[V+NP] will be identified and added to it as parts of its segmentation, all the terms and/or expressions that appear in syntactic relation with any of the three (possible) parts of the basic sentence. By requiring that such modifications must be syntactically linked, the links which could be established with other parts of the text based on purely semantic relations, are excluded. That is, we should be able to identify the textual mark establishing the relation of each modifier accepted as syntactically linked with any component of a basic sentence. Depending on what the analyst is looking to establish (as to the virtual system of such possibilities), can be selected all the identified segments or only those appropriate for the aim of the analysis. This is another point of risk, because the selection could bias the analysis towards a preconceived assessment. In this sense, the completeness requirement posed by Courtine (1981:22) needs to take into account each of such segments, and its eventual exclusion must be justified.
9.2.3.3 Contextual definitions

Suppose, for example, that we are trying to establish based on our text, the characteristics of the semantic construction of given names, according to the contexts in which their producer has used them; this is the fundamental aim of “contextual definitions”, and towards them is directed the continuation of the analytical task.

It is quite possible that, in each case are to be made, yet, certain modifications, which we will develop in what follows. To preview and categorize, systematizing them, all the situations which may appear, is not possible, because as we are recording orality, we entered the “heteroclite” universe mentioned by Saussure, that falls beyond what the pragmatic studies could normalize.

The contextual definition is that by which is established the sense acquired by any term appearing in a given complete textual segment8, depending on the context to which such term is associated in that same segment.

With more precision can be said that a contextual definition is the transformation of a given complete textual segment, in such way that a given name, effectively used in that textual segment, occupies the place N of the NP of a copulative sentence with relative clause9 (following some variants of “is that which...”), being the V (“is”) along with such clause (“that which...”) the VP which completes the contextual definition.

The contextual definition will have a configuration like this:

X is [that+(preposition or prepositional expression10)+(remainder of sentence context)].

The “preposition or prepositional expression” according to which will be syntactically rearticulated the remainder of the complete textual segment, will provide syntactical expressions (required in each case by the original text’s syntactic structure) of the kind:

X is [that+that/which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+in which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+with which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+for which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+from which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+with respect to which+(remainder of sentence context)].
X is [that+whose+(remainder of sentence context)].

Etc.,

being this a merely illustrative enumeration.

9.2.3.4 Conceptual axes, sequential and contrasting networks

The next step starting from a given repertoire of contextual definitions, is to identify the organizing conceptual axes through which can be grouped the definitions obtained. These ensembles will represent the different ways the community or a social sector producer of the discourses at study, attributed meaning to the terms.

Every contextual definition generates a conceptual axis which allows to perform searching (preferably from a database fed with all the definitions obtained analytically). The results will be other definitions sharing the same axis.

One characteristic of this method is that it permits to identify, according to how it has been effectively said, the axes by which different sectors of the community give different meanings to the same term, and it permits also to identify coincidences. Although the way a given model built a priori has been effectively used in a given community’s discourse, can be studied (which is a characteristic of the structuralist method and of some variants of content analysis), the main utility of the method we are proposing here is to discover the components and/or differential prototypical traits of given concepts at study, in the very way in which they have been used at a given moment by the community (which is the characteristic of cognitive semiotics practice and of discourse analysis).

8 It is understood in this definition by “complete textual segment”, the segment which is constituted (or reconstituted depending on the normalizing task) by a basic sentence ([NP+VP] or [NP1+V+VP2]) and the modifiers of each of its components, if there are any, in the text being analyzed.

9 In this definition “the copulative sentence with relative clause” will be constituted by the remainder of the segment being analyzed, as context of that name, with the changes in the syntactic structure that this modification requires.

10 They are those syntactic expressions which contain a relative pronoun expressed directly or by transformation, so that “how” is a transformation of “in what manner” or “where” is a transformation of “in what place”, etc. (see Magariños de Morentin et al., 1993: 65).
The analysis can establish more sub-axes, depending on the depth of the research objectives. A new reading of the sub-axes found in each axis will permit the reconstruction of the corresponding tree.

To the extent that such trees or networks were extracted from one or various discourses, they will result in a sequential network or a contrasting network. The analysis does not end appropriately while not appearing differences or contradictions in a contrasting network, which ensure that it has been identified at least more than one discursive formation. So, the presence of a difference or contradiction (the content of such “difference or contradiction” shall be such as to cause the inconsistency of the axiological and/or conceptual system at study; see Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 434ff) is a necessary but not sufficient condition to affirm the representativeness of the sample submitted to analysis. This representativity has no statistic but constructive foundation: it must demonstrate that social diversity is represented. The basic hypothesis is that such social diversity is inherent in any community (and this is confirmed insofar that every research shows the inconsistency of the cultural system of whatever community at study).

All this configures the universe of values and concepts in force in the community to which belongs who speaks. The representation of the differential configuration of such universe of values and concepts, such as it appears effectively enunciated in a given corpus of discourses, is the specific aim to which this semiotic methodology contributes with its analytical operations.

9.2.4 Annex

An example, in Spanish, is taken from the interviews for the study of “contextual definitions” and “contrasting networks”. The following text has been segmented in order to perform the analysis of its characteristics as producer of significations.

(See ANNEX 1)
10 Possible semiotic worlds in social research

10.1 Introduction

One of the main tasks of semiotics is to identify the interpretations that at a given moment in a given community can receive a text.

A text, its possible interpretations and the referents constructed for each of that interpretations, are integrated into a structure and into an information processing to whose study is useful the logical device known as “possible worlds”. Following the diverse types of operations interpretation involves, and the diverse qualities of texts and referents, I have proposed to call their study, “possible semiotic worlds” because such logical device must give account of them in the specific semiotic field.

The PSW designation applies to both the representation of a (non contradictory) set consisting of minimal textual structures, syntactically and semantically complete, constituted by the triadic relation that associates two terms by a given connector, and, if any, by the modifiers that each term and the connector receive, always preserving the initial minimal syntactic structure; these minimal syntactic structures come from a given textual corpus identified as relevant to prove the explanatory hypothesis stated in the research project. These minimal syntactic structures correspond to what we called “contextual definitions”, whose formation rules, as those of the “utterings” and of the “networks”, are kept, as stated in another work (see 9.2).

I call the larger possible set of PSWs (but this always will be a necessarily incomplete description with respect to the world of which it gives account), following Hintikka’s terminology (1969), a “system of models” (from now on, SM). Consequently, an SM is the formal description of a Semiotic System, understanding by this, the set of functions linking a representamen with a ground to an interpreter (accepting broadly the Peircean representation), whatever the nature of that representamen (accepting, also broadly, the Peircean distribution in icons, indexes and symbols, with the expansion coming from the combinatorial of these categories), in such way that the force area of a given Semiotic System identifies a given social group, as the interpretant resulting from such system.

If we approach the study of a community from semiotics, we could see that its semiotic system is composed, following again Hintikka’s (1969: 71) terminology, by two large “set of models” (from now on, SoM): one of the given texts and one of the constructed interpretations-referents. The name of the last set shows that there is no interpretation that does not construct a referent and there is no referent without an interpretation that has constructed it. Taking a further step in this direction, we can say that the interpretation is the referent and vice versa, so we only need to speak -and I will do so- about either “interpretation” or “referent”, and not about both of them, nor about any causal relation between them. These qualities of texts and interpretations are established in each analysis and nothing prevents what is text at some point proves to be interpretation (of another different text) at another given moment and vice versa.

Finally, each of these SoMs is composed by a contingent and determined number of PSWs; depending on which SoM we include them. The function assigned to these PSWs will be either textual or interpretative.

A textual PSW is the representation of any set of minimal syntactic structures modified or not modified, identifiable in the texts (symbolic, iconic, indexical or their combinatorial) which are accepted as producers of the signification of the social phenomenon (symbolic, iconic, indexical or their combinatorial) at study. The difficulty inherent in the identification of the minimal syntactic structure and its representation, especially if the phenomenon is not symbolic (when symbolic, it involves a syntax predominantly formalized, as in verbal language) but iconic or indexical (it involves the analysis of graphics or behaviors or its participation, that can be along with symbols, in semiotically complex social phenomena) is only a matter of fact, solved in various ways (or provisorily with solution not available but possible).

An interpretational PSW is the representation of any set of minimal syntactic structures, modified or not modified, identifiable in the texts (symbolic, iconic, indexical or their combinatorial) in which their interpreters (symbolic, iconic, indexical or their combinatorial) which are accepted as producers of the signification of the social phenomenon (symbolic, iconic, indexical or their combinatorial) at study, enounce such interpretation. The selection of texts in which the analyst considers identifiable minimal syntactic structures whose representation will result in relevant interpretational PSWs, is a risk of the own analyst, who will affirm them as valid by stating the working hypothesis, which will be validated or not in the course of the investigation

Magariños de Morentin, 1990: par. 41-43.

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1 Published initially in Magariños de Morentin, 1996, Los fundamentos lógicos de la semiótica. Buenos Aires: Edicial, and afterwards I made important modifications, that can be seen in this text.
The set of all the PSWs of all the textual and interpretational SoMs is the SM or semiotic system of a given community at a given moment of its history. Such semiotic system can not be fully encompassed. As it is necessarily partial, it lacks at least the interpretational PSW that gives meaning to the semiotic system as textual PSW, in a way analogous to that of Gödel’s theorem, which shows the character necessarily incomplete of all axiomatic system (Nagel & Newman, 1970: p. 102ff; Hofstadter, 1999: p. 15ff).

On the other hand, the study of the semiotic system should be organized not only so as to constitute the SoMs of both textual and interpretational PSWs, but also in such way that be represented the relations linking each textual PSW with all and each one of the interpretational PSWs that the community at study makes about the textual ones.

The relation between the textual PSW and some (at least one) interpretational PSW, is studied especially through the function of interpretation and the accessibility and alternativity relations.

The function of interpretation is a set of rules by which each individual (as signs or entities) of the PSW at study (and the paradigm of its effective relations) corresponds with a given individual or set of individuals of the interpretational PSWs at study (and with the paradigm of its virtual relations. So, the representation of the articulation (syntactic) of each of that PSWs (the textual one and the interpretational taken into consideration) should be available, in such way that they could project each other/s and, consequently, could be affirmed or denied the relations (semantic) of accessibility and alternativity between them.

The representation of the consequences of this projection will produce new SoMs, different in nature from the first ones, which can be called “set of accessible models” (from now on, “SaM”) and which must permit to identify the set of interpretational PSWs of a given textual PSW at study, that have no internal contradiction (that is, when a relation of accessibility can be established between the first ones or between each of them and the second ones) and to differentiate them from that other set of interpretational PSWs of the same textual PSW at study (between them can also be affirmed the existence of an accessibility relation similar to the previous one), by virtue of establishing their mutual contradiction (which will deny the existence of an accessibility relation between the different sets of interpretational PSWs of the same textual PSW).

This accessibility relation between the interpretational PSWs so identified and a given textual PSW, inside a given SaM, is well formed if complies with the conditions of reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry (or, which is the same, of equivalence). The reflexivity condition says that always will be possible to access through appropriate research to any textual or interpretational PSW, from itself. The transitivity condition says that, given an interpretational PSW of, which is an interpretation of another interpretational PSW, which is, ultimately, that of a given textual PSW, if by appropriate research can be shown that PSW is accessible with respect to PSW, which, in turn, is accessible with respect to textual PSW, then textual PSW and PSW are also related each other by the relation of accessibility. Symmetry says that always will be possible, by appropriate research, to access a textual PSW from all and any of the interpretational PSWs and that, in such circumstances, always will also be possible to access to any of the interpretational PSWs from the textual PSW.

Therefore, is advisable to extend the study of the semiotic system until the identification of given PSWs contradicting that other PSWs from which representation it has been started. I affirm, by hypothesis, that any SaM finds at some moment and/or social sector corresponding to the same semiotic system, its dual, that is, a SaM, which affirms that the state of things previously described, has no longer place. Also is a hypothetical statement (working) of the analyst the one which establishes that the dual character attributed to a given identified PSW (or to given identified PSWs) has/have, effectively, by isomorphism and complementarity, sufficient and necessary characteristics to constitute the SaM (or SaMs) dual from which are at study; this must be proven in the course of the research.

The relation of alternativity poses the question of the directionality of the interpreting function; this should be applied: from the textual PSW to one of the interpretational PSWs and vice versa, and also interrelating diverse (at least two) interpretational PSWs belonging to the same SaM. Indeed, under the alternativity relation and inside a semiotic system, should occur that given an individual located in the context of a given textual PSW, be possible the identification of one or a set of interpretational PSWs in which the individual who is the interpretation of the first one, appear located in a context homologous to the textual, and so we can say that such and such interpretational PSWs are alternatives of the corresponding textual PSW. We can also say that such textual PSW is the alternative of any of the interpretational PSWs. And, if operating inside a given SaM, we can

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2 These SaM can be considered as a methodological instrument permitting to build and use operationally what Foucault has called “discursive formations” (2002/2007: 44ff).

3 So its description would be usable in the System 5 of Lewis and Langford (1932: 501; Hughes & Cresswell, 1973: 72, 198)

also say that one and any of the interpretational PSWs is alternative to any of the remaining ones.

This embraces, from semiotics, some of the fundamental aspects of the methodological universe of social sciences. It leads especially to a given logic of interpretation, as critical reflection and attempt of overcoming (in the full dialectic aspect of the hegelian aufhebung) hermeneutics.

Using PSWs, the enumerative identification of the universe of those texts that have been involved in the production/interpretation of a text at study is not exhausted. But it can be assessed in a bivalent way (true-false), a proposition on the necessary involvement of a given text in the production/interpretation of the text at study. Likewise, it can be assessed in the same way (true-false) a proposition on the possible involvement of another given text in the production/interpretation of that text; of course, also can be assessed the necessary exclusion of a given text in such production/interpretation. That is, from the viewpoint of this logic of interpretation, the PSWs are an artifact of recognition of the necessary, the possible (as non-necessary) and non-possible (as necessary-that-not) presence of the texts involved in the production/interpretation of another text.

The distinction between textual PSWs and interpretational PSWs is purely operational, since all PSWs must have a textual structure. An interpretation is possible insofar it has been stated and, as such, it has a given textual structure. We are not working on “possible interpretations” as a universe of abstract objects, but as the possible results (texts) of given operations formally defined.

The interventions and exclusions (from which we do not speak here) in the production/interpretation of a text, do not include the possible presence of texts in the mind of the producer/interpreter when making such production/interpretation (that is, their possible psychological presence), but instead, there are restricted to the real presences of such texts in the text produced as product or as interpretation of that producer/interpreter.

The interventions and exclusions may refer either to given specific texts or to “types” of texts; in the first case, would be identified predominantly possible semantic ancestors and, in the second, predominantly possible syntactic ancestors of the text at study. Insofar the recognition of “ancestors” of a given text is in turn an interpretation, the identification of interventions and exclusions of other texts is the possible result of given operations of accessibility and of the specific way in which these operations have been defined at a given moment in a given society.

10.2 Towards a principle of PSWs formalization

From an operational approach, we understand here by “possible semiotic worlds”, the set composed by a text and the possibilities of interpreting it, that the members of a given society have available (with relative permanence) or those they construct (circumstantially).

In a provisorily initial synthesis, we formulate the hypothetical assertion that the logic form of a semiotic system is that of a set of possible semiotic worlds and that the relations linking the individuals of one of such worlds with the individuals of each of the remaining ones, have the character of cognitive operations.

The first part of this hypothesis needs to establish the value of the assertion “the logic form of a semiotic system is that of a set of possible semiotic worlds”. This logic form has certain characteristics whose specificity identifies the semiotic itself.

5 Taking into account that an interpretational-1 PSW can be, at the same time, a textual PSW for another level of interpretational-2 PSW, the alternativity relation includes the problem of transposition (paraphrastic, descriptive, or metalinguistic) of the sense that, for some authors (see Parret, 1983: 78) is “the essence of semiotic art”.

6 “Text” is understood here as “substituted semiosis”, since it must necessarily be interpreted; i.e., is a “substituent semiosis” which has already been substituted from “another substituent semiosis”. Is that situation in which a sign functions as semiotic object, being interpreted from another sign of a higher metametasiemiotic level (see 2.1.8 and 5.3). So then, we can consider it as text, as verbal semiosis, or as semiotic object, belonging to any other semiosis. What matters is that it is perceived, in any case, as already interpreted.

7 This disjunction may also be formulated as one that occurs between the canonical interpretations that are in force and therefore, socially accepted in a given community, and the deviant interpretations that a given member or subgroup of that community can construct as an overcoming, currently not accepted, of such canonic interpretations.

8 Observe that the hypothesis states that the relation is between individuals of one of the PSWs with the individuals of each one of the remaining PSWs. This is a specific characteristic of PSWs logic, on which we have to back.

9 “Semiotic system” includes, in this book: 1) the semiotic function linking a representamen with a ground for an interpretant (accepting the Peircean conception in general) and 2) all the raw material available and in force in a community for the construction of the representamen (accepting, also generally, the Peircean distribution in icons, indexes and symbols, with the expansion given by combinations of these categories). I call “semiosis” the semiotic function related to some kind of representamens built with a given kind of available and being in force raw material or with some combination of them.
The second part of the same hypothesis requires to establish the value of the assertion that "the individuals who compose a semiotic system are cognitive operations". These cognitive operations have specific cognitive characteristics which identify the functions and processes of all semiotic systems.10

The scope of this paper is limited to identify such operations and situate them in their methodologically necessary place.

10.2.1 General characterization of the logical form of a system of semiotic worlds

i. Be "Ω" the symbolic representation of a semiotic system. Following Hintikka’s terminology, Ω would have the form of a system of models and would be constituted by two sets of basic models, which are here symbolized with T and M, and by other various sets of models resulting from the semiotic operations applicable between the basic models and which should have given conditions here symbolized with Φτμ;

ii. The sets of basic models contain, each of them, a given number of PSWs, each of which are designated, because its semiotic function, as "τi" (or textual, or substituted, or interpretable PSWs), so that "τi ∈ T", and "μi" (or discursive, or substituent, or interpretant PSWs)11, so that "μi ∈ M". Therefore, every PSW of a given semiotic system Ω belongs to one or another of the two large sets of models, symbolized with T and M respectively.12 Consequently, these PSWs: \{τ1, τ2, ..., τn\} ∈ Ω \{μ1, μ2, ..., μn\} ∈ M13, thoroughly considered, cover all the texts available in a semiotic system (or interpretable objects) and all of their interpretations in the same system, which is complete and decidable, but inconsistent. Nevertheless, from the T and M sets can be identified subsets "Σμ"i, constituted by the conjunction of a \{τ1, τ2, ..., τn\} ∈ Ω \{μ1, μ2, ..., μn\} ∈ M, selected within the semiotic system Ω at study, and all of that \{τ1, τ2, ..., τn\} ∈ Ω \{μ1, μ2, ..., μn\} ∈ M which are their possible interpretations in the same system. Well, some of these (Ξμ) subsets will satisfy the condition of establishing a complete subset, decidable and consistent, which we will denominate "Φτμ".

iii. Once identified the "Φτμ" sets, the conditions (C · v; C · &; C · v; C · E; C · U; C · auto (≠); C · =) stated by Hintikka (1969: 71), are valid to symbolize each of them, with the clarifications and/or additions derived from the following paragraphs:

iv. From semiotic theory can be stated that exist/s: i) a possible semiotic world (τj) differentiable in the set of T, whose domain is the set of the individuals concurring to the effective actualization of a given text or semiotic object (ultimately: the set of T is the set of the substituted semiosis, insofar their effectiveness is expressed metasemiotically from the set of M); ii) a possible world (μj) differentiable in the set of M, whose domain is the set of the individuals concurring to the effective actualization of the real14 (that is, the set of M is the set of the substituent semiosis with which is given cognitive existence to the ontological produced by the set of T); iii. the virtual possible worlds in the set of T, that represent the contrafactual utterings about the non substituted texts from the universe of M and, therefore, non interpretable; iv. the virtual possible worlds in the set of M, that represent the contrafactual utterings about the non-said discourses or of those whose metasemiotic substituent ability were not applied to explain the substituent ability in the universe of T, v. the actual possible worlds, resulting of the effective interpretation (Hintikka’s θ function) of a T, such as it has been explained from all the identifiable M in the corpus at study.

v. Ordering the symbolizations above, we have:

1) \{τ1, τ2, ..., τn\} ∈ T
2) \(\{(\mu_1, \mu_2, ..., \mu_z) \in M\}\)

3) \(\{(\mathbf{T} \, \delta \, M) \in \Omega\}\), complete, decidable and inconsistent\(^{15}\)

4) \(\{<\tau_{x1} \, \delta \, (\mu_{x1}, \mu_{x2}, ..., \mu_{xn})> \equiv <\Sigma_{x1}, \Sigma_{x2}, ..., \Sigma_{xn}>\} \in \Phi_{\tau_{x1}} \in \Omega\)

\(\{<\tau_{y1} \, \delta \, (\mu_{y1}, \mu_{y2}, ..., \mu_{yn})> \equiv <\Sigma_{y1}, \Sigma_{y2}, ..., \Sigma_{yn}>\} \in \Phi_{\tau_{y1}} \in \Omega\)

\(\{<\tau_{z1} \, \delta \, (\mu_{z1}, \mu_{z2}, ..., \mu_{zn})> \equiv <\Sigma_{z1}, \Sigma_{z2}, ..., \Sigma_{zn}>\} \in \Phi_{\tau_{z1}} \in \Omega\) ...etc.

... 

5) \(\Phi_{\tau_{x1}}\) complete, decidable and consistent\(^{16}\)

\(\Phi_{\tau_{y1}}\) complete, decidable and consistent

\(\Phi_{\tau_{z1}}\) complete, decidable and consistent, etc.

6) \(\{(\sigma_{x1} \cdot \delta \cdot \tau_{y1} \cdot \delta \cdot \tau_{z1} \cdot ... \) \(\in \Omega\)\) tends to be, and in some moment is, complete, decidable and inconsistent\(^{17}\)

10.2.2 Elementary and necessary syntactic operations to the formation of sets of models belonging to a system of possible semiotic worlds

The initial operations for the formation of a model-set (MS) in a system of PSWs are the following:

i. Constructive-identification of the individual constants as minimal semiotic units\(^{18}\), depending on the semiotic raw material constituting them: icons, indexes and symbols and/or their combinations\(^{19}\), segmented according to the characteristics of the grammar\(^{20}\) governing their relatively contingent but effective use.

ii. Constructive-identification of the syntactic/contextual minimal relations, which, regardless of their semiotic raw material (or combination of raw materials), are designated here “utterings” and which, consequently, can be defined as the representation of well-formed expressions\(^{22}\) linking two minimal semiotic functors\(^{23}\) by a given connector (the operation of contrasting them with other well-formed expressions of the same kind, allows to attribute to them either the value of inmanent identity depending on the set in which they are included, or the value of differential identity depending on the set from which they are excluded).

iii. Constructive-identification of the average syntactic compositions that, regardless of their semiotic raw material (or combination of raw materials), are designated here, “networks”\(^{24}\) and that, consequently, can be

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\(^{15}\) This amounts to saying that the interpretation of a given text in force in a community by the set of all of the interpretations it could receive: a) allows to obtain all the interpretations that come from a given text; b) allows to determine if is possible to get a given interpretation from a given text; c) but it can not prevent that, in the universal set of interpretations of a given text, appear correctly derived an interpretation and its dual.

\(^{16}\) This amounts to saying that the interpretation of a given text in force in a community by a given subset of the interpretations it could receive: a) allows to obtain all the interpretations that come from a given text; b) allows to establish if is possible to get a given interpretation from a given text; c) and, by the rules of its construction, is not possible that, in this given subset of interpretations of a given text, appear correctly derived an interpretation and its dual.

\(^{17}\) The set consisting of all pairs of subsets of texts and of interpretations, is the semiotic system at study, with its characteristics of completeness, decidability and inconsistency (see also note 28).

\(^{18}\) This character of being “minimal” is not absolute but depends on the dimensions imposed by the interpretable world at study or to be produced.

\(^{19}\) In principle, the traditional classification of Peirce (see note 7), is accepted, with the observations to the index stated elsewhere (Magaríños de Morentin, 1994: 74).

\(^{20}\) All raw material or combination of semiotic raw materials, are organized in syntactic structures which depend on some (or combinations) of the grammars (regardless their strict or relatively conventional formalization) in force at a given moment in a community (which they follow or from which they deviate to a greater or lesser extent).

\(^{21}\) The reconstruction of the grammatical/semiotic characteristics effectively actualized in a given syntactic structure is the aim of this analytic stage of PSWs. We speak about “characteristics” and not “rules”, since the usage that shows them is “relatively contingent”, in the sense that nothing requires that these or those be the syntactic relations in force in a community (as historically changing grammar/semiotics, but with at least relative permanence of the fundamental logical operations), but is “effective” insofar given syntactic relations should be present.

\(^{22}\) Well-formed, but depending on their relation with the historical contingency of their effective being in force.

\(^{23}\) In the sense Hjelmslev uses the term “Funktiv” (“functive”) (see Hjelmslev, 1971a: 33).

\(^{24}\) In others (Magaríños de Morentin and coll., 1990: 26ff; 1993: 12 and 16), of higher linguistic incidence, was preferred the expression “contextual definition”, and the term “network”, was used for representing the ordered sequence of cognitive operations effectively applied by the user and identified in the corresponding contextual definition.
defined as the representation of the well-formed expressions that exhaust the textual modifiers of each semiotic functor and/or their connector, as they appear circumstantially and effectively used when building a given uttering (and the operation of contrasting them with other well-formed expressions of the same kind, allows to attribute to them either the value of inmanent identity depending on the set in which they are included, or the value of differential identity depending on the set from which they are excluded). It is the specific place of representation of the PSWs; each network identifies and describes the internal structure of a PSW.

iv. Constructive-identification of the main syntactic compositions which, regardless of their semiotic raw material (or combination of raw materials), are designated here, “sequential hyper-networks” (SHN) and that, consequently, can be defined as the representation of the well-formed expressions comprising directionally the set of networks linked with a given network, being possible the exhaustion of all the networks circumstantially and effectively used when building a given text (and the operation of contrasting them with other well-formed expressions of the same kind, allows to attribute to them the value of inmanent identity depending on the set in which they are included). Each SHN identifies and describes the set of PSWs articulated in a hypothetically homogeneous way within the same text.

v. Constructive-identification of the dialectical syntactic compositions that, regardless of their semiotic raw material (or combination of raw materials), are designated here, “contrasting hyper-networks” (CHN) and that, consequently, can be defined as the representation of the well-formed expressions which determine the set (always incomplete) of the systems of identities, differences, and contradictions between the ordered relations whose functors are each of the utterings of each PSW and/or each PSW of each CHN. The set of all CHNs comprise a system of models that is here denominated “semiotic system” (“Ω”).

vi. Description of the necessary operations to push the limits of each of the preceding levels, following necessarily the order established in their formulation.

vi.1. By integration, as an operation whereby two minimum semiotic functors are linked by a connector, we pass from minimal semiotic functors to the utterings.

vi.2. From the utterings we go to the networks through the operations of identification and representation of (all of) the modifiers that, within a text, affect the two functors and/or the connector with which the utterings at study are built.

vi.3. From the networks we go to the sequential hyper-networks through the operations of listing and directing; they list the networks identified and represented by the previous operation, according to the sequential direction of the original text and specifying the inter-networks connector (when there is one).

vi.4. From the utterings or from the networks or from the sequential hyper-networks we go to the contrasting hyper-networks by the operations of building the respective model-sets (each of them, complete, decidable, and consistent), articulating the diverse isomorphic model-sets in a unique model-set (that continues being complete, decidable, and consistent), and differentiating between non-isomorphic model-sets (being the set of the differentiated model-sets, complete, decidable, and consistent).

10.2.3 Elementary and necessary semantic operations to the interpretation of sets of models belonging to a system of possible semiotic worlds

i. Between the PSWs such that \( (((τ, ε T) δ (μ, ε M)) ∈ Ω) \), we define: a δ function of interpretation and the relations of accessibility and alternativity.

ii. The δ function of interpretation is a cognitive operation that establishes the regularities of the interpretation
context that makes possible the alternative availability and the accessibility with respect to the PSWs in force, in such way that for each individual constant \("a\) from one of the PSWs \(\sigma_i \in \Omega\) (substituted) is selected a \(\delta(a)\) which is member of the domain of \("I\) individuals corresponding to other PSWs \(\mu_1, \mu_2, ..., \mu_n \in \Omega\) (substituent).

iii. Alternativity is the cognitive operation which associate, for a given individual constant \("a\) and for for a PSW \(\tau\), so that \(a \in \tau\), a set of PSWs \(\mu_1, \mu_2, ..., \mu_n\) so that \(\delta(a) \in M\) that would be their alternatives. Semiotic alternativity is characterized by this relation of a PSW (some \(\tau\)) with multiple PSWs \((\mu_{i \neq 1})\).

iv. Accessibility is the cognitive operation that decides the quality of \(\mu_1\) identifying \(\tau\) as its ancestor; this accessibility is necessary if \(\tau\) is identified as ancestor for all PSWs of \(M\), or is possible if it is identified for, at least, one. This operation of accessibility between the interpretant PSWs so identified and a given textual PSW within a given MS, satisfies the conditions of reflexivity, transitivity, and symmetry.

v. In this approach, 1, 2, and 3 delimit fundamental aspects of the methodological universe of social sciences.

10.3. The PSWs of death in J.R. Jiménez and J. Gelman (See ANNEX 2)
III

ICONIC SEMIOTICS
11 Semiotics of the visual image

11.1 Introduction

The rigorous construction of a *semiotics of visual image* or, perhaps more precisely, of the various semiotics that are possible from a visual image, could be approached outlining the relations that would constitute the specific sign of such semiotics or of each of them, as the particular sign of general semiotics corresponding to each case. I will use a repertoire of cognitive operations, closely but not dogmatically, related to *Peircean semiotics*.

As a first approach, we must enter in the field of *the visual perceptions*. I think we must distinguish carefully the *semiotics of visual image* from the *semiotics of the speech or of the language* (*langue*) or, also, from any other kind of particular semiotics not being the visual. So, reflections appropriate to perceptions other than visual, would be excluded from this work, while those belonging exclusively to specific problems of visual perception, will be developed. This does not mean to isolate the visual, which, as any other semiosis, require in order to be interpreted, the remaining semiosis in force at a given moment in a given society.

But it is not enough this centering in visual perception. In order to be the object at study of a semiotics, a visual perception (the Peircean “something”, 2.228) must satisfy necessary conditions for being characterized as sign. Otherwise, the perception would be limited to have the informative qualities Marr (1982: 3) attributed to vision: “to know what is where by looking”. Instead, by including it in a semiotics, that is, by modifying the perception as sign, is attributed to it fundamentally the quality of arousing in a mind the possibility of being considered as *substituent of other form* which is not the one being perceived.

So, the approach to a definition of sign, which corresponds still in a way general, to a semiotics of the visual image, can be stated as:

(something) a visual perception proposal,
(which stands...in some respect or capacity) considered as representation,
(for something) intended to configure a form,
(to somebody) for its valuation by the perceptor ([22] Fig. 1).

I will name this kind of visual perception “*material visual image*”. The image must be material, therefore needing a physical support to be admitted as the starting point of a semiotic analysis, without differentiating, at least for now, either the qualitites such physical support may have (cloth, paper, screen, etc.), or the qualities of the production systems of the image (oil painting, photography, pixels, etc.). I intend rather to establish the difference of these *material visual images* with respect to the *perceptual images* and the *mental images*. *Perceptual* or *visual images* belong to a class of sensorial images, provided that “A primary sensory experience is a cognitive event evoked directly by the stimulation of a sensory organ” (Langacker, 1987: 111). Similarly, Kosslyn refers to the “low level visual processing”, which “is driven purely by stimulus input”, (1996: 53).

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1 Published with few variations, in *Cuadernos 17, Revista de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Nacional de Jujuy*: nov., 2001; 295-320.

2 One and not the least of the first contributions to the study of visual semiosis has been the awareness that no semiosis, including of course the verbal, is self-sufficient to reach an interpretation. An interesting empirical task results from this assertion: to ask ourselves before any substituent semiosis (verbal, visual, musical, etc.), about what information we need to comprehend it or to attribute a meaning to it. Each society at any moment of its history will provide this information through one or more of the semiosis in force among its members, and that semiosis will be different at the different moments of each society.

3 Culture operates this modification from the natural ability to see; as Kosslyn expressed: “The reason vision is so easy for us is that we come equipped with an enormous amount of sophisticated machinery. These inborn abilities are ours for the using; we do not need to learn to see.” (1996: 70) [Italics is mine].

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The existence of mental images has been repeatedly denied or they have been considered, especially by Pylyshyn (1973), as epiphenomena: “depictive images would have little or no computational utility, even if they were computationally tractable”, cited in Kosslyn, 1996: 404, or as an originary metaphor anticipating the concept of representation (Mac Cormac & Stamenov, 1996: 19), until the notion that “images are internal representations that ‘stand in’ for (re-present) the corresponding objects” (Kosslyn, 1996: 3) have been accepted generally. One confirming argument about the existence of such mental images comes from the experiment by Shepard and Metzler (in Marr, 1982: 10-11) on the mental rotation of certain images and the time they need to rotate. They propose two lines of objects [23], so that the difference between the upper and the lower appear as a mere tridimensional question that may be associated to their reflection; nevertheless, this is not true in one case. During the time consuming task of determining which is that case, the observer must rotate the perceived material image, and this, in fact, would prove the existence of mental images, given that the mere reference to propositional statements in mental language (“mentalese”, Fodor, 1984) is not sufficient proof.

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* Besides, between perceptual images and mental images there are three major differences: “First, mental images fade rapidly, unlike percepts... In perception, the world serves as an external store... Second, mental images are created from stored information; the external world does not dictate the contents of one’s imagery at any specific time. Mental images arise under a variety of contexts, and may not have any resemblance to the on-line perceptual representations. Third, images, unlike the perceptions of normal people, are remarkably malleable. One can imagine objects twisting, turning, bending, and so on -but perceptions not (and should not be, for the sake of one’s survival) so cooperative”; Kosslyn, 1996: 74-5). Moreover, the study of perceptual images requires detailed knowledge of the mechanisms of the retina, knowledge that has already been achieved, while regarding the higher cortical process that is responsible for visual memory consisting of mental images, can only be spoken in a very general way (Kosslyn, 1996: 53).
Material images are objects of the perceivable outside world and therefore, as any other object of that world, can originate one or more perceptual images and can be stored and transformed in the visual memory as one or more mental image. They differ from other objects of the world, as we said in the previous definition, because of their ability to be considered by an eventual perceptor as representation, aimed to setting up a form for its evaluation. The perceptor, instead, considers the perception of the “remaining objects of the world” as visual information aimed at organizing some kind of behavior.

The relation between the characteristics of material visual images and symbolic processes functioning in the visual system is strong, as Marr noticed: “The point I wish to make is that from our ability to interpret certain kinds of drawings, we can infer with some confidence that certain kinds of symbolic processes must exist in our visual systems”; Marr, 1976: 653; but I also will explore here the possible validity and, eventually, to apply the reverse proposition, according to which we can know the operation of the interpretation process of material visual images, given the neurological and symbolic processes of our visual system.

11.2 Identification

But I warned that the unitary approach of a visual image semiotics gives no account for the different possibilities and requirements covered by the expression “material visual image”. This, indeed, could be constructed to show (1) qualities or (2) existents or (3) laws or (4) a combination of two or three of those aspects, which with greater or lesser presence of one or another, is the usual case. Visual images as pure or merely prevailing proposals, are distributed roughly between the three varieties to which the denominations of Peirce (2.254, 2.255 and 2.258): “iconic qualsigns” (the form of qualities), “iconic sinsigns” (the form of existents) and “iconic legisigns” (the form of laws), can be applied. I want to emphasize some aspects which specify these three kinds of material visual images as “modes of possible presentation” (Peirce, CP 8.347) even if there were no specific coincidence with the Peircean proposal.

11.2.1 Material visual plastic image

I understand in this work by “iconic qualsign” a material visual image showing pure visual qualities, related to color, texture or form, referring in none of these cases, either to some existent or to some law. Later I can say, despite its negative character, that the condition it must fulfill is to not set up any existential or symbolic attractor. But it needs to set up an attractor (which is specific to any perceptual image), which in this case would be abstractive or abstraction sign (“abstractive such as color, mass, whiteness, etc.”; Peirce, 8.366), to preserve its representative character. It is assumed in this case, that the producer proposes a visual perception and that the interpreter perceives a visual proposal whose only representing relation is established with respect to certain subjective sensations or qualia as possible “properties of conscious experience [in our case, visual]” (even if Dennett denies them, as we shall see; Goldman (ed.), 1993: 381). Taking care not to give room to the equivocal, it corresponds to what has been called “plastic sign”, among others, in the works of Groupe μ, where besides what is understood by non-figurative art in the 20th. century, “les plombs des vitraux cisterciens, les entrelacs des enluminures irlandaises, los ouvrages de dames en macramé, etc.” (1992: 186) are cited as examples.

5 This is what Peirce calls “ quale-consciousness”, taking it in its whole simplicity (6.231) and also “tone”, as “tones are signs of visceral qualities of feeling”, and he analyzes them especially regarding odors and flavors (1.313), while here we are interested in visual forms (Fig. 3 Tàpies). From another perspective, he calls them “potisigns”, “Objects which are signs so far as they are merely possible, but felt to be positively possible...” and he relates them to the abstraction plane, “as, for example, the seventh ray that passes through the three intersections of opposite sides of Pascal’s hexagrams” (8.347).
11.2.2 Material visual figurative image

I understand in this work by “iconic sinsign” a material visual image showing a specific analogy with an existent, as is emphasized by Peirce (2.245 and in a similar way, 8.334): “where the syllable sin is taken as meaning ‘being only once’ as in single, simple, Latin semel, etc.”. The core problem of this kind of images is situated in a conceptual field close to what is cognitively known as “object recognition”, with the particularity that these images propose the recognition through their representation, arousing the problem known as “iconicity” (Santaella & Nöth, 1998: 39ss). They generally have the appearance of perceptual images, to the point that they can be proposed as trompe l’œil, when the object seems to be not represented but effectively existing. The construction of these material images is intended to produce in the interpreter the operation of setting up an existential attractor with the dynamic components stored in visual memory. Nevertheless, the quality of the existent can be imagined, with all the intermediate positions of the gradient distancing the material visual image from the reality, that is, from the effective perceptual image as it has been learned to be constructed phylogenetically and socially (Hoffman, 1998: 71). It is assumed in this case, that unlike the previous iconic qualisign, the producer proposes a visual perception and the interpreter perceives a visual proposal whose fundamental representational relation is established as a substituent of the perceptual image which would be the result, in the retina, of an effective perception or of a possible perception, even one impossible but imaginable.

So, the material visual image which can be called “iconic sinsign” is part of the perceptual image, insofar the interpreter makes an effective perception (of the material object) and it is part of the mental image too, insofar is a representation not determined by the outside world, but constructed neurologically and culturally as interpretation (mendacious, following Hoffman, 1998: 18) of the visual proposal, though being none of them. The producer pretends the effective presence of an object, real or imaginary, which would be perceived. This pretended presence requires the updating of given qualities of the existent (according to its corresponding mnemonic registry, as we shall see), so the iconic sinsign needs the iconic qualisign (Peirce, 2.245). It corresponds roughly to which is called “figurative image” and with one of the more banal and generic usages of the term “icon”.

11.2.3 Material visual conceptual image

I understand in this work by “iconic legisign” a material visual image showing the form of given relations already regulated at a given moment of a given society. These forms are replicas of those laws, so that “nor would the Replica be significant if it were not for the law which renders it so”; Peirce, 2.246). The law which allows to work out its representative character, that is, to know which forms are being shaped in a way that the perceiver can evoke them, preexists in the society. So, the material visual image, brings back in the visual memory of the interpreter, by using given preestablished formal qualities, the symbolic attractor corresponding to those laws. Peirce developed one of the most important parts of his work, “Existential Graphs” (at least, he esteemed it so much as to having added, as epigraph, the expression “My chef d’œuvre”) as a clear iconic proposal representing given laws of his symbolic logic. “A logical graph is a graph representing logical relations iconically, so as to be an aid to logical analysis” (Peirce, 4.420). Each of these graphs is an iconic legisign in its most strict sense.6

In this case, the producer proposes a visual perception and the interpreter perceives a visual proposal whose relation of representation consists in bringing back the socially assigned values to the communication of given structures and conceptual processes or habits and ideological values. Ultimately, there is no pure perceptual experience, as is the case of iconic qualisigns, nor existential analogy, as is the case of iconic sinsigns, which suffice to understand the representative character of the material visual image called “iconic legisign”. To understand it, we require, in addition and mainly, to know a given convention and the laws which bring it back in the proposed configuration. This reinforces the symbolic or “conceptual” nature of these material visual images and their dependence on a given interpretative system, temporarily and spatially delimited. If the cultural system of interpretation in force is modified, the same material image (which, though, is already not the same) produces in the interpreter a cognitive behavior which corresponds to another semiotics. Religious imagery in the late middle ages had a predominant quality of iconic legisign, since forms and colors were encoded and met precise laws. Those codes are now lost or they are mostly unknown to nowadays interpreters, so that paintings are seen, predominantly, as iconic sinsigns.

11.2.4 Material visual image by combination of the preceding

The three kinds of material visual images whose difference and specificity I outlined above, appear, in practice,

6 When developing the conventions that will rule the perceptual qualities of graphs, or more accurately, replicas or instances of graphs, he emphasizes their representative character: “Its beauty [...] and its other merits, which are fairly considerable, spring from its being veridically iconic, naturally analogous to the thing represented…” (4.368) “These Conventions are supposed to be mutual understanding between two persons: a Graphist, who expresses propositions according to the system of expression called that of Existential Graphs; and an Interpreter, who interprets those propositions and accepts them without dispute. A graph is the propositional expression in the System of Existential Graphs of any possible state of the universe” (4. 395).
as combinatorial and predominance of some over other and/or, also, they shift from being considered as ones to be considered as others, depending on the being in force of different structures at different times and/or in different social systems. That is, at a different moment of a given society, a given material visual image is predominantly, for example, an iconic sinsign, but its analysis will show that it includes aspects of iconic qualisign, which are indispensable to its configuration and that it includes among its visual proposals aspects of iconic legisigns coming from symbolizations in force in its social field. And the same happens when one of the remaining kinds of material visual images predominate.

Nevertheless, at least in the space of this threefold division, each kind of material image is interpreted by the mind of its perceiver through the activation of different cognitive operations. So there is a need to develop specific and different semiotics for each kind of material visual image.

11.3 Recognition

As to the representative quality of material visual images, we have established the perceptual variants which would activate the appropriate mental operations, each of them leading to a specific identification. Now, as to the components involved in the shaping of a given form, we will establish the entities whose association actualizes in the perceptors memory, the corresponding attractor, whose acceptance will permit the recognition that satisfies the representative quality of the material visual image.

According to this, the production of a material visual image is aimed to configure a form in the interpreter’s mind. This task require specific and differential cognitive operations, depending on whether the perceptual proposals selected by its producer, are qualities, existents or laws.

The object or ground of this material visual image (the Peircean “for something”; 2.228) is that which is effectively represented by it. But, this process of representation must be accomplished through one or more recognizing operations triggered depending on whether the construction about the material visual image is plastic, figurative or conceptual, and the result effectively represented in these images, must not be confused with any real object. Despite the positivist pressure, in the more abstract case of the verbal language it is adequately argued that “what the philosophical tradition calls the reference of the word [...] it concerns not the real-world counterpart of the concept but the mental representations linked to the concept in the perceptual and motor modalities”; R. Jackendoff, 1993: 56. The shaping effectiveness of the material visual image, as a result of the recognizing operations applied to the perceptual proposal, does not refer either to given forms of the real world, but to given mental representations filed in the visual memory, which I will call “attractors”. The existential field of the object or ground of the material visual image is the visual memory.8 The mind of the interpreter configures a form from the proposal that is the material visual image, trying to find the more similar effective mnemonic mental image that will be activated by the perception of the material image; and, at the same time, the availability of given mnemonic mental images will lead to the construction in the perception, of a given and no other configuration. The coincidence of the cortical networks of perception and memory led to its inclusion in a set called “perceptual memory” (Fuster, 1995: 114), to which belongs the attractor articulating perception and memory. Following this, it can be said that “the mechanisms of high-level visual perception are also used in visual mental imagery” (Kosslyn, 1996: 285).

I call generally “attractor” a set of forms which at a given moment are organized, with certain constancy, in a mental image (it is not appropriate to assess the correctness or incorrectness of such organization, but its being in force or lack of it, leaving room to the cultural variations), whose relative reiteration or psychological constriction or voluntary fixing operation (Fuster, 1995: 101) produces its permanence in memory and, therefore, is available to be contrasted with a given set of forms occasionally perceived, permitting to identify (or not) this set as one of its possible variants.

I call, in particular, “attractor” of a material visual image a set of forms which at a given moment are organized, with certain constancy, in a mental image stored in the visual memory, which is actualized or not, depending on whether it corresponds or not to the configuration the perceptor makes from the proposed material visual image.

The different kinds of operations required by the diverse perceptual raw materials (qualisigns, sinsigns, legisigns) for the retrieval of the corresponding attractor, underlie the need to consider a plural set of semiotics of visual images, instead of treating them on an unitary base.

7 The multiple treatments of Peirce’s secondness (see 5.45), with the example about the necessary resistance of a geometrical mental image to warrant the maintenance of its identity despite the metamorphosis to which a geometrical demonstration subjects it.

8 This memory has “the category of fact”, since it “involves an unconditional necessity, that is, force without law or reason” (1.427); and an existential character, since it “supplies us a knowledge of the past by a sort of brute force, a quite binary action, without any reasoning” (2.86).
11.3.1 Regulated or conceptual perceptual proposals: symbolic attractor

“Types”, as forms whose configuration meets given restrictively regulated requirements, have in a semiotics of the visual image, a conceptual space extremely limited and specific. Only if they are iconic legisigns, that is, a selection of socially regulated perceptual elements, the symbolic attractors (“we do find symbol early and often used to mean a convention or contract”; Peirce, 2.297) involved in the recognition of each figure proposed to the visual perception of the interpreter, can be regarded as organized in a system, having therefore the character of type. Although currently the universe of such iconic legisigns is extended and growing. Such is for instance the case of words in a written text, relations of connection and visual distribution in a diagram, pictograms organizing public traffic or passengers security in planes, or orientation of the public in international exhibitions and olympic games, etc. (Aicher & Krampen, 1979). These and their appropriate system preexist, as preconfigured stereotypes, in the social field of the interpreter. In these cases, material visual image proposals must adapt to the social mobility features of these perceptions (that is, to the structure of each form of symbol of this kind of material visual images); they have a relatively narrow freedom to vary. The configurations the perceiver can organize, are also subject to the characteristics of the registry or system with which the perceiver organizes them in the visual memory, following learned social patterns. This attractor would be therefore a canonic form, which only would admit minimal possibilities of variation. Certain proposals, like those of Biederman’s geons (1995: 12ff), Hoffman and Richards codon scheme (cited in Ullman, 1996: 27, and see also in Hoffman, 1998: 84 and 89, the rules of “concave folds” and “minimum”, which segment the image using this criterion, without mentioning the term “codon”) and, even, Marr’s 3D models catalog (1982: 318), would be more adequate to configure the attractors we are calling “symbolic”, than to the objective initially proposed by these authors, which is to configure the objects of the world. The schemes proposed by these authors have stereotyped the forms of the world, which have lost, or at least, weakened, their “figurative” character and transformed or, at least, strengthened their symbolic character; hence their remarkable similarity with current pictographs in force.

May be the main characteristic of the symbolic attractors related to these perceptual proposals is to have, as necessary, a minimal number of parts. The attractor is actualized dynamically based on the recognition operations by which the perceptual components of support-structure and morphology (Cátedra Fontana, 1996: 40), which are the constructive-analytic components of these images, are determined. That is, the constructive task should actualize and propose to perception the support-structure able to generate the corresponding conceptual image, from which this task can make the possible transformations without destroying such support-structure. Such is the case, for example, of the illuminated letters of medieval manuscripts, in which the richness of the arabesque or the glimpsed landscapes do not prevent the retrieval of the letter’s basic structure. As to the analytical task, it should actualize and recognize after the immediately evident transformations, the socially learned normative support-structure, which endorses its symbolic character.

11.3.2 Existential or figurative perceptual proposals: existential attractor

If it is a selection of existential perceptual elements, then the corresponding existential attractors are not organized in one or more systems, that is, they do not hold the character of types, but instead, they are dynamic transformation images based on differential poles and intermediate spaces with possibility of recognition. Types are related to knowledge and in their historical development, to a given state of the system including them, which corresponds to the truth of that moment of that society. Existential attractors are related to the recognition produced regardless of its truth or falsity and only take into account the being in force of a given discourse (visual in this case) at a given moment of a given society. The example of this type of material visual images is any representation of the so called “figurative” ones, based on analogical recognition processes (Fig. 3) and the explanation of the similarity of their characteristics, fullness or limitations originated the debate about iconicity, described by Eco (in 1977: 325ff; 1999: 391ff, among other texts) and also Groupe μ (Sonneson, 1989: 220ff).

The attractor is actualized dynamically, based on the recognition operations which will determine the marks, axes and occlusion contours, as perceptual components through whose inside and outside grouping, the form are being shaped until the attractor is materialized. I approached this topic in a previous work (Magariños de Morentin, 1999a).

The marks, according to Groupe μ, are entities outside the limit from which the signifier articulates in determinants: “Au-delà de cette limite, les entités correspondant à des types cessent de s’articuler en sous-entités correspondant à des types subordonnés. Il est cependant possible de les décrire comme le résultat de l’articulation de manifestations iconiques complexes. Nous n’assimilerons marques ces manifestations. Elles se définissent par l’absence de correspondance avec un type” (1992: 151).

The concept of mark retains its importance in the figurative semiotics I am intending to develop, especially as to its operational aspect, with the only condition of transforming what the Groupe μ says about its articulation or lack of it in respect of a type, related with its ability for build an attractor. From a cognitive semiotics, this mark can be defined as the major portion of image whose perception does not actualize yet an existential attractor. It
is obviously not a mere terminological change, because the rejection of “type” excludes from the repertoire of mnemonic forms, those forms consisting of normal and relatively invariant features, which I limit to symbolic semiotics field, as well as the option for “attractor” suggests that the pertaining repertoire of mnemonic forms does not consist of discrete perceptual units, but of varying zones identifiable in a continuum of transformations. The limits of admissibility of such variation are established by the spatial and/or temporal validity of the social habits of perception (the visual discourses in force).

The axes (Marr, 1982: 296ff) are one aspect of the visual representation of the form of an object (so the axes are established according to the figure) that is fundamental to recognize and differentiate it. The information provided by the axes comes from the task of establishing their spatial disposition (distribution of the component axes, specifying their angles of inclination along the main axis; Marr, 1982: 318, 323), orientation and relative size. Following Marr, an object centered canonic coordinates system “must be based on axes determined by salient geometrical characteristics of the shape […] A shape’s natural axes may be defined by elongation, symmetry or even motion (e.g. the axis of rotation), so that the coordinate system for a sausage should be defined by its major axis and the direction of its curvature, and that of a face by its axis of symmetry” (Marr, 1978: 276).

My only objection to Marr’s proposal is the need to avoid the “canonical” consideration, of either the particular axes and the alleged coordinates system. In this work, and especially as to its operationality, I define the axes (all figures have more than one) as the set of lines that can be traced articulating the diverse attractors composing the image at study; this articulation may have relatively broad variations. One of these lines would be the major axis and the remaining would be the component or subcomponent axes, from whose relation could be established the spatial disposition of the image as a whole, the orientation of this image as a whole and that of each part of it in relation to the major axis, as well as the relative size of each component axis, compared each other and to the figure as a whole. This allows to construct unequivocal (to our culture) representations of diverse animal forms through bent, twisted, hooked, cut, etc., pipe cleaners (1982: 299). The axis allow to go from parts to recognition of figures or, following Hoffman: “To construct objects we must construct parts. But we must also [...] assemble these parts in coherent spatial relations” (1998: 104).

Another aspect is the representation of occlusion contours which, along with the marks and the axes, provide an effective and acceptable information load, without exhausting however the cognitive operations involved in such recognition. Marr defines the occlusion contours as “simply a contour that makes a discontinuity in depth, and it usually corresponds to the silhouette of an object as seen in two-dimensional projection” (Marr, 1982: 218).

The recognition of the occlusion contours is intimately related to motion perception. Indeed, the recognition of objects is, in principle, result of the permanent mobility of the activity of looking. Before the eyes, nothing remains static: the seen object moves and so the eyes. The basic fictional element of fixed material visual images is their immobility. Each object seen in this perpetuum mobile is perceived as an occluding surface silhouetted on another occluding surface. The proof of the autonomy of the object and, so, its possibility of being recognized, is that an occluding surface is moving on another occluding surface. This removes the burden of subjectivity Marr attributes to the form (of the objects) and which has been the main criticism against Gestalt’s hypotheses. The visually recorded movement originates the recognition of object’s forms and, consequently, the representation of occluding surfaces through the lines which delimit its edges, originates the recognition of images, static (photographies, pictures, sculptures) and dynamic (TV, cinema), which represent a given object. The occlusive contour is previous (we are unable to say whether, in addition, it is a primitive), being the line an available feature to its representation. Of course, in this operation there are no analysis inside the occluding surface (this will be done by the recognition of the marks and axes), but a mere and elemental possibility of recognizing an attractor from the recognition of its edges. Movement adds its perception as a whole (the displacement of a continuous and self-enclosed edge, before other differentiated surfaces) and the possible perception of all of its forms (the changing set of occluding surfaces generated by the edge when the object rotates, effective or virtually, on its diverse possible axes). All these are related in a way to the experiences of mental rotation of Shepard & Metzler (see, for example, in Marr, 1982: 11 and in Jackendoff, 1989: 179ff), but these are aimed at proving an effect in relatively different fields; these authors research “visual imagery” as a proof of the effective implementation of imaginary operations of mental rotation and, so, as a proof of the effective existence of mental images (ultimately, the available attractors), while here they are proposed in the field of the material visual images perception and referred to the possibility of their recognition by the appropriate attractors.

11.3.3 Qualitative or plastic perceptual proposals: abstractive attractor

A third possibility, in terms of quality of the perceptual proposal, is that of strictly qualitative nature, without involving figurative or symbolic elements in its composition. This would be a “pure” case, that interest me here to develop in order to establish its specificity and limits; I have already said that in most material visual images it
would be just one of their components. Only in a few percentage of cases the whole perceptual proposal consists of qualitative perceptual proposals.

In every cognoscitive-perceptual activity, there are elementary aspects building the primary levels of which is being perceived. Such aspects are assimilated without involving consciousness, but leaving a mnemonic trace that can be retrieved as proposal or as perceptual recognition. Surpassing that primary level, that vary according to different cultures or education or specialization of professional experience, is reached the possibility of a conscious perception of objects which are, consequently, delimited in a subjective way. In verbal communication, we usually perceive phrases, we are able to attend to words, but we attend to the timbre and tone of the voice of the speaker only fleetingly and we lose at least some information of what is being said and we have to make an effort to individualize and identify each of the sounds emitted by the throat of the speaker. This is reversed in the case of singing, where the attention of the hearer is fixed on the sounds emitted by the throat of the singer, in its timbre and tone, and only additionally get to attend the phrases constructing what effectively means the song. Tintoretto, Greco or Velázquez’s brushstrokes are the most interesting features of their work, whose topic lacks of validity today and is an additional and anecdotic information. Instead, the texture is intentionally removed in conceptual or symbolic images (Fig. 2), and in hyperrealism, like for example Estes (Fig. 3), is very difficult to retrieve the brushstroke; its disappearance is an object of knowledge until it is being identified as an evidence that it is not a photography. In other works, like those of Tapies (Fig. 4) or Péri (Fig. 5), the addition of material, the chromatism, or the play of forms and planes is the fundamental, if not the unique, proposal (in Tapies always appears the other semiosis, the symbolic in his picture, but in others, like that of Fig. 6, appear also an indexical semiosis, through concrete objects or pieces of objects shown in their uniqueness). So the qualitative is that which structures, although it only structures itself; all material visual image contains this and there are material visual images which only propose its perception.

When faced to the qualitative aspect of a material visual image, in the mind of the viewer is activated an abstractive attractor. Its characteristics have been little explored. It has generated much literature however, and I say this in a sense complimentary and also to delimit fields of knowledge: it produces the generation of texts proposing its phenomenological comprehension, but only few text worked this purely qualitative aspect of visual proposals from the perspective of a rigorous and cognitive semiotics.

In an elementary synthesis -which for now I will expand barely in the following comments- I propose, tentatively, that the abstractive attractor is a quale or sensation belonging to a private semiosis and, as such, to the individual experience, so that the work appropriate to the producer of such qualitative proposals is to achieve the formulation of a visual expression bringing given qualia, from which the viewer should have available in the non-conscious memory, the plane of communication, and, therefore, makes them socially shareable.

With the expression “private semiosis”, I intend to establish the existence, in memory, of given abstractive attractors, originated in the perceptual experience, which are being accumulated consciously or unconsciously.

Is there an experience or chromatic sensation that can not be translated into words and that can only be retrieved through a material visual image? Are we confident that our chromatic experiences are the same chromatic experiences of others? We know and share names and expressions designating those experiences, but, Are we sure that the shared names and expressions designate shared experiences, or we could never know if naming a color we are not naming a very different experience than that which another person calls with the same name? This is in fact the problem Wittgenstein poses when referring to the existence of a “private language” (1953: 243ss) and also of a “private experience”, which would not be the same to affirm that “The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have this or something else. The assumption would thus be possible -though unverifiable- that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another” (1953: 272). Or, in another sense, to admit the existence of private experiences means also to be oneself trapped in the duality between to mean and to refer to: “The word ‘red’ means something known to everyone; and in addition, for each person, it means something known only to him? (Or perhaps rather: it refers to something known only to him,).” (1953: 273).9

9 And he adds: “But how is even possible for us to be tempted to think that we use a word to mean at one time the colour known to everyone -and at another the ‘visual impression’ which I am getting now? [...] I don’t turn the same kind of attention on the colour in the two cases. When I mean the colour impression that (as I should like say) belongs to me alone I immerse myself in the colour -rather like when I ‘cannot get my fill of a colour.’” (1953: 277).
This would begin to refine the concept of “private semiosis”. The idea is to propose the existence of experiences which are not conscious, nor are they verbalizable, but they can be actualized and, being visual experiences, their actualization (and the success of their acceptability by others) is the task of the producer of this kind (iconic qualisigns) of material visual images. Figurative images effectively seen but not recorded as such, and symbolic images perceived but not attended in their socializing effectiveness, are not excluded from these experiences, because all of this can be object of the perceptual proposal materialized in a material visual image. But in the basis (delimitation, color and texture) of the construction of these figurative or symbolic images, are involved elements whose effectiveness in the mind of the viewer depends on their preexistence in the memory, as traces of delimiting chromatic and textural experiences, effective in the construction of the visual universe, but which were not specifically conscious.

I think that the terms “ quale” and “qualia” are appropriate to designate the sensation/s composing that abstractive attractor which needs to be activated by the perceptual proposal of the purely qualitative visual

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[24] Fig. 2: Symbolic semiotics; Mijksenaar & Westendorp, 1999

[25] Fig. 3: Figurative semiotics; Estes, Avenue of the Americas at Spring Street, 1998

[26] Fig. 4: Plastic (and symbolic) semiotics; Tàpies, Taula negra, 1966

[27] Fig. 5: Plastic semiotics; Péri, Térkonstruktció 16, 1922

[27] Fig. 6: Figurative (and symbolic) semiotics; Tàpies, Tovallons plegats, 1973
images (or by the qualitative aspect of the perceptual proposals in general) in order to be recognized its existence and its effectiveness as dynamic element of the private semiosis visual aspect. The expression “quale-consciousness” with its philosophical origin in Locke and Berkeley, is taken up again by Peirce, who in his “Scientific Metaphysics”, devotes to it 16 paragraphs (6.222 to 6.237). The main formulations with which Peirce built this object of knowledge, can be summarized as:

(1) There is a quale-consciousness, for which the subject will be completely unconscious, which is different from the conscience that is heightened by the attention; Peirce calls it, objectively considered, “vividness” and, as faculty, “liveliness” (6.222).

(2) The quale is in and for itself (6.234), without reference to any other (6.224), it is a unity in which originate (Kant) the diverse synthetic unities with which the intellect operates, and is also the unity of the individual objects (6.225). This does not exclude that the quale consciousness is not limited to the simple sensations; the Peircean example is that of the quale of purple, as a mixture of red and blue (6.223).

(3) The unity of the quale-consciousness is logical, because to feel, to be immediately conscious, supposes one consciousness and not two or more (6.230).

(4) If the quality, as quale-consciousness relative to the overall average experience, were double, the principle of contradiction, falls to the ground (6.232). An object can not be blue and not blue at once, but it can be blue and hard, since both qualities are not thought of as joined in the same quale-consciousness (6.231). This illustration puts into a high light the distinctio between two kinds of consciousness, the quale-consciousness and that kind of consciousness which is intensified by attention, which objectively considered, I call vividness, and as a faculty we may call liveliness (6.222).

(5) All the operations of the intellect imply the introduction of conflict where just the quale-consciousness itself were (6.233).

(6) Different quale-consciousness can not blend without losing their identity (6.235).

(7) From this follows an important consequence: there is no check upon the utmost variety and diversity of quale-consciousness, as it appears to the comparing intellect. There are no common element to compare, since each quale-consciousness is sui generis and in itself. Whatever is absolutely simple must be absolutely free. Each quale-consciousness is “totus, teres, atque rotundus” (6.236).

(8) By this logic, the unity of quale-consciousness, implying simplicity and freedom, necessarily results in endless multiplicity and variety (6.237).

These would be the characteristics, from Peirce’s view, that must have the entity I am intending to construct with the term “abstractive attractor”.

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10 “[...] This illustration puts into a high light the distinction between two kinds of consciousness, the quale-consciousness and that kind of consciousness which is intensified by attention, which objectively considered, I call vividness, and as a faculty we may call liveliness” (6.222).

11 “[...] Quality or quale-consciousness is all that is in and for itself [...]” (6.234).

12 “Each quale is in itself what it is for itself, without reference to any other [...]” (6.224).

13 “[...] In so far as qualia can be said to have anything in common, that which belongs to one and all is unity; and the various synthetic unities which Kant attributes to different operations of the mind, as well as the unity of logical consistency, or specific unity, and also the unity of the individual object, all these unities originate, not in the operations of the intellect, but in the quale-consciousness upon which the intellect operates” (6.225).

14 “The quale-consciousness is not confined to simple sensations. There is a peculiar quale to purple, though it be only a mixture of red and blue. [...]” (6.223).

15 “I say then that this unity is logical in this sense, that to feel, to be immediately conscious, so far as possible, without any action and reaction nor any reflection, logically supposes one consciousness and not two nor more. [...]” (6.230).

16 “[...] The quality itself is nothing in the world but a quale-consciousness of a composite photograph or general average of experience. And if the quality can be double, the principle of contradiction falls to the ground.” (6.232).

17 “[...] Any object, A, cannot be blue and not blue at once. It can be blue and hard, because blueness and hardness are not thought of as joined in quale-consciousness, one appealing to one experiment and the other to another. [...]” (6.231).

18 “All the operations of the intellect consist in taking composite photographs of quale-consciousnesses. Instead of introducing any unity, they only introduce conflict that was not in the quale-consciousness itself [...]” (6.233).

19 “[...] Quale-consciousness cannot blend with quale-consciousness without loss of its identity.” (6.235).

20 “[...] I now call attention to a remarkable consequence of it. Namely it follows that there is not check upon the utmost variety and diversity of quale-consciousness as it appears to the comparing intellect. For if consciousness is to blend with consciousness, there must be common elements. But if it has nothing in itself but just itself, it is sui generis and is cut loose from all need of agreeing with anything. Whatever is absolutely simple must be absolutely free; for a law over it must apply to some common feature of it. And if it has no feature, no law can seize upon it. It is totus, teres, atque rotundus. [...]” (6.236).

21 “[...] This is the logic by which the unity of quale-consciousness, implying simplicity, and through simplicity, freedom, necessarily results in endless multiplicity and variety. [...]” (6.237).
Dennett redefines the term “qualia” as “The ways things seem to us” (1995: 381). He says that “qualia are supposed to be properties of a subject’s mental state that are (1) inefable, (2) intrinsic, (3) private, (4) directly or immediately apprehensible in consciousness” (1995: 385). Through 14 examples he transmits an intuitive comprehension (he names each of these examples “intuition pump” of the qualia. Some of them (especially those dealing with the difference in the colors actually perceived: 3, which questions the constancy; 4, which assigns it to another; and 5, which assigns it to oneself) refer to topics we can reintroduce in turn as examples of the private semiosis\(^{22}\) of visual nature.

The four characteristics Dennett assigns -despite his skepticism- to qualia coincide with the Peircean development, from which it can be retrieved other, like: raw material of intellectual operations (6.225), its unity (6.230), its sufficiency (6.236) and its ability to generate a multiplicity of replicas (6.237). This separates the abstractive attractor from the existential and symbolic attractors and justifies the proposal of build with them, not a conceptual system or an analogical repertoire, but a private semiosis without the laws and taxonomies in which the purely qualitative perceptual proposals (or, as I said, the qualitative aspect of the existential or symbolic perceptual proposals) search their object or representative ground.

11.4 Interpretation

When referring to the representative quality of material visual image, were had established the perceptual variants which would activate the appropriate mental operations, each of them leading to the production of a specific identification. When referring to the components involved in the configuration of a given form, were had identified the entities whose association will actualize in the memory of the perceiver the absence of conscious memory of the visual experience proposed.

As I said initially, material visual images are not self-sufficient to interpret themselves; they need the external complement to which alludes Foucault with his metaphor of the transformation of documents into monuments (1969: 15), that is the axis of his concept of uttering: “Une série de signes deviendra énoncé à condition qu’elle ait à ‘autre chose’ [...] un rapport spécifique que la concerne elle-même, -et non point sa cause, non point ses éléments.” (1969: 117). So, a material visual image will have its meaning only by the effectiveness of one or more other semiosis (even of other manifestations of its own visual semiosis). Ultimately, material visual images do not mean by themselves, but can only produce a demonstration effect.

Because of this need of interaction with other semiosis or with other manifestations of the semiosis of the visual image itself, semiotic research should be able to account for those other semiosis as well as for the characteristics of such interaction. I suggest here, as I did in other works (1996a, 1996b, 1999a, 1999b), to use the instrument I called “possible semiotic worlds”. We can derive interesting and effective operations from the works of Fauconnier (1984) and Fauconnier & Turner (1998), about mental spaces and conceptual integration networks.

As operational intuition, can be said that the researcher should give answer to questions like: *What needs the viewer to interpret this image?* This need for knowledge is never exhausted in the image itself.

11.4.1 Demonstration of lack in plastic semiotics

In the case of the material images consisting of qualisigns, the researcher has to demonstrate their interpretative effectiveness by showing the preexistence in the viewer’s memory, of an abstractive attractor or perceptual sensation or experience (the qualia belonging to a private semiosis), whose relation he/she will use to extract the actual meaning; but if the researcher wants to demonstrate its creative effectiveness, he/she must show a lack, as an absence of conscious memory of the visual experience proposed.

\(^{22}\) In his “intuition pump 3”, he recovers, as it has been done also by Peirce and Wittgenstein, the “reverse [chromatic] spectrum” of Locke: “how do I know that you and I see the same subjective colour when we look at something? Since we both learned colour words by being shown public coloured objects, our verbal behaviour will match even if we experience entirely different subjective colours” (1995: 387). The “intuition pump 4” supposes that “there were some neuroscientific apparatus that fits on your head and feeds your visual experience into my brain [...]. With eyes closed I accurately report everything you are looking at, except that I marvel at how the sky is yellow, the grass red, and so forth. Would this not confirm, empirically, that our qualia were different?” (1995: 387). He gives one more step and in “intuition pump 5: the neurosurgical prank” he says that “[...] the experiences to be compared are all in one mind. You wake up one morning to find that the grass has turned red, the sky yellow, and so forth [...] (and we later discover, if you like, just how the evil neurophysiologists tampered with your neurons to accomplish this). Here it seems at first [...] that qualia are acceptable properties after all, because propositions about them can be justifiably asserted, empirically verified, and even explained” (1995: 387-388). Nevertheless, Dennet arrives in his work, pessimistically, to the conclusion that “So contrary to what seems obvious at first blush, there simply are no qualia at all” (1995: 409).
11.4.2 Demonstration of similarity/difference, in figurative semiotics

In order to demonstrate the interpretative effectiveness of material images consisting in sinsigns, the researcher should show the preexistence in the viewer’s memory, of an existential attractor, whose relation he/she will use to extract the actual meaning; but if the researcher wants to demonstrate its creative effectiveness, he/she must show the existence of a relation of similarity/difference with respect to some existential attractor as dynamic mnemic image.

11.4.3 Demonstration of the place in a system, in conceptual semiotics

In order to demonstrate the interpretative effectiveness of material images consisting in legisigns, the researcher should show the preexistence in the viewer’s memory, of a symbolic attractor, whose relation he/she will use to extract the actual meaning; but if the researcher wants to demonstrate its creative effectiveness, he/she must show the place of the appropriate system of visual perceptions socially ruled, where the symbolic attractor previously learned and available in the society, is being actualized.
12 Semiotic operations in the analysis of comic strips

12.1 Metasemiotic analysis of graphic images

Verbal discourse analysis can be done from syntactic and semantic analysis using quite naturally metalinguistic categories and operations (for example, grammatical analysis and contextual definitions). That is, the word is considered an appropriate instrument for analyzing the word. A metalinguistic or metadiscursive perspective is chosen, leaving aside the use of any other external discourse -see Desclès and Guentcheva Desclès (1977: 2)-, that would add to the analysis, categories and operations that are different from the verbal and would therefore disturb and distort the analytic aim, which is to describe and explain its specific functioning.

Nevertheless, the habitual instrument for the analysis of graphic images is verbal language. It is an external discourse which transplants theoretical concepts and compositional relations that can be applied only in a metaphorical way to the visual semiotics specific of graphic image. In the origin of a discipline, is convenient this metaphorical use of terms coming from other sciences relatively close and more developed, since it can provide heuristic power to strengthen the new theoretical field (Boyd, 1979: 357). This happens with the graphic image, with expressions like “image grammar”, “visual syntax”, “graphemes”, etc. In other cases, the terms and expressions require a thorough reflection so to determine its relevance for an image semiotics, like “meaning of the image” (Do images signify?), “visual thought” (Is there a thought constructed with images? What proximity or distance would be between it and the visual mind, imagination, imagery or knowledge produced by images? Is acceptable this kind of knowledge? I say yes), “visual types” (Have the unities available in the mnemic repertoire, the characteristics needed to call them types? or, Are there rather attractors or dynamic images, and if so, with which ability and limits to their variability?). The studies on image have already a history and a documentary richness that allow to pose the need of having available not only a terminology but, above all, the consequent specificity to characterize the visual operations appropriate to them. So, it should be available a metasemiotics using the resources of imagery to account for the different aspects involved in the study of the image.

Why, then, this very verbal text I am writing about image problems? Because this text, for the time being, is not analyzing images but posing an argument of a given epistemological scope, about the representation of our knowledge on images, which belongs specifically to the field of verbal discourse effectiveness. Also, because a printed communication showing immediately and exclusively images, would lack of the essential background to allow the recipient to understand what is being proposed. But there will come the time when the operations involved in a visual metasemiotics will be presented in this way.

12.2 Fundamental operations of a metasemiotics of visual image

In the metasemiotic analysis of visual image converge three fundamental operations which can be called “identification”, “recognition” and “interpretation”. The verbal description of these operations, such as I am stating them here, will try to be the less distorting possible translation of what is being done graphically in their production and, visually, in their perception. The exposing of each of these operations require a sequential order (inherent in the verbal discourse), but it should be noted that they occur in parallel, either graphic or visually: their cerebral/mental processing is simultaneous and is performed in a tempus which can be taken provisorily as instantaneous.

I understand by identification in this work, the perceptual operation of registry of the marks composing an image. The term “mark” has been used by the Grouppe μ (1992: 151) and I take it in a sense close to that.

There would be two ways to reach that identification. The deductive way is the establishment of a paradigm of given primary elementary forms with which could be composed or decomposed any visual image; this is the proposal of Biederman’s geons (Biederman, 1987; 1995: 12ff) or of the codon scheme by Hoffman and Richards (cited in Ullman, 1996: 27). The inductive way is the identification of the maximal mark that is not yet representative in a given image, that is, one that activates no attractor. The set of these marks when they exhaust the visual image at study, is the virtual repertoire of the marks used by the producer of the image and identified (in a subsemiotic level, as not consciously actualized, but having an effective information input to the neural
network) by the eventual perceiver. I choose this inductive mode (see its justification in Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 260) because it registers operations instead of applying models, an example of this, is Biederman’s proposal.

I understand by recognition, in this work, the perceptual operation of integrating the minimal number of marks needed to activate an attractor, that is, to produce a representation. In this operation is posed the requirement to establish what is understood by “representation”, since in the case of visual images, this term is related to the problem of iconicity. Although this is not the opportunity to deepen an answer, I outline the principle permitting to overcome this problem. The axis is the criticism aroused by the concept of similarity or isomorphism (Eco, 1977: 325; Grouppé μ, 1992: 124), when the image is seen as something comparable with a real or imaginarily existent and perceivable given entity. This criticism presupposes a very restricted concept of icon. In the broader dimension of the statements of Peirce, the icon, as representation of existence, is just one of the possibilities of the iconic sign, that which Peirce calls “iconic sinsign” or “second correlate”. But also is possible that the icon represents a quality (for example, chromatic/textural, like the case of concrete painting), possibility called by Peirce, “iconic qualsign” or “first correlate”. Or may be the icon represents a conventional value (for example, writing, or a diagram, or the graphic of a statistical projection), representation called by Peirce “iconic legisign” or “fifth correlate” (Peirce, 2.235ff, and 8.341). With this broader approach, the operation of recognition will be met when, from the integration of a minimal number of marks, is activated the attractor of an existential entity (for example, the recognition of a minimal number of marks composing a face, a hand, a phone, etc.; see Fig. 4-C), or the attractor of a quality (for example, the recognition of a minimal number of marks that form a given tone variation of blue or the intersection of lines in a given inclination, or tangency, etc.), or the attractor of a conventional value (for example, the recognition of a minimal number of marks that form a given letter or number or network, etc.).

Finally, I understand by interpretation, in this work, the perceptual-conceptual operation by which the result of the operation of recognition is articulated in the cultural system of the person who perceives it. Only the first two operations imply exclusively visual or graphic relations (that is, with exclusive intervention of the visual or graphic components of the perceiver’s culture), so they are specific to a visual metasemiotics and must be worked out in this specific semiotic field. In the operation of interpretation converge components of the diverse semiosis available to the perceiver: fundamentally, of visual semiosis (differential value as to the other perceptual proposals caused by other recognitions), but also of verbal semiosis (possibility of translating the recognition at study into a historical, narrative, poetic, etc. discourse) as well as of musical semiosis, etc.

12.3 The images (cartoons) of comic strips

Following Peirce’s classification of signs, comic strips can be considered in principle and generally, as iconic sinsigns, that is, signs whose attractor is composed by the mental image of existential entities or semiotic objects as well as of their attitudes and behaviors.

The operation of recognition integrate the marks composing such images, producing a given rhetoric transformation with respect to the recognition produced by other graphic images which preserve, to a greater extent, the result of the visual perception of the semiotic objects. So I am situating graphic rhetorics as a transformation between images, but not between the image at study and the perceived object. There are at different times of a culture or in different cultures ensambles of images that the society considers closer to its ways of perceiving (with more power to activate a given attractor). This would be a zero degree of image, not an absolute or universal zero, but a zero (as the less modified) in relation to the culture to which the image on the one hand, and the perceiver, on the other, belong. Beginning with the identification of the marks and the result of the recognition which operate in the production and perception of such zero degree images (currently, may be especially related to the photography without filters and tampering), are produced, differentially, the identification and recognition of the images rhetorically transformed, that can be called generically “cartoons” and that are the proposal of the perceptual experience of comics. These are but one of the possible ways of rhetorize graphic images; obviously also Escher, Magritte or Picasso among others (each image creator, with respect to the images preceding him or contemporaneous) rhetorized the degree zero of their time’s graphic imagery.

5 “Representation”, is a too broad term. We would need different names to designate relations different from those included under this name. In the cognitive level, could be differentiated, at least initially: (a) a perceptual representation, or what someone sees in the world at a given moment in a direct way; (b) a known form (registered in memory) by virtue of whose knowledge someone is able to recognize what is perceiving (I called it here “attractor”); (c) the process by which a form, mnemonically present (the mentioned attractor), is in the place of another form already known (as already perceived) or being perceived; (d) a material image that is presented to someone containing a form which can be recognized; (e) a known form, by virtue of whose knowledge someone is able to recognize what appears as material image; (f) the process by which a form, present in a material image, is in the place of an already known form (as already perceived) or which is being perceived.
The comics I study in this work are the graphically humorous. In Fig. 1, the production of visual humor is completed by the concurrence of graphic and verbal semiosis, being none of these semiosis by itself sufficient for the production of humor. In Fig. 3, humor is fully achieved by the only presence of the visual image. In both cases, the images propose a perceptual experience rhetorizing the mnemonic images originated in the visual experience of other akin images, conventionally accepted as not modified.

Quino’s comic, in [28] Fig. 1 is an excellent graphic representation and very opportune humorous use of the mark and attractor concepts here developed: the simple curve found by the man on the floor is a mark, and the man wonders about the attractor appropriate to actualize: the symbolic signifier or money, or the damaged rear light of his car, until he had to accept that such mark corresponds to the memory of a part of the anatomy of his daughter’s girl friend.

[28] Fig. 1. Quino I

[29] Fig. 2. Marks and entities
Fig. 2 shows how can be originated, starting from a hypothetic repertoire of marks, diverse entities, determiners or determined, according to Grouppe μ’s terminology (1992: 149ff), that are the graphic materialization of the mnemically available attractors. Integrations in this [29] Fig. 2, do not exhaust the possibility of producing other entities, depending on the exploration of memory performed by the experimenter in search of other attractors. This is the task the character created by Quino performed in the comic of Fig. 1.

I took the last vignette from [30] Fig. 3 in order to to perform a reverse of the previous task, and which may have more relation with the metasemiotic analysis of graphic images. In [31] Fig. 4-B I have selected inductively the marks with which both images of the vignette were built, as can be proven by the numbers in Fig. 4-A. That is, I have identified the maximal sets of graphic features that have yet actualized none attractor. None of the 39 marks identified evoke, in Fig. 4-B, a recognizable image, which is what would happen if I add any other of these features, adjacent to the identified marks, used by Caloi. Instead, the eight sets of Fig. 4-C can be already recognized, since they can be referred to specific attractors. This correspondence with mnemonic attractors coming from previous visual experiences involving other graphic images or the perception and recognition of objects (semiotic), makes sense in this case, because these comics belong to the category of iconic signs and as such, they have as referents the attitudes and behaviors of existential entities.

The operation of interpretation is not shown in this graphic development, because it exceeds it and requires the establishment of intersemiotic connections with other sectors of the perceiver’s culture. This is accomplished in most of the writings on comic strips and on other plastic manifestations. It is not given account here on the way these comics have been built, nor on the mental process which permits us to identify, from given graphic strokes, the characters and situations experienced by any perceiver. The metasemiotic operations of identification and recognition, require that we face a serious research work. The operation of interpretation is, simply, that which makes us to smile.

[30] Fig. 3, Caloi I
Fig. 4: decomposition in marks and attractors
13 Abduction in the interpretation of visual images

13.1 Possible Semiotic Worlds

When focusing semiotics as a basic methodology in social sciences, the designation “possible semiotic worlds” allows to identify a systematic set of analytical operations, productive and effective. In principle, it is related to the search of a precise description and a well grounded explanation in the task of interpretation, as this is evident in the statement establishing the meaning of a given social phenomenon (for example, that of a given material visual image).

Interpreting is an operation; it therefore implies to perform a given or many behaviors, whose characteristics should be identified from observation, since otherwise the term “to interpret” and its possible transformations (“interpretation”, “interpreter”, “interpretant”, etc.) would designate an entelechy, that is, the pretention to possess what is already perfect and that, as such, does not require the empirical contrast, which is equivalent to the absurd. A precise description of the behaviors involved in the task of interpretation is, thus, an essential requirement for understanding what we are talking about when dealing with possible semiotic worlds.

But is not sufficient. Once the behaviors have been identified, it will be necessary to establish how they act when they produce the attribution of meaning to something (if this, as I am tentatively saying, is what I call “to interpret”). That is, to make useful the concept of interpretation that we are constructing, it will be necessary to explain the characteristic features of the dynamic construction of that/those behavior/s and to explain what is, and why, its/their result.

I call this integration of description and explanation, “possible semiotic worlds”. We should propose also the symbolic representation of the way in which description and explanation interact in order to be an effective instrument, at least in our times and in our society (with the scope we attribute to that given moment and that given society), to furnish a specific content to what we call “interpretation”.

It may appear that I have gone too far ahead or too far back in the search of consistency and rigor for a term we use so habitually, without worrying much about it. When including the issue of interpretation in the operational field of semiotics as methodology, I am not referring to the everyday, intuitive and creative use of the term “interpretation” as it is allowed by the practice of the semiotic faculty, but to the conceptual development by means of which we can have available the explanation of the operation constructed with the name of interpretation as an operational instrument of the semiotic discipline (which, however, should not contradict the other practice, unless by means of the concurrent demonstration of an overcoming of the everyday sense of the term).

To talk about possible semiotic worlds is to try to identify, arrange, systematize and show how are interacting some given elements of that experiences, values, knowledge and interpretation of a given perceptual proposal and memories we might have stored in our associative memory, which activate themselves to produce the interpretation of a given perceptual proposal. They are also the form that abduction adopts in its task of formulating a perceptual judgement which gives sense to a certain perception (or percept). The concept of associative memory belongs to cognitive neurology and I use it in a sense close to that proposed by Kosslyn (1996: 73):

“The outputs from the ventral (object properties) and dorsal (spatial properties) encoding systems come together at an associative memory (which appears to be implemented in part in the posterior, superior temporal lobes), where they are matched to stored information. Associative memory contains not only associations between perceptual representations but also more abstract “conceptual” information (names, categories, parts of speech and so forth). Information in associative memory can be accessed by input from all sensory systems; once one has accessed the appropriate information, the object has been identified.”

As regards to “percept”, as this term retains its Latin participle structure, refers to what is perceived or perceptum, and it is exactly the term that Peirce proposes to indicate what we see before we know what we are actually seeing (2.141) and also the instance in which abduction intervenes as the initial interpretative hypothesis of what is perceived (2.776). When we know this or accept what we are assuming we see, we have already constructed a “perceptual judgement” and, consequently, we have already given an interpretation to the percept. By means of the expression “perceptual judgement” (“perceptual fact”), Peirce designates the conscious vision or “intellect’s description of the evidence of the senses, made by my endeavor” (2.141) and with the expression “perceptual judgement” he designates “its [the percept’s] dynamic interpretant” (5.540).

1 Paper published in English as “Performance of abduction in the interpretation of visual images”, in Semiotica. Vol 153, 1/4, 2005; pp. 375-388, translated by Ana Coria. However, as the author has changed in several places this article, I intervened in some parts to include these modifications, respectfully to Ana Coria’s translation (G.W.).
In order to achieve the transformation of the percept in perceptual judgement, it must be made a search in associative memory, that has the faculty to relate what is already filed with the information that is entering via the retina. And this file, with these relations (which, as socially involved and linked to a culture and to a given historical time, are what is individual and identifies the interpreting possibilities of each perceiving subject), will intervene to confer a given interpretation to what a certain subject is perceiving, and this file with these relations, as it appears at a given moment of a given individual or of a given society, is what I intuited and try to configure as possible semiotic world, as an essential instrument to produce a given interpretation of a given visual material image. The display of its structure and its relations will provide the effective and socially adequate explanation of such interpretation.

[32] Fig. 1. Figurative image; in Azorín (1966). Fot. 12.
The selection of photographies and assembly of the book was made by Miguel Buñuel

13.2 From the percept to the interpretation

The proposal is, thus, to identify and retrieve the successive steps which go from the percept to the interpretation. The suggestion of taking as objects of analysis the three proposed visual material images, is based on the fact that each of them corresponds to one of the three semiotics, being this a discipline in which the intended visual semiotic unity is distributed (as I have stated in Magarinós de Morentín, 2000:665-695) as identifiable and distinguishable according to the three large groups of different cognitive operations that as semiotic faculty, operate to interpret the images.

In this sense, [32] Fig. 1 can be included in the group of figurative material visual images (following Peirce, “iconic sinsigns”); [33] Fig. 2, in the group of symbolic material visual images (following Peirce, “iconic legisigns”); and [34] Fig. 3, in the group of qualitative material visual images (following Peirce, “iconic qualisigns”).

If the last point is valid, then the perception of [31] Fig. 1 (that is, Fig. 1 as percept) will tend to produce a perceptual judgement that states an existential configuration.
The perception of [33] Fig. 2 (that is, Fig. 2 as perceptum) will tend to produce a perceptual judgement that states a conventionalized configuration.

The perception of Fig. 3 (that is, Fig. 3 as a perceptum) will tend to produce a perceptual judgement which states an emotional configuration (still a very ambiguous term, but that I leave as expressing that it will produce or retrieve a pure perceptual experience; pending adjustment of the term “pure”).

I say “will tend to” to give raise to the possibility of talking of the percept, even knowing that it implies a contradiction: the percept is seen before knowing what is being seen, so how can we say something about what we do not know what it is? This means that the percept is a mere possibility and, as such, does not admit a realization and perhaps, playing a little logical trick, it might be said that it still is not but tends to be (or to produce) something.

To move forward as little as possible (so as not to skip possible stages; although we may probably later realize we have skipped them), but making an important advancement from a cognitive point of view, I would say that although we may not know what the future perceptual judgement will state, we can anticipate the kind of (identifier-differentiator) of statement it will be.

In the case of [32] Fig. 1 the perceptual judgement will construct (outside the image but starting from it, and as its object) a perceivable existential phenomenon; and all of us, intuitively or abductively, know (since, by now, we have already seen and interpreted the corresponding image), what are the characteristics of such phenomenon, but nothing empowers us to affirm them as socially valid (which does not mean true). That is, as analysts (semiotics as a discipline) we still cannot find why we see what we know we are seeing (semiotics as a faculty). What I am forbidding to myself (so I break my own prohibition) is to say that I am seeing “a coastal town” (on which grounds could I affirm that?).

In the case of [33] Fig. 2 the perceptual judgement will construct (outside the image but starting from it, and as its goal) a conceptual interpretable phenomenon; and all of us intuitively or abductively, know (since we have already seen and interpreted the corresponding image) what are the characteristics of such phenomenon, but nothing empowers us to affirm them as socially valid (which does not mean true). That is, as analysts, (semiotics as discipline) we still cannot find why we see what we know we are seeing (semiotics as a faculty). What I am forbidding to myself (so I break my own prohibition) is to say that I am seeing an instruction on the need of shaking a container in a given way (on which grounds could I affirm that?).

In the case of [34] Fig. 3 the perceptual judgement will construct (outside the image but starting from it, and as its object) an emotional experimentable phenomenon; and all of us, intuitively or abductively, know (since, by now, we have already seen and interpreted the corresponding image), what are the characteristics of such phenomenon, but nothing empowers us to affirm them as individually (attention, I modified the adjective that until now was “socially”) valid (what also does not mean true). That is, as analysts, (semiotics as discipline) we still cannot support why we see what we know we are seeing (semiotics as a faculty). What I am forbidding to myself (so I break my own prohibition) is to say that I am seeing something that makes me feel stimulated by a craving for tactile sensation (on which grounds could I affirm that?).
The last question, between brackets, at the end of each of the paragraphs above, is the challenge by which I think
should follow the construction of the corresponding possible semiotic worlds, whose initial relations appear in
the content that I have tried to confer to the expression "to tend to".

13.3 The syllogism of abduction

The answer to the question "on which grounds could I affirm that?", after anticipating the construction, in each
case, of a provisory (provisory because I would have to justify much of it) perceptual judgement, can be
constructed by intuition or by abduction.

By intuition, implies to leave the proof of its acceptance to the experience that depends on the future behavior.
For example, the possibility of sharing, with others who perceive the same images, what is affirmed as an
interpretation of each of these (except for the third, the subjective nature of whose validity, inasmuch as it is
private semiosis, admits that its contents should be non shareable, but it equally requires to be shared, given its
character of emotional configuration).

By abduction, it implies to leave the proof of its acceptance to the experience coming from the past behavior, the
use of whose memory implies to leave it to the reasoning built according to the corresponding logical scheme.
What has been affirmed, in each of the three images, is a case (Fig. 1 is a "coastal town"; Fig. 2 is "an instruction
on the need of shaking a container in a given way"; Fig. 3 is "I am being stimulated by a craving for tactile
sensation) whose validity depends on the acceptance of the relation between a result and a rule.

Let’s recall the syllogistic structure and the example of Peirce: abduction affirms or hypothesizes something
about a case (“these beans are from this bag”) which is based on the relation of an observable result (“these
beans are white") and a rule ("all the beans from this bag are white") whose validity is assumed aprioristically
(2623).

But in the case of the three figures we are considering, What is the result and what is the rule on which depends
the validity of the case: the abductively affirmed (what then needs to be proved) in the perceptual judgement that
accounts for what is really perceived?

I will try to construct, for each figure I am studying, the three elements, with their logical hampering, with which
Peirce structures the syllogism of abduction: a given case is valid, because it is coherent with what is affirmed in
the result, which comes from the validity of a given rule.

Of course, the abductive process is different and independent in each of the three figures (confirming my claim
of being three semiotics); but in each supposition it tells us what we have to relate in order to find out what we
are seeing, that is, to formulate the corresponding perceptual judgement.

As regards Fig. 1:

Case: I interpret this image ("these beans") as the representation of a coastal town ("are from this bag");

Result: because I interpret such image ("these beans") as the representation of the fronts of some houses located
beyond and above a water surface where some boats are afloat ("are white");

Rule: inasmuch as any interpretation of this image ("all the beans") as representation of a coastal town ("from
this bag") requires recognizing the fronts of some houses located beyond and over a surface of water where some
boats are afloat ("are white").

Where the work has fallen predominantly on the iconic representation of the existential.

As regards Fig. 2:

Case: I interpret this image ("these beans") as an instruction on how the contents of a certain container are to be
shaken before using them ("are from this bag");

Result: because I interpret such image ("these beans") as a requirement that the container be shaken by placing
one hand on the mouth of it and the other on its bottom and by shaking it from right to left and from left to right
("are white");

Rule: inasmuch as any interpretation of such image ("all beans"), as an instruction on how the contents of a
certain container are to be shaken before using them ("in this bag"), requires that the container be shaken by
placing one hand on its mouth and the other on its bottom and by shaking it from right to left and from left to
right ("are white").

Where the work has fallen predominantly on the iconic representation of the symbolic.

As regards Fig. 3:

Case: I interpret this image ("these beans") as stimulating a craving for tactile sensation ("are from this bag");
Result: because I interpret such image (“these beans”) as the representation of a texture of hollows and a subtle weave (“are white”);

Rule: inasmuch as any interpretation of such image (“all beans”) as stimulating a craving for a tactile sensation (“in this bag”) comes -in my view- from the representation of a texture of hollows and a subtle weave (“are white”).

Where the work has fallen predominantly on the iconic representation of the qualitative (and thus: individually and intransferably valid, as private semiosis).

There is still countless concurring visual and conceptual knowledge, which have not yet been stated in this text, despite its being necessary for producing the proposed interpretation before each figure (for example, the retinocentric representation of the image, without any shapes re-conveyable to existing ones, from Marr’s (1982) Primary Sketch as a basic perceptual condition to construct the 2½D sketch and conclude with a 3D model).

13.4. Towards an explanation of the intended interpretation

I will try to show the interpretation process (reduced to its very basics but not to the most elemental, because such minimum would be almost unattainable), for each of these visual material images, which I have formulated with the logical form of the syllogism proposed by Peirce to explain the workings of abduction, stating it in a more colloquial way but bearing that formulation in mind and what it could have of methodological instrument, in order to arrange the intended interpretation (by formulating the corresponding perceptual judgement).

The question would be to explain the process of interpretation of the visual material images by using visual images, instead of (or with the minimum possible participation of) verbal discourses. By replicating the possible interrelation of such visual images in associative memory at the stimulus of a visual perception that needs to be interpreted, their concurrence and transformation in the mind should be shown by means of the accessibility and alternativity relations corresponding to the construction of the possible semiotic worlds. Still, I have not yet been able to prepare the software application that would (perhaps) allow me to replicate, as far as possible, such visual functioning in associative memory.

I therefore continue to resort to the inconvenient, imprecise and distorting verbal discourse (when is used to explain the interpretation process of visual images), though using it only to designate, and indicate how the interrelation of the visual images that we should see (or imagine or retrieve mnemically) is brought about as the starting point of a software application that could show and understand the nature of a supposedly explanatory analysis of this type.

As regards [32] Fig. 1:

On viewing it I know I can designate it as a “a coastal town”.

But this means that I can designate what I can most immediately see as “the fronts of some houses located beyond and above a surface of water where some boats are afloat”.

All of this means that, when I can designate what I see as “the fronts of some houses located beyond and above a surface of water where some boats are afloat”, I know that I can designate what I see as “a coastal town”.

If I have a sequence of different visual images in which I can designate what I see as “the fronts of some houses located beyond and above a surface of water where some boats are afloat”, I will be able to check if in all cases I can designate such images as “a coastal town” or if there is any case in which, although I can designate what I see as “the fronts of some houses located behind and above a surface of water where some boats are afloat”, I could not identify it as a “coastal town”, which would count as a proof of falsity of what I intended to assert as the interpretation of the images perceived. Of course there is a possibility that the qualifier “coastal” should refer to the sea or a river, but I doubt whether that would destroy the intended interpretation.

What would still need to be proved is that each parts of the image that seems enable me to designate what I can see as “fronts of some houses”, “houses”, “houses located beyond” something, “houses located above” something, something “beyond a surface of water”, something “above a surface of water”, “water where some boats are afloat”, etc, does fit in with the interpretation of each of such parts in the whole visual image. It does not matter so much that these names should be designative of what I can see. What is important is to prove that the other possible images that I could see, and that I would associate as the visual history of my experience about each of such possible perceptions, should come together in a non-contradictory way, so that all of them allow, by linking each other and the one I can now see (Fig. 1), in an uninterrupted reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry relation that would associate and link them until they have constructed that intended interpretation.

As regards [33] Fig. 2.

On viewing it I know that an instruction is being addressed to me as to how to shake the contents of a certain container before using it.
But before constructing such interpretation, the basic perceptual judgements (that is, the first attractors) I can formulate refer to certain “impoverished” images (as limited to borders drawn by lines and to an abstract representation of the content, by a dotted area) consisting of the representation of three partially superimposed containers, a complete central one in a vertical top-up position, and two others in a tilted or angular position partially concealed by the first one, with their tops pointing left of the viewer in both cases. This cumbersome description would be unnecessary if every one of the images could be shown in their autonomous form, as they appear, and detached from the whole image, which should be the aim of the explanation by images rather than by verbal discourse.

Also are “impoverished” images, those consisting of the profile representation (always the left profile; or perhaps the right one? And, in any case, is it a visual projection error?) of four hands, contextualized, two on the tops of two out of three containers, and two on the bottoms of the same two containers out of three ones. One of the containers bears no hands or any other element in its context, that is, it is isolated and unsupported (but the point is, as we shall see, that here is not represented the existence, neither imaginary nor experiential, but is being transmitted a convention).

I have perceived all this (as any perceptor does) almost simultaneously and following the integration proposal (by configuration, that is, by image contextualization) that the producer of the image has constructed. As a result I add, undoubtedly, something that is not in the static image: motion. That is, I abductively interpret this image as an instruction indicating how to shake the content of a certain container before using it.

On viewing the [33] Fig. 2, made up of this ensemble of conventional images, I formulate the perceptual judgement, with hypothesis value, that “the content of a certain container have to be shaken before using it”. How do I prove that such hypothesis is correct?

Here, the associative memory does not provide (or does not only provide) images that we can use to reconstruct an uninterrupted sequence of reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry, that would only allow us to recognize the image of the container, of the hand and even of the arrow (whose better designation is not as “arrow image” but as “arrow”). The associative memory has to provide the socially established code containing the conceptual meaning of the image in question. And this process is only incorporated into the associative memory through learning, just as is the case with words or numbers, for example, and with their contextualizations permitted, prohibited or creative.

The proof that the perceptual judgement (value of the hypothesis) related with the statement: “you have to shake the content of a particular container before using it”, built from the perception of this image, is in force, comes from the generalization of the interpretation of such image in a certain community and at a certain historical time, because such interpretation is conventionally linked to that image (with the morphological variants that should preserve its basic structure). It is no longer my individual associative memory that which holds the validity clue for the response (still, it does contain a necessary condition: my previous learning, so that I can interpret the conventional message), but the social codes transmitted through this type of associative memory which is learning.

I will now try to state the cognitive ensemble of visual interpretative relations that in the case of [34] Fig. 3 justify my formulation of the following perceptual judgement: “I interpret this image as stimulating a craving for tactile sensation”.

What I see when I know that I see the representation of a texture of hollows and of a subtle weave, I interpret it, with no intention of sharing it but as an emotional and experiential consequence, as stimulating a craving for tactile sensation.

In such cases (I refer to qualitative images or iconic qualsigns), my interpretation, that which allows me to construct the perceptual judgement: “this image stimulates in me a craving for tactile sensation”, comes from my
own history of perceptual emotions and emerges in an abductive process, focusing such craving on the specific visual perception as a “representation of a texture of hollows and of a subtle weave”. And it is here that the differential identity of the qualitative images is brought about. Awareness of this perception, which would be the basic initial one to achieve the construction of the perceptual judgement materializing the interpretation, has no verbalizable support but is based purely on an emotional, effectively experienced sequence. Only much later (perhaps at this now), when I endeavour to rationalize what I have experienced, I can construct statements that should retrieve all what I have already experienced (and, therefore, known) starting from the conscious sensation in Fig. 3 [34]. That is, the perceptual judgement, in the case of qualitative images is not constructed on words. I do not acquire the awareness of knowing what I see as a consequence of knowing to enunciate it, but instead, I know what produces to me what I am seeing, perhaps, without being conscious of what is producing it. I know I have a desire to touch, but I do not know where that desire comes from (until this now, perhaps wholly artificial and brought about by the commitment to try to explain it, attributing it to the perception of “the representation of a texture of hollows and of a subtle weave”).

Abduction, in the case of qualitative images, cannot be proved; it can only be affirmed or denied. And, as it is the result of a construction based on an internal semiosis (on that private language that Wittgenstein referred to, in 1953: p. 243ff, or in that quale that Peirce characterized as unique, untransferable, pure intensity and liveliness without possible verification, in 6.233-6.237), it cannot be communicated either but through uttering a name (“craving for tactile sensation”) of a feeling already undergone, but not of a verifiable phenomenon. Communication of the interpretation of qualitative images has to do with personal honesty in the expression of emotions rather than with any socially explicable prevalence of the actualisation process of such emotions.

[34] Fig. 3 (and its possible related forms: by inclusive denial, non-figurative painting and non-symbolic painting) is a prototypical example. But the qualitative component is in all visual material images of any kind, in that they are all constructed by means of the combinatory of form, texture, color, which, with greater or lesser prominence, accompany the construction of the specific referent. This means that our perception of any visual material image, besides (if corresponding) of making conscious its existential retrieval (what may have of iconic sinsign) or of making conscious (if corresponding) its effectiveness of conventional instruction (or what may have of iconic legisign), proposes an emotional experience (due to what it has necessarily of iconic qualisign), that remains untransferably in the subconscious (and also without entering into it, but aware of its unconscious problems) as the deepest effect of what is being perceived.
14.1 Specificity of the visual

From all the problems arising when we intend to take visual semiotics as a particular semiotics, that is, when we try to identify the rules and specific operations through which the relevant meaning is produced, I will now approach the problem of determining the possibilities of a researcher to know the cognitive processes by which an interpreter interprets a given material visual image. Essentially, we want to know (or to intuite with some basis) what interprets an interpreter when interpreting what we propose to him/her to interpret.

As I said above (in chapters 11 and 12), the interpretation of material visual images supposes prior compliance of the operations of identification and recognition. The sequence of these three operations (they need processual development only for the analysis, since their effective performance is done in parallel, that is, simultaneously) could be shared by the different semiosis (iconic, indexical, symbolic) human mind/brain uses, or when the human being must understand or comprehend what is perceiving. I would refer here exclusively to how these operations are involved in the construction of an interpretation starting from the conscious perception of a material visual image and, more specifically, to how a researcher can know, within given limits, the processes and habits that another individual shares with the members of his/her social sector, in order to recognize (which is not to interpret yet) the given material image he/she is perceiving.

In visual semiotics, the operation of recognition is to relate a given perceptual visual proposal (I constrain it here to the possible perception of a material visual image: photography, drawing, painting, “patch”, graphic symbol, etc.) with a given mnemonic graphic attractor (that is, with a stabilized mental image, available in the memory), and this relationship may be is not coincident with the options in force in that sector of the society, that is, regardless the truth or falsity of such recognition. This relation is the minimum indispensable -although not sufficient- requirement to produce the interpretation of a specific material visual image.

Note that this work is not intending to enter the debate about the recognition of objects (be it images or not), despite its importance and though, in a way, I would make some assertions and deny some others. What I want is to find some methodological resources which would allow to the researcher to identify the mental images available to an interpreter and the relationships he/she establishes between them when performing the task of perceiving a material visual image and trying to recognize it in order to interpret it.

I think of course that the only way to reach the mind of that interpreter is through the discourses (or more comprehensively, the substituent semiosis) produced by him/her.

A research on the characteristics by which a given interpreter performs the specific task of recognition of the material visual image being perceived, require to face and try to solve two problems: (1) to identify the different semiosis available at a given moment and in a given society so to attribute a meaning to that particular material visual image. This implies to accept, as expansion of the minimum requirement mentioned, that the information involved in the interpretation process, comes from and joins with, other semiosis: verbal, behavioral, sensory, etc., stored and available in the memory, aside from the specific visual semiosis of the image being perceived. As apodictic statement, I could say that no semiosis is self-sufficient to produce its interpretation.

In addition, (2) it should be established which would be the specific visual attractor that, along with others of non-visual nature, is related with the material visual image posed for its interpretation. This can be formulated in a general way as the problem of stating and proving a hypothesis as to which would be the particular retrieval process of visual memory that operate a given individual of a given community at a given historical moment in order to project it on the material visual image being perceived and, so, to accomplish its recognition. I think that, from the methodological view, if the problem is effectively solvable, another metatheoretical hypothesis (with respect to the previous and pertinent to general semiotics, as applicable to all and any of the available semiosis) should be proved, stating that the process of meaning production, at a given moment in a given social group, is symmetrical to the process of meaning interpretation, as is produced in that very moment and social group (Peirce, CP: 4.551; Marty, 1990).

That is, this hypothesis implies that a logical-mnemic system of concepts, images and experiences works to produce and interpret a given substituent semiosis.

The difficulty is that we can know this system, available in the mind/brain of a given subject, only by inferences from the analysis of the (various) substituent semiosis effectively produced by that subject. First, we will have to infer the operating logical-mnemic system, since we can effectively describe and verify it and, starting from this inference, we will be able to formulate a hypothesis about how this same logical-mnemic system will intervene to interpret other given substituent semiosis, produced by other subject.

* An initial version in spanish, without graphics, was published in deSignis 4: 139-156.
An example will allow to make evident that this is what occurs in certain operations related to studies in marketing or opinion, whose goal is to make advertisers or politicians to produce messages to be interpreted so that the eventual interpreters would attribute to a given product or social phenomenon the signification -within relatively narrow ranges of variability- which the advertiser or politician wants to be attributed to it. Studies in marketing or opinion are generally seeking (among other things that do not concern us here) that potential users/consumers or voters produce, when replying to certain interviews, responses with built in meanings and values in order to evidence the way they use language to build them. So, advertisers and politicians would be able to apply the same technique to build the text for their own messages. And in this way, they could persuade the users/consumers or voters to accept that the social products or phenomena they are communicating through their advertising or political discourses have effectively the meanings and values they want that the users/consumers accept. More convincing than talking about the same, is to say it in the same way.

All this may be relatively acceptable in the case of the speech, but, How to retrieve the path toward the visual images stored in the interpreter’s memory, provided that the production of graphic images is an unusual task or, at least, much less usual than speech and even writing?

14.2 Usable semiotic operations

The search of data confirming images in the mind/brain is complex and is performed by inferences based on symptoms (in the full sense of this term and also in the colloquial but this needs confirmation) and this causes yet strenuous scientific debates (see for example, Kosslyn, 1996).

I will propose tentatively, in an almost exclusively enumerative way, and necessarily incomplete, some specific operations, most of them widely known, which can be used to verify that it is possible to attempt the retrieval of visual memory, at least in fragmentary form. The challenge will consist in organizing these symptoms, when they refer to (and this is their importance) the mnemonic archive of the images a person or a group of persons have, so that there can be established the regularities justifying the inclusion of the images retrieved in this way, in a specific and differentiable possible semiotic world, justifying then also the consideration of the group as a community linked by the relatively shared use of such images and relationships between them. To my knowledge, this has not been achieved and its achievement could be even questionable for some, although not for me. And that applies in cases where those particular operations can prove their effectiveness in the identification of attractors, for which we must remain very vigilant before giving proven such effectiveness.

I will list, therefore, some possible operations, trying to describe shortly their characteristics and discussing their effectiveness and the validity of the achieved retrieval. Suppose we are trying to actualize as perceivable image, a windmill. It is a question of producing a material visual image, not only of imagining it (as probably occurs in the mind of the reader) and nor of copying it from other image already given. It is about establishing which image of a windmill can materialize each person, producing it or recognizing it through graphic configurations, in such way that the identifiable similarities and differences between them could be evaluated, which is not possible if we have only the inaccessible mental images such as they are secluded in each individual brain. We can use with diverse success (and aware that it can be also with failure): 1) the verbal description of the visual images; 2) the drawings of the images of which they speak; 3) the identification of the attractor from marks; 4) the identification of the attractor from spots; 5) the identification of the attractors involved in ambiguous images; 6) the identification of the attractor from degraded images; 7) the identification of the attractor from lacking parts; 8) the identification of the attractor from changes in perceptual habits; 9) the identification of the attractor from stereotypical image fragments; 10) the identification of the attractor from its parts; 11) to modify “incorrect” material visual images; 12) to modify what is needed to delete the humour of an exclusively graphic joke.

14.3 First operation: verbal description of visual images

The first of the operations mentioned above is to state a verbal description which allows to retrieve the attractor stored in the visual memory of a speaker. If it would be an attempt to retrieve by verbal description the effective visual quality of an image, such as it is stored in the speaker’s memory, I dare to say that the attempt is doomed to failure.

Through someone’s words, a hearer can construct certain mental images of visual nature, which respond to the visual attractors this hearer actualizes when interpreting the words of the speaker. But it is the hearer who construct images from the words, since the speaker has constructed words about certain mental images he/she had while speaking or before beginning to speak, but there is no possibility of establishing the proximity or distance of these images made by the hearer, with the ones the speaker had in mind when speaking about them. It is possible to know how he/she calls them, but this gives them no specific shape, linking them instead to a conceptual stereotype. The individual image about which the speaker is speaking (without showing it) is a social interpretant, which has been organized industriously through history and, in its transient present state, is
absolutely individual and specific. The task of achieving that the subject at study show his/her mental image when is describing it verbally, is not done yet.

When somebody is asked, for example: “What is for you a museum?”, the answer gives us, by the selective actualization (or the replicas) of the signs and possible relations of the language (langue) system, the conceptual components by which this person individualizes and materializes to some extent, the abstract and conceptual aspects from which speaks when speaking of “a museum”. The speaker gives us also the names of the other concepts he/she associate to the name of the concept “museum” and the syntax used to associate them. The words effectively said are basic, as text (only syntax) and as discourse (semantics added), to know the cognitive process used to construct the concept of “museum” by this speaker and, therefore, to infer the logical symbolic system he/she had effectively available in his/her mind/brain. They are basic too for establishing the proximity or distance that his/her way of constructing the concept of “museum” has with respect to the way that other members of his/her community have available to construct it. Each of that cores of proximity are what can be called possible semiotic worlds of the concept of “museum”, being the diverse possible semiotic worlds so identified by the analyst researcher, the set of conceptual systems that the society has in order to define the concept of “museum”.

But if someone is told: “Imagine a windmill. Now, describe it”, the description would generate in the mind/brain of the hearer the images this hearer has available or that which is able to build with the category features or individual identity characteristics that he/she has been storing social, historical and industriously in the associative memory about windmills, and this will be the visual interpretation such hearer would make from the words of the speaker. Yet this does not provide a path to the images existing effectively in the associative memory of the speaker, nor does it ensure that the images of the hearer match with those the speaker had or with those he/she could build with the category features or individual identity characteristics being stored social, historical and industriously which he/she translated into words while describing the imagined windmill, and this will be the verbal interpretation of the mental images of the own speaker. Verbal discourse installs mediating between the hearer interpreter and the images which effectively has the speaker; while speaking, the subject gives an interpretation (that of the speaker and owner of the mental images) but he/she does not actualizes a presence.

The work that permits us to prove this distance is that of Saramago’s El Evangelio según Jesucristo (1998). The situation of production of his discourse (at the time, written) about an image (the Crucifixion, attributed to Dürer, without being Saramago committed with this), in which the producer (Saramago) has the image before him and aims to turn it into words, is symmetrical with the situation of interpretation of that discourse (now, read), in which the interpreter has before him/her the same image and aims to see it as the writing indicates to him/her. The literary work consists in allowing to differentiate what Saramago is interpreting when saying the images he sees from the attractors such images actualize in his associative memory, from what we would build if we would have to state verbally what we see in the same image. The adventure, as readers, is to follow the other associations proposed by the writer (but I reproduce here just the first of the nine pages he devotes to describe this image in his work), contrasting them and enjoying the resulting distance, with our own associations, that which we interpret when seeing the same image. In the case of a person who tells us what he/she has dreamed or imagined, the symmetry is contrasting with that of the image-text of Saramago. We have but one discourse: the verbal statement of the speaker and, in principle, no image. We have access to the images of the speaker only in the linguistic form the speaker gives them, referring the words to the visual attractors available in the associative memory; as hearers, we have his/her verbal text and, when referring his/her linguistic expressions to our own associative memory, we build the images which actualize for us his/her statement. We have no possibility of contrasting that what we build in our imagination with that which the speaker had available when stating it verbally for us, but, in the same way as while reading Saramago we note the difference between the possible interpretations of the same image -the one he saw when writing and we see when reading, and this is the literary- we are not able to note the difference when someone speaks about mental images, because we do not share the same visual referent. Nevertheless, the Saramago case does not prove the difference between the mental images from which starts the speaker and those in that we fall when hearing to him.
So far, the failure of this first operation: we can not access the mental visual images of someone with the verbal description that he/she makes of them.

14.4 Second operation: drawing the images about which is spoken

The second operation of the researcher interested in exploring the mental images of a given person, is to ask him/her to draw an image; here, “Imagine a windmill. Now, draw it”.

Just as the verbal description is the specific and appropriate operation for the retrieval of the symbolic concepts a person at study has in the mind/brain and the process by which he/she builds them, to draw is the specific and appropriate operation for the retrieval of the visual images a given person has in the mind/brain and the process by which he/she builds them.

The request to draw a certain image is a synthetic form of expressing the need of the researcher that the person whose visual attractors are being studied, represent them graphically, in any instance of the gradient from lineal drawing to painting, and even in sculpture. The most habitual situation is to give him/her a paper and a pencil and ask him/her to draw a windmill, if the researcher wants to study the images of windmills in the head.

If the person accepts the request and draws the image, its configuration, as a result of his/her task of drawing, is a basic datum to establish what he/she imagined when asked to draw a windmill or how would he/she accept the request or what should he/she modify on the visual attractor stored, to interpret as windmill an image proposed to his/her perception. That is, it would be possible for the researcher, to infer from the image or images produced, the system of graphic representation used by that person in the mental construction of his/her imagery (or ensemble of images available or which can be produced mentally), in order to contrast such imagery with the perceptions proposed to him/her voluntary or occasionally and so to be able to infer the interpretation he/she will attribute to these.

This is not the time to deploy the various aspects of a graphical analytics (that, however, is the basic task visual semiotics has ahead). That is, to make in an adequate way the task being suggested, we need to have available a repertoire of articulations which explain and organize the configuration at study, in order to evaluate the construction characteristics of the visual image made by the subject. I do not intend to enumerate them exhaustively or describe them grounded and adequately. But I mention that, for instance, if it is a figurative image, the researching analyst should be able to answer the following questions, among others, about the specific image the subject at study (about whom we want to know which windmill image he/she has in the visual memory) is producing, and with which the researching-analyst would be able to infer the graphic representation system available to the subject at study: how the marks (maximum graphic surface that has not activated an attractor yet) are organized in attractors; how the attractors (minimum graphic surface that appears as having
visual identity) are organized according to axes; how the axes (the combination of the inclinations linking a given set of attractors) are organized in occlusion contours; and how the occlusion contours (the perception of a discontinuity like signal of deepness) are organized in 3D models, according to which the subject at study recognizes the represented objects (how much debt we have with the Grouppe μ, 1992; and with Marr, 1982!). Such are some of the minimum elements supporting the possibility of inferring a given mental system from a graphic representation, that I have trying to outline in the texts that complete this chapter.

“I do not know to draw” is the answer which threatens to finish the task, despite being this admitted as specific and appropriate to retrieve the visual quality of given images. The possibility of such answer is an unfortunate consequence of the cultural moment we live in, since it is supposed that “to know how to draw, is to be born with this ability”.

Of course, not every writer is Borges, but to know how to write one does not need to have born with any particular ability. Maybe we can say that to be an artist or a writer, some innate ability is needed; but I rather think that is needed work as well as social opportunity, and what is innate is the pleasure in doing that work. All of us can write if we are taught to, but only some will be writers; all of us can draw if we are taught to, but only some will be artists (and something like this can be said about tone and musical ear). That is, the path to individual visual memory retrieval by drawing is a skill that we all share, although it is true that we can not use it (or it would embarrass us) if we were not taught to draw. At lower levels of education is as important teaching to draw as teaching to write. Only when facing an image (communication by graphic images, that is, by video, has currently and in may fields much more widespread effect that by symbolic images, that is, by writing) the expression, trivial and absurd on the other hand, “a picture is worth a thousand words” makes sense. Neither one nor a thousand words can substitute what can be interpreted from an image perception; neither one nor a thousand images can substitute what can be interpreted from a phrase or an uttering. In either case it is another kind of interpretation and consequently, another significative content (but nevertheless, they could be concurrent). There are two proposals which I leave by now in its apodictic version, to which I referred in several occasions and I will continue working on them: 1) each semiosis (iconic, indexical or symbolic) has its specific significative ability, which is not substitutable by another; 2) no semiosis is self-sufficient, since every semiosis needs other/s to produce and interpret its specific meaning.

14.5 Third operation: to identify an attractor from the marks

I continue going over some operations that could lead to infer the presence of given visual images in someone’s memory. This exploration is always based on the supposed relation between interpretation and production. The third possible operation listed above is: to propose to a subject the identification of a windmill as attractor, from marks. Because the term “mark” as I am using it here and in another writings (Magariños de Morentín, 1999a: 435) has a strong technical component, I clarify that I understand by “mark” the largest extension of a graph that is not yet recognizable, since it does not actualize an attractor, or (according to Grouppe μ, 1992: 151), those that are defined by their lack of relation with a type.

When I start to draw a picture of something, it does not immediately arise what it is, in the imagination of an eventual interpreter who observes my task. Moreover, often the first shape the interpreter build (and I become aware of it because the interpreter names it: “a slice of watermelon”, “a boat”, “a mouth”, “a glass”, etc.), adding to it imaginary features which I have not yet drawn, is not the one I intended to do, or even I can cheat and change the picture, to draw a shape, maybe from the available one, different than that the interpreter has named.

Let we establish the roles played in this semiotic situation. I am working progressively on a drawing according to the availability of visual images I have in memory. The final image I have in memory (or those I have been substituting consecutively as it was possible starting from what I have drawn partial and effectively) is what I called “attractor”. The image I have partially and effectively drawn, that is not yet necessarily an attractor, is what I called “mark”.

[37] Mark 1

Note that when I change the final destination of the representation built by my drawing, what I am doing is to show that the intended attractor, that was named by the interpreter with anticipation, can be a mere mark of another attractor. As the producer of my drawing, I am obviously actualizing images from my visual memory. But the object at study in this situation is not my mental imagery, but that of the eventual interpreter.
So, when I ask the interpreter to identify a specific image in the picture I am drawing and to say what he/she has identified, I am provoking an externalization of the task of this interpreter, allowing the identification of some of the mental images he/she has in visual memory, and this is the aim of the operation.

Somehow, I am establishing the interpreter as producer of the same image that I am drawing, but only I know what is that image whilst he/she discovers it. It is like when you are scribbling with a pen on a paper and, suddenly, you recognize a visual image you had no intention to produce, but whose features made you to identify it in the scribble. The interpreter in this situation is a substitute producer who takes as who takes as their own, my task of drawing. This is why Peirce affirms the existence of two quasi-minds, at the same time producer and interpreter, in every communication situation (4.551). I found this Peircean notion retrieved by Marty (1990), in a fragment (Cap. 2, Sec. 5: “Interpretation vs Production: la communication”) of his book L'Algèbre des Signes.

In any case, the operation of retrieving the attractor from a mark, is effective to infer in the visual memory of the subject the presence of a given image or a sequence of given images, from the visual stimulus proposed. For more that appeals to psychologists the possibility and richness of interpretations which may arise from the selected option, I will keep the search in in a strictly semiotic field, that is, as an appropriate operation for the identification of the effective contents of visual memory.

[38] Attractors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

14.6 Fourth operation: to identify an attractor from spots

This operation consists in proposing to the subject the identification of a windmill or of any other image at study as attractor, from “spots”, either in Rorschach plates or in some artistic “iconic qualisigns”, as non-figurative material visual images and even, by the peaceful entertainment of discovering figures in the maze of the passing clouds.

Also here I will let aside, very respectfully, the psychological value that could have the choice of one or another representation built by the interpreter from the arbitrary, symmetrical, chromatic or non chromatic forms, which are the visual support of the “Rorschach test” (Klopf and Davidson, 1966). Their semiotic value consists in the retrieval of the mental activity of identification performed by the interpreter, as evidenced when he/her delimits certain zones of the plate and marks them as shaping the image whose presence is affirming. Provided that the visual proposal of Rorschach plates is not univocal, insofar each of them permits more than one figurative representation, the identification of that limits and, eventually, of some elements inside the delimited figure, is an individual task of the subject who, externalizing the aspects constituting the form by pointing them on the plate, permits to the researcher the retrieval of the form of the mental image the interpreter is actualizing among many other possible forms (whose possibility has been proven by the choice of other subjects). These other forms are not actualized because they are not in his/her visual memory or because they are not available.
The same kind of inference can be done starting from abstract and/or non figurative painting. The task is again to ask the subject to recognize, by pointing or marking on the spot, the borders of a given figure and, if identifiable, to mark an inside feature. Psychology has produced the Rorschach sequence in order to reinterpret an interpretation, but in the case of the iconic-qualisigns, philosophy intervenes in order to infer the existence of not transferable subjective experiences, through their features in aesthetic experience, either in the reworking of the topics of “qualia” (Peirce: 6.222-6.237; Dennett, 1995; García-Carpintero, 1996), or in the perspective of Wittgenstein’s “private languages” (1953: 243ff). I have explored synthetically both aspects, as “private semiosis” (Magariños de Morentin, 2000a).

I propose ultimately, and in this case, as effective for the retrieval of visual memory, the operation of marking the limits that identify a visual figurative image and of pointing some feature/s such individualize the image inside amorphous visual proposals. I start from the assumption that, to be able to make such identification, the interpreter actualizes the appropriate attractor, available in his/her visual memory, as is shown by the fact that it is a given figure and not another, what he/she “sees” in the spot. So, his/her internal interpretative task is made evident by the production of his/her external delimiting task, repeating so the Peircean symmetry of interpretation and production. That is why it is not sufficient to say that he/she sees “the head of a goat”. Semiotically, he/she should point the borders and characteristics, in order to establish what specific goat head is it about.

14.7 Five new operations: to identify an attractor from damaged images

While the two previous operations propose to anticipate or shape a non existing image as not completed (in the third case only were available marks), or as started from an amorphous perception (in the fourth case was available only a spot), the five following operations will propose to the interpreter the actualization of an attractor from diverse situations in which the image is already built in the perceptual proposal presented, but it appears affected by some kind of deterioration. The question is to make him/her work in order to externalize the image available in the memory.

The fifth operation is to propose an ambiguous image: in a single figure could be represented two or more objects, and the interpreter should point to the borders or to the identifying features or to the disposition of one image and, eventually (if he/she sees them) to those which corresponds to the other image. The productive task
of highlighting a profile, choosing possible limits, or naming parts which would have different functions in the figures, allows the researcher to infer a pre-existing image in the mind/brain of the interpreter.

The sixth operation proposes the reconstruction and identification from *a degraded image*: something is represented with an absolutely irrelevant, inappropriate and insufficient material and its possibility of identification is kept by the presence of axes, that is, minimal directional and structural features. It is the case of animals (giraffes, horses, ostriches, cats, etc.) built with pipe cleaners ([42], from Marr, 1982: 299). Their recognition requires the interpreter to have in his/her visual memory a sufficiently stable image, to be able to continue identifying it although it is reduced to its most elementary synthesis.

A seventh operation is to show *the absence of a given image*, caused in a complex perceptual ensemble, by eliminating one of its constituent parts, which is easily deducible from its habitual presence in configurations similar to that shown to the interpreter. As actualized presence, this is often named an “occluding surface”. Since the image removed only shows its edges, appearing as a hole with an arbitrary form, virtual handling of the image available in visual memory is needed, by turning and rotation, so to make it match with the lack effectively shown.

It is known that our interpretation of volumes, according to the shadows they project, follows some automatism, in a way phylogenetic (the supposition is that it is sunlight), which implies an illumination from the height, that is, from the top of the image (Ernst, 1992: 28). Changing this direction of the light leads to rearrange the perceived, so that it can be recognized in that new configuration. Such the intervention of the eighth operation,
[43], which require the interpreter reconstruct the perceived, “in the light” of the new illumination as image modified by disturbance of perceptual habits. Generally, it would be sufficient to ask him/her which are the inbound and the outbound parts, since the transforming of concavities in convexities is crucial for the recognition of the image being perceived, that is, to correlate the image seen with its symmetrical reverse, stored in visual memory.


And the last: the ninth operation is to display an ensemble of the stereotyped fragments of a known but not individualized form, until achieving its individualization in order to differentiate it from any other similar form. This is the case of the correspondence between the “identikit”, production of images through an absent object (IDK, 2000); the most common use of these techniques by the police: an absent face made to correspond to the image effectively existent in the mind of a subject, which allows to affirm or to reject such correspondence.

[45] Identikit (DC2007).
14.8 Tenth operation: to identify an attractor from the studies on visual agnosia

Indeed, the study of Visual Agnosia (Farah, 1995) or damage of high visual processes necessary for the recognition of objects, gives us important information about the semiotic operations involved in attributing signification to visual images, that is, in their interpretation.

This is why the 10th semiotic operation I propose, starts from the assumption I stated above and establishes that the way to infer the presence of images in visual memory will be to offer to the subject’s perception, images already damaged in their perceivable material characteristics, so he/she must resort to the image, that is, the attractor, filed in visual memory, supposedly intact.

If the chosen subject suffered from some kind of visual agnosia, he/she would not be able to retrieve such attractor; but our aim is not to formulate a diagnosis, so we will have to propose the task to another subject who has not this illness, without prejudice to recommend to the former, to consult a neurologist. That is, the material visual image proposed to the perception of the subject should have the same configuration as the organization of such perception in the mind/brain of a patient with some kind of visual agnosia. If the subject is not ill, then he/she could organize such perception in a visually significative whole, which is the image or attractor whose presence in visual memory we are trying to infer.

[46] Farah, 1995, 1 and 2

I will comment some of the more expressive known cases of visual agnosia, relevant to our specific aim.

One of the basic problems we resolve in health, without even being aware of its existence as problem, is the integration of parts into a whole. This whole can be that of the parts of a given perceptual entity (the category features which identify an object or a person) or that of the parts of a complex scene (the characteristics of spatial localization consisting in a number of entities) (Farah, 1995: 35-47). The proposed image must permit either to infer if the subject at study can redirect the perception of the fragments of the entity or scene represented in the material visual image proposed to him/her, to the whole consisting in the mental visual image or the attractor of some entity or scene stored in the visual memory and to recognize which would be this, being or not coincident with the one the researcher wanted to produce. A healthy person can do it, unless he/she lacks of the necessary visual experience to be able to store it in his/her visual memory.

This task is similar to assembling a puzzle, especially when is made without a guide, that is, to associate the apparently incoherent surfaces of a series of cubes or of irregular cuts of shapes that assemble, in order to build a figure or scene; such figure or scene must preexist in the visual memory of the player (that is why I added “without a guide”) so that be recognized while is produced and organized. Visual agnosia situation is that in which the patient perceives a figure or scene as the scrambled pieces of the unassembled puzzle; he/she identifies each of them but fails to reconstruct the figure or scene that would give visual sense to the whole: hence the puzzle can be assembled only by those who have no visual agnosia and store in their visual memory the image of that figure or scene.
The mnemonic image must not be static. Motion is also taken into account in the study of agnosia, leading to a type of visual agnosia called “associative” (Farah, 1995: 57-80). Facing the image of a mechanism (a windmill, a device for making cigars, the Voyager, etc.), the subject can be asked: “How does it work?” The answer, involving generally the verbal, the graphic and the gestural, will permit to infer the sequence of transforming images the subject stores in his/her visual memory (or in his/her imagination, as a possible reworking from that memory), unless he/she suffers from associative visual agnosia, in which case we must do as I said before: take another subject and recommend a neurologist to the first one (see chapter 20).

[48] Iconopoiesis 1 - “¿How to use this?” Mijksenaar & Westendorp (1999)

This dynamic aspect of the images stored in visual memory, has led also to the so called “pragmatic anaphora”, in which the anaphoric use of the pronoun has been substituted by the anaphoric use of the gesture and, consequently, they also require the preexistence of given mental visual images about the movement or transformation occurred inherent to given behaviours, so to give an answer to (and even to understand) the typical questions of this kind of anaphora.

Examples of pragmatic anaphora:

“a. Your coat is here (pointing) and your hat is there (pointing)
   He went thataway (pointing)
b. Can you do that? (pointing)
   Can you do this (demonstrating)
c. That (pointing) had better not happen again around here
d. You shuffle cards so (demonstrating)
e. The fish that got away was this (demonstrating) long.

...the conceptual structure must contain constituents whose basic characteristics are: [thing], [place], [direction], [action], [event], [mode], [quantity]” (Jackendoff, 1983: 49 and 50)

I have outlined here so far this 10th semiotic operation of retrieval of mental visual images inferred from the proposed stimuli, as was suggested by visual agnosia and, as a related expansion, by pragmatic anaphora.

[48 bis] Iconopoiesis 2 - “So” Mijksenaar & Westendorp (1999)
14.9 Eleventh operation: to identify an attractor modifying supposedly incorrect images

The 11th operation proposes to an interpreter to observe a sheet with a drawing, for example, some of the well known of Piranesi, Escher, del Prete, Magritte, Duchamp, Fukuda, Ernst, etc. He/she was asked to indicate what has to be transformed so to “correct” the image, to represent a possible object or configuration.

This restates the issue of whether images can lie. Its development, regarded from the visual, converges toward the point in which the problem of truth and falsity in verbal language, finds the explanation, since it is not the semiotic divergence between the visual and the verbal, but the uniqueness of treatment of the lie. In verbal language can be affirmed only one of these alternatives if taken for absolutely valid, scientifically or dogmatically (and Peirce would say that in both cases it would be dogmatically) another verbal discourse, external (as different) to that whose truth or falsity is discussed. So the last will be true if it does not contradict that which has been established as valid and it will be false in the opposite case. The truth or falsity of verbal discourse is not opposed to the modes of existence, but to the modes of speaking about existence which are established as valid for this finality.

The images of the mentioned authors are usually called “optical illusions”, which is not the same as to consider them lies. However, I think that it is precisely about lies and not optical illusions, since the drawings were done to be seen as they are. In this sense, the interpreter sees correct perceptions of the visual proposal which represents the world in an incorrect way or lying.

They would be optical illusions if they were false or distorted perceptions of objects and configurations of the world, and not representations of it. That is, an architect can create an optical illusion when building his/her work, as it is also optical illusion the gigantic size of the moon when it leans on the horizon. However, the images can be used as optical illusions when they seem to replace the existence of non-existent objects and configurations, as in the case of the “trompe l’oeil”. And also the wall in which seems to open a window showing a given landscape, which is in fact the image of a window and a landscape, or the wall showing an apparent arc toward another part of the town, but which is a fictitious, merely visual, access. But when they are proposed as representing objects or configurations, they do not create an optical illusion but instead possibly they lie, as in the cases in which they show as possible, in the bidimensionality of graphic image, forms or relations tridimensionally impossible, at least from a strictly euclidian geometry, that is able to give account of phylogenetic learning. And we have already found the other discourse, the euclidian, external to the one we are evaluating as true or false, and it will be essential to determine its lie.

Therefore, at asking someone to point out where should be corrected the image brought to his/her perception, it is assumed that he/she has in memory a visual image for the object, which corresponds to his/her previous perception of it, according to how it was learned. And this is the image that this operation attempts to retrieve.

14.10 Twelfth operation: to destroy visual humor

It is about images that build an exclusively visual humor. Graphic humor, in a broad sense, involve proposals that combine the word and the drawing and others containing only drawings. Even among the ones combining words and drawings, there are cases in which humor is built exclusively with words and the drawing merely accompanies the situation or scene in which something humorous is said, and there are other cases in which words and drawing complement each other, without being possible arising humor with only one of them.

This operation, aimed to explore the interpreter’s visual memory, consists in the interpreter pointing out and modifying any part or parts of the humorous image, destroying the humorous effect of its original form. This would indicate that the interpreter (who, by this operation, becomes at the same time, an image producer) has effectively the image he/she is building as replacement of the graphic proposal perceived.
The humor -graphic or verbal, or constructed with whatever other semiosis-, require the association of two isotopies which usually are not joined in social practice or, at least, they are not connected in the point in which verbal narration or graphic configuration are. Nevertheless, both isotopies must contain a point, may be merely visual, but not semantic, in which they are close, and humor arises in the resemantization and homogenization of that visual similarity of the graphic fragments shared by both isotopies. So, the interpreter-producer’s task is to identify such point and dissociate the involved isotopies. Actually, the subject retrieves two images from the visual memory: that which correspond to each of the isotopies converging in the production of humor.

See, for example, a very simple graphic humor sequence by Quino [51]. A man approaches the subway entrance, he begins to walk down stairs and keep descending, he walks down stairs by straight stairs, by turning stairs, he walks down by stairs connecting with others, by which he continues descending, until he reach, in the last image, a skyscraper’s high balcony, and so he finally arrived.

[51] Quino II (1999)

The staircase is the connector of isotopies, which, in this case correspond, on the one hand, to the visual representation of the activity of walking up and, on the other hand, to the visual representation of walking down; a ladder would be appropriate too. The interpreter (me, seeing the sequence) should have available an image of the kind of places to which is possible to arrive walking down and another for the kind of places to which is possible to arrive walking up. This interpreter is transformed in producer, since he/she has to actualize both images to be able to enter in the game Quino proposes; the humor is to make that, showing a man who is steadily walking downwards, it ends up showing the same man arriving where is only possible if walking upwards.

Two notes about this example: on the one hand, the similarity with some games of Escher about the bidimensional, when he represents a waterfall that are tumbling on the same level that is arising, without being justified the rise which later allows the spill of the waterfall. That is, Quino too is playing with the absurd in his representation of tridimensionality; maybe he was inspired in Escher.

The second note refers to the absurdity of trying to reconstruct in words the signification effect produced by visual images. I mentioned something of this above. It is almost impossible to substitute here the lack of images by their description; they become rather their explanation, generally impoverishing the meaning they construct visually with such power. And, as I have said before, my words generate in the mind of the reader, images that I can not infer, nor retrieve. As to the readers, they can not infer nor retrieve the images from that I start to give verbal account of them (unless my description remind them to have seen the image about which I spoke and they superimpose it on my words). They are universes of images isolated one from the other, without being a bridge of words able to put them together, the bridge, instead, generate other images in an indefinite sequence (one of the realizations of the endless Peircean semiosis).

14.11 The unfinished

There are something more that I have to bring back. These twelve operations allow us, if they succeed, to infer the images someone store in visual memory. But this inference retrieves them one by one or each of them in its isolated virtual and possible existence. What is still not resolved is how to know the visual interpretation system of the interpreter at study and also the accesses to the visual interpretation system of his/her community.
And here, I have to note that, from my point of view, I believe that this system does not exist, strictly speaking, and that the term is only appropriate when referring to symbolic entities whose interaction rules identify each element from the others, as in the case of the language (langue) system established by Saussure. I think that between the series of images an interpreter stores available in the visual memory is not established a system, but a set of dependency relationships of contiguity and simultaneity, along with transformation and integration possibilities with other semiotic systems that a given subject and a given society at a given historical time, have available. But this is another big issue that I will try on another occasion.
15 Visual semantics of symbolic images

15.1 Basic questions and the three semiotics

In my last work on visual semiotics (Magariños, 2002b, in press), I referred to the need of outlining some operations that could support the necessary inferences for the retrieval of the visual images effectively contained in the visual memory of a given subject. I now will share my attempt to find the connections, which are materially shaped inside one and the same specific material visual image, and can be cognitively established from other images and from the signs of other semiosis, which allow to infer an explanation about how that subject interprets a given image in its corresponding social and historical context.

The cognitive and calculative similarity between this task and the recognition of objects and faces (for example, Ullman, 1996), will arise often inevitably. So, we have to take into account and be aware of this conceptual proximity, avoiding the tendentious bias it could give to the appropriate building of a specific visual semantics for a visual semiotics. But what in this field has been achieved should not be wasted, especially the possibilities of developing computer programs which produce results similar to those derived from reasoning and from hypotheses or, even, if such epistemological range is accepted, from their justification.

Much has been done on this topic and with due respect to those who have made it (Klinkenberg, 1985; Sonesson, 1989; Saint-Martin, 1990; Floch, 1991; Santaella & Nöth, 1998; among others), I will explore other ways, which continue, parallel or contradict theirs. Broadly speaking, there are three basic questions which need an appropriate and well grounded answer.

1) What are the steps followed effectively to produce the meaning of a visual image, and what are the steps to follow in the analysis of the possible ways of producing the meaning of a visual image? Do this steps correspond each other?

2) What is the meaning of “the meaning of a visual image” (without going back to the classic work of Ogden & Richards, 1923)? Or, What is the possible meaning of a visual image? and, moreover, How this meaning varies according to whether the visual images are plastic, figurative or symbolic? Perhaps it means to interpret it, but then:

3) What is the meaning of “to interpret a visual image”? Perhaps to know what it represents as possible knowledge of the world, that is, of social phenomena, that is, of those which are built or modified by visual images, that is, to know how a given visual image is building, affirming or modifying my (or whatever interpreter’s) knowledge of the world?

These questions, finally, could be summarized in this: What, how, and why, images signify? whose answer, if it should go beyond common sense, is quite complex. In order to work on it, I follow, as I do generally in my work, a cognitive and Peircean approach.

The current version of the cognitive approach, or as Rastier (1991) says, “of cognitive research”, implies to reflect and essay explanations which correspond to (1) advancements in the knowledge of visual image processing in human mind/brain (Kosslyn, 1996) and (2) the possibility of its implementation in artificial intelligence/robotics programs (Thagard, 1993), that show the operativity of such explanations.

The Peircean approach allowed me to differentiate, in the problematic space of visual semiotics, three objects of knowledge, relatively independent, which require different answers: 1) semiotics of purely qualitative or plastic visual images; 2) semiotics of predominantly figurative visual images; and 3) semiotics of specifically symbolic visual images.

According to my working hypothesis, the knowledge and explanation of production and interpretation procedures of each of those objects, can not be done in an homogeneous joint treatment, since it will lead to equivocals and disputes originated by using the same reasoning on three very different things. I began this differential analysis in my study “La(s) Semióticas(s) de la Imagen Visual” (Magariños de Morentin, 2001). However, I have not reached more than to the aspects of identification and recognition; the aspects of interpretation, that is, semantics, have little more than a tentative and elementary development. This is the work I intend to deepen here, at least as to the symbolic images.

In order to have available the specific empirical referents, I have added to this text three images corresponding respectively to the plastic images or “iconic qualisigns” (52) Fig. 1), figurative images or “iconic sinsigns” (53) Fig. 2) and symbolic images or “iconic legisigns” (54) Fig. 3). I will show how they will gradually acquire their specific meaning, in the progress of the task of their interpretation.
I think it is evident the difference of the cognitive operations working in order to realize that what is being perceived: a proposal of an abstract perception of just form, color and texture (plastic image), a photo of Frida Kahlo (figurative image), a group of indications of possible behaviors, suggested or prohibited (symbolic image).

In all three cases is involved the search of an attractor in visual memory, which permits to organize the data provided by the perception, so that the built image can be recognized. The plastic image attractor will be retrieved projecting the subconscious residue of experiences about the perception of qualities the interpreter possesses on the data provided by the perception. The figurative image attractor will be retrieved projecting information about forms of the world possessed by the interpreter on the data provided by the perception. The symbolic image attractor will be retrieved projecting the knowledge of the graphic systems of enunciation possessed by the interpreter on the data provided by the perception.

This involves the exploration and application of qualitative experience and/or formal information and/or systemic knowledge, coming in each case from specific mnemonic domains, which use purely differential cognitive processing operations to produce the interpretation of the images being perceived.

The formation of these three groups is a theoretical and experimental approach, which I consider is necessary to the appropriate study of visual images semantics. As often happens in semiotics, not only is required the consideration of different semantics for each of these three groups, but also it must be taken into account that generally, except in special cases, they are predominance, so each image after being classified in a group (plastic, figurative or symbolic) will show to perception, the features belonging to the others.
15.2 What is shown and how is it shown

Every semantic study require to give account of, at least, two basic aspects, which are stated in different terms depending on which semiosis is at study.

1. If it is verbal semiosis, then it should be established (A) of what is spoken and (B) how is it said.

2. If it is visual semiosis, then it should be established (A) what is shown and (B) how is it shown.

3. If it is indexical semiosis, then it should be established (A) what is indicated (B) how is it indicated.

Since the focus of attention, this time, is visual semantics, I have the luck of not having to deal with the endless topic of verbal semantics, of which so much has been written and, fortunately, is still being written, nor with that of indexical semantics, to which however I hope to devote myself soon, as there is little that is written and so there is much to write about it (see an outline in Magaríños de Morentin, 2002a).

Regardless of what happens in the cases of verbal and indexical semantics (that is to say, neither in those fields things are so simple and clear as the 1 and 3 enunciates seem to establish), in that of visual semantics, the two basic aspects I mentioned, are constructed in a different way, depending on the kind of visual semiosis: consisting in qualitative or plastic images, or in figurative images, or in symbolic images.

(I) Regarding figurative images (Fig. 2):

What is shown, when the perceptual proposal consists in figurative images, it is the form with which the objects of the world are identified in the mind/brain.

How is it shown, in the same case of the figurative images, it results from the construction of a possible way of existing, either inwards or outwards the image.

It can be seen as an example, that in the case of Fig. 2:

It is shown the form with which the mind/brain identifies in our culture a woman (because it actualizes the attractor that the socially constructed memory attributes to the form of a woman) and, depending on the richness of the visual information of the viewer, will identify (without needing to read the title of the image) that woman as a given woman called Frida Kahlo (from whose specific form will also have the appropriate attractor). In case of lacking of this attractor, he/she would build it for the first time (or would fix it) associating the two involved semiotics: the symbolic, which, by the written text, links a name with that image, and the figurative, which attributes an image to that name. Also will be linked (if it were not previously) the image with the name of the photographer and, if the interpreter does not know who was Frida Kahlo, the name would remain as a mere identification of someone, until other semiotics, figurative, symbolic and plastic joined, link the name to a work, to a time, to another characters, etc.

How it is shown is the configuration of a possible way of existing that acquires the image of a woman (Frida Kahlo), as a result of the figurative representation of gestures and attitudes, costume and chromatism, and as well by contrast and assimilation with the motives and chromatism of the background. As to this enunciation of components and minimal operations to build the semantic analysis of a visual image, I am interested in achieving a relatively formalizable program which exclude subjective judgments more or less imponderable.

I can ground my formulation that the three visual semiotics (figurative, symbolic and plastic) are three different fields of knowledge since they are built from different mental operations, on the inapplicability of what I said above about figurative images, if I would apply it to begin the explanation of the semantic process required to interpret symbolic and plastic images.

I am not working yet on this analysis as applied to those two key aspects of the other images (symbolic and plastic: (A) what is shown and (B) how it is shown), aspects that I will progressively deepen. For the moment, I will make a short scheme of the answers that may correspond to both questions in each of the other two variants of visual semiotics.

(II) Regarding symbolic images (Fig. 3):

The answer to the question of what is shown, can no more be “the form with which are identified in the mind/brain the objects of the world”, but, as we shall see soon, in the case of symbolic images what is shown will be the replicas of the graphic types of a figurative code intended to instruct, forbid or suggest, given behaviors. Nothing farther from the operations that are activated to interpret the perceptual proposal which allow the actualization of the mnemonic image (the attractor) of Frida Kahlo.

Nor the answer to the question of how it is shown, stated before that very symbolic image, can be “to build the configuration of a possible way of existing, which acquire the form of a woman (Frida Kahlo) as a result of the figurative representation of gestures and attitudes, costume and chromatism ...” etc., which belongs to the figurative images, but instead, as we shall see soon, the answer to the question about the way of showing each
replica of a graphic type, in the case of symbolic images, is to identify them as a class (see Ullman, 1996; p. 163) and not as individual and to associate them to other replica/s of graphic types, being this association conventionally encoded in order to be interpreted as a given instruction about a given behavior.

(III) Regarding qualitative or plastic images (Fig. 1):

The answer to the question about what is shown in this image can not be “the form with which are identified in the mind/brain the objects of the world”, which belongs to the figurative images, nor, obviously “in the replicas of the graphic types of a figurative code intended to instruct, forbid or suggest, given behaviors” as is the case of the symbolic images, but instead, what is shown in the case of plastic images, are residues of personal experiences about the perception of visual qualities (“qualia”).

Besides, the way of showing, specific of plastic images, can not be “to build the configuration of a possible way of existing, that acquires the form of a woman (Frida Kahlo) as a result of the figurative representation of gestures and attitudes, costume and chromatism...” etc., that belong to figurative images, nor the association process of graphic types replicas that by convention instruct, forbid or suggest given behaviors, as is the case in symbolic images, but instead, the answer to the question about the way of showing such residues of personal experiences about the perception of visual qualities, that are specific of plastic images, will be shaped in a way that they keep and actualize the retrieval of that personal non-conscious experiences.

In summary, what is interpreted as the form of the objects of the world in figurative images, is not related with what is interpreted as replicas of graphic types in symbolic images, nor with what is interpreted as residues of sensory experiences, in the case of plastic images.

Besides, what is interpreted as the configuration of a way of existing in figurative images, is not related with what is interpreted as the instruction about a behavior, that is suggested or forbidden in symbolic images, nor with what is interpreted as configurations intended to the retrieval of sensory experiences, perceptual and visual, non-conscious.

For the moment just one more note: there are too many words here and, although verbal semiosis function is to explain the production and interpretation processes of the remaining semiosis, I have the feeling that it also interferes with that explanation with its burden of verbalization or, as the French say, of “langagerie”, or with the danger of an irreflexive contamination of syntactic structures as Wittgenstein (1953) said, and therefore, all this (and a large part of what follows) should be researched, as to the possibility of explaining it, at least complementarily, with and from, images.

15.3 What symbolic images show and how they show it

Having outlined the more basic and elementary features of visual semantics in the polar cases of visual images: figurative, symbolic and plastic, let us now begin to deepen the specific semantic problems of each of them. I consider analytically more simple to explore in this work the semantic universe constructed through symbolic images, beginning with (1) what is shown and (2) how it is shown.

15.3.1 What symbolic images show

What is shown when the perceptual proposal consists of symbolic images, are replicas of graphic signs. By saying that what is shown are “the replicas” I follow the Peircean observation on the virtual character -as types- of the signs in the system they belong to. In the system each sign is unique, non perceivable, just thinkable; what we see in the configuration when the sign is activated (that is, when it passes from being a virtuality, i.e., a possibility, to be an existent, i.e., when accessing to its actuality), is a replica of that sign (Peirce, 2.261).

What interests here is that graphic signs articulate in a system, and this does not occur with the signs corresponding to figurative images, nor with those corresponding to plastic images, which (both of them) have mental attractors in the long term memory registry of visual images. I will emphasize with these observations, that the ensemble of these attractors (the qualitative or plastic and the figurative) have no system structure, due to their mode of being stored in memory, but instead, they have what we could tentatively call a “dynamic registry”, as component of the imaginary, correlated with what is usually referred to as the continuous character of figurative images and as the experiential character of plastic images. Therefore, systemic characteristics specific of graphic signs, are those appropriate to symbols and I mean always by “symbol”, following Peirce, the result of a social agreement (C. P 2.249).

1 The sense of this expression, “interpreter interpretant”, can be understood from the Peircean correlation with those of “producer interpretant” and “communicative interpretant”. But doubting about the conceptual autonomy of the last, I used fruitfully the other two variants of the interpretant (see Marty, 1990 and Magariños de Morentin, 2002a: ap. 13).
So, graphic signs, as symbolic images, can deny, affirm conditionally, identify the consequent of a given antecedent, recommend, demand, forbid a given behavior, be false or true, be good or bad formed expressions, and possess the effectiveness and the limits of the “speech acts” (which now should be explored as “graphic acts”; see also 15.9). A system of graphic signs would be able hardly to actualize all these possibilities; some systems would actualize some of them, while a few systems would actualize most of them. Symbolic images are aimed to produce in the interpreter interpretant some of these semantic effects or the like.

On the contrary, it is enough to look at the image of Fig. 2 to understand that Frida Kahlo’s image could not comply with any of these possibilities; this example aims to prove that figurative images have a demonstration capability as minimal semantic effectiveness, different from symbolic images. Figurative images show in order to individualize an existent actual or imaginary.

Nor the proposal of color and texture of Fig. 1 could meet the possibilities I listed above; this example aims to prove that qualitative or plastic images have a demonstration capability as minimal semantic effectiveness, different from symbolic images. Qualitative or plastic images show in order to induce a sensory experience, subjective and untransferable.

On the other hand, looking at the variants proposed by the Fig. 3, we can see how each of that symbolic images, replicas of the corresponding graphic signs, are effectively complying with some or several of these specific possibilities: to deny, to affirm, to recommend, to demand, to forbid, etc. This involves different cognitive behaviors we develop as interpreters when faced to each of this kind of perceptual proposals, strengthening the comprehension of the differential character of these images and the methodological incorrectness which would imply their undifferentiated treatment.

15.3.2 How symbolic images show it

It would be impossible to expect exhaustiveness in the treatment of this point. Being symbolic images, the development of how they show what they show is equivalent to an encyclopedia of all the syntax according to which are related in the corresponding configurations (that is, in the contexts integrated by visual images), the effective and socially available graphic signs.

Because, in principle, the relations that link between them (at least) the symbolic images in already produced configurations, or the relations that could link them in possible configurations, is real syntax.

Two observations: on the usage of the term “syntax” and on the specificity of each series of symbolic images.

The term “syntax” has a strong linguistic connotation. As is my constant concern, I try to avoid such terms, given what they drag of their metalinguistic quality, generally inadequate when the signs at study are different from the linguistic signs. Anyway, this term is related with linguistics because of linguists’ usage of it, which is heavy and difficult to overcome. However, in its etimological structure, it contains nothing necessarily linguistic: “syn” means “with” in greek and “taxis” means “order” also in greek; so, “syntax” suggests “joint order”, that is, an order joining diverse elements, which meets adequately the ordered disposition of the signs, as is required by a communicable production of a substituent semiosis. So, we can speak about the syntax of a configuration without fear (but attentive) of the danger of linguistic contamination, taking care to refer to the rules that establish an order in a series of symbolic images.

And here comes the second observation about the specificity of each series of symbolic images. As I said above, symbolic images are replica of graphic signs, which are defined by relations linking each other inside the system they belong to, and as being symbols, they belong necessarily to a system. This is the old Saussurean idea of value, by which he could constitute the science of linguistics from the recognition that linguistic signs are discrete entities (that is, with a net and stable differential identity or with precise rules of transformation) linked by relations of different degree of formalization, so that Saussurean linguistic signs are too symbols in the Peircean sense. As a general approach, I claim again that graphic signs have a symbolic quality as they are identified and related following conventionally established and/or accepted rules. This is what differentiate them, also according to my proposal, of the remaining visual images, be figurative images or plastic images, from none of which we could claim a discrete character, or a necessary linking by relatively formalizable relations nor, therefore, their belonging to a system.

But, What series of symbolic images are we speaking about when speaking about graphic signs?

The range of perceptual proposals covered by the expression “symbolic images” is very broad. The raw material with which are formed the images that can be included in that expression, is very diverse. Because what justifies the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others, relates to the character of system established between some, while it can not be established between others (or this possibility is not socially accepted).

The character of the series of symbolic images shown in Fig. 3 is obviously the actualization or the existential replicas of the corresponding graphic signs of the respective virtual symbolic system. But, before resuming its
study, we have to bear in mind that the letters (and the words formed with them) of this text, are, equally, symbolic images.

In which differ these letters from those drawings? In what can be called “raw material” or perceptual ground of the corresponding representation ability. Peirce would better say “in representamen’s quality”, what is absolutely conventional in these letters and relatively conventional (as stereotyped icons) in those drawings.

In what these letters resemble those drawings? In that one and others are related by stable links, that is, by relatively hard and unmodifiable syntactic relations. This permits to establish that, behind the configurations which appear to visual perception, there are a system of relational rules that validate or reject the ability of substituent semiosis that is being intended to attribute to such configurations.

Let us observe the following configuration of letters:

“ncafm sy rsiuul ntetuae s a lvse erhnot eegysm n utrlatri he eltiwrai ons algt loi n osors tlome o uinehe f ot lesth rtuibd nat yaiio ef”

Unless a casual event, there is no regularity in their relations allowing to outline some of the rules that, by definition, form a system. The concept of system rejects such configuration as possible substituent semiosis coming from a system. On the contrary, in the configuration of letters below:

“Allen a casual event, there is no regularity in their relations allowing to outline some of the rules that, by definition, form a system”.

There are stable relations that, precisely, allow to outline some of the rules that by definition form a system. The concept of system accepts this configuration as possible substituent semiosis, that is, susceptible to be interpreted by an interpreter. The example may seem uninteresting, since we read from childhood and we perceive it as written language and not as visual images that require to be previously interpreted as graphic signs of a given system.

Nevertheless, this is the aspect in which that configuration of letters resemble the drawings of Fig. 3. An interesting task, that is the base of diverse researches aimed to explain the production process of many social phenomena’s signification, is to retrieve the system underlying an obvious message. This task is especially related to the learning of interpretation of languages (different languages, signals, Morse, flags, cryptograms, hieroglyphs, signaletics in computers, packaging, public buildings, etc.; because of their possible diversity, I would prefer to call these “semiosis”, rather than “language”, as I have reiterated before), all of which are formed by symbolic visual images related by preexisting (or retrievable as transformation) rules in the corresponding system.

But we could never affirm something like this in the case of Frida Kahlo’s photography (as figurative image) or in that of the colors and textures of van der Werf’s work (as qualitative image). There are no system of regulated and relatively necessary relations that could be retrieved following the last perceptual proposals. The cognitive operations involved in their interpretation have to be different. That is to say, they belong to another visual semiotics that is not the symbolic.

15.4 To retrieve the system of the rules that build the sense

This is the task I will do, from each of the graphic configurations of Fig. 3.

To this end, we must take into account that my aim is to identify behaviors occurring effectively in the mind of the interpreter interpretant and I think that they occur after being produced the results of other previous operations that I consider interesting, especially from the approach of a cognitive semiotics.

This concern to establish and, as long as possible, to describe the performance of the minimal mental behaviors is coherent with cognitive research approaches which have reverted in a way -opposed to those that were the dominant conceptions of the Gestalt- the order in which is thought that the perceptual behaviors occur. Especially, from Marr (1982: 41ff) on, it is considered that perception goes from the elementary to to global and general; without prejudice to continue taking into account many valuable explanations proposed by the Gestalt. Marr claims that once we recognize the great forms (or synthesis or images) we have made a subjective commitment with them, seeing what we want to see.

The requirement that what is proposed as an explanation could be the basis to a computer program, can be debated in its epistemological value or can be posed as a mere demonstration of the empirical usefulness of such explanation, but a cognitive approach to semiotics must conciliate its convergence with the neurosciences, and information technology (Thagard, 1993: 2ff). Therefore, it should begin by the identification, as elementary as possible, of the minimal and effective relations to produce the results that integrate in new effective relations for the production of new effective results, and so on, until getting answers that replicate the observable behaviors.
I would find it impossible to develop here and now with the data intuitively identifiable in the symbolic images proposed by the Fig. 3, a computing program. But at exploratory purposes only, I will try to outline some analytical operations that would be then appropriate to design.

Each of the 25 symbolic images of Fig. 3 are identified with numbers whose position in a 5x5 double entry table, replicates the positions of the corresponding images, so they can be easily identified.

I number the pictures from left to right and from top to bottom:

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  1 2 3 4 5
 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25
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By calling them “symbolic images” I mean that, regarding the components of each image and of the way the components are related inside each image, there is a social agreement whose knowledge is imprescindible to the interpretation of each image's meaning. Therefore, I have to make explicit what I believe that should be known from each image and, starting from that previous knowledge, I will describe the syntactic relationship from which would come, ultimately, the corresponding interpretation, that will make explicit the built meaning.

I begin with the analysis of the image number 1, that is, that of the upper left corner:

The more evident perception is that of the drawing of a hand. This does not mean that initially and without needing previous instances, we know that it is the shape of a hand. The lines which form it, even those appearing behind the occlusion contour of the drawing of what we establish is the representation of a bottle -after having integrated and cleansed such drawing-, are the visual perception of a material image which actualizes in the associative memory, taking from diverse possible models, the one we finally choose (Ullman, 1996: 44ff), the attractor model of a hand. Another supposition, which we reject immediately -is more easy to admit that it is a hand-, would be to interpret the lines either as representing three engines of a Boeing seen in perspective on a white space (the sky, seen from the plane window), or as a bullet and the traces (its graphic symbolization) of its displacement. We reject these alternative attractor models because the transformations needed to make them to correspond to the represented objects are much more artificial and atypical that those we have to make in order to admit that it is the stereotype of a hand. And I say “stereotype” because it contains the conventional features to draw a human hand, as a class of object and without any characteristic of individuality which would allow to identify them among other hands. Thus, by similar feature selection procedures (that I will not describe, so as not making this text unbearable) for the other drawings included in the table, we can accept that the perceptual proposals include the representation of a bottle and of a little cloud of spray (the models of the object and the phenomenon are available in our associative memory as attractors, because we belong to a culture whose registries say that they can be perceived).

Although I have not finished listing the perceivable in that material image, I want to mention the syntactic fact which allows to interpret what I called “a little cloud of spray” as such. The other objects: the hand and the bottle, are interpreted so because they correspond to available models. “A little cloud of spray” could not be interpreted by its simple association with a mnemonic model, but by its syntactic location from the top of the bottle, partially occluded by one of the fingers of the hand. It is sufficient to cover the rest of the image, leaving perceivable only that “little cloud of spray”, to make it cease to be such (without having defined other object represented by that image). That is, the “little cloud of spray” is an interpretation which depends entirely of its relation with the rest of the image, so it is a purely syntactic construction.

A couple of images complete the development of this symbolic image. There are a couple of superimposed and duplicated arrows, with their points facing each other in opposite vertical locations: top to bottom and bottom top. It must be known the visual code of the duplication or reiteration habitually used to get the interpretation of motion or that constructed with other kind of features similar but not identical to that of speed. The syntax associating by proximity the hand holding the bottle between the representations of the thumb and the index and the couple of duplicated arrows in opposite directions, allows an interpretation (which we apparently have had at the beginning) of the visual proposal, in so far it is aimed to communicate us that a given bottle (certainly that which as effectively existing object, accompanies the symbolic image, so we would enter the field of disposition or indexical syntax) should be used making that movement of approaching of the thumb and index, while these are holding it in the position shown.

We also need the cultural knowledge that we use to handle such kind of bottle with the aim of producing “a little cloud of spray”.

I wanted to outline, by the one hand, the cultural a priori or semiotic constructions, coming from the same or different semiosis, that we need so to be able to interpret an image as obvious as the one shown in the table of
Fig. 3. By the other hand, I wanted to show that the interpretation of the communicative interpretant needs syntax, complementarily but fundamentally, so as the interpreter interpretant can construct the interpretation the producer interpreter wants to be constructed. These are the normative or regular aspects that, integrated with other identifiable in the remaining images (2, 3, 4, etc.), make of these reflections an initial description of the relations involved in a given system of graphic signs.

Let us continue with the analysis of other aspects of the 25 symbolic images of Fig. 3:

1. The representation of the hand. Being a corpus of configurations proposed to the interpretation as substituent semiosis on (predominantly) the handling of given objects and instruments, one of the most repeated stereotypes is that of the hand/s. This option require to having chosen it, among other possible representations, projecting the corresponding model available in the associative memory. I have chosen it because it is the one requiring less transformations to produce an acceptable interpretation of the perceived images. It is present (in whole or in part) in 11 of the images of the whole (1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 23 and 24) and in other 7 it is inferred (2, 4, 6, 14, 16[?], 19 y 22) as necessary to complete the imaginary configuration of the action effectively represented and socially recognizable. When appearing the hand, its fundamental syntactic relations are as follows:

   (in 1) the representation of a hand (right) and of a bottle whose base is above the representation of the thumb of that hand and its cap is below the representation of the index of the same hand, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to hold”, that is not the same as the one constructed with this word;

   (in 3) the representation of a hand (left) as occluding surface (that, along with the “occluding contour” are expressions used by Marr referring to this effect of visual obstacle and its effectiveness in the identification of the referential notion of object; 1982: 218ff y 295ff) above the representation of the middle of a handset, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to grip”, which is not the same as the one constructed with this word;

   (in 7: two hands) the representation of a hand (left) in the bottom of an image and on the edge of the representation of a bag (garbage?), and the representation of the other hand (right) in the top of that image, with the representation of the index of that hand occluding the representation of a crumpled paper (?) which, in turn, occludes the rest of the hand, to construct the meaning of “to hold”, by one of them (the left) and of “to grip” by the other (the right) (which is not the same that the visually one constructed in 3; we know that it is an intermediate instruction which, ultimately, constructs a “to throw”, but this will arise from the integration of this drawing in a given existential syntax; but we can anticipate the interpretation of the graphic at study, from the mnemonic attractor of that syntax, as that of an instruction “to throw”, though we are seeing it out of its specific existential syntax); the visual construction of the meaning of “to hold”, “to grip”, “to throw” is already not the same as the ones constructed with these words;

   (in 10) the representation of a hand (right), with closed fingers occluding partially the representation of a cable that terminates in the representation of a plug, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to grip”, which is already not the same “to grip” as the one constructed visually in 3 and 7, nor the one constructed with this word (the complement of “to unplug” require the syntactic integration of the drawing of the arrow, showing its direction);

   (in 11) the representation of the finger (index?) of a hand (right) resting upon the representation of the internal bottom part of a human ear, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to introduce” (or “to clean”?), or “to rummage”?, which is not the same as the one constructed with this word;

   (in 13) the representation of the tip of two fingers, possibly thumb and index, of a (left) hand, resting upon the representation of the two wires in the representation of a safety pin, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to unhook”; which is not already the same as the one constructed with this word (we need more visual, verbal and behavioral complementary information if we want to determine if it is a possible instruction about the position to take a picture);

   (in 15) the representation of two hands, one of them (the left) in the top of the image, occludes the representation of one side of a camera, and the other hand (the right) in the bottom of the image, occludes the representation of other side of the same camera, which occludes the representation of the eye (left) and the half (left) of a female face, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to hold directing”; which is not the same as the one constructed with this word (we need more visual, verbal and behavioral complementary information if we want to determine if it is a possible instruction about the position to take a picture);

   (in 17) the representation of the back of a hand (right) with the index extended and the other fingers curled into the palm of the hand, resting the tip of the index on the representation of a label, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to press”, which is not the same as the one constructed with this word;

   (in 20) the representation of a hand (right) at the end of the representation of a forearm and the representation of the other forearm (left) with the rest and the corresponding hand occluded by the representation of a bundle represented as held by both hands (we infer the left), surrounded below and on the sides, by the representation of an open box, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to put in” or “to take out” (we need the existential syntax to decide on this alternative); but that is not the same as the one constructed with the words;
(in 23) the representation of two hands, the left resting on the representation of the cup of a little bottle and the right, below, holding the base of this same bottle, with the graphic characteristic of both hands being duplicated. This visual resource (as we saw in the arrows of 1), is used to represent motion, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to shake” (whose direction is constructed by the arrows); and it is not the same meaning as the one constructed with this word.

(and in 24) the representation of three fingers (and a fourth half occluded) of a hand (right), with the tip of the index barely occluded by the representation of the central hole of a CD and the tip of the thumb, the middle and the ring touching the representation of the edge of that CD, to construct, visually, the meaning of “to hold”, that is not the same as the one constructed by this word (and the way in which the object is held is reiterated through words. Without prejudice that the graphic elements shown would make unnecessary this presence of verbal language).

In all cases, the representations are stereotypes of the elements represented.

The aspects here identified are absolutely incomplete to explain the visual production process of the meaning of these symbolic images. I will complete this, but perhaps without being able to exhausting it, because I am transferring to the verbal what is proposed to produce its corresponding significative effectiveness in a graphic form.

In fact, in these reflections I am resorting to the word (I do nothing else than writing) as explanation of the semiotic effectiveness of the drawings and I think that the cognitive effectiveness of the word, being conceptual, is its effectiveness to explain. I do not consider as equivalent in their relationship, the drawing and the word or the verbal discourse representing it, nor that it is visible because it can be said (i.e., the word is not a condition of vision). My conception of independence, while also complementarity, allows to relate the diverse semiosis socially concurrent so as to confer meaning to social phenomena, and to say that drawing (like the symbolic images we are dealing with here, unlike what happens with with the figurative or qualitative images) is a substituent semiosis that constructs instructions, by informing, suggesting or forbidding about a given type of social phenomenon (in these cases, object handlings), that acquire meaning (or sense, if we consider it as atomic component of more complex processes that include them) through the effectiveness of such drawings. The phenomena or the handlings represented by these drawings are substituted semiosis or, if we enrich them with the remaining informations (constructed by the confluence of all verbal, visual, indexical, etc. semiosis) which can be applied to them, they are semiotic objects (Magariños de Morentin, 2004: Section 3). Of course, the verbal discourse can intervene, in turn, as substituent semiosis of the drawing, which then would be provisionally constructed as substituted semiosis, about which the word will always have something to say different to what the drawing says. In the same way, the drawing as substituent semiosis of a given verbal discourse, always will have something different to show about what the word -provisorily a substituted semiosis- can say as verbal construction of the same action, which will be already not the same.

**15.5 Interval**

The major characteristic of the object’s visual representation is, in this corpus of images, its dynamics. The drawing shows what is being done with or in the object or its transformation. In this sense, the symbolic image presupposes generally the existential situation applied to the object or that in which it is manipulated. It should be remembered that my aim is to demonstrate how these images differentiate from figurative images and from qualitative or plastic images, to the point of constituting another particular semiotics.

In (2), the symbolic image represents, with notable gaps that prevent the identification of the person represented, the specular image of a man who is tying his tie, existential situation about whose correct realization instructs the image at study. The representation of the loops and turns of the tie actualize, in the simultaneity of the image, the sequential steps, successive and temporally differentiated, of the tying behavior. Note that it was necessary to represent the head, so that the syntax of the representation below it, by suggesting the representation of what is around the neck and from it, could identify the representation of a tie and not merely a ribbon in which is made a knot or even a snake uncoiling. Note as well that it has been dispensed with the hands, which would either possibly complicate the drawing too much and prevent the visual perception of what is being done with the tie because of their perceptual character of occluding surfaces. These presences, absences and twists and folds of the object, construct the effectively significant visual syntax, materializing given virtual relations, conventionally established, that belong in this case, to the use system of clothing. The symbolic image has the goal to actualize, exclusively, this virtual characteristic or this possibility of a specific aspect of the social system of object handling, conventionally established.

I emphasize what is unique about this goal, because in the case of figurative images and qualitative images, what is effectively shown, despite being their fundamental effectiveness (individualizing in the first case and experiential in the second) does not exhaust what is shown, but instead, it is often a mere excuse to actualize
other associations, to which will point, in fact, the interpretation, while the symbolic images show what they have to show and so they exhaust their interpretation proposal.

Moreover, the words, here, out of the explanatory use I am giving them, would not have demonstrative effectiveness for the behavior represented visually. We can say that in symbolic images, words are nor before, nor after the drawing (since if the drawing is correctly done, they are not necessary to understand it), but instead they are effectively replaced by the drawing (as expressing what would otherwise be unsayable).

15.6 What can be called “strictly symbolic elements”

Let we identify the strictly symbolic elements involved in each image of the ensemble represented in Fig. 3. I understand by “strictly symbolic elements” those lacking of figurative reference, even of that reference we have considered here as “stereotyped”, as they do not substitute any individuality, but merely represent a class, identified by its generic and prototypical perceptual features (Kleiber, 1991: 108ff). Strictly symbolic elements are forms elaborated to represent only by convention, that is, such elements must be recognized as belonging to a code whose interpretation require necessarily a learning.

In this sense, words are prototypes of what I am calling “strictly symbolic elements”. And we find words in symbolic images 13, 17 and 24. The verbal expressions represented graphically (as writing) in images 13 and 24, express instructions whose sense is integrated with the other graphic elements (in these cases, they represent behaviors which perform instructions that not necessarily require verbal expression). So, at least in images 13 and 24, the producer interpreter considers that the visual representation of the behavior is regarded insufficient for its correct realization, thus is added a specific verbal indication of how to act.

In image 13, the verbal expression appoints an action (“pull”) with which a result is achieved (“to open”). The image provides visually the perception of the result: a safety pin that is open, and this is what the image is teaching to do. It teaches with other kind of non verbal symbolic elements that, in this ensemble of images, only appear in the image 13 and that its producer considered insufficiently expressive, and so he resorted to the verbal complement: those little lines parallel to the mobile needle, three from the head of the pin to the center of the image and six between the head of the pin and the finger resting on the open tip. In another kind of images, as those of cartoons, is usual to resort to this kind of expressive image (a car moving, a foot running, a bird flying, etc.) to represent motion; what is sought to represent here: a small inward movement (the three lines) and a broader movement outward (the six lines). This lines are also strictly symbolic elements, as they require to be learned, but, of course, different to words.

In image 24, the verbal expression is redundant, as I already stated, because it says (“this way”) that what it is showing, as it represents the position of the fingers as the correct way of holding a CD. Unless the images that prohibit something, all others could add this expression, since this is the semantics that they build visually: the way to do something.

In the image 17, that is a different case, the verbal is the name of the object to which is directed the action of the extended finger of the represented hand. Knowing the habitual context, every device moved with some kind of electric or nuclear power has a button that activates the source. That place of power activation (“power”) is called here explicitly, by a box put around the word itself which names it, as sometimes appears in the carcasses of some devices; the representation of that box increases the visual representation of the switch, key or digital button; the semantic proposal of the image is to establish the need of activate it. So, in this case, the representation of the word is a representation of the object to handle.

The numbers are too prototypes of strictly symbolic elements. Numbers appear in images 22, also 18 and 21, but, as they associate with other symbolic elements, I will leave the comments of them to later.

In image 22, the number represented as “1” and “2” identify respectively each of two tips of some device that is supposed to be known, or that is seen at the same time it is handled. The whole configuration of the image with the conventional representation of a hair coming out of its alveolus and breaking, represented by the action of the point 1, along with the indexical experience of our depilatory behavior and with our role-admitted or imposed-of frequent interpreters of advertising messages, leads us to interpret it as the effectiveness of a given device, possibly a shaver. And after the effective action of the point “1”, the effectiveness of this shaver is increased by the point called “2”, leaving out of the semantic universe represented here, the eventual formulation of a correct handling rule, merely reporting on a feature of its operation.

The arrow or the plurality of arrows, is another of the strictly symbolic elements added to the visual syntax of these symbolic images. The representation of an arrow has gone from being a representation of a weapon that is thrown at a target (military or sports) to be the representation of the direction in which that goal is or according to the direction a certain object is to be moved, of course, endowed with mobility. One or more arrows appear in symbolic images 1, 3, 6, 10, 11, 14, 23 and 25. Also in the images 18 and 21, but again, I leave their analysis to continue with others: letters and/or numbers. In the first mentioned cases, is added to the representation of a
given object: (1) a bottle, (3) a handset, (6) a flap of container, (10) a plug, (11) a finger, (14) a couple of ladles, (23) a bigger bottle, and (25) a signal of bifurcation on the road. In all these cases the syntax of association adds the representation of a directional motion, according to which the represented object must be handled: (1) to shake it up and down repeatedly, (3) to lift and separate it, (6) to open and to lift it, (10) to remove it horizontally, (11) to turn it around itself, (14) to rotate them circularly and simultaneously, (23) to shake it repeatedly and laterally, and (25) to separate and join the march of vehicles on a route; having in mind always that the representation of these actions as they have been said here, is not the same as the one constructed visually. If we take out the arrow, it misses the sense; I leave to the reader the reflection on the effect this lack will produce.

Images 18 and 21 are particular cases. In image 18, the object represented is a special power connexion and with it, are also: (a) a small arrow highlighted with a circle, (b) a “H” also included in a circle and (c) the number “10” between two parallel lines, on the outside of which are two opposing arrows. Each of these strictly symbolic elements are related syntactically with a specific part of the represented power plug: (a) with the representation of a cable type visually differentiated, (b) with the representation of a stop which represents a limit and prevents slipping, and (c) with the representation of a margin of a given dimension that must be preserved (with the opposing arrows pointing to the adjustment of such margin) and they provide, due to this syntactic relationship, a semantic increase, and this makes that this symbolic image be a more complex discourse than that of the other symbolic images of the same series.

On the other hand, the symbolic image which I numbered “21”, integrates syntactically the representation of a human body profile, with: (a) at our left (or, at the right of the represented human figure), a column made by some underlined numbers; with (b) on the same side, a bracket between that column of numbers and the figure represented; with (c) on the same side, a thin arrow starting in the middle of the bracket to the representation of the waist of the figure; with (d) a horizontal line of dots on the representation of such waist. This allows to interpret the column of numbers as the measures the represented waist can have. But, in addition, the representation of the human body profile is also syntactically integrated with (e), at our right (or, at the left of the represented human figure), another column made by underlined numbers; with (f) on the same side, a vertical line terminated in separate and opposing arrowheads; with (g) two lines of horizontal dots linking the upper arrowhead with the top of the representation of the human body and the lower arrowhead with the representation of the foot plant of the same figure. This allows to interpret the column of numbers as the measures the height of the represented human figure can reach. The underlining of the numbers of each column emphasizes visually the correspondence between those of the same level in the columns, constructing the semantic relationship between linear height and waist size.

These boring descriptions tend to identify the visual aspects that explain the interpretation which we achieve in the everyday communication in an immediate and intuitive way. And I can not help to associate this reflection with the “oral communication” of a “non-specialist” that Pêcheux quoted in his Introduction to the paper of Courtine (1981), non-specialist who asks himself ironically, referring to the task of discourse analysis: “Is that discipline thanks to which it takes ten years to establish what a medium reader understands in ten minutes?” Let us not lose sight that to interpret is one thing and to explain why we interpret what we interpret is another; that to design an image so that the perceiver know how to behave, is one thing and to explain why that image transmits that information, is another thing. I am not justifying myself (or am I?), but I am explaining why semiotics is a research methodology in social sciences.

15.7 Need of a syntax, at least, virtual

Images 2, 4, 12, 16 and 19, represent exclusively objects, without integrate them syntactically with the representation of the hands that eventually could handle them or with those of any other strictly symbolic elements to which I referred above: arrows, letters, words, or numbers.

But, in all cases, are proposed to perception effective relations between representations of objects, in such way that always representations of more than one are perceived, because otherwise it would not be built any instruction or information, instead, they merely would be the showing of a representation, impoverished since stereotyped, and that, not having a usage configuration justifying it, would lack of signification. This is what seems to happen with image 12, that consists in the representation of the sun, shifted to the right and to the upper part of the frame, and of some of its rays. We need the experience of having seen it stamped on some buses and public vehicles, close to their accessing door and with other symbolic images informing about comforts offered to the potential passenger, in order to be interpreted as informing about the polarization of the window glasses to protect from the harshness of the sunlight.

That is, the necessary syntax can be established not only between aspects that are graphically represented inside the image, but also can be established relating it with activities or other elements outside the image, but in such proximity to it as to be possible to establish the linking between them. An image with only one representation of an object, or one that could not be linked with other representation, activity or existential object outside the
image, that is, an image without syntactical relations, inside or outside the image itself, would not be a symbolic image, because it would not build any signification.

The need of possessing the interpretative keys which allow to identify the representations proposed to perception and the relations established between them, links these images to the field of the symbolic, as conventionally in force. An example is the difficulty, even impossibility of interpreting the image 16: the representation of two teeth is identified, one in the upper part and the other in the lower part, corresponding to both maxillaries. In the intermediate zone can be interpreted the representation of a toothpaste, but in a strange outline. I could not interpret the fourth element, because, even if it wanted to represent the toothpaste, I do not know which action is suggested or which correct way of behavior is proposed, so the whole image lacks of a recognizable syntactical structure, loses its semantic ability and becomes opaque.

Three images remain; they include two graphic ways of representing prohibition, by appropriate strictly symbolic elements: by the one hand, the vanes or the “X”, with their general representation of “labeled” or “deleted” and, by the other, the metaphorical transplantation of the traffic signal (that, in specific semiotic terminology is not such or is not always, because the semiotic function of the “signal” is to anticipate the future presence of the represented object) that establishes the prohibition of movement, or is overimposed to a “P” representing parking, it can be generalized establishing then the idea of prohibition to transport the kind of objects or to perform the kind of behavior which appear represented below it.

In fact, only image 9 is clear about the bathing prohibition, because of the metaphor of the banning signal overimposed to the representation of the bathtub with that of the water falling from the open shower.

It is known that image 5 prohibits, but it is not known what is forbidden: whether to drink water (in the context of some given behavior) or to pour in a cup some fluid (the disposition of its usage will allow to know which it is). And from image 8 is also known that it forbids, because of the “X” labeling the three parallel lines, but it is not clear what is it forbidding, unless by the indication (which in specific semiotic terminology is not such - because the semiotic function of the “indication” is to retrieve the historical presence of the represented object-, but an ambiguous stereotype of a not known object to be represented) that the slightly curled lines of the rectangle containing the prohibition, refer to a TV set, and so the prohibition would be to turn on the TV.

In the next section I will try to systematize the observations made with painstaking detail working on what I think would be the symbolic system rules to which these images belong.

That is, by the one hand, I intend to support the claim that having available the corpus of graphical configurations (or, as also would occur if there would be verbal contexts or existential dispositions available) along with the set of syntactic relations effectively applied to their construction, it would be possible to know the system from which they come, in so far in all cases at study, there are symbolic signs (images, words or behaviors), therefore relatively univocal and conventional.

And, by the other hand, I also intend to support the claim that only knowing the rules of a symbolic system’s signs, would be possible to explain how the interpretation will be able to attribute a given and no other singification to the graphical configurations (or the verbal contexts or the existential dispositions) that are being perceived at a given moment.

15.8 The rules of the symbolic images system

I will describe now the rules of the system from which have arisen the symbolic images configurations I have been working with until now. Complying with those rules a producer interpretant could propose to the eventual interpreter interpretants, other visual configurations intended to communicate by the appropriate proposals of visual perceptions, other instructions, informing, suggesting or forbidding other given behaviors, also related to the handling of objects. That is, from a given system of symbolic signs can be constructed any number of texts (iconic configurations, existential dispositions or symbolic contexts). Such the field in which is met the semantic effectiveness of symbolic images coming from the system of rules identified in the analysis.

This enumeration does not exhaust the possible rules nor the rules necessary to the effective existence of a generation/interpretation system of visual configurations with characteristics of symbolic images. It just records (some of) those effectively used for the construction of the symbolic images repertoire on which I have worked. Other configurations would allow us the access to other rules that would be integrated in the same system or in another kindred system. For example, the visual identifications of men’s room and lady’s room, are generally constructed with the stereotyped image of the profile or border of an occluding surface representing a woman facing, identifiable because she is represented with long hair and skirt or a man, identifiable because he is represented with jacket and trousers (of course there are variations, aimed, in all cases, to produce a differential visual identification by gender). That is, the activity to perform is not represented, nor the way to perform it, nor the furniture for use, but each image is related to the space assigned to one or another sex (or, rather, to one or another clothing), associating it to the image by directional arrows or by sticking such images on the doors of the
corresponding places. These two rules are not used for the images studied (supposing that we include the symbolic images I have described in our repertoire), but we can begin with them the normative description of the system at study:

To propose a representation of the protagonist of the action, without reference to the action in question; a visual *implicit*, strongly motivated by the respect for the “good manners” and strongly established in the social imagery, as to represent unequivocally the meaning of the image at study;

*to identify a gender differentiation by conventional criteria of representing the differential use of clothing,* regardless whether this clothing is currently used or has lost effectivity. And now I will continue with the registry of the rules of our 25 symbolic images;

*to use the image of one or more arrows to represent motion and/or direction,* in cases like the present one, which only include static graphic images;

*to use the image of the letter “X” or the “non parking” or “don’t walk” metaphors overimposed to the representation of an object or action to forbid such action or the handling of an object.* The use of “X” to transmit the idea of deleting or forbidding, as well as its more immediate meaning of “cross out” is an interesting exploration: why to cross out with an “X”? its explanation by saying that “X” is constructed with the double gesture which is a rejection gesture, would be to beg the question;

*to represent the action or state of things immediately previous to the production of the desired result;* to duplicate with words what is represented in the image. This duplication is either *unnecessary,* and thus, questionable, given that the image is expressing it adequately and sufficiently, or it *is necessary* to understand what is represented, but equally questionable, because of having accepted the communication based on an insufficiently expressive image to identify the corresponding instruction;

*to use letters and/or numbers to redirect to written instructions,* unrelated to the visual configuration proposed (they belong to some brochure in which the instructive image is integrated or accompanied);

*to use numbers to provide visually non representable dimensional information* or information whose whole possible variations can not be represented, because of communicative economy;

*to associate the representation of a characteristic or quality with the object or environment in which that characteristic or quality stands out,* superimposing physically the instructive image on the object or environment;

*most of the represented actions are “handling”, however it is possible that the specific representation of the hand is elided,* being represented the objects as entities metaphorically “animated” or endowed with movement of its own. There may be other rules; for now I will stop here and I leave to the reader the identification of other possible rules.

15.9 Conclusion

It seems to me that it is appropriate to conclude (provisorily) these developments about *semantics of symbolic images,* with some reflections that frame them and ground them in the corresponding *semiotic and cognitive* problem.

In principle, I believe I have justified my hypothesis about the diverse problems, semiotic and cognitive, which, sometimes in an equivocally undifferentiated way, share the epistemological space of *visual iconicity.* I suppose it became evident that all what I have explored is appropriate to *explain the semantic effectivity of a kind of images that I called “symbolic”* and that it would not be appropriate for the explanation of the semantic effectiveness of other two kinds of images which (provisorily) I called *“figurative”* (exemplified with the photography of Frida Kahlo, Fig. 2) and *“plastic”* or *“qualitative”* (exemplified with the proposal of Van Der Werf, Fig. 1).

It emerges as an interesting aspect of the analysis done as to the configurations of *symbolic images,* that of their *“deictic”* aspect, as building the meaning of the handling of objects or the realization or prevention of given behaviors *in the specific act of communication being produced.* The qualification of “deictic” corresponds to a possibility, in the case of linguistic statements, which may be not deictic; and the difference is that in the case of *symbolic images,* the visual statements they configure can not but to be deictic. That is, the configurations of *symbolic images* do not build universal or abstract meanings, but they are always *referred to specific existents.* The 25 graphics2 analyzed make sense insofar they are applicable to the handling of given objects or to the effective realization or prohibition of given behaviors.

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2 Among the symbolic images I was analyzing until here, are also for example: ideograms, hieroglyphic writing, hieroglyphs (also known with their french name, of very old latin reminiscense, “rebus” or graphic riddles and enigmatic drawings), drawings of certain scientific
This has two derivations: first, the need of exploring what we can call “graphic acts” or “iconopoiesis”. Graphic acts (“to make things with images”) are similar to “speech acts” (“to make things with words”) because, while these require in order to be effective the concurrence of other factors than given linguistic statements, those require the complement of other instances, aside from the communicative proposal of the symbolic image itself. Just as the effectiveness of the promise in the case of speech acts is not fulfilled if the person decides not to comply with his/her promise and/or if the person to whom the promise was made has no desire of the promised item, so the informative effectiveness of, for example, symbolic image 12 (the frame with the sun and rays) is not fulfilled if it is stick to the back of a chair, nor the effectiveness of the instruction of symbolic image 13 (to open a safety pin) is fulfilled if it corresponds to a brochure of instructions on the best way of working with a photocopier. On the contrary, graphic acts differ from speech acts because their semantic effectiveness is achieved irrespective of the will of who formulates it and of whether someone will follow or will not, what is proposed graphically. The behavior of the person addressed can fail, but it does not cancel the effectiveness of the graphic act; how to open a safety pin is correctly presented in symbolic image 13, even though its addressee prefers to open it otherwise (for example, folding it). That is, in the graphic act, the semantic effectiveness is independent of the communicative effectiveness of the instruction; while in the speech act, there are no semantic effectiveness, unless it occurs the rest of the conditions involved.

Moreover, the relation between the symbolic image and a given object or behavior is basically a proposition belonging to indexical semiotics. That is, semantically, it organizes a behavior, which, whether correctly done or not, needs to be integrated into an existential disposition, i.e., must have physical realization, successfully or not. So then, these symbolic images belong to visual semiotics as perceptual configurations, but their effectiveness is fulfilled in the indexical semiotics environment.

And this make us to reflect on the kind of temporality these symbolic images generate as specific semantic effect. It can be said that symbolic images are situated always in a present, that of the represented action, from which is constructed the future of a given result, whose achieving or forbidden realization can be explained. Sometimes (Figs. 3, 6, 10, 13, 18, 24) the present in which the symbolic image is situated represents the correct form of the state-result, so this present is the future of a project which is represented as being already done.

As all these is clearly different of what occurs semiotically and cognitively with figurative images (writing adds nothing to the explanation of the eventual semantic effectiveness of Frida Kahlo’s photography), or with plastic images (nor contributes to the explanation of the possible semantic effectiveness of Van Der Werf’s visual proposal), I believe I have demonstrated effectively that we deal with three different semiotics.

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1 I would suggest that the last relates to the following quote of Peirce (2.270): “An abduction is a method of forming a general prediction without any positive assurance that it will succeed either in the special case or usually, its justification being that it is the only possible hope of regulating our future conduct rationally, and that Induction from past experience gives us strong encouragement to hope that it will be successful in the future.” That is, the logical effectiveness of symbolic images, in the specific case of instructions on behaviors and on handling objects (and I even do not know if it could not be generalized to the whole remainder of such images), would be that of abduction or retrodiction, with interesting consequences (yet to be explored) as to their analytical processing and semantic content.
16 What visual semantics explains

16.1 Prolegomenon

The researcher who wants to explain how the meanings of the phenomena in his/her environment are produced, should assume that the ability of humans to perceive a phenomenon, require to having known previously some utterings attributing to it ontological existence. This uttering may have any of the identifiable semiotic characteristics: verbal text, or visual, auditory, behavioral, etc., or a combination of them; must be different from the phenomenon and should refer to it, or to contain reference/s to it; the interpreter may have registered it intentionally or subconsciously or, even, unconsciously (see in 16.5 a synthesis and the relations between these characteristics). This conceptualization of the semiotic faculty, as we have seen above, implies therefore that a semiotic statement is required so that a given phenomenon has ontological existence, that is, so that such phenomenon exists for knowledge (see also Magariños de Morentin, 2005b).

An interesting repertoire of those possible utterings, able to give ontological existence to the phenomena of the environment can come from the reflection about what Peirce called “The ten signs” (see also 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 on Peirce’s 10 signs in the genesis of particular semiotics).

In this work, I will confine myself to develop the cognitive ability required of the interpreter from the iconic utterings in their visual specificity through the analysis of their 3 basic variants: (1) plastic visual images (Fig. 1); (2) figurative visual images (Fig. 2); and (3) conceptual visual images (Fig. 3).

16.2 What is understood by “visual semantics”? 1

The most immediate answer to this question could be that “visual semantics” is an expression that, in principle, would designate, for the one part, the ability of material visual images to give account of the meaning of given phenomena, and, by the other, the discipline which aims at explaining the process by which this occurs.

Posing the question that I try to answer implies that I consider problematic to identify what is spoken about when it is spoken about “visual semantics”. However, it is a subject that usually appears only incidentally treated in the studies of visual semiotics, without having been central subject of expositive developments or empirical researches. The meaning of visual images has been studied, but mainly as a result of artistic production. I believe instead that a visual semantics begins long before the rhetorical transformation, at the simple level of the visual perception of a material visual image. I also leave aside the use of the expression “visual semantics” in computational logic studies, where it is related to the visual representation of cognitive structures, using formal semantics as the specific instrument. This approach is not alien to semiotic problems, since those studies start defining “visual language” as “equivalent in expressive power to term subsumption languages expressed in textual form.” (Gaines, 1995: 1), but they exclude any reference to semiotics. Quite inexplicable exclusion as Peirce was one of those who gave to graphic representation of logical structures its most utility and consistency, in his “Existential Graphs” (CP. 4.347-584). However my intention is not to follow this line of research (with an interesting topic that includes the impossibility of understanding geometric explanations if we leave out the corresponding figures), but to establish the scope of the term “semantics” when, qualified as “visual”, the expression so built is used to designate either those characteristics of material visual images from which an interpreter can represent to himself/herself given characteristics of given phenomena of natural and social environments, as well as the discipline which studies the corresponding process.

But I have already transformed my initial statement; this last designative definition is not equivalent to the initial one; so, let’s see their differences. It is no longer about an “ability of material visual images”, but about the “characteristics of material visual images from which an interpreter can...”. It is quite common in the language of social sciences to attribute to inorganic entities (material or ideal) qualities corresponding to the activity of a human agency, and even those that require the use of thought, and it is done through the use of paraphrase and the structure of metaphors (and, specially, of “dead metaphors”, in Ricoeur’s designation, 1977: 427ff. It is so habitual that we do not perceive that they are metaphors and produce the fallacy of considering them as referentially descriptive).

This is the fallacy of attributing to material visual images the “ability... of giving account of the meaning...”. Adjusting the expression, I say now that material visual images have “characteristics...from which an interpreter can...”, so the signification is produced by the interpreter interpretant (Magariños de Morentin, 2003a, Chapter 12) and not the images (like, mutatis mutandis, it is not the text but the reader), coincide or not this interpretation, with that the producer interpreter (author) has proposed when configuring the image at study. Finally, material visual images have no ability to give account of the meaning of given phenomena, but material visual images have characteristics which will allow to an interpreter to represent himself/herself another given

characteristics of given phenomena.

This is another modification: Not even referring to the interpreter, I say that by given characteristics of material visual images the interpreter achieves the meaning of given phenomena. I say that through it an interpreter will be able to represent given characteristics of given phenomena, which obviously is not a synonym of the meaning of given phenomena. With this, I question also that the images or certain of their features might be used for the representation or the construction of the meaning of given phenomena; they can represent other given characteristics of given phenomena, which not necessarily are its meaning. This can be understood bearing in mind that no semiosis is self-sufficient, and that when an interpreter contemplates a material visual image, as well as when contemplating any other kind of natural or artificial show, is adding to it, the symbolic text that such interpreter believes has more affinity with the perceived, from his/her own ideological system, building thus a meaning that does not come from pure perception (Magariños de Morentin, 2005a). That is, the edge of what can be affirmed is that by given characteristics of material visual images, an interpreter can represent to himself/herself other given characteristics of given phenomena. Explaining this would be the aim of the discipline we call “semantics”.

By not trying, at least in principle, and necessarily, of the meaning, the name of the discipline is also distancing itself from what is usually interpreted as its specific relevance and so we just have the name, thoughtlessly applied, of a discipline which gives account of another different process related to another object of knowledge. Our object of knowledge are material visual images and what an interpreter can produce from them (exclusively) only will deserve the name of “representation of given characteristics of given phenomena”, and this is far from what is designated as “meaning of given phenomena”, to whose production other semiotics, different from the visual, must concur.

If we decide to keep the designation of “semantics” to such discipline, we should clarify that its object of knowledge is to establish either what would be the characteristics of the visual images from which an interpreter can represent other characteristics of given phenomena, that already are not material visual images but what they represent, and to establish which would be these other characteristics of those other phenomena and how is produced the representation of the last from the first ones.

If it is being admitted what all this intends to say and if we were in agreement as to shifting the field of study that I proposed, and as to the need of studying the logical consequences of such shifting, we would be closer to comprehend what we understand by “visual semantics”.

16.3 Three visual semantics, one for each different cognitive operation

There is yet a difficulty. The operation realized by the interpreter in order to relate given characteristics of given material visual image with given characteristics of given phenomenon represented by it, vary according to clearly differentiable parameters.

First (and I follow the order proposed by Peirce to structure his phaneroscopy (1.300-1.353) and his speculative grammar (2.219 to 2.444), the interpreter selects in the material visual image, given perceptual features with which he/she actualizes in the mind the representation of a sensorial experience as such. This representation is free, then, of its link with the phenomenon that produces it. “Imagine me to make and in a slumberous condition to have a vague, unobjectified, still less unsubjectified, sense of redness, or of salt taste, or of an ache, or of grief or joy, or of a prolonged musical note. That would be, as nearly as possible, a purely monadic state of feeling.” (1.303). Such would be the more general framing of the plastic material visual image ([55] Fig. 1).
Second, the interpreter selects, in the material visual image, given perceptual features with which he/she actualizes in the mind the specific representation of an individual existent. “In the idea of reality, Secondness is predominant; for the real is that which insists upon forceings its way to recognition as something other than the mind’s creation.” (1.325) Such would be the more general framing of the figurative material visual image ([56] Fig. 2).

Third, the interpreter selects, in the material visual image, given perceptual features with which he/she actualizes in the mind the conventional representation of a rule or social value or meaning. “Thirdness, in the sense of category, is the same as mediation.” (1.328). “A Symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause th Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object.” (2.249). Such would be the more general framing of the conceptual material visual image ([57] Fig. 3): contemporaneous proposal, and [58] Fig. 4 medieval proposal.

I made the description of the basic semiotic characteristics of these three kinds of material visual images in another paper (Magariños de Morentin, 2000a). In the semantic aspect, I scarcely have outlined a treatment of what would be the possible operations for the interpretation of each of them, and this is what I want to broaden here, with the generic designation of “visual semantics”. This approach needs to formulate the appropriate hypotheses in order to have available an explanatory answer to the following questions: What sees the interpreter when looking at the visual image?; What reconstructs the interpreter in the world, with what is seeing? and, What variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what has seen?

[57] Fig. 3. Conceptual material visual image:
Neurath; Isotypes (1924)

[58] Fig. 4. Conceptual material visual image:
Marbles of San Millán de la Cogollía, 1068
16.3.1 Plastic image semantics

What sees the interpreter when looking at a plastic material visual image? As Marr defines to see (1982: p. 3), it is “to know what is where by looking”, and what the interpreter sees in this kind of images, are opaque sensory perceptions. Though this is what we see when we look at something (Primal Sketch, in Marr, 1982: 42), in the case of the vision directed to a figurative or conceptual material visual image, is about trying to see something different from what we are looking: it is not interesting (beyond the aesthetic values) the image but that what is represented (2½-dimensional Sketch; ibidem. And also: 3D Model Representation; Marr, 1982: 305). But in the case of the plastic material visual image, what the interpreter is looking at is all what he/she sees; that is, there are sensory visual perceptions intended to configure the visual appearance of the material visual image itself, as perceived object. The relations of association, overlapping and distance between the available sensory visual perceptions (texture, color form) are viewed as definitive but not referential proposals.

What reconstructs the interpreter in the world, with what he/she sees? Nothing. The quality of object of the perceived consists only in the set of sensory visual perceptions being perceived; there are no other, not even its physical support (the whole picture) as something aside of such perceptions, much less something built from these. Its effectiveness as sign is retrieved only to the extent it can be stated that the interpreter him/herself is part of the world being constructed. So that, the sensory visual perceptions the interpreter sees in a plastic material visual image, reconstruct him/her as they are a new emotional-perceptual experience or the actualization of an emotional-perceptual experience already experienced. That is, the plastic material visual image only modifies the universe of perceptual experiences that configure the interpreter himself/herself.

What variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen? A reiteration, variation or rupture with respect another perceptual experience he/she has had previously (for example, the feeling provoked by Piranesi’s drawings). That is, the reinforced or transformed recall of qualia, the feelings, emotions or sentiments he/she had available from previous visual perceptions, or a new recall that he/she will have available to work out new feelings, emotions or sentiments as a result of the interpretation of another given future situations of visual perception (about qualia, see Peirce, C P 6.222 to 6.237; Wittgenstein, 1953: 243ff, and Dennet, 1995: 381).

16.3.2 Figurative image semantics

What sees the interpreter when he/she looks at a figurative material visual image? The interpreter sees given proposals of sensory visual perceptions (texture, color, form) among which he/she establishes given relationships of association, overlapping and distance, and generates marks (Groupe μ, 1992, p. 151), axes and occluding contours (Marr, 1982, p. 307ff and 218ff), tending to fix the uniqueness of the established relations. With this task, and with respect to the relations proposed by the producer interpreter, the interpretant interpreter either accepts or rejects them from any of the intermediate points of the gradient which separates acceptance from rejection.

What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees? Through the relations the interpreter establishes, he/she actualizes the same or similar or contradictory relations historically perceived in the world or in other figurative material visual images stored in the associative memory (Kosslyn, 1996: 214ff) as attractors. He/she projects what perceives as a showing of the forms of the world. Since they are figurative material images, what the interpreter reconstructs is the individualizing identity of such forms of the world (the unrepeatable in Van Gogh’s chair) attributing to it ontological existence.

Which variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen? Associations of features, which are recorded as new attractors tending to ratify, contradict or expand the relation rules of the preceding attractors, and so is constituted the dialectic quality of the identification of the visual, situated between recognition and discovery.

16.3.3 Conceptual image semantics

What sees the interpreter when he/she looks at a conceptual material visual image? The interpreter sees given proposals of sensory visual perceptions (texture, color, form) among which he/she establishes given relations of association, overlapping and distance, and generates marks, axes and occluding surfaces. However, these relations do not represent individuals but conventional representations of classes and categories. The interpreter needs either to know the codes of identification of forms and rules of relation between such forms in force in a given community at a given historical time, and to make the visual route of the image in a given order and he/she must to establish those relations in the way set by those codes and rules. So the perceived images acquire the semantic effectiveness of proposing themselves to the interpretation as descriptions, commands, prohibitions, handbooks of operating instructions, etc. (note that the writing offers the cognitive possibilities of conceptual images, whose characteristics constitute them).

What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees? Almost any situation related to making: to make something right or wrong, indicating how and/or where, to order, to permit and forbid, to take precautions,
to identify classes of parts or element or places; to determine sequences of actions to perform in a given order; to establish movements to perform mainly with the hands and also with the feet; to establish spatial measurements of weight, volume, distance, direction, or temporal measurements of waiting, of functioning, of speed; ways of assembling composed elements, connexions, relative situation and orientation; to link causes and effects; to show how should or how should not to be perceived the final result; and so on a large number of ruled behaviors (Mijksenaar & Westendorp, 1999).

What variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen? The syntactic rules of graphic language. My traditional rejection of the association between visual image and language (any kind of symbolic language: verbal, mathematic, braille, morse, amslang, etc.) disappears before these kinds of material visual images of a conceptual nature (which I have identified in Magariños de Morentin, 2001: 300, as iconic legisigns). Here visual images do not work because of the reprocessing that the eventual interpreter can perform from the perceptual characteristics observed, but by virtue of the interpretation possible from the knowledge the interpreter should have about the coding that a given society (even if, as is increasingly the case, the global society) attributes to given perceptual basic visual elements: textures, colors and forms, and to their normed connections.

(In 16.5, I developed these contrasts in a different order, to help the reader to understand the differential cognitive relations which identify each of the three proposed visual semiotics.)

16.4 A complementary aspect of visual semantics: incrustations

Generally, these interpretative directions are related to each of the expressive possibilities of material visual images -according to their quality: (1) plastic, (2) figurative, (3) conceptual-, not isolated but in mutual combination. Variants of these combinations are: a) how 1 appears in 2 and in 3, that is, how the plastic image is integrated in the figurative and in the conceptual; b) how 2 appears in 3, that is, how figurative image is integrated in the conceptual; and c) how 3 appears in 2, that is, how the conceptual image is integrated in the figurative.

The first variant is evident if we understand that there is no figurative or conceptual image that is not built on basic sensory visual perceptions: texture, color and form. These perceptions, taken in isolation, constitute what I called “plastic material visual images”, that can be perceived without presence of figurative or conceptual images and any relation with them, while not figurative or conceptual images could be perceived without the plastic image (see the example of [59] Fig. 5).

![Fig. 5. Incrustations: plastic images in figurative images, El Greco: St. Paul (1610-1614)](image)

The second variant has the presence, at least complementaty, of figurative images. The conceptual image can be constructed with purely symbolic images, as for example, written linguistic, mathematical, musical signs. Nevertheless, it is common the conceptual presence of figurative images (like mother and daughter in [60] Fig. 6) which reach such presence losing their basic figurative character: the showing of individual identity. When they are part of a conceptual visual image, they show a class (not an individual) of entities of the world (the mother and daughter shown in Fig. 6 [60], are any woman, any girl and, even, any passenger, as possible addressees of those set of instructions).
The third variant is subtle and dangerous. The flag of a country is a basically conceptual entity (symbolic); but the photography or painting representing a flag (as those of the parisian celebrations of Raoul Dufy in [61] Fig. 7) is a figurative material visual image, as figurative is the photo or the picture of a man dressed in military uniform, although this uniform is symbolic (unless it is proposed as a military image and not as individual). But if an encyclopedia shows the flags of a number of countries, it is a conceptual material visual image, since they are not aimed to establish the individual identity of the shown form, but to establish its symbolic power as a kind of instrument effectively identificatory (not to confuse individual identity of a visual proposal with construction and relational norms that give a symbolic identifier to a specific country).

16.5 Annex

The three basic problems of visual semantics

[Summary of the topic above. Contrasting and comparative reading of the 3 visual semiotics, one for each of the 3 problems]

Under the generic name of “visual semantics” the appropriate hypotheses should be formulated, in order to have available an explanatory answer to the following questions:

1) What sees the interpreter when he/she looks at a conceptual material visual image?
2) What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees?
3) What variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen?

1

Plastic image semantics: What sees the interpreter when he/she looks (plastically) at a conceptual material visual image?

What the interpreter sees in this kind of images, are opaque sensory visual perceptions. Association, overlapping and distance between the available sensory visual perceptions (texture, color, form) are relations seen as definitive and non-referential proposal.

Figurative image semantics: What sees the interpreter when he/she looks (figuratively) at a conceptual material visual image?
The interpreter sees given proposals of sensory visual perceptions (texture, color, form) between which he/she establishes given relations of association, overlapping and distance in order to generate marks, axes and occluding contours, tending to fix the uniqueness of the relations established as possible representations.

**Conceptual image semantics:** What sees the interpreter when he/she looks (conceptually) at a conceptual material visual image?

The interpreter needs to know the conventional codes in force to identify the forms and rules of relation between such forms, as well as a given order to make the visual route of the image. So, he/she will be able to interpret those relations in the way set by those codes and rules, and to generate conventional classes and categories of representations (commands, instructions, prohibitions, etc.)

**Plastic image semantics:** What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees?

Nothing. The quality of object of the perceived consists only in the set of sensory visual perceptions being perceived; there are no other, not even its physical support (the painting) as something independent of such perceptions, and even less, something different built from them. That is, the plastic material visual image modifies only the universe of perceptual experiences that configure the own interpreter.

**Figurative image semantics:** What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees?

Through the relations established by the interpreter, he/she actualizes the same or similar or contradictory relations historically perceived in the world. Since they are material figurative images, what the interpreter reconstructs is the individualizing identity of such forms of the world, attributing to them ontological existence.

**Conceptual image semantics:** What reconstructs the interpreter in the world with what he/she sees?

Almost any situation related to the regulation or the feasibility of doing, allowing the representation of a large possible number of normed behaviors. (This answer requires to work out the concept of “iconopoiesis” or “how to do things with images” (with some relation with Austin’s proposal, 1962/1982, *How to do things with words*). The initial proposal I formulate here can be seen in *Iconopoiesis or the effectiveness of the form*.)

**Plastic image semantics:** What variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen?

New “qualia”, that is, the reinforced or transformed recall of feelings, emotions or sentiments he/she had available, from previous visual perceptions, or a new recall which he/she will have available to work out new feelings, emotions or sentiments as a result of the interpretation of other given future situations of visual perception.

**Figurative image semantics:** Which variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen?

Associations of features, which lead to ratify, contradict or expand the relational rules of the preceding attractors, and so it is constituted the dialectic quality of identification of the visual, situated between recognition and discovery.

**Conceptual image semantics:** Which variations stores the interpreter in memory, from what he/she has seen?

The syntactic rules of graphic language. Here visual images function by virtue of the coding a given society (even if, as is increasingly the case, the global society) attributes to them as conventional valid interpretations of the perceptual visual basic elements: textures, colors and forms and of their normed connections.
17 Possible worlds of visual images

17.1 Introduction

17.1.1 Preliminary remarks

I think it is desirable to establish a common basis to develop this proposal or, at least, to make explicit the differences from which our discourses of producer and interpreter will be built. I reiterate the key definitions I will use along this work, as well as a justification of certain provisory restrictions in the field of visual images, to whose analysis I will devote myself.

I understand by “semiotics” a body of knowledge and an ensemble of operations designed to explain how and why a given phenomenon acquire, in a given society and at a given historical moment of such society, a given signification and which would be this, how is communicated and what are its possibilities of transformation. I choose therefore a methodological approach of semiotics and I attribute to it an explanatory function; I work from the perspective of objective relativism and I consider that the signification is a possible object of knowledge, as the textualized emergent resulting from the interpretation process.

I understand here by “possible semiotic world” (PSW) the non contradictory set of perceptual proposals, with the mnemic attractors required for their interpretation, with their possible interpretations, and with the referents built by the interpretations of those proposals such as all of this is identifiable in a specific social environment. When contradiction appear in any of the mentioned proposals (perceptual proposals, mnemic attractors, interpretations, constructed referents) or between some of them, we are facing another and different possible semiotic world. I formulate it in this way since I suppose either that the interpretations of any perceptual proposal require to actualize given mnemic attractors (hence historical) and that, from such interpretations are projected the referents that give signification to the phenomena of human experience.

I understand by “perceptual proposal” the material result, and thus sensorily perceivable, that a human give, in order to be interpreted, to other humans. With the expression “mnemic attractors” I designate the mental images available in associative memory (Kosslyn, 1996: 214ff), that should be actualized, necessarily, in order to produce the interpretation of a perceptual proposal.

I understand by “interpretation” what could be said as “attribution of a meaning to a given perceptual proposal”, that could be considered appropriate except for the indeterminacy of the expression “attribution of a meaning”. Asked about what meaning I would give to an image, I possibly would respond saying what forms I can identify or what emotion causes to me, or what norm or instruction or convention is it transmitting to me, and one of these answers, or may be the combination of some, would be what I can call “interpretation”. Both the “interpretation” and the “meaning” need to be textualized so that they could be communicated and known thus by a person other than his own producer.

By “built referents” I understand the characteristics acquired by objects, emotions, conventions after having interpreted the corresponding perceptual proposal.

Beyond these precisions of terminology, I should clarify that I will not deal with the aesthetic aspects of the visual images that I will use as examples in my theoretical development. I will explore the field of the semiotico-cognitive operations involved in the interpretation of material visual images. The aesthetic can also be explained by the corresponding semiotico-cognitive operations, but this implies that we must situate in the level of rhetorics, as second (or umpteenth) transformation of the perceptual proposal, whose conventional form is achieved with a basic (never initial, but may be already as “dead metaphor”; Ricoeur, 1977) socially valid interpretation. In this work I will try to explain the production of this last kind of interpretation.

Also, as an economic limit, given the complexity that would involve the alternative option, I choose to restrict myself to trying to explain the production of the interpretation of fixed visual images. This excludes the moving material visual images (film, TV, some hypertexts, etc.) and the sequential material visual images, as arranged in series of fixed material visual images that construct a narrative course through substituting the perceptual proposal of continuum, by a sequence of given successive cuts, in each of which can be registered a state of transformation of the initial perceptual proposal. This successivity allows to retrieve the interpretation of the narration sequence with respect to the visual representation of a given behavior (comics).

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17.1.2 An open problematics

The expression “the PSWs of visual images” aims to designate, therefore, the whole of (a) the perceptual proposal, (b) the semiotico-cognitive operations, (c) the interpretation produced and (d) the semantic effectiveness or the finally built referent, that are involved in the interpretative task of material visual images. To speak of “material visual images” means to assume that there are material images that are not visual, for example, acoustic; that there are visual images that are not material, for example, mental. Even among mental visual images, can be differentiated the perceptual mental visual images, which are those produced in the mind as a result of perception acting at the same time, and the imaginary mental visual images, that are those stored in visual memory and available to be actualized as a result (or not) of a given perceptual behavior, but not only of this, and acting at the same time (or not). There is an interaction between material visual images and mental visual images (perceptual or imaginary) as necessary condition to produce interpretation.

By “perceptual proposal” I understand, in the field I am trying to delimit now, the specific material visual image which is being perceived at a given moment by a given subject. For a subject know that what is perceived is a material visual image, should be done given semiotico-cognitive operations, so through them the person actualizes in the mind/brain the configuration of another entity that is not the material visual image perceived, but the one represented by it, according to the available attractors.

So, the identification of the images corresponding to Figures 1, 2, 3 [62], [63] and [64], needs a particular construction in the mind, since in no case the perceptual proposal coincides with them. The first of them does not coincide with the representation of Woody Allen, but with that of a banana and a broken eyeglass frame, placed all on the white surface of an irregular trapeze, with an ocher frame on top, and all that on a blue background, but given the characteristics of this contextualization, it actualizes as attractor, some of Woody Allen’s images stored in our memory. The second, does not coincide with the representation of a face, but with that of a conglomerate of autumnal object representations, but given the characteristics of its contextualization, it actualizes as attractor, the possible form of a head profile. The third does not coincide with the representation of a female nude, which is just the lacking element between the borders of the effectively represented entities; these borders, given the characteristics of its contextualization, actualize as attractor, the possible shape of a female nude. Another kind of images that resort to the attractor to their interpretation, but that need a previous and special optical exercise to be able to retrieve the material proposal of the image to be interpreted, is those known as stereograms or stereoscopic images [65]. After a counterintuitive visual exercise of adaptation –since to be able to perceive it is required to blur what is being seen- a tridimensional image is obtained, generally amazing, of complex neurophysiological explanation and with deep implications in the mind-body relation problem (Julesz, 1995).

A possibly Peircean reference allows to say that this (1) first entity shaped (as interpretant) in the mind of the interpreter from the perception of (2) a given material visual image (as representamen) which confers given perceptual characteristics to (3) other given entity (as object/ground), is the result or semantic effectiveness of such material visual image, from whose production process I will outline an acceptable explanation using the methodological instrument of PSWs.
17.1.3 PSWs as field and structure of visual semiotics

A semiotic system, with its natural socio-historical dimension, has the logical form of a set of PSWs and the relations of the individuals (in the logical sense of minimal constitutive entities) belonging to one of such worlds with the individuals of each one of the remaining, are cognitive operations. As I said above, PSWs of visual images are formed by the logical relations identifiable between a given perceptual proposal (or textual PSW), the interpretation attributed to it by an interpreter (or interpretational PSW) and the referent built from such interpretation (or referential PSW).

I will analyze exclusively (a new restriction) the so called “figurative images” or “iconic sinsigns” in Peircean terminology, which I used in Magariños de Morentin, 2001. I will not refer thus to PSWs of the so called “qualitative images” or “iconic qualisigns” and to the PSWs of the so called “conceptual images” or “iconic legisigns” (but see Magariños de Morentin, 2002b on the process of semantization of these). Those who may be called “individuals” in a given textual PSW of a figurative image, correspond to the marks, as they designate the most part of a perceptual image that is not yet provoking the actualization of an attractor ([66] Fig. 4 and [67] Fig. 5). The “individuals” in given interpretational PSW of a figurative image correspond to the attractors, as they designate the smaller portion of a perceptual image corresponding to a given mnemic registry ([68] Fig. 6 and [69] Fig. 7). The “individuals” in a given referential PSW of a figurative image, correspond to the identificatory referents projected on some entity of the environment, different (in principle) to the perceptual proposal at study. Marks, attractors and identificatory referents are not univocal perceptual features, but different interpreters can choose different marks, attractors and identificatory referents equally effective to interpret a given perceptual proposal. Each interpretation will not, obviously, coincide with any other made by any other interpreter who starts from another marks, attractors and identificatory referents. Each of these interpretations is valid as a process of socio-historically acceptable interpretation, because is corresponding to marks, attractors and identificatory referents which are socio-historically in force.

In textual PSWs can be distinguished: a function of interpretation and the relations of accessibility and alternativity. The function of interpretation is a set of rules (identification of observable relations) by which each of the members (“marks”) of the textual PSW at study (and the paradigm of their effective relations) is corresponding to a given ensemble of individuals (“attractors”) of the interpretational PSWs at study (and with the paradigm of their virtual relations, thus generating other possible interpretations). This require to have available the representation of the articulation (syntactic) of each of these PSWs (the textual and the interpretational taken into consideration), so that they can be projected the one on the other/s and, consequently, can be affirmed or denied the accessibility and alternativity relations between them.
[69] Fig. 7 also shows the relations of the marks (right column) with the attractors (central column; made so as to show the connexions) and of any of them with the representation of the referent construction (left column).

This accessibility relation between the interpretational PSWs identified and a given textual PSW, will be well-formed if it meets the conditions of reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry (or, what is the same, of equivalence). As to reflexivity, it means that it will always be possible, through appropriate research, access to any textual or interpretational PSW from itself (this explains the mass production of images, common in Andy Warhol, [70a] Fig. 8; the failure of this condition in two reproductions of Picasso’s Guernica, in [70b] Fig. 8bis, is what originates the humor).

As to transitivity, it means that, given an interpretational PSWII, that is interpretation of an interpretational PSWI, that is, ultimately, interpretation of a given textual PSW, then, if the appropriate research shows that PSWII is accessible with respect to PSWI, and this is accessible with respect to the textual PSW, then the textual PSW and PSWII are also related, given the accessibility relation.

Symmetry means that by the appropriate research always will be possible to access to the textual PSW from all and any of the interpretational PSWs and that, in these circumstances, always will be possible to access to any of the interpretational PSWs from the textual PSW (see [71] Fig. 9; considering as textual PSW the drawings and interpretational PSWs the photographies (metaphorically, that is, as representation of the images stored in the interpreter’s memory and actualized so to interpret the corresponding drawing). The photographies allow to interpret the drawings, but these too allow to interpret the photographies).
As to the *alternativity relationship*, it poses the issue of the *directionality* of the interpretation function. This should be applied: from the textual PSW on some of the interpretational PSWs and vice versa, as well as relating with each other, diverse (at least two) interpretational PSWs belonging to the same semiotic system. By virtue of the alternativity relation and inside a semiotic system, it should occur that *given a certain individual, placed on the context of a given textual PSW, is possible to identify one or a set of interpretational PSWs in which the individual that is the interpretation of the first, appear placed in a homologous context to the textual*. Then it can be said that such and such interpretational PSWs are alternative of the corresponding textual PSW (see in [72] Fig. 10, the interpretational alternatives (photographies) of the textual PSW (drawing) proposed).

It can also be said that such textual PSW is the alternative of any of the interpretational PSWs. And, with the condition of operating inside a given semiotic system, it can also be said that any of the interpretational PSWs is the alternative of any of the remaining interpretational PSWs.
From the semiotic theory approach, it can be argued that there are: i) an identifiable PSW in the body of texts, whose domain is the ensemble of individuals that concur to realize the presence of a given discourse; ii) an identifiable PSW in the set of referents, whose domain is the ensemble of individuals that concur to project the projected reality (constructed) by those texts; iii) the virtual PSWs of the counterfactual utterings about non-said discourses, identifiable in the set of texts; or iv) the virtual PSWs of the counterfactual utterings about the non-interpreted reality, identifiable in the set of referents.

17.2 Three basic hypotheses

17.2.1 First hypothesis: instrumental

If a visual metasemiotics able to account for the visual operations effectively applicable to a given visual material or identifiable in it, is available, then the study of the production, the effectiveness and interpretation of visual images PSWs will have more rigor, consistency and comprehension (explanatory deepness). The metalinguistic instruments with which linguistics explains the semantic effectiveness of language in the projection of the referential universe, have been used excessively to explain the effectiveness of images. So is necessary a conceptual and terminological distance of linguistics. This distance with respect of the the linguistic aspects, has diverse aspects, among them:

(a) the verbal discourse and the visual image consist of contextual sets of signs, therefore, they share concepts, operations and the effectiveness of semiotics, in what the latter has of general or common to all classes of signs. For example: they need to be interpreted; they are different from the object they represent; their representative ability and characteristics of such representation depend on the context of signs of each discourse and each image; they do not have a single valid and definitely effective interpretation, but instead this interpretation depends, at least on the conceptual system and the associative intra and intersemiotic memory available to each interpreter, and this memory will be evaluated according to the social hegemony of the system of thought and of the semiotic relations applied.

(b) the verbal discourse and the visual image do not share other multiple characteristics that are basic to explain and, therefore, understand, the specific semantic effectiveness of each of them. Only those which I have defined in this work as conceptual or symbolic material visual images (see also Magariños de Morentin, 2001: 300), can be significantly closer to the characteristics of language (see, for example, the isotypes of Neurath, 1936, and the Blissymbols of Kasil Bliss semantography, 1948-9). But the distance of the figurative and the plastic material visual images with respect to a verbal semiotics is overwhelming. For example: the prosodic structure and linear contiguity of the verbal phrase do not appear in the visual image surface; the visual image is constituted by entities continuously variable, that is, without the discrete shape that identifies the linguistic signs: nor figurative and plastic visual image have or pose reasoning (as is the case of the symbolic or conventional visual image), and therefore, it is not appropriate to question its truth or ask if material visual images are able to lie (this lie would not refer to the eventual discrepancy between image and “reality”, because by rejecting such quality of “reality”, the question would be poetic or metaphysical, but to that existing between material visual image and perception or mental visual image, where that question could become appropriate. What, however, I also deny);

(c) there is also certain risk in qualifying the visual as "paralinguistic", for the equivocal of specifying the visual as that which is non-linguistic, that is, as something left as residue when the linguistic is excluded. It would be like to qualify the verbal as “paravisual”, generating the equivocal of limiting the linguistic to the non-visual, that is, to something left as residue when the visual is excluded. None semiosis is residue of any other, nor of all of the remaining, but each of them shares with the others the conceptual and productive space of semiotics signification, according to their differential characteristics and their necessary intersemiotic complementation.

(d) it remains to deal with the difficult issue of giving a visual communicative form to the visual metasemiotics. A part of such metasemiotics could be shown tentatively as the confluence of mnemonic attractors that are being actualized when a given visual proposal is present. Like the sequence of steps that are constructing from marks (see Groupe μ, 1992: 149) the image that finally a given attractor (“entities” in the terminology of Groupe μ) actualizes.

17.2.2 Second hypothesis: differential

When an access (cognitive) is used to study the semiotic effectiveness of visual images, 3 PSWs are identified in the universe of their perceptual possibilities: the plastic, the figurative and the symbolic, which can not be redirected to a unique iconic semiotics.
17.2.3 Third hypothesis: interpretational

When analyzing the interpretative specificity of each of the perceptual set so identified, 3 PSWs can be obtained: that of the identity, that of the perlocution or iconopoiesis and that of the experience/ing (emotion/energy) with respect to the effectively perceived.

(see a conceptual development of the second and third hypothesis in Magariños de Morentin, 2001)

17.3 Identification of the basic operations of a visual semantics

As to “the basic operations of a visual semantics”, I emphasize that it is about producing an explanation on what, how and why a given interpretation is produced from a given visual image, from any visual image, not from a necessarily aesthetic or artistic visual image. There are here other aspects, involved possibly with rhetorics (mentioned above), that do not appear, at least prominently, in the basic problem. Although these aspects can not contradict those, the basic problem should foresee them. That is, I am differentiating semantics from criticism and I am now interested in the operations explaining the production process of what usually is called “the meaning” of a fixed material visual image, regardless the aesthetic quality that could be attributed to it.

But immediately, I consider it necessary to intervene in the concept of “the meaning” of a visual image (proposal for a concept of meaning: the interpretation generated and externalized/externalizable). Do visual images signify? Or do they merely show? This alternative require to reflect and take a stand on a hypothesis which I provisiorily accept as valid: none semiosis is sufficient by itself. That is, so that a perceptual proposal signifies, it needs the presence, at least mnemic, of other perceptual proposals constructed with other different classes of signs. Despite that the concept of meaning is so worn-out, I will refer to it so we can share a common reference and we can avoid the use of a term referring to an ambiguous concept and even to contradictory concepts in the interpretation of each of them. I have already proposed to understand by “meaning” the textual materialization of an interpretation. I intend thus to avoid the metaphysical universe that is usually open to that term. The social dimension of meaning will come from the extension and validity of the social acceptance of such interpretation’s textualization. The meaning is not a quality that is intrinsic or inherent to a given perceptual proposal (as a representation of another thing or as the thing perceived), but a quality that is attributed to a given perceptual proposal by the social discourse (or, more specifically, by given sectors of the social discourse) at a given moment of a given society, so the meaning is not one, nor universal, nor, therefore, true. The goal of semantics is to explain the production process of a given meaning such as it is in force (i.e., as it is being or could be uttered) in a given sector of a given society and at a given historical moment.

So we could say that the semantics of visual images is the set of appropriate operations to explain why a given material visual image acquire at a given historical moment in a given society a given meaning and what is such meaning and how this signification has been attributed to that image.

To establish what is the signification of a given visual image implies to establish what is it proposing (by duplication, expansion or rupture of the interpretations in force) as possible interpretation of that what the image at study is representing.

To establish how a given visual image constructs the proposal of the possible interpretation of that what the image is representing, implies to establish the perceptual characteristics used to build the mental representation of what is represented by the image at study.

To establish why what is represented by the image at study acquire the possibility of being interpreted in a given way, implies to establish the social codes in force used in the production of such image at study.

That is, visual image semantics studies the effectiveness of such image in an environment different from that of the visual image. Visual images semantics studies the effectiveness of visual images to transform the meaning of the represented object, that is always different from the visual image itself. It is an effect that occurs outside the visual image, but that depends, basically, on the specific perceptual proposal of the visual image itself.

17.4 Semiotic methodology in the explanation of the interpretation of visual images

I will summarize and update some methodologically grounded arguments on the difference between the interpretation of visual images and that of verbal texts.

1. We do not learn to see vs. we must learn to speak

This is the proposal that provoked the major scandal among us, semioticians, who consider ourselves as the knights of the culture (the Dulcinea so vilified by the positivists). This proposal says that culture configures, social and historically, the way of seeing, that is, of looking. But seeing, as possibility of being modalized, is given by our organism. Instead, culture gives the speech, which is not given “ab origine” by the organism (despite the chomskyan innate grammaticality). The wolf child lacks speech but does not lack vision; if he loses after some time the possibility of getting his humanness, it is because humanness is a social but not an individual.
effect: he had lost the opportunity to learn to speak (he only has the roar of the guttural) and the opportunity to learn to look (but he still sees and identifies the food, the sexual couple and the attacker, among other things; it is not the same to see [which we do not learn] than to look [which needs to be learned]). This argument seeks to conclude that the operations which explain speech are inadequate to explain vision.

2. Images are dynamic forms vs. words (or linguistic signs, although there are not the same) that are discrete forms

This aims to limit the concept of type and system, that would have no effectiveness in the case of the repertoires of images in memory (the attractors), except in the case of images having the value of symbols (like the traffic signals). So, with the exception of these (the less habitual when speaking of “visual images”, although this is changing and leads us to understand that this written page is, above all, image, and after that, word), the operations coming from grammar, rhetorics, reading, etc., are not applicable to the explanation of the meaning of the visual images, but only in a metaphoric and dangerous way. Not only such operations, but also the adjectivations: “visual grammar”, “visual rhetorics”, “reading the image”, etc., produce equivocal statements and their apparent expressivity hides the difference and exalt the similarity (in contrast to what is postulated by Foucault).

3. Speech is a metasemiosis (its referent is another semiosis) of the perceptual image vs. perceptual images are semiosis-object (its referent is the world)

I follow Quine’s conceptual proposal (1977: 81ff). The operations explaining the speech are developed in a metatheoretical level of 2nd. degree, that does not need to be adequate to develop the operations explaining visual images, that would be developed with more effectiveness in a metatheoretical level of 1st. degree.

(These theses, with an argumentation somewhat different, were presented in the VI IASS Congress, in Guadalajara, Mexico, 1997 [Magariños de Morentin, 2000b]. They were aimed to reject the interference of linguistic methods in the study of images, which need specific operations, depending on the characteristics of the mental operations involved to explain them).

4. Every semiosis needs another/s to produce signification

Therefore, visual images may need the word to explain the process of production of signification which is appropriate to them. But the word also needs the image to explain its specific process of production of signification. It is not that the image must conclude (despite Barthes´ argument, 1964c) necessarily in the word, where can get its significative completeness, but instead that none semiosis is self sufficient.

(I presented this thesis, with another argument, in the III Latin American Congress of Semiotics, in Sao Paulo, Brasil, 1996; see Magariños de Morentin, 1988).

5. The study of all forms of manifestation of the material visual images can not be encompassed in a single semiotics; we should speak of the multiple semiotics of the visual image

There would be three large groups of material visual images, differentiable because they need different cognitive operations to get their interpretation. For this are useful the cognitive operations described under the iconic qualisigns (for the pure perceptions), the iconic sinsigns (for the figurative perceptions) and the iconic legisigns (for the conceptual or symbolic perceptions).

6. It seems to be appropriate to differentiate, in the construction of these semiotics: on the one hand, the cognitive operations leading to their identification and recognition and, by the other hand, those which lead to their interpretation

The semiotic work on visual images is not limited to explain how they acquire the signification a given sector of the society attributes to them, at a given historical moment. Ultimately, to explain how the signification of given material visual images is produced (and I am treating in very similar way the acquisition of signification and the production of interpretation) semioticians should be able to identify what and how are being actualized in the memory (of a given individual belonging to a given society) those perceptual features that are be chosen to identify and recognize (which are not always, nor to everyone, the same; not all of us see the same when looking the same image) those images, and this actualization is manifest in the discourses (in the broad sense I will give to this term below).

7. The meaning can be considered as the interpretation of a given substitutent semiosis, as is produced by the set of discourses (verbal, plastic and behavioral) that are constructed from such semiosis, by a given society at a given moment

With this, the term “meaning” ceases to refer to the metaphysical entelechy or to the nonsense criticized by Wittgenstein, and is contrasted with signification, term that would designate the interpretation of a given substituted semiosis produced from the substituent semiosis in force in a society at a given moment. This is
applied to the semiotics of the visual, so the semiotic work is to establish what discourses are involved and what are excluded (and as well, what concepts are built; what kind of perceiver-subject they allow to build; what discursive strategies they develop and, considering all of this, from which strategies they keep themselves apart; what strategies, possible and available, exclude they, at a given moment in a given society), when a given set of interpretations is attributed to a given material visual image proposed to the perception of a given society.

8. The object represented by an image does not belong to “the reality” but to the memory; in other words, the effectiveness of an image is to actualize a given attractor, as configuration of dynamic mnemonic features

We do not see “the grandfather sitting under the fig tree” when we see the photograph, but we retrieve the image we have stored in memory about how was (or could have been) the situation “when the grandfather used to sit under the fig tree”. The customs agent does not compare the photo of our passport with our face, but instead, looking the photo, he compares it with the archive (in the short term memory) he built or is building, after having looked our face (he can not look both at the same time, so he compares one with the archive of the other).
18 Iconopoiesis or effectiveness of the form

18.1 Introduction to iconopoiesis

For this study on the semiotic efficacy of the form, we start from Peirce, leaving an appropriate room for heterodoxy. The form is considered initially as possibility, needing a particular raw material to be specified as existent and to acquire a given value by convention in a given community.

As possibility, the form has available on the part of the interpretant, diverse systems of historical emotional qualities as actualizable attractors, both in the producer and in the interpreter. The raw material giving existence to it, will be physical stimuli suitable to configuring a visual or auditory or gustatory or tactile image or one relevant to any identifiable sensory sensations or to their combination. The social convention that attributes a value to a given form, will opt for (1) privileging the purely qualitative, considering it as bearer of emotions; (2) or privileging the predominantly identificatory, considering its ability to confer ontological existence to the entities of the environment; (3) or privileging the conceptual, that informs, proposes, commands, or forbids, a given behavior in relation to a given situation. When in (1) the image generates a quale or intimate emotion not experienced before, or when in (2) the image allows to perceive an entity that were not perceivable until its iconic configuration, and, when in (3) the form behaves as a symbolic statement with performative effectiveness as to a given behavior, then we can speak of iconopoiesis because of their ability to configuring the sentiment, the entity or the behavior, as effectiveness resulting from the interpretation attributed to that kind of forms. So, I will speak of iconopoiesis.

[73] ICONOPOIESIS

VISUAL IMAGES DIFFER (in the cognitive behavior needed for their interpretation)
IN THREE POSSIBLE SEMIOSIS:

a. plastic images
b. figurative images
c. symbolic images

EACH VISUAL IMAGE OF THESE SEMIOSIS, ALLOWS THREE VIEWS (OR INTERPRETATIONS):

1. as representation, it actualizes:
   1a. a possible emotion
   1b. a differential identity
   1c. the enunciation of a norm
   \}\n   \in a given environment

2. as configuration, it gives ontological existence to:
   2a. the feeling of an original emotion
   2b. a given identified entity
   2c. binding conventions with the rest
   \}\n   \in this modified environment

3. as performer, modifies:
   3a. the universe of available sensations
   3b. the effective relations with the identified entities
   3c. the behavior, making it conventional
   \}\n   transforming the environment in world

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1a, 2a, and 3a, are met with the perception of the other
1b, 2b, and 3b, originate the other
1c, 2c, and 3c, require the other to modify it

18.2 Analysis of the semiotic effectiveness of the form

To study the iconopoiesis, as semiotic effectiveness of a given form, we need to take into account 3 aspects: (1) the situation of the environment of a perceiver, to that refers the form; (2) the possible transformation in the interpretant of that perceptor, to which leads the perception of the form; (3) the acceptability of intervening in the environment, by the perceptor, to do the suggested transformation.

These aspects vary and their specificity depends on their quality: [a] predominantly qualitative; [b] predominantly identificatory; [c] predominantly and conventionally symbolic; or [d] by combination of the previous, of the form whose iconopoiesis is at study. In this initial outline, I will merely develop the variants of these 3 aspects, depending on the form that is a visual image (Magariños de Morentin, J., 2000a), leaving for
further developments the forms consisting in other sensory perceptions: acoustic, tactile, olfactory, etc., and their interaction.

18.2.1 Semiotic effectiveness through the interpretation of predominantly qualitative images

The first step of iconopoiesis of: (1a) a predominantly qualitative visual image, taking into account the situation of the perceiver’s environment, assumes the disposition of such perceiver to reduce to the chromatic any possible perception of such environment. I have as a visually enunciative perceptum of my environment, the chromatic proposal of [74], an exclusive perceptual universe, capable of identifying the possible chromatism of the ontological existence of the possible semiotic world from whose recognition I build my emotional identity.

The second step of the iconopoiesis of: (2a) a predominantly qualitative visual image, taking into account the possible transformation in the interpretant of that perceiver, assumes the generation, in his/her intimate universe, of emotions different from which he/she had stored along his/her history before. The perception of [74] gives me, as perceiver, an original and intransferable sensation. If I would try to verbalize such emotion, I would be restricted to state a necessarily unspecific generality, with respect to what I have effectively felt.

[74] Iconopoiesis of predominantly qualitative image (Elizabeth Murray, Her Story, 1984)

The third step of the iconopoiesis of: (3a) a predominantly qualitative visual image, taking into account the acceptability by that perceiver, of intervening in the environment, assumes the inclusion of those new emotions as qualitative components of his/her sensory universe. I have experienced as interpreter, perceiving Murray’s proposal [74], an emotionally new sensation, which is added as a new quale available in my emotional memory, for its historical availability to recognize other similar sensations.

Therefore, the effectiveness of a purely qualitative form is (i) the generation of qualia (untransferable intimate emotions; Dennet, 1995; Peirce, 6.222 to 6.237, 1965), (ii) its availability to identify the semiotic possible world as the chromatic form of the environment in which I exist and (iii) its availability as emotional memory, actualizable but unutterable.

18.2.2 Semiotic effectiveness through the interpretation of predominantly identificatory images

As to this quality, [b] predominantly identificatory of the visual image at study [75], we have the following three steps:

The first step of the iconopoiesis of: (1b) a predominantly identificatory visual image, taking into account the situation of the environment of its perceiver, assumes the disposition of such perceiver for the identification of possible new entities in such environment. I have available, as perceptum visually enunciative of my environment, the existentially identificatory proposal, visually stated in [75], in order to become an exclusive fragment of my possible perceptual universe, capable of identifying the possible individuality of its ontological existence in a possible semiotic world.

The second step of the iconopoiesis of: (2b) a predominantly identificatory visual image, taking into account the possible transformation in the interpretant of that perceiver, assumes the generation of new possible entities in his/her conceptual system with effectiveness to identify the environment. The perception of [75] gives me, as perceptor, the existential identification of an entity, effectively or potentially present in my world built from the elimination of the lack that before did not allow me to note in my environment the possibility of its existence for knowledge.

The third step of the iconopoiesis of: (3b) a predominantly identificatory visual image, taking into account the acceptability by that perceiver, of intervening in the environment, assumes the inclusion of those new entities as ontological existents effectively present in his/her world. I have experienced as interpreter, perceiving Hanson’s proposal [75], the configuration, in my associative memory, of an attractor which allows me to redirect the
perceptual fragments captured in the environment to the configuration of that existing entity, which is then added to the recognition of the possible semiotic world, from which I build my contextual identity.

[78] Iconopoiesis of predominantly figurative image (Duane Hanson, Woman with Dog, 1977)

Therefore, the effectiveness of an identificatory form is (i) the possibility of attributing identity to the entities of my environment (Varela, 1992), (ii) the attribution of ontological existence to the perceptions that are interpreted by the visually uttered form, and (iii) the building of my own identity as a specific way of existing among those things.

18.2.3 Semiotic effectiveness through the interpretation of predominantly and conventionally symbolic images

[76] Iconopoiesis of predominantly symbolic image

(A) How to do; Instruct
Mijksenaar & Westendorp, 1999; p. 49

(B) How not to do; doing wrong
Mijksenaar & Westendorp, 1999; p. 141)

(C) To permit to do. Alternatives; Swiss Army, 1886

(D) To forbid to do India; Rajesh Vora

(E) To forbid not to do; to have to do.
Aerolíneas Argentinas

(F) To encourage to do. Relax - Air France
From the third quality: \textit{[c] predominantly and conventionally symbolic} of the visual image at study, we will have the following last three steps:

The first step of the iconopoiesis of \textit{(1c) a predominantly and conventionally symbolic visual image, taking into account the situation of the environment of its perceiver}, assumes the disposition of such perceiver for the acceptance of the visually established norms as a guide of his/her behavior when intervening in such environment. I have, as a visually enunciative \textit{perceptum} of my environment, the conventional normative proposal (visually uttered in the examples of \cite{76}), as an effective fragment of my possible behavioral universe, capable of identifying the necessary or conventional actions for the obtention of a result forbidden, desired, discouraged, enforced, etc., as a consequence of given actions, from whose realization I build my social identity.

The second step of the iconopoiesis of \textit{(2c) a predominantly and conventionally symbolic visual image, taking into account the possible transformation in the interpretant of that perceiver}, assumes the availability of the new regulated behavior as a future realizable behavior in the environment. The perception of \cite{76} gives me, as perceiver, a set of statements about the existential identification of given actions, necessarily or conventionally established, in order to be capable to produce in my semiotic possible world given effects, individually desired or socially enforced, forbidden, or discouraged, as existential result effectively or potentially present in my world, built through the elimination of an ineptitude for a given behavior that, before such perception, did not allow me to note in my environment, the necessity of its existence for knowing its successful, dangerous or rejected realization.

The third step of the iconopoiesis of \textit{(3c) a predominantly and conventionally symbolic visual image, taking into account the acceptability by that perceiver, of intervening in the environment}, assumes the effective handling, under the rules visually established, of a given entity of the environment. I have experienced as an interpreter, by perceiving the proposals stated in \cite{76}, the configuration in my associative memory, of an \textit{attractor} that will allow me to redirect the perceptual fragments of possible behavior to the configuration of a complete existential behavior, that then is added to my possibilities of intervention in the possible semiotic world from that I build my social identity.

The enunciative ability of the predominantly and conventionally symbolic visual images, encompasses a multiplicity very close to that of the performative statements of language (langue) (see Austin, 1982). They could be systematized as visual images that:

- they instruct on how to make
- they instruct on how not to make
- they allow to make
- they allow not to make
- they forbid not to make (they demand to make)
- they forbid to forbid
- they encourage to make
- they encourage not to make (they discourage)
- they identify ways of making (sports, works, professions, etc.)
- they identify possible spaces and behaviors
-they contextualize
-they decontextualize

Therefore, the effectiveness of a predominant and conventionally symbolic form is learning and the practice of regulated behaviors (Mijksenaar & Westendorp, 1999).

Thereby, the forms (in the case studied: visual images) intervene in the production of untransferable emotions, ontological existents, and patterns of behavior, that transform the “environment” in “world” (Varela, 1992) and, through their process of interpretation, they confer specific identity to the perceiver and interpreter of such forms.
INDEXICAL SEMIOTICS
19 Towards an indexical semiotics

On the interpretation of objects and behaviors

Warning

From Peircean semiotics there are two ways of work on the concepts of index, indexical sign, iconic semiotics. I will develop one part of the triadic definition of sign (for example, that which Peirce stated in 2.228) in 19.1. The other part can be developed from the four cases which include the presence of the index in the generation process of the Ten classes of signs (2.254 to 2.264). This is what I try more concisely in chapter 20.

19.1 Towards an indexical semiotics¹

19.1.1 The interpretation of the substituent semiosis in indexical semiotics. Its difference from verbal semiotics

I start this tentative outline following Peirce’s proposal (Peirce, 1.427; 2.86). The problem outlined points to the design of an indexical semiotics, that is, a semiotics in which the signs of the substituent semiosis are behaviors, or objects with the quality of existents, or contents of memory. I think appropriate to clarify first the issue of the interpretation of the substituent semiosis (see the terms “substituent semiosis”, “substituted semiosis” and “semiotic object”, in 19.2.27 and 19.2.29) in order to include it in general semiotics, redirecting it then to the field of indexical semiotics, showing the specificity this semiotics acquires.

A. With respect to all semiosis: I propose a question that is important to the analyst-researcher facing a given textual proposal, that is, facing a substituent semiosis consisting of whatever raw material: What should we know in order to understand (to interpret, to attribute a meaning to) what we are perceiving?

Generally the interpreter is not conscious of this knowledge to which I am referring here. Often the interpreter does not notice what is looking for in the associative memory (Kosslyn, 1996: 214-225), when seeking other substituent or substituted semiosis that could associate with the one perceived and, by virtue of this association, understand, i.e., attribute a meaning to it (this is what is making each of you reading these lines, in order to establish what have you read at another time and coincides almost identically with what you are reading now, or what is contradicting other things that you already have read, or what at least have some resemblance with what you are reading now. Ultimately, without a correlate in personal historical experience, it can not be constructed a meaning).

A possible answer: in all cases, but especially in those of objects and behaviors, we must update and use (comparing, contrasting, transforming) the diverse semiosis (verbal, visual behavioral) in force in our society and, among them, those which we have available and are able to associate with what we are perceiving. As Peirce noted (2.303, passim), the result of this is an endless semiosis starting from the interpretant. Except from a dogmatic-hermeneutic perspective, there is no true interpretation, but interpretation consistent with given social semiosis in force, nor false interpretation, but interpretation divergent from given social semiosis in force; since everything depends on what is available to an interpreter and how he/she manages it, relates it, mixes it.

So, when we perceive a given semiosis as a substituent one (we can also perceive it as substituted or semiotic object) we need to relate it with other semiosis in order to understand it. In this sense are posed the concepts of function as a definitional characteristic like those called “utterings” by Foucault, and of externality of the meaning and of its explanation (Foucault, 1969: 105ff).

Those other semiosis should have the character of mnemonic attractors, that is, of images (qualitative, figurative, and/or normative experiences) retained in memory, which redirect what is being perceived to other perceptions which are already endowed with sense (or with historical meaning), attributing it, contrasting it, transferring it or proposing it as the sense (or as the search for the sense) of the new perceptual proposal.

This would be what the social interpreter makes in his/her intuitive and daily process of communication; the explanation, grounded in a rigorous methodology, is the task of the analyst-researcher who works in semiotics.

B. With respect to the objects and the behaviors: the objects will be considered habitually as semiotic objects, but in a given situation or in respect to some aspects, will require them to be considered as substituent semiosis, being this the most important aspect regarding the possible formation of an indexical semiotics.

That is what happens when they are exhibited in museums (and, more trivially, in a shop window). The objects exhibited in museums are (or should be) surrounded of written texts, photographs, audiovisual devices, the

¹ Sections 19.1 and 19.2 correspond, with some minor differences, to what was published as “Hacia una semiótica indicial”, A Coruña, Edicións do Castro, 2003.
discourses of guides and even may be workshops installed for the production of objects similar to those exhibited. All these resources are destined to actualize, in the mind of the visitor-interpreter, between an imperative and a suggestive mode, depending on the ideology of the curator (or of the designer of the shop window), those semiosis which are indispensable, or merely convenient, or even original, to produce a given meaning for the exhibited object.

The individual or group behaviors will be considered semiotic objects, but in a given situation or with respect to some aspects, will require them to be considered as substituent semiosis, being this the most important aspect regarding the possible formation of an indexical semiotics. Let us start to outline some examples.

The so-called “table manners” are behaviors that are fulfilled as substituent semiosis as far as they account for values which are culturally, historically, and socially linked to the intake of food. Eating is a semiotic object (behavior), as the action that materializes the intake, to which the table manners confer a given meaning.

The cutting of roads and the behaviors of piqueteros are predominantly substituent semiosis. As soon as we have contact with the culture in which that behavior occurs (now almost in a global dimension), who perceives it knows (because he/she links it to preexisting information in the semiotic memory) that it is not a celebration (as it would be the behaviors of Pachamama’s celebration in the Andean region of Argentine’s Northwest), but a protest specifically linked to lack of work or payment of wages due. This meaning is built from given isolated behaviors and from diverse groups or series of behaviors perceived in that situation. This perception is redirected or guided, in the individual case of each perceptor or interpreter, by the conceptual information, personal experience and memory of visual images already perceived, which attract that what is being perceived, generating associations, oppositions and transformations that are building the meaning of such perception; hence the interest of the press, the politicians, union leaders, in the production of verbal discourses that re-interpret (redirect, re-guide) the original meaning to whose production was produced the behavioral discourse.

What can not be required as evidence purported to establish the discursive character or of substituent semiosis in the case of existential behaviors (in principle, similar to the existential objects), is that these meet the enunciative possibilities that are specific and exclusive of verbal discourse (see 19.2.28).

Behaviors (individual and groupal), as well as objects (especially those exhibited in museums) and material visual images (qualitative and figurative, but not the symbolic), do not build conditional statements (“if...then”), nor causal statements (“because...”), nor do they show concordance in relations of gender, number, etc., since all of these cases are strictly linguistic categories.

Instead the verbal discourse can not show, nor can perform actions (despite Austin), nor can it use 3D, 2½D, or even 2D configurations to build the meaning, like the behaviors, the objects and the images (in each case, mutatis mutandis) can do, along with many other possibilities of specific effectiveness that the material existential has when is socially proposed as substituent semiosis.

To say that the behavior (like objects and images) needs the conceptual building that verbal language performs to be able to produce a meaning, is as valid as the reverse: verbal language needs the memory of behaviors (and/or those of objects and images) in order to produce the verbal meaning. That is, none semiosis is auto sufficient, but instead their interpretation needs another (one or more) semiosis (and/or more elements of the own semiosis) to be able to signify.

So, the task of the researcher is, at least partly, to search the rules appropriate to each of the semiosis with which is built a given meaning at a given moment of a given society.

Some of the basic problems are:

1. **How can be found those rules specific of a given semiosis?** Or, how they differentiate, in each case, from those which can be considered as rules common in general semiotics? That is, What are the rules governing the relations between behaviors or between objects (or between images; those which are in force between symbols are better known or are known from the beginning, and explicitly) so as they produce a given meaning? That is, How can we differentiate the behavioral relations which produce the meaning of “celebration” from those producing the meaning of “protest”?

2. **Do not confuse the analysis of the ability to produce the meaning of other entity**, different from the semiosis producing it, with the analysis of the meaning of a given phenomenon, which comes from other semiosis. To analyze how the piqueteros behavior produces the meaning of protest (as substituent semiosis) is different from analyzing the meaning of lack of work, built by the behavior of piqueteros, unlike that resulting in a newspaper editorial.

3. **Identify, in each specific case, what are the semiosis that concur in order to build the interpretation of how a given semiosis produces a given meaning.** That is, what images, what memories of what has been seen, read, or
19.1.2 Exploration of the object in the museum, as introduction to an indexical semiotics

I intend to explore the basic lines of a semiotic study on the meaning of the objects, insofar it is one of the fundamental aspects of indexical semiotics. The expression “semiotic study on the meaning of the objects” require some clarifying attempt before, which, nevertheless, would be already a part of the same semiotics. I choose the particular experience of the museum as ground of exhibition of given objects, in order to situate ourselves in the field of the observable and with a relative delimitation of the quasi universal domain which would correspond to the concept of object.

For now, I only intend to leave some lines of inquiry raised about the issue. I think the basic is to bear in mind that to confront the study of the object meaning in the specific context of the museum, requires an exploration of semiotics effectiveness as research methodology, in order to be able to explain the process of proposition, interpretation and transformation of the meaning of what is exhibited, as well as its result, because of the very fact of being exhibited according to the characteristics of the exhibit design and adjusting itself to the interpretation systems of the visitors of the exhibit.

This meaning is different from which would acquire the same object in a shop, in a particular room in a house, in a hospital, in a church, in the barracks, in a park or a street, or a school, or in a neighborhood sporting club, etc. It also would differ from the signification acquired by that object if it were represented in a graphic image, bi or tridimensional, and from the signification of such image as object. So, I exclude provisorily from this work the kind of objects whose domain is to be representations of other objects; even if they were the most commonly represented in museums, like museums of painting and sculpture, but also museums of mockups, of photographs, of artistic reproductions, of the voice, etc.

Therefore, everything about what we are going to reflect in this work shall be understood as referring to the exhibition of the object in its basic quality of semiotic object, in a museum, and not referring to the exhibition of those objects that are displayed by virtue of their basic quality of substituent semiosis, unless otherwise noted due to the requirements of a differential semantics. It should be noted that by displaying in a museum any object, it ceases to be semiotic object and becomes substituent semiosis. When speaking about its “basic quality”, I am referring to the quality the object has, previously and historically, regardless of that which it will acquire by virtue of being exhibited, which always will be that of substituent semiosis.

The reason for this exclusion of objects whose basic quality is that of substituent semiosis, is that this basic quality is already metasemiotic, provided that the exhibited are discourses about objects, that is, objects which are originally representations of another objects, as is the case of an exhibition of figurative visual images. On the contrary, when the basic quality is semiotic, the exhibited are objects that do not possess originally, a representative character, as is for example the case of a nautical museum. I exclude the first ones and I restrict myself to the second ones, because the problems and analytical operations to use in both cases (that of metasemiotics and that of semiotics) are different.

Nevertheless, this exclusion does not encompass the discourses, in co-textual function (see the difference between “context” and co-text”, in 19.1.8), by which the exhibited objects are proposed as endowed with a given signification, at least in the communicative design of the museum curator; these would have a particular importance to establish the relation between the possible semiotic world of the curator such as he proposes it when designing the exhibition, and the possible semiotic worlds of the visitors such as they build them from the curator’s proposals and from their own interpretation ability (see possible semiotic worlds, in 19.2.32 to 19.2.34).

However, by being exhibited, the object in the museum ceases to be what it is “in itself” (which, nevertheless, includes it in a culture and so gives to it the basic character of semiotic object) and begins to be in representation of something else (which gives to it the derived character of substituent semiosis).

The objects in a museum lead us to an absence, to another object and/or to another space and/or to another time, in which such object, being the same, is already not that what is in the showcase or on the pedestal. They have not the basic structure conventionally accepted of substituent semiosis (unlike the material visual images) and so, they become it by the effectiveness of the context. That is, without ceasing to be semiotic object (that, as such, admits the set of substituent semiosis that produce its specific signification: written texts, photographs, audiovisuals, etc., that to accompany the exhibited object, and that I have called above, “co-text”), it is proposed in addition as substituent semiosis to build the signification of other objects or behaviors, effectively absent of the context of museum’s exhibition (that is what happens with the objects exhibited, for example, in a history museum).
19.1.3 More on the object in the museum; more on indexical semiotics

In the previous paragraphs I proposed to consider this object as a semiotic object that is exhibited and that, by virtue of this exhibition acquire a representative power; therefore I will propose it as substituent semiosis, even if (originally) it is a semiotic object and becomes substituent semiosis only through the effectiveness of that situation of exhibition.

It seems like a contradiction. But it is about the exhibition (i.e., the transformation in substituent semiosis) of objects that have not the quality of being substituent semiosis. One thing is exhibiting a pipe in a museum and quite another to exhibit the image of a pipe in a museum; a situation that lead to Magritte to write next to that image: “this is not a pipe” (retaken by Foucault, 1973, in a delightful little book with that title and on this topic). If what is being exhibited are images of pipes, then there are being exhibited substituent semiosis; if what is being exhibited are pipes, then there are being exhibited semiotic objects, but, while they are exhibited, they are substituent semiosis, since they represent other pipes of a given style or manufacturer or culture or ethnic group or, even, they represent a given smoker who used them. But this capacity to represent is such that neither Foucault nor Magritte might say “this is not a pipe”; since they are, effectively, pipes.

This is how acquires specific representative quality the object exhibited in the museum. The basic cognitive task proposed by the exhibition of an object in a museum (like in other places in which it could be exhibited) is to perceive it. Such task corresponds to the fundamental goal of vision, as Marr stated: “To know what is where, by looking” (1982: 3). But so far, the object in the museum is not identified in its specificity; it would be identified, as Marr stated, like any other object we identify and situate in spatial coordinates, generally intuitive. In the museum it is necessary to perceive, but this is not enough; it must be assigned a particular quality to that perception: that of being the perception of a representation. I believe that having clear the difference between to use and to exhibit, helps to understand this (we owe something to Quine, 1962: 77).

The object used requires to be perceived its placing in space and to know how to handle it with the appropriate effectiveness according to its characteristics. But possibly it is not being perceived consciously, nor we have constant awareness of the skills required for handling, as is for example my relation with the keyboard in which I am writing this.

The exhibited object is proposed explicitly to perception, in a given situation which favours (or should favour) its contemplation, and actualizes to the visitors awareness a given information, by which becomes a representation, insofar it is not confined to itself, but instead, its presence proposes some kind of relation with something different to the own object. This relation with something different has diverse variants.

That it is not confined to itself does not exclude that its only possibility to represent, is to represent itself. This happens especially with the so called “unique objects”. In these cases, the exhibited object and the represented one, are not the same, despite their apparent unicity; the object has not the same identity when perceived as when interpreted.

In the unique object case, the represented object is always characterized as an absence that contradicts the effective presence of the exhibited object. San Martin’s saber, in custody in the Regimiento de Granaderos in Buenos Aires, is not (except from a positivist view, “dry”, as would say Hanson, 1977: 21) the saber that clung San Martin, but instead, it represents it or evokes it as an already exhausted or non-existent possibility and, in any case, effectivly absent with respect to the saber exhibited: the possible semiotic world of the current saber is not the possible semiotic world of the saber handled by San Martin; due to this difference in possible worlds, the identity between what we perceive today and what San Martin perceived when handling the saber, is lost. What does not detract, but adds the value of being its own representation and the unreachable value of not being able to be of San Martin; the case of replicas or copies, as the case of San Martin’s saber exhibited in the Museo Histórico, is already the case of the objects that have the character of substituent semiosis (but I warn that I will use the term “replica” in a Peircean sense, more rigorous, and as the third possible set of the kind of objects exhibible in a museum; see 19.1.8 and 19.1.26). However, the most common case is that in which the exhibited object is representing a whole domain of objects, to which it belongs too. It is the case of the so called “prototypes”. The object shares its perceptual and/or symbolic characteristics with a series of other objects, displaying them as decisive and definitory of its capacity of representing them (Rosch, 1973; Dubois, 1991: 15). Those other objects are similar to each other and to the exhibited one, but, additionally, they are absent. Such the case of the old spanish coin of one maravedí, exhibited in a numismatic museum. Shown there, that coin is not such, but it represents itself and all others of its type and value that once existed. I think I could argue that this necessary distance, is what makes the essential characteristic of a museum object, what confers its status as sign and what makes it an object of knowledge of indexical semiotics.

19.1.4 A first approach to the interpretant of the object in the museum: the visitor

One of the basic contributions of Peirce was to establish the interpretant as the place of plenitude (always provisory) of the sign. There are no sign until a given perception found its place in the mental system of
interpretation, where the observer redirects it. It does not mean that in the meantime there are a sign which is not interpreted; it means that there are not sign at all (coincidentally, in relation with the de re modality: Kripke, 1980: 110).

From this perspective, the museum object only acquires its specific meaning when interpreted by each of the visitors who perceive it effectively, and according to the characteristics which acquires such perception in the mind of each of that visitors.

An observation I made in another paper is actualized again (Magariños de Morentin, 2000a: 691), with respect to visual image semiotics; I think it can be applied to the interpretation of any kind of sign: no semiosis is self sufficient to get its interpretation. It means that the interpretant needs to relate the current perception being interpreted, with the mnemonic trace, already interpreted, of other (one or multiple) perception’s, sensory experiences, names, expressions and verbal phrases, perceived or performed behaviors, etc., and on which by similarity or difference, will be based the current perception. This is the function fulfilled by that part of the brain model of the visual objects identification that, as I have already mentioned, Kosslyn (1996: 214-225) calls “associative memory”.

The term “interpretation” involves a double task: that of recognition and that of interpretation as such. The first task is accomplished when the viewer knows what is seeing. Usually it points to the capacity of giving it a name. The second, is accomplished when the viewer links it with diverse aspects of the cultural system to which he/she belongs. Involves the ability to assign it a context, essentially existential or utilitarian and/or to include it in a system, essentially conceptual or virtual.

This is the field of concurrence between the proposal of the exhibition curator and the universe of significations with which the visitor arrives to the museum. This field could range from the complementarity to the conflict, and about all this there is much to clarify.

19.1.5 Contraposition of the possible semiotic worlds of the curator and the visitor

The previous section concluded with my commitment to continue my development on the museum object as a part of indexical semiotics, approaching that space of complementarity or conflict consisting of the concurrence between the proposal of the exhibition curator and the universe of significations the visitor brings to the museum.

Note that when I refer to the “curator”, I think in a collective subject, since in the design, organization and implementation of the exhibition, always and necessarily are involved a staff of persons with different knowledge and abilities (museologist Alicia Sarno, personal communication). Of course, also the term “visitor”, without being of my full satisfaction, refers to a collective subject: the group of persons who attend the museum and establishes contact with the exhibited object.

But returning to the initial thread, I want to consider the exhibited object as a meeting point between the possible semiotic worlds of the curator and the visitors.

The expression “possible semiotic world” deserves a careful development (I contribute here with some; see 19.2.32 to 19.2.34). I worked on it in at least a couple of papers (Magariños de Morentin, 1996b and 1999b). Different approaches can be seen in Versus N° 17 (1977); in Kripke (1980), with the metaphysical exploration of the relations between the designative and the ontic; in the very attractive compilation of Allen (1989) of Nobel Symposium 65, with an interesting work of Eco (“Report on Session 3: Literature and Arts”); in Hintikka (1976) with the hardness and fascination of an excellent logic, among others. It is also fruitful the concept of Foucault’s (1969: 62; 72; 90; 97 passim) “discursive formations”, which I consider similar to that of possible semiotic worlds.

One of these possible semiotic worlds in indexical semiotics, arises from a specific empirical situation, built following given spatial relations and, in the case of the museum, was chosen by the curator for the exhibition of the object.

Some of these spatial relations may fall on the same object and are aimed to propose a given visualization of it. Others, may relate it to a universe of concepts and textual images from which will come the information necessary for its semantization. Others may link it to a universe of behaviors aimed to build its pragmatic dimension. In any case, such spatial relations implies a proposal of ideologization of the object, according to determinations with which the curator wants to control, or at least, from which pretends to guide the interpretative ability of the visitor.

The other possible semiotic world is formed by a set of predetermined interpretative possibilities, according to which each interpreter, or in the case of the museum, visitor, is located in presence of the object to configure an imaginary empirical situation, built according to given spatial relations, and in which each visitor is willing to place the object.
Some of these spatial relations may fall on the same object and are intended to establish the characteristics the visitor can accept as appropriate to the visualization of such object. Others are intended to relate this object with a universe of concepts and mnemonic images from which comes, when the visitor is in presence of the object, the information necessary to the semantization that visitor can give to it. And, finally, other spatial relations will link the object, in the visitors imagery, with a universe of behaviors tending to build its pragmatic dimension. In any case, this set of spatial relations implies a proposal of the objects recognition, following determinations from which the visitor will be willing or not to accept the ideologizing proposal of the curator.

In its more basic form, the possible semiotic worlds of the curator and the visitors, consist of the dialectical possibilities, as contrasting and eventually even contradictory, of visualization, semantization and pragmatic utilization applicable to the object. These three dimensions are the fields in which is risked the possibility of communication exchange between the collective curator and the group of individual visitors of the museum. They materialize in the form in which is exhibited the object, the texts, the graphics and audiovisuals to which it is being associated and in the pedagogical or play activities which are programmed as kinetic experience with the object or with its replicas or with its components or results.

How the curator exhibits the object versus how the visitor want to perceive it. What information the curator associates to the object exhibited versus what the visitor knew about it. What physical relation admits the curator to be established with the object versus which is the one that the visitor is interested in establishing.

Such could be, I think in principle, the three basic topics for the analysis of museum objects as communication proposal.

19.1.6 The “staging”of objects and behaviors

I continue with some reflections on indexical semiotics. The theme is centered on the possibility of identifying when we are before the perception of objects and/or behaviors which by suggestion, or, maybe by imposition, projects us to a universe different from that we have in presence and, therefore, leads us to build a semiotic interpretation of such perception which we, in principle, consider as semiotic object but, later, should be considered as substituent semiosis.

In this sense, I argue that all display of objects/behaviors has always some aspect of “staging”, and staging is an initial and necessary condition to communication. Therefore, staged objects are different from themselves (they cease to be simple semiotic objects) because of that plus to which they refer (and what attributes to them, in some extent, the character of substituent semiosis).

In this reflection the semiotic perspective is general and encompasses, after analyzing the symbolic proposals (for example, verbal or sign languages, arithmetic and symbolic logic) and the figurative proposals (for example, photographs, paintings and sculptures), all existing and possible entities, artificial and natural. Seen by man, such entities are seen (or intended or built) for man and they already are not what (supposedly but inaccessibly) would be in themselves, nor what they would be (being equally inaccessible tu us) if seen by an alien of another galaxy, by some Peircean eternal intelligence (the “Æon” of 3.433, which I will transcribe below) or, closest, by the martian of Chomsky; but note that they always would have to be for someone, since, if not, they simply would not be (or, at least, they would not be the possible object of a conscious perception of a mind we were able to imagine).

The hypothesis would then affirm that all semiotic object is involved in something which has simultaneously the quality of substituent semiosis. Even in its mere character (ontological) of semiotic object, no entity would situate (taking up the well known expression of Barthes, 1967a, 1967b) in the “degree zero” of a semiotics. It means that none object could be considered as total and definitely finished or built as the final result of some semiotic interpretation, nor could be considered as without any power to semiotize something which is already not the same but something else, to which such object refers or represents (other object with which it would appear or whose absence would reveal; the owner or handler of the objects; a necessary gesture; etc.). It means, instead, that by denial of the “degree zero”, would always retain in addition (at least) the power to be redirected to something other than itself. When being placed somewhere, inevitably with other object/s or next to other object/s, in order to be seen there and not in another possible place, nor in association with other possible entities, in order to be seen by someone (or by many), but not by others (or by one), it is placed in order to communicate something more than its mere presence: something which can refer to identity, status, commitment, power, veneration, mentality, ideology, creativity, fashion, exclusion ... and many other aspects that the objects build and for whose designation or description there are no sufficient words, but whose effectiveness can be proved when perceiving them or when being or circulating among them.

There are explicit “stagings” of objects, as socially recognizable, that are exhibited so to be seen: this is the case of museums, collections, exhibitions, botanical gardens, zoos and nature reserves, showcases or shopwindows, supermarket gondolas, plazas, gardens and parks, building fronts, the clothes we wear, the furnishing of a room in a private home, in a hotel, in a hospital, in a company, in a prison cell, etc.
There are explicit “stagings” of behaviors, as socially recognizable, exhibited in order to be seen: military parades, the ballet, mime theater (to address predominantly situations with minimal presence of the verbal), sporting events, political and/or trade manifestations, civic or religious ceremonies, medical consultation (especially, in social medicine in which the doctor manipulates the patient’s body with minimal participation and interest in the information that the patient transmits verbally), fashion parades, attendance and displacement by meeting places and urban promenades like that of the Alameda in Santiago de Compostela, the old “vuelta del perro” in Tandil2, the Recoleta in Buenos Aires (and every inhabitant of every city, town or village knows where and when), aerial acrobatics, etc.

To identify this repertoire is like a challenge. It is almost inexhaustible, comprising areas for exhibition of objects and/or behaviors. All of them are perceptual proposals (I avoid to say “texts” or “discourses”, to evade the intrusion of linguistics; but, between quotes and brackets, I say it. In 19.1.22 and 19.1.23, I use the term “disposition”) about which semiotics has (or would or should have) much to say and to explain. The rich line of research and study in which I am including this particular kind of reflection is that of an indexical semiotics.

Now, the hypothesis I am outlining is that besides these explicit situations of staging of objects and behaviors, that unequivocally constitute substituent semiosis, also the objects used in social practice (according to their specific goal and, although they are apparently not intended to be exhibited, that is, as simple semiotic objects), are always involved inevitably in some kind of implicit staging situation and, therefore, appear endowed with a semiotic tension that makes them objects at study for an indexical semiotics.

The only exclusion would be the set of those objects which could be considered as impossible semiotic objects (along the line of the configurations designed by Escher). But, Exists the impossible object?

19.1.7 Semiotics as a transformation process and the Peircean unsystematicity in the characterization of the index

I am intending to develop the basic lines of an indexical semiotics. I have already anticipated some comments when referring to the objects, especially those exhibited in a museum, and to the behaviors, particularly in the case of “piqueteros”.

But rather than isolated thoughts, I would try to systematize concepts and operations which allow the construction of that part of semiotics that, at least according to the information I have, is the one less developed.

Of course, Peirce is who has built the concept of index with more depth and richness (2.284-2.291, passim). His thoughts will be present here permanently, but I will not attempt to be orthodox; rather, I foresee the need for a considerable heterodoxy or, at least, the search of alternative developments.

In this sense, I pose a couple of topics about which it will be necessary to continue working, so to move forward to an indexical semiotics.

The first refers to the basic semiosis of this indexical semiotics, that would consist, for example, in the objects and behaviors (and also the contents of memory, which I leave for a later work) to what I refer above. But, as we know, a semiotics is not identified by the kind of referent it builds, nor by the sensorial feeling from that it starts, but by the transformation to which it submits the perceptions and the referents, by virtue of which it constitutes them in signs. So, the words, that are predominantly symbols, have in Peircean systematics an (important) indexical aspect: for example, their physical quality and their presence as existents that make them be heard or seen, and, of course, an (important) iconic aspect: for example, the modulation of who pronounces them and the typography or calligraphy of their writing, both of which follow a formal structure as base. And the images, that are predominantly icons, have also an (important) indexical aspect: for example, their physical support and their presence as existents that occupy a space in a wall (paintings) or a volume in a place (statue), etc.: and, of course, an (important) symbolic aspect: for example, their price in the art market or their quality as revolutionary piece that initiates a new period or of transient piece that provides nothing new. That is, I believe it does not suffice to say that an indexical semiotics deals with, for example, objects or behaviors, because both have (important) iconic and symbolic aspects, besides their predominant (in our culture) existential presence. In all signs predominate an aspect, which will make them appear to us as icons, indexes or symbols, depending on the circumstances and social-historical conditions, but that does not exclude the other semiotic aspects (more on this copresence of all signs in each, can be seen in 19.1.11). The index is, therefore, a way of representing and not a raw material or a sensation, although it should be taken into account that its way of representing fall predominantly (at least in our culture/s) on those we call “objects” and “behaviors”.

The second topic is conceptually rather complex. It refers to the unsystematicity that appear in the criterion

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2 “To go around the dog” in Tandil, which some years ago was a little town, meant turning around the main block of the town, in the car, again and again, on saturday night, especially the young people. (G.W.)
followed by Peirce for his construction of the index, compared to the criterion, more coherent and unambiguous, followed to characterize the icon and the symbol. While these are identified because they acquire a specific representative quality (their quality of sign) by being situated or appearing “in place of”, in the case of the index, it seems to be identified because it acquire its specific representative quality (its quality of sign) according to the characteristics of its physical association with other sign/s, that is, because of its capacity to and characteristics of contextualization, i.e., being situated or appearing “in a dynamical connection” with the object it represents. The general semiotic operation posed to study the signs is that of substitution; so it would be a menonymy dynamics (it represents because it is in place of). Moreover, the general semiotic operation posed to study contexts is that of integration, so it would be a menonymy dynamics (it represents because it is a part of). But in the case of the index, following Peirce, the semiotic operation specifying it as sign is that of integration (in a broader context) that is, its identification as sign would be that of metonymy dynamics (it represents because it is a part of).

This option to specify the index from the perspective of its integration with other signs is manifest, initially, when Peirce establishes the quality of existential context he attributes to the ambit of assessment of the index, that is, to what he calls “dicisign” or “dicent sign” (2.250 to 2.251) against the quality of virtual system he attributes to the ambit of assessment of the icon, which he calls “rhema” (2.250) or to that of the symbol, which he calls “argument” (2.252 to 2.253). This is potentiated when Peirce (2.283) differentiate, in evaluative terms, between the genuine index, consisting in an existential relation (therefore, linked to the integration and, as such, relatively close to the metonymic), and the degraded index, consisting in a referentiality relation (therefore, relatively close to substitution, and so, to the metaphoric). And, without clarifying if he speaks in the same sense as before, in the footnote 23 to 8.368, he distinguishes two kinds of indexes: those which “stand for...” or “designations”, that is, those which designate, since they are in place of something (this allows to consider them relatively close to those he has established as degraded indexes, so they have a metaphoric relation with their object) and those he calls “reagents”, that is, the reactive (maybe as a trace of his academic formation as chemist), since they connect the mind with a given phenomenon to that they point or indicate or of which they are indexes (this allows to consider them relatively close to those he has established as genuine indexes and, then, having a metonymic relation with their object).

19.1.8 How is defined and delimited a context

I believe it is important to stop here and try to clarify a double operation we will need often in our task of outlining an indexical semiotics. It concerns the theoretical comprehension and the empirical adequacy of the problem of (1) how to define a context and (2) how to delimit a context.

Almost nothing of semiotics can be answered in two words, but I suggest to take these short comments as minimum outlines for understanding the proposed topic, which needs be the subject of reflection and deepening and of a more precise adjustment, which would not be timely here.

(1) With this restriction, can then be said that the context is, in principle, the set of signs, effectively existing, that appear associated to another given sign, effectively existing, according to the rules of integration of the semiosis to what they belong.

Moreover (as a provisional and unrealistic analytical approach, but appropriate to the rigor, and that should be changed, as I will propose later, to adapt it to effective situations), only will be taken into account, in order to affirm that it is another context, the signs belonging to the semiosis of the sign whose context is at study. This means that the context of a linguistic sign consists of other linguistic signs, that of a graphic sign consists of other graphic signs, that of a musical sign consists of other musical signs, etc. When these other signs appear associated but without belonging to the semiosis of the sign at study, we use to speak of “co-text”, a term by which I confess to feel little sympathy, since I think it is not well defined and, above all, there are poorly defined their relations with the text it accompanies, so I do not believe it can be used to eliminate the unreality of the above criterion; and I speak of “unreality” because it is almost impossible to find a given sequence of signs, I mean a context, whose components intervene, all of them, in one and the same semiotic function: all of them intervene only like icons, or only like indexes or only like symbols. From a co-textual perspective, the examples of situations might be: gestures accompanying words, a title accompanying a painting or a sculpture, or the TV images while is being transmitted a concert (be they natural landscapes, or details or panoramics of the musicians or the director, etc.; it is interesting the case of videoclips) or the mentioned informative texts (writings, audvisuals, photographies, etc.) yuxtaposed to the object exhibited in a museum.

The context, whose definition I already have outlined, is the natural tool of all semiosis, by what each sign acquire the sense conferred to it by the other signs of a given context in which they are included (see the “sense” face to “meaning” and to “concept” in 19.1.18). All context is always the context of some given sign; in addition, it is context of some effectively existing sign, that is, all context is always a material and non virtual phenomenon.
This, in turn, means that it would not be semiotically correct to speak about abstract concepts, therefore it could not be said (although it is said fairly often) that a cultural system or the rules of a grammar or the political ideas in force at a given moment, were contexts of “something” or that “something” acquires sense in the context of a system or of some rules or of given ideas. It can be said (although almost never is said) that something acquires sense in the system of a given culture, or of the rules of a given grammar or of the political ideas at a given historical time, in which case, “something” is not considered as a specific existent, but as a virtuality or abstraction. The context of something specific is composed by existential items present in its physical environment, while the system is composed by abstract items, conceptual and/or virtual. This is why it can be said that “something” acquires sense in the context of a specific political discourse or in those issued at a given session or period in the Parliament, or in the context of the perceivable relations of an advertising image or in the books of a given library. Curiously, while it would seem acceptable, although it is contradictory, to say that “something acquires sense in the context of a given system”, nobody would dare to say that “something acquires sense in the system of a given context”, where the contradiction is more evidently perceived.

In my use of the term “context”, the expressions that I criticize would not be semiotically correct, as adequate use (or even scientific or rigorous) of the terms and relations of semiotics itself, but instead, they would correspond to colloquial language, with its definitory load of being the semantic place of the equivocal (in the accurate words of the older structuralist Galvano della Volpe, 1966), despite the creative power or poetics of the colloquial language. In the correct use of the term “context”, we might to say that “something” appears in the context, that is, inside a specific discourse, or a given visual proposal, or a given individual or collective behavior. In all the cases, exists in time and space (all of that, of course, comes from the existential actualization of the virtual possibilities of a system).

To understand this it is necessary to take into account that the sign has two possible levels (or ambits) of existence: (a) an abstract or virtual existence in a system (or paradigm or discursive formation, etc.) and (b) a specific or effective existence in a context (or syntagma or uttering, etc.). Peirce calls this specific existence, “the replica” of the sign as an instance of its application (2.246), since the sign always acts through its replica (2.249). I even add that it is at this level of specific existence where, being interpreted, the sign is changing its meaning, while in the abstract level of existence, the sign is available as the registry or archive of all the possibilities that, at a given moment (past or present) have been or are being performed existentially. Creativity involves a rupture (future) of such possibilities (creativity depends on the possibilities already created which have preceded it, that is, we can not create out of nothing; we can transform the preexisting possibilities) and is always a discursive event (or of some substituent semiosis) and never a state of the system. This is why a system of signs is not directly knowable, but only by an inference from the analysis of one or various given contexts in which some of its forms or possible replicas and some of its possible relations are actualized.

(2) The double operation to that I am referring continues with the issue of how to delimit a context, that is, how it is identified or how is established where it starts and where it ends.

In the ambit of linguistic signs, I have applied the criterion of segmenting the whole verbal text, according to the syntactic and semantic minimum, in another work (Magariños de Morentin, 1998). It attempts to identify and segment (provisorily), the part of a text which is a full grammatical structure and build a given meaning. Ultimately, to identify the context of a sign involves segmentation of the text that contains them (the sign and the context) and this operation require that its application be adequate and rigorously defined and described. I attempted to approach it in my proposal, in verbal semiotics field, in the work mentioned above.

But now I would not risk proposing segmentation criteria to delimit contexts, nor in the semiotics of visual images, and even less, in indexical semiotics. I even keep suspended for the moment, the decision about whether it is indeed appropriate to speak in these cases (which are not the linguistic) of “context”. It can drag an extrapolation of linguistic categories (at least, as designation) to semiotic ambits where it may not be relevant. I develop this issue below (see 19.1.18 to 19.1.20 and 19.1.22), and now I only say that the analysis to establish the sense a sign acquires, always will need to take into account its relations with the other signs which share with it a given specific existence. In “the (various) semiotics of visual images” I speak of “perceptual components by whose internal and/or external grouping, form is configurated until the specification of the attractor is achieved” (Magariños de Morentin, 2000a: 677), but I consider it only provisional and there is much to rethink.

I think this contributes something (or rather, I apologize for how little it contributes) to the issue of how to proceed to the recognition and identification of the precise dimension (or, what is the limit up to which extends the semantizing effectiveness that a context has on a given sign contained in it) of the contexts in indexical semiosis situations, particularly in the cases which refer to behaviors. What fragment of the collective behavior of the “piqueteros” is a sign and what value it acquires in each specific situation, due to its linking with the rest of the collective behavior that includes it, and also, how to assess the necessary dimension or the maximal limit of this collective behavior? I believe that the discussion of the topic will be better performed when working on the specific characteristics that the concept of context (or another similar concept if needed its elaboration)
acquires in the whole of indexical semiotics development. Obviously, we always should refer to the concrete existence of substituent semiotics built with the raw material of the corresponding indexical semiosis.

19.1.9 First Peircean scheme of the indexical sign

A way of producing a rigorous discourse with which to build a theoretical space organized on semiotic relations, is to explore the topic at study applying to it the structure of the sign. I used this strategy to restate the semiotic analysis of visual images and I think that its result is specific and suggesting (Magariños de Morentin, 2000a), but still debatable. I intend to apply now the same procedure in order to frame, at least elementarily, the notions constituting indexical semiotics.

I adopt the logical scheme Peirce uses to define the sign, with some latitude to interpret its relations: “A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (2.228).

In a first approach I will try to make expressive the relations Peirce proposed, by numbers and levels of lines of writing.

“∞” The sign is the result of the transformation of something; I marked it intentionally with the sign of “infinity”, in allusion to the inexhaustible richness of the relations involved in the Peircean triad, known as infinite semiosis (1.339; 2.92; 2.274; 2.303; 8.339, passim);

“0” this first something (which appeared above; it is that about which Peirce says everything, i.e., that which says: “is something that…”) is what will be transformed in sign, but it is not yet. It is important because it will raise much of the semiotic problems. In the verbal (which is already sign) that something (which is not yet) would be the speech phonation (not as an object of knowledge of pragmatics, but as something very close to the “sound and the fury” with which Shakespeare evokes the language of the demented), inside which (or in its ambit) will be produced the segmentation of acoustic material aimed to be interpreted and with ability to designate (or to identify) a referent; the resulting theoretical construction will lead to verbal semiotics.

In the case of the visual image (which is already a sign) the something (which is not yet) would be the perception (not as an object of knowledge of the neuropsychologist, but as something very close to the flight control system of a fly who knows how to avoid obstacles and how to alight), inside which (or in its ambit) will be produced the segmentation of the visual stimulus aimed to be interpreted and with ability to configure a referent; the resulting theoretical construction will lead to visual semiotics. To indexical semiotics, the problem is that in the case of the index (which is already sign), the something (which is not yet) is what has been the referent of the other two semiotics: what is designated by verbal semiotics and/or configurated by visual semiotics. Of course, before having been their referent, but not as object of knowledge either of some positivist natural science, or of an allegedly ontic approach of some metaphysics, but as something very close to the chaos in which lived the “wolf boys”, if we would believe the barely credible nineteenth-century stories about abandoned and survivor babies (Lenneberg, 1975: 170). And, to complicate the picture, the “something” of an indexical semiotics, is also possible that it transforms itself into a sign, so that reversing the dialectical relation, it becomes, not an existent, but a referent of itself. If we want to have available (after having elaborated it) an indexical semiotics, what we need to describe through the relations of the indexical sign, is the whole process by which all that occur.

With this is being encompassed the universe of all existents: objects, behaviors and memory contents. What I am saying explicitly is that values and concepts are excluded, that is, those meanings that exist only after having been produced by some substituent semiosis.

Somehow, I am referring, perhaps dangerously, to the ontic, to the pre-significative. It should be remembered that I am trying to give a content to the Peircean something, that will be built as sign but it is not yet. So I can only propose this dialectic back and forth between the significative, to be able to refer to it, and its denial, to keep it in the space of possible significication. Its existence is necessary and its significication is virtual.

At this point is when can intervene a given semiosis (verbal or visual, for example) and transform it in sign. But is also possible that it transforms itself into a sign, so that reversing the dialectical relation, it becomes, not an existent, but a referent of itself. If we want to have available (after having elaborated it) an indexical semiotics, what we need to describe through the relations of the indexical sign, is the whole process by which all that occur.

Suppose, provisionally, that these reflections will give us abductively, an intuition of that which will be transformed into a sign. What I have stated above is a working hypothesis and, as Peirce himself says, only remains to prove it.

By way of example and trying to make stronger that intuition: the desk on which I work can be said, and I am saying it, and make that in the mind of an interpreter (those who read this, and myself), emerge as a particular sign. Or I can photograph it, so that its frame and the brightness I can give to it, etc., makes emerge it in the mind of an interpreter as a particular sign (different from the previous). Or, being aware that I am working on it and of its relation with the library, with the computer, with the window, etc., I can make it to be interpreted (1) in my mind, as a particular (and different to the two previous) sign (semiotic object); (2) in the mind of someone who is
looking at it, and at me working on it, as a particular sign (substituent semiosis), depending on what the interpreter has in his/her mind as information on desks, on working on desks and on my own activity, and considers it as the way I wanted to be seen by that given interpreter (through a given “staging”). In any case, building a particular sign, different to all the previous ones. As an example, perhaps trivial and not free from problems, what in these cases is being built, is an index.

Finally, I want to anticipate the other levels of analysis I am designing (after the “∞” and the “0” with which I began this development) on this indexical sign and with whose study I will continue my attempt to outline indexical semiotics.

“1” The aspect or disposition according to which it manifests, with the pretention of being a representamen, that is, of not being but substitute and to make that something that is not itself be present (in a way, this is what makes us to relate to things as bearers of a meaning). Only now we have reached the first component of the sign; the above was preliminary, raw material, but not semiosis.

“2” The something in place of which is the indexical sign; i.e., the referent of that pre-referent, once it is able to point it out or substitute it.

“3” The operation that is fulfilled in the mind of the interpretant to assess and give meaning to that existent, not by itself, but by its ability to be the substitute of the other.

19.1.10 The first component of the indexical sign: the relation it establishes with its object

To understand what I come to say about the indexical sign in the preceding section, in the first sentence of “1”, it should be taken into account that, in the case of indexical signs, we are dealing, for example, with behaviors (or objects or memory contents) produced from a semiosis that is existential. This differs, for example, from the material visual images (or sculptures or diagrams, etc.), whose semiosis is formal, as perceptual forms or configurations with that are produced the iconic signs; and differs, for example, from the words (or from the numbers or musical writing, etc.), whose semiosis is evaluative and, therefore, conventional, with which are produced the symbolic signs.

This aspect or disposition, i.e., the relation the sign establishes with its object in order to propose it to its interpretant ("interpretant" is, in one of its senses, the designation with that Peirce refers to the more systematic and less psychological aspect of the interpreter), in the case of the indexical sign that is being built, is a relation of actual presence. So it differs from the iconic sign, that relates to its object to propose to its interpretant a visual configuration that is not the object but instead it substitutes its form. It differs also from the symbolic sign, that relates to its object to propose to its interpretant a conventional substitute for its object. The question is: How is produced the substitution of the object of an indexical sign for its interpretant? What gives the indexical sign to its interpretant as substitution of the object which, by definition, can not be present?

Here arises the alternative: the indexical sign can acquire either a designative aspect or capacity or a capacity that is reactive or of dynamic connection.

In the first possibility, called by Peirce “designative”, the index gives to its interpretant a substitute (with operative components similar to those used to transform common language into rhetorical language, by the metaphor; Jakobson, 1963: 43-67); this is the most general function of all sign.

In the second possibility, called by Peirce “reactive” (although subsequently he will call it “indicative”, and I prefer to adopt this), the index gives to its interpretant a dynamical connection with something different than the operating sign itself (with operative components similar to those used to transform common language into rhetorical language, by the metaphor; ibid.), but this something is identified and unequivocally actualized by such sign, except in cases of ambiguity or deviant polysemy.

Objects exhibited in a shop window can be considered as elementary example of the first possibility or designative effectiveness of an indexical sign. When I want to buy a shirt I saw in a shop window, I say to the salesperson: “I want that shirt” and the salesperson turns to the shelves and takes another shirt that shows me; I ratify that it is that which I want, I pay it and take it. It is evident that the shirt in the window is an index which was in place of another, that I finally bought.

As an example of the second possibility or “indicative” effectiveness, a whole set of variants specify the dynamic connection the indexical sign can establish with its object to a given interpretant. I referred above to the rhetorical operation of metonymy construction, in which something represents the totality, ultimately, of the other part of the whole that I am not perceiving. So, there always are an absence that becomes present for this semiotic function of the indexical sign. By anticipating that there are a number of variants, I mean that since the dynamic connection has effectively existential relations with its object, is possible to establish certain temporo-spatial regularities which, in turn, allow to identify diverse semiotic relations between the present index and its object, absent but physically connected, so that it re-actualizes or makes itself present to the interpretant.
But let’s go to the “set of variants” of the index in dynamic connexion with its object. Among the multitude of designations used to name the signs, generally in equivocal and non technical way, are the terms “signal”, “indication” (I warn as to its difference with the index as such) and “symptom”; however, I think that they are semiotically retrieveable. My proposal, synthesizing and reworking the treatment that these terms have received in Morris (1946: 23, 46, 354), Wallon (1965: 164) and Peirce himself (with contrasting approaches in 5.473, 6.338, 7.357, 8.313, 8.335) and, even Rastier (1991: 80, 84) among others, is the following (I am more interested in the agreement about the operations I describe here very elementarily, than the eventual agreement on the assignment of such operations to the terms which I suggest). The three cases are replicas of the indexical sign; that is, I consider the signal, the indication and the symptom as indexes.

**Signal**: is a sign that appears in the same context than another, and before this become perceivable. Example: clouds are an (eventual) signal of rain (I choose this example intentionally, because I reject the category of natural signs of Morris, 1946: 5, 6; human mind is who establishes the semiotic relation building the sign; in this sense, all sign is artificial, if we consider as such man’s intervention attributing names to phenomena of nature). There is a dynamic anticipation connection: the object (the rain), that is not yet there, is anticipated by a signal (the cloud). This is coherent with the second possibility of index’s definition: the index gives to its interpretant a dynamic connection with something different to the own sign, but that this sign identifies and actualizes unequivocally, except in the deviant cases of ambiguity and polysemy.

**Indication**: is a sign that appears in the same context than another, and after this become perceivable. Example: a footprint in the sand of the beach (also, the traditionally so called “indications” of police stories and events). There is a dynamic retrieval connection: the object (the foot that stepped), and that is already not there, appears retrieved by the indication (the footprint). This is coherent with the second possibility of index´s definition: the index gives to its interpretant a dynamic connection with something different to the own sign, but that this sign identifies and actualizes unequivocally, except in the deviant cases of ambiguity and polysemy.

**Symptom**: is a sign that appears in the same context than another and at the same time than its perception became possible (strategically or for the full expressivity of the symptom is better the situation in which, co-existing, the other sign is not perceivable). Example: the column of smoke rising on the other side of a wall (also, the classic symptoms of clinical semiology: pallor, redness of the face, temperature, rash, pain; generally, there are not the disease, but its symptoms. The most known example of index given by Peirce: the weathercock and the wind, is also a symptom). There is a testimonial dynamic connection: the object (the fire, the disease, the wind direction), that is not perceived but co-exists, is retrieved by the symptom (the smoke, the temperature, the weathercock), that is perceived and co-exists in a hardly appreciable mode with its object. The proposal is still coherent with the second possibility of index´s definition: the index gives to its interpretant a dynamic connection with something different to the own sign, but that this sign identifies and actualizes unequivocally, except in the deviant cases of ambiguity and polysemy.

19.1.11 The second component of the indexical sign: its effectiveness to build its object or ground

I have characterized, at least tentatively, the first component of the indexical sign, that is, its representamen or the perceptual aspect according to which the sign appears, as the existential, as a material and actual presence, which is, in the case of the indexical sign, the tool by what something other, its object or ground, actualizes to someone, its interpretant.

What now corresponds to develop is that second component of the indexical sign, to that I refer before as its object or ground. This poses to indexical semiotics the problem of establishing the quality of the referent that an index can represent/project/build.

It should be noted, in all what follows, that the first aspect (or component of the indexical sign) is what I am calling “substituent semiosis” and the second, is what I am calling “semiotic object” or “substituted semiosis”.

To understand this second aspect, I think we should find an agreement about a rule of general semiotics, very basic and elementary, but whose disregard can cause problems. Perhaps this agreement would not be easy, but as in many other questions of semiotics, what matter is to know the existence of this problem and, eventually, to reflect on it to take a position.

The rule of general semiotics to that I am referring can be stated as:

*Any kind of sign: icon, index or symbol, can allow to represent/project/build a referent of iconical, indexical or symbolical nature.*

That is, symbols are not the operations necessary to represent/project/build symbols, nor are they limited to represent/project/build symbols. With symbols can be represented/projected/built icons, indexes and symbols.

For example: *with symbols are built icons* when, with words (symbols) is described (icon) a landscape. *With symbols are built indexes* when, with words (symbols) an event (index) is told. *With symbols are built symbols*
when, with words (symbols), are defined concepts (symbols). And it is also the case of mathematics, whose signs are symbols, as conventionally established and used, with which are defined/or analyzed the quantities and/or relations between them. I am using the term “symbol” in the Peircean sense, as conventional norm.

But I continue: icons are not the operations necessary to represent/project/build icons, nor are they limited to represent/project/build icons. With icons can be represented/projected/built, indexes and symbols.

For example: with icons are built icons when, with images (icons) are reproduced images (icons); like a book with reproductions (icons) of paintings (icons) of Jheronimus Bosh. With icons are constructed indexes when, with images (icons) are represented objects, persons or events (indexes); like a photography of Gaudí’s building known as “La Pedrera” or the painting “Madison Square, 1944” of Richard Estes. With icons are built symbols when, with images (icons), are represented words (symbols), as is the case of the writing; or with images (icons) are given orders, prohibitions or recommendations (symbols) as is the case of the commonly called “icons”, usually in airports, computers and clothing.

And I finish: indexes are not operations necessary to represent/project/build indexes, nor are they limited to represent/project/build indexes. With indexes can be represented/projected/built, icons, indexes and symbols.

For example: with indexes are built icons when, with physical behaviors (indexes), are actualized the forms (icons) of other behaviors, as is the case of the mime representing/projecting/building an imaginary encounter with a friend; or certain kinds of experimental dance (index) which explore the postural and expressive possibilities (icons) of the human body. With indexes are built indexes when, with objects (indexes), are represented objects (indexes), as is the case of a mineralogy museum (but, careful with the museums, since there can be situations in which with objects (indexes) are represented forms (icons), as is usual in a museum exhibiting paintings or sculptures or in situations in which with objects (indexes) are represented values (symbols), as is the case of historical museums). With indexes are built symbols when, with objects (indexes) are actualized values (symbols), as, besides the objects exhibited in a historical museum as the mentioned above, is the case of Peirce’s weathercock, since the object weathercock (index) represents the direction (symbol) of the wind, but not the wind itself (index), or is also the case of a funerary (symbol) stone (index).

This last part, related to the constructive possibilities starting from indexes, is that which interests especially to indexical semiotics.

There is yet another aspect, also basic and elementary to taken into account and that should not be confused with the previous: according to it, each icon, index and symbol has its corresponding iconic, indexical and symbolic aspect, that is an operational reading of the Peircean “division of triadic relations” (2.233 to 2.242).

To summarize:

1) The iconic aspect of an icon are its purely formal or qualitative characteristics: for example, the typography (iconic aspect) of the writing (icon) of a book; or the traces of the drawing superimposed (iconic aspect) in a painting (icon) of Rouault.

2) the indexical aspect of an icon are its existential characteristics: for example, the ink and the paper (indexical aspect) that are the physical support of the writing (icon) of a book; or the texture in the application of oil (indexical aspect) on a painting (icon) of Rouault.

3) The symbolic aspect of an icon are its evaluative characteristics: for example, the meaning of a word (symbolic aspect) written (icon) in a book; or the expressionist protest (symbolic aspect) in a painting (icon) of Rouault.

4) The iconic aspect of an index are its purely formal or qualitative characteristics: for example, the design as specific form (iconic aspect) of a given chair (index).

5) The indexical aspect of an icon are its existential characteristics: for example, the wood, the painting, the varnish (indexical aspects) that are involved in the making of a given specific chair (index).

6) The symbolic aspect of an index are its evaluative characteristics: for example, the price, the style, the family memory (symbolic aspects) of a specific chair (index).

7) The iconic aspect of a symbol are its purely formal or qualitative characteristics: for example, the modulation of voice as a specific form (iconic aspect) of a given education or social class (symbol).

8) The indexical aspect of a symbol are its existential characteristics: for example, the tone and timbre as the effect of breath going through the vocal cords of a given person (indexical aspect) when speaking (symbol).

9) The symbolic aspect of a symbol are its evaluative characteristics: for example, the themes (symbolic aspect) of which someone speaks (symbol).
Another question to take into account is that the fact of assuming these combinations and their semiotic effectiveness in each case, does not make them equal, since each culture (and a given individual or group of a given culture), at a given historical moment, will use predominantly one or another of these building variants, according to their historical dialectics, that can be studied.

19.1.12 Towards the third component of the indexical sign: on text, discourse, producer and interpreter

Until now we have seen given aspects on (1) the raw material with which can be built a substituent semiosis of indexical character, and (2) the raw material that is being actualized (as represented), as semiotic object or substituted semiosis by the intervention of the indexical sign. It should be noted that (3) a study is needed on the kinds of knowledge by whose systematization is built the interpretant of the indexical sign and on its basic characteristics.

I pose this because I think it is basic to understand that, with all that I have developed up to now, we have no yet operating an indexical sign, but only some features characterizing its two first components. But there is no sign until the triadic relations are not completed with the dynamic presence of the third component, which is the interpretant.

I anticipate, without developing it yet, one specific characteristic of the interpretant: to be a semiotic entity rooted on two different subjects, each of which applies it with counterposed effectiveness, although symmetrical. Therefore, it will be necessary to study the interpretant in its two possible positions (that, as we will see in the next section, Peirce raises to three): as producer interpretant of the substituent semiosis and as interpreter interpretant of the same substituent semiosis, becoming in this last sense, in producer of the substituted semiosis or actualized semiosis or interpreted semiosis of the proposed text, the actualization of other mnemic relations with the same or other (or the same) given discourse.

I retrieve, merely as methodological aphorisms, these couple of formulations, in quasi paraphrastic relation:

1) there is no semantics without syntax, and
2) there is no discourse without text

Thus, (a) the interpretant, as producer of the substituent semiosis, merely propose some syntactic relations between representamens or manifestations of the perceptual aspect of the sign, with which is attempting, ideologically, to get us to see the world (or with the specific aspects in which is involved the substituent semiosis) as it can be seen from the syntactical proposal it is offering to us. And, (b) the producer interpretant knows, or at least supposes, that a given community at a given historical moment will interpret this substituent semiosis so that it will produce given meanings, which are those it pretends to be attributed by us to the world (or which it will avoid to be attributed). And, (c) that the producer interpretant offers to us a text in which it has placed and distributed strategically given syntactic relations that are the producers of a given signification (i.e., given semantics), expecting thus that its text be transformed in the desired discourse (Magariños, 1983b: 44-57; 1991: 121-138; 2002b).

But what actually occurs can never be entirely manipulated by the producer interpretant who has produced its text. The community and each of its members, can find as interpreter interpretants of that text, in the physical elements or representamens of the proposed text, the actualization of other mnemic relations with the same or other (one or more) semiosis which lead them to interpret it as building other semantics (i.e., other significations).

Finally: the discourse built by the interpreter interpretant of the substituent semiosis (or, in principle, the addressee of the text) is not necessarily the same discourse that the interpretant producer of the text, wanted (waited and attempted) to be built by that other interpretant.

It remains to study the double operational capacity of the interpreter interpretant: (1) as (re)producer of a text which (by the other original producer) is supposed to be interpreted as a given discourse (or, in a given and no other way); and (2) as interpreter of the same text, but not (or yes) as the other expected it, i.e., (re)interpreting it, as other (or the same) given discourse.

This study of the interpretant, either producer or interpreter, for the semiotician researcher would require knowledge of all semiotic systems which have (such interpretants) available for the production and/or the interpretation of the same text; as this is not possible, only will be used those that are supposed to activate to interpret such text. A technical observation: if the rules of textual production applied by an interpretant to produce its own texts are known, then are also known the rules of interpretation available to it to interpret the text of other; hence the importance of of knowing the discursive formations to which refers Foucault (1969: 53, passim); task that will allow the possible explanation of the effectiveness of interpretation that can achieve certain text when being interpreted by certain members of a community, and thus, it will be no more text, but discourse.
I believe that all this satisfies what I wanted to say about the indexical sign. I leave to the readers (my interpretant interpreters) the decision as to whether convert this text into the discourse which I am intending to produce as producer interpreter, or if they prefer to read this in another way, to produce a discours more akin with their own system of interpretation. I wrote it from mine; others will read it from theirs.

19.1.13 More on the third component of the indexical sign: concurrence of the producer and the interpreter interpretants in the communicative interpretant

There has been important contributions in indexical sign structure, to the identification of the features of the interpretant, especially as to the possibility of focusing on the third communicative interpretant, whose characteristics, from the work of Peirce, Marty (1990) has thoroughly studied.

The availability of a theoretical construct consisting in the threefold perspective from which can be studied the interpretant as producer, as interpreter and as communicative confluence, allow to design the investigation eventually leading to have an effective tool, constructive and analytic, to organize a possible indexical semiotics.

I believe that by now we all agree (although some argue its effective existence or its autonomy; tragic fate for a indexical semiotics: that its existence is discussed!) that an indexical semiotics is a theoretical-operational system able to give account of the capacity and significative effectiveness of given entities that have the quality of objects, behaviors or mnemic memories, as well as of the process by which the objects, behaviors or mnemic memories produce given specific meanings (not substitutables by their verbal or graphic representation).

An object, a behavior, a memory, as representamen in strict sense, i.e., as existential perceptual proposal, are physical stimuli (that are input to multiple and concurrent multisensory information) requiring (as any other kind of semiosis) the fulfillment of a process of interaction between the three categories of interpretants in order to become a perceptual judgement and, as such, a significative existent. From the perspective of the research, it is also needed an analytical-inferential system to describe this process and to outline an explanation on its effectiveness.

The system that should be available to the researcher require, in principle (1) that the analyst hypothesize and build the relevant calculation, about how the producer interpretant has established the correspondence between the multisensory input of the existential image perceived by the producer interpretant and a given attractor that will be activated in the intermediate experiential memory, as that building advances. Afterwards is required (2) to explore the possible relations of the existential image created by the producer interpretant, with attractors belonging to other semiotic systems available in associative memory, as member of a given society at a given historical moment, which confer to such existential image, the interpretation attributed to it by the subject.

In a second instance, is required (3) that the analyst hypothesize and build the relevant calculation, about the correspondence between the multisensory input of the existential image perceived by the interpreter interpretant and a given attractor activated in the intermediate experiential memory of the interpretant interpreter. Afterwards is required (4) the exploration, through the associative memory, of the possible relations of the existential image perceived with the attractors belonging to other semiotic systems available to that interpreter interpretant, as member of a given society at a given historical moment. These relations will confer to the existential image perceived, the interpretation that the given subject will attribute to it as interpreter interpretant.

All this would not be possible if the analyst (5) could not hypothesize and construct the appropriate calculation intended to demonstrate that, between the producer interpretant and the interpreter interpretant, there is a coincidence, at least relative, as to what Peirce called “communicative interpretant”. Such coincidence could refer either to one part of the available attractors in both of them, that are activable from the existential image proposed and/or perceived, or to a given part of the possible relations linking that existential image with other semiotic attractors in force and available for both interpretants as participants in a given society at a given historical moment. All this could lead them to build a new coincidence, always relative, about the definitive interpretation both attribute to such existential image. If that coincidence is not built, the proposed interpretation will not correspond to the interpretation the interpreter attributes to it: the producer of the object, the behavior or the memory, would then not achieve the same interpretation as the interpretation attributed by the interpreter.

It seems to be difficult. But (to reveal the secret), I followed a scheme that is the same to any semiotics because is sufficient to replace in this paragraph, “existential image” by “visual image” or by “symbolic image” in order to have the necessary calculations to construct the corresponding semiotics.

19.1.14 Cognitive operations in the production and interpretation of meaning

The question of the interpretant is fundamental in many aspects, whatever the type of sign at study. But in the case of the iconic signs (in any of the three classes I work: plastic, figurative or symbolic; Magariños de Morentin: 2000a) and, particularly, in that of the indexical signs, is a challenge, moreover, inavoidable. And I qualify it as a real inevitable challenge for being poorly studied and yet being the key to any plausible
explanation of the significative effectiveness of icons or indexes. The concept of interpretant is necessary to explain, with rigor, the process of attribution of a meaning to an image, an object or a behavior (I leave for now the question of the mnemic memory).

I propose, tentatively, the next inferential-analytical scheme, which I alluded on several occasions: to know how an interpreter can interpret a message, it should be known how that eventual interpreter produce its messages, because (and this is the central hypothesis), in both cases is being implemented the same cognitive system.

It will therefore be necessary to start from the analysis of a given number of messages produced by the eventual interpreter (or interpreter community) to know how it contextualizes the signs it situate in its message, since, from the rules identified in them, would be possible to build (in this case, by inference) the rules that the interpreter has available to accept or reject the contextualization of the signs that a message proposes. That is, to accept or reject the meaning that is intended to be attributed to such message.

(I am using “interpreter” in a sense very close to one of Peirce’s definitions for “interpretant”, that is, as a logic system of interpretation. In the other sense, he identifies the different instances of the effectiveness of the sign in someone’s mind (see the differences he points out between the dynamic interpretant and the immediate and final interpretants; 8.315, passim). But it is not true that Peirce does not refer also to the subject as “interpreter” (for example, 8.346); he does it, but when he uses the term “interpretant” in place of “interpreter”, he simply want to distance himself from the psychological construct, without deleting it, and settle in the logical construct of the interpreting operation. Neither do I exclude, in this proposal, the psico-social components of the interpreter or interpretant at study.)

To study the system of interpretation that an interpretant has in order to attribute signification to a given text (for example, how someone, as member of a given community, will interpret given political discourse at a given moment) we should know the system of attribution of sense that this member set to function when building a text (that is, as to the previous example, we would have to study how he/she produces his/her everyday discourse when speaking of what the politician talks).

In the case of language (langue), the analyst can reconstruct such relations with relative precision, by the fact of being materialized in specific texts on which the analyst can work. That is, the interpretative relations materialize both in the text whose effectiveness we intend to know (those of the politician), and in the texts of those who will attribute meaning to the first text (that is, the texts produced by the community to whom is destined the discourse produced by the politician).

Those networks and rules are assumed to be effectively known by the interpreter. The analyst constructs, from the specific application of his/her analytical operations to the text at study, an inference consisting in a given configuration with which are represented the cognitive possibilities of the interpreters. Of course, just as the way in which are recognized and represented, the cognitive possibilities of the producer of the political text. And here, although it is not the topic I intend to develop by now, appears the tool of possible semiotic worlds (see 19.2.32 to 19.2.34) to establish the contrast and to assess the possible degree, from identity to contradiction, which mediates between the two systems of cognitive possibilities.

But, What happens when the question is to explain the significative effectiveness that a given image has for a given community? What happens when the question is to explain the significative effectiveness of an object or of a behavior?

The operational question to pose would be: How to retrieve the cognitive operations applied to the production of the meaning of an image, or, of an object or behavior? (I separate them, not following Peirce’s structure, but because I consider them as very different operations).

How to retrieve the visual memory or, in indexical semiotics, the memory of objects and behaviors? Because in the memory of each person (and in the socially shared memory) the relational possibilities to construct the meaning of such images, objects and behaviors are conserved, i.e., the cognitive operations which produce meaning in each case, can be retrieved.

We can have verbal discourses about such relations, so that when a person produce a verbal discourse, the relations used to construct it, can be then analyzed, but if the person produce a visual discourse, i.e., if an image is constructed, this could not be done or it would not be so simple. It involves the habits of the person as to the visual relations with which the specific meaning of a visual discourse have been constructed (I have advanced in the exploration of this issue in Magariños de Morentin, 2002a). Even less, and because of its nature, could we make that this person produce indexical discourses with objects or with behaviors, such that we could know then the rules of production of the meaning of the indexical. Intuitively, and in a way similar to that of Moore (1974: 257) when qualifying common sense, all of us understand such meanings, the difficult is to explain them. However, it is the only procedure that would ensure the validity of the explanation achieved. I think it is
possible, but the experiences which will allow the appropriate possibility of analysis with rigor, to justify the inference, are yet not constructed.

19.1.15 Indexical sign and examples

To avoid getting lost in the woods, this would be a further step towards a definition of index. By free paraphrase of the concept of sign in Peirce (2.228), we can say that an indexical sign is:

0. (Something which stands...) an existent placed by a producer interpretant ...

1. (...in some respect or capacity...) by given relations of contiguity or substitution ...

2. (... for something...) to actualize other existent ...

3. (... to somebody.) the effectiveness of whose actualization should be evaluated by an interpreter interpretant.

I have been discussing diverse aspects of these relations and their supporting semiosis (Something which stands.../an existent placed by...) in previous paragraphs. My aim is to continue with the discussion, but I think the problem needs to be delimited, to be able to organize and explore its application to specific empirical situations, in concrete examples.

To begin with, I propose as examples, some observations (regardless or independently of the Peircean examples), whose signification is better understood if we start discussing the indexical quality of the (one or more) involved semiosis.

The critical point is to differentiate those which appear to observation as indexical semiotic objects (that are significative by virtue of some other (one or more) substituent semiosis of diverse kinds; but that, in the observed situation, are not substituent semiosis generating a signification for another different entity) from those that appear to observation as indexical substituent semiosis, i.e., those that produce the signification of other entity/ies by the effectiveness of its own indexical quality. These, regardless their producer’s intention, fulfill effectively, due to the social valuations in force, the function of substitution or integration, and therefore are perceived with representative effectiveness.

It should be differentiated the semiotic quality of the substituent semiosis that is being analyzed, that must have indexical character, from the semiotic quality of the constructed signification that, as I said in 19.1.11, can be indexical, iconic or symbolic.

We must also bear in mind that there can be no substituent semiosis consisting of a single class of signs, in our case, of index, but we can always find traces or significant presences of the other two signs: icons and symbols. It is an identification by predominance or cultural validity in the society where it is present or circulating.

Is also important to take into account that, although mentioned generally in plural, these examples do not refer to the class of the mentioned phenomena, but to the individuality of each of their manifestations.

And, ultimately, it should be recognized the particular characteristics by which the indexical substituent semiosis produces its specific effect of signification, without hypostatizing the effects of signification of the verbal or visual substituent semiosis by which the first ones are realized. Any other substituent semiosis, and specially the verbal, can explain the production process of the signification effect originated by an indexical substituent semiosis, but can not produce it. So, these are examples of substituent semiosis of indexical character:

1. the performance of a mime
2. the objects exhibited in a museum
3. the objects exhibited in a shop window
4. the animals of a zoo
5. the clothing that is worn
6. the furniture of a house, a company, an institution, a consulting room
7. public or private gardens, plazas and parks
8. a chess party (Hjelmslev denies its semiotic character; 1971b: 139-143)
9. the “promotion” advertising
10. the table manners
11. the tone and modulation of the voice
12. the theatrical performances
13. the ballet functions
14. all sports
15. the manual games wit (including the Hanoi tower)
16. the dreams
17. the archaeological remains
18. monuments, construction and historical buildings
That is why we call them members of those classes. Represented, but we do not identify any specific individual, since the aim is to appeal to all and any of the position in case of emergency landing, etc. In these images we recognize the class of persons or objects cellphone communication, carrying corrosive substances, etc.; the man or woman bent on their seat to indicate under which appears a cigarette, the cellphone, the bottle with a skull, etc., with which is forbidden smoking, cinemas, public institutions, airports, etc.: the man and woman indicating the toilets; the red circle with a red bar specimen (as existent), but to the corresponding class of objects (as concept). Note that in its character of legisigns or figurative representations; 2.255) to the generic representation (that, in that same system, would be the iconic legisigns or symbolic representations). 2.263; since there are virtual sets of conventionally identified features, in each language (langue), as accepted to be carriers of a given substituting ability, in their intangible existence of types), although we have to consider its visual presence as writing, as iconic legisign (since there are sets of features visually perceivable and conventionally identified, in each language (langue), as accepted to be carriers of a given substituting ability: to be the visual representation of a given linguistic sign); and we could discuss whether its oral manifestation, as an event of enunciation, could be considered as indexical legisign (2.269; since there are sets of features existentially produced and conventionally identified, in each language (langue), as accepted to be the replica of a given linguistic sign and, therefore, as carriers of a given substituting ability).

So, despite the loss of the possibility of representing a given individual, iconic legisigns or stereotypes in shields (in our case those of municipalities but also, in general, the images of heraldry), have a strong effect as identification of the community, the family, the person, region, economic activity, etc. This identifier effectiveness comes from the second process to which each of the iconic legisigns of the shield at study are submitted: their reworking, that is, the morphology they acquire by transformation of the basic structure (Fontana, 1996: 40). This is strengthened by the contextualization in which the image at study appear included, i.e., the remaining images and their segmenting in “quarters”.

When we look the images of a shield, we are seeing the result of an abstraction process or stereotyping, that goes from the figurative identifying the individual to the generic identifying the class in which are included a group of individuals and that, as conventionally accepted (what includes that imposed coercively), acquire a value of symbolic identification.

19. military parades
20. civil, religious, academic, etc. ceremonies
21. any three dimensional entity (needs to be it?) located in the right context, that is, with effectiveness to be shown, not only to be used etc. etc.

19.1.16 Stereotypes and identikits

The fact of having posed the issue of indexical semiotics generates in the working groups on semiotic topics reflections that enrich or modify, at least, their approach.

A punctual task (in a broader research project: the study of the construction of individual and social identity in Buenos Aires province) in which we are working at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, consists of an analysis of the shields of the municipalities of that province. We want to establish the socio-institutional image they had and the image proposed to themselves and to others, as identification of each community, at the different historical moments at which these shields were created and accepted.

The semiotic analysis of the images of these shields is intended to establish the specific characteristics of their symbolic quality; that is also the aim of the analysis of verbal expressions, appearing in those shields. So, images and writing are analyzed considering its effectiveness as iconic legisigns or symbolic representations; the ground, the requirements and the analytical consequences derived from this research, can be seen in my work already mentioned, “La(s) semiótica(s) de la imagen visual”, Magariños de Morentin, 2000a).

Most of the images appearing in these shields are schematizations of other possible images appropriately figurative. It means that there has been produced a stereotype by deletion of the features of similarity or individualization with specific existents. The process and its result are the same of the so called icons in ordinary sense, not semiotic-technical, like those of computers: the printer icon, that of the magnifying glass on a sheet of paper for the preview, that of the waste paper basket for the recycling bin, etc.; like those of signaling on streets, cinemas, public institutions, airports, etc.: the man and woman indicating the toilets; the red circle with a red bar under which appears a cigarette, the cellphone, the bottle with a skull, etc., with which is forbidden smoking, cellphone communication, carrying corrosive substances, etc.; the man or woman bent on their seat to indicate the position in case of emergency landing, etc. In these images we recognize the class of persons or objects represented, but we do not identify any specific individual, since the aim is to appeal to all and any of the members of those classes.

That is why we call them “stereotypes” and the task of elaboration has required a process of distancing that goes from the individualizing features (that in our interpretation of the Peircean system, would be the iconic sinsigns or figurative representations; 2.255) to the generic representation (that, in that same system, would be the iconic legisigns or symbolic representations).

That is why, too, they acquire a symbolic value from which the iconic proposal is interpreted. And we can speak of iconic legisigns, because they permit an interpretation close to that of words, which do not refer to a given specimen (as existent), but to the corresponding class of objects (as concept). Note that in its character of linguistic sign, the word is a symbolic legisign (2.263; since there are virtual sets of conventionally identified features, in each language (langue), as accepted to be carriers of a given substituting ability, in their intangible existence of types), although we have to consider its visual presence as writing, as iconic legisign (since there are sets of features visually perceivable and conventionally identified, in each language (langue), as accepted to be carriers of a given substituting ability: to be the visual representation of a given linguistic sign); and we could discuss whether its oral manifestation, as an event of enunciation, could be considered as indexical legisign (2.269; since there are sets of features existentially produced and conventionally identified, in each language (langue), as accepted to be the replica of a given linguistic sign and, therefore, as carriers of a given substituting ability).
When in the research team (integrated by Guillermo Seminara, Ariel Barbieri and Irene Silin) we discussed some of these aspects, it emerged, as a construction process symmetrical to that of the iconic legisign or stereotype, but in logical reversion, the issue of the construction process which would lead to the kind of images known as “identikit” or iconic sinsign, whose production has particular characteristics, among which, I believe, indexical semiotics has high incidence: the behavior of the producer, by successive approximations, to the desired identikit.

It is to get an individualized representation of a concrete existent, based on a set of variants representing stereotyped elements whose archive is available for integration into a specific context, that of a human face, so that it could be recognized.

That is, in this case is a process which goes from the iconic legisign (a given sequence of stereotypical features chosen) to the iconic sinsign (an identifiable figurative representation).

We can ask then, What are the cognitive operations by which an interpreter interpretant makes the corresponding interpretation in the case of the interpretation of a stereotype or “icon” (in ordinary sense) versus those an interpreter interpretant should apply to make the identification of an identikit?

And also, What are the cognitive operations used successively by the producer interpretant of a stereotype or “icon” (in ordinary sense) until reaching it, from its start in a given figurative representation, versus those successively used by the producer interpretant of an identikit until reaching it from its starting in a fragmentary series of non figurative stereotypes?

19.1.17 The indexes by contiguity relation and the indexes by substitution relation

At the risk of repeating some concepts, it seems useful to try to organize, through a certain systematization, the universe of phenomena that we can identify as indexical signs.

One of the major difficulties to their study is the number and diversity of the perceptual proposals we can call “indexical sign”. As usual, I will closely follow the proposals of Peirce, but without the commitment to stay within his specific orthodoxy.

In a broad sense, can be considered two large sets of indexical signs (see 19.1.7 on certain unsystematicity in Peirce’s criterion in the characterization of the index):

1) Those which are indexes because of the contiguity relation they establish with their object. Peirce expresses it as “...which is a Sign whose significance of its Object is due to its having a genuine Relation to that Object, irrespective of the Interpretant. Such, for example, is the exclamation “Hi!” as indicative of present danger, or a rap at the door as indicative of a visitor.” (2.92). Using examples already known, we can add: given clouds as indicative of rain, the footprint in the sand as indicative of someone’s steps, or the smoke coming out of a chimney as indicative of the fire kindled in the home. I will repeat these examples to keep the subclassification of these kinds of indexes, as I did it before, in signals, indications and symptoms (that correspond correlatively to the previous examples). Note that I maintain the Peircean term “indicative” to designate the special relation these representamens (as perceptual aspect of the sign) have with their object; in another place (footnote 23 to 8.368) it is the relation he calls “reactive”. But I question the expressions “genuine relation” and “irrespective of the interpretant”. I think the last is a theoretical incoherence, because following “irrespective of the interpretant”, nothing can be related to anything. Facing the axiological content inherent to the classification of “genuine” attributed to the constitutive relation of the indexical sign, I think it is rather a specific relation by contiguity (but not of contiguity), as physical proximity, effective or imaginary, between the representamen and its represented object. This is nothing but a variant of the substitution process, a central operation in the semiotic process. By establishing it as contiguity relation, remains open the possibility that such contiguity exists only in (or is proposed by) the mind of its interpreter or in (or by) the cultural presuppositions of given social sector. For example, this set of indexical signs by contiguity include the superstitions. Passing under a ladder, spilling salt, a black cat that crosses, to kill a spider at night, etc. are associated to the occurrence of another event which, in addition, will have the character of unwanted or harmful. Semiotics has not the aim of establishing the truth or falsity of a sign, nor of a text, nor of a substituent semiosis, but their effective validity in a given society. This is why this relation of contiguity can not be derived until converting it in a causality relation. Neither matters whether the contiguity established by the interpreter from the indexical sign proposal is part of the relations “scientifically” established, or if it is included in given “mythic beliefs”, or if it is interpreted so by the mind of a neurotic or psychotic patient. In all the cases, we face an indexical sign with its specific effectiveness for the actualization of a given object, to a given interpreter. The object is here indicative of the effective or imaginary presence of another object, future, past, or contemporary to it.

2) Those which are indexical signs because of a designation relation, irrespective of the physical proximity that may or not exist between the representamen and its object. The subclassification possible in this case is the less developed by Peirce but, nevertheless, it has strong expressivity. The mime designating a drunken cop, the shirt
in the shop window designating the shirt I decide to buy, the accent with which someone speaks designating a place of origin, etc. Here the object designates the possible or effective or conventional presence of another object.

I will for now merely outline a tentative distribution of designative indexical variants (I am trying to avoid speaking about classification, because I believe taxonomies are now not opportune).

2.1) An existent which designates pure possible qualities of another existent: for example, the ballet as designation (exploration, proposal and showing) of the kinesic possibilities of human body.

2.2) An existent which designates another existent, that could be the same existent in another possible semiotic world or another existent of the same kind: an example of the first case (already mentioned before) would be the unique object (the example had been General San Martin’s spade) exhibited in a museum, that is no longer itself, but is designating itself in another context. The example of the second case would be the prototype (the tiger in the nature reserve designates all the remaining tigers), or the replica (the lithic arrow point designating the others of the same culture).

2.3) An existent designating a value or a norm: in 19.1.1, I have considered the “piqueteros” as existential behavior designating a given existential situation of lack of work or of payment of wages due. More trivially, but with full indexical effectiveness, the plastic container on the top of a car designate the purchase and selling situation of that vehicle (at least, in Argentine).

19.1.18 Returning to the contextual analysis/1

Contextual analysis is basic in semiotic studies, because to know the context to which belongs or in which appears a given entity is fundamental to know its meaning and, therefore, to relate with the world and live in it.

Regardless of whether it is an innate capacity of the mind/brain of the human being (or of all mammals, or of all organism, or generalizable to the totality of the biological?), phylogenetically available, or an acquired ability and, so, linked to culture, and leaving provisionally aside what would be the other ambits in which the contextualization process would be effective, we can say that significacion is always the result of a contextualization process, although if, by dealing such process with something that happened in a past whose memory could be lost, dazzles us by his categorial and even apodictical nature. This loss of historical memory makes that many entities appear as signifying by themselves, that is, regardless of the presence of any interpretant. However, first linguistics and then the remaining semiotics could demonstrate that meaning comes either from a normative will socially accepted and shared (the symbolic signs and the symbolic aspect of all sign) or from fixing given contextual relations socially accepted and shared (the indexical signs and the indexical aspect of all sign). But knowledge, either empiric or speculative, of that meaning, is acquired either sharing its use or by its observation, that is, retrieving and analyzing the presence of given signs in their context of use. I have identified (Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 113) this process with the name of “attribution”, as one of the basic operations of semiotics and I have defined such operation as “that by which a form is put in relation with a value”. That is, a value is attributed to a form, having established before that, being form “the possible existence of the result of a sensory perception”, by value should be understood “the relation between (at least) two forms”. So is established the minimal contextual relation as the necessary condition in order that a minimal semantic quality could be actualized: intrasemiotic semantics constitute a syntax. The minimal meaning (or value) of any sign is constituted by the set of its possibilities of relation with the remaining signs of the same semiosis (Magariños de Morentin, 2002b).

For all the above, the normative definition of a sign is invalid if it is not in force, i.e., if the sign is not materialized in effective contextual relations which, at a given moment, attribute to it that and not other value. A dictionary of usage, especially in the case of linguistic signs, registers the being in force of the meaning of a term or expression, and its validity depends on the institutional acceptance of such being in force, which means its conformity with a given normative system (Winchklker, 2002). But, in the course of history, the valid contextual relations always are imposed on the normative, becoming new rules aimed to be overcome by another new and different validity. I have identified (Magariños, 1996a: 205) this process with the name “overcoming”.

I therefore encourage to reiterate the assertion, at least as an exploratory methodological hypothesis, that contextualization, in human being, is necessary either to produce the significacion phenomenon (although it is not evident, since it is not performed necessarily in a conscious way) and to explain it (that is where is necessary to evidence the intervention of contextualization) and that the historical and social components give to this contextualization the raw material to that it applies and the specific operational processes it makes to function.

I would like, very briefly, to delimit some precisions about the productivity of the notion of context with respect to the notions of sense, meaning and concept, and to provide a guide towards their definition. The terms “sense”, “meaning/significacion” and “concept”, etc., have, each of them, a certain semantic mobility, as may be affected by slight displacements, due basically to the perspective from which an author considers them. From my
perspective, there are not the aspects linked with, for example, enunciation those that I will emphasize, but rather those related to contextual analysis. Without pretending them to be full definitions, I use provisionally “sense” as the minimal signification a term receives by the effectiveness of the context in which is included (in which it appears, where its producer situates it, etc.). I use “meaning” as the set of senses attributed by usage to a given term. It implies necessarily a cut or choice of the texts at study. So, there will be constructed sets according to criteria of temporality (historical), spatiality (social groups), or both (socio-historical) or some other (thematic) appropriate to the research. Finally, I use “concept” as the result of the abstraction of some (one or more) meanings. As opposed to content analysis, I think that the concept is always posterior and result of the use in the discourse, of the term or expression at study, by the mere fact that the meaning and its generative unit, the sense, are also posterior and results of the use, in the discourse, of the term or expression at study. There are historical concepts, but there are no innate concepts (inherent in mind/brain), nor substantial (inherent in entities or phenomena); all them come from their use in ordinary, scientific or poetic contexts (Della Volpe, 1966: 120-125), without other axiom (logical) or premise (empirical) than the previously constructed by another contextualizations, already historical to any new contemporarity. The fact that the senses, meanings and concepts in force at a given moment in a given society are acquired by definition and, therefore, adopt the form of substantial or categorical definitions, should not obscure nor deviate the researcher’s attention from the contextual quality of their historical process of constitution. The definition of scientific, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic concepts offered by each culture to the social functioning of the members of each society is summary and synthesis of such historical process of contextual quality building. To have definitions, without having to recreate them each new generation, is the condition for the existence of a culture, that provides, in turn, a minimum of social security, security of individuals to the development of their coexistence and security of society to prevent the eventual cognitive dispersal of its members. But the explanation of the origin and effectiveness of the concepts in force in a given society, have to break the mirage of their apodictic necessity and frame them in the conventional and contingent productivity of the appropriate contextualization processes.

The researcher who works from semiotics on topics related to the production, interpretation and transformation of the meaning of social phenomena, needs to have the appropriate and rigorous tools to solve the problems arising when proceeds to the contextual analysis, without evading or substituting it by the uncritical acceptance of definitions preestablished from some hegemonic discourse.

What is specific to the analytic problem begins so: if the units of a context are discrete units, i.e., delimited differentially as perceptual forms and with explicit rules about how to produce the relation between these entities in order to produce a given signification, then the analysis is factible and can be exposed with explanatory rigor.

There is such factibility, or rather it is only evident, when faced to symbolic constructions and, to a greater extent, if this constructions come from completely or relatively formalized systems, i.e., of well formed constructions. This happens with the logical and/or mathematical propositions and in a relatively strong way, with verbal language. What about the remaining semiosis? How can be analyzed the context of entities coming from visual semiosis and, specially, as is the case we began to study, with those belonging to some of the possible indexical semiosis?

In both (visual and indexical) seems to predominate the continuum vs. the discrete (preventing, apparently, the specification of the identity and difference and the possible operations that relate them) and this makes difficult, or even some authors feel that it excludes, the possibility of a rigorous contextual analysis of visual images as representation or a rigorous contextual analysis of individual or group behaviors and of natural or artificial objects as representation.

It is our responsibility, as theoreticians of a discipline that pretends to explain meaning, the solution of this conflict, and we should give to the scientific community the specific and appropriate tools in order to solve the diverse dimensions of this problem.

19.1.19 Returning to the contextual analysis/2

As I warned in the previous section, the study of context, in the case of iconic and indexical semiotics has yet not been adequately studied, due to its complexity.

I am not referring, of course, to the verbal interpretation of such semiosis nor, consequently, to the analysis of the context resulting of such interpretation, since that belongs to symbolic semiosis problems.

In the other cases, when working with icons or indexes, arises with specific characteristics the problem of the discrete (apparently absent) vs. the continuous (apparently present). To understand that there is a problem and about what is that problem, it should be applied an univocal concept of icon and of index (and, despite the pleonasm, I add: nor equivocal nor ambiguous), that must be kept invariable (except the requirement for a change, which if chosen, must be made explicit and applied to the entire writing), in order to permit us to establish an agreement about what we are speaking about. In addition, it must be adequate, as effective to build
the interpretation of the phenomena in which we will intervene, and systematic, as can be attributed to it a place in a conceptual system with the characteristics (or as close as possible to them) expected from the rigorous systems (or relatively rigorous). So, it must be complete: it should give account of the semantical relations of anything it affirms; consistent: it can not have contradictions; and decidable: it should be able to establish if a new concept or assertion belongs or not to the proposed system.

However, as a thematic general formulation, I anticipate the idea which I will try to develop below, referred to the possibility of identifying in the appropriate contexts, the presence and relational characteristics of the icons and indexes in which it consists, since, following my assumptions, the context attributes meaning to each of its components (or, at least, it attributes a sense to each of such components, and then from the whole, will arise the meaning).

To summarize: I outline a problem consisting in the difficulty to identify the entities of a context, when it is composed by perceptual images of material visual images (and I begin to seek the core I am proposing for the concept of icon) or perceptual images of objects and/or behaviors as existent (as initial approach to the concept of index).

Having identified a problem, it is possible to formulate by abduction (that is, as intuitive summary experiences, knowledge and emotions) an hypothesis, whose only requisite is to be ascertainable, i.e., that it could be proved (Peirce. 5.145 and 8.209) or, from the reverse perspective but the same effectiveness, that it be falsifiable (Popper, 1974: 185; 1977: 75-88).

I formulate, then, as a hypothesis that tries to explain that problem, the following: The identification of present entities in iconic and/or indexical contexts is produced by contrasting and comparing at least two contexts: that which is effectively perceived by a given interpreter and “the more similar” context retrieveable from the memory of the same interpreter.

This last phrase states the operational effectiveness I intend to derive from the proposed cognitive processing. Provocatively, I would say that a discrete entity in a context is the minimal entity effectively perceived that can be substituted by another, if it holds the possibility of attribute a sense to the totality that results from such substitution (even being not the same sense). Of the whole paragraph will be needed explicit definitions of the terms and even an adjustment of the rigor of yet not well defined expressions, such as “the more similar context”. Moreover, the formulation of the hypothesis is related to the recognition of objects and behaviors in their corresponding dispositions and of images in their configurations (see 19.1.22), as complex “scenes” and their explanation. Such hypothesis intends explicitly to distance itself from holistic proposals of understanding for those scenes.

19.1.20 Searching the more similar context, where the discrete is established by the difference

Two short approaches to the proposal I try to outline, with respect to the possibility of analyzing the indexical and/or iconic contexts (as long as the problems of both contexts show a relatively parallel development).

By the one hand, a reflection wich helps us (me too) to understand the characteristics of those I called (somewhat intuitively, yet) “effectively perceived context” and “more similar context” and their paraphrasis through what can be stated also as “complex scene”.

The empirical situation to that I am trying to find explanation, from cognitive semiotics, consists of those cases in which the interpretation of given substituent semiosis corresponding to icons and indexes, is being produced. That is, we focus on the interpretative activity realized before a figurative visual image or before the perception of objects or behaviors in museums and scenarios, respectively.

In such cases, the hypothetical assumption (to prove), states that it is being produced a contrasting analysis between the effectively present and registered by visual perception (in both cases: iconic and indexical) and the registry of another complex image in memory. The latter is assumed to be updated by a subsystem that is searching categorical properties (identificatory) and of spatial coordinates (situational), until actualizing the corresponding complex attractor (mnemic mental image) that permits a recognition of the effectively perceived context and configures in a given way the input of sensory information, allowing the margin of necessary variations to identify what is new or original in the current perception vs. the historical.

The process would be in some aspects, similar to that we perform when buying photographs of the same motif: the same urban or rural landscape or the face of one person (the face as scene) with the only variant of the course of time or, with many restrictions, when the variant is a change in the angle in the frame or in the illumination. Suppose we have a archive with many photographies, and we want to compare the photograph we have just taken, and whose picture we have before us, with other photographs taken at another time. The perceivable difference in such cases, would be what I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, saying that “the difference establishes the discrete”. So, the first interpretative work would be to find the “differential scene”, i.e., that
which is different from what is being perceived and to establish in this couple the points of similarity and difference; by finding the different, we are assured that we have a discrete presence.

The other approach to the same problem is in a quote of Peirce. Without believing that Peirce has necessarily the answer to problems that, today, semiotics and cognitive sciences pose in a very different way (he died in 1914), it is still useful his logical organization of the problems he studied, and among the immense amount of them, there are some relatively close to those we are outlining here. I transcribe a piece of text from Peirce emphasizing with italics the expressions on which I intend to draw attention:

“3.433: [...] When an assertion is made, there really is some speaker, writer, or other signmaker who delivers it; and he supposes there is, or will be, some hearer, or reader, or other interpreter who will receive it. It may be a stranger upon a different planet, an aeon later; or it may be that very same man as he will be a second after. In any case, the deliverer makes signals to the receiver. Some of these signs (or at least one of them) are supposed to excite in the mind of the receiver familiar images, pictures, or, we might almost say, dreams -that is, reminiscences of sights, sounds, feelings, tastes, smells, or other sensations, now quite detached from the original circumstances of their first occurrence, so that they are free to be attached to new occasions. The deliverer is able to call up these images at will (with more or less effort) in his own mind; and he supposes the receiver can do the same. For instance, tramps have the habit of carrying bits of chalk and making marks on the fences to indicate the habits of the people that live there for the benefit of other tramps who may come on later. If in this way a tramp leaves an assertion that the people are stingy, he supposes the reader of the signal will have met stingy people before, and will be able to call up an image of such person attachable to a person whose acquaintance he has not yet made. Not only is the outward significant word or mark a sign, but the image which it is expected to excite in the mind of the receiver will likewise be a sign -a sign by resemblance, or, as we say, an icon- of the similar image in the mind of the deliverer, and through that, also a sign of the real quality of the thing. This icon is called the predicate of the assertion. But instead of a single icon, or sign by resemblance of a familiar image or “dream”, evocable at will, there may be a complexus of such icons, forming a composite image of which the whole is not familiar. But though the whole is not familiar, yet not only are the parts familiar images, but there will also be a familiar image of its mode of composition. In fact, two types of complication will be sufficient. For example, one may be conjunctive and the other disjunctive combination. Conjunctive combination is when two images are both to be used at once; and disjunctive when one or the other is to be used. (This is not the most scientific selection of types; but it will answer the present purpose.) The sort of idea which an icon embodies, if it be such that it can convey any positive information, being applicable to some things but not to others, is called a first intention. The idea embodied by an icon which can not of itself convey any information, being applicable to everything or to nothing, but which may, nevertheless, be useful in modifying other icons, is called a second intention.

19.1.21 Indexical semiotics: ratification and exemplification

I review what I have been writing, to account for aspects, problems, concepts that may be convenient or necessary to clarify or resolve or expand.

With respect to the two large sets that can divide the indexical signs, I ratify and synthesize the fundamental difference:

1) Those that operate in a contiguity relation of sign and object, from which depend the physical relation created between them. I consider very interesting and useful to focus on the term “indicative” that Peirce uses to refer to the specific effectiveness of the perceptual form of this kind of indexical signs, that is, the effectiveness of the representamen, as its capacity to actualize in the mind of the interpreter, the (yet or already or currently) absent object. The term “indicative” is semantically related to the term “ostensive” and, ultimately, both converge in the very term “indexical” as what is pointed out (with the finger).

2) Those that operate in a substitution relation of sign and object, regardless the physical relation we can see between them. Here is also retrievable the term “designative” that Peirce uses to refer to the specific effectiveness of the perceptual form of this kind of indexical signs, that is, to the effectiveness of the representamen, as capacity to actualize in the mind of the interpreter, the (regardless any temporal relation) absent object. The term “designative” is related semantically with the term “denominative”, insofar it retrieves and keeps the difference and independence between the representamen and the object, and adopts the conventionality because of the necessity of knowing a given community’s codes in order to understand the semiotic relation produced by this kind of indexical signs.

Regarding the examples I proposed in 19.1.15, I want to return to them, adding possibly some and, without pretending to build a taxonomy (I reiterated my disagreement about this) I want to place them in this huge (and therefore, coarse) division of indexes; we should note that this assignment of specific examples to given categories is not even roughly wholly convincing. We are always referring to predominance of one or the other character (the indicative and the designative) and not to categorical inclusions or exclusions. I will give a further
step in the analysis of such examples, making explicit the difference between representamen and object, either in the case of the indication or in that of the designation.

(In what follows, what is before the first bar should be taken as the verbal uttering of the representamen, and what is after the second bar, as the verbal uttering of its object; what is between these bars, states the quality of the indexical sign I attribute to the example. Note that the interpretant is the sign that, based on the previous one, each interpreter builds in its knowledge system).

A. Examples of indicative indexical sign are:

- the state of chess pieces at a given moment of a match /is predominantly indicative (as signal)/ of the technically unavoidable denouement (another thing is the mind's ability to discover the sequence leading to it)
- advertising promotions /are predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of the content of the advertised product
- all sports as spectacle /are predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of the possibilities and abilities of human body
- all sports as competition /are predominantly indicative (as signal)/ of superiority of the physical condition of the body of a certain individual or team of individuals with respect to some other or others
- the furniture of a clinic /is predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of the actions and operations at the site
- manual games wit (including the Hanoi tower) /are predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of the mental capacity of configuring spatial coordinated relations to guide the action
- dreams /are predominantly indicative (as indication)/ of the daytime activity performed in a waking state (leaving aside but respecting psychoanalysis's subtleties)
- archaeological remains /are predominantly indicative (as indication)/ of the activity and or events which occurred, individually and/or socially (including material culture), to the member/s of a given community without an active presence today
- monuments, constructions and historical buildings /are predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of the cultural options and validities relevant to a given community at a given moment
- public or private gardens, plazas or parks /are predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of recreational activities, or resting or healthiness, being in force in a given community
- any three dimensional (needs to be it?) entity situated in the appropriate context, that is, with effectiveness to show it, and not only to use it, (is predominantly indicative (as symptom)/ of that effectiveness (think of the necessary dependence of the “ready made” of Duchamp, with respect to the context in which he situated them)

B. Examples of indexical designative sign are:

- the performance of a mime (is predominantly designative (as icon)/ of an individual or social situation or behavior
- the objects exhibited in a museum (are predominantly designative (as indexes) (that are, in turn, indicative or designative)) of other things of the same class (as designative-designative-index) or of other objects with which they have been associated (as designative-indicative-index)
- the objects exhibited in a shop window /are predominantly designative (as indexes)/ of the available objects in a given shop
- the animals of a zoo or of a natural reserve /are predominantly designative (as indexes)/ of the other animals of the same species
- the clothing that is worn /is predominantly designative (as symbol)/ of the economic situation, professional or ideological of the individual who wears it
- the furniture of a house, a company or institution /is predominantly designative (as symbol)/ of the social meaning that is intended to attribute to it
- table manners /are predominantly designative (as symbol)/ of the politeness of a person, family or social group
- the tone and modulation of the voice /is predominantly designative (as symbol)/ of the kind of education the person has received
- theatrical performances /are predominantly designative (as icon)/ of situations and events totally or relatively imaginary
performances of a dance corps or ballet /are predominantly designative (as symbol) of the aesthetic qualities of human body motion

-military parades /are predominantly designative (as index) of the military power of a country

-civil ceremonies, religious, academic, etc. /are predominantly designative (as symbol) of given civil values, religious, academic, etc.

19.1.22 Indexical semiotics: context, configuration and disposition

I continue these reflections tending to develop an indexical semiotics, as a set of available operations to propose adequate and rigorous explanations about the processes of production and interpretation of the signification of the relevant social phenomena. I began already to outline an approach to this “relevance” (of the social phenomena which need to be studied from an indexical semiotics) through the examples mentioned in some of the previous paragraphs.

I have also anticipated that for the analysis leading to the proposed explanatory proposal, is essential an adequate understanding and identification of the context in which are located the indexical signs of the phenomenon at study. And we have viewed some issues related to both the concept and production/interpretation of what is understood by “context”.

In principle, I recall the convenience of taking distance from the reflections linked to linguistics, so that its terms and analytical processes do not bias the research, redirecting it to the verbal. This requires to build a set of terms and analytical processes specific of the existential, in the case of the indexical phenomena, or of the qualitative, in the case of iconic phenomena. In the universe of the iconic phenomena, I have suggested to use the term “configuration” instead of “context” and I propose to the universe of indexical phenomena, the term “disposition”. That is:

1. “context” is proposed to designate the ambit in which the symbolic phenomena exist and acquire or reproduce their signification;
2. “configuration” is proposed to designate the ambit in which the iconic phenomena exist and acquire or reproduce their signification;
3. “disposition” is proposed to designate the ambit in which the indexical phenomena exist and acquire or reproduce their signification.

It is not a caprice to complicate the terminology. The (contextual) relations by which symbols acquire meaning, are not the same (configurative) relations by which icons acquire meaning, nor are the same (dispositive) by which indexes acquire meaning. If we fail to differentiate these relations by the corresponding terms, specific to each kind of relation, they would tend to be homogenized (as they are now) by the shared use of the term “context”.

(Although the term “disposition” or “dispositio” has also a particular use in rhetorics, is not so spread or stereotyped as “context”, thus admits a redefinition in other discipline/s, without having to be subjected to inherited conceptual predeterminations. Nevertheless, in all cases, these terminological adjustments must be considered attempts, until their use in semiotic practice, justifies or excludes their convenience. I am not very optimistic about the introduction of these terms, but I think that to specify them and to develop their peculiarities will help to understand that the existential ambit and the relations relating symbols, icons and indexes in it, are different in each case.)

We immediately find also that context, configuration and disposition are not structures that could be generalized to each of the three semiotics easily; but they are useful to focus on the symbolic, iconic or indexical quality predominating in each of these large ensembles of social phenomena.

Thus, in order not to remain in the purely terminological and to approach the existential quality of the ambits in which are materialized each of these three kinds of signs, should then be outlined three following working hypotheses:

1. To refer to the context will imply to refer to a set of elements (a) effectively existent (so, is excluded from the term “context” any allusion to its virtual existence, that, as constituting the corresponding types, belongs to a given system) and (b) related according to highly conventional rules, adopted by a given community (of any quantitative or spatial dimension) to their interpretation. As a result of the analysis of the relations of this set of effectively existent elements, (c) it can be affirmed or denied its character of well formed (compliance of those rules is the basic requisite to its acceptability). According to this well formedness (d) such context will be interpreted, and the meaning of each of these effectively existent elements and that of the totality, will be built through it.
2. To refer to the *configuration* will imply to refer to a set of elements (a) effectively existent (so, is excluded from the term “configuration” all allusion to its virtual existence, that, as constituting the corresponding attractors, belongs to the perceptual archive of the mnemic) and (b) *related according to loosely conventional qualities*, proposed to a given community (of any quantitative or spatial dimension) to their interpretation. As a result of the perception of the qualities with which is related this set of elements effectively existent, (c) it can be accepted or denied *its character of similarity/difference* with respect to the preexisting mnemic attractor. According to this similarity/difference (d) such configuration will be interpreted, and the meaning of each of these effectively existent elements and that of the totality, will be built through it.

3. To refer to the *disposition* will imply to refer to a set of elements (a) effectively existent (so, is excluded from the term “disposition” all allusion to its virtual existence, that, as constituting the corresponding possibilities, belongs to the archive of the mnemic) and (b) *related by loosely conventional three-dimensional connexions*, proposed to a given community (of any quantitative or spatial dimension) to their interpretation. As a result of the perception of the three-dimensional connexions with which is related this set of elements effectively existent, (c) it can be accepted or denied *its designative and/or indicative character* with respect to the preexisting experience mnemically registered. According to this designative and/or indicative character (d) such disposition will be interpreted, and the meaning of each of these effectively existent elements and that of the totality, will be built through it.

19.1.23 Indexical semiotics: on modes of disposition

I will propose some thoughts that have emerged on the occasion of my visit (October 2001) to the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, during the itinerant exhibition "Más allá de los preconceptos" ("Beyond preconceptions"), curated by Milena Kalinovska, that went through the main museums in the world, according to some renovation of interest in conceptual art of the 60’s and early 70’s.

I am not interested now in the characteristics of conceptual art as aesthetic proposal. I rather will intend to show how intervened certain manipulations (or the resort to given forms of disposition) to which were subjected some of the exhibited objects and how, through the corresponding cognitive operations applied by the producer and recognized, admitted and used by the viewers in their interpretations, some of the exhibited proposals (objects disposed in a given way) acquired the ability to actualize in the interpreter’s memory, other absent object/s, that is, they acquire a given meaning and, therefore, their possible aesthetic quality and, in all cases, their effective semiotic quality, that we can qualify as *indexical*.

The following is a non-systematic enumeration, tentative and experimental (from effective observations in the mentioned exhibition), of some ways of disposition, according to which a given object or an ensemble of objects can be perceived by a given sector of the community as a substituent semiosis, resulting from a kind of cognitive processing to that I attribute by hypothesis, an operational quality of indexical nature and that I will unravel through these examples.

In all of the cases the dispositions mentioned here must be proposed by someone (as producer/s of the substituent semiosis) and must be perceived by many or by some or, in an extreme case, by one (as interpreter building the substituted semiosis). That is, I am assuming that there exists no semiotic effectiveness if not in a communication situation (i.e., there exists no semiotic effectiveness if an interpretant is not being built in the mind of some, at least one, interpreter).

Ways of disposition identified:

1. Distribution of a series of relatively similar objects in a way that is not the one by which there are perceived habitually in a given community, but that is similar to the habitual, frequent, and therefore well known distribution in the same community, of other series of objects different to the previous.

2. Situating a massive object or a series of identical objects (serially produced) in a showcase or on a pedestal or associated with a kind of support that, in a given society, is designed to receive, show or hold single objects or objects with some characteristic which makes them close to be unique.

3. Associating (by proximity) two (or more) objects belonging to socio-cultural ambits that have no connexion and, strengthening the association by enhancing some quality (for example, a given chromatic similarity) present in both objects.

4. Making evident the absence of an object, showing the device which, habitually, is container of something, whose lack invites to build it.

5. Reproducing the structure of something habitual, whose daily disposition require, by social convention, a given kind of raw material, but changing the raw material which holds the structure. This, generally, changes a raw material considered socially valuable (the absent, but represented), to another raw material, socially devalued (the present, with representative effectiveness).
6. Showing an object related to another (or to various objects in a chain of links) as a piece of behavior, for example, working, which actualizes the absent subject and a result being elaborated. There would be many possible dispositions, in addition to these. These are not basic, nor are they effectively diverse examples that mark possible series of possible dispositions. They are just (if they achieve to be) samples of where I think could advance the reflection that tries to identify possible forms or modes of the relation between present objects, in such way that they acquire the possibility of being representations (because they designate by substituting or because they point to what is missing) of other absent objects, that is, in a way that they acquire the possibility of becoming *indexical signs*.

19.1.24 Indexical semiotics: from sculpture to toys

I have mentioned above the topic of *aesthetics*, so I think I should essay some reflections which *link it with indexical semiotics*.

I will repeat that each sign has characteristics which allow to analyze it from any of the three basic semiotic perspectives: as icon, as index and as symbol (see 19.1.11). In a given society and even in a given situation of a given society, some of these perspectives are established as predominant. The indexical of the spoken word is the breath that sustains it, the tone, cadence and melody of the voice with that is emitted, and even the succession and the interchange of all of this in the monologue or dialogue; it is not the interchange or the succession of significations, that belongs to the symbolic aspect which, generally and with respect to the word, is the predominant semiotic perspective; nor is the recognition or imitation of someone identified by his/her specific speaking features, which belongs to the iconic aspect of the word.

A painting, a canvas, a painted table, have also an indexical aspect, that prevails when it comes to deciding, for example, on what support is going to be suspended or how will be directed the light to its surface. Of course, the predominant semiotic perspective will be that of the iconic aspect. But in certain cases, increasingly frequent in the production of visual images, the symbolic aspect acquires more importance; it is the capacity of the visual image to transmit socially codified information as in the graphic indications of airports and airplanes, stadiums, computers, clothing, etc.

Te objects (leaving aside behaviors for now) are not indexes because of being objects, but they are indexes when they represent another object/s, either because they designate them by substituting them (leaving aside behaviors by now) or because they point to them as those which lack (as a fur coat denotes the rest of the body of the animal that was killed to obtain it).

Conceptual art, when using objects (because it not only uses objects, and I understand here by “objects” those which are used habitually in an utilitarian mode and without a predominantly aesthetic aim), shows them in a variant of these two generic possibilities to build indexes: *substituting or showing its absence* (or an incongruous presence, which is a variant to show the absence). That is, conceptual art, while offering their objects to perception, i.e., while establishes them as icons, nevertheless enhances or retrieves or rests for an aesthetic leap, in the development and construction of the very indexical nature of such objects.

This is the occasion to speak about the term “sculpture”. In a similar way (but not identical) to what I proposed for the visual image (since sculpture is), I would say that (1) when it is figurative, is an *indexical icon* (or, better, an *iconical-sinsign*), whose pretension of similarity includes the three dimensionality (to that the representation on two dimensions must resign, except as trompe-l’œil). This would be the case of the image in [77a], of the group of medieval sculptures known as “Muertos que leen". (2) When the sculpture is plastic (in the sense the Groupe μ uses the term; Klinkenberg, Edeline and Minguet, 1992: 186-196), is an *iconic icon* (or, better, an *iconic-qualisign*), whose pretension is not the similarity with some existing context, but instead, it pretends to actualize the *qualia* of the spatial, that is, the sensation or inner feeling of an experience, allegedly unprecedented, of spatiality (6.222-6.237; Dennett, 1995: 381). Such would be the case [77] of the *Large Upright Internal/External Form 1953-54* of Henry Moore. (3) When the sculpture aims to bear a socially valid convention, becomes symbolic and we would say that it is a *symbolic icon* (or, better, an *iconic-legisign*), as can be the case [76] of *The Model of the Monument to the III International*, of Vladimir Tatlin.

3 Dead who read (applied generally to the so called reading statues). (G.W.)
That is, the sculptoric object is fundamentally iconic in some of its variants, by the simple fact that it is proposed as a form for contemplation. This is why, there are also sculptures, i.e., icons, the replicas of toys (which are fictitious toys or toys to be seen) made to show structural, dynamic or textural characteristics of toys (real or to be played with; so they are indexes, consisting the play, precisely in adding or supplementing what is absent). This reflection was enriched when I visited the Exhibition of Toys in the Centro Cultural de La Recoleta, in Buenos Aires; the exhibited objects were not toys, but represented toys and therefore, they were icons, with the exception of one part of it, called “The Dolls of Japan”, with too delicate dolls to play with them, but they nevertheless, were dolls (as they did not represent toys, but are, they were indexes).

Ultimately, as I went trying to understand in what consists the indexical quality of given objects, I arrived to toys, to which I consider indexes despite certain similarity we can find with the sculptures that would be icons, if we accept the preceding reflection. I think the analysis of toys can offer much more to reflect on.

19.1.25 Indexical semiotics: the registry of museum objects

I would like to extend a little the proposal for this task, aimed at the research on the museum, which I called “registry of the characteristics of interpretation and representation of the objects exhibited in a museum”.

It is assumed that a research on the specific characteristics of a given museum (besides circumstantial aspects that will also be taken into account in due course) should provide knowledge about three fundamental aspects:

The objects.

The visitors.

The policies of the curators for the exhibition of the objects to visitors.

These are not simple aspects, but they have a great complexity, in which we would have to enter little by little.

The issue of the “registry of the characteristics of interpretation and representation of the objects exhibited in a museum” is intended to provide knowledge about the objects; in this sense, its study belongs to the field of indexical semiotics.

There is a strong debate about whether the object is or is not an essential and defining element as to what is meant by Museum (personal comment of museologist Alicia Sarno). Provisorily, I consider that, in a broader
concept of object, it is any existing material entity that can be perceived by our senses, and, specially, if focused the object from the cognitive perspective of an indexical semiotics, can be affirmed that a museum, in order to exist, requires the exhibition of given objects, as representations of something different from themselves, subjected to the perception of a generic group (but specifiable) of visitors.

In order to advance in the possible building of the registry of objects (from which I exclude images) that I am proposing, I consider convenient to distribute them in three large groups (as I have already mentioned):

The **unique** object.

The **exemplary** object (prototype).

The **replica** object.

In the first case, as *unique object*, the object has in an exclusive way a given intrinsic value that makes it to be unique; any other that seeks to match it (in some or various of its multiple characteristics) will be considered a reproduction or falsification (and here can follow an interesting development on the differential characteristics of reproduction and falsification).

In the second case, as *exemplary object*, the object belongs to the existential field of a set whose elements can be identified because they have given morphological and relational features that allow to consider it as belonging to that set, and that the “exemplary object” shows, acquiring so, by this capacity of exhibition, the value of representing the other objects of the same set.

In the third case, as *replica object*, the object actualizes a possibility from a virtual system, showing in its materiality, formal features and specific relations that can be known only through such replica, whereby the perception of those features and relations allows to infer, from their material presence in a given context, the validity of the type in the virtual level of the system to that corresponds such replica.

Of course, there may be an *exemplary object* that by the special quality of the features that make it belong to a particular set, becomes a *unique object* without losing its quality as “exemplary”. For example, the beauty of certain features of a vessel of Aguada culture.

Regardless of this division between unique, exemplary and replica, in the object also influences:

A. Its *interpretation* (historical) and

B. Its *representation* (future)

I think that is possible to say that the set of interpretation and representation constitutes the meaning of the object. Of course it all depends on how we define interpretation and representation.

Approaching the cognitive operations I am trying to outline, I would say that an object’s *interpretation* is constituted by the set of discourses/semiosis available at a given moment by a given society, which build it (always from at least an instant previous to its perception) as referent. That is, I am considering here that interpretation is the sum of the characteristics of substituted semiosis that can be identified in a given object, by virtue of the knowledge which refers to it. That is, by virtue of the set of discourses/semiosis that can be applied to it, or, what everyone knows (with the full range of differences which this implies) about an object. This is the possible way (or possible ways) of interpreting it, so this sense of interpretation implies to resume the historical knowledge about something. An important aspect that all museum curator should take into account when planning an exhibition: *What knows the community about it?*

As to the *representation*, it is what the object can build. In this case, the (representational) characteristics of an object are those that refer to something very different to the object itself and by virtue of which, such difference acquires a given interpretation. The object becomes substituent semiosis to make (always from at least an instant after its perception) that something else be interpreted in a given way, that is, comes to be a semiotic object or substituted semiosis.

The interesting thing is that every object participates in this double quality: to be the result of the effectiveness of another and to exert its own effectiveness, which would result in another.

I designate the first aspect *interpretation or interpreted object* and may now be understood why it can also be designated semiotic object or substituted semiosis. Every object is the result of the action of another (being generally this another: a verbal discourse and/or a graphic configuration and/or a disposition of other objects).

The second aspect, the possibility of exerting the own effectiveness so that another come to be interpreted, is that which I designate *representation or representamen* (taking advantage of the Peircean term) and may now be understood why it can also be designated as substituent semiosis, since when we see it, we do not see it as such, but as a form building another (the well known “transparency” of language, being applied to any semiotic raw material in its representative proposal).
So, as in the case of the change in the depth direction of the Necker cube, any object (extensible to any sign, since it is a general characteristic of all semiotic systems) can be seen either as an interpretation resulting of other discourses/semiosis, or as an agency representative of something different from itself. But what can not happen, as in Necker’s cube, is that it could be considered in both aspects at the same time.

So that an object produce a representation of something else it must be situated as proposal for communication, and this depends on the usages and habits of each society at each epoch. The task of the museum curator is then: to provide the objects to the visitor’s perception, so that they can build something different to the object they are seeing, which is that what this object represents (or that what the curator wants it to represent).

Maybe now can be understood the resistance to admit that the object is essential and necessary to the museum’s existence; because it is not as such object in itself, but in terms of the representative power that is able to attribute to it the disposition in which it appears at a given exhibition. It is not the object itself what is exhibited in the museum, but the object as representative power.

Therefore the basic task in the study of the identity of an existing museum or of one that is being designed or of a given exhibition, partial and temporal, is to have available what I have called provisorily “the registry of the interpretative and representative characteristics of the objects exhibited in a museum”.

If the result of this registry is related with the result of the repertoire of basic questions that have been addressed to the visitors in order to know the contents and rules of their capacity of interpretation, the museum curator begins to have the first outline of information to sketch an exhibition policy of the museum’s patrimony.

This is why I am proposing these tasks for an indexical semiotics to the reflection of those who are interested in museum’s research. I think it would be important to make an empirical exploration of such semiotics in different ambits and cultural traditions, because they would permit to explain the dispersion of communication problems in different museums, related to diverse communities of possible visitors.

19.1.26 Indexical semiotics: concepts and variants of the indexical sign

I believe that the diverse aspects developed above on the appropriate features to design an **indexical semiotics**, are the basic and necessary grounds to propose and develop, in an organized and enriched way, the characteristics being outlined to identify the **indexical sign**.

I continue, as I have done before with respect to the indexical sign and, especially, with respect to the iconic sign (in Magariños de Morentin, 2000b), the conceptual structure of that which is considered the most complete, simplest and widespread definition of the Sign (relevant to a general semiotics) among those of Peirce (76 recorded by Marty, 1996), that of the C. P. 2. 228.

I. The *indexical sign is something*: an existent, that is:
   1. an *object*, or
   2. a *behavior*

II. that is in some *relation*: is proposed (as *substituent semiosis*) as *representation*:
   1. *indicative*
   2. or *designative*

III. with respect to *(other) something*: its *object or ground*, with respect to that
   A. if the relation is *indicative*, its character could be:
      1. *signal* (if anticipates it)
      2. *indication* (if retrieves it)
      3. *symptom* (if they are simultaneous)
   B. if the relation is *designative*, its character could be:
      4. *unique object* (it represents itself)
      5. *prototype* (it represents the other objects of its own set) or
      6. *replica* (it actualizes a possibility coming from a virtual system)

IV. for *someone*: who *interprets* it (in both cases as indicative or designative representation), attributing to it (as *substituted semiosis* and, therefore, as a *new sign in the mind of the interpreter*) a quality of:
   1. *icon* (as formal value),
   2. *index* (as existential value) or
   3. *symbol* (as conventional or normative value).

So far the derivation of the Peircean definition of *sign*, to construct, specifically, the *indexical sign*.

The pretention of this scheme is that the identification of a given sign as index will be valid if it can be integrated in indexical semiotics categories, allowing the identification, in the process of production of its significative effectiveness, of each of the successive relations registered in it.
So it can be used as an instrument of falsation, that is, it would allow to demonstrate that the proposal (of indexical sign) stated is false, if it were possible to find an existential sign (that is, an object or behavior in situation of substituent semiosis) which contains none of the relations identified in such scheme.

But this scheme can be used also to make evident the mental process and cognitive characteristics of each stage, when attempting to attribute meaning to something through objects or behaviors, that is, to describe rigorously those situations in which the objects or the behaviors are effective, for something to acquire a given meaning in the mind of who interprets it.

Now I will provide, very briefly, the route of each of the possible combinations corresponding to each of the variants established in the definition: there are 36 variants of possible indexical signs. I will give examples of all of the cases. They will be preceded by the numerical identification of each variant and by (a) the technical-semiotic description of the variant; (b) the empirical description of the existential relations that make the social presence of the corresponding variant. And finally (c), I will propose the example (one among the innumerable) in which materialize all the features relevant to the variant at study (when I say “and, of course...”; it means that I am referring to some example already used before).

1: I/1; II/1; III/1; IV/1 = (a) an object indicative as iconic signal; (b) something that appears in a place anticipating a form that will occur; (c) a lipstick anticipates the color on the lips of someone.

2: I/1; II/1; III/1; IV/2 = (a) an object indicative as indexical signal; (b) something that appears in a place anticipating an existence that will occur; (c) a fire arm anticipates the production of a hole on a target; and, of course, the clouds which, eventually, anticipate the rain.

3: I/1; II/1; III/1; IV/3 = (a) an object indicative as symbolic signal; (b) something that appears in a place anticipating a value that will occur; (c) a wedding dress in the dressmaker’s workshop anticipates a marriage.

4: I/1; II/1; III/2; IV/1 = (a) an object indicative as iconic indication; (b) something that appears in a place retrieving a form that is no longer there; (c) a photography retrieves the face of someone absent (or present in a past moment).

5: I/1; II/1; III/2; IV/2 = (a) an object indicative as indexical indication; (b) something that appears in a place retrieving an existent that is no longer there; (c) a cigarette that has been put out retrieves the presence of a smoker; and, of course, the footprint in the sand retrieves a foot of someone who went through there.

6: I/1; II/1; III/2; IV/3 = (a) an object indicative as symbolic indication; (b) something that appears in a place retrieving a value that is no longer there; (c) a good suit, faded, worn by someone, retrieves the good times in which it was used as new.

7: I/1; II/1; III/3; IV/1 = (a) an object indicative as iconic symptom; (b) something that appears in a place evidencing a contemporary form; (c) a television broadcast “live” shows how “it looks” at that time, the face of a character.

8: I/1; II/1; III/3; IV/2 = (a) an object indicative as indexical symptom; (b) something that appears in a place evidencing a contemporary existent; (c) the little lamp turned on on the door of a radio studio, shows that, in the studio, is being transmitted; and, of course, the smoke, which is seen beyond a wall, shows the existence of fire.

9: I/1; II/1; III/3; IV/3 = (a) an object indicative as symbolic symptom; (b) something that appears in a place evidencing a contemporary value; (c) the star of David or the half moon or a cross, on top of a building, evidences that it is a religious site.

Observe that, from here on, we pass (for the objects) from the indicative relation (“II/1”) to the designative relation (“II/2”), so the variants pass too from being (“III”) (1) signal, (2) indication, (3) symptom (which are indicative relations) to (“III/4”), unique object and (“III/5”), prototype and, finally, (“III/6”) replica (that are specifically designative relations), each of which can be interpreted as (“IV”) (1) icon, (2) index or (3) symbol.

10: I/1; II/2; III/4; IV/1 = (a) an object designative as iconic unique object (b) something that appears in a place representing itself as form; (c) an egyptian pyramid shows itself as being the form that is seen in tourist postcards; or the face of a politician when we recognize him/her, because of having seen him/her in the media.

11: I/1; II/2; III/4; IV/2 = (a) an object designative as indexical unique object; (b) something that appears in a place representing itself as existent; (c) someone’s voice, that allows us to identify him/her unequivocally.

12: I/1; II/2; III/4; IV/3 = (a) an object designative as symbolic unique object; (b) something that appears in a place representing itself as value; (c) the armchair of Rivadavia, which represents presidency; and, of course, San Martin’s spade.
13: I/1; II/2; III/5; IV/1 = (a) an object designative as iconic prototype; (b) something that appears in a place, representing the others of its domain, as forms; (c) a car in an exhibition that shows us how are the other cars of the same brand and model; and, of course, a coin of one maravedi that shows us how were the one maravedi coins.

14: I/1; II/2; III/5; IV/2 = (a) an object designative as indexical prototype; (b) something that appears in a place, representing the others of its domain, as existents; (c) a skull representing the skeleton of a kind of heads.

15: I/1; II/2; III/5; IV/3 = (a) an object designative as symbolic prototype; (b) something that appears in a place, representing the others of its domain, as values; (c) a banknote in circulation represents the same economic value than the others of the same designation.

16: I/1; II/2; III/6; IV/1 = (a) an object designative as iconic replica; (b) something that appears in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which it belongs, as forms; (c) the same banknote, seen as one of the differential and identifiable variants of the diverse designs of banknotes.

17: I/1; II/2; III/6; IV/2 = (a) an object designative as indexical replica; (b) something that appears in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which it belongs, as existents; (c) a drug in a pharmacy, as a possible alternative with others of the same or similar effectiveness.

18: I/1; II/2; III/6; IV/3 = (a) an object designative as symbolic replica; (b) something that appears in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which it belongs, as values; (c) a container as possible fraction of a system of measures of capacity in liters or gallons, etc.

[79] Scheme (1)
Here begins the first possibility of a sequence of 18 similar to the preceding. But from something initial that consists, not any more in a (“I/1”) object, but in a (“I/2”) behavior.

19: I/2; II/1; III/1; IV/1 = (a) a behavior indicative as iconic signal; (b) given actions produced in a place anticipating a form that will appear; (c) the task of a draftsman who is drawing, indicating that we will see a drawing.

20: I/2; II/1; III/1; IV/2 = (a) a behavior indicative as indexical signal; (b) given actions produced in a place anticipating an existent that will appear; (c) the task of a mason, from which will result a wall.

21: I/2; II/1; III/1; IV/3 = (a) a behavior indicative as symbolic signal; (b) given actions produced in a place anticipating a value that will appear; (c) the work of an employee, who for it will receive a salary.

22: I/2; II/1; III/2; IV/1 = (a) a behavior indicative as iconic indication; (b) given actions produced in a place retrieveing a form that is no longer there; (c) to look at himself in the mirror searching for the remains of the face that was 20 years ago.

23: I/2; II/1; III/2; IV/2 = (a) a behavior indicative as indexical indication; (b) given actions produced in a place retrieveing an existent that is no longer there; (c) a gesture someone makes authomatically, which is reproducing that which he/she used to make when he/she had a cat who was the recipient of it.

24: I/2; II/1; III/2; IV/3 = a behavior indicative as symbolic indication; (b) given actions produced in a place retrieveing a value that is no longer there; (c) to wear suit and tie to give the class, as a hierarchization of the teaching task.

25: I/2; II/1; III/3; IV/1 = (a) a behavior indicative as iconic symptom; (b) given actions produced in a place evidencing a contemporary form; (c) to wear clothes with colors that match the color of one’s eyes.

26: I/2; II/1; III/3; IV/2 = (a) a behavior indicative as indexical symptom; (b) given actions produced in a place evidencing a contemporary existent; (c) tremor as a demonstration of fear.

27: I/2; II/1; III/3; IV/3 = (a) a behavior indicative as indexical symptom; (b) given actions produced in a place evidencing a contemporary value; (c) obedient attitudes in recognition of the authority of the other.

28: I/2; II/2; III/4; IV/1 = (a) a behavior designative as iconic unique object; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing itself as forms; (c) Kiri Te Kanawa’s singing enjoyed by the qualities which are peculiar to it.

29: I/2; II/2; III/4; IV/2 = a behavior designative as indexical unique object; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing itself as existents; (c) the voyage of Columbus which represents him insofar it only was captained by him.

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30: I/2; II/2; III/4; IV/3 = (a) a behavior designative as symbolic unique object; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing themselves as values; (c) arbitrary handling of financial transactions representing the concrete political and economic power of a given bank.

31: I/2; II/2; III/5; IV/1 = (a) a behavior designative as iconic prototype; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing the others of their domain as forms; (c) attitudes learned by a clergyman in order to be seen as clergyman.

32: I/2; II/2; III/5; IV/2 = (a) a behavior designative as indexical prototype; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing the others of their domain as existents; (c) smoking a cigarette after another allows to identify a compulsive smoker.

33: I/2; II/2; III/5; IV/3 = (a) a behavior designative as symbolic prototype; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing the others of their domain as values; (c) the way of handling the cutlery allows to identify a person's education.

34: I”; II/2; III/6; IV/1 = (a) a behavior designative as iconic replica; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which they belong, as forms; (c) gestures and body attitudes chosen by a mime to represent a drunk.

35: I/2; II/2; III/6; IV2 = (a) a behavior designative as indexical replica; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which they belong, as existents; (c) the movements of a surgeon while operating come from learning the practice of surgery.

36: I/2; II/2; III/6; IV/3 = (a) a behavior designative as symbolic replica; (b) given actions produced in a place, representing some of the possibilities of the system to which they belong, as values; (c) to spend much “ad exhibendum”.

19.2 Some complementary topics

19.2.27 Substituent semiosis, substituted semiosis and signification. An approach from the topic of indexical semiotics

I do not think it possible to use the term “signification” as synonym of “substituent semiosis”, or of “substituted semiosis”.

The basic difference would be that “signification” (or even, “meaning”, with the nuances of both terms depending on the authors or tendencies) is the product, while the couple “substituent semiosis” and “substituted semiosis” designate the two poles of the semiotizing activity; that is, it could be said that the first of them designate the agent and the second, the patient. Put another way, “substituent semiosis” designates the tool with which we aim to produce a given meaning, while “substituted semiosis” designates the object or phenomenon on which works that tool and in which will be shown the result of the operation that this instrument allows to do, by acquiring a given meaning.

Generally, but not always, the identification of what I called “poles of semiotizing activity”, is easy. Recently a question arose in the Universidad Nacional de Jujuy, related to the economic problems of that province, more or less in this terms: “What is the substituent semiosis that builds the signification of the activities of piqueteros?” (see also 19.1.1, 19.1.7, 19.1.8, 19.1.17 and 19.2.28).

The topic is important because all semiotic research tries to explain the meaning of a social phenomenon, especially having in mind that by “social” is understood the phenomenon that is represented/interpreted in some social semiosis. Should be noted that there is no virgin phenomenon, that is, not interpreted, but it should be noted also that the semiotician’s task excludes a direct intervention in the phenomenon, whose possibility is always a metaphysical fallacy. The semiotician must intervene in the discourses (or semiosis in general) with which their signification is constructed.

“Piqueteros” is the popular designation of those who participate in “piquetes” or groups of people who interrupt traffic, usually on roads or paths, but also in avenues and streets in order to protest against some urgent situation that does not seem to be attended by the Government, such as lack of work or the long overdue payment of salaries of public employees.

The question is interesting because it allowed the awareness on the existence of a set of gradual or interdependent levels, in respect to the course of different substituent semiosis, that intervened to provide a given meaning to different substituted semiosis involved when the semiotic situation.

I think that the most striking was to note that the behaviors corresponding to the road interruptions or piquetero’s activity, were not the social phenomenon being semantized, but that they were a substituent semiosis which sought to attribute particular meaning to the lack of work or the long overdue payment of salaries of public employees. Consequently, the road interruptions and piquetero’s activity were a substituent semiosis used as
semiotic tool able to confer a specific signification to a substituted semiosis that was, ultimately, the social phenomenon they tried to semantize, consisting in lack of work or long overdue payment of salaries of public employees (along with other substituent semiosis also competing to build the meaning of this last phenomenon).

But, as I have already said, in semiotics nothing is definitely and forever in a given manner. Piqueteros’s activity are, in principle, a discourse or substituent semiosis that tries to provide a given meaning to the referent consisting in the lack of work or substituted semiosis. But, at the same time, there are a substituted semiosis that appears to be semantized by the discourses or substituent semiosis of politicians, unionists, drivers that see impeded their transit and of the participants themselves in road blockades or any other who have an opinion about it.

That is, the social discourse integrate with different related semiotic levels, all of which are constituents of the semantizing tool of the social phenomenon, that, ultimately, consists in the lack of work.

The other interesting aspect is that all these diverse discourses, that of the behavior and that of opinions and verbal discourses, do not operate exactly as a metalinguistic intervention of one language in another. They operate instead as the intervention of a language external to the language at study (as intervention of the symbolic or verbal in the indexical or behavioral and viceversa), implying a transformation of the interpretative effectiveness of the language (external or different) that were used to attribute signification to the other one (Descles et Guentcheva Descles, 1977: 60-61). Despite the emotional rejection it can provoke, the intervention of a police or gendarmerie would be a metalanguage of road blockades (or, better, a metasemiosis) insofar it would be a semiosis of the same semiotic characteristics than that of piqueteros, being both indexical, that is, behavioral, with the attempt of intervention of the last in the first, modifying it. So can be interpreted the differential characteristics between a symbolic debate (or argumentation and verbal criticism) versus an indexical debate (of repression and violence).

So far my approach of the technical use of the expressions “substituent semiosis” and “substituted semiosis” and my rejection to consider them as synonyms of the term “signification”.

19.2.28 Verbal language fallacy as necessary model for all substituent semiosis

Apparently, we face a dilemma: given behaviors (or all of them, but some more overwhelmingly) seem to be considered, alternatively and not jointly, as referents and as such, destined to have their signification built by another semiosis (preferably the verbal, but also the visual of the images, for example, of TV) or as substituent semiosis and, as such, as producers of the signification of some other entity (the work, the salary, etc.), which thus would result to be the referent built by this behavioral semiosis.

The dilemma would arise if we had to decide between one or the other possibility, that is, if the adoption of one of them would require, necessarily and definitively, the rejection of the other. But this would be a positivist perspective. From semiotics, as we have seen already, something may, at a given time, be considered as substituted semiosis and, therefore, require the researcher to establish which is the semiosis that builds its meaning, while at another moment, the very same something can be considered as substituent semiosis, and therefore, require the researcher identify the semiosis whose meaning is being built with it. It is not to be involved in the labile field of subjectivity of the analyst or the author's intentions, but instead, in each case, the researcher has to find answer to this couple of questions (and to prove that it is the answer demanded by the question).

1. Are there “something” whose meaning is produced by any other semiosis? And, which one would be that “something”? Then, is possible to consider such “something” as substituted semiosis or, in another terms, as semiotic object, and even in another terms, as referent.

2. Are there “something” that is necessary to produce the meaning of some other semiosis? Which one would be that “something”? Then, is possible to consider that “something” as substituent semiosis or, in another terms, as sign, and even in another terms, as discourse.

From semiotics, something may be at a moment the tool for the production of meaning and, at another moment, it may be something that receives its meaning from another. Now, the problem is restated from another perspective, as it seems generally accepted that there are given semiosis that have been seen historically and predominantly as substituted semiosis, that is, as semiotic objects, as referents. And what habitually is called “behavior” would be one of such semiosis necessarily substituted.

There are, also, other given semiosis that have been seen historically and predominantly as substituent semiosis, that is, as signs, as discourses. And the speech is the more habitually mentioned among such substituent semiosis (the other are material visual images, music, gestural language of the deaf or the mimes, etc.).
Among these, the verbal or written language has become the model of substituent semiosis. That is, has come to be considered that, if something is intended to be effective in order to build the meaning of another something, it should share the basic characteristics of verbal or written language.

This is a fallacy, because the characteristics of verbal or written language depend on those of its raw material: phonetic sounds, and, therefore, its discrete character, sequentiality, be non-superimposable, repeatability, formal variability from the transformation of minimal features, etc., with all of which is built its specific grammaticality.

Likewise, the characteristics of any other semiosis, for example, visual or behavioral, depend on the characteristics of their raw material. So, as for the material visual images: their planarity, acceptability of the chromatic, simultaneity of different formal elements, broad margins of formal variability maintaining identity, among other characteristics. And as to the behavioral attitudes: their three dimensionality, the integration and disintegration of complex units by concurrence or dispersion of single units, the necessary mobility, constant production of physical perceptual transformations, etc. (in both cases, I do not intend to establish a taxonomy of features, but to state a merely illustrative and exploratory enunciation).

This fallacy of the necessary modelic reference to the characteristics of speech has slowed and distorted the development, for example, of visual image semiotics, limiting their study to what could arise from metaphorical transplant of metalinguistic operations. It has slowed due to similar reasons the emergence and development of an indexical semiotics, as well as semiotic of objects, that is indispensable, for example, to study them by their representative character as exhibited in museums. And has slowed also the emergence and development of a semiotics of individual and/or group behavior, that is essential, for example, to study them because of their representative character as indicative of events or values independent of their character of behaviors, as for example that of the “piqueteros” mentioned above.

19.2.29 Peircean developments: substituent semiosis-substituted semiosis-semiotic object

I return, here, to a fundamentally Peircean issue, although in its comprehension are involved some reflections which are a transformation of saussurian proposals. Despite the apparent antinomy, I have never considered that Saussure and Peirce have developed incompatible conceptions. And, as always, the theme I propose (not for the first time, but trying to consolidate it) is linked either to its implementation as a methodology of analysis on explaining the production, circulation and transformation of signification, and to its exploration according to the diverse social semiosis in force in a given society, whether they are iconic, indexical or symbolic.

As we have seen, there are three expressions in semiotics that are not interchangeable, but instead, each of them refers to a given aspect of the semiotic relation produced by knowledge and even to a given state of the progress of the sign towards its specific effectiveness. These expressions are: “substituent semiosis”, “substituting semiosis”, and “semiotic object”. Especially in this occasion I want to propose some reflection about the difference and proximity between the last two expressions: “substituting semiosis”, and “semiotic object”.

Is true that these do not make sense if not a function of the substituent semiosis, that is the operational tool that, perceived by the senses and interpreted by some mind, allows the production of the substituted semiosis and of the semiotic object.

I want to stress the operational tool character that I attribute to the substituent semiosis. Can help to understand this, the awareness that the page the reader is reading is a substituent semiosis, just as it is also an exhibition in a museum or the objects situated in the shopwindow, etc. They are operational because they build (and this is their operativity) the idea and/or the concept and/or the meaning of another thing and, hence, they are substituents of something different from what is being perceived and interpreted.

We will explore how far it can be methodologically useful and theoretically well grounded our argument that the semiotic object is any entity or phenomenon with the meaning that the substituent semiosis of the society in which each interpreter lives, attributed to it. Is exactly so, in past tense, since “semiotic object” would be used in reference to what we already know about something at a moment in which we are not increasing our knowledge about it, that is, at a moment in which we do not consider it as that which is being substituted by some substituent semiosis, but as something which has been already substituted historically. Semiotic object is any object of the world such as we are taught to consider it at a given moment.

The methodological usefulness of differentiating between semiotic object and substituted semiosis, is that it allows to identify the substituted semiosis as the new things we can learn about such object because we are perceiving a substituent semiosis that adds something to it, builds it in another way, transforms its meaning so that it is no longer the previous but another, different. That is, substituted semiosis is a new way of seeing and interpreting the semiotic object. It is any object of the world that is built, seen, interpreted, from other substituent semiosis which, therefore, attributes to it a new meaning.

But, What is it that makes the substituent semiosis be another and no longer that with which historically (even though it is the history between the time you read a paragraph and the paragraph that follows, when the change
justify to speak of “history”) has been built the meaning of what we had come to know? That otherness of the
substituent semiosis is, necessarily and sufficiently, a transformation of the syntax which relate the signs of each
of the contexts (or configurations or dispositions) of the preceding (or of each of the preceding) substituent
semiosis. But the syntax is the replica or materialization of the value of the sign in its system, and this concept of
“value” is what makes scientific the Saussurean linguistics.

Saussure wanted not enter the study of speech, all that, however, later was developed in pragmatics. This is why
he did not study the change but the situation (a diachrony is the result of the identifiable transformation between
two synchronies). If we accept Peirce’s view of the interpretant (in which is grounded all what I am saying here)
we can explain the change, not only in the system of signs from that is built differentially each context of
substituent semiosis, but in the meaning that acquire the phenomena of the world (this meaning makes them at
the same time signs of some system or some semiosis). As soon as these have acquired the meanings attributed
to them by a given substituent semiosis, we can identify them as semiotic objects, that is, semantized
phenomena. Insofar such phenomena of the world modify the meaning they had before by the effectiveness of
(the syntax of) each substituent semiosis, and insofar the interpreter is working on that new meaning proposal,
the object that is being interpreted by such interpretor is what we can call “substituted semiosis”.

I know that there are still issues to be clarified, but I will summarize what I have said so far:

A **substituent semiosis** is a context of signs in force in a given society, that by virtue of the syntax relating the
signs of such context, applies to something different from itself, attributing to it, therefore, a given meaning.

A **semiotic object** is an entity or phenomenon of the world that, at a given moment of a given society, acquires a
given meaning through the effective action of a substituent semiosis that attributes such meaning to it in the
mind of a given interpreter.

A **substituted semiosis** is the modified meaning of an entity or phenomenon of the world, that is being produced
by a substituent semiosis when this becomes a sign of that entity or phenomenon. All substituted semiosis is
destined necessarily to be transformed in a semiotic object, insofar is admitted as the signification (that has come
into history) of a given entity or phenomenon of the world. When a new substituent semiosis can attribute to it a
new meaning, it constitutes another substituted semiosis that, as socially reproducible, becomes a historic
semiotic object until a new substituent semiosis generates another substituted semiosis as new object of
knowledge for the mind of the interpreter.

The Peircean ground of this reflection can be found in the relative correspondence between:

1. **Substituent semiosis and immediate interpretant**, as the scheme that actualizes the sign (or set of signs) in the
mind of the interpreter (that is, its representative effectiveness).

2. **Substitued semiosis and dynamic interpretant**, as the result effectively produced in the mind by the sign (that
is, the new meaning).

3. **Semiotic object and normal interpretant (or Ultimate or Final)**, as the effect which will be produced in the
mind of the interpreter by the sign, after sufficient development of thought (that is, the historical meaning).

### 19.2.30 Peircean developments: the communicative interpretant

In his definition of sign as “medium pour la communication d’une forme” (cited by Marty, 1990: núm. 33,
Annexe A)⁴, Peirce constructs the concept of **communicative interpretant**: “Il y a l’Interprétant Intentionnel, qui
est une détermination de l’esprit de l’émetteur; l’interprétant Efficace, qui est une détermination de l’esprit de
l’interprète; et l’Interprétant Communicationnel, ou disons le Cominterprétant, qui est une détermination de cet
esprit dans lequel les esprits de l’émetteur et de l’interprète doivent être fondus pour qu’une communication
puisse avoir lieu.”⁵

In the construction of each of these interpretants: intentional, effective and communicative (worked by Peirce
from a theoretical perspective different from that which lead to the concepts of immediate, dynamic and normal,
which we saw in the previous section), he uses the term “determination”, of deep hegelian roots (with whom
Peirce had always a love-hate dialectical relation), in terms of concretion of that aspect of the minds which refers
to the joint task of producing and interpreting, respectively, a given substituent semiosis.

It costs to me a little more to admit the **third mind**, that in which “les esprits de l’émetteur et de l’interprète

⁴ In http://www.archivo-semiotica.com.ar/peirceano.html, message 996. Following Marty, the origin is MS 793 (texte n°67?) (G.W.)

⁵ In http://www.archivo-semiotica.com.ar/peirceano.html, message 996. Following Marty, the origin is n°33 Annexe A (where?; G.W.)
doivent être fondus” because in this context we speak already of entelechy, to which the term “mind” provides its metaphoric sense, as virtual mind: it does not belongs to someone concrete but, as in a Venn diagram, to the common parts of two minds (which is not a third mind).

And, disregarding the reference to this mind, in which the other merges, I consider important as to the concept of communicative interpretant: when the producer interpretant (the designation includes the Peircean intentional interpreter) generated its substituent semiosis, it applied given forms that had available and it applied them following given relations also available (besides other forms and relations that also were available, but were not applied by it). A part of those forms and relations effectively applied, should coincide with the forms and relations that are available to the interpreter interpretant (the designation includes the Peircean effective interpretant) in order to apply them to the interpretation of such substituent semiosis, and this interpretant is willing to apply them and applies them effectively. Were this not so, would not exist a minimum agreement to communicate about something (the symbolic contract implicit in all communicative act or what Marty’s quotation calls communicative interpretant).

But the interpreter interpretant has other relations too, that can be applied to relate the forms proposed in the substituent semiosis and that are not those projected by the producer interpretant. But they must be possible among the relational availabilities (contextualization capability) of a given community at a given historical moment, so that they can be used by any of the members of it. That is, the interpreter can read or perceive what the author of a text proposed, either image or behavior, in a way different from how the author assumed and expected that the interpreter will read or perceive it.

The interpreter interpretant, in addition, has other terms available that possibly would have preferred to find in the substituent semiosis instead of finding those applied by the producer interpretant. But they should be possible among the representational availabilities (other designations with other contextualization history that provides other semantic load) of a given community at a given historical moment, so that they can be used by any of the members of it. That is, the interpreter would have produced a text, image or behavior, using another vocabulary, other images, or different attitudes than those which the author of the text, image and behavior has chosen to produce the one he/she proposed to the perception of the interpreter.

The shared ensemble of terms and relations is what establishes the degree of communicability existing between the two interpretants of the same substituent semiosis, respectively produced and interpreted, and this is the use I make of the expression communicative interpreter, which results in the concrete fulfillment of the indispensable symbolic contract. This shared ensemble is close to what Foucault calls discourses produced from the same “discursive formation” and what I identify as shared possible semiotic worlds.

To the extent these terms and relations diverge, also diverge the production of the substituent semiosis and its interpretation. This is the political struggle to establish a hegemonic discursivity (Foucault, 1971; Pêcheux, 1975). The struggle is destined, in the long or short term, to fail and to benefit then the ideological plurality: in a given society and at a given moment, the whole of the possible semiotic worlds is characterized by its inconsistency, that is, by the validity of the contradictory. Although every possible semiotic worlds must be consistent to its own interior, is also required to recognize the inconsistency which affects the whole of the possible semiotic worlds in force at the same time at a given historical moment in a given society, which is the semiotic manifestation of the plurality inherent to the social.

All this leads us, like in a relatively marginal addition, to reflect on the passivity of the representamen. It is like saying that the perceptual proposals (the substituent semiosis) do not signify in themselves, but the interpretants make them significative. In a research intended to explain the characteristics by which the signification of a given social phenomenon is produced, is important to avoid this kind of animism of significant forms, regardless of their quality: iconic, indexical or symbolic. This is manifested attributing a soul (latin “anima”) to given material entities (in our case, the page, the drawing, the score or the musical sound, etc.), which will assume the quality of agent in the verbs that Russell and Quine called verbs of “propositional attitudes” (Quine, 1960: 150-156) or “of language (langue)” (as “says” or “speaks” or “expresses himself” or “proposes”, etc.; Sánchez Márquez, 1982: #289). In this sense, it would be animism in the Peircean concept of third mind or mind by merging of minds, as a cognitive event that provides effectiveness by itself to the communicative aspect of the representamen, which leads Peirce to call it “communicative interpretant”. A discourse, the page of a book, an image, a musical piece, a gathering of persons interrupting the transit in the street, etc., do not “speak”, nor are they “eloquent”, nor “say” they something by themselves (by more than its habituality in a given culture attributes an interpretation to their mere presence). They do not signify by themselves. It is the interpretant and/or who interprets it, who has the ability to signify something, that is, to make significative something. That is, without interpretant there are no meaning. And anything in which intervenes the interpreter, is significative.

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6 In http://www.archivo-semiotica.com.ar/peirceano.html, message 1037. Following Marty in this message, it is in a letter to lady Welby (Semiotics and Significs, p.196. Letter to Lady Welby (Draft) dated “1906, March 9”) (G.W.)
In 19.2.29, I tried to contribute with some more reflections on “substituent semiosis”, “substituted semiosis”, and “semiotic object”. I wanted to: (1) identify more clearly what knowledge we can expect as result of a research with semiotic methodology and, therefore, (2) also a better understanding of what is the structure and formulation adequate to a hypothesis in a semiotic research project. I wil refer now more thoroughly to both aspects.

1. As to the knowledge we can expect as result of a research using semiotic methodology, it would refer to how and by what tools has been produced the actualization of the meaning of a given social phenomenon at a given moment of a given society.

All phenomenon is social because all phenomena known to man, have been represented from some substitutem semiosis (symbolic discourse: verbal, mathematical, algorithmic, etc., and/or visual configuration and/or disposition of objects or behaviors and/or etc.), which is the operational tool allowing to man to have already interpreted the corresponding phenomenon (i.e., it is not interpreted by immediate observation, but by its observation through some substituent semiosis which represents it), attributing to it a meaning, that is, knowing it, making it to become the semiotic object that such substituent semiosis or set of substituent semiosis has/have produced. In each new substituent semiosis proposal, if it is effectively new, the significative contribution would make the interpreter to consider the represented phenomenon, not as a known semiotic object (historical), but as a different substituted semiosis, directly linked to some new substituent semiosis, as an original phenomenon. And also the semiotic research is who has the necessary and adequate tools to establish whether or not have been occurred these new relations (which could be an overcoming, in dialectical sense, of the previous substituent semiosis) and therefore, whether or not has been built the new substituted semiosis as to the phenomenon at study.

As an example, it can be said that in each political discourse, when the politician speaks about justice, work, poverty, investments, debt, etc., these social phenomena are being built in semiotic objects. In the plural scene of political discourse, each political discourse, as particular substituent semiosis of each of those phenomena, constructs those semiotic objects in a different way. The attempt made by each politician so the community interprets his/her own discourse in a specific and differential way, is materialized in the establishment of different syntactical relations, by situating in his/her discourse each of those linguistic signs (“poverty”, “justice”, “work”, “debt”, etc.), in such way that the interpreter can construct different semantic relations (with respect to the use of the same signs by another politician). That is, that the community perceive such aspects of the social events as substituted semiosis and, then, original, and, of course, akin to how a given sector of the community (as broad as possible, for electoral purposes), would build them. This is not an enigma, but it can be known (the political discourse not emitted by the society, but possible to be emitted by it, as positively interpretable) by the semiotic analysis of everyday discourse (in which is spoken of the same phenomena as those spoken by the politician) of diverse members of the community at study. This semiotic analysis will show the differential syntactic relations with which that members of the community construct the different semantic relations that they would consider acceptable as to those social aspects (justice, work, poverty, debt, development, etc.). In summary, every politician builds his discourse (or want to build it) as a replica of the social discourses in force not emitted, but emissible (politically) which (and here is produced the necessary decision of the politician) build syntactic relations that are either akin to those the politician wants to propose so to make emerge the semantic relations acceptable to his/her ideology (discourse emitted from a given political platform), or more widespread (the “manièrê de parler”, Marandin, 1979: 51-52 and 57-84), from which, as is known, would emerge the semantic relations that would be acceptable by the majoritarian sectors of the community (demagogical discourse). And still there is another possibility: regardless of the syntactic relations of the discourse, and of the meanings coming from the semantic relations so built, politicians show him/herself and behaves, situating him/herself (as “person” in the greek sense of “character”) in a particular way of being seen in order to evoke his/her previous performances in a given context, whose syntactic relations (the way of behaving) gave him/her a personal semantic value, as sign already interpreted, regardless (total or partially) the semantic values constructing his/her political discourse. Such the case of the person (as indexical sign of a substituent semiosis) who uses the syntax of his/her own position in the diverse social relations (as actor/actress, artist, sportsman/sportswoman, etc.) knowing that it has been already interpreted positively as having built a semantics, that is, a meaning that is highly acceptable by broad (also here are sought as broad as possible, for electioneering purposes only) social sectors. All of this has a very similar development and applicability in the case of the advertising discourse.

Is not about the mere pleasure of using technical terms: substituent semiosis, substituted semiosis, semiotic object, syntactic relations, semantic relations. Rather, by the precise definition of such terms, the analysis of the meaning construction (for example, the political or advertising effectiveness of the discourses) can achieve higher precision, by providing the explanation, not of what is the true meaning of a given phenomenon (that always would be a dogmatic-ideological inference, that also can be explained semiotically as the process of its
production, but not as the absolute value of its truth or falsity), but instead, the explanation of what the social force is and from what discourses come the diverse options existing at a given moment in a given society to construct the meaning of given phenomena.

The semiotic research provides, therefore, a rigorous knowledge about this process by which a given phenomenon acquire a given meaning.

2. As to the structure and appropriate formulation of a hypothesis in a semiotic research project, what is required is to state as concisely as possible a conjecture (or abduction, which, as Peirce proposes, is what has to be proven; hence the appropriateness of concision) about the semantic relations that constitute the capacity that has given substituent semiosis, in force at a given moment of a given society, to build a given meaning to a given social phenomenon.

The burden of proof shall be on the need to demonstrate which syntactic relations established between which entities or signs, construct such semantic relations. This analytical aspect, that starts from the perceptual (syntax) to explain the conceptual (semantics) is one of the aspects that provides rigor and specificity to the hypothesis. In semiotic methodology, this hypothesis must be enunciated and proved. Of course, the substituent semiosis concurring in the production of such meaning (that is, in the attribution of a semantic content to a phenomenon) require a broad knowledge of how are working the diverse semiosis in force in a given society: this will result, like the simple scheme already known, in iconic, indexical and symbolic semiotics, not being sufficient the use of linguistic structures (that are not but a part or variant of symbolic semiotics).

Also requires some reflection the need to adjust the notion of language as the faculty, natural to man, of constituting a system of different signs corresponding to different ideas, in the words of Saussure’s amanuensis students, since such faculty would be what I am calling in this work “semiotic faculty”, that includes verbal language but is not restricted to it.

Again and ultimately, the statement about the faculty natural to man, of constituting a system of different signs corresponding to different ideas is, from this perspective, the definition of the semiotic faculty and is not reduced to be the definition of language as faculty, but includes the language as one more systems of those of different signs corresponding to different ideas.

This is why I prefer the hjelmslevian conception (as I have already said) that includes the verbal language into the semiotics universe, and I reject the barthian conception that redirects all semiotics to verbal language, because this is able to account for all. This “to account for” refers to the production of an explanation, which could be indeed the specific effectiveness of the verbal as its capacity to the production of concepts, but will never reach the possibility of producing the same signification, which depends on the specificity of each semiotics.

I think also that the expressions “mental processes” or “neurological processes” are more involved with current knowledge on the brain functioning and permit a more effective inclusion of them, than the Saussurean expression of “faculty natural to man”. I am not arguing this as merely a terminological dilemma, but in order to identify a space of conceptual reflection in which to explore the new cognitive hypotheses.

Thus, it can be said that semiotics, in singular, refers, in a general way, to the mental-neurological processes (natural and evolutive) of production of signs which substitute or represent different ideas.

Semiotics, in plural, refer specifically to the mental-neurological processes (natural and evolutive) of production of different kinds of signs which substitute or represent, in different ways, different ideas.

From another perspective, the designation “social semiosis”, refers to the diverse historical realizations of such semiotics.

Instead, from a third perspective, is also spoken of “semiotics” as the theoretical discipline which give account of the process of production, interpretation and transformation of the meaning of social phenomena.

Another aspect is that no semiosis is self sufficient to its interpretation; nor to produce or to explain the corresponding process of interpretation. So then, in order to interpret the substituent semiosis of verbal nature, we should have iconic and indexical attractors in the memory, in addition of those specifically verbal-symbolic. And the same reflection will be applicable, mutatis mutandis, to the remaining semiosis. So, to argue that is required mediation of the action of language as determinant of the nature of iconic and indexical semiotics, is not more valid nor less valid, but in no way determinant, than to argue that is required mediation of the action of iconic and indexical semiotics as determinant of the nature of verbal language. No semiosis determines the nature of another, but all of them concur to its interpretation.

For all this, the hypothesis in a research that applies semiotic methodology, will be to anticipate the explanation of the production processes of the signification of social phenomena, as the result of the working of the semiotic
faculty, as can be established is constituted, in terms of available entities and relationships, that is, in terms of the plural and competitive possible semiotic worlds in force at a given moment in a given society.

I think that all this is debatable and we merely are searching the possibility of having available the semiotics as analytical tool that will permit us to understand each time a little more, why, how, and what is the signification of social phenomena, immensely complex for each contemporaneity.

19.2.32 About possible semiotic worlds/1

I will try to organize a little more the topic of possible semiotic worlds (PSWs; see the bibliographical references of 19.1.5)

First, the addition of “semiotic” is not arbitrary, but intends to emphasize that, in the works of production and analysis of the meaning of semiotic objects, possible semiotic worlds acquire an effectiveness which depends on whether their particular characteristics are or not well established. This addition intends to emphasize also the distancing from its origin in the ambit of modal logic and its full inclusion in that of semiotics.

Should also be kept in mind that most of the terms I will use require an explicit definition, since they could be interpreted polysemically. They should be univocally read here, that is, with a unique and given signification, to make possible the comprehension of the proposal and its eventual debate. Nevertheless, in order to not exceed myself, I will leave such explicit definitions provisorily, in order to transmit now just an intuitive and general idea.

The scheme I propose to organize the problem of PSWs is the following:

In the construction of the meaning of a semiotic object, different substituent semiosis are involved.

At a given moment in a given society (or in a given social group) we can identify the (various) semiosis from which the semiotic object at study receives its interpretation.

The construction of the meaning of a semiotic object is done through the production of the interpretations in force, that is, through the substituent semiosis that interprets it.

Each set of interpretations that, at a given moment and in a given society constructs the semiotic quality of a given semiotic object (its visibility and cognoscibility), is a PSW of that object.

The identification of these PSWs (to know which they are), the knowledge of their construction rules (to know how they function) and the determination of their shared and contrasting social validity (to know which is their effectiveness), are our aims and, therefore, the framing of all social research problems approached with semiotic methodology.

The substituent semiosis that intervene in the attribution of “semioticity” to a given object (I use “object” in a broad sense, including entities and phenomena of whatever nature) come from virtual semiotic ensembles (linguistic systems, repertoires of images, sounds, behaviors, etc.) available at a given moment in a given society, that are actualized by such substituent semiosis.

Each substituent semiosis is a product, perceptually identifiable, consisting in a given selection, both in an ensemble of virtual semiotic entities and in the repertoire of semiotic rules, being such entities and such rules, available at that moment of that society.

At another moment of that society (or social group), or at the same moment of another society (or social group), or at another moment of another society (or social group), other substituent semiosis could be actualized by other producer subjects (individual and collective), to allow other interpretations which would construct other semiotic objects when applied to the same entity, which would be no longer the same.

We have then:

1. the ensemble of the substituent semiosis that construct the semioticity of a given entity (that is, they interpret it and, by this interpretation, it become semiotic object), at a moment of a society.

2. the ensemble of the substituent semiosis that construct the semioticity of a given entity (that is, they interpret it and, by this interpretation, it become semiotic object), at another moment of the same society.

3. the ensemble of the substituent semiosis that construct the semioticity of a given entity (that is, they interpret it and, by this interpretation, it become semiotic object), at the same moment of another society.

4. the ensemble of the substituent semiosis that construct the semioticity of a given entity (that is, they interpret it and, by this interpretation, it become semiotic object), at another moment of another society.

Each of the ensembles 1, 2, 3, 4, can be (theoretically) consistent, full, and decidable (Sacristán, 1973: 47) or not.
By **consistent ensemble** we understand the ensemble that does not contain contradiction between its substituent semiosis.

By **full ensemble** we understand the ensemble that allows to identify a given substituent semiosis as produced or producible from the rules inherents to it.

By **ensemble decidable** we understand the ensemble that allows to establish whether a given substituent semiosis belongs to it or not.

The ensemble of ensembles, resulting from the integration of each ensemble 1, 2, 3, 4, with each of the others and/or the totality, can be (theoretically) **consistent, full, and decidable or not**.

Always will be possible, in this ensemble of ensembles, to identify, at least, given subensembles of substituent semiosis being (theoretically) **consistent, full and decidable**.

Each ensemble or subensemble of substituent semiosis effectively applied to the semantization of a given entity (that is, those that interpret it, so that it becomes semiotic object) that is (theoretically) **consistent, full and decidable**, can be called PSW of that entity. Thus, a **PSW is an ensemble of interpretations that construct a unique semiotic object**.

When the ensemble or subensemble at study shows inconsistency/ies, incompleteness/es or undecidability/ies between their substituent semiosis, then we can say that is not constructed a PSW, so we can also say that the semiotic object that appears (generally with the same “name” and/or “configuration” and/or “3D”) is not the same, that is, there are no identity between the designations of such semiotic objects in the different PSWs in which they appear.

On the contrary, when the PSWs in which appears a given semiotic object can be grouped in an ensemble whose consistency, fullness and decidability can be demonstrated, then can be said that there are an identity relation between the diverse presences of the “name” and/or “configuration” and/or “3D” of the semiotic object in the diverse substituent semiosis in which it appears.

19.2.33 About possible semiotic worlds/2

To establish the whole of operations which will form the PSWs, we must propose an intuitive, non technical, concept, that describes them, showing the effectiveness that we pretend to attribute to them in the field of semiotics.

PSWs are constructs developed by the analist who works on a given corpus of substituent semiosis. PSWs come always and exclusively from substituent semiosis.

*I define tentatively the PSW as a representation showing the relational characteristics according to which a given entity is linked with others, in the ensemble of contexts in which its presence is effectively registered (with the dimension each research considers appropriate).*

When such entity is a linguistic sign (or, generally, a symbol), each of such contexts will be a **contextual definition**; when it is a graphic sign (or, generally, an icon), each corresponding configuration will be a **configurative definition**; when the entity is an existential sign (or, generally, an index), each corresponding disposition will be a **dispositional definition** (see 19.1.22)

So, with one (1) **PSW** we have a set or list formed by a single entity, that is repeated in each line of the series or list, and **various different contexts (or configurations or dispositions)**, each of them formed by each of the lines the researcher added during the retrieval of the information from the substituent semiosis at study.

So, each PSW is formed by **multiple contextual and/or configurational and/or dispositional definitions**, all of it referred to a single entity (only iconic or only indexical or only symbolic or being transferred from one to another of these semiotic categories; it is a hypothetical transference because it should be proved that the entity has still the same identity).

In the set formed by one (1) **PSW** is possible to identify the relations of each single entity with the contexts or configurations or dispositions in which is included. The subset of these relations with respect to a single entity will be the identification of the entity at study. That is, **to identify the relations is the semiotic operation permitting to identify the entity that is related and not the reverse**.

This subset of relations will show similarities and even differences and, as long as they do not disturb their demands for consistency, completeness and decidability (already defined notionally in the preceding section), can be affirmed that it is one and the same PSW.

While being before one and the same PSW, may be said that, from the analyzed substituent semiosis is built a universe of significations in which the signification of the entity at study is maintained as **identical to itself**. Therefore, may also be said that the proposal, circulation and interpretation of this substituent semiosis identify a
relatively homogeneous social group, regardless the social, cultural, economic, etc. variations that could have been registered from a positivist characterization. From the approach I hold here, a social group is identified by its ability to generate an indefinite number of substituent semiosis in which the same signification is attributed to the same entity, by making it to appear situated in such substituent semiosis and participating in the same or homogeneous relations.

It may also be said that, as long as the subset of relations shows differences disturbing the demands for consistency, completeness and decidability of the subset, there are so many PSWs as subsets that can be recognized as complying, each with respect to its own internality, with the corresponding demands for consistency, completeness and decidability.

Therefore, each of these are a different PSW, in which the entity at study finds its place, but it is no longer the same, for it have been transformed its relations with the other entities of each of the substituent semiosis, so will become another.

Thus it can be in the latter situation (that is almost universal, except in some groups formed according to their adherence to certain dogmatic principles), that a social group apparently coherent, it is not, or it has certain aspects in which disintegrates, because the construction of the PSWs effectively done by the group, can not be redirected to the configuration of a single PSW, consistent, complete and decidable. All of this leads to ratify the plurality inherent in anything and any social group.

The instrument of PSWs will be useful to demonstrate, therefore, the cohesion of social groups effectively bound by the attribution of signification identity, despite their eventual dispersal (spatial, temporal, age, gender, income, culture, etc.). Conversely, they also will be useful to demonstrate the disintegration of social groups apparently endowed with the same characteristics of unity (spatial, temporal, age, gender, income, culture, etc.). And, of course, it will also be useful to show the difference between social groups effectively dispersed and the similarity of social groups effectively close.

PSWs will be useful, specularly, to understand the different modes of interpretation, effectively in force, available to diverse social groups of a community, faced with the need to produce effective communications, as is the case of political messages, advertising, pedagogical, etc. That is, they are the specific tool to know the identity and differences of the constructed worlds, that would never be but PSWs coming from substituent semiosis produced inside a given social group.

19.2.34 About possible semiotic worlds

I continue with the work of terminological precisions regarding the PSWs.

Summarizing what I said in the previous section regarding verbal semiotics: the meaning of a term or expression will be shown through a network of contextual definitions that registers the relations of contextualization to which the term or expression has been effectively subjected in the chosen text/s (Magarinos de Morentin, 1998).

I think we are arriving to a formal expression that structures the presentation diagram of the PSWs, for its reading and interpretation. I have called it, by the one hand, “sequential networks”, as ensemble of contextual definitions coming from a text or group of relatively homogeneous texts and, by the other hand, “contrasting networks”, when they show ensembles of internally consistent contextual definitions, but inconsistent (contradictory) between each other; that is, they can not be gathered in a consistent group. Note that the success of a research about the construction and validity of a given signification at a given moment in a given society demands to define how is produced the inconsistency specifically in this society, that is, it demands the identification of the semantic features building the contradiction, from the assumption of the plurality inherent to all social formation.

And with this we approach what Foucault have called “discoursive formations” and that I will relate with the notion of PSW (simply, at least, to make room for other semiosis besides the verbal). So, we should give account for other definitions related to these PSWs.

I can speak of “worlds” as a metaphor about the complexity of the sets or sets of sets of meanings that are being identified as relevant to the social phenomena of a given ambit that have to be specified. I consider it a metaphor to exclude from the term “worlds” any allusion to reality, whose knowledge is a result and not an antecedent of such worlds. Instead of an interpretation of reality, the world of PSWs is the text that builds (reality) and which, if interprets something, it interprets the texts with which, before, was being built such reality.

I can speak of “possible” because it is something which was not yet actually done, but is virtual or available to be used at some moment by someone, in order that something acquire some meaning, or is something done contingently from the same something that was available for somebody at a given moment to attribute to something some meaning. It has no necessity character, belongs to the enunciative modalities and is available at a given moment of a given society. The analyst will know these modalities after having analyzed the texts and
retrieved the system of possibilities from which they come. The work done by the social discourse and the work of the analyst should be differentiated. If in a given society is possible to say something according to a given enunciative modality, it is because such possibility preexisted in the virtual universe of the signification available in that society, that is, in the PSWs available to it to attribute meaning to the environment. The society uses this availability in a way either unequivocal or equivocal or poli-sense (Galvano della Volpe, ibidem), being aware or not (and, generally, without knowing, without being aware) of such availability.

The analyst, in principle, could not know it if it is not said. So, the analyst identifies the possible character of those semiotic worlds a posteriori, when they have already been specified in the discourse and, therefore, they have built the meaning of the environment. What is interesting in the analysts task is that, besides the proof of the social validity, he/she can also preview the possible transformations based on the overcoming of the contradictions identified in the PSWs of the society at study and, thus, anticipate new significations available to that society to build its reality.

I can speak of “semiotic” when speaking of “PSW”, because they encompass all and any of the raw materials of social communication (icons, indexes, symbols and their combinations) and because they refer to the construction of the meaning of reality, un-significant in itself, as a result of the intervention of the semiotic faculty.

I can speak of “possible worlds” because the reality built from each text and as a result of all the texts, can be interpreted, paraphrased, metalinguistically restated, substituted, abandoned, contradicted, by virtue of a given function of interpretation (of other given text or texts, but not as to some reality). A possible world always derives from (is successor of) another (its ancestor) and this can be determined establishing the relations of accessibility and alternativity which link it to other coexisting possible worlds. It allows to identify the transformation relation that have generated it, and excludes the possibility of speaking of “impossible worlds”, because only could be such those worlds that can not be thought nor imagined, because they are no successors of any other possible world and, therefore, they lack of ancestors and so, nothing makes them possible (Magariños de Morentin, 1996a: 454-459). That is, the possible world of PSWs is not an alternative to reality, and not even for a given text (which would lead us to a hermeneutical closure and, therefore, to a truth which is said in the text and, and thus, to the attempt to make possible those semiotic worlds that are impossible, that would contradict the truth, although with an already different gnoseological quality of the possible/impossible), but they are reciprocal alternatives between the enunciative possibilities available in a given community. Each ensemble of contextual definitions is a transformation of another ensemble of contextual definitions and is possible by the effectiveness of the existence of that other possible world. Depending on which of them the analyst-researcher takes as base, the remaining will be its possible variations and will construct the social poliphony of the meanings in force.

I can speak of “semiotic worlds” as a metaphor of places full of meanings, like the worlds inhabited by man. Along one day we move through multiple different semiotic worlds, sometimes being aware of it, and sometimes inadvertently. Each door we open, each person we meet and each social activity we engage, poses an unknown about what kind of world we are going to integrate ourselves and whether our semiotic world has the necessary distance and proximity for communication. We can not find someone or something in a space that is not yet semiotized, that is not already something different to what it would be in itself, if that being in itself could be known.

I can, ultimately, speak of “possible semiotic worlds” as a summary and synthesis of all what I am saying and as an advance of what I will continue saying as an overcoming (in a dialectical sense, not as progress or as positivist improvement) of what I have already said (Magariños de Morentin, 2001). This is the way I expect and intuit that will be the identification of “the reality” in the PSWs, from the knowledge that an indexical semiotics could us provide.
20 Indexical semiotics

From Peirce or how to make signs with things

20.1 The 10 signs of Peirce in the genesis of indexical semiotics

In principle, the objects, behaviors and memories of our environment have the quality of semiotic objects, that is, they are entities which have been enunciated through words, images or rituals, being this enunciation the possibility of perceive them. They acquire ontological existence from this enunciation.

Therefore, not any object, behavior or memory, is a sign, but only that which represents, by enunciating it, another object, behavior or memory different from that which is being perceived, by conferring ontological existence to it.

The semiotic object receives its ontological existence (as can be known) from the sign.

The sign confers ontological existence (since it permits to know) to the semiotic object.

All of our environment consists of signs and semiotic objects; tertium non datur.

To think and to use the entities (objects and behaviors) of our environment as signs require a certain effort, motivated especially by the counterintuitive character of such perspective. Objects and behaviors are intuitively considered semiotic objects and to interpret them as signs require certain effort. The analysis of the 4 indexical signs based on the 10 Peircean signs provide reflections, grounds and operationality contributing to consider fruitful their identification as signs (if corresponds, when corresponds) to the study of the construction of the signification of that environment.

20.1.1 The 10 signs of Peirce, in the genesis of indexical semiotics

I take from the section 6.4.3, the graphic [15] that shows the constituent relations of the 4 possible indexical signs.

[15] 4 possibles signs, according to the index:
Representamen /Object /Interpretant

1. Rhematic indexical sinsign [4-5-3: individual material existent (object, behavior, memory) interpreted by its perceptual qualities]

Semiotic object considered as interpretable sign depending on how it is perceived.

For example:
- a musical instrument → is interpreted by its sound as piano, violin, trumpet, etc. → is sign of possible emotion coming from a accoustic sensation.
- a rainbow (not as “natural sign”) → is interpreted by its chromatism, as end of the rain → is sign of stabilization of weather conditions being experienced at a given time;
- a dish of food prepared → is interpreted by its flavour and/or texture, and/or color, as appetizing, being “ready”, burned, etc. → is sign of appetizing (or no appetizing) culinary offering;
- a person with his/her smell → is interpreted by his/her perfume, stink, absence of smell, as educated, marginal, etc. → is sign of sociability/unsociability.
[For Peirce (2.256) a spontaneous cry “is any object of direct experience so far as it directs attention to an object by which its presence is caused”]

Summary and clarification: the indexical rhematic sinsign attributes a functional meaning to the object, behavior or memory, by a given sensory quality constitutive of its interpretant; that is, the interpreter assesses the perception of given sensory quality as identifier of the social effectiveness of the functional value of a given object, behavior or memory.

2. Dicisign indexical sinsign [4.5.6: individual material existent (object, behavior, memory) interpreted through its contextualization]

Semiotic object considered as interpretable sign depending on how it is handled.

For example:
- a door → is interpreted by its positions and mobility, as possibility of entry or exit → is sign of accessibility or inaccessibility;
- a window → is interpreted by its positions and mobility, as possibility of watching or of receiving light, wind, temperature → is sign of scope and/or invasion;
- an object (article of clothing, car, electronic device, etc.) exhibited in a shopwindow → is interpreted as proposal of sale/acquisition of the objects similar to the exhibited, that are inside the shop → is sign of availability.

[For Peirce (2.257) a weathercock is “any object of direct experience in so far it is a sign and, as such, affords information concerning its object.” I consider however that Peirce does not take into account that the weathercock contains a pointer with the cardinal points: N-S-E-W, and this would situate it rather in the indexical dicisign legisign.]

Summary and clarification: the indexical dicisign sinsign attributes a functional meaning to the object, behavior or memory by a given contextual relation constitutive of its interpretant. That is, the interpreter assesses the perception of a given contextual relation as identifier of the social effectiveness of the functional value of a given object, behavior or memory.

3. Rhematic indexical legisign [7-5-3: individual material existent (object, behavior, memory) interpreted as normatively effective by its perceptual qualities]

Semiotic object considered as interpretable sign by the conventions that convey its perceptual characteristics.

For example:
- the oral enunciation (words effectively uttered) and, also, the written enunciation (words effectively written) → is interpreted by its acoustic or visual characteristics, as predetermined bearer of given semantic contents, different than the effectively present materiality → is sign of communication;
- a vals music → is interpreted as generating given and not other dance moves → is sign of placidity and levity;
- the uniform of a soldier → is interpreted as an identifier of the alleged membership of the soldier who uses it → is a sign of inclusion in its place of a chain of command;
- an obscene gesture → is interpreted as a possible offense to an eventual addressee → is a sign of exhibition of a sexual organ or action conventionally intimate;

[For Peirce (2.259), a demonstrative pronoun is “any general type or law, however established, which requires each instance of it to be really affected by its object in such a manner as merely to draw attention to that object.”]

Summary and clarification: the indexical thematic legisign attributes a conventional meaning to a given object, behavior or memory by a given sensory quality constitutive of its interpretant; that is, the interpreter assesses the perception of a given sensory quality as identifier of the social effectiveness of the conventional value attributed to a given object, behavior or memory.

4. Dicisign indexical legisign [7-5-6: individual material existent (object, behavior, memory) interpreted as normatively effective through its contextualization]

Semiotic object considered as interpretable sign by the conventions that actualize in a given environment.

For example:
- a semaphore → is interpreted as regulating vehicular traffic in terms of its location → is sign of advance or detention;
- a wire on a camp → is interpreted as identifying a property → a sign of demarcation;
-any object placed on a pedestal in a gallery → is interpreted as aesthetic proposal → is a sign of art;

[For Peirce (2.260) a street cry “is any general type or law, however established, which requires each instance of it to be really affected by its object in such a manner as to furnish information concerning that object.”]

Summary and clarification: the indexical dictisign legisign attributes a conventional meaning to a given object, behavior or memory by a given contextual relation constitutive of its interpretant; that is, the interpreter assesses the perception of given contextual relation as identifier of the social effectiveness of the conventional value attributed to a given object, behavior or memory.

20.2 Semiotic variables intervening in the indexical signs
As we have seen, all indexical sign is identified by the specific combination of these six relations:
(1) Functional meaning or (2) Conventional meaning
(3) Sensory quality or (4) Contextual relation
(5) Social effectiveness of functional value or (6) Social effectiveness of conventional value

[81]

Some observations emphasizing research on the concept of falsability of the built concept:

Do the specified relations exhaust the possible variants of the semiotic relations in which consist the identified indexical signs?

Is it possible to identify another indexical sign generated by the articulation of some other variant different to those specified?

What we have is:
- The attribution of functional meaning to an object, behavior or memory by a sensory quality [The sound of a violin]
- The attribution of functional meaning to an object, behavior or memory by the relations which include it in a given context [A door]
- The identification of conventional meaning attributed to an object, behavior or memory by a sensory quality [A flag]
- The identification of conventional meaning attributed to an object, behavior or memory by the relations which include it in a given context [The fencing of a farm]

That is, in the index concur:
- Operations “A”: (1) a functional meaning (original or not) is attributed to it or (2) an attributed conventional meaning is identified.

And this occurs:
- Operations “B”: (3) by the perception of its sensory qualities or (4) by the perception of its situational relations (contextual).

These four operations can concur (and in fact they concur) in each of the indexes in presence; however, social usages make predominant some of them (at least two should concur: one of “A” and the other of “B”).

For example:
(1-2-3-4) Ritual homage1 to the flag3 of the homeland2 raised over the school yard4

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(1-2-3) The image of the flag of a given country in an encyclopedia is recognized due to its chromatic combination.

(1-2-4) Ritual use of holy water contained in the stack in a church porch.

(1-3-4) Attribution by a policeman, of the quality of “suspicious attitude” to the gestures, forms of movement and glances of certain person in a given situation and circumstance.

(1-3) Recognition of someone originated by looking a photography of his/her face.

(1-4) Attribution of the presence of a given person at a given place by the identification of his/her fingerprints on the surface of a given object.

(2-3) Identification of the value of a banknote by the perception of its print features.

(2-4) Attribution of the quality of judge to a given person by his/her position in the courtroom.

Addenda: All replica, following Peirce, has an indexical quality; Peirce considers it specifically as an indexical sinsign; and all type has to Peirce a symbolic quality. Peirce considers it specifically as a symbolic legisign. This is why require replica [indexical sinsign] those signs whose interpretant is a type [symbolic legisign]. The type is virtual and lacks of the possibility of being perceived by itself; therefore it requires its existential version, to become perceivable. In this sense, for example, words are not linguistic signs but replicas [indexical] of such types [symbolic] (see Peirce, 2.246). Hence, the number of word specimens we can produce is unlimited, while the linguistic sign corresponding to these words is a single one (except when, considering the diverse interpretants built in the mind of the diverse interpreters, the attention is focused on the differential quality of each linguistic sign depending on how they result from the relations with the other linguistic signs of the same language (langue) system, in the state in which each interpreter possesses it specifically). Also, for example, each specimen of the unlimited number of banknotes of a given designation is a replica [indexical] of a single type of value [symbolic] belonging to a given monetary system. The logical process of generation of a replica (still non existent) from a type (preexisting) is a deductive process; the logical process of generation of a type (still non existent; with the consequent generation or modification of the corresponding system) from an existent (preexisting by creation or by hazard; and which will be a replica when the type is generated, but still it is not, because such type does not exist) is an inductive process; the logical process of selecting a replica (already known) as the more adequate to actualize a type (preexisting) is an abductive process.
IN WHAT HAS TO CHANGE SEMIOTICS?
21 Semiotics of the edges

I

I will take up as a starting point the scheme I presented at the end of 2005, at the FELS Congress in Maracaibo in which the 3 minimal and necessary elements that comprise the ontological identification of a subject: thought–semiosis–world interrelate (this scheme can be found at http://www.centro-de-semiotica.com.ar/gio.htm).

None of these 3 elements can be defined without the other two. There is no thought that does not consist in the system of interpretations that results from the enunciations produced from the state of a given semiosis about any entity of the world. There is no semiosis which does not construct for the thought a given interpretation of any entity of the world. And there is no entity that is not identified by means of the interpretation of a semiosis in the system of possible thought.

In this constructive interaction the transformation of each of the 3 elements is constant, so that any attempted identification is instantaneous and already historical, barely enunciated. The dynamic of interrelations can be described, projecting it to its immediate future transformation, or retrieving it from the immediate fulfilled transformation, but never can it be stated as occurring because the moment it has been enunciated, it becomes a different one as a direct consequence of such enunciation.

In the thought:

As a virtual system of interpretation, the thought undergoes a transformation of its possible limits due to the effectiveness of the inclusion of a new interpretant, which being constructed from the emerging uttering originated in a certain semiosis, enables to perceive, in the world, a new existent for knowledge.

In the semiosis:

For each individual and for each given social group, both in the (various) available semiosis and in the available margin of each semiosis, new enunciation limits appear possible, for the possible transformation of what has been effectively enunciated up to a certain moment (a transformation that was not possible before having occurred the effective). From these new limits to enunciation, can be achieved new interpretants, which give sense to entities of the world making them ontologically perceivable, creating for them a space of admissible relations in the system of thought individual and/or of the group.

In the world:

The transformation of perceivable entities for a given individual and/or for a given social group takes place in the world. The entities that were not observable for lacking a name can now be named or interrelated in a different way, by means of the new utterings emerging from the new state of the available semiosis, that come from a new state of the virtual system of interpretative possibilities admissible. This is the new dynamic configuration of thought in this new instance of transition.

The subject, being constituted, constituting and overcoming this triple way, lacks a present that permit to attribute it permanence since it is not (today) the same as it was (in the preceding instant or 14 years before) but instead is the successor of what it was, since it was its own ancestor (note that both ‘successor’ and ‘ancestor’ are taken in their logico-mathematical meaning of derivation through transformation of proposition and as a function of stochastic variants). The subject is neither suitable for a Saussurean description that homologates it to a system’s synchronic state nor for a diachronic relation between two synchronic states in a system. It instead becomes an instance of transit from an ancestor towards a successor which, in turn, are instances of transit.

All this can materialize, provisionally, in the following question: In what has to change semiotics, to keep being [or to become, for once and for all] an effective instrument to explain the production, interpretation, and transformation of the meaning of social phenomena?

II

To begin with, I would like to say that if semiotics is trying to explain the meaning of the social phenomena, rather than referring to the results and the constructed concept, should accompany, systematize, or even promote, the dynamics of the concrete procedures according to which are produced, interpreted and transformed the meanings that, at a given moment of a given society, are attributed to the multiple, diverse and disperse

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1 This paper has been published in Spanish, in Significación y negatividad. Tópicos del Seminario núm. 18. BUAP, Seminario de Estudios de la Significación, Puebla, México, 2007, pp. 97-112. It also has been has been used for the round table I coordinated at the 9th IASS/AIS World Congress, Helsinki, Imatra, 11-17 june 2007: “Communication: Understanding/ Misunderstanding “.
phenomena that constitute the social universe. That is, the process that leads to its production should be explained so as to understand the differential semantic value of the results, and this involves admitting that the meaning is a historically situated result and not an essential, universal substance.

According to this, the first task of semiotics from a logical point of view consists in explaining not just the meaning of social phenomena but first and foremost the process of production, interpretation and transformation of this or that meaning. That is, semiotics must be able to explain in the system of existing rationality, at a given moment of a given society, how the meanings are produced, interpreted and transformed then and there so that an adequate explanation (i.e., according to the rationality of the historical time and the community that poses its utterings and giving appropriate account for the phenomenon which is in cognitive conditions to perceive) can be given as to why certain phenomena are perceived as bearers of certain possible meanings.

For the time being I will preferably refer to the conditions of production, interpretation, and transformation of the meaning or meanings rather than to the specific characteristics that constitute the value of the meaning or meanings of a given social phenomenon, in its corresponding semantic system.

I also propose to reflect together with the reader, whether, as is my pretension, of these three conditions, the fundamental is transformation. As a matter of fact, the meaning which at a given moment of a given society, allows to perceive the existence of a given social phenomenon is a transit state, that is possible because there was a “before” from which the meaning that this phenomenon already had in it, included too, on its edges, the possibility that its present meaning be formulated. Verification of an inapprehensible present, because being barely understood, and as such, perceived, it already overflows to an after, that paraphrasing Foucault’s quotation of Althusser (1969; 12) will reveal this present, when it would be already passed in the immediate future. Because such future will consist only in the possibility of the enunciation of different significations, which overcome to one another dialectically, and will make to see other phenomena, in the same space where the they are perceived today, which also had done so with those that have been perceived in the past.

This is the sense of the above mentioned constructive interaction, in relation to which I considered that on the edge of the thoughts possible at a certain moment, are, still blurred the new thoughts requiring new semiotic forms, which sound as expressive fury on the edge of the available semiosis at that moment. A time that we consider is present due to its fleeting transition, so that these new semiosis enable the perception, in a future world, of the phenomena to which existence our present knowledge has no access yet, because they are still on the entropic edge that we cannot differentiate. Indeed, I am just saying something as old as the following: the object of knowledge of semiotics consists in the explanation of the historical transformation of meaning. Historical should be understood in this case as the emergency of change. The question is thus to admit its dynamics, its rationality (present and transitory) and to construct the fleeting ways to explain all this.

I have focused the problems of semiotics in the explanatory exploration of the conditions of production, interpretation and transformation of meanings, just as they exist at a given moment in a given social group, and claimed, for the transformation, the quality of being fundamental with respect to the other two conditions. The transformation constructs history and, in turn, history is a constitutive characteristic of the human being: there is no man/woman unless as a transitory function between what it was and what it will be, never frozen in the present time of any definitive being, until its death, and even then subjected to the history of interpretations which are still being done about it.

And now I suggest that the readers join me in the exploration of the interpretation, in that it is necessary work for the transformation production. A transforming interpretation will have to consist in the production of another meaning arisen from the previous one, which will be no longer the same and therefore in another possibility of perceiving the previous social phenomenon, which will be no longer the same. If the transformation, as I have already tried to pose, projects itself on a chronologic dialectics, the interpretation, as I hope we can visualize, projects itself on a mental dialectics (furthermore, cerebral, that is, neurological as well as situated [Suchman, 1987]). In this way, I suggest that we place ourselves on an edge of the concept of interpretation, to explore its dynamics, that is, transforming behavior. Likewise, I believe that there are two relatively autonomous directions in semiotic research.

On the one hand, a new perceptual stimulus, chronologically speaking, (for example, something seen or touched, or smell, etc. at a given moment, in the world) requests, in the associative memory, the possible identification of an attractor, as a residue of the signification that identifies another perception, already historical, which is now intended as the interpretation of this new stimulus. That is, this historical significance is proposed as the signification attributable to the existential configuration which is being perceived.

On the other hand, toward an opposite direction, the actualization in the associative memory, of the signification of a historical perception, allows to retrieve in the corresponding sensory organ, given historical sensory stimuli, updated, that create an imaginary configuration in that organ.
The first situation is that in which something is perceived and besides, this something is known. Similarly, Peirce makes a difference between the “perceptum” as sensorially activating (but without an interpretation that identifies it) and the “perceptual judgment”, for example in 7.630, being this first situation already the case of the perceptual judgment. This capacity for identifying something in the world depends on the results given by the comparison between the registered sensorial image (visual, tactile, olfactory, etc.) and the attractor or mnemonic registry, that is, the sensorial images previously recorded and stored in memory. According to these, it is interpreted in the following three ways: (1) either it coincides completely: what has been seen is seen again; (2) what has been seen is seen as a modification of something which had already been seen; (3) or there is no matching registry whatsoever with that proposed to perception; incapacity of the latter to know what is being seen (not even the possibility that it be what is being seen, but the cancellation of the possibility to see what is being seen, considering that to see is to identify and to identify is to recognize). The process of knowing, in this sense, consists in the possibility (or capability) of perceiving what is different, while the process of recognizing consists in redirecting what is different (and has been proposed to perception) to what is already known, which implies to ignore whatever new there is in what was perceived (this has something from the Argentine althusserian philosopher’s reflection Saúl Karsz, 1971). In case (1), the interpretation of what has been perceived duplicates what is known (it recognizes it without increasing knowledge). In case (2), the interpretation of what has been perceived expands what is known (it enables to know what has been perceived as a possibility, unknown before because it was inaccessible, in the associative memory registry, which involves its expansion up to the edges). In case (3); there is no way to know what has been perceived unless (a) at the expense of denying its existence or (b) at the expense of producing a rupture that restructures the associative memory according to different rules and relations from those which were so far available, which implies producing them from the edges of the relations that were previously available. This rupture is necessary to create a new way of knowing in which the interpretation of that what was perceived as new knowledge has a place (that is, either (a) the perception is denied, or (b) the system with what was intended the interpretation, is denied too, entailing the presence of a new system surpassing the previous one).

The second situation is that in which someone imagines something. The capability to imagine depends on the possibility of updating memories of effective, previous sensorial perceptions. They mix together, they transform to construct a possible imagery, but, finally, its raw material (mnemic) preexists. Ironies and metaphors aside, I consider that the sensory endings (retina, gustatory papilla, eardrum, ...) are not only the receptacle (the “screen”) that registers and transfers the input of the external sensory stimuli (to perceive) to the specific locations in the brain, but also the “screen” on which, from the associative memory, in a second function of stimulation, the perceptual traces of historical sensory stimuli, already internalized, are projected and they are “contemplated” (as bouncing) by the associative memory itself, in its first function of recognition.

Both when perceiving an entity from the environment and when imagining it, we place ourselves on the edge. In the first case, in the edge of the effective variations historically perceived so as to perceive what is different in the effectively existing available set (I perceive from what I know). In the second case, on the edge of the same effective variations historically perceived, so as to reproduce, in the corresponding sensory organ, the traces left in the neuronal record by former perceptions (I imagine from what I have perceived). All the sensory organs are “two ways”: they project (in the world) what they can identify through correlation and contrast between what has effectively been perceived and the information registered in the associative memory; and they project perceptual configurations (imagery) on the sensory organ (without need of effective perception) through cerebral activation of the information registered surpassing the associative memory.

The execution of this double registering task: to perceive/to project something (which is no longer that what was perceived) and the double task of stimulation: to project/to imagine something (which is no longer that what was projected) is the one that frames the transforming possibilities of the operation of interpretation. I will return to it after paying due attention to the enunciative production of those semiosis which are socially existing/possible in a given society and at a given historical moment of that society, and I will do so to try to identify and describe the semiotic operations which from the edges of historical semiotics allow to explain the process of dynamic production of the significance of the social phenomenon in its chronologic, mental-cerebral and enunciative dialectic.

And this would be the edge of semiotics: from its own field, built with the explanation of the meaning of social phenomena (their valid state of representation/interpretation) its edges are reached, delimitation created from the limit of the validity of the operations of production, interpretation and transformation, in the own field of the available significations.

III

In several opportunities I have referred to the Adamic myth as a metaphor of the first semiotic production (in our Western culture) and, with it, a first projection, from the conceptual structure of human being (see Jackendoff, 1983: 135-159), of the ontological existence of the world entities: “And out of the ground the Lord God formed
every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” (The Holy Scriptures 1921; Genesis II, 19). I will leave the issue of the failure of the first semiotic task by means of which God pretended that the man is no longer alone. This would be later reverted when the man found what God had prepared especially in a second attempt, thus fulfilling that first semiotic production by naming this new presence: “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh out of my flesh: she shall be called Woman [ʾissáh] because she was taken out of Man [ʾiš].” (The Holy Scriptures 1921; Genesis II, 23) Resulting from this the man is set as referential point in our (Western) history. In fact, what I am proposing to reflect upon is this sample of semiotic production’s effectiveness (in this case, of discourse): Every fowl in the air and every beast of the field acquire ontological existence when named by the man, and the same happens, in this account, with the woman. Before the man had named them, considering they had previously been named by God, all of them had ontic existence, but the possibility of identifying them, that is, to assign them a meaning and a sense in relation to each one’s differential identity is ultimately given when the man gives them a name. There is, in this metaphor, an easy start: nothing had a name and no name had been previously used. Semiotics (or rather, verbal discourse in this case) had no history and for this reason, nor the world, until the semiosis is transformed by means of a female’s creation, which makes possible the identification of a new presence, that differs from the preexistent giving place to the first change, and with it, to history.

Nevertheless, when going from the rhetorical surprise to the explanatory intentions, one has to face a different situation. The world that perceives (recognizes/knows) the human being consists in a series of identities which are determined, at each moment of its history, by the enunciative possibilities (reproduction/production) verbal, visual, tactile, etc. provided by the ensemble of semiosis it has at that very moment of its history.

If it reproduces what could already be enunciated before, recognizes what could be perceived and just in the same way it was able to perceive it before; if it produces new enunciative forms which it was not able to enunciate before, it knows what could not be perceived, and as it could not perceive it before. There is a strong correlation between what can be enunciated and what can be perceived. And this order would also be inescapable and immutable: I must be able to enunciate, in order to be able to perceive, and not in the opposite direction. It is not the new perception that what produces the necessity of a new enunciation (although this results to be counter-intuitive). To be in condition of perceiving something different, the man has to know that it can perceive it, otherwise, it will deny it as perception, refusing to perceive it. An inversion of another classic, religious metaphor: the one that relates Saint Thomas with the resurrection of Christ; it is not that if Thomas saw him he would believe it, but, instead, he must believe so that he would see.

If you are ready to modify the structure of your knowledge, because you sense that you can name other entities to whose perception you have no access, then you have already situated yourself on the edge of your semiotic possibilities. And you will accept to modify your cognitive structure in order to see what you presume you are not seeing any more, owing to the contents and relations of enunciative transformation that this edge can provide. In some way, this is what a theory of creation entails, which is what a transforming interpretation consists in.

So, we could leave now the field of semiotic epistemology (in spite of all that is still to be settled and explained) and move into that of a semiotic methodology. Considering all what I have been saying, we have two possible ways to access the issue of methodology depending on the direction our investigation takes with respect to the moment the change happens: the previous moment or the moment after.

(1) At the previous moment, if I want to propose (create, produce) a semiotic enunciation (as sign) that transforms a certain semiotic perception (as semiotic object): How can I know and use the new characteristics that the new semiotics will have? How to identify the contents and the relations that constitute the edges of present semiotics so that, from there, to discover the contents and relations that constitute the core of the still inexistent new semiotics? Or is it that all I can do is a duplication or expansion of the present one?

(2) At the moment after, if I want to explain where a certain semiotic enunciation (as sign) to which I assign the efficacy of having transformed certain semiotic perception (as semiotic object) comes from: How can I identify the characteristics and the way to use the semiotics from which the examined semiotic enunciation comes? How to identify the contents and the relations that constitute the core of present semiotics so as to discover, from that standpoint, the contents and the relations that constituted the edges of the previous semiotics which gave place to the new enunciation? Or is it that the examined semiotic enunciation is merely a duplication or expansion of the previous one?

IV

Indeed, I will only try to reflect on some examples and outline my intuition about the possible methodological explanation of what I have given the name of “transforming interpretation”.
A little and almost redundant adjustment though. To speak of the edges of semiotics involves accepting the existence of a difference between a semiotic field and the edges of such semiotic field.

We can understand by semiotic field a certain ensemble of phenomena contextually situated at a given moment of a given society, whose ontological and perceptual existence emerges from a number of utterings and meanings constructed by a given series of established operations in force in that effective society.

Edges of a semiotic field (edge1) are those which are marked by the necessity of overcoming the failure of the operations by means of which the possible enunciations and significations would be constructed. These possible enunciations and significations would enable to perceive other particular possible phenomena, not included among those that belong to the examined semiotic field and which still would not achieve ontological existence until the gradual realization of those new possible enunciations and significations that would trigger their emergency (about the forms of emergence in constructivism, see Visetti, 2004).

This would gradually displace the semiotic field, assimilating the new enunciations and significations and making perceptible other phenomena whose new ontological existence would also displace the edges of the possibility of semiotic identification. In the continuum of this displacement, another edge (edge2), dual of the former one, would gradually be outlined from the enunciations and significations that would stop being possible, with the consequent entropic expansion of the phenomena whose ontological existence would stop being perceptible.

The examples

Desuetude as edge2 of the legal. What behaviors lose their ontological quality of legal existents when the law which contained the enunciation that granted their specific existence, is not in force any longer? (edge2). For example, the decriminalization of abortion when as a matter of fact, it was not judicially persecuted, while it was yet included in the penal code. The edge2 claims for the formulation of the legal enunciation that gives effective legal ontological existence to the phenomenon on which it falls. The opposite phenomenon can also be observed (edge1) in the analogical application, through jurisprudence: the effectiveness of a rule when what has been enunciated in this rule falls on the initially unforeseen behaviors. For instance, non specific legal texts that are resorted to in order to give legal validity to the agreements of e-commerce, an expression which, in turn, gives legal existence to agreements made through e-mail or the Internet.

The etymological inquiry as the study of the overcoming of the edges of a name’s designative effectiveness with respect to a certain behavior, socially accepted at a given historical moment; an effectiveness that runs out and requires the modification of the semantic field in which it ascribes ontological existence to a new behavior, or else transform the name that designates such behavior. In a Spanish example, the term “manufactura” (“manufacture”) is not included in the Diccionario de Autoridades (1732/1963). I argue that the reason may well be the inexistence of a mechanical production; this is why it would not be necessary to differentiate, in the universe of laboral behavior, the name that gives ontological existence to hand work: the semiotic field had not reached that edge1. As for such edge1, I suggest that its presence in the Diccionario de la Real Academia of 1817 (Corominas & Pascual, 2001; p. 820), is due to the inverse effect of the same reason; the use of machinery in the working process needs to enunciate the differential ontological existence of what is hand work. On the other hand, the disappearance (or disuse) of a term would be showing the edge2; “bacia” (“shaving bowl”) that designated an instrument, a type of metal bowl used by the barbers in Quixote’s time. In our days it is a term that belongs to edge2 for it is not effective to give cognitive existence to any thing or phenomenon in our environment (except for a museum’s collection). The shaving bowl is well known in the Quixote because he used this bowl as a helmet. To do so, Quixote attributes the name “helmet” to this object by displacing it from the professional tool kit of a barber, to where it pertained at that time (at which the semiotic field that contained the term was already in use and identified an existent). So he retrieves the effectiveness of the term in order to designate an ontological existent: the “velmo de Mambrino” (helmet of Mambrinus) pertaining to the semiotic field of chivalry books (already historical and outdated at that time). Quixote’s mental operation consisted in renaming an object which belonged to the contemporaneity of his time (thus internal to the semiotic field in which he was living), with a name that belonged to other contemporaneity (“helmet” was internal to the semiotic field of that past) in this way ascribing to it the ontological existence he needed for that object. The expression “helmet of Mambrinus” designating a shaving bowl belonged in Don Quixote’s time to the edge2, that is, to what was no longer a possible existent and had faded at the entropic level of the unidentifiable.

The lack of iconic and indexical metalanguages shows the existence of an edge1 in the methodological field of social sciences and what refers to the task of explaining the process of construction of the interpretation of social phenomena of iconic or indexical nature. The edge here is perceived when, owing to the necessity of resorting to verbal discourse in order to explain the meaning of the images or the objects and behaviors, cannot be reached a firm explanation about the effectiveness that the components of the iconic or indexical propositions have in order to construct a given signification. An iconic metasemiotics is needed so as to explain the image production process and an indexical metasemiotics is needed so as to explain the production process of the meaning of the
objects and behaviors. The edge1 is constituted here by the requirement of methodological concepts that identify
the possible existence of operations that are coherent with the phenomena analyzed, by means of which it is
intended to avoid the extrapolation of the explanations reached through the construction of interpretational texts.
This construction is exclusively done by or with predominance of the verbal discourse; a language external to
the iconic or indexical character of the studied phenomenon. We can notice (from such external language) the
incomplete and outdated character of the explanation it enables, directing it to an edge2, from which social
sciences begin to displace.
22 Humanity, the semiotic faculty and the history of the environment

Abstract

Semiotics as discipline has the aim of explaining the process by which a given entity is identified through a number of concepts in force in a given society. The textualisation of this series of concepts is called its “meaning”. Semiotics must also explain the ability of a given uttering to attribute ontological existence to a given entity, its referent; I call this ability its “signification”. This proposal is aimed to accomplish such explanation taking into account the historical character inherent in every uttering as well as in every entity constructed from such uttering, identifying the methodological operations needed to explain the process of change involved. In this would consist the history of the semiotic faculty, unfortunately still not written, which will furnish the progressive registry of transformations of the diverse semiosis through which humanity materialized his identity by shaping his world. And by world I mean the transformation of the environment according to humanity’s specific cognitive abilities.

I

All semiotic study about the process by which a given phenomenon acquires a given meaning or about the effectiveness of a given uttering (iconic, indexical or symbolic) as its ability to attribute a specific signification to a given phenomenon has, from a perspective temporally and contextually situated (Visetti, 2004), the possibility of being approached from different views, each with specific explanatory power.

Both the uttering and the phenomenon can be studied acronically, synchronically or diachronically. As is known, the first of them excludes all comparison with another uttering-phenomenon, since it eliminates the temporality that would permit it. The second contrasts the relation between an uttering and a phenomenon or two utterings or phenomena within the boundaries of a contemporaneoussness. The third compares the relation between at least two pairs of uttering-phenomenon pairs, one of them chronologically situated at a moment n and the other at the moment n+1, or between two pairs of utterings or of phenomena, one of them at a moment n and the other at a moment n+1. In the last case, the relation is situated in history, i.e., it takes into account the change.

Nevertheless, from the perspective I am proposing to explore now, in this third approach (dialectical-diachronical) can be studied both the uttering that builds a given phenomenon and the phenomenon built from a given uttering: (1) as current presence and current significant construction; (2) as a consequence resulting from a previous transformation process of other uttering/s and/or previous phenomena that led to the apparition of the current uttering/s and phenomena; (3) as antecedent from which will derive, by a subsequent process of transformation, a new uttering and/or phenomenon substituting the current one. The latter two approaches, taken separately, that is, when an uttering and/or a phenomenon are considered either consequence or antecedent of other/s, situate in the history the whole building relation of the meaning, that is, they can not dispense taking into account the change; this can be identified as the metabolic character of the meaning (I adopt provisorily the denomination of “metabolic” to qualifying the meaning in its relation of exchange between the concept which is its content and the situation in which such content contextualizes).

My aim is to outline the operational characteristics necessary to describe and analyze those situations whose processing can be explored to assess the usefulness of the semiotic methodology as a specifically adequate tool to explain the inherently historical character of all uttering and/or phenomenon of its ambit of knowledge. That is, the need of having available the methodological operations of a semiotics able to explain the process of change that affected the uttering and the phenomenon, in the specific situation that links them, as indispensable requisite to achieve an acceptable explanation of their relation as the condition of effectiveness of one of them and the condition of the other to become object of possible knowledge. I propose then the hypothesis that the meaning of a phenomenon can not be explained without taking into account the uttering from which it comes and the uttering that will result in order to generate the necessary historical transformation of the interpreter’s gaze.

II

I argue that, in order to face the possibility of developing the task above outlined, we could not start from the assumed significant contents but from the materialist criterion from which comes our expression: the observable are perceptual phenomena and, in order to infer and explain the meaning (or content) attributed to them, it is registered in a given language preferably symbolic (Jackendoff, 1993), or may be also iconic or indexical (everyday as well as scientific), which is that of the signs, and these are methodologically preponderant over the methodology that the conceptual approach of the contents could have. Semiotics study the signs because they are the only access relatively objective and with a rationality relatively verifiable, shareable and adequate to give
account of the contents, which cannot be approached without the signs. From my perspective, there cannot be a *theory of contents* if it is not in the form of a metaphysics or a dogma, that is, in something that is affirmed according to a given subjectivity or belief. And this is what *semiotics as the discipline of the sign* tries to avoid, through the development of an assemblage of objective, verifiable and rigorous operations, based on the materiality of the sign, which permit the access, as far as possible, to an explanation about why a given ensemble of meanings related to a given phenomenon, are effectively in force at a given moment in a given society. Wittgenstein himself (1953) warned about the metaphysical character of the meaning. This is why I affirm semiotics is a *methodological discipline* that explains how and why given signs (effectively enunciated, that is, effectively existing in one or more specific enunciating situations) attribute given *meaningful contents* to a given phenomenon and how and why a given social group in a given society accepts to share a given meaning, while other social group/s share other meaning/s eventually contradictory with the first. Respecting the other possible positions, I consider that *semiotics studies the signs to explain the meaning* and I consider this sequence as valid and effective: (1) I perceive (or I learn about the existence of) a phenomenon; (2) I register the signs with which it has been enunciated and which give ontological existence to it; (3) I operate on such signs, first analytically, then synthetically and later dialectically, and (4) so I infer the process by which a given meaning is attributed to the phenomenon I was interested in initially, and I would never make speculative reflections on its significant content because I think that my subjective engagement would deprive of rigor that what I wanted to explain (but maybe I could write a beautiful poem, whose meaning would have to be explained by another researcher analyzing the signs I used and that I stopped using despite being socially available).

III

...anyway, the question of the *content* is not strange to us, semioticians. As an exploration, I propose three points to bear in mind:

First: I understand by *meaning*, the interpretation of the textualization of the concept that given individuals in a given community, attribute to a given phenomenon, as a consequence of the interpretation of a given uttering whose referent is that phenomenon.

This concept is in principle incomprehensible, for belonging to the cognitive system of the individual. To pretend that *that concept* (regardless its contextualization) is the *meaning*, is to make of the *meaning* an entelechy. It is not explainable formulated in this way, because it would be a term empty of sense or with an arbitrary sense.

To retrieve it, the concept should be textualized (symbolically, iconically or indexically) by whom possesses it, and the interpretation the eventual addressee of that textualization makes, is what we can call *meaning*, whose process and components of production can be explained.

That is, someone utters a phenomenon (with the collective constructing the individual) from a given semiosis.

The interpreter of that enunciation, as a consequence of the perception of such uttering, constructs in his/her cognitive system, and shares in a relatively similar way, a concept on that phenomenon, which is the interpretation attributed to that uttering.

We have a concept constructed by the interpreter of an uttering that refers to a given phenomenon.

We have another concept (in a way, it is a *metaconcept*) constructed by the interpreter of the uttering made about the first concept, by interpreting the first uttering.

We only have access to that concept constructed in the mind of the interpreter, through the interpretation of the textualization (as a product existentially perceivable of the enunciation) that such interpreter made (eventually) of concept.

Insofar such uttering is interpreted in a relatively similar way by a given sector of a given community at a given historical moment of that community. Can be said then, that such concept is in force in this community, i.e., that this community attributes that *meaning* to that phenomenon.

Second: I understand by *signification* the ontological mode of existence of a given phenomenon, as this existence has been attributed to it (i.e., it has been possible to perceive it in this given way) by the uttering that had it as referent.

A phenomenon exists to knowledge insofar it has been uttered from a given semiosis and insofar such uttering attributes to it differential and identifying relations that allow to perceive it and insofar the relations attributed by the uttering have been interpreted by someone.

The interpreter of this uttering attributes to the phenomenon formed by it, a *meaning* in his/her cognitive system, being able to share it with a given sector of the community.
To know the signification of a phenomenon, that is, the existential characteristics of its known mode of being, the interpreter of the first uttering should textualize, i.e., enunciate, the mode he/she knows it, so that another individual, we, can interpret such textualization. So, we attribute to a given phenomenon a signification according to how the first interpreter (in his/her collective identity) made it bearer of the meaning that resulted from the interpretation of the first uttering which has it as referent, allowing to identify it differentially (with respect to its context), and this is the attribution of ontological existence.

For all of which, we need operations to analyze, synthesize and contrast the signs used in both sequences of utterings in which the signification of the phenomenon and the meaning of the uttering consist. Semiotics is, from my perspective, the identification and application of such operations.

I acknowledge the difficulty of following the development of thought in what I have expressed above. I will try to make it more comprehensible through a visual scheme and its corresponding illustration (see [82] Scheme 1).

Third: I understand by uttering the formulation, in any of the socially available semiotic systems, of the textuality that specifies the meanings that give signification to the phenomena of the environment. Because not always the language (langue) is the first to enunciate that which later will be possible to perceive, perhaps the image was first or the ritual or music or dance (or some integration of relations and reciprocal transductions between them), and they have allowed to perceive, from each semiosis, what until the moment of the corresponding semiotic uttering was not perceivable, but what later, has been transformed in linguistic enunciation and so, it began to be said in order to recognize its linguistically constructed presence. Or this was never done and, so, its presence iconically or indexically constructed was recognized and still is, without having available the symbolic formulation (verbal). This permits to say again that the transformation of the world is not only due to the language (langue), but also to the images, the exhibited objects and rituals. May be this is a new perspective to perceive the ontological existence of a new history of the semiotic systems.

[82] Scheme 1: Semiosis, Perception, Interpretation (their recurrence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I/ Semiosis (1) produces the possibility of Perception (1)</th>
<th>I/ Film in which we could see a classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II/ Perception (1) of Semiosis (1) by the Interpreter (1)</td>
<td>II/ Someone sees the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III/ Interpretation (1) of the Perception (1) of Semiosis (1) by the Interpreter (1)</td>
<td>III/ Someone identifies the image of a classroom in the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV/ Semiosis (2) produces the possibility of Perception (2)</td>
<td>IV/ Inside a building we could see a classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V/ Perception (2) of Semiosis (2) by the Interpreter (1)</td>
<td>V/ Someone sees inside that building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI/ Interpretation (2) of the Perception (2) of Semiosis (2) by the Interpreter (1) who redirects it, because of its similarity, to Perception (1)</td>
<td>VI/ Someone recognizes what has seen inside the building as classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII/ Production of Semiosis (3) by the Interpreter (1) in which he/she enunciates the Interpretation (2) made from the Perception (2) as similar to Perception (1)</td>
<td>VII/ Someone says that what has seen inside the building is a classroom [interviewed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII/ Interpretation (3) of semiosis (3) by the Interpreter (2)</td>
<td>VIII/ A researcher interprets what someone told him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX/ Production of Semiosis (4) by the Interpreter (2) explaining Semiosis (3) made by the Interpreter (1) about the Perception (2) associated to Perception (1)</td>
<td>IX/ The researcher informs why what someone told him/her, explains that he/she considered what has seen in the building as a classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV

The history of the semiotic faculty contains the registry of the transformations of the modes by which humanity configured its world; and I use the term “world” in the sense of Varela (1992) when he differentiate it from “environment”, attributing to it the surplus of signification that accompanies persistently the understanding of the living and of the cognition, and which is at the root of how the individual comes to be such. I think, therefore, that the ontic environment is always the same and unknowable. Only the ontological world, as transformation of such environment according to the knowledge humanity builds about it, shows the history attributed to such world by the utterings that the human can formulate, depending on the possibilities of the historical state of humanity’s semiotic systems (and not only, but including it, that of the language (langue)) with the relations and dependences we can establish between them. Unfortunately such history is not yet written and to come to write it, is necessary to conceive of the transformation of signs (be they linguistic, including a history of the faculty of language or of the cognitive competence to produce and/or transform languages or any other kinds of symbolic signs, and also a history of the faculty to produce indexical signs, as ritualized behaviors or exhibited objects or stored memory, and also a history of the faculty of production of iconic signs, encompassing the diverse kinds of sensory images, be visual, acoustic, tactile, etc., and their combination) as implying the transformation of that world, with which, according to Varela, is materialized the identity of all organism perceiver of those signs (at each specific level). That is, from this perspective, each organism, however elementary it is, has a world
belonging to it, that is a result of its cognitive possibility of relation to the environment it shares with the rest of the organic, transforming it in its world, which is species-specific (if we differentiate organisms) or culture-specific (if it is about human species). This is done by the human from their semiotic faculty and their ability to confer ontological existence to the environment. Therefore, a history of semiotic faculty is not a mere registry of how the value of the signs used by humanity in diverse epochs changes (that is, the specific relations that are linked with each other inside the corresponding system), but instead, it requires to register how given signs exhausted their ability to identify the entities of the environment and how other signs showed their appetite for building other identities to the same entities, that were no more the same, because they passed to be another world. So, the history of all semiotic system and, even, the history of semiotic faculty available to humanity, is based on the finding of the relation of necessity identifiable between (a) the transformations observed in the identity and in the possibilities of the internal relations between the signs belonging to a given semiotic system (iconic, indexical, symbolic) and (b) the corresponding modifications in the ability of perception of new entities and new relations that, having been formulated according to those new semiotic possibilities, generate the progressive transformation of the environment in world.

In this attempt of outline, a history of the semiotic faculty requires the correlative knowledge of, at least, the following relations:

(a) a given state of the socially available semiosis recognized as effective to attribute habitability as identifiable world to the environment of the members of a given community;

(b) an enunciation situation in which can be produced texts (of any semiotic quality) able to give a different signification to given entity/ies of that world, that was reduced in the beginning to environment because of impoverishment of the signs that identified it and that later retrieved the quality of world (but already different from the previous) since it was enunciated in the new situation;

(c) an ensemble of interpreters (at least one) being aware of perceiving the new enunciation, and interpreting it by capturing the meaning proposed as a new concept with which the enunciation attempts to modify the meaning of the world that became environment and now returns to be again a new world;

(d) the textualization of the new concept in a new situation of enunciation, so that it can be interpreted by those who were not interpreters of the previous enunciation; then they now can have access to the meaning attributed to the environment, i.e., to the mode in which now is transformed in a new world by the previous interpreters;

(e) the dissatisfaction of the new interpreters before given aspects of their own textualization of the significant concepts with which they organize the world that give them their identity and that makes them to perceive the character of limit or border of the semiosis they have available, by virtue of that historical textualization, that already manifests as beginning a loss of capacity to produce the identity of those who use it;

(f) the disagreement of those who are currently interpreters of these statements textualized or materialized by their current utterers, and the corresponding disagreement with the world produced in this way, which implies the necessity of building other semiosis that satisfy the needs of identity, dissatisfied when interpreting those statements;

(g) the production of experimental semiosis, intended for the exploration of new configurations and/or different relations between preexisting configurations, so that they generate new worlds in which can deploy the emerging identity of the previous statements.

What should be written so that we could have this alleged history of the semiotic faculty, is the determination of the specific semiosis involved in the interpretation that produces new worlds and the specific semiotic characteristics of its deterioration, which transforms the worlds that were new in specific sterile environments (all of that requires to produce other semiosis that lead to other new worlds, product and genesis of new identitities).
Towards a new history of the semiotic systems

The outlined scheme (in [2] 2.1.6 Language/Semiotic faculty) has become, unavoidably, more and more complex. I intended to make expressive in it, the displacement of all semiosis which, by modifying their internal construction rules, produces the modification of their enunciative possibilities and, thus, the modification of the possibilities of perception of the entities of the environment, so they pass from an entropy or inability to identify them for knowledge, to a finding of their ontological existence as new semiotic objects. Consequently, I offer another development [83] trying to depict the transformation process that occurs in the history of all semiosis. I will just read it, accompanying the visual overview that can make those who look at it.

[83] History of semiotic systems III. Historical process of transformation of a given semiosis at a given moment in a given society, focusing on the change it produces in the possibilities of perception, interpretation and transformation of the environment.

The theoretical space represented in [83], continues to integrate with the three ambits: thought, semiosis and world (see [1] 1.8.3 and the two previous instances of this scheme ([2] 2.1.6 and [21] 8.10) can be retrieved too). To not complicate too much this scheme, is worth this brief list. Despite their effectiveness to configure the world, remain implicit, at least, both emotion and society, whose particularities will be included in another work. I argue that no scheme is self-sufficient; it is just that: a scheme and as such, it can represent and identify, expressively, given relations. But, in fact, most of them, are left without presence or mention. I intend to show through a scheme, the functioning of an operation in whose description and/or explanation we are interested, in order to take it into account, since it is involved in the support of other more complex operations, or it exhibits a turn or relation that allows to know a dynamics interpreted as fundamental or, at least, as important to explain other processes.

On top of this scheme is represented the thought, connected to the course of the time, in three successive moments (..., t-1, t, t+1, ...). The convenient time to begin its reading (or that which is recommended for an analytic application of this scheme to the determination of the effectiveness of an enunciation coming from a given semiosis, in the development of a specific research) is represented from the thought and is linked to semiosis by the intervention of a producer subject, for its transformative construction, and of a interpreter subject, for its perception and interpretation. That is, it points to a moment in the evolution of thought (of the individual and/or of the society), in which is produced and interpreted a given semiosis (it means that a specific state of a given semiosis [iconical, indexical or symbolic] appear in a given society, as different from that which was in force in the same society at a hypothetical previous moment).

The representation of semiosis, in this scheme [83], has a central strip between two side strips (this way of representing the semiosis, reiterated to represent semiosis, and semiosis, and which would have to appear in
the representation of any other semiosis, for example, \( \text{semiosis}_{e,0} \) or \( \text{semiosis}_{s,0} \), gives account of the three components of all semiosis: what stays, what is innovation and what is no longer used). The central strip or center represents what is not modified in the semiosis, at study, with respect to its other evolutive states, which may precede or follow it in time. I am not intending to register the existence of given aspects immutable or substantially necessary and permanent in the historical course of a semiosis. If nothing would change, we would have either the semiosis available to the simplest organisms (unicellular, amoeba, etc.), insofar it could be said that (with a great risk) they lack from the possibility of having a history, as species, or the semiosis of a humanity, that would have reached the peak of its enunciative ability (the hegelian absolute spirit) and so, therefore, would be no longer humanity, because of the lack of a possibility of having a history. If everything would change, we would be facing another semiosis, with other problems, also a-historical because of lacking from links between the final of the previous and the emergence of the next, and it will be worth to ask (I anticipate my negative answer) whether, in case of being conserved humanity, can occur this substitution between semiosis, disconnecting the new one from any dependence on the earlier. I think that, cognitively, nothing can come from nothing and that all creation is a transformation of a previous knowledge, and we can speak of the total unity and dynamics of the humanizing semiotics of the human, and we can even ask whether such intersemiotic unity, is not a characteristic of all organism. Something therefore changes; but this change is not accidental or secondary, leaving what does not change as fundamental. Changes what is left of naming, as an effect of the enunciative insistence, and changes what starts to be named as an exploratory effect of the semiotic entities and relations not used already but usable for the construction of other possibilities of humanization, by the transformation of the environment in world. This is what is represented by the two side strips, corresponding the right one to the innovation and the left one to the decay or to what ceases to be used. I propose, to designate the right as edge (1) and the left as edge (2). Then it should be accepted that in any mutation of a semiosis (and it is assumed that the semiosis are constantly changing), can be identified those three states of its components: what stays, center, what is innovation: edge (1) and what decays, edge (2).

This difference is effective when considering what is occurring in world, synchronically with such evolutive change of the system. As an effect of the new enunciations, possible thanks to the innovation added to both the raw material and the relations, being both of them enunciative possibilities of semiosis, (i.e., what in the scheme is synthetized as “Sign,” and is still including what was named as “text/discourse”, “image”, “object/behavior”), edge (1) allows to pass from “?t-1” to “Lt”, that is, from a given entropic environment (not perceivable, unidentifiable from the previous semiosis, therefore [?t-1]) to a given semiotic world (perceivable, identifiable from the current semiosis, therefore [Lt]). Such is the sense of the enunciative innovation: to make perceivable what was invisible (sensory or conceptually). An example: for the existence of a crime is necessary its typification in any legal text; this typification is the new semiotic form or verbal description, in this case, of a given behavior. Before its typification, this behavior did not exist as a crime to legal knowledge; the behavior could occur, but legally it belonged to the entropic ambit of the unknown [?t] to the criminal law prior (semiosis,t) to the new legislation (semiosis,s), in which it become identifiable as crime [Lt]. As a complementary comment (see 6.3.3.4 [11]), the legislative norm only produces the possibility for that behavior to be considered crime; to characterize it effectively as such, is required to sentencing on a specific situation, and this is actualized as the effective enunciation of the legal semiosis.

Now, this option for a new possibility of enunciation, is accompanied (not as its cause, but as an evidence of the aging process of all semiosis, which is consequence of its use or enunciation) by the loss of availability of a given form of enunciation (word, image, behavior) that stops to be used (because of becoming opaque by the use). This is the result identified in [83] as edge (2) of the same semiosis, making that given configurations of a semiotic world [K,t] (that has been historically perceivable by the effectiveness of semiosis,t) cease to be perceived (because of having lost effectiveness its enunciation, because of becoming opaque; that is, because of having lost its referentiality) and become unidentifiable, being included in a new entropic environment [?t]. This entropic environment [?t] that, in the moment t, ceases to be perceivable, was that what historically in some moment t-1, has been the referent identifiable through some enunciation, new at that moment t-1, which have attributed ontological existence to it by transforming it in semiotic world. [K,t]. That is, “K”, in the moment t-1, was identifiable by some new enunciative possibility, from that which previously was the unidentifiable “?” and as consequence of the social being in force of semiosis,t-1. When that enunciative possibility stops to be, at the moment t, because of aging and by the consequent referential opacity, the perception that showed “K” is lost, becoming again an unidentifiable “?” What at a given time starts to be perceived, at a later moment, will stop to be perceived, but not because it is not enunciated, but because it actualizes a new enunciation that shows what is different from what was shown by the previous one. The sky of Van Gogh in [84] (with a particular ontological existence) is not the sky that Socrates knew to perceive, that is, the sky he learned to perceive, from other enunciations that were available at that time.
But neither can we perceive the sky that saw Socrates, because his enunciative possibilities are not socially available currently (maybe neither can we see, despite its higher temporal proximity, the sky that Van Gogh saw and taught to see, because we know what we have to see; we can not avoid to see it in the place of a beautiful and opaque statement [passing from “K” to “?”]). This is why, taking the obvious as a guarantee that assures us our place in the world, some would prefer to affirm that the sky we see now is the true sky, being the previous skies ideological visions, inherent to the discourse-semiosis that enunciates them. Ultimately, the reality (or entropic environment) is not simply available there to be perceived, because it should be learned to be perceived, and then it is already not reality but knowledge (or semiotic world) built, because only is perceived what is learned, and because is learned what is enunciated and in the mode it is enunciated at each given moment in each given society, insofar such enunciation is transparent and being aware that to reiterate it will lead to its opacity, demanding then from society another semiosis that can be enunciated with effectiveness. Should be also taken into account, that all society is plural and that, therefore, there coexist competitively modes of enunciation which attempt to make us to see or to make opaque, given phenomena of the environment that, ideologically, they attempt to include/exclude in the world.

Looking ahead implies to assume what, in more or less immediate future may be stated and, consequently, what may be perceived. An entropic environment, at the moment $t+1$, designates what, at some future time will cease to be seen from all that we see today, what will come out of the field of attention of humanity (or of given community or, even, from a given person) when, due to the effectiveness of new modes of speaking, of new forms of representing with images, new gestures and attitudes performed in ritualized behaviors, that is, by the effectiveness of the transformations that actualize given semiosis$_{t-n}$, leading to new semiotic worlds [M$_{t-n}$], there will be many other words, images and gestures fallen into disuse, sounding at first if we try to use them, as archaic, as inexpressive, and finally ignored into oblivion [?$t-n$].

From a methodological approach, is possible to identify, therefore, a sequence of analytical operations that permit to establish the genesis and clouding of possible enunciative forms, from those which, as can be determined, were in force at a given moment [85]. World’s history, as the history of the semiotic transformation of the environment, is linked to the transformation of the semiotic systems used to identify it as world, in the same way that the history of the semiotic systems is not the list of its internal transformations, but instead, should be known the transformations that such changes allowed to identify in the world.

[85] Historical functioning of each semiosis with their edge (1) and edge (2)

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<td>*By effectiveness of edge (1) of semiosis$_{t-n}$:</td>
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<tr>
<td>“?$t-n$” transformed in “$J_{t-n}$”</td>
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<tr>
<td>[at the moment$_{t-n}$, an entropic environment would have been transformed in semiotic world].</td>
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<tr>
<td>By the being in force of new entities and/or relations between entities of semiosis$<em>{t-n}$, will have begin to be perceived what until the moment$</em>{t-n}$ had no ontological existence.</td>
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| 2                    | -1/2 |
| *By effectiveness of edge (2) of semiosis$_{t-1}$:  |
| “$J_{t-n}$” will be transformed in “?$t-1$” |
| [at the moment$_{t-1}$, the previous semiotic world will be transformed in entropic environment]. |
By *clouding* of preexisting entities and/or relations between entities of the previous semiosis \([t,n]\), no longer will be perceived what until the moment \(t,1\) had ontological existence.

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<td><em>By effectiveness of edge (1) of semiosis(_{t,1}):</em></td>
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<td>“(?<em>{t,1})” will be transformed in “(K</em>{t,1})”</td>
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<td>[at the moment (t,1), the entropic environment will be transformed in semiotic world].</td>
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<td>By the being in force of new entities and/or relations between entities of semiosis (t,1), will begin to be perceived what until that moment (t,1) had no ontological existence.</td>
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<td><em>Por By effectiveness of edge (2) of semiosis(_t):</em></td>
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<td>“(K_t)” will be transformed in “(?_t)”</td>
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<td>* By effectiveness of edge (1) of semiosis(_t):*</td>
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<td>“(?_t)” is transformed in “(L_t)”</td>
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<td>[at the moment (t), the entropic environment is transformed in semiotic world].</td>
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<td>By the being in force of new entities and/or relations between entities of semiosis (t), begins to be perceived what until that moment (t) had no ontological existence.</td>
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<td>“(L_{t+1})” is transformed in “(?_{t+1})”</td>
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<td>[at the moment (t+1), the previous (current) semiotic world will be transformed in entropic environment].</td>
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<td>By the <em>clouding</em> of preexisting entities and/or relations between entities of the previous semiosis (t), will cease to be perceived what until that moment (t+1) had ontological existence.</td>
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<td>By the being in force of new entities and/or relations between entities of semiosis (t+1), will begin to be perceived what until that moment (t+1) had no ontological existence.</td>
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<td>* By effectiveness of edge (2) of semiosis(_{t+n}):*</td>
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<td>“(M_{t+n})” is transformed in “(?_{t+n})”</td>
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<td>[at the moment (t+n), the previous (already future of the current) semiotic world will be transformed in entropic environment].</td>
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<td>By the <em>clouding</em> of preexisting entities and/or relations between entities of the previous semiosis ([t+1]), will cease to be perceive what until that moment (t+n) had ontological existence.</td>
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...and so on...
24 Semiotics: its rigor and interdisciplinarity

To conclude, I will transcribe in what follows, two messages that I have addressed to the forum (see the References). Nobody reflects in solitude; it is indispensable the contribution of the others, with which each one builds their “world”. I include these messages as a homage to all the people who are accompanying me in the task of reflecting about the semiotic methodology and whose knowledge, proposals and comments are present in what I write and in what I propose from my classes.

24.1 To ask and to answer from semiotics

Monday, 13 February, 2006, 6:41 pm

Dear semioticians:

My constant expectation, which I share with you on this virtual dialogue that is being developed in SEMIOTICIANS for six years and a half, is that it allows us to reflect and make decisions about the characteristics and effectiveness of semiotic work.

To continue with it relentlessly, it would be convenient to exchange possible answers to some questions which I will begin (in fact, I reiterate them once more) to formulate. I propose that each provide the most appropriate response, so we could be able to know our differences and the range of possibilities that semiotics gives us.

And I will make three observations: One: if someone thinks he/she has the right answer, do not hide it and amass it greedily, but instead, take the risk to share it generously (regardless of whether I do not believe in the truth). Another: let us share also questions different to those I formulate, so that we can know whether they are considered interesting by the other colleagues of the forum and to know what answers they would give to them. And the third: have no fear of being wrong and being criticized by our readers; I have proposed time ago to consider our private keyboard and our computer screen on which we share our knowledge and our ignorance, as the bench of a carpenter, in which we work, we make mistakes, we throw faulted materials, and we call the neighbor to tell us what he/she thinks about the results of what we are busy in, and of what we may be feel proud.

Thus, as a closure to this step of my work, I want to ask two questions that I consider central to understand the scope I attribute to this text and to consolidate the concept of semiotics as a discipline, and therefore, semiotics as methodology:

(1) What can we ask to semiotics?

And, (2) what answers we seek behind what questions?

We can either give different answers to these questions or criticize the question or replace it by other that perhaps we consider more appropriate; what would be sad is to leave them go in silence.

When we apply semiotics, we try to take from it the best results.

What is the result we expect from semiotics?

Suppose that to apply semiotics, there should be a problem requiring explanation. But, from the perspective of the semiotic work: Is effectively necessary a problem? What is a problem? In what kind of problems are semiotics involved?

Suppose that when we identify a problem we want to solve, we move in the direction in which the hypothesis that should contain the explanation to the problem is pointing. When we begin to work, is effectively necessary to have some hypothesis available? What is a hypothesis in semiotics? What kind of explanation provides a hypothesis?

But also, from the perspective of the semiotic work: Semiotic work consists in explaining something? What is to explain? When can be regarded that something is semiotically explained?

Suppose that when we begin to research in order to solve a problem, that is, to prove the validity of the hypothesis (or hypotheses) we have formulated (conjecturally, as corresponds to a hypothesis), the first thing we have to do is to identify and collect the corpus of information, whose content credits that the explanation proposed for a given problem is effectively appropriate. But, from the perspective of the semiotic work: In order to prove a hypothesis is necessary to collect information? What is a corpus of information semiotically appropriate? How is established the link that allows to associate semiotically a given information with a given hypothesis?

1 This chapter consists of two messages I sent to my forum semioticians (http://ar.groups.yahoo.com/group/semioticians/): on February 13, 2006 and on August 23, 2007.
Suppose that, afterwards, we should identify, describe and justify the methodological operations with which we will work on the corpus of information, by providing the analysis and the relations that comply with the probative requirements of the hypotheses. But, from the perspective of the semiotic work: Is necessary to use semiotic operations? What is a semiotic operation? How is credited the methodological rigor of a semiotic operation? Are there in semiotics, analytical operations, synthetical operations and dialectical operations, and if yes, what are they; and if not, which would be the effectively appropriate semiotic operations?

Suppose that with the result we get in this way, we build the possible semiotic worlds in which the initial problem finds its sense and explanation. But, from the semiotic work perspective: Does each problem emerge exclusively in a given semiotic world that is possible, different and specific? What is a possible semiotic world? What is the dependency between a given explanation and a given semiotic world in which such explanation is possible and effective?

Suppose that the effectively proved explanation permits to identify the signification in force of a given phenomenon which, then, is no longer a problem. But, from the semiotic work perspective: To establish the explanation of a phenomenon is to provide to it a signification? What is the signification of a phenomenon? Does any hypothesis, once proved, become the signification of the phenomenon whose problematic interpretation has been resolved?

There would be many more possible questions, and many other ways to raise these same questions. I tried to criticize their formulation along this text, intending to find the more appropriate question and to state possible answers. I wanted to (1) take the necessary steps to formulate a research project, with the greatest possible rationality (which does not give it a necessary substantial structure, but only the ability to answer to any eventual critical reading at a given moment in a given society), that is, from my cognitive perspective, the specific field of application of semiotics as methodology; and (2) show that semiotics can be a valid instrument for providing rigor and appropriateness to any research developing in the ambit of any discipline, social or natural. That is, I am still trying to answer the question I formulated (and I am reformulating) at the Semiotics Congress of FELS in Maracaibo, October, 2005: What for, semiotics?

Sincerely
Juan

24.2 The semiotic faculty and the construction of the environment

Thursday, 23 August, 2007, 2:38 pm

Dear semioticians

Julius Caesar had unconscious?

The question is related to what I am venturing to assert in “Semiotics of the edges” (in press): in order to make something to have ontological existence, there should be a statement. It is somehow related with what Molière said of M. Jourdan: he spoke in prose without knowing it; but was necessary for others to know what was to talk in prose to identify that he was doing it; if nobody knew what it was to speak in prose, nobody would know that he was speaking in prose.

Sincerely
Juan

I retake also now, another question arising from the work of Mirta Bialogorski in the Helsinki Congress of IASS (11/17 Jun, 2007): “There were craftsmen in 1300, when that designation did not yet exist?”

I think that the relation between utterings (or between enunciations) and the attribution of ontological existence to the environment, is inescindible from the history of language (langue) (and not only of this, but also of all of the semiotic systems available at a given moment in a given community) and viceversa. This is the sense I intended to give to the formulation of the questions to answer from semiotics, which I proposed in semioticians in February last year, and I think it was interpreted that way.
I had chosen the topic for a debate at the VIIth Congress of the AAS (Rosario, Argentina, November 2007) with the same intention: “The present and its lack of semiotic entity. Semiotics as the methodology of change”. It implies the rejection of an eventual universal and definitive character we can attribute to any language (langue) (which would not allow a history of that language (langue) as well as the production of any change in the world and, therefore, it would deny the history of humanity), and it implies as well, the acceptance of the attribution of a fundamentally changing character to any possible language (langue) (which would warrant the history of the human in their world).

The ontic environment is, from my perspective, always the same and unknowable. Only the ontological world, as transformation of such environment according to the knowledge humanity acquires, shows the history attributed to it by the utterings (or enunciations) that the human can formulate depending on the historical state of the totality of their semiotic systems (and not only, but including it, that of language (langue)) with the relations and dependencies (in a way also historical and changing) established between them.

From my perspective, the construction of the history of all language (langue) (or, more precisely, of the history of all semiotic system), would be not only the registry of a set of lexical-phonetic and grammatical transformations (or of the “qualisigns”, “sinsigns” and “legisigns”, in Peirce’s terminology, corresponding to the concerned semiosis) along the time, but also the verification of the relation of necessity identifiable between such transformations inside a given semiosis-language (langue) occurred in a given society at a given moment, and the corresponding modifications in the ability of perceiving new entities and new relations which accompany the progressive (and therein would lie the historical sense of humanity) transformation of the environment of their users in world.

Because not always is the language (langue) who enunciate for the first time what later would be possible to perceive, but maybe the image, the ritual, or the music or the dance (or the relations or the reciprocal translations between them) have enabled for the first time the perception, from each semiosis, of what was imperceptible until the moment of the corresponding semiotic enunciation, and afterwards, it was transformed (or it was never transformed) into linguistic enunciation and so it began to be said or perceived, in order to recognize its presence semiotically constructed (or it has not been perceived yet). Perhaps this would be a new perspective to credit the ontological existence of a new history of the semiotic systems.

As to the question with which I began this ending, my personal answer, with sincere respect for the diversity of answers of the participants in the dialogue of semioticians, is that ontically, Julius Caesar had unconscious, and this intervened effectively in most of his actions and behaviors, but we have no direct access to the ontic, so we can not know the reality in itself. That is, Julius Caesar’s unconscious was not then, nor is now, available as a necessary instance to explain to himself his own behavior or to enable the others to explain the meaning of many of his behaviors (those which today can be explained by the intervention of the unconscious); his individual or social motivations are an irrecoverable phenomenology; i.e., ontologically, Julius Caesar had not unconscious.
VI

ANNEXES
Se presenta aquí un ejemplo tomado de una de las entrevistas realizadas para el estudio. Se trata de segmentar el siguiente texto a los efectos de proceder al análisis de sus características en cuanto productor de significaciones.

**Pregunta:** Y digame, ¿cuál es su experiencia con los médicos?

**Respuesta:** Mirá, yo he ido a médicos clínicos que no saben un cuerno. ¿Sabés lo que pasa? Yo te explico. Vos cuando tenés una enfermedad, el médico ¿sabés lo que hace? Te dice: "Bueno, tiene que tomar esto", qué sé yo, "el régimen éste"; pero no te explica cómo tenés que..., por qué es eso, ¿entendés? Entonces, ¿vos tenés conciencia de lo que tenés?, ¿por qué?, ¿cuál es el problema de tu enfermedad?, ¿cómo apareció? Porque a mí me apareció de grande, en mi familia no hay ningún diabético y yo tengo muchachos que por ahí tienen síntomas de diabético y no lo saben y les digo: "pero, ¡hace un coso!" Y ellos dicen: "Sí, porque tengo sed, orino mucho de noche, que patatín, patatán" y uno no le da bolilla a eso, ¿viste? De cada un diabético hay otro diabético, ¿sabías vos eso?

9.2.4.1 Normalización

mirá yo he ido a médicos clínicos que no saben un cuerno ¡(+vos) sabés lo que pasa? yo te explico (=lo que pasa) vos cuando tenés una enfermedad el médico ¡(+vos) sabés lo que hace? (+el médico) te dice bueno ¡(+usted) tiene que tomar esto [un remedio] qué sé yo [lo que (+el medico) te dice] ¡(+el médico me dice (+usted) tiene que tomar) el régimen éste¡ pero (+el médico) no te explica cómo (+vos) tenés que [cuidarte] ¡(+el médico) no te explica por qué es eso (+que tengás una enfermedad) ¡(+vos) entendés [lo que digo]? entonces¡ ¿vos tenés conciencia de lo (=la enfermedad) que tenés? ¡(+vos tenés conciencia de) por qué [tenés la enfermedad]? ¡(+vos tenés conciencia de) cuál es el problema de tu enfermedad? ¡(+vos tenés conciencia de) cómo apareció (+tu enfermedad)? ¡porque a mí (+la enfermedad) me apareció de grande en mi familia no hay ningún diabético y yo tengo muchachos [conocidos] que por ahí tienen síntomas de diabético y (+los muchachos) no lo (=que tienen síntomas de diabético) sabén y (a los muchachos=) les digo pero ¡hace un coso! [análisis] y ellos dicen¡ (me hago un análisis=) sí¡ porque tengo sed¡ (+y (los muchachos=) ellos dicen¡ (me hago un análisis=) sí¡ porque) orino mucho de noche¡ (+y (los muchachos=) ellos dicen) que patatín, patatán¡ uno no le da bolilla a eso (=¿viste? de [*por*] de [*por*] de [*por*] de [*por*] de [*por*] de [*por*] cada un diabético [conocido] hay otro diabético [desconocido]) ¡¿viste? de [*por*] cada un diabético [conocido] hay otro diabético [desconocido] ¿sabías vos que de [*por*] cada un diabético [conocido] hay otro diabético [desconocido]=) eso?

9.2.4.2 Segmentación

Supongamos completada la normalización y procedamos a la segmentación del mismo texto; en el anterior texto normalizado, se identifican los siguientes segmentos:

1. mirá
2. yo he ido a médicos clínicos que no saben un cuerno
3. ¡(+vos) sabés lo que pasa?
4. yo te explico (=lo que pasa)
5. vos cuando tenés una enfermedad el médico ¡(+vos) sabés lo que hace?
6. (+el médico) te dice bueno (+usted) tiene que tomar esto [un remedio]
7. qué sé yo [lo que (+el medico) te dice]
8. ¡(+el médico) te dice (+usted) tiene que tomar) el régimen éste
9. pero (+el médico) no te explica cómo (+vos) tenés que [cuidarte]
10. ¡(+el médico) no te explica) por qué es eso (=que tengás una enfermedad)
11. ¡(+vos) entendés [lo que digo]?
12. entonces¡ ¿vos tenés conciencia de lo (=la enfermedad) que tenés? ¿(+vos tenés conciencia de) por qué [tenés la enfermedad]?
13. ¿(+vos tenés conciencia de) ¿cuál es el problema de tu enfermedad?
14. ¿(+vos tenés conciencia de) cómo apareció (+tu enfermedad)?
15. porque a mí (+la enfermedad) me apareció de grande
16. en mi familia no hay ningún diabético
17. y yo tengo muchachos [conocidos] que por ahí tienen síntomas de diabético
18. y (+los muchachos) no lo (=que tienen síntomas de diabético) saben
19. y (a los muchachos=) les digo pero ¡hace un coso! [análisis]
20. ¡(me hago un análisis=) sí¡ porque orino mucho de noche
21. ¡(los muchachos=) ellos dicen¡ (me hago un análisis=) sí¡ porque
Estos 27 segmentos son los que permiten recuperar las distintas significaciones de que disponía previamente el productor del texto y que ha actualizado en él, al producirlo. Esta recuperación se cumple mediante la elaboración de las definiciones contextuales inherentes al texto que se analiza.

9.2.4.3 Definiciones contextuales

Se puede, en principio, prescindir de determinados segmentos cuya función se hipotetiza como fundamentalmente "fática", en el sentido en que usa este término R. Jackobson (1963: 28ss). Tales segmentos serían los siguientes:

1. mirá
3. ¿(+vos) sabés lo que pasa?
4. yo te explico (=lo que pasa)
7. qué sé yo [lo que (+el medico) te dice]
11. ¿(+vos) entendés [lo que digo]?
25. ¿viste?

Con el resto se puede proceder a elaborar las definiciones contextuales, en las que el analista esté interesado. Retomando el análisis del párrafo inicial, las siguientes son definiciones contextuales que proceden de los segmentos no excluidos anteriormente.

2. MÉDICOS son aquellos clínicos a los que yo he ido que no saben un cuerno
5. MÉDICO es aquel que (+vos) sabés lo que hace cuando vos tenes una enfermedad?
6. (MÉDICO) es aquel que te dice bueno (+usted) tiene que tomar esto [un remedio]
8. (MÉDICO) (aquel que te dice (+usted) tiene que tomar) el régimen éste
9. /pero/ (MÉDICO) es aquel que no te explica cómo (+vos) tenés que [cuidarte] (8)
10. (MÉDICO) es aquel que no te explica) por qué es eso (=que tengás una enfermedad)
11. /entonces/ (ENFERMEDAD) es aquella que de que la tenés ¿vos tenés conciencia?
13. [ENFERMEDAD] es aquella de por qué la tenés ¿(+vos tenés conciencia)?)
14. ENFERMEDAD es aquella acerca de cuyo problema ¿(+vos tenés conciencia de) cuál es ?
15. (ENFERMEDAD) es aquella tuya acerca de la cual ¿(+vos tenés conciencia de) cómo apareció ?
16. /porque/ (ENFERMEDAD) es aquella que a mí me apareció de grande
17. DIABÉTICO es aquel del que no hay ninguno en mi familia
18. /y/ DIABÉTICO es aquel cuyos síntomas yo tengo muchachos [conocidos] que por ahí los tienen
19. (DIABÉTICO) es aquel cuyos síntomas tienen (+los muchachos) y no lo saben
20. /y/ (MUCHACHOS) son aquellos a los que les digo pero ¡acete un coso! [análisis]
21. /y/ (MUCHACHOS) son aquellos que dicen (me hago un análisis=sí porque tengo sed
22. /y/ (MUCHACHOS) son aquellos que dicen (me hago un análisis=sí# porque) orino mucho de noche
23. /y/ ((MUCHACHOS) son aquellos que dicen) que patatín, patatán
24. /y/ ESO (que de [*por*] cada un diabético [conocido] hay otro diabético [desconocido]) es aquello a lo que uno no le da bolilla
26. DIABÉTICO es aquel [conocido] de [*por*] cada uno de los cuales hay otro diabético [desconocido]
27. ESO (que de [*por*] cada un diabético [conocido] hay otro diabético [desconocido]=) es aquello que ¿vos sabías?

Se hace evidente, a partir de esta última tarea de construcción de definiciones contextuales, que se está obteniendo un "diccionario" con los valores semánticos que el productor del texto le confiere a los términos que usa en su discurso (podían ser otros cualesquiera de los sustantivos efectivamente utilizados).

Aquí, por ejemplo, "MÉDICO" se presenta construido semánticamente del siguiente modo:

"MÉDICO"

2-aquellos clínicos a los que yo he ido que no saben un cuerno
5-aquel que (+vos) sabés lo que hace cuando vos tenes una enfermedad?
6-aquel que te dice bueno (+usted) tiene que tomar esto [un remedio]
8-(aquel que te dice (+usted) tiene que tomar) el régimen éste
9-aquel que no te explica cómo (+vos) tenés que [cuidarte]
10-(aquel que no te explica) por qué es eso (=que tengás una enfermedad)
También se define "ENFERMEDAD":
12-aquella que de que la tenés ¿vos tenés conciencia?
13-aquella que de por qué la tenés ¿(+vos tenés conciencia)?
14-aquella tuya acerca de cuyo problema ¿(vos tenés conciencia de) cómo apareció?
15-aquella tuya acerca de la cual ¿(vos tenés conciencia de) cómo apareció?
16-(enfermedad) es aquella que a mí me apareció de grande
También "DÍABÉTICO":
17-aquel del que no hay ninguno en mi familia
18-aquel cuyos síntomas yo tengo muchachos [conocidos] que por ahí los tienen
19-aquel cuyos síntomas tienen (+los muchachos) y no lo saben
26-aquel [conocido] de [*por*] cada uno de los cuales hay otro diabético [desconocido]
Se puede continuar con "MUCHACHOS":
20-aquellos a los qué les digo pero ¡hacete un coso! [análisis]
21-aquellos que dicen (me hago un análisis=) si porque tengo sed
22-aquellos que dicen (me hago un análisis=) si porque orino mucho de noche
23-aquellos que dicen que patatín, patatán

9.2.4.4 Ejes y redes
El fragmento que se ha tomado en consideración para extraer estas definiciones era breve; puede comprenderse fácilmente, la información que este método permite obtener de entrevistas completas, cuya duración promedio puede estimarse en 45'.

Por ejemplo, los ejes encontrados en el conjunto de definiciones de "Médico" que acaba de transcribirse son los siguientes:
"MEDICO"

EJE 1: CONOCIMIENTO
2-aquellos clínicos a los que yo he ido que no saben un cuerno
  -el termino subrayado "saben" proporciona la base lexemática para agrupar todas aquellas definiciones que lo contengan en su contexto (definiciones que pueden ser sólo las del término "MEDICO", pero también la totalidad u otra parte de las definiciones registradas, en cada caso según el interés del analista)
  -es posible que el lexema de base seleccionado (aquí "saben") no agote la construcción del significado de "MEDICO" en su relación con el concepto de "CONOCIMIENTO"; en tal caso se construirá un campo semántico en que se asocien, además, otros lexemas o expresiones lexemáticas afines, como "informado" o "estar informado", "estudio" o "estudioso", "investiga" y el propio "conocimiento" o "conocer"; en tal caso, el investigador debe hacer explícito el repertorio lexemático que considera constitutivo de un "campo semántico" de importancia para su análisis; así dicho campo será completo y criticable, dos cualidades necesarias para que una investigación social sea adecuada y rigurosa
  -estos comentarios son aplicables a los restantes ejemplos de ejes

EJE 2: PRAXIS
5-aquel que sabés lo que hace cuando vos tenes una enfermedad?
  -si esta definición contextual, en una búsqueda en la base de datos (constituidos aquí por las definiciones contextuales) que se esté utilizando, viniese junto con la anterior, por compartir en su contexto el fragmento lexemático "sab" (no la raíz, sino la secuencia significante que es constante en todas las variaciones del término), sería eliminada del conjunto conceptual que se está construyendo ya que no se refiere al saber del médico sino, textualmente considerado, al del interlocutor (entrevistador) con el que habla el autor del texto; no puede pretendarse una aplicación automática y acrítica de las reglas; hay que tener presente que se trata de que: (a) los ejes surjan del texto y no de supuestos externos aportados por el analista y (b) el analista haga explícitos sus criterios de aceptación o exclusión
  -o sea, "hace" es el lexema en base al cual se ha identificado el eje "PRAXIS"

EJE 3: TRATAMIENTO
6-aquel que te dice bueno (+usted) tiene que tomar esto [un remedio]
8-aquel que te dice (+usted) (tiene que tomar) el régimen éste
  -sería interesante explorar el "tener que" vinculado a las definiciones contextuales de "MÉDICO"
  -también puede construirse el eje "TRATAMIENTO" en base a los lexemas "remedio" o "régimen"
  -también, dependiendo del objetivo de la investigación, este eje "TRATAMIENTO" puede considerarse como un sub-eje del eje "PRAXIS"
Las calidades encontradas en el interior de las expresiones que han construido los precedentes ejes, permiten identificar sub-ejes que van enriqueciendo el contenido del concepto efectivamente utilizado en el texto y con las que se va construyendo determinada Formación Discursiva.

Suponiendo que este conjunto de ejes y sub-ejes tuviera la riqueza suficiente y necesaria para constituir una Formación Discursiva (en el ejemplo, meramente, uno de sus mínimos fragmentos), una variación en cualquiera de sus componentes tal que, caso de incluirla en la Formación Discursiva original, conduzca a afirmar y negar equivalentmente una misma y determinada proposición, estaría indicando la necesidad de originar la representación de otra Formación Discursiva. Esta (y otras que puedan identificarse) y la inicial constituirán el repertorio de Formaciones Discursivas disponibles en la comunidad en estudio, cada una de las cuales será internamente consistente, pero cuyo conjunto describiría las especificas características de la inconsistencia que, por hipótesis, se considera inherente a todo sistema cultural y que el hallazgo correspondiente probaría.
10.3 Los mundos semióticos posibles de la muerte en J. R. Jiménez y en J. Gelman

Tarea de Investigación (con eficacia ejemplificativa):
Identificar los MSPs correspondientes a cada uno de los dos poemas siguientes. Establecer si el conjunto de los sentidos que se van construyendo en cada uno de ellos constituye un CONJUNTO CONSISTENTE o no. O sea, establecer si los dos poemas pueden incluirse en un mismo MSP o no.

POEMA 1
Juan Gelman
Claro que moriré y me llevarán...
Claro que moriré y me llevarán en huesos o cenizas
y que dirán palabras y cenizas
y yo habré muerto totalmente
claro que esto se acabará
mis manos alimentadas por tus manos
se pensarán de nuevo
en la humedad de la tierra
yo no quiero cajón
ni ropa
que el barro asuma mi cabeza
que sus orines me devoren
ahora
desnudo de ti

POEMA 2
Juan Ramón Jiménez
El viaje definitivo
...Y yo me iré. Y se quedarán los pájaros cantando,
y se quedará mi huerto, con su verde árbol,
y con su pozo blanco.
Todas las tardes, el cielo será azul y plácido,
y tocarán, como esta tarde están tocando las campanas del campanario.
Se morirán aquellos que me amaron,
y el pueblo se hará nuevo cada año,
y en el rincón aquel de mi huerto florido y encalado,
mi espíritu errará nostálgico ...
Y yo me iré, y estaré sólo, sin hogar, sin árbol verde, sin pozo blanco,
sin cielo azul y plácido...
y se quedarán los pájaros cantando.

10.3.1 Etapa 1: NORMALIZACIÓN + SEGMENTACIÓN
Las operaciones que van a aplicarse se encuentran descriptas en 10 Manual operativo para la construcción de definiciones contextuales y redes contrastantes.

1 Sería absurdo modificar la consciente ortografía de J. R. Jiménez.
POEMA 1

1.1 (es) claro que (yo) moriré
1.2 {y}* (es claro que ellos) me llevarán en huesos o (en) cenizas
1.3 {y} (es claro) que (ellos) dirán palabras y cenizas
1.4 {y} (es claro que) yo habré muerto totalmente
1.5 (es) claro que esto se acabará
1.6 mis manos, ** alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.7 yo no quiero cajón ni ropa
1.8 (yo quiero) que el barro asuma mi cabeza
1.9 (yo quiero) que tus (del barro) orines me devoren ahora [que yo estoy] desnudo de ti

POEMA 2*, **, ***

2.1 {y} yo me iré
2.2 {y} se quedarán los pájaros cantando
2.3 {y} se quedaré mi huerto con su verde árbol y con su pozo blanco
2.4 todas las tardes1 el cielo será azul y plácido
2.5 {y} (todas las tardes) tocarán como esta tarde2 están tocando las campanas del campanario
2.6 se morirán aquellos que me amaron
2.7 {y} el pueblo se hará nuevo cada año
2.8 {y} en el rincón aquel de mi1 huerto florido y encalado mi2 espíritu errará nostálgico1
2.9 {y} yo me iré
2.10 {y} (yo) estaré sólo sin hogar sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido
2.11 {y} se quedarán los pájaros cantando

Comentarios:

*Uso las llaves "{}" para señalar los elementos que no intervendrán en las definiciones contextuales, si bien seguirán marcados como para poder ser reutilizadas si la recuperación de algún sentido así lo requiriese.

**Cuando la misma palabra reaparece en un mismo segmento pero construyendo otro referente, ambas palabras se diferencian mediante un subíndice.

***El análisis según los MSPs no pretende (ya que no está entre sus objetivos) recuperar, explicativamente, la eficacia poética de estos textos, sino mostrar y (si corresponde) contrastar el (o los) universo(s) de significados identificables a partir de tales textos.

10.3.2 Etapa 2: Construcción de DEFINICIONES CONTEXTUALES

POEMA 1

1.1.1 YO: aquél que es claro que morirá
1.2.1 (ELLOS): aquéllos que (es claro que) me llevarán en huesos o cenizas {y: 1.1}
1.2.2 HUESOS: aquéllos o (en) cenizas que (es claro que) son el modo como ellos me llevarán {y: 1.1}
1.2.3 CENIZAS: aquéllas o en huesos que (es claro que) son el modo como ellos me llevarán {y: 1.1}
1.2.4 ME: aquél a quien (es claro que ellos) llevarán en huesos o (en) cenizas {y: 1.1}
1.3.1 (ELLOS): aquéllos que (es claro que) dirán palabras y cenizas {y: 1.1}
1.3.2 PALABRAS: aquéllas y cenizas que (es claro que ellos) dirán {y: 1.1}
1.3.3 CENIZAS: aquéllas y palabras que (es claro que ellos) dirán {y: 1.1}
1.4.1 YO: aquél que (es claro que) habrá muerto totalmente
1.5.1 ESTO: aquello que (es) claro que se acabará
1.6.1 MANOS1: aquéllas mis alimentadas por tus manos2 que se pensaran de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.2 MANOS2: aquéllas tuyas alimentadas por las cuales mis manos1 se pensaran de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.3 HUMEDAD: aquélla de la tierra en la que mis manos1 alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensaran de nuevo
1.6.4 TIERRA: aquélla en cuya humedad mis manos1 alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensaran de nuevo
1.6.5 MIS: aquél cuyas manos alimentadas por tus manos se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.6 TUS: aquél la cuyas manos alimentaron mis manos que se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra

1.7.1 YO: aquél que no quiere cajón ni ropa
1.7.2 CAJÓN: aquél ni ropa que yo no quiero
1.7.3 ROPA: aquélla ni cajón que yo no quiero

1.8.1 [YO]: aquél [que quiere] que el barro asuma su cabeza
1.8.2 BARRO: aquél que, que asuma mi cabeza [yo quiero]
1.8.3 CABEZA: aquélla mía que, que el barro asuma [yo quiero ]
1.8.4 MI: aquél cuya cabeza [yo quiero] que el barro asuma

1.9.1 [YO]: aquél [que quiere] que los orines (del barro) le devoren ahora desnudo de ti
1.9.2 (BARRO): aquél cuyos orines que, que me devoren ahora desnudo de ti [yo quiero]
1.9.3 ORINES: aquéllos suyos (del barro) que, que me devoren ahora desnudo de ti [yo quiero]
1.9.4 ME: aquél al que, que sus (del barro) orines devoren ahora [que yo estoy] desnudo de ti [yo quiero]
1.9.5 [YO]: aquél [que está] desnudo de ti
1.9.6 TI: aquél(la) desnudo del(a) cual [yo quiero] que sus (del barro) orines me devoren ahora

Comentarios:
*No se marcan, en las Definiciones Contextuales, los elementos textuales incorporados para mantener el sentido del texto original.
*Cuando hay una conjunción del tipo de "huesos o cenizas" o de "palabras y cenizas", podría segmentarse reiterando la parte común de la frase. Si no resulta indispensable para mantener el sentido, parece preferible incluirla en un único y mismo segmento.
*Las definiciones contextuales pueden resultar comunicacionalmente inaceptables, por la transformación sintáctica a la que se somete el texto, pero siempre deberán ser gramaticales.
*Cuantos el segmento comienza con la conjunción "y", a ésta se la excluye de la Definición Contextual, pero se conserva su referencia, al final de la definición, indicando el segmento con el que se conecta.
*El número que va entre paréntesis, al final de cada Definición Contextual, establece una secuencia ordenada y total para dichas Definiciones.
*Recuérdese que el objetivo de las Definiciones Contextuales es registrar el sentido de los términos utilizados en función del efectivo contexto en el que aparecen.

POEMA 2

2.1.1 YO: aquél que se irá {y: 0}
2.1.2 PÁJAROS: aquéllos que se quedaran cantando {y: 2.1}
2.3.1 HUERTO: aquél mío que se quedará con su verde árbol y con su pozo blanco {y: 2.2}
2.3.2 ARBOL: aquél verde del huerto con el cual y con su pozo blanco se quedará mi huerto {y: 2.2}
2.3.3 POZO: aquél blanco del huerto con el cual y con su verde árbol se quedará mi huerto {y: 2.2}
2.3.4 MI: aquél cuyo huerto se quedará con su verde árbol y con su pozo blanco {y: 2.2}
2.3.5 SU: aquél huerto mío con cuyo verde árbol y pozo blanco se quedará {y: 2.2}
2.4.1 TARDES1: aquéllas todas en las que el cielo será azul y plácido
2.4.2 CIELO: aquél que todas las tardes será azul y plácido
2.5.1 (TARDES1): aquéllas (todas) en las que tocarán como esta tarde están tocando las campanas del campanario {y: 2.4}
2.5.2 TARDE2: aquélla que como en esta están tocando las campanas del campanario tocarán (todas las tardes) {y: 2.4}
2.5.3 CAMPANAS: aquéllas del campanario que como esta tarde están tocando (todas las tardes) {y: 2.4}
2.6.1 (AQUELLOS1): aquéllos* que se morirán que me amaron
2.6.2 AQUELLOS2: aquéllos* que me amaron que se morirán
2.6.3 ME: aquél al que amaron aquellos que se morirán
2.7.1 PUEBLO: aquél que se hará nuevo cada año {y: 2.6}
2.7.2 AÑO: aquél cada cuanto que el pueblo se hará nuevo {y: 2.6}
2.8.1 RINCÓN: aquél de mi1 huerto florido y encalado en el cual mi2 espíritu errará nostálgico {y: 2.7}
2.8.2 HUERTO: aquél mío1 florido y encalado en aquel rincón del cual mi2 espíritu errará nostálgico {y: 2.7}
2.8.3 ESPÍRITU: aquél mio2 que errará nostálgico en aquel rincón de mi1 huerto florido y encalado {y: 2.7}
2.8.4 MI1: aquél en el rincón aquel de cuyo huerto florido y encalado mi2 espíritu errará nostálgico {y: 2.7}
2.8.5 MI2: aquél cuyo espíritu errará nostálgico en aquel rincón de mi1 huerto florido y encalado {y: 2.7}
2.9.1 YO: aquél que se irá {y: 2.8}
2.10.1 (YO): aquél que estará sólo sin hogar sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido {y: 2.9}
2.10.2 HOGAR: aquél sin el cual sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9}
2.10.3 ÁRBOL: aquél verde sin el cual sin hogar sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9}
2.10.4 POZO: aquél blanco sin el cual sin hogar sin árbol verde sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9}
2.10.5 CIELO: aquel azul y plácido sin el cual sin hogar sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9}
2.11.1 PAJAROS: aquellos que se quedarán cantando {y: 2.10}

Comentarios:
*El término con asterisco ("aquellos") está en su función anafórica de pronombre relativo para la construcción de la Definición Contextual y no constituye un término que requiera definición; como sí lo requiere el doble “aquellos” que es sujeto de los verbos “se morirán” y “amaron”, por lo que se lo diferencia con los sufijos “1” y “2”.

10.3.3 Etapa 3
10.3.3.1 Diseño de REDES CONTRASTANTES
Hasta ahora, al conferirles la forma de DEFINICIONES CONTEXTUALES, se han identificado los SENTIDOS que, en cada uno de los poemas, adquieren los términos utilizados para construirlos.
Corresponde analizar tales SENTIDOS y sus RELACIONES para establecer las SEMEJANZAS y DIFERENCIAS que permitan ir identificando los MSPs correspondientes a cada poema.

En cuanto esta puesta en relación se basa en semejanzas y diferencias semánticas, se introduce, inevitablemente, UNA COMPONENTE DE SUBJETIVIDAD en su diagramación. No obstante, dicha componente es mínima ya que el criterio para incluirlas en el mismo nivel es la reiteración del lexema (en alguna de sus variantes) o la aceptación de algún tipo de sinonimia entre lexemas distintos. La sinonimia puede consolidarse (no digo "probarse") aportando muestras de otros discursos en que los lexemas distintos (que se postulan como sinónimos) aparecen incluidos en el mismo contexto.

P1 = POEMA 1
P2 = POEMA 2
N1 = NIVEL 1
N2 = NIVEL 2
N3 = NIVEL 3 ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YO</th>
<th>(YO): aquél que es claro que MORIRÁ</th>
<th>YO: aquél que (es claro que) HABRÁ MUERTO totalmente</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1.1---------------N1.1</td>
<td>1.4.1----------N1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YO</th>
<th>(YO): aquél [que QUIERE] que el barro asuma su cabeza</th>
<th>(YO): aquél [que QUIERE] que los orines (del barro) le devoren desnudo de ti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8.1----------N2.1</td>
<td>1.9.1----------N2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YO: aquél que NO QUIERE cajón ni ropa
1.7.1--------N3

(YO): aquél [que ESTÁ] desnudo de ti
1.9.5--------N4

(ME): aquél al que (es claro que ellos) LLEVARÁN en huesos o (en) cenizas
1.2.4--------N5

(MIS): aquél cuyas MANOS1 alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.5--------N6

Comentarios:
*Con la identificación de niveles ("N1", "N2"...) se trata de establecer desarrollos relativamente homogéneos en el interior de cada texto, así como hacer evidentes y, por tanto, fijar posibles puntos de contraste (desde la identidad a la contradicción) entre textos diferentes en estudio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YO</th>
<th>YO: aquél que SE IRÁ</th>
<th>YO: aquél que SE IRÁ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>2.1.1--------N1.1</td>
<td>2.9.1--------N1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>2.9.1--------N1.2</td>
<td>2.9.1--------N1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>2.9.1--------N1.3</td>
<td>2.9.1--------N1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.3.3.2 Aproximación a un análisis contrastante

Posibilidad 1
N1.1/2/3: el "YO" aparece como sujeto del verbo "MORIR", en P1-N1.1/2; mientras que en P2 se vincula con la forma verbal metafórica "IRSE" (N1.2/3), en todos los casos, en futuro. El YO así construido recibe, en P2 respecto de P1, el efecto de un desplazamiento semántico que debilita, en P2, la contundencia de la acción de la que es sujeto en P1 (los aspectos específicos de los verbos "MORIR" e "IRSE" y de "ESTAR SÓLO" se analizarán más adelante, en función de las FRASES NOMINALES de las que dependen).

N2, N3: en P1, hay dos niveles: N2 y N3, que utilizan el "YO" como sujeto del verbo "QUERER" y de su negación "NO QUERER"; esta relación no existe en P2. El YO así construido es agente de deseo del contexto físico de la muerte y de no-deseo del contexto cultural de la muerte; sólo existe en P1 y no existe en P2.
N4: en P1, aparece el "YO" implícito con la calificación de "[ESTAR] DESNUDO"; en P2, aparece el "YO" implícito con la calificación de "[ESTAR] SÓLO". El YO así construido adquiere, en P1 y en P2, una calidad de desposesión.

N5: tanto en P1 como en P2, el "YO" aparece con la forma del acusativo "ME", en cuanto destinatario de las acciones de otros: "LLEVAR", en P1, y "AMAR", en P2. El YO así construido es objeto de la acción física de ser llevado en P1 y del movimiento emocional de ser amado en P2 (los aspectos específicos de los pronombres "ELLOS" y "AQUELLOS" de una y otra acciones se analizarán más adelante).

N6.1/2/3: tanto en P1 como en P2, el "YO" aparece con la forma del posesivo "MIS" y "MI" respectivamente, en cuanto poseedor, en P1, de "MANOS", en P2.1/2, de "HUERTO" y, en P.2.3 de "ESPIRITU". El YO así construido regresa, en P1, sobre su propio cuerpo, y, en P2.3, sobre su propio interior, y se proyecta hacia su exterior, en P2.1/2 (los aspectos específicos de los sustantivos "MANOS", "HUERTO" y "ESPIRITU" se analizarán más adelante).

TÚP1

(TUS) aquél(la) CUYAS MANOS2 alimentaron mis manos1 que se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.6----------N1

(TI) aquél(la) DESNUDO DEL(DE LA) CUAL [yo quiero] que sus (del barro) orines me devoren ahora
1.9.5----------N2

TÚP2

Ø----------N1
Ø----------N2

Posibilidad 2

N1: en P1-N1, el "TÚ" aparece con la forma del posesivo "TUS" en cuanto poseedor de "MANOS2". El TÚ así construido regresa sobre su propio cuerpo; carece de identidad, ni siquiera respecto del género; sólo existe en P1 y no existe en P2 (los aspectos específicos del sustantivo "MANOS2" se analizarán más adelante).

N2: en P1-N2, el "TÚ" aparece con la forma preposicional "DE TI" que indica de quien el "YO" está desnudo. El TÚ así construido es una carencia del YO; sólo existe en P1 y no existe en P2 (carece de aspectos específicos que identifiquen, al menos, el género).

ELLOSp1/AQUELLOS

(ELLOS) aquéllos que (es claro que) ME LLEVARÁN en huesos o (en) cenizas
1.2.1----------N1.1

(ELLOS) aquéllos que (es claro que) DIRÁN palabras y cenizas
1.3.1----------N1.2

ELLOS / AQUELLOSp2

AQUÉLLOS2 : aquéllos**** que ME AMARON que se morirán
(AQUÉLLOS1) aquéllos* que SE MORIRÁN que me amaron

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2.6.2----------N1.1 2.6.1----------N1.2

**** Este pronombre pertenece a la estructura sintáctica de la definición contextual; remite a "AQUELLOS" en cuanto pronombre perteneciente a la estructura semántica de P2.

Posibilidad 3

N1: en P1-N1.1, el "ELLOS" aparece como sujeto del verbo "LLEVAR". El ELLOS así construido sitúa a los ajenos como protagonistas que reducen al YO a la condición de ser llevado. En P1-N1.2, el "ELLOS" aparece como sujeto del verbo "DECIR". El ELLOS así construido sitúa a los ajenos como protagonistas del uso de la palabra. En P2-N1.1/2, el "AQUÉLLOS" aparece como sujeto de un doble verbo: en pasado "AMAR" y en futuro "MORIR". El AQUELLOS así construido sitúa a los ajenos como protagonistas del amor pasado y de la muerte futura.

Términos diferenciales
que ya aparecieron en las redes precedentes

POEMA 1
En las redes precedentes ya aparecieron TODOS los términos utilizados en este poema, con excepción de "ESTO".

1.2.2 HUESOS: aquéllos y (en) cenizas que (es claro que) son el modo como ellos me llevarán {y: 1.1}
1.2.3 CENIZAS: aquéllas y en huesos que (es claro que) son el modo como ellos me llevarán {y: 1.1}
1.3.3 CENIZAS: aquéllas y palabras que (es claro que ellos) dirán {y: 1.1}
1.3.2 PALABRAS: aquéllas y cenizas que (es claro que ellos) dirán {y: 1.1}
1.6.1 MANOS1: aquéllas más alimentadas por tus manos2 que se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.2 MANOS2 : aquéllas tuyas alimentadas por las cuales mis manos1 se pensarán de nuevo en la humedad de la tierra
1.6.3 HUMEDAD: aquélla de la tierra en la que mis manos1 alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensarán de nuevo
1.6.4 TIERRA: aquélla en cuya humedad mis manos1 alimentadas por tus manos2 se pensarán de nuevo
1.7.2 CAJÓN: aquél ni ropa que yo no quiero
1.7.3 ROPA: aquéllas ni cajón que yo no quiero
1.8.2 BARRO: aquél que asuma mi cabeza [yo quiero]
1.9.2 (BARRO): aquél cuyos orines que me devoren ahora desnudo de ti [yo quiero]
1.8.3 Cabeza: aquéllos suyos (del barro) que que me devoren ahora desnudo de ti [yo quiero]

POEMA 2
En las redes precedentes ya aparecieron los términos de este poema, registrados en esta lista.
Esto implica que estos términos aquí registrados están vinculados con "YO" y "AQUELLOS", en sus diversas formas de presencia.
| 2.3.1  | HUERTO: aquél mío que se quedará con su verde árbol y con su pozo blanco {y: 2.2} |
| 2.8.2  | HUERTO: aquél mío, florido y encalado en aquel rincón del cual mi espíritu errará nostálgico {y: 2.7} |
| 2.3.2  | ÁRBOL: aquél verde del huerto con el cual y con su pozo blanco se quedará mi huerto {y: 2.2} |
| 2.10.3 | ÁRBOL: aquél verde sin el cual sin hogar sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9} |
| 2.3.3  | POZO: aquél blanco del huerto con el cual y con su verde árbol se quedará mi huerto {y: 2.2} |
| 2.10.4 | POZO: aquél blanco sin el cual sin hogar sin árbol verde sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9} |
| 2.10.5 | CIELO: aquel azul y plácido sin el cual sin hogar sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9} |
| 2.8.1  | RINCÓN: aquél de mi huerto florido y encalado en el cual mi espíritu errará nostálgico {y: 2.7} |
| 2.8.3  | ESPÍRITU: aquél mío que errará nostálgico en aquel rincón de mi huerto florido y encalado {y: 2.7} |
| 2.10.2 | HOGAR: aquél sin el cual sin árbol verde sin pozo blanco sin cielo azul y plácido yo estaré sólo {y: 2.9} |
|        | **POEMÁ 1** |
|        | El siguiente es el único término que no apareció en las redes precedentes. O sea, no está vinculado con "YO", "TÚ", "ELLOS", en ninguna de sus diversas formas de presencia. |
| 1.5.1  | ESTO: aquello que (es) claro que se acabará |
|        | **POEMÁ 2** |
|        | En las redes precedentes no aparecieron los términos de este poema, registrados en esta lista. Esto implica que estos términos aquí registrados no están vinculados con "YO" y "AQUELLOS", en ninguna de sus diversas formas de presencia. |
| 2.2.1  | PÁJAROS: aquéllos que se quedarán cantando {y: 2.1} |
| 2.11.1 | PÁJAROS: aquellos que se quedarán cantando {y: 2.10} |
| 2.4.1  | TARDES1: aquéllas todas en las que el cielo será azul y plácido |
| 2.5.1  | TARDES1: aquéllas (todas) en las que tocarán como esta tarde están tocando las campanas del campanario {y: 2.4} |

**Posibilidad 4**

En P1, los términos, vinculados a "YO", "TÚ", "ELLOS", aquí listados: "HUESOS", "CENIZAS", "PALABRAS", "MANOS:", "MANOS:", "HUMEDAD", "TIERRA", "CAJÓN", "ROPA", "BARRO", "CABEZA" Y "ORINES" están utilizados para construir un discurso de COMPENETRACIÓN con los elementos y el contexto FÍSICO de la MUERTE.

En P2, los términos, vinculados a "YO" y "AQUELLOS", aquí listados: "HUERTO", "ÁRBOL", "POZO", "CIELO", "RINCÓN", "ESPÍRITU" Y "HOGAR" están utilizados para construir un discurso de PRIVACIÓN de los elementos y del contexto físico de la VIDA.

**Términos diferenciales**

que no aparecieron en las redes precedentes

*POEMÁ 1*
El siguiente es el único término que no apareció en las redes precedentes. O sea, no está vinculado con "YO", "TÚ" ni "ELLOS", en ninguna de sus diversas formas de presencia.

1.5.1 ESTO: aquello que (es) claro que se acabará

*POEMÁ 2*
En las redes precedentes no aparecieron los términos de este poema, registrados en esta lista. Esto implica que estos términos aquí registrados no están vinculados con "YO" y "AQUELLOS", en ninguna de sus diversas formas de presencia.

2.2.1 PÁJAROS: aquéllos que se quedarán cantando {y: 2.1}

2.11.1 PÁJAROS: aquellos que se quedarán cantando {y: 2.10}

2.4.1 TARDES1: aquéllas todas en las que el cielo será azul y plácido

2.5.1 (TARDES1): aquéllas (todas) en las que tocarán como esta tarde están tocando las campanas del campanario {y: 2.4}
| 2.5.2 TARDES₂: aquélla que como en esta están tocando las campanas del campanario tocarán (todas las tardes₁) {y: 2.4} |
| 2.4.2 CIELO: aquél que todas las tardes₁ será azul y plácido |
| 2.5.3 CAMPANAS: aquéllas del campanario que como esta tarde₂ están tocando tocarán (todas las tardes₁) {y: 2.4} |
| 2.7.1 PUEBLO: aquél que se hará nuevo cada año {y: 2.6} |
| 2.7.2 AÑO: aquél cada cuanto que el pueblo se hará nuevo {y: 2.6} |

### Posibilidad 5

En P1, "ESTO" aparece como sujeto de "ACABARSE". El ESTO así construido es la única alusión a la vida, semantizada como lo que acabará.

En P2, se construye, con los términos nuevos registrados en esta lista, la perduración del contexto físico de la vida.

**Reglas identificables que son constitutivas de los MSPs del POEMA 1 y del POEMA 2**

La identificación de estas reglas supone, de nuevo, la intervención de una componente de subjetividad. Al consistir, cada una de ellas, en paráfrasis abstractivas y sintetizadoras de las correspondientes definiciones contextuales, requieren de una tarea de construcción discursiva, cuya lexematización dependerá de la formación discursiva (o modo de hablar) de su productor (analista-investigador que formula las reglas). Ello exige, para mantener el mayor rigor posible, la expresa identificación de la o las definiciones contextuales de donde proceden. Así, eventualmente, un lector crítico podrá disentir con el criterio del investigador, pero éste habrá hecho explícito su fundamento de racionalidad al formular cada una de dichas reglas.

Cada conjunto de reglas, correspondiente, en este caso, a cada uno de los poemas en estudio, establece el total de las relaciones semánticas que atribuyen sentido a cada uno de los lexemas identificados en dichas reglas. El conjunto de relaciones semánticas establecido por estas reglas constituye el MSP del correspondiente poema, en cuanto fija los contextos en que pueden situarse a cada uno de tales lexemas sin que cambie su identidad. Si el análisis ha sido efectuado correctamente, un determinado lexema, ubicado en el dominio de alguno de los contextos autorizados por (o que pueden derivarse de) alguna de tales reglas de alguno de tales MSPs, no podrá exportarse al otro poema (al otro MSP) sin que rompa la coherencia semántica del poema al que se pretende importarlo, salvo los casos en que los contextos fuesen homogéneos en uno y otro poema, lo que no se da en el caso en estudio; o sea, cada lexema, registrado en alguna de las reglas correspondientes, posee una identidad especifica en cada poema y la presencia del mismo lexema en los dos poemas, al estar necesariamente vinculado a un contexto diferente en cada uno de ellos, hace que su sentido ya no sea el mismo, o sea, hace que se trate de otro signo lingüístico diferente.

 Esto es lo que constituye un determinado y no ambiguo MSP: que determinado lexema mantenga, en todas sus presencias en el o los textos en estudio, un único y mismo sentido o un conjunto de sentidos que pueden complementarse (sin resultar antagónicos). Cuando en un único texto o en determinado conjunto de textos (identificado y constituido por interés de la investigación en curso) aparece, en distintas ubicaciones (por tanto, en distintos contextos) un mismo lexema, si tales contextos le atribuyen distintos sentidos no complementarios, se estará en presencia de otros tantos MSPs; si tales contextos mantiene, respecto de dicho lexema, un mismo y único sentido o un conjunto de sentidos complementarios, se estará en presencia de un único MSP.

**PRIMER CRITERIO TENTATIVO PARA LA IDENTIFICACIÓN DE LAS REGLAS**

**REGLAS/ P1**
-1/ La futura muerte del yo será total (1.1.1/1.4.1)
El yo se integra en el contexto físico de la muerte (1.8.1/1.8.2/1.8.3/1.8.4/1.9.1/1.9.2/1.9.3/1.9.4/1.6.5)
-3/ El yo excluye el contexto cultural de la muerte (1.7.1/1.7.2/1.7.3)
-4/ El yo está desposeído del tú (1.9.5/1.9.6)
-5/ El yo será destinatario pasivo de la acción de otros (1.2.1/1.2.2/1.2.3/1.2.4)
-6/ Partes del yo se renovarán en el contexto físico de la muerte (1.6.1/1.6.2/1.6.3/1.6.4/1.6.5)
-7/ Partes del tú nutrieron (en vida) partes del yo (1.6.6)
-8/ El tú carece de identidad de género (1.6.6/1.9.6)
-9/ Ellos son los que construirán el contexto simbólico de la muerte (1.3.1/1.3.2/1.3.3)
-10/ Esto (la vida) es lo que acabará (1.5.1)

Debe observarse que las REGLAS 1 y 6, pueden considerarse antagónicas; téngase en cuenta que se trata de un texto poético; esto sería inadmisible en un texto científico.

REGLAS/ P2
-1/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
-2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
-3/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.2)
-4/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
-5/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
-6/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
-7/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
-8/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
-9/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Las REGLAS 6 y 7 no son antagónicas ni meramente diferentes, sino que la 7 incrementa lo afirmado en 6

Análisis comparativo de las REGLAS de los MSPs de los POEMAS 1 y 2
PARES CONTRASTANTES:

PAR 1
REGLA 1 DE P1/ La futura muerte del yo es total (1.1.1/1.4.1) es antagónica con
REGLA 7 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)

PAR 2
REGLA 2 DE P1/ El yo se integra en el contexto físico de la muerte (1.8.1/1.8.2/1.8.3/1.8.4/1.9.1/1.9.2/1.9.3/1.9.4/1.6.5)

es independiente de
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)

PAR 3
REGLA 3 DE P1/ El yo excluye el contexto cultural de la muerte (1.7.1/1.7.2/1.7.3)

es independiente de
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)

PAR 4
REGLA 4 DE P1/ El yo está desposeído del tú (1.9.5/1.9.6) no tiene correlato en P2
Ø

2 Prefiero hablar de "antagonismo" más que de "contradicción", ya que esta última categoría requiere incluir a los enunciados en estudio en la oposición binaria: afirmación/negación y, por tanto, no podrán ser ambos verdaderos ni ambos falsos. Entiendo por "antagónico" aquel enunciado cuya fuerza (semántica) se opone a la de otro enunciado, si se pretendiera considerarlos como integrantes de un mismo sistema, con lo que se rompería la pretendida unidad (ver Brandt, Per Aage, 1989: 152). Por tanto, dos o más enunciados que puedan considerarse antagónicos entre sí no pueden incluirse en un mismo MSP; tal sería lo que ocurre con los PARES 1, 2, 3 y 10.
PAR 5
REGLA 5 DE P1/ El yo será destinatario pasivo de la acción de otros (1.2.1/1.2.2/1.2.3/1.2.4)
   es diferente a la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)

PAR 6
REGLA 6 DE P1/ Partes del yo se renovarán en el contexto físico de la muerte
   (1.6.1/1.6.2/1.6.3/1.6.4/1.6.5)
   es diferente a la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)

PAR 7
REGLA 7 DE P1/ Partes del tú nutrieron (en vida) partes del yo (1.6.6)
   no tiene correlato en P2
Ø

PAR 8
REGLA 8 DE P1/ El tú carece de identidad de género (1.6.6/1.9.6)
   no tiene correlato en P2
Ø

PAR 9
REGLA 9 DE P1/ Ellos son los que construirán el contexto simbólico de la muerte (1.3.1/1.3.2/1.3.3)
   no tiene correlato en P2
Ø

PAR 10
REGLA 10 DE P1/ Esto (la vida) es lo que acabará (1.5.1)
   es antagónica con
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)

PAR 11
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
   no tiene correlato en P1
Ø

PAR 12
REGLA 5 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
   (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
   no tiene correlato en P1
Ø

PAR 13
REGLA 7 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
   (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
   no tiene correlato en P1
Ø

PAR 14
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)
   no tiene correlato en P1
Ø

SEGUNDO CRITERIO TENTATIVO PARA LA IDENTIFICACIÓN DE LAS REGLAS

Si se admite la
REGLA 1 DE P1/ La futura muerte del yo es total (1.1.1/1.4.1)
   ---no es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
   ---no es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
   es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
   es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)

es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)

es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
--- no es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)

es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por las relaciones de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 1 DE P1 y las Reglas 1, 2 y 8 de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 2 DE P1/ El yo se integra en el contexto físico de la muerte
(1.8.1/1.8.2/1.8.3/1.8.4/1.9.1/1.9.2/1.9.3/1.9.4/1.6.5)

es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)

es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)

es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)

es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)

es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)

es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)

--- no es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)

es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por la relación de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 2 DE P1 y la Regla 8 de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 3 DE P1/ El yo excluye el contexto cultural de la muerte (1.7.1/1.7.2/1.7.3)

es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)

es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)

es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)

es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)

es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)

es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
estable la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
estable la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
No es necesaria la separación en dos MSPs, en función de la relación de "es posible" entre la REGLA 3 DE P1 y la totalidad de las Reglas de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 4 DE P1/ El yo está desposeído del tú (1.9.5/1.9.6)
estable la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
estable la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
estable la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo está desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
estable la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo está desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
estable la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
estable la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ El que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
estable la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ El que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
estable la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
estable la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
No es necesaria la separación en dos MSPs, en función de la relación de "es posible" entre la REGLA 4 DE P1 y la totalidad de las Reglas de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 5 DE P1/ El yo será destinatario pasivo de la acción de otros
(1.2.1/1.2.2/1.2.3/1.2.4)
estable la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
---no es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
estable la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo está desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
estable la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo está desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
estable la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
estable la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
estable la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
---no es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por la relación de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 5 DE P1 y la Regla 8 de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 6 DE P1/ Partes del yo se renovarán en el contexto físico de la muerte (1.6.1/1.6.2/1.6.3/1.6.4/1.6.5)
es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
---no es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por la relación de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 6 DE P1 y la Regla 8 de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 7 DE P1/ Partes del tú nutrieron (en vida) partes del yo (1.6.6)
es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
---no es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ -2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ -3/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ -4/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ -5/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)
Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por la relación de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 7 DE P1 y la Regla 2 de P2.

Si se admite la
REGLA 8 DE P1/ El tú carece de identidad de género (1.6.6/1.9.6)
es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
No es necesaria la separación en dos MSPs, en función de la relación de "es posible" entre la REGLA 9 DE P1 y la totalidad de las Reglas de P2. Si se admite la

REGLA 9 DE P1/ Ellos son los que construirán el contexto simbólico de la muerte (1.3.1/1.3.2/1.3.3)
es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
es posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
es posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
es posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida (2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida (2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
No es necesaria la separación en dos MSPs, en función de la relación de "es posible" entre la REGLA 9 DE P1 y la totalidad de las Reglas de P2.
Si se admite la
REGLA 10 DE P1/ Esto (la vida) es lo que acabará (1.5.1)
---no es posible la
REGLA 1 DE P2/ "Irse" es la metáfora de "morir" (2.1.1/2.9.1)
se posible la
REGLA 2 DE P2/ El yo es agente del propio comportamiento (2.1.1/2.9.1)
se posible la
REGLA 3 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto cultural de la vida (2.10.2)
se posible la
REGLA 4 DE P2/ El yo estará desposeído del contexto físico de la vida (2.10.1/2.10.3/2.10.4/2.10.5)
se posible la
REGLA 5 DE P2/ El yo ha sido destinatario de las emociones de otros (2.6.3)
---no es posible la
REGLA 6 DE P2/ Lo que permanecerá es el contexto físico de la vida
(2.2.1/2.3.1/2.3.2/2.3.3/2.3.4/2.3.5/2.4.1/2.4.2/2.5.1/2.5.2/2.5.3/2.11.1)
---no es posible la
REGLA 7 DE P2/ Lo que se renovará es el contexto físico de la vida (2.7.1/2.7.2)
---no es posible la
REGLA 8 DE P2/ El espíritu del yo permanecerá en el contexto físico de la vida
(2.8.1/2.8.2/2.8.3/2.8.4/2.8.5)
es posible la
REGLA 9 DE P2/ El morir les ocurrirá a los que amaron al yo (2.6.1/2.6.2)

Comentarios:
La separación en dos MSPs viene exigida por la relación de "no es posible" entre la REGLA 10 DE
P1 y las Reglas 1, 6, 7 y 8 de P2.

Hay dos puntos cuya elaboración considero que es, todavía, poco rigurosa. Se trata de la formulación
de las reglas y de las categorías relacionales que pueden establecerse entre ellas.

Sobre estas últimas, las categorías relacionales, creo que conviene pensarlas a partir de la operación
de accesibilidad. Para ello, conviene diferenciar entre enunciados (en este caso, reglas) textuales y
enunciados (o reglas) interpretacionales. En principio, a cualquiera de los dos poemas se le puede atribuir
el carácter de textual, con tal de que al otro se lo considere como interpretacional. Dado el orden del
análisis efectuado, opto por considerar al poema de Gelman como textual y al de J. R. Jiménez como
interpretacional. La comprensión de la operación de accesibilidad requiere aceptar (provisionalmente)
que las reglas construidas a partir de las definiciones contextuales surgidas del poema de J. R. Jiménez pueden
considerarse interpretaciones posibles de cada una de las reglas construidas a partir de las definiciones
contextuales surgidas del poema de Gelman. Esto, como puede observarse, no se da en todos los casos.

El análisis seguiría con la verificación de los caracteres de CONSISTENCIA, COMPLETITUD Y
DECIDIBILIDAD de cada uno de los MSPs de los POEMAS 1 y 2 (y el desarrollo puede continuar; a
efectos ejemplificativos, me detengo aquí).
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