

SEMIOTICS

SEMINARS & LECTURES



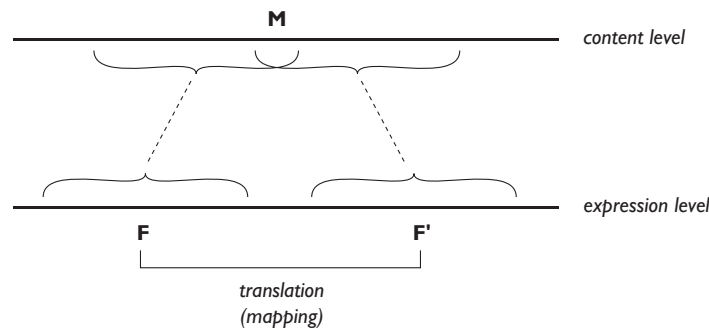
SPRING SEMESTER 1998

Center for Semiotic Research
UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

INTRODUCTION

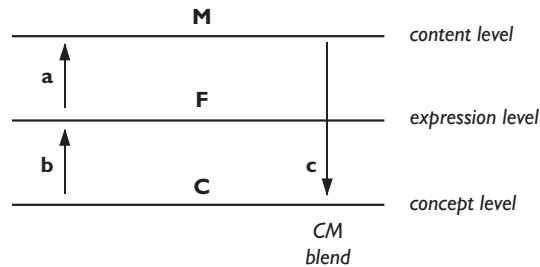
The study of Meaning, as any other study, has a **methodology**—a conception of how to do it—and an **ontology**—a conception of what it is about—and beyond these technicalities, a deeper motivation which allows both to vary substantially, or even to incidentally collapse, without affecting its idea, or ‘semiotic logos’: Meaning as such is simply a challenge to our general understanding of the world, and Semiotics is any ‘logos’ that tries to meet this challenge.

Semiotics has tried to do so by elaborating notions and models of **sign structure**. One of the basic issues thus raised concerns the architecture of signs (linguistic, plastic, gestural, musical): translations from one sign mode to another show that there is a stable **content level** which is rooted in human cognition; they also show that there is an independent **expression level**, organized by formal principles inherent in human communication. A specific ‘sign mode’ seems then to consist in a selection of expressive structures functionally linked to a selection of content structures. Overlapping content selections explain the possibility of translation—by substitution of functionally analogous expressive structures.



However, this model—assuming that the sign modes **mf** and **mf'** statically link bits of meaning (M) to bits of expressive form (F)—fails to explain a salient fact, namely that the translating form (F'), ‘standing for’ a primary form (F), modifies the ‘presentation’ of the translated content (M)—its ‘content form’ [Da.: *inholdsform*]. This means that expressive forms of whatever sign mode must **construct** what they mean in specific ways. Formal modifications of content also occur within any sign mode, in so far as different **constructions** may render a ‘same’ content, paraphrase it by changes of scope, perspective, focus etc. (cf. syntactic variation in language). Forms influence dynamically what they mean: they are also semantic forces.

Therefore, expressive forms must have a deeper relation to meaning than the functional link considered. Let us introduce a **conceptual level** underlying the expression level and grounding its structures in **cognitive structures** rooted in human neuro-phenomenology. The constructive force of forms then stems from what cognitively motivates them. On the other hand, the formally constructed contents also affect these cognitive structures (as thoughts affect perceptions and imaginations) and give rise to what current research calls ‘mental blending’ or ‘conceptual integration’ (Turner, Fauconnier). The improved model—though unheard of in current semio-cognitive literature—would now look like this:



The ‘sign-making’ link (a) is now a projection applying **form** to **content** (of thought), whereas expressive forms are motivated (b) by cognitive structures (schemata), or **concepts** (stemming from perception and its laws of intelligibility, in particular: figurative mereology, dynamic patterns of causation). Constructions are interpreted by projection (c) back onto the concept level, where they blend with ‘structures of experience’, and new meanings appear in human imagination, if the concepts that interpret them differ from those which motivated their form.

This architecture (C-F-M) accounts for the essential connection existing between semiotic studies (traditionally: F-M) and cognitive studies (traditionally: C-F). It also substantially elucidates the notion of semantics. There is a **content semantics** of ‘juicy’ meanings inscribed in domains of knowledge; and there is a **concept semantics** of schematic conditions-for-meaning in general, rooted in bodily and intersubjective experiences of our species in the macro-bio-physical world in which it evolves.

Humanities differentiate according to the ‘juiciness’ of content semantics, but unite on the common ground of concept semantics. Communication articulates this differentiation and this unity, and so does the semiotic framework here suggested.

Per Aage Brandt

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Stig Brøgger: *Flora Danica*, 1988. 122 x 12 cm.

FEBRUARY

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday 3 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | |
| Wednesday 4 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 5 | – | 12-14: Semio-linguistics 15-17: Psycho-semiotics |
| Tuesday 17 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | |
| Wednesday 18 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 19 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i> |

MARCH

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday 3 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |
| Wednesday 4 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 5 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 12-14: Semio-linguistics 15-17: Psycho-semiotics |
| Tuesday 17 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |
| Wednesday 18 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 19 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i> |
| Tuesday 31 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |

APRIL

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Wednesday 1 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 2 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 12-14: Semio-linguistics 15-17: Psycho-semiotics |
| Tuesday 14 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |
| Wednesday 15 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 16 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i> |
| Tuesday 28 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |
| Wednesday 29 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 30 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 12-14: Semio-linguistics 15-17: Psycho-semiotics |

MAY

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday 12 | 13-15: Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics | 15-18: Emotions—from Aesthetics to Psychology |
| Wednesday 13 | 12-14: Dynamic Modelling | 14-16: General Semiotics |
| Thursday 14 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 13-18: <i>Semiotic Research Group Meeting</i> |
| Tuesday 26 | – | 13-16: Mark Turner: A Mechanism of Creativity (LECTURE) |
| Wednesday 27 | 10-12: Neurocognitive Grammar | 13-16: Mark Turner: Principles of Conceptual Blending (LECTURE) |

JUNE

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Tuesday 2 | 10-12: Mark Turner: SEMINAR | 13-16: Mark Turner: SEMINAR |
| Wednesday 3 | 10-12: Mark Turner: SEMINAR | 13-16: Mark Turner: SEMINAR |
| Thursday 4 | 10-12: Mark Turner: SEMINAR | 13-16: Mark Turner: SEMINAR [see presentation on back cover] |

SEMINAR ON GENERAL SEMIOTICS

by Per Aage Brandt. **Wednesdays, 14-17. Auditorium 221.**

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|-------------|--|
| February 4 | Mapping the Mind: Domain Theory and Human Experience |
| February 18 | Concept Structure and Meaning: the Basic Blend of Figuration and Causation |
| March 4 | Language and the Signs: from the Basic Blend to the Blends we live by |
| March 18 | Categories and 'Typical Things' in Discourse |
| April 1 | Force Dynamics, Causation, and Modality I: Domain Specificity |
| April 15 | Force Dynamics, Causation, and Modality II: Catastrophes in Discourse |
| April 29 | Forms, Forces, and Feelings: Subjectivity Represented |
| May 13 | Space, Time, and Identity: Objectivity is Here Now... |

This seminar will discuss a selection of central problems and ideas in current dynamic semiotics, and propose some new models (following up what the introduction to this semester programme outlines).

Meaning is considered both to be 'substantially' specified by domains of experiential knowledge (cf. open-class semantics in language) and to be non-specific—generic—as 'formally' organized by conceptual structure (cf. closed-class semantics in language). Domain theory is now considered a 'theory' in the semio-cognitive competence of humans (cf. 'theory of mind', the empathic competence), i. e. a natural predisposition for referring experiences to a specific 'domain address' within a finite universal set of domains, and for structuring them there. Conceptual structure includes dynamic schemata of causation and agentivity on the one hand, and figurative schemata of part-whole forms, framing, scaling, scope, figure-ground, etc. These substantial and formal properties of semantic items are probably processed separately in perception (and imagination), but integrated in a Basic Blend, which is then the input of categorization (recategorization involves therefore a re-blending operation).

Categorized items blend further into more or less creative integrations, such as metaphors and scenarios, manifested by discourse. Discourse can manifest such complex meanings, because language—according to our hypothesis—is a special version of the general process of basic blending, which **occurs neurally on an expressive support**, like a double imprinting on a substratum; the phonetic support has the particularity of receiving this semio-cognitive imprinting, or 'semiotization' twice: by two cycles of basic blending, yielding 1) morpho-lexical units, 2) grammatical units, (1) and (2) being separated by a syntactic part-whole-structure.

The above of course represents the state of the art in a contingent synchronic cut of a fast developing diachronic research process (so: the programme is subject to alteration...).

SEMINAR ON PSYCHO-SEMIOTICS

by Bent Rosenbaum and Per Aage Brandt. **Thursdays, 15-17. Auditorium 221.**

[February 5 · March 5 · April 2 · April 30]

The subject of this seminar is in fact the Subject—as a psychic and linguistically represented entity (cf. the deictics, the vocative, the personal pronouns, the genitive)—with its proprioceptive, empathic, expressive, volitional, emotional, and performative competences and its normative commitments (epistemic, deontic, aesthetic), such as it appears in the domain of **enunciation**, at the threshold of discourse, but still bound by the phenomenology of direct ‘intersubjectivity’.

Enunciation can be analysed as a process of constant **attunement** between expressive agents in verbal and ‘intercorporeal’ communication. Rhythm (straight or rubato), tone (tense or relaxed), and phrasing (legato, staccato) are among the ‘musical’ parameters of attunement: they are signifiers of a signified state of enunciation shared by Subjects or demarcating Subjects mutually as parts of a dynamic scenario categorized by a genre of ‘situations’.

There is thus a **semantics of enunciation**; interaction is intelligible, if structured by the schemata of a situational genre, a sort of micro-narrative frame, specified by psycho-historical contents, but nevertheless ‘cross-psychically’ and cross-culturally identifiable to an extent sufficient for description. Speech act force, authority, status, symbolic efficiency in general, can be considered in this perspective. Intersubjective ‘power’, or social ‘micro-power’, springs from the dynamic **control** aspect of shared scenarios—rather than from the Subjects participating in them.

Psychopathological variation elucidates the function of enunciation: pathetic, ironic, polite or violent enunciative modes and behaviors vary or fixate according to schematic roles that subjects integrate into their expressive ‘selves’ and project playfully or painfully in their interaction. Ludic or theatrical behavior seems to underlie the phenomenon of **fiction**: fictionalization of self and others—obtained by processes of situational blending (yielding blended roles, cf. metaphors like: Da. ‘skrankepave’ [office pope], Da. ‘landsfader’ [father of the nation], etc.)—as manifested in social institutional life, as well as in psychosis and eroticism.

This semester will be dedicated to the study of enunciation as such, and will incidentally also include gender specification and developmental evidence.

SEMINAR ON DYNAMIC MODELLING

by Peer. F. Bundgård and Svend Østergaard. **Wednesdays, 12-14. Auditorium 221.**

[February 4 · February 18 · March 4 · March 18 · April 1 · April 15 · April 29 · May 13]

One purpose of this seminar is to examine **the structures of events**, both in general and also specifically as they are manifested in narrative texts. In doing so we will present examples of dynamic models that have been used in the semiotic tradition to represent canonical narrative sequences. We will therefore discuss the differences between a modelization that is discrete and logical as in the Greimasian tradition, on the one hand, and a modelization that is continuous and dynamic as in the catastrophe theoretic conception of narration, on the other. This distinction (and conflict) between the discrete and the continuous is much more general than if it were just related to narrative theories. In cognitive science it is manifested as a difference in theoretical approach between those who claim that the discrete syntactic manipulations of symbols, as manifested in language, are already implemented in the neuro-biological substrate, i.e., that the processes of the brain are themselves algorithmic, and those who claim that syntax and symbol-manipulations are emergent properties of underlying dynamic processes which are not algorithmic in the formal and logical sense.

The second purpose of the seminar is to examine the concept of **causality**. We will here present catastrophe-theoretic models of dynamic schemas that represent causal interactions, and possibly dynamic models of syntactic structures according to the second paradigm mentioned above. Besides, we intend to examine more generally how **energy transfer**, **force**, and **dynamic relations** are represented in language. This leads to a theory about how the **verb** codes information about different types of force-dynamic relations, such as **gradient-dynamics**, **flow-dynamics**, **causal interactions** etc. We will try to relate this to the theory of syntax and in general discuss whether there are models that can account for these different dynamic relations.

The notions of **event** and **causality** will also in one or two sessions be treated on the basis of the work of Husserl.



SEMINAR ON NEUROCOGNITIVE GRAMMAR

by Rick Grush. **Thursdays, 10-12. Conference Room.**

[February 19 · March 5 · March 19 · April 2 · April 16 · April 30 · May 14 · May 28]

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.



SEMINAR ON EMOTIONS—FROM AESTHETICS TO PSYCHOLOGY

by Hans-Erik Larsen. **Tuesdays, 15-18. Room 221**

[March 3 · March 17 · March 31 · April 14 · April 28 · May 12]

This seminar will address the problem of understanding the semiotic structure of emotions. Subjects are reputed to be ‘emotional’, though not constantly; and when they are, they are either just ‘moved’ [Da. ‘bevæget’]—by events or works of art—or enter into one of a finite set of emotional states or values, selected from a general morphology. The precise articulation of this morphology is still problematic.

Emotions may be demarcated against simple **moods** (objectless, or intransitive; e. g. “gloomy”, “cheerful”) on the one hand, and against **passion**, on the other (only one or two objects, or idio-transitive; Love, Hate, Jealousy). Emotions, by contrast, have mental space structure, categorical transitivity and a temporal horizon, e. g.:

- retrospective:** “shame”, “pride” (S has done something);
“sorrow”, “grief”, “bitterness” (S’ or destiny did something to S);
- prospective:** “hope”, “fear” (S will do something or go through something)
“contempt”, “scorn” (S will scorn any S’);
- retro- and prospective:** “anger” (S’ → S, and now S is furious, then optionally S → S’, revenge);
“happiness”, “enthusiasm”, (something good has happened to S, and the effect will last for some time);

Art represents emotions, moods, and passion; S. K. Langer says that it symbolizes human emotionality, but does not seem to convey the represented feelings; Kant says that the aesthetic judgment is impersonal. The experience of beauty or aesthetic intensity rather conveys universal attitudes of openness, sensitivity, attention, involvement-in-reality, empathy, mental readiness.

Psychologists—P. Ekman, R. Lazarus e. a.—(after W. James, Ch. Darwin...) maintain that basic natural emotions related to the expressivity of the human face are evolutionarily given and underlie empathy in our species.

Philosophers—e. g. Rousseau—have seen the paradox that emotions are perceived clearly only when they are represented, but not felt; namely in the case of art, where ‘good’ means ‘living’, ‘vivid’, besides ‘well-formed’. The experience of **pure form** as an aspect of aesthetic experience may explain the paradox. Then, there is an intriguing relationship between **form and emotion** to explore: emotions might create or manifest form, might be inherently morphogenetic, simply because they are expressive (form is prototypically expressive); but the expressive **performance** excludes the **experience of form**, which therefore becomes impersonal, neutral—a ‘cool’ perception of ‘hot’ stuff.

There are many more aspects of the semiotics of emotions that the seminar will discuss. It addresses students of aesthetics, psychology, and all kinds of humanists.

SEMINAR ON C. S. PEIRCE'S PHILOSOPHY AND SEMIOTICS

by Anne Marie Dinesen. **Tuesdays, 13-15. Room 221**

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|-------------|---|
| February 3 | Realism and Nominalism: What is the Relation between Mind and Matter? |
| February 17 | The Classification of the Sciences. |
| March 3 | Phenomenology and Categories |
| March 17 | Evolution, Continuity and History: What Is it that Makes Things Happen? |
| March 31 | Schematic Properties of Mental Processes. |
| April 14 | Sign Theory and Classification of Signs: Icon, Index, Symbol. |
| April 28 | Interpretation and Logic: the Study of Truth. |
| May 12 | Interpretation and Semiotics: the Study of Meaning. |

Peirce's general semiotics is based upon Peirce's philosophical presuppositions. This seminar will give an introduction to the most important topics on the basis of which Peirce's theory of signs is grounded.

The first session will deal with the philosophical traditions, 'nominalism' and 'realism'. The different kinds of nominalism presuppose a fundamental division between 'mind' and 'matter'. Peirce's realism implies that such a basic division is not drawn. Instead he studies the common characters, a study which is performed through phenomenology. Phenomenology is one of the basic sciences proposed by Peirce, and the second session will introduce to the classification of the sciences and the consequences of this.

The third session will be a presentation of Peirce's phenomenology and the categories. The internal order of the categories implies a specific perspective on nature and natural processes. Peirce studies such processes as evolutionary processes and the fourth session will introduce the evolutionary nature of his theory, which also includes a study of time and continuity. The fifth session will present topics related to the nature of thought and the schematic properties of mental processes. The analogous structures between "the thought of nature" and the "nature of thought" will be presented.

Peirce's general sign theory presupposes that all mental activity takes place through signs. The sign theory and the classification of signs will be introduced in the sixth session.

The interpretation of signs is a study which concerns the methods implied. The basic method for interpreting signs is logic. Peirce makes a distinction between logic in the narrow sense, which comprises deduction, induction and abduction, and logic in the broad sense, which is semiotics. Logic concerns the possible, probable and necessary truth of something, while semiotics also comprises the study of meaning as simply meaningful.

The seventh session will introduce to the logical methods and their references, while the last session will introduce to the study and formation of meaning.

MARK TURNER: VARIETIES OF CONCEPTUAL PROJECTION

Visiting Professor Mark Turner, Dpt. of English Language and Literature, Univeristy of Maryland, USA.

Lectures, May 26 and 27. Three-day Seminar, June 2-4, daily 10-12 and 13-16. Auditorium 221.

This semester's Guest Professor is MARK TURNER—Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature and the Doctoral Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science of the University of Maryland, and one of the most creative and fertile exponents of the cognitive turn in the Humanities.

Mark Turner's lectures on May 26 and 27 at the Center (cf. Calendar) are preliminarily entitled:

(1) **A Mechanism of Creativity**, (2) **Principles of Conceptual Blending**.

On May 28 - 30, he will give the paper **Blending and Metaphor** at the symposium "Modelling Metaphor: State of the Art", in Copenhagen (org. by the Center and the Philosophy Dept. of the University of Copenhagen).

On June 2 - 4, he will finally give a special and intensive seminar on **Varieties of Conceptual Projection (Analogies, counterfactuals, and their kin)** at the Center, daily from 10 - 12 and 13 - 16. Inscription at the secretariate of the Center is needed, since attendance is limited to 30 persons; inscription fees incl. lunch, coffee, and materials DKR 300.

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