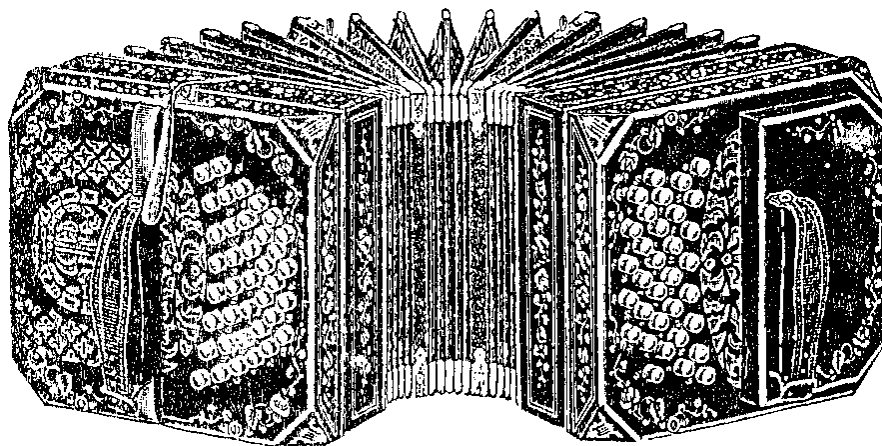


SEMIOTICS

SEMINARS, AUTUMN SEMESTER 1997



Center for Semiotisk Forskning

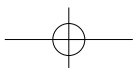
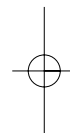
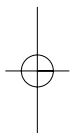
Center for Semiotic Research · Centre de Recherches Sémiotiques

UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS



Forsideillustration:

En argentinsk *bandoneón* — opkaldt efter sin tyske promotor Heinrich Band (opr. Bandonion, 1850erne) — er en harmonika-lignende "koncertina" med en for sin uhyrlighed berømt fingersætning: "diatonisk" over 71 taster, en tiltrækkende fyldig klang, stort register: næsten 5 oktaver, en lang bælg og dermed et potentiale for snappende eller hvæsende ansatser; siden århundredskiftet især dyrket som tango-instrument.



INTRODUCTION

Semiotics as a scientific and philosophical, theoretically explicit and empirically open, study of a reasonable range of phenomena characterising the object Σ , such that: 1) Σ is mainly called Meaning [Danish: *betydning*]; 2) Σ is manifested by the content of interpreted texts and communicational expressions in general, whether pragmatic or aesthetic; 3) Σ is manifested by the content of mental representations, whether stemming from experience, dreaming, phantasizing or other sources; 4) Σ is present in the structure of knowledge, beliefs, and direct experiences of the world; 5) Σ is neutral to the distinction between truth and falsehood, since it is not propositional; 6) Σ is never experienced in itself, as Σ , but always as the Σ of something and as the property by which something can be related to something else; 7) Σ has formal properties and can be described, and in principle understood, by appropriate models.

The features (2) through (6) indicate the transversality of Σ in a world of communication, thoughts and feelings, and experience, including perception. (7) expresses a principle of hope.

It might be added to these determinations that Σ prototypically occurs as given to *other minds* than the one involved in the study of Σ . These other minds are then reading, thinking, seeing or otherwise attentive to the something that Σ is the Σ of. Nevertheless, it also occurs, only not as given, to the student of it. Therefore, Σ can perfectly well study Σ without circularity. In the same way, language can be used to describe language, only not in an identical manifestation (autoreference).

It might also be added that Σ is a fine thing to study, if you are in the Humanities or the social sciences, since things there are interrelated only by Σ . So if you want to know what things really lead to what other things there, instead of mixing up everything, Σ — as far as it is known — can guide you towards the sort of reality you are dealing with. You don't have to quit your discipline and only study Σ — a possible, but rarely chosen option — you can just check it and get informed about the seminars offered, take or leave what you wish, and then use it when studying the Σ of your something.

There is a Danish journal, *Almen Semiotik*, 'General Semiotics', that shows you what stuff semioticians come up with. The activities of this Center for Semiotic Studies, currently financed by the Danish National Research Foundation and the University of Aarhus, under an external contract, are continuous — seminars, special lectures, colloquiums, workshops, publications —, so you can start, continue, stop, and begin again whenever you want, or must.

The special attraction *this semester and the following* is our eminent guest researcher, the American neurocognitivist **Rick Grush**, from the Washington University in St. Louis, who offers a course (please see below) of particular interest for all Ph. D. students, local, national, or from other countries. We are happy to welcome him to Aarhus.

And welcome to all of you from all of us.

Per Aage Brandt

CALENDAR AUTUMN SEMESTER 1997

September

<i>Tuesday 9</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 10</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 11</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	12-14: Semio-linguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
<i>Friday 12</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

<i>Tuesday 23</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 24</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 25</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i>	
<i>Friday 26</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

October

<i>Tuesday 7</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 8</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 9</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	12-14: Semio-linguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
<i>Friday 10</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

<i>Tuesday 21</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 22</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 23</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i>	
<i>Friday 24</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

November

<i>Tuesday 4</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 5</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 6</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	12-14: Semio-linguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
<i>Friday 7</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

<i>Tuesday 18</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 19</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 20</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i>	
<i>Friday 21</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

December

<i>Tuesday 2</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 3</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 4</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	12-14: Semio-linguistics	15-17: Psycho-semiotics
<i>Friday 5</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

<i>Tuesday 16</i>	15-17: The Imaginary		
<i>Wednesday 17</i>	12-14: Dynamic Modelling	14-16: General Semiotics	
<i>Thursday 18</i>	10-12: Subjectivity...	13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i>	
<i>Friday 19</i>	08-10: The Imaginary		

PLEASE SEE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE SEMINARS.

THE SEMINAR ON GENERAL SEMIOTICS

by Per Aage Brandt

Wednesdays, 2-4 p.m. Room 219

- Sept. 10 Structures of Time*
Sept. 24 Metaphors and other beasts
Oct. 8 Eco on Interpretation
Oct. 22 Gender, Emotion, and the Domains
Nov. 5 Peirce on Reality, Mind, and Meaning
Nov. 19 From Iconicity to Symbolization
Dec. 3 Diagrams and Schematism
Dec. 17 Consciousness, Brains, and Beauty

This seminar will present a series of recently developed ideas on the current issues of Dynamic Semiotics. A Reader containing papers on all of the topics selected for the sessions will be initially available for the participants. As always, the seminar is both introductory and idiosyncratic. It addresses junior researchers as well as specialized seniors wanting to reconsider basic assumptions in the Humanities and other areas related to cognitive or semiotic inquiry.

Among its transversally active hypotheses is the idea that local patterns of meaning in language and human behavior can be understood as grounded in a global and generic semantic architecture, embracing a finite set of a priori relevant *domains* which account for all that Meaning can mean: for experienced phenomenological, 'presentential' reality and also the trans-experiential, acknowledged worlds or spaces of reference that emotions are mainly linked to, and that representations (therefore) mainly signify. According to this hypothesis, *representations* do not echo or reduplicate our 'presentential' reality — the 'pheno-sphere' — but refer to a higher or second order in the architecture of Meaning — a 'semio-sphere' — whose structure can only be grasped by a close study of the compositions of the lower first order: human 'semiology' is based and built on phenomenological grounds, but cannot be reduced to this basement. Semiotics and cognitive semantics have to analyse the orders or levels of Meaning as articulated stabilities. This view has implications for the understanding of *discourse* and *culture* in a realistic universe and a naturalizing theoretical framework. It also sheds light upon the societal and non-societal aspects of *subjectivity*.

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SEMINAR ON SEMIO-LINGUISTICS

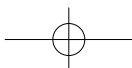
by Lene Fogsgaard and Per Aage Brandt

Thursdays, 12 a.m. - 2 p.m., Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 6, Dec. 4. Room 221.

The seminar is an open workshop, inviting all interested scholars for sharing observations and reflections that might stimulate the understanding of the relationship of language structure to semiotic structure — hence the term ‘semio-linguistics’. Whereas *linguistics* has contributed essentially by its cognitive grammars, and its structuralist heritage, *semiotics* has introduced considerations on enunciative, discursive, and textual meaning; the actual field relies on the assumption that sentence structure (syntax proper) is an irreducible formal phenomenon, which should be studied both as a prerequisite of expression and as an internal co-organizer of Meaning; it is both a crucial means of access to the mental processes involved in the construction of Meaning, and an autonomous instance of its ‘editing’. - Grammatical knowledge or sensitivity of all kinds is highly welcomed in the seminar, and no other particular qualifications are needed.

This semester will be dedicated to the study of *verbs* and *verbal* dynamics. Previously, selected word classes have been discussed, and the most challenging of them all — Her Majesty the Verb — has been the necessary background of our foregrounded species: nouns, adjectives, adverbs. This category seems particularly important and decisive in any linguistic grammar, since it apparently controls the syntactic representation of semantic structure and also adds to represented meanings a ‘presentational’ meaning which determines linear manifestation. It is deeply involved in case structure, but also in perspectival morphologies (tense, aspect, mode) that prepare the inscription of sentence sequences in dialogue and discourse. Verbs are difficult to ‘describe’: there is of course no known valid principle for classifying them universally, and even the language-specific criteria are uncertain. They have closed subclasses — auxiliaries, copulas, modals, etc. — and ‘half-closed’ groups — motionals, aspectuals, expressionals, performatives, etc. — , and the open (‘juicy’, as Talmy says) subclasses have dual transitivity — causationals, perceptionals, etc. — or ternary transitivity — communicationals, interactionals, etc. — ; obtaining an exhaustive finite list of verbal sub-classes is an interesting task of semio-linguistics, since such a framework would elucidate the dynamic commonality of sentential meaning as such. Any attempt to reach this goal, however, seems to implicate the whole of semantic theory and knowledge; so, this challenge is at least an occasion to review current theories and proposals.

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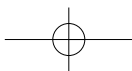
SEMINAR ON PSYCHO-SEMIOTICS

by Bent Rosenbaum and Per Aage Brandt

Thursdays, 3 - 5 p.m., Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 6, Dec. 4. Room 221.

The seminar welcomes students from all related fields. It is a workshop dedicated to investigating 'psychic properties' of expressed meaning, and thereby approaching a relevant model of subjectivity as a component of semiotic structure in human behavior and phenomenology. *Emotions and imaginations* are linked in stable patterns of what is traditionally called the Imaginary; less stable patterns characterize different forms of psycho-pathology, by which it might be possible to access this Imaginary in a contrastive mode, and to specify its non-transcendental singularisations of memory, consciousness, and intentional subject-to-subject interaction. Individual 'selves' relate to groups in several ways (cf. phenomena such as laughter, enthusiasm, panic, solidarity, obligation...); to other individuals, by emotional empathy (face and gaze reading); and, by intimacy, to selected others who appear to merge with the subject's proprioceptive, bounded identity (erotic love, deep friendship, parenthood). These relationships appear to coexist symphonically in the individual, and to be directly involved in the mind's reality constructions — as can be seen in readers' reactions to fiction. Enunciation inscribes these mechanisms in language structure (cf. adverbial, modal meanings: deictic, deontic, and epistemic logics are all built upon viewpoint settings that enunciational signifiers manifest); variable 'imaginary' patterns can therefore be found through interpretation of language, both in minimal utterances and in maximal narrative unfoldings (cf. psychotic delusions; literary fictions), as characteristics of their metaphoric or literal imagery, space blendings, 'imaginings', fantasies in general. We intend to examine some clinical cases of such 'emotional imaginings' in the light of current hypotheses on subject structure.

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SEMINAR ON DYNAMIC MODELLING

by Peer F. Bundgaard and Svend Østergaard

Wednesdays 12 a.m - 2 p.m.

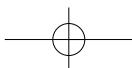
Sept. 10, Sept. 24, Oct. 8, Oct. 22, Nov. 5, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Dec. 17. Room 219

In this seminar we will examine how we refer to configurations in space and to dynamic processes in time by means of language, in more technical terms: how we conceptualize these phenomena. One approach is structural. Suppose we have a phenomenon in the perceptual field, called a scenario. The conceptual understanding of the scenario corresponds to selecting certain aspects of the inherent geometrical, topological, and dynamic properties of the scenario. Other aspects might be selected, but will then produce another conceptualization, although they refer to the same content. The aspects selected from the inherent structure are of course evolutionarily developed. This accounts for the differences in conceptualization from language to language and implies that language universals have to be found in the underlying structure from which the aspects are selected. These problems will be discussed on the background of the works of L. Talmy.

Another approach is the dynamic one. This amounts essentially to saying that the relation between the conceptualizer and the conceptualized scenario is dynamic. One aspect of this is when the speaker explicitly expresses an epistemic or affective evaluation of a given content. This is often done by means of adverbs, and in the seminar we will give some examples of how adverbs place the speaker in a special dynamic relation to the expressed content. A different aspect is the dynamics of perception. The difficult question is here to understand how conceptual forms can emerge from this dynamics; we will in this respect consult researchers like Jean Petitot and Terry Regier.

Although this last problem is a difficult one, the seminar does not require any particular qualifications except patience and intellectual curiosity.

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**SUBJECTIVITY, OBJECTIVITY, AND THEIR NEUROCOGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS**

by Rick Grush, University of St. Louis, USA

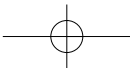
Thursdays 10 - 12 a.m.**Sept. 11, Sept. 25, Oct. 9, Oct. 23, Nov. 6, Nov. 20, Dec. 4, Dec. 18. Room 221.**

A central feature of human experience and thought is the divide between subject and object. We experience the world as something independent of us, with an objective existence, something that does not disappear if we close our eyes, or even if we die. And we conceive of ourselves as subjects that experience this world from a particular point of view. In this seminar we will explore this feature of human thought and experience with the following considerations and issues in mind:

- 1) What does the subject/object divide amount to? In this regard we will look at the work of the philosophers Peter Strawson and Gareth Evans. We will find reason to believe that the subject/object divide is not an unanalyzable feature of human experience, as many believe, but is rather the result of the interplay of more primitive cognitive abilities, including the ability to represent spatial relations, to construct cognitive maps, to engage in imagination, and to effect coordinations between different experiential structures.
- 2) Given such a philosophical analysis of the subject/object divide and the cognitive machinery that makes it possible, we will look at the cognitive and neurobiological mechanisms which support these capacities, especially the cognitive neurobiology of imagination and cognitive maps.
- 3) Finally, we will examine the implications of this analysis for the project of understanding the mind in terms of the brain. This is perhaps the deepest question possible -- how can mere matter, atoms in the void, behave and interact so as to create meaning and a subjective mental life. That is, how are *we* possible?

Much of the material we will cover will be difficult, but not in the sense of requiring a strong background in any particular field, such as philosophy or neuroscience. Indeed, this seminar is structured around a chapter I am working on as part of a book manuscript, and I want this chapter to be accessible to a wide academic audience. Accordingly, I hope to benefit from the participation of people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

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SEMINAR ON NEUROCOGNITIVE GRAMMAR

by Rick Grush, University of St. Louis, USA

THIS SEMINAR WILL RUN IN SPRING SEMESTER 1998.

Cognitive Linguistics seeks to explain human linguistic competence as the employment of a structured inventory of form-meaning pairings, where the 'meanings' are contentful internal representations of various sorts, without the mediation of an autonomous syntax. Though the successes of cognitive linguistics in shedding light on features of human language has been impressive, it has not, except in a few isolated cases, been applied to explaining so-called syntactic constraints, such as island constraints. Because of this, opponents of cognitive linguistics have felt justified in their dismissal of the program as a serious challenger to Chomskyan approaches. In this seminar we will

- 1) Examine the core syntactic phenomena to be accounted for, such as island constraints and antecedent binding in pronominal anaphora.
- 2) Look at the interplay between these phenomena and cognitive factors, such as attention and feature-binding.
- 3) Examine the neurocognitive mechanisms responsible for attention management and variable binding.
- 4) Examine the relationship between various components of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar framework, especially reference-point constructions, and these neurocognitive mechanisms.

If all goes well, we should be in a position to see how Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, supplemented with an account of the neurobiological mechanisms supporting attention management and variable binding, can explain the syntactic phenomena at issue. The upshot will be that the cognitive synthesis and analysis of complex semantic structures (as posited by Cognitive Grammar) is an attention-intensive process. Limits to attention, and constraints on attention management, have the effect of constraining the way this semantic synthesis and analysis can proceed. So-called syntactic constraints will thus be revealed to be no more than formal shadows cast by these cognitive/semantic constraints.

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SEMINAR ON THE IMAGINARY

by Hans-Erik Larsen

Tuesdays, 3 - 5 p.m. :

Sept. 9, Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, Dec. 16. TRØJBORG, room 122.

Fridays, 8 - 10 a.m. :

Sept. 12, Sept. 26, Oct. 10, Oct. 24, Nov. 7, Nov. 21, Dec. 5, Dec. 19. TRØJBORG, room 156.

In this workshop we will discuss the structures and morphologies of the Imaginary. Our general idea is based upon the assumption that the Imaginary is a semantic frame in human worlds of perception.

The *structure of the Imaginary* gives rise to three possible scopes of reality: *the bio-imaginary scope* (accounting for perceptions of the human body), *the socio-imaginary scope* (accounting for our social inter-human relations), and *the phantasmatic-imaginary scope* (accounting for our individual erotic desires). These scopes are inter-related semantic primitives and frames, and they organize higher-order structures of meaning.

Within these three structural scopes, the four elements - air, water, earth, and fire - participate as figurative and dynamic *morphologies*, thus giving the Imaginary an *emotive* meaning. The four elements are examinable in this framework, not merely as preexisting elements of content, but purely and simply as an emotive background.

We will examine this emotive and structural Imaginary, taking our analysis mainly from aesthetics, either in literary art or pictorial art. In relation to this, recent results from Affective Science will be discussed and connected with ongoing research from the "surrounding" seminars at the Center for Semiotic Research, especially the results from Psycho-Semiotics (e.g. the discussions on human empathy).

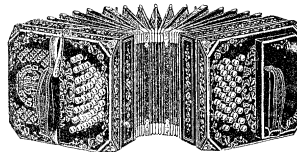
In addition to the above mentioned, the ideas developed in the book *The Aesthetics of the Elements* (by Hans-Erik Larsen) will be of initial interest.

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ADDRESS

Center for Semiotic Research
UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS
Finlandsgade 28
DK-8200 Aarhus N

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Tel. +45 89 42 44 66
Fax +45 86 10 82 28
e-mail semaleph@cfk.hum.aau.dk

WORLD WIDE WEB

<http://www.hum.aau.dk/semiotics>

The Research Programme in General and Dynamic Semiotics is established through a contract between The Danish National Research Foundation, The University of Aarhus, and The Center for Semiotic Research at The University of Aarhus.

OTHER EVENTS

Center for Semiotic Research, Autumn 1997

Guest Lectures by

Jean-François Bordron, Professor, Université III, PARIS.

Jean-François Bordron is a Guest Professor at The Center for Semiotic Research this autumn.

Further detail and precise information on lectures, etc. will be given later.